



# Creative Writing Chapbook

Session Three  
2022

*Notes from the Editor*

This summer at 6 Points Creative Arts Academy marks the fourth year of our creative writing major. Like every year before it, this year has seen growth: in our numbers, in our skills, and in our writing. In this chapbook you will find the culmination of 12 days of learning and writing in the form of narrative poems and stories. Our writing this session centers around our summer theme, which comes from Pirkei Avot: “It is not your task to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.” This theme is particularly applicable to creative writing. As writers we are often faced with the question of when to release our art into the world. This chapbook serves as a moment in time, a reminder that though these pieces are published they are imperfect, unfinished, and serve as time capsules for where each writer is at this particular moment in their lives. Our writers will revisit these poems and stories whether in these exact words or in new iterations. The work of a writer is never done! Please enjoy these collected works, we are so proud to present the Creative Arts Academy’s very own creative writers!

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*My pieces are about writing, growing up, and exploring new things. Some of them are incomplete. These are things we work on as we continue to go through our lives; they're processes and things that might be outside of our comfort zone, but they're necessary to becoming us.*

## **Collection By Francis Quigley Age: 14**

### **Life without Writing**

I write because I breathe,  
I write because I think.

My life without words,  
Is a life lost at sea.

Without a voice,  
I drown to the masses,  
Their voices gripping at me.

I write myself to tears,  
To panic,  
Into fears.

The adrenaline I get,  
Pulls me back each time,  
Like a boomerang,  
Soaring through the light blue sky.

Writing is a sickly love,  
It's someone you return to, begging,  
Knowing each time,  
You'll get nothing.

And when I am older,

No one will stay,  
Because I am in love with writing

In the most abusive way.

### **My Father's Sweater**

This sweater,  
Smells of lavender and dust.

I stare down at me,  
I'm perched on my shoulders,  
the sweater my dad gave me,  
Drooping from my body.

In that photo,  
He's carrying baby me,  
Both of us wrapped,  
By that sweater and our memories.

The day he passed it to me,  
The autumn air shock,  
"Here, while your jacket's being cleaned."

The sweater,  
That no matter how many times he asks,  
I can't seem to give  
This silly skin  
Back to him.

### **Time**

I watch the clock,  
The seconds on my grandfather's watch fold to  
hours,

Hung to dry like linens on a clothesline.

Its hands don the fabric of time,  
A soft, brown leather  
That match his smile-lines.

Now the minute hand has crawled,  
Five times past.

Mom is always late;  
I rush like an animal,  
Dashing for its life.

Clocks with no limbs are trees with no leaves,  
They cannot show you the rush or the breeze.

*[Unfinished, to be continued]*

## **Forgiven**

I do my best to always forgive,  
You can't seem to stop tearing at the fabric of our  
conflict.

You tightrope walk my heartstrings,  
Carrying your blade for a tongue.

The only thing you say for yourself is

"I'm sorry."

So no,  
Not this time.

I do not forgive you,

And you won't be forgiven.

I won't hug you.  
And I won't tell you goodnight,

You walk out of the door.

And shouldn't be too hard,  
As you've done it before.

### **Ellipsis**

The blank stares at me,

Its stark face doesn't appeal to many.

Filling the blank,

Ruins a serendipity,

A balance.

The equilibrium is perfect.

the ellipsis,

the pause.

The implied breath.

...

*My piece represents the theme because it's an unfinished part of a novel. I could have written a poem, or a short story, but I chose to write these chapters because it sparked my interest.*

*The novel I am writing, "A House With Stories In Its Walls" is about a boy named Lucas, who has been planning their exploration for months, yet the plan was not entirely clear. Lucas' mother doesn't know about their plans to explore this house, she thinks they're going to the mall. Though their plans are not clear at all, they are determined to explore this house they hear so much about, whether they figure out the truth or not.*

## **A House With Stories In Its Walls**

### **By Ray Zapata Age: 13**

#### **Chapter 1**

I just finished getting dressed. Jesse insisted on wearing matching pirate costumes, so I pulled something together, just for him. I don't think he really understands how much I appreciate him. I have known him since we were toddlers, and he has been nothing but kind to me, and Halloween is his favorite holiday. He enjoys all of the scares and surprises.

I'm the exact opposite. Though I love all of the lights and the candy, I'm not a huge fan of getting jump-scared by a deteriorating clown. I think that's why we work so well together.

As I walk down the stairs, I hear a knock. He's here. I run down the stairs and open the door, and to my surprise it's not him, it's Timothy, my five-year-old next door neighbor.

"Trick or treat!!!" Timmy says, anticipating being showered with candy.



"Hey little guy!" I say, slightly confused. Its 5:00 pm, why is he trick-or-treating so early? Especially in full costume. He's wearing a little bear costume, it's the cutest thing ever. I mean we have everything set up, maybe he's just practicing. I take a pack of Swedish fish out of our bowl set at the front door and place it in his little jack-o-lantern bucket.

"Thanks, Lukey!" he says, with a wide smile on his face. This kid never fails to make me feel better. He's always some type of happy.

"Anytime, buddy," I said, as I walked down my house steps. As he walked away, I saw Jesse coming up my street.

We've been planning our Halloween for months. There is an old house at the end of the street. Its exterior is covered with rotting wood, mossy windows, and wilting trees. The owners abandoned the house after they reported things going missing, to a point where the children would be gone for long periods of time. They would see things that weren't to be found, and they would hear music playing in the middle of the night. Kind of normal haunted house stuff. The one thing however, that interests me the most is the basement. The basement is said to hold most of the family's history and inheritance.

They left it all behind because they swore it was cursed. Now, I don't know if I believe it was "cursed" but there was definitely some iffy stuff going on in that basement. Most of what I'm telling you are considered rumors, but I disagree.

