



2025 Session 2 Chapbook

EDITOR'S NOTE

This session was a menagerie that included a beaver, a turtle, a sloth, three caterpillars, eleven musicians, and a surprising number of flies. No matter what creatures might have been with us in the room, the writing that came out of it was beautifully, incisively human. Writers tried out new challenges, and they explored and expanded their skills, and the results show their continuing growth and experience in their craft. I hope you enjoy reading this collection as much as we did creating it.

Meir Hoberman

Creative Writing Session 2, 2025

Mentor

Meir Hoberman

Faculty

Rabbi Leah Berkowitz

Counselors

Pidge Thorner

Sadie Fleetwood

URJ 6 POINTS CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Life of Rufus	Sydney Robinson	Bonim	5
5 Courses	Ivy Cohen	Shorashim	8
The Oceans Are Gone	Jessica Weiss	Shorashim	18
Turning to Ice	Jessica Weiss	Shorashim	19
The Train of Sherlock	Jessica Weiss	Shorashim	20
The Cookie Jar: A Children's Story	Bennie Bar	Shorashim	22
The Turtle Show	Lior Fineman	Shorashim	26
First Prelude to Naijaev	Jay Rom	Olim	28
The Sea, The Song, and The Moon	Alice Hyde	Olim	32
Everything is a Circle	Alice Hyde	Olim	33
May I Come In?	Julian Kadesh	Olim	35
Familiar and Unknown	Julian Kadesh	Olim	37
Ethan and the War On Rock	Hannah Baumal	Olim	38
The Ocean	Hannah Baumal	Olim	44
I Forgot to Say	Emma Pun	Olim	45
Someone Like You	MJ Dorfman	Olim	49
I Hope You're Happy	MJ Dorfman	Olim	54
Modern-Day Kabbalah	MJ Dorfman	Olim	55

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

Author's Note

Authors note: this piece is based on my fav episode of The Twilight Zone, "Five characters in search of an exit". This is a collection of poems(ish) that I have written this year and this summer. This relates to the theme of the year because I like to think that each one of the character's different thoughts are connected, in a way.

Sincerely,

Sydney Robinson

The Life Of Rufus

By Sydney Robinson, age 11

Dedicated to Mrs. Pegolo for always inspiring me

From the moment Rufus was born, he was famous. He was the life of the party at the factory where he first opened his eyes. Of course, he had no family. He was made from machines and power. But, they were all family there. All identical, all perfect. Except for Rufus. He had warmer, kinder eyes than all the others. He had a wetter nose than all the others. And of course his crooked smile stood out in the sea of straight faces. And, that made him popular. Very popular. And he knew it. Sure, he was young. But he knew he was liked. Those were some of the best days of his life.

Then the truck came. The others had warned him about this. How they knew this, he did not know. No one escapes the truck. Ever. The truck came, and they were loaded onto the truck. They were on that truck for days. Months, maybe. And then, they stopped. They were stuffed into boxes. And through a crack in the cardboard, Rufus saw the sun for the

URJ 6 POINTS CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

first time. "It was one of the best moments of my life," said Rufus. "It felt like I was opening my eyes for the first time."

But then things changed. He was brought into a toy store. Well, none of the beavers knew that. They could not read the big bright sign that said "Get your toys cheap!" They were brought in from the back door and placed in the very center of the store. Rufus liked this very much. They were placed messily in a white, tall, spinnny, circular shelf. Then, they waited. Rufus tried to escape many times. "I just had to see the sunlight again." He explained. He failed every time. The store cashier just picked him up and put him back again. Every. Single. Time. Rufus began to realize something. His friends were being taken! A child would come, take a good look at one, pick them up and take them outside. Into the sunlight! He had to be bought. He Had to. So he tried to make himself look as loveable and cute as possible. It did not work. Once and a while, a small child would come and like his fluffy tail or soft skin, but would take one look at his crooked face and say that he looked weird. "I didn't understand. How could something that made me so popular now make me disliked?" He asked many years later. After many months of sitting and waiting, a yellow sign sat above their heads that read in fine black Sharpie: 50% off. But of course, none of them could read. By that point, there were very few of them left. Only two friends sat beside him. Until they were bought too. And then, only Rufus was left. "Those were the saddest, loneliest days of my life," Rufus said. Then a woman came in and spotted Rufus. She saw his crooked face and kind eyes, picked him up, and bought him. She brought him outside into the sunlight, and into her car. Soon, they were at camp. "You'll have a great day at CAA." She said. She brought him inside, and his new life began. Dress up, Shabbat, and much more. Campers and staff make things for Rufus, like hats and bow ties. And, Rufus gets to see the beautiful sunshine every single day. He goes outside, and sees it through the window. Rufus may be old now, but he is still the life of the party.

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

In 2022, Rufus was named by a red haired kid in Bonim. The name was picked out of a hat at random. And to this day, he is very grateful that his name is not Chunky or Chubby, or any of the other suggestions.

And of course, during the school year, the fun doesn't end. Early in his time at camp, Rufus made many friends. The Gesher goat, Gregory is hilarious, Caam the camp bear is creative, Odie the Olim lemur is interesting, and the Shoreshim sloth, Sol Amadeus The 5th, is smart. "I learn so much from them every day," says Rufus. During the school year, Rufus and his friends sit in the storage unit. They guard the Torah, sing songs, and Hula Hoop. And when summer arrives again, they make sure that everything is neat and in perfect condition. Even back when Rufus was a child, he was loved. And he always will be.



Author's Note

Those who sow in tears will reap in joy: when indulging in hard work, the results will pay off. In my piece, most of the characters have gotten to their place in life by doing very little labor and feeding off the success of others. Therefore, they should not reap in joy. I hope you enjoy.

Sincerely,

Ivy Cohen

5 Courses

Ivy Cohen, age 13

Five entered the restaurant with hope of nothing more than an entertaining night and delicious meals to remember. Both became true, but had an intriguing way of developing. The first to arrive to the Michelin Star was a tall man with a tall face which stretched from bone to bone. Fragments of cartilage lacked satisfaction and disgust played across expressively in a timely fashion. His figure was elongated and his eyes were set deep in his molded skull. His hair was remarkably gelled from his hair line that his forehead ran for miles along his soft skin. (His soft skin was from the large amounts of lotion he applied three times a day after each shower.)

When arriving, the unimpressed waitress asked for his name to match him to his assigned seat. He straightened up. "Food critic," and the lady led him to a tightly captive table hidden in a small corner of the establishment. He swiped his finger along the wood and gagged at the thin coat of dust along his finger. He asked the waitress politely for a tall glass of water, specifically without the appearance of ice, just in case someone grabbed the cubes with their vile fingers. He then attended the bathroom to wash his hands.

Minutes after, a short, stubby man arrived with a half buttoned Hawaiian shirt and a look of nostalgia. He analyzed each set piece of silverware and etched the format of the restaurant in his mind. He longed for that environment of freshly scrubbed dishes and that slight whiff of burnt goods. He was led to the same table the food critic had come to and eyed the small space with judgment. "Coffee, black," he told the waitress, even though it was far into the depths of the night already. As he sat in the only chair with arms, he shivered at the ghosts of his memories. The man had actually been a chef in his lifetime. If you investigated closely, you would be able to see the tan lines across his forehead from his large cap.

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

The next person to arrive was actually two, a larger man with impeccable taste in watches, and an older woman with saggy skin. She seemed out of place, both in the location and in her own garb. She wore a (very expensive I might add) long tapered dress that drew into a tight fabric latched around her neck. Little did most know, the woman was without a home, living desolate along a string of enclosed courtyards. The man was most renowned, being one of the richest in the country and owning a company with questionable legal contracts when it came to his workers. His skin escaped his tightly held shirt as he chuckled deeply with his booming, beef infected breath. "Whiskey for me and- what would you like suga?" He asked freely to the woman by his side. She had barely been given water in the past months and had little knowledge of polite etiquette. "Can I have a Fanta?"

When the food critic returned, he dragged a chair out and sat across from the CEO and adjacent to the chef. The cook gave him a look of loathing. Their eyes met dryly as they stared in hate. As this meeting was occurring, the door swung open and the hinges released a fearful yelp as a younger girl stepped through with unrequited self-respect. She looked to be seventeen, but did not act a day over ten. Her lips were traced with puffing lip gloss and her eyelashes were weighted with heavy clumps of mascara. Her skin was tight from all the skin care her daddy had bought her from freshman year. Let us hope nobody will tell her how products expire. She knew which table was hers, which was the table everyone else belonged to, and sat most stubbornly. "I'll have a Shirley temple!" She yelled, with some belief that a certain member of staff would hear her. With the short appearance of silence, she muttered disgusted under her breath, "Gosh, a little respect would be nice."

Outside of the brick built dining house, a station of reporters had taken their claim of land for a new story on the CEO, who was the most controversial money maker in the media. They had also been intrigued why those specific five had been chosen to test and review the newly opened restaurant. The CEO, for his famous exterior. The no family, older lady from the streets because she was simply a tactic for clout, belonging to the business man. The inspector, because he was one of the most respected food critics of all time, and the chef because of his contorted history with the culinary arts. The girl, because her father was a reporter, but was off to some far away place like Bolivia or Paris, so she decided herself to take the reservation. But why would she do such an act? There was a particular reason- and it had to do with one of the other attendees.

