***Slate & Style***

**A publication of the Writers’ Division of the National Federation of the Blind Fall 2016**

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**From the Keyboard of the President** by Eve Sanchez

Life is crazy and I am sure that you are all writing. This is something I have been missing as I continue working towards graduation, but I am reaching the end of my journey and should now be job hunting. Who has the time though? Well, the chaos may explain the reason for this late issue of Slate and Style. This is the first issue in over a year that has been late and hopefully is not the beginning of a trend.

Shelly Alongi is taking over the monthly gatherings for members so watch for her announcements. I know she is excited about the task and is trying to line up some great speakers for you all.

The contest is still a few months away, but we want to be sure that everyone has time to prepare and get their entries in. The current guidelines are also below for you. You might notice some needed changes. We had to increase the entry fees which keep us in line, though still on the low end, with most other writing contests out there. The division is not trying to get rich I assure you. It is just that we struggle every year to pay our winners and we would also like to be able to donate our share to the many worthy efforts of the National Federation of the Blind. Please read carefully. Life is so much better when everyone adheres to the guidelines.

The submission Slate and Style Guidelines are again included at the end of this publication to remind you of how you can get your work included in future issues of Slate and Style. Guidelines are provided below, but for any questions you may have, please contact the S&S team at [s-and-s@nfbnet.org](mailto:s-and-s@nfbnet.org).

**On the Slate**

This issue finds us showcasing some of the winners of the 2016 Writing Contest. Here you will find both the Youth and Adult Fiction winners as well as the winning entries in our Stories For Youth category. Do not fret if you do not see what you are looking for. The Winter issue will have loads. Of course we will still accept submissions from our readers so be sure to limber up those fingers of yours.

**THE BEST GOALIE by Joshua Fields, First Place Elementary Fiction**

Today was the first day of P.E. for Joe. They were playing hockey and Joe was super excited. Joe loved hockey, and he was already signed up for this new season. Joe played the goalie position for his team The Greyhawks. For school Joe was playing center for class. He scored 4 goals and won all of his face offs. After school Joe and his 2 friends Landen and Carl went to the ice rink to warm up their legs for the new season. Joe blocked all of their shots and then he tried some shooting. Joe was not that much of a shooter except for when he had played hockey in school. Tonight was the first Greyhawks practice of the season. Joe was all fired up and ready to block shots for shooting practice. Today in practice Joe blocked all the shots accept one from Carl.

After practice Joe was about to walk back to his Michigan home and eat dinner. But on the way out of the hockey rink someone was standing there waiting for him. The man was dressed like he was from a very rich family. He was standing right next to a newly polished limo. The man said to Joe, “Would you like to meet my son?” He is a huge fan of yours. I have fans, Joe said. The man said yes! All of his friends are also your fans. How about I take you out for dinner? Joe said OK. So they went to a nice steak house, then they left.

The man told him he would take him home but Joe didn’t think they were going to Joe’s house. Joe recognized they were going to the Detroit International Airport. The man told Joe he had been recruited to the world’s best middle school team. The team is in Orlando, Florida. You are not a Grey Hawk anymore. You are now a Hurricane. When you graduate you will become a player for the Tampa Bay Lightning. Do you accept the deal? Joe nodded yes then went into the airport. The man also told him his parents had accepted the deal and money would be put into his funding account for playing for the Hurricanes. Then after you graduate from high school you will be a member of the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Today was the first game for the Hurricanes this season. Joe was so excited that he was the starting goalie for the team. Joe loved the style of how they played. The team played like an NHL team. The teams took their sides of the rink to warm up and Joe blocked shooting shots. During the game Joe blocked all of the shots and they won. Joe had the best time after that with the new team. For the next 5 years the Hurricanes won the middle school and high school Stanley Cup. They were the best team in the country and went undefeated for 2 whole years. Joe was the best goalie in the country.

A few years later when Joe was in high school Joe got injured! Joe had dislocated his leg and had to go to the hospital. He had said that he would try to get better and healthy for the next hockey season. Joe’s doctor said that he would only be out for the rest of the season and would return for the next year season. Joe had promised himself that he would not give up even when he felt like giving up playing hockey for the rest of his life.

Weeks later Joe was out of the hospital and back in his room at the hockey facility. Joe had to miss out on all of the team meetings because he couldn’t leave his room. All day Joe felt alone even though he had someone taking care of him. He started doing therapy to help his leg get better faster. Joe had started playing games that would exercise his leg and get all of his leg muscles back.

While Joe was recovering he had started being able to walk around. Even though Joe couldn’t play hockey he still went to the practices now. Joe loved that he felt a part of the team when he was at the games on the bench. As time went on Joe got better and stated skating again. The doctor said that Joe had to skate for a while before he could play in practice and in games. After so many weeks Joe got to start to play in practice. Practice was going well so the coach let him start playing in scrimmages and then in games. Though Joe was only allowed to play in 2 periods in each game he still enjoyed the time he got to play.

Finally Joe was allowed to play full games again. Joe could play even better than he did before he got injured. Joe had one of the best high school careers that anyone had ever seen in their entire lives. When Joe graduated he was one of the world’s best hockey players ever to play the game of hockey.

Joe moved on to play in the Stanley Cup 8 years in a row and won 7 of them. Joe had also played hockey in the Olympics 2 times in a row. Joe moved on to be the best hockey player in the world.

**The Statue In the Middle Of The City**

by Monserath Espinola, First Place Middle School Fiction

Eleven year old Kirby Ratell was in her room doing her homework. She sometimes couldn't focus on it. She thought that homework was boring! Sometimes she would just sit there and daydream. Well, in this particular day, she decided to do her homework later. She went on her computer and randomly typed in "legends." Then, suddenly, as if she had forgotten about the legend she remembered of the statue in the middle of Lunaville city. The statue was a princess named Katie, with blue eyes, long eyelashes, thick eyebrows, blond hair and wore a beautiful blue dress. She stood, as if to conquer the city. Her arms always by her sides. She also had a cat, Kylie by her side. Everyone admired her, however, a legend falls behind all this.

It was supposedly about a girl named Katie who was eight years old. Katie had a cat named Kylie who was as brown as chocolate with blond stripes all over. She had hazel eyes and a slim sleek body. Katie found Kylie in the woods. She remembered the day she found her. She heard a cat's high pitched, Meww, as if asking a question. After that Katie took care of Kylie. Katie always played with her, but there was something deep in her heart, something that she really wanted. She always dreamed of one day standing in the middle of Lunaville and wanting everyone to see her, everyone.

"What if they could make a statue of me, when it's time?" she asked her father one day in late July. He could see the excitement in her blue eyes. Then, something told her to stay calm. Why did she want a statue now?

Thirty years later, Katie was in the woods picking berries. Then, she heard a whisper. "Katie, it's time. It's time my beautiful princess." Katie whirled around, the basket of freshly picked berries fell and they were scattered everywhere. Katie didn't care. "Time for your dream to come true." the voice said. Her dream? "My dream!" she said surprised. "You're wish is my command." it said. Then, a man appeared. Glowing red eyes, stared into hers. "Come!" he begged. He let out an evil laugh, and guided her deeper into the woods. Neither of them were ever seen again.

After this happened Katie's dream came true. People agreed to make a statue of her in Lunaville city. People loved her and wanted her to be present. People say that the person who guided her deep into the woods left a message by the statue. But how? If he wasn't seen again, how did he put it there? Was this even true?

Kirby asked her mom about this legend. She said that she also wondered about this too, but didn't pay much attention to Kirby's idea.

The next day, she had a test on her violin. She loved when test sections were going on, because then it gave her time to finish her homework. Well this day, she somehow got really involved in this baffling mystery. She rested her chin on her palm while her elbow was on her knee. She thought about what she could do. Maybe go to the library and get a book about the legend?

"Kirby?" Mr. Green said. Mr. Green was a man with big brown eyes that looked like almonds covered with round sunglasses. His curly brown hair was always all over the place. Kirby looked up. "It's your turn." Mr. Green said. "Oh, sorry." she said. She played her song and then went back to the position she was in.

As soon as the final bell rang, Kirby rushed out the door, like a jet to walk to the library. She turned back and saw the music stand she had knocked over, laying lifelessly on the floor. "Kirby, can you pick that up?" "Sure."

She got a great idea from the book of legends. Maybe she could ask the person who built the statue if she could check it out.

Kirby asked Mr. Martinez the man who built the statue, if he could take it off from the platform. "Why, Kirby?" Kirby poured out the story, and the idea that she had in mind. "Ask your parents first. I'll do it! I want this mystery solved too."

Kirby told her parents about this. They were really confused about this, and didn't know what to say. "We'll think about it Kirby."

A week later, they said, "Yes, Kirby, this can happen." Kirby jumped up and hugged her parents. "But," they said, Kirby sat back down. "We have to go with you, tomorrow."

The next day, news spread around the country that the statue of princess Katie was going to be taken off from its place. People were really curious and couldn't wait to see this happen. News reporters came to video tape this. As this was going on, Kirby and her family waited patiently. Kirby was excited about this, but also really nervous. What if they took it off for no reason? What if this legend wasn't even true? Well, she'll prove it.

