

DIGNITY :

creative expressions from
the inspiration project



Spring 2012: Volume 2

ABOUT :

The Inspiration Project is a volunteer collaboration between the University of Rochester and CP Rochester, a nonprofit organization that supports individuals with physical and developmental disabilities. During the spring of 2011, six writing students from the University of Rochester met weekly with six writers from CP Rochester. Through extensive one-on-one conversations, the UR students and CP Rochester adults have produced the creative works assembled here.

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P R E F A C E :

College is a place where you go to classes and you learn about what you want to do with your life. You learn about how to grow as a person and how to experience life outside of college. I came up with the Inspiration Project because I always dreamed about going to college and I wanted to bring this experience to the rest of my peers.

Working on the project last year helped me become a better writer and public speaker. I want to give speeches to other people about people with disabilities and talk about how strong and determined you need to be when you have a physical or intellectual disability.

At the Inspiration Project we all come together to write our own unique stories. We work with our tutor to write fiction, biographies, memoirs, and poems. It's a lot of hard work but we write stories we think are appropriate for other people to hear. It's hard for some of us to communicate, but with the Inspiration Project we have come up with a solution.

We have worked very hard this semester. We hope you enjoy reading our stories and listening to what we have to say. We hope that when you listen to the stories you have some kind of understanding about our lives, our imaginations, and our creativity.

Thank you for listening.

Latrice Person

April, 2012



UNTITLED

By Yeats Chao

In Collaboration with Illiana Garcia

I was born in 1950 in Taiwan. Back in the sixties, when I was only seven years old, I was electrocuted and started having seizures. It was a shocking moment when I was struck by lightning and I just can't remember anything whatsoever. All I remember is everybody was coming out of the swimming pool, but I was still in there when I was struck and I passed out afterwards. I didn't know where I was, and all I heard people saying was "Yeats, Yeats, you all right?!" I remember people calling my mother's name: Lina.

My mother was in her middle-age adult years. I can't quite tell you how old she was. She was a lot older than I was and was born in Taiwan. Now she is likely in her eighties. I remember going home with my mother and going to grocery stores to buy food – apples and cheerios, apples and cheerios. Pomegranates, they grow on trees in Taiwan. I wouldn't pick them though. I remember getting them from the store. I remember going to the store in her car. I was just a little boy. I remember a bread box in the kitchen. We put bananas and peaches in the bread box. I remember walking on my knees, walking on my hands and knees. Crawling. I tried going to the kitchen and reaching the bread box.

When I was younger, I was

friends with Chinese boys and girls. We spoke Chinese; I could speak Chinese – Mandarin. I can remember words in Chinese, but I can't remember letters.

What I remember most? Drawing animals: a dog, a cat, a human being. Scenery. I still do. I do it to communicate with another person. When I was a small boy, I would draw animals. I would draw a human being with no clothes on. I would draw a person with no body. A Chinese woman once said, "This is so magnificent!" I remember seeing things out in the open, like someone helping me draw pictures.

Notes on piano keys—I just pushed on any keys, just fiddled around to see what it's like, and people asked, "Yeats, what are you doing that for?" I thought of the keys as A to Z. It sounded nice. I never got to take piano lessons. Something like E G A E, such and such; I would play desperately, like an animal. I can remember looking at the wall, and there being a face; I imagined keys and words to it.

So my mother also speaks Chinese; she's alive in New Jersey. My father is dead; he died in the sixties from a heart attack. He worked in the United States for an engineering company. I remember being punished by my dad. He took me and belted me. Yes, that was my punishment when he did that. I was only

six or seven years old.

My sister Alice works in New Jersey; she's a dentist. So she cleans out people's teeth. Floss! I floss because my sisters say so. I was only five years old when I was taught how to clean my mouth. She taught me to open my jaw and floss each tooth, under and upper. Gerald, my brother, fixes cars and Jeanie, my other sister, is married to someone, to an American person. I'm close to them, but they don't remember speaking Chinese. They say to me, "We hate it when you speak Chinese." But I told them, you've got to stick with it to understand me in this country.

I can remember when it was easy to walk. I remember bicycles. As I grew up, I grew higher, larger. I can remember seeing myself walk in the mirror. I was born that way.

Yes, drawing. I would tell people: "Maybe someday, if you have time, you can write to me and I'll draw for you—as a favor." I would draw animals I saw. I just love to see small birds on a table. The birds grow larger; I've seen them grow. I wouldn't want to get close to them though; I wouldn't want to scare the birds. I like squirrels. I love drawing animals the most. I can still remember what I see on the wall like birds, an eagle; what else? Chickens. Roosters. Small chicks. I watch them grow larger. Then I remember that when I was small, there was this

little chick...wrens—if you don't scare them, they'll stay.

She woke up one day and wondered what made her a girl. I didn't know a thing about Alice until I got older, more mature. Then I asked my mother how old she was, and I remember her telling me.

I remember being in bed with my sister. I remember my mother saying to my sister, "Alice, what are you doing?" Why are you sleeping in your brother's bed?" Alice slept in my bed so she wouldn't be scared. She was scared of not knowing me that well. But that goes way back.

Writing a letter. I also have things that have been written. I've written and read things about other people, of their interests. I read their interests like a common goal, what it's like being on an airplane, going to places they've never seen before, seeing different objects, and to see where airplanes fly.

We ate rice and vegetables. I remember when I was young, I would see things. I can remember things as far back as when I was small planting vegetables for my mom and dad. I would plant spinach. The chickens were scared of me. Then I would go to school. I used to go to public school and I used to walk as I did before the accident. After, I went to an appointment with a doctor. He gave me medicine to take, which was Tegretol. It made me walk unsteady and that's what made me walk lopsided. My body changed. But I still did drawings, sketching things to show how much I could draw and then I give them out to people. This was also how I showed things I've seen before. I did

pictures of animals: deers, fawns, dogs, chickens. Just by imagining how they were done and multiplying them by numbers.

I went to school in Sonyea Developmental Center, then it changed to Craig Developmental Center. Before it was closed, there were men and women; they worked together. I lived there for fifteen years. Now it's not a school and no one works there. It's a prison now. There are no residents there now. No one lives there. While I was there, I also wanted to know how to go to dif-

ferent places. When I moved out of Craig, I remember writing letters to some people like my niece, uncles, mom and dad. I stayed with my sisters Alice and Jeanie, and my brother. At that time I went to an education program. We studied some math and reading. I also did some drawing where I drew a picture of Christ. I loved drawing a lot. It was always on my mind, drawing. Now I live in an apartment with other consumers, and I do many other things. But I still draw . . . always.



WHY I'M SPECIAL

By Toni Montgomery
In Collaboration with Suzanne McKenzie

I like sewing, all kinds of art, writing in my journals, writing stories about families and friends, I love movies, especially Tyler Perry movies, like Madea's Reunion and Daddy's Little Girls! My favorite TV shows are House of Payne and Desperate Housewives.

Sometimes I like to read – my favorite book is Oprah's biography! I like Oprah because she is good role model! Same with Tyler Perry! I like puzzle books, like word searches. My favorite music is Janet Jackson, Jamie Foxx, Fantasia, Jennifer Hudson, and gospel music like Mary Mary and Kirk Franklin. I like listening to music, dancing, but not singing.

Family From my Past and Friends
From Today:

My mother's name was Christine. If she were alive today, she would be 83. Here's a letter I wrote to her:

Dear Mother,

I love you. I feel sad about your death. Why did you leave me alone with Claudia? I want to tell you about my life, my life story, because you would like it. I am happy! God blesses me in my life, and you are in my heart. You are a special angel.

I loved cooking with you! I helped make dinner with you on the

weekends. We would go to church sometimes. You read the Bible with me. I miss you. I love you with all of my heart.

Love, Toni

I have four sisters and one brother. I also had a big brother named Alunzo who was born on November 30th, but he passed away when I was little. I don't remember much about him. I do remember that he was taller than me.

I spent a lot of time with my older sister Nettie. I went to movies with her. A long time ago we saw a movie called Jump the Broom. I don't remember much about it but I felt proud sitting in the theater with my big sister.

Father's Day is special; my father is special in my heart. He was a good parent. He went to church with me. He gave me money on my birthday. He liked to go fishing. Sometimes we ate the fish he caught. Mmm, it was good.

He was a deacon and usher in the church and he sang in the choir. My father and my mother didn't stay married. My father married again, and Liz is my stepmother. My father had a blood clot and he passed on the same day as my brother Bernard's birthday, June 28th. If he were alive today, he would be 93

years old.

Here's a letter to my father:

Dear Father,

I miss you so much. Why did you leave me? I hope you see my mom in heaven. I hope you get to go fishing in heaven. Here's what I want to tell you: I am a good lady. My goal is to get my own apartment and job. Right now I have some independence. I do my laundry. I have a laptop. I play games on it and watch movies. I love art. When I get my own apartment I will hang pictures on the wall. I hope you are happy in heaven.

Love, your daughter.

Poem to Nettie, from Toni, love
always.