The meal was written to be a delight.

URJ 6 POINTS CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

COURSE 1: FRENCH ONION SOUP

The moment the soup arrived with its delicious smell of caramelized onions and its soft glaze of chopped scallions, the girl immediately complained.

"Ew." She poked at it with a fork. "I thought the food was supposed to be good?"

The chef began slurping the treat with a spoon and rolling his eyes back in ecstasy. He then faced the youthful girl with mock confusion. "Teenage girls have no taste buds?"

She wrinkled her faux-freckled nose at his ludicrous response. "Chefs can't raise teenage girls, huh?"

The food critic began to write distinct, loopy notes into a pen pad while avoiding eye contact with the cook. The conversing was quite awkward, and even more awkward for the socially isolated inspector.

Each of their drinks had arrived, which the homeless lady was quite pleased with. She had never had a Fanta before and was in awe of the orange substance. Her first sip was slow, gauging the perplexity of the taste. But then, she began to gulp almost the entire cup of the fructose syrup, orange flavoring; her mouth filling and leaving a gritty aftertaste. The young girl eyed her suspiciously, as if belonging to no home made her equivalent to scum. Though her manners were lacking, she had mostly been a kind soul. Most believed she was simply too poor to plant herself down in a nice, cozy abode, which was true, but the reason was not because of her having no stable job. The reason was that she grew aggravated by obtaining large amounts of cash. She did not want a home, and preferred being among the small coves of the outdoors.

The waitress came to their table with a forced smile, as if she had been training to turn her lips and show only the tips of her teeth. "Everything alright?"

Every person began to launch into a long intricate dialogue on how beautiful the serving was and delicious their dish had been, except the girl and the lady. The younger girl scoffed at the question and pulled her light brown hair behind her ears in disgust. She had only straightened it hours before, but with the humidity the same frizzy waves had returned. The lady was more entertained by her own infected nails than the food in front of her.

"Slide the extra underneath my file, got it doll?" The CEO winked as he made a sound between his lips like a ruptured cash register. The waitress had a peek of a snarl in her mouth before leaving for the kitchen. The business man constantly had been making sly comments on classified concernings which no one knew of.

"This is just delightful," the chef finally spoke within the gaps of silence, "CEO, would you like to go to compliment the chef with me, who has bestowed us such scrumptious food?"

The CEO gave the man a satisfied chuckle and stood, the table slightly

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

catching on his lower stomach.

The food critic laughed slowly, for what reason, was unknown. Perhaps he was trying to fit in, or maybe he thought that it was the correct action to take. But either way, it ended with abrupt embarrassment. He turned to the lady without a home and tried to be relatable with a thick grin, but it was not returned.

The food was then taken. The first course came to an end.

COURSE 2: CAVIAR ON A SPINACH KNISH

Only three were left when the appetizer appeared under their very hands. Featuring, a grouping of small, black eggs floating on top of a pastry baked with rows of freshly washed spinach. The young girl sniffed; it was unsatisfactory for her liking. The lady immediately penetrated the knish with her fork, delivering it straight to her mouth. Between the walls of her teeth grew sprouts of greens. The food inspector watched in horror as he picked up both a fork and knife and began to cut the dish in symmetrical pieces. For some reason, though he found her repugnant, he was quite fond of her. It may have been due to her slight resemblance to his late mother, or maybe he had just grown attached because it was a coping mechanism. The inspector recalled the chef who had been sitting only mere inches away from him. He grew weary and tried to push the past deep into the long lost crevices of his mind. He kept many things back there, from his daughter's birthday to his favorite pair of socks.

"I remember you," the homeless lady shouted out of turn. She stared, mouth agape (lodged with half chewed food) at the young girl. "You used to walk by me when you were leaving from school."

Her face was not nearly as expressive as the older lady's. It may have been that she had already recognized her, or maybe she just had no care towards the matter. She was way below her social class. "No you don't."

"Yes I do."

"No—you don't." Why the girl was contradicting her on such a small subject was not disclosed, but perhaps she was fearful of such a disturbing woman knowing her.

"I remember. You looked very different. Puffier cheeks, wetter eyes. Were you, crying—?"

The young girl's face turned sour. A wrinkled expression rippled down her small, intricate muscles. "No. I wasn't."

"And there were these girls, were they your friends?"

Her fingers embraced her palms as she began to beat her thigh repeatedly.

"No, no. They were—teasing you. Pushing you. Calling you ugly."

"Shut up!" Her back arched like one of a feline. Her distressed reaction caused the plates to flutter up and crash down. Shards did not isolate, but

URJ 6 POINTS CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

cracks did appear.

The food critic winced at the sudden mess. Out of his large cross shoulder bag he pulled a tube of disinfectant wipes. He briskly began to rub the table back and forth of its disaster. He was very much afraid of bacteria.

Out of a swinging door swayed the two confident men. They had not complimented the chef, but instead talked to each other of certain matters that will be revealed later on. The retired chef looked oddly uneasy and the CEO wore the same face he always wore: pride. They sat down next to each other and began to interfere with the past events of the table.

“What’s goin’ on?” Asked the CEO blandly.

The girl returned to her seat at a slow pace, still staring at the lady with hatred.

The business man took a moment to inspect her. Inferring on her personal life would be quite the entertainment, but intruding, oh that was surely more interesting. “So tell me, young lady, what is it like to be you?”

“Terrible.”

“Do you have both of your parents?”

“My parents are divorced, but my dad loves me.”

“Are you sure?”

As the intriguing conversation between the girl and the CEO continued, the chef slipped in heinous comments to the food critic. The chef’s eye brows furrowed. Just by gazing upon the man made him madden.

The food was then taken. End of course.

COURSE 3: RAINBOW TROUT

The rainbow trout was not nearly as unappetizing as it was labeled to be. It was a crescent of translucent thin fish. Though, it was certainly not rainbow, which was made apparent by the young girl who was planning to boast of it on her public story. The chef immediately recognized the carefully designed plating. The sauce was painted meticulously in a semi circle. It was barely even visible since the proportions were so miniscule.

“Pretty nice?” The food critic asked the older lady, questioning if that was the right thing to say.

The lady ran her fingers carefully along the spine of the creature (or what was thought to be the spine.) She picked it up from the designated spot on the plate and inspected it thoroughly. Then, the slimy creature slipped through her calloused fingers and it fell solemnly to the ground.

“Silly me.” She smiled as she reached down to pick it up. She was struggling, so she gripped the CEO’s leg as an anchor to keep herself upright. Her hand slipped down as she sat back up and tossed the slice back on her plate. Slime

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

that had not always been there fell and made a splashing sound. The food critic found this unusually gross; his face, twisting into disgust. She laughed, unaware of their silent judgment.

“So, any occasions after this?” Asked the food critic slowly, still recovering from the earlier situation.

“Boarding school,” the young girl complained, her face snarling at the sight of the chef.

“That’s good for a young girl like yourself,” the chef replied with an overly exaggerated smile, “too bad such a decision was not to be made earlier. I bet it would be better for everybody.”

Her lips pursed and her face melted. And in a low, almost incoherent whisper, she spoke, “Both you and my mom can wake up on the wrong side of your bed. The side closest to the window.”

“You know each other?” The older lady became intrigued.

“We all know each other, practically,” the food critic responded kindly.

The CEO chuckled. “You know, we have not taken a moment to recognize the amazing food critic in our midst.” Suddenly, he stood most unexpectedly. And then, he exited with a jaunty skip out of the establishment. He was then in front of the camera crew where he announced loudly, “You know who’s in here? One of the most famous food critics of all time for God’s sake!”

Embarrassed, the critic shrunk in his seat, his hands over his skinny face. One of the main reasons he had chosen his career path was because he had hated attention. The business man had obviously been aware of this because when he returned, he arrived with a self satisfied grin. He turned to the chef and nodded. He had been doing him a favor.

The food was then taken. End of course.

COURSE 4: RAW TUNA IN A BATH OF SOY

It smelled not like fish, but gave off the most voluminous whiff of something sweet. The fish was rounded like the arch of a castle. It was almost swimming in the soy like when it was alive.

“I am allergic to soy,” the chef announced to the table. Apologetically, the waitress removed his plate and replaced it with a dry piece of fish. It was not nearly as scrumptious as it had once looked, maybe even a little shriveled.

“Young girl,” the CEO began to say with a mouth full of fish, “I have a proposition for you.”

She stared at her food dully. She had not eaten a single bite of anything. “Okay...”

“Well,” he picked his handkerchief and rubbed his speckles below his

URJ 6 POINTS CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

chins, “how would you like to be one of the proud workers at CEO’s SOCKS AND LOTS.” He grinned proudly at the company he had founded. He did not actually find it, his father had stolen the rights and passed it to him along with copious bundles of money. But, it was practically the same for the business man.

And though it seemed the old lady’s origami face could not have been more wrinkled, it folded over in a frown. “Servitude,” she muttered under her fish ridden breath.

He turned to face the woman next to him so quickly that one of his buttons completely popped off. He laughed nervously. “Old women and their fables.” The business man had been known to throw things in the “fantasy” file rather than accepting reality. His workers were not kept to the law provided regimen on how they should be treated.

The young girl, at this point, had grown so frustrated that she had almost completely bent her silver spoon. “You all hate me, don’t you.” She asked this not as a question, but as a statement with a spark of anger. A fire awaiting to burn.

