



# **overture**

literary magazine

winter 2016 | mountains and molehills

---

# OVERTURE

WINTER 2016 | MOUNTAINS AND MOLEHILLS

---

The winter 2016 theme of "Mountains and Molehills" is our take on a classic idiom that represents taking a minor issue and drastically inflating it. This theme refers to exaggeration and all the possibilities that can spawn from spinning our own dramatic tales out of unimportant details. This issue, our writers and artists were asked to explore the world of creation, drawing their inspiration from seemingly insignificant everyday matters; not only does this theme urge our staff to not turn a blind-eye to these trivial details, it inspires our writers/artists to turn them into colorful, over the top, and vividly imaginative works.





---

# CONTENT

---

## Prose & Poetry

EVERYTHING // Xinglin Li	1
CALCULATION PROCESS - ENGINEER // Kevin Plunkett	4
MY ROTTEN LIFE // Kayla Chen	5
CONTROL// Stella Huang	7
TWO LIVES CHANGED// Marissa Dai	9
THE ANDROID // Suphala Nibhanupudi	12
GONE: PART ONE // Alisa Lu	15
FUNERALS // Nevin Thombre	16
THE MAN AND HIS GOLD // Bennie Chang	17
CODE RED // Nikhil Narasimhan	18

## Artwork

EVENING SNACK // Saanvi Shreesha	20
----------------------------------	----

# Everything

They came whenever they pleased. But the day they took everything, when time ran out and locked me in their vice-like clutches, they came at the happiest of times.

Dad was home from work. The joyful laughs of my sister and brother rang through the air as Mom cooked another delicious meal, the scent wafting to my nose; I could almost taste it on my tongue. I was laughing along with my siblings. The atmosphere was merry. Happy. Carefree.

The feeling of the holidays.

They announced their arrival the way only they could: the door screamed in protest before collapsing inside with a *boom!* that shuddered through the eerie silence that had fallen. And there they were. Clad in their black clothes and armed to the teeth with deadly weapons, they filed in through the doorframe one by one, their large, hulking forms blocking out the colors of the setting sun bleeding gracefully together across the sky.

It was so strange, seeing people who brought disasters in my joyful and cozy home; they were like ebony ink staining a beautiful painting. I watched as the ink spread further, a relentless tide of black, stopping only a few feet away from me— because they wanted to. The laughter ceased abruptly. Mother rushed towards us and Dad's relaxed form stiffened. Even the fire seemed to have become quieter, more subdued, in the sneering face of death and desperation.

The entire room's temperature plummeted and cold snaked up my spine as the wind gushed in and the uncomfortable cold of death—the cold of a corpse— drifted in with them, saturating the air and making it hard to breath.

*There's still more time. There has to be.*

They stared at me, their charcoal eyes emotionless and cold. I shrank against my mother. Another blast of cold wind shook my body and I retreated deeper into her comforting warmth and shadow.

*Please, I pleaded in my head. Please don't let them take me.*

“What are you doing here?” Dad asked, his voice shaking with rage and beneath that, fear. “Didn't I tell you she's nothing special?”

His fear became mine, paralyzing my bones and chilling my blood.

*Please.*

The man at the front leered, his face contorting. “Why should we believe you? Perhaps it hasn't shown itself yet.” His voice was smooth as silk but every syllable sounded like a blade against flesh and bone.

I shook my head desperately, shriveling under the dark, hungry glares of the men. *I'm nothing special. Nothing special. Leave me be!*

“We can smell it,” added someone else at the leader's side. “I'm sure you do too.”

*Smell what?*

“Hand her over and perhaps you'll get to live,” the leader suggested, grinning cruelly, showing too white teeth. I saw their hands collectively inch towards one of the many daggers and scims and swords strapped to their waist to form a lethal, metallic dress.

My blood chilled. *No.*

I knew I should move. I knew I should volunteer. But I sat, frozen, staring at them.

The man advanced towards... towards my younger sister. My heart jumped into my throat and stilled.

“You. Stop. Right. There,” Dad hissed, moving to stand between the three of us huddling together and the man, his face a image of pure desperation, fury and dread.

My muscles went taut, and I sucked in a breath— cold, suffocating air rushed in— as he prowled forward until he was a within a feet from Dad. “Get out of my way, *peasant*.”

Dad’s lips peeled back in a snarl. “*Try me.*”

Those thick, unforgiving eyebrows flicked up and he smiled. “Well... you asked for it.”

A flash of metal, a choking sound, and Dad was slumped onto the ground, throat slit from ear to ear in a bloody smile below his now-frozen lips. I watched as the light faded out of his eyes.

And I screamed, shock and fury and grief all clashing into one volatile mess.

“Now, now,” the man soothed, smoothly sheathing his sword in one fluid motion. “You don’t have to scream. Come with us, and everything will be just fine.”

I didn’t trust him; I didn’t trust the look in his eyes—those of a viper, as if it could see straight into my soul and know exactly where to bite with those venomous fangs to bring me crashing down, filled with cunning and a love for violence. But I couldn’t shake my head either, with Dad’s corpse staring up at me, his face and eyes blank but I saw, through a haze of tears, I saw there a kind of pleading. Dad didn’t stand a slip of a chance against just one of them; there was an entire squad behind him, waiting and ready. If I shook my head, none of us were going to see another morning, or the sun or the moon again.