In you I see:

Faith in yourself

The power of love

Freedom to make your own choices

When I'm with you, I feel peaceful
I know that dreams come true if you believe

When someone does something
nice, like send a card to me

I think of you.

Best friend is big sister

There is no fear in love

And I love you

You are so special in my heart.

Denise

Denise is a staff member in my program. I see her every day, and she has nice, stylish hair, and clothes that always match. She is a very good person. Sometimes we talk about what happened on Desperate Housewives. She is important to me because I love to talk with her every day.

A look into my future...

My goals are: I want to take a creative writing class, write many more stories, and publish a book someday! I want a lot of people to buy and read my book, so many people that they would request a book-signing, and maybe even be part of Oprah's book club!

I want to get a different job, something having to do with inspiring other people. I want to work helping others who have the same problems as me.

My dream vacation would be going to Hollywood, California! I would like to stay there for 2 weeks and see celebrities walking around, take pictures in all the famous places, go shopping at a lot of different stores and buy clothes and makeup. I would like to go see the handprints and the stars on the walk of fame. Maybe even see the actresses from Desperate Housewives! Most of all, I'd want to meet Tyler Perry and Oprah! And also visit some art museum to see paintings and fancy clothes. That would be my dream



vacation.

My dream apartment would be right near a shopping center—there would be grocery stores, clothing stores, shoe stores, jewelry stores, makeup stores, and art supplies stores. Half of my apartment would be an art studio where I could work on painting, and drawing, and needlepoint, and the other half would be where I lived. It would have a great view of sunsets every night, and I would watch them from a big porch with a mini fridge. I would also write in my journals and have little parties with my best friends on my porch.

In my room, I would have a big desk where I could write, and a computer where I could go on the internet. To decorate, I'd have friends come and help, and I'd paint the walls light pink with stars on them with my favorite celebrities' names on them!

I would hang up my own paintings and drawings on the walls, and put price tags on them so that my visitors could buy them. Instead of cooking, I'd hire a personal chef to cook half of my meals, like baked chicken, fried chicken, and stew, and the chef would also cater the parties that I had on my porch with my friends.

My closet would be huge, a walk-in, and my clothes would be hung low so I could reach them. I'd have a separate closet for my shoes and purses. I'd have a maid who cleaned the apartment, and a chauffeur to drive me around and open the car door for me and my husband. I'd

have a pink car for me and a black and white car for my husband.

Issues I Care About

I have known people who have done drugs, and I have seen how it hurts people. I would like to fight to eliminate drug use from our society. Drugs are dangerous to our health, they fry your brain like egg in a frying pan, and who wants a brain that looks like that? I would like to help counsel drug addicts to help them stop, I would like to work with teenagers, to help them say "no!" to drugs in the first place, and help babies of drug addict parents get adopted by good families.

I watched a movie about Malcolm X, and I was inspired to fight for civil rights, just like he did. Once, someone insulted my race, and it hurt my feelings, but what I really wondered was "why?" Why would you say that? Why is skin color such a big deal?

We don't put each other down for having different colored hair, so why should we put each other down for having different skin colors? Years ago, before the Civil Rights Movement, white people and black people couldn't drink out of the same water fountain. Years later, things have changed, so why do people still say mean things about race?

Once, Rosa Parks was sitting on a bus, and the bus driver told her to move to the back because she was black – she refused and got taken away by the police. Even though most people thought she was wrong

then, today it is clear that she did the right thing.

She is an inspiration to me because she was brave, she stood up for what was right, and she wasn't afraid to break the law and go to jail for sticking up for herself and others who were discriminated against.

I believe it's good that we are all different; this way, we can learn from each other, and grow into a society that accepts everyone.

Thank you for listening to my true story. I hope you have learned a lot from my words. Remember that every day each one of us has the opportunity not only to learn from others' words, but also to teach people by example with our actions.

Love,
Toni

EMILY'S STORY

By Latrice Person
In Collaboration with Sara Cohen

Emily, her mom, her grandmother, and her brother lived in an apartment, on the fifth floor of their building. It was a three bedroom apartment. They moved from the apartment because Emily kept bumping into stuff. She was legally blind. They needed some room so Emily could grow and blossom before she went to college.

When she was five Emily's kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Flowers, noticed that when Emily wrote her name it looked funny. She left some letters out. Mrs. Flowers did some tests on Emily to find out if she could see colors, numbers, and letters. Emily tried very hard but she didn't pass the test.

Emily's mom and Mrs. Flowers had a conference to talk about the test. Emily's mom took her to the doctor and they did some other tests on her. They found out that she was legally blind.

At first Emily's mom didn't believe the doctor. She thought that something was temporarily wrong with Emily's eye and that they would be able to fix it or that it would go away.

Emily was scared to tell all her friends about the diagnosis. She was scared to go to Kindergarten because people might stare at her. The doctor said that she had to wear glasses that were sunglasses outdoors and regular glasses indoors because her eyes were very sensitive. She was scared she would get picked on at the playground and in school.

She would cry and have temper tantrums when she had to go to school. Emily's mom thought that the temper tantrums didn't mean anything. She thought that Emily just wanted some attention. Her mom made her go to school because her mom had to work during the day at a law firm.

The doctor did more tests on Emily and found out that she had Attention Deficit Disorder. Eventually they realized her blindness and her ADD was permanent. She would have to live with it.

She tried every day to conquer her blindness and focus. They gave her medication to calm her down. Some of the time she couldn't calm down. If she was at a movie theater or at the mall with lots of people she would get very hyper and have outbursts and cry.

In elementary school some kids would pick on her because they didn't understand her. They didn't know about people with disabilities who were different than them. A lot of kids would stare at her.

Emily started being rebellious as she became a teenager. She started not caring about herself, not liking herself, and thinking that she needed her mom and dad to help a lot—thinking that people owed her something.

Emily got very depressed. She started to be really bad. She wasn't being nice to her brother. She cursed at her mom. She did badly in school. She yelled at the teacher and disrupted

ed the class.

After her mom found out that she was blind her mom put Emily in a special school that taught her how to do things for herself. It was a boarding school. Emily's mom wanted Emily to experience being independent. But Emily didn't want to go. She fought. She cursed, she yelled, she screamed, she said she hated her mom and dad. She said they didn't care about her.

She had no choice but to stay there. Emily could only come home on the weekends. She lived there for three years. Then she graduated and went to college.

In her new school, one of the teachers was named Mrs. Trees. Mrs. Trees taught Emily how to read and write with her braille writer.

The braille writing she learned in school helped her realize that she could write stories. She had thought that she couldn't write because she couldn't see.

The braille writer helped her realize that she could do a lot of things. Emily could dress herself, feed herself, watch TV, and use the computer with a braille keyboard. She could unlock the door to her dorm room with a keypad because she couldn't use the knob. The keypad had braille writing bumps around it so she knew what she was pressing. When she dressed herself, her clothes had bumps on the tags. She could see enough that she could see the colors of her clothes. She could also see what she was eat-

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ing.

A public speaker came to her school. The speaker had ADHD and was blind. After she saw the person speak Emily believed in herself. As Emily got older and more mature eventually she grew out of her temper tantrums and realized that people are different. Some people still made fun of her but she learned to go above that. She believed in herself and started caring about herself too. She accepted the fact that she was blind, but she didn't let it control her brain and she didn't let it stop her from following her dreams.

In school Emily learned math and science. Her teacher, Mrs. Apple,

led the debate team at school. Emily joined and she was good at debate team. Emily was very good at expressing her mind because she fought her mom all through her early childhood. She decided when she was fifteen that she wanted to become a lawyer so she worked hard and got straight As.

At school Emily's best friend was Rose. Rose listened to Emily and gave her feedback. Rose was quiet and sweet but she could speak her mind when she was asked. When Emily felt like something was wrong she would talk about it with Rose and they would try to solve the issue together. Sometimes Emily didn't like her feedback but she accepted it.

She wasn't good at listening to other people's opinions but she listened to Rose's opinions. Rose and Emily met at the boarding school but they felt like they knew each other their whole lives.

Rose was very girly and she liked vampires. Emily was very tomboyish. Emily liked football, basketball, soccer, and volleyball. Rose had a different disability. She was in a wheelchair but she could walk with a walker a little. Rose had a reading disability. Rose would write things into the computer and it would help her with her sentences.

Rose was like a sister to Emily because they did lots of things together.



They went to the mall, the movies and out to dinner. They went to each other's houses during breaks in school and they went on vacation together with their parents.

Rose and Emily grew up together and stayed friend forever.

Rose and Emily also hung out with Sharna. Sharna really liked sports. All three of them played volleyball together.

They were very good friends but they argued sometimes. Sharna was bossy. Sometimes Emily and Sharna would talk and Sharna would have an outburst. She would start cursing and yelling at Emily. When that happened Emily just walked away from Sharna. A couple of weeks after their arguments they would be friends again.

When Emily was in high school at the boarding school she made up with her mom. They went out to dinner together and they talked about their relationship. Her mom said she was sorry. Emily accepted her apology and trusted her mom little by little. Her mom said that you can do anything you put your mind to. This made Emily feel very confident and kept her going every day.