“Of course not,” the older lady cooed softly. What a kind soul she truly was, even to the most obnoxious.

“Of course,” the chef spat at almost the exact same moment with a look of certainty. When facing the woman who had interrupted his speech, his cheeks flushed a vibrant orange.

Suddenly, in a moment of complete anguish, the girl’s cleanly kept loathing boiled over. Her feet embarked on a climb to her chair where she stood tall, full of pride. “You’re not my father!” She screamed so powerfully, as if she had been meaning to say those very words for quite some time. It soon became apparent that she was not spitting at not just anyone, but the chef. “I don’t care if you marry my mother. I don’t care if you use her for the cash because you are too dense to keep your own job with the “culinary arts,” she mocked, “and I simply don’t care about any other thing you do- but shipping me off to a boarding school to get rid of me?!” Her eyes were enflamed, she was greatly maddened that no one dared to condemn her back to the ground.

“The only reason you came here was to say those very words to me.”

Her eyes thinned. “Take a sip of your coffee, you proud man.”

The chef was stunned, almost in awe of such an outstanding move. He gripped his cup, and with a smile, took a sip while his eyes met hers. “Your mother and I are a beautiful pair. Like cheese and wine. It’s not my fault she has such a disturbed child- why this coffee disgusting. Who puts salt in coffee?”

She grabbed her fork, and just as she tried to lodge it in her enemy’s forehead, the homeless lady wrapped a cloth around her back and gave her a warm smile. “Come with me, child. I’ll teach you the right ways to live.”

For some reason, for some odd, a completely unpredictable reason, the young lady believed her. She stepped down and followed her to the bathroom where she would presumably collect herself and return anew. But before she left

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

the vicinity of the table, she shouted at the highest pitch, the loudest point, “you’re a sucky chef anyways.”

And though these words were said by such a disrespectful girl, he was suddenly in a state of total aggravation. No return. “I’m great! I’m amazing!” He turned, his eyes huge, “you all think I am great and amazing?”

The silence was uncanny.

He banged his hands against the table and pushed himself away. Then, turning into a mad man, he was set ablaze, bursting through the restaurant doors where the camera crew sat.

“Don’t you know!” He began to scream, his hair sticking straight into the air, “I am an amazing chef! And I would still be!” He pointed to a man at the table in anguish. “If it weren’t for that stinkin’ man. And his stupid obsession with cleanliness.”

“It was absolutely hideous in there!” The food critic responded sharply, he felt a need to protect his reputation.

“Nobody cares about nothing! No one cares if the sink was full! No one cares if one thing was burnt! No one cares if one employee’s hands were not washed! No one cares if there was one, singular vermin crawling around. And no one cares what I’m about to do to you!” And just before he could sprint back inside to strangle the food critic (on live TV with hundreds of viewers) something odd occurred. He collapsed. He did not return to his feet.

The food was then taken. End of course.

COURSE 5: LEMON MERINGUE ON TOP OF A BED OF COCONUT CREMÉ

Now two were left. The food critic, a lousy, cowardly man curled up in a corner, and the CEO, a most uneducated and unworthy fellow. But, at least the meringue looked absolutely gorgeous. It had that perfect burnt look, and a warm coating that hid the soft under layers of folded marshmallow. And the coconut smell drifted into each nostril and left a symphony for each consumer. However, instead of contemplating the beautiful dessert, they both began to go into rambles on the fallen man they had just been next to.

“He’s been poisoned!” Yelled the CEO. “They’re coming after me next! I mean- I am the most important-“

“No, no, no.” The food critic began to beat his head from terrifying anxieties. “It was the germs. The chef was repulsive when it came to hygiene.”

The CEO began to inspect the man’s coffee. He traced his fingers around the rim and gave it a good sniff. “There’s soy in here.” His eyes lit up in understanding. “That girl! She poisoned him! When she was up causing a ruckus, she poisoned him!”

With a sharp realization of a horrendous spectacle, the food critic

URJ 6 POINTS CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

quickly approached the women's bathroom in search of the girl who had committed such an ugly act of violence. Though fearing for the scene he had seen, he was secretly pleased with the outcome. He very much believed that the chef was correctly put out of business, and if anything, the girl had done the world a favor.

As the food journalist was off in search of the two women, the CEO sat unconcerned. Though the chef and him had been friends, he did not mind the fact that he was no longer around. He mostly used his appearance for his own needs and thought of him more as an object for his own use. But as he began to slouch back, he noticed that the bulge in his pocket had dispersed. No, it hadn't dispersed, it had disappeared. Frantically, he dug through his deep set pocket which was almost pinned to his oily skin. His wallet was gone. He recalled a time before when that homeless lady had returned a horrendous fish to her plate. And how she had used his leg as an anchor- and had- she had-

"That wretched woman pick-pocketed me!" He threw his hands on his head and almost in a drastic move, pulled his sweat-slicked toupee to the floor.

Quick paced skidding could be heard around the corner before the critic came into view. "Uh-" he paused for a moment, preparing himself for the following words, "they escaped through the window."

In heated seconds of sheer awkwardness, the CEO had finally decided to leave with a dramatic flipping of mood. The film team would certainly love it.

Most of the news crews had been by the chef, sticking him with apipens and calling 911, but a couple were more accustomed to their career rather than human suffering. "Mr. CEO," one of the reporters chimed with a mechanical camera smile, "what do you have to tell the people about your dining experience at this new restaurant?" Instead of fleeting the scene, he halted and placed his large hands around the microphone. "It was awful! Horrendous! Worse experience with fine dining in all of this earth. It is simply repulsive, a vile excuse for an establishment that serves food! Practically inedible. Hands down, worst place I have ever been!" After his long awaited rant, he screamed at his driver on the phone before seeing that his ride was parked directly in front of him. He opened the door, and slammed it shut as he muttered in annoyance. He was certainly irked by his experience at the place.

The food critic tried to find an alternative door to escape through, when realizing there wasn't, he also attempted to crawl through the window in the women's bathroom. Though, to his embarrassment, the waitress caught him and started yelling as if there was an attempt of murder (which there was, just not in this part of the story.) He got a lifetime ban and was told adamantly that he was "undeserving of the title 'human'."

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

The homeless lady and the young girl boarded a bus to a far off town in the middle of the abyss where they grew a farm and ironically, started a sock business. They managed well, before the older woman got arrested for kidnapping and spent three long, gruesome years in jail. But after that, she returned, and they started their company again where it was even more successful. However, they soon both got arrested for tax fraud, and their company got sold to the highest bidder.

The restaurant went out of business after the CEO's ludicrous account of his experience. After the customers left, the waitress begrudgingly cleared up and closed down.

The place was taken. End of restaurant.

Author's Note

I think that these pieces connect with the theme via the fact that whenever I think of tears, I think of the lines that farmers put into their soil right before they plant seeds. Under the water, sometimes, there can be long, straight, lines made from the waves of the ocean. These also remind me of tears.

Sincerely,

Jessica Weiss

The Oceans Are Gone

Jessica Weiss, age 13

The lord did it over.
The oceans—they're gone.
All the fish—dried up.
Dead.
From the plankton,
to the humpback whales.
They said that we ruined it.
We all did.
With our pollution.
We were given a gift
and we ruined it.
Wasted it.
Destroyed it.
So, they took it back.
Just like that.

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

Turning To Ice

Jessica Weiss, age 13

I awake to the feeling of cold air and movement around me.

‘Not again,’ I say in my head.

I’m in an odd grey-ish thing.

Then, suddenly, I’m falling. And I’m falling fast.

But for some reason, I can’t scream. I just... exist...

As I fall, I’m getting colder by the zeptosecond; a trillionth of a billionth of a single second.

Now, I’m seeing a tundra of ice spikes and snow come into my vision.

Wait... something's happening... I can no longer move, the coldness is becoming numbing... I can’t feel anything now...

The ground is becoming closer now, a sheet of ice. My vision is dimming. I’m struggling to keep my eyes open now. The ground is so close now... Wait-

Shatter.

I hit the thin sheet of ice.

It cleaves open and I plunge into the freezing cold waters of the Antarctic.

My eyes close for a final time as I become one with the glaciers- soon to be melted again by global warming and this whole thing will start over again.

But, one thing is for sure, my life will no longer be eternal.

The Train of Sherlock

Jessica Weiss, age 13

“Sherlock!” Dr. Watson yelled a few yards away from the legendary detective. Amazing and spectacular in his ability to—

“Working on it!” yelled the detective.

Currently, the legendary detective and his faithful assistant were involved in a chase for the case that the detective decided to take on.

Usually the detective goes through the entirety of the case with his faithful partner before he accepts them.

But as of late, the detective and Watson have been drifting apart.

They no longer had tea-time together whenever Big Ben called the time of day. They no longer walked together to get their morning newspapers from the paper-boy down the street.

Little did the legendary detective know who was truly behind this case. Sherlock had been on this case for a few months by now, longer than usual for the famous detective, and had little to no idea who was behind the robbery of the local pickle shop.

This case was especially personal for the detective because a close friend of his ran the shop.

At the current moment, Sherlock was driving a train going at eighty miles per hour. The fastest the train can go.

