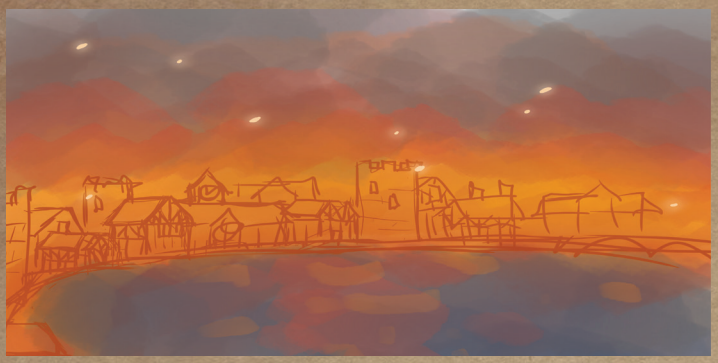
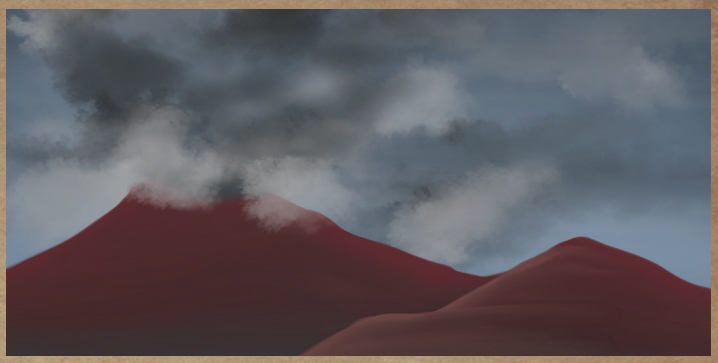
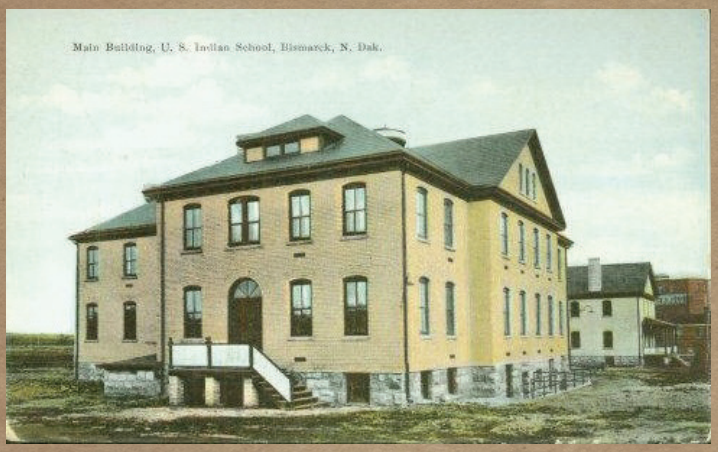
Surviving COVID-19 & Other Tales













Stories about survival * Open World Learning Community * Spring 2022

Foreword

Following is a compilation of survival stories that mark the culmination of the survival expedition at Open World Learning Community. This expedition began in the fall, when we studied a series of stories about people who had survived difficult experiences. The Earliest stories were about extreme situations – such as Julian Koepcke, who survived when the passenger jet bound for Lima she was flying in broke up thousands of feet above the Peruvian jungle. She somehow survived the fall, then managed to trek for nine days without food or medical care in order to make it to safety. Over the course of our reading, we began to also study people who survived much more common situations, like poverty, depression, or single parenthood. One of our primary goals during this reading was to examine what kinds of techniques and approaches writers use in order to make a story compelling. One of the anchor techniques we studied – and that you will see in the stories gathered here – is the intentional mix of narrative and exposition to balance a story.

After we studied some common texts, and students selected from a library of stories to read independently, students chose their survival book clubs. Book club selections included Sherman Alexie's The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian, Kao Kahlia Yang's The Latehomecomer, and Art Spiegelman's Maus, and other fiction and nonfiction selections. We also spent some time examining how Andy Weir managed to create such a convincing fictional tale of survival in his novel and subsequent film The Martian.

After reading and studying survival-themed stories for months, we launched this final product – student survival narratives – in January. Students could write about themselves, a family member, someone they knew, or even someone from history. The common thread that binds these stories is that all of them focus on a period in a person's life – sometimes a few terrifying hours or even minutes, and sometimes several years – during which they faced a dangerous or challenging situation. Not surprisingly, the range of topics students chose to take on was vast. Some students chose to write about their families escape from war-torn countries, while others chose to focus on historical time periods they were interested in. Not surprisingly, many of my students this year chose to write about their experience during the COVID-19 global pandemic that closed the schools and upended their way of life. In all of these stories, regardless of topic, the writers were tasked with writing a short narrative that helped the reader understand what the survivor experienced.

After a substantial research period, we began to conceive of compelling opening scenes, then spent some time mapping the stories so that writers could capture the survival period in a matter of two to three pages. Once drafts were completed, it was time for revision – with a focus on imagery and finding the optimal balance between narrative and exposition.

As spring approached, I assembled a team of editors to comb through stories for minor errors, and then take on the formidable task of laying out all of the stories into a neatly packaged magazine using Indesign layout software. The team – Mi Paw, Orathai Hang, Lucy Anis-Bercier, and Sofia Maldonado – spent the entirety of interim week poring over documents in Google Drive, breaking the stories down into chapters or sections, and laying out the collection into a coherent, readable document complete with graphics and pull quotes. It goes without saying that this journal would not have been possible were it not for their aptitude, skill, and determination – not to mention their capacity to collaborate effectively over the course of the week.

Special thanks go to my editing team, but I would also like to thank all of the students who were willing to share their stories with me so we could put this special edition together. The stories capture a range of topics and approaches to writing – but as a collection they helped me to understand my students better and also to understand the world better than I did before.

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"One study shows that a day without meaningful social interaction is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes."

Rescued by a Cup of Coffee

Maleah Young

The following is an account of my experience during the entierty of Covid-19. In order to write this story, I reflected upon my thoughts during this hard time. I looked back to the very start of the pandemic and my thought process up until where we are today.

December 31st 2019, the excitement was in the air as me and my friends got together to celebrate the new year. We indulged in snacks and tons of sparkling cider, excited for what the new year would bring. We sat and talked for hours while watching New Year's Rockin 'Eve. We spoke with enthusiasm, excited for a chance to do better this year.

"I want to work on becoming more social, I'd really like to get out of my comfort zone," I said with great optimism not knowing that was going to actually become impossible.

"It's time guys," said Erica. We ran to the living room to watch the ball drop. We were ecstatic, 10…9…8…7…6…5…4…3…2…1 we jumped up and down hugging each other while also downing another bottle of sparkling cider unaware of the things to come. It was the first day back at Open World Learning after the new year students returned wearing their new Christmas presents, new shoes, AirPods and the very cozy new sweaters our moms got us. School was going great. My grades were right where I wanted them to be. We participated in school dances and had an absolute ball dancing and jumping in the lunchroom. When I look back at these moments I wish I wouldn't have taken them for granted. I wish I would've lived in the moment more.

As the school year proceeded there was talk about a virus spreading in China, although the idea of a new deadly virus was scary I found that many people weren't too worried about it, I mean even my history teacher told our freshman and sophomore class that we have nothing to worry about it's just like the flu. If my history teacher and almost everyone was saying not to worry then they must be right…right? Turns out we were wrong, March 2020 the teachers were striking and a few days off of school sounded pretty nice to me. Sunday rolled around and I was mentally preparing myself to return to school the next day until… my mom ran into my room telling me to turn on the news. "Minnesota Gov Tim Waltz closing k-12 schools as Covid-19 spreads." So many thoughts were running through my head. What does this mean for us?

My family was just as shocked as I was. We paraded around wondering how we were going to be able to be with each other 24/7. Weeks went by and my daily routine consisted of waking up somewhere around 12pm, walking into my very unorganized kitchen and making a bagel along with a cup of coffee, then I'd jump on my big comfy couch to binge Twilight for hours. Unfortunately it was announced that school would not resume.

> "I did not like the person I was becoming but no matter what I did, I could not do school anymore. I had given up on my dream of going off to college."

I was immediately crushed freshman year is important and I was excited for what the rest of the year would bring. I began to think about everything I was gonna miss out on. There was prom, the outward bound trip and interim. I felt as though freshman year was a big fat waste of time. The fear of catching Covid grew all around the world, my family and friends refused to take any risks. We stayed home all day Doordashing lunch and going on long



walks. I was doing okay and started to become more content with the situations but it only got worse from there.

April 2020 it became harder and harder to get up and find the motivation to do things. I was beginning to feel isolated; it was a feeling I have never felt before. Everyday my family and I tuned into the news despite the fact that it was sometimes hard to listen to, it didn't feel real hearing about the lives lost due to Covid it felt like a bad dream I couldn't wake up from. Summer flew by before my eyes. I was grateful because I got to do more and wasn't in the house 24/7. I went on road trips to Duluth, visited my family's cabin and went on lots of walks.

School was constantly on my mind. I had hope that we would go back in person but of course that wasn't the case. September 2020 usually I'd be back to school shopping finding the perfect first day outfit but why bother when your classmates are only seeing your head. I could not bring myself to log on everyday. It felt pointless, I began to feel like a failure. I was always questioning myself, why can't I just log in and get my work done? Some of my teachers began to worry because of my neglect of my school work. I'd get texts from my crew leader Nora everyday but like my school work, I avoided her as well. I began to fall into a deep depression. I had given up on talking to my friends and my days consisted of me sleeping in until 3 in the afternoon. My mom began to worry, calling me everyday to make sure I was logged into my classes. I'd get daily phone calls,

"You better be on that google meet Maleah."

I found myself lying to those close to me and that didn't make me feel good. I did not like the person I was becoming but no matter what I did I could not do school anymore I had given up on my dream of going off to college.

Summer 2021 I was in a complete funk. I constantly felt guilty because of the classes I had failed and just when I felt like giving up, I got a call from Nora. "Hey hon, would you like to get coffee with me." It was a bright and sunny day, Nora picked me up and we headed towards Amore Cafe. We sat and talked and school got brought up. I told Nora that I didn't think I was going to graduate.

"How could I, I've lost so many credits maybe I should just give up," Nora immediately stopped me and told me something I'll never forget.

"Maleah you failed and that's okay you are determined and I know that if you want it you will graduate." Hearing that someone believed in me made me feel amazing. I started to find myself wanting to do good in school. I began to believe in myself and I never would've been able to without the help of Nora. September 2021 I was determined to come back and get my stuff done and that's what I did . I passed all my classes in the first and second quarter and I'm happier than ever. Despite how hard it was, I was able to get some confidence back. I refused to beat myself up for my mistakes and learned that if I want it I will work for it and I will go to college.

Distanced from my Learning

Isaac Stender

The following is an account of my experience during COVID-19 that closed schools. In order to write this story I thought back over my own experience, and also did research on how loneliness and isolation affect people's mental health.

My blaring alarm pierced the morning silence, signaling the start of the day. A day to be spent at home, like the previous 99 days of this school year. My room was a mess of note sheets and water bottles and my violin. I swear I put that away, I thought, but no matter. It would have to wait, as I had to log on to my first online class of the day.

My iPad sat in its spot on my desk. Just looking at that thing drained me of any energy I had. I stared at it for a few seconds, gathering my thoughts. Only five minutes into the day, I was already feeling physically and mentally exhausted.

"The 2020-2021 school year was a year unlike any other."

The 2020-2021 school year was a year unlike any other. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all high school students in many schools across the country were holding classes online. While this helped to slow the spread of the virus, it had other, unintended consequences. A lack of contact with friends and family led to the unprecedented issue of widespread feelings of isolation. This was especially prevalent in school-aged

individuals. One study concluded that "Loneliness is generally reported more among adolescents and young children, contrary to the myth that it occurs more in elderly [individuals]." (Mustaq, Raheel et al).

The school day ended unceremoniously. After "homework" was assigned, the amount of icons on my screen quickly went from 16 to 0. I closed the iPad, plugged it in to charge, and left my room, passing by the still-not-put-away violin on my way out. It had been 5 hours since the morning, 5 long hours spent in one spot, staring at icons on an iPad screen. What do I do now? Answering this question has become a daily task of mine.

I had nowhere to go after school had finished for the day, all extracurricular activities had been canceled along with school. Too tired to begin work on any assignments, I left my room. The creak of the floorboards as I went downstairs was all there was to be heard. There was no sound of school bus engines, no distinct scent of exhaust and road salt. Alone with my thoughts, I collapsed onto the sofa and began the daily scrolling session that had become my new extracurricular activity.

The constant consumption of news and information, colloquially known as "Doomscrolling," comes with many negative effects. According to psychologist Dr. Susan Albers, "The negativity can pull you under quickly." When someone partakes in this, the side effects include increased stress and anxiety. This effect is exacerbated by the drama of headlines related to politics, COVID-19, and anything else that may invoke fear in the reader. A feeling of uncertainty and lack of control go along with this, making for a melting pot of negative emotions.

That day the scrolling session revealed a small nugget of gold. As I skipped from COVID-19 case numbers to political controversies, I saw the name of a local news agency. Finally, something relevant to me. I opened the article, and to my great surprise, saw some positive news. There were plans in the works for a reopening of many public spaces, schools included! This mere fact was enough to completely change not just my perspective, but everyone else in my family as well. The icing on the cake was that the following article detailed recent statistics and projections that showed the infection rates of COVID-19 going down in Saint Paul.

I was not the only one I knew who considered online school to be less than ideal. The majority of K-12 students in the United States were less motivated and/or performed worse during virtual learning. 68% of parents of K-12 students were concerned about their children falling behind in school. Much of this concern is not due to digital learning itself, but the background events of the pandemic, causing increased stress to everyone.

The final weeks of online learning were a time of all-time high motivation. Returning to classrooms meant that neglecting schoolwork would lead to visible, tangible consequences. It also meant that it would be easier to get help with tricky assignments. This was motivation enough to grind through every assignment that I did not need extra help for, so I could focus on the difficult ones when back at school. Knowing that returning to classrooms was imminent, that there was a light at the end of the tunnel, was exactly what was needed to get through the last couple of weeks of online school.

Suffering in Isolation

Alex Cowles

This story is about my experience during the lockdown period of the COVID-19 pandemic. I reexamined my personal experience during the period when schools were closed, and also did some research on social isolation.

I'm listening to the teacher talk about nothing important. The information has been delivered and the work is in Schoology at this point I just feel like my time is being wasted. I was up really late last night and I woke up just minutes before the first class started. I'm sitting in this Google Meet not feeling much of anything except boredom and exhaustion. Every smell and sound in

"One study shows that a day without meaningful social interaction is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes."

my room I've gotten so used to that I don't register it anymore. I climb back into bed while I listen to the teacher talk. The benefits of Bluetooth earbuds.

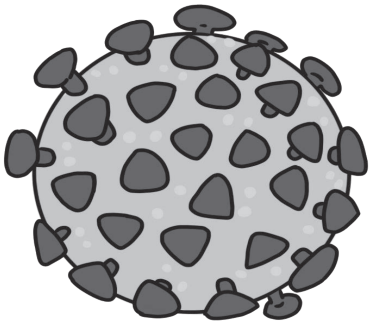
When we finally get let go, I know I have another class in 5 minutes. I could go downstairs to get something to eat, maybe get some fresh air but I don't feel like it. I don't feel like doing anything. I don't think the next teacher will check attendance. I'm sure I could miss it just once. I go back to sleep and do not wake up until almost 2 o'clock.

2/3 of adults have reported struggles with mental health since the start of the pandemic but isolation due to virtual learning takes a toll on students' mental and physical health as well. One study shows that a day without meaningful social interaction is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes. Isolation also increases risk of death by any other cause, especially suicide. It increases stress and leads to trouble regulating eating and sleeping. It makes it more challenging to pay attention in class. The mental health struggles are significantly worse still for lower class families.

A few months later I'm walking in the woods. I've made a habit of doing this every Sunday morning. I haven't been outside yet today and my brain felt more clear then it had. The remaining snow was melting on the grass. It was still cool out but it was getting warmer. It wasn't too cold except for when I'm hit with an especially strong gust of wind. When I can wander aimlessly and let my mind go wherever it likes I can actually recharge.

Getting outside in the sun is proven to help with isolation related mental illness. Interacting with people through zoom or in person social distances can help people struggling. Doctors and therapists can also help people with all kinds of mental health struggles.

Last year sucked but those things helped me stay sane. When I eventually return to school it feels surprisingly normal. My brain can return to its old habits. We're still wearing masks and keeping distance from each other but it's close enough to normal for me.



Covid-19 is a Storm

Gus Holtan

The following is a story about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected my family. The isolation was difficult and the health risks made it stressful. This story reflects my personal experience, and I followed that up with a little bit of research about how the pandemic affected the economy.

Covid-19 is a storm. Everybody had to weather the same storm. There were some people in yachts where they could still safely stay in their social bubble and not much changed from their regular life. Others were in leaky paddle boats where they felt the biggest effect of the pandemic with not being able to do a majority of things that people in the yachts can do. I'm going to tell my perspective from the leaky paddle boat. The world as we know changed. It changed so drastically that I think we won't be able to go back to it ever. A flaw that I've noticed recently is that we keep trying to revert back to pre-pandemic systems, but the system is shattered as it is right now, and it's also very overloaded.

Around fall of 2020 was when my isolation was its worst. I had no way of going outside because it was cold, nor could I hang out with friends because I was worried that I would get COVID. I was more concerned that I would give my parents COVID and kill them. I started to think that maybe I could hangout in social pods with my friends; immediately the thought that both of my parents could die if they got covid haunt me, so I once again convinced myself to stay inside for who knows how long. So far it's been a rough couple of months, we were promised that we could go back to school september 2020 but due to the world falling apart around us, we had an entire year of online school.

Everyone had a different quarantine. I've heard the struggles of others who were considered essential workers in the fast food industry, I also had friends who worked retail jobs during the George Floyd riots. At this time, due to how quickly the virus spread and how it affected jobs, the unemployment rate was at 4.9%, the highest it's been since the 1930s.

Around the start of springtime in Minnesota, my life changed for the better. I was offered an appointment for my first vaccine! I obviously took the appointment as fast as I could. The appointment was set for March 31st. The mood in my house immediately brightened. My parents had gotten their first vaccine earlier in the month because they both have autoimmune disorders so they could get it early.

Mere days after I got my first vaccine, I walk down stairs and see my mom sweating profusely, and my dad pacing around the room. I ask "Is mom ok?" My dad replies that she had a fever for the last few hours and we don't know what's wrong. Me and my Dad talk about it and he decides to take my mom to the hospital. That moment was the most scared I've ever felt. My mom sat in the waiting room as her condition worsened because the hospital rooms were full with people who contracted Covid-19.

Not that I blame them for getting the virus, most of those people were probably in there because a relative of theirs caught it. But I was still mad at them because it was almost the death of my mom.

After a quick hospital stay, my mom made a quick recovery and was back home with time off. Later that April, I got the second half of my shots and I got immunity on the 1st of May. I wasn't able to go back in person because I missed the deadline of signing up for offline school. I was eventually able to save my grades and have a good summer that I could spend with my friends.

Something I often consider is who got the vaccine first. It was mostly elderly people in the state of Minnesota. But in my family, my mother at the time had kidney stones and had been dealing with them since March of 2020. Never once was there a policy in the state where it said that people who were immuno-compromised could get access to the vaccine early. Not only was my mother immuno-compromised, she also was waiting on an operation that would drastically improve her quality of life. Since neither of my parents could get the vaccine, I couldn't return to school on time. SPPS had a very rigid policy. If you opted for online school at a certain point you didn't have the choice of going to offline school.

I have to give credit to my parents for being wonderful and supportive the entire period of isolation. They are the people I looked up to the most. I also had an amazing group of friends on social media. They were also super helpful for me still being here. Thank you for my teachers that understood the struggle I (and everyone else) was going through.

Quarantine 101

William Patton

The following story is about how the pandemic affected me personally and academically. In order to write this story I did some research on how isolation affects mental health and thought back carefully over my memory of the time period.

I remember back in 2nd quarter of 9th grade, I was talking with my friends in Crew. We were mainly talking about the teacher strike that would take place the following week. We were all excited for the time off from school but someone else mentioned that we wouldn't have school for a longer time because of a new virus outbreak. I still didn't know or think much of it at the time. That is until two weeks later, school was canceled because of COVID-19. Having more time off of school was exciting at first, but once the COVID restrictions were set in place, I started to feel very bored and lonely since I couldn't see most of my friends or even get out of the house at all.

> "Headaches became common since I had to stare at a small screen the entire school day."

Living through Quarantine can negatively affect people's mental health, especially when it lasts as long as COVID-19. A lot of people have been experiencing symptoms such as stress and anxiety. According to the Child Mind Institute, stress and trauma can heavily interrupt mindful & cognitive thinking, which makes learning much more difficult. Quarantine gives a lot of people a sense of isolation since you're being trapped

inside your house for a long time. COVID has also introduced distance learning which is a new concept for many. The sudden change of lifestyle can really harm your mental health.

A few months later, school was back in session, but this time it was online. All the courses were asynchronous and some teachers would post lesson recordings. The only way to get support was through email. I felt so disconnected with my teachers and even my classmates. Distance learning was a whole new thing for everybody which made things more difficult. Headaches became common since I had to stare at a small screen the entire school day. I regretted thinking that online learning would be fun and wished that things would turn back to normal.

I hoped that in-person school would come back by 10th grade, but I was wrong. This time, I had developed multiple bad habits from over summer break. I had a bad sleeping schedule, which made me wake up minutes before class. I had lost much of my organizational skills. Distance learning became a lot worse than last year.

Fortunately, despite all of these challenges, I was still able to pass all of my classes. Although, it took a lot of work towards the end of the quarters. I was still able to survive the school year because I was always set on meeting my goal of passing all of my classes with at least C's.



Video Games Gone Wrong

Jonathan Ramos

The early stages of the pandemic seemed fun, but over time it became very stressful. This story is about how the pandemic affected my social and academic life. I did some research on anxiety and depression in order to write this story.

It was a Monday of 2019, my friends and I found out that classes were gonna get canceled. We were ecstatic at the thought of playing for a whole week without having to worry about school. On the Wednesday of the week we found out that because of rising COVID cases we were gonna get another two weeks off. A feeling of happiness because I could just play all day and not worry about anything. During this time no one knew that those two weeks would extend to two years and counting. Eventually this feeling of happiness would be replaced with boredom, stress, and anxiety.

"But after the first year, I felt this feeling of emptiness, this feeling of being hollow."

Through the summer of 2019 to right now mental health cases have gone through the roof. Adults have reported feelings of stress, depression, and anxiety up to a 41.1% compared to the 11.1% that were reported before COVID. Not only in adults but also in young adults and teens. Health workers have also gone up by 64% due to COVID and the stress, and anxiety they are dealing with. Essential workers have had a really hard time with them having higher percentages in mental health disorders and have thought more about suicide that any other group.

Throughout the two years, the first 18 months were fine. I would just play all day and do nothing, a kid's dream. But after the first year I felt this feeling of emptiness, this feeling of being hollow. I had no motivation to do anything. I didn't want to be with my family or even be downstairs. I just wanted to play my

video games with friends. I would play up to 8 hours every day. It was horrible. Everything about what I was doing was just bad. My mental health plummeted. The only motivation I had was to just play, the only reason I would get up. All I wanted to do was get better at my game. This was repeated until the last 6 months of quarantine where I picked up the slack and started being with family again. I also stopped playing as much.

I woke up at 2 on a Saturday and got up from my bed and went to turn on my game and I just started playing. After three hours I realized that I wanted to do something different in my life. I realized that I wasn't in a good place and that something needed to change.

In a recent survey done from the pew research center revealed that 42% of young adults have reported finding difficulty in getting motivation since the beginning of the pandemic. People of ages 18-29 have even a higher percentage of finding motivation since the pandemic started as well. People aged 50 and above have the same issues at just 20%. When people lose motivation and they have anxiety with also some pandemic depression, mental health can really go down hill.

In the second year of quarantine schools started being online and I remember not doing any work. I would just call my friends and tell them to get on. I procrastinated all of my work and never focused on my studies during this time. At the end of the quarter I had to stay up all night for the week just to be able to pass some classes. I was so stressed and anxious that I would get sick and throw up.

One night I was throwing up really bad. I was being loud and my mom started banging on the door screaming,

" JONATHAN ARE YOU OK?" Mind you it's 3 in the morning.

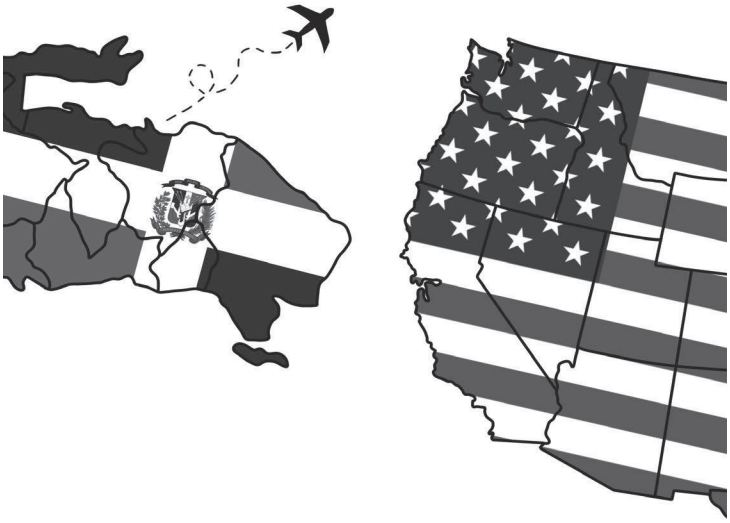
I respond choking throughout my sentence, "yes mom." She barges in and sees me throwing up. I have to explain to her why I'm so stressed and anxious. We realized that I have horrible time management. We worked with my crew leader and made plans on how to get better at it. Eventually by the third quarter I got the hang of it and was fine.

It's pretty safe to say that COVID-19 caused a lot of issues. Since COVID-19 started people at all ages have reported increased stress. Stress can cause other emotions like fear, sadness, anger, worry, numbness, and frustration. Stress can also mess up eating habits and changes in sleep patterns. Stress can also cause physical issues with body pains,headaches, and stomach issues.

With all the stress and anxiety that I had at the time what really helped me was my mom and crew leader. My mom because she was very understanding and helpful. Gave really good advice and helped me with encouraging me to keep trying and that she would always be there for me. My crew leader also helped me a lot. She helped me create a schedule and she would do daily check-ins to make sure I was on top of everything. She would also encourage me to keep going and remind me that I've made a lot of progress since I first reached out which meant a lot to me.

Leaving Home

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"As DEA helicopters flew by, Eduardo wondered if they were gonna be caught or if they had already been seen and had been left for dead."

Journey to America

Gabby Her

The following is my grandmother's account of her escape from Laos at the end of the Vietnam War. In order to write this story, I sat down for a long conversation with my grandmother in order to make myself more familiar with the stories I had heard before.

Running through the forest trailing after one another trying to stay as quiet and stealthy as possible so they don't find you. As your wet feet hit the ground after each step causing it to make you uncomfortable but then all you hear is the panting of those next to you and if you're quiet enough you can hear gunshots in the distance. As you try to stay as calm as possible all you can hear is your heart beating through your own chest. You try to calm yourself down as much as possible. "Hide" is all that comes to mind, "survive" is what you need to do. Finally coming to a stopping point where you can get to safety for the night but also make sure to keep one eye open just in case you need to quickly get up and leave. As you wake up in the morning make sure you leave no trace you weren't there, but also be careful where you step because there could be a planted bomb that could lead to fatal death. But as all that is running through your mind all you care about is the child in you and for you to keep him safe.

"As you wake up in the morning make sure you leave no trace you weren't there, but also be careful where you step because there could be a planted bomb that could lead to fatal death."

Hmong immigration was one of the biggest and most harmful events to happen in the Hmong community. Back in the 1960s, there was a Hmong War that had taken over the countries of Laos and Vietnam. Countries involved were Vietnam, America, Laos, and Thailand, the French were also involved but they were involved to fight alongside the Hmong people. It was the Hmong against the Lao communists. The Hmong people were forced out of the mountains and were to seek safety in Thailand refugee camps also known as the Ban Vinai refugee camp which bordered Thailand and Laos. More than 120,000 Hmong fled for safety but 18,000 Hmong soldiers were left in Laos and around 50,000 were wounded or killed in battle.

As you make it to the river that borders Laos from Thailand, also called the Mekong River, stretched out about 1.5 km, you see the men trying to quickly assemble rafts so others can float over but when you look ahead you can see some already trying to cross the river by swimming. All you remember is after crossing the river go to the camp and stay there until the Americans come and save you in their big flying thing. Then after crossing the river, you arrive at the Ban Vinai Camp where 42,000 others are. You are put in a shelter where there is no running water and at night you hear the cries of others who lost their loved ones.

The Ban Vinai camp was no sort of safe homeland for the Hmong. Multiple people were sick and people in the camp were dying. Approximately a total of 50,000+ Hmong died in the camps due to starvation or an illness. In the camp, they were averaged to stay a total of 8 years. More than 200,000 Hmong people in total were calculated to seek refugee at the camp but many died because of the environment that they were put in.

