TRESTLE

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Carnegie Mellon University
& Sheffield Hallam University
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Introduction, Part I
Professor Jim Daniels
Carnegie Mellon University

I received an email from Conor O’Callaghan in spring of 2008 asking if I’d received his letter proposing a possible exchange between our two universities. It turned out that I hadn’t. His letter must have gone for a swim in the Atlantic. Luckily, through Conor’s persistence, we were able to connect and slowly lay the groundwork and cut through the red tape to establish this exchange in Spring 2011. My trip to Sheffield in 2009 confirmed my sense that Sheffield Hallam would be a good fit for our creative writing students. The generosity and hospitality of Conor and the other faculty and students at the university, and the passion about writing, and teaching writing, were clearly palpable.

Our first group of students who traveled last spring seemed quite enthusiastic about their experiences on both ends of the exchange, and we wanted to create a more permanent record of that exchange, both in terms of the creative work produced and the experience of living and traveling abroad. I’m pleased to welcome readers to this eclectic collection of creative work—poems, stories, reflections—that attempts to capture the range of experiences students are having and will continue to have in this exchange. What you will find here are creative pieces from the five exchange students from last year, along with thoughts on their experiences during the exchange. We asked the six students participating in the exchange in Spring 2012 to send a sample of recent writing to include as well, for what we hope to create through this exchange is an international community of writers in which students on both ends stay in touch and continue to share their writing and support each other (and perhaps visit each other) after their exchange experience.

For additional practical information on the exchange, you can access our blog at http://cmusheffieldhallamexchange.wordpress.com. You can also google ‘print across the pond wordpress’, and choose the first link available.

We hope this journal will continue to evolve, with the input of the students, and work alongside our exchange blog to provide valuable information to interested students at both universities and provide a warm, welcoming face to the exchange while highlighting the fine writing by our talented students!
Here’s how it started. I used to teach in America: one year in an honorary Irish Studies chair in Villanova, just outside Philly; for a few years thereafter at Wake Forest University in North Carolina. Then, in 2007, a combination of homesickness (kids) and job opportunity (me) meant that I moved to the UK.

When I went for my interview in Sheffield, I told them that I would forge links with colleges in the US. The interview panel bought it, and offered me the job. It wasn’t just interview patter, however. Part of me was very sad to be leaving, and I figured something like an exchange would be a nice way for me not to lose America altogether.

The great Romanian/German poet Paul Celan once famously likened poems to messages in bottles. Little tiny S.O.S. pleas we toss on the waves, unsure if anyone will ever find or read. The year I joined Sheffield Hallam, a new BA in Creative Writing began. So I wrote to Jim Daniels, since I had heard great things about the program at Carnegie Mellon, and to my surprise and delight Jim said yes.

Now seems like as good a time as any to thank Jim, which I don’t think I have ever done! Jim is a heck of a poet and great guy, one who clearly cares deeply about his students and their experience on his course. It was a huge stroke of fortune for me that Jim was at the other end, to read my message in a bottle and respond as generously as he has done. We quickly formulated the idea of a semester-long exchange, whereby some of your guys come here and some of ours go there. That simple.

Picture a city... Once a huge steel town, famous for being gray and grim and cold, but with a downtown area that has blossomed hugely in the past twenty into a vibrant cultural center that is also a pretty cool place to live and study. Pittsburgh? Sheffield? That the description could just as easily be either city is testament to how perfect a match this is.

This spring will see the second year of our exchange. Still early doors (as they say in Yorkshire...), but a good beginning to something I hope lasts many years.
Noelle Crochet
Carnegie Mellon University

Noelle is a Creative Writing major at Carnegie Mellon University. She studied at Sheffield Hallam University during the spring of 2011.
Donde Crece La Palma
(Where the Palm Trees Grow)
by Noelle Crochet

A newlywed couple in violent, impoverished post-Revolutionary Cuba must choose between staying together and leading a life of assured starvation or divorcing in order to give their newborn daughter a chance at a healthy life in America.

This excerpt is from the prologue to the film, setting the political climate of Cuba in 1959, as well as revealing a bit of background to Isabel, the female protagonist of the film, and her mother.

FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT.

A beautiful, peaceful beach. No sound but the waves crashing against the shore. Then, the sounds of violent revolution - GUNSHOTS, SCREAMS - gradually fade in, breaking the silence. The noise grows louder. CUT TO:

EXT. HAVANA STREET - NIGHT.

Scenes of revolutionary violence. Three armed REVOLUTIONARIES pound on the front door of a house and disappear inside.

Another REVOLUTIONARY shoots a MAN at point-blank range and steals from his pockets.

Two REVOLUTIONARIES drag a woman out of her house by her hair. Her children cry in the background.

A group of REVOLUTIONARIES set a home on fire.
INT. SANCHEZ LIVING ROOM - NIGHT.

A spacious, fine, assuredly wealthy living room, with full bookshelves lining the walls. The daughter, ISABEL, 14, sits at her father, ARTURO’s, 40, feet reading a book, her mother, ADELA, 35, sitting beside him on the sofa.

ISABEL: Papi, why haven’t you gone back to the university to teach since the new year started?

ARTURO: It isn’t safe, mi amor. The new government doesn’t like teachers like me that disagree with the government.

ISABEL: But you’re not doing anything wrong, are you? You’re just saying what you think.

ARTURO: That is a dangerous thing now, I’m afraid. It shouldn’t be, but it is.

Adela, uncomfortable, looks around and notices the book of poetry Isabel is reading—Versos Sencillos (Simple Verses) by Jose Marti.

ADELA: Amor, why don’t you read some Marti to us? Poetry should be read aloud and it’s been so long since you’ve read to us.

ARTURO: All right. Give it here, Isabel.

Isabel hands the book to him.

ARTURO:
A sincere man am I / From where the palm trees grow, / And I want before I die / My soul’s verses to bestow—

The front door SLAMS open, cutting him off. Six armed REVOLUTIONARIES storm in. They surround the family and the women scream. Arturo shoots to his feet, trying to protect the women.

ARTURO: What are you doing here? Get out of my house!
LEAD REVOLUTIONARY: This house is no longer yours—it is now the property of the Cuban government.

ARTURO: Like hell it is! I said get out of my house!

LEAD REVOLUTIONARY: Arturo Sanchez, I take it? (To revolutionaries) Take him out back.

Before anyone can grasp what is happening, three revolutionaries grab Arturo and drag him out the back door. Adela and Isabel try to run after him but the other two revolutionaries hold them back.

A GUNSHOT is heard. The women SCREAM. Isabel wriggles out of the revolutionary’s grasp and darts towards the door.

ISABEL: Papi!

The Lead Revolutionary fires his rifle into the ceiling and Isabel stops dead in her tracks at the noise. The Lead Revolutionary grabs Isabel by the shoulders.

LEAD REVOLUTIONARY: Don’t try that again or I’ll forget to miss.

He shoves her back to the revolutionary who lost her. The two revolutionaries return from the backyard.

LEAD REVOLUTIONARY: (To the revolutionaries) Dispose of the body.

They exit.

Isabel bursts into inconsolable tears. Adela screams and struggles against the revolutionary that holds her.

ADELA: Murderer! How could you do this?

LEAD REVOLUTIONARY: Your husband was a threat to the safety of this new government.

ADELA: What, the government that murders its citizens and ruins families?

The Lead Revolutionary approaches Adela slowly and places his face inches from hers. He grips his rifle threateningly.
LEAD REVOLUTIONARY: I would keep those thoughts to myself if I were you, unless you want your daughter to grow up an orphan.

He backs away from her and addresses her forcefully.

LEAD REVOLUTIONARY: You must vacate immediately—this house is government property and you are now trespassing.

The Lead Revolutionary nods and the others let the women go. The revolutionaries point their rifles at them. Isabel runs to the table, grabs the book of poetry, and the two women run out of the house without looking back.

EXT. HAVANA STREET - NIGHT.

Adela and Isabel huff to a stop, their breathing impeded by tears, trauma and exhaustion. Isabel fights back tears.

ISABEL: Mami, what are we going to do?

Adela looks at Isabel helplessly but manages to come up with an idea.

ADELA: We—we have to find a place to stay for the night.

They wander to the next house and Adela knocks on the door.

A WOMAN in her late forties opens.

ADELA: Hello, my name is Adela and this is my daughter Isabel. May we please have a place to stay for the night? We’re desperate—our home was just taken over by—

WOMAN: I’m sorry but I can’t. I’ve got another family here in the same position as you, and I don’t even have space for them.

She begins to shut the door.

ADELA: Please!

WOMAN: I’m sorry.

The door shuts. Isabel looks up at Adela with tears in her eyes.
BEGIN MONTAGE

Adela knocks on another door. An elderly man opens. He shuts the door in her face.

Adela knocks on a door and a woman carrying two children opens. She shuts the door in her face.

Adela knocks on a door and a pregnant woman and her husband open. They shut the door in her face.

Three more doors shut.

END MONTAGE

EXT. JUANA’S PORCH – NIGHT

Adela and Isabel trudge up the rickety steps to the door with peeling white paint. Adela hesitates before knocking.

JUANA, a thin woman with a kind face, late fifties, opens.

ADELA: Please, may we have a place to stay? Our home was just invaded by revolutionaries. They killed my husband and we have no place to go.

Juana’s face softens and she steps aside to let them in. Isabel starts to cry softly. Juana puts her hands on their shoulders protectively and leads them towards a bedroom.

JUANA: I have no food to give you, but you may stay in my daughter’s bedroom—she is away tonight.