These statements are history, and me and Jesse are going to explore it.

"Hey stranger," Jesse says, walking up my front porch stairs with the stupidest pirate costume I've ever seen.

I could tell he put a lot of work into it though, sharpie stains 'n all.

"Hey, lover," I say, with an equally stupid costume on. I got my mom to sew it though, so it's a bit less raggedy.

Every single time I see Jesse it puts a smile on my face. We've been dating for around two years now since our freshman year of high school. We actually started off pretty fine, until Jesse's father passed away. It put him through a lot of stress since his father was such a big influence on who he wanted to be. His father had the type of personality to light up a room.

His father was one of the kindest and most involved in his community. I remember, I was playing at Jesses house, we couldn't have been older than eight, and Jesse's father walked into the room and I turned to Jesse, and the look on his face made it seem like he had just seen a superhero. I never had an in-depth relationship with his father, but I could tell how much he meant to Jesse. His death sent Jesse into absolute turmoil, and it put a strain on our relationship. Once he got the therapy he needed, we started to come around. He has lots of triggers though. One of which is staying home the night before his father's death, which I think could trigger anyone under those circumstances. That's part of why I planned this whole thing. His favorite holiday was something he no longer enjoyed after his father died, and I want to bring that childhood happiness back as close as to how it used to be as possible.

As we walk into my house, the smell of freshly baked ghost cookies fills the halls. It is my mother's baking.

She and Jesse always have one thing in common and that is their love for Halloween.

"Hey Mrs. C!" Jesse says, immediately running towards the kitchen. I swear my mother loves him more than me.

Our families have always known each other, whether it be from cookouts or neighborhood meetings. Both our parents are very involved in the state of our town and keeping it safe. Our neighborhood is relatively safe, but it has its cons. It's not as inclusive as other towns in our state, but it's not horrible. For the most part, the community is pretty open-minded but there are always a couple of weirdos here and there.

"Hey Jesse," my mother says. She has just taken the last batch of those ghost cookies out of the oven, and now she's starting on dinner. This woman never gives herself a break.

"Luke, Honey, can you help me chop these veggies?" she asks, finally opening herself up to the idea of help.

Unfortunately, Jesse and I have to leave soon, it's almost 6:00.

"I'm sorry mom, but Jesse and I have to leave soon if we're going to make it to the.." Shoot. She doesn't know about our plans. "..mall before it gets dark." Nice save.

"I see. That's fine, but please stay safe." She's not one to be suspicious of me, most of the time she can tell when I'm lying, but I guess she's in a good mood today.

"Sorry Mrs. C," Jesse says, muffled, with his mouth full of cookies.

"Don't worry! You boys have fun," she says. I really appreciate how she trusts me, even if I am lying, which is something I feel horribly about, but right now it has to be done.

"We will!" I say as we walk out the front door. Our journey is beginning.

## Chapter 2

Once we got out the house, I closed the door behind me and me and Jesse were on our way.

"Have you decided on a design for the citizen costume for the fall play?" Jesse asked, knowing that I had probably forgotten about the play, which I had. At our school, I work on the costume design for the plays and such, and we have an upcoming fall play. This is going to be my first piece of the year, and I'm super worried I might mess it up. Right now, I was assigned to design and sew the costume for the ensemble, or the "citizens".

"I have the basic design set up," I say, in an anxious tone.

"I know that you're worried Luke, and I don't really understand why. You have shown me these amazing designs that someone modeling for vogue would wear," he says. He truly hates it when I'm unsure of myself. I never really understood how he had so much confidence in me. Earlier this year, our families were playing a small game of baseball, like a summer activity, and when it was my turn at bat, he was cheering so loud I'm sure the people in the city could hear it. Don't get me wrong, I appreciate it so

much, but I wish I understood what he was so proud of in me.

"Thanks Jess, I really appreciate it. I don't think that my first couple of designs for the play were horrible, but I definitely think they could be better," I say, "but honestly I think I should scrap the first couple of designs."

"I think that the first one was great, but the second one might be too colorful for the time-set," Jesse says, and he's not wrong.

"I think that you should do this with me instead of tech," I said, with a stupid grin on my face. Jesse does the technical for our school theatre, and it's really cool to see. I never understood all of the technical stuff about the plays, but I have a basic understanding of it. Jesse however, is super good at it. I think in terms of tech in high school, he's one of the best.

"You know that I'm horrible at designing stuff," Jesse says, imagining what it would be like if he was in design. I think he is wondering what it would look like if he tried to sew a garment together.

"Yeah, now that I think about it, it doesn't look like a good idea," I say jokingly. Jesse nudges me off the sidewalk, pretending to be angry. Once I get back to the sidewalk, I notice that the house is one fence over from where we are.

"Jess, we're almost there!" Jesse and I never really noticed how short the walk was from my house to the haunted house.

I mean, neither of us had gone up to it intentionally, so we never really noticed where it was. The first time I saw it I was in the car, and the first time he saw it, I think he was walking his dog.

"Race ya!" Jesse yelled, sprinting to the other side of the street. Jesse was in track and field in middle school, so there's no way I'm winning.

"Oh, come on!" I say annoyingly, as I sprinted behind him running as fast as I can. Around a minute later, we finally get to the house. It looks even worse than I remembered. Its wood, not only falling apart, now had new sprouts coming out of the boards, and the biggest spiders I have ever seen. I hate spiders.

"So, are we doing this, or not?" I say, extremely nervously.

"I guess so" Jesse says, as we both run into the house of horrors.

As we step in, it is bigger than I had expected. There is a set of spiral stairs running up the interior, and four rooms as far as the eye can see. There are a lot of wilted pictures of the family on the wall, and they look like they were taken in the early 1900s. Overall, it seems mostly up-kept for a house that was abandoned so long ago. As Jesse and I start to explore the interior, the people in the photos start...talking. I have never seen something like that happen. It looks like it is from Harry Potter.