Two days later, the statue was now out of its place. Dirt was at the bottom. Kirby started to dig. She had dug deep enough when she saw a piece of paper. Kirby's heart began to pound with adventure as she unfolded it. People came closer. Kirby read the message aloud.

Dear, Katie

I heard about your dream, and I wanted to make this true. To make your dream even better, I put Kylie right next to you. Whoever finds this should be congratulated worldwide.

(no one)

Kirby couldn't believe it. The mystery was solved and there was proof right in her hands.

**The Stinky, Lousy Day** by Chris Kuell, First Place Stories for Youth

Friday afternoon meant no homework or school for two days, so as soon as the school bus door opened, Molly Evans was out of there. Unfortunately, she still wasn’t used to her new clogs. She stumbled on the last step and wound up on her knees at the curb.

Some kids laughed as the bus pulled away, spewing horrible, nasty smelling exhaust on her. Molly’s knees burned where she had hit the pavement, and she coughed from the poisonous bus gas. Standing slowly, she fought back tears. Both knees in her favorite pants had dime-sized holes now, with a trickle of blood oozing from one.

Molly forced herself to walk, favoring the bloody leg. This was Grandpa’s street, not her normal bus stop. Her Mom and Dad were attending some fancy dinner, and kids weren’t allowed. Instead, she was on her way to Grandpa’s, and tonight they were going to the Yankee game. That is, she thought, if I can make it. Her knees ached like somebody burned them with a hot frying pan and then poured lemon juice on the wounds.

Molly walked by a brick house where two kids were playing fetch with a big honey colored dog. His tail wagged with excitement. Just as the taller kid tossed a ball, Molly’s foot slipped and she almost fell again.

First she smelled it; then she saw it. A muddy brown pile on the sidewalk, with a clog print smeared right in the middle. The smell was so gross she gagged and nearly threw up right there. She wanted to take her clog off, but she was afraid she might accidentally touch it. So she limped over and wiped it off as best she could in the grass.

Then that stupid dog ran over and started barking at her. Normally, Molly liked animals and would have taken a few minutes to pet the dog. But, today she was in no mood for being nice, so she ignored the big smelly dog and limped to Grandpa’s house, dragging that horrible stench along with her.

At number 17, Molly left her dirty clogs on the porch, walked in and yelled, “Hey Grandpa, it’s me.”

Her Grandfather must have been napping in his old recliner, because he seemed surprised to see her. “Oh, hey, Sweetie. How was your day?”

“I had a stinky, lousy day.” Molly dropped her backpack with a loud *thud* for emphasis.

Grandpa opened his arms wide. “C’mon over here and tell me all about it.” Molly went over and accepted his hug. She was still in a pretty bad mood, though. Grandpa scooped her up and sat her on his lap. She was getting too big for this, but Grandpa was amazingly strong for an old guy.

“Tell me all about your day,” he said.

Molly began with how impatient her mother had been that morning when she couldn’t find any pants to match her new clogs. Then, their cat Frisky sneezed on her cereal while she was eating breakfast.

“Then for lunch today,” Molly said, “I ordered chicken nuggets, but you know what they gave us? Fish nuggets!”

“Did you eat them?” Grandpa asked.

“No way, they’re gross!” she said.

“So, you didn’t have any lunch?”

“Well, I ate an apple, and my friend Emily gave me a cookie,” Molly told him. “At recess, I was playing four-square, but this one kid kept cheating. He always calls a do-over or lies and says a ball was in when everybody knows it was out.”

“Who was that?” Grandpa asked.

“Danny the dork face,” she said. Mom or Dad would never let her talk like that, but Grandpa didn’t mind. “He’s bossy, and a cheater. He picks his nose, and always makes fun of other kids.”

“That’s terrible.” Grandpa’s whole face wrinkled in disgust. “Do you ever tell the teacher?”

Molly rolled her eyes at Grandpa. “No, and even if I did, it wouldn’t help. They would just say, ‘I want you kids to play nicely,’ and he would keep cheating.”

“Try not to let it bother you,” Grampa said as he tousled her hair.

Adults just don’t get it, Molly thought. They always tell kids to just forget about it, or try harder, and think everything will be fine. They went into the kitchen and Grandpa fixed her a snack while Molly told him about falling on the street and the dog do-do incident.

“Where are those smelly shoes?” he asked.

“I left them on the front porch, don’t worry,” she said.

Grandpa cleaned her clogs while Molly ate her snack and watched Cartoon Network. They washed her knees and put antibiotic cream and band aids on both. Since Molly came over fairly often, she had extra clothes at Grandpa’s, and she put on a clean outfit before they headed to Yankee Stadium.

The Yankees were playing the Blue Jays, and Molly’s excitement grew as they entered the ball park. Baseball is much more interesting when you are at the game than watching on television. There are thousands of people there; most dressed in Yankee shirts or Yankee hats. The air is full of the smells of popcorn and hot dogs, with the sellers hauling around their boxes of ice cream, peanuts and soda.

Grandpa gave the tickets to an usher who brought them to seats right down next to the field, just three rows back, a little past third base. Molly could see the muscles on one of the Yankee player’s face as he chewed a piece of gum during batting practice.

“Grandpa, where did you ever get such good tickets?”

He smiled and winked at her. In a fake mobster voice he said, “Let’s just say, I’ve got connections.”

The announcer called out the Yankee player’s names as they ran onto the field. Molly’s heart nearly stopped when Derek Jeter came out of the dugout. He played shortstop for the Yankees, and was Molly’s favorite baseball player. She cheered loudly with the rest of the crowd and felt the excitement in the air as the first pitch was thrown.

The game was close, with the lead changing several times. Derek Jeter had played a pretty good game, with two hits and a walk.

In the eighth inning, Grandpa let her get a soda and some popcorn. He loved junk food as much as Molly did, as they’d already had hot dogs and sno-cones. Now it was the ninth inning, and the Yankees were ahead 5 to 4. If they got the Blue Jays out without scoring, they would win the game.

The first Blue Jay up was a huge guy, and he hit one deep into center. The Yankee outfielder ran and jumped high, catching the ball just before it went over the wall. The crowd roared and clapped with excitement.

Grandpa turned to Molly and said, “That was a close one.”

She nodded in agreement. One out, two to go.

The next batter was a guy named Coletro. He hit a line drive over the first basemen’s head into right field. Surprising everyone, he ran past first base and headed for second. The Yankee right-fielder threw the ball to Jeter, but Coletro was fast and slid under the tag. The umpire called, “Safe!” and the stadium erupted into a deafening chorus of boos!

The next batter hit several foul balls while the pitcher tried to strike him out. On one pitch, the catcher bobbled the ball and the Blue Jay player on second stole third. Molly couldn’t believe how fast he was. Finally, the batter swung and missed, so that was the second out.

The next Blue Jay up was a left hander with a big chest and powerful arms. The count went to three balls and two strikes, and Grandpa held her hand as everyone hoped the batter wouldn’t get a walk or a hit. Molly sipped her soda and held her breath as the pitcher wound up and threw.

A tremendous crack! Exploded from the bat. Molly watched the ball soar high into the air, and then started to panic. The ball was coming right towards them.

The next seconds were ones that Molly would never forget. She heard the heavy breathing of a man running and turned just in time to see Derek Jeter jump into the air and fly like Superman, over the fence and right at her. His gloved hand knocked Molly hard back into her seat as his face crunched into the seat in row two. Then, the most amazing thing imaginable happened. The ball came down like a meteorite, and instead of cracking her skull wide open, it landed right in Derek Jeter's mitt.

The crowd went nuts with applause as the other Yankees helped Jeter back onto the field. There was blood on his chin from where he hit the chair, and his eye already looked a little swollen. Even though Molly was drenched in soda and her popcorn lay all over her lap and in a pile on the ground, she clapped like crazy with the rest of the fans. That was out number three, which meant the Yankees had won.

“Sweetie, are you OK?” Grandpa asked, looking her over. The guy in row two was rubbing a sore shoulder and neck where Jeter had landed on him.

“I’m a mess, but I’m OK.” Molly brushed the soggy popcorn from her lap before getting up to go, and that’s when she found it. At first she caught just a little glint of silver in the small mound of soggy popcorn under her seat. When she touched it, it moved, and a large blue stone gleamed from the center. A ring, she thought, and picked it up.

A man’s ring, bigger than any she’d ever seen before. It was silver, with a brilliant blue gemstone circled by tiny diamonds in the center. Lettering above the stone read, *New York Yankees*. Below the stone, it read, *1996 World Champions*.

Molly ran her finger across the stone, unable to believe it was real. On the inside of the band were carved letters, *DEREK JETER 2*. That was Jeter’s uniform number. His ring must have fallen off when he made the diving catch.

“Whatcha got?” Grandpa asked.

For just a second Molly considered cupping the ring in her palm, putting it in her pocket, and saying, “Nothing.” Finders’ keepers, loser’s weepers, right?