She opens the door. She looks Adela directly in the eye.

JUANA: I am so sorry.

Adela looks at her with an expression of exhausted appreciation and ushers Isabel into the room.

INT. BEDROOM – NIGHT

A closet-sized, dingy bedroom with a small single bed. Adela undoes
the sheets and crawls in, beckoning Isabel to join her. Isabel slowly takes off her shoes and slips into bed. She kisses the book of poetry, places it tenderly on the nightstand, and turns out the light.

Adela wraps her arms protectively around Isabel. Isabel barely notices and she begins to cry silently.
My name is Samantha Frank, and I am a senior double major in Creative Writing and Professional Writing at Carnegie Mellon University; I am also obtaining a minor in Business Administration. I am originally from New Rochelle, New York, just a train ride outside of New York City.

Going on the Carnegie Mellon-Sheffield Hallam exchange in the Spring of 2011 was one of the best experiences of my life. I made life-long friends, and met my amazing boyfriend. I had the opportunity to travel all around England, from Manchester to York to London. I also traveled through Scotland, France, Spain, The Netherlands, and Germany. I was very diligent about my writing, and kept a travel journal.

I highly recommend to anyone considering studying or traveling abroad to keep a travel journal. Everything is so crisp and exciting when you are abroad; if you make time to write, you will
have vivid images and thoughts for your present and future work. Your travel journal will also be a place that you can turn to for lasting memories and good laughs.

I enjoyed every minute of being abroad—I learned so much about other cultures as well as myself. I realized that you really can do anything you want in life—just as long as you work hard at it. And that jacket potatoes, beans, and tea make for a really wonderful cheap and quick meal.
“I just don’t feel anything,” Ryan said, as he stared at the glow-in-the-dark starry ceiling.

She lay there half naked, feeling the faint glow of the perfectly arranged Orion’s belt sear into her pale skin. She thought that she had never been so angry or terrified in her entire life.

“What do you mean you don’t feel anything?” she said, looking into Ryan’s dark brown eyes, his pupils pinpricks.

The television glowed in the darkness of the room. Dave Chappel dressed up as an old woman pranced across the screen. Ryan looked down at Jamie’s pointy pink nipples. He did not reach to touch them like he had dared to so many times before.

“It’s not that I feel bad, or even that I feel happy, or numb, for that matter,” he paused, his eyes darting back and forth. He turned then, facing her.

“I just need a cigarette, that’s all,” he said, as he shuffled out of Jamie’s bunked bed and down her wooden ladder.

She sat up then and stared down at him.

“Come here,” she said, biting her lower lip, holding a pillow in front of her chest.

Ryan flicked on the lights and stuffed his feet into his Lacoste loafers. He grabbed his Camel Lights off of Jamie’s desk and stuck one behind his diamond-studded ear, and walked over to her bed. He looked up at her, staring. His face blank.

“You’re a bastard,” she said as she spat into both of his eyes.

***

“How had she let it get to this point?” She wondered as she fussed around for her bra and panties. Sure she was a freshman in college and things were bound to get frisky now and then, according to the “expectations,” and all, but Jamie didn’t answer to expectations. And furthermore, she never wasted her time getting to know people, because all in all, as her parents had taught her, people were generally sure to disappoint. So why had she wasted her time getting to know him? Why was she so obsessed with the story?
But the biggest question of them all was why did she trust him? Why did she tell him the truth? She wished at that point as she heard him coughing outside that she had listened to her parents. Would he tell anyone? Would he expose her? Jamie switched on her computer and typed in her user name and password. Wordpress.org appeared on the screen with a welcome sign reading welcome cheeky bitch x. Jamie took a deep breath in and a deep breath out as she pounded out, The only person you can ever fully trust is yourself, before she quickly logged off, checked the time: 2 a.m, and wondered if she had just committed the worst act imaginable - she wondered if she had lied.

The fact that Ryan had just gotten up and left her like that isn’t even what got Jamie the most, what irked her the most as she set her alarm for 6 a.m. in the morning, was that she had planned this. She had wholeheartedly, without a doubt, planned her own demise. Her readers would laugh if they only knew that she, miss know-it-all, goodie-two-shoes, the neighborhood’s anonymous blogging spy, had in fact, while working on her next post, failed herself.

***

Love is a bunch of fucking bullshit. It is an excuse for people to get married and to have kids, and to later divorce—love is just an evolutionary adaption. The reason why we think we fall in love is because love encompasses feelings of lust and trust. For one thing, lust is necessary in order to initiate sex. And I’m pretty sure trust is required in order for a man to believe that the child his wife or girlfriend or “friend” is carrying, is actually his. There is no visual way for a man to know that his baby is his baby. He cannot watch his sperm smash into an egg, fertilize it, and grow into a fetus weeks later. No—he has to trust a woman enough to believe that she would only carry his baby—not his friend’s, his brother’s, or his father’s. And the only way for a man to know this for sure is if he trusts the woman who he is dating, seeing, loving, etc. Thus the reason for love—paternity assertion.

From a woman’s perspective, evolutionary speaking, love is no longer necessary. The things women fell in love with in the first place were not with a man, but with his goods and services. If a man could hunt, provide shelter, and safety for a woman, then these services consecrated love. A woman would love a man so much that she would be willing to carry his baby for nine months, in the hopes that he wasn’t fucking any of the other women from the village. But now—now that women can provide for themselves, get jobs, have thoughts, etc., what is the need for love?

Though we have already answered the question of love and its existence—why do people still believe in love and why do people think
that they are in love when in actuality they are stuck in a momentary time capsule of lust. People are afraid of being alone. I guess I am too. But what is this desire to not be alone and to be wanted by somebody else? What is this desire to be wanted? Where does it come from? Do all people want to be wanted? What does it even mean to want?

The world is a fucked up place. All we do is want everything and we don’t really need anything that we want—do we? We want a warm house, but do we really need a fireplace with a mantle? Why can’t we just build a fire in the backyard and sit around and roast marshmallows?

Jamie thought of her parents then, and how they claimed to be in love, and wondered if she had just proven it to be true.

Pictures:

1) Me and my boyfriend, Andy, at Hyde Park, London.

2) Edinborough, Scotland. I took a nine hour bus ride to Edinborough with my best friend from New York, who was visiting during her spring break. We had brunch at The Elephant House, the cafe where J.K. Rowling wrote the first *Harry Potter.*
I grew up on the Yorkshire coastline in the north-east of England, where I spent my days having the eccentric imaginative mind that children generally have. I was particularly into science-fiction. If, in films, there were no explosions or aliens, I didn’t want to watch them. (My favourite film of all time would be Independence Day). As I grew up, I began penning down everything story-wise that came to mind, and my idea of a decent story expanded beyond invasions.

I now go to Sheffield Hallam University, where I study Creative Writing. Focusing mainly on short stories, I also enjoy writing the occasional poem as well. Recently, I’ve primarily been influenced by the works of Margaret Atwood, Simon Armitage, Malorie Blackman and Gertrude Stein, yet I consider that every literary piece I enjoy has its own effect on me. Despite my influences, I prefer to read crime fiction from the likes of David Baldacci and Patricia Cornwell. While I still enjoy the occasional fictional apocalypse, where my own work is concerned, my fictional pieces tend to be light-hearted and comical, yet I’ve also found that writing domestic dramas can be just as fun. As far as poetry is concerned, I often try to understand human behaviour, and occasionally a good old romantic sonnet can be nice to write too.
Jacks
by Oliver Hadfield

3 a.m., Cherry City. At the dead of the night this city was beautiful. It wasn’t because it was the last city standing. It wasn’t because of its water fountains in the parks that didn’t spew out shit from the sewers. It was because when you have such little time on your hands, the city could make it last longer for you. The loneliness you felt after you watched the sun set seemed to just make everything slow down around you, and when you stepped outside, you could ignore the fact that every lamppost had been knocked over. The city, much like a dream, could let you reflect on your troubles. It could let you think without restriction. There’s no social etiquette when you’re on your own.

Turning into the Rubber Road, known for the many public carnal meets that took place there, Harriet took out her ID for the first time in months. The nineteen-year-old girl in the picture was now in her late thirties. She kept walking and found herself hopping over a brick wall and approaching a steel door. She banged on it five times. A slide in the door opened.

“Who the fuck is it?” a voice riddled with throat and lung cancer asked. Harriet held up her picture.

“Wilson!” said the voice, stifling a painful cough right after.

“Two secs, sweetheart.”

A few clicks here and there, and the door slowly opened. The screaming hinges were the first reminder as to why she didn’t enjoy coming here. She stepped inside, and was instantly punched in the face by the smell of liquor and body odour.

“How are you doing, Wilson?” Harriet realised she was talking to Pete, yet she wouldn’t have recognised his voice. Most of the people here had vocal defects for whatever reason anyway.

“It’s Harriet.” She said, and walked on past Pete into the basement. Pete followed her; his cotton slippers made his footsteps impossible to hear.

It was dark and foggy with smoke of all kinds in the basement. It was a small crowd tonight, only six others. One, an unconscious escort, was laying naked face-up on the floor, two needles hanging out of either arms. Two men were also naked, staring blankly opposite
each other in armchairs, lazily stroking the tip of their beers with their fingers. One of them threw up. The other didn’t even flinch. Neither did Harriet for that matter. The two most conscious people apart from Harriet and Pete were sat down with a deck of cards. The fatter one, as Harriet grittily registered him, reached out for a questionable beer bottle, looked at his hand, and laid it down.

