

THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY
PRESENTS

THE NINTH ANNUAL
YOUNG WRITERS AWARDS



THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY

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MEMBERS' ROOM

THE YOUNG WRITERS AWARDS ARE GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY JEANETTE SARKISIAN WAGNER AND PAUL A. WAGNER

THE YOUNG WRITERS AWARDS

2011

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POETRY

JAMIE GELMAN

MY HEART IS AS BIG AS MY FIST

My heart is as big as my fist, and I'm very very proud.
And when I want to show my pride, I just yell aloud,
"Hello people with hearts *normal* size! My heart's so big, it could
win first prize!"

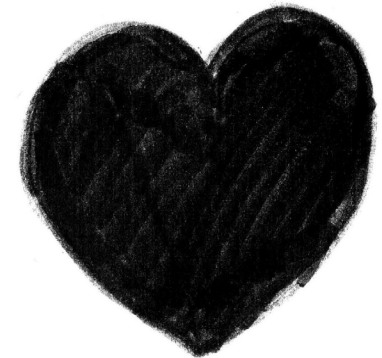
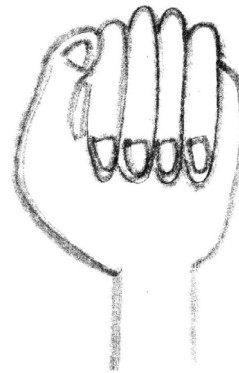
Everyone looks at me and usually are annoyed,
about this crazy weird, heart talkin' boy.

But then one day, a girl came to say,
"Just stop this nonsense, NO MORE PLAY!
A dinosaur's heart was really really big,
it's three times yours and then add 6 pigs.

And a monstrous lion, even though he can be mean,
has a heart as big as a lake. NO! a heart as big as the sea!"

That tore me into pieces, from head to toe,
that a dinosaur and a lion's heart, beat faster than the river's flow!

So I made a huge list,
about how I could grow my heart BIGGER than my fist.



EMILY GAW

DIVINITY

An egg in a tree,
The great miracle happens,
A fluffy wet bird.

KATHERINE FRANCO

PROUD

I look to the left and see all of the kids gathered around.
Talking.
About me.
How I am not right,
Not like them.
They say I am Black.
Ugly.
I turn my head to the right and notice a girl.
She is shy, insecure.
Almost different.
I am hopeful.
Maybe she will care.
Realize that I am just like them.
Look past my color.
But she does not.
She walks over to the rest of them and stands within their crowd.
She was
Almost different.
They can change their personality.
Their thoughts.
But I can never change my blood.
My skin.
And I am proud.

ALANA EILAND

RAGE

Rage
It's what I feel
when they say I can't
because of my skin
When who I am
isn't seen
Rage
It's what I feel
When I'm different
Flying in a flock of doves
I am a beautiful crow
I call it individuality
They call it inhuman
Rage
It's what I feel inside
Each word
Gnaws my soul
Rage
I sit alone
Watch them play
They say I can't
Because of who I am
How I was raised
I sit there
And feel
Rage

ARTHUR POTTER

SKI RACE

I was shooting down the mountain, the snow spraying like a fountain, when I was halfway down I turned around.

I shouted, "Hey ho look at me go! I'm flying down the powdery snow!"
I felt the wind in my hair, I was almost there!

It was really exciting, but the wind was biting. It was like I was fighting to get to the finish!

Then I flipped in the air. It was a real scare! I fell on my face; it was a real disgrace.

I guess I wasn't all that fast, because I came in last.

ELIZA FAWCETT

GIVE ME A LITTLE SWEET SUSTENANCE

Give me a little sweet sustenance:
a crumpled whiff of sunshine,
a frayed petal, heaving a last kiss of dew—

Hand me a suppressed laugh,
bottled with shivering hands
in an old jam jar

(strawberry rhubarb, a bitter-sweet combination)

Toss me a wink,
an entanglement of eyelashes and brevity,
the caress of butterfly wings, lost in symmetry—

Crack me a smile,
plucked from the briny depths—
a half-eaten oyster: pearled ambiguity.