The pictures start getting louder, and louder, and louder. I kneel down to cover my ears, but it won't stop. It is so loud it feels like it is coming from inside my head.

And then all of the sudden it just stopps.

"What was that?" Jesse says, concerned.

To be continued...

*This poem collection is about the different periods of my year starting from August 2021, and ending at August 2022.*

*Each poem represents a certain theme from the periods ranging from religion to changing yourself. Overall, this poem collection is about the endless struggle with mental health at a young age, and the continuous work you have to do to sustain health.*

## **Arc of Adolescence By Ava Sylvie Usatin Age: 13**

### **August-November: Thrift Store**

50% off all drastically short skirts your parents would shudder to see you wear

25% discount for teens that break down over two times a day

Take a look over here, we've got huge, ratty t-shirts that can swallow you whole and enclose all of your darkest thoughts and feelings

How about you try the men's section, why not give your grandma a heart attack when you show up to Thanksgiving dinner in a pilling work suit that's five sizes too big?

You look like your style's drab, just scrap what you've got and change it all,

It couldn't hurt.

Thanks for shopping at the Thrift Store,

We hope to see you again

## **December-February: Lineage**

A 10 year old in a tacky, itchy dress for their  
cousin's big day

An 11 year old spacing out during lectures while  
sitting long hours in a cold classroom

A 12 year old with a big blue book of unproven  
theories, lacking motivation to keep up with task  
upon task

A 13 year old draped in a prayer shawl, facing a sea  
of anxious eyes, carrying on their family's tradition

## **March-April: Over**

Your last exhale, the blinding lights went out

Deafening pandemonium

It all fell right into place:

Accepted, Celebrated, Respected

A cleared plate opened to new opportunities

But you know your decision could've been better

## **May-June: "Fun"**

Funny how handfuls of "innocent" incidents,  
lingering stares, and passive jokes that keep you



thinking for months are not enough to make you stop

Where are you going? What do you want?

Acceptance? Love? Or are you just convincing yourself it's worth it?

Is it?

Are all the blood, tears and isolation completely obsolete?

They're making you small, staining happy memories with pain, puppeting your emotions, for what?

“Fun?”

### **July-August: Inevitability**

You can think it's over, but that doesn't mean it's true

A monster always living in the crevices of your mind, affecting your decisions, infecting your peace

You can use your eyes; see it inside of you, it's always been there

So stop thinking she'll help, she's only bringing it to the surface

Keeping it there longer than it needs to be

Keeping you stuck

An inevitable future of darkness

That's only just begun

I bet it's scary,

Looking ahead

*Our theme this summer is "it is not your duty to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it" my first piece "what is art" I think relates a lot to our summer theme because art is never really finished. Art is subjective and means different things to different people and my second piece itself is unfinished and a lot of people have supported me in creating the beginnings of this piece and when I do complete it, I plan on submitting it into different places and hopefully completing a full play.*

### **What is art By Kooper Kniaz Age: 14**

#### **What is art?**

What is art?

Is art a stroke of color on a piece of fabric?

Or is art a singer's voice papering over their pain?

What is art?

is art the pulling of strings on a piano vibrating off of each other

or is art the words on a paper pulled from our mind like a string?

What is art?

Is art

a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage?

Or is art our most painful memory tucked away under a

dark,

thick,

cloth

Turned into a showcase of

Movement

Sound

And words

Allowing the world  
To experience  
The true thoughts of your own mind.

### Uncovering Himself (a play)

*(Jonathan is standing in a small bedroom with childlike decorations a twin-size bed, a dresser covered in dirty clothes and old cups and glasses, and a mirror on the inside door of a messy closet and is talking to himself in the mirror.)*

JONATHAN: Come on Jonathan all you have to do is tell him how you feel about her and tell him how great a person she is. Okay so I'm just going to say "I met her at parent teacher conferences for her son, Albert. And I just immediately saw something in her!" or something like that... no no no that isn't going to work god why am I still worried about what he thinks! I'm a 40-year-old man I can make my own decisions and do whatever I want, he has no control over me. I live on my own, I make my own money, I don't need him! No but I do. I **DO** still care! I don't know why I need to talk to him and get him to realize I'm not a 12-year-old boy anymore I'm my own man he can't tell me what to do!

*(Turns from mirror and leaves through bedroom door into a small room with a few ragged old chairs and couches and the walls are lined with old paintings where the father is sitting, waiting on the couch.)*

JONATHAN: Hey dad can I please talk to you about Joanna now?

WILLIAM: Fine you have a couple of minutes to attempt to change my mind about that woman.

JONATHAN: I met her at parent teacher conferences and the moment I saw her I just knew... something is different about her she's just special.

WILLIAM: I don't care how "special" she is, the point of marriage is not to find someone "special". the point of marriage is to start a family, support that family, and die with enough money left to support that family through their life.

JONATHAN: I understand that's what's supposed to happen, and it will! I promise it will! Why can't I do all that AND be with the woman I love?

*(Slowly standing up while grunting and groaning. Reaches to put his hand on his son's shoulder.)*

WILLIAM: I'm truly sorry son, that's not how this world works. *(Backing away angrily from his father.)*

JONATHAN: Just listen to me, please! Sh-she has a beautiful son, 7 years old his name is Albert and he's the sweetest kid out there and it's BECAUSE of her.

WILLIAM: Mhmm continue.

JONATHAN: That night I first met her, at the school I wish I could just go back and show you, then you might understand what I mean. Albert was nervous for his teachers to talk to his mother even

though he's the smartest kid in his grade, but I digress, she squatted down next to him and talked to him for almost 15 minutes, never once looking angry or irritated. Truly, all she wanted was to make sure her son was alright.

