

Issue 1

Halloween

October 2024-25

# *The* writer's BLOCK

## featuring:

Whispers in the  
Wind

The Disappearing of  
James Wood

Evolution of  
Halloween Foods

Word on the Street  
*and more...*

## October Issue

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# meet OUR team



**Isabella Io**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

Isabella Io was a Grade 12 student last year. In what she labels her “free time”, she enjoys listening to movie musical soundtracks, reading horror novels that aren’t actually scary, and procrastinating.

This issue, she’s an:  
*Editor and Designer*



**Sirin Sen**  
*Head of Design*

Zeynep Sirin Sen is a Grade 12 student. She enjoys to draw from observation, read, watch movies, and play guitar. She is excited to see what the Writer’s Block has in store this year!  
“...and beyond.”

This issue, she’s a:  
*Designer*



**Athena Basiratnia**  
*Head Editor*

Athena Basiratnia has been at BVG for a long time and is now a Grade 12 student. She really enjoys writing and editing for the Writer’s Block. On her free time, talk to her about video games, books/mangas, and a variety of shows!  
“To the stars...”

This issue, she’s an:  
*Editor and Writer*



**Kevin Chen**  
*Head of Writing*

Kevin Ruhao Chen is a Grade 12 at BVG. He loves to read all types of fiction except the ones with “non-” in front of it. He enjoys playing video games, reading and watching tv. His favorite tv shows in order are: Flash, Friends, Modern Family, B99, WandaVision and Loki.

This issue, he’s a:  
*Writer*



**Alina Dong**

Alina Dong is grade ten this year. She enjoys reading, writing, painting, playing the violin... the word count here is the limit. And it must be noted that half the things she writes features cats – cats and spontaneous randomness galore...

This issue, she's a:  
*Writer and Designer*



**Amelie Choy**

Amelie Choy is a Grade 10 student in her 14th year at BVG. She loves learning languages and has a slight obsession with ice cream. In her free time, she likes to read, listen to music, and have fun with friends.

This issue, she's a:  
*Writer and Editor*



**Anushka Yoganathan**

Anushka Yoganathan was a Grade 12 student last year and BVG Lifer. If you see her in the hallways, she's probably yapping about robotics or crying over physics homework. In her spare time, she enjoys watching documentaries, catching up on sleep, and taking care of her very neglected plants.

This issue, she's a:  
*Writer*



**Beatrice Milasan**

Beatrice Milasan is an 12th grade student at Bayview Glen. Outside of creative writing, her hobbies include stargazing with her telescope, rock climbing and painting. She's an avid reader of anything from fantasy to mystery, so if you have any cool book recs make sure you send them her way :)

This issue, she's a:  
*Writer*



**Daisy Mou**

Daisy Mou is a student at Bayview Glen and a dedicated contributor to the Writer's Block!

This issue, she's an:  
*Editor and Designer*



**Clarissa Wong**

Clarissa Wong is a student at Bayview Glen and a dedicated contributor to the Writer's Block!

This issue, she's an:  
*Editor*



## Karina Rathee

Karina Rathee is a student at Bayview Glen and a dedicated contributor to the Writer's Block!

This issue, she's an:  
*Editor*



## Louisa Zhang

Louisa Zhang is a grade 10 student. She enjoys reading and music, and used to want to be an author when she was little. She has since realized that it's not the best career option for her, and has now joined Writer's Block to pursue her writer dreams unprofessionally.

This issue, she's an:  
*Editor*



## Lukas Rubenyan

Lukas Rubenyan is a grade 11 student who has been at Bayview Glen since grade 8. He has been a member of the Writer's Block for a year. You can often find him taking photos outside or eating ketchup.

This issue, he's a:  
*Writer, Editor, and Designer*



## Mikaila Taam

Mikaila Taam is in Grade 11 this year. She usually doesn't talk in third person, and enjoys eating chocolate. Say hi to her in the hallways!

This issue, she's an:  
*Editor*



## Jiajia Jiang

Jiajia Jiang is a student at Bayview Glen and a dedicated contributor to the Writer's Block!