“Oh, I just found something,” Molly said.

“Let me see,” Grandpa said.

Reluctantly, Molly put the ring in his hand and watched his eyes grow huge with surprise.

“Holy cow, Molly. This is Jeter’s World Series ring, from his first year with the Yankees. This ring must be worth fifteen thousand dollars.”

“Can I keep it?” Molly asked, already knowing the answer.

“Molly, I’m surprised at you. Do you realize how important this ring is to him? It is every ballplayer’s dream to win one of these.”

Grandpa kept the ring and they walked around until they found the Security office and turned it in. He explained everything to the officer, who was very thankful and called them, “Good citizens.”

Grandpa chatted excitedly the whole way home about the game and how amazing it was that Derek Jeter not only jumped in her lap, but lost his ring, and they’d found it. Actually, I found it, Molly thought, but didn’t point that out. She was glad he was happy, but all in all, she’d certainly had better days.

On Monday, Molly told all her friends about the game while they were supposed to be doing morning work. She wished she had the ring to show them, but she remembered exactly what it looked like and described it in detail.

“You’re lying,” Danny the Dorkface said. “I seen the game on TV, and Jeter landed on some fat guy with a beard, not a kid. You’re making it up.”

“Am not,” Molly said. Why did Danny Dorkface have to have such big ears?

“OK, that’s enough talking,” Mr. Alvarez said.

Molly tried to focus on her work, but Danny was singing softly, “Molly is a liar, a liar.” She felt her face turning red, and wished she had magic powers so she could glue Danny’s lips shut.

At recess, Danny the Dorkface went around telling everyone that he saw the game, and that Molly was just lying to get attention. At first, Molly tried to tell all the kids who asked that she really was at the game. But, she could see the doubt in their eyes.

When it was time to line up, the boy behind her said, “Hey Molly, can I borrow your World Series ring?” Most of the kids in line laughed.

Molly didn’t mention the Yankees game or the ring to anyone for the rest of the week, and the teasing gradually stopped. Danny was still annoying, but Molly was pretty certain he was born that way.

Friday came at last. Except when Molly had the hiccups for about an hour during gym, it was not a bad day. They had pizza for lunch, and that was Molly’s favorite. She got a 95 on her spelling test, which would make her mother happy.

Around two o’clock, Mr. Alvarez was at the board telling the class about the Lakota tribe, who lived somewhere in the middle of the United States. It was pretty boring, so Molly doodled in her notebook, drawing a squirrel with razor-sharp teeth biting off Danny the Dorkface’s head.

A knock came at the door, and Mrs. Brown, the school principal, came in. She was smiling, which was very unusual for Mrs. Brown. Behind her was a handsome man with bright green eyes wearing a Yankee cap. A white bandage was taped under his chin. Tommy Nichols gasped and said, “Hey, that’s Derek Jeter!”

Immediately the room erupted in chitter-chatter. Mr. Alvarez went over and shook Jeter’s hand. Mrs. Brown scowled at the class and commanded they settle down. Molly wondered why Derek Jeter was there. Were they going to have a special assembly? Molly could hardly wait to tell Grandpa.

When the room was quiet, Derek Jeter turned to the class and said, “Hello. Is there a Miss Molly Evans here?”

For some reason, Molly couldn’t put her hand up. It just laid on her desk like it was stuck in cement. Karin, in the desk next to her, jumped up out of her seat, pointed and said, “Here she is!”

He came over and shook Molly’s hand. She saw the World Series ring on his finger, right where it belonged. He had a great smile, but there was still a little bruising under his eye. “Molly did two very nice things for me a week ago,” Jeter said to the class. “She got out of the way just in time to help me make a game-winning catch, and she returned something of great value to me.” He pulled a small box from his pocket and handed it to Molly. “I’ve brought you something to say thanks.”

The entire class got out of their seats and gathered around her desk to see what it was. Molly was so nervous she had trouble opening the box. When she managed to get her clumsy fingers under the lid, there was a loud gasp from the class. Inside the box was a kid-sized ring. It was silver, with a blue stone and several small diamonds around the stone. Molly picked it up and saw “New York Yankees and World Champions” printed in small letters surrounding the stones.

“Look on the inside,” he said.

*MOLLY EVANS #1 FAN* was inscribed.

“Go ahead, put it on.”

Molly slipped the ring on her finger. She couldn’t talk; she could only stare in wonder at the ring. Finally, the words came. “Can I keep it?” The Yankee shortstop laughed, not in a mean way, but in a way that made Molly feel like it was her birthday and someone gave her an all-the-ice-cream-you-can-eat party. For once, Danny the Dorkface was completely silent.

Derek Jeter gave Mr. Alvarez a baseball signed by all the Yankee players. He stayed with the class for a little while, signing autographs and talking baseball. At two-thirty he apologized and said he had to catch a plane to Minnesota, where the Yankees were playing the Twins the following day.

Nobody could focus on doing work for the rest of the afternoon, including Mr. Alvarez, who kept looking at the signed baseball, rolling it gingerly in his fingers like it was made of glass. Everybody wanted to see Molly’s ring, and she was so happy that she let them try it on.

When the release bell rang, Molly raced to her bus, not too fast, as she was wearing her clogs again. She clutched the ring in her fist, a wide smile across her face, anxious to get home and tell her parents about her wonderful day.

**The Robot and Emmajean Doolittle** by John Batran, Second Place Stories For Youth

Emmajean Doolittle is 11 years old and she is not very tidy. In fact, you could say she was a slob. Her bedroom is such a mess that her mother refuses to enter it until she cleans it.

Emmajean has a trash can, but it is empty and the trash is all over the floor. When she takes five minutes to clean up her clothes that are scattered all over the place, she throws them into the corner in a pile, and then can’t find anything.

Emmajean asked her mom if she had seen her back pack and her coat.

“It is most likely in your room,” her mother replied. “That is where it is supposed to be, remember?”

“Will you tell Walter that he has to help me find them?”

Walter is her 14 year old brother who was coming out of his very neat room as they were talking. He heard what was said and commented, “I wouldn’t step a foot into that toxic dump you call a room, for a million dollars.”

“Mom, tell him he has to help me.”

“I am sorry honey, but you are old enough now to take care of your own things.”

Emmajean’s friends didn’t like to come over because her room was such a mess. She even paid them to help her clean up her room, but when they came over a few days later; the room was a disaster again, so they learned real quick that she was still a slob.

One afternoon while she was being real lazy and watching TV, a commercial came on that caught her attention. It was addressed to busy housewives who worked, took care of kids, ran the house and just didn’t have enough hours in a day to take good care of everything.

“Have you ever thought about hiring a maid, but just can’t afford it? Well, I have the perfect solution for you. For just three hundred and fifty dollars, you can have your very own housekeeping ROBOT. That’s right! You heard correctly. This amazing robot can clean, take out the trash, pick up after the kids, do the laundry, and can also be programmed to start dinner at a certain time.”

Hard to believe, but this could be an answer to her prayers. Now, Emmajean had to figure out how to come up with the money to buy this robot. She needed to make her life a lot easier, if that was even a real possibility.

So off she went, looking for any job she could get. She raked leaves, mowed lawns, babysat, washed cars, ran errands, walked dogs... anything for a buck! She even helped her brother clean the garage one Saturday, for two dollars. He thought she was changing, but her room was still a disaster area.

Finally, after working all summer, she had all the money she needed to buy the robot, and a little more. Boy, was she tired. Now the robot was going to work for her!

All she had to do was program the robot to do what she wanted it to do, and she did! It was cleaning, picking up, taking out the trash in her room, sorting her laundry, washing her clothes, picking up her books, putting them neatly on the shelves, and even making her bed. The robot was better than she hoped it would be.

One day, while Emmajean’s robot was reading to her from a book that she had programmed into him, her brother walked past her open door, peeked in, and saw that her room was clean as a whistle.

“Wow, do wonders never cease?”

Then he spotted the robot, and the robot said in a robot voice, “Your name, please.”

With a huge smile on his face, Walter said, “Sure thing little fella. My name is Walter.”

“Oh yes, Walter Doolittle,” said the robot, “brother to Queen Emmajean, 16 years old, trying to get his driver’s license, the brains and face of a maggot. Would Walter like an audience with the Queen?”

“You seem to know my name, little one. What might yours be?”

“I am Fetcher, personal assistant to the Queen. Now answer my question or I will be forced to bar you from entering this room.”

“Please oh small freak, let me enter.”

Fetcher told Walter that he also had the manners of a maggot, before letting him into the room.

Walter asked Emmajean if this was the reason she worked so hard all summer, so she could be lazier than she already was.

Emmajean thought about it for a long minute, and then replied, “Yeah, I guess it was.”

Walter left Emmajean’s room in quite a huff, saying that he needed a snack. When he got to the kitchen, Mother was there, starting supper. She said that they would eat in an hour and he could wait until then. But he said he needed something to take what he saw in Emma’s room out of his mind. She was curious at that and went to see what he was talking about. It couldn’t be worse, could it?