WILLIAM: I believe you son; I really do but how could I ever explain the fact that my son married a DIVORCED woman! Imagine what the other veterans would think of me.

JONATHAN: They don't have to know! None of your veteran friends live anywhere near us how would they ever know!

WILLIAM: That's fair... this is not me giving you my approval but let me meet the woman, I will tell you what I think.

JONATHAN: Thank you father, truly I can't wait for you to meet her I'm sure you will just simply adore her.

*(Jonathan, old man, and Joanna are now all seated at the dining table in Jonathan's messy apartment around them is a small table and couch, the room looks in disarray.)*

WILLIAM: I am glad to meet you Joanna I have heard much about you.

JOANNA: All good things, I hope!

WILLIAM: Why of course.

JONATHAN: Okay well now that we are all finally together do any of you have any questions for me or each other?

WILLIAM: Well, how did such a pretty woman like you end up divorced?

JONATHAN: Father, please! I meant polite, respectful questions!

JOANNA: No, no I don't mind answering! My first husband was rather...queer...

WILLIAM: Oh well, you know lots of young men are like that in their younger days, when I was about 20 my best friend and I were rather...close.

JONATHAN: Father most young men are not like that...I never was, and I know my friends at the time certainly never were.

WILLIAM: Oh well I digress, lets continue on with the topic of conversation. Joanna, why on EARTH would you divorce a man for having a little bit of fun with his friends! I know I did it all the time back in my day and my wife just continued happily doing her housework!

JOANNA: Well, you know, there were other factors and things of course but we made the best decision for me and my son, Albert. Oh, you should meet him some day! That young boy is my pride and joy you would love him, I just know you would!

WILLIAM: Why I have heard the same exact thing from my dear son, if this boy is so fantastic why don't you take me to meet him?

JOANNA: I am truly sorry sir, but it is far past 11 pm my sweet Albert has been sound asleep cozy in his bed for hours!

JONATHAN: How about tomorrow! Tomorrow is a Sunday I believe so I will not have work and Albert will not have school, how about my father and I come to meet Albert at say...noon?

WILLIAM: My, that sounds fantastic I can't wait to meet the boy!

JOANNA: Well, I am sad to say but I need to get going, I have the sweetest young babysitter at home to watch Albert I must go relive her!

WILLIAM: I am sad to see you go, let me walk you out!

JONATHAN: Oh no, father that won't be necessary, no need to put more of a strain on your back.

WILLIAM: Don't you go worrying about me Jonathan I know what I can handle, if I would like to walk this kind young lady out of our home, I am more than welcome to do so!

JOANNA: That is very sweet of you sir I do not want you to injure yourself but if you would like to do so I am always happy for some company!



WILLIAM: Very well then! We had better get going!

*(William reaches his arm out to Joanna and leads her down the front steps towards her car. It is late at night and completely dark except for a few street lights.)*

JOANNA: Well, this is my car thank you so much for having me over to dinner I am ecstatic to have finally met you!

WILLIAM: Why I had no idea that women had the ability to drive cars! You learn something new every day, truly!

JOANNA: Yes, yes, you learn to do many things whilst raising a beautiful young boy by yourself!

WILLIAM: My, I'm sure my dear wife Margery would have simply adored to have been able to do that, what with my locking her out of our bedroom to enjoy time with my friends and my soft weeping every time one of my friends found a wife, you know all of that!

JOANNA: Oh my... that sounds...difficult...now why would you weep when your friends got married?

WILLIAM: Why I have no idea, I just always felt a sort of loss when my dear friends got married, they always ended up spending more time with their wives then me and I just missed them...oh how I miss them dearly.

JOANNA: Why I am very sorry to hear that... well I must be going now thank you so much again for having me!

*(William waves goodbye to Joanna as she drives away and turns back to the house wiping a single tear from his eyes.)*

*My story connects to the theme because it is based on Romeo and Juliet. In this version Romeo's little sister feels like it is her obligation to help the lovers keep their relationship a secret and to help them sneak around. It's not the main character's job to help the lovers, she could tell on them and get them in trouble, but she chooses not to because she loves her brother and Sophilia.*

## **Kingdoms By Eva Resnik Age: 12**

### **Chapter 1 - The Aqua Princess**

After my older brother, Alexandrian, had taken over the throne of the Ignis Kingdom and signed the Peace Treaty with Queen Adelaide of the Aqua Kingdom, my life didn't really change. One thing did though, the way my other brother, Vaint, acted. The hour after the Treaty was signed, there was a giant ball. That's when I first started noticing changes. It was a ball hosted by the Aer and Terra Kingdoms, in celebration of a unity between two Kingdoms that had been rivals for 200 years.

Anyways, I started noticing little changes in him, he is my brother after all. Little things like he would zone out more often at dinner, or when we were in Royal Meetings with the other Kingdoms, his eyes would go to Princess Sophilia, of the Aqua Kingdom. She was pretty, she had long, wavy blond hair and blue eyes. Her skin was tan, but not orange (like some members of the Aqua Kingdom) from spending her days at the sunny beaches of the Aqua Kingdom. I also started noticing bigger changes, like he would grow impatient at dinner, and go straight to his room, or he would skip playing in family game night, which was very important to Alexandrian and

me, especially after mom and dad were exiled. They were exiled by the Aer and Terra Kingdoms, along with the old King and Queen of the Aqua Kingdom because there was no stop to the conflict going on between the Kingdoms (hence the Peace Treaty).