“Gin,” he said. The other, whom Harriet hadn’t seen here before, grabbed his hair in frustration.

“You lucky fat fuck. Best of three, yeah?”

“You should know that deck has had only two jacks for eight months,” said Harriet. She’d noticed that he’d had the two in his hand.

“What’s your name?”

“Simon.”

“Well, Simon, I hope you haven’t got a wager on this. Everyone here knows not to play with the fat fuck. Speaking of which, Gary, how do you stay so fat?”

“Still haven’t forgiven me for winning your teddy, Wilson?”

“I’ve come to get it back,” said Harriet, biting her tongue. “And I’m leaving with it this time, the picture too.” Simon looked up at Harriet with a confused look on his face.

“What’s the picture?”

“It’s a picture of her daughter,” said Gary. “She died last year. Only fifteen bless her.” He sat back with a smirk, but steadily continued. “There’s a rip perfectly positioned on the bear’s arse, so last time she was here I stuck the pic—”

Harriet had thrown her knuckles into Gary’s nose so hard he fell back on his chair. Pete appeared in a flash to restrain her with much difficulty. Simon flinched in his chair yelling, “Shit!” The naked drunkards carried on staring.

“You fucking bitch!” was all Gary could muster. Harriet wriggled free of Pete’s grip and rushed upstairs in tears to throw up. The thought of what her old friend had done made her sick to her stomach.

Twenty minutes later she had come back wiping her eyes and nose with her wrists. She took a minute to compose herself and approached Gary. He was sat upright with his arms by his side and a face like a smacked arse. Pete had obviously had a word with him.

“I’m sorry, Harriet,” he said. Harriet made up her mind there and then; she wouldn’t forgive him, nor anyone else in here. She waved away the apology.

“My daughter’s dignity didn’t have to suffer because you can’t reach your own cock, you fucking cunt.” She had Gary’s full attention now. “And I’m not here to win them back.”
“Well, you know the score,” said Pete. “If you won’t play for it, you gotta have something to offer.”

Harriet saw that Simon’s seat was empty. The man himself was leaning silently against the wall, his head down, his hands playing with each other.

“Well wotcha got?” said Gary. After seeing what Harriet could do with her fist, he wasn’t going to irritate her further. Harriet reached into her pocket and pulled out a jack of clubs. Pete moved like lightning, pulling a pistol out of his own pocket and pointing it straight to Harriet’s temple.

“You fucking stole it.” His broken voice was somehow less intimidating than it could’ve been. Harriet stared him in the eye, her pulse silently racing.

“Prove it,” she said.

Pete tightened his grip on the pistol and stared menacingly at Harriet. She took no notice and looked back at Gary. Simon moved uncomfortably on the spot. Pete aimed a shot at him. It struck Simon in the kneecap, causing Simon to scream and fall to the ground. The two in the armchairs looked at all the commotion and began yelling at each other as to what was going on. They then stood silent and watched. This was entertainment for them. The escort still hadn’t moved. Pete, seeing that Harriet hadn’t seemed bothered about Simon, fired a shot into the escort’s head, and brought the pistol back to Harriet’s temple. Simon whimpered quietly on the floor.

“Don’t think I won’t do it to you, lady.”

Harriet chuckled at being called a lady and reinforced her offer. “This one for the picture.” She then dipped into her pocket again and pulled out a jack of hearts. “This one for the bear.”

Gary looked at Pete, waiting to see if he would pull the trigger. After a while he laughed, choking halfway through. Harriet had wanted to diagnose him with something terminal for awhile.

“Okay, deal. Bring the cards here.” He had a look on him that said he’d miss the bear. He pulled a rucksack from under his chair, and pulled out the bear and the picture. Harriet approached him and threw the jacks onto the table and grabbed her belongings. She tried to hide her disgust at the moist feel of the bear, but a small shudder and a few tears made that impossible. She looked at the small table of front of Gary; there was a lighter, and one solitary cigarette.

“Can I bum that?” she said.

“Christ, Harriet, what the fuck do you think this place is?” said Gary. Nonetheless, he gestured for her to take it. Harriet picked up the cigarette and lit it, and moved to leave the house. As she did, she blew smoke into Pete’s face, who spluttered viciously. She grabbed the
pistol out of his hand, pointed it straight at Gary, and fired two into his heart, and emptied the clip into his throat, screaming as she pulled the trigger.

The last noise Harriet heard before she closed the door, other than the screeching hinges, was Pete still trying to recover from the smoke. She walked back to the end of the Rubber Road, her long black skirt, her secretary heels and her old black trench coat almost completely silhouetting her against what little sunlight was shining.

“It’s beautiful out here, tonight,” she said. She took out the picture of little Sally Wilson and kissed it, then put it back in her pocket, and continued to walk on home. She took out the bear and began heavily crying as she frantically began scrubbing it with her sleeve.
Traveling to Sheffield was the first time I have ever been outside of the United States, and I had no idea what to expect. Of course, I had my British stereotypes: afternoon tea with crumpets and biscuits, using the “loo,” and Prince William with his charming accent. While I did get afternoon tea (along with breakfast tea, lunch tea, snack tea, after dinner tea, and bedtime tea), crumpets weren’t a culinary staple, and I didn’t get Prince William—or even people who remotely sounded like him. Instead, I got the full-blown North. I’m not going to even try to explain what a Yorkshire accent sounds like, expect to make the following analogy: Prince William’s accent is to a Northern’s as Morgan Freeman’s narration voice is to a native Yinzer’s. Get the picture?

Once I got past the initial shock—and the embarrassment of having to ask people to repeat themselves because I couldn’t understand their thick accents—I settled into my classes. Or my lack
thereof. Compared to my 48-hours per week workload at Carnegie Mellon, I only was in class four days a week at Sheffield Hallam, for two hours a day—maximum. With my newfound free time, I joined the Hallam basketball team. Playing for Hallam was very different from my experience on Carnegie Mellon’s varsity team. Hallam practiced twice a week and had one game a weekend, but the catch: “mandatory” nights out on the town, hitting up pubs and clubs. I enjoyed my time with the team, and at the end of the season, I was voted the First Team’s MVP and I attended my first ball!

With the rest of my free time, I went on trips with Sam [Frank]. Throughout the semester, we traveled to Liverpool, Manchester, London, Berlin, Paris, Nice, Barcelona, Montepellier, and Madrid. I also went to Dublin to visit my sorority sister, and back to London for my sorority’s Founder’s Day celebration. When I wasn’t traveling through Europe, I was with Sophie, a girl that Sam and I met in our first class at Hallam. Needless to say, we became best friends. She showed me the English way of life—taking me around town and cooking me traditional foods—and I told her of my strange American ways. If I could bring one thing back from England, it would be Sophie. And chocolate biscuits.

Being abroad for a semester really opened my eyes to new places, people, cultures, and philosophies. All of my experiences abroad really expanded my breadth as a writer. I feel more comfortable writing in different genres, as well as tackling different topics. England was a vehicle for my own self-reflection; it allowed me to figure out my priorities, delve into a new mindset, and I feel like I returned to America a new person and a new writer.

It was the trip of a lifetime, and even though it was definitely a rollercoaster ride, I wouldn’t trade it for anything.
The King Pigeon
by Lauren Hirata

There once was a time when pigeons were the richest, most beautiful birds in the world. Though times were tough, they lived in fabulous houses with walls made of the sturdiest bark and a roof thatched of the finest reeds. They lived amongst themselves, nestled in well-kept trees that lined park lanes. All the other birds marveled at their fortune, but never dared to cross a pigeon’s path. Pigeons—being rich and beautiful—were very vain and could be nasty.

The richest, most beautiful—and therefore the vainest and the nastiest—of the pigeons was the leader, King Albert. King Albert’s coat of feathers was intricately colored with dazzling hues of emerald, purple, and maroon, but King Albert was proudest of the cluster of feathers on his breast, that were black like iridescent oil in water. Every morning, Albert would delicately wash each individual feather
and then apply a smooth wax, so his beautiful coat wouldn’t ruffle or stain. He would then comb the feathers on the crown of his head, making sure not one of them was out of place.

Once King Albert was done tidying himself, he would look out of his front window, down onto the prim gravel path that circled his tree. This path was a favorite among park-goers because of the lovely daffodils and pale pink and white tree blossoms that lined it in the spring. There were also several wooden benches along this path, one placed directly beneath King Albert’s leafy tree. It was the most popular because it was at the park’s apex—you could see the whole span of the chase from there.

The location of this bench was beneficial for King Albert as well. You see, he was very lazy and entitled, and he didn’t like searching for food. Instead, King Albert would just fly to the patch of grass beside the bench, where scores of humans would be waiting to feed him. He would have his pick of food—from crusty bread to roasted seeds—but his favorites were bonbons.

On this particular morning, King Albert ascended from his high house rather late (he had taken extra time combing his feathers), and there were more birds around than usual. As King Albert landed on the low wrought iron fence near his tree, he scoffed at the sparrows that were begging the humans for food. Upon landing, King Albert was approached by several children who offered him grand portions of biscuits, muffins, nuts—but there were no bonbons. He turned his beak up and left the upset children behind. “Stupid humans, they think I’ll eat anything!” thought King Albert.

After King Albert strolled along the gravel path for what seemed like ages, a young girl approached him with a paper bag full of bonbons. “Finally,” King Albert thought, taking the whole bag from the surprised girl, “a decent meal.” With the large bag grasped between his perfectly manicured claws, King Albert started to return back to his house. Not long after he landed in his tree, a little robin landed beside him. “Please, sir, can you spare some of your bonbons?” asked the hungry robin. Disgusted, King Albert replied, “Get out of my tree, you filthy beggar!”