This issue, she's a:  
*Designer*



## Naomi Low

Naomi Low was a student last year at Bayview Glen and a dedicated contributor to the Writer's Block!

This issue, she's a:  
*Writer*

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# *The* editor's

OUR FIRST ISSUE OF THE year is just in time for Halloween! This time of year always brings me back to trick-or-treating with my childhood best friend. One memorable occasion, we wandered particularly far from the neighbourhood, and found ourselves turning aimlessly in circles for almost two hours. The houses were dark and undecorated, and as we jumped at every starting car or rattling leaf, we finally felt the thrill of fear that

Halloween had promised. Our parents were just as lost, so we had to rely on Google Maps to find our way home. This issue is full of similarly spooky stories. Not all of them have as happy an ending...but I won't spoil them for you. We're also diving into everything Halloween, like the real terrors haunting students (university applications and deadlines, anyone?) and the evolution of Halloween foods. But if you're in the mood for more contem-

# NOTE



porary discussion, we have a hot take on the NewJeans controversy and a profile of Andrey Rublev, the world-renowned tennis player. Finally, we're thrilled to introduce our new column "Word on the Street", where you, the student body, shared your own little horror stories. We never

knew how creative you could get with the 60-word limit! And, unfortunately, the Whisperer is back - the real biggest jumpscare of this issue. I guess it's not done with us yet. The terrible grammar sure is keeping us all on our toes...

Happy Halloween,

Isabella Io  
Editor in Chief





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# creative pieces



# Whispers in the Wind

*Beatrice Milasan*

Your first thought in the open woods are the stories echoing through your mind.

Like a broken record, hours past repairable,  
Or maybe a leech - a parasite infecting every harmless thought.

You had been warned, after all,  
Of the monsters that lurked in the shadows patiently waiting to strike.

Though not all were like that,  
Bold, courageous, or candid in their actions.

Some were subtle when they found their prey.

Like perhaps a siren song that never lifted,  
Countless lives slaves to its eerie tunes.  
The unlucky ones who had been led to the waters,  
Drowned without a say for themselves, glimmering, hopeful  
eyes chasing something nothing more than a twisted fantasy.  
A phenomenon so laughably one-sided you'd wonder how  
anyone ever fell for it,  
Until it was you blinded by the siren's spell.

Somewhere along the journey along the faded gravel path,  
The lines between fear and exhaustion will begin to blur.

A new message will overtake the dull vacancy of your mind,  
And you will find yourself restless.

Every step becomes a mantra,  
Keep going  
Don't stop  
Keep going....

And as the soles of your boots wander, your thoughts will too.

With every tiny advance into the darkened forest,  
Your mind becomes as estranged as you have from the wooden hearth  
within the cottage.

The lighthouse nothing but a distant memory, as you continue on course,  
Your memories become more solid than the ground beneath you.

They paint a picture from many moons ago while twigs snag onto the  
fabric of your coat,  
Like arms reaching out to grab you.

You think of the decisions that led you here, alone, in rainwater-soaked  
clothes,  
Every squelch in your step a constant reminder of the clouds' wrath in the  
earlier evening.

How comically the clouds had bled at such an inopportune moment,  
A humbling point in time to say the very least and what a painfully obvious  
reminder that you are in fact,  
Nothing more than a thorn in the side of the universe.

You remember just how new you are to it all – were to it all,  
Before the moment it was all pried from the grasp of your shivering,  
weakened fingers.

With that remembrance comes a story of origin for the shoes you wear,  
Both the ones on your feet and the ones you had been set to fill.

Shoes that had conquered mountains but in them now stepped  
unblistered, unworthy feet,  
Perhaps that is why things had ended up the way they had.

Either that, or the stubbornness you had once worn like a badge of  
honour,  
How quickly it had faded into a shameful secret.

You had convinced yourself it had made you different, special  
somehow,  
When really all it had made you was a fool.

You'll be thrust back into reality by the sound of a snapping twig that  
comes not from your worn boots and careless missteps,  
But from a shadow lurking in the darkness behind you.

You won't notice it until it has become too late.

You run but the shoes you convinced yourself you could fill won't allow  
it,  
The death of you, your very own pride.