I saw him sneaking out of his window once and being a totally concerned and (definitely) not nosey younger sister, I followed him. I made sure to dress casually, and in something I could move in. I chose a dark scarlet tunic and black leggings with combat boots that had ruby decals. I put my hair in a braid so it wouldn't get in my face, and I climbed out of the window after him. I snuck behind him all through the palace gardens and out of the palace grounds. I followed him all the way into the Fire Kingdom city, where he called a taxi. Then I called a taxi and told the driver to trail him. We trailed him through the high mountains and hot deserts of Fire Kingdom, through the rocky, drab, and grey terrain and grassy, vibrant (even at night) green fields of the Earth Kingdom. We followed him for a really long time, and most of the time, I didn't know where we were. It reminded me of the times that my family and I went to the Grand Ball the Aqua Kingdom holds each year.

From there, we arrived at a park. A gorgeous one, may I add. All of the Kingdoms had a Kingdom Park, and this was the one in the water kingdom. It was filled with blues, and whites, and lots of pastels. There were pearls and sand everywhere, and there were iridescent metal gates surrounding the park. From the taxi window, you couldn't tell where the park ended. It smelled salty like the ocean and had an ocean-ish demeanor to it, big and dark, and mysterious — yet still beautiful. I

told the taxi driver to drop me off a couple blocks away from the park, and I hopped out, but not before paying the driver a hefty sum for keeping this a secret, and for staying at the park entrance until I got back.

After I got out, I walked into the park. It was beautiful. There were lakes everywhere, and when I peered into them, they were crystal clear. I knew that the subjects of the Aqua Kingdom could turn into mermaids at will, and that some of them lived underwater. Inside the lakes were lounging spots, beanbag chairs, televisions, and popcorn machines.

I continued walking up the path. I got bored of walking, and it was starting to hurt my feet, so I turned into a phoenix and started soaring over the park. Oh, yeah. I forgot to tell you that certain members of the Ignis Kingdom (such as the Royal Family) can turn into flaming phoenixes, but the flaming part isn't always useful, especially if you're trying to hide from someone. The phoenixes are gorgeous, with long feathery tails that melt into fire, and wings that are the same. My brothers and I used to play hide and seek, and Alexandrian would turn into a phoenix and soar to the top of the palace we lived in.

I soared over the park, like Alexandrian would soar over the palace, looking for my brother and his rendezvous. Then, I saw them. Well, him. He was alone and sitting on a bench the same iridescent as the gates. I was going to go down and ask him what he was doing, when I saw something – *someone* in the corner of my eye. She was draped elegantly in a pearly shawl, long, blond hair braided back with shimmering pearls in between the strands, and she

looked like she was gliding towards my brother. She was Sophilia. The Aqua princess.

## **Chapter 2 - Secrets, Secrets are no Fun.**

I landed on a tree branch of a mahogany on the opposite side of the path where my brother and Sophilia wouldn't be able to see me. I turned back into a human, hugging the tree trunk, I jumped down, so I was crouching on a sturdier branch than the one I landed on originally. The tree felt rough under my arms and hand, and it reminded me of the playground mulch we had in elementary school. I looked down and concentrated on my brother and Sophilia's words.

"Did anyone follow you?" Sophilia asked, her voice very quiet and seemingly worried, taking a seat on the bench Vaint was already sitting on.

"No, no one followed me, it's just us," my brother said reassuringly as he put his arm around the princess and hugged her close.

Sophilia closed her eyes and leaned her head on his shoulder, she looked calmer now. *Weird*, I thought. The two Kingdoms might have a peace treaty, but they still don't like each other. Based on the way that Sophilia and Vaint interacted, I guessed that they had been seeing each other for a long time.

I watched them for about five minutes, before I became impatient. They weren't doing anything but lying on the bench and holding hands. I was getting antsy, and I was about to turn back into a phoenix and go home but then I heard my name.

"Mari, I know you're up there, you can come down. It's alright," Vaint sighed.

Sophilia looked up, straightening her posture, her brows knitted together. “I thought you said that no one followed you...” she said, voice laced with worry.

Vaint sighed (again), “It’s okay, she’s my sister.”

Sophilia’s face softened, but you could still see apprehensiveness in her eyes and posture.

I jumped down from the tree, landing in a frog position.

“How’d you know I was here? I made NO noise. I made sure of it,” I said, standing up and walking towards my brother and sitting on the bench next to him, well, in between him and Sophilia.

“Mari. You’re probably confused, and I can explain.” My brother looked at me, and then Sophilia. Apparently she took that as her cue to leave.

“I’m going to leave now,” she said, looking down and getting up.

I noticed things about her voice that I didn’t notice before. It was soft and pretty like the ocean on a peaceful night. It was soft, but not too soft. It sounded like she had full control over it — like she could command a room full of people with it if she wanted to.

I also noticed her eyes. Sophilia’s eyes shimmered like the ocean and they were like a crystal ball, blue, teal, grey. No wonder my brother liked her. She was just like the ocean, the opposite of my brother. Stubborn and commanding, like fire. His eyes were a mix of browns, reds, ambers. They contrasted each other perfectly.

“Wait, no. I want you to explain what this is. And I want something — something from *both* of you in return for my silence.” Like I said earlier, the Ignis and Aqua Kingdoms weren’t enemies anymore, but it was still frowned upon to have any sort of relationship.

Sophilia sighed and sat back down. “What do you want for your silence?”

To be continued...

