

dignity:

creative expressions from the inspiration project



Spring 2023 Volume 13

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 2023, students from the University of Rochester met weekly with writers from CP Rochester. Through extensive one-on-one conversations, the UR students and CP Rochester adults have produced the creative works assembled here.

acknowledgments:

This project was made possible by the hard work and generous support of many people: The participants and staff at CP Rochester, especially Kristi Powers and Erin Greenfield, the students at the University of Rochester, Joanna Scott (Professor of English, University of Rochester), Erin Francisco Opalich, (Department of English, University of Rochester), Justina McCarty, Kathy Kingsley (Department of English, University of Rochester), Glenn Cerosaletti (Director, Rochester Center for Community Leadership, University of Rochester), Deborah Rossen-Knill (Director, Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program, University of Rochester), Jeffrey Runner (Dean of the College, University of Rochester), Sarah Mangelsdorf (President of the University of Rochester), Katherine Mannheimer (Chair, Department of English, University of Rochester). This volume's cover art is by Jeff Yarmel.



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introduction

Every Thursday evening through the spring semester, vans from C.P. Rochester drive through snow, sleet, rain, along dark, icy streets from all corners of the city. They roll up to the back of Rush Rhees library, delivering many of the writers participating in the Inspiration Project. Parkas are unzipped, hats removed, writers find their student collaborators, and the work begins. Rooms buzz with conversation for an hour. Then parkas are zipped back up, participants head to the back of the library, the writers return to their vans, the students disperse, and the vans drive away.

All this just to fill pages with words. We're lucky to be able to meet by Zoom when it's just not possible for everyone to get to campus. Hurray for technology! Maybe we should ask ourselves: Would it be easier to let computers do all the work for us? Think about it: Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) comes up with solutions at lightning speed. In its newest incarnation, it can generate art, videos, even original stories. There seems to be no limit to the advances of technology. Our smart phones keep getting smarter.

Now let's think about Human Intelligence. We depend on Human Intelligence to organize our thoughts so we can write them down, but it isn't nearly as efficient as Artificial Intelligence. Human Intelligence doesn't necessarily come up with the best sentence. Human Intelligence (H.I.) can lead us to say things we don't mean. Stories generated by H.I. usually have mistakes, and we have to revise them, often through multiple drafts. And doesn't the Human keep distracting us from the information being communicated? Doesn't the Human keep asking us to think about what it means to be Human? Isn't this wonderful?

I predict that Human Intelligence will be the preferred mode for writing creatively as long as we remain interested in people, and as long as people have something to say. The stories and poems in this anthology are unique because each author is unique. Reading these stories, you learn about the writers and their unique memories, their imaginations, their ways of seeing the world.

Here's what Latrice Person, one of our writers and a founder of the Inspiration Project, has to say about stories by Humans:

"When we're reading, we're reading about all different kinds of people and how people express themselves through words, how they express their emotions in a beautiful story. I think people should write more stories because then they can let their feelings out. People are human beings with feelings, aspirations, they make decisions. Computers are boxes. We're not boxes. We're not boxes at all."

– Joanna Scott

Mike Calms Down A Dad Fox and a Baby Fox

By Jeff Yarmel

In collaboration with Zoe Miles and Jenny Zheng



Mike is a park ranger who works at Yellowstone National Park. The park is big and there are trees and snow, and many wild animals. At a nearby lake, the water is as blue as the sky. It's wintertime and nineteen degrees outside in late January. Mike's birthday is January 27th, and he is having it in the park. His siblings will be there, as well as his friends, coworkers, and dog. His dog is one year old, very energetic and protective of him. Mike's dog's name is

Benedict. Mike has a brother named Jim and a sister named Nikki, who he is very close to. The party will be around 20 people, in a forested area of the park. This part of the park is home to many animals, but specifically home to wild foxes. Mike really likes foxes, and knows a lot about them. Right before his birthday party, he saw a specific pair of foxes. Mike particularly likes foxes because they look like dogs, and his

childhood dog inspired him to work with animals.

The party began well, but had an unexpected interruption. A baby fox ran into the clearing where Mike was having his birthday, followed by a dad fox. The dad fox was showing signs of aggression, because he was protecting his baby. Jim, the little fox, was getting big fast. His dad was worried about him. Large groups of people are dangerous for little foxes. He didn't want him to get hurt. Luckily, Mike was a fox expert and saw what was happening. He stepped in to calm down the dad fox while a little boy took care of the little fox. After the two animals had settled down, Mike let the dad go talk to his baby.



"What were you doing?" the older fox asked.

"I'm telling you right now Dad,"

"Talk to me," said the dad fox.

"I am talking," replied the little fox.

"The instructions were to stay right here and be safe" his dad gently scolded.

"But-"

"No, nothing else matters but your safety. I don't care, I don't know who all these men are in here. Stay back."

The dad fox and little fox eventually calmed down and they followed Mike's party. Mike cleans up the park from the party, with the little fox and his dad. Mike is close with Nikki. She is helping him with cleaning up the park. The two foxes are sitting next to Nikki. The foxes trust her. Mike and Nikki start to say goodbye.

"Goodbye!" They said to the foxes.

The next day, the foxes went back to Mike's house; it is not cold in his house. Mike and his sister made the foxes pets. The foxes are happy not to be cold.

THE END



The Tale of Lovely

By Latrice Person
In collaboration with Meghan Consorti



Lovely's mom sits her down on her bed and tells her that they have to move. Lovely doesn't understand, she asks her, "why?" and yells at her. She doesn't think before she speaks. Lovely will sometimes say something rude but not really mean it, like say, "shut up," out of the blue. She also has rituals, like turning a light off and on multiple times. Sometimes she will scream and her mom has to calm her down. She also

sometimes has to get up and walk around to help herself calm down. Being in a room full of people talking can also make her anxious and her mom has to watch her so that she doesn't run outside. This is because she has autism.

"I don't want to move, I have to change schools, I don't want to do that! Why are you making me do this? Can I live with dad?"

“No, Lovely,” her mom says to her.

“You’re trying to ruin my life! I don’t like you!” Lovely yells at her, “I’m going to run away to grandma’s house!” She starts crying and hyperventilating.

“No you’re not!”

“Yes I am!” Lovely says and runs out the door and out of the house to her grandma’s which is around the corner.

Lovely’s mom calls her dad and tells him what happened. He has to go pick her up from grandma’s house so she can calm down. When Lovely’s dad gets there, she doesn’t come out even when grandma tells her that he’s here.

“I’m not talking to him and he can go back to my mom and tell her that I’m not leaving!” Lovely yells.

“Yes you are!” Lovely’s dad says to her.

“No I’m not! You can’t make me, are you a cop or something? Are you the law? You can’t make me do anything! You have another life with other kids now.” Lovely yells, “You are the reason I have anxiety issues!”

Lovely’s dad is mad at her. He calls Lovely’s mom and tells her everything she said.

“You have to come over here and see because she is not listening to me.”

Lovely’s mom drives down to grandma’s house in her bright red truck.

“Get up Lovely,” she says to her when she gets inside, “We are going to go now! You’re 12, when you turn 18 you can do what you want, but now we are going home and you’re grounded!”

Lovely goes with her mom but she is not happy. She gets in the car and slams the door shut.

“If you break that door, you’re going to have to pay for it,” Lovely’s mom says angrily.

Lovely goes into the house stomping her feet, and runs up the stairs. She slams her door really loud and turns up her music all the way. She totally ignores her mom when she asks her to do something.

Lovely talks on the phone to her best friend Gabby and tells her everything about leaving for her grandma’s house, her dad showing up and her mom dragging her home. Gabby knows that Lovely has anxiety and anger problems because Lovely has yelled at their teacher before and ran out of the classroom to the computer room. When another teacher told her she couldn’t be in there, she yelled “screw you” at her.

Gabby knows how to cope with things like this. Lovely is still so mad she doesn’t really want to listen to what Gabby has to say.

“No! I don’t want to listen to you! You don’t know what you’re talking about. You’re like my mom, don’t try to boss me around!”

“Call me back when you calm down,” Gabby says to her and then she hangs up.

Lovely feels bad that she hurt her friend Gabby. She decides to write in her journal to calm down. She has a writing disability so she uses a computer program called Frog that reads the sentence to you as you write it.

She colors and watches TV and uses coping skills that her teacher gave her. She is still mad the whole day.

Her brother is very calm, and she is loud. She sometimes yells at her brother, and her mom has to tell her to calm down. Lovely goes to him for help sometimes. Her brother has a calming voice and he knows about her disability so he tries to teach her how to be quiet. She goes to him and he tells her to take three deep breaths. She has a

white noise machine that she listens to in order to calm down.

Lovely's mom calls the behavioral specialist to come over because she doesn't know what to do. The behavioral specialist comes over and goes outside with her to help her calm down. They sit on the porch and play with pop-its and pop tubes.

Lovely's mom is trying really hard, and Lovely still acts up. She gave Lovely an ultimatum with the counselor that if she doesn't act right she will have to go to a group home. Lovely stays on her best behavior but they still have to move. Lovely is confused because she thought she was doing good and didn't have to go, and they still did. She thought she had to go to a group home, but her mom wasn't doing that.