You look up and it's the first time you see a plane. You were one of the first Hmong who arrived in America when you were just a kid. As you are on the plane all you can come to is you're finally at peace. You left out all the details because you couldn't see the fact of having to go back into the environment and scary situations you were put in. As your two sizes, 5 feet hit the ground and your long-haired ponytail swinging back and forth you're in America well… more specifically Sheboygan Wisconsin you're in America but you don't understand anything. All you have is your newlywed husband and his family. You have a family that arrived first in America. You stay with them until you guys are both ready to move out.

To this day there are a number of Hmong in America the Main states they had settled in Were MN, WI, CA more specifically in Fresno, and NC. There is a new generation of Hmong who doesn't understand their background. There are about 3 generations of Hmong people in America as of 2022. We all hear our grandparent's stories but they won't go into detail

because of the fear and trauma behind it. They were all just so young, especially to contribute to the war. Vang Pao as most of the Hmong people know was the biggest contribution to the war he led the Hmong through the 15 day trip to the camps and brought dozens of them to America thanks to the CIA also a major contribution they offered a place the Hmong could call home.

My grandma alongside many others was put through a fight or flight instinct and they all decided to do both as many of them lost their lives they lost their lives trying to survive. People nowadays will continue to ask oh what asian are you? What country are you from? Essentially we don't have a place where we can say is our country by law if legally needed a flag you would need a country to have a flag. So when asked the question what is Hmong we say we are of Chinese descent, and when asked the question where is your country we simply just answer that we don't have one. When we hear the term "lone wolf" I would say the Hmong would be considered that we were in a time of need and protection and in the secret war we got help from America in which overtime they began accepting us and taking in more and more of them. Till this day there are still some living out in the Laos mountains doing what they do best surviving.



Mi Abuela Sandra

Cezar Fernandez

The following is the story of my grandmother, who immigrated to the United States from the Dominican Republic. I knew some of her story, but talked to her on the phone in order to get enough information to write this story.

The first thing Sandra saw when she got off the plane from the Dominican Republic, was this weird and terrifying thing with railings with a flat moving surface. She decided to not even touch it. Of course we all see this as a moving walkway, but she had never seen something like this coming from the Dominican Republic. Many things surprised her, things as simple as Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts.

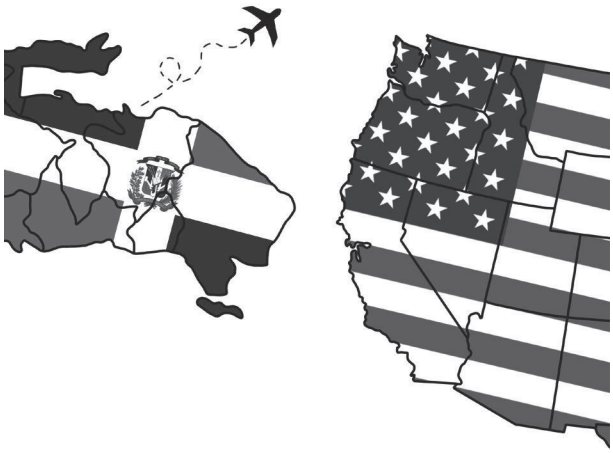
My grandmother came to the U.S. in 1980, along with many others that were legally allowed to leave their home country the Dominican Republic, which at the time only had about 5.804 million people. The Dominican Republic is a beautiful tropical island. It's not the largest country, sharing an island with Haiti, but it also has its issues with poverty, which is the biggest reason my Grandmother left. To her surprise, when she first got to the U.S., she didn't struggle too much with racism; with only having one moment with a cashier at Shaw's but it was very subtle. But her job had very little diversity -- she was the only Hispanic in her department.

However, her children suffered a lot more with racism. As they would get beat up when they would go

"However, her children suffered a lot more with racism. As they would get beat up when they would go to the bus stop for school and would get called racial slurs."

to the bus stop for school and would get called racial slurs. Her children would always get into fights over this. Especially the middle child, his name was Alejandro. One day he got called a spick, broke the kid's nose.

Her life now is pretty good. She's retired and does volunteer work for her church and has a house near the waterfront in Plymouth, Massachusetts with her youngest son and his daughter. Her youngest child, her daughter, lives about 10 minutes away in her own house and her oldest living in Boston. With all her children being very successful in their respective fields.



A New Life

Chukbar Paw

This is my mom's story. When I think about life in the refugee camp, I still can't imagine my mom's life in Burma. Life in the refugee camp was hard enough, but every time when I compared my life then and now, I always get surprised.

I was born in Yo Kla, Burma. My mom named me Ma Chi. One evening, I was in the house alone preparing rice for my family, as usual. I was calm until I heard a gunshot. I was shocked.

My house was about six feet off the ground and made of bamboo, so when I heard the shooting I did not know whether I should jump down. The house was in chaos -- people were running around and grabbing possessions. I jumped from the house and landed on the ground. People were screaming. I reached for my nephew who was already on the ground and was scared to move. After I grabbed him, I put him on my back and ran into the forest. After running for a while, everything seemed to settle down. I was too weak to do anything. I was hungry, but food wasn't even on my mind because I was more focused on the army. I was too scared to close my eyes. I just stared at the moon and talked to myself. That's when I heard the signal that it was safe to go back to the village. I went back and everything that I had in the house was destroyed.

It didn't take that long for the army to come back to the village. One morning I heard what sounded like a gunshot, but this time it was way worse. They didn't only come back with a gun, but this time with an airplane that can kill up to 50 people with one hit. It was bomb! I ran faster than I ever have in my life. While carrying my nephew on my back and my niece in the front, I was in a situation where I lost all my thoughts. My brain became numb and the only part of my body that could move was my legs.

This time I didn't want to go back to the village, but then I felt pity for my parents so I went back. It wasn't long before I woke up in the morning and could no longer call out for my mom and dad. I didn't even think that this day would come, I never thought of it. Never thought losing someone will hurt your soul so much. I lost both of my parents due to a sickness that grabbed onto them and would not let go. My mom was the first to leave. Before my mom passed away, she knew that the illness was strong and she wouldn't make it. She called me over to her and held my hands. She whispered in my ear, "You are a good daughter that any mother would love to have. But I'm lucky, I got to have you in this life." Those were the last words she said to me.

My mom passed away when I was just 18 years old. I didn't even know how to cry, but the only thing I felt was my heart being squeezed by someone's hand. I could barely breathe. When my dad was alive his heart was pure and the kindest heart that I couldn't never ever replace. I think that's why my mom got married to him. About two weeks after my mom's death, my dad started to get sick from malaria and soon he left the earth to be with my mom. I didn't eat for two weeks because I was so lost in my thoughts. I said to myself, "There is no happiness for me in this world now." My heart was aching.

After losing my parents, I had no choice but to be married off to someone that could protect me and this is what I did. I didn't want to live in the village anymore, so my husband and I decided to leave the village. One morning, I packed up all of the stuff that we might need

and prepared for the journey. I cooked breakfast and then packed a lunch for us. I was ready to leave this miserable life. I wanted to set myself free.

I began to walk out of the village and entered the forest where you have to fear everything around you. But I left those fears behind and just kept walking. It took two weeks day and night to reach the Thai border. I felt happiness for the first time after the loss of my parents.

After I escaped the war, I ended up in Ma Ra Moe refugee camp in 1984 where everything in my life changed. There were many more things I could do without worries about getting caught by the army. But the problem was that the Thai army didn't let the people who lived in the camp to leave. But I still have lots of opportunities to go into the forest and look for food like Bamboo, marsroom and other plants. I started having kids and sending them to school and they are very lucky that they have the opportunity to do many things that I didn't get to do. Also they get to live life mostly peacefully.

On the Run from Guatemala

Marco Hernandez

The following is a fictional story based on how the government in Guatemala treated many of its own citizens in the late 80s. In order to write this story I talked to my father and did research on the internet.

"Speaking up against the government will not end well for you. We know this by how Luis was a public speaker, speaking his truth. It didn't align with the government's agenda and he was hunted. He was stripped of his identity and hunted down as a fugitive of the highest degree."

It's a calm Sunday morning, birds are chirping. The little town of San Lucas is bustling with life and music. Luis is enjoying his eggs and coffee. It is a routine he has developed over these last 3 years. Wake up at 5, church from 5:45 to 9. He rarely has time to eat before, so he usually goes out after church. He is on his last sip of his coffee, when suddenly he hears "policía, policía" (this is police in Spanish). Immediately, almost in the blink of an eye, Luis is up and out on Main Street. He sees the black and white uniforms and the military grade truck speeding down the street towards him. Instinctively, he runs to the nearest house.

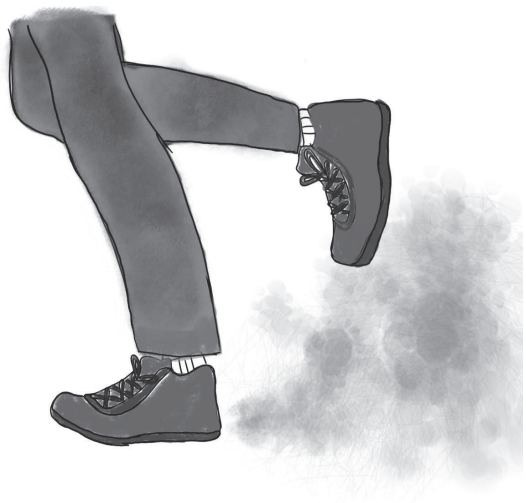
Luis jumps over the fence. The feds have raided his safe house once again. He runs to the nearest vendor's stand and hides in the back. He watches as what basically is the whole law enforcement of his little town comes tumbling down the street, scanning and

searching for him. See, Luis is a community speaker. He speaks truth and sometimes that truth does not respond to the government's agenda. He had become somewhat popular and was getting more people's attention. Worried about a revolt, the government had set out to find him and make him stop for good.

Speaking up against the government will not end well for you. We know this by how Luis was a public speaker, speaking his truth. It didn't align with the government's agenda and he was hunted. He was stripped of his identity and hunted down as a fugitive of the highest degree. It was sad and hard for him to leave his kids and wife behind. He hid from the government and ran and evaded for a long time. He chose that type of life because he needed to speak his truth to the world. The government made his life miserable just because he was being true to himself and didn't mind speaking up about doing it.

As he ran through the floral corridors and bustling streets and shops, all the reasons he became a public speaker came flooding back to him. His community, the never ending family and energy that coursed through him and gave him strength. Knowing he would always have people to support and uplift him was a powerful moment. As he ran past all the little vendors' carts, he thought about each one of them and the memories he had with them all. This drove Luis to speak up and protect the community. He needed to be a symbol of community and truth. The rows and rows of uniform orange trees became almost hypnotizing as he continued his trek through the town. As he ran, he frantically looked around. Cow barn? No. Grain silo? No. Up ahead, he saw the rows of coffee plants. Perfect, he thought. As he neared, he knew he had friends in those fields. He took a sharp right into a field of coffee beans and hid among the harvesting workers. They sheltered him from the eyes of the police rumbling by, it brought a feeling of belonging to Luis, knowing that his community always would have his back.

Luis ran through the coffee trees as the police drove past. He snuck back over to a transportation station and paid a man to take him back the 8 hour journey back to his hometown. The ride was bumpy and hot, bugs buzzing around his ear they bounced along the pockmarked pavement and mud. They finally made it to the house, and he was greeted by his family and they caught up over a warm dinner. He told them about how he was being chased and that he needed to hide for a long time. The next morning, he said his last goodbyes and headed out again, waving as he left. He could secure a safe house, which overlooked lake Atitlan. He stayed in the safe house for 6 years before he could come out and see his family again. When he finally met up with them, they hugged him so tight and had so many stories to tell. They all moved to a house on the same lake as his safe house and have lived in peace ever since.



Fleeing from Myanmar

Mi Paw

The following is an account of my mom and her family escaping myanmar.I did research on the topic of the conflict happening in Myanmar and interviewed my mom about her experience.

I could hear shots and footsteps running getting away from the Burmese soldiers cashing us. Running to not get caught because getting caught meant death. I looked at my surroundings which were only full of trees and the shadows casted from the sun, pausing a second to catch my breath as shots could be heard. My little feet were running trying to keep up with the adults as shots in the distance echoed, I could hear the crunching of leaves being stepped on. Fear that can be seen on myself as well as my family, sweat forming from the never ending run, and panic from the thought of being caught.

My family and I were running for our lives trying not to get caught by the Burmese soldiers. I held on tight to

my mothers hands as we ran. I looked over my shoulder seeing my older sister running along and my younger sister being carried by my father as she was too young to run along with us. I tried to run as fast as they could and as softly not to make too much noise, any sounds too loud would trigger death. The news of the soldiers sent everyone frantically trying their best to take anything with them and get far away as possible.

The conflicts that's going on in Myanmar have been very hard on the Karen people. Myanmar, which used to be known as Burma was granted independence from the British in 1948. After being granted independence, Karen along with other groups hoped to advocate independence from burmese and their own land. The British considered the case of the Karen but it went unacknowledged by Burmese. Soliders would terrorize karen villages including burning down homes, killing, torturing and even raping women and girls. If one is caught they are forced to labor for the military. "When I was 10 they arrested me and some other villagers to stay at their camp for 13 days," said Paw Wah. Thousands have crossed the border of Thailand to get to the refugee camps. 150,000 have lived in refugee camps since April 2008 and 10,000 Karen refugees have migrated to the U.S in 2008.

We had been running and walking for hours until we came across a village. Since there were no signs of soldiers and the village looked untouched. My family and I decided to stay here. We started our new life here, if you could call it that, but it didn't last long. Before I knew it we were hiding again in the forest as there were news of soldiers around the area. We had to flee the village and take shelter in the forest. We stayed there for a few days before it was considered safe to come out of the forest. While staying hidden in the forest I would remember the hard, dirty brown ground that we had to sleep on and the cold, silent night. From time to time I would fear the soldiers finding our hiding spot and killing us at that moment. I feared the sound of footsteps and crunch of the leaves thinking it might have been the soldiers.

After we had confirmed that the area was clear of soldiers we went back to the village. One unfortunate day my dad fell ill. I never noticed at first but after seeing him look pale, droopy and a little thin I started to think he's not well. Everyday he laid on bed and I would visit him to bring medicine. But no matter what, he didn't get better and soon passed away.

A month passed and we found that it was no longer safe and we decided to travel to the border of Thailand and get to a safer place there. Before we could reach we had to cross the Moei river. The current of the river was strong enough that we used a boat to cross, and none of us knew how to swim. So in order to get across we had to go to a place where they sell those boats and buy it to cross. We managed to get a boat from a boat seller. Me along with my uncle, mom, sisters and brothers loaded on the boat and hoped to reach Thailand.

We had finally reached Thailand and ended up in Mae la refugee camp. I was 10 when I reached the camp, we settled in there and were finally out of danger from the outside. We lived in a small house made of wood, and very close to other houses, some were even built on a hill. Our surroundings were full of a variety of trees, dirty dry roads or sidewalks and you could sometimes see people hanging their clothes on the side of the house. Our main sources of transportation were our feets since rarely you would see anyone owning a car or even a bike and even if someone did own them it would be hard to travel with it due to the bumpy roads. Most of the time kids were walking around playing with their friends.

I was responsible for cleaning the house, washing dishes and clothes, and just helping out my mom. After my dad passed away she was left to look after us and was the one that earned money for us. She ended up taking on the challenge of looking after 5 kids, making sure to feed us, keeping us safe and providing us happiness. Living in the camp we were given rice, beans, fish paste, etc from the people in charge of the camp but none of us were able to grow or own any garden because of the very dry condition of dirt or soil. We had to buy our own meat and my mom worked in order to buy food for us. My mom worked selling vegetables and went around asking if anyone wanted their grass to be cut. She went cutting grass for people outside from the camp and would be paid.

> "My little feet were running trying to keep up with the adults as shots in the distance echoed..."

I was able to go to school and get some education. Everyday I would wake up, get ready, and walk to school which would take some time. The school was outdoors with a chalkboard in the front and woody chairs and tables that lay across each row. Then I'll quickly return

home and eat lunch then walk back.

Due to the conflict many have their homes resulting in many to take refuge. Roughly 140,000 karen have lived in refugee camps in Thailand and there are a total of 9 refugee camps in Thailand, the largest being Mae La which holds 43,000 refugees. Many were forced to come to these refugee camps because of the violence. One mother said, "I came to the camp 10 years after the army burned our village." Many of the homes were made of wood and built on hilly landscape. The camp is mostly full of farmers and low-income workers. Even though the camp was a way for them to escape violence there were still few problems like little to no employment and minimal education for children. Those who live in the camp and went to school are taught to learn Skaw karen and that's the language that is mostly spoken, English, Thai and Burmese are taught as additional languages.

Now my mom and her family are safely in America and away from the conflicts back in Myanmar that are still going on until now. But now she and her family are out of danger and they are able to do so because of running away from danger, hiding, crossing the river and finally ending up at Mae La refugee camp. Her family were able to get where they are because of the means to survive and get as far away from the Burmese soldiers as they could. They started off hiding within a village for a few months, hiding away in the forest when they knew the soldiers were close then crossed the river to get to Thailand and end up in the refugee camps where it was more safe. My mom was able to survive because of her family that was around her, and the support she had from her family. She was able to keep going out of fear of dying or being killed, the fear of death was strong enough to keep her going.



Desaparecidos

Analigia Batres Pearson

During the 1980's, the government in Guatemala used forced disappearance as tool of terror in order to control its ciitzens. The following is a fictional but realistic account of a Guatemalan citizen who suffers at the hands of the Guatemalan government.

"Hold still, this might hurt a bit," Eztli told the injured man in her gruff voice. The guerilla groaned as she spread some herbs over the gash on his side. Gritting his teeth, he clenched the fabric of his pants as he felt the herbs sting the exposed flesh.

"You shouldn't do this, you know. People are disappearing left and ri-..." The last word died in his mouth, giving way to a surprised cry as Eztli began to rub the herbs into the wound.

"It's a good thing my daughter saw you when she did. Otherwise, you might have bled out," Eztli replied plainly, grasping his thigh firmly to prevent him from moving.

"Wouldn't have been the worst thing in the world," he grunted as he leaned his head back against the floor, staring up at the ceiling.

"You'll rest here tonight. Lie quietly and I'll sneak you out at dawn," Eztli instructed, as casually as if she were telling one of her children to tend to one of their cows. Giving him one last look, she exited the kitchen where she found her son and daughter waiting expectantly for her.

"How is he, mama?" Zyanya asked innocently, looking up at her mother. Eztli's usually stern eyes softened as she looked at the wide eyed girl in front of her, the baby of the small family.

"He's hurt, but he'll be alright. He just needs some rest." Eztli bent to kiss her forehead.

"And you and Eloy need to rest, too."

"Buenas noches, mama," Zyanya replied, kissing her on the cheek before
unrolling her petate next to Eloy's.

"Buenas noches," Eloy said softly, rustling his little sister's thick black hair. The gentle way he addressed Zyanya could not hide his worry and his jaw clenched as he looked at his mother.

"You shouldn't have helped him, mama," he whispered harshly.

"I treated his wounds, he'll leave when the sun rises if not before then."

"That won't matter if soldiers find out you helped a guerrilla! What if somebody saw you bring him inside? We can't even trust our neighbors, mama!" At this, Eztli smoothed stray hair behind Eloy's ear, smiling reassuringly at her son, who was nearly a man.

"Nothing is going to happen. I promise." The squeeze she gave Eloy's hands did nothing to assuage his fear, and later that evening, when Zyanya insisted on sleeping on Eloy's petate, he didn't push her away. His mind raced and the knot in his stomach only tightened as his sister snuggled into him. Not caring if Zyanya felt the frightened way his heart bounced against his rib cage, Eloy pulled her closer, stopping just short of squeezing her. Nothing will hurt you, was the last thought he had before succumbing to a troubled sleep.

"It was no mystery what had happened to Eztli. Eloy knew exactly what the Kaibiles did to "subversives."

"Did the soldiers bring back mama yet?" Zyanya asked quietly, holding up her plate as Eloy ladled some black beans onto her plate.

"No. They didn't." He didn't know how to explain how she had mysteriously disappeared. Mysteriously disappeared… It was no mystery what had happened to Eztli. Eloy knew exactly what the Kaibiles did to "subversives." Zyanya softly cried between bites of warm corn tortilla. Their mother had been missing for three months now. The packed earth floor felt colder beneath his feet, and Eloy caught himself wondering how the ground felt for Eztli before she was killed. The rumble he heard in the next moment left him no time to dwell on the thought. His head jerked up in fear and he tiptoed to Zyanya, who had stopped eating to listen. Gunfire sounded and before she had a chance to react, Eloy had grabbed her and retreated into the corner behind the open fire. "What's happ-"

"Shh!" Eloy clasped his hand to her mouth, ignoring her muffled protests. Screams soon followed and he peered through the gaps in the cane stalk walls. The gunfire only sounded louder and Eloy flinched. Zyanya yelped, burying her face in his chest as she caught a glimpse of soldiers firing at people. Eyes wide, Eloy shook as he watched what was happening. Fires licked at every home he could see, and the ground felt hotter as the smoke poured in, surrounding him and his sister. He bolted outside with Zyanya in his arms, only able to think about his bare feet slapping the earth. His heart pounding in his ears, the surrounding chaos could not deter him. The spilled blood mingled with puddles from the winter rains, and everything blurred. Everywhere he looked, soldiers, gunfire, flames, screams, terror, bodies, running, falling. The only thing that kept Eloy tethered to the earth was Zyanya screaming as he held her tightly, not daring to drop her. He ended his sprint once he reached the forest, breathing heavily as he whipped his head around to look back. Zyanya clung to his neck. The sound of gunfire and the screams of people they knew dimmed. Eloy didn't know what was in store, where they might find a new home, or whether they would find anyone they knew on the other side of the forest, but for now, they were alive. He squeezed Zyanya tightly, never wanting to let her go. Silently, they disappeared into the forest.

Eloy and Zyanya are fictional characters, but the violence they witnessed is not. Over the 36 years that the Guatemalan Civil War took place, (November 13, 1960 - December 29, 1996) indigenous people endured the worst of the brutality inflicted by the Guatemalan government on their own people. Of the 200,000 people killed during the conflict, 83% were indigenous Mayans. The United Nations has attributed 93% of the human rights violations committed during this period to the state. Like Eztli, approximately 45,000 Guatemalans suspected of being sympathizers with guerrilla revolutionary forces were forcibly disappeared by the Guatemalan military, their bodies buried in unmarked graves or thrown away in rivers and ravines. As of 2021, the remains of only 4,000 of Guatemala's disappeared have been identified. But by 1983, approximately 100,000 Guatemalans had crossed the border and sought refuge in Mexico. Like Eloy and Zyanya, they disappeared, but remained alive. Their villages were destroyed, and many never returned. But their stories survive.

Choosing to flee

Dean Abdulla

The following story is about how my dad endured and then escaped the regime of Sadam Hussein, which changed life for everyone in Kurdistan. I interviewed my dad in order to write this piece, and learned many new things about his life before he came to the United States.

It was a Saturday morning and Muhamad and his family just finished eating breakfast when a loud knock had hit the door, Muhamad's father got the door and seen a man in a soldier uniform asking for Muhamad to come to the door, at this point his father knew that Muhamad was being drafted. The soldier gave Muhamad the information needed and made it clear that he had no choice, if he had rejected the offer to join Iraqi forces he would be held in prison and eventually executed. So when the door closed he told his father that he couldn't do it. Saddam's military committed various crimes against humanity and they were extremely cruel and merciless. Although Muhamad didn't want to worry his family, he couldn't live with himself knowing that he was upholding such an oppressive system in order to stay safe.

Muhamad began plotting his escape and eventually decided that traveling with a group of smugglers would be his best bet since they were very familiar with the area and knew which spots to avoid. They would take him to a village in the mountains and he would live there until things died down in Slemani. So that's what he did, he found a group of smugglers through a close friend and paid them some money to travel alongside them. They traveled for 5 days straight with close to no sleep. They only ate bread and dates, and they drank water once a day when they could stop by a spring. On the 3rd day Muhamad was near his breaking point but he knew he couldn't stop moving or he would be left behind in the middle of nowhere. Although this was one the biggest hardships he had ever gone through, this was freest he had ever felt. The 4th night of traveling he had adopted the name Hamazadi (Hama The Free).

Life in Kurdistan changed a lot once Sadam took power in Iraq. Most Kurds were already used to dictators. But Sadam was different. Although he was a power-hungry dictator a lot like those in power previously, he was a lot more maniacal. Over 300,000 people went missing during his reign. He did cover up a majority of his crimes but the Iraqi people knew who was responsible. He gassed a Kurdish village of men, women, and children, and over 1,500 casualties were the result of this attack. The most civilian casualties in one chemical attack of all time. People all across the country were censored, protests and public gatherings were prohibited, and leaving the country was nearly impossible. This made it even harder to reveal Sadam's atrocities to the public and the outside world.

"Although Muhamad didn't want to worry his family, he couldn't live with himself knowing that he was upholding such an oppressive system in order to stay safe."

Muhamad lived in the mountains for 2 and a half years. When he first arrived he truly felt how harsh the conditions really were. It was the coldest place he's ever visited in his life. It was difficult to grow food and the housing was extremely rundown. But he managed to make ends meet by taking on many random jobs he had experience in: blacksmithing, farming, and moving goods in and out of the mountains were his main forms of income. He would think of his family often, they didn't even

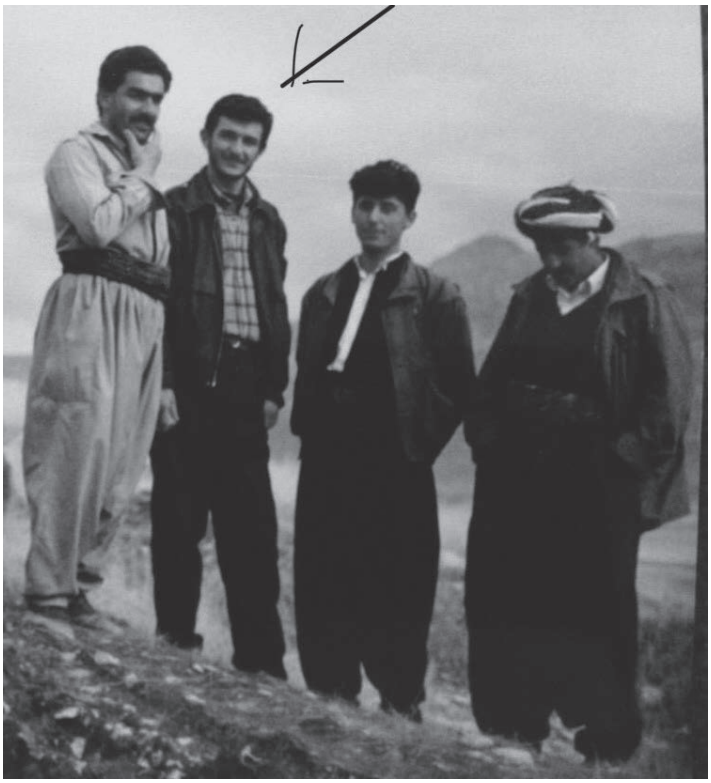
know if he was alive or not during this time. He was eager to return home and see his family again. After a long 2 and half years, he got news that slemani had been retook by peshmerga (Kurdish forces) and he was safe to return. He was really happy to hear this and began preparing to leave the mountains the same night.

The mountains were a safe haven for many Kurds around Iraq because it was extremely difficult for the government or military to push into this area. Firstly it was extremely cold which makes it hard to set up a comfortable base of operations. Second, the land was occupied by tough Kurds who carried their arms very often. Third, the Kurds in the area were a lot more familiar with the area which would give them the tactical advantage in a gunfight. And lastly a lot of land was unwanted since it was so cold and hard to survive in. There is a very well known Kurdish proverb that says "No friends but the mountains". This saying became very popular amongst the Kurdish people since they have been being persecuted for a long time and never had any real loyal allies.

When Muhamad arrived back in Slemani he started working with the United Nations to help build a DMZ for people displaced by the Iraqi-Iranian war that was coming to a close. He was helping build hospitals, schools and houses for those in need. Working with the UN was smart since they would make sure that he was safe from Iraqi forces in case they pushed back into Slemani. He often had to traverse dangerous territories outside of Slemani to obtain materials. On multiple occasions, he was in close proximity to scrimmages taking place between multiple militias. But on one particular occasion, he found himself in the middle of a gunfight with two militias. One of which was backed by Saddam and the other was backed by Iran.

Both parties weren't sure who Muhamad and his comrades were, but they had the idea that he was part of a third party. Although he was behind a good amount of cover, being on top of a hill, he had to leave the area as soon as possible. He decided the best course of action was to drive down the steep hill to safety. Due to the amount of trees and debris that they would have to swerve around to get down the hill to safety his comrades thought his plan was idiotic and they were destined to die. But Muhamad had confidence that he would be able to do it. He got in the truck and told them, "Get in if you want to live." Obviously, that's what they did because they had no other choice. As soon as they started going down the hill a barrage of bullets started flying towards them, they were getting shots from so many directions, and they managed to stay out of danger by dipping and dodging through the trees and debris. When they got about half-way down the hill a RPG exploded above the truck. With his ears ringing he was racing down the hill to safety, and his companion in the car was yelling in fear with his head down. Thankfully, they retreated out of the area with no injuries inflicted on him or his comrade. They both got out of the truck thanking god repeatedly.