Suddenly, the train car in front of the one that Sherlock was in, the train car without any other cars attached to it, took a swift turn on the tracks, an unexpected turn by Sherlock. Now, Sherlock’s train was going in the complete wrong direction and was heading straight for a dead end. An old, red, brick wall.

“Darn it!” Sherlock shrilled.

“Is that even Camp?” Watson replied.

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

“Doesn’t matter!”

Sherlock then reached for the train’s lever and pulled down hard. But the lever refused to move. Sherlock then realized that retrying to pull the lever was fruitless in its intentions and quickly ran away from the control station of the train, bringing Watson along by his jacket’s sleeve. Sherlock was heading towards the closet exit.

“Sherlock?! What in G-d’s name are you doing?!”

Sherlock suddenly opened the door to reveal rolling hills and an nearing wall.

“Jumping!” Sherlock yelled.

Then, Sherlock jumped out of the moving train, bringing Watson along with him.

As Sherlock rolled down the never-ending hills, the only thing on his mind was as follows, ‘Who is behind the pickle heist?’.

As the light came back into his vision, Sherlock realised he smelled the scent of vinegar and artificial coloring that his friend’s shop swore isn’t in the pickles but truly is.

Sherlock turned over to see Dr. Watson next to him with a cracked jar of pickles leaking out of his overworn jacket.

“Watson? You were behind the pickle heist all along?” Sherlock asked.

“You never give me any credit! I thought we were partners! But all you want to do all day is eat those stupid pickles. So, I took matters into my own hands!”

In the end, Sherlock turned his own partner into the police, and quit eating pickles forever.

I guess something as simple as eating too many pickles, can turn a friendship into a broken one.

Moral of the story, don’t be like Sherlock and myself who eat too many pickles.

Author's Note

One way my story can relate to this summer's theme is when Beth was creating her plan, she was all angry since she did not get the last cookie. She "sowed" in tears. Then, in the end of the story, she did get the last cookie and a story she would share and laugh about with her sister. She "reaped" in joy.

Sincerely,

Bennie Bar

The Cookie Jar: A Children's Story

Bennie Bar, age 13

PART ONE: DISCOVERING THE EMPTY JAR

It's empty. The cookie jar is empty. Who took the final cookie, where not a morsel was imperfect? Nobody knows. There are no crumbs, not a stray chocolate chip left in the milky white jar. I wanted that cookie so bad, my stomach could have exploded. And yet, a thief stole that cookie so meticulously baked just for me. As a grudge holder, I won't back down from my intense hatred for the individual who grabbed my chocolate masterpiece and took a bite. Suddenly, I hear soft footsteps pattering behind me. I almost growl at the recognizable rhythm of her smelly feet walking toward me.

"It was me. I'm sorry!" The criminal cries, stretching out the Y annoyingly.

I turn around to my sister Lila's innocent smile, decorated with a chocolate smear, masking her disloyalty. Without a word, I storm off, ready to plan my revenge.

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

PART TWO: THE PLAN

In my room, I slam my sticker-adorned bedroom door with such ferocity I'm almost positive the house shakes. I open my old beige drawer and find my red notebook: *The Notebook Of Vengeance*. With my black as coal pen, I write down a simple 3-step plan. Step One: Bake a batch of my sister's absolute favorite sweets: sugar cookies with buttercream icing and sprinkles. My mouth waters thinking about them. Step Two: place them in the jar and wait until Lila comes with those grimy, stealing hands. Step Three: Wait for the last cookie to be in sight, watch as my sister reaches to grab it, and snatch it at the speed of light from her baby blue fingernails. My forehead creases as I calculate when to prepare the cookies, but I figure it out soon enough. I smile slyly and my eyebrows raise in utter disbelief at my brilliant mind. I rub my hands together and whisper to my stuffed pig: "time to take back what is mine."

PART THREE: LILA GETS HOME - AVOID GETTING CAUGHT

The cookies are done. Their sweet smell wafts through the house, and I take a deep breath. I decided to only bake three cookies; one for me, one for my sister, and one for the final step... I hear the front door creak open, letting in the cool evening air, and I bite my cheek to hide the evil grin that threatens to come out. My father's deep voice echoes through the house as he announces that he'll be taking a shower. My mother calls back, "okay." My sister walks into our kitchen and sheepishly smiles at me.

"I'm sorry, Beth! I forgot you wanted it!" She whines. I plaster on a fake happy face and try to accept her apology as nonchalantly as I can.

“Oh, it’s fine, Lila. I understand!”

She smiles happily and trots over to the pantry. “Ooh! Where’d we get these from? They’re my favorite.” She reaches her backstabbing hand to the top shelf and successfully grabs the jar from its designated spot next to the Cheerios.

“Chelsea and I made them while you were at dance,” I reply, lying with ease about my friend coming over. Lila nods and munches on a cookie. She closes her eyes and mmm’s while nodding.

“Wow, these are goo-oo-ood!!” She squeals and offers a cookie to me. I take it and slowly devour it as Lila races upstairs to shower. As she showers, I begin to prepare the scene. It’s quite dark by the time I hear Lila thunder down our wooden stairs, shouting to our mom that she’s going to grab a bedtime snack. The stars are out and the moon is shining. Everything is set in place: the cookie jar is in the center of our marble countertop, and I’m hiding in the pantry, ready to strike.

PART FOUR: REVENGE

“Be-eth! Are you down here?” Lila calls as she skips into the kitchen. I keep quiet. She begins to hum a song, and I get a bit distracted trying to decipher whether it’s Sabrina Carpenter or Ariana Grande. Suddenly, I hear the glass top to the jar clatter on the table. I peek through the crack of the pantry door and catch Lila fishing the final cookie out. Sprinkles fall on the table and I burst out of the pantry. I scream “CHARGE!” in my head and slap the cookie out of Lila’s hand. My hair is flying and my eyes are wild as I stuff the crumbly mess into my mouth, not bothering to savor the sweetness. “Victory!” I call out to the house, sounding like a mad scientist.

We seem to be frozen in time. Lila stares at me with wide eyes. Her mouth is parted, creating a small, surprised O. Her eyebrows are raised, and she sort of looks like a tan Lisa

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

Simpson in her orange nightgown.

I'm standing in a warrior yoga pose on our wooden floor. My 'Rolling Stones' T-Shirt has a smudge of icing on the R, and I can feel cookie crumbs stuck on the corners of my mouth. My lips are pursed in a slight grin.

Time unpaused, and Lila and I cascade into uncontrollable giggles. We scream with laughter and bend over when our stomachs begin to hurt. "What was that?!" Lila shouts into the air. I try to shush my sister since our parents are probably trying to sleep, but we end up just laughing more.

"Oh my gosh, Lila, why'd you have to eat the last cookie?! I was so mad!!"

"No, you ate the last cookie!"

"Oh my goodness, I was ridiculous!"

"You got so mad! You went crazy!"

"I know-w-w!"

Lila and I go back and forth, calling each other out and cackling.

"Okay, okay. Truce?" I say, sobering up and smiling. Lila grins in return.

"Truce."

Author's Note

*I am Lior and among one of the counselors I am known as Turtle Child. And I am in Shorashim Jewma. I am roommates with Ari and Emmett, so let's put our hands together for them. *Insert clapping here.* I got the idea for a turtle because I had been wearing my turtle shell that I got for my B'Mitzvah from my friend Charlie as a present and I thought it would be funny because on outer space day I wore it to be a space turtle, and now I'm writing about said space turtle! Thank you, thank you! And now, my sincerelees...*

Sincerely,

from Lior Fineman

THE TURTLE SHOW

Lior Fineman, Age 13

This story is dedicated to Mother Nature for making Turtles, and to my friend Charlie for buying me my turtle shell for my B'Mitzva.

Hello I am Turtle, but you can call me Grampa #2. I know you're probably asking who in the big, wide, long, tall, giant insert more big describing words* world is this guy, and because I'm lazy and don't want to explain; who I am, why I'm here, or what I am I'll just say insert answer here*

This is why when your a turtle you just stay in you shell, if you know what I mean Insert laughter here Ha Ha Ha*

So me, I came from space when I fell. Yes I fell in the only place with zero gravity.

I did run into some tin cans, fell into a trash bag, and ate the rest of a half eaten boonAAAA. This is why trash goes in the trash, not the

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

street, not the big splashy hole with blue stuffs (Ocean), and not space.

Then finally after a long bumpy ride, fall, drop... stuff I landed on Earth, the human planet. Then I got stuck in a plastic tin can wrap, and after I finally escaped it, I felt something touch my fin as I rosed, rised, upped, hightended, insert other rising words* until I was out of the big splashy hole with blue stuffs (Ocean) and got put on a splashy blue stuffs car (Boat) that was very oddly shaped. Like where's its top? No straps on the sitters (Seat), come on clip your straps (Seatbelt) what if you hit something. Your healthynessesses is not my concern. A loud splash is made as we have come to a pause, "Why are we stopping" no response, everyone just acts like I don't exist. Soon, I feel the net that I'm in lift as I'm put on a board with slice marks as I see a person with a tall-bladed slicer (Cleaver) with a DNA stranded bracelet string that looks carefully and delicately hand made with a matching one on the person holding it but the person's said BFF on some beads, whatever that means? I need to find a way out of this net, a thought comes up in my head as it's interrupted by a slice, as the person hesitates I get just enough time and space in the net to crawl out through the sliced area as the rough net scrapes my shell leaving marks almost identical to the slices on the board I was just on, now I do the dasher out as more people wearing cloth attached to them by two strings with holes that have an end to them (Apron) chase and grab at me. After 2 minutes I've escaped with only a couple; scrapes, cuts, and bruises on my shell. I look down with my front fins on my knees, as I try to catch my breath while my heart beats a heavy beat. I'm left thinking of how I could be still on that sliced upped board, in the net, but in many different pieces. My heart pounds out of my thorax, my mind is racing with thoughts faster than the best mario cart player can go in speed...

nothing...