TESS SOLOMON
CELLO CONCERTO
SIR EDWARD WILLIAM ELGAR
MOVEMENT I

They cut through the air like knives,
Filling you with pleasure not pain—
Swells with emotion as the next expression starts
And wafts towards you on atmospheric vibrations
Depicting color, portraits, landscapes,
To be snatched away in less than a second and leaving you satisfied anyway

Scenes reach you as the next note is struck, in blues and maybe purple,
Then the trumpet rings out, red and gold shine as vivacious feeling
heartfelt, and none the wiser listening,
deep as canyons,
High as stars,

You feel yourself brimming with ache you know not what for.
Suspenseful, sharp dark maroon colored pauses
Then burst flourishes of music louder and deeper with blaring vibrant overtones

You *feel* when you listen,
the expressiveness fills you, even as you're sitting still, your mind is filled
with the colors depicted.
sun-golden and blue-green melodies
play their course
and you don't see anything but filled with the players' expression as sound is played,
specifically for you,
from the hands of the composer.
Fabulous as the sun takes over and gold and shines and fills and satisfies,
and quiets as you notice the peaceful grass,
to be gently replaced with a picture of the sea,
always moving beneath the sun.

Deep segments finished to be carried by a higher voice
and the deep continues only in one's heart;
and together two high voices make a tune of swelling shimmering patterns that end all too soon
reaching a peak on a high note and to be filled in on the bottom by a whole orchestra
long lasting evergreen fills as the last deep note is struck
...then continued by woodwinds in an uprising and revival of what *could* be the end,
harmonic minor notes struck, filling you with a wonder, of the beauty that
no matter how much listening, surprises you every time.

SARAH YEOH-WANG

KOI POND

We could sit there for ages, eons even,
Noses nearly skimming the glossed surface of water,
And sun glaring off of our glass tent.
We bit our lips in twin concentration;
Purple petals fluttered behind us,
Controlled like the fans of an elegant empress.
No noise—just the burbling of the spigot and the cool rush of water against
A cool slate rock to which we pressed sweaty legs,
Too hot to continue walking.
We looked in an empty pond,
Empty, save the smooth taupe pebbles lining the floor,
The twisted black statue in the center,
And the gaping, gasping fish,
Hungrily kissing the sides of the stone.

I've always wanted to see a baby koi,
Not just a small goldfish.
Even an egg would do. I imagine it'd be orange,
Like the tobiko on sushi,
Maybe red, like the glistening drops of jelly from the doughnut you dropped
On our way to the museum.

ASHBOY: A NATIVE AMERICAN CINDERELLA STORY

PROSE

There was once a young boy long ago who was the son of a great warrior of the Crow tribe of the Great Plains. One day the boy's father grew ill, so ill that he could not get up. He called his son over to his side and said, "I fear that I will die soon, but near the river lives a nice woman with two daughters and a son. When I am dead, go live with them in their tipi."

The boy was very sad but he agreed to live with the nice woman. After his father's death, he walked to the woman's tipi. The woman and her children welcomed him. He liked the woman. She was short and had jet black eyes.

At first his new family was kind to him, but after a while things began to change. They made him do all the hard work. The woman, whose name was Short Bird, did not allow him to hunt with her son, but made him butcher the dead buffalo and scrape the hides. Her daughters made him do all the tasks that they used to do—gather firewood, clean the tipi, pick berries and nuts and mix them with dry buffalo meat and fat to make pemmican. He had to sleep on the hard, cold ground. He did not get enough to eat. His breechcloth and leggings were torn and dirty.

One day after he had finished his work, the woman's son pushed him into the ashes from the fire and called him Ashboy. From then on, everyone called him Ashboy.

One night he asked, "Give me a buffalo skin to sleep on."

Short Bird replied, "You are too dirty to have a buffalo skin. You would make it black."

Many nights, however, Ashboy would wait until everybody was asleep. Then he would sneak out and hunt with a sharpened stick. He learned how to track small animals, even in the dark. His eyesight grew very sharp. After he had caught an animal, he would leave it outside the medicine man's tipi and sneak back into Short Bird's tipi.