For the next 2 years Muhamad continued to work with the United Nations in the DMZ. The Iraqi government made it clear that those working with the UN were traitors and would be executed when found. So the UN offered the volunteers who had worked with the UN a chance to leave Iraq and go to the US. Muhamad took the offer and took his wife with him to Arizona. His English was not bad and he worked as an electrician and a security guard for a majority of his time in Arizona. Until he learned more about the US and learned how to use his degree to get a better job. He moved to Minnesota in 2000 and started working as a Diabetes Research Scientist at the U of M in 2004. He still works there today.



Run to Freedom

WaWa Khin

The following is a true story about my parent's experience of the hardships of escaping the civil war in Burma and immigrating to America. I interviewed them to learn more about their experience and did research on the war.

My mother said her heart wouldn't stop beating as they were walking through the jungle. She remembered how their village elders had a meeting and were listening to the radio. She would wait outside as her father, my grandpa, was also in the meeting. When the elders finished their meeting, they decided it was time for them to run as the Burmese were getting closer to the village. My mother, her father, and some villagers went to the temple to cook the chicken that was given to them. They killed the chicken then cooked it, which they would then put in a container. The reason they don't cook the chicken on their way is because it scares them that the smoke or smell of the food might attract the Burmese people.

"Army General Shwe Maung said, "In twenty years you will only be able to find Karen people in a museum," as he walked on our Karen flag."

It was terrifying for my mother. As a young child who hasn't even reached the age of eight, you don't expect to be in the middle of the war. As a child, you expect to be free and have little responsibility, but in this situation; the kids had little free time and were expected to do more. There was little to none to eat and drink. They would steal from others and if they were caught, they would fight over the food and water.

When my mother heard the elders say that the Burmese soldiers were coming, her heart dropped. The fear of being found or getting captured by the Burmese soldier was terrifying for my mother. "Getting captured by the Burmese soldier was one of my biggest fears," is what my mother said. She knows what would happen to the people who got captured. She says that she was grateful that she was one of the few lucky groups who didn't get caught. While my father had to run for so many years of his life, when he was a kid he would hide in jungles. He has time to act or be one. Up until he was 20, my dad finally found a place to call home. Burmese Army General Shwe Maung said, "In twenty years you will only be able to find Karen people in a museum," as he walked on our Karen flag. Many people feared for their lives because of General Shwe, including my mother and father. In 1988, there was a nationwide democracy uprising in Burma. The Burmese military killed hundreds of the Karen people and even some were imprisoned. Thousands of refugees fled to Thailand.

Finally, getting to the refugee camp was an enormous relief for my mother, but that relief soon turned into worries all over again as there wasn't any housing or anything to cover them from the rain or the cold. They would make a shelter using a big plastic bag they tied around trees like a mini roof. During this time, many of the Karen people would die from the cold as there wasn't any medicine or anything to help them.

For three months, my mother had to live in these conditions along with the rest of the refugees. They finally got wood and leaves to build themselves a tiny cabin, but there was only enough space for my mother and grandfather to live in. "The bigger the family is, the more wood and leaves they gather to make their house bigger," my mother said. She also said to me, "As small as the tiny cabin may be, I still called it my home. It was the only thing that protected me from the cold." Many refugees and immigrants had to live in harsh conditions, and some didn't survive.

When the Noh Poe refugee camp started, many people died because of the water being very dirty and unsanitary. These unsanitary water causes diarrhea, cholera, dysentery, typhoid, hepatitis A, and polio. Many of the Karen refugees had the symptoms of diarrhea, but some wouldn't stop vomiting. Because of the lack of clean water and barely any doctors that can help them, lots of refugees would die and many would have the illness. My mother said she witnessed many people die, but there really isn't much she could do being a child and all.

After a few years of living in Noh Poe and after losing her father, my mother was raised by her stepbrother who was a real pain, is all she said. It was hard for her living without her mother and father seeing

how close she was to them. My mother never got into details or anything about how they died, but all she said was, "Wawa, your grandfather would have loved you so much. He always wanted a granddaughter." During this year my mother was only a teenager, around 13 or 14 she was working in the cornfield or would go carry woods to bring back home, this was also when my father, Than Thin, came to the Noh Poe camp after running from Burmese soldiers. When my father saw my mother for the first time, he said, "She was beautiful. I fell in love with her right there." Meanwhile, my mother said, "He was just like every regular man." Of course we all saw how that ended, 'cause I'm here now and Pain, my little brother, he's here too.

My parents got married a year or two before I was born. On June 28th 2004, a little girl named Wawa Khin was born. She also had another name, Klay Su Mwee. My father's side of the family gave the name Wawa Khin,



while Klay Su Mwee was the name my mother chose for me. My mother said she remembers not wanting a child at all because, "I didn't want my child to grow up in this condition." But when she got pregnant, she didn't know what to do. It scared her I would starve or have some type of illness that would be impossible to cure. I was born premature, born a few weeks too early. When my mother saw me for the first time, she said, "When I saw your face, everything changed for me. I realized there I became a mother." My father cried like a lot when he finally had his first kid, and it's a girl sadly not a boy 'cause many people want their firstborn to be a boy, it's "easier for them to work" but that wasn't really the case for my parents; girl or boy, it's still gonna be their child.

My mother would have to leave me with a few of her relatives so that she and my dad could work. That was a hard part for her having to leave her child behind, even though the child was only a year old. My parents got split up between the border of Thailand and Burma because of the Burmese soldier coming after them. They both made it back home safely, but my father has a permanent scar on his thighs from the bullet the Burmese soldiers shot him with. When they got home, they saw me with scars and bruises. My father had so much anger, seeing how badly the relatives treated me. They barely fed me and would have me sleep outside of the mosquito net. I started developing an eating disorder I would barely eat, and I was so underweight they had to force feed me. During the night there would be so many mosquitoes, and I was left to sleep without the mosquito net while my relatives slept without the bugs biting them. My mother couldn't believe her eyes and from that day on, she wouldn't let anyone babysit me. If she has to work, my dad stays home with me and if my dad works, she stays home with me. The thought of her child getting hurt all over again scared my mother. So when my little brother Pain Lin Kyaw was born on March 5th 2008, my mother made sure she was more careful with him. When my brother was born, I tried to feed him candy. He was only a few weeks old, and I asked my mom why he wasn't eating candy? Because my uncle always brought me these blueberry candies. I really didn't understand why babies don't eat candies, like candy was the most expensive thing I ever got to eat. My mother and dad signed up for the refugee stuff, during this time I was 5 but I remember stuff from when I was a kid like the time my mom threw a shoe at my dad or the time where my mom kicked down the living room wall. The house was made of bamboo and it's not like the house here. My mother said "If I were to kick down the wall in this house my foot would be broken". Our family makes a joke about it because it was hilarious and it was silly how I would remember stuff like that.

When we came to America, the language barrier made my mother cry. She thought we were lost and my father was too scared to talk to anyone at the airport and asked for help. My mother grabbed the name tag we were carrying and dragged my whole family to this guy who had the UN pass as well. My mother walked up to him with a child in her arms and a little girl following her. She said "brother, do you know where our plane is?" The UN guy didn't know Karen, so he asked if my mother spoke Thai, "Oh, you speak Thai? Well then, I'm going to speak to you in Thai too." That is what my mom said. The guy helped us and then we waited for our

plane. When we landed in the Minnesota airport, my uncle and aunt were waiting for us. My mother broke down into tears, and so did my father. I didn't know why they were crying, but my aunt carried me in her arms and said she missed me.

My mother started school, and she learned as much English as soon as she could. Before my father went to work at the slaughterhouse, he would go to school for a few months. My brother goes to daycare and I go to school where I feel left out and isolated because 7-year-old me didn't know English and many kids spoke English. We struggle with sleeping and adjusting to the new time zone. I didn't know there was such a thing as an apartment. All I know is before you walk into someone's house, you leave your shoes outside. I left my shoes outside of the apartment like the front door. I think many people must have laughed at me for that. We really started struggling when my father started having a hard time breathing and it happens whenever he works. My mother made him find a new job and while finding a new job, my mother worked at a laundry place. We struggle a lot, but my mother or father never showed it to us and always made sure we could eat.

My mother is a brave woman, and she is so smart being able to speak Thai, Burmese, Karen, Poe Karen and English. She also supports her kids and sees all the risks she took for us. I really appreciate my mother. My father is a wonderful, kind man who is brave and goofy and always makes sure we have food and a roof over our heads. When I see these two people together, to me they are survivors and heroes. The reason my mother wanted to keep living and kept running from the Burmese was because she didn't want to have a life full of regrets. Some people would give up and give in, but not my mother. She wanted to live life at its fullest. My father had the will to survive because after losing family and friends to the Burmese, he wasn't about to let them win. I am very lucky to have a roof over my head and foods on my table, lots of immigrants don't have that. I believe it was hard for my mother and father to leave the camp because they have so many memories there. My grandmother and grandfather were there. They basically only knew that camp as home because their real home was taken away from them. My parents said they know if they didn't take the chance of coming to America they would regret it. They wanted their kids to have freedom and lots of opportunities.

Surviving Sonora

Sofía Maldonado

This story is an account of my father's journey from crossing the Mexican border on foot, and being left behind by the group he was with; to live in the U.S. until he was arrested and deported. To write this story I had to interview my dad and research the lives of migrants living in the U.S.

On the way to a landscaping job, Eduardo sees out of the corner of his eye in the rearview window a car behind him, he looks up and sees a cop car. He's driving the speed limit, he has his seatbelt on and his car is fully functional. All of a sudden there are red and blue flashing lights. Eduardo has been here now 3 years, he is an immigrant, abiding by the law so as to not get deported because he is undocumneted. Eduardo pulls over thinking, hoping to himself that the police car will just drive past. As he moves over the police car also pulls over and parks, a sinking feeling overcomes him. The policeman comes up to his window and immediately asks for his identification and proof of citizenship. He slowly reaches for the glove compartment for his passport and tries to explain that he got it from the Mexican consulate and is allowed to be here in the US. Eduardo thinks I'm almost to work, hopefully he just lets me off with a warning, this has worked before. The police officer looks over the frayed and dirty passport, he asks again for papers, Eduardo doesn't have an answer. The policeman asks him to get out where he promptly

arrests him and puts him in the back of his squad car. He drives him to the Anoka county police station.

Eduardo Maldonado was born in Mexico City on October 13 1973, his father worked in construction and his mom was a cook and cleaning lady. He was the third out of 7 children and went to school until 11th grade. He had dropped out to help his family by working construction jobs but they were very laborious for very little pay. He knew friends who had moved to the US and he decided to as well in search of better pay. When he was 25 he crossed for the first time in Matamoros, MX into Texas and in 2003, with the help of coyotes, in search of better jobs with better pay. After crossing into the US in 2003 he made his way to Minnesota, and he went to work like many other latinos in a town near a meat processing plant because he had family there. During his time there he met a translator, Lorrie Spading, they had a child together and then he was deported again in 2007. His last time crossing was in the Sonoran desert in september of 2010.

Eduardo's third time crossing the US Mexico border proved to be his most challenging. It was September, 2010, early on a monday when he met with a coyote and some other migrants in Nogales, Sonora. They started the cross a little after midday and walked for around 12 hours and stopped once to rest and eat just a little. They kept on like this for the next few days, only stopping once or twice during the day to eat and rest a little. During the night they would find somewhere, somewhat hidden like a bush, to sleep and would hang up their food on a tree. On Thursday Eduardo drank some polluted water and started to feel sick and fatigued afterwards. On Friday when they all woke up, he was too sick to go on and the group left him behind along with another man who likely had heat exhaustion and had not been expecting the treacherous journey. They were both too tired to go on, they laid there in the sun watching as DEA helicopters flew by, Eduardo wondered if they were gonna be caught or if they had already been seen and had been left for dead.

"As DEA helicopters flew by, Eduardo wondered if they were gonna be caught or if they had already been seen and had been left for dead."

The Sonoran desert goes through the southernmost part of California over to west Tucson AZ, it takes up around 100,000 square miles, a little bigger than the size of the UK. Its climate consists mostly of blistering heat, and yet can get freezing cold at night. The Sonoran desert is a very common place for migrants to cross with the help of coyotes; coyotes are people that charge migrants to get them across the desert or the border at high prices from a couple hundred dollars to $20,000. Due to the increased security at borders and at big cities on the U.S, Mexico border, migrants are taking more secluded and longer routes to cross the border to avoid it, this proves very dangerous and deadly to some. Since 1998 8,000 migrants have been found dead around the border, most of them are found in the desert and there are likely many more. Migrants will go into the desert desperate to get to the US but they come unprepared, many have no idea what lies ahead, many suffer from dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat strokes, and some die from this.

That Friday in the afternoon Eduardo and the other man felt a little better and walked a while until they found some bushes to sleep near and tied their food they had up in a tree. The next day they woke up to their bag of meat that was in the tree, ripped open by a coyote and now only had water to survive on. They continued walking following their instincts until they found a pond, they drank from it and filled their gallon jugs. After drinking the water they both began to feel better and continued on until midnight. The next day while they were walking they came upon a house, no one was home so they looked for a hose to get more water, it was very hot out. As they walked around the house they found a pool, Eduardo thought, plenty of water in the middle of a desert, how lucky of us, he took it as a sign. They were so thirsty they drank the chlorinated water and bathed themselves for the first time in a week. They continued on walking and stopped around midnight again to sleep.

The next day, Sunday, they continued on hoping they would find someone. While resting they found hidden in bushes a backpack filled with water and

crackers, it was definitely left for migrants and they took it as another good sign. They continued walking until they came up to a person, a coyote. At a price of $2000 the coyote promised them to get them across and into Arizona. With the coyote's phone they each called their families, and the coyote helped them to get safely across and into Tucson, Arizona. As planned, Eduardo then went to a hotel to meet up with Lorries parents and her daughter. They had driven from Minnesota to pick him up and had begun to worry until they got Eduardo's call. The next day they began their journey back home to Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Eduardo then lived in the US for three years until he was arrested, he lived with his partner Lorrie and 5 of her six kids, one of which they shared. He had been working a landscaping job, mowing lawns at the time of his arrest. According to the Hispanic Center report from 2009, 53% of undocumented Immigrats in the US live in mixed status families, meaning some people in the family have papers and some dont; eduardo was one of these immigrants. Eduardos family did take precautions like many other families with undocumented imigrants, they avoided calling the police, they were careful who they spoke to about Eduardo and to this day are careful about things they say and post online.

When a undocumented immigrant is arrested they have their fingerprints taken to indetify them or for identification in the future. If they have already been deported they are detained and will be deported unless they plead for asylum. Eduardo fingerprints were taken when he was arrested and he was identified as Jesus Delacruz, in english meaning "Jesus from the cross". He had lied about his name the first time he got arrested, so his real name did not come up and since he had already been deported he was detained and set to be deported. Eduardo and Lorrie decide to plead political asylum in hope to keep Eduardo from getting deported.

Eduardo had one child with lorrie, Sofia. She had been born in 2005 and was 7 years old at the time of Eduardo's arrest. On May 15 2013, she got off her school bus as usual at the end of her block, she carefully crossed the street and walked down the broken sidewalk, to her home. When she got home she opened the door, and walked into her house into the kitchen where she found her mom. She was sitting on the rocking chair that sat in the left corner of the kitchen in the sunlight, she was on the phone with her face in her hands. She looked distressed and Sofia asked "what's wrong?". Sofia knew not to trust the police, she was very young and didn't understand it all, but when her mom told her that her dad had been arrested she knew this was bad.

Since Eduardo has pleaded for political asylum he was kept in jail, for months Eduardo's family visited him at Ramsey county men's jail every wednesday after school or work. They would call all the time, Eduardo was in jail at the time of Sofias 8th birthday, at the birth of Lesly's daughter, during Lorries birthday and couldn't see his parents who had come to the U.S. for the first time. Sofia was pulled out of school one day while she was eating lunch with her classmates, her mom said they were going to visit her dad. She was confused why they were doing this in the middle of the day. She was even more confused when they started driving away from the jail near their house. Eduardo had been moved because he had been denied political asylum; he was going to be deported in a few days. They went into an office building, Sofia saw offices and sat in a waiting room wondering why exactly this moment felt so important.

They soon got called into a room, this wasn't like at the previous jail where they only saw Eduardo on a monitor, this time it was a small room divided by plexiglass, it had two benches and a phone. They waited until the door opened and in walked Eduardo in orange coveralls restrained with handcuffs, a belly chain and his feet were also cuffed. He sat down and picked up the phone, this visit was sadder than before. It was a good bye, except we didn't know when we would see him again, he put his hand against the window and so did Sofia and then Lorrie. Then the policeman came back in to take Eduardo out and Sofia and Lorrie left.

A few days later with Lesly, her new baby Luli, Lorrie and Sofia went back to the facility where they saw men in orange coveralls in chains being loaded into a coach bus. The lawyer had told lorrie that eduardo was going to be deported on this day and we might get a chance to see him. They looked and looked, they had to stay in their car from far away, they thought that maybe Eduardo was already on the bus or this was a different group of prisoners. They couldn't see into the bus because of the tint but they hoped the people inside could see out. The bus was loaded and they hadn't seen him, they decided to wave goodbye anyways, these men also had families, lives and deserved a goodbye. 2 months later when Lorrie, Sofia, Lesly her husband

and baby had driven to Mexico and were talking with eduardo face to face, they would find out he had been on that bus, he had been sitting when the other men on the bus started looking out the window to some people waving, Eduardo looked over and thought it might be us but we were too far away for him to know for certain, now he did. They smiled, cried and laughed about this, all the sacrifice has been worth it.

Knowing the risks of the desert, and of getting caught, Eduardo still crossed for a third time in 2010. He was deported 3 years later, put in jail and had to start all over again in Mexico. He had decided not to try and cross again right away, he thought maybe he would try again in a few years. He survived thanks to the help of others, the coyotes, the man he was left behind with and his family. He now lives in Mexico City in his childhood home with his mom and two of his sisters. He is an uber driver, and hopes to come to the US again. His daughter Sofia hopes to get him a green card when she is 21 and hopefully get him full citizenship.



Sofia's dad holding Luli.

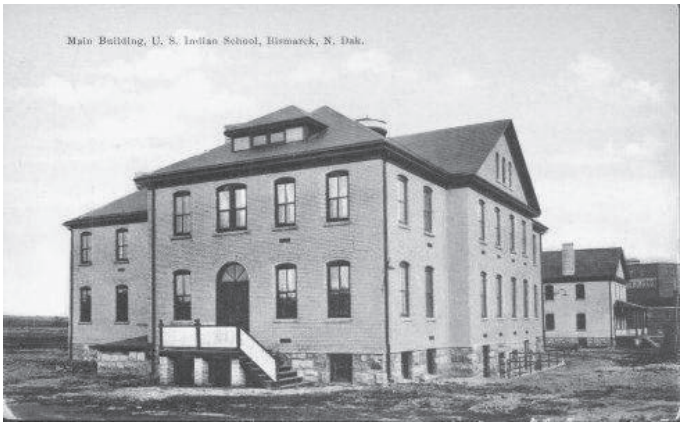
Flashpoints in History

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The Bismark Indian School

Lucy Annis-Bercier

The following includes the names of real people who attended the Bismarck Indian School. To write this story, I conducted research from information accumulated from archives found in the Bismarck Indian School. I also spoke to my mom who studied this subject in college for her thesis.



Most nights it was hard to fall asleep. The silence bell had already gone off for the night. Gladys, Alice, and I lay in our beds in the quiet darkness. I sat up and peered at the rows of beds in front of me, each occupied with a sleeping child. I turned to my friend Gladys. The crack of moonlight coming from the boarded window hit her back. I knew she was awake too. "Psst, Gladys. I know you're not asleep," I whispered. She looked up at me and smiled.

"I was just about to fall asleep. You woke me up!" We giggled at each other. I noticed Alice pulling the blanket down from over her face.

"Blanche, you guys have to stay quiet, the matron will hear you," Alice stated.

"I am not afraid of the matron. I saw her secretly picking her nose today!" I responded. We all started to laugh, even Alice. Soon enough, there was a forceful knock on the wall but it was too late, our laughter was unstoppable. Our jokes and voices grew louder until all of a sudden the matron entered our dormitory with a long piece of leather in hand.

"I knocked on the wall as a means of silencing, but it seems you girls don't like to follow orders." She announced as she walked up to Gladys and proceeded to strike her on her bottom with the leather strap. Gladys cried out. The matron then approached Alice who was hiding under her blanket. Alice apologized frantically until she was silenced by the strap. I couldn't stand to see my friends hurt like this. I couldn't stand to see anyone hurt like this. How can she abuse us with such ease, with no expression on her face? It filled my chest with fire. When the matron began to walk towards me, I pushed her away strong-willed. She did not like that in which I was punished with two beatings. "Perhaps that will teach you girls not to disrespect me". The matron walked out of the room with her head held high. Gladys and Alice had turned over in their beds, clutching their blankets. We needed to escape this place.

"The matron then approached Alice who was hiding under her blanket. Alice apologized frantically until she was silenced by the strap."

Blanche Young Bear, Gladys Bassett, and Alice Standish were young Native American girls from the Fort Berthold Reservation who attended The Bismarck Indian School which ran from 1916-1921. They were a part of the estimated 70,000 children to be taken from their homes and sent to a boarding school operated by the federal government and churches. These schools were created by American Military officer Richard Henry Pratt to assimilate Native American children into Euro-American culture. They were given Anglo-American names, forced to cut their long hair, and given military-style clothing. At least 6,000 children were killed and many deaths went unrecorded. A main cause of death were the diseases that spread through the schools, such as tuberculosis, influenza, and smallpox. Another major reasoning behind their creation was to attain land. The federal government believed if they could force Native people to leave their way of life, then they could dissolve their legal agreements with tribes and give them access to lands, resulting in no more treaty obligations.

The next morning, we were woken up at 5:00 am. All the other children quickly got up from their beds and began preparing for the day. Back home, there was never a schedule that children were forced to attend to, not like this anyway. I wasn't able to sleep much at all after last night. My eyelids started to feel droopy until, suddenly, I fell asleep. What felt like seconds after, Gladys and Alice were hovering over my bed, shaking me.

"Blanche! Wake up, we overslept!" I slowly opened my eyes and noticed we were the only ones in the room. The clock read 5:28 am, we were called for breakfast at 5:30 each morning.

"Olive Sherwood was late for dinner a few weeks ago, she was sent to bed with an empty stomach!" Alice exclaimed. We rushed to throw our dresses on and fled to the bathroom to brush our teeth and wash our hands. We approached the door to the dining hall to find the matron guarding it.

"Come with me girls." The three of us hesitantly followed her order. She took us down to the basement. She then gave us each a strapping. I was too tired to fight back. Then she pushed us into a small, dimly lit room. "Because of your disrespectful tardiness, you're going to spend the morning in the playroom." The matron told us as she locked the door from the outside and walked away. This didn't look like a "playroom" to me. I looked at Gladys and Alice, they had their heads tilted down.

"Hey, don't look so sad, we're getting out of here. I don't just mean this room, we're gonna escape this whole place. Tonight."

Gladys, Alice and I spent nearly the whole day isolated in the "playroom". We were starved, tired, and bored out of our minds. At around 7:00 pm, my ears perked up as I heard the sound of keys jangling outside the door until it opened. "You just missed supper time, now it's time to begin the evening activities." The matron told us.

"Oh please, we haven't eaten all day! Where's the goodness in your heart?" I pleaded.

"Perhaps you should have thought about that before disrespecting me. Now be silent and follow me to your needlework lesson."

The clock finally struck 9:00 pm and we were all sent to bed. I lay there as quietly as I could to not draw attention to myself. As I waited there, all I could think about was how excited I was to leave and see my family. I've written them letters but I'm positive they never get sent. We waited at least an hour and a half, making sure everyone was asleep. I climbed out of bed, which signaled Alice and Gladys to follow along. We layered our night gowns and dresses for warmth and tiptoed out of the dormitory. We dashed through the school until we reached the front door. I took a deep breath and tried to open the door, but it was locked. "The window! Over here!" Gladys whispered. She held onto the handle and pulled it up with great strength and, to our surprise, it opened. We gave Alice a boost, then Gladys, then me and within 15 seconds, we had escaped. I held onto Alice's hand and she held onto Gladys's hand. We started to run and didn't look back. I ran as fast and far as I could. My heart was beating fast. I prayed no one had caught us. The harsh January weather nipped at my face and hands. Despite all of this, I couldn't help but feel relieved inside and even if it was just for this moment, we were free.

Blanche, Alice and Gladys were on the run for four days until they were found by North Dakota residents, Mr. and Mrs. Schaffer. Unfortunately, within those days they suffered from extreme frostbite in their feet and hands. The girls told the Schaffer couple how they were treated at the school. When the Superintendent of the Bismarck Indian School came to retrieve the girls, the couple expressed their anger and concern about how the school was run. No changes were made after the incident and the three girls were sent back, with the exception of Gladys who was admitted to the hospital for her frostbite. When the girls returned, they made it clear they weren't going to stand for the beatings and punishments any longer. Their request was ignored, which caused Gladys to escape for a second time. On March 3, 1921, Blanche and Gladys were expelled from the school due to their violence against the employees. They were able to survive their time at the boarding school with the help of each other and their perseverance. This story shows the lengths children would go to get away from the treatment and environment they were brought into.

It wasn't until 1978 that the Indian Child Welfare Act was passed, which gave Native American parents the legal right to deny the placement of their children in off-reservation boarding schools. Many children who survived the boarding schools dealt with many issues their whole lives. The "Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy Act" was created in

2015 to investigate the "cultural genocide, assimilation practices, and human rights violations of Indian Boarding Schools in the United States." This is the first federal effort to give thousands of children the justice they deserve.

The Final Day in Pompeii

Asher Vieau

The following story is a fictional account of a person who survived the deadly eruption of Mount Vesuvius, which destroyed the city of Pompeii. In order to write this story I did internet research about Pompeii and the eruption.

Elias, after having bid goodbye to his family and pet for what would unknowingly be the very last time, had met up with some of his friends in the street, ball in hand. He had offered to spend a day playing a game of kickball in the street with his friends.

"Are we ready to sort ourselves into teams now?" He had questioned, cocking his neck to the side and putting a hand on his friend Atticus' shoulder, scaring him lightly. Atticus, in return, jerked Elias' hand off and jumped a little bit.

"What did I say about scaring me like that, Eli? Also, yes. We're ready." He nodded, and Elias laughed.

"Simply stop being a scaredy-cat! Now, for the teams. Me and Atticus will be on a team, and Gregory and Nicholas will be on the other team." With that, the four boys rounded themselves into teams, and Elias made a whistling sound. Dropping the kickball into the mid center and kicking it. There weren't really any rules. They just did this for fun.

At least, they were having fun. Getting knocked off of his feet by a loud rumble that shook the entirety of Pompeii, Elias skidded and landed on his elbow, scraping it a little bit. Pausing the game, Nicholas grabbed the kickball Elias brought over and Atticus helped him up.

"Are you alright, Eli?" He pulled him up, and cleaned some dirt off of Elias' clothes. Nodding a bit, Elias responded.

"I should be alright, just a little scraped up is all.. now what was that about?" He turned his head towards the direction of Mount Vesuvius, which was now spitting out a giant gas cloud of volcanic ash and pumice, threatening to spill down on Pompeii and all of its residents. Freezing for a second, he tugged on Atticus' shirt sleeve and declared. "We should run."

Mount Vesuvius, the infamous volcano that had been known for killing a fair amount of residents within Pompeii, did as much damage as it did to Pompeii and its sister cities, due to how close it was in proximity to Pompeii, Herculaneum, and the other cities. There were several warning signs before its actual eruption, however. After the various earthquakes that raged along Pompeii, Vesuvius had unleashed a roaring eruption that lasted for a whopping 18 hours, and buried its residents that didn't, or couldn't escape in time, in upwards of 14-17 layers of volcanic ash and pumice. Instead of killing the residents regularly and dousing the cities in ash, burying what they once were, the residents' bodies were encased in volcanic ash, preserving their final moments and expressions in what was essentially a gray plaster cast.

"After the various earthquakes that raged along Pompeii, Vesuvius had unleashed a roaring eruption that lasted for a whopping 18 hours, and buried its residents that didn't, or couldn't escape in time, in upwards of 14-17 layers of volcanic ash and pumice."

"Yeah, no kidding.. that doesn't look good.. at all." Atticus looked toward the same direction that Elias was looking towards. Nicholas and Gregory had already fled the scene, trying to make it home to their families so they could all leave together. Shoving the dirty kickball into his clothes without a second thought of the aftermath if he were to survive, he and Atticus immediately began running off to their families. Elias had run to his domu and shut the door quickly, bolting towards the main

room of the house, attempting to catch the attention of his family. Not even bothering to change from his dirty clothes.

"Elias! What did we tell you about showing in the street with dirty clothes? The other upperclassmen will think you're a peasant!" Elias' mother yelled, running over to the panting Elias and ripping the dirty kickball from his clothes, quickly going to wash it off. His father had joined in.
"I would punish you, but I demand an explanation, young man." He scolded, and Elias quickly caught his breath.

"I know, I know. I sincerely apologize, Mother and Father." He walked over to his father. "You can punish me all you wish later, if we survive." He mumbled that last bit to himself, and his mother came back in, placing down the shiny kickball.