### **Author’s note:**

*First of all, thank you to Ava, Sage, Logan, Vera (the Squishmallow), and of course Carly for inspiring (kind of) me and making me laugh. I loved creative writing so much.*

*Anyways, if I had more time, Sophilia, Vaint, and Mari would figure out a deal, and would all go home. Things would continue peacefully for about a year, and two years later, at a meeting between the Ignis and Aqua Kingdom, Vaint and Sophilia confess that they’ve been dating and want to get married (because it’s a fairytale thing) but Queen Adelaide and King Alexandrian don’t want them to, and you need your king/ queen’s permission to get married in Elementia (which is the continent all of the Kingdoms are on).*

*So they go to Princess Lila of the Aer Kingdom, because she’s a sorcerer, and ask if there is a way around it. There is: to get the blessing of another Kingdom, so Princess Lila allows their marriage and they get married in secret. No one knows except for Lila and Mari. Then a war breaks out between the Aqua Kingdom and the Ignis Kingdom, and Vaint wants to help fight in the war, so he does and he dies (so sad).*

*And then Sophilia spends the rest of her life in misery.*

*But Mari has it worse because not only were her parents exiled, but her older brother who was also her best friend died*



*a few days before her eighteenth birthday. I had a lot of fun writing this, and I am going to continue to write this at home, and hopefully I'll turn it into a novella (or hopefully a novel).*

*Thank you so much!*

*My story relates to the theme because my main character Zev is lonely. Zev gets sucked into his own mind and fights against his mind. This is a lot of work but Zev never gives up.*

## **Into the Dark Forest By Sage Herman Age: 11**

### **Chapter one**

The heat of the three lights was beaming down on him. It must've been a bad idea wearing a light blue onesie with penguins on it when you'd be sitting under three lights on a loft bed with your younger brother's bed below you. *I wonder what's for dinner tonight... Chinese food? Pizza? Steak? Guess I'll find out.* Zev thought.

He heard his mom's voice from the other room, "Hey can I share with my co-worker what happened last night?"

*What did happen last night? "Suuuuuuuuurre?"*

Tap tap tap tap tap.

"Hey mom?"

"Yes?"

"What are we having for dinner tonight?"

"I don't know ask Daddy."

*Fine... down stairs.*

Zev slid out of bed and into the hallway, he passed his cat, Alex. Alex was a floofy gray kitty with darker stripes, a tan under-belly and a white muzzle and he was slowly dying of heart failure. As he passed his parent's room he saw his other cat, Mallory, or MalMal for short. She was an orange and white cat who shed a lot.

His parents room was quite big with a king sized bed with light shades of blue and green leaf-like

shapes as the covers, the sheets were white with little blue anchors on them, and they had a lot of comfy pillows that piled high, a big mirror-closet that took up the whole left side of the room. The room smelled of cat-litter since there was one of the two cat-litter boxes by the door on the right side of the room and that side of the room had a window on it that looked out at his back yard which had a Magnolia tree in the back with luscious green leaves and a worn down shed that's roof was off because Zev's parents were redoing the shed.

He went down the creaky stairs and over the dog-gate.

Zev's Bernedoodle (Bernese Mountain dog and Poodle crossbreed) was laying on his old turquoise couch with her head raised, staring at him, trying to make sure that it was really Zev.

"Heeeellooo." His dad greeted him.

"Hi?" Zev headed for the couch. "What's for dinner?"

"Oh me and your mom were thinking of salmon for dinner and left over steak for you and Henry."

Zev started petting Foam, his dog. Foam was almost all black, her big paws and fore-legs were tan with black toes, her chest was white with a little black curl in the center, and the tip of her tail was white, her cheeks had small tan spots and her muzzle also had little to no white and her eyes were dark brown.

"Steak sounds good. I know that Henry loves steak."

"Yup."

Zev's stomach grumbled, he got up from to couch to find some food. *Something that will fill me up. Maybe a Chery bar? Oooh, how about Cheerios!*

Zev went into the pantry and got out one of the four Honey Nut Cheerios boxes and the one that was open. He checked the time. 2:40. He got out a bowl from the cabinet across the room then took out a spoon from the drawer that's below the cabinet. Zev went to go put down the bowl, cereal and spoon. He then moved over to the fridge with a lot of pictures on it. He opened the door and grabbed the milk. He took the jug of milk to the table and set it down. Next he poured the Cheerios into the bowl, he filled it to the last little line of the bowl then he poured in the milk also to that little line. With his spoon he dunked a spot of Cheerios then started eating them.

Foam walked towards the table.

"Foam's coming with you to New Hampshire, right?" his dad asked, still typing on his computer.

"Yes, and I'm all packed so that's nice I guess."

"Huhh- OOF!" Foam barked.

"Oop, take the dog out."

"Uuuuuuuhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!"

After Zev took the dog out for a walk and finished his Cheerios, he picked up his bowl and put it into the sink that was filled with dishes that needed to be washed. He set the bowl down and ran upstairs. When he was back on his bed he looked at his phone. Zero texts. He felt his heart ache with hatred.

*I've been away for SIX weeks at camp – no, I disappeared and no one decided to text or anything!! Some friends I have! Who would reach out to me anyways? I suck, my personality sucks, I suck.*

Zev imagined a tall black figure with pale soulless eyes and sometimes with a maniacal grin.

*My demon. Zev thought. No! Stop don't dig yourself into that hole again!*

The ground under him opened up into a black void which swallowed him up.

Down down down into a dark abyss. Down down down into the dark place in his mind.

Zev woke up in a dark forest full of black leafless trees. The sky was a dark turquoise and in the distance you could see black tall figures with pale soulless eyes. Zev felt fear crawling all over him at the sight of the creatures. He got up to his feet and started running into the forest since he saw in the distance some lights from a town.

*What is this? No... it's- it can't be? Everything is so... real... so – my mind.* Zev stopped in his tracks. *How did I get inside my mind?* He heard rustling behind him. He combed his curly hair with his hands and almost instantly his hands got stuck in his hair, yet he took them out. He whipped his head around. The tall black creatures had started running towards him at full speed with huge maniacal grins on their faces.

He started running at full speed towards the lights.