She got to Emmajean’s door. The robot asked for her name.

“Mom,” she said in a not too friendly voice.

Fetcher answered, “I see where the Queen gets her good looks,” and moved aside.

“Thanks,” said Mom, and she stepped inside and gasped, “Emmajean, this room looks great and smells wonderful!”

“Thanks, Mom. I owe it all to Fetcher. He is my new robot. He cleans and can do anything around the house.”

At that, the robot said, “I don’t do windows.”

And at that, Mom said, “I don’t either.” And they all laughed.

Emmajean told her mom she could borrow Fetcher any time she wished. Her mother said she intended to do just that, starting tomorrow morning! It was Saturday after all, wasn’t it?

Everyone was happy. Mother was happy, which meant Father was happy. Emmajean was very happy because she got to keep her robot, and Fetcher was happy just to serve.

The only one who wasn’t happy was Walter, because he failed to get his sister in trouble for being so lazy. He pouted around the house for a couple of weeks, and then came up with a plan to get even, once and for all.

He went to the robot store and bought another program to take the place of Emmajean’s. He made sure not to disturb what Mother liked and wiped out everything else. He had to get Emmajean out of the house and away from Fetcher. Luck was with him. Their father took her to a friend’s house for a sleepover.

Walter went quickly to work, installing his program. Now all he had to do was wait and watch the fireworks. He was giddy with excitement. Even his mother commented on his mood.

“Oh, I’m just happy that Emma is not just sitting at home and being lazy, and she is finally having fun for a change. That’s all.”

“I’m so glad to see that you do love your sister.”

“Yeah, right,” said Walter to himself, so quietly that nobody heard.

Later the next day, Emmajean got home. Walter waited ever so patiently, but nothing happened. The next day Emmajean asked Fetcher to clean her room and Fetcher said, “Sorry Miss, not today.”

“Do you know who I am?”

“Yes Miss, Emmajean Doolittle, sister to King Walter, and most likely the laziest eleven year old on earth.”

“I command you to clean my room!”

“Not today Miss. I am watching football with the King.” He turned and rolled out.

Emmajean stared after the robot for a very long minute, her face very red with anger.

She hollered loudly, “Mom!”

Walter saw Fetcher coming, knew what had transpired, and smiled broadly, while in Emmajean’s room, he heard her holler even louder…..”Mom!!”

The Disappeared by Doris Hampton, First Place Adult Fiction

Thirteen-year-old Gabe balanced Pappy’s dulcimer on his lap, closed his eyes and began to play. The high, lonesome sound merged with the pain in his chest, then flew away to sweep through the branches of oaks that huddled together along the banks of the river near the edge of the clearing.

"Dang!" Pappy grinned and launched a stream of chew onto the dry earth. He pointed a gnarled finger at the dulcimer.

"You finally snagged its voice. Now you can get shed of that burden you been lugging around ever since we buried your daddy."

The old man was Gabe's great-grandpa. The crazy one. The one who believed in the dulcimer's power of soul healing.

Pappy's voice lowered. "You gotta let it go," he said, ignoring the tears that slid down the boy's cheeks.

Gabe clinched his jaw and dove deeper into the playing. No amount of music was going to tame the rage buried deep inside him, as fiery as the bomb they'd said had killed his dad.

This was the first time Gabe had cried since the body had come home from that hellhole in the Middle East whose name he would never utter again.

How he'd hated standing beside his mom in that country cemetery with its mossy tombstones and its Mason jars full of fake flowers. Pappy had been the only one who, like Gabe, hadn't attended the church potluck afterwards.

Since then, Gabe had come here daily, to Pappy's isolated cabin, to sit with the dulcimer and lose himself in the playing.

Now, his skill with the dulcimer had reached a new level.

Pappy chuckled. "Go on playing like that and you'll soon be good enough to summon the Wildshine."

The Wildshine, a mythical race of shapeshifters, was just another example of Pappy's crazy thinking.

Gabe continued playing, filling the dusty August afternoon with a haunting tune that swirled and soared.

Another sound, wild and shrill, pricked the back of Gabe’s neck as he shot to his feet.

"Kee-yah. Kee-yah," the sound came again.

“What's that?” Gabe raised a hand to shade his eyes and peered into the gloom beneath the huddled trees down by the river.

Pappy gave him a wide grin. “You’ve called in the Wildshine,” he said. “That means your playing’s as good as it’s gonna get.”

He chuckled. “I never thought I’d see the day when someone, besides me, played good enough to summon them tall, shiny ones.”

"Kee-yah. Kee-yah. Kee-yah."

“That’s the way they talk,” Pappy said.

Excitement pulsed as Gabe scanned the gloom beneath the oaks.

“They’ve come to the sound of your playing,” Pappy said. "That's a mighty feather in your cap, boy."

Gabe swallowed hard. He settled the dulcimer into the leather case on the ground at his feet and went to stand beside Pappy in the center of the clearing.

“The Wildshine ain’t something most folks have ever seen and they ain’t what they're made out to be when someone does happen to catch sight of 'em," Pappy said.

His gray head bobbed. "I reckon I'm the only one who hasn't disappeared after seeing 'em as they really are."

Gabe thought of the missing hikers and campers and fern pickers whom Pappy believed had been taken by the Wildshine. He claimed these unfortunate folk had been changed into Wildshine clones and imprisoned in a cave hidden somewhere in the shadows of old growth timber farther up the mountain.

"No need to worry," Pappy said as if reading the boy's mind. "I’ve been dealing with these critters for years. I know what to do to keep us safe.” He paused, then added, “I know what not to do, too.”

The old man pointed. "There's probably a bunch of 'em hiding back in those trees down by the river, but you ain't catching sight of 'em unless they wanna be seen."

As if responding to his words, a huge, ape-man creature stepped out of the grove of oaks and stood as still as the trees which had hidden it from view.

Gabe's heart lurched. He’d seen pictures of this giant whose footprints had been left along logging roads and in rural yards throughout the county.

“Bigfoot!”

“It ain't a bigfoot,” Respect and a touch of awe filled Pappy’s voice. "That's his shift-self. Most of them shiny ones shift into a bigfoot, but some of ‘em shift into cougars and a few even show up as wolves."

Gabe felt a chill creep up his spine. Although the creature was too far away to get a look at those eyes, he felt their fix on him.

“He knows it was you, not me, that was playing the dulcimer.” Pappy said.

The giant stared at Gabe for a long moment, its silver-gray fur glistening in the sunlight, then turned and faded back into the shadows.

“See what I mean? Ain’t no need to fear the Wildshine when I’m around," Pappy boasted. "You're safe as a toad in a bucket when you're with me.”

A flash of silver, caught from the corner of Gabe’s eye, caused him to turn toward the log where he and Pappy had been sitting.

“Hey!” he yelled. “Leave that alone.”

Another silver-gray creature, a female, was holding the dulcimer in one hand and the leather case in the other. Eyes like molten amber met Gabe’s.

“Drop it,” he shouted, rushing forward.

The creature whirled and sprinted for the river.

“Stop,” Gabe yelled. That was Pappy’s dulcimer. No hairy beast was going to take it away from him.

“Let her be,” Pappy yelled. “Give her the dulcimer. I’ll get me another one.”

"Kee-yah," the beast taunted.

A fiery explosion of suppressed fury sent blood roaring in Gabe’s ears, drowning out the old man's warning.

“Boy! Stay away from their cave.” Pappy waved frantically as he hobbled across the clearing.

Gasping for breath, he tried to shout, but his words sounded as if they were coming from behind the thick log walls of his cabin.

“Beware – of – their shifting fog.”

Gabe gave chase along the riverbank until his lungs were ready to burst. When the creature veered onto a deer trail and started into the twilight gloom of dense woods, He tripped over a rock and fell. Shards of gravel stung like buckshot and blood oozed from a cut on his lip.

Searing pain morphed his rage into a living thing, propelling him on.

"Kee-yah!"

Gabe followed the sound from the deer trail through salmonberry bushes and fern.

After what seemed like hours, he became aware of an eerie silence that permeated the gloom of the deep woods.

“Kee-yah. Kee-yah,” came from just beyond a fallen tree that lay across a creek on the side of the mountain.

The creature was waiting for him at the yawning maw of a cave. Amber eyes locked onto Gabe’s, daring him to come closer. Silver-gray fur caught sunlight as the dulcimer was held aloft.

“Give it back!” Gabe demanded. He wasn’t about to chicken out now. His dad hadn't been a coward and neither was he.

The creature waved the dulcimer in one hand and lifted its case in the other.

Gabe took a few halting steps toward the cave. Pulse racing, he thought of his dad and moved even closer.

As he watched, a cloud of thick fog drifted from the back of the cave, rising to swirl around the beast. Like a lace curtain rippling in the breeze, the mist pulsed and stirred – pulsed and stirred, until the creature disappeared from view.

Gradually, the fog cleared to a ghostly haze. A young girl with a tangle of silver-gray hair materialized out of the mist where the beast had stood. She was rail-thin and tall, at least seven feet. But the most amazing thing was the fact that she glowed.