"What was that, dear?" Elias repeated himself, but so his family could hear him.

"I said, if we survive." Catching his mother and father by surprise, his father responded.

"What are you on about, son?" He stood up.

"Look outside!" Elias yelled, sounding almost panicked. "That volcano erupted! And it looks like it's going to crash down on us! We have to leave!" His slight panicked tone turned to one of blatant fear, a trembling feeling creeping up his spine.

"Don't be so silly, boy! Your imagination is playing tricks on you!" His father shut him down almost immediately, standing up and shoving Elias out of the way lightly. Storming over to the window, he got a tight grip on the curtains, and snorted. "I guarantee you, if I open these curtains now, there will be NO big smoke cloud threatening to kill us all!" His tone changed from anger to that of a mocking one, his pitch changing to essentially mock Elias. He did exactly as he said. Ripping the curtains open, he paused, looking out at the large mushroom cloud that had been holding its form in the sky.

"Honey, what's wrong?" Elias' mom peered back over at her husband, walking over to the window, her gaze being caught up in the mushroom cloud, too. "Oh.. my.." She turned around, walking over to Elias and kneeling down to him. "Elias, honey, we should group up with the other upperclassmen. Are your friends alright?" Her tone had shifted to a softer one: one of concern.

Swallowing hard, she didn't know how this would turn out, but she didn't have high hopes in the slightest. There was a feel in her gaze, one that Elias had never seen or felt before, he was concerned. Swallowing hard, Elias began.

"Yeah, they all made it home to their families. Atticus, Nicholas, and Gregory all took off the moment we noticed something was off." He fiddled with his hands, picking at the sleeves on his dirty shirt. "Mama, I'm sorry for dirtying my clothes." He looked down, almost disgraced. He knew he would be in major trouble if they were to survive. He was ready to accept whatever possible punishment his mother was about to mutter.

"Do not fret about it for now, darling. All we should focus on is.. making it to see another day." She responded, picking up Elias as if he were a little toddler, learning how to walk. Worrying not about her clothes getting dirty as a result of Elias' clothes being dirty, she walked over to Elias' room, grabbing some more of his toys and things to keep him entertained on the way out. Making sure she had everything Elias would want and need, she walked back into the living room, looking over at her husband.

"We're all packed with everything we need!" Elias' father yelled with confidence. He didn't pack much, only the bare essentials, like food and drinks. Once they were all prepared, Elias tugged at his mother's shirt, his mother giving him his kickball. Holding tightly onto the kickball, Elias buried his head into it, shooting one last glance back at his home. The three then closed the door to the domu for the last time, running into the street and going towards the nearest escape route.

"ELI! HEY, ELI! WE'RE OVER HERE!" A familiar voice boomed out to Elias, echoing through the temporarily empty streets and roads. Looking upward from the kickball, Elias noticed Atticus, Nicholas, and Gregory all prepared with their families. Elias had waved back, and the four families had met up, wincing as another loud boom had shot from the volcano, roaring throughout the city. This time, the upper cone of the volcano was blown off, and the mushroom cloud started to fall. With this as a result, the streets of Pompeii were now chaotic. People running everywhere, screaming and cries of families and friends trying to meet up with each other. It was like in the blink of an eye, everything changed.

Without another word, Elias, Atticus, Gregory, and Nicholas all had made a beeline for the escape boats.

Going as fast as they could carry themselves. Nobody had another word to even think of, other than.. survive. That's all the four families were hoping for: survival. Running through and shoving past people that were making a mess in the streets, Elias had pointed toward a large boat he had seen out of the corner of his eye the moment they escaped the town. Elias' family skidded it to a halt after reaching the boat.

"Children first! Children first!" Elias' mother yelled in a panic, noticing other families had been able to make it to the boats with them. Setting Elias down in the boat, she helped Nicholas, Gregory, and Atticus' mothers get the three children on the boat. Atticus had moved to sit next to Elias once he was on the boat, Gregory and Nicholas finding room next to the two. The parents of the four children had moved the luggage they had brought with onto the boat, finally helping each other in once everything, and everyone else was on the boat.



The Bombing of Tokyo

Ryuki Walker

The following story is told through the eyes of my great grandmother, who endured bombing raids in her hometown during World War Two in Japan. In order to write this story, I talked to my great grandmother about her experience, and also did background research on the war.

Tokyo, Japan 1945 May 9, I lived in the city of Yokohama with my little sister, mother, and father. I was 15 years old at the time and did most of the chores around the house because my parents were too busy to do them. I went to sleep early that night because I had a long tiring day. I kissed my parents goodnight and went onto my futon. It was a fairly quiet night today. The cicadas weren't buzzing, the crickets weren't chirping, and not a single gust of wind was blowing. It was almost too quiet. A few hours into my sleep the warning sirens went off. I was startled from the noise but I was still half asleep to fully comprehend what was happening. I stumbled my way out of my room to find my parents and they were packing stuff into bags as if they were going out for vacation.

"Where are you headed?" I asked quietly.

"We have to leave as soon as possible" my mother said panicky. I was confused about what was happening, mixed in with the siren I heard a scream in the distance. I look in the direction of where it came from and I see big smoke clouds and a bright red light that looks like a sunset. It was my town burning down into a big flame.

"It was my town burning down into a big flame."

The Air raids in Japan during WW2 were very brutal and sinister. Although this event was not as significant as the Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the air raids have had a tromendous impact in destroying and killing many Japanese people. The B-29 SuperFortress U.S. Aircrafts carried hundreds of Incendiary bombs (made from napalm, thermite, magnesium powder, chlorine trifluoride, or white phosphorus) that was made to ignite the buildings that were all made out of wood. In the span of a year the

B-29s dropped over 1000 tons of incendiary bombs killing between 200,000 and 900,000 people, injured 300,000-1,300,000 people, and rendered over 8,000,000 people homeless.



As time went by the flames gradually got closer and other parts of the town started to turn into ashes. I felt the ground rumble as people tried to run away from the never ending fire. My mother and Father were packed and were holding my little sister's hand. "We need to leave now." Said my mother in a serious tone. My mind was flustered from all the commotion and my legs started to shake. I knew I needed to leave as soon as possible or else I'd end up feeding the flame myself.

We started running towards the evacuation area where everyone else was headed. The siren's noises grew louder in my head and I felt my sanity wash away as I mindlessly ran with the crowd of people in fear. As we approached our destination I felt crunch's from time to time where I stepped. When I looked down I felt sick to my stomach. I saw lifeless bodies charred to the bone with faces that couldn't be recognized anymore. As I looked around I saw at least a dozen corpses but I couldn't bear to look any longer so I kept my eyes tunnel visioned to where we were headed.

The place they were headed was one of the underground facilities that were made for the evacuation of the civilians. It was 20ft under a middle school that the community helped to dig out. The hole was around the size of a school gymnasium and had enough room to fit 700 people. The room was very hot and claustrophobic when full and a few ended up dying in there from heat exhaustion as well.

When 12 hours passed we climbed out of the hole and were greeted with my town almost completely erased by the attack. We hurried back to where our house should've been to salvage anything that ended up surviving the fire. We traveled up north, taking us 4 days to get to Fukushima. We hitchhiked and gave out the little money we had and walked the rest to where my mothers sister was living so that my family could live with them until we found a new place to live. If we didn't have an afterplan for such a disaster to happen, my family and I wouldn't have survived.

The Great Fire of London

Orathai Hang

The following is a fictional story of a family that escaped a great fire, from a real historical event: The Great Fire of London 1666. To write this story, I researched life in 17th century London. Along with research on The Great Fire of London 1666 from sources such as BBC, London-Fire.Gov, and the Museum Of London.

"Bartholomew! Wake up, we ain't got time!" The voice of my mum pierces through the thin wretched walls of my room, and into my eardrums. No, this isn't a call to wake me up; my mum sounds panicked, and her voice is hoarse. I hear the sound of my parents hurriedly stuffing things into bags. I know something isn't right, this sick feeling in my guts quickly met reality. Outside the window, pitch black, the only light that radiates is not the kind of light anyone would want. A giant blaze of fire teases its way down the city, swallowing any house that stands in its way. The smell of the thick gray smoke burns into my nose. My stomach drops and beads of sweat drip down my forehead. I swallow, but my mouth is dry, incapable of answering my mum. I look outside again, my focus now is on the brave citizens; they are brave enough to bring their small leather buckets and desperately splash their valuable water into the engulfing blaze. The effort is nothing but a mere teaspoon of water in the ocean of fire.

I hear three gentle knocks on my polished bulky door; just loud enough to stir me awake.

"Sir Pepys! I'd seen a fire in the city. A great fire." my maid, Jane, says in alertness. I take my time to open my eyes, making sure to savor the air as I inhale. Drowsily I get out of bed, with a slow yawn I slip on my nightgown. I put my hands against my smooth door and push it out gently. The door smoothly sways and catches the momentum of the air, it sways open.

"Where?" My voice croaks and my eyes are still practically half-close. I follow Jane as she makes her way to her window.

"Right over there sir," Jane points outside. I look out the window as I rub my eyes, and I take my time to adjust to the darkness outside. I did indeed see a fire, so I take mental note of the fire.

"Jane, it's dry and hot this time around, a fire isn't anything too uncommon," I remark.

"But sir, it's…" Jane's concern trails off as I walk away. I shoo Jane away with my hand.

"Jane, the fire is far off, we needn't worry." I yawn as I make my way into my bedroom. With that being said, I went right back to sleep.

"Outside the window, pitch black, the only light that radiates is not the kind of light anyone would want. A giant blaze of fire teases its way down the city, swallowing any house that stands in its way. The smell of the thick gray smoke burns into my nose."

The Great Fire of London started small and could've been easily prevented, but eventually became out of hand. London was very dry at the time experiencing many droughts, and because of this fires were very common. Though the dryness wasn't the cause of the fire, but rather the cause of the rapid spread. The fire was believed to have started in a bakery belonging to Thomas Farriner. It is speculated that he failed to fully put out his oven before heading to bed; where a spark fell into the wood. The fire was just about starting at this point and could've been put out with no sweat before it became The Great Fire. At this time, Samuel Pepys the 17th-century diarist wrote, "… Jane called us up about three in the morning, to tell us of a great fire they saw in the City. So I rose and slipped on my nightgowne, and went to her window, and thought it to be on the backside of Marke-lane at the farthest; but, being unused to such fires as followed, I thought it far enough off; and so went to bed again and to sleep."

Most information known about 17th century London came from Samuel Pepys—Pepys was a wealthy naval administrator in London. He took a leadership role in taking out the fire when the fire eventually became The Great Fire. Additionally, at the time London became very populated as new job opportunities were available—this meant overcrowding. Houses aligned next to one another, unfortunately, made of only wood and straws, which fire can easily burn through. However, the material of the house didn't matter, because the blaze burned at a whopping temperature of 1,700 degrees Celsius(3,092 degrees Fahrenheit) hot enough to melt stone. Because Farriner didn't extinguish his oven properly, Pepys ignored the fire, and houses were unreasonably too close to one another, the fire spread easily and became an issue out of anyone's control.

The ragged blanket falls off of me as I get out of my bed. I need to be quick, no time to waste, and no time to change, it has to be now. I reach the entrance, and just as I heard before, my parents are rapidly putting their valuables into their bags. My dad is mostly packing his hard work of shoes into his bag; the shoes he packs are each carefully crafted by his own hands. My mum looks at me, she comes closer, and her hands are on my cheeks. Her face softens and she's on the verge of tears; the littlest of light hits her eyes and you can see it glisten in the darkroom. The sudden fear rushes in, and it hits me as I tear up; I know for sure we are both sharing the same fear.

"Come now, we've got to go." My dad gently says. My mum grips my hand, it's firm but gentle.

On the way out thousands of citizens rush down the direction of the Thames River. The blaze continues to play with our anxiety as it looks down at us from behind, towering higher than King himself. There are many bodies pressing against one another—at this point, I realized that maintaining the firm grip my mum has on my hand is no longer possible. Bodies pulling and pushing against one another does my fragile arm more harm than good, so I let go of my mum's hand. Now I have my arms cross in front of me, and the inner side

of my shoulder blades push out as my shoulders push inward towards the front. I try my best to eliminate taking up more space than I need to. Though sharing no space with strangers is not just the only problem. The summer mocks heat the heat of the raging fire, and the dry blowing air chokes me. I gasp for air, but feel the rush of the color red across my face; my throat is sharp. A hole rips through my sleeves as we squeeze and fight our way out; a fresh tender rash results along my arms.

"Excuse me, good sir!" I felt a firm grip on my shoulders. I turn around to face the notable gentlemen with my eyebrows pinch in and upwards.

"Yes?" I answer. "I am Samuel Pepys. We are asking for brave souls to help with the putting out of the fire. Please?" I stare at Bartholomew and my wife; I am reluctant, but Sir Pepys' request is absolutely valid. My eyes are softened as I think about my family and the situation.

"If I must, I will." I reply, Sir Pepys lips' purse proudly, and his chin slightly raises, then he pats me on the back.

"Go on without me Anne, and take care of my shoes, Bart." I toss my bag at Bartholomew. Anne grips on Bartholomew's hands now firmer, as if reassuring him, "it's okay Bart, dad will make it back." Anne and Bartholomew continue on without me, I can see that their energy now is significantly lower. "I'll meet you down at Southwark when I'm done!" I yell into the cupped hands around my mouth, hoping to reassure the two off in the distance.

Our goal is to cross the London bridge down to Southwark. "THE BRIDGE IS ON FIRE!!" I jerk my eyes up. The bridge burns bright as the blazing fire inhales it like it's nothing. The black color of charcoal dances across the stone bridge. I become nervous once more, my limbs shake in fear, and my lips tremble.

"Mum, how do we make it to Southwark now?" I ask.

"I don't know Bart, I don't know." My mum says hopelessly. We don't have a boat, we don't have a boat, we don't have a boat; I grind my lips with my teeth as my thoughts echo in my head. My thoughts come to a stop when from the corner of my eyes, I see a raft rushing down the river. A choice that is now or never; in an instant I drop my dad's shoe bag and myself onto the crusty dirt. Desperate and quick as I do my best to extend my arms out to the raft, I can tell that it has been in the water for some time when moist chipping comes off onto my hands as I grab it. I look up at my mum, my face kind of bright.

"Mum, I know. I know it's silly but we don't really have a choice." I say hoping that my words reach her. After a quick sigh, we both find ourselves on the raft; even without paddles, we can ride the current of the river. During the ride I realize that being on the raft is quite nerve-wracking; whenever the slightest ripple hits the raft will jerk back and forth. Soon I learn that those are just warnings, for when a big ripple strikes the side of the raft, it tips and sends my mum down the cold water. In a panic, I lay flat on my front so I could reach further on her side. I maintain my sight on her as she waves her arms around frantically. I grab hold of her sleeves, trying my best to drag her out of the water, but my strength betrays me. In a panic, I constantly look back at my mum while looking out for help. My prayers are answered when I see the figure of a fisherman on the other side of Southwark. "HELP!" I yell out to him,

"HELP PLEASE!" He looks up at me.

A cold force surrounds me and I can feel that it wants to push me away from Bart. I try my best to look up to see if I can pick myself up onto the raft again. However, I can only make out the blurry figure of Bart above me. Seeing that he is reaching out to me, I try my best to cooperate, flailing my arms around, hoping he will reach me. This cold force will not overcome me. I realize that is not a task for me as my vision soon becomes blurry and black speckles replace and fill the blurry figure of my son.

The fisherman quickly made his way over to the raft. He comes right next to the spot my mum fell in, and with both of our strengths, we grab her up. He offers to bring me and my mum to Southwark. I stare at my mum, intensely worrying that she did not make it, but instantly feel relief when I see her chest move up and down. After some time, she finally opens her eyes—she looks confused as I try to explain to her what had happened, but I couldn't help but hug her. Soon, we arrive in Southwark, feeling good about our escape. I look back into the city and hope for my dad's safe return.

Sir Pepys orders the soldiers to guide the many citizens to a safe area. The citizens' most crucial evacuation, when it comes to extinguishing the blaze, are the ones housed in the fire's path. Many men, including I, receive the task of transferring barrels full of gunpowder down the wall; so it will not blow up the

wall when the blaze sabotages it. After transferring the barrels down the wall, we then are to set up gunpowder in the following houses. Our hairs are drenched in sweat, when our walking starts to slow and we limp—I can tell our feet are all cramped up. My heartbeat increases and I can feel my chest move up and down rapidly; I gasp it feels as if a hole is burned into it.

"The fire is approaching rapidly and we must hurry up the process!" Sir Pepys warns. During the ordeal, I will continuously look into the distance, hoping my wife and son have made it out of London safe and sound. But all I can see is the deep orange blaze mocking my hopefulness. I wipe my forehead, soaking my sleeves during the process, and prepare myself for Sir Pepys the last set of instructions.

"We must explode the houses following the path of the fire, so it can spread no more!" I stand a suitable distance away from the following houses that are due to explode. I use my pinky fingers and insert them deep into my ears, though I can still hear the sharp explosion of the gunpowder pinging in my ears. I close my eyes, making sure to pinch them close tightly, and I feel my face scrunch up as dirt debris flies at my face; small pieces of wood debris find their way into my loose shirt. The houses collapse as the explosion tests their structure. After the long effort, the blowing wind loses its momentum and the fire no longer has its fuel to eat. The blaze slowly but surely dies out and breathes its last puff of air. It left a thick gray smoke on its final fuel.

Although the fire was eventually successfully put out it was too late. The damage done was devastating. The Great Fire started on September 2nd, 1666, and it lasted until September 6th, 1666—the fire had a time span of 4 days burning the city. As a result, 436 acres(approximately one-third) of London at the time were damaged. Within that one-third of London, about 13,200 houses and 87 out of the 109 churches were burned down. And out of the burned churches, 51 churches were rebuilt, and only about 9000 houses were rebuilt—the fire left about 100,000 citizens homeless. Unfortunately, lower and middle-class deaths weren't considered significant enough to document, so there were only 6 recorded deaths. It took almost 50 years for London to rebuild the burned area, even till today you can still kind of see the site of The Great Fire. Not only that but rebuilding the burned down part of the city was very expensive; the cost of the damage was approximately 10 million pounds(13,400,000 USD). To put this into perspective, the annual income of London at the time was only 12,000 pounds(16,000 USD).



Though extinguishing the fire was a tad bit too late (they didn't act on it until the 4th of September), the reason the fire was put out successfully was because of the strategy they had and the environment. We know London had experienced many droughts during the summer of 1666, however, the fire also had the advantage of the wind picking it up. Organizing a plan to blow up the houses following the path of the fire would ensure that the fire could no longer have fuel to continue burning. Although the fire really died out because the wind level had also dropped. Lastly, the many citizens running away also had a grand plan on impulse—they went down the Thames River. Because the fire had also reached the London bridge, causing it to also be burned during the ordeal. Riding boats down south of the Thames River was a clever idea and was one of the primary factors to survival.

The Gulf War

Hayden Erickson

This story is about my dad, who was a soldier in the Gulf War. In order to write this story, I weaved together the stories of my dad's actual experience, and also did some internet research on the war for background information.

During their drive north the battalion ran into some resistance from stubborn Iraqi soldiers, the battalion unloaded from their vehicles and started to engage the Iraq forces, my father and 2 other soldiers moved to a farmhouse to clear it of hostels covered by 50 caliber machine guns from their humvees they breached the door my father was point man (the first person to enter the building) he was met by an Iraqi soldier with his ak47 pointed at the floor, instantly my father fired at the enemy striking him multiple times killing him, a 2nd Iraqi soldier peered around the corner firing a hail of bullets 7 of which struck my father, he was quickly dealt with when the 2 other American soldiers unloaded their mags into him turns him into a bloody pile of flesh "when they finished firing you couldn't even recognize if it was a man or not" - My father's Friend.

"When they finished firing, you couldn't even recognize if it was a man or not"

In August 1990, my father just got off the plane in Saudi Arabia, lining up on the Iraq/Kuwait border, he loaded up into his truck with his unit and headed to their staging area. Hostilities have not yet been declared but there was a feeling in the air that war would break out with Iraq. "we weren't in war yet be we all knew we would be in a war soon and this made us very excited knowing we were gonna do what we were trained to do this is what we are meant to do we were all very excited and nervous we were an all a mix of complex emotions" - my father

On February 24th United states ground forces rolled into occupied Kuwait, this was the 2nd phase of the liberation of Kuwait and the eventual invasion of Iraq. At around 4 in the morning, my father received orders to move north into occupied Kuwait with his unit of the 2nd Marine recon battalion.

Joining the Marines in 1986 he would end up going into the 2nd Marine recon battalion, stationed at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina he was stationed here for 4 years until he was deployed to Saudi Arabia as a deterrent to the Iraq army that recently invaded Kuwait a rich oil nation to the southeast of Iraq.

The invasion of Kuwait was launched on August 2nd by the much larger army, quickly the Iraq army overwhelmed the small defense force of Kuwait leading to a total occupation and annexation, this action was immediately met with international condemnation of Iraq's action, backed by the United States a coalition formed of 35 nations that eventually started to deploy forces in neighboring Saudi Arabia (mostly lead by American forces) a preemptive air war was launched by coalition forces ultimately destroying Iraq's air forces and severely damaging Iraq's tank army and their logistics.

Following his orders, my father loaded into his humvee and headed to the rally point in occupied Kuwait, along the way they needed to worry about massive minefields laid by the Iraq army before the invasion, mine-clearing vehicles and personnel were brought forward to clear a path and mark it so the rest of the battalion could move forward towards the objective,

Many minefields were deployed by the Iraq army some spanning many miles, among these minefields were conventional anti-vehicle and anti-personnel mines but there was also a threat of chemical mines including sarin and mustard gas, which was common during the invasion. The Marines were intensely trained in case of gas attacks and would always carry NBC suits to protect them from the harmful gasses. Although at the end of the war not one chemical mine was found deployed on the field, it was still a threat because, during the Iraq war against Saudi Arabia, Iraq frequently used chemical weapons against the Saudi army.

After the mine clearing operation was finished which would usually take many hours they could move towards their objective, their objective was to move ahead of the main forces to provide recon on the enemy position, they moved from the south of Kuwait along one of the major highways, shooting north they

observed multiple Iraq armor battalions that were lead by Saddam's elite republican guard, they relayed this information back to the armor division moving north allowing them to divert to engage the enemy armor.

After only 100 hours the Coalition forces drove the Iraqi army out of occupied Kuwait liberating it, this would lead to the second half of the operation desert storm the invasion of Iraq.

Once realizing his wounds my father collapsed to the ground in pain, he was immediately patched up by the squad medic stabilized him while and they called for immediate helicopter medevac, in 5 minutes a medevac chopper was there, they loaded him into it and flew him to a medical ship 20 miles offshore.

He later woke up around 3 days after the incident, he has been shot 7 times, luckily he was a very lucky man and none of the rounds hit anything important he was hit 2 times in his left leg and 4 times in the chest and once in his left shoulder, 1 of the rounds that hit his leg hit in the lower thigh and the 2nd round his upper thigh around his hips, the 4 rounds that hit his chest only 1 didn't hit his Kevlar vest, the one round that didn't hit his vest grazed the side of his torso leaving only a big scratch, the one round that hit his shoulder went in and out, luckily the round did not spiral in his upper chest.

After a few months of recovery, he was awarded the purple heart and the bronze star for the incident, he would finish out his military service as an MP at camp Pendleton in California.

He doesn't talk much about the war and this is the 2nd time he has told me this story to this day. When I see him I can still see the scars of the war physically and mentally. PTSD is a common disorder that affects veterans that are involved in the war, he was a victim of this and still is, this has driven me away from my father in recent years, but understandably the things he saw would cause anyone to suffer from something.

Long drives in the desert would lead to finding enemy positions where dead Iraqi were laying in the dirt or their tanks half burnt or civilians scattered along the roads slaughtered by death squads reterting with the main Iraqi army. These were common sights on the battlefields, burning oil wells that were ordered destroyed as Iraq's scorched earth policy, this would lead to memorable sights of smoke spilling into the air miles high and as far as you could see, burnt out enemy vehicles or fortified positions.

Some of his other friends that served with him could tell similar experiences and sights, my great grandfather who is passed now would tell us the stories of his time serving in world war 2 and my other great grandfather who served in Korea would tell us some of the experiences that would be similar to the ones my father has and even my grandfather who served in Vietnam.

About 12% of veterans that served in the Gulf War suffer from PTSD (12 in 100). My grandfather and his father also suffered from PTSD from his time fighting in the jungles of Vietnam and the hedgerows of Normandy.

This is my father's survival story. He survived going to war against Saddam's Iraqi army, he survived being shot and he still survives his mental wounds to this day saying that his survival story is still ongoing.

Interview with Granny

Olivia Bilek

This story is about my great grandma's experiences during World War II. I talked to her about what she remembers from the war and what it was like on the farm during the war.

This story is about my great grandma's experiences during World War II. I talked to her about what she remembers from the war and what it was like on the farm during the war.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, my Granny's brother Delbert (my great-great uncle) went into the service, spending time in Germany and England. My Granny remembers him packing up papers before he left. She said,

"That's when we heard Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and I can still see him standing by the dining room table." When the soldiers drafted them for the war, they avoided drafting fathers as much as possible. The military desired 18-year-olds, but the public was not in favor.

"During the duration of WW2, most of the soldiers were not allowed to come home. The US Navy and Army had different policies on taking leave during the time of war. If the soldiers in the war wanted to leave, the Army generally said no."

While soldiers stationed in Europe, they were not allowed to come home for any reason. Granny said,

"I was like eleven [when the US entered the war] and my brother [Kenneth] died when I was twelve [at the age of 24 in 1943]. Like I said, Delbert couldn't come home. He was either in England or Germany, but I don't know which. Now you would come home, but not back then they didn't. Now, if there's a death in the family, they get to come home. However, during the war, they didn't, so Delbert didn't get to come home to his brother's funeral. During Christmas [Delbert] was in Germany and at that time they had Christmas Eve service in a barn and he said that was the closest to Christmas he ever was [during the war]." So even though the soldiers could not come home for the holidays, they still tried to make the holidays festive for them to bring up their spirits.

A large number of men were sent off to war. During the duration of WW2, most of the soldiers were not allowed to come home. The US Navy and Army had different policies on taking leave during the time of war. If the soldiers in the war wanted to leave, the Army generally said no. However, the Navy often allowed leave if their ship was in a US port and it was going to be docked there for a while. Even if they were allowed leave, there were very strict restrictions.

As the war was raging on, things were also changing stateside. Rationing became a way to spread out limited resources across larger groups of people.

"Things were rationed so on the farm where we raised bushels and bushels like 40 bushels or better of potatoes. But we ran out of potatoes because we usually ate them twice a day. You couldn't buy potatoes, they all went to the Army, the Navy, the servicemen. So we learned to eat rice with gravy on it, rice was our potatoes."

Starting in January 1942, the US government issued points to families for each person, including infants, that lived in a household. The points that they were given would be turned into stores to purchase sugar, eggs, butter, coffee, meats, cheese, etc. This was the beginning of rationing. Gasoline, tires, fuel oil, firewood, shoes, etc. were also rationed. After the war ended, in 1945 the only thing still being rationed was sugar. Rationing finally ended in 1947.

"We didn't have electricity [during the war], we had lamps you lit with [kerosene] and a match. We had a radio, but it was hooked up to a car battery and we were not allowed to listen to it, it was just for stuff my



dad wanted to listen to. He'd wanna know what the price of pigs were in South St Paul, the price of hay and stuff like that, so we weren't allowed to listen to that radio," Granny said.

"I don't know, we got electricity back in 1948, I think. Otherwise we took a lantern to the barn to milk and took a lantern to our bedroom at night when we went to bed. Us girls had one bedroom and the boys had the other and then in the morning you got up and lit the lantern - it was dark when you got up in the morning - got dressed, and hung two lanterns in the barn to see to milk the cows."

During the time of war, there were labor shortages, and this was particularly felt in agriculture. Most of the farmers during this time were given an exemption and not drafted because they needed to grow food for people. As more people moved to the city or volunteered for jobs elsewhere, the demand for agricultural products was in high demand not only for the civilians, but for the military. While production was encouraged, the prices and the markets were under control by the federal government.

"During the time of the war, it appeared like things were really not that much harder than it was before the war. But I would say maybe you know you couldn't get everything you wanted, you know, like groceries and some - like I said we ran out of potatoes we had to eat rice so I would say, probably. There's certain things like butter and cheese or whatever, we got coupons in the mail and then if you wanted to go in and buy meat or something in the store, you had to use that coupon the government sent you. That's how you got your food from the grocery store cause like I said, most of the stuff went to the government for the soldiers, the sailors, the Marines, and the Air Force. So if you didn't have an extensive garden, it was kind of hard because if you had to buy stuff in the store, they ran out. And it seemed to me as if the gas for the automobiles was rationed, too. Then, you had a certain little card to get gas for your car, too. I don't know if clothes were rationed or not, that I don't remember."