“HELP! SOMEBODY HELP ME!!” He screamed at the lights.

He tripped over something.

Zev landed on leaves then turned swiftly around and saw that he had tripped on a thick root of one of the black leafless trees. The tall black creatures were so close now and so were the lights. Zev started going back while he was screaming. Something pulled on his sleeve. His leg throbbed, his head throbbed. He whipped his head around. A

guy with tawny skin was towing him out of The Dark Forest.

“Who-?” Zev tried to say but then started gagging on his blood that had dripped into his mouth.

“Shh– don’t talk. You’re in serious pain,” the guy said sharply.

He flung Zev into the lights of the town. Zev grunted.

“I’m not familiar with your kind,” the guy said, crossing his arms.

“My – kind?” Zev asked, lifting his head up to get a better look at his savior.

“H–h–humans?” he said, almost unable to say the word. “Oh! I’m terribly sorry, I forgot to introduce myself! I’m Lucas!”

To be continued...

*In this story, a crime is committed and the police attempt to figure out exactly what happened. The detective knows she might not find the solution, but is determined to not stop trying anyway. This relates to the theme of “It is not your task to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it” because that is the mindset of the detective while solving the crime.*

### **Thievery on Shabbat By Emily Critz Age: 14**

Dinner at the Iberstein Manor, 7:32 PM, Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> of May

*[At the back of the stage hangs a large, ornate analog clock.]*

BEN IBERSTEIN *(sitting at a long, dark wooden table laden with food)*: Take a seat!

*[JAMES FRY sits down]*

FRY: You have a beautiful home. I can't believe I've never been here before.

BEN: Don't compliment me! Mother does all of the interior decorating.

FRY: Speaking of her, how's she doing?

BEN: She's as normal as ever.

FRY: That's good to hear. What have you been up to lately?

BEN: Lots! I just went to the coast and visited an old friend. I hadn't seen him in decades, so it was very nice to do some catching up.

FRY: Would I know this old friend of yours?

BEN: Yes, actually! George L.R. from high school. He called me out of the blue, said he was gathering

some people he'd nearly forgotten about. I forgot how much I liked that fellow. I should talk to him more, maybe get him to come here. Did you know him?

FRY: We were... acquaintances.

BEN: I see.

*[Forks clatter in a moment of awkwardness]*

Is Joan doing any better?

FRY: *(sigh)* No. And insurance won't cover the surgery because it's "experimental".

BEN: I'm so sorry to hear that. I know how much you've always loved her.

FRY: Yes. I would do anything for her.

*[The minute hand of the clock quickly spins a little more than once, and the hour hand ticks once.]*

FRY: Well, I should probably be going now. I've got some work to do.

BEN: Alright. It was nice to have you here.

FRY: Which exit should I take? There's so many, I don't want to get lost.

BEN: To the end of the hall and down one flight.

Turn right and you should get out eventually.

FRY: Okay. Thanks for having me!

*[FRY exits]*

*[The clock is illuminated, showing that the time is 8:49]*

### Excerpt from *The Daily Scroll*

#### **Iberstein Painting Stolen**

In the early hours of Saturday morning, the prestigious Iberstein family's *Portrait of Joseph Iberstein* was reported missing. The painting has an estimated



value of \$2.7 million, and its disappearance is causing a stir. Adeline Iberstein declines comment on the event, but her son was willing to speak for the family. “This is devastating,” Benjamin Iberstein reported. “It’s really a blow to have an item stolen that held not only such monetary value, but that is so important to the family. This portrait has been with the Ibersteins since we came to this area and made our fortune. I’m putting my faith in this town’s police department to recover our heirloom and in the court to bring to justice whoever committed this heinous crime.” The painting could have been stolen from the home any time between Friday evening and midnight.

Interrogation of Adeline Iberstein, LPD  
headquarters, 11:30 AM, Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> of May

*[A small room. On one side of a black table sits Adeline, on the other are two officers.]*

DETECTIVE NELLIE CARSON: Hello, Mrs. Iberstein.

ADELINE: Hello, Detective.

CARSON: We’re so sorry to inconvenience you like this, Ma’am. You understand that this is solely to help you find the thief, correct?

ADELINE: Yes, I do. And please call me Ada.

CARSON: Wonderful. So you also understand how important it is to tell us every detail that could possibly be of use?

ADA: Yes.

CARSON: Thank you. Can you explain the security the painting was kept under?

ADA: I thought it was very secure. The painting is kept in its own small, windowless room which also contains an ancient vase that was bought for me by my husband before he passed, two velvet chairs, and an intricate rug. There is only one door to this room, which is impossible to bust through. There are only two key cards with access to the room, both of which are kept under security at all times and will set off an alarm if you don't enter a specific password within a minute. There's also an old manual key in case of a power outage, but that was lost ages ago. And besides all that, this room is *the Iberstein Manor*. There are guards posted at every entrance and exit, and there are security cameras everywhere.

CARSON: I see. Was anything else in the room stolen?

ADA: No! The rest of the room was completely untouched. That's what's so strange.

CARSON: It's very strange. Can you show us the security footage of the painting's room and the surrounding hallways that night?

ADA: It doesn't exist.

CARSON: Excuse me?!

ADA: We don't keep security cameras in the painting's room and just outside it. I wanted to preserve the peace and privacy that the room offers. I thought it was so impossible to access that it didn't even matter. I see now that I was wrong.

CARSON: You really were, but I guess it's too late now. Where were you Friday evening?

ADA: I celebrated Shabbat with the family shortly after sundown. After that, I ate dinner with just my granddaughter Laney in the kitchen because my son, Ben, was having dinner with his friend. I put Laney to bed, read in the living room for a little while, and went to my room at 9:15. I left my bedroom around 8:30 in the morning. That was when I was informed by Rover, my head of security, that the painting had been stolen. The cameras can verify all of that.