I glanced at the door, hoping to see the dying sun’s rays. There was nothing, only more and more of them. My chest seized in panic; my heart stuttered into a sprint. How many were there? Were any of us going to live?

Maybe. The three of us. Maybe we could crawl out of this alive, at the end.

Yet I couldn’t force myself to say just one word: *Yes*.

*Say yes.*

*Shake your head.*

*Yes.*

*No.*

I couldn’t. Couldn’t, couldn’t, couldn’t.

Another flash of that dreaded metal and my younger sister went limp in my arms.

*NO! No, no, no, no, no. NO!*

My bones became stone, my blood became ice. My entire body shut down. No.

“How about now?” he purred.

I stared in mute horror at the red going down his blade. It trickled down the pristine, gleaming surface, as fast as water but it looked so thick, so filled with hate and resentment, of anger and rage, of violence and death, it seemed poisoned. It was as if her blood was blaming me for her death, for letting her die. My stomach clenched.

*Go*, encouraged the selfless part of me who wanted to save what was left of my family.

*Stay*, insisted the logical part, the cowardly, the selfish.

*They’ll die*, the selfless voice protested.

*I’ll die.*

*I will be saved.*

*They will be saved.*

*Stand.*

*Sit.*

***Stand.***

Legs quaking as if the very world beneath my feet was shaking in grief, I rose to my feet. Mom sucked in a breath. “*Charisma,*” she nearly begged, making my name sound like a prayer for mercy.

I didn’t turn around to look at her. I couldn’t. I couldn’t see her pale face, hugging my baby brother to her side. I would break. And I wouldn’t be able to walk.

One step.

Another.

*I can do this.*

“Charisma!” Mom shrieked, the pleading in her voice crystal clear.

I didn’t turn, even though icy tears slid down my cheeks and I could almost see it on Mom’s face in my mind.

*Halfway there.*

*“Please.”*

A choking sound. And all went silent.

Not being able to stop myself anymore, I whirled around, my breath catching in my throat. And suffocating me.

She wasn’t pleading me to come back. She was pleading me to *help*.

Her throat was slit exactly like Dad and my sister. And one of *them* was holding my baby brother like a trophy.

I knew exactly where my brother would go, the places that would freeze those eyes, harden his heart, encase him in cruel, eternal ice. He would become a part of their group, trained and sent to fight in the wars they waged against other of the same groups. He would have to serve at their hands forever, bound. He would become a monster, with no conscience. A killer.

Fury erupted through me, staining my vision a sickening red. I lunged, not at the leader who beckoned me with an almost feral smile, but at my baby brother.

The world flashed by and my hand... so close, so, so *close*.

The dreaded, ice cold grip of the leader fastened on my arm; my skin crawled.

Then he was out of my reach— as the man stepped smoothly aside— and dragged out the door. Gone. Something torn away by the wild and ruthless wind of fate.

*No, no, no, no, no, no.*

I repeated that single word in my head as I was dragged out the door behind him. As stones slammed into my chest and pushed me down, down, down into an endless abyss.

I couldn’t fight. My strength was gone.

I couldn’t speak. My voice seemed to have left me.

I couldn’t do anything but stare at my baby brother, then at the corpses on the ground.

*I am going to avenge you all,* I promised them. And a promise to my brother: I’ll get you back.

But what would those promises cost me?

## KEVIN PLUNKETT; GRADE 6

### Calculation Process - Engineer

It was 2038 when the world revolutionizing tech company called NeoTech rose to prominence. With great expectations of products every year, the technology got less and less security checks due to the factor of time. Eventually, the company created their highest achievement, the “NeoBot”. The robotic servants of the future! Though their net worth rocketed, the robotic butlers began to show behavior that led to a massive recall. The Neobots began to kill and destroy their owners.

“Auxiliary power unit is down!” I yell through the screams of my crewmen. The ship begins to turn lopsided.

“Hold on to something! Anything!” I scream as I clutch onto a seat. Big Bess takes another artillery shot to her wing. My sense of gravity is gone. We are falling rapidly. I attempt to kick a window out. Jack Fisher, another engineer on Big Bess helps me.

“Almost got it,” he groans as he pushes the window so hard that cracks appear. Suddenly, I hear a deafening snap. An artillery shell shoots straight through the hull. Everything instantly went black.

I was enlisted to be an engineer of Big Bess, the rebellion’s first warplane. I was an automobile engineer before the whole “NeoTech Crisis”. Whenever there was a problem with the APU, engine, or practically anything else, the captain of the fine vessel would come to me. I took pride in that! I was pretty popular among the crew. Saving their lives a few times from explosions will do that to people, you know. But one day was different than any others. Not the day Jiffy Anderson barfed from plane sickness, but the day that the NeoBot ship blipped on our radar.

We all stood at our battle stations. Except the engineers—except me. Now I’m not someone who makes a fuss when they are bored, but sure do make a fuss when I’m bored. I ask the captain to let me onto a turret, but he turns to me with a grin on his face.

“You need to make sure Bess doesn’t choke out on us, private!” He declares loudly.