She says goodbye to her best friend Gabby, her dad, and her grandma. Lovely is sad but knows her best friend will see her in the summer. They'll go swimming and go to the beach and go horseback riding.

Lovely's mom drives up the street to their new house. Even though Lovely is young, she is used to the fast New York City life. All of her friends and her school are there. Now, because of Lovely's issues, she had to move schools and now she lives in the Daisy suburbs and things are a lot slower. Lovely's emotions about moving go around and around and around. She is okay with it one minute, upset the next, wants to move and then doesn't want to move, and she gets all flustered. Her brother has to remind her about her breathing exercises, and he tells her that it's okay. She uses her fidgets while they drive.

She is a little scared. When she gets out of the car, she is quiet which is unusual since she likes to talk. Her autism makes her uncomfortable with change, but she finds the courage to go inside with her brother while he holds her hand. He walks her in the

house, and she finds her bedroom all set up. Lovely sees the familiar stuff and she feels a little better. She jumps around and claps because she is happy that her stuff is here. Lovely can be good at listening, but she's not good at staying still, so she always jumps around.

Lovely goes to a new school called the Rosary School Of Learning. She is good at math and helping other students and the teacher. She always helps clean up her area and put books away. She is able to answer questions like no tomorrow in class and she is really quick at testing games like Jeopardy. She joins the History Quiz Club and is very good at it. If anybody has the answer, Lovely does. Her new school helps her be around other kids like herself.

On the weekend she goes to a respite care program, and her dad takes her there. It helps give her mom a break so she can go shopping or anywhere she wants to go. Lovely likes to go to the mall and go to the zoo with the other kids and staff in the program. One day one of her staff that she doesn't really get along with gets into an argument with her. The staff member told her to clean up her area when she was eating chicken and vegetables, but she refuses to clean up after she eats. Lovely takes the plate and throws it, and starts arguing with her about it.

"I don't want to clean up my plate. You do it! I need to call my dad so he can take me home!" Lovely yells.

She leaves the room and slams the door and starts yelling and screaming and bothering the people near her. She doesn't go back in, and the manager of the respite house comes. Lovely does not listen to her. She gets really vocal with the manager, and calls her dad and asks him to get her. She is very dramatic, and calls everyone crazy.

When she goes home, she decides she can never go back to the respite program. When she goes back to school, she starts acting out more. Her teacher asks her to do math, but she starts cursing out the teacher. The teacher is used to this, but he knows she needs help. He calls the counselor,

“Can we have a meeting to talk to Lovely’s mom? And her behavior therapist?” The teacher says.

The counselor talks to the psychiatrist and behavior therapist to make sure Lovely has the medicine and skills she

needs to get better. This helps Lovely a lot, and she gets to talk to the counselor every week. She does her coping skills, and uses all her tools on how to cope. She feels a lot better, does better in school, and lives her life to the fullest. One day, at school, she gets her math test back. She got an A. She says to her teacher, “Look at how awesome I did.” And he says, “I’m proud of you, Lovely. I’m proud of the girl you’ve become.”

All Three Little Siblings

By Maria Cruz-Dillio

In collaboration with Geneva Hinkson and Leen Khankan



Chapter 1: Alex is my best brother, my life

Alex protects me when I'm upset.

When we were younger, we played tag football every weekend on the lawn during the summertime in the evening. I like the hot heat of summer. The grass was green and smelled clean and fresh.

We played for three hours.

My mom and Danielle kept score, they watched us play. I learned to play tag football from school in gym class. I liked playing with my brother more than at school. Alex and I were a team and Elijah,

Shinia - nicknamed NYA - and Bryanna were on another team (2 vs. 3 because Alex was on a football team). He told me to catch the ball and run a touchdown.

I did. We won. It ended at night.

To celebrate, Alex got me a treat – sour cream and onion chips.

We had a bat with two wings on Alex's mom's (step mom's) closed porch, and Alex grabbed a chair and hit it with the chair. The bat came back in and he grabbed the chair again and hit it again.

I was freaking out!

My mom, step mom, sister, and two friends—Elijah and Shania, “Nya”—were all

laughing and running, so I went back into the house.

My brother noticed the bat first.

He said, “Everybody we have a bat in this house, go get a chair!” I thought he was lying. But then I saw it. It was disgusting – ughdfdfgdfgfg – its teeth came out. It was a baby bat but it was still gross. I got the chair, it was crazy! I threw the chair to him and said “I’m going back inside!” The bat went bye-bye. To the mooooooon!

We joke about the bat now.

I smacked him in the head for trying to get the bat to go outside – he’s crazy! I was nervous for him. He said “I told you so!” And I went “Yeah yeah yeah yeah.”

Chapter 2: Field Trip with Alyssa

I help her with nurses because she can’t talk or walk or eat.

I help my mom with her food tube and medicine.

She passed away when she was seven.

She loved laughing and rolling her eyes at mamma. With the purple trachea tube she could talk, but the white one she couldn’t. She couldn’t touch the tubes. The nurse would change the tubes all the time.

She could have milk and her medicine. I helped the nurses all the time and when the nurses weren’t there, I’d help my mom. She had black curly, short hair with light skin and black eyes. My mom did her hair all the time – ponytails and clipped up.

Purple was her favorite color.

We went to Florida before she passed because we wanted to have a good trip. It was my mom and grandma’s idea to surprise her with that trip to Disney World. They rented a house for us. We got her a new wheelchair because on the way there, Alyssa’s wheelchair broke.

On the first day we went to Disney for food, and we ate with all the Princesses. We were in a parade with all the Disney characters – Minnie Mouse was walking next to me. I ate pink cotton candy. Alyssa couldn’t have any, but I told her what it tasted like.

On the second day, we swam in a pool at the house. Alyssa liked Tarzan – he is her boyfriend. She saw the movie a lot of times. Her favorite part was when he hits his chest and goes “Uhuhuhuhuhhhhhhh!” When I watch the movie now it makes me think of her.

It was a long time ago.

Now, we are thinking of going to Florida again. I would ask the princesses, “Do you remember my sister Alyssa?”

We were all packed the night before. My mom and grandma woke us up at 2am to go to Florida. We took a limo at 4am. There were lights on the inside of the car – lots of colors, they flashed.

Alyssa loved lights.

Everyone piled into the car. Alyssa was sick and wanted a last memory with me in FL. We rented a big house together and I shared a room with my sister. Her feeding tube was beeping so I slept on the couch. During the trip, I kissed a dog on the nose, learned how to swim by myself, watched cartoons, went to a princess parade and all the Disney people signed a book.

I still have the book in my grandma’s basement. I sometimes open it and feel good because I remember all the good memories.

Chapter 3: Troublemaker

He’s on my naughty list.

My naughty list is short, it’s just: Joshua, Joshua, Joshua.

He's in his twenties. He's been in prison seven years. He has been there for a while.

He's five hours away – so I don't visit him. I write letters to him.

He lived in our house until my step dad passed away. He never played tag football with us.

He had my room, and I slept with my sister. I didn't like sleeping with my sister – we had pull-out beds and I was on the bottom. Joshua would wake me up for summer school and he has four kids – I like my nephews: Junior–6 years-old, Prince–3 years-old, Josiah–baby, and another baby. They live in Rochester.

Joshua's a troublemaker and a cheater – that's why he has two baby mammas.

He's always been a troublemaker, he was suspended for a whole month so he had to do homeschool, and his mamma was the teacher. He didn't like homeschool – he didn't listen or do his work.

He liked to hang out with the wrong friends. I know his friends and I don't like them either. They made my brother get into trouble. I just avoid them.

Joshua makes me pancakes sometimes. They are good pancakes. I miss him.

If he came home tomorrow I would run up and jump into his arms.

And then smack him.

I Am A King

By Russell Hill
In collaboration with Grace Lee



Scene 1

Location: My old house in Florida, close to Disney world

Time: This was a long time ago, around 2002

People: My father, my sister, and me

We are wrestling and playing a game seeing who can fart the loudest. It is a lot of fun.

Me and my father have the same name. It makes me feel great. We are the kings. We are the Hill family.

When I lived in Florida I went to Disney World a lot. I would see the Lion

King and Mickey Mouse. My favorite rides were the bumper cars. I even went to Disney on Ice one time. There were so many characters skating on the ice.



Scene 2

Location: Charlotte Middle School in Rochester

Time: Around Christmas time, I am around 15 years old

People: Me

Then my family moved to Rochester. We traveled on a train. I was excited to move. I went to Charlotte Middle School.

I am wearing a Santa Claus hat and a firefighter sticker. Behind me we got a big Christmas tree in our classroom. Everybody in our classroom got to decorate the Christmas tree. Sometimes we'd even get to do Christmas cookies. They had a long school bus that I liked to ride.