Gabe stepped forward then hesitated. It looked as though florescent bulbs were shining through the girl's parchment-pale skin. Her amber eyes met his as she held out the dulcimer with a triumphant grin.

Seeing Pappy's prized possession in the hands of that thieving freak rekindled a burst of anger, dissolving the thread of caution which had halted his steps.

“You can't have it!” Gabe rushed at her.

Immediately, the fog gathered and surged, shrouding him in an icy mist. With lightning speed, he was caught up like a windswept leaf, propelled past the shining girl, into the depths of the cave. He struggled frantically to break free, but the pulsing fog held fast, anchoring him to the dank ground beneath his feet.

Terrified, he felt his body begin to grow upward, stretching like a rubber band pulled, inch by inch, into the darkness above. Bones and tendons and muscles expanded with excruciating pain, trapped in the Wildshine's shifting spell.

Gabe's heart thundered as his bare arms began glowing from within. He opened his mouth to cry for help. The sound bursting from his lips came alien and shrill.

“Kee-yah."

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**Escape** by Robert D. Sollars, Second Place Adult Fiction

His heart threatened to burst out of his chest as it thundered harder as he ran, urging his weary and failing body to keep going. The sweat poured off of him in rivers even in the frigid below zero air. His legs were becoming rubbery with fatigue as they crunched & pounded through the calf deep snow. His mouth hung open as he gasped for air & spittle froze on his cheeks. His skin was turning red from both the exertion and cold.

His thoughts raced about his flight for safety. “I can’t let them catch me! They’ll kill me to know what I found out! I’ve got to keep running and find a place to hide”. He saw a small opening maybe big enough for him to hide in before the secret police caught him.

The ground was uncovered by the snow and was gravelly. He wouldn’t leave footprints so they couldn’t track him. But would they look for him there anyway? “It’s so narrow and virtually unseen he didn’t think so. He made a dive for the opening.

He literally dived through it and came to rest on a pile of rotting leaves, grass, & hay. ‘An animals den’ he thought. ‘And a large one at that, but the opening was too small to be much by anything. The overwhelming warmth of the hiding place pushed him to and then over the edge into the abyss of darkness.

He awoke to a high & bright sun. He then saw shadows of the secret police walking close by. It was then he smelled the stench of the den. ‘This scent will turn away the dogs I’m sure, at least I can hope’.

After a few minutes he heard the search commander yell an abrasive command and they began to move off. He listened intently for hours until the night fell and the black velvet dark spread across the land. He remained motionless and slept until awakened by the sun, again.

A grousing & growling noise told him that he was no longer alone. He opened his brown eyes and saw a set of what seemed to be razor sharp teeth staring at him. He quickly closed his eyes and waited for the animal to tear the flesh from his bones and kill him. Instead he heard sniffing and then the badger curled up next to him and fell asleep. ‘That was definitely strange’ he thought. ‘Why would badger do that and why would they build such a large den for themselves? Curious indeed’ he thought just before falling into another coma like sleep.

The sun was just beginning to creep over the trees when the sound of feet scuffling around the entrance forced him awake. He kept still and watched with one eye as a shadow stopped at the entrance. His eyes flew open wide in fear as a gloved hand came into the den searching for…him he assumed. The hand touched the badger and awakened it. In an instant he understood what the stench was as the hand tried to withdraw but was caught in the steely jaws of the badger and was in the process of being ripped apart as was half of its forearm.

The hand managed to escape and the policeman ran screaming away from the den. He remained still for what seemed like hours, and then realized he had fallen asleep again.

The next morning he was rested but hungry. Doubting if he would like raw bloody meat, like the badger, he gingerly began to inch his way out of the borrowed den. He crawled as quietly as he could until the bright sun light caught him in the face. He then thought he should have waited until nightfall and slunk away like an opossum into the inky darkness of the night, but it was too late.

The 2 pronged razor sharp fork surrounded his neck & trapped him. A harsh and sadistic laugh erupted from above him. He struggled against it and finally saw who had caught him. The policeman laughed even louder when his eyes opened as wide as dinner plates at the sight of blood soaked bandages surrounding a stump.

“Thought we gave up on you Mr. President? Well, we didn’t and now you’ll pay for your crimes against the people of Mexico.” A long pause ensued as the policeman gazed intently at his prize. A rope was put around his next. “Get up you worthless piece of lizard shit! Let’s go to Houston for your ‘fair trial’.” The loud, gruff, & gravelly laughter erupted again. A sound that he remembered until they led him to the shark tank & the sharks bean a feeding frenzy as he screamed.

Grobair awoke to a green hand with 4 fingers shaking and yelling at him. Fear shot through him before he realized that he had been asleep and his kids were waking him, or trying to, for the morning meal. He opened his 3 eyes to see the beautiful light green tinged skin of his wife looking at him with concern. “Are you okay Grobair? You had us worried when we couldn’t wake you. We almost called the medical units.”

She leaned over and gently kissed him on his slit of a mouth. “Maybe after the kids slumber, you can have special something for dessert my sleepy one, she giggled.” He got off of the long chair in which he had been sleeping and went to the glop bench

“Oh daddy, you tell such stories!” his little one said. “A place with a blue sky, yellow sun, & you slept during the dark!” she laughed hysterically like a normal 4 glipo girl would.

“And the fact you had 5 fingers and your skin was the color of death. And then this monster you called a ba…dger? You shouldn’t be telling such stories to your children Grobair! Shame on you!”

Grobair set his eating utensil down and thought long and hard. Had it been a dream? It was so real. And the feeling of exertion, cold, fear, & then being ripped apart by monsters that swam. What were they called again, sha…

**Magic by Chris Kuell, Third Place Adult Fiction**

“Mommy’s gone,” Justin says. “I’m sorry.”

My son has that same look on his face as the first time his teacher sent home a note telling us she suspected he’d stolen a pack of gum from the girl who sat next to him. I put my briefcase and keys on the table and kneel down to his height.

“What do you mean?” I say. “Where’s Mommy?”

“I made her disappear.” Tears are about to erupt from his seven-year-old eyes. “I didn’t mean to.”

“Take a deep breath, buddy,” I say, putting out my hands to hold his trembling ones. “Tell me what happened.”

‘Mrs. Meeker called, and then Mommy started yelling at me.” The tears were rolling now, and he took his hands from mine to pull up his Batman tee shirt and wipe them. “I just wanted her to stop. I ran to my room and used my magic to make her disappear.” He was trembling now, on the verge of a meltdown that might take hours to control. “I want her back.”

“Maybe she went to the gym.” I glance in the front hall and see her gym bag where she always keeps it. An open diet Coke is on the counter by the sink. New mail is stacked by the phone like it was every day.

Our lives follow a fairly strict schedule. Vanessa picked Justin up from after-school care at 4:30, and was home at 4:45. I came home at 5:15 and started on dinner while she went to the gym. Dinner was at 6:30, Justin was in the tub at 7:30 and we took turns reading to him every night at 8:00. Lately we’ve been working through the Captain Underpants series.

“I’m sorry Daddy.”

The floodgates opened. I picked Justin up and carry him into the living room, cuddling him on my lap as I rock and try to calm him down.

The third time we received a note, Vanessa and I both went in to talk to his teacher. “I’ve asked him,” she said. “He doesn’t deny it, but he doesn’t admit it, either. He said he uses magic.”

“He’s got a lively imagination,” I said, thinking about all the YouTube videos we’d watched together. Card tricks. Live pigeons from a sleeve. A guy who smashed a Rolex with is boot, then fixed it as good as new with the military sweep of a British flag. The magic set I’d bought him for Christmas last year.

“A lively imagination is one thing,” Mrs. Meeker said, using an index finger to slide her oversized glasses back up her nose. “Stealing is another. I know that mug full of Hershey Kisses was on my desk when we went to lunch, and he was the only student who went back to the room because he’d forgotten his lunch money.”

A four-color pen. An X-Men comic book. A Sponge Bob pencil sharpener, and now a mug full of chocolate.

“I’ve searched the entire house, “Vanessa said. “Top to bottom. None of it is there.”

“I don’t mean to get personal,” Mrs. Meeker said. Her eyes said just the opposite. “But… is everything okay at home?”

“I made them disappear,” Justin said.

“Buddy, you know magic isn’t real. I told you; those magicians on YouTube are just doing tricks. It’s an illusion.”

“That’s fake magic,” he agreed. “But not all magic is fake.”

I rock my son and push back thoughts fighting to invade my perimeter. Five business trips in the past six months when she’d only been on three or four trips in the past seven years. “Big project,” she said. “New opportunities.”

New clothes. New hair color. New gym membership.

I coax Justin into the kitchen and heat up some canned ravioli on the stove. I dial her cell, but only get voicemail. I text, and wait. And wait. And text again.

We eat. He wipes his mouth on his sleeve and I don’t correct him.

All marriages go through rough patches. This is normal. People are complex.

“Daddy, I want Mommy back,” Justin says.