“Yeah, I’m actually a first lieutenant, and there is no private in the air force.” I reply. A look of confusion spreads across his face. I can’t help but smirk in the dire situation.

“Well I might as well demote you to priva-” He gets interrupted as soldier runs up to him and whispers something to him. “Private first lieutenant-or whatever you are-get to the engine bay, and double time it!” He yells. “And for God's sake, keep us from getting blown out of the sky.”

I run as fast as my legs can carry me, which is pretty fast, considering the humongous length of the ship. I follow the natural map in my head of Big Bess to the engine room. I skid into the familiar sandbox of mine. The hissing of the engine signals the coolant loss. I get to work, doing what I love. Fixing the ship, or anything really, comes naturally to me. Crank a gear there. Release pressure here. I finish within a minute, beating my personal record!

Suddenly, a cog snaps. It barely misses my eye, just skimming the side of my face. I dodge a gear. Suddenly, a whole platoon of metal snaps out. Big Bess starts shaking. I assess the situation. I hear someone yell, “What is going on down there?”. I didn’t do anything wrong; maybe I went just a little too quickly on securing the bolts. Whoops. I jump to the loudest bang I’ve heard in a long time.

A missile stuck into the ship right front of me.



## My Rotten Life

On a chilly fall day, my new friends and I were shopping for clothes to wear for the annual bash that our school holds. My new friends were a large group of girls at school that everyone recognized and wore expensive clothes and accessories. At first, I thought the bash was pointless, however, I wanted to hangout with my cool, new friends. Multi-colored leaves crunching beneath our feet, my friends and I walked towards the mall entrance, and I realized that I had made a bad decision. The mall was decorated with signs with sales and discounts, and the girls soon rushed to a store. I felt like kicking myself because there was no point in coming here, I didn't bring any money to buy clothes and I had no interest in shopping. After an hour of walking around and buying nothing, I decided to leave the mall, and the girls didn't even notice.

I went back home. I found a huge stack of papers on the kitchen table. I leafed through all the pages, and I realized that these were all bills. My mom was sitting at the kitchen table, running her fingers through her hair back and forth, with eye bags underneath her eyes. I picked up one and saw a large amount of money that was listed on it. I didn't think that we would be able to pay all of the money. I asked my mom, "Hey, do you need help with paying, because I can totally help out when I can."

"Go away, can't you see I'm busy?" my mom snapped. I was a little taken aback but I decided to act mature and let it slide. I went upstairs to my room, on the way I passed my sisters' room. They were giggling at a photo they posted on social media.

I was curious about what they were giggling about, so I went to my room, unlocked my phone, logged into Instagram, and checked my sister's Instagram accounts. The photo that was recently posted looked suspiciously like the photo they took of me this morning where I looked like a zombie. I had toothpaste all over my face, and my hair was frizzy and sticking out. I shrieked, "Julia, Dilara, get your butts in here right now!" My sisters came in here with smirks on their faces. My sisters were always pulling pranks on me, but this was the worst yet. I threatened, "You guys are so dead!"

The next day at school, I was walking down a hallway to my next class. Everyone was staring at me while looking at their phones, as if they were trying to see if my face matched the one in the photo. Snickering and whispering filled the hallways as I passed them. My face was getting hot, and my cheeks were flushed bright pink. I felt uncomfortable. I immediately ran to my only real best friend, Charlotte. She patted my back and tried to comfort me by saying, "It's ok Cassandra! It will be fine, no one will be talking about this by tomorrow!" As being a very sensitive person, tears were brimming my eyes. My two bratty sisters decided to share this photo on their Facebook wall. I decided to not act humiliated, as every time my sisters pranked me, they would record my reaction and show it to my friends and family, humiliating me even more.

By lunchtime, the Instagram photo was still going around the school, but not as much. I felt somewhat better, people soon forgot about the incident because of the exciting news of the school bash. Suddenly, I realized that it was the next day! I kind of wanted to ditch it, but I had never gone to one and wanted to experience how exciting it was. I convinced myself that this bash would be fun and there was no need to stress and worry myself about it.

It was 5 pm on a Saturday, 1 hour before the festival. I was trying on different hairstyles, but they all seemed really weird and awkward to me. I finally decided to go with a ponytail with a bow on top. My "friends" were standing near the entrance door and looked me over. One of the girls, called Martha sneered, "Hey Cassandra, why is your clip patterned with My Little Pony and rainbow designs?" Kristen scoffed and muttered to the other girls. "Loser!, they called. I was confused,

because I clearly remembered that I put on the clip that I had put in my room the night before. The girls continued to tease me, so I decided to go to the bathroom to check.

I reached into my purse to check if I had another clip inside, instead I found a scrap of paper. It read, "Sorry for the inconvenience - I had to borrow your clip without you getting mad at me, so I just went into your room to replace it with the My Little Pony one!" ~ Dilara :p" I felt like punching Dilara and destroying her as I quickly attempted to take the hair clip out, and decided to leave the bash. Anger filled me as I stomped out of the bathroom. Tears were streaming down my face, my whole body was shaking, my jaw was clenched, my mouth was dry, it felt like I was going to lose it. It seemed like nothing was going right for me today.