This went on for many years until one day the tribe was preparing to raid a nearby Sioux camp for horses. The warriors gathered together to ask for the blessing of the spirits in a ceremony with loud singing, drumming, and dancing. But when they were about to leave, the chief died suddenly. He had no sons to take his place. So the medicine man said, "Whoever is the bravest in battle and in hunting will take the chief's place."

Short Bird's son was certain that he would get to be the new chief. He boasted to all the villagers, "No person in this camp is as brave as I am."

Right after the war party left, Ashboy grabbed an old spear that had belonged to Short Bird's husband. The tip was broken, so he replaced it with a sharp piece of bone that he had been saving. Once Ashboy had repaired the spear, he set off on foot after them. He walked for hours and still he could not see the other warriors. He walked a little more and soon he could hear shouts from up

ahead. Then he saw warriors fighting. He threw himself into the battle and all of the warriors saw how bravely he fought. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Short Bird's son flee in terror. Soon the battle was over and the Crow warriors had won.

Two days later, the men of the village prepared for the buffalo hunt. Once again, they had a huge ceremony where they danced with buffalo masks. Short Bird told everybody that Ashboy was sick so that he would not join in. But this time Ashboy was allowed to go on the hunt because he had been so brave in battle. He was even given a horse by the medicine man who told him, "You'll need this." The men rode for a couple hours until they saw little black spots on the horizon. They got excited and rushed into the herd. Ashboy gripped his spear tightly. He doubted that he would kill the most buffalo, but before he knew it he had killed five buffalo. The rest of the herd ran away.

The medicine man was impressed. He asked, "Ashboy, where did you learn how to hunt so well?" But Ashboy didn't want to answer him and give away his secret.

When they got back to camp, Ashboy found out that Short Bird's son and two other men had also caught five buffalo. The medicine man said, "Four men killed five buffalo, so we will have another test. We will take you a long way away with no horse, no food, and no water, and the first person to get back will become the new chief."

The following morning, each of the four men was taken away from camp. From the moment Ashboy was left on his own, he began to track the horse that belonged to the person who had taken him out. He saw where the dry grass had been bent and the dirt had been disturbed. He tracked the horse the whole day, but did not see the camp. Then he saw a buffalo ahead of him. And that was when he realized he had been tracking a buffalo. So he turned around and retraced his steps. He saw how the buffalo had crossed the horse's trail and why he had been confused. It was getting dark, so Ashboy lay down to rest in a clump of very long grass.

The next morning, he started out again. When he saw tipis on the horizon, he began to run and he got to the camp five minutes later. Short Bird's son got back to the camp just after he did, but the other two men were never seen again.

That night, the whole camp had a big celebration. Everybody was happy except for Short Bird and her children. When Ashboy went for a walk the next night Short Bird and her son hid in the bushes next to a cliff. They waited and waited until they saw him coming and then jumped out and pushed him over the cliff. As he was falling, Ashboy managed to grab onto a big rock that was jutting out of the cliff and pulled himself onto it.

When Short Bird and her son got back to the camp they told the medicine man, "Ashboy walked too close to the edge of a cliff and fell over the side." Everyone was shocked. After a minute of silence, the medicine man replied, "You got back second. You will be our new chief."

Ashboy wondered how he would ever get back up to the top of the cliff. He sat thinking and thinking, while some birds flew above him. Finally, he had an idea. He broke his spear in half and rubbed the two pieces together above a little bundle of dry grass that he had found in a crack on the

cliff. A spark hit the bundle and it caught on fire.

Back at the camp, the medicine man saw some wispy black smoke a little ways away. He asked two men, "Go find out where that smoke is coming from."

The two men set off. In a while, they reached the cliff. They saw that the smoke seemed to be coming from the side of the cliff. They looked over and saw Ashboy sitting on a ledge far below with a small fire beside him.

"We thought you were dead!" they yelled. "Short Bird and her son hid in the bushes and pushed me over the cliff," replied Ashboy. "Really!" they said, "We did not think that they were that mad!"