Your screams will fall on deaf ears and come years' time,  
Your story will be nothing but one told by children 'round a campfire.

Hundreds of spine-curdling whispers around the flame in the  
unsettling calm of the woods,  
The only hurdle to pure silence, a distant whistling of the wind.

*The campers have*

*convinced themselves it is just the wind,*

*anyway...*



# The Disappearing of James Wood

By Kevin Chen

Every Halloween James would go out trick-or-treating with his friends. Even though he was now a teenager and his parents were telling him he was getting too old to be doing it, he still enjoyed going out with his friends and returning back home with mountains of candy.

It was now less than a week from Halloween, and James' house stood like a dark spot in between the vibrant decorations of his neighbours. His parents were always busy, and he had been so caught up in schoolwork that he had forgotten to decorate his house. Determined to add some life to his driveway, James started searching all over his small town for carved pumpkins. Unfortunately, everywhere James looked, all the pumpkins had been sold out and no one was willing to lend him theirs. Defeated, James started walking back home until something caught his eye. It was a small sign on one of the sidewalks that read "Free jack-o'-lanterns, come to 435 Pickering Street - 400m away" with an arrow that James presumed pointed in the direction of the house. With no other choice, James decided to check it out. It seemed a little too good to be true, but he decided that there was no harm in checking it out.

James followed the road in the direction of the sign, and started counting the house numbers to see how far he had to go. Eventually he arrived at number 435. It was one of the last houses bordering the edge of the town and had numerous creepy scarecrows and other Halloween decorations sitting on the front lawn. James walked up to the front door which had a piece of paper stuck to it that read "Jack-o'-lanterns are in the backyard, the gate is unlocked." James followed the instructions and went around the house into the backyard where he saw a table full of smiling pumpkins waiting for him. These jack-o'-lanterns looked very well-carved and were exactly what James had in mind for his decorations. He looked around to see if there was anyone in the house, but the windows looked pitch black, so he just took one of the pumpkins and made his way out of the backyard. It was now evening and there were only a few rays of sunlight peeking over the horizon. James needed to rush home now if he wanted to get home for dinner.

Just as he was about to start jogging back home with the pumpkin under one arm, James had a strange feeling that he was being watched. He turned around but no one was there. It was probably just one of the Halloween decorations, he thought.

In the days leading up to Halloween, James worked tirelessly to decorate the front of the house, and on the day before Halloween it looked just like all the other houses on his street. James was quite proud of his work and stood back to admire his masterpiece when he spotted the jack-o'-lantern he had gotten for free a few days ago. He had left it right next to his front door, and almost completely forgot about it. All he had to do now was add a small candle inside its mouth and it would be perfect for Halloween night. However as James went to pick up the pumpkin, he saw that its face looked a little different than it did when he first got it. He couldn't quite place his finger on it, but he felt like it looked a bit more realistic than it did a few days ago. James shook his head. There was no way a carved pumpkin could change its appearance, it was getting dark outside and he was probably just tired. He put the pumpkin down and went inside.

The next day James woke up feeling excited that he would finally be able to go trick-or-treating with his friends again. He quickly changed into his costume and started getting ready for school. As his mom pulled out of the driveway James caught a glimpse of the pumpkin sitting on the front porch. It looked pretty normal from afar, he was definitely just tired last night. In school, James completely forgot about the pumpkin and started planning out which neighbourhoods he and his friends were going to visit that night.

When James got home, he immediately went to find a bag that was large enough to fit all the candy he was hoping to get that night. Once he was fully prepared, he waited until the clock turned to 8 PM and bolted out the door to meet up with his friends.

James' bag filled up surprisingly fast that night, and it was filled to the brim not long after he and his friends had finished trick-or-treating half of the neighbourhood. After a while of carrying the huge weight, James decided to run home and dump all his candy before joining his friends to finish up the night. He told his friends that he would meet them on the next street in five minutes and started running as fast as he could back home.

However, as he turned the corner onto his street, something that felt like a huge rock tripped him and he fell onto the cold hard pavement of one of the houses. James winced: he'd definitely scraped his knee, and his hands felt like they were burning. As he slowly got up from the ground, he turned to see what had tripped him.