After I had left the bathroom, my vision was blocked by my tears. I accidentally tripped over some rainbow streamers, which knocked down the speakers. There was a loud crash. All of a sudden, every head in the room had turned to face me. I panicked, my cheeks flushing bright red. I immediately turned on my heel and fled. I sprinted all the way to my house.

When I reached home, I quietly stepped into our living room, where I saw my mom and dad arguing about those bills not being payed. Dad had a calculator in his hand, and a pile of papers stacked messily. I thought about my actions, and felt like I had got my family in big trouble. My dad has a job, but it doesn't pay well, and my mom is trying really hard to quickly find a job. My mom threatened, "If we don't pay all this money, including the property tax, we will lose this house!" I sighed as I trudged up back to my room, thinking about what my clumsiness has done to my family's income.

The next day as I woke up, the events from last night came rushing back in. I just hoped that I didn't have to pay for those speakers because my family needed all the money we could get. I checked the mail and found a white envelope labeled, "To: The Brown Family, From: Valley Crystal High School." My heart pounding, I gulped and opened the letter. "It read:

"Dear Brown household,

We have been informed that your child has broken 4 speakers at Valley Crystal High School's Back-to-School Festival on Saturday. The DJ has requested your payment to cover all the costs of the speakers. The total amount is \$3,500. Please send the money with your tuition fee at the end of the month.

Best Regards,  
Mr. Hedge  
Valley Crystal High School Principal'

## STELLA HUANG; GRADE 8

### Control

*I sat alone, in bed till morning. I'm crying, "They're coming for me." And I tried to hold these secrets inside me, my mind's like a deadly disease.*

---

She snapped up, rubbing her eyes. There would usually be sunlight streaming through the old glass windows, but only the dark grey of stormy clouds floated above. She ran her hand through her hair, letting out a sigh. Pushing open the window, she looked out. Rain was dropping from the skies like someone had strewn rice over the crowd on a wedding day. It pounded mercilessly at the mediocre wooden house. Lightning flashed for a second, illuminating everything in her sight. Her windows glistened white. Thunder rumbled in the distance, like a low, deep warning cry. Her small house shook slightly, the photo frames in the house rattling, shaking off the dust it had collected over the years. China shattered on the ground, white and blue staining the dull brown wood. Books crashed onto the unstable tables, opening to crinkled and stained pages, with ink splotches dotting the yellow paper, making the words on the pages unreadable.

*Not today...* It would be the last day she would see. She screamed, but it felt like hands were in her throat, blocking any sound that would come out. She burst out the window, running, running. She could feel the presence of something dark, mysterious, horrible, coming after her. She wouldn't look back. The storm followed her, making her turn around in her little white nightgown, now torn, the white material tainted with murky brown mud water, soaked and dirty. She clenched her teeth, pulling her nightgown up as she turned back. She wasn't going to let go this easily.

Her feet crossed over grass, over plains, over concrete. She didn't stop running, and the storm didn't stop chasing. She stopped in a small deserted town, standing on the sidewalk, leaning against a lamppost. The sky was black and grey with the storms swirling behind her, the ground a similar color. Her slender fingers wrapped around the base, for support. It wasn't long until the light turned black, the post turned into mist, and she began running again.

She made it to a lake, where the usually bright blues and greens turned to dark greys and browns. The water felt like needles, each one painfully stabbing her in the back. She couldn't stop now, she was already this far. The wind grew stronger, tussling her dark brown hair. Her silver-grey eyes gleamed, before she set off again.

The storm behind her was ripping everything in its path, like a wild wolf gone insane. Howling could be heard from the loud winds, as it wound its way around the thick foliage. A soft laughter was caught in the midst of the wind itself. The storm was tearing grass from its roots, destroying leaves off trees. A little bracelet on her wrist became tighter. She knew she wasn't going to make it, but it was worth one last try. Her body become numb, as if it was that she had turned to stone. Yet she kept running, her eyes set on the grey horizon. No thoughts came over her, only running, to somewhere, to escape the storm.

She eventually stopped, tired and out of breath, her legs breaking down under her. It was too much, she was exhausted; her legs would not comply with her mind's orders. Speed wouldn't help her now. It was much too late, as the presence of the dark shadows was already too close to her. She ran her hand through her knotted hair one more time before laying against the hillside. *This is the end.* She tightened her hand onto the little bracelet on her wrist tightly, the beads a metallic gold color. She watched as the charm on the edge captured the glow of the lightning, bringing color to her world one last time. A smile tugged at the ends of her lips. *Just you wait.* She watched as they emerged from the storm, one by one, before circling around her.

As she went limp, she had one last thought. *Who is in control?*

## Two Lives Changed

The streets were littered with trash as we ran down the road, our laughter filling the silence. A cold breeze blew through my hair, whipping it back and forth. I patted some stray curls down as my friend nudged me in the arm.

He pointed over to where a young girl seemed to be sitting by herself. She was leaning against a wall, toying with the strap of an old bag. Her head was bent low, her gaze focused elsewhere.

Robert laughed, “The streets are just filled with those these days, huh?”

I watched her silently, noticing the way that she bit her lip and glanced around nervously. Tearing my gaze away from her, I turned to face Robert. “Yeah.”