“Make her reappear then.”

He frowns and sips his milk. I need to believe. Make her reappear.

“Buddy, I want you to do something for me.”

He perks up at this request. His eyes, on the spectrum halfway between green and blue, are exactly the color of hers.

“Make my briefcase disappear.”

He scowls. “You’ll get mad.”

“No I won’t,” I insist. “Go ahead. Use your magic.”

“Mommy told me not to do any more magic.”

“Mommy isn’t here, is she?” I immediately want to retract my words. “I believe you, Justin. I don’t care what Mommy and Mrs. Meeker say. I believe you. Go ahead.” I pop open the clasps and pull all the paperwork out. “It’s just an empty briefcase. Make it disappear.”

He closes his eyes and scrunches his face. I can almost smell the brain cells burning as he evokes all his mental might to… what? Move the briefcase to another dimension? Negate all the inner-atomic forces to pull the briefcase into an instant black hole?

As my son imagines the briefcase disappearing in his mind, I imagine her slacks and blouse draped carefully across a hotel office chair. Her panties tossed haphazardly on the floor.

“It doesn’t always work,” Justin says.

“Try,” I say. “Try.”

He bursts into tears again, pushes back from the table and races upstairs. The slam from his door rattles all of Vanessa’s kitchen trinkets. His wailing tears something deep inside me.

I’m afraid. We’ll be married eleven years this June. We got hitched right after college, and Vanessa really wanted children. But, try as we might, and believe you me, we tried—nothing happened. Then, just about the time we’d given up hope, the piss strip turned blue. Nine months later I held my son and felt more love in my heart than I ever could have guessed possible.

Upstairs, Justin had cried himself dry. He laid, curled up in a ball, still in his school clothes, thumb in mouth, his Iron Man comforter wrapped around him. On the ceiling are glow in the dark stars I’d pasted so carefully to show Ursa Minor, Ursa Major, and Cassiopeia. On a shelf above his bed is his collection of super hero action figures. Batman, Superman, Spiderman, Thing, and Daredevil. I sit and listened to the miracle of his breath going in and out.

I check my phone, but there are no texts or missed calls from Vanessa. If I check the garage, what would I find? What about her closet? Her bureau? Would there be cotton and lace, or dusty old cedar chips and emptiness?

I read a blogpost once from a woman in Iowa or Illinois or somewhere in the middle of the country who said her daughter had made her Siamese fighting fish disappear using magic. The mother didn’t believe her, but the fish, which her daughter professed great love for, was gone. Three weeks later, there it was again, back in its bowl. A mystery, divine intervention, or magic?

I unconsciously spin my wedding ring with the fingers on my right hand. “Make her reappear,” I chant to the universe. “Make her reappear.”

**Seeing With the Heart** by Robert Gardner

Her voice was warm and soft. “Tell me about silver. The color. I want to know about silver.”

“Okay,” I said, smiling a little.

She sat with me at my kitchen table, just around the corner of the table, our knees sometimes bumping. Close enough to touch, I thought. Close enough to take her hand and hold it, but I thought it best not to try. Just be content she was there, I told myself.

“Silver,” I said, “is shining, like light bouncing off a mirror. Silver is like light dancing.”

“Really?” she said.

Though unable to see them, I gazed down at my hands on the table. “I think of silver when I hear you laughing,” I murmured. “Silver is like when you chuckle, when you giggle.”

After a long pause she said, “You remember silver?”

“Yes.” I’d been told her eyes were hazel. Probably beautiful, I thought, but as unseeing as my own.

“It’s different for you,” she said. “You could see once, and I’ve never seen.”

“Well, yeah, it’s got to be different.” I wondered where this was going, this trying to explain colors to her. To someone who’d never seen colors. I smiled to myself once more. I really didn’t care. The important thing was she was here in my apartment again, she sitting at my table again.

“What about green?” she asked, her tone enthusiastic.

“Green is the color of trees budding in the spring, the color of grass waving in a meadow.”

“That sounds very pretty.”

“Green is you when you’re not saying much, but you’re happy. Or when you’re just sitting there and you’re smiling. When you feel safe with things around you, with the people around you.” I hesitated, then said, “I think the way you feel right now is probably green.”

“I see,” she said quietly.

“You know what the color blue is?” I asked.

“No.”

“Blue is the color of the sky, the color of an ocean, of a lake with sailboats gliding across it.”

“That sounds beautiful,” she said, her voice full of wonder. “The sailboats on a lake thing.”

I looked over at her. “Do you know what a sailboat on a lake looks like?”

Her laughter bubbled up. “No, not really,” she confessed, laughing again.

I smiled. “Do you even know what a sailboat looks like?”

“No.”

“Can you picture one in your mind?”

“How could I?” she said. “I’ve never seen one.”

I said nothing, mulling over our differences. The differences in our lives, the differences in our blindness. I asked, “You don’t picture things in your head?”

“I don’t know,” she said, sounding confused. “Sort of. I don’t know. Probably not like you. I was born blind.”

I said nothing.

She asked, “You can remember all that stuff? Sailboats and lakes and colors and all that?”

“Yes.”

“It’s different for me,” she said, her voice flat.

I lowered my head. “Am I wasting your time? With all this talk about colors?”

“No, keep going,” she said, her tone now eager and bright. “This is fun.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I’m sure,” she said. “Keep going. This is fun.”

“What was I talking about?” I asked absently.

“You were talking about blue.”

“Okay.” After a moment I went on, my tone serious. “I guess I’m talking about colors the way I think about them. Or how I remember them. Then I’m trying to describe them in a way you might understand them.”

“Okay,” she said. “What about yellow? Or orange?”

“Yellow and orange are fun colors,” I said. “Colors that you see on happy days, colors that make you smile. Like the color of the sun on a summer day. Like the taste of an orange or a pineapple.”

“Go on,” she said, almost breathless. “Tell me more.”

“Yellow and orange are like when we’re talking,” I said. “Like right now when you sit here at the table and we just talk.” Although she couldn’t see me, I smiled at her. “These are happy times for me. Here at the table with you. Orange and yellow times.”

There was a long, awkward silence. Then she asked, “Have you got anything to drink?”

“Sure,” I said. “What do you want?” I stood up. I’ve got diet Pepsi. I’ve got some beers, and I could make coffee.”

“A beer would be great.”

I brought back two bottles of Dos Equis and a can of mixed nuts, then resettled into my spot. We sipped our beers, our hands occasionally brushing as we both dipped into the can of nuts. The mood became relaxed once more, and she started giggling. I smiled at the sound of her, at her laughter. “What’s so funny?” I asked, almost giggling myself.

“You,” she teased.

“Thanks,” I teased back, chuckling. I reached for more nuts. “So, what’s going on tomorrow?” I asked, referring to our classes at the training center.

“Nothing special,” she said, giggling again. “Just the usual.”

“Want to go out and get something to eat tomorrow night?”

“Maybe.”

I smiled, and I was sure she was smiling too. Her maybes almost always turned into yeses. I thought about telling her that, then decided it best if I didn’t.

And I thought about how much I’d changed, how different I was. Since being at the training center, that is. Now I was a guy with travel skills, the confidence to get out on my own. To walk around the city or take the buses. The confidence to go to a restaurant or a bar, the confidence to ask someone to go with me. Not just to ask another student so I’d have some company, but to ask someone special. Someone like her.

We talked more, sipping our beers, nibbling on the nuts. I felt at ease, and she seemed at ease also. We laughed and teased and joked, enjoying each other. I pictured her there: small, petite, her hair brown and short. Tidbits I’d picked up being around her for the last several months at the center. Things I’d been told by those who had a little sight.

Finally I asked, “How about red? Do you know the color red?”

“Not really,” she said, giggling a little.

“Red can be like how spicy foods taste,” I explained. “You know, like when you eat peppers. Red can be how you feel in the summer when you’re out in the heat. Or maybe red can be like when you’re excited.”

“I think I understand,” she said.

My voice became very low. “Red can be like when you’re around someone you love.”

She said nothing.

Then with most of a beer in me for courage, I decided I had to tell her. What I’d been wanting to tell her. I lowered my head once more, my voice turning serious again. “Red is how I feel when I think about you. When I think about how I feel about you.”

I waited for a response from her, hopefully something similar, but got nothing. “Do you know what I mean?” I finally asked.

She continued to sit there, silent. When she at last spoke, her voice was very soft. “Red is maybe not a good color for you.”

I said nothing.

“Do you know what *I* mean?” she asked.

“I’m sorry,” I mumbled, still looking down, “but that’s the way I feel. About you.”

Both of us were quiet. She took a drink from her bottle, and I did the same. I felt as though she was staring at me, or what passed for staring for us. She took another sip, laid down her bottle, then said softly, “We’re friends, aren’t we?”

“Yes.”

“Maybe we should just keep it that way. Okay?”

“Okay,” I said, my voice barely audible.

“We haven’t known each other that long.”

“Two months,” I murmured. “I started at the school two months ago.”

“I remember the day you started,” she said, a smile in her voice.