King Albert strutted into his house and slammed the door behind him. “The nerve!” King Albert tutted as he opened the bag of bonbons. “These are nice,” he said as he proceeded to eat every bonbon in the bag. After an hour, King Albert lay on his back with his stomach full of bonbons and the paper bag empty. “A short nap won’t hurt,” King Albert thought, as he slipped into a food-induced slumber.

He awoke with a start as the sun peeked through his window and across his face. It was the next morning and King Albert was
still lying on the floor. King Albert slowly pulled himself up. “Ugh, bonbons are delicious, but not so nice in the morning,” he thought, as he splashed some water in his face. As King Albert began to wash his feathers, he noticed they seemed loose. He stopped, examined himself in the mirror, and gave a soft tug on an emerald feather. It pulled out easily. Astonished, he tugged on another feather—and another—and each one came out easier than the next. Soon, hundreds of beautiful feathers lined the floor, and King Albert stood half naked in front of the mirror. “What’s happened to me?” he gasped, staring at his unrecognizable reflection.

King Albert didn’t leave his house for almost a month, and didn’t dare to look into the mirror either, for he was afraid of what he would see. Having not seen their king in weeks, many curious visitors came to his tree each day to try to catch a glimpse of him. By the end of his third week of solitude, a large crowd of birds—pigeons, sparrows, robins—had gathered outside of King Albert’s tree.

Finally, King Albert couldn’t last any longer—he was too hungry. Hesitantly, he approached his front door, silently hoping that the past few weeks had just been a dream and that he still had his beautiful feathers. King Albert squeezed his eyes shut as he stepped out into the warm sunshine, but was startled when a collective gasp erupted from beneath him. He opened his eyes to see hundreds of birds below him, all clearly appalled with the sight in front of them. “What do you think you’re looking at?” King Albert hissed at them, but the birds still stared. Even the humans on the pathway stopped and became quiet. “Mummy, what’s that thing?” whispered a young girl, pointing up at King Albert. “I’m not sure darling, but let’s keep walking,” her mother replied as she grabbed the girl’s hand and lead her away.

King Albert flapped his wings in aggravation, but then a glimpse of grey caught his eye. Slowly, King Albert lifted his wing in front of his face and let out a gasp. His wing was covered in thin, sickly grey feathers that seemed dull and lifeless. He looked down on the pigeons that surrounded his tree; King Albert was monotone against a canvas of brilliant hues.

Desperate to assert control over the crowd, King Albert decided to let out a large squawk, but all that came out of his beak was a low, “Coo.” The mass of birds—having never heard such a terrible call—started to laugh. Clearing his throat, King Albert tried again, this time trying to formulate a sentence. “I, King Albert, of the—coo—pigeons declare silence!” Slowly, the crowd settled. King Albert thought quickly. “The Pigeons are taking a step forward! No longer will we be distinguished for what others call vanity and beauty, but for—coo—charity and humility!” Below him, a hesitant murmur rippled
through the crowd. “Coo—excuse me—I urge all of my pigeons to do what I have done: to pluck your beautiful feathers and to give them to the less fortunate. Those who oppose will be deemed too selfish to live within our community!”

Ready to retreat from the disapproving stares and buzz from below, King Albert pushed out his chest and retreated back into his house. As soon he closed his front door behind him, he collapsed in desperation.

King Albert desperately yanked on dull feathers that covered his body, hoping they were hiding beautiful ones beneath. The dull feathers held fast, and King Albert let out a sob. “Those cursed bonbons!” he wailed, “If I can’t be beautiful, no pigeon will be beautiful ever again!”

Pictures:

1) Me with some of the basketball girls before the Sports Ball, a big gala celebrating Hallam’s athletic achievements of the year.

2) Sophie, Me, Rhian (Sam’s good friend), and Sam went to a pub with Hallam’s American football team to watch the Steelers play in the Super Bowl.

3) Hallam Basketball—I’m number 15!
It’s now been four months since I came back from Pittsburgh and already my memories of Carnegie Mellon, Pittsburgh and everything I did there, seem distant. It’s only now as I draw upon them to write this, that they come back to me fresh, bright and full. The smell of coffee, the taste of my new found love, peanut butter and the feel of trudging through snow, and my lips twisting into a grimace each time a slop of it slipped into my boot.

Carnegie Mellon University, the name was introduced to me, with a warning: “Be prepared for a heavy and intense workload,” and I remember thinking on the long flight over, as I stared down at my mismatched winter socks: “What if I can’t keep up?” and with this question I wondered whether or not I had made a terrible mistake. I hadn’t—in fact I can say without a shadow of doubt that I had made the best decision I have made in my life so far. CMU worked me to the bone, and by doing so it made me realise my own potential and capabilities, which much to my surprise surpassed anything I had ever given myself credit for.
The exchange also gave me the opportunity to travel and I have now seen and experienced things I hope I never forget. I visited New York, Niagara Falls, Miami, Washington, D.C and Philadelphia and I am hardly content at just that. It gave me just a taste of what makes up America and I want to see it all.

Thinking back to the exchange makes me happy but also sad. I miss sighing each morning as I woke up to yet more snow, and walking around campus. I miss my classes, the talks, the readings and the passionate debates. Most of all I miss all the friends I made, all the things we did together, and how much they helped me and richer they made my experience at CMU.

So how have I changed since I participated in the exchange? Well, I am a stronger person and my writing has grown stronger along with me. My time at CMU gave me the confidence I needed in myself to realise I can achieve anything I want as long as I work hard enough. I also know now that I can happily get along with under 10 hours sleep over 4 days and an ample supply of coffee. I now really like peanut butter and bagels. And most importantly of all, I have some new, wonderful friends, not just from America but all over the world, which I have and will see again.
They Ran Because They Could
by Shannon Roberts

They ran because they could. Because that’s what you are supposed to do when you are ten years old and you are still free. The two children ran along the dirt path, jumping over the nettles and brambles that grew in their way and snatched at their ankles. They ran across the field and laughed at the cows that were huddled together dosing at the other end. That lifted their heads and Mooooooed! together in indignation as the children’s skipping feet flattened the long delicious grass they had yet to chew on.

They never raced; there was no need, they were equal in all things. In speed, in the length of their legs, in the reach of their stride. They held hands, fingers knotted tight like they had never separated, like they had grown together that way. They ran faster because they noticed how the clouds were bloated and pregnant above them. Fit to burst at any minute. They ran into the woods, under the tall trees that would shelter them from the impending storm. The wood took them in under its roof and stood silent as it looked up and waited for the storm to break.

Their first steps under the trees were different. The air was hot and damp and the ground beneath their feet soggy and swollen. They slowed until they were only padding softly along, their eyes drawn upwards, ears pricked.

The first crack of thunder announced the beginning of the storm, and the rain came down like the drop of a curtain. The light dimmed and the woods filled with the rhythm of raindrops smacking and splattering on the protective canopy above. Lightning flashed pink and yellow. The cries of a blackbird high above them screamed for its mate to return home. The scrambling of mice running to their burrows rustled the undergrowth. The children picked blackberries that wouldn’t ripen for many more weeks, chewing on their thick skin.

They reached the den they had made together earlier that summer and crawled inside. It was made of lengths of stripped branches that they had plaited together and then covered with mud
and grass and leaves to keep the rain out. They had dug into the ground too to make a hollow below the walls so the inside of the den was almost tall enough for them to stand up in. The air was thick and warm inside, but dry. They lit stolen candles with a stolen lighter, passing it to one another. Haloes of light rippled and flickered.

Do you think he might come again tonight?” he whispered, so close to her she could smell the sour tang of blackberries on his breath.

“Maybe. He might stay home tonight though, because of the storm,” she replied. She shifted away, finally unknotting her fingers from his. Apart they looked thin and unfinished. She reached up and gently pulled some branches out of the wall, making a peephole, and applied her eye to the gap. She looked out, completely still for a few minutes, then turned to him.

“I don’t see anything,” she said and drew back so he could look for himself. Nothing moved outside. Only the wind stirred the dense bushes of fat circular leaves that they had built their hollow in the middle of.

Then something shifted as a blast of thunder shuddered through the sky. His breath caught as he saw the first flickers of red amongst the leaves. She clutched onto his back and held her breath too, squinting over his shoulder as she saw the black twitching nose and sharp golden eyes steal from behind the leaves, then just as quickly slip from view.

A light growl made them turn. The fox stood in the entrance to their den, its back arched and fur bristling. It sniffed at the air, glaring at them with wary intelligent eyes.

It’s okay,” she whispered, but did not move. It twisted away at the sound of her voice and he watched through the peephole as it disappeared into the bushes from which it had come.

“He’s getting really brave, isn’t he?” he said. “Last time he wouldn’t even come out of the bushes.”

“I scared him away. I shouldn’t have spoken to him,” she replied.

“Nah, it was the candles that must have done it. He must have been scared of the light,” he said. “Do you want to blow them out and see if he comes back?”

She shrugged, unconvinced, and lay down on the dirty sheet they had lined the floor with, curling up her legs so her feet wouldn’t stick outside of the door. He blew out each candle and lay down facing her. They each reached out and twisted their fingers together again without realising it.

The rain beat down harder. The wind grew stronger. The walls
creaked and groaned as their strength was tested. Outside, the light was fading fast. The storm clouds thickened, forcing the evening to pass quickly into night. The children lay and watched the light fade. Finally the girl stirred.