TO BE CONTINUEDEDEDDEDDEDDED...

Author's Note

This piece is positioned as the first of multiple planned pieces to help me get used to writing within the setting. As such, it is much shorter, and much less detailed, than I would prefer. Inspired in part by a late-night revelation, and in part by simple interest in an element of the setting, this piece will hopefully intrigue, if nothing else.

Now, sit back, relax, and enjoy.

Jay Rom

First Prelude to Naijaev

Jay Rom, age 15

A coin hit Rieval in the stomach. Two more followed in quick succession. She glared at Fiyah, who was holding a coin wrapper in their hand and smirking. Rieval ignored them, instead looking at the maps on the table, the first of the Vaelen Republic—her home country—and the second of Jiom, a port city on the northern edge of the Republic. Her finger traced the path her ship would take from northern neighbor Shiyet down to that city, crossing open sky.

“So, you head out in a couple days, right? Got all of your gear Juiced up?” Fiyah’s voice was cheerful, as usual.

“Two days, yes. Knives are charged, boots as well. Shouldn’t have any issues until I get to the dock.”

“Well, should be easy enough. Just a little surveillance mission, eh? Check out whatever they’ve got cooking, run on home before you get caught in anything. I doubt you’ll even need your knives!”

“Here’s hoping... it’s just, I feel that a secret military project that close to the Einin region isn’t a good sign.”

The Einin Autonomous Region had been trying to join the Shiyeth Federation—where Fiyah was from—for a while now, and the Vaelen government had largely ignored it, despite Einin being within its claimed borders. Knowing what Vael had been doing elsewhere, though... Rieval couldn’t help but worry.

“C’mon, it’ll be fine! The higher-ups don’t think anything big’s going on, and my gut says the same! Just trust me, or I’ll throw more coins at you.” They smirked again.

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

"Fine, I suppose. Well, I should be packing. See you." She stood up and started to leave the room, only for another coin to hit her square in the back. With another glare, she left.



Rieval stabbed, and with a flash of electricity, another guard fell unconscious. That's the last of the Juice on my first knife. Six or so uses left on the other, thankfully. Ignoring her heartbeat pounding in her ears, she turned the corner, to see exactly what she was looking for. A state-of-the-art Kial-class carrier, hovering within the dock. Blue-green glowing cables connected to it from various apparatuses around the room, refilling its Juice batteries. She scanned the room, revealing... only a couple of guards. Strange. Was this bigger than her bosses had thought, requiring more secrecy?

Either way, she had to infiltrate. She snuck around the room—thankfully, those apparatuses provided great cover—until she found an entrance into the ship. She waited for the guards' eyes to move away, then sent the mental command to her boots to activate. A burst of wind shot out from them, launching her across the dock and into the ship. She cut it then, hoping the guards would think it just the AC activating. If only her heartbeat could stop... it seemed to be trying to alert the guards, with how loud it was.

Focus. She took a deep breath, and thought back to the blueprints she'd memorized. Okay, down this hall, through that door. Take the stairs instead of the elevator... But her focus was disrupted; the ship began to shake, and then she felt it moving forward. What little she'd done to soften her heartbeat was now irrelevant, and she ducked into a crevice.

Breathe. Breathe. Breathe! Slowly, she got herself to hear naught but the Juice flowing through the ship's pipes. With one last breath, she realized she could think again. Okay. The ship is heading out. Presumably on a test flight. I just need to check out the hangar bay... then, hide? Yes, investigate, then hide. Sneak out when it returns. And if I need a weapon... She took out her knife, then checked its Juice battery using the display on its hilt: full, enough for five or six shocks. I have this. Rieval took another breath. I can do this.

She returned to the ship's halls, noting a distinct lack of personnel—though she still kept to whatever cover there was. After perhaps a quarter-hour of sneaking, she arrived at the hangar bay. Only a single boat lay inside, one of the new, small ones they called "airplanes." Behind it was a massive cylinder, looking sort of like a missile, though much, much larger. It glowed from within with blue-green Juice-light, brighter than anything she'd seen other than a ship's battery.

Wait... enough power to fly a ship for days, within a missile? Oh no. Oh, Heaven-Abyss! Before she could even think further, she ran across the room, disregarding safety altogether. She scanned the missile, looking for anything that might give away the location of its computer systems. If she couldn't destroy those...

Despite her heartbeat's return to deafening status, she heard a shout from

above her. “Intruder! In the hangar, by the Wither missile!”

She spun around, then saw six guards rush into the room, each wearing the dark-blue uniform of the Vaelen Air Force and armed with various Juice-powered weapons. Rieval drew her remaining knife, and fell into stance. Thankfully, Fiyah’s training overpowered even her nervousness.

Three of the guards dashed towards her, and she positioned her knife properly. As the first came into range, she leaped forward, stabbing the knife into their abdomen. She quickly pulled it out, then carefully stabbed again into the second. Both fell immediately, and the third guard’s shock—perhaps due to inexperience—gave her time to take them out as well.

A voice shouted from across the room. “Stand down!”

She turned towards those three remaining guards. One was pointing a large metal box at her, visibly glowing with Juice-light—a Caster, similar to her boots. The other two drew blades of considerably longer length than her pitiful knife, each flickering with electricity. If any hit her, she’d probably die on the spot, or at least be knocked out.

Her heartbeat was deafening, but a strange clarity presented itself. She could see how she could move: head forward, and be charred by the Caster; head to the side, and be stabbed into unconsciousness. Leap backward—

And she did, hiding behind the missile. Since this was what they were protecting, presumably, it could serve as cover. She used her relative safety for the moment to check on her knife and boots’ batteries; three or so uses left on each—perfect. Considering the guards probably didn’t know about her boots, she had one opportunity to get them. Rieval crouched, turned, and sent the command.

She shot out, then redirected straight towards the Caster-wielder, hoping for the element of surprise. She held her knife out, and stabbed straight into them. She then turned, using her boots’ last bit of Juice to slam into one of the swordsmen, similarly burying her blade within them. With but a single charge on her knife left, she turned towards the final guard. She dashed towards them, but this one was ready. Each raised their blade, each slashed—

But only Rieval’s connected, implanting itself directly into the guard’s chest. With a final flash, they fell to the ground. She turned back to the missile.

Only to see the plane it was attached to taking off. The hatch had opened while she was fighting—how had she missed it? Her heartbeat had been that loud?—and the plane flew straight out, dragging the missile behind it. She dashed towards it, but no human could catch up to a ship, especially one so small. It flew out, and she barely grabbed on to a railing before being pulled out of the bay.

The plane flew ahead, and she realized where they were—right on the edge of the Einin region, since those forests were found nowhere else in Vael. And the plane—it was headed for its capital. With the missile. She could not stop herself from screaming, despite it being lost in the rushing air, as the terrible weapon was separated from the plane.

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

All became that blue-green glow, which then transitioned to a sickly purple-brown. When it faded, she looked towards the ground.

Which was now desert.



Fiyah spun a coin between their fingers, glancing periodically between Rieval—collapsed on the couch—and the television.

“...Shiyeth Federation collectively declared its exit from the Leiviel Accords, citing a refusal to remain allied to a state that would annihilate its own people. Representatives of Vael replied that the release of the new weapon—known as a Wither missile—had been orchestrated by a rogue officer, who is now facing court-martial...”

Ever since Fiyah had broken Rieval out of a Vaelen prison, she’d been like... that. Just laying there, moving her arm as if to relive fighting those guards she’d whispered about.

“Riev... you know it wasn’t your fault, right? You know as well as I do the higher-ups didn’t have enough intel.”

Rieval continued to lay there, stabbing at something Fiyah couldn’t see. They sighed.

“Well, I’m being sent back to Shiyet within the week. Feel free to come with, but let me know soon, okay?” Their coin renested itself among its brethren within the wrapper, and Fiyah left the room.

Rieval continued her battle for many minutes more, the sound of the television absent from her senses. She thrust, twisted, spun the knife around. Eventually, her hand fell still.

Softly, a whisper. “Yeah, it was impossible, wasn’t it... I couldn’t have done it alone...”

She sat up, walked over to the television, and turned it off. Time to find Fiyah. She needed something to do.

Author's Note

It's been several years since I have written poetry, or really written at all, and in coming to camp I hoped to rekindle the creative side of me I felt I'd lost. It wasn't easy, all my procrastination and doubt had built up a wall. I needed to learn to let go of my inner critics and write how I felt, no more planning just to stall, I had to let go of my standards and expectations of myself. My journey with my creative art has seemed closely tied with the theme "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy". Without struggle you never really grow and never really learn. Without struggle, joy lacks depth, it is easily turned into a forgotten memory. I believe without sowing tears, joy would not have been reaped, just taken.