Her junior year of high school Emily met a boy named Tommy in her science class. At first Emily was bossy to Tommy. He would come up to talk to her and she would tell him to sit down. He did it a few times. Eventually Emily gave in and they sat next to each other in class.

Even though Emily wasn't shy she was very shy around Tommy. After the class was over she got up the courage to ask him what he liked to do for fun. Tommy said he liked basketball.

Emily liked sports too. They found they had other things in common. They liked funny movies. He liked to make her laugh.

Emily said, "You want to call me?"

He said, "Yeah, I want to call you."

They started dating and they were a happy young couple. Emily learned to follow her dreams and believe in herself.

A couple years later, Emily was old enough to own her own house. The house was yellow with white shutters and a white door. Emily came home from the law firm where she worked. She used a braille keypad to open the front door.

Emily walked into the living room. All of her doors had braille writing on a black and white pad on them. This

way she knew what every room was. Emily took off her jacket. She wanted to say hi to her husband, Tommy, but he wasn't there.

She watched TV while she waited for him. She fell asleep.

A few hours later, Emily woke up to the loud sound of the car engine outside. She could hear the front door open and approaching footsteps. Someone's hands covered her eyes.

"Surprise!" Tommy said. He handed her a teddy bear and flowers. "Happy anniversary." Tommy kissed her hand.

Emily was shocked. She thought Tommy was cute for thinking of her and bringing her a present. "Thank you," she said. "I love you."



POEMS AND IMPRESSIONS

By Thaun Nguyen
In Collaboration with Jamie Kurtz

Dear Reader,
My name is Thuan, and I want to tell you about myself through my poetry and through narrative. I hope that you like it.

I was born in Vietnam. I lived in Saigon. My family lived in a big house. I have two older sisters and two older brothers. I was the baby of the family. My house had a yard. I moved to Wa-an, but did not go to school. I stayed at home and learned letters from my sisters. They also taught me how to count. I learned Vietnamese. I can also say "merci beaucoup!" I do not speak a Philippine language. I can say "buenas noches" in Spanish. I know a lot of different types of communication. I can understand. I learned Spanish in California. A lot of my friends were from Spanish-speaking countries. I lived with a Mexican family for one year. They were nice to me. I learned by listening to them talk. I learned six or seven languages: Vietnamese, French, Cambodian, English, Spanish, and Sign Language. My favorite languages are French and English. They sound pretty when I speak in them.

I was twenty-three when I went to the Philippines for three months; I went to school there.

They taught me how to speak English. My teacher took me out with my friend. I lived on Samar Island, which was four hours from Manila. Manila was a bigger city. Then United States took me there. I do not know why. They gave me medicine to take.

My Two Sisters

They took care of me.

They taught me how to read

The words xin chào (hello) and ban (friend).

They taught me how to stand up.

They took me to the playground.

They taught me how to celebrate the Vietnamese New Year.

We cut open a watermelon, and it was very red.

I put sugar on all of my food, and everything tasted sweet.

We sucked a lot of lemons covered with sugar.

It was loud, and there were fireworks everywhere.

I liked the lights from the fireworks. I also went to see the water in Saigon.

My sisters taught me how to kick and splash.

Most importantly, my sisters taught me how to be polite

And say cam bon, thank you, sisters.

My favorite holiday is Christmas. I give presents to my friends, and they give presents to me. I use a lot of wrapping paper. I remember every Christmas in Vietnam. In Vietnam, my family and I would go to church at night. We opened presents in the morning. My favorite presents are my father and mother. We would all go in the car to see the lights in the city. We had a Christmas tree with ornaments. My family would decorate the tree together. My favorite part of Christmas was the cookies. I love Santa Claus cookies because they are decorated with frosting. In Vietnam, there was never any snow on Christmas. Now, I like when there is snow on the ground on Christmas Day. I dislike when there is not snow on Christmas. When I lived in California, we did not have snow; it was too warm.

Everything comes from the heart
Everything comes from the heart.
When we get together,
The sun will come out.
When we get together,
The sky is blue.
When everything comes to you,
I feel happy.
When flowers open,
I think of you.

Soon I will be there, where the sun shines.

I paint pictures about all of the seasons, but winter is my favorite because of the snow. The snow is white and pretty. I like watching the snowflakes fall from my window. When I go out in the snow, I wear a winter coat. My coat is puffy and warm. I go outside to go to work. At work, I clean the windows until I can see my own reflection. I like going to work in the morning. I get there at 8:40 AM, and sometimes leave at 2:30 PM, sometimes 3PM. I work with the people like me. I get along with everyone. I have two other jobs: in someone's home cleaning, and I sort food. I don't really get a weekend. Saturdays I work, and Sundays are the only time that I have free time. Monday, I go to exercise.

When I Come to You
The ocean.
I wish you were on a boat.
The water up and down.
The ocean and the sound.
When we've been through the night,
When the morning come,
You know the morning,
When the morning come,
The sky is full of color.
When I see the ocean, the whale,
I see the fish.
The boat goes out to the ocean
When my heart opens for you to come.
I come to you with all my love,
I come to you with happiness.
You look like a flower.
You open, you open up for me to

come to you
With happiness.
I remember when we talked together.
When the night comes again,
We sit by the table with the candle.
I miss you when I go out on the ocean.

I go out to the garden. I look at the flowers. They are all different colors; my favorite flowers are red roses. There were a lot of roses in the garden, but not all were red. I planted different flowers in the garden. I got dirty, but I did not mind. I watched some flowers open. The flower made me open its door. I watered the flower, and I made sure that it was safe. I love the flower. The flower makes me happy. The flower makes me feel good. Her name is a secret.

When I open my heart for you to come with happiness
I remember when I go out in the morning
I talked to you.
I let you know how I feel about you.
When the time comes,
I will be with you.
We'll sit by the table with the candles.
I'm looking through the window,
Looking for insight.
We go to the boat on the ocean.
We sail away together.

The sun comes to the flower through the blue sky. The sun helps the flower to grow. I go out to the garden at night. I put the flower on the table so that I can look at it better. The flower smells

good. The flower makes me remember to go out to the garden. I go back out to put the flower back. Flowers are supposed to be out in the blue sky.

Tiny Tim: Tiny Thuan
Every year, two times a year, I am in a play.
Tiny Tim was my favorite.
I was the Ghost of Christmas Future.
I had a lot of lines, but they were not hard to remember.
I was very excited to be in the play. A lot of people clapped, and the audience filled the whole theater.
I was never nervous.
I love the spotlight.
I had to wear a long white gown and stage make up.
I felt like a different person!
But it was just a costume; I am not really a ghost!
In this year's play, I fought the devil because I was an angel.
I had to wear a white gown again.
They always seem to put me in white gowns.

I am in a play. I am angel, but I am always an angel. I took out the devil. The play has to do with New York State. It takes place in the fall. There is song in my play. I sing "I Believe I Can Fly." I know most of the words.

Thanks for listening to me. I also would like to thank the University of Rochester for providing an area for me to work on my writing. Lastly, I want to thank my family because they took care of me.

GROWING UP IN MY WORLD

By Victoria Bement
In Collaboration with Emily Hessney

Chapter 1

Once I was a little girl living in a strange world. When I was seven years old, I heard funny noises at night. I heard people around outside my window every evening. Once, I heard a loud scream. I decided to go outside and investigate.

Outside my childhood home, there was a graveyard. When I crept into the cemetery that night, there was a pale, handsome man talking to another man. It was a warm night, and the stars were out. The first man said to the second, "Are you ready to say goodbye to the light?" As I hid behind the large headstone, I watched the attractive man lean over the other man—they were like shadows in the starlight. Excited, my heart raced. I knew now what the mysterious man was!

Growing up, I liked vampires, even though they're scary. Vampires are strong, and they never die. In the graveyard when I was seven, I saw my first vampire.

I watched him suck all the human blood from the poor man's body. To my surprise, the vampire then fed his victim his own blood from his wrist. The second man was turning into a vampire!

Suddenly, the vampire turned towards me—he had smelled me! He shouted in a deep, harsh voice, "Who are you?" Terrified, I managed to squeak out, "Tori!" He said, "You

have seen too much; you must die." He bared his fangs. I was so scared, but I mustered up the courage to say, "Please, I love your kind, I know a lot about vampires!" He responded, "Why should I let you live?" I said, "Please, I'll do anything." The vampire replied, "I'll let you live, but you must do exactly as I say."

Chapter 2

I learned that my new master's name was Levi, and he was a mean master. Levi lived in a huge mansion with Leon, the man I watched him turn in the graveyard. They slept in coffins in the basement, and I slept down there too, with just a tiny blanket in the cold. Levi used to boss me around all the time. He made me bring him rats for a snack on a silver platter. I also had to clean the house all day long—I was always dusting, sweeping, mopping the floors, cleaning the windows—it was no fun! This is not what I dreamed of when I dreamed about vampires.