I was surprised at that. At the fact she’d noticed me that day, that she still remembered. For me that first day at the center was a haze of too many new things being thrown at me, she lost among the dozen other students already there.

“I’m not sure I remember you on that day,” I said, my voice low.

“I remember *you*,” she said.

The silence between us stretched out. I found myself playing with my empty beer bottle on the table, not sure what to say next, not sure what to do next. Finally she asked, “Are you going to have another beer?”

“I could. Do you want one?”

“Sure.”

I brought back two more Dos Equis from the fridge. She took what seemed like a large swig from hers, then asked, “We can be friends, can’t we?”

“Sure,” I said grudgingly.

She took a smaller sip. “I can come up here to your apartment, and you can come down to mine. And we’ll see each other every day at the school.”

“Yeah.”

“We can even go out at night sometimes and get something to eat. Like we’ve been doing.”

“Okay,” I said, my voice leaden.

She drank more beer. After several swallows she said, her tone impish, “Let’s talk colors again.”

“Okay,” I said again. I took a long draw from my own bottle, telling myself to pull myself out of my funk, that I needed to get with it.

She said, “Blue was about sailboats, right?”

“About sailboats on a blue lake,” I corrected.

“But people talk about being blue,” she said . “That means they’re sad or depressed or something if they say that, right?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Does that make any sense? If someone is sad, why do they talk about the color blue? Why not some other color?”

I smiled at her question. “I really don’t know.”

She took a long drink of her beer. “Do you sometimes feel blue?”

“Yes,” I said, my voice low. I remembered yesterday at the training center. I was struggling through my Braille class, then heard her laughing down the hall, she apparently in her computer class. An ache flashed through my chest at the thought she was with someone else, with other people, and she was laughing happily. She was laughing, without me. And I had immediately dived into blue.

“What about black?” she asked. “It’s bad, right? If people say something is black, that’s bad, right?”

“Not necessarily,” I said. “Some things are just black in color. Like a shirt or a pair of pants, and that doesn’t make them bad.”

“Okay,” she said.

“You can say the night is black, which means there’s no stars or moon out, but that doesn’t necessarily make it bad. If I turn off the lights, it would be black in here, and there’s nothing wrong with that.”

“You have the lights on?”

“Yes.”

“What’s the point?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” I said, feeling like I was apologizing and not sure why. “I grew up sighted, so I guess it feels normal to me to have the lights on at night.”

“Huh,” she said. She took a drink from her bottle, then said, “But people can say it’s a black day or something like that and that’s bad, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” I said.

She clapped her beer bottle down on the table. “All gone,” she said.

“Want another one?”

“No.” Her chair scraped on the floor. “I better get going.”

“You have to go?”

“Yeah. I better get back to my own apartment. Thanks for the beer.” She got up and headed toward the door.

“Did any of that help?” I said to her back. I angled out of my chair and rose to follow her. “You know, to understand colors?”

“I need to think about it,” she said over her shoulder.

“Okay,” I said.

She retrieved her long white cane standing in the corner of the entryway next to mine. She didn’t open the door, but instead turned to face me. “I’m not sure I get it,” she said. “Colors are hard to understand.”

“Yeah,” I said, gazing down at her, aware only inches separated us. So close, so near, I thought. The redness, the yearning for her, flashed through me. I jammed my hands into the pockets of my jeans to keep from reaching out and touching her.

She was silent for a beat. When she spoke, her voice soft, I could tell she was looking up at me. “We’re still friends, aren’t we?”

“Yeah,” I said.

She was silent again, this time a little longer. Then she said, “I’ll graduate before you, but we’re going to be at the center together for at least another six months.”

“Yeah?”

“So,” she said, a smile obvious in her tone, “who knows what could happen?”

I said nothing.

She brushed my arm with her fingertips. “Good night,” she said, her voice like silk. “See you at school tomorrow.”

“Yeah, sure,” I mumbled.

I heard her open the door, then the click of the latch as she gently closed it behind her. I sighed, that ache in my chest returning.

I turned and shuffled back into the emptiness of my apartment, my head still down, my hands still in my pockets. I sighed again, this time longer and deeper. Once more, she was gone. Once more, I wasn’t with her.

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From *La Petit Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupery:

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

**Robert Gardner**, now retired, worked his entire adult life as a mechanical engineer. He lost his eyesight after college, but he managed to keep working largely by becoming knowledgeable on the computer. He lives with his wife in the small town of Hampton, Illinois, on the Mississippi River. He became involved with the NFB fifteen years ago, and has published articles and stories in both the Braille Monitor andSlate & Style. His favorite writing genre is short story fiction.

**Resistance** by Shelley Alongi

The building lies at peace, the morning all around it is calm. The smell of fresh morning dew on the besieged city rises and caresses the nostrils of the lookouts posted on the wall. It has been a tense, yet quiet night. They know that today the Germans will conduct an “action”, moving in to eliminate the remainder of the people in the ghetto. The two straggling boys who stand in their secure niches on the wall look at each other and suddenly, with the speed of the blitzkrieg, disappear into the stinking, teeming confines of the decimated ghetto with its now empty rooms, and its piles of garbage. The people here try to keep it clean, but there's no easy way to clean an area three hundred yards by five hundred yards with humanity stuffed into it like so much discarded refuse. The boys know that neither they nor the remaining people are refuse. They are people with names and hopes and dreams in the middle of incredible darkness.

One of the boys takes a sudden turn into a corner where he crouches and groans as cramps of a severe and sudden diarrhea seize him. He hasn't eaten any decent food for a long while, and what food he has managed to secure has left him ill. There hasn't been much food to run in for the people left in the ghetto. Lately, with more and more people being forced from the ghetto to the factories of death, there has only been one thing on the boy’s mind: guns. There's going to be a fight, soon, and they desperately need guns to fight off the gathering SS men. There's no time to think of that, now. There's only time to run, to hide, to warn the others. The cramps pass, and he continues his trek deeper into the bowels of the ghetto.

He passes the other lookout, gives him a signal.  
"they're coming!"  
He and the other boy on the wall are running in opposite directions. The boy who has just been ill turns into a corner street, and rushes into a house. It is not really a house, it is a room, filthy and bare. There is one woman and one man in the house. One of the women is covering an infant with her shawl, nursing the child, pale, wan. He collapses into a corner of the room.

"They’re here!"

As one, they disappear Into a wall, in a hollow place. The boy knows that someday their hideout will be found. An SS man is going to kick down a wall and find his family.

The family grows still as the sounds of gunfire and dogs reach them. The woman holds the child to her breast, desperately praying that it will not make a sound. God knows she has no milk to give it.

The boy listens intently for harsh commands and screams. The sounds come closer, and then, there is a great commotion. The door to their house is being kicked in, and it sounds as if a hundred men are entering the room. The crashing of heavy jack boots seems to go on forever as the boy curls in the small space provided by the wall. No one breathes. Someone is cursing those damned Jews. One man comes over to the wall and kicks it. The wall vibrates. There is a small quiet stir.

"Jews! Jews!"

There is a scuffling, and then the hide out is revealed.  
"So, there are Jews here! there are!"

The infant gives a whale, and for a moment, no one moves. Then one of the men raises his Lugar and shoots the child. the bullet enters the baby's chest, forever silencing it. The shot intensifies the silence.

"Raus!" shrieks one of the Ss men. He knows that the death of the baby has left the others pliant, unafraid.

The mother, the son, and the Father follow them out of the room, down the rickety stairs, and into the streets. The Jews know they are going to the Umschlagg Platz to board the trains. They will pass by the cowering Warsaw citizens, who will let them go onto the trains to the death camps.

The mother has tried her best to keep her family together through the darkest time in Jewish history. She puts what food there is together to make a meager meal, giving up her own rations for the children. She takes the food that her son brings to her, knowing he is a runner for the resistance. Sometimes she is surprised at what he brings in: some vegetables, some fruit, small items that can be easily smuggled past the watchful eyes of the SS men clustered close to the ghetto. She follows her son and her husband calmly, numbed by the violent death of her eight week old infant. She knows that such a child cannot live in February of 1943. It is too cold, the darkness of hatred is thick, settling over her family and her people like some ludicrous covering. She looks up into the sky, and sees the sun. It is beautiful. She breathes in the fresh air, and sighs.

The Father is thin and shaking from too little nourishment. His stomach knots with hunger. He is a rabbi, and rabbis meet their fates calmly to set examples for the others. Therefore, he will stand as straight as he can and face the Germans with dignity and courage. Perhaps God will honor him in this last act of worship. He has lived a long life, raising his children to fear the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He has taught his congregation to fear God, to worship Him in the festivals, and the prayers, and mitzvot. Perhaps dying bravely, (yes he knows the rumors are not rumors at all, but stunning truth) will be his final act of worship. He has lived a long time. He closes his eyes, feeling the sun gently caressing his black sidelocks, and prays the final prayer: Here o Israel, the Lord our God is one God.

The son marches along with his family. He has run in the resistance for two years, and the SS has never caught him.