Sincerely,

Alice Hyde

The Sea, The Song, and The Moon: A Collection of Poems

Alice Hyde, Age 16

The First Phase

Angels called up to heaven
Sweet harmonies did play
They brought the fullness of the moon
The one that shows on your face

The Full Moon

The moon is not for everyone
And the moon's not just for me
I feel my last day approaching
The last day I'll truly be at peace

The Final Phase

You shine for everyone
As long as they look
Still I will leave you behind soon
Not only at day
Forever. For good.

The Sea

Slightly blushed pearls
Almonds and porcelain lips
At one glance there is thunder
The next a peaceful fish

The Love Song

Curl your hands in close
Give a nervous laugh
It struck a chord in my gut
Made me retch then throw up

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

Everything is a Circle: A Collection of Poems

Alice Hyde, Age 16

Death as a Concept

City of Macabre
Destiny of materialism

City of Macabre
Houses with wax people in them

City of Macabre
Trees, hills, and grass all void

City of Macabre
Inescapable streets, cracked, destroyed

City of Macabre
If death can't exist, than neither can life

City of Macabre
The souls lurk in limbo, holding no sin, still holding strife

City of Macabre
A lonely abyss

City of Macabre
No eyes to see pathways that guide

City of Macabre
Peer in a mirror to escape pride

City of Macabre
No shadows nor light, reflections do not exist

City of Macabre
Yet addictions persist

City of Macabre
Simply darkness and she

City of Macabre
Simply nothing else to be

URJ 6 POINTS CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

Therefore, Life is Eternal

My son and I are one
We will always be
Even after he has
Emerged from me

I ponder what I'll teach him
What he will learn and see
About life and death
Who he will grow to be

I will whisper to him softly
While I bathe him clean:
A dead tree is alive
And always will be
Unless he rots alone
Among the concrete

I will take him by the hand
To show him the world outside:
Ants bathing in dew drops
Feathers illuminated in the light
Those who bathe in honey
And those who bathe in muck

The soul is immortal
It makes everything eternal
It makes everything a circle

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

Author's Note

When coming up with something to write and present, I struggled a lot with how vulnerable it feels to put yourself and your art out there. Thus, my first piece was born!

My second piece came from the same line of thinking. It can be hard to step out of your comfort zone, but when you do, it can open your world to brighter possibilities.

I want to thank my family and friends, and a special thank you to Emma Likin. Thank you for helping me be myself unapologetically.

Sincerely,

Julian Kadesh

May I Come In?

Julian Kadesh, Age 16

How familiar are you with your own brain? It seems like a silly question. You've spent your whole life there, mapped out every hallway, every room, every corner. You know your mind palace like the back of your hand, because it's part of you. It IS you.

Let me ask you another question. How familiar are others with your brain? Do you let them in, give them a grand tour? How much have they seen? How much would you let them see? Can they see the everyday messes - dishes in the sink, stress on the counter, stupid mistakes left on the floor? Have they seen the place when it feels like a disaster, or do you just push the clutter under your bed to hide it? No shame here, we've all done it.

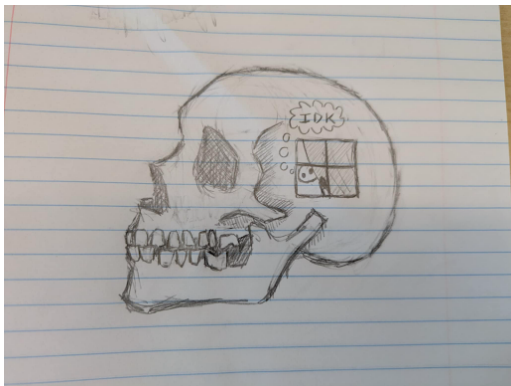
Have you heard of the hedgehog's dilemma? It goes something like this - everybody wants to be close with each other, but nobody wants to get hurt. We hesitate to open the door - did I

URJ 6 POINTS CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

clean up enough? But the people we care about are on the other side. No matter how well I know someone, sometimes letting them in feels like letting someone onto the plane with more than 3.4 oz of hatred. Mental TSA, if you will.

Art is vulnerable, and it can be a window into the mind of the artist. It's why I'm so critical of what I create, why I scrapped 4 ideas before this. I'm used to keeping the curtains closed. But that's not really what I want, is it? I want to reach people. I want you to see my art and feel seen, too. I'll be a flashlight in a power-outage so you aren't alone in the dark. That's why I pushed myself to do this.

None of us are alone. Even if you can't get the door open, or get any words out, we can sit and pass letters. Vampires have the right idea, you know? Letting people in takes time, you should wait to be invited in. Progress is progress, no matter how slow or small. Now, if anyone needs me, I'll be in my coffin, because that was intense.



SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

Familiar and Unknown

Julian Kadesh, Age 16

The world seems one way when we only look at what we know, but adding the unknown changes our perspective.

Familiar

I've walked
These old paths
For a while
And now
I
Don't see
How
To
stop.

Unknown

away, now.
are behind me.
I've wanted change
I've made it.
welcome things I
everyday.
wonderful
see the world anew.

Author's Note

"those who sow in tears will reap in joy". I thought of my project from media arts, which was to come up with an idea for a short animated film. I came up with: Ethan and the War On Rock. in which high school senior Ethan, has yet to make any friends and is riddled with social anxiety. He's also living in a time of war because the government dislikes rock music and thought blowing things up would get rid of it. Ethan finds a magical guitar weapon, joins the rock-resistance and helps lead them to victory. So enjoy a few scenes from that, as well as a silly poem about my hair for your troubles :)

Sincerely,

Hannah Baomal

Scenes from a planned short film: Ethan and the War On Rock

Hannah Baomal, Age 16

Explosion day

Ethan looked down at his phone as people shoved past him. Everyone was walking, or running, to get home. People in groups or pairs brushed past Ethan while he checked how long the bus would be. Headphones already on, he opened his music app, about to start listening, when a loud CRACK-BOOM! threw him forwards. He stumbled, but kept upright, and turned around to see a mushroom cloud rise up behind the school building. Everyone was screaming and running, panicking and flailing. Ethan however, remained relatively calm. He had no one to grab onto in fear, no one to scream at, to run with. Plus, the explosion had to be several miles away, they were safe here at the school. So instead of wasting his breath running and screaming, he did something much more logical in his opinion.

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

He opened his phone, hit play, and started off in the opposite direction of the frenzied crowd, towards the explosion.

After what felt like hours of walking, and many songs later, Ethan came across what felt like a dead zone. In a normally bustling city, with someone everywhere at every time, there was a circle of around 10 blocks with not a soul outside. There wasn't even anyone protecting the site of the explosion, just silence. Inside this circle was a wasteland of rubble and destruction.

With the day he'd had, Ethan decided that exploring this new found junkyard alone with nothing but his favourite tunes, was something he deserved. After about an hour of exploration, and only a few trinkets collected, Ethan sat in a clearing. Disappointed by his lack of treasure, he took out his phone to check the time when he suddenly felt strange, like he was being watched. Not by someone, but something. He stood up slowly and looked to his right. There he saw something shiny sticking out from behind a slab of concrete. Ethan ran around the slab to see something unusual, to say the least, to find at the site of an explosion.

There sat a perfectly pristine Ibanez Destroyer Guitar, completely unscathed. All of the debris in the area somehow fell around it in a perfect circle, like some kind of a force field. Ethan took a step closer and the guitar almost glowed in response, like it was beckoning him. He took another step and felt a wind begin to grab at his long flowing hair. As he examined it closer, darkness edged at his vision and gravity fell away. Little bits of debris began to swirl around Ethan and the guitar, enclosing them in a vortex. In the center, the guitar glowed brightly through this sudden darkness, and Ethan heard something he couldn't quite place in the back of his mind.

"Hello?" Ethan called out. The guitar pulsed light in response. Ethan's heart started to race.

"Are—are you talking to me?" the guitar practically

shimmered to answer his question. “Excuse my surprise, it’s just that no one’s really talked to me before.” In this sudden lack of gravity, the guitar floated towards Ethan, and he held his hands out to accept it as it shimmered again. It spoke to Ethan through his mind, yet no words were heard, Ethan just understood its intentions.

“You want me to fight?” Ethan asked. “How?”

The guitar glowed a response before the ground rose up to meet him once more. The yellow sky began to shine through the darkness and the spinning debris started to settle.

“What do you mean I’ll figure it out? Hello?” but it was over. The winds didn’t pick back up and the yellow sky began to blind him as he stared into it. The guitar didn’t glow again and probably wouldn’t answer his question. Ethan sighed and put the strap over his shoulder. He stood there a moment, feeling the weight of the instrument in his arms. He carefully strummed each string, of course, all perfectly in tune to match its impossibly perfect condition. Ethan shifted the guitar so it sat on his back and he started towards home.



SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

The Flyer

“Hey.”

Silence.

“Hey you.”

Ethan nervously looked around before pointing to himself with a confused look on his face.

“Yeah you. Come ‘ere!” As Ethan approached the stranger he studied them carefully. He looked to be a boy, maybe 19 or 20. He had short blonde spikey hair making his many earrings visible. He was wearing a black leather jacket over a graphic tee with an unreadable logo of some kind that had been ripped into a crop top. He had on black jeans with a silver studded belt, similar to the one Ethan was wearing, and black leather combat boots with spikes. His expression was vague as he waved Ethan over, but he didn't seem upset in any way.