James' eyes widened as he looked down. It was the pumpkin. James recognized it immediately. There was no mistaking it now. Its face definitely looked real, almost resembling a person, and it was staring right at him. It had an disturbing smile that made the hairs on James' neck stand up, and a shiver run down his spine. What was it doing here? James thought.

Suddenly, a sound came out of the pumpkin. "I'll be back in five minutes guys. I'll meet you guys on Erling Street." It was James' voice coming from inside the pumpkin's mouth. It was what he'd said to his friends a few minutes ago.

James' heart started beating faster, and he could feel a tightening sensation in his chest. What on Earth was happening? He stared at the pumpkin in disbelief, his eyes fixated on its eerie smile. Then all of a sudden the pumpkin started changing. James looked on in horror as the pumpkin's orange colour started fading, and its face began to distort, becoming more and more human-like. James was frozen in place with fear, and could do nothing but watch as the pumpkin began to take the form of a familiar face.

It was his.

The thing stared at him with an uncanny smile. James' felt like his heart was beating outside of his chest. Then suddenly, he felt his knees buckle, and he fell to the ground. He couldn't move. The thing was now inches from his face, and James could feel its breathing. James then felt an extremely odd sensation throughout his entire body. It felt like he was being squished and moulded at the same time. James looked up, and with a look of terror on his face, he saw his own face grow a neck, and then a torso; he watched as arms popped out from both sides, and legs began unfolding from underneath the torso, with the sounds of bones cracking into place. James tried to scream, but to his horror, he could no longer feel his mouth, or his face. He tried to move his arm, but there was nothing there. He couldn't feel anything at all. All he could do was watch in absolute fear as the thing that looked identical to him picked him up, and started walking.

James didn't know what to do, or how to feel at that moment. He tried so hard to scream for help but no sound came out. He didn't even know if he had a mouth anymore. The thing carried James far out to the edge of the town. James no longer knew where they were. The thing carried James to the last house on the street. 435 Pickering Street, the mailbox read. The thing creaked open the gate leading to the backyard, and walked to the table full of carved pumpkins. There was now one empty spot on the table, as if it was waiting for James. The thing put James down on the table and walked away. There was nothing James could do but watch as the thing turned around and gave him one last disturbing smile before leaving and replacing his entire life.



# Beyond the Mirror

Amelie Choy

Elena stood before the bathroom mirror, blinking at her reflection in the early morning light. The sun filtered through the sheer curtain, bathing the room in a soft, golden hue and casting a warm glow on her reflection. The lingering darkness from early dawn cast shadows that seemed to crawl up the walls, making the entire room feel more enclosed. There was a silent calm, as if the air itself was holding its breath.

Elena forced a smile, hoping it would help her feel more awake. The corners of her mouth lifted slightly in a practiced manner, her lips curving in a familiar shape, more habit than feeling. Her stomach tightened as she looked into her own eyes, searching for that usual familiarity. But there was nothing—no trace of her comforting warmth. The face staring back seemed empty, detached, as if it were someone else entirely.

The moment stretched uncomfortably as a strange unease settled over her. She frowned and leaned in closer, studying the arch of her brows, the tilt of her nose and the curve of her lips. But the more she looked, the less she recognized herself. The face in the mirror was a perfect replica, every feature exact, yet it felt hollow. There was something strange about her expression, as though it had frozen, locked in a cramped stare.

Elena shuddered, a strange feeling settling into her bones. A cold prickle crept up her spine, as though unseen eyes were trailing every movement, every breath, every blink.

“Come on, wake up,” she whispered, laughing nervously.

Her voice felt small, but it echoed through the room. She straightened her shoulders and forced an even broader smile, willing herself to shake off this uneasy feeling. But the reflection remained disturbingly still, not even mirroring the smile she made. Instead, its lips remained in a tight, unmoving line.