The two men threw down a rope that they had brought with them and slowly pulled Ashboy up. When they got back to the camp, everyone welcomed Ashboy.

The medicine man said to him, "You have shown bravery, strength, and intelligence in battle, hunting, and tracking. What you have done now is like a fourth test because it shows you can deal with the unexpected. A good chief needs all of these qualities."

Soon after, Short Bird and her children were banished from the tribe forever.

EPILOGUE

It was said that Ashboy was a good chief and he led the tribe for 20 years. Short Bird and her children were killed by a stampeding buffalo herd. The two men who never made it back to the camp were captured and taken in by the Sioux who had fought and been defeated earlier by Ashboy and the Crow tribe.

MARY BEN LEE APATOFF

DOWN IN THE DUMPS

“Hey Carl,” Ben shouted, “I’ll race you to that tree!”

Carl was a good five feet behind him, and yelled back “Hey! No fair!”

Ben and Carl were 10-year-old twins. Today was their first day of Spring Break. Tomorrow they were flying to California to see their uncle. Their parents had promised they could go camping with him. Carl already had packed the stakes for their tent in his backpack.

“Phew,” Ben said as they passed the garbage dump. Holding his nose, he glanced at the smelly dump and saw a machine. “Hey Carl, look at that!” Ben exclaimed. “Let’s check it out!”

“We’ve got to go home to pick up the tent,” said Carl.

“C’mon!” Ben said insistently.

Reluctantly Carl went along to look at the machine. It was about the size of a refrigerator, painted bright red and blue with lots of different sized nozzles, screens and tubes coming out of it. The device’s control panel, had crazy looking, multi-colored buttons sticking out.

“Wow!” said Ben “Isn’t it awesome?”

“Yup,” Carl admitted.

“Hey, stand under that purple tube.” Ben said. He pointed to the largest tube connected to the machine.

Once Carl was under, Ben shouted, “Come in earth...get ready for blast off!” He pushed a few buttons on the machine’s control panel.

Carl shrieked and closed his eyes as a flash of red light came out of the tube. When he opened his eyes he saw Ben towering over him. Ben’s ear-splitting voice rang out.

“CARL WHERE ARE YOU!?”

“Ben! Ben! Down here!” Carl screamed at the top of his voice.

Somehow Ben heard the small voice and looked down. As he bent over, his bottom knocked a button on the machine’s control panel. There was another flash of red light.

Seconds later Ben was standing two inches tall next to Carl. They both looked very shocked.

Carl was shaking. “Ben,” he said angrily, “We’re really tiny now, we’re probably gonna miss going camping, and it’s all your fault.”

Before Ben could reply, they heard a soft voice from a person their size. “Hello there?” it called.

“Hello?” Ben called back nervously.

A girl about their age ran up to them and said, “Hi, I’m Wilma. There’s something I’ve got to show you.” Without letting either boy answer, she led them to a little town made of cardboard boxes and cans. They walked down a little path paved with bottle caps. Other miniature people saw them and followed. Wilma finally stopped at a big box, with a cluster of twenty people surrounding them. She knocked on the door. A man came out. “He’s a scientist.” Wilma whispered to the boys.

“Newbies,” said the scientist. “I am Dr. Whitherspoon who invented the machine you boys found, my Reducinator. My goal was to shrink the garbage to help save the environment. Accidentally we shrunk ourselves, and now we can’t reach the controls to reverse the process.” Carl suddenly had an idea. He pulled the stakes from his backpack. “Ben,” he said excitedly, “we can use these to climb the garbage bags and reach the controls!”

Ben and Carl slowly climbed the garbage bags by stabbing the stakes in the plastic, with a horrible odor coming out after every hole. Many hours later, they had finally reached the control panel with its complicated arrangement of buttons.

Everyone was looking up hopefully. Dr. Whitherspoon yelled “The yellow and green ones! Push them both together when I say now!”

The whole group huddled under a yellow tube and Dr. Whitherspoon yelled “Now!” Ben and Carl each jumped on a button. A strange noise came out of the machine. All of the people grew before the boys’ eyes. Wilma then carefully scooped up the boys in her huge hands. “Now it’s your turn,” she said, softly placing them down.