When I was nine years old, I realized that I walked with a wobble. Levi noticed that I was having trouble, and took me in to see a doctor. The doctor diagnosed me with a rare genetic disease, with a name so crazy, Levi couldn't even pronounce it! I'll just tell you, the abbreviation, is AT. Sadly, I had to use a wheelchair after this. From then on, Levi lightened up on me.

Over the next few years, Levi and I grew closer. He told me about his childhood, and how he grew up in England. When he was a young man, he lived in London. One night, when he was walking home from the theatre, a tall old man crept toward him from the shadows. Before Levi knew it, the man had descended upon him and bitten his neck, turning him into a vampire. I sympathized with his sad story, and told him about my own childhood. I told Levi about how when I was little, I was always left out when other kids played—they didn't like it when I talked about goth things all the time. I was different from the other kids—I didn't dress my Barbies in pink; I dressed them all in black. Since I didn't really play with other kids, I read and watched movies about vampires. Levi and I had lots of good conversations like this. I started to feel something confusing: like Levi was my friend, and not my master. I didn't understand what I felt.

Chapter 3

By the time I was sixteen, Levi and I were becoming friends. One day, he invited me to go hunting with him. I had never seen Levi hunt! Levi was hunting for foxes—they are fast, but their blood is delicious. We chased the foxes on horseback; I held on very tight to Levi as we raced through the woods. I wrapped my arms around Levi's waist, and my hands rested on

his perfectly smooth chest. Levi drew his bow and released, his arrow flying straight into a fluffy orange fox. He dismounted, grabbed the fox, and we galloped home. On the way back, Levi put one of his hands on mine and glanced back at me with a smile. I felt so close to Levi, and so happy.

When we got home, though, we realized disaster had struck. As soon as we walked in the front door, we knew something was wrong. Shattered glass was strewn across the floor, giant holes had been punched through the ceiling and the walls, leaving drywall and insulation everywhere. Ceramic clamps were smashed, our fine china was in shards, bookcases were toppled. What

a mess! In the middle of it all was Leon, shaking and bright red.

"What the hell, Leon?" asked Levi angrily. "What is wrong with you?"

"I'm sick of drinking animal blood, Levi!" he shouted. "I need human blood. I can't live on this weak stuff any longer."

"You need to calm down. You're not thinking clearly. Let's go to the blood bank at the hospital tonight for a snack."

"I need human blood, and I need it NOW," Leon growled as he suddenly lunged toward me. Leon grabbed me by the throat. I felt his fingernails pressing into my arms as I sat paralyzed in fear.

"LEAVE HER OUT OF THIS!" roared Levi as he pounced on Leon, tearing him off of me and throwing him into the wall. He advanced, sinking into him and pummeling him with his fists. I watched in horror as Levi wrenched Leon up and smashed his skull into the mantel. Leon fell in the midst of a pile of broken dishes.

Levi rushed to my side. "Tori, are you alright?" he murmured.

"Yes," I breathed, "are you? Thank you for saving me...again."

Levi responded, "I'm fine..." his voice trailed off. "I'm fine...I just can't believe he tried..." he stopped short. As Levi and I silently surveyed the damage to our home, we began to re-



alize that it wasn't salvageable. "We'll have to burn it," said Levi, "and leave no trace that vampire ever lived here."

Chapter 4

While we were trying to find a new place to live, we had to spend our nights in a graveyard—it was different from the one near the house I grew up in, and felt strange and unfamiliar. But it was a new adventure. Even though it was musty, dirty, and cold, it gave me time to get to know Levi and Leon better. Thankfully, Leon had apologized to me, saying "I was out of control and wasn't thinking straight. I'm so sorry; it won't happen again." I appreciated his apology, but wasn't sure if I believed him. From then on, Levi kept a close watch on him.

Luckily for us, Levi had a great deal of money because his wealthy parents had passed away when he was young. Levi used some of this money to purchase a big house next to the cemetery. It was old and dilapidated, but perfect for two vampires and a human looking for a new start.

A few nights after we moved in, I overheard Levi talking to a woman whose voice I didn't recognize. I wheeled myself into the living room and spied Levi passionately kissing this stranger. My heart lurched. Immediately, I returned to my bedroom—I couldn't stand to watch Levi and that woman. I wanted to say something, but I didn't know what. A few moments later, I heard an odd noise, and I returned to the living room to see what was going on. To my surprise, Levi wasn't with the woman anymore—he was arguing with Leon. In the corner, I saw the woman curled

up and pressed to the wall. I watched as Levi offered a glass full to the brim with blood to Leon, saying, "don't deny yourself."

Leon slapped the glass out of Levi's hand, and the blood splattered across the wall like a crime scene. Levi shouted, "If you will not drink it you will not survive!"

Leon responded, "No! I won't kill her. I am not a murderer." I watched from outside the door as Levi put the poor woman out of her misery. Leon stormed out the front door to wander the streets alone.

I finally went into the living room and asked, "Is everything alright?"

"No!" Levi said, "Leon is refusing to drink human blood like a true vampire even though he needs it to survive. Am I a failure as a teacher?"

I responded, "No, Leon is just stubborn." I rolled over to the couch, sat next to him and stuttered, "Levi, I have to tell you something."

"Spit it out," Levi muttered, clearly still frustrated with Leon.

I gulped and said calmly, "I love you!"

"You love me?" Levi said, shocked.

"Yes, I know it's crazy, but I do, and I've felt this way for a long time." I closed my eyes and leaned in towards Levi, kissing him softly. When I opened my eyes, I realized Levi's eyes were closed too. I hoped it was a sign that Levi was remembering what love is like—a feeling he had not experienced since he was still human.

"Why are you shaking?" Levi asked.

I replied, "Because I just kissed a vampire, and I've been dreaming about it for my whole life! Levi, I have to know, do you feel the same way about me?"

"I'm sorry," he answered, "but I can't feel. I can't feel anything. I haven't felt anything in the 100 years that I've been a vampire."

"Please try!" I pleaded, "Please, I just know you are different from other vampires. You've been so kind to me, and I'm only a human—I know that you're special."

Levi closed his eyes. I waited, nervous. A few long moments later, he opened them and looked at me with his heavenly blue eyes and said softly, "Tori, I love you too. Something about you has made me look within myself, and has made me feel again—you're special too, Tori." He stroked my cheek with his cold hand, and then kissed me with more love and passion than there ever was between two humans.

After our fantastic kiss, we were jerked back to reality by a huge crash of thunder outside. We peered out the window at the pounding rain, and began to worry about Leon. Levi grabbed a large umbrella, and we voyaged out into the storm. Levi pushed my wheelchair all the way to the end of our street, where there was an ancient house surrounded by tall, waving grass that hadn't been cut in years. "Why are we here?" I asked.

"I smell Leon," Levi responded.

"What do you mean you smell him?" I asked.

Levi pushed me into the decrepit old house and into the bedroom, telling me, "Like humans, vampires have senses—but ours are special. Some vampires can read minds, others can see in the dark, but all of us have a particularly good sense of smell, and we can always smell other vampires." As we entered the bedroom, we saw a

little boy with disheveled brown hair. He was crumpled up on the bed, and Leon was sitting in a rocking chair, staring sadly at the child as he rocked back and forth. "Are you happy now?" he said. "I just took this little boy's life!" Distraught, Leon ran out of the room. Levi chased after him; yelling over his shoulder, "Stay here my darling! Watch over him; I'll be right back."

I stayed by the boy's side for what seemed like an hour, paralyzed with fear. When Levi and Leon finally returned, I rolled quickly to Levi's side. He rubbed my shoulder comfortingly, and turned to the child. He whispered in the boy's ear, "open your mouth, Jason. I can give you a new life." Levi bit his wrist and put it to the boy's lips. As Jason started to suck, his eyes shot open, and he put Levi in an arm lock—in his last moments as a human, he tried to defend himself. As his life started to leave him, he let go of Levi's arm, and Levi flew back into the wall. It took Levi a few minutes to recover, but he was fine. So was Jason—Levi's blood filled him with new life, vampire life. We all returned home, taking Jason with us.

When we got back to our house, Leon was there and had finally calmed down enough to tell us what had happened. Leon said he had found Jason at his house, sobbing and holding his dead mother's hand. Jason had told Leon that his mother died of a heart attack, and his dad had passed away when he was a child. Since Jason was alone in the world, Leon decided to feed from him and turn him into a vampire—an act of compassion, in his eyes. I guess Leon was learning from Levi's teachings, in his own uniquely

merciful way.

Chapter 5

Jason and I did not get along. Jason was bitter and unhappy about not being able to grow up like a normal human child. He threw fits all the time, and was constantly trying to hurt my Levi! Of course, Levi could take him, and always put him in his place. He often threatened him with stories of the Rulers—an old group of vampires that controlled the vampire world and disciplined those whom he behaved or came close to revealing the existence of vampires. Levi said if Jason stepped one toe out of line, the Rulers would come immediately and destroy him. Frankly, I didn't get where Jason was coming from—human life seems so trivial, and I envied him a little for his vampire life. But still I believed that one day I would become a vampire.