“Mum said I had to be home before the streetlamps came on,” she said. “We should go.”
He nodded in agreement, breathing a quiet sigh.
“Let’s wait a few more minutes and see if the rain gets better, then we’ll go.”
She nodded in reply. Both children were unwilling to venture forth from their warm and comfortable shelter, even as the dark outside deepened.

Something wet brushed against their bare dirty toes. Something cold tapped against their knees. The children looked down and the fox, its large gold eyes glimmering in the dull light, looked back at them. It was walking cautiously up through the small space between their bodies.

“Don’t move,” he whispered. “He might get scared again.”

It took them a moment to see the other three sets of flickering gold eyes approaching slowly in the dark. The three other foxes slipped past the father fox, for that was who he must be, shivering and soaked with rain, bringing with them the scent that only wild things have.

“He has a family!” she whispered. The two cubs, less cautious than their parents, took no notice of the children and curled up together in the middle of them. The mother, after one long look at the father fox, followed suit, stretching herself protectively around them. The father remained sat upright, staring suspiciously up at the children.

“Why did they come in here?” he wondered aloud.
Above them lightning flashed, illuminating them in a white glow. A few seconds later, thunder rumbled above them. The cubs flinched, their mother tightening her body around them in comfort. Father fox let out a snarl.

“Maybe something happened to their den,” she said.
“Or they were in the forest and were too scared by the storm to get home,” he said. “Something like that.” She lifted her hand and the father fox went rigid, a quiet growl humming up from his chest.

“It’s okay,” she said once more, and gently laid her hand along his back. He looked for a moment as if he was going to bite her but then relaxed as she stroked her fingers through his damp coarse coat. She drew her hand away and the father fox crept forward and finally lay down with his family, his back pressing against her stomach.
The storm continued on, but now the foxes did not stir at the sounds. The woods outside were black.

“I smell like them,” she whispered, and pressed her wrist below his nose. “Smell.” He sniffed and smiled and sniffed at himself.

“Me too,” he replied. “Maybe we always smelled like them, that’s why they came in here with us.” They lay in complete darkness now, only the flashes of lightning giving them fleeting glimpses of each other’s silhouettes.

“We need to go home. My mum and dad are going to be worried and yours will be too,” she said, her voice tinged with regret.

“It’s so dark, we might get lost in the woods,” he replied. “And anyway we can’t leave them now.”

“I don’t like the dark,” she whispered.

He sat up slowly, taking care not to disturb the sleeping foxes. His hands patted the ground lightly seeking out a candle. She pulled the lighter from her pocket and held it out to him.

“Here.”

His fingers found her wrist and slipped up to gently take it from her grasp.

He sat, his thumb ready to flick, but hesitated.

“Do you think they will run away?” he asked her.

She gently laid her hand down on top of the entwined bodies of the foxes. She felt the smallest of twitches.

“I think they trust us now,” she replied. He flicked the lighter and lit the candle. Four sets of tired, curious eyes looked at the tiny open flame. The children tensed, waiting to see if the foxes would run away. Then, one by one, they settled back down to sleep, the father fox last of all. He left the lighter next to the candle and lay back down and together they pushed their fingers through each of the fox’s coarse fur in turn, fur that was now warm and dry. A welcoming rumble vibrated through their bodies at the children’s touch, not unlike a cat’s purr.

Some time later, the mother, small and sinewy, stood and slunk out into the rain that still pattered down persistently. Even though as they now realised, the storm had finally passed. Little time had gone by before she returned carrying a dead mouse in her jaws, one of its paws still lightly twitching. The cubs let out shrill high barks and they fed on the mouse together as a family, until only the tail and a few bones remained. The children as they watched the foxes eat, felt the hollowness of their own empty bellies and he reached up and pulled a box of cookies they had stored amongst the branches that formed the roof, down. They shared them, finishing the entire box. The foxes watched them eat, licking the meat and blood from their
muzzles.

“It’s time to go to sleep.” she said with a yawn, and each of them settled more comfortably around each other. The children entwined their fingers and the foxes entwined their bodies and each of them closed their eyes. Outside the rain eventually stopped and even the wind eased. They curled together like wild things, and each of them dreamed of running through undergrowth, catching mice and staring up at the world through sharp golden eyes.

When the children woke, the foxes were gone. Only the corpse of the mouse was left behind. They crawled from their den and out into the chill damp air of early morning, the light around them pale and unfixed as it waited for the sun to finish its rise. They walked from the sleeping forest in silence, holding hands so tight it was as if they had never let go and never would. Then as they left the border of the trees, they set themselves running across the field, now empty of the cows from the evening before. They ran down the dirt road but did not mind, this time, the snatching brambles and nettles. They ran towards the sounds of their names being called ahead of them.

They ran because they could. They ran because that’s what wild things do.

Pictures:

1) Miami, Bike Ride. Me, Irene and Pauline, celebrating our success after reaching Biscayne Bay on our long bike ride from South Beach in Miami, Florida.

2) Washington D.C., U.S Capitol Building. It was after taking this picture that I fully came to grips with where I was and how lucky I was to be there.
Carolyn Supinka
Carnegie Mellon University

Carolyn Supinka is studying Creative Writing and Art at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her poetry has been published in *Fjords Arts and Literary Review, The Oakland Review*, and *The Naugautuck River Review*, and she has designed a clothing line for the Lunar Gala Fashion Show 2011.

Her artwork is primarily text based, and spans a broad range of 2D mediums such as printmaking, photography, ink drawing, oil painting and watercolors. She works to combine visual art with text in order to create a new, unique narrative. She is incredibly excited to travel to Sheffield.
Little Cures
by Carolyn Supinka

Disease becomes this family
like an inheritance.
Nobody truly belongs-
my brother was not my brother-
until he found his body
was broken, in some small way.
Until a cure was needed
and yearned for, until we commiserated
together, his healthful blood
was not our own.

To forget her husband, my grandmother swallowed eggs.
My brother and I pressed our ears
to her nightdress to listen
for the fall
a crack, the sound
of doctoral wings beating
carrying
a memory away.

When I was five, she taught me
to point two fingers
and shoot down the evil eye.
I practiced on robins and taxi drivers, loving
the silence of each bullet, pure thought.
The white veil of hospital beds
and plane crash dreams were foiled
by my own hands, each day under my desk
twisted like a sign language G, like baby Jesus
in my mother’s painting, hushing the world
with an empty palm.

We love little cures. We lay white cloth
in the backyard to catch moonlight
and cover our faces.
In the morning, look—we have grown old overnight, we can forget any face we want.

We rub oil on our aches, eat breadcrumbs so we won’t starve when we’re ancient. My grandmother sleeps on cut roses and blessed coins taken from Egypt’s earth. When she touched my finger to a bruise, I smelled silver and crushed petals. “All good medicine leaves a mark.”
My name is Charlotte Carrick and I am studying Creative Writing at Sheffield Hallam University. I’ve always loved English, reading and writing. This year I hope to improve my knowledge and ability as a writer by attending Carnegie Mellon University. I look forward to experiencing a different culture and meeting new people to inspire my thoughts, actions and writing.
The Sad Existence
by Charlotte Carrick

“A Sadroid is someone who suffers from the disease Sadness, a rare hereditary disease, allowing a person to only have one emotion. Sadness, therefore, dictates one’s life and is a refractory disease resisting treatment. It is ultimately incurable.”

The professor giving the lecture made me feel sad. Her bland outfit looked masculine, the creases on her face forced her to appear old and worn out; however, the worst thing was her left hand. There was no sign of marriage, no sign of ever being in love, she put work first and herself last. I could feel it, no matter how much she loved her work she was sad that she had no one with whom to share it. It was locked up in the back of her mind but I could sense it.

“Victims of this terrible disease feel constantly down as they can also sense other people’s hardships, therefore carrying other negative feelings of sorrow as well as their own. Indeed it is hypothesized that they can sometimes locate the very source of another person’s sadness.”

The professor presented herself well, holding a sense of sophistication which emphasised her professional status. Nevertheless, she hid a hopeful glance, a flicker of the eye that allowed her to stare into the audience. Would a loved one be there to support her? Would she at least recognize anyone? I knew the truth; she had no loved ones, none in the sense of friends and neither in the form of biological family. It was just her.

“How did this disease come about?” asked a man from the audience wearing a monocle.

“Well, sir, we live in the year 2050; the human race has inhabited earth for millions of years. We as a species are very emotional due to our sophisticated brains but the brain is easily influenced by life experience. What seems to be evident now is that these negative influences evoke the feeling of sadness and can be passed on genetically to one’s child. If someone has experienced little happiness in their lifetime this could possibly affect generations to come.”

“Isn’t that just depression?” demanded the same man, shuffling papers held loosely in his hands.

“In the past we diagnosed people with depression, a state that
doctors claimed you could be lifted out of. This was not accurate; people are affected by past events. Somewhere down the line a person who suffers from sadness had a relative whose mind was dominated by sad thoughts, leaving no room for any other feeling. People most prone to this disease are of those who had relatives, for example fighting in wars, victims of war, people who lost their loved ones, etc. The list could go on forever; such relatives blatantly suffered an imbalance of emotion experiencing a high amount of sadness and have passed this down upon generations. This disease is genetic; however, there is also no reason why people of today, who aren’t Sadroids, may trigger this disease if lived or are living through events that may affect the amount of sadness they feel. The disease could, therefore, potentially be diagnosed in anyone.”