"Of course, with no electricity, we didn't have no way of saving our milk and our butter. So my mother had a pail, and she put a jar of milk and butter in that pail. Then, she had a string on it and put it down the well in the well water because that was the coldest thing we had. And in the winter time when we butchered - we butchered a steer and a pig or maybe two pigs, I really can't remember, we made sausage and cut up all this meat but we had no way of keeping it but we would bury it in a snowbank so it stayed cold. Then later my dad bought an icebox at the auctions. So you would go to the lake and see a chunk of ice this big. We had ice in a little shed that was built - dug into a dirt bank and then it got covered with lots of sawdust so way until July we would have blocks of ice in this little place. My dad would cover it with sawdust and that would keep it from melting too fast. One thing that we did on 4th of July was we would make. homemade ice cream. That's about the only time we had ice cream was 4th of July and we'd have homemade ice cream."

Soldiers could write home during WW2. They were sent via airmail and delivered by the postal carrier. They would write home about their experiences, let them know what they were doing, things that they miss at home, etc. They could often write back and forth if they were stationed in an area where an address could be provided. This helped to keep a strong connection between the soldier and home.

My Granny remembers writing to uncle Delbert.

"You got a letter in the mail and your letters are this big or better (size of paper towel). In fact, in the house some place there's gotta be one. When Delbert would send home a letter to us - this letter would have been maybe this big (size of paper towel). But the government took it and shrunk it down to about this size (she folded a paper towel 3 times). Now, I don't know why they did that, maybe because of bulk… too much bulky mail. It would be kind of like on cardboard and it would be about this size (she held up the folded paper towel)."

"We ate a lot of wild game, squirrels, wild duck, pheasants, and rabbits. Anyway, my dad and my mom went out in the pasture of the woods hunting, so I wrote back to my brother. Then he sent back a picture of my mother and my dad coming into the woods or into the pasture that he drew and then it said, 'look out! mom Busse with the gun' or something. This other piece showed pictures of rabbits and squirrels and the deer all running out of the woods. My ma was on this side of my dad and she had a gun like they were going hunting."

When the war was over, my granny was maybe 13 or 14 years old. She couldn't remember. "I don't remember if I was out of school. I was 13 in the 8th grade and that's as far as we went to school was 8th grade. I don't know if we heard it on the radio in school when the war ended and across the street - well of course I don't know if you kids were with me that day and I showed you this little place across the street that was silver and they had a telephone over there. I went over there and called my mom and said, 'The war is over! Delbert's gonna come home!'"

Mental Health

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"The night before the funeral I cried so much I threw up. It was hard for me to get to sleep and then stay asleep."

Reaching out

Audrey Cannon

The following is an account of my personal experience during the pandemic and how isolation affected my life. In order to write this story, I thought carefully back over my time during the isolation and also did some research on how the pandemic affected people's mental health.

I was laying in my bed in the corner of my bedroom. Lights are off, blinds are halfway shut with only a small amount of sunlight poking through. It's 7am and I'm still awake from the previous night. I walk downstairs to the living room and see my mom sitting on the couch. I can tell she's confused why I am up so early. I would be thinking the same thing if it wasn't for the fact I haven't yet slept. I haven't left the house in over a month, not even stepping outside. My life has become the same thing everyday: sleep, sit on my phone, eat a bagel, sleep, repeat. This way of life isn't sustainable for anyone but I didn't know what else to do.

While COVID-19 was and still is a very serious disease that killed millions. Months of isolation also caused many problems. 4/10 adults reported anxiety symptoms during the pandemic. And 11% of adults reported feeling suicidal. Waking up on my friend's couch, her mom runs down the stairs to tell us that school has been canceled for 2 weeks.

"OMG" I said. I was so excited. Two weeks of no school! This was incredible news for me, I was already struggling with my grades so this was a huge relief. Most schools throughout the country were already shut down in March of 2020 so I knew that this was coming. I would have never expected how long this would last. About a month in, my opinion on being in quarantine started to shift. I no longer enjoyed being inside all day. Is it better than school? Of course, but I just wanted to see my friends.

School was something that felt optional, I ended up sleeping through all my Google Meets and couldn't sit down to do more than maybe 5 minutes of work. My mom would always try to get me out of bed and make me do my work but I refused. I skipped 2-3 meals a day because I just didn't have the energy to get up. Every once in a while I would join one of the google meets but I would have my camera and mic off. It wasn't awkward or anything because no one else had there's on either. I ended up getting P's for all my classes since I barely completed any assignments.

Summer had come around. No more school, out of my job, there was nothing. I felt as if I was going insane. Everyday was the exact same but somehow I felt more and more miserable each morning.

My mental health has always been a struggle for me. I was never super open about my struggles and never reached out for help. The isolation during quarantine worsened my depression. I have always relied on social interaction to distract myself from depression. Another problem I was facing during quarantine was my eating disorder. I have been struggling with bulimia since I was in 4th grade. With nothing but time I would lay down in my bed and scroll through social media. Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter etc. While they were all different every app had a common theme, a standard of what we should look and act like. I saw all these people with "perfect bodies" while scrolling through the internet. I needed to be like them. I sat and stared at myself in the mirror thinking of all the different changes I wanted done. My arms needed to be thinner, my eyebrows needed to be thicker, I felt as if nothing about me was good enough physically. Spending every minute on social media in my room for months made my body image and self image overall horrible. I tried all these new workout routines, I went on eating disorder accounts to find people I could relate to. My mental health and eating disorder was at an all time worse.

> "The isolation during quarantine worsened my depression."

I was admitted into an inpatient program for a week then transferred to a 6 month long eating disorder recovery program. This program is what saved my life, it was easy to work on myself when the whole world was on lockdown. I felt safe since nobody even noticed I was gone. I had the luxury of being able to leave my house everyday 9-4 to this treatment program which on its own, getting out of my room helped tremendously. School was starting up but instead of working on my junior year my focus shifted onto my mental health. I knew I wouldn't be able to succeed in school if I didn't work on myself. The next few months were extremely difficult for me, I have spent my life distracting myself

from my problems just to now face it. I developed a strong community of supporters who helped me continue to reach my goals. Having this support system really helped me stay motivated to recover. After lots of hard work I got myself in a better place and was able to step down and go back to school. I have recovered from an eating disorder, gained confidence about myself and helped others with the things I learned. The pandemic impacted my life a lot but despite all the struggles I faced, I survived.

Why am I here?

Natasha Klemmensen

This is an account of a period in my life when I had some struggles with mental health. In order to write this story, I thought back over my own experience and did some internet research on the topic.

I've been sitting in a room for an hour waiting for the hospital staff to speak to me. I don't remember if they were nurses or psychiatrists, but I didn't care. I was tired, I already sat through the urgent care waiting room. They ask "why?" Why am I there, why did it happen. After another hour or two I was moved into a room and changed into scrubs. This is where I spent the next 3 nights alone and isolated in a hospital bed. With a tiny television in the wall with plastic bolted over it, slanted door handles, and thin, rough blankets. I was tired of being alive, so I was brought to the hospital.

"I was tired of being alive, so I was brought to the hospital."

Mental illness affects a person's feeling, thinking, mood, and often impairs how they function, especially in settings like at home or in school. 1 in 5 youth have emotional, behavioral, or mental disorders. 80% of kids aged 6-17 don't receive the mental health care they need. Nationally, 40% of youth with mental illnesses graduate. While the national average is 76%.

I was rolled in a wheelchair through the doors to the inpatient unit. There was a schedule, with group time, "lessons", circle check in, free time, yoga, and of course breakfast, lunch and dinner. I wasn't sad when I was there, because it was like an escape from reality. My problems were outside the hospital. Maybe like a vacation. I was away from my problems. I still had nightmares every night though. I was there for a week. The day I got picked up we went to get Dairy Queen, but as soon as I got home I hid under my bed and cried. All of my emotions and thoughts came flooding back. It was just like before I was admitted. Nothing changed.

Being in the hospital was only a break. Within many months I got a lot better. I dealt with what was causing intense stress and emotions, and started doing group therapy twice a week. But getting better isn't a straight line. Episodes come in waves, sometimes triggered by intense situations or no reason at all. It has been almost one year, and I've been a lot better compared to then. Most of it was due to time and resolving the conflict that was causing intense emotions that brought me there.

Hotline resources: 1-800-273-8255 Text MN to 741741

It's okay to cry

Dani Butler

The following story is a true story of getting over the death of a loved one. I interviewed family and did some research on grief.

I had just finished a volleyball game and was walking out to my car with some teammates to drop them off at home. It was around 8:30 after the varsity game and we were always the last out of the locker room. In the car we sang along to Doja Cat and talked about the game. When I got home I walked in and looked around for

dinner. My mom came into the kitchen in a panic to tell me that Linda and Richard were sick so we couldn't see them that weekend. They're very close family friends that we saw at least once a week. They both have been mentoring me and my younger brother for a long time. Richard is like a second dad to us and he would always make the best food with a side of advice we didn't even know we needed. I asked how they were doing because Richard had just got a new kidney not even a month before. My mom said they were doing well and asked me how the game was.

Just a couple days later I got home from volleyball practice around 5:30. When I walked in and saw dinner half prepared on the table, we were having pasta and garlic bread. My mom was on the phone crying in the other room, it was the type of tears that she didn't want the person on the other side of the phone to know she was crying. I finished making dinner and my brother came down to help me set the table. When my mom came into the kitchen she told us that Richard had died last night. The rest of the dinner was dead silent.

Everyone experiences grief in different ways. There are 5 different stages of grief, denial/ isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. Some people experience them in that order but it's also normal not to. There is no set time for how long the stages will last. Knowing the stages will make it easier to understand all your emotions and help you work through them in healthier ways. It's also normal to want to do some crazy things out of anger so it's always good to talk to people you trust.

"The night before the funeral I cried so much I threw up. It was hard for me to get to sleep and then stay asleep."

The whole next week was all a blur. I was stuck in the denial stage and kept thinking one day I would come home and everyone would be laughing in the living room, and when I walked in Richard would say "what's up girl!" the way he always used to. I remember one afternoon me and my brother were driving home in complete silence. We are just one year apart and were best friends growing up, so when one person was sad or mad the other person has always been there to help. We were about five blocks from my house and he looked over at me and said,

"You know it's okay if you want to cry." Right then we both burst into tears. When we got home we stayed in the car a while to wipe away our tears then went inside. My mom was sitting on the kitchen table with red puffy eyes. She's the most emotional person in our family so going to funerals growing up she would always sit in the middle of me and my big sister and hug us while crying. Well this time my sister was living in Chicago and I was really trying to work on myself so when I got home I went straight to my room. While going to my room I heard my dad in his room crying softly.

Around 10-20% of people don't end up dealing with deaths in healthy ways. It's easy to turn to drugs, alcohol, and filling your mind and time with other things rather than acceptance. It's common to have stomach pain, loss of appetite, intestinal upsets, sleep disturbances and loss of energy after anyone's death. A death of a close family member or friend could also incluede anxiety attacks, chronic fatigue, depression and thoughts of suicide.

The night before the funeral I cried so much I threw up. It was hard for me to get to sleep and then stay asleep. The funeral was in October, seeing Linda again without Richard was heartbreaking. The whole family was eating a maruchan cup because nobody wanted to cook. We went early to help set up snacks and be with Linda and her kids. Linda had just showered that day for the first time. She spent her past time in bed crying and usted all her sick and vacation hours. My mom was already crying when we walked in and started hugging everyone in the family. My dad paid his respect and sat down and talked to Richard's son. Me and my brother helped set things up and followed my mom around till she sat down.

"The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you'll learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same nor would you want to." Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler. Getting over a death is one of the hardest things a person can do. There is no right or wrong way to do it as long as in the long run you will be getting better. For me I would always call my sister and talk to my brother and remember to help myself before trying to help others. Also listening to music was very important for me to have my own time to think

and push through.

Calorie Counting

Emi Sisson

The following is a fictional but all too common story about a young woman struggling with body image issues. In order to write the story I did research on earring disorders and how they affect people's mental and physical health.

Maya Jones never really felt like she was fat. Sure, her stomach would stick out and would occasionally be bloated after a day of eating three full meals, but she never thought much about it. Yet here she was, listening to her health teacher talk about the fears of over eating and diabetes.

"Today in class I want you all to take these calorie tracker worksheets. For the next two weeks you will be counting up all the calories you eat after each meal, writing down what food you eat and how many calories each food has," the health teacher explained.

Maya looked down at the paper she was just handed and immediately saw the big bold numbers at the top, 2,200.

"Now, class, I know 2,200 calories may seem like a lot, but burgers are around 350 calories each and just a cup of milk is 103 calories. So the number may look big but it's much smaller than you realize."

Maya had to eat all three meals, to make sure she's still getting enough nutrients and vitamins while fitting it under 2,200 calories. Her head started to spin, thinking of how she most likely was eating over the amount, trying to calculate the best way to stay within the limit.

"Now remember class, you will be getting graded on the completion of your trackers and for extra credit you have to stay within the calories limit."

Maybe I could just skip lunch, it's not an extremely important meal anyway, Maya started thinking to herself, yeah! Where's the harm in that? I bet I can handle it.

Diet culture and the importance of weight and body shapes becomes a huge issue for adolescence, especially girls. The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA), says that 40-60 percent of elementary school girls, from the ages of 6 through 12, are worried about becoming overweight and even think that they're becoming too fat. The school system throughout America has calorie tracking as a required subject to teach in health classes in hopes to combat obesity and diabetes,ignoring the fact that eating disorders are a growing problem especially in teenagers who are at their most impactful age.

NEDA has many recovery stories of people who struggled with eating disorders. One stated, "My first experiences with dieting were in 4th grade. I remember still being in elementary school and learning what calorie counting was, and I decided that I needed to restrict my calorie intake."

The person then went on to say that tracking her calories became extremely harmful in high school when she decided that the only way she could ever be successful as a dancer was to change the way her body looked.

> "Eating was starting to become a harder thing for her to do, just thinking about food made her stomach churn with anxiety."

This is just one of the many examples of how introducing, and even encouraging, calorie tracking in schools, especially at a young age, can be harmful to many influential children.

She couldn't handle it. Maya was so caught up in trying to eat the perfect amount of calories that it was starting to become an obsession. Not only was she



skipping lunch, her other two meals were starting to get smaller and smaller.
At first she was trying to stay in the calorie limit just for the extra credit but once she realized her daily intake of calories was higher than the limit, she started to worry about her weight and figure.
Eating was starting to become a harder thing for her to do, just thinking about food made her stomach churn with anxiety. Maya knew she still had to eat something though so she decided that when she did eat she'd only eat foods that were green and red. Those colors did have the healthiest foods like apples, strawberries, celery, broccoli and other things like that, making it easier for Maya to eat.
Maya thought she was going to be fine with her calorie intake, especially now that she had her safe foods, but it never seemed to be enough. Weeks would pass by quickly, her new habits being the only thing on her mind. She'd wake up every morning and go straight to weigh herself, then before every meal she'd open her phone up to see how many calories there were left in her day to see how much she could eat. After the meal, she'd update her calorie tracker with what she just ate and quickly look herself over in the mirror to see if she was bloated at all. All these different habits would take over her whole time and life.

Many other disorders are very common to co-occur with people who struggle with eating disorders. 94 percent of those people struggled with depression, 56 percent of those people were diagnosed with anxiety and 20 percent of those people were diagnosed with OCD. Among those with eating disorders, there's an elevated risk for OCD and around 69 percent of patients with anorexia had OCD.
Many things people could end up obsessing over is dieting/calorie tracking, eating only their safe foods, compulsive exercising and developing a lot of eating habits.
Compulsive exercising has a strong link between many different types of eating disorders. NEDA even stated, "Between 40% and 80% of anorexia nervosa patients are prone to excessive exercise in their efforts to avoid putting on weight."

After weeks of all these habits, she started to lose weight. Maya would've been doing all of these things without anyone noticing but she now had to buy new clothes since her old ones were suddenly a bit too big. Her mom started to get very worried when she kept having to buy new clothes for Maya.
"Maya, we need to talk," her mother's brows furrowed with worry. "I'm concerned about you, there's no good explanation to why I have to keep buying you smaller sized clothes. Please talk to me, I know something is going on and I want to be there for you."
"There's nothing bad going on," Maya tried explaining, "I just realized I wasn't eating the perfect amount of calories but now I am."
"That doesn't seem healthy, you shouldn't be losing this much weight at your age." Maya's mom reached her hand out and asked for Maya's phone to see her calorie tracking app. Maya hesitantly gave her the phone, scared her mom might think she was still eating too many calories.

"This limit is too small for a growing teen! And you're not even meeting the limit everyday! Honey, this really isn't good. You're so beautiful the way you are and your body is perfect no matter what. I'm going to find some treatment to help you because I really am concerned."
Maya got her phone taken away for a little bit so that her mom could delete the app and block any other apps that she would have downloaded in the future.

A little while after going through some weeks of treatment, Maya started to get better. She finally had time to take up a hobby since she no longer spent her every waking moment obsessing over her diet and weight.
She still wasn't completely good, thoughts of calories and things like that constantly looking in the back of her mind, but she was still working hard every day to get better. Her mom's support really helped her out, she didn't know what she'd ever do without her.

1:44 AM

Krista Hines

This story is about a fatal car crash with some triggering topics regarding mental health (like suicide, recovery, etc). I struggle with my mental health but wanted to write a fictional story that included some of those elements I could use my own prior knowledge for. I did some research about drunk driving and a little about PTSD in order to understand it better.

It's been a few weeks since the accident. A few weeks

since we were driving down the freeway without a care in the world. As if we weren't drunk off our faces and as if there weren't other cars on the road. 1:43 AM is when I turned up the radio. We were blasting Breezeblocks by Alt-j. One of our favorites. I looked over at Brian who I was very close with while we were both singing loudly to the song. I wanted to be closer, but he could never know that. Sandy told me he felt the same, but I didn't want to initiate in case I imagined what they had said.

I remember tapping his shoulder, causing him to pull his eyes off the road. I was about to kiss him when at 1:44 AM a car appeared out of nowhere and he swerved to avoid them. We crashed into the divider at over 100 miles per hour. Brian's arm shot out across my chest as the car flipped and crumbled. Even after he and I lost consciousness, the doctor told me the EMT's found us with his arm shattered but in my lap, indicating that he kept his arm up as long as possible to prevent my whiplash. Our car was upside down and when I looked over at Brian for the last time while we both were alive, I saw a large piece of sheet metal from the barrier cutting him in half, using his body and the airbags to stay in place. The last thing I knew as my eyes shut was him whispering I love you while sputtering up blood.

"At 1:43 AM, I wish I hadn't turned that radio up. At 1:44 I wish that drunk me hadn't decided to nearly confess his love for him."

He was pronounced dead on scene while I was rushed into the hospital and in for emergency surgery. Apparently a few of my ribs fractured along with my collarbone, and I had a leg fracture and a shoulder dislocation. I was told that I also had glass shards poking out of my face and head.

I was asleep for 3 days after my surgeries. When I woke up, the first thing I thought about was Brian. I didn't know if he was okay. If he had made it or not. The next thing I thought about was how much pain I was in. Everything was so sharp and the casts I had on allowed for little movement in my chest. I was having trouble breathing. If I was able to, I would've screamed. But from days of not using my voice and throat, nothing came out. I managed to move my finger to the emergency button, to call for a nurse. 2:17 PM. Once she came in, she called the doctor that was assigned to me, and two police officers, into my room. As soon as they came in, the pain became too much and I passed out. 4:35 PM, approximately two hours after passing out, I had awoken again. At that time Sandy, my roommate at the time, came in and requested water for me beforehand and got the nurse and doctor again. I gulped my water down. My dry throat that could make the Sahara run for its money, was temporarily soothed.

The nurse and doctor came in at 4:42 PM. I was questioned which distracted me slightly from the constant warm throbbing pain spanning my whole body. The doctor asked me very general questions such as my name, age, if I knew where I was, if I remembered why I was in the hospital. Stuff like that. The two police officers came in shortly after, wearing casual clothing. They flashed their badges so I was reassured that they weren't murderers or something. Probably just protocol. The one that resembled a building, being the same from his head to his toes while also towering over everyone in the room, looked at me with glossy eyes. My heart dropped. I feared asking because I already knew what they would say. The other one was a lady officer. She was much shorter than her partner but held the clipboard. She was higher up in ranks.

She asked me how I was feeling to start with while her partner pulled up some chairs and asked Sandy if they could leave the room. I feel like Satan's personal footstool is what I wanted to say but instead I stuck with

"Could be better." I made sure to add in a small chuckle to really seal the deal. She asked me some questions about what might have caused a crash and I froze on the spot. The water I drank earlier to lubricate my throat suddenly didn't do anything. The room started spinning the second she asked. I didn't want to tell her I caused the crash but I knew I had to. "We… me and Brian were at a friend's house and we had been drinking," I started. I took as deep a breath as my chest cast would allow which was not much. "We shouldn't have been drinking, but it was a special night. They had just gotten engaged. We were… driving down the highway and I distracted him." Tears started falling

from my face as I realized I was the reason we crashed. The reason why Brian wasn't in a bed next to me or even close to me.

"He didn't see the other car pulling in front of us because I distracted him. When he noticed he swerved and.. that's the last I remember before everything went to hell". Both of the officers nodded and sent their condolences. They said they wouldn't charge me with a DUI or for anything at all given the circumstance. They should've. I deserved it. They said the other driver sent us wishes of good health, not knowing one would never recover. After they left, the doctor went over my injuries and all the boring stuff I could clearly feel. He then went over my treatment plan which was physical therapy, to regain movement in my arms, stability in my torso, and to gain strength back in my legs. I mentioned the pain I was in and he requested the nurse to up the IV medication I was on. It worked well, but made me incredibly lethargic. I'd take that over remembering Brian's face as he coughed blood up under the glow of the emergency lights any day.

At 1:43 AM, I wish I hadn't turned that radio up. At 1:44 I wish that drunk me hadn't decided to nearly confess his love for him. Three nights ago, I wish I hadn't drank so I could've driven us home safely and had the chance to tell him properly. I wish three nights ago never happened at all.

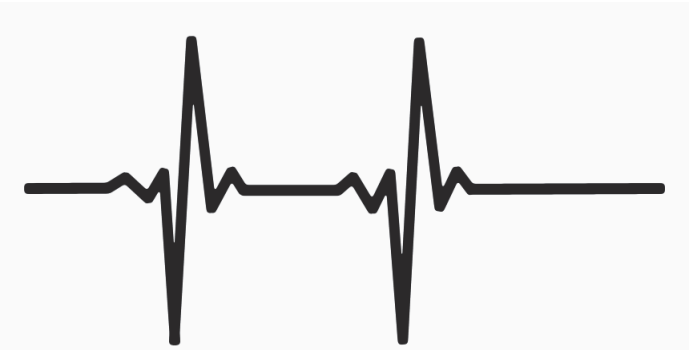
It's been a few weeks since the accident. Physically I'm recovering well. I'm gaining strength back and have moved up a weight class or two. I can walk around the unit floor with little assistance from others, I still need my walker and a wheelchair handy though, in case I collapse from fatigue. My physical therapist is making me do my exercises with heavier weights as well. Mentally, I'm still in the crash. I'm still laughing with Brian. Apparently that's not healthy. Apparently I have PTSD from the event as well. Even though I'm recovering well physically, I'm still empty inside without him by my side. He's here in spirit and I know he'd be so proud of me for making it this far, but I can't help but think about all the wrong I've been doing since he's been gone. I've been so much more rude. So much more irritable. The therapist said it's normal to feel…
Bad after such a traumatizing experience but that doesn't reassure me. I want to let others know I'll be okay, at least physically. That when I lash out it's not personal and I don't mean to.

I wish I didn't survive. I wish Brian was the one to live and thrive. He was still in school. He was about to graduate. He had so many people who loved him and it all got taken away by me. I wish I weren't here in this hospital bed. Things would be easier if I were to just disappear. No more bills being piled up. No need for anyone to worry. It would be easier if I just took those painkillers I was prescribed and used all of them at once. What's the worst that could happen at this point? My body gives up? Good. It should. My thoughts were interrupted by my mom coming in for a quick visit. I didn't want any visitors but I didn't kick her out. Instead I was polite and let her come in and sit next to me. She caught me up on things that have been happening to our family. She shared all the anniversaries I missed and all the parties I would've been able to go to if we hadn't crashed. She doesn't mean to make me feel worse, but she's really not helping my situation.

I feigned tiredness and asked if she had plans for after the visit. "Just some grocery shopping dear, I might pick up some of your favorite ice cream bars to keep in the freezer here, as a treat of course." She remembered I liked ice cream bars. I knew which ones she was talking about. She was talking about the chocolate covered ones with a heart design made out of more chocolate dotting the surface. "Oh you don't have to, I'm sure I'm not even allowed them right now anyways. The doctors have me on a strict diet to ensure I reach full health as quickly as possible". It was the truth. As much as I wanted them, I most likely couldn't have them. Her phone rang and she said she had to go. My mom kissed my cheek and my forehead before wiping a small tear and heading out. I made my mother cry.

It's been 9 months since the crash. I'm out of the hospital now and living at home with my parents. Rather, parents. My mom died three weeks ago from, you guessed it, a crash. The other driver didn't see her while they were going 90 in a 35 zone and they ran her over full speed. The police are investigating it now but because the driver never reported the accident, it's currently labeled a hit and run. I hate cars. I was finally getting better mentally as well.

I can walk without aid, I just get tired easily. My chest sometimes hurts when I breathe the wrong way. My arms are still getting back to full strength, but I've been cleared to lift heavy objects. I started processing



what happened with my therapist and over the past few months I've learned to accept what happened. It's still so hard. I still wish Brian would've lived. I still regret distracting him that night, or going out at all. It's just easier to understand now.

My mothers death set me back to square one. I couldn't handle it and I took all my painkillers at once. The doctors that treated me said I had two known seizures, vomiting, and slurred speech. I don't remember my stay in the ICU, or being in the psych ward. I only remember after the fact and getting back to a regular routine. Nothing has gone right this year. Half of it is my fault and the other half is pure chance that I hit the wrong person. I've been trying to stay strong for my dad. Trying to be a good son by being there for him. How can I be there for him if I missed the funeral due to a suicide attempt though? The guilt is getting to me. It's not fair on him that I attempted. That I almost left him as well.

My therapist thinks I've been doing a good job managing my emotions and ptsd, but is concerned because I've been taking care of my dad rather than myself. I've had to reassure her that I'm fine. I truly am. Me helping my dad is helping me heal as well. It works out perfectly.

It's been two months since my moms death and since I got out of inpatient mental treatment. It means it's been nearly a year since the initial crash. Two more weeks until the anniversary. Two weeks until I visit Brian's grave for the third time to apologize for taking his life away. I've been working on coping skills for my depression lately and have been working on mentally preparing myself for the one year anniversary.

The coping skills have been going great, I've been picking up a lot of new hobbies that have helped refocus my thoughts. The prep, however, has been a mess. Every time I rehearse what I want to tell his grave, I break down into tears. Every time I think about what happened, I get sent into a panic attack due to related medical trauma. I only have two weeks to get myself together to do this apology for a dead guy, which is two weeks to empty myself of all my tears. Apparently this is "irrational thinking" but I don't care right now. Irrational or not, this is something I need to do in order to move forward.

The day has come. One year since me and Brian were at a friends party, drinking and having fun. One year since we blasted Breezeblocks by alt-j on the radio. One year since we swerved and crashed, cutting his life short and making my life a living hell. I checked myself in the mirror before nodding at my outfit approvingly and grabbing the flowers I had gotten him off of the table. "You can do this, it'll be a quick catch up", I told myself. I grabbed my house keys, locked my doors, and set off towards the bus stop that'll take me to the cemetery. I'm still very weary with cars, instead I've been taking buses everywhere and walking. Luckily there's a stop right outside of the cemetery, so it won't be too long of a ride.

As the bus screeched to a stop, I quickly got off, thanking the bus driver. Fifteen minute bus ride for an inexplicable amount of grief. I could feel myself starting to break. My throat got a lump in it and my breaths were becoming shaky. I could do this though. Lump and all I made my way towards the grave I had only seen a few times before. Everything I rehearsed had run away and any tears I let out came flooding back.

I fell to my knees, sobbing. My shirt was soaked from the tears that had fallen onto it. My cries echoed throughout the graveyard, far enough to where I'm sure the attendants were getting worried. I didn't care. It needed to be let out. I spent so long trying to push down my feelings when I really needed to release them. A year of pent up aggression and frustration was finally being let out. A year of built up grief and sadness for what happened had an outlet. I don't know how long I cried for. How long my wails filled the empty space. How long it took my shirt to dry out after sobbing into it.

The flowers I brought were placed onto his grave and I started speaking finally. "I'm sorry," I started. "I'm so sorry Brian. I never should have distracted you. We were already tipsy and drunk and you were already having a hard time driving. I shouldn't have

made it worse. I'm so sorry. You deserved to live on and everything got cut short. You deserved to live such a long and joyous life and now you'll never get the chance to do so." I had to pause. I had to recollect myself because I was on the brink of tears yet again. My wavering and frail voice started up again. "I never got to tell you that I loved you. Every part of you. From the times you would laugh at the smallest things or at someone falling, to the times you cried on my shoulder because you were stressed. I'll never stop loving you or forget you, but it's time I move on I feel. It's caused me nothing but sadness and grief and you don't need any more of that in your life. I'll still visit, but next time it won't be an apology but instead me catching you up only." Before the tears could fall again, I hastily wiped them away.