One night as Levi and I were cuddling up together in his big four-poster bed with a black lace canopy, I said, "You know I love you even more than that night three years ago."

Levi replied warmly, "I know," and kissed my head. "How did you fall for a guy like me, anyway?"

"There's something that attracts me to you—maybe it's your eyes, maybe it's because you're so beautiful—but when we first met, I could tell how alone you were. I know what it feels like to be alone, and I didn't want you to be alone anymore. And our connection has just grown over time." I raised my head from his shoulder and kissed him sweetly. We were kissing for what seemed like a vampire lifetime when we were rudely interrupted.

"Leviiii iiiiiiiiiiiiii!" Jason shouted, "I

have a present for you!"

Irritated, Levi shouted back, "Can't it wait? I'm busy!"

"No, it can't!" Jason yelled.

Levi kissed me and said "wait for me" as he stood up.

"Always," I replied. He kissed me again as Jason impatiently shouted for him, pounding on the door.

Angrily, Levi shouted, "I'm coming!"

Immediately after he left the room, I knew something was wrong. I heard horrifying screams—Levi's. They were followed by a loud thud. I was terrified. I got into my chair as quick as I could and rushed to see what had happened. I rolled into the living room and found Levi in a pool of blood, with Jason standing over him, clutching a bloody kitchen knife.

Jason looked possessed—his face was utterly deranged, he was grinning, and had Levi's blood smeared on his face. "I killed him, I finally killed him—that jerk took away my normal human life, and every chance I would've had to be happy." He licked his lips.

I was shocked, and threw myself out of my chair and crawled to Levi's side, crying hysterically. Leon had heard the ruckus and came to see what was going on.

"Oh my God!" he cried, "Tori, you're drenched in his blood!" He remained motionless, knowing that there was nothing he could do. "Jason, how could you? Levi was teaching you how to live, how to be part of our world!"

Jason remained silent. I pulled Levi's head onto my knees, and whispered in his ear, "I love you, Levi. I love you." As I held on to my Levi,

Jason pulled him away from me, dragging him outside to be buried in the backyard. I stayed in the living room, sobbing and shaking.

Chapter 6

For two nights, I stayed in the living room crying. On the third night, I heard Levi's voice in the wind, whispering my name. I went over to the window weeping and closed my eyes, murmuring, "I wish with all my heart that you were with me." I felt a breeze. The breeze felt like his cold hands were touching me, and it felt so good. Then I heard Levi's voice in the breeze once more, saying, "I am here." I could feel something turning me around and it felt like I was lying on cold stone; then I felt someone kiss my head. Was I hallucinating?

I opened my eyes and looked up and saw Levi! I asked, "Am I dreaming?"

"No, darling, it's me!" Levi answered happily. I started to cry again and hugged him close.

"I have really missed you," I said softly.

"I'm so sorry," he replied, "If it was up to me I would never have left you, my love. I'm here now."

"But how are you alive?" I wondered.

Levi sighed. "It's because you called me. Your wish brought me back. Jason's stabbing was no match for the power of your love. Thank you." He exhaled slowly. "But I must warn you," he said, "there is a group of vampires that call themselves the Rulers, and they are coming here. They will kill everyone in the house. They saw Jason murder me, and Leon standing

by, letting it happen. That's a major vampire offense. They didn't see you, but if they find you, I don't want to think of what would happen—you're a human who knows too much."

"What do we do, Levi?" I asked fearfully.

"I'll push you out to the graveyard and we'll hide together. We'll run far away and create our own world, I promise."

Chapter 7

Levi pushed me into a mausoleum. He said, "There are enough dead bodies in here that it should lead them off our trail—they won't be able to smell your human scent." It was pitch dark in there.

"Levi, I can't see anything," I said.

"Don't worry," he responded, "I can sense where we're going—night vision is one of my gifts!"

Luckily, Levi grabbed a few things from the house. He brought two blankets, two pillows, and a couple of candles, and made a bed for us on the floor. He lit the candles and moved closer to me. I could feel his lips on mine, and he swiftly untied the rope that held me in my chair, gently putting me on the cozy pile of blankets. In the soft candlelight, he kissed me again and removed my peasant top. I slowly helped him pull off his tight shirt. I lay back slowly on the blanket, and we continued kissing. Then we made love. It was the best feeling in the world.

Levi kissed me from my naval to my lips, and I said calmly, "I really love you, Levi."

He asked firmly, "Are you sure you want to be with me forever?"

"Yes, of course I do. More than anything," I replied confidently.

"Then there's one thing we have to do," Levi said.

"I know," I responded, "I hate the thought of drinking blood and being in excruciating pain, but I know it will make my dreams come true. I'll be a vampire, and I'll be able to be with you forever," I said thoughtfully. Levi smiled and kissed me.

He said, "I'm only going to turn you into a dowf fea vampire so you can enjoy your human life."

"What is a dowf fea vampire?" I asked.

"Half vampire, half human," he responded. "Are you ready?"

I took a breath and said, "As ready as I'll ever be." I closed my eyes and waited. I could feel Levi's ice-cold hands supporting my neck, then my eyes shot open when I felt the unreal pain. I was screaming like a newborn baby.

"Shhhhhh," Levi hushed me, "I'm here. It's almost over." Levi bit his wrist and fed me his blood. I saw him close his eyes and begin to breathe heavily. After a minute, he pulled his wrist away from me. A few moments later, I slowly sat up.

"How do you feel?" Levi asked me.

"Wonderful!" I said, grabbing him and pulling him to my lips. "Hold me," I whispered. We kissed and made love again until we fell asleep in each other's arms. It was even better as a vampire—all my senses were heightened!

Then the next night I got a surprise when I woke up—I could walk!

"Levi, look!" I exclaimed as I walked across the mausoleum.

He said, "I know, it's amazing!



Becoming a vampire rids you of any physical problems your human body may have had."

I said joyfully, "Thank you, Levi!"

"You are very welcome, my love," he answered with a smile.

I was so happy that I danced all over the place. As Levi and I twirled around the room together, I felt happier than I'd ever felt before. I couldn't stop smiling.

Chapter 8

By the following evening, Levi thought it would be safe for us to leave the mausoleum. But when we came out, the Rulers were waiting for us.

Six tall men dressed all in black were perched on various gravestones around us. I could see their long fangs from the steps of the mausoleum. They smirked at us menacingly.

"Levi," their leader said in a gravelly voice, "We are surprised to see you here. Who is your beautiful mate?"

"Get away from her, Todd," Levi

spat back.

"We followed a human woman here; have you seen her?" Todd replied.

"No," Levi said firmly, "if there was a female here last night, she's gone now. We've slept here the past two nights and haven't seen one."

"Are you sure?" he questioned aggressively.

"Yes," Levi asserted.

One of the other vampires was circling me and eyeing me viciously. He snatched my hand. Terrified, I cried out, "Levi!"

Levi quickly pounced between me and the other vampire and bared his fangs. Here he repeated slowly and angrily, "Get away from her!"

Out of respect, the Rulers slowly backed away. Todd spoke up once more, "Do you know anything of Jason, who we hear tried to kill you?"

"I assume he's on the run," Levi said, "but I haven't heard much or seen any sign of him. Go search elsewhere. Leave us be."

Todd said resignedly, "We will seek him and punish him for his violation of our laws. Go in peace. True love is a rare gift. Goodbye, Levi. Take good care of yourself, and of your mate."

I watched in awe as the six vampires turned their backs on us and swept out of the graveyard proudly.

Epilogue

As Levi promised, we ran away together and got married that Halloween. It was a small ceremony, with just my mom, uncle, and a few other family members present. Everyone was so happy for us. I felt beautiful in my lacy black dress, covered in an intricate spiderweb design.

Levi and I have made our own world. He is the King and I am the Queen of the Night. We have an enormous supply of human blood that we acquire from blood banks and freeze so it's available whenever we are thirsty. We live in a sprawling mansion on the outskirts of New York City. We couldn't be happier... or so I thought.

Then I got pregnant with our first child! She was born in 2008, and we named her Alexis. Since then, I've had two more children, Silver Belle and Elliot. Our family is so happy. Levi is a great father!

The best part about being a dowfee vampire is being able to live in both the human and vampire world. I can visit my mother and my human family during the day, and Levi and my dowfee children by night. I've come a long way from the vampire-loving little girl to the wife of a vampire and mother of my own coven!

The End

IN MOTION

By Jeff Yarmel

In Collaboration with Taylor McCabe

My name is Jeff Yarmel, and I was born June 3, 1973, in Long Island, NY. I have one younger brother, Peter, who is five years younger than I am. I have a cool mom and dad, whom I lived with until I was 31, in 2005, which was when my family moved to Rochester, where we live now. When I lived on Long Island, I went to Carman Road School, in Massapequa Park.

I remember, in school I helped a friend who had a computer that helped her talk. She used her head to tell the computer what she was looking at, because she didn't talk. The computer knew what she was looking at, and would say it for her. Same thing for her chair, she could move her head and make it move that way.