After Ben and Carl resumed their normal size, everyone was laughing and dancing in excitement. Soon all of the people had left and Ben and Carl were alone.

“What a day,” said Carl.

“At least we’ll make it to California,” said Ben. “After this adventure I’m looking forward to a nice, calm vacation.”

With that Ben and Carl ran home.

GABRIELLE HERZIG

AT PLAY WITH ROGET: MY FRIEND THE THESAURUS

I hate writer's block. It's irritating, infuriating, exasperating, maddening, trying, tiresome, troublesome, bothersome, nettlesome, irksome, vexing, cursed, vexatious, galling, and it gets on my nerves. It is especially annoying when you cannot seem to find the right word so you simply use them all. When I think I have that ideal, without fault, faultless, flawless, consummate, quintessential, exemplary, best, ultimate, unrivaled, unequaled, matchless, unparalleled, beyond compare, without equal, second to none, too good to be true, Utopian, incomparable, peerless, inimitable, unexcelled, unsurpassed, unsurpassable and absolutely perfect idea; it just slips away from my brain. It goes in one ear and out the other.

She grasped the sacred golden Roman locket, and quickly slipped it into her bag. No, too many adjectives, how about: *The sly girl swiftly slipped the sacred Roman locket into her bag.* Nope! All I did that time was change a couple of words, and rearrange the sentence. I also added alliteration, but using a poetry technique in a fictitious story is just plain odd. What about this: *Slipping the golden Roman locket into her bag, the girl quickly dashed out the door before anyone could catch a glimpse of her.* Oh, I know you're supposed to start sentences with verbs, but it just doesn't sound right in this sentence. Here let me try again. Maybe I should go on to the next sentence: *Dashing down the spiral staircase on the second floor of the Barracco Museum in Rome, this mysterious girl did her best to keep the guilt in her eyes concealed.* Hey, that actually wasn't too bad! Did you see the foreshadow there, that she might have stolen the necklace? *After darting out of the secret side entrance, she finally made it to the cold leather backseat of her boss's Jaguar. The elegant black vehicle was waiting for her in a dark alley near the museum.* That was good right? Did you like how I gave you a hint that she might have stolen the necklace for her boss? *"Is the mission complete," said a burly man wearing a fedora and black sunglasses. The girl nodded as the man briskly handed her a large bundle of cash. Little did her boss know that hidden within the girls ring was a microscopic chip recording the evidence of the scam.* No, I don't think the word scam fits the mood. How about: fraud, swindle, fraudulent scheme, racket, trick, con, felony, flimflam (never heard of that one!), gyp, or shakedown. Oh no! I'm stuck in thesaurus mode again! Hmmmm...How about: *Although the boss believed the girl was on his side, hidden in her ring was a microscopic recording device saving every last word of their conversation. "Working for the FBI can be exhilarating," the girl thought silently; as she stashed the bundle of cash in her pocket, ready to catch this crook once and for all. She exited the car and hopped on her mo-ped (parked especially for this get-away) immediately squeezing the gas handle. "He's falling right into the arms of our trap," thought the girl with a grin spreading across her face. She zoomed down the cobble stone street...* Hey look! My writer's block actually lead to a pretty good intro. It captivates the reader's attention and leaves a cliffhanger that will keep them yearning for more. Who knew that messing around with a thesaurus could lead to the key to overcoming writer's block.

ELIZA FAWCETT

DAYS OF NIGHT

The little girl shifted her stack of schoolbooks to the other side of her weary arms, lagging behind her older brother as they trudged home. It had been a tiring day, one of monotonous arithmetic and brief playground chaos; the only highlight being the consumption of a slightly soggy cheese and pickle sandwich at noon, which was not much of a triumph. This dreariness was the underlying theme for most all of the schooldays of the little girl, and she had concluded that fourth grade was neither exciting nor essential.

"Hurry up, will you?" called her brother, hurrying back to lead her away from the tantalizing displays of mince pies in the bakery window.