CARSON: You were in your room the entire night, and did not leave once?

ADA: That's correct. I have my own bathroom directly attached to my bedroom, so I never had to leave.

CARSON: That's fantastic for eliminating you as a suspect. Not so fantastic for information about the thief... Sorry if this is insensitive, Ada, but how is your health? Can you walk and do other things like that with ease, or are they difficult?

ADA: I am seventy-two years old. I am healthy enough to live on the second floor, but not healthy enough to like it very much.

CARSON: Thank you for talking to us. You are dismissed.

Once Adeline had left the room, Nellie Carson pushed her chair back from the table with a loud scrape and sighed. She turned to the other officer.

“The next step is to talk to Ben, right?”

“Right,” he agreed. “He had more going on that night, and probably has more to say about what happened, and what was going on with that friend who was over for dinner. Also, my research found that he studied art in college, so he’ll have more to tell us about that.”

“Perfect.”

There was a silence, before Nellie hesitantly asked, “Who is Laney? I’ve never heard of her before. I know they like to be private about their lives, but I feel like I would’ve heard about a third Iberstein by now.”

“I don’t know any more than you do.”

Interrogation of Benjamin Iberstein, LPD  
headquarters, 1:00 PM, Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> of May

*[The same room as previous, but with Ben Iberstein across from the officers.]*

CARSON: Thank you for coming here on such short notice, Ben.

BEN: I’m happy to be here. I’ll do anything I can to find the rascalion who stole our art.

*[The detectives glance at each other, as if thinking ‘who the heck says “rascalion”?’]*

DETECTIVE STONE: I’m aware you studied art. What can you tell us about the painting?

BEN: The year it was made and the name of the artist has been lost to history. It’s a portrait of one of our ancestors, Joseph Iberstein.

STONE: What does the painting mean to your family?

BEN: Everything. *[a pause]*

STONE: Can you elaborate on that?

BEN: What else is there to say? It's gone.

CARSON *(hopefully)*: Is the painting insured?

*[BEN shakes his head]*

BEN: We didn't think we would need it.

*[The detectives glance at each other, as if thinking 'how foolish are these people, putting so much faith in their security, thinking their painting could never be damaged'??]*

CARSON: Your mother mentioned a "Laney". Is she your daughter?

BEN: Technically, no, she's my niece. My sister never got along with the family – she left. One day she showed up, dumped a baby on my parents and I, and left again. Laney is ten now. We haven't heard from her mother in ten years.

CARSON: And yet – I've lived here for nearly a decade and never heard of Laney until now. Is it possible you're... embarrassed of her?

*[silence]*

STONE *(gently)*: Let's move on.

CARSON: Tell us about the friend you had over for dinner.

BEN: That was my friend James Fry, though I just call him Fry. We've known each other since high school, but we only really became friends a few months ago. To be honest, I was sort getting the feeling recently that he only keeps me company

because we can do expensive things, go to nice restaurants, etcetera.

CARSON: Then why invite him over for dinner?

BEN: Because I was suspicious. He's in a spot of financial trouble and he's always been a bit... sneaky. I recorded our conversation, and I'm glad I did. He admitted he would do anything for money. And in the morning – painting gone!

CARSON: That's very interesting. You'll give the tape to us?

BEN: Of course.

CARSON: Where were you the entire night?

BEN: Mother, Laney, and I celebrated Shabbat together. At 7:30, Fry arrived and then we started eating dinner. At 7:49, he left the room with instructions for how to get out. At 9:30, I left to go sing karaoke. I got back around 11:30. Someone should be able to verify that I was there. When I got home, I immediately went to bed. I woke up around nine in the morning, and the rest is history.

CARSON: Okay. You seem very suspicious of Mr. Fry. Tell us more about why.

BEN: There's so much! I was talking about how I recently visited someone that I know for sure Fry hates. The name is George Leery-Rakes. Fry seemed *very* bitter about it. Most incriminating of all, I looked at the footage from the security cameras. Fry left the dining room at 8:49 – *but he left the building at 10:45 holding a rectangular object.*

CARSON: That's *very* interesting. We'll make sure to talk to him. You know the house and the security of

the painting much better than us. Is there any way you think that he could have stolen the painting and left with it without setting off any alarms?

BEN: I don't know. You're the police. That's for you to figure out.

CARSON: Thank you. You are dismissed.

*Note from Emily – I didn't have time to finish writing the story, so I'll sum up and explain what the rest of the events would be here:*

Next, the police interview James Fry. They present all the information Ben gave them, and of course he has no alibi because his wife is in the hospital. They get a warrant to search Fry's home and find it in his shed. They also interview Rover, the head of security, and find that there was supposed to be a guard posted at an exit Friday night that wasn't there. Stone and Carson discuss and find a few holes in the stories. Eventually, everything is figured out. Ben stole his own painting so that it would increase in value so that he could sell it later. He used the old manual key to the painting's room that they only use on Shabbat, which does not set off the alarm. Ada was an accomplice and did most of the planning, lying to the police on a few occasions. How did the painting end up at Fry's shed? The estranged sister is not as estranged as they say. She actually is still part of the family. Her daughter lives with the rest of the family because the sister can't support her on her own. The sister was the one who brought the painting to Fry's home. The exit that Fry went out

was the unguarded entrance. Ben tampered with the schedule and purposefully sent Fry out the unguarded exit. He left and came in several times undetected to commit the crime, while bribing people at the karaoke place to say he was there. He left in the same outfit that Fry had previously been in to make it seem like left later than he did, and snuck back in undetected.









“It is not your  
task to finish  
the work, but  
neither are you  
free to desist  
from it.”  
– Pirkei Avot