She also had CP. I met her at school. I went to public school, where I was in the same classes as her. I don't remember her name, but I do remember that she had brown hair, she was tall, and she talked with her eyes. If she wanted to say yes, her eyes went up. I was maybe 12 when I knew her.

I went to that school on Long Island until I was 21. I had classes there such as math, gym, English, and speech. My classes were with other kids who had CP. This was good, since it meant we understood each other better, and I had a lot of

friends. I had a friend, and he was playing with the chair of the girl with the computer. I was walking back from lunch. I saw this and said no way could he play with the chair. This helped out my friend with the chair, since she couldn't talk for herself. I started to run towards him, to stop him from doing this, and he ran away. My friend with the chair was very grateful. At this time, I was about 15.

Every year in the spring, a bunch of people from my town went to our track for a 100-meter race. I had been running in this race for years, but this year was different—not only was I on a team that had been practicing for weeks, it was my birthday to boot. With that kind of training and luck, even though nobody else knew it was my birthday, I was guaranteed to win. Even so, as I stood waiting for the flag to drop, I was feeling a little nervous.

When it did drop, I took off as fast as I could, and right away I got a clear lead. As I ran, I had too many thoughts in my head to keep straight, so I just ran as hard as I could. The wind was blowing in my face as I broke through the finish line, and I realized I had won! I paused for a moment, and suddenly realized through my excitement how exhausted I was, and I quickly had to sit down. As I slumped down onto the bench, my dad came over and gave me a high five to show how proud and excited

he was.

I really like where my family lived on Long Island when I was younger. I rode my bike around the neighborhood where I lived. There were a lot of kids in the neighborhood, and we played together sometimes.

I had a friend who could drive, who lived nearby. Her name was Erin. When she drove us, we usually went bowling. We were on a bowling team, and so we went bowling every week. Some people on the team had CP, and some didn't. We bowled against other teams who were from my town. It wasn't very competitive, we just played for fun. One guy got 259 in 1 game. I was pretty good, too, though I don't remember my record. I played bowling for about five years, but I had to quit when I moved. Luckily, I got to join a different bowling team here in Rochester, and I've been bowling ever since I got here. I also like playing Wii bowling, and I have my own Wii.

Often, when I was young, I helped my aunt cut her grass. She lived in New Jersey, and our whole family would go see her often. She had two children, one boy and one girl, Matthew and Jena. They were a lot younger, but I played with them a lot. Unfortunately, I don't get to see them too much now, since they live far away.

When we were young, however, whenever my aunt and uncle needed help outside, I would help

them. Anything they needed, I would help—cutting the grass, pulling weeds, raking leaves, anything. I loved being outside and I really liked being able to ride the lawnmower. It was really fun.

I also went to a camp on the beach during the summer. I loved being able to be outside all day. We did lots of great things, like go swimming, do arts and crafts, and play music. The whole thing was fun. I went to this camp for maybe 15 years, and only stopped going because I moved. Since most people also came back for many years, I made lots of friends there.

I like to fix things, something I've liked my whole life. I like trying to fix anything, and I wish I knew how to fix everything. I remember trying to fix my bike with my dad. I must have been a teenager at the time. If I tried to go right, the handlebars wouldn't turn.

When I was in high school, I went to three different proms, but the second one was the best. This one stood out as being so much better than the others because I got to go with a big group of friends. My mom got a suit for me to wear, which was great, since that meant I didn't have to worry about getting it myself. She even picked out my tie, which was blue, for me, so getting ready was a cinch.

After getting ready, I met my friends at the prom, which was held at my school, but it had been decorated so wonderfully that it wasn't even recognizable. It was so cool, that all I could think was, "Wow!" After everyone got there, looking super fancy, we sat down and ate dinner, which was just as fancy as the people.

The longer dinner went on, the more excited I got to get to dancing, and finally the music started up. Everyone was dancing together, and even though I'm only an okay dancer, it was a ton of fun. They played all kinds of music. By the end of the evening, I was exhausted from all the dancing we had done, but even though I was tired, I still felt great about how the whole evening had been. My friends and I stayed until the very last dance. Going home was a little bittersweet, because while I was glad that it had happened, I was sad that prom was over. I wasn't sad for too long, though, because when I got home, I collapsed straight into bed.

When I was 21, I finished with high school. I was happy to be finally finished. They gave everyone who was graduating a big party on the last day, and the families of all the students came as well. At the party, I was really happy, and had a lot of fun, but I was nervous because I wasn't sure what I was going to do next.

My family decided to move when I was about 30, and we wanted to go to Rochester, because we have another family living here, my dad's brother and his family. When my parents first told me we were moving, I felt excited to be somewhere new and be near my family, but I also felt a little nervous about leaving everything I knew to live in a new city.

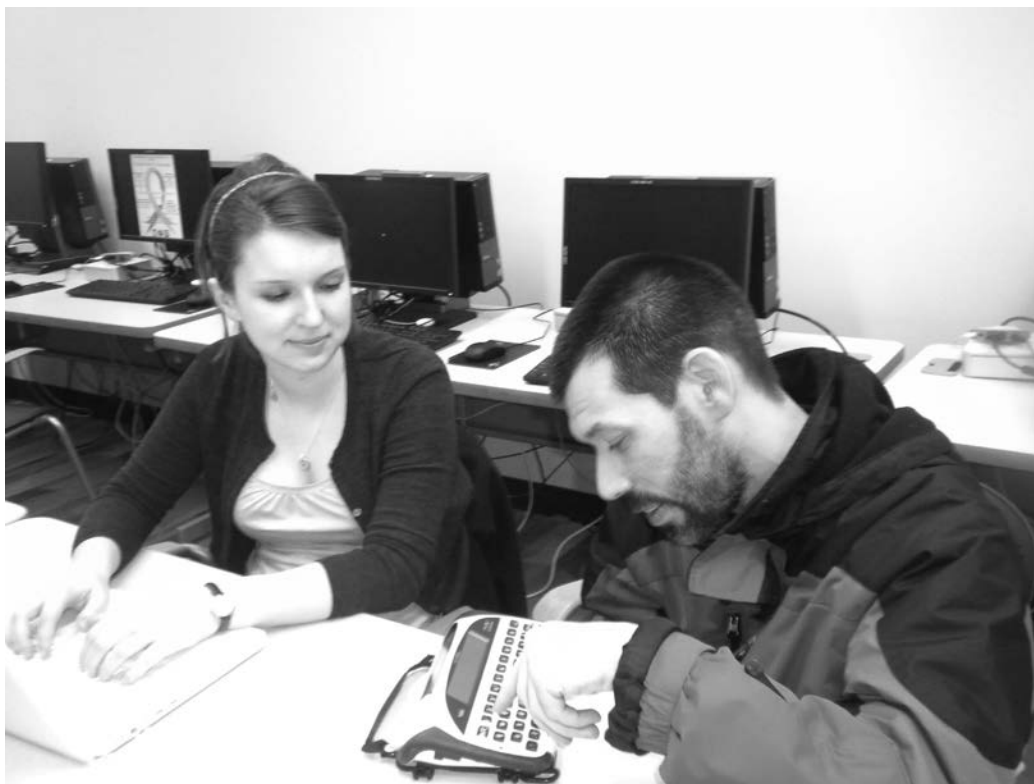
Before my family ever moved up to Rochester, we visited here a lot, looking for a place to live. The trips here made me feel a little better about moving. Each time we came, it was a six hour drive in each direction, and

I hated sitting in the car that long, so I was happy when we finally chose a house and could get ready to finally move.

Right before we moved, Long Island started getting crazy. There was always so much traffic that it took us thirty or forty-five minutes to get anywhere. This was one of the other reasons we decided to move: things were just getting too crowded.

When I was getting ready to move, my friends threw me a surprise going away party. In order to lure me to the party without my figuring anything out, one of my friends called my mom, and told her to bring me to local YMCA at a certain time. It ended up being my dad who took me there, but he wouldn't tell me where we were going.

The first moment I thought something suspicious was going on was when we pulled up to the YMCA and I saw one of my friends standing outside. This was too big of a coincidence, especially since nobody would tell me what was going on. Then, when my friend walked me inside, we went into a side room, where the lights were all off. I didn't know what was going on, and all I could think was, "What now?" Just then, the lights all turned on, and all my friends jumped out, yelling, "SURPRISE!" It turned out they had gotten together a whole party in my honor, so that all my friends could say good-bye to me. There was a lot to eat and a lot to drink, and luckily one of my friends is a DJ, so he played music for us. It was the best party ever. Every single one of my friends was there, there was really great food, and everyone just sat around talking



and had a great time.

Eventhoughthepartywasamazing, it was a little bit sad as well. Throughouttheparty,eventhough I was having fun, I couldn't help but think that I might not see these friends again for a very long time. However,wheneverIstartedfeeling a little bit down, I would call over my friend Erin to cheer me back up. I had such great friends on Long Island that any party with them was guaranteed to be fun, and this one was no exception.

Eventually, though, the party had to end, and my friends and I all had to head home. That was when I startedtofeelreallydownabouthaving to leave them all. Even though I knewIwasgoingtomisseveryonea lot, I was comforted by the idea that we could easily email and keep in touch. Andalthoughwe'velosttouch by now, when I first moved and felt

likelwasin anewandstrangeplace, emailing my old friends was very comforting.