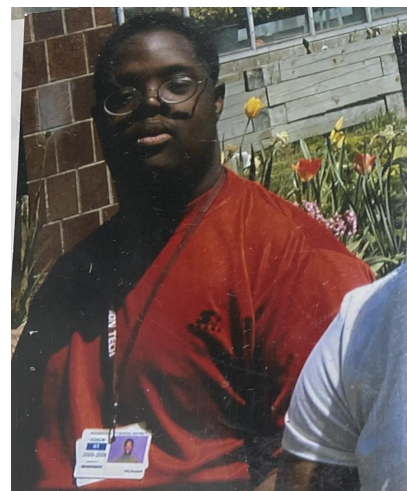


Scene 3

Location: Edison Technology School

People: Me

I graduated high school from Edison Technology School. I got a trophy for a high honor roll. When I graduated, I got balloons. It felt good to finish school. It made me feel accomplished, like a king.



Scene 4

Location: The University of Rochester

People: Me, and all my friends from CP Rochester and the Inspiration Project- they are awesome and I love them all.

After that, I moved into the CP Rochester House. I go to Program. I go to a lot of places in Program, like the Irondequoit library, Pinnacle Church, the train station, and the Rush fire department. I also do a couple jobs in Program. We clean tables, or sweep floors, and vacuum the rugs. I like to work, it makes me feel better. I work with my friends.

Now, I'm grown up. Right now, I am 35.

I am the king, so I am not scared of things like the dark or loud noises.

I still love Disney, especially movies like *The Lion King* and *Toy Story 4*.

I also love reading, watching wrestling and race cars, the Buffalo Bills, listening to country and gospel music, and drinking coffee or Coca-Cola Zero.

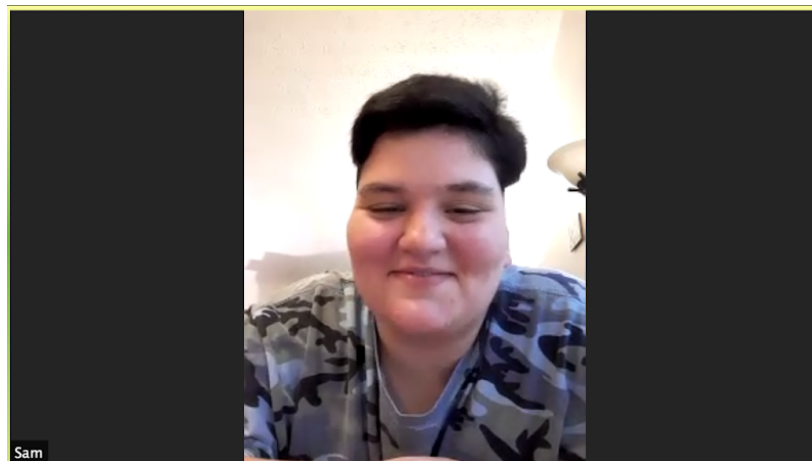
Who I am today: I am American, a story-teller, and of course, a king.

The End.

Sam and the Mystery of the Monster

(inspired by the show *Wednesday*)

By Sam Jansen
In collaboration with Ritu Peddinti



Today was a strange day. You won't believe it. I bet you don't believe me when I tell you Shoshana is a girl and she is also a vampire. Yes, a real vampire! She wears a school

uniform, blue skirt and blue shirt, it's all blue. She looks like a normal girl, her hair is straight, chin-length, and she wears headbands. If you see her, you think she's a

normal person. But really, sometimes, it could be anytime, she turns into a bat. Night is the worst—she is different at night. She flies away to the moon. She has long nails, they pop out, and they are colorful—pink, green, and yellow. Her teeth are sharp. She really turns into a vampire at night. Why? Cause if the moon's out, the girls in the vampire pack have to turn into vampires—the moon does that to them, it turns them into vampires. They are vampire-people. They can change back when they want to, but when the moon comes out, they have to fly at it. That's how they're blooded, that's just how they are.

There are different groups in her school: vampires, zombies, witches, and wolves. Her friend Sam doesn't belong to any group. Sam wears all black. She has two braids. She's like gothic. She can be really mean. At her old school, not the one she's at now, her little brother got punched and she made it worse for him. She put those piranha fish in the pool, so they sent her to a new school. That's how she met the wolves and the vampires and zombies and witches. And that's how she met Shoshana.

Shoshana and Sam are roommates. Sam doesn't really like anybody, she is not a people-person. Shoshana loves friends, she likes people.

Today, Sam found out her mom and dad went to the same school where she goes now. Her principal told her that. He said her dad got into a fight and pushed someone down, he didn't mean it, his friend started fighting with him. Sam's dad went to jail for it, and her mom left the school. The principal says Sam is going to be just like that, she'll be mean and really bad.

Shoshana and Sam have another friend named Beekeeper. He likes bees and honey, and he works with the bees to take care of them. Beekeeper is a zombie who also goes to their special school, and he is the smart one of the friend group.

Together, they like to go to Hershey Park. They like to go on a bunch of rides and get a lot of chocolate. All three of them really like Kitkats, Reeses, and Wentures.

When they are at school, Shoshana likes to play the viola and bass. Sam doesn't play anything, but she likes to listen to music. Sam and Shoshana like listening to stories. Shoshana likes happy stories, but Sam doesn't. She likes to make her own scary stories. Beekeeper doesn't like to do much, but because he's good at school he likes to study.

The three of them like to hunt. They went to a different park this time to hunt. They would hunt people, so that Beekeeper the Zombie could eat brains and the vampires could have their blood.

After the park, they go back to their rooms at school and then go to class. Shoshana and Sam went to Play Tag class. Beekeeper the Zombie went to science class.

The three of them also like to go horseback riding. When they ride, they go to a trail that leads to a pond that has magic turtles that can sing. The three of them sing to the turtles so they sing back.

On their way back from horseback riding, a storm happened! It was windy and raining and they couldn't see because it was pitch dark outside. Even though they were scared, they decided to ride straight through it. The vampires, Sam and Shoshana, decided to fly back and let the horses free.

When they all made it back to the field, they decided to wait in the barn until the storm passed. The storm passed and then it was bright and sunny out.

On their way home, they met a new friend who was also a vampire: Drake. Drake likes polka dots and to collect rocks. He was collecting rocks when they met him.

Drake decided to join their group, and when they got back to school he stayed with Beekeeper in his room. Drake and

Beekeeper are both smart, like nerdy stuff, and they love science.

The next day, Drake and Beekeeper went to meet up with Sam and Shoshana. It was a nice day out, so they decided to go to a boat race on their team boat The Cat. They were all dressed up like cats. There were five different teams, and the four friends all got on their team boat.

There was a mermaid from their school on one of the other boats, and even though The Cat was winning, the mermaid jumped in the water and did terrible things to the boat. He tried to move and crash it! Three of the five team boats crashed.

Now the only two left in the race was their boat and their friends' team boat. The goal was to get the flags in the forest at the end of the race, and when the race got close, The Hand messed with the other team's boat so The Cat won.

They were all excited to win, but Sam didn't look too happy - but that's just how she is. She didn't want to be at the race, but she was there because the principal told her she had to be in some clubs.

"I can't believe it! We won!" Drake said.

After the race, Sam went back to her room to write her evil story. She wrote about what happened at the boat race, but in an evil way. She still doesn't look very happy, but she is much happier when she's writing because she likes to write evil stories and write music. Those are her two favorite things to do, aside from being evil and doing bat stuff.

While she was writing her story, the other friends went to Shoshana's room to talk.

"I started loving somebody," Shoshana said.

Beekeeper reacted really well. Drake was smiling because he knew Shoshana had

a crush on him. "Who do you love?" Drake asked.

"Drake."

Beekeeper said, "Oh, it's him? Drake?" He was upset that it wasn't him.

"Yes, I like Drake," Shoshana said. "But do you like me?"

Drake got nervous and didn't know what to say. He left the room. "Are you okay?" Beekeeper said. "That wasn't cool that he left."

Shoshana didn't know what to do or say, she was confused. She didn't know what would happen next. She started to get a little upset.

Sam came into the room then because she had finished her story. "Are you okay?" she asked.

"No, I'm not okay. I feel like I am going to turn into a wolf. I want to cry and howl."

Shoshana left the room and went outside. It was really dark outside and the moon was out. She ran into the woods and up the hill. From the top of the hill, she could see other werewolves doing the same thing.

She went and told the other werewolves what happened. Together, they all started howling at the same time.

Shoshana felt better after howling. She decided to stay outside with her wolf friends for the night. Her friends at home decided not to look for her and to wait for her to come back. Shoshana didn't know how long she wanted to be outside. She just knew that she wanted to spend time with her wolf friends.

Her friends said if she didn't come back by the morning, they would go look for her.

When Shoshana woke up, she didn't know where she was, what was going on, how far she went with her friends, or where

her friends were. She thought her friends left her.

She walked around the woods trying to find her friends, but couldn't find them. She kept going deeper in the woods and ended up running into Beekeeper.

Beekeeper had gone out late at night to look for her but it was dark and he had been bitten by a Hyde. He had tried calling for help, but nobody answered.

Shoshana helped bring him back to school. "We'll find my friends later on," she said. "Right now, we need you to go back to school."

When they got back to school, Shoshana took him to the doctor. The doctor said he broke his leg and the Hyde bite was serious, and that he had to stay at the doctor for a month.

"How did this happen?" Shoshana asked.

"I went to the woods and got hurt," Beekeeper said. Their other friends also came to the doctor to see him. They were nervous and didn't know why Beekeeper went to the woods when they decided to wait until the morning. They didn't know why he didn't listen, but they were glad they were both back home.