“Nice belt, man,” he said, pointing to Ethan's waist.

“Thanks...” Ethan replied quietly.

“You seem like you know a thing or two about all this”. He gestured to the hazy orange sky and street lights shining red to signal danger. Ethan's eyes widened in surprise.

“Who are you? How do you know?”

“I have my ways,” the young man replied as he looked Ethan up and down, ignoring the first question.

“So you got anywhere to be tonight?” Ethan crossed his arms and shifted in his stance.

“Not particularly. Why?” The stranger extended his arm, holding a flyer. Ethan took it and scanned it quickly. He looked up from the paper, shocked, and saw the boy grinning eagerly.

“So, you in?” he asked.

“Of course I'm in,” said Ethan.

“See you there,” the stranger said as he turned to walk away.

“Wait!” Ethan called out, surprising even himself. He

URJ 6 POINTS CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

wasn't sure what came over him to make him act this way to a stranger, but he was in too deep now. "My name is Ethan". He cringed. Why did he do that? The conversation was already over. So why tell him his name? As Ethan's thoughts spiraled further, the stranger turned around.

"See you there then, Ethan. You can call me Mikey."

Ethan stuffed the flyer in his jacket pocket and continued walking until he finally reached his destination. The little convenience store, only a 10 minute walk from his house. All he wanted was an ice cold coke and a peaceful evening stroll; he didn't expect to be invited to an illegal rock show. Well, maybe it was a little expected. He thought back to the day of the explosion as he walked up to the counter. He placed down the can and looked past the shopkeeper, careful not to make eye contact, out the window at the sky on fire.

"It's getting pretty bad out there, huh?" Ethan nearly jumped out of his skin. What is it with strangers talking to him today?

"I guess..." Ethan replied quietly as he handed over his cash, still looking away. The shopkeeper smiled and gave Ethan his change.

"Thanks," Ethan practically whispered. He grabbed his coke and turned to leave when the shopkeeper suddenly spoke again.

"Good luck out there kid."

"Um.. thanks.. Bye." Ethan said as he quickly walked out the door. Why is he so awkward? And why would the shopkeeper say something cryptic like that anyway? Whatever. Ethan cracked open the can and took a sip.

When Ethan got home, he threw off his shoes and ran upstairs. He sprinted into his room and dove onto his bed. He rolled onto his back and pulled out Mikey's flyer. It read:

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

November 8th 9:00
Saviours + YellowRocks
underground rock show
Fight! Rebel! Rock!

Saviours and YellowRocks. Ethan assumed those were the bands performing, neither of which he's heard of before. But the most interesting part was at the bottom. 'Fight! Rebel! Rock!' He's seen those words before, in the article he read about the truth behind the war... Maybe there's more to this show than Ethan originally thought. Oh well, in about 3 hours he'd have the answer.

He rolled onto his side in his bed, wondering how to spend the time leading up to the show, when he noticed the mysterious Ibanez poking out of his closet. That thing always seems to appear at the perfect time, Ethan thought, as he got out of bed to grab it. He took a pick out of his jar full of them and sat back down on his bed with the guitar in his lap. He's researched more on how to play guitar since his last attempt at practice, and after many youtube tutorials he felt ready. He adjusted the instrument and felt something peculiar on the back. It appeared to be an on/off switch, for what, he wasn't sure. According to Ethan's research he needed an amp to play with the guitar on. He didn't think anything would happen if he hit it, since he had no amp, so he did. Unsurprisingly, nothing changed. Or so he thought. Ethan placed his left hand on the fretboard and plucked the first string of the arrangement he'd learned. When he did, the string lit up in a quick flash where the pick struck it, and a small bolt of energy flew from the guitar and hit the lamp on Ethan's desk, instantly shattering the bulb.

Well, that's new! Ethan picked the string again, more softly this time, and his jar of guitar picks fell over, spilling the contents all over the floor...

The Ocean

Hannah Baomal, Age 16

I hold the brush in my hand and breathe a sigh
Its been many moons since i last fought it
Its shining blue is hypnotic
As i dig my paddle in the waves
Push pull back and forth
Tangled in a mess of curls
It's hard not to lose your way
In an ocean as vast as this
It can be vicious and wild
Waves tall and proud
Or on a calmer day
Sit neatly framing my face

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

Author's Note

This piece is a work in progress and is very, very unfinished, though hopefully still coherent! I tried to relate it to this year's theme of "those who sow in tears will reap in joy" by focusing on a character's grief after losing a loved one. While this story is fictional, grief in real life can feel drawn out and contradictory, much like the proverbial time between "sowing in tears" and "reaping in joy." This story tries to explore that strange and difficult space, as well as how memories, stories, names and words can bring comfort while working through a loved one's passing. Thanks for reading!

Sincerely,

Emma Pun

I Forgot to Say

Emma Pun, Age 14

In my eyes, you were always a storyteller. It was how you made sense of the world, of a people that were otherwise inaccessible to your perpetually moving mind. When I was small, you would offer stories like candy, pulling them from your pockets with the tips of your fingers. Would you like to hear? And when I said yes, (as I always did), you would tug me in close and sweep us away to far off lands and unimaginable times. In place of toys and cookies, I had your words, poured from the hollow of your ribs in a flood of milky wonder. I live in a home made of cobwebs and magic, I would say, using your phrase in response to concerned teachers' gentle questioning. With enough repetition, they would give in to my overly active imagination, learn to accept that I was unharmed and content, if somewhat undersupervised. And it was true; I was happy, even as you drifted further from me, losing yourself to the dips and valleys of your own mind.

URJ 6 POINTS CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

Good God, I said, coming home one night to plates shattered like eggshells on the floor, flecks of porcelain in your hair. The melted key ring in the microwave, the paint streaks on the wall, the hand wringing and dazed looks and constant paranoia. I grew, and you grew further away, leaving me to build myself into someone you could not reach in the absence of your imaginings.

When you couldn't find your way to me, the stories were a bridge, laying a path for me to follow back to you. When you wouldn't get out of bed, when tomorrow was a promise too heavy to hold, I would brush your hair from your ears and whisper your own words into them, trying to feed you back the parts of yourself you had given to me over the years. In the hardest moments, those stretches where I could not see the light no matter how I squinted, I would recount your stories, the far off gleam in your eye that had since flickered into something hollow and quiet.

(Something you forgot to remember: I told you my name, the evening before your lungs decided for you, pressing it to your cheek in the shape of my voice.)

Can you hear me, Ma? I sat by your bed that night, my back to your feet, listening to you breathe. Time was sliding away, and I had given you nearly all of my truths, the final exception being this. I sat, listening, searching for a you that I could not dredge from the vacant body next to me. And in the silence stretched between us, the uncertainty and the quiet, I found a story. You told it to me like this:

In the Torah, they name each of Zelophehad's daughters: Mahlah, No³ah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirtzah. These are small words, drops of blood in the body of the Holy Text, reducing women who had lungs just like you and I into a few clean strokes of ink... We don't remember which sister had a laugh like a river unfreezing, which had the spirit of a wild bird, which were even-tempered and which were not; We don't remember

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

which sister danced like the wind and which tripped over her own shoes, which put out an open hand to a stranger while the other shied away. But we do remember their names: Mahlah, No'ah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirtzah. Say them with me. Yes, good, just like that. Why? Because names have power, love. A name is a definition, a story. To share your name is to give someone a part of you, and to write it is to live forever. That's why these sisters are special. As daughters, they could not inherit their late father's land, so they spoke of this to Moses. Moses told their troubles to Adonai, and Adonai declared that if a man has no sons, his possessions shall go to his daughters. And so the five sisters received their father's land, and the scripture implies that they were content with this. But here is the interesting part, are you listening? Yes? Good. What the Rabbis often forget is the rest of the women who could not inherit land, the ones with no names. Or rather, the ones whose names were forgotten, made faceless by collective memory, or lack thereof. You see what I'm trying to tell you? A name is powerful, love. But in the end, it's what you do with it that counts. Please, remember that for me.

...

On the anniversary of your passing, I carved my name into wood with my nail, bloodying it with thin splinters in the shape of pine needles. I heard your voice as I traced the letters, the groove and grain of my many has-beens, a shade paler than the lacquer above it. A name is powerful, you'd said, voice blurry with medicine. A name will never die, so keep it close.

I'm going to be immortal then, here on the bottom of this table. Scraped into wood, initials drawn jagged in its coarse surface... I was here. How sad is that, how lovely? To write a name on the underside of a desk, a prayer for whoever comes next: I was here. Please don't forget.

URJ 6 POINTS CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

Do you hear that? Please don't forget, Ma. I gave you my name so you wouldn't, the one I chose for myself. A name is both a story and a definition, you told me. If you were right, then to choose a name is to redefine yourself, to rewrite your own story with a fantastic upheaval. I've learned the hard way that to lose and keep on losing is often what it takes to make yourself whole. Tell me, when are we ever going to stop losing? When can we finally just be?

(A confession: I only told you at the end because I was afraid that to change would be to forfeit what you'd already given me.)