I adjusted how I was sitting, even though I knew I couldn't stay longer. I said my goodbyes and told him I would visit again soon. Within the next month at least. Time had passed by slowly yet so quickly at the same time. It felt like it had been days but those days were just minutes. It was an odd feeling, knowing that I spent however long talking to a grave. Realization hit like a truck. I knew he was dead, but I had previously thought that he might come back somehow, someway. It hit me that he was never going to come back, that the only thing that remained of him was a somewhat disassembled corpse and the memories he left with everyone. I didn't cry at the thought, I had no more tears left so I couldn't.

I hesitated as I started walking away from Brian's grave. It was if he was holding my legs, begging me not to go. As if his spirit was lonely and needed company. That prompted my intrusive thoughts to start up again. They told me nasty things. Telling me I shouldn't be alive. That I should end it myself, as if I hadn't already tried. As I walked to the bus stop, the intrusive thoughts got louder. By the time I reached my door, I had a headache. Once I stepped inside, I let out a loud yell, probably startling my neighbors. I was sick of everything. Sick of feeling so disgusting. I want it all to stop but it just won't. Haven't I paid for what I did yet?

I don't know how long I sat there on the floor, ignoring all the thoughts racing through my head. By the time I checked the clock, it was past 2 AM. I felt warm out of nowhere. My cold body, so tired from the wear and tear of physical therapy and an overdose, suddenly felt warm. My arms and torso only though. I felt a breath on my neck and I almost melted right then and there. He was with me. It wasn't him dragging me back at the cemetery, it was me.

The next few days dragged on for what seemed like forever. The thought of his spirit being with me that night wouldn't leave my mind. Even if spirits didn't exist, it made me feel somewhat better.

In those few days, I met with my therapist twice. I told her I visited Brian's grave. I told her that with my eyes threatening to spill. No matter how many times I think about it, it doesn't get easier. One of those days in therapy we talked about my mom. The other we talked about Brian. She asked how I was coping with my mothers death and it felt embarrassing for me to say I was dealing with it better than Brian's death. As if nothing in the world could top how I feel about him. I asked if it could be because I was the one that caused the crash. My therapist only nodded and said that it could be the cause. When we talked about Brian, she asked me to tell her about one of my favorite memories of him.

It was December, only months before the crash. I was spending the night at his house due to a fight I had gotten into with my roommate. It was snowing outside while we were hanging out. Although we both get cold easily, he had the idea to go out and mess around in the freshly fallen and soft snow. I agreed almost instantly because I loved him. We got dressed in as many layers as possible, yet still forgot our jackets in between all the bouncing and laughing we let out. We were dressed in numerous hoodies with at least two pairs of gloves and socks on each. We looked stupid but it only fueled our want to play outside. As if we were penguins, we waddled outside and I instantly face planted into the new snow. Our laughs filled the air as I got up and stared at the face imprinted in the snow, and while he stared at the snow stuck to my nose and cheeks. He wiped it off for me. We played for what felt like hours, throwing snowballs at each other, pushing each other into snow banks outside his door, and behaving like children again. By the time we got back inside, it was dark. Even though we were wet and cold, it didn't matter because the events that happened made up for it. We changed out of our soggy clothes, put on some fluffy socks, and sat in front of his electric fireplace. It wasn't as warm as a real one, but the hot tea and food we had made, made up for it.

As I ranted on and on about this day to my therapist, she sat there and only smiled. It was the first time she'd seen me so happy to talk about him. Usually I'm full of tears or stoic. Never smiling. She asked me, "How did that make you feel? Talking about this

memory?". I didn't know how to answer. It was the first time I felt any sense of joy in a year. It took me a while to reply to her, but in the end I said, "It felt… amazing". For once, it was true.

She recommended that I think about the memories that were there, instead of the ones that could've been made. After our session it had me thinking about everything that had happened. The crash. His death. My physical recovery. My overdose. My mental recovery that's still in process. It made me realize she was telling me I can't bring him back, no matter how hard I would try. Everything finally made sense.

It's been 4 months since that session. It's still so hard to try and think about how I'm finally coming to terms with the fact he can't come back. To combat those thoughts whenever they pop up, I think about that day instead. I think about how he would want me to remember him, but move on and get better. My therapist said she's noticed a difference in my mood. I've come to sessions less irritable and more willing to talk lately. That I seem more approachable than before. It was hard for me to notice the changes, but if other people see them then I suppose it's true.

A year and a bit later since I almost confessed my love to Brian and I'm only now just beginning to heal. A year and a bit since we were racing down the highway blasting Breezeblocks by Alt-J. A year and a bit since he didn't see the other driver and we crashed into a highway divider at full speed, cutting him in half with sheet metal and making him utter his final words of,

"I love you". I'll never fully recover from the crash I don't think. When you cause a fatal crash, that's something you never forget. Every little detail and blood splatter between you and your friend leaves a stain on your memory. I don't know if I'll ever be able to listen to that song ever again. I don't know if I'll be able to drive a car ever again, at least without guilt. There's so many unknowns. The one thing I do know is that he'd forgive me. He wasn't one to hold grudges, no matter how serious the situation was.

I held a lit cupcake up that night, waiting for the clock to strike midnight. 3…2…1… I blew the candle out.

"Happy birthday Brian", I said before eating the cupcake slowly, savoring every bite while my cheeks slowly got more and more wet. It never gets easier, no matter how hard I try. I'm working on it though. I've made progress. I go backwards sometimes, but progress is progress. That's what I'm counting on to get me through whatever I have left of my life.

Katy's Story

Leo Mousseaux

This story is a true story (altered slightly) about my aunt, Katy. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2009, and had to go through a whole bunch of treatment to get her life back together and live in that moment.The only reasons she was able to survive would be because of the support from my family (and other close friends) along with her getting the treatment she needed.The treatment she went through probably would've been different nowadays (she said that nowadays it would probably be kind of barbaric in my interview with her), the help of her family and friends helped her get through the rough years of getting treatment for cancer.

Katy was waiting patiently for the results of her biopsy. Her mammogram revealed something strange, so this moment could be crucial. It could be nothing to worry about, or it could be something really bad. But all she had to do now was wait for the results. The doctors walked in, and the looks on their faces didn't help her feel any better. After a short conversation with them, Katy learned something about herself. She had breast cancer. Katy didn't know what to think, she wanted to live long enough to be a grandmother, and now this could cut her life short. All she could do now is find a way to slow it down or get rid of it altogether.

"Katy didn't know what to think, she wanted to live long enough to be a grandmother, and now this could cut her life short. All she could do now is find a way to slow it down or get rid of it altogether."

Breast cancer is a difficult thing for somebody to deal with. Not only could it cut somebody's life short,

but it also becomes more common the older a person gets. Most women get diagnosed with breast cancer above the age of 50 years old, making my aunt pretty unlucky since she was 39 at the time of the diagnosis. With a 21 year distance between the 2, I guess you could say my aunt wouldn't be the luckiest in terms of the diagnosis.

Katy talked with both a cancer and plastic surgeon in order to set up a date. They all had a plan to go through with a surgery that would remove both of Katy's breasts, and after a bit of planning, the date when the surgery would take place landed on October 28th, Katy's 40th birthday. Katy was fine with this, and now the last step was to explain the situation to her (at the time) very young kids. She sat them down and talked about it, making it an analogy for a garden. The way she explained it was that there was a weed in the garden, and they had to break the fences down to get the weed out. They then would have to reconstruct the fences, in a new way so that the weed wouldn't manage to get back in. After a while of this conversation, all she had to do now was wait for that day.

With breast cancer, there are multiple ways to get rid of it. Most of them involve chemotherapy, which my aunt also partook in since the treatment required it, but the other options would be to remove the affected breast. The only problem with this is that if you remove only the affected breast, there is a chance that the cancer would just appear again in the other breast, usually forcing the victim to remove that one as well. The one my aunt chose was to remove both of her breasts, then reconstruct them later, since that had the greatest chance of it being removed for good. Keep in mind that reconstruction is an option the patient gets to choose, and my aunt chose to partake in reconstruction, which would explain the analogy. With breast cancer, the cure can often be worse than the disease, since when my aunt didn't know she had cancer, she was feeling just fine, only discovering it during her doctor's appointment. As soon as she had to do chemotherapy however, she ended up vomiting for a while, she didn't have her hair as a side effect, and she had to do this over a long span of time.

After a lot of chemotherapy and some surgery, the cancer was gone. All she needed to do was an annual check to make sure that it didn't appear again. Eventually, the checks got less and less frequent, until there were no more checks and she was in the clear. She still had a while to be completely sure that it was gone, and there was the (very little) chance of it showing back up, but for the most part, she was in the clear.

Breast cancer usually is better to get diagnosed early. The earlier it gets diagnosed, the better the survival rate gets, usually with patients getting better within 5 years, like my aunt. I guess you could say my aunt was lucky in terms of discovering it pretty quickly, since if she were to have discovered it later, she could've waited too long to get it under control fast enough. I guess you could say it was a good call for her to get all of her doctor's appointments for when she would've turned 40 done when she was 39 just to ensure that she could relax during her birthday, though I guess she didn't really get to relax that much due to having to deal with having breast cancer.

10 years later, in 2019, Katy had celebrated her 50th birthday, though she didn't say she was 50 years old, and there wasn't a 50 on the cake. The cake instead said 40 + 10, to signify that she was 10 years of being cancer free since 2009, when she was 40. Everybody (including the writer of this story) got to go to her house to celebrate, with the future looking bright for her as well. All that mattered to her was that she was still alive, and was probably going to be able to see her kids grow up and live their lives.



Misadventures

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"He escaped but not without a nice, bullet-sized hole in his right shoulder."

Adrenaline

LaRobb Watts

The following is an encounter of something that happned to me in 1st grade. To write this story I conducted research on andrenaline. I also had to look back on the experience, which happened over 10 years ago.

I was In the process of looking for my friends at the park, I rode my bike around the back alley of the park to go back home, and as I did I saw a big gray and white pit bull bust out from behind a white fence door running after me. My breath became heavy as I peddled faster and faster as I turned around and saw the pit bull still chasing me and I kept going down the hill turning towards my house.

Pit bulls are fast and aggressive dogs that are commonly known for chasing people and this earned them a rather unsavory and biased reputation for doing so and while not all of them are like this the fact that they do this is still a problem. Pit bulls can run up to 25-30mph and can go for 2-5 miles but shouldn't necessarily run for that long without resting.

In the morning I was getting ready for school and heading to my bus stop. I put my coat and bus tag on, heading down the cold street, waiting for the bus as I sang to myself "She'll be coming around the mountain." I watched the bus turn the corner and drive down the hill towards me. I got on, finding my friend throughout all the seats sitting with him and heading to school and to class.

After a few classes it was time for lunch, and after it was recess which I was extremely excited about. My class ran outside to the cool breeze and hot shine of the sun, towards the playground I ran up the yellow stairs, across the rumbling bridge, and towards the slide, which is when I thought "I wonder if I could slide down the slide…while standing up" so I tried it. As I started going down the slide I was quickly brought to a stop and lost my balance as I fell over the edge towards the ground and hit the hard sand, knocking myself out for a little while.

"Christopher Giza, professor of pediatric neurology and neurosurgery at UCLA, explains what happens when you're knocked out. Basically you can lose consciousness if both hemispheres of your brain are turned off at once. You can also lose consciousness if part of the brainstem that resides between the hemispheres is knocked offline."

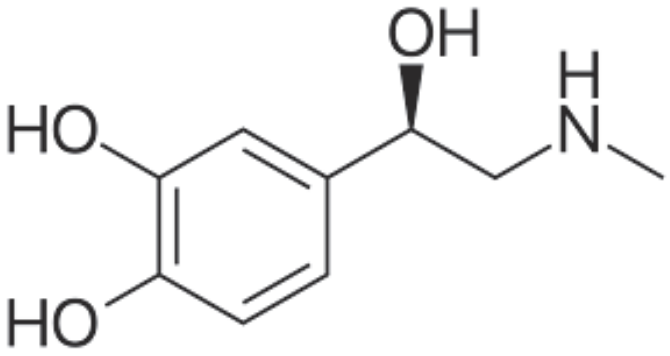
With the end of school I was on my way home on the bus, as I got off I ran home quickly alongside the bus racing it to my house and as I ran up stairs quickly I'd wave goodbye to the driver. As I made my way inside I walked through the kitchen to the living room, I yelled to my mom "I'm home" while going into my room and putting my back pack down on the carpet, my bus tag on my door knob. Then retracing my steps, going back outside and down the stairs to the side of the building to get my "Razor Twist" bicycle. I'd ride it through the parking lot in front of my house and then down the street as I'd head to my friend Joey's house to see if he was there but he wasn't. So I headed around the corner of his house towards the park to see if he and my other friend Wyatt were there but again, nothing.

"I turned around to see a pit bull bust out from behind a white fence door and come running after me quickly..."

Afterwards I rode my bike around the back alley of the park to go back home, as I did I would hear barking and I was startled. I turned around to see a pit bull bust out from behind a white fence door and come running after me quickly, I started pedaling faster going around the back of my friends house down a hill and into the street heading back up a hill to my house, the dog kept following me I quickly stopped at the the stairs to my house jumping off my bike rushing up the stairs and inside to safety breathing heavily and sitting down in my room thinking about what just happened, and how lucky I was that I was on a bike, and how cool it'd be to tell my Joey, Wyatt, and my friends at school what happened.

"Adrenaline triggers the body's fight-or-flight response. This reaction causes air passages to dilate to provide the muscles with the oxygen they need to either fight danger or flee."

I was able to survive because of that adrenaline boost I got from being chased, activating my flight response allowing me to get away, but also my very fast and sturdy Razor Twist bike that got through it and the chain didn't decide to come off at that moment either.



Fifteen minutes of terror

Nox GebbenGreen

The following is a close encounter event with a tornado I experienced as a little kid. To write this story, I thought back about my experience and tried to remember my best, even getting help by asking my parent's their experience as well. I also did some research about extremely deadly tornadoes for people to understand the gravity of how dangerous tornadoes can be.

I was drawing in my bedroom on a late afternoon spring day. The light from my window was fading surprisingly quickly and was not enough to see my drawing well. I got up to turn the lights on and walked over to the window. Outside, I could hear the sky thundering and see the rain pouring from thick clouds. The wind was strong, but I didn't think much of it—just things you'd expect to happen in a thunderstorm. Hail mixed in with the rain and a loud BOOM shook the house. The lights flickered. It was a violent storm but we needed the water for it had been so long since it had last rained. I was just getting back to my drawing when the sirens went off.

"Hail mixed in with the rain and a loud BOOM shook the house."

Saint Paul, Minnesota, May 23, 2007. The first confirmed tornado for 2007 touched down at 4:10 pm 5 miles southeast of Dennison in Goodhue County, an hour away from my house. I was young, only 2 years old, but I still remember this scary event. I still remember hearing the sirens and not understanding what they meant. I remember my parents telling me and my older brothers to go downstairs to the basement. There, I remember they had us settled under the workbench.

I could still hear the sirens from the basement. My parents explained that a tornado was near us and that we needed to stay in the basement because it was the safest place to be. They gave us blankets and pillows for comfort. My mother cuddled us as the windows rattled and our father read us a book to take our minds off of the dire situation.

When a tornado is near, you want to go to the sturdiest place you know. Usually, that'll be placed underground, like a basement or a bunker. Tornadoes are typically harmless, usually just a cyclone of wind connecting thunderstorm clouds to the earth and only lasting for a few minutes. When they're not, they can be one of the world's most dangerous natural disasters. The wildest of tornadoes can last for hours and span miles in diameter, reaching up to 300 miles per hour in speed. In Bangladesh on April 26, 1989, the tornado in history: The Daulatpur–Saturia tornado. The tornado killed approximately 1,300 people. On Wednesday, March 18, 1925, the Tri-State tornado spanned a large portion of the Midwestern and Southern United States and killed 695 people. So, being underground will protect you from unstable structures that could be ripped up by a tornado's violent winds. Thankfully, this tornado didn't reach us and lasted only for about 15 minutes.

The strong winds, hail, and thunder came to a slow stop along with the sirens. A light drizzle still carried on though. My father finished reading the children's book and helped us all get up. My mother hugged each of her children and made sure we were okay—which we were, just a little shaken. We all decided it'd be good to stay on the first floor for the rest of the day. We were lucky this tornado wasn't as bad. Even if the tornado was horrible and hit us directly,

I think my family could have survived.

On Thin Ice

Erica Polta

The following is a true story about a close call my parents had while driving a car on a frozen lake. In order to write this story, I interviewed my parents about their experience and did some research on ice accidents in Minnesota.

"You sure you know where you're going?" Peggy said.

"Of course honey, don't worry" Paul responded as they were driving down a windy road. Soon enough they passed a sign that said "public boat access road" with an arrow pointing right.

"We're almost there Andrea!" Peggy exclaimed as the six year old kicked the back of her mom's seat in excitement to go ice fishing.

Andrea watched the passing signs intently through the window,

"Gas station five miles...bald eagle lake...white bear lake" she read. Paul took a right turn and found the public boat access road connected to the lake so they could begin driving on the ice.

"Careful honey, this cars pretty heavy." Peggy said cautiously,

"We'll be fine, the ice is thick and it's frozen solid" Paul responded as he started to drive their flashy Cadillac forward. I asked Paul why he owned a Cadillac back then, to which he responded with,

"I thought it was a safe car, it's supposed to be more reliable than others and that's what I wanted for the family." That 1977 Cadillac Eldorado weighs about 4950 lbs. The average car weighs just 2,871 pounds, making a 2,079 pound difference. A heavier car can be more dependable, but in order for it to be safe on ice, the ice would have to be at least 12-15 inches thick. Cracking noises followed the car making Andrea nervous.

"Mom, are we almost there yet?" She asked.

"Yes dear, we should be there soon... I think." Peggy responded. She glanced around and didn't recognize where they were.

"Paul, are you sure you know where you're going?" She asked. Paul anxiously scoped out the area around them, not wanting to admit he was unsure. He paused, and then responded,

"Alright, I'm sorry but I don't think we are going in the right direction. This kind of looks like... Oh no."

"What do you mean, Oh no?" Peggy questioned.

"I think we are on the wrong lake; this looks like white bear lake, not Bald Eagle lake." He said disappointed, "I guess we better start heading back then." She responded.

"I just want to use my new Dora fishing rod!" Andrea stated impatiently with a frown on her face. Paul sighed and made a slick u-turn and started heading back to where they got onto the ice by the access road. Suddenly the car halted to a stop, and they felt a shift in the car as the front right tire started to slowly sink into the melting ice.

From 1976 to 2013 the Minnesota DNR gathered ice accident statistics for the state. They involved about 220 fatalities, and 60% of the statistics were classified as involving vehicles. The worst time of the year for ice accidents is during December, February, and March; especially in areas with new ice as it is likely to have weak spots. Minnesota loses one to two people a year to ice accidents involving vehicles. Ice claws and life jackets would have saved the day in many of these cases because sometimes people are able to get out of the vehicle, but sadly can't get back on the ice.

"Suddenly the car halted to a stop, and they felt a shift in the car as the front right tire started to slowly sink into the melting ice."

"Mom? Dad?" Andrea panicked, quickly forgetting all about her fishing rod. Peggy speedily unbuckled her seat belt and reached behind her trying to unbuckle Andrea's as well. Seeing them struggle, Paul immediately slammed his hand on the car horn in an attempt to alert anyone nearby. He turned off the car and unbuckled, then proceeded to lightly hop out of the car to help. Almost slipping, he carefully walked around the car, with every step cracking the ice a little more. He managed to free Andrea and grabbed Peggy's arm assisting her in the escape. They barely made it a couple feet away from the car when the front of it abruptly fell a few inches further into the ice, creating a crashing sound that could've traveled for miles. Peggy held on to Andrea's hand a bit

tighter. Paul's eyes desperately searched for any close all-year cabins or signs of people but saw nothing. All at once they heard loud honking noises, followed by a pair of headlights flashing in the snow-filled air from ahead. Immediately they all started waving and shouting towards the sounds of what seemed to be a large truck. Slowly it came closer, seemingly being more cautious not to break the ice like the Cadillac had done.

There were two men in the truck who luckily had heard the honking and the car collapsing into the ice about 200ft away, while they just so happened to be ice fishing. They kindly offered help and used a tow rope to pull the Cadillac off the lake, fortunately it was okay and they could still drive the car. Peggy, Paul, and little Andrea all said their "thank yous" and decided to still go meet up with their friends and ice fish, but now with a story to tell. I think they survived because of luck, and possibly Paul's quick instincts to honk the horn. The family will still go ice fishing but the story continues to be shared every time as an interesting anecdote and memory.



My Crusty Brown Dog

Lue Lor

I feel like social media romanticizes rescuing dogs so much to the point where most people don't even know what they're getting into. You know how all the girlies that have a crusty white dog? Well I have a crusty brown dog and this is how I got her bad self.

She was basically a backyard bred puppy, which basically means people breed dogs just to get money out of it. She was bought by this lady who lived with her parents, knowing that her parents don't even like dogs. Miss thing decided to keep the dog and make it "work" by locking her up in the basement for like 2 months, until finally deciding to give up the dog.

If you know anything about puppies or just dogs in general from birth to 6 months is the most critical time for a dog to be socialized. Having a well socialized dog will help prevent so many issues, like dog reactivity, animal reactivity, and so much more. Having a dog that isn't properly socialized is like just having a bad kid, they'll probably be acting up in public. That's why socializing your dog at a young age is so important. Also if you got a large dog breed it's gonna be harder to socialize them when they are reactive and big as hell. That's why it's so important to socialize a dog.

"When we got there the little dog ran up on us barking, like that scared me and my sister. Within 3 minutes the little dog armed down, that's when we decided we really do want her."

August 2nd, 2020 was when I first heard about this crusty little brown dog with no name. My sister basically got a text from her friend saying they got a crusty little dog that no one wants. At first my sister wasn't even really feeling the little dog until she got to thinking about how this little dog was already in her second home. Side note the reason why we got the crusty

little dog was because of pity which should never be a reason on why you get any animal. August 3rd, 2020 was when we finally decided to go pick up the dog. My sister picked me up and we were on our way to pick up the dog. When we got there the little dog ran up on us barking, like that scared me and my sister. Within 3 minutes the little dog armed down, that's when we decided we really do want her. We got her in the car and she slept on my lap the whole ride back. That's when I finally decided to call her August cause we got her in August, yeah I know so creative. That's the story on how I got August but the story isn't over, when we got August she was already dog reactive especially on leash and certain people would make her act up. August is still a working progress till this day even, I feel like it's our fault too for just rushing to get a puppy not knowing how to train a dog. That's why I feel like if you're gonna rescue a dog, make sure you're really ready after "rescuing" them cause rescuing a dog is so much more than just a physical thing.

Bracing for the storm

Antonio Rosell

To write this story, I looked back on my memory of the event that took place, and what I experienced. I also conducted research on tornadoes.

It was a summer evening, and the sky outside was dark and green. Everyone in our family was sitting at the dinner table, listening to the radio, trying to find out more about the tornado that was supposed to pass through our neighborhood in Minneapolis. As I listened to the announcer, who kept talking about how severe it was, I started to worry that I would die or get hurt. But I kept listening. Suddenly, the lights turned off, and the radio stopped. Our power went out. Without thinking, we went to the basement and hid there for the next few hours as we heard tornado sirens and strong winds from outside.

On May 22, 2011, a "hook echo", which was a large mixture of hot and cold air, caused 56 tornadoes throughout the United States. In Minneapolis, one of the tornadoes touched down in the northern part of the city, uprooting thousands of trees and causing two people to lose their lives. The National Weather Service ranked the tornado as EF1. On the Enhanced Fujita scale, which the federal government uses to measure the severity of tornadoes, EF1 refers to a tornado with winds of 86 to 110 miles per hour. The scale goes from EF0 to EF5, and EF5 is the most severe option.

After about two hours, the storm was over, and we went upstairs. It was the middle of the night, and we had to use flashlights to find our way around the house. I remember going to my bedroom and sleeping. The next morning, what we saw outside the house was shocking. Most of the trees toppled over. Some of the trees landed on houses, and others landed on roads and parked cars. Cars could no longer drive past our house. Our house was still in good condition, but lots of other houses that were only two blocks away had damaged roofs, and, in extreme cases, torn out walls.

"Some of the trees landed on houses, and others landed on roads and parked cars. Cars could no longer drive past our house."

The tornado in Minneapolis wasn't the worst of the "hook echo" tornadoes. An EF5 tornado in Joplin, Missouri caused 161 fatalities, more than 1,100 injuries, and damaged 2.8 billion dollars worth of property. People consider this to be a reason why the federal government responded inadequately in providing assistance to tornado victims in Minneapolis. Another reason could have been "environmental racism", in which the majority-Black, low-income, neighborhood was neglected in terms of tornado relief.

Our family survived the tornado mainly because of how lucky we were. We were lucky to have a house that was still intact, and we were also lucky to have access to a gas stove during a power outage. And also we didn't have to deal with what people in Joplin dealt with. But even when other people were suffering, I actually remember having lots of fun. I liked to ride my bike over a sidewalk tile that was uprooted from the storm, forming a ramp. It was also cool how the neighborhood looked like a jungle, with leaves touching the ground. But at the same time, the storm was such a serious issue.

I can't take my fortune for granted. Our house was untouched while other people's houses were destroyed.

After about two weeks, my sister was born. Our family had grown to five, so we moved into a different house a few months later.

Food Poisoned

Sophia Rose Windingstad

A story about how while visiting my family on the east coast, I got food poisoning and had to spend a miserable night in my Aunt's home.

I started to feel sick, I didn't think much of it because I always feel a little sick in the car. I yelled to my aunt to pull the car over so I didn't puke in the car. I stumbled out of the car and one of my shoes fell off after I tripped on my sister, better that than vomit. We're in front of some random house in their side yard. But it's too dark to see anything else. My mom is comforting me and after nothing, we get back in the car and drive to my cousin's house. I had never been there before in my life and I barely knew any of my cousins. It was after Thanksgiving 2018 and thank god I decided to go with my mom to my aunts house instead of staying at my uncles. My mom and sister are sleeping in the basement on the pull out couches.

Food poisoning can be much more dangerous than many people realize. 420,000 people worldwide die from food poisoning each year. It can be a painful few days while your body resolves itself, there is not much you can do beside rest and fluids to recover. Getting dehydrated is the most common complication when it comes to food borne illnesses. When germs from contaminated food get into your body, they release poisonous toxins that can cause vomiting and diarrhea.

"I just hung over the toilet and cried to my Mom wanting it to be over before hurling into the toilet again."

When we got to the house I immediately went to the guest room and laid down, I felt hot and nauseous. I ran over to the toilet and puked, just barely making it. I spent that whole night throwing up in a house I didn't know, with one little bathroom and a pull out couch. I just hung over the toilet and cried to my Mom wanting it to be over before hurling into the toilet again. My poor Mom cleaned up the place all night long. Hurlsghhhhhhh. Autghhhhs.

When it was time to leave the next day, my Aunt hooked me up on a few Gatorade bottles for the road trip home. I definitely was feeling a lot better and I hadn't puked since the day before. I was very grateful for My Aunt and my Mom and older sister for helping me get through it. I was so excited to go home and finally be in my own bed again, there wasn't much I could do besides sleep while I had food poisoning so I missed my house and my bed and my cats. I was so glad it was over.



Leader of the James-Younger Gang

Mathias Horn

The following story is about the raid attempted by the James-Younger Gang on the First National Bank of Northfield, Northfield, Minnesota . I lived in Northfield from 3rd through 6th grade.

As our horses galloped closer and closer to Northfield, my heart was racing faster than the horse that carried me. It was an early afternoon in September, the sun was high in the sky, and I was ready to rob a bank. This is what I lived for, the rush that I felt every time we did a raid was like no other. But even with the anticipation, I was still a little nervous with the sudden switching of targets from the first bank of Mankato to the first national bank of Northfield. When we arrived at the edge of the quaint farming town, we split up into two groups. Me, Frank, and Bob were in one group, and Cole, Jim, Clell, Charlie, and Bill were in the other. Cole's group rode into downtown first and started causing a distraction. They were shooting off their revolvers into the bright blue sky and yelling, attracting all the nearby residents. While the town was distracted with the big group, the three of us in the small group were able to easily sneak into the bank unnoticed.

This wasn't Jesse James' first rodeo. Seven years into his career as an outlaw, Jessie James was pretty used to holding up banks. Jessie started his career after his time in the confederate army during the civil war where he served in "Bloody" Bill Anderson's guerrilla band. In the seven years since then Jesse along with his brother Frank and his gang had robbed numerous individuals, stagecoaches, and banks in many states like Alabama to Iowa to Texas. This had been the gang's first time in Minnesota though. They decided to go to Minnesota to avoid the law thinking it would be the last thing people would expect. But what the gang didn't expect, is what would happen next.

Inside the long small single room bank Frank, Bob, and I quickly pulled out our guns and took control of the bank. There had been only a couple of bank workers inside. We rushed to round them all up behind the wooden teller's cage on the opposite side from the main door. whilst Bob watched the rest of the employees, I grabbed out the booker and dragged to the front of the bank, to the vault. I said to him in a sort of threatening tone.