Because Beekeeper was hurt, Sam and her friends decided to go get a present for him. They got him a stuffed animal and flowers from the store in town.

When they brought him the gifts, he was really shocked and happy. "Thank you! This made me feel better now," Beekeeper said.

Shoshana got him a special gift. She got him a broom and a friendship bracelet because she knew they would be friends forever.

Things between Shoshana and Drake were a mix of awkward and normal.

"How are you doing? I hope you are feeling better," Shoshana said.

"Not really," Drake said. "I love you."

"I love you." Shoshana was so surprised that he liked her back. It was perfect.

The doctor said Beekeeper would be in a wheelchair forever. His friends felt so bad for him, and he wasn't very happy about it. They couldn't really do all their adventures together anymore. He couldn't ride horses anymore.

Beekeeper was worried about what he would eat now that he couldn't hunt. When the vampires went to get blood, they brought him back the brains.

Instead of going back to their usual trail, the friends went to a walking trail so Beekeeper could come too. The trail was smooth, not like bumpy rocks, and the trees were covered in green leaves.

They wanted to go on the trail so they could go have a picnic. They were going to go eat subs. When they sat down, they started asking each other questions.

"I like to dance," Sam said. "I like to make jewelry, bake, and make butterscotch chocolate chip cookies."

Everyone was really surprised because Sam wore all black with the braids. She didn't seem like she would like that stuff.

"I have a mom, a sister, and a cat named Oreo," Sam continued. "And yesterday I got picked up to go do a cooking class."

Everyone was really shocked, and they kept her asking a bunch of questions. "You don't look like the type of person to do that!" Shoshana said.

"I know I don't like that stuff, but I make it evil!" Sam said. "I mess all the cookies and jewelry up and make it all black. I make gross stuff!"

"But does the gross stuff still taste good?" Shoshana asked.

"I hope so! I don't wanna eat something that's not good." Sam replied.

Drake was up next. They asked him the same questions they asked Sam.

"I like horseback riding, playing video games, and to ride my bike. I like the outdoors," Drake answered. "I live with my grandma and poppa."

Then it was Beekeeper's turn. "I like making jokes and messing around, hanging out with my friends, and learning about bees and flowers. I live with my dad."

After they were done talking and eating, they left the trail. They walked a bit more and then came back to school. It was nighttime by the time they got back.

They decided to hang out in the school's cool area, where they play Skee-Ball. Beekeeper and Shoshana were really good at Skee-Ball; they won a lot of games, but Sam managed to beat them! Sam felt so good about winning. She chose a black Skee-Ball to play with.

They stayed in the cool area until everyone got a chance to play.

The next day, Beekeeper was the first to wake up. He met up with everyone to eat breakfast. He had yogurt parfait, made himself waffles, and ate eggs and bacon.

They went back to their rooms after to do their homework and then went to their classes. In the middle of the day, they got a call from Beekeeper.

"I'm hurt again! I'm at the school nurse," he said.

When they got to the nurse, they asked him what happened. "I was in the woods playing, and then somebody attacked me! I could only see a little bit of what he looked like. I saw a cape and a mask."

"Sounds tricky and mysterious!" everyone said.

He was only a bit hurt, but everyone was worried. Sam loved mysteries, so she wanted to figure out who did it.

She went around the rest of the school asking if anyone had seen the guy. She also asked her friends if they had seen anything suspicious.

"I've heard things, but I didn't see anything," Drake said.

"What did you hear?" Sam asked.

"I heard the principal and your uncle talking."

"What were they talking about?"

Sam asked.

"They were saying that Beekeeper is a bad person. And they said that he was spying on us and we didn't know about it," Drake said.

"Why would he be spying on us?"

Shoshana asked.

"Probably to get somebody," Sam said.

They decided to go ask Beekeeper why he was spying on them. "I'm not spying!" Beekeeper replied, but Sam could tell that he was lying because he was shaking when they asked him.

"We thought you were our friend!" Shoshana said. "How could you do this?"

"Stop asking me questions. I'm not the one doing anything," Beekeeper said. They kept going anyway because they knew it was him.

He still wouldn't budge even when they kept asking him. Eventually, they stopped asking, but they said "You're not our friend anymore," and left. "We want you to stop spying on us!"

They continued to try to figure out the mystery when they got home. They went back to the woods to try to find clues and figure it out.

They found footprints in the mud. They were medium sized and near the trail where they go to do horseback riding.

"We found medium footprints, but we don't know who it is," Shoshana said.

“We should take a picture so we can try to figure it out.”

Then they found the mask! It was black and white and further along the trail.

They noticed greasy and dusty fingerprints on the mask; they were really small. They wanted to figure out who it could be.

They decided to take the mask back to school and show it to the principal to ask for help figuring out whose fingerprints were on the mask.

“Where did you get that from?” the principal yelled.

“We found it in the woods. Can you test the fingerprints to see who it is?”

“No, leave it alone,” the principal said. “Stay out of this, I will figure out who did it.”

Shoshana, Drake, and Sam all thought that was really suspicious. They turned to leave but the principal tried to grab the mask from the desk. They quickly turned around and grabbed it before she could.

“We found it!” they said, “We should get to find out who did it.”

“If you don’t want anything bad to happen to you, leave the mask here,” the principal said. They all looked at each other, worried, and left the mask.

After they left the office, they went to Shoshana’s room to talk about the mystery. They knew they weren’t going to stop until they figured it out.

“It could be the principal, because she was acting suspicious,” Sam said.

“Why would the principal want to hurt Beekeeper?” Drake asked.

“It might have something to do with me,” Sam said. “My dad got in a lot of trouble when he went here. I haven’t seen him in a long time.”

“We should go talk to your mom,” Drake said. They decided to go home to Sam’s house.

Sam’s house was black, and so was the furniture. All the walls were painted black. When they went inside they saw her mom, sister, and the cat, Oreo; they were all wearing black too.

“What happened at school when you and Dad were there?” Sam asked.

Mom started the story. “Your dad was so loved at school; everyone wanted to do stuff with him and practice fighting with him. I kept telling him not to fight, I didn’t want all this happening. One time they were sword fighting on the roof and he pushed the other guy down on accident.”

All three kids were shocked.

“After the accident, he went to jail,” Mom said.

“Why didn’t anyone tell me?” Sam asked.

“I don’t like to talk about it,” Dad replied. “Don’t trust the principal.” They took his word for it, but they were still going to keep going until they figured it out.

Sam asked Mom, “Do you know anybody who has a mask?”

Mom said, “I think I do, but I’m not supposed to tell you. I will give you another clue. Someone in your family has the same mask.”

“Thanks for dinner, Mom,” Sam said. “We’re leaving now.” They went back to school to talk and make a game plan about what to do next.

“Who could it be in my family that has the same mask?” Sam asked. “It could be my uncle, or maybe the Hand. I haven’t seen the Hand for a while.”

Everyone else agreed with her. Sam decided to try to find her uncle to see if he knew anything - not just about the mask, but other stuff too.

She decided to go alone; she told her friends it was better that way because he didn’t really like other people and he only trusted family. Also, if he was the one who

hurt Beekeeper, it wouldn't be good to bring the rest of the friends. Her uncle was crazy!

His house looked crazy too. It was big and creepy looking, and really, really old looking. She knew how to get in, and walked through the front door.

When she went inside, her uncle was laying down on his bed of nails - doing something crazy, like he always does.

"Uncle, what are you doing? I need to talk to you," Sam said.

"I'm not doing anything, just laying down on my pokey bed," Uncle replied.

"Uncle, do you know anybody who has a mask? Or do you know anything going on with these mysteries? Have you heard anything?" Sam asked.

"Yes, maybe, mystery...you gotta figure it out yourself, cause I can't really help you much. But I will say this: I know who the mask could be, but I'm not really sure. Just be really careful and watch out for that monster," Uncle said.

"Okay, but is it the monster who hurt Beekeeper?" Sam said.

"Yes, it is," Uncle said. "The monster is a guy who passed away by falling off a roof. It's the same monster who hurt your sister."

"The one I talked to?" Sam asked.

"I don't know, maybe. You just gotta figure it out. I can't say anything else, I don't want to get in trouble. They could be listening, and I don't want anything to happen to you."

Sam left after they had finished talking.

Sam knew what she had to do. She went back to the horse trail, and started making a circle on the ground. She and her friends gathered rocks to make the circle- there was no way she could do it on her own!

Once the circle was finished, she had to find a way to get the monster there. She had no idea what to do, but just as she was starting to feel that it was impossible, her dad appeared on the trail.

"I'm here to help you, I have a good idea," he said. "I will stand in the circle, because I'm the one who started this."

"I don't think this is a good idea, you just came back into our lives," Sam said. She was confused and upset, and didn't want anything to happen to her dad.

Before she could stop him, her dad stepped into the circle. Once her father stepped into the circle, the monster came quickly. It was as though he knew what was going to happen. He was very tall and super fast- that's how he was able to attack Beekeeper without being caught. He was creepy-looking.