My head had been pounding for a whole five hours but since I had arrived at the conference the headache had worsened. My mouth began to drop from a horizontal line to an upward arch, with my eyes becoming moist and wet. The professor’s talk reminded me that I was a lost cause. A single tear ran silently down my face, the symbol of relief, yet the tears did not cascade down my defined cheek bone as I had longed for. A single salty tear, a sign of letting my sadness out, an overload had caused seepage from the corner of my eye. The last time I cried was three years ago when my father passed away. I still felt sad but the tear on my cheek felt warm; it was a rare event. The warmth is how I imagine happiness to feel.

The professor took a few steps to the right, answering another question as she dictated what should be done.

“Exactly what is not to say that the entire human race will be affected one day by the disease, if we do not balance our emotions and ensure people have a high quality of life? If what we do presently affects how our future generations feel, we have to act now to prevent the human race from becoming Sadroids. This is why we try to encourage society in balancing emotion. Those that seem to feel sad often, but have no previous diagnosis of the disease, are helped in trying to stabilize their emotions. If a family has no past history of the disease, then the youngest generation are prioritized by making their quality of life full of joyful and happy experiences. In schools they’re trying to introduce half the week committed to learning and the other half to play. Holidays are being encouraged, and it is becoming compulsory in countries to celebrate every birthday of the youngest generation of your family. Overall, we must support these methods and not forget that this disease is serious. It will always affect the human race; we just have to find a way of confining it. The disease has reached some but that doesn’t mean it has to reach us all.”
It was sad how much this professor knew about my disease. The amount of time sacrificed in her life just to research this topic made my mouth feel moist, as if I was going to be sick. I had to swallow constantly due to the excess saliva, which made me feel uncomfortable and nervous. Everything she said was true; I am a Sadroid, the name they give to those suffering from “Sadness.” The weird thing is I’m not dying from my disease. My doctor says it’s possible for a person to be diseased without being ill, as it is also possible to be ill without being diseased. Sadness is a state of mind that I cannot change; I have one emotion and that is to feel sad.

“The disease doesn’t seem too harmful,” suggested a woman in the audience, as she placed her glasses on the edge of her nose and looked up at the professor.

“Some sit in bed for days, others obtain unbearable headaches that everyday people do not experience. Sometimes patients struggle with an overload of ‘sad thoughts,’ which makes it hard to sleep and escape through dreaming. They often feel lethargic and can refuse to follow structure to a day. Frown lines are visible on lips as their mouths won’t stretch upwards. Therefore, the worst physical evidence of the disease is that patients cannot smile. Sometimes eating is a problem with patients as their salivary glands release a viscous fluid into the mouth, constantly causing them to feel sick and anxious.”

The professor gave the woman who had just spoken a look of disapproval.

“There has also been no evidence as yet to suggest other emotions are solely present in the brain. The only emotion to do this is sadness. In conclusion I must highlight the importance of realising that normal people experience a diluted version of what Sadroids do. So next time you think you feel sad, try and contemplate those who suffer from this disease and ask yourself is your sadness real? Or is it just a brief disengagement from happiness? With Sadroids there is no happiness. Thank you.”

“Ally, there you are. Come with me and meet Professor McClean.”

My psychiatrist, Sandra, a skinny uptight woman too anal for her own good clutched my wrist and dragged me towards the stage. Sandra of all people, whenever we met, made me feel sadder than I had already been feeling and today was no exception.

“Sandra, I can’t, I’m going to be…”

I quickly pulled my hand up and clasped it over my mouth like a muzzle. I was not going to bite Sandra; I was going to be sick.

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Sandra and Professor McClean waited for me outside the toilets. As soon as I saw Sandra I thought I was going to hurl again. Normally it’s not this ruthless; the woman makes me feel extremely sad but generally I can refrain from spewing. I had been in the ladies for over an hour now and as I came out I tried not to make eye contact with either of them. When I emerged I felt the two women looking at me with pity, raising their eyebrows, pursing their lips and widening their eyes.

“Oh, Ally. Sit down here, are you sure you’re going to be alright?” droned Sandra in a fake maternal way. I nodded and sat down on a chair, the two of them remained standing. Sandra spoke again.

“This is Professor McClean; I think I’ve mentioned her before. Well, she’s very excited to meet you Ally.”

Professor McClean stuck out her hand, her left hand. I had to look away as I shook it.

“Hi, Ally. I am indeed very pleased to meet you finally.”

There was an awkward silence, one that made me sad that humans could not communicate how we truly felt or what we really wanted. For all I knew these two could pretend by acting out their emotions. I was stuck with one. I couldn’t pretend, I wouldn’t know how to. Really what Professor McClean required was to use me as research; she wanted to ask me some questions but didn’t know how to bring up the idea. I was living proof of the disease she had committed to researching and now I stood before her. Finally I piped up; the silence was making me nauseous.

“Let me guess, you want to know how it feels...metaphorically speaking of course?”

Professor McClean blushed a shade of chalk pink, the type of colour you use to paint the walls. She looked down at the floor; her right foot rubbed her left awkwardly, as if the two of them were discussing what to say next. She then raised her head and met my gaze. I didn’t like it when people looked directly at me.

“That would be a good start Ally, if you don’t mind talking about it of course?”

I ran my fingers through my lifeless hair letting my head bow for a second. Lifting my head up I spoke.

“What does it feel like?” I laughed at the naivety of the question.

“Well, if you could possibly imagine...which you can’t, might I add.”

“Ally,” interrupted Sandra, sternly but I carried on regardless.

“It’s that sinking feeling you get when you lose something precious. A heavy weight upon your limbs, a force compressing your
mind and it’s exhausting. Your eyebrows feel like they’re balancing tiny weights above them. It’s a loss of control, optimism replaced with pessimism, a burden, a useless emotion, to be indifferent and to have no opinion. It’s no way to exist.”

“Yes, but Ally we find ways to channel our emotion, don’t we?” Sandra added, so as not to make me sound suicidal. I took my gaze away from Professor McClean by observing a bird outside, dipping and diving, cutting the wind with its streamlined physique. How I longed to be free like that. I used to dream of flying and when I did I couldn’t remember if I’d felt sad or not. That was enough for me, the closest I got to not feeling sad; but I don’t dream anymore and I don’t know why.

“You say your only emotion is sadness Ally, do you think it’s possible you could experience happiness but you automatically dismiss it?” asked Professor McClean, blinking softly as a fake smile sprung across her face.

I was oblivious to why she was asking me such hypothetical questions. She’d just talked for a whole three hours on the complexity of my disease; she knew how it worked.

“I don’t know what happiness is, my brain could discard the feeling before I am conscious of it; but I know for definite that I’ve never experienced happiness because inside I feel the same, day in day out.”

“You don’t feel anything different, ever? Not even for a split second?”

Her doubts were making me sad; I was beginning to feel tired. Hoisting my legs up on to the chair, I began to curl up into the fetal position.

“It’s one emotion. Just one.”

“You must have felt something else?” pressured the professor.

“No I feel sad, that’s it. That’s not to say there aren’t different scales of the emotion. I know this because sadness is creeping further and deeper inside me. No matter how much I want to let go I cannot part with the disease.”

“Maybe you can, maybe it’s not physical.”

Professor McClean bent down in front of me, the tip of her nose just a few centimetres away.

“Look, don’t you feel angry now? I’m persistently asking you about your disease, slightly doubting you. Don’t you feel something different, other than sadness?”

The professor was insistent, trying to provoke a reaction out of me. Professor McClean was an expert on my disease; she already knew the answers to the questions she’d asked. I raised my head and
shuffled forward so that the tips of our noses were nearly touching.
   “When did you lose her?”
   “Pardon?”
   “Your adopted daughter, when did you lose her?”
   Professor McClean stood up. A topic chosen, one that would open a whole mixture of emotion but most of all it would make her feel sad. I knew I shouldn’t have said anything for my own sake but she left me no choice.
   “Ally, that’s enough,” urged Sandra, worryingly observing Professor McClean.
   “It’s fine Sandra.”
   Professor McClean pulled up a chair and placed it in front of me. She sat down.
   “I know what you’re doing, Ally; Sadroid defence, trying to make me feel sad, right?”
   “It doesn’t matter if you feel sad, does it? You have no children and if one day you acquire the disease, it dies with you.”
   Professor McClean was putting on a front but I could see that her eyes were wide, struggling to hold back the tears. My eyes were on the verge of watering too. If I was going to make her sad I had to commit.
   “How could you do it? Burying your own daughter?”
   I started to cry, tears ran down my face slowly like wax on a candle. I was melting inside.
   “Why can’t I be dead? Why did they have to take her? I bet that’s what you thought. Leukaemia wasn’t it?”
   “Listen Ally, stop it,” uttered professor McClean, in a stern voice. Her smile had dropped from sympathetic to sheer sadness. I stood up and leaned over so we were face to face again, placing my hands down on the sides of her chair. I leant in close and whimpered.
   “Do you know what they did with my daughter? They took her from me.”
   On that note Sandra ushered me out of the room.
My name is Kayleigh Gibson. I’m in my second year at SHU studying Creative Writing and am really looking forward to the exchange with CMU in the second semester! (Although the cold weather will be an interesting experience to start off with).

I’m excited to experience a different learning environment as well as hopefully discovering the Greek system and activities. Mostly, I can’t wait for life in a huge, different city where the views and events I’m exposed to will influence my writing and develop my awareness of other lifestyles. I’m keen to further enrich this by travelling to New York in spring break and then head over to the west coast once the academic year is over to visit Vegas, the Grand Canyon and L.A.