"Open It," as I gestured at the huge metal vault door. The booker wasn't very young, he was probably around 50 if I had to guess, he had a well kept appearance with short gray hair and a slight beard. He refused saying the vault had a time lock and couldn't be opened. This made me more worried as this was supposed to be a quick in and out job. As I was dealing with the booker trying to get him to open the vault, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a man enter the bank. The man seeing us quickly ran back out and yelled,

"GET YOUR GUNS BOYS, THEY'RE ROBBING THE BANK!" I instantly realized our cover was now blown. With all the chaos one of the bank employees tried to flee, but Bob quickly shot at him hitting him in the shoulder. He escaped but not without a nice, bullet-sized hole in his right shoulder.

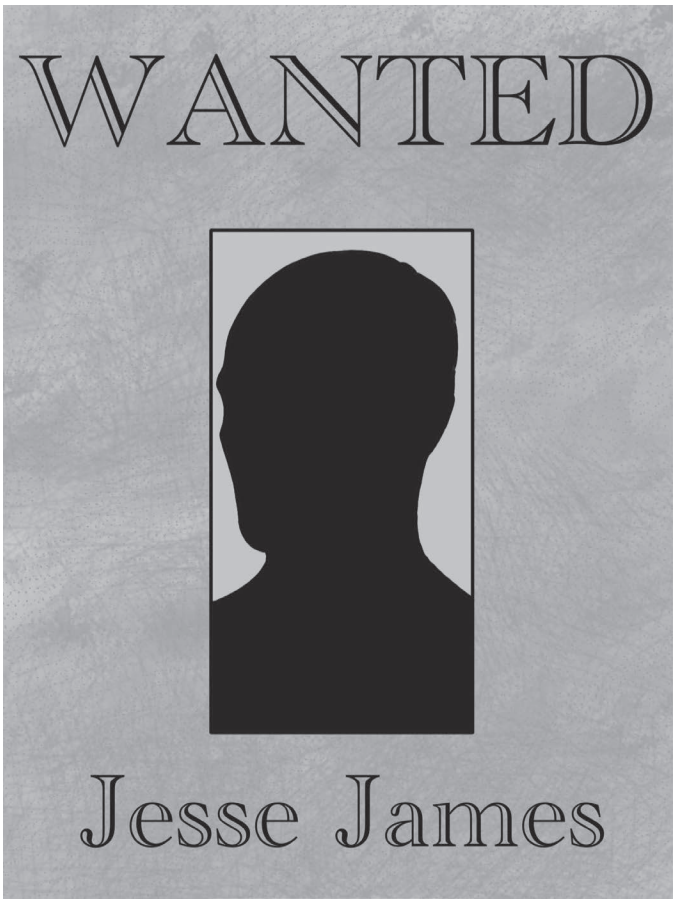
We soon started to hear gunshots coming from outside. The other boys must've been caught in a shootout with the town. Me, Bob, and Frank quickly finished up our business in the bank without getting the money. As we ran out of the bank, I looked back to see Frank shooting the uncooperative booker in the face, killing him instantly. Once outside I could see that the rest of the gang was in a fierce gunfight with what seemed like the whole town. Bullets were flying everywhere and looking at the ground across the street I could see Bill laying dead in the middle of the street. He was covered in bullet holes, like a slice of Swiss cheese. I contemplated whether to run and try to escape or try and help the others, but it was at that moment I watched as Clell on his horse was shot and killed falling off his horse. I decided at that moment that this was a battle we were going to lose. So me and Frank got on our horses and made a run for it. Frank and I made it out alive meeting up with Younger brothers, before finally going our own separate ways.

"He escaped but not without a nice, bullet-sized hole in his right shoulder."

This raid marked the beginning of the end of the james-younger gang and its members. After escaping the town, Frank, James, and the Younger brothers all went their separate ways. Following the raid, a manhunt for the remaining gang members which lasted multiple weeks and over 400 miles. Through this manhunt the Younger brothers were able to be captured in Madelia Minnesota, in a gunfight that resulted in the death of Charlie Pitts. The only 2 members not captured had

been Frank and James. Eventually Frank and James died years later, but whenever questioned about their part in the Northfield Raid they always denied ever being there.

The reason Jesse survived is because he knew when to run and he knew how to run. Once Jessie saw that the raid had gone south, he ran and he only waited for his brother. He didn't stay and fight, he got on his horse and rode away during all of the chaos and confusion of the gun fight. Then eventually when he and Frank did meet up with the other surviving members they went their own way instead of staying in a big group, because staying in a big group would only go to paint a bigger target on their back and make them easier to catch. Because of this Jesse and Frank were able to hide and avoid capture unlike the rest of his gang.



Stranded on Mt. Etna

Astrid Piot

The following content is something that happened to my family and I. It was really something, on the day and in the moment, it was just a long boring accident but now that I'm rethinking about it, months after I realized how much worse it could have been and how lucky we got.

The car goes up the hill a first time, half the way I feel like the car stops and can't go further. The car goes back again and takes some speed to try again, we reach the same point. My mom starts to try to give advice to my dad, but it doesn't seem to work. They go back at the end of the hill, asking me and my siblings to get off the car, hoping that by the car being lighter, it would pass. As we go on the side the car stops, it won't go on, I start to hear my parents arguing about the situation and how we got here, I do admit that my mom is right on one point. We shouldn't have trusted the GPS when he said that way was the right way. The way in question wasn't even on the map! Dad thought it was a shortcut or

"I pull out my phone to realize two things, firstly I only have 30% battery left and secondly I have no wifi or 4G reception."

something like that but no, just a very tight road leading to abandoned farmlands and a broken bike path with no possibility to go back on that way. We had to go on a lower platform in order to turn and go up from there. As we continued to watch our parent struggling, one of my sisters looked at me with a jaded face, "I feel this is gonna take a long time," I agreed with her sighing,"Yep."

We were waiting on this broken bike path that apparently was big enough for me and the twins to stay on. They were both looking around for something to do or talk about, besides the accident. I pull out my phone to realize two things, firstly I only have 30% battery left and secondly I have no wifi or 4G reception. I sigh, comparing this situation to the beginning of a horror movie : we are stuck in the middle of nowhere, there

is no connection and the night is about to fall. I am getting cut from my thoughts by one of the twins who started to complain about mosquitoes, she had a good ten mosquito bites and swelled up at sight. Immediately I put my sweater on her so that she could cover her arms and her neck, of the three of us she was the most sensitive to thoses stupid mosquitoes. Despite the outside heat she kept it on. Her twin started to complain too, about being thirsty and so went down to our parents, and a young Italian couple.

"Mom!" she said, "Could you please pass me the water bottle?" Our mother went to the trunk to get the bottle and gave it to her, adding,

"Be careful, there's not much left," referring to the beginning of that day.

We didn't expect that to happen, especially after the whole day of adventure we just got. On the occasion of summer break, my family and I decided to take a trip to Sicily to discover this country: their culture, their food, their monuments, and the Mont Etna. With a height of 11,014 feet this volcano is one of the largest in Europe and the only one active. His activities may vary from the days and the period of the years, in the past two months Mount Etna had few eruptive episodes, short but violent, with big fireworks of lava and a lot of black ash. In total the scientists have counted 8 eruptions, called in the domain paroxysms, with a duration of 2 to 3 hours.

We had planned that at one moment during the trip when we would be in the region, that we would go hiking on it for the whole day. In the company of a guide and some other families we got further to see the volcano and got the luck to see it erupt! According to the guide, there weren't any eruptions during the whole week and so far it was the biggest eruption of the month. It was super cool, at the beginning it was just a lot of smoke and some rock falling but it slowly increased and the first eruption came out, they were small explosions and pretty fast, so having a photo of it was luck of timing. As the volcano continued to erupt and more rocks were starting to fall. The guide warned us and the group slowly came back to the station to check out and take off the equipment. These expeditions are pretty dangerous, without a guide or an expert, it could lead to some accident, which apparently happens sometimes and for many different reasons, the air compression, unplanned eruption, landslide. Fortunately everything went well and we had no problems during the hike or after it. Well, the accident doesn't count.

Our father was trying to communicate with the young couple as best he could, the surprising thing was that they both didn't speak a word of English. Our reference language ended up being French, which was good because we were French and apparently this young man had learned it when he was younger. The conversations weren't great but at least we were getting somewhere. According to what he said, they were not from the area and were on a trip, like us, to see their family. His girlfriend ended up leaving the accident area and heading to the path that brought us here, looking for help or a network. Then there was a big silence, the Italian had stepped aside to try to call family or help, Dad was circling around the car trying to figure out what was wrong with it, while Mom took care of the twins now both eaten by mosquitoes. I thought about checking the houses around but the parents had warned me, so I decided to wait like everyone else. The Italian girl came back after a while saying something in Italian before her boyfriend explained that she was able to find Wifi and call the fire department. They are apparently onto something but would be there within 30 minutes, but confirmed that the surrounding houses and farms were deserted. I was not surprised but still had my doubts, after all we were in the neighborhood of the volcano.

All around the volcano there used to have cities and farms but were evacuated because of the volcano, the risk of eruption as well as the alteration of the land and air made it too dangerous for peoples to stay around, it was no longer a habitable area. So as far as help was concerned, she had a great idea to call the fire department. Not being from the country we had no idea of the helpful numbers, in our case we called 115, which is the Italian's fireman service.

After a good hour, the firemen finally arrived, unfortunately only them, because it seemed that their truck could not pass the road and had no knowledge of other ways leading to the area where we were. They checked the car before explaining to my father what the problem was; it seems that while trying to turn the car, it got stuck on a stone which only enlarged a hole in which one of the wheels was. This was not a big problem and they could get us out of there without taking so much time, but the problem remained the same, they had no idea how to get their truck into the area. They eventually left, leaving only one fireman with us until they got back. It took a while I must admit, but

in the end the fireman and my mom started talking while my dad decided to go to the nearby fields in hopes of finding something. I joined him immediately, being tired of waiting and standing in a corner to not disturb anyone. After a small walk of five minutes on the dirt road, I saw that this road was actually leading to a building in abandoned construction, therefore roads rather than small paths. We verify that this road was leading somewhere and that it was not only false hopes but not. We return immediately to the accident to tell the remaining fireman, who communicates the information to his team. And in the following minutes, we saw the fire truck arrive towards us. They took care of the problem and after another thirty minutes, the car was able to drive properly again. The firemen took the lead so they could stay with us in case the wheel burst or something like that. But we got out and headed back to our Airbnb, laughing at the situation.

The main, possible but impossible danger in our case was if the volcano had a big eruption and that we would have to flee but not be able to because of the immobilized cars. Fortunately it didn't happen and after the firefighter intervention we got back safe. During that whole period of waiting and figuring out what to do, the main attitude that helped us survive was to not panic and try to do things that could be dangerous, or at least let the adults do it. But our patience and calm showed its fruits.



Fear of Fireworks

Thomas Xiong

The following is a firework accident/experience that happened to me back in my early childhood years. In order to write the story, I had to try my best to remember what happened back then and research firework accidents

It was the dead of night; the crickets were singing; the fireflies were dancing through the dark. It was the start of our firework show. We all gathered and took a sparkler one by one. Lit our sparklers and ran out into the open field. The adults watched us from afar and prepared the prime show for after all the sparklers were finished. Right before mine finished, I touched the bright and beautiful sparkling light of flame right before it died out. As I did, the heat and radiant pain raced across my hand. Quickly, I moved my hand from the burned out sparkler and blew my burning hand. As I walked back with my burned out sparkler, the prime show began; lighting up the sky with the big colorful lights, shattering in the sky.

"Quickly, I moved my hand from the burned out sparkler and blew my burning hand."

Sparklers are extremely hot. Sparklers are hot enough to melt glass and most metals. Most sparklers are made with a holding stick, metal, or bamboo. The metal sparklers don't burn as bright as bamboo sparklers mainly because they're less hot, bamboo sparklers are hotter and spark more, giving a better show. Sparklers can burn up to 2,000 degrees. Firework can cause 1st, 2nd, and or 3rd degree burns.

Talking about fireworks; firework accidents and injuries happen all the time during July 4th. During 2020, 15,600 people were "hospitalized" from firework injuries. There were 3,100 (hands, fingers injury in a day); 2,300 (head, ear, face injury); 1,500 (eye, legs, and arm injury). In 2016, fireworks injured 11,000 people. The percentage of injury was 33% hands and fingers burns; 28% head, face, ear burns; 18% leg burns; 9% eye injuries; 8% arm injuries; 12% torso and other body

parts. When you're injured from a firework burn that hurts a lot, it's good to "Cool the burn with cool water, NOT ice, for at least five minutes. Clean it with soap and water. Cover it with a bandage or clean, dry cotton dressing. Call your doctor if the burn does not feel or look better within 24 hours or if the burn is larger than the palm of your hand."

After that year, I stopped going out with my family during the festival of light. I stayed inside, hidden from the flares and burning flames that would eventually roast me; burning more than it did. Years would pass one by one, and still I'll be sitting by the window watching the show from afar. One year, choosing to face my fears; I walked out the house through the door thinking It'll be different from the last time. As I'm walking out the door and through the frame, I see a sea of flares fluttering and raging as their sparks run by. I feel the waves of heat engulfing me, I smell the smoke and ashes of the burning sticks, my skin twitching trying to escape from the radiation of heat, my nose dieing from the intoxicating environment. As I'm sneaking through the volcanic landscape. My cousin comes walking straight to me with two sparklers, one in each hand. Thinking that I wanted to join in this year, she kept walking towards me trying to hand one of them to me. Finally noticing her, I moved as fast and as close to the wall as possible thinking that If I get close to the sparkler then I'll get burned. No matter how fast I thought I moved, In the end she was already in front of me, pointing to the flares of a thousand suns.

Believe it or not, fear helps keep us safe. Fear is a "deeply wired" emotion. It's a survival instinct that is genetically built in and responds to fight-or-flight situations. When fear is activated, it releases "adrenaline and cortisol" to make sure the body is ready to fight or run. Fear is activated by a "small organ in the middle of your brain" that's responsible for fear. The only time when fear is not activated is when your brain decides if the situation is safe and does not determine the situation is dangerous. If your brain decides the situation was dangerous, it will do anything to keep you away from the danger.

The next year at grandma's before the firework shooting was going to start, All my siblings and cousins grabbed me, pushing me outside saying things like, "You're going to join us this year even if you don't want to!" "Come on, It won't be fun without you." "I want to shoot fireworks with you this year". Of course, I fought back; but when you're pushing pigs, It's not so easy. As I'm being dragged out like a guzzle, my uncle brings out the pack of sparklers. Handing them to us one by one; after that we lit our sparkler. At first, the heat and exploding wave of flares came rushing out, but after a while it slowed, the loud flares turned into small sparks, quietly popping sparks. The long years of fear of harm and burns slowly drifted away, as I gazed into the sparkles, I remembered all the things that I had loved about them, the sparks fluttering in the night, the light like a quiet star shining in the night.

In 2019, years had passed. I've now forgotten about all the fear that I once had. We're at my cousin's place celebrating the festival of light as usual. Standing outside waving sparklers and launching fireworks into the sky. I'm outside in their front yard waving my firework around, pointing it up to the sky. After it burned out, I grabbed the second one and lit it. For some reason, unlike the other fireworks I lit, this one had more push in it after I lit it. Seconds later, my uncle yells at me from afar,

"Thomas! That's not a sparkler!" Not thinking much, I looked back at the firework as it blew up in my face. Briefly blinding me; the explosion scratched and pinched me from my fingers down to my face; ringing my ears from the shock-wave. After the minor explosion; I laughed it off and lit the next one; knowing that even though I was lightly burned, it's okay, because accidents happen all the time.



The Crash

Adan Galvan

Following is a story about a serious accident I experienced when I was younger. In order to write this story, I thought back over the experience and did some research on car accidents and bicycle safety.

I went to a friend's house, then we went outside to bike. My friend stood behind me, with his feet on the pegs of my BMX bike. We decided to bike down the driveway, into the street. Then, I heard a car and from the corner of my eye I saw the car heading towards us.

I tried to brake, my hands gripping on the handbrake handle, but to no success the bike's wheels continued rolling. I decided to jerk the handles of the bike to the left, hoping that it would bring the bike to a stop with a sharp turn. Though I ended up just going forward. Suddenly, I felt the impact of the car hitting us. We were thrown to the ground and all the way to the other side of the street due to the impact my friend flew over me onto the pavement.

Over the last ten years, because more people are riding bikes, accidents involving biking have increased by 37%. And unfortunately, 40% of non-fatal injuries could have been prevented. Though, bicycle-related car accidents have decreased by 41% due to COVID-19, because many people are working from home and not going out as much as they used to. However, there were 846 deaths involving biking in 2019 and about 675 biking deaths in 2020. In 2020, 1 out of 4 of bicycle deaths were hit-and-run accidents. 2020 could have been the year of highest deaths and injuries involving bicycles, if not for the pandemic.

People were not sure if we were both alive seeing our bodies laid on the sidewalk on Ross Street, near my house. I was unconscious for 15 minutes. And when I regained consciousness I looked around, and saw the guy that hit us screaming that he killed me and my friend. My mom recalled that he was screaming,

"Oh my god! I fucking killed them!" I turned around and saw that my friend's face was dripping in blood, it looked like he had a serious head injury. I tried to get up to help my friend out, but I couldn't. I just couldn't stand up no matter how hard I tried because I couldn't feel my legs. From the way my legs were wiggling back and forth, I could tell it was broken, regardless I tried to move myself over anyway. Then I look over to my brothers and my mom. I was in total shock from what was happening to me.

A few minutes later, the paramedics arrive on the scene. They rushed to my friend first because he was bleeding from the head. His injury looked more serious compared to me, who was sitting up and seemingly alert. They brought me a strip of gauze and asked me to hold it on the cut to stop the severe bleeding. However, I ended up using it to wipe the blood as if I was trying to get it clean instead. I just was so out of it, that I didn't know what I was doing.

After aiding my friend, the paramedics got me up and walked me over to the gurney. They placed me on the gurney, and the paramedics rolled me into the ambulance. This was the first time that I had ever been in an ambulance in my entire life. They wrapped me in a blanket and put the oxygen mask on my face, it felt kind of nice. I had a pretty bad cut on my right leg, so they were patching it up to stop the bleeding. I was lucky to be alive because I was not wearing a helmet. At first, I felt really cold, but then as I warmed up, I completely blacked out.

> "I turned around and saw that my friend's face was dripping in blood, it looked like he had a serious head injury."

According to the Bike Helmet Safety Institute, 82.3% of the bicyclists are hit by the front of a vehicle. And out of the 76,032 bicyclists with head/neck injury, 22% wore helmets. The number of helmet use was less common with Hispanics, Blacks, and people over the age of 17. Wearing a helmet significantly reduces severe injuries and even death from a head injury. In bicycle accidents, men often have more severe injuries(spending more time in the hospital than women) and die more often than women. This is because men are less likely to wear helmets than women. Where 21% of men wear them compared to 28% of women. Helmets reduce traumatic brain injuries, brain bleeding, and fractures

to the face.

The ambulance arrived at Children's Hospital in Saint Paul. After being taken down from the ambulance on the gurney, they took me into the emergency room in order to figure out what they needed to do next. Shortly after I got there, I saw that my mom and my cousins had arrived. I could tell that one of my little cousins had been crying (he still talks about today).

All of my family members were sitting there looking very worried. After examining me, they decided that they needed to take me directly into surgery. They ended up telling my family members to leave. My operation was about an hour long. The doctor talked with my mom after the surgery, to talk about all of my problems. After the first surgery to put everything in place, they took me from a recovery room up to a hospital room.

While lying in my hospital room, I was checking out the room and looking out the window. I was slipping in and out of consciousness from all of the medication and I also had a little bit of a concussion. As I was lying there, I remember asking my mom to lift up the blanket, so I could see what my leg looked like. I could feel the machine in my leg, it was used to pump out blood because my leg was very swollen. They had to take a lot of blood out. It was not long after asking my mom to do that when I passed out. My brothers, Juan and Omar, came over that day to the hospital to visit me. It was many days later that I got my stitches out, so they could check the progress of my healing and because the stitches were covered in blood. It was very painful to remove them. I had a lot of really nice nurses and doctors that were taking care of me so I felt very lucky. I also got visits from other staff from the hospital. I was given Legos and tried to build things with my one hand, because the other hand had an IV in it. I did whatever I could to pass the time.

That was only the start of my journey, after 4 surgeries, and almost a year in the hospital, I survived and went home. The doctors told my mother that I was lucky to survive and realistically I would've been dead. But because I weighed more, it actually saved my life. Today, my leg is held together with a plate and many screws. I am very thankful to be here to tell the story. Things could have been much worse.

A bad feeling in my gut

Frida Hilbrich

I wrote this mostly based on my imagination. I did research on robberies and reasons why people rob banks or houses. I thought that adding in something like my character's point of view to the story world would make it more interesting and attention grabbing.

It was just like any other day, but today, I had a bad feeling in my gut. I don't know what this feeling was, I just ignored it and headed to work. Hi, my name is Ashley. I work as a teller back in the city. The thing about the city is that there is more crime and more violence than there is in the suburbs of New York. My job is fairly secure because I sit behind bulletproof glass most of the time and help people with their money and other things like their credit cards.

My job starts at 7:00 am and ends at 5:30 pm. So it's a long day for me, but sometimes my job can be stressful. Today is one of those days. I was sitting in my chair behind the bulletproof glass and I saw a white man come in. He had short brown hair and a shirt that read something that I couldn't see. I watch him with caution because I notice he keeps reaching into his waistband for something. Since he is facing away from me, I notice it is a gun, so I slowly reach my hand down to my lap and feel around for the emergency button that is just under the side of my desk and I press it. I got a message that the police have been notified and are on their way and that they will be here in 5-10 minutes. I continue with my work and continue to monitor this man.

Did you know that the number of handguns used in robberies is 33,296. New York has a robbery rate of 90.6% per 100,000 inhabitants in 2020. Idaho has the lowest rate of robbery in the United states at 9.5% per 100,000 inhabitants in 2020. The highest rate of robbery is in the district of columbia at 332.9% per 100,000 inhabitants in 2020. The entire United States robbery rate stood at 73.9% per 100,000 inhabitants.

I've been living in the loud and busy city of New

York for the past couple of years. You learn to identify when someone is acting suspicious, on a subway car or on the streets you walk on during the day or at night to get from work to your apartment. So I know when someone is acting strangely. The man with the gun in his back pocket is acting fidgety, looking nervous and looks out the window. That's when I get a notification on my computer that the police will be coming in through the backdoor of the bank. A second later the man with the gun walks into the middle of the room and raises the gun and shoots the ceiling, scaring everyone in the bank. People scream and try to run towards the exits, he shoots the ceiling again and everyone stops in fear that they will be the next thing this man shoots.

"A second later the man with the gun walks into the middle of the room and raises the gun and shoots the ceiling...."

"I will start taking hostages if I am not given the money I am owed from this bank!" The man shouts.

Before the man walks to the teller, I send a message to all the tellers that says,

"Give him the money and track it and give the routing number to the police so they can track him. And when he gets arrested, we can rewire and take back the money that we gave him." Then the man walks up to one of the tellers and points his gun at her head through the hole in the glass. "I would like the 5,000 dollars that I am owed in full." He says to the teller in the booth next to me. I gave the woman next to me a look that said, "Do what I suggested and no one will get hurt." She nodded, and I nodded back at her. I sent a message to the police that said, "You should stay hidden from sight and stay outside. If he runs, then we can give them the routing number, so that they can track the purchases from the robber's account." They message back saying, "That works for us."

While this was happening, the woman in the teller in the booth next to me said,

"Can I have the routing number for the account that you want the cash to go into?"

"Why do you need the routing number?" The man with the gun asks the teller.

"We need the routing number to give you the money. If I don't get the routing number I can't give you the money sir." The teller says in a calm voice.

"Ok, the routing number is 43856098716100. Hurry, I gotta get out of here before the police show up." The man said anxiously. The transaction goes through and the man runs out of the bank.

As the man is running down the street, three police cars corner him and arrest him. After they arrest him, the police contact the bank anad say that they can rewire the money the man forcefully took from the bank. After the police interrogated him, apparently he needed the money to pay for medical bills for his daughter, who is sick with some kind of cancer at 6 years old. The police said that he will have to do community service and have an ankle monitor. He can only go to home, work, the hospital, and the community service location. The police asked the bank to check if 5,000 dollars was deposited into his account. The bank said that it never went through. The bank said that they would pay for the man's daughter's treatment and, if the daughter's case relapses, they would pay again. But only as long as he did his community service
with no other crime committed during the time of being monitored for the next 6 months. And if he commits another crime, they would stop all payments to the hospital for his daughter's medical bills.

At first glance, the man who robbed the bank seemed unhinged, but upon second glance, he seemed desperate for the money to help his daughter. Me being the owner of the bank's granddaughter gave me some leeway in giving the man's daughter her treatment that her father couldn't pay for at the moment as he was being monitored and didn't have the money to pay for it.

Academic Struggles

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"I had a headache and my face was burning, all I could do was wish away my stress."

Feeling the Pressure

Guadalupe Dimayuga

This story is one about the grade stress that I experienced throughout middle and high school. In order to write this story, I researched other situations with grade stress, and I recalled what my own experience was like.

I was ecstatic, overjoyed, I was incredibly impressed with myself that I managed to pass all my classes. I watched the houses go by on my way home from school, and for once, I looked forward to getting my report card in the mail. I could imagine myself seeing no N's on my transcript and proudly walking over to my parents to show them what a great job I had done. I couldn't wait any longer though, maybe it was the rush of excitement from getting out of school, or the impatience of waiting for grades to be finalized and receiving them in the mail, but either way, I just had to tell my parents. I wrote out my text, eager to press the send button, "I passed all my classes!! No N's!!" I sent the text and put my phone back in my pocket.

I got no response for the rest of the bus ride but I was ok with that, they were probably just working. As I walked home from my bus stop, I heard a little Ding! from my phone, excitedly, I unlocked my phone: "Nice, Mi'jo." That's all I got in the little green text bubble from my dad. A small bit of my heart dropped, I never really cared for my grades, but not failing any classes was very important to my dad. I was expecting a little more from him since he made it such a big deal before.

I would encounter this sort of interaction with my parents many times again, and so would a lot of other students. No parenting style is perfect, some are better than others, but my parents were overall pretty good. My stress to succeed came mostly from my dad, he had to work a lot to succeed so i don't blame him for wanting me to do the same. It wasn't as obvious from my mom, but all it takes is one parent's high expectations to take effect on a child. He always pushed me to do my best, which was most obvious in soccer, always making it clear how important it was to play well and win.

Pressure to succeed can be in many different fields, but they can all affect each other. High expectations with success often teaches kids that values, learning, improvement, and friends aren't as important as succeeding. It's been proven that when parents tell their kids that it's not enough, or they can do better, kids will usually just feel more stressed the next time, defeating the intention of criticizing them. There are many studies in favor of instilling values in kids, rather than pushing them to succeed. For example; a study from Arizona State University found that kids whose parents valued kindness, performed better in all tests compared to kids whose parents valued success.

I sat in my bed doing work, well at least that's what I pretended to be doing. My dad kept checking in on me to make sure I stayed on task, so I hid my phone behind a bump in my bed sheets and watched YouTube. I wasn't actually enjoying my time though, I couldn't enjoy it with the threat of overdue homework looming over my head. It was a big list to finish, and I had little time to do it; in fact, I had run out of time for most of it. Quarter 2 had ended last Friday and it was already the first Wednesday of quarter 3. I had extensions on some of my important work, but I had given up on it at this point, I never took advantage of extra time and this time was no different. I knew that my dad would be pretty much equally unsatisfied with my grades if I got an N or two more, after all it wasn't straight A's. In my head it made perfect sense to slack off and accept whatever came. Although, that came a lot sooner than I had originally anticipated.

"Kids! dinner is ready!" My dad exclaimed from the kitchen, I sluggishly got up and made my way to the dining room. I wasn't very hungry but my dad's cooking was always great so I was cool with having to get up from bed. "I can swerve myself," I told my dad, who already had grabbed a bowl.

"What do you mean? This is for me," he said with a chuckle,"whaaat? You weren't serving mee??" I said, playing off my light-hearted entitlement. We sat down at the table and it went well for a while, until my dad brought up my grades.

He asked me how they would look, and I, not one to tell a full lie, told him that it was up to how the teachers graded my late summatives. This was of course true, I just left out the part about how I wasn't turning some in. His facial expression hardened, or maybe it softened, I really couldn't tell, it was kind of in between but either way I could tell that's not what he wanted to hear. Then he revealed why,

"Your crew leader emailed me. I thought you told me that it was going ok." He delivered it with his

signature: I'm not mad but I'm going to make sure you understand how disappointed I am, tone of voice. "You're in 9th grade now, this is serious and it's going to stay on your transcript forever. You're gonna have to take summer school." He switched to Spanish to make his point clear.

It worked because now I started to regret slacking off these past few days. I didn't respond, I just kept my head down and took my plate to the sink. I had lost my appetite, even though I really liked the Albóndigas. I walked to my room, closed my door with just enough strength to show I was upset, and sank into my mattress. All I wanted was to disappear, and leave all my stress behind.