“Hey! What’s the hold-up? Let’s go!” Carl called out as he stood on the other side of the street, his hands resting on his hips impatiently.

Robert just rolled his eyes and pulled at my arm, “C’mon, let’s go. No point wasting our time on those weirdos.” He looked away, ignoring the scrawny girl that was lying only a few feet away. I couldn’t blame him, I should be ignoring them too. The homeless were viewed as worthless in our community, people who were just too lazy to get up and get a job. People who weren’t worthy of being part of our society.

I shook him off and glanced back towards the old cafe we’d just left. “Uh, I think I left something behind,” I lied. “You guys go on ahead.”

Without a second thought, he turned around and left. Sometimes, I wondered why I was even friends with people like him. My gaze slowly traveled back to the girl on the street, her hair blowing wildly out of her tattered hood. I shook my head, trying to clear those useless thoughts away, and walked back into the cafe.

A few minutes later, I walked out holding a brown bag filled with food and a cup of hot water. Clouds had begun to gather in the sky, becoming darker by the second.

I was nearly across the street when I stopped abruptly. I closed my eyes shut for a moment. I could feel the ticking of my watch against my bare hand. Robert was probably waiting for me. I needed to get home to help my mom prepare dinner. I still had piles of homework to finish. I could think of a million excuses to stop me from turning back around and walking over towards that girl.

But none of that mattered.

I gulped. Well, here goes nothing, I thought to myself, before walking down the street, forcing my gaze ahead.

She didn’t look up at me when I set down the bag and cup in front of her. I leaned against the wall, making sure to keep a safe distance between us.

After a while, her gaze shifted to watch me cautiously. I gestured towards the meal, a hesitant smile plastered on my face, “For you.”

For a second, she didn’t move, and I was worried that she hadn’t heard me. But all of a sudden, I noticed her eyes glistening.

Very slowly, a tear slid down her cheek.

My eyes widened in surprise, I didn’t know what to do. “Umm,” I reached into my pocket for a tissue and nervously handed it to her.

The corners of her mouth twitched up. She barely whispered, “Thank you.”

I smiled back, “No problem.”

“It’s for you.” I pushed the bag closer to her, along with the steaming cup. Her hand nervously grasped around the cup, and I was surprised by how cold her fingers were when they gently grazed against mine for just a split second. She held the cup with both hands, letting the warmth seep through the thin paper.

The second she opened the bag, her eyes lit up as she immediately began devouring the food. Her eyes twinkled with pure happiness, and they were almost as bright as her smile. I would have thought that she would be savoring the food, but instead, I watched as she inhaled it. In a second, there was nothing left but a few crumbs. Crumbs that she happily picked up and popped into her mouth.

After she finished, she wiped at her mouth and gave me a sheepish grin, “Sorry, that was so rude of me.”

I waved my hand dismissively, “Trust me, manners are the farthest thing from my mind right now.” But I still handed her a clean napkin, for her sake more than mine.

She smiled, “Thanks.”

For a while, we both sat there, just talking. I tried to stay away from anything personal, as that seemed to be a touchy subject for her. So instead, we discussed almost everything else that we could think of. As the time flew by, we were able to find out quite a lot about each other. We learned that we both loved Christmas to a fault. She told me stories of the twinkling lights on her Christmas tree, next to the crackling fire, and the steaming hot chocolate. Stories about the time the tree popped her balloon dog or the time she woke up in the middle of the night to steal Santa’s cookies.

And we were both equally surprised when we realized that Christmas was only a few weeks away.

I admitted to her that I’d spent the entirety of November exclaiming, “It’s November, already?!” and “It’s so dark!”

She laughed so hard at this that she accidentally spilled the rest of her drink on the sidewalk, which made me double over in laughter too. And soon, we were sitting on the street, laughing like we were crazy.

And I didn’t care, not even a little bit.

It took a while, but finally, I got her to open up. She revealed to me that after a fight with her parents, she’d stolen half a thousand dollars from her dad and ran away from home, but with full intentions of going back. After falling asleep on a train ride, she’d ended up here and has stayed here for almost a month now. She admitted that she wanted to go back, but was afraid that her family wouldn’t want her anymore.

I tilted my head, “Why would you think that?”

She glanced down, “If they really cared, don’t you think they would’ve found me by now?”

We talked some more, and I tried to convince her to use my phone to call her parents but she repeatedly refused. I told her, instead, that I’d call her parents and see if they wanted to talk. After about five minutes of back-and-forth arguing, she gave in.

I dialed the number she gave me and after about three rings, her mom picked up. I awkwardly introduced myself and explained that her daughter wanted to speak with her.

Silence.

A few moments later, I could hear her soft crying on the other end.

I handed the phone to the girl, and she took it with shaking hands. I watched the conversation from her end. It included a lot of I love you's, apologizing, and crying. Almost twenty minutes later, she handed the phone back to me, tears still rolling down her wet cheeks.

The girl explained to me how her parents had tried everything to find her, and in the end, decided that she was probably better off without them. They had spent all of their savings hiring investigators to find her and were nearly broke.

I walked with her to the bus station and handed her all of my bus tokens and a crumpled up twenty dollar bill in case anything happened on the way back.