Sam's dad and the monster began to fight. While they were fighting, her dad tried to explain to the monster. He said "It wasn't my fault, it was the principal who made you fall."

He had only become a monster because of his hatred for Sam's dad. After he heard that it was really the principal, he was able to be at peace and moved on. He disappeared, and suddenly everything got better. Beekeeper was even able to walk again! Everybody had a dance party to celebrate!

The End.

Lunar Totem Saga

(excerpt from the novel *Ranger Corps Adventures*)

By Caleb Dingus
In collaboration with Steven Crowell



Introduction to Ranger Corps Adventure: the date is 3/2/2111- 7/4/2113

The Ranger Corps is going through major changes as a Republican politician from the state of East Florida has been elected U.S. State Attorney. His first decision as U.S. Attorney has cut funding for the Ranger Corps. In his second decision, he creates laws to oppress beast folk and Anthrope, title 66. The new law says, "All anthrope and beast folk are to give up their property

including business, money, and houses to the United States of America, they are required by federal law to report to the Washington D.C. federal building or local national guard base to be processed and sent to an Anthrope internment camp or reform school/asylum. Failure to do so will result in forced life imprisonment, or being sent to security camp 43, 76, or 68. If they fight or resist military officers, they will be forced to use Anthrope euthanasia, chemical agent pcx 13. The Ranger Corps now have to buy their own weapons/supplies, and to make

matters worse, the Ranger corps in the continental U.S. and New Hawaii have been focusing on a radical beastfolk terrorist organization known only as Beast Folk Liberation Front that has planned and perpetrated several attacks and events against the U.S. government.

◆ ◆ ◆
A few hours later after escaping the fuzz.

Two friends make the walk through the factory district where they come across two large groups: a pro-Anthro anarchist group protesting and a group of humans who were listening to Senator George Kelly speak to a live audience of anti-beast folk fascists.

Black Gunpowder Movement, Ax-Anthro Gang, and the Anthro Equalist Power Movement were also present at the event.

A goat-Anthro speaker: “The humans are our oppressors! Join us tonight at the old copper washing plant to hear the leader of the movement, the legendary poison-tooth alligator-Anthro, Teca the Great.”

Olivia: “Not all humans are bad.”

A salamander-Anthro in the crowd replies: “You’re a traitor to the beastfolk race!!!”

Jackal-Anthro: “Who are you to tell us that we have to live in peace with the dough faces!!! Get out of here, oppressor!!!”

Olivia: “FYI. I’m the next prophet of the beastfolk.”

The Anthro protesters began to boo and hurl insults at Olivia and Oxsana.

Olivia: “Well maybe the reason they are so angry, just like we are, is because of our violent actions, too, like when that plane was crashed into California.”

Senator Kelly: “You’re damn right people, we have good enough reason to be

angry at the anthros who have done these **terrorist acts** on the **American** people!!!!!!”

Olivia wanted to speak again, but to make matters worse, the crowd of angry, anti-beast folk fascists began throwing anti-beast folk slurs at the two friends. One of the human protesters threw a haymaker, hitting Oxsana in the face and knocking her to the ground. Olivia threw the man to the ground.

Senator Kelly: “You see that’s how the **beast** folk react when *they* don’t get *their* way!!! They are a danger to the Aryan human race and to show that I mean business I’m running for President next year!!!”

By the time the scuffle was over Olivia and Oxsana were in handcuffs arrested by the police.

The next day.

Oxsana and Olivia were put in a cell with other Anthros. Olivia placed a phone call to Feng Huang to bail them out or use her FBI contacts to get them out of jail.

Olivia: “We’re in the Las Vegas jail, Feng Huang, ok?”

Oxsana: “I’m going to get us out, Olivia. If I can use metal alchemy skills, I’ll put a dent in this metal.”

Fenghuang: “Whatever you do, don’t break out! I’ll bail you guys out.”

Oxsana: “.....fine!!”

15 minutes later.

The two of them are bailed out.

Oxsana: “What the hell Olivia? Attacking that guy?”

Olivia: “He slugged you. What was I supposed to do?”

Oxsana: “That’s besides the point.”

Olivia: “What now?”

Feng Huang: “The condition of the bail was you had to help me and Kalepa try

and bust the Anthro terrorist coalition as they have a super weapon they plan to use on the night of a blood moon eclipse in five weeks. Once you learn the last two elemental powers, you're going to that meeting to try and get intel on Teca. The only intel we have on him is that he can take peoples' alchemy elemental powers away. Oh, and Oxsana needs to teach you how to do earth alchemy better, so I can teach you fire alchemy."

Olivia: "What about learning air and wind alchemy?"

Kalepa: "I'm afraid that's a little complicated. The last teacher of air and wind is Luna, and she is terminally ill with sickle cell combined with pcx9 chemical poisoning."

Olivia: "Well, I gotta learn from her. Where is she!!??"

Kalepa: "She lives on Tiburon Island where she sells medicinal charms, talismans and potions."

Feng Huang: "I'm taking her to Tiburon Island."

Olivia: "How will we get there without the fuzz noticing that we're skipping bail."

Fenghuang: "I have an idea."

Location: Tiburon Island. 3 hours later.

The four Anthros arrive after they take an airplane to Tiburon Island, which is sandwiched between Baja California and the Salton Sea.

Olivia: "How did you manage to get us in first class?"

Oxsana: "How did you get us on the plane despite our bail?"

Fenghuang: "My friend Grady hacked into the system, set the GPS to New York City."

Location: Washington state: Bear Creek Bail Bonds

Kenai: "Benny, we got a bounty."

Benny: "From Las Vegas?"

Kenai: "A Ms. Oxsana and an Olivia Hairumi Oliveira. We have reason to believe that they are armed and dangerous with friends, two owl-Anthros."

Benny: "Wait. We're Bearfolk-Anthros and also former military vets..."

Kenai: "I know that."

Grit: "We need to find them and track them down."

The phone rings.

Anonymous caller: "The suspects you're looking for are heading to Brachiosaurus Village on Tiburon Island. I believe the suspect is related to you, name Oxsana."

The caller hangs up.

Location: Luna's Shack, Brachiosaurus Village, Tiburon Island

Luna: "So, the next prophet of the beastfolk, asking for help???"

Olivia: "I want to learn the way of wind and air."

Luna: "cough...cough...cough...Ok I can teach you a few things, seniora."

Luna gets up and walks towards a cliff side pagoda.

Luna: "The way of air and wind is about calm, going with the flow of things, seniora. Watch, as I will demonstrate now." Luna began a TaiChi display following the movement of the wind.

Luna: "cough!!!! cough!!!! Now you try Olivia."

Olivia tried to mimic the moves Luna showed her.

Luna: "Nice, but we now learn the art of deflection. Now I will show you this."

Luna used her wing crossbow to fire an arrow at Olivia. However, Olivia used

ground alchemy to force a slab of stone to shield her.

Luna shook her head: "Follow me, seniora."

The two took a walk on a narrow canyon path.

Olivia: "Why did you bring me here Luna?"

Luna: "Here, drink this brew I made, an elemental agave rain brew."

Olivia drank it, only to faint.

Two hours later.

She wakes up, alone, on a desert beach dune.

Luna left a note, saying she dropped Olivia in giant sand crawler territory as a way to teach her. She has to survive the night by herself.

Olivia: "Arrrrgh!!! Darn it, I'll meditate. Prophet Luanis, can you help me learn wind and air?"

The Prophet Luanis: "Studying air was easy for me because I knew it by heart, but for you I see it's hard. You just need to be in a life or death situation to help you learn. I had an encounter with a giant that had stronger skills than I did. Only, the day I fought him he almost killed me twice. That's why I say it takes a dangerous situation to get you to learn."

Olivia: "...Okay."

Olivia set up camp only to hear a rumbling underneath her. Olivia ran the three miles towards the ocean only to be blocked by a barrier. Luna spoke to her using psychic powers to tell her not to run, but to fight. The worm was closing in on Olivia.

Olivia: "Crap. Crap. Crap."

Olivia, using the TaiChi movement from earlier, punches the air creating a tornado spinning the worm in a circular cyclone of death, causing the worm to flee

the area. To make the situation more bizarro, the worm was cut in half by a cosmic sword.

Olivia: "My sword, it just showed up."

Teagan: "Olivia, the night isn't over yet. You have a rogue group of honey badger bandits and ghouls headed toward your direction right now. Do you need my help?"

Olivia: "Yes!!"

Olivia picked up the cosmic sword, raising it in the air like a highlander, and running towards the danger, she swung her sword, and with one swing, a cosmic tornado sliced through the ghouls like a knife through butter.

Olivia: "Teagan, I don't think I need your help anymore."

Teagan: "I know. You have reached your true potential."

Olivia, using the leopard society claws, runs towards the honey badgers. Olivia was just beating them down, punching through them.

Olivia: "Ora Ora Ora Ora Ora."

The honey badgers were down for the count and in less than sixty seconds the badgers were beaten and bloodied.

Olivia woke up back at Luna's shack, tired.

Luna: "You did it, my student, you have learned the way of wind and air. You learned it by combining what you knew from brawling and what I taught you."

Now you must learn the last two alchemy elements: fire and earth-ground.

Feng Huang: "Now I will teach you fire."