School has been a struggle for me for a long time. I have diagnosed ADHD and depression, which are the main contributors to my bad relationship with school. My parents divorced in the summer before 7th grade, and my life got so much worse from there. My depression worsened to the point of suicidal thoughts, and I had to continue with my regular activities as if nothing was wrong. Of course, my depression wasn't very obvious most of the time, it seemed pretty normal to me. Stuff like low motivation, low pleasure, bad sleep and eating habits, stuff like that. Now I've come to notice a pattern that my quarters followed: I would get behind, stress out about being behind, get sad that I was behind, rush at the end of the quarter, and feel terrible when I didn't meet expectations. My depression always dipped at the end of quarters, and not just a little bit. I had come to feel like grades were everything, I used to get a little sad, but now if I failed a class, I would feel like a complete failure and often contemplate if living was even worth it. I was off and on meds, nothing seemed to work. ADHD meds, Depression meds, a combination, either way the cycle always continued.

I was crying crying, this was 3 months of stress, sadness, and disappointment all coming out at once. I cried for a time with both my parents, a time of innocence with all my friends in elementary school, I cried for all the effort I put into this quarter, all the time I spent stressing over summatives, I cried for the years of soccer I threw away, and even the bad school lunch I had that day. Everything came out through sobs and tears, until there wasn't anything else. After what felt like an hour of crying, my red-puffy-faced self turned my head out of my now-wet pillow and looked at my dad. "What do you want?" I said in between sighs. He was sitting on the end of my bed, just looking at me.

"¿Por qué lloras mi'jo?" He asked me, I thought it was obvious why I was crying, but I guess not. I told him everything about my grades and mental health. There wasn't anything he could say that would affect me more than my own disappointment, so nothing bad could come from telling him.

I started off calm but he wouldn't listen. I told him how much his pressure was weighing on me, but he kept giving me his reasons instead of acknowledging my pain. After a while, my headache and emotion grew into anger, and I started to yell at him. My eyes red and my nose runny, I thought yelling at him would make him understand how much pain school was bringing to me. My voice started to give out as he told me to stop yelling, but I kept going even with every other word being lost to a break in my voice. I told him how much I regretted living, and how I wish he was a competent parent. His eyes wide and trained on mine, he slammed my door shut on the way out; making sure that his own frustration wasn't taken out on me.

"I had a headache and my face was burning, all I could do was wish away my stress."

I started to cry again, this time out of frustration towards my dad. That same argument had happened multiple times before, but he never seemed to get the message. My sobs were more like yells, but this time I let my emotions out into my room. The sounds echoed throughout the house all the way down to the basement, that way my dad knew I was still mad and would be for a while. I finally gave up and curled myself up into my bed, I pulled the sheets over my head to block the light and I tried to sleep. That wasn't going to happen though, I had a headache and my face was burning, all I could do was wish away my stress.

COVID hit during the 3rd quarter of that year, so I didn't end up getting to prove myself during my 9th grade year. Distanced learning was hard for a lot of students, barely anyone I knew thrived during the year at home. Depression was very common, and even a lot of introverted people missed people. Many surveys

of students and studies have been done, and almost all point to COVID having a negative impact on student's grades.
I have my own evidence towards this; not only did I go from mostly B's and a few A's, to C's and NP's, but also my PSAT score in 2021 (11th grade) was in the 95th percentile of 2021 scores, compared to only being in the 89th percentile of the past 3 years; evidence towards COVID at least rusting student's skills. Despite this, I got all A's and one B in both my 1st and 2nd quarters of 11th grade.

Everyone was a little late to the google meet, but that's cool, I was snuggled up in a blanket and I had my phone. My mom was the first to join, followed by my crew leader Rebekah, then my dad, and finally my older sister. We stayed quiet for a little, as student led conferences typically go. "Hi everyone" said Rebekah, she was cheerful as usual but no doubt tired after hours of SLC's. "Hello, welcome to my SLC. I'm gonna present my slideshow now, I hope it works." I said awkwardly, not really knowing how to start. I was actually kind of excited for this SLC, I felt proud of my work for once and I even made the slideshow look pretty.

"Sooo, here's my 11th grade SL- uh, first semester SLC" I went through my grades, reflected on my goals, talked about why I succeeded, things I was proud of, and I was done; I did skip the HOWL's section because i thought that section was kinda useless.
"You guys have any comments/questions?" I asked once I finished. Surprisingly no one said anything, I was kind of expecting some wahoo's and you did great!'s but everyone just stayed muted. "I must've done great leaving you all speechless like that." I joked, trying to quell the silence. I did find some humor in the silence, not all disappointment. My dad finally piped up and said

"Well, you just did good this semester, nice job Mi'jo, i'm proud of you." It felt pretty good, finally meeting his standards. It wasn't the eureka moment I was expecting, but I had expected it to be a little dull. Rebekah and my mom said a few more things, and just like that, my SLC was over. I got back into bed, content with how I showed off my great 1st semester, as well as being able to find my own happiness in my grades without anyone's approval.

I went into 11th grade with the mindset that I needed to prove that my bad grades were only from having to work from distance learning, and that I was really a much better student than my transcript had shown. This was working for a while, but I was still lacking in motivation. At some point I realized that I really only needed to prove myself, to myself. This was what I was lacking for all the previous years; I had been trying so incredibly hard to make my dad proud, that I was never allowing myself to be proud with the improvement I was making.
Going back to my transcript from middle school, I realized that my grades weren't really all that bad. I was passing most of my classes with B's and A's even in 7th and 8th grade. I was thinking I failed a lot more classes than I actually did. All this time, I had been so clouded by my disappointment in myself that I always thought that I must have been failing half my classes back then.
When I made the goal of good grades truly mine, I really started to flourish. Of course this was stunted by a worldwide pandemic, but I got there eventually. I never got through grade stress, I'm even stressing over them as I write this. All I did was become more independent in my schoolwork, making sure that I never let myself be affected by other's expectations. It's ironic that by doing that, I, in turn, exceeded their expectations, but that's my main source of pride anymore, that's the difference.

Isolation high school

Samantha O'Hara Graff

The following is an account of a particularly hard time in my life. I had just moved schools and was learning how to adjust in a completely new world. In order to write this story I had to reflect back on the challenges I had faced, I thought back to all the emotions I had felt and put into words all the things I never got to say.

There was just silence, the only thing I could hear was the overwhelming sound of my heart pounding. The hair on the back of my neck stood up, so I knew people were watching me. Finally I had managed to take a deep breath and step into my first class, gym. Quickly I started scanning the room, hoping to find a group to belong

too. Looking around I could see that everyone had already found their groups, they were all huddled into different sections and catching up on the year we had all missed in quarantine. There in the center of the gym I stood alone, the giant room felt cold and dim. There were no familiar faces that I so desperately searched for. I felt sick, I quickly ran into the locker room bathroom, my mind started racing with thousands of things I hadn't thought of. I was a stranger here for the first time in four years. I was not known for anything I had done, In a way that was sort of comforting but I couldn't ignore the fact that something felt wrong. That was my first day attending Henry Sibley Highschool.

"I left in worse shape then I was when I first walked in, I had never felt more alone in my life."

OWL and Sibley are two very different schools. The size difference contributes a lot to the experience you'd receive at either school, OWL has 476 students compared to Sibley which has 1,468. OWL allows you to connect with your teachers on a more personal level which gives the school a very comforting environment, and gives the students more support in their lives. Sibley is a very education based environment, It's set up almost like a factory. Teachers barely remember your name, and everything is based and judged off of the grade you recieve and the large amount of work you are assigned daily.

A normal day at Sibley would be seeing students in the halls or classes crying and a large line outside of the guidance counselors office. At OWL Having a hard day you can quickly walk down to the office and talk to someone, at Sibley you'd have to make an appointment a week in advance. Sibley offers a wide range of classes to choose from, which is great for experience, But the teacher will always make or break those classes. In two of my classes in particular the teachers had made the environment very uncomfortable, by talking about their spouse leaving them and even telling the students that trigger warnings on very serious subjects didn't "matter". While at OWL the teachers always went above and beyond to make their classes interesting and engaging.

I walked out of class as I got into the hallway. I could feel the tears begin to flood my eyes. I went to the counselors office needing someone to talk to but as I got there I was told I had to wait a week. I left in worse shape then I was when I first walked in, I had never felt more alone in my life.

I had visited OWL earlier in the fall. Walking into the building I could already feel the tears that had started to build up. I remember looking around and thinking, it was all still here. For months it had felt like maybe I had made it all up, the community meetings, my teachers, the blue colored walls. But there it all was, untouched just like I had remembered it. Walking into the office I had felt something I couldn't explain, it wasn't until months later that I had figured out what it was. That day I had talked with some of my old teachers and had discussed with my principal to move back. Leaving OWL I felt that some part of me that I had lost long ago came back, for that brief moment I had forgotten about the fear and loneliness that had consumed my life. I had found out days later that I was on the waiting list and probably would not be able to return until my senior year, I felt the loneliness creep its way back into my mind.

I stayed at Sibley the next couple of months. Wishing that at some point I would get that call saying I got in. But as weeks turned into months I slowly started to lose hope. I found myself trying to find similarities between Sibley and OWL in a way it made me feel a bit better. But that only lasted so long until I had to face the fact that it was not OWL. Those were not the teachers that I was excited to see everyday, and these were not the classes that I knew every answer too. I was in a constant battle with myself trying to remember that I had loved school once, but every time it got pushed down by the feeling there was no use. Who cared if I graduated anymore? I was going to graduate alone anyways. there would be no teachers to cheer me on, or students who I could give a friendly smile to as I walked across the stage. I was a nobody.

It was a Thursday night, and I was sitting on the red chair in my living room when my dad received a call from my mom. I heard my mom say "Wait I want to see her face when we tell her," my mind started to be filled with questions. That was when I had found out I had gotten back into OWL. I was hit with the feeling I

had felt that day in the office, I felt safe. A feeling I had almost forgotten, but there it was in all of its light and warmth. The war I had been battling in my mind was finally over. I went to figure out my classes the next day and returned on Monday. Walking through the hallways I remember how I used to be so afraid of the way people thought of me, one word could have shattered me. But now no one knew who I was, at least not who I had become. I had made it through the countless sleepless nights and never ending days. Something I had wanted to feel for so long was now a reality, I survived.

Jumbled Letters

Lily Barnard

The following is my experience dealing and growing up with Dyslexia. To complete this story, I interviewed my mom and researched Dyslexia. I also got help from my English teacher Leo.

It all began in the middle of fourth grade. I was in my advisory room. It had desks on one side, and a big open area for reading on the other side. It was on the highest floor of the building. When you first walk into the homeroom, you notice the colorful walls, no designs, just lots of colors. I went to sit down at the table I usually sit at, everyday. The teacher started class. He walked around the classroom, giving students green packets. He told us he would give us a new green packet every week, from now on until the rest of the year. He gave me a green packet, and walked away from me.

I started to look at the packet. It had wordbanks, and stuff related to geography on it. The first thing I thought to myself was, what does this mean? I didn't understand what one word meant on the packet. I looked around the room at the other students, and saw them working peacefully. I didn't see one student that was struggling with this packet. I started to panic. We didn't have a lot of time to complete this and I didn't even start the packet. I started to get frustrated and sweaty. No matter how hard I tried to understand the words, I just couldn't. So I stopped working on it.

Later that day after school, I walked home. I opened the door loudly, and slammed it as hard as I could. I stomped up the stairs, and slammed my door to my room. Then my mom opened the door, and walked into the room. I pulled out my green packet, and threw it across the room. I was angry at myself for not knowing what to do. I was frustrated, and confused. I sat there in my room, crying. I felt like I was to dumb to go to school. I had no idea what was happening to me. I didn't understand why school was so hard for me, and so easy for everyone else.

"I was angry at myself for not knowing what to do. I was frustrated, and confused. I sat there in my room, crying. I felt like I was too dumb to go to school."

Dyslexia is a common learning disability that affects 1 in 5 people. Dyslexia makes it very difficult to read. Those without it use the left side of their brain for language. Those with it use the right side of the brain for language. That's what makes it so difficult for dyslexics. The right side of the brain is organized differently. Dyslexics can sometimes get words mixed up too. They can switch the letters around in a word, and say something different. Or they can read a specific word perfectly, then see it a minute later, and it's like they haven't even seen that word in their life. It's completely unrecognizable. It is also not uncommon for people with dyslexia to have trouble with math facts. It's hard for them to remember simple facts. 68% finish school with a diploma, and 19% dropout of high school.

At the beginning of summer after fourth grade, we still didn't know why school was so hard for me. My mom tried to get me on track with my reading. She wanted me to read 100 books by the end of the summer, to make my reading better. I picked up the same book multiple times, and couldn't remember the words.

Whenever I had to read, I would read in the kitchen, living room, bedroom, or the front porch. I even had to read when we went camping. I was in the backseat of the car, with a bunch of books stacked together next to me. I remember feeling drained from the inside out. I kept asking, "How many more Mom"?
If I read all the books, my parents said they would give me a reward. I don't even remember that I got a prize, I just remember the pain and suffering part of it.

At this point, my mom knew something was definitely off. She took me to a place that gives people a bunch of tests. I did a lot of testing that day, and then weeks later papers came back. It was now, when I was officially diagnosed with dyslexia. After that my mom signed me up to go to a place every Monday and Wednesday after school. I was taken to a place called Learn to Learn. It was a private tutoring center that used the Barton reading and spelling system. The way they taught reading was different. They called it Wilson. I got set up with the same tutor each session. Each session was a few hours. I walked into the building, and went to sit down at the desk we usually meet at. My tutor, Connie, set out tiles in front of me. The tiles had one letter on each tile. She put them together to make words out of them. Then she told me about all these rules I had to learn about. I had to learn to look at a word and know when to split it up. I had to figure out where to put the vowels when I split the words up. As I was getting ready to leave Learn to Learn, I read stories more often and eventually answered questions about the story. By the end, I was ready to leave. I could read well enough.

As the years went by, a lot changed. I went to a school called Groves Academy. It was a school for students with learning disabilities. School was still hard, but it made it easier to be in a school with teachers that had knowledge about dyslexia. After that I went to another school in 9th grade, and towards the end the pandemic happened. Then I switched schools again in 10th grade. The pandemic made school even harder for me. I was at a new school, without having met my teachers in person. Day after day I sat in my kitchen alone. No social interactions, and no help. I was getting tired of doing school. It was so hard, and it took a lot out of me just to pay attention in class. Then I began to have very dark thoughts. I started to have suicide thoughts, and I cut everyone off if they tried to talk to me. I thought anything was better than this. I was tired from the pandemic, going to school, and most of all having to deal with dyslexia. As I hit 11th grade, things got a little easier because we were back in person. I started to take more responsibility for my schoolwork when 11th grade started.

Today, I feel like I have most things figured out. I'm still working on getting into that routine, but I have a system now. I have a system for school that's working. I know that school will always be a struggle for me, and that there is nothing I can do to change that. I can't fix it, but I am learning to deal with it better. I've started writing in my planner more often, and I put post - it notes on my desk at home now. Each post - it note is for a different class. I color coded them, and have different sizes. I also have an ADHD coach too. I meet with her once a week, and she's been helping me everyday. She helps me get organized with my schoolwork, and teaches me how to control myself when I am dozing off in class. In 9th grade, I got really close with one of my teachers. He looked at me in a way that none of my other teachers have. Then shortly after that, he left the school. He is the one that has helped me push through the hard times. He inspires me, and whenever I think of him now, I keep remembering to keep fighting even though it is hard. All these things have helped me push through. It's been hard, but my payoff is that I am on track for graduating.I know now that dyslexia is not a disease or a curse. It can't be cured, and it is awful sometimes. It has made me stronger though. I still have those suicide thoughts sometimes. But I keep reminding myself that if I survived all of that, then a year and four months left of high school isn't such a big deal.

Kicked Out

Ekin Vang

This is a story about some difficulties I faced in my life earlier in high school. In order to write this piece I thought back over my own experiences, and also did some research on adolescence.

It was the middle of the school year, nearing the end of the quarter. I struggled to get out of my bed to make it in time before the school bus leaves. About every other day, I woke up late and tried to find another way to school because I didn't want to cause my parents more trouble. I'd either call a friend to drop me off at school and when that didn't work, I'd take the city bus and be hours late. Getting through the day was painful and exhausting. I took naps in class because at home I'm not allowed to take them, so I got scolded by both the teachers and my parents. I managed to pass in my classes, even though I missed half the classes and with all the naps I took throughout school. I knew my parents weren't happy with anything I did, but I still tried my best to get through every single day while taking care of my sister. On a Friday afternoon, I arrive home and the first thing my dad tells me to do is pack my things. I was being kicked out.

"The only parent that said goodbye to me while I was walking out was my mother, who I ignored. The only people I wanted to say bye to were my only friends that I never thought I'd see again."

Teenage years are the first point in life where people have to think for themselves. It's a time where they face adult responsibilities but are treated as inferior. Around 20% of adolescents develop depression and only 30% get treatment for it. Suicide rates in adolescents are also 12 times more likely than an adult and are the third leading cause of death for adolescents. Depression also causes adolescents to abuse substances and do worse overall.

I packed my things in a hurry and got into the car of another family member later in the day. The only parent that said goodbye to me while I was walking out was my mother, who I ignored. The only people I wanted to say bye to were my only friends that I never thought I'd see again. It was a long car ride over to my grandpa's house, a person I despised because he was just like my father. During the ride, I messaged my closest friends and said my last goodbye to them. It puzzled each of them and they were distraught, just as much as I was. My last goodbye to them was over a simple text message, and the only comfort I found was the words through the screen. I felt alone and betrayed, but I couldn't let a single word or tear out.

Getting kicked out of the house can significantly affect the person in negative ways. Another thing that can negatively impact a person is changing where they live or go to school multiple times during childhood. In a research study focusing on how housing matters, they discovered that changing the housing and school impacts cognitive and social-emotional functioning. The study says that the timing of the moving can affect just one function or both. During my 12 years of school, I've been to 5 different residencies and 11 different schools. Every time I change schools, I have to learn how to develop a new personality and a new way of adapting to the new environment.

After arriving at my new home, I quickly unpacked my things and hid in my new bed. I wanted to be alone and lay in my bed forever. Two weeks passed and I finally had to attend my new school. I had a rough start, having no friends and being a new kid halfway through the year, but people slowly introduced themselves to me and quickly made friends. I thought things would shape up for me but when things were getting better, Covid hit everything like a truck and sent everything into lockdown. I was now truly alone. I had no friends from St. Paul or at my new school and the family that I trusted threw me out of the house. After a couple months of moping around with no direction. I finally had enough motivation to step out of my zone and try to shape up my life again.

Covid was and still is a relatively new virus that affected the economy. It sent almost everyone into a panic and caused a worldwide panic. Covid caused everyone and everything to go into a lockdown and changed the way people lived. It also caused a major

change on how schools functioned. Everything went from in person to virtual. Virtual schooling was new to everyone. Teachers and students alike both had trouble adjusting to it and caused a mass amount of students to do poorly during those years. The lockdowns caused almost everybody to lose out on social life, making more students become introverted and slowed down learning.

I needed to fix up my daily life, which comprised going to class and lying in bed. I had a lot of free time, so I started exercising and cooking. Exercising made me feel active and cooking made me feel healthier. I could keep it up for the rest of the year and I was at the peak of my life. I could go back to my old house, but I wasn't sure if I wanted to. I wanted to stay in a better environment and continue living the life I loved. I received more support here than my old home and that also made me want to stay. Even with all the reasons to stay, I concluded that I was running away from my problems, so I went back to fix the things I messed up. I'm still undergoing constant changes with every additional problem that occurs, but I want to prove to myself that, no matter what, I can get through it.

Toxic Friendship

Emily Yang

When I was in 8th grade, I had this friend who meant the world to me, but no matter how many negative things happened, I just refused to acknowledge any of it. I think what made it difficult to realize this was because I've never had to deal with something like this. It was an uneasy time in my life and for the longest time and it was hard to open up about what happened. After 3 years, the healing process is almost done and the past is a learning experience. Whenever 'she' or 'her' is written in italics, I'm referring to the person who was my best friend.

I hear a knock on the door during the middle of english class, 3rd period, and that's when I felt my heart drop to the white tiled floor. Anxiety built up inside of me for the past week, wanting to get this very moment over with. Today was March 28th, 2015.

"Can I take out this student?" The security guard ask the teacher with a monotone voice and points to me. Everyone looks my way as I get up from my seat in the middle of the room. Was I in trouble? I'm sure everyone thought that.

We walked to the long dim stairwell down to the assistant principal's office. My hands shook inside my gray sweatshirt and my heart pounds as the security guard walks by my side. Only ten minutes passed since the security guard had last knocked and took Her to the office. I don't want to talk to Her face to face, because the words that she could not tell me face to face were all written in a group chat. The security guard opens the glass door to the office and I can sense that something could go wrong.

Her brown double braided hair and purple glasses are the first thing I see next to the open door, then it was the assistant principal inside the little room with single window, white walls, and one empty seat. She sits in the black chair and waits for me to tell my side of the story, and I knew that whatever I had to say, she might not agree.

It's been about a month since things started to slowly crumble in what seemed like the perfect friendship. I had a feeling for a while now that things would never be the same as it had been before. I didn't feel like I could be myself and always had to ask Her if I could do thing in my personal life outside of school. It even came to a point that I realized that I was indirectly bullying another person because She didn't like that person. I look back on it now and know that doing so, it was the wrong decision to make.

The week before hand at lunch, it was just Her and I at the table in complete silence. I had the ability to leave days earlier, but I didn't know if I should or if I could. I didn't think that I would ever take that chance to leave, because that was how much this friendship meant to me. I wanted to leave and eventually I did. Staring at the tan table, black lunch tray, and the cranberry walls, I was sick and tired of it all. It took everything inside myself to take that next step out of the toxic friendship and not sit with Her at lunch. I was trapped in a cell called "friendship". It's a dark place where I drown in my lost feelings and thoughts of regret. Deep and cold, I keep swimming and swimming in the frozen pond only to be pulled back down again into nothing.

There are many ways a friendship can fall apart,

especially during middle school and high school. About 84% of females and 75% of males have been through toxic friends at some point in their life. The signs to a toxic friendship can be subtle, but can be a very big impact on your life later on in the friendship. You might change how you act in a negative way. Not being able act like your genuine self around others, your stress might go up, and your mental health may go down.

During this time in middle school, I felt mentally drained all the time because I just couldn't let this friendship go no matter what wrong the both of us had done. We didn't meet eye to eye in group projects in school, anything in our own personal lives, or even being honest with each other. It came to a breaking point where secrets and lies put both of our safety at risk and that this couldn't go any further.

The assistant principal asks for my side of the story of how all this drama started. It was a simple question, but there were so many answers that could've been said; So many things raced through my mind because She was going to hear the unwanted truth of what I had to say. I stated that we hadn't spoken in quite some time, how I felt lately about the two of us and our friendship. There was too much damage that happened during the last few months that I refused to try and fix the unfixable.

20 minutes was all it took in that little room to know that I would not be able to fix our friendship this time. I knew everything that was right and what was wrong in our conversation. She avoided direct answers to questions and avoided anything that put the blame on her.

The bell rings and it's time for lunch. She leaves the office first, then moments after I follow to lunch. I'm disappointed in how this meeting went, because many things were not said that should've been said. My friend, Renae comes up to me in the lunch line and tells me,

"There's a rumour going on about you," she whispers to me, worried as ever, "She's mad at you for what you did," and what I had done was tell the truth about the toxic matters in our friendship that was making me almost lose all sanity. I told my mom, then I told my crew leader about what was happening in the shadows of my quiet life. She had told people that I called some kid a very nasty name, something I wouldn't even think of saying because that's not who I am. People didn't buy into what she was saying, because they also knew who I was as a person, but even then it still broke me.

Renae and I sit down at the lunch table in the crowded cafeteria. My friend noticed that there was a lot on my mind, but she reassured me that everything would be



okay. I debate and thought for a while, wondering what the most important things are. It was like being stuck on the edge of a cliff. Should I keep the weight that may cause me to fall, or drop it and save myself?

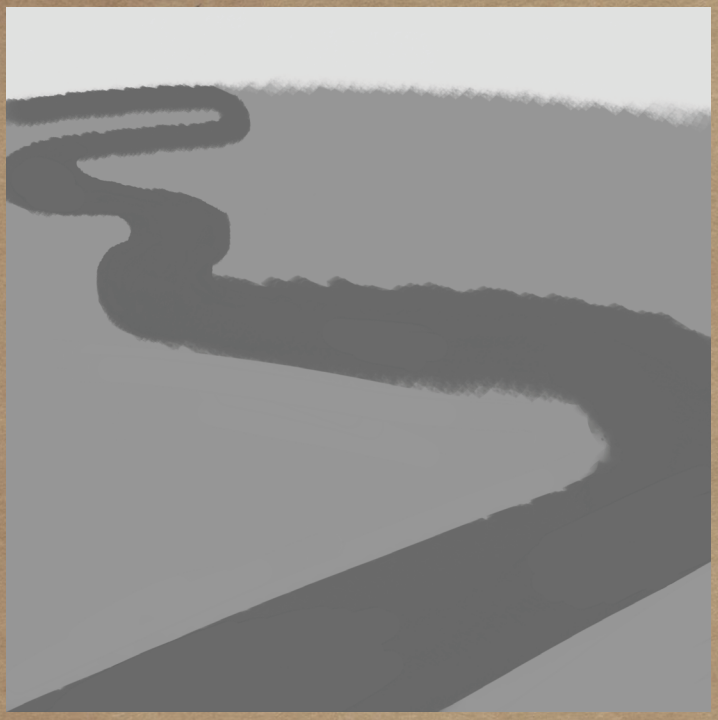
I remember Her and I used to have this app. It was a messaging app, and I remember in this app She had told me that She was talking to this guy from across the world. She wanted me to talk to him too, I didn't know why. I clearly remember telling her no, because I knew that I wasn't supposed to talk to strange people I don't know, but she just kept pushing on and on until she put me into a chat. It all started out innocent like you would think. He would say hi and I would say hi. He started to ask questions that I don't remember and I would give vague answers, but suddenly he left the chat. I specifically told Her that if he were to ever try to talk to me privately, I wouldn't respond. He wrote to me that my parents couldn't know that we had been talking because he was older and I was underage. He said it

would be a secret between the two of us. Right away I blocked him on the app.
When I told Her about it, She just shrugged it off when I told Her that it was not okay. She said that I didn't understand. I guess talking to strangers helped Her with Her depression and suicidal thoughts. For a while I knew that She had those types of thoughts and She told me to never tell anyone about it. I listened when I shouldn't. I should've said something sooner. I've never had someone close to me think like that before. I was lost.
It was February 2, 2015. I had gotten a text from Her. It said that there were police at her house. She had tried to kill herself. It was text after text saying that it was my fault that She was like this and that I didn't care that She tried to do that to herself. My mom told me before hand to not discuss anything with Her. I sobbed for hours thinking about what did I do to make Her want to turn against me like this. I was scared, so scared, because I didn't want Her to blame me for Her close call. She put all this guilt and anger on my shoulders, all of the things that She had done to Herself, She put the blame onto me. This was when I told everything to my mom about the toxicity of the friendship. The principal was notified about the situation and that's how the meeting with the AP occurred. I knew that I needed to stand up for myself before I followed the same path she did.

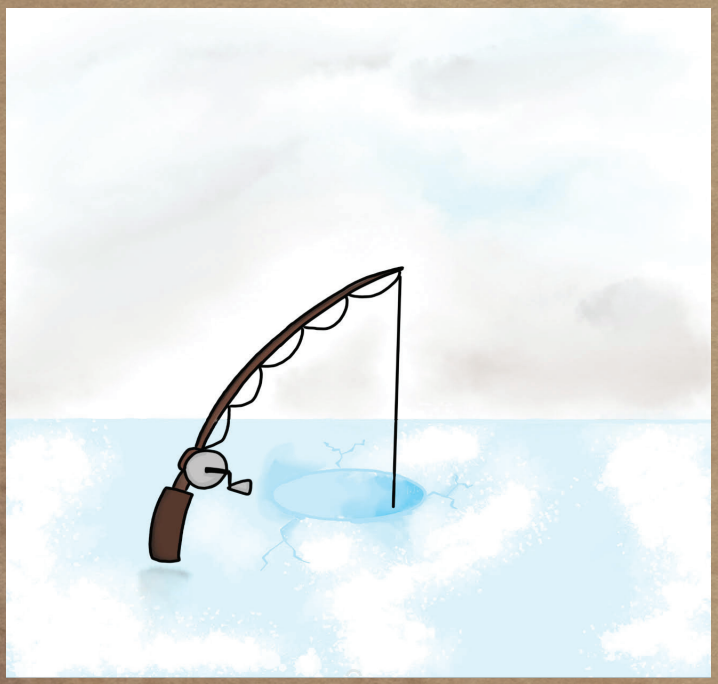
A month or so after this meeting took place. I found out that She moved schools. I didn't know how to feel for the longest time. Having that physical separation from Her might have been what saved me from falling. Although the initial event only took place over a couple of months, its taken 3 years to process all that has happened in the past. Through the three years after this event, I've found people that I can really connect with and call my real friends. They were there for me when She never was. I will not be one to be silent anymore.
To this day, I still wish that things had gone better in this situation. Saying something first before someone gets hurt sooner would be what I would do. Making friends are hard to do and trusting them is even harder to do. I try my best to see the best in the people around me, whether it be inside school or out. Knowing who my true friends are is the most important thing to me, because I know that I can trust them the most.











"Army General Shwe Maung said, 'In twenty years you will only be able to find Karen people in a museum,' as he walked on our Karen flag."