As the bus slowly drove up the road, she lunged forward, throwing her arms around me in a tight hug. I rested my head on her shoulder, giving her a quick squeeze before ushering her onto the bus.

It was only when I got home, that I realized that I had only changed that girl's life and she had done the same with me. I'd somehow completely altered the course of her life, without even learning her name.

Since that fateful day, every Christmas, I got a special gift. Every Christmas, I woke up to a card on my doorstep. Every Christmas, she sent me a handmade card with a message written by her. And every Christmas, she'd send me pictures of her with her family. Or friends. Or just having fun in general. She'd always make sure to update me on what was going on with her life, a better life than the one she had on the streets.

Her new life.

## SUPHALA NIBHANUPUDI; GRADE 8

### The Android

“You are all ... masterpieces that science has created.”

Simone’s empty gaze was directed towards the expansive, suction proof picture window, which showcased the atmosphere of her “home” planet, Teteleon, if she could call it a home. For as long as her memory file permitted her, she had been programmed on this sterile, white satellite that floated 40,000 micro light years’s away for fifty-three years, twenty days, seven hours, two minutes, and —

Simone’s core processor sputtered in annoyance, as the stream of information plaguing her optical sensor divulged into useless trivia. Closing her eyelids, she tried to send the data away to the side of her vision, but it stubbornly continued to scroll down her scanner. Simone tried another way, simply disconnecting herself from the announcement feed signals and reconnecting, even though the respite from the data wouldn't last long.

The satellite was Teteleon’s home of science. Plant hybrids were created here; foreign animals tested for interesting abilities; new technological advances discovered. All of the planet rejoiced at a new batch of androids, which usually meant a new com-mod model in store for them, with new camera features, or an upgraded personal assistant or whatever the new androids’ unique feature was. But Simone, and the AI’s like her, were mysteriously hidden from the public.

Simone’s eyelids opened to find one of the engineers gazing at her in curiosity. Her head awkwardly pivoted back to the picture window. She was different; she had understood that a long time before. She was quite affected by the violent gestures of the director. Her comrades, a variety of male and female androids, didn’t even blink at the director’s rapid pacing and agitated gestures. He knocked down everything from a squeezed glass of citrus to the intercaster which held the plans for world domination. It made her processor twinge when she was newly programmed, when no one showed her even a grain of emotion to her arrival. Not a turn of the head, not a blink, not even a stir. She was the last one created, and she thought herself as the outsider of them all.

She wondered if they were too afraid to step out of line. After all, a disobedient android would be reprogrammed, and the way Simone imagined that, she had deemed it synonymous to death.

It took her weeks to understand that they were programmed that way. Not to feel. Not to care. Not to experience pain. Instead, the batch of “state-of-the-art, intelligent, obedient, androids”, were created to document, report, and analyze. But the question persisted into her logic processor. What was wrong with me?

“Mark 14,” the director mused. He was an aging man, with thin graying hair, pale skin, and two spindling beige horns traveling down his chest. Unlike most engineers, his residence was here, at the satellite, which made him gaunt and pasty, “My favorite number. And division zenith at that.” He spun on his heel, his horns swinging with him, “I had a brother named Zenith. My mother’s favorite. He was a spoiled brat,” A few engineers shared a look as the director swung his arm and knocked over a rare herba corpus specimen. The director’s lost the edge of insanity quickly enough, and it was replaced with complacency. Simone knew that mood swings were common for this eccentric man. He opened his arms to the line of unfazed androids he had heaped praise and expectations onto. Simone wondered if they were shaken up in the slightest. “These AI’s are sure to make the Winged One proud.”

He gazed at them a moment longer, with the warmth and affection of a father, before turning to the cluster of engineers by the terminals. “Each of you will take an AI and head to an assigned star system in the outer reaches. You can repair them in case of outdated processors and

cores and sensors, but don't get in the way of data retrieval. We need all the information that we can get. These star systems might hold information we need for interplanetary domination." He paused a moment for dramatic effect, sound sucked out of the satellite. He then daintily clapped his hand together. "AI's, ID 14Z, one through twenty-six, go to store room for nightly hibernation. Programmers stay with me, and I will assign, well, er, assignments."

Simone's legs robotically started for the "dorm" but she desperately wanted to see what assignment she would receive. She could be at the Rethromin system, with volcanic planets and small, intelligent life forms, where the temperatures reached highs of 2000 jeanes-

In the name of the Winged! Her fan accelerated as Simone disconnected.

---

Simone's hibernation was interrupted by blinking green text, flashing on her optical sensor. Message received, it proclaimed, open comm link?

Open, she agreed, willing the text to descend lower and the short audio clip to play.

"Greetings AI, ID 14Z26." It started. It was a rough voice, but not natural. More like an android voice feature trying to be set to a language and dialect. Never natural sounding. "I am Rocklinth Hom'mon, your, say, mechanic on your trip to Earth. Please be charged up and ready by tomorrow."

Simone's thought core spluttered as it processed the information. Of all the exotics, Earth? It was part of the well-explored Soluna system, hardly worth a lightyear of time. Why such a backwards, uncivilized place for data retrieval?

Another message popped into her view and Simone hoped it was a correction of a mistake.

"I look forward to helping you and getting to understand your, per say, oddities."