For a week, Feng Huang and Olivia practiced the art of fire. Starting with cooking her own food, they then went to how to use it to encircle enemies and cause explosions with the snap of the paw.

The next week.

Feng Huang: "I'm going to teach you one final thing I know about fire."

Olivia: "What is that???"

Feng Huang uses a TaiChi move set, raising both of her wings to the sky, and takes a deep breath, and releases lightning from her talons at Olivia.

Olivia drew her cosmic sword which acted like a great conductor, and with one swing of the sword the lightning blasted out of the sword towards a sand dune, causing the lightning strike to create a large angel statue made out of glass. Passerbyers witnessed the miracle.

The next day Olivia and Oxsana go back to the boat to Jacob's Well, Texas.

Location: Jacob's Well, Quarry, Swimming Hole

Oxsana: "I have a cache of gear down in that underwater cave. Your job is to get it and bring it back to the surface."

Olivia: "You're just assuming because I'm an otter I can swim."

Oxsana: "Uh, yes."

Olivia: "Okay...What is it, old weapons?"

Three hours later a large crater opened up in the ground. Olivia emerged out of the water holding a crate full of supplies and weapons.

Oxsana: "You punched the bolder, didn't you?"

Olivia: "Yup."

Standing over Oxsana were two wolves.

Oxsana: "Ahhh wolves!!!!!"

Olivia: "Don't worry, they're my animal guides."

Oxsana: "He...he..he...ok???"

The two friends head back to the boat where Tisa has cooked dinner for the group.

Tisa: "I wish I hadn't made a deal with Bandit and his gang."

Olivia: "The honey badger road warriors."

Oxsana: "I think there is a bounty on bandit and his gang."

Raquel: "I say we form a posse to take his gang of bandits out."

Rebecca: "I'll join."

Mikoto: "You'll need a sniper too. I'll join you on your hunt."

Otto: "I'm in."

Cookie: "I'll go to the library in Richmond, Virginia once we go that way toward D.C."

Rebecca: "We won't be heading there anytime soon. Not unless there is danger to anyone."

Little did the group know the tribunal corporation was planning an attack via battleship fleet while the Ranger corp was secretly taking out certain Anthro terror cells in the few remaining US cities.

Location: Red Stone Apartment, Richmond Center, Virginia.

Claudia Mudpaw: "Alright Rangers, our goal is to take out a suspected cell of teenage beast folk in this building."

Claudia Mudpaw gives the green light for the raid to commence in less than 12 minutes. The teenage terrorists are rounded up quickly and taken to a Ranger Corps black site.

Location: Unknown

Raquel turns on loud metal music and puts a cattle branding needle over the fire.

Claudia: "Hello there, so you're Charon the Doberman Anthro we have been talking to on the dark web forum. Here's how it's going to go: your friends are in the room next door being interrogated via water

torture, but because you're the ring leader, you are going to get the worst out of it."

Claudia stabbed the Anthro in the paw causing him to faint. Dani, who was hiding in the shadows, injected the Anthro in the neck with an adrenaline shot.

Dani: "You see, I'm a clinical psychopath who will go to extreme lengths to protect the folks I love, don't cross me!!!"

Charon: "Don't....don't...please my group is connected with Teca's group. We're planning an attack on Senator Kelly's rally."

Dani: "Rebecca, send Fan and Mikoto to protect George Kelly."

Rebecca: "Ok I'll send them."

Dani: "Have you seen Cookie???"

Rebecca: "He was going to the rally to find some info on the Anthro terror cell. The rabbit hole goes deep."

Dani: "Myself and the others will meet you in the desert to take out Bandit's gang."

Connie

By Ruth Emens
In collaboration with Emma Goettler



I get out of bed, get dressed, and have tea. I see Joe. Joe is a man and he comes and gets me and drives us to Fairport. He gets me off the van. We're a group of four, Shelly, John, Terry, and me. Today we went out for coffee but we don't usually. I like going out for coffee because of the scenery. Then we went back to Fairport and went to group. They have a ramp and I don't go up by myself, I'm supposed to get help. I go to room three and get ready to go home.

When I get home, I hang my coat up in my room. I have a cup of tea and I watch

Golden Girls on my T.V. *Golden Girls* is my favorite show. My second favorite movie is *Beethoven*. I have lots of favorites. I turn off my T.V. and go outside to see Pat, my friend. Pat lives in my house. We've been friends since I moved to the house. Chris does too. There are two Chrises in my house. One girl Chris and one guy. I spend most of my time with Pat. I go to the dining room where I eat. We get two tables. Chris washes the tables. The staff cooks in the kitchen. Steak is one of my favorites. We have spaghetti, it's also

my favorite. More than steak. I like my steak cooked rare.

Nomi is my next door neighbor. She talks every night. Pat and I can hear her. She gets on my nerves. Pat doesn't like her. They shut the door. I don't like her talking up at night because I want to sleep. I tell Emma that she is too loud and I cannot sleep. Emma is the boss and she makes good tea for me.

Monday is my favorite day of the week because I go to Fairport. I like Fairport better than Rochester. I go for lunch. I like to make my own sandwich. I put mayo, ham, and cheese on it.

On the weekends, I watch T.V., I hang out with my friend Pat, we play cards, we play different games. I usually win. The trick to winning is figuring out what cards to put down. I am always the winner of the card game. I have not lost once. If I lost a game of cards I would be very sad. I don't like to lose.

My favorite thing to do is hang with my friends. They make me happy. Pat and Chris are my best of friends. I have breakfast with my friend Pat. I like Pat because I always win when we play cards. We talk alot about the weather. Like today the weather was bad. I don't like the rain. I don't like snow. I just like sunshine.

I got a new nephew, Quinn. In my room at home, I have pictures of him on my dresser. He's cute. My favorite thing to do with Quinn is hold him. He is very small. I see him once in a while.

I live in a group home. I like the house. The thing I like most about the house is the food, as well as the staff. Tima is my

favorite staff. She takes me to the apartment. My favorite food is spaghetti! No cheese, please.

I have a brother, Gary. He's tall and older. I have a sister in law, Connie. She is married to Gary. I get along with them. They're nice. I go to their house sometimes. I go for dinner. I help her cook. I help her make chocolate chip cookies. I like seeing them, I'm close with Connie and Gary too. Gary has a red car. He takes me to his house and takes me home. Connie comes with him. I like riding in the car. He's not too far. I see him every once in a while. I watch T.V. at their place.

When riding the car I see trees. I like the trees in the fall because the leaves come down. My favorite colors of the tree are red, green, and yellow. Fall is my favorite because it's not too hot or too cold, just right. I like taking walks in the fall.

May 5 is when my birthday is. I have a small party. I invite all my friends Pat, Chris, and the whole staff. You have music playing. The music playing is country music. I also like quiet music. My favorite part of my birthday is balloons, cake, and putting candles on my cake. I get a big room. I had a good time on my birthday.

I got a new blue hat with a ball on it. It says New York on it. Joe gave it to me. This hat is my favorite. Joe is my friend.

Paul works at our house. He brought me, Pat, and Chris here. He's nice. He does paperwork.

My favorite holiday is Easter. I like looking for Easter eggs. I always find them.

I go to brunch for Easter. I usually go
to my brothers. I also like painting eggs.

**Ruthie's poem (4/13/23): Connie and
Ruthie and Gary**

I help her make chocolate chip cookies.
I read the ingredients.
I take a bowl.
I put them in the bowl, the chocolate chips,
then we put them on cookie trays,
then the oven to bake them.
I wait for them to cool down because they
are too hot.
I eat cookies with milk.
I love making cookies with Connie.

Ruthie's poem (3/30/23): U OF R

I like to come to the U of R.
I like to color.
My favorite season is summer.
I like to drink tea.
Sometimes my best friends Pat and Chris
makes it,
just for me.
I like to paint my nails pink, red, and purple.
It makes me feel happy.

I like to go on a walk.
During that time, I don't like to talk.
I only go on this walk when it's sunny.
I don't like the cold because it makes my
nose runny.
I like the people here at the U of R because
they're nice.
They are my friends and they are wise.

“Don’t Bother Me” - The Pat Hurley Collection

By Pat Hurley

In collaboration with Adya Mohapatra and Tenzing Lama



Life of the Gym Bag:

The sun coming through the window woke me up. I looked over to see if Pat was still asleep. He was. I’m in the same place where Pat left me - on the floor by the wall. Suddenly, a loud voice erupted from the radio. If I could jump, I would have.

Then Pat finally got up. Thank God, that took forever! I look up at Pat and he’s

dancing out of bed. He’s such an interesting fellow. It took an eternity for Pat to come back, but I patiently waited for him. Soon, he came over and slung me over his shoulder. Whoa, the view up here is so much better! Last night, Pat filled me up with his gym clothes, sneakers, two water bottles, and two earphones so I am pretty full this morning.

As he walked out the door, I caught a glimpse of me and Pat in the mirror. I'm pretty big. (At least compared to Pat, but don't tell him I said that.) I can see my yellow, green, and orange stripes. Pat was wearing jeans, a brown T-shirt, and a brown jacket, and we were both headed to work.