Me and two friends also went on holiday to Orlando and Miami last June which has got me very excited to return to the US now I’ve had a taste of it. The food is another aspect of the culture that I’m looking forward to!’
Living “Happily Ever After”
by Kayleigh Gibson

I have always been my Daddy’s princess, denied nothing, wanted nothing, money never scarce. I always did have the best toys, clothes, shoes, cars. Life’s just one huge party, a hedonistic fairytale, a quest for fun without responsibility. Consume harder, faster; can’t be depressed or feel hollow with your senses hazy...

By morning light our legal team’s arrived with bail and my system’s free from cocaine, the booze and nicotine. I have survived another overdose, dodged jail again. Daddy’s gone. His credit card’s hushed my crime. When will he give not just money, but time?
My name’s Eleanor Sarson, but I prefer to be called Elly. I have always had a wild imagination, from creating nonsensical song lyrics when I was three, to trying to write my first feature length script at ten. I noticed in my first year of college (junior year of high school) that my imagination had gone into overdrive. Every spare second of my day I was creating stories; most of them were fan fictions just to keep my imagination in shape. After that, taking Creative Writing at University was the certain option. I have been to America before on family holidays and on school trips, both of which were sensational experiences. I am eager to learn in a different environment and to experience creative writing with new people.
Riverside Nursery Rhyme
by Elly Sarson

In the day of the night when the dark was cold
The river dew did sing
To the full beauty of the moon
A serenaded fling

To which the lilies did unfold
To watch the starry sky
The hummingbird outstretched his wings
To swoop, to soar, to fly

In the day of the night when the wind did blow
to urge the willow tree
to tickle the icy river below
Who spluttered a desperate plea

Dear creatures from far and wide
Came here to sing and dance
A band of cats did entertain
It’s Sundown’s Second Chance

The bumblebees on bended knees
Do bow down to their queen
With sore and battered paper wings
But never a penny seen

The swan left her grey baby boy
In mother duck’s good care
Teased and bullied by teen ducklings
No kindness did they share

In the day of the night when the moon did fall
The swan had drunk her fill
She went down to pay mother duck
Who said “put it on the bill”
Jordan Stephenson
Carnegie Mellon University

Jordan Stephenson is a Professional Writing and Creative Writing double major at Carnegie Mellon University. She has a great interest in creative nonfiction and also in children’s literature, and most of her favorite books are still children’s classics, such as *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Secret Garden*. However, she also reads adult books, and her favorites at the moment are *Unaccustomed Earth* by Jhumpa Lahiri and *Memory Wall* by Anthony Doerr. She is impressed by the way Lahiri and Doerr write about culture and race, and hopes that one day she will be able to write fictional stories about culture and race with as much insight and depth. She is interested in African-American literature and culture, and recently won an MLK Writing Award for her essay, “On Being Black.”

She is excited about furthering her education at Sheffield Hallam University this spring, and excited and nervous about leaving the U.S. for the first time. However, she is sure the experience will be brilliant (she is trying to cut back on using “awesome” before she gets to England).
Grandma’s Gumbo
by Jordan Stephenson

The day my dad called me to let me know that my grandma had died, I had this overwhelming desire—a need, really—for a bowl of gumbo. A bowl of gumbo so spicy that I wouldn’t know if my eyes were watering because of it or if I was crying because my grandma was gone. But there is nowhere in Pittsburgh to get an authentic bowl of gumbo, so I just cried and was sure of the reason.

When I first learned about grandma’s Alzheimer’s, I was confused. Why was this happening to a woman as amazing as my grandmother? Would she remember us? Would she remember how to make gumbo?

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Grandma hums as she stirs the pot of gumbo on the stove. On the counter, chopped okra, onions, and celery wait to be dropped into the steaming, spicy soup.

She sees me peering into the kitchen and asks me to help her peel the shrimp. Smiling at the opportunity to help, I pull a stool up to the counter and step on it so that I can reach the shrimp she is pouring into a red bowl. While we’re peeling the shrimp, grandma stops humming the familiar grandma-tune and tells me about her childhood in Louisiana and how gumbo was always her favorite meal. She pauses to taste the bubbling liquid (it always amazed me how she could stand tasting piping hot food—my tongue burned painfully when I drank hot chocolate). She puts the spoon down and smiles at me.

“That’s so spicy it will clear your sinuses right up.”

I smiled back at her wondering what sinuses meant, but not really caring because I was with Grandma learning about Louisiana and getting ready to eat gumbo.

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If grandma with Alzheimer’s tasted gumbo, would she remember this? Would she remember her childhood in Louisiana? Would she even remember that gumbo was her favorite meal? I really hoped so. So many of my memories of grandma have to do with eating and preparing food, that I irrationally hoped that if she ate the food associated with the memory, she would remember and the
memories would be shared again. I learned that Alzheimer’s isn’t that generous.

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“Okay, now spread the peanut butter on the first slice of bread,” Grandma instructs as she demonstrates, clutching the butter knife in her wrinkled, much-used hands.

“Like this?” I ask as a spread a huge dollop of peanut butter on my bread. Five-year-old me was so excited to be making her own lunch for the first time.

“Oh shucks,” Grandma chuckles as she looked at my peanut butter mountain, “I don’t think you would be able to swallow that!” She slaps me on the butt playfully in her usual way, and demonstrates how to spread the peanut butter super thin. After that, she shows me the perfect amount of jelly to put on the other slice of bread—enough that you can taste it but not so much that it makes the bread soggy. Till this day, I make my PB & J sandwich to her specific instructions.

“Grandma,” I begin as I put my sandwich into a sandwich bag, “what do I do when somebody mean hits me?” I was having a problem with a bully in my pre-school class.

“You hit them back!” Grandma exclaims as she cuts up a shiny, green Granny Smith apple into slices for me and douses them with lemon juice.

My mom walks into the kitchen as Grandma is imparting her wisdom, and laughs while shaking her head. “No, no, no, Mom; we don’t hit back,” she says. “Jordan, be the bigger person and just ignore them.”

“Be the bigger person? She’s five! How big can she really be?” Grandma asks. They will keep slapping her around if she doesn’t stand up for herself. “Jordan, hit him back. Hit him hard.” She slaps me on the butt again for emphasis, and I give her a hug before I grab my lunchbox and my mom’s hand and leave for school.

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I wish I could have fed grandma gumbo and a peanut butter sandwich before she died so that she would have remembered with me. So that she would have remembered me. I wish I could have fed her cobbler and brought back all her memories of baking cobblers for sweet treats on special days—of my sisters and I stealing the blackberries from her bowl as she half-heartedly yelled at us. I even wish I could have fed her a spicy hot dish to trigger her memory of how I always refused to eat it when she made it for me. Even a
slightly negative memory would have been welcome as long as she remembered it and remembered me. At the end when it got really bad, when Alzheimer’s had stripped her of all her memories and all her dignity, she was fed through a tube. I found myself imagining a tube pumping gumbo into her, and the thought made me smile—gumbo as a fuel that would revive her memory and strengthen her body. But no, a couple of weeks after she stopped eating and they were forced to hook her up to the feeding tube, she died.

I didn’t think I would be that sad when my grandma died, since my family has been mourning the loss of her memory for about five years now. Considering that she completely forgot who we are a couple of years ago, and we haven’t visited her in Seattle since spring break of my senior year in high school, we have really missed her phone calls and her visits and her. But it’s been a long time since I talked to my grandma before the Alzheimer’s—the one who remembered me and shared our memories. So I’ve been missing her for a while now, and I didn’t think her death would be that sad because I knew she would be happier once she was out of this “life” and free from her misery. But I learned that you can’t prepare for or rationalize death. I was completely heartbroken. All I wanted was to be back in the kitchen, listening to grandma hum, taking for granted her complete memory, and feeling the excited anticipation bubbling in my stomach at the thought of eating a bowl of spicy gumbo, or any other amazing meal cooked by her.

It’s difficult, because I wish I could have seen her and told her I loved her before she died. Everyone keeps trying to console me by telling me that she did know. But no, she did not know that I loved her. Alzheimer’s took care of that. But every time I eat a bowl of gumbo, a peanut butter sandwich, or a piece of cobbler, I will be reminded of how much she loved me.

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“Grandma, why was gumbo your favorite meal when you were little?” My whole family was sitting at the table—my parents, my four sisters, and my grandma—eating the gumbo Grandma had been working on for almost the whole day.

Grandma looked up at me, smiled, and said, “Because it’s a whole lot of love in a bowl.”

***

I think the worst thing about Alzheimer’s is knowing that you no longer share memories with the person who has the disease. The
memories are now only yours, and you have to keep them alive all on your own. I will start by having my dad teach me how to make Grandma’s gumbo. The other day when I was talking to my older sister Brittney on the phone, she said, “Grandma will always be alive in our hearts.” I concurred, and I silently added, and in our gumbo.
Adria Steuer is a junior in Carnegie Mellon’s Creative Writing program. She is from Indianapolis, IN, and the semester she’ll be spending at Sheffield Hallam will be her first experience abroad. She’s looking forward to getting the opportunity to travel while engaging her writing and education on a new level.
Schoolyard Hero
by Adria Steuer

The Redford Charter School was one of Brooklyn’s secrets, one that was crammed between an abandoned candy factory from the 1920s and a squat four-story government building that changed names with every election. The steps of the school were clean because that’s how Freeman kept them. Every morning after the kids arrived, Freeman went around picking up the water bottles, paper sacks, and cake wrappers that gathered on the concrete like lint on wool.