Today, he wanted to see his family. the urge to see his baby brother and the thought of his weak, pious Father, and his practical mother caused him to come up and take a look out position on the wall with the other guards. He hopes that the other lookouts escape. He will never know. He looks at his mother, determined to march along without complaining. He looks at his Father, who has bowed his head in prayer, and then he looks at the SS men, whose guns are trained on them. Anger burns in the son like the fires of the Auschwitz ovens, hot and red, and all consuming.

Feigning sudden terrible cramps, the boy hunches over, groaning. the SS man looks, perhaps unwisely. The boy throws the matzah ball grenade he has been hiding the whole time. It bursts into a million pieces of metal, peppering the German's eyes, and tearing into his body. First, a shriek, then, a hail of bullets, and the boy is on the ground, bleeding. He smiles. He will not let them take him alive to the death factory. He will not let them take his mother. He will not let them take his scholarly Father. If there is to be death, it will come by his own hand, and he will take some of them with him. He will not stand idly by. He will hope others will live to tell his story.

A crowd mills around the spot where the boy has made his final stand. Here in this unholy place the blood of the haters and the hated mingles in the final act of death which comes to everyone. SS men descend upon the spot, pushing back spectators with the butts of their guns. In a moment, the spot is deserted, and the sun gently caresses the street and the wall of the Warsaw ghetto. Soon it will be noon and the sun will shine upon the walls and the city. But for now, once more, all is quiet.

**Shelley Alongi** has served as editors for several newsletters with subjects as varied as Jewish culture, and aviation. She has been writing since she can remember. She has published one novel and is currently working on her second with a goal of publication in November or December 2016. Trespasser, published in 2015 is Shelly’s first full length novel. She enjoys taking snippets from her surroundings and turning them into stories. She never knows where the adventures will lead her. She currently lives in Texas with her two cats Pearl and Brandy. Pearl is her cat editor.

**Writing In the Dark**

Along with all of the other commemorations that are observed in October, the state of Arizona has also deemed the blind writers ‘group, Writing in the Dark’, worthy of being recognized with an official month long proclamation and celebration of its achievements and goals.

The group was formed in March 2016 with the sole purpose of assisting writers who are blind or visually impaired, B/VI, in getting their work published in regular markets and not just those that are just for the B/VI community.

The group’s president, himself an accomplished writer, says “I’ve never seen a more dedicated and talented group than I have with this bunch. They are truly gifted and artistic and I expect great things from all of them in the future.”

Robert D. Sollars is this talented president. You might recognize his name from this very issue as he is one of our own contest winners. Writing in the Dark holds its meetings at the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Phoenix. The group is open to all who are B/VI and who want to write for publication. Please contact the president for more information on members’ achievements, goals and how they accomplish them.

Sollars can be reached at (480)251-5197 or via email at rdsollars@aol.com.

2017 WRITING CONTEST GUIDELINES

The annual youth and adult writing contests sponsored by the NFB Writers’ Division will open January 1st and close April 1st for all aspiring writers whether blind, sighted or visually impaired.

Adult contest categories are: short Fiction, non-fiction, stories for youth, and poetry.

Youth contest categories are: Short fiction and poetry. The youth contest is divided into three groups, determined by grade level – elementary, middle, and high school.

As always, in both adult and youth contests, there may be up to three prize winners (1st, 2nd, 3rd), and one or more receiving honorable mention. Additionally, a prize winning entry may be published within the Writers’ Division’s magazine, Slate & Style.

All contest winners will be announced during the first week of July, at the Writers' Division business meeting, during the NFB national convention to be held in Orlando, Florida.

PRIZES

\*Youth contest winners will receive $30 for 1st place, $20 for 2nd place, and $10 for 3rd place.

\*Adult contest winners will receive $100 for 1st place, $50 for 2nd place, and $25 for 3rd place.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

YOUTH CONTESTS

\*This is a contest for students who use Braille.

\*Note: if you are 18 years old, or older, you must enter the adult contest.

\*Entries must be submitted in hand embossed Braille, either with a slate and stylus or Braille writer, and there are no exceptions.

\*Submissions must be Brailed by the entrant.

\*All submissions, no matter your grade level, must be in contracted Braille. Let us know if you “know” or are “learning” contracted Braille. Additionally, let us know if you have chosen to use UEB, or not.

\*Each entrant must provide an identical electronic copy of the cover letter and contest entry as a Microsoft Word file [doc] or as a Rich Text Format [rtf] file).

\*Attach the electronic copies to an email and send them to- EvaMarie Sanchez at thirdeyeonlyinaz@gmail.com.

\*Send your hardcopy Braille and cover letter to:

EvaMarie Sanchez

\*Address to be announced.

COVER LETTER

Entries must be accompanied by a cover letter containing entrant's information: Name, address, phone, e-mail, title of the entry, school, and grade of entrant.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

\*We will consider only unpublished original entries.

\*Youth short fiction stories submissions cannot be more than 1,000 words, and poetry of no more than 50 lines.

\*Authors of either poetry or fiction are encouraged to submit multiple pieces.

Youth ENTRY FEES – None

Are you the best Brailler in the contest? Be sure to double check your work. Remember to use Braille paper so the Braille is easy to read. Good luck!

ADULT CONTEST

\*Note: this contest is for everyone 18 years old, or older. One need not be blind to enter.

\*We will consider only unpublished original entries.

\*Fiction short stories can be of any main stream genre, and cannot exceed 3,000 words.

\*Non-fiction entries should be either a memoir or personal essay, and cannot exceed 3,000 words.

\*Stories for youth are stories with content written at an intellectual level appropriate for the younger reader, and cannot exceed 3,000 words.

\*Poetry: We will accept poetry of any length

\*Authors of either poetry and/or prose are encouraged to submit multiple pieces.

\*Adults are required to submit all poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and stories for youth as attachments to an E-mail message.

\*The attachments must be in either Microsoft Word (doc) or Rich Text Format (rtf).

\*Fiction, non-fiction and stories for youth should be written in a normal prose style, with paragraphs being left justified, lines are single spaced, and having a 14 point font of Aerial, regular.

\*No hard copy submissions will be accepted.

COVER LETTER

Along with your entry or entries, include a cover letter providing the following:

\*Your name, mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address.

\*List the titles of all submissions, including the category in which they are being entered.

\*State your method of payment for the entry fee (check or PayPal).

\*Finally, the cover letter could be your e-mail message, or a separate document attached along with your submissions.

CONTEST ENTRY FEES PAYMENT AND METHODS

Adult Fees:

\*The fee for each short story, non-fiction piece, or story for youth is $15.00 for members and $20.00 for non-members.

\*The base fee for poetry will cover up to three poems, if the combined line-count of all three pieces does not exceed 108 lines - additional poems require a second fee, following the same fee payment scheme. Base fees are $15.00 for members and $20.00 for non-members.

PAYMENT

\*You may use PayPal from the Writers’ Division website, http://writers.nfb.org

\*Alternatively, you may mail a check made out to NFB Writers’ Division, with a note in the memo line relating to the contest. Send to:

Shawn Jacobson

19541 Olney Mill Rd.

Olney, MD 20832.

\*E-mail submissions should be sent to EvaMarie Sanchez at: thirdeyeonlyinaz@gmail.com

\*\*\*\*We look forward to seeing your words. \*\*\*\*

If you have questions write EvaMarie Sanchez, Writers’ Division President: thirdeyeonlyinaz@gmail.com

**Let’s Write the Lives We Want**

Slate & Style is a quarterly publication of the National Federation of the Blind Writers' Division. It is dedicated to writing pursuits such as literary pieces, resources, and information about various writing styles. A majority of Slate & Style's contributors are blind, but we welcome submissions from any contributor. We also accept submissions touching on any subject matter. We encourage submissions from both experienced and beginning writers with our goal being to hone our writing craft and share our thoughts.

Slate & Style accepts short fiction, short creative nonfiction, poetry, articles discussing and providing tips for various writing styles including literary, technical, editing, public relations, and academic, literary criticism, resource information, and book reviews.

Subject matter is not limited but will be up to the editor's discretion to publish.

Slate & Style accepts material from adults and children. We require email submissions.

Below are some of the highlights for submitting. Go to writers.nfb.org/Slate&StylePage for the full submission guidelines.

Include an attached cover letter and a short biography. This should be no more than 150 words. Keep your bio to the key items you feel are important for readers to know.

Multiple submissions per email are fine, but all must be listed in the required cover letter. Use Microsoft Word or RTF. No other formats are accepted. Send all submissions and questions to [s-and-s@nfbnet.org](mailto:s-and-s@nfbnet.org).

Please read through all the guidelines carefully. Submissions that do not follow these guidelines may not be considered for Slate & Style.

Though submissions are welcome at all times, if your submission is specifically about a particular season or time of year and you would like your submission to appear in that corresponding issue, please read the dates and submission deadlines in the guidelines.

For the Winter issue, which will come out on December 21st, the closing date for acceptance of submissions is November 30th.

**Happy Fall Y’all!**