In the last few days before we moved, I was feeling really nervous. I was busy with packing and saying goodbye to everyone I knew, but luckilyIgoteverythingdoneintime. EventhoughIknewthiswasthelast time I had to make this long trip, I was so bored with driving that it didn't feel any different.

After we moved, I lived with my mom and dad for about a year. When we had moved, my brother had stayed on Long Island, so it was only the three of us. The first change I noticed about our new house is that we had a lot more room. Also, when we lived in Long Island we had a tiny back yard, but now we had a huge one. I wished that I had had that kind of a yard to play in when I was a kid. Best of all, I had a room to my-

self, because when I lived in Long Island, I had to share with my brother. EventhoughI mostlygot along with my brother, it was great to have my own space.

I liked my new home, but it still was slow getting used to it. One of the disappointing things about Rochester was that there are so many hills and it was harder to ride my bike, and someone had to come with me to make sure I would be safe. Back in Long Island, it was very flat and it was a lot easier and more fun to ride my bike. I have a blue a three-wheeler but I don't ride it as much anymore because over the years it's gotten harder to do it. I like riding my bike because it feels really good to use my legs; it feels free because it's a lot easier than walking for me.

While I was living there, my parents renovated the floors. They hired guys to come and do the job and it

was exciting because I got to watch them rip out the old floor and put in a new hardwood floor. That was really cool for me because I'm very interested in building and fixing things.

I remember the year I moved into the group home. It was 2004. I talked to my parents and we decided I needed a change of scene because I was getting older. Before I moved in, my parents took me to see several different homes so we could choose the best one. It was very hard for me to move into the group home because I had a lot of adjusting to do. It's hard for me to write about it, even though it was so long ago.

It was challenging to move to such a different environment, where there were always staff members supervising us. I had a roommate but unfortunately he was a lot older than me and he couldn't see very well so I had to help him do things. I was used to having my own room and suddenly I was living with a total stranger. A lot of the time he had the TV and the radio on and it was so loud I couldn't think. It was very frustrating. I also missed my family a lot since I didn't know anyone.

Making friends at the group home was a slow process. On the second day, people started to be more friendly with me, and approached me to talk to me. For the most part, they seemed friendly and kind, and they showed me around. I started to feel much better, and some of the first friends I made were Jane and Betty. I helped them with computers because that's something I'm good at, and we get along really well.

I still live there today. The house

has 12 rooms, and one of those rooms is mine, which I share with my roommate Tom. I work with him. He's funny and I like him because it's easy for me to talk to him, and we laugh a lot together. He's a lot closer to my age and he's a great roommate for me, so things have improved a lot since I first moved in.

Pretty soon after I moved to Rochester, I started working in a workshop. My job was to put different kinds of parts together, but I can't remember what they ended up being. I liked having a job, but this one was hard and boring. I made a friend at the workshop who worked with me on the same projects a lot. Her name was Sue, and she was one year older than I was, so we had a lot of things in common. There weren't many other people my age in the workshop, so it was nice to meet Sue. She also had CP. She was one of my first friends after I moved, and sometimes we hung out outside of work when I first moved here. Even though we're still in touch, and even though she only lives five minutes away, we don't see each other very often.

Now, I work at another workshop through CP Rochester five days a week. I've been working there for about two years. I like this workshop a lot better, because we get to build things and fix things that are broken. I've gotten to build a frame for one of my paintings, but I've also worked on repairing wheelchairs. I built one of the desks that can sit on the front of wheelchairs, supported by the armrests.

I like the people who work there, because there are some real funny guys. They tend to goof around A

LOT while they work, which makes it fun for everyone else, as well. If someone puts a picture up, Tony and Pat always tilt it so it's crooked. I always tell them that it's not straight; that's part of the joke. It's sort of an inside joke, so not everybody may get it, but for us it's hilarious.

Every Tuesday, one of the workers brings her dog to the workshop. When he's there, I get to work with the dog, something I've been doing every since he was little. It's amazing how much bigger he's gotten. It's really great that I get to play with him. We've been together for so long, that whenever he sees me, he runs right to me. Every week I give him a treat, so I know I'm spoiling him. He has a sister dog but I've only met her once.

One of the things that I love doing is anything that has to do with art. For about the last four years, I've been taking art classes through CP Rochester that I attend every Friday for an hour. Although I've tried other kinds of art, my favorite medium is painting, and my favorite thing to paint is animals, especially the cats, dogs, and birds that are people's pets. One of the best pieces I've done is an etching into glass of a dog. I think part of the reason I like painting dogs so much is how much I enjoy playing with the dog who comes to the workshop. If I could pick any kind of pet to have, it would definitely be a dog.

LET ME EXPLAIN . . .

By Jane Gefell
In Collaboration with Ripa Chowdhury

My name is Jane. I was born in 1960 at St. Mary's hospital in Rochester. When I was born I didn't get enough oxygen to my brain. As a result, I have cerebral palsy (CP). In the year 1960 we did not have technology; at least it was not as advanced as today's technology.

I have been thinking about the technology of today. We have so much knowledge about technology and it is great to have it for our daily lives. We must be appre-

ciative of all the advancement in technology, but we must be careful and not think that we are "god" or that we know more than Jesus.

In the late 60s and early 70s we did not have many technologies available to us. Back then we had wheelchairs that were very big, made of wood, which were not so easy to use.

My first wheelchair was made of steel. It was very heavy. I had to use it for years. But then I got another wheelchair and this was

made of aluminum that was somewhat lighter and easier for my family to put in the car. My third wheelchair was an orange-brown color with black thick rubber hand grips, and it was very heavy!

I also had a walker and canes which helped me walk. I had so much equipment to make my life better. I want to talk about some of the wheelchairs I had for many years that were not the best. They were very uncomfortable. I could only sit up and they did not re-



cline.

You have no idea what I went through for many years.

It wasn't until 1995 when for the first time in my life I had a power wheelchair. My wish came true when I was in my 50s! A new form of wheelchair was out in the market which, compared to the ones I used before, was much more feasible and comfortable to use: all you had to do to operate it was just push a switch. It allowed me to switch positions. It even had reclining feet and back and that was heaven for me! This made me feel very comfortable. It was GREAT!!!!!!

But wait, that is not all! Now I can even push a switch which allows me to stand up and walk. Because I have so many different diagnoses like gastric problems and

irritable bowel syndrome, when I stand up it helps me feel much better not only physically but also emotionally.

Let me explain something to you. It is not easy to buy some of the equipment I need. The process is very long. First you have to get a note from the doctor and then you have to submit more documentation both to the insurance and the wheelchair company and hope that they will not deny your request for what you need. If you have Medicaid or other insurance, it is an important part of the process. This is very important information.

On the other hand, I have started to read a book called "Rise Above" by Ralph W. Braun. I have started to read the prologue and the epilogue. The author Braun

was only six years old when the doctor told his parents that their son has been diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. But that did not stop him from his dream of mobility. He was the one to invent the scooters and the busses with the lifts for wheelchairs. Also the minivans with the pull ramp. He got his work started in his parents' garage.

Everyone needs to know what disabled human beings go through to get what we need when we need new equipment. Now I want to say no matter how disabled you are, any human beings can do anything they want to. No matter how huge or small, you are good at something.



DEAR READERS / WEDDING PLANS

By Geraldine Copeland
In Collaboration with Kate Watts

Dear Readers,
My name is Geraldine Copeland. I work at CAC. I don't know if you know what CAC is, but I love it there. CAC stands for Community Arc Connections. I go there during the day to do all kinds of art, music, writing, quilting, drama, to eat lunch, and to take classes. My program is made possible through government funding like Medicaid. I also live in a CP group home in Rochester, New York. CP stands for Cerebral Palsy. I want to write about how important it is to support the arts, especially for people with disabilities.

Every day at CAC I go to two classes, one before lunch and one after lunch. My favorite class is . . . EVERY class! I get to do drama and I have been in many plays like *Beauty and the Beast*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*, and *Seussical*. I loved all the plays I was able to act in. I also love directing plays. Being in plays and doing my art makes me feel confident and I want to do another play soon. I am also in an acting and directing class and I want to start writing plays.

Doing my art at CAC makes me feel happy. Quilting and other kinds of art make me feel creative and I love the projects I get to do. CAC needs money in order to pur-

chase supplies for our art projects. I have lots of friends at CAC and I like to see them when I go there. The people at CAC are so wonderful to be with.

I love living in my group home. I really like all the people I live with and they are my good friends. My group home is funded by CP Rochester. I read at home and I like to cook for my friends in the house. We bake together. Once I made banana pudding pie and we all shared it together. My friends at my group home make me feel like I belong there for good. They are like my family.