Today was the coldest day this year, so when Vice Principal Johnson poked his round head out the door, the bitter air immediately swarmed to burn his pasty cheeks a bright pink.

“Freeman, could you come inside a moment?” he said.
“Yes, sir.” Freeman hefted the garbage bag over his shoulder before following Principal Johnson.

There had been a small accident, Vice Principal Johnson explained on their way down the fluorescent lit halls. It was much warmer inside the school, and Freeman started feeling uncomfortable in his heavy coat and hat. As Vice Principal Johnson talked, Freeman pulled off his gloves.

“Paul is a smart kid but he has some problems,” Vice Principal Johnson said. “Well, I guess we all have problems, but when you’re young, you’ve got a hard time reining them in. Anyway he didn’t mean any harm.”

They ended up in the art room, a place that looked and felt like a world apart from the rest of the school. Colored paper hung from the ceiling in the shapes of boxes and birds. Pictures were tacked onto the wall, all drawn by kids at the school. Bright paints and mute watercolors, circles and dots representing faces and eyes, and happiness. Lots of happiness. Kids were always drawing happy things because they didn’t know how to draw anything else.

The colorful bits and pieces of glass scattered over the linoleum floor almost didn’t seem out of place. The red, blue, green, and yellow shards reminded Freeman of the hard candy his mother used to bake in cookies sheets. Once it had cooled on the counter all afternoon, she’d shatter it with the rolling pin. Bang! Bang! Bang! The
irregular pieces would go into plastic baggies for him and his brother to take to school. They’d suck on them until their tongues and fingers were stained brilliant colors.

These pieces, Freeman knew, wouldn’t taste the same.

Sitting well away from the mess was a sullen boy, no more than seven-years-old, perched on a stool, the art teacher hovering over him. Ms. Brenda’s face smoothed over when she saw Freeman and Vice Principal Johnson walk in.

“Oh, good. I was just about to head out for my lunch. It’s alright if I leave now, isn’t it Mr. Johnson?”

“Sure, Brenda. Freeman will take care of this.”

She was out the door before the last word, and it made Freeman think she must have had a real nice lunch waiting for her.

“Paul, this is Freeman our janitor. You’ve seen him around, I’m sure.”

Paul didn’t look Vice Principal Johnson in the eye or even blink. He sat like a storm cloud ready to burst.

Vice Principal Johnson continued. “I want you to help Freeman clean this mess up. Make sure he knows where all the pieces are. I’ll be back in half an hour.”

It was just Freeman and the raincloud, then. He got to work sweeping up the pieces closest to his feet, the ones that drifted in the outer-most ring of carnage. These shards were smaller than the rest, the least likely to be identified as part of a former whole. They hit the back of the dustpan with a grating clamor that made Freeman wince and made Paul sulk further into his seat.

“You drop something?” Freeman wished he could take the words back the moment he spoke them. They were noisier than the passing of the broom over glass and more indelicate. Freeman had been a kid once, not that long ago, in fact. And he tried to recall what he would have wanted in this situation, if he would have wanted to speak at all. But before he could come to a decision, there was another slip.

“My Momma doesn’t keep nice things in the house anymore because I’m always breaking things.” Oh Lord. Now he was telling the boy about his mother. Of course, then it was too late to stop. The words started leaving him as quickly as the thoughts came.

“I was always breaking things because I was running around catching bad guys. If you walk, the bad guys walk.” Freeman was moving toward the heart of the mess then. Fat pieces of glass shaped like broken squares and rectangles joined their less geometric counterparts in the dustpan. “They were just pretend bad guys, but I had to practice for the real things. See, I was gonna be a superhero
back then. Like, a legit superhero. None of that Captain Planet-Wishes-He-Was-Green-Lantern bullshit—I mean, stuff. None of that Captain Planet-Wishes-He-Was-Green-Lantern stuff.”

“A superhero?”

Freeman, who had been so taken by his task and heartfelt conversation, was startled by the small voice. The raincloud—Paul—was looking at Freeman from behind his glasses and folded arms. He spat the word “superhero” as if it were toxic goo.

“That’s right.”

“Like Batman?”

“Just like Batman. Or Wolverine or Ironman. Kicking butt and taking names.”

“You missed a piece over there.” Paul’s arm shot out in the direction of the trash can, where the weak sunlight streaming in from the window caught a blue piece of glass on the floor. “I like superheroes.”

***

“Batman. He’s my favorite.”

The day after their meeting in the art room, Freeman and Paul were sitting in the bleachers of the schoolyard, a world apart from the crowds of grade schoolers jumping rope, bouncing basketballs, and chasing each other in a game of tag. Two stacks of comics sat on the seat in front of Paul. One pile of books he had already flipped through and another stack he was poring over more thoroughly.

“He’s my favorite because I saw the movies and they were awesome. Where did you get all of these?”

Freeman had had to climb up into the attic the night before and dig past Christmas decorations and Easter baskets to find the boxes containing the spoils of ten years worth of flea market scouring, garage sale haggling, and comic book store hunting. He hadn’t laid eyes on the comic book collection in nearly five years. When his brother had left for college, it had seemed silly to keep them around the house, especially when his mother had decided to convert his brother’s bedroom into a sewing room. There hadn’t been enough space. So the pages of Spider-Man, Captain America, X-Men, Batman, and Green Lantern had been packed and stored but never forgotten.

“My brother and I used to collect them. Every weekend we’d hit up a new place, trying to find the best deals. We were good at talking prices down.”

“And you’ve read them all?”

“Most of them more than once.”
Paul nodded, thumbed the page of the *Batman* comic book almost self-consciously. “I’ve never read a comic book before.” If there were two things Freeman knew for certain about comics, it was that you never outgrew them, and that you were never too old to start reading. Heroes themselves transcended the confines of age.

***

Paul’s mother was a butterfly of woman. If you weren’t looking at her head on, she was nearly invisible. Her arms were in a constant state of motion at her side, fluttering nervously as if they were the only things keeping her from face-planting on the floor. Even seated in a chair in front of Vice Principal Johnson’s desk, she shook her hands in the air and gestured frantically. It betrayed the calmness of her voice. “I just have a few concerns.”

Vice Principal Johnson nodded along like vice principals were supposed to, round head rolling backward and falling forward again and again. “I’m here to listen to them, Mrs. Brooks.”

So was Freeman apparently, but he didn’t get chance to say that. He sat in a chair in front of Vice Principal Johnson’s desk, an empty seat between him and Paul’s mother. When Freeman had been summoned to Vice Principal Johnson’s office that morning, he had assumed another student had thrown up on the carpet. It had been several weeks since the last instance, and that was tempting fate. But there had been no pool of applesauce and chicken nugget vomit, only Paul’s mother flapping her arms.

Freeman would have preferred the vomit.

“It’s just Paul’s been going on and on about this man at school, and how he was giving him things to read, and how they talked at recess, and how they were good friends, and what am I supposed to think? And then this weekend he sprained his wrist jumping off the back of the couch. The kids aren’t allowed to stand on the furniture. He jumped off because he had to catch the bad guys who had stolen his genetically enhanced goldfish. We have a cat. No goldfish.”

Vice Principal Johnson’s head wasn’t rolling around anymore. Now his eyes eyebrows were pinched into two straight lines. “Maybe he wants a goldfish.”

For a moment, Mrs. Brook’s hands stopped moving and her jaw seemed to unhinge. “I’m sorry?”

Vice Principal Johnson laughed as if she’d delivered the punch line of a familiar joke. “Maybe the problem isn’t what you think it is. I’ve seen Freeman with Paul, and I have to say that their interactions
have done a great deal to bring Paul out of his shell. And just maybe a sprained wrist is worth that.”

The arms started up again with a vengeance. “You think I should let him jump off of the couch?”

“No. But you could enroll him martial arts classes or in peewee sports. The community center down the road has excellent programs...”

Freeman didn’t listen to the rest. He pictured his own couch at home. The middle cushion was stained on both sides with grape juice, and the back was lined with runs from where Tommy The Cat had sharpened his claws every afternoon. Freeman knew every inch of that upholstery, knew it better than he knew the backs of either of his hands or the tops of either of his feet. That couch had been a bed, a fort, a rocket ship, a boulder in a sea of lava, a bank with a robbery in process. He and his brothers had jumped—had flown—from it more times than he could count. And they had always been victorious.

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“She doesn’t understand.”

“That’s because she’s a mom. She’s not supposed to understand you.” But that probably wasn’t something you said to a seven-year-old. Reassurance was what they were really looking for, Freeman thought. “That’ll change though, and until then she’ll cut the crusts off your sandwiches so they taste better.”

Paul’s eyes, which were always oversized and owlish behind his glasses, blinked at Freeman. “She doesn’t do that. She says the crusts are good for me, and I need to eat them to get muscles.”

Freeman squints at the murky cafeteria window, where the froth of the cleaner was oozing over the built up scum, overtaking the dirt only to be mercilessly washed away by the passing of his damp rag. “Well, that’s a competing theory.”

When Freeman said something like that, Paul always smiled. He wasn’t exactly sure why, but it might have had to do with the way kids saw the world. It—the world—was bigger when you were smaller. Words were bigger, too. Freeman once told Paul that he knew someone who could breathe underwater. Paul hadn’t bought it at first, but after one convincing story about how Freeman had witnessed it firsthand, Paul had taken it much more seriously. He had looked away—his mind working, weighing, and testing—before turning back and nodding along. “I think I might be able to breathe underwater, too,” Paul said.

When Freeman was a boy, his power had been super speed.