They continued down the chilly, damp London street: the brother striding with amateur authority, his sister jumping over cracks and warily heeding other sidewalk superstitions. The fog hung low and long in the sky, casting a mysterious grey blur above the avenues, settling amiably on church steeples and amongst the nestled birds. It dominated the air as ice monopolizes a lake: quietly, with a sense of expected presence, a defining characteristic of England, of winter. Crooked chimneys sent up loose columns of smoke from the fireplaces below, and they dangled in the air, curved, like question marks. The sky was heaving with lines and punctuation, but the words were trapped in warm homes and on the tips of commuters' tongues.

The two children hastened across the cobblestone road to their house, and let themselves in quickly, slamming the red door behind them. They stripped off their bulky winter garments and hurried into the kitchen for tea, where Mother was preparing a beef stew for supper.

After their toast and jam, the little girl took a couple half-hearted stabs at her homework, while her brother simply skimmed his textbook and pronounced his work complete. Neither child was particularly rigorous when it came to schoolwork: they preferred daydreaming much more than dividing. They ran outside to find their playmates, after assuring an exasperated Mother that they had the weekend to conquer their schoolwork, for it was, in fact, a Friday.

As they raced into the street, breathless with victory, the sudden darkness made them falter: surely there were a couple more hours until evening...? The sifting, dreamy fog had been dyed an ominous black: sooty, heavy, and almost impenetrable to the naked eye. The curly-cues of smoke and the familiar layering of fog had disappeared altogether: what remained was a great mix of smoke and sky and air, a dense block of blackness which was sinking towards the ground. In confused awe, the children raced down the pavement, their eyes stinging from the raw smoke, trying to make sense of the brittle, dark air around them. Turning the corner, they peered down the avenue, shivering as the menacing darkness inched down the cobblestones, slithered over the gutters, and pressed itself with empty black force against the brick houses straddling the road. The steady progression of

automobiles slowed to a tentative crawl, the rounded barrels of yellow glow emitting from their headlights only just penetrating the smog. Drivers swung out of their cars, pedestrians evaporated into the dark air, and silence descended on the hastily deserted streets.

Disoriented and fearful, the little girl pulled at her brother's sleeve; they stumbled down the street and reached their door by means of memory, since sight was, at this point, absolutely ineffective. Upon arrival, they were greeted with a jumbled mix of gratitude and chastising by Mother. After but ten minutes in the smog, their white socks had been stained black; they could taste the particles of smoke in their mouths, feel the catch of sooty dust in the backs of their throats.

Waiting for Father was a tense, interminable couple of hours: the family watched apprehensively as a wisp of smoke entered into the still room from a crack in the doorframe. The trail of dusty air hung limp by the window, a taunting cat's tail, stirring the hushed breath and teasing the fearful eyes which watched its faint development.

At long last, the door knob turned tentatively, Father hastened in and slammed the door triumphantly. The children ran to meet him, content for but a minute: his hat was smeared with a darker substance than the black fabric, his wool scarf pulled up around his mouth, the tears from his watering eyes stained with soot.

As the family sank down to supper, Father flicked the radio on:

“Good evening, this is the BBC news. A great smog has descended on London. Already there are at least a hundred reported dead. Seventeen automobile accidents have occurred, due to extremely poor visibility. The Home Secretary and the Secretary for Public Health have issued a joint statement concerning this highly toxic and dangerous smog. The public is advised to remain indoors, but if going outside is necessary, to cover their mouths in order to avoid inhalation of the poisonous air. While the exact causes are unknown, a spokesperson for the Royal Society for the Environmental Sciences has confirmed that the smog is a result of the mixture of coal smoke and fog, a fatal pollutant for which there are no defenses. Mr. Geoffrey Huxtable of the National Weather Service predicts that winds from the Northeast should blow the smog away within 48 hours. The newly elected President of Mexico, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines...”

Father slowly switched the radio off.

With worry cracked across their faces, the family retired to bed, creeping up the stairs as if they too were wisps of smoke—dispersing under covers and behind tightly closed doors. The little girl pressed her face to her pillow, finding not comfort but a film of soot on her sheets which had seeped in mysteriously: and still the smog engulfed the night streets.