I stood from the desk, freshly scarred, and sucked the blood from underneath my nail. It tasted like rust, like rain on new earth. The moon was waiting in the window, dazzlingly silver, drinkable and full in its round clarity. I unlatched the screen and slid myself into its light, ankles first onto shingles. They'd retained a measure of warmth from before dark and they scraped it into the bare skin of my feet now, ribbing them with small pink divots. The siding cut grooves into the rounds of my spine, the crown of my skull as I leaned back, chin tilted to see the stars. Specks of salt, a goddess' tears; I remembered the feel of your fingers on mine, the gentle pressure of your touch on my knuckles. Orion, Pegasus, Cassiopoeia. Arcturus, the Big Dipper, Venus. Look, look how red it is! Can you see it there, over the rooftops? I found them all now, tasting the bitterness of my lips, the last dregs of Cherry Coke and sea salt drying in their corners. Cobwebs and magic, that's what the world is made of, you said. Here on the roof, fingers stained red and raw, I began to remember why.

(One final note: I remember you more than you know, and I am sorry for more than you can imagine. But in the end, the thing I regret most is not telling you my story sooner. I hope this wasn't too late.

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

Author's Note

This year, I told myself I wouldn't put only poetry into the chapbook. And, though I did end up writing a good deal of poetry, I think I somewhat succeeded. I was able to write a short story inspired by the Midrash stories we were told in class, which was very outside of my comfort zone. I also wrote multiple A-B scenes in my time here, the first of which was prompted by the idea of emotions and their resolutions. The one I put into the chapbook is supposed to have an almost tangible sense of emotion. As for the poems, I incorporated formal poetry into my work as well as my usual informal poetry. As a note, all of this excluding the "Modern-Day Kabbalah" story, is meant to be read aloud. I hope you enjoy reading it!

Sincerely,

MJ Dorfman

Someone Like You: A Poetry Collection

MJ Dorfman, Age 15

Someone Like You

I have never met someone like you before,
A light in my life to brighten the dark.

I've never seen someone like you before,
You always stayed positive, making your mark.

I've never lost someone like you before,
A truly kind person with no blunt remark,
An aunt to me who cared for all,
You'll never be gone; in our hearts is your call.

A Friendship Lost

Forget the girl,
Forget the way that she still haunts you.
Re-learn to feel
'Bout how she held and then forgot you.
Pull memories,
Good and bad
Aside inside your mind,
And fill a hole
Of grey matter
To bury them alive.
Find peace in time
With those you love
Who give you time of day,
Give priority
To the friends you know will stay.
This way, even if you're
Down to your last dime,
You're never again
taking care of a girl
Whose life is built on lies.

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

My own Personal Monster

There is a monster
That lives inside,
And it's nothing like you'd think.
It's a master of disguise,
And unfortunately
We've got a strong link.
It's sometimes friendly,
Even kind,
tells me I'm doing the right thing.
But then I end up
Sick and tired,
Impossibly stuck with clipped wings.
Sometimes it hides
In hibernation,
so I forget its stink;
And it slowly crawls
Back into my brain
With the trail of grime it brings.
I am too much,
And not enough-
Get better, get worse
Repeat.

URJ 6 POINTS CREATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

Home Away From Home

There is a place
That I know well
And never wish to leave.

But year after year,
I come and I go,
with the time of my life in between.

I've made new friends,
And reunited with
Those I now care for dearly.

Use creativity
To experiment with
Every new idea I see.

Camp is a place
That I know well,
And feel free to be me.

I'll miss this
Home-away-from-home
The next time that I leave.

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

Erased (a Petrarchan sonnet)

I watch you through slightly crossed eyes .
When you're near, my vision seems to blur,
My voice retreats to a quiet murmur,
words a mess I can't untangle despite many tries.

Of course, I'll hold in and silence my cries.
Your voice and words cause me to suffer,
My body reacts and my throat becomes rougher.
With just your glare, I fear for my demise.

I don't know why you still scare me.
It's been so long since those days
Where I sat alone in the library,
Everyone believes your lying ways.
That is a person you'll never see
That is the person I long to erase.

I Hope You're Happy (An A-B Scene)

MJ Dorfman, Age 15

B is standing onstage. A walks up to B.

A: Are you happy?

B: Not particularly.

A: Isn't this what you wanted?

B: It is.

A: So how?

B: How what?

A: How are you not happy?

B: Didn't you know? Just because you get exactly what you want doesn't mean you'll be happy.

A: ... You should be.

B laughs.

A: You should be because other people worked to get you what you wanted. So that you would feel better.

B: I know that. I can't help how I feel.

A: Sure, but, could you at least try?

B: Try to be happy?

A: Yes. Try to be happy.

B: I'm not sure if that's the way it works.

A: Well, give it your best shot.

Option A: *A leaves*

Option B: *B and A leave at the same time*

Option C: *B leaves*

Modern-Day Kabbalah (A Short Story)

MJ Dorfman, Age 15

It was a warm summer day, and I had little to do. I woke up early, and decided to take my dog for a walk around the neighborhood. I clipped Fluff's leash on, and headed out the door with my headphones in.

I was walking the steep hill of my col-de-sac, with a song from Little Shop of Horrors blasting through my earphones, when I saw it. A large sign on one of my neighbor's houses, reading: GARAGE SALE! I dropped a tennis ball into Fluff's mouth to ensure he wouldn't bark, and made a detour.

I wasn't very friendly with the neighbors who were having the garage sale. They were an old couple, and they didn't talk much. I greeted the woman, whose name I remembered was Patty, and surveyed the area. There were tables set up in the garage with piles upon piles of things from jewelry and silverware to gardening tools. I noticed immediately that the couple must be Jewish- the mezuzah on their door was the first tell, and then the noticeably Jewish items around the room. A gilded menorah sat by a nice box of candles. A large seder plate was on sale for just ten dollars. Next to a necklace, with what I recognized as Hebrew written on it, was a stack of books. Fluff wandered over there, almost as if he knew; he is a Jewish dog, I suppose.

I sifted through them: a couple of prayer books, a Jewish history book, and one smaller volume with a shiny silver cover. On the front, in dark purple letters, it read, "Kabbalah, a guide." The word sounded vaguely familiar, but I couldn't place what it meant. The book was beautiful and continued to draw my eye as I looked through the other items for sale. Curious, I picked it up to look at the price tag. Seven dollars. My eyes fell on the necklace again, and I examined it more closely. It was a silver matching book, with a single word in the middle. I squinted, reading the Hebrew, and realized It was familiar. In transliteration, the word was "Emet," though I couldn't quite remember what it meant. The price tag read fifteen dollars. Checking my pockets, I found two tens. I sighed, realizing there

wasn't a way I could pay for both the necklace and the Kabbalah book, when I noticed there was someone standing behind me, just to my right.

It was Patty's husband, whose name I had forgotten. He offered me a smile before taking the items I was holding into his hands. Eyes darting between my Star of David resting just below my collarbone, the two tens in my fist and the prices of the Items, he began to speak.

"I think these should belong to you," he said. I frowned.

"I don't have enough, I'm sorry." I explained. I supposed he was old, and may have not realized that I was two dollars short.

He laughed. "Don't worry about it. I'm happy enough just to find these items a good home." I thanked him, pushing the money I had his way.

"Don't worry about it. I told Patty these were overpriced anyway," he chuckled. Though I tried to insist, he refused to take the money, pushing the book and necklace back over to me.

I headed home, with Fluff wagging his tail beside me. I had already clasped the necklace around my neck. I brought the silver book to my room, and opened to the first page.

To my surprise, it was not a printed book like I had imagined. Instead, It was a hand-written journal, with every page filled with the same neat handwriting. It was, however, still structured like a book. There was a Table of Contents with chapter names as well as an introduction. The author, I noticed, was named Gale J. Witherstein. I flipped to the first page of the introduction. Skimming over it, I learned that Kabbalah is a form of Jewish mysticism. It tied into spirituality, and, in some cases, magic.

I put my hand to my new necklace, noticing that it had grown warm. I looked through the Table of Contents. I saw that there was a chapter titled, "Stories." Below were sections with what seemed to be the names of these stories, none of which I'd ever heard before. I flipped there. The first story was, "The Dybbuk." It was a sad, spooky tale of cursed fate where both lovers died in the end.

I read the next one, "The Finger." It felt oddly familiar to me before I realized I had heard a very similar story before. The

SESSION 2 CREATIVE WRITING

story was similar to that of *The Corpse Bride*- a man was nearly forced to marry a dead woman! I realized that, though the Tim Burton film was similar, all of the Jewish elements had been removed.

I decided to read one more. It was titled, “The Golem.” As the story went, the Jews of Prague were going through tough times of persecution. A Kabbalist sculpted a man out of clay. On its forehead, he spelled out the Hebrew word for “truth” on its head. This creature came alive and was named The Golem. At first, it helped defend the Jews in Prague and fight back against their oppressors. However, soon the Golem became unpredictable and violent. In order to prevent further damage, the Kabbalist erased a letter on its head, changing the word “truth” to the word for “death.” The Golem then died, and, as legend has it, was put in the attic of the synagogue of Prague. For centuries, no one was allowed in, so the whereabouts of the body were still a mystery.

The stories had pulled me in. But something was off. Slowly, something clicked in my mind. I had forgotten what the word, *emet*, that was on my new necklace, meant. Reading the last story, I remembered. Emet meant truth. I felt strange, knowing that I now carried a part of these stories, a little bit of kabbalah, with me. I wasn’t sure how to feel...