Before I went to CAC I was in other programs and other schools. When I was a child I went to school with other kids and I really liked being there. It was hard because of my disability. It was hard to learn to read and I was not as fast as other students even though I tried very hard. It made me feel angry and frustrated that things were harder for me than for other kids. CAC makes me feel better than being in other places because there are lots of people at CAC who are like me and we work together to make beautiful art. I love my friends at Community Arc. They make me laugh.

I was born with brain damage. My umbilical cord was wrapped

around my neck when I was born and it caused a brain disorder. Sometimes it is hard for me to walk around because it is hard to keep my balance. It is hard for me to stay focused on tasks. Doing my art helps me to improve my focus and makes me feel like I am being very productive every day. I feel grateful for my CAC program. Going to CAC makes it easier for me to live with my disability and the programs there are very important to me. Without CAC I would feel very lonely and if I didn't have a program to go to I would feel very sad. I love my art and I love CAC very much. Without funding for my CAC program I would not be able to do the things I love to do with the people that I care for so much.

For this anthology I have written three acts of an original play. It has made me very happy to work on this play for my readers. I have enjoyed doing creative writing and coming to the University of Rochester to participate in the Inspiration Project. I hope you enjoy this sample of my work as much as I do. I also hope it shows how important it is for everyone to have a creative voice.

Sincerely,
Geraldine Copeland

Wedding Plans

Marsha: beautiful, young princess

Kenny: handsome, kind fisherman

Queen Daphne: nice, understanding mother of Marsha

King Harry: handsome, loyal father of Marsha

Steve: abusive, violent fiancé of Marsha

Once upon a time...

Scene 1:

London 1961. The dining room of a castle. There is a long wooden table, a chandelier, two portraits of an old king and queen. King Harry and his wife, Queen Daphne, are sitting at the table having their coffee. Their daughter Marsha enters from stage right holding a plate of food. Her face is covered with bruises, one eye is swollen.

Marsha puts her plate of food down hard on the table.

Queen Daphne: Good morning, Marsha. Marsha? Marsha! What happened to you?

Marsha: Look at me. Look at my body. Look what Steve did to me.

Queen Daphne gets up from the table and grabs Marsha by the shoulders: He did this to you?

Marsha: He took me to the woods; I didn't want to go.

Marsha starts to eat her breakfast.

King Harry: He beat you?

Marsha: Well, what does it look like?

Queen Daphne strokes Marsha's hair.

King Harry: How dare he! He shall be banished, he will never show his face in my kingdom again!

King Harry exits in fury.

Marsha sips her milk.

Queen Daphne: (quietly) How dare he?

Scene 2:

King Harry summons Steve to the castle. Awaits Steve's arrival in the Great Hall: dark, quiet, portraits on the wall of past kings and queens.

Steve enters escorted by King Harry's men.

King Harry: (to his men) Leave us now. (Men leave, King and Steve stand alone in the hall.)

King Harry: I can't believe what you've done. Those bruises, all those bruises.

Steve: Sir...

King Harry: She trusted you, we all trusted you; how could you?

Steve: She wouldn't listen to me. I had to do something.

King Harry: No you didn't. You didn't have to put those bruises on her. Marsha deserves better than you. Leave my kingdom and never come back.

Steve is silent.

King Harry: Leave now!

Steve: You'll never find anyone else to marry that liar.

King Harry: You're the one who lied, to all of us. She will. She will find someone who loves her, who really sees her.

Scene 3:

Hempstead Heath, early summer afternoon. Marsha is walking through the long grass. She sees Kenny at a pond, fishing.

Marsha: Hey you!
Kenny: Hey what?
Marsha: I've got a wedding planned next Sunday.
Kenny: Yeah? So?
Marsha: I'm getting married.
Kenny: Congratulations.
Marsha: Yeah, I'm getting married, but I don't have a groom. (Marsha walks up and sits on the bank next to Kenny.) Do you have any plans?
Kenny: Plans?
Marsha: Are you free next Sunday?
Kenny: Why?
Marsha: Would you like to be my groom?
Kenny: You're the princess, right? Princess Marsha? Is it gonna be a big wedding? Lots of people? Royalty? How about food? Cake? Ice cream?
Marsha: It's all buffet. The cake is chocolate, ten layers, with white icing.
Kenny: I think I'm falling in love . . .
Marsha: And there will be plenty of champagne. And a crown waiting for a prince.
Kenny: I'll marry you.
Kenny turns to Marsha, looks over her bruises, furrows his brow and moves a piece of hair off her eyes. Marsha looks up at Kenny and smiles.
Scene ends with Marsha and Kenny sitting together on the bank of the pond.



THE INSPIRATION PROJECT:

Project Director
Joanna Scott

Project Advisers
Deborah Rossen-Knill
Glen Cerosaletti

Project Coordinator
Katie Van Wert

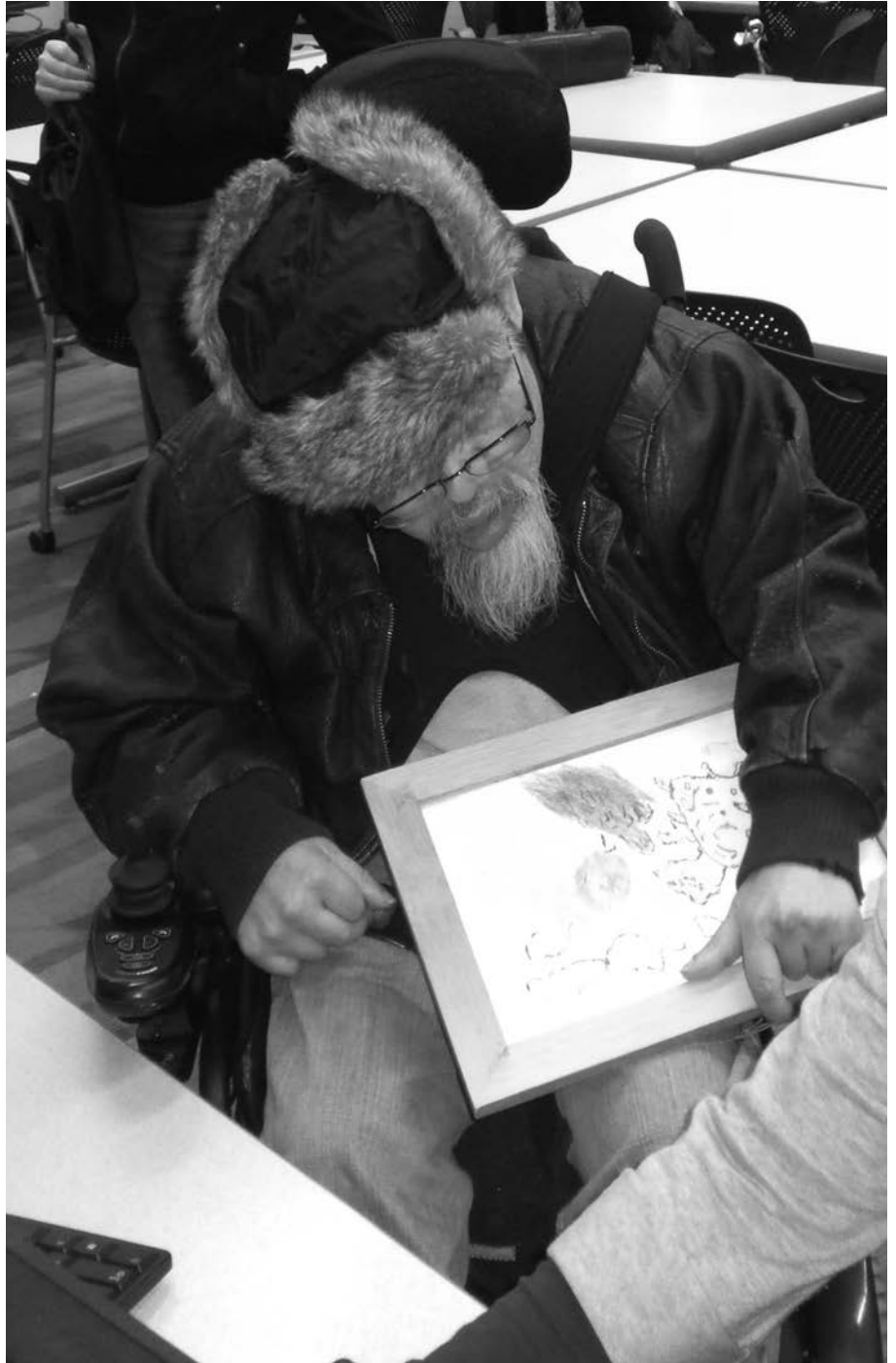
Consumer Guide
Latrice Person

Consumer Advocates
Marilyn Argenta
Tina Bennett
Gretchen Young-Zeh
Kristi Powers

Anthology Design
Taylor McCabe

Consumers
Yeats Chao
Jane Gefell
Toni Montgomery
Latrice Person
Thuan Nguyen
Tori Bemant
Geraldine Copeland
Jeff Yarmel

Student Collaborators
Ripa Chowdhuy
Sara Cohen
Illiana Garcia
Emily Hessney
Jamie Kurtz
Taylor McCabe
Suzanne McKenzie



DIGNITY: 30