Simone's core processor nearly stopped. She started to pay attention to the trivia scrolling down to find, yes, he was the curious engineer staring at her in the main hall.

Simone core processor felt an odd sensation, as if it was being crushed in a trash compactor. My oddities.... What if I get reprogrammed?

---

At the end of the line of androids, as usual, Simone stared out at the docking area of the podships. It was becoming easier now to pretend that she was like everyone else. Her "mechanic" Rocklith Hom'mon was in a line of 26 programmers, behind the space glass. Simone's optical sensor focused on his face, and started picking it apart, words running down the side of her vision. A white, pale face, with a shock of auburn hair, haphazardly brushed into what he probably thought was a hairstyle. He was tall, and bony, as if he never had a decent meal. Currently he was scowling behind the director's back.

Simone's data processor was not happy with these results. The picture that she had linked him up with was him was older and more muscular, not a mess. Her optobionics picked up on every detail of the difference, only his face perfectly matched the portrait, down to every last freckle.

And with all his flaws, this perfection made her even more wary.

"AI, ID14Z001," a disembodied voice started through the hidden speakers. There were no organisms on the dock, for the lack of oxygen would asphyxiate them "Android Alida. Podship 001."

Simone stared at the distraction. The android, a blond, fair skinned AI, followed her proud engineer, each step showing her as indifferent as the rest. But when all eyes had been averted from the two, her face swung to observe the androids. Her face was contorted in so much blatant emotion that Simone stumbled.

She was an android. How...how did she....

Her optic sensors and Alida's clashed. Her mouth dropped in surprise, in disbelief, before melting into a smile, one that sent chills ricocheting across Simone's data interface. Her



optobionics picked up the details of her face, but not quick enough to process the expression; she had already turned and paced towards the shiny podship.

Simone's processors were in a daze, calculation and theorizing and researching, but she herself was lost. Her programming prompted her to walk to her designated podship, the last one, and curl up in the back, as Hom'mon started the podship. The smile was rooted in her interface, in her optical sensor, in her processor. She didn't even realize where she was until the engineer stepped towards her, wrench in clenched fist, as they tumbled towards Earth, thousands of light-years from the satellite.

## Gone: Part One

I don't want it to happen this time. It can't. Not when I finally earned a respectable position in my school. Not when my mom told me last month that it wouldn't happen again.

It's moving day. Every month, our family moves. I questioned my parents about it, but they would always have an answer that didn't make sense, like "It's for your own good", or "It's for everyone's well being", so I stopped asking all together.

"Paige!" My mom called from downstairs. "Coming!" I shouted back. I stared at my empty bedroom that I would probably never see again. I looked at every detail of it. The scratched hardwood floors, the chipped windowsill. But then, I noticed something I hadn't seen before. In the corner, there was something round and slimy that very much resembled an eye.

"Paige!" Her voice was more frantic now. I didn't reply. When I looked closer, I realized it definitely was an eye. It was swerving around to match my every move. It was a crazy idea, but I felt my mom knew something about it.

I was not someone who easily got disgusted, but the eyeball was definitely a perfect example of an exception of that. It kept staring at me, and I found myself not being able to look away. I heard pounding footsteps on the stairs. I blinked and was pulled away from reality.

TO BE CONTINUED...

## NEVIN THOMBRE; GRADE 8

### Funerals

Funerals,  
Tragic and sad yet so reminiscent,  
Haunting you with memories  
Of loved ones close to you.

Funerals,  
Miserable ceremonies,  
Draining all light and happiness  
Softened up with the warmth of delicate white roses.

Funerals  
Trying to reconstruct,  
Bonds of love and respect  
But sometimes, you just can't.

Funerals,  
Collections of your very last memories,  
Forever embedded in your heart  
Going, going, gone.  
Rest in peace.

## The Man and His Gold

It was a sunny day, and the gentle wind blew across the golden meadow. The crows screeched, and the mice ran in the field as they played hide and seek. Suddenly, sprinting in gracefully was an animal that they haven't seen before, a doe. It trotted across the field, and then disappeared into the Hidden Forest. After the deer ran in, the animals listened and waited for something to happen. They heard nothing. They saw nothing. They waited and waited, and finally, they heard the rustling of bushes followed by a gunshot.

In the market, was the overjoyed hunter, with his pockets full of gold coins. He had just sold his freshly killed doe, and was as happy as ever. He skipped across the streets holding up his gold coins proclaiming loudly, "Look at the gold I got!" His massive celebration attracted a lot of people including an elderly man.

The elderly man then asked him, "Where did you get the money from?"

He replied, "Oh! I killed a deer, and a merchant bought it from me."

"How cruel of you to kill such a beautiful animal," the elderly man sighed sadly.

"Well, I had to kill it in order to get gold; I would do anything to get it," he laughed. And two sneaky man, wearing all black, who had overheard the conversation, stalked him as he went home.

That night as he slept, the two men in masks crept into his house, and tied him to his bed. They forced him to tell them where the gold was. He quickly gave up his gold, and the two men snatched it away from him, leaving him tied up in his bed.

The robbed hunter heard the two snicker, "I really don't like threatening people to get their gold, but I really like gold and I will do anything to get it." The two robbers laughed as they shuffled back to their homes, with the pouch gold hanging off of one's belt.