Once we got to work, Pat took me to my least favorite room. He gently shoved me into the evil locker, and then everything was black and my friend Pat was gone. I think it's been a couple hours and suddenly I heard a rustling outside the locker. Lo and behold, my friend Pat was back! And that only meant one thing. It was gym time!

Gym time is my favorite time of the day. Pat held on to my handles, and we got into his sister Mary's car. Not long after, we finally reached my workplace. Soon after Pat changed, he placed all of his work clothes inside me. He put me in a classy locker, which was three times the size of the evil locker, and he left to lift weights.

My shift has finally begun! It is my job to guard everything that Pat has left in me so I am always on high alert for any suspicious activity. I hear a bit of rustling outside of my spacious locker but I think it was just a false alarm. Phew! The coast is clear.

Finally, Pat comes back to get me. And just as we are about to leave, he throws his sweaty towel into me and at times like this, I have to remind myself that I actually like my job.

Tonight Show Starring Pat Hurley:

Host: Good evening, guys! We've all been looking forward to this for a long time, and I'm happy to welcome Pat onto the stage!

Audience: *claps*

Host: Hey, Pat! How are you?

Pat: Doing good!

Host: Alright, Pat, what do you want to say first?

Pat: Luke Brian! I like his songs.

Host: Oh, who is that?

Pat: Luke Brian is my favorite country singer! And country is my favorite music!

Host: Wow, Pat, that's really cool! Do you like to sing, too?

Pat: Yes, sir! I like to sing Kenny Chesney songs.

Host: And do you like any shows on television?

Pat: What I do like is - Let me think. I like Reba, and she's a singer. I also like *MASH*, *The Brady Bunch*, *Baywatch*, both versions, and I like *Friends*. I just watched *The Brady Bunch* over the weekend, and Mike's my favorite.

Host: Well, hearing about your life, it sure feels like we're on a show!

Audience: *laughs*

Pat: Wait, hold on. I also really like the *Dukes of Hazzards*.

Host: Would you ever like to take a ride in a sportscar?

Pat: Fine by me!

Host: Pat, you're a hoot! Now tell me, what's your favorite vacation spot?

Pat: I liked going to Canada with my two brothers, Jerry and Eduardo. And sometimes, I go to Ireland with my whole family. I like going to the bar and getting drinks! Beer! Bud lite, to be exact.

Host: Whoa, Pat, you sure do have a lot of fun!

Pat: Yeah, I do!

Host: And to thank you for coming on to our show, we're going to give you a free trip to Ireland! All drinks are on us!

Pat: Thanks! I love vacationing, almost as much as I love the drinks!

Audience: *infinite laughter*

Curtain closes.

Pat's Do and Don'ts - Morning Routine Edition:

In the morning, Pat recommends waking up to the sounds of the news. Pat will allow an alarm every once a while, but everyday is a no in Pat's book.

Before you get out of bed, remember to put your fluffy slippers on. Pat believes in keeping your feet warm when you start your day. To be efficient, Pat says you should brush all your teeth all at the same time, there's no time to brush the top and then bottom!

Before you go and get dressed, Pat recommends eating breakfast. You want to have energy for the day, and you want to avoid any spills on your clothes.

Pat's go-to breakfast options are cereal, plain bread, and sometimes even pancakes, waffles, bacon, and eggs. The bread can be plain, or just a little bit of butter. A lot of butter is a big no, and Pat will pick plain bread over buttered bread any day.

If it is Saturday morning, and it is warm and sunny outside, then Pat recommends going out running. Pat often goes running with his sister, Mary, on a trail across from the group home. Pat is pretty modest, but he is not afraid to admit that he is a very fast runner. Every Sunday, Pat gets ready to go to church.

But, if it is a weekday, then Pat suggests going to work or Program. Today, Pat is headed to Program, and he is packing a baloney sandwich to take with him. It has to be plain bread with just two pieces of baloney. Nothing else, otherwise it is not Pat-approved. Pat also packs a fruit cup and some chips.

Of course, Pat has to get dressed before he goes out. Pat always picks out his outfit the night before so he doesn't have to worry about what to wear the next day. Pat says that putting on your shoes first and then putting on your backpack is the way to go.

At last, Pat is ready for the day. He heads out and waits for the bus to pick him up and take him to Program. And if he ever misses the bus, you know what Pat always says.

"Don't bother me!"

Emma's the Boss in the House

By Chris Thornton
In collaboration with Charlotte Hennessey



I live in a house with some of my friends. It is a big house with many bedrooms, a kitchen, and a living room. I enjoy living in the house because I get to spend time with my friends! We have a House Manager named Emma. Emma comes to visit every day. I see her car park on the side of the road. It is mediumly sized. I always get excited when I see it, because I look forward to her arrival.

Sometimes, Emma even brings us gifts. Recently, she gave me new

headphones and I was very excited! I used to have black headphones, but the volume stopped working. Emma gave me shiny, new, red and blue ones. She went shopping at Five Below and brought them back for me. I really like headphones because I can listen to music. Emma and I both like Nickelback. I use my headphones a lot now, and am very grateful for my new pair.

In the house, I do some of the chores. I wash the dishes and take out the garbage. I don't do the paperwork, though, because

that's none of my business. Emma takes care of that. Each day, Emma gives everyone their medicine and gets gas for the van. She sweeps and mops the floor, and even cleans the tables. Sometimes, I help her with these tasks, and we do them together. For example, I clean my clothes myself, while Emma does other people's laundry. She dusts the walls, cleans the bathrooms. Sometimes she'll call the staff to come in and work with us. She cooks dinner sometimes, too. She makes spaghetti some nights, steak on others, along with mac and cheese and quiche. Emma is a great cook! She's also the boss.

Recently, Emma stopped people from misbehaving. She had to tell my housemate to stop, but not me... 'cause I'm the perfect one. Emma lays down the law.

Another time, Emma arrived in the night to do a fire drill. I didn't know about it, and was surprised! The fire alarm on the wall made a loud beeping noise and woke me up. Some people came out the front and I came out the back. I had to go stand with the others and we met by the pole. I was wearing a yellow tank top with shorts and had to get dressed in my sweatpants and Syracuse jacket. It was cold outside for some people but I had my jacket and sweatpants. I was very warm. Then Emma came and turned off the fire alarm, and I went back to bed, in my room.

Living in the house is always exciting. Last December, we put up a Christmas tree in the living room. My housemate, Pat, and I decorated the tree with lots of pretty ornaments and sparkly lights. I even hung my Buffalo Bills stocking on the

tree. After about a month, when Christmas had come and gone, we took down the tree.

Especially in the winter, Emma and I do everything together. I like snowballs, so Emma and I throw snowballs with each other. I also go sledding; it is my favorite. I don't get cold in the snow, so we stay outside for a while. She and I make snowmen, and lots of them! I decorate them with a hat and scarf, and give my snowmen the name Emma; I do this because she is my favorite person.

When we go inside, we get snacks. My favorite snacks are pepperoni hot pockets. Emma gets me hot chocolate with whipped cream. Together, we watch *Home Alone*, *Home Alone 2*, and *Spice Girls*.

When we aren't playing, or warming up inside, I shovel the snow. I shovel all across the walkway and driveway. I find doing that easy, and Emma thanks me.

Emma cleans the dishes and sweeps leaves from the sidewalk. Emma passes meds to other people. She does this in the morning and at night once in a while. When we are at Program, she even cleans our rooms. I compliment Emma a lot, because she is good at many things. On top of all of the great things that Emma is, she is also funny! Sometimes, I call her Sophia because I like to make Emma laugh. She has a great sense of humor.

Emma and I spend a lot of time together. Whether we are cleaning dishes, tossing snowballs, or making trips to Five Below, I love every minute. Emma is definitely the boss in the house, but she is also my good friend.

Here is My Story

By Geraldine Copeland
In collaboration with Angelina Severino



Dear Winton,

Winton is a super-duper place to be. It is a great place to work, and I wish everybody had a place to work as great as Winton. I would rather be there than anywhere else. My love for Winton is red like the valentine I made for my supervisor Marianne, and like the cranberries in the muffins we baked together. Winton is yellow like the nail polish I pick out at the nail salon. Winton is right close to the group home, at the corner

down the road. It's a very pretty brick building and it looks like a place where people want to work. Even though it says no parking on the fire line, people park there anyway. I don't think that's right because if there were ever a fire, how would the fire engines get in? I want everyone at Winton to be safe. Winton has very nice supervisors, like Paul, Marianne, Jared, and Marcus. But, I love everybody there because the people at Winton are what makes it so special. They all provide me with things to do, jokes to