Across the street lived the elderly man, and he quickly ran across the street to find out what the strange sounds were about. He then hunter shouting for help.

"Help me!" shouted the tied up man, who then spotted the old man from the market earlier that day. The old man then untied him from the bed. The hunter asked guiltily, "Why did you help me even though you thought I was cruel to the doe?"

The old man responded caringly, "Because I believe we should always treat others kindly and respectfully."

From that day on, he decided to not hunt for money, and he never in his life bragged about his money. He always treated people and animals with respect, and kindness.

# NIKHIL NARASIMHAN; GRADE 7

## Code Red

"Steph! Come down to eat breakfast!" my mother shouted.

"Gimme a couple minutes!" I replied.

I devoured my waffles and eggs, and rushed out of the door for school. I was excited to build the barricade for the code red drill that was planned for today.

I walked into the classroom excited. I don't know why it felt like I was the only one very eager to start the drill. Maybe it was because no one else cared.

"Just a reminder, the principal will announce any minute now that we should start the code red drill." my teacher announced to our class.

"This is our code red drill. Teachers, please instruct your students to start barricading." the principal said over the speaker.

"Let's go guys! Start the barricading!" said my teacher.

This was the fun part. My excitement built up, as I was rushing around to push items around into the doors and to barricade. I shoved the computer cart in front of the door and put chairs, backpacks, and desks to form the barricade.

Once we finished barricading, we had to sit down for around thirty minutes behind our barricade of desks, chairs and backpacks. This was the boring part of the drill though. Some people fell asleep, since they were allowed to. After what felt like hours, the sheriff arrived, and said we did a great job. Our teacher praised us after we finished putting the classroom back together.

"Great job class! The sheriff said we did a fabulous job!" my teacher said enthusiastically.

The rest of the school day was boring, nothing exciting happened after the drill.

"What did you do in school today Steph?" my dad asked.

"We did a code red drill in first period, but the rest of the day was boring."

"That must have been fun, wasn't it?"

"Yeah, I loved it!"

1 month later...

"Have a good day at school Steph!" my mother shouted to me as I walked out the door.

"Today, we will be going over chapter 8 about the Muslim prophet, Muhammad, so please turn to that page. Steph, will you please read the first section?"

"Muhammad's early life. Muhammad was born on-"

Beep! Beep! Beep!

"May I have your attention please? This is a code red situation. This is not a drill. I repeat, this is not a drill." the principal's strong voice sounded through the speakers.

"Oh my god! This can't be happening!" I shouted.

"Everybody! Drop your books and build the barricade now!" my teacher directed.

In urgency, I shoved the computer cart in front of the door. The sound of scrambling feet filled the room.

"Get behind the barricade and don't utter a word!" my teacher whispered.

You could have heard a feather hit the ground. There was dead silence. Then, "BOOM!"

We heard a gunshot. Everybody held back their scream. Surprisingly enough, no one made a sound. We heard running beside our classroom. Then banging. Tears rushed down from many eyes, onto the floor. I was ready to fight and defend. This was the scariest moment of our lives. This could have been the last day of our lives. No one dared to move. After a few minutes, we didn't hear anymore gunshots, and so we were all relieved. After about 1 more hour of hiding, the police came to inform us that the gunman had been caught and arrested.

"Thank God!" I shouted, all of the relief rushing out of me.

Kids hugged each other and cried with joy, but everybody was still terrified, with scared faces everywhere.

School ended immediately, and fortunately, no one in the school was hurt.

.....

"Oh my goodness! Steph, are you okay?" my mother, said, with tears streaming down her tired face.

"We were so worried when we got the news." my dad said, also in tears.

"I am very lucky that nothing happened to me, this was a horrible experience. I can't explain it. I just don't want to talk about it."

I had had the worst school experience anyone could possibly think of, but I came out without any injuries. This was a great way to prepare me for anything of this sort to happen in the future.

---

# ARTWORK

---

SAANVI SHREESHA; GRADE 8

Evening Snack





*www.overtureliterarymagazine.com*  
*overtureliterarymagazine@gmail.com*



---

# OVERTURE

---

This is *Overture Literary Magazine*, a pursuit by Miller Middle School and Lynbrook High School to expand writing, art, and imagination within the Miller Middle School community. Join us as we share the creativity of students by publishing their work in a monthly magazine.

In musical terms, an overture is an orchestral composition forming the prelude or introduction to a musical piece. Much like an overture in music, this creative writing program will serve as an introduction to the landscapes of creativity, self-expression, and imagination.

*Overture* strives to inspire imagination, foster literary and artistic talent, and promote creative growth by teaching middle school students how to develop their own creative writing or art styles through mediums not offered at their own schools.

FOUNDED SPRING 2011 BY  
ROOPA SHANKAR AND KIMBERLY TAN  
*www.overturereiterarymagazine.com*

Copyright © 2017 *Overture*  
Copyrights revert to authors upon publication.



*[www.overtureliterarymagazine.com](http://www.overtureliterarymagazine.com)  
[overtureliterarymagazine@gmail.com](mailto:overtureliterarymagazine@gmail.com)*