laugh at, and memories to cherish. Paul, who is a great driver, loves to joke around and has helped us all learn relaxation techniques. He has been acting more like a counselor than a supervisor lately, which makes me happy because he helps me relax and I feel better emotionally. Marcus and Jared never fail to make me laugh. Today Marcus was being especially silly, coming into all our rooms and joking around. Marcus is wonderful - he drove our van once and he too is an excellent driver. He also has an awesome beard. Yesterday Jared was running through the hallways, which I scolded him for, but only because I care. He always comes in with two bags of potato chips and pop for breakfast, and I tell him that is junk food! I want him to be healthy. Marianne keeps us updated on current events in the newspaper and helps us watch our favorite shows, like the Price is Right and Let's Make a Deal. She is a great person and always plans the holiday parties, which I look forward to. Barbara always checks our temperature, and makes sure we are all alright. Everyday she looks very pretty. All the supervisors make sure we are well-fed, and help serve us our lunches, which I appreciate. The workers at Winton recently tried to do Irish dancing, which I thought was silly, but it brought me joy because it made me laugh. There are many things to do at Winton. Today I colored an egg on a piece of paper and covered it in glitter of many different colors. Then after it was cut out, I put it on a piece of yellow cardstock, signed my name on it, and hung it up on the door way. I also love doing crafts like making my own jewelry. I also love when we play bingo. Every morning we watch trivia and answer questions about pets, cats, and other fun topics. My favorite classes are art, singing, ceramics, and current events. The current events class keeps us updated on

what is going on over the weekend, the birthdays that are coming up, and even keeps us updated on our horoscopes. It is nice to be updated on what is going on in the world. Even when there aren't classes or activities to do, I still have a blast doing my word searches. Most importantly, Winton has a kitchen that I can use to bake yummy treats. I just love to bake bread, cupcakes, and pies. Whenever I make cupcakes I want to make enough for everyone at Winton to share. I don't like seeing people left out. I will forever be grateful that my friend Patrick recommended Winton to me, for I love it there. I would recommend it to any of my friends who don't have a job. Winton is my second home.

Dear Jefferson group home,

I moved into my Jefferson group home last April, and I don't regret a single thing. I feel wonderful here. They cook excellent food there, especially Debby. She is an excellent cook. Her french toast is delicious, yummy, and jam packed with cinnamon flavor. For holidays Debby makes the food extra special, like making green eggs and ham for Saint Patrick's Day. Debby always says that after breakfast, we'll all be tired, but my love for my group home is enough to keep me awake. They also have us play games from time to time, go out in the community, and check on us periodically to make sure we are healthy and safe. I'm so happy because I love all the staff there. I feel grateful because they give me the opportunity to come to creative writing, so I can write stories like this one. I thank Kristi for letting me come here, and Mark for helping me get in and out of the van that takes me to campus. I'm grateful that everyone at the group home is nice. There are two Suzies there, one is Sue Lee, and the other is just plain Sue. They both do

paperwork for the group, and they are very kind. Israel, the manager, is doing a great job and helps all the residents live their best lives. He sacrifices a lot to be with us every day. Outside of doing paperwork, he always wears shorts, a short sleeve shirt, and sandals, even when it's cold out. That always makes me laugh. At our meetings, he asks us what we want to do in the community, and he then makes it happen. I feel like he listens to me, which I appreciate. My fellow residents, like Ramone, Jennifer, Ashley, and PJ, have become friends who I cherish. There are twelve of us in total in the group home, and we have built a community together that makes me feel supported. My roommate Jennifer, who always wants a hug, is very helpful to me, so I give her all the hugs she wants. I help her with her mattress so that she doesn't fall off of it. I even go out of my way to hold her hand because she would do the same for me. PJ is another resident who I feel close to, and I always ask to help him out. He and I watch T.V. together and I enjoy spending time with him. Moo Moo, who I look out for emotionally, is a great friend. I always try to comfort her because she deserves to be happy. She loves when I hold her hand and give her hugs. Ashley is another resident who I like to help. She is wonderful, and I sit right next to her at meal time. Ramone is very nice when he wants to be, and I wish I were closer with him. I sang a song for him recently because I knew he would like it. I love my group home, and for that reason I think that we should try to do things together as a group, like go out together, and avoid leaving people out because that makes people feel embarrassed. The group home makes me feel happy. It is great there because they help me get up when I can't do it by myself. I want to help the people out at the group home, especially in the kitchen because I

love to cook and bake. When I found out I was being moved to Jefferson, I was at first scared but now I absolutely love it. I could never move out because I love it too much.

Dear the People of the United States

By Thuan Nguyen
In collaboration with HaiLee Hearburg



Dear the People of the United States,

In 2016, Russia was involved with our elections. They were backing Trump. I didn't feel good about that. He talked about the people to the senator; he didn't say good things. I don't like him. The FBI found Trump mishandled a lot of classified documents. The FBI found torn up documents and classified records. He's in trouble now in 2023. President Trump was indicted with 34 charges. The New York official brought Trump to New York, on

Monday, for criminal charges of falsifying business records. He was found not guilty.

On January 6, 2021, there was an insurrection at the Capitol. A bunch of people stormed the Capitol because President Trump lost the election. The President encouraged people to do it. They got mad because they counted the votes and Biden won. I saw it on the news when it happened. They were going after Nancy Pelosi and Mike Pence.

Recently on the news, I saw that there were two school shootings. One was in Nashville, Tennessee, and the other in Des

Moines, Iowa. I wish I could stop this violence and every violence, and protect all life. There are a lot of arguments about gun laws. The lawmakers are protecting guns over children. I don't know why that keeps happening. I saw on the news the Supreme Court is saving the babies. That makes me happy, because I care about all life. I sent the Supreme Court an email about this. I also sent a lot of letters to the President about the school shootings.

I just want everyone to be safe. I'm saying this to help you be safe. It's important to know what's happening in America.

Love, Thaun.

My Home, Rochester

By Tom Sullivan
In collaboration with Eric Kukenberger



Introduction

I was born in Rochester. Rochester has my family, my father and my brother. Rochester is close to Buffalo, the home of the Buffalo Bills. The Buffalo Bills are my favorite team. I live in Irondequoit, right down the road from Rochester. Irondequoit is where my group home is. I like living there. I like the food, the people, the sports, and the van rides. The van takes me all over Rochester, the city I love.

What I Like About Rochester

I like the summers in Rochester. When the weather is warm, I go to Charlotte Beach. I

also walk outside in Irondequoit when it's warm. I go see the Rochester Red Wings play baseball when it's warm. The summer also means tasty vegetables from the garden. Juicy tomatoes, sweet cucumbers, crunchy carrots, spicy peppers, and fresh lettuce. Summer is my favorite season, especially in Rochester.

In the fall and winter there is football, Bills football. I like watching the Bills. The winter also has basketball, Lakers basketball. I like watching the Lakers. Christmas comes in the winter. I go see the Christmas lights in our neighborhood. There is a whole street of decorated houses with

lights and snowmen. During Christmas I like opening gifts with my housemates. We have stockings and a Christmas tree. Christmas is my favorite holiday.

The only thing I don't like about Rochester is the winter. I hate the cold, the snow, and the ice. I can't go outside on walks or on van rides. There's no baseball, beaches, or picnics during the winter.

Sports

I have been a Buffalo Bills fan since I was a kid. My family likes the Bills, both my dad and my brother. I like watching them on the living room T.V. I watch from the couch. Watching them I can get mad, or I can be sad, or I can be happy when they win. Someday, maybe I can watch in the stadium in Buffalo. Not on a cold day. I want to get a Bills poster to go on the wall of my room. The poster would have all the players on it.

It would be cool to play football one day. I would play on defense. I would be a defensive lineman. You have to be big to play defensive line because those guys are big. I am competitive, and if I were on the field I would want to win.

Rochester has the Red Wings. I go to Red Wings games and I order hot dogs and celebrate when they win. The Red Wings are a good baseball team.

Where I Live

I live in Irondequoit. I live in a group home with ten people. It's a big brick house. We have a living room, a kitchen, bedrooms, a laundry room, and bathrooms. Outside there is a front yard, a backyard, a big tree with a swing, and there's a garden. At my group home I watch T.V. shows and movies. We watch the news, game shows, and action movies. I eat a lot of food. Hamburgers and hot dogs are my favorite.

Sometimes I walk down the streets of my neighborhood. I walk by my neighbors. It is a nice neighborhood with lots of houses. There are lots of trees and plants in the yard. I have no special destination, I just walk around. Only on the good days with nice weather, not in the cold.

Irondequoit is a nice town with a downtown to drive through. It's close to Lake Ontario and downtown Rochester. Irondequoit is close to a bunch of places to drive to. It's in the middle of everything.

Van Rides

I like going to restaurants and movies in the van. The staff drive me all over Rochester. I get to explore the city. We go to Bill Gray's and I get the hamburger with mustard and ketchup. There are Bill Gray's all over Rochester, even in Irondequoit. Rochester also has Abbott's Ice Cream. I go to get my favorite flavor, vanilla. Rochester has a lot of its own good restaurants. We also go to see movies at the theater. I like watching action movies. I like the fighting scenes.

Irondequoit is close to Lake Ontario where we go to Seabreeze and Charlotte Beach. I like the Seabreeze amusement park. I play games like Skee-Ball and I win stuffed animals. I don't like the rides. Going to the beach is my favorite van ride. We go to Charlotte Beach. I swim, I walk down the pier, and we have a picnic. The water is nice and warm in the summer, but it is cold in the winter.

Conclusion

I like Rochester for all the places I go, the sports teams I like, the food, the beaches, I like the weather sometimes but not when it is cold, and the people. From Irondequoit I can go all over in the van. I don't want to live anywhere else but Rochester. My home.