Her breath caught. She shook her head as though to break the spell. Elena rubbed her eyes and blinked rapidly, hoping to erase what she saw. She looked around the room, her gaze flitting to each familiar object—the toothbrush on the counter, the robe hanging from the door. Everything was in place, yet it all felt wrong. The shadows hadn’t gotten lighter. It seemed as if the whole room was eclipsed, the unfamiliar darkness creeping along the floor and walls. Her skin prickled, and a bead of sweat formed at the back of her neck.



She breathed faster now, her lungs fighting to keep up with the pace of her heart.

Slowly, Elena looked back at the mirror. The reflection's gaze had a newfound intensity, seeming to burn and chill at the same time. Cautiously, Elena tilted her head side to side, making sure to keep her eyes focused on the reflection. It was subtle but unmistakable—like a puppet following a cue, the reflection moved just a bit too late.

Her heart thumped painfully loud in the silence. She lifted her hand toward her face, but as she did, her reflection's hand moved out of the mirror, extending towards her with fingers that curled unnaturally. The cold skin of the foreign hand brushed Elena's cheek. Her breath hitched, every instinct screaming for her to run, to get away, but she couldn't move. The reflection had stopped her.

The air thickened, charged with a suffocating energy that felt toxic against her skin. With every passing moment, the reflection inched nearer, the mirror warping itself to allow the figure to escape. Pure terror churned in Elena's gut, her heart pounding with a toxic blend of fear and curiosity. The reflection's lips parted, finally stretching into a twisted grin, wider and more menacing than any smile Elena had ever cracked. Once, it had refused to mirror Elena's own smiles, but now it seemed to wear one of its own—dark, knowing, and far too eager to linger. The figure's grip tightened around her chin, pulling her closer until she could feel its breath, sour and cold, brushing against her skin.

The edges of the mirror began to ripple. The reflection curled its hands around Elena's wrists. She felt herself being pulled forward, unable to resist as the cold grip dragged her into the glass. As she was drawn deeper into the mirror, her reflection stepped smoothly out, filling the space she left behind. Elena's mind spun, but she could only watch, powerless, as the figure turned and looked back at her with familiar eyes, a hint of satisfaction flickering across its face.

In that last moment, Elena knew—she was looking out from the other side, trapped within the mirror, staring at the world through eyes that no longer belonged to her. She was not Elena, she was just another reflection.

Just before the figure began to walk away, it turned back and smiled, content in its new skin.

# *Why the Amazing Race is Peak Television*

Athena Basiratnia

You might've seen posters by your local bus stop or ads on social media showing a happy guy standing on a cliff holding a huge Canadian flag, bold letters underneath reading: The Amazing Race Canada. If this lackluster image didn't interest you (which it probably didn't), then I'm here to tell you all about the show, and how it shouldn't be judged by its poor marketing!

The Amazing Race started off as an American produced series in 2001, before it gained success and branched off to different countries. It's a huge reality show and race around the world, spanning multiple countries, cities, and challenges, all for the one million dollars at the finish line.



Each season has 11 pairs of participants and 12 episodes, or otherwise known as 12 legs of the race. Each leg has a chance of elimination for the team that reaches the pit stop (checkpoint) last. Only 3 teams need to make it to the finale, so with a little quick math, that leaves 3 legs to be non-elimination. In that case, the last team in those legs is given extra challenges to do in the next leg, making it harder for them to catch up. Participants have to find or are handed yellow envelopes with clues inside to their next destination or challenge. Since this is a race around the world, you can imagine the issues navigation could cause.

One major source of chaos is the fact that no taxis or flights are previously booked for teams. Therefore, they have to navigate foreign countries on their own, showcasing their skills in navigation, or sometimes just pure luck in finding the right place. You wouldn't believe how hard it is to reach the right destination when all the road signs are in a different language. Believe it or not, there's been moments where teams checked in at the pit stop of the leg a whole day behind others.





# 1. CHALLENGES

There are many types of unique challenges the contestants face. They can be based on physicality, memorization, puzzle-solving, building, eating, fear-overcoming, and more. Challenges come in iconic yellow clue envelopes, each with a different meaning:



## Route info:

This clue tells teams to go to a specific location to find their next clue.



## Roadblock:

The pair must choose only one of them to complete this challenge. However, they're only given a short sentence with no information to help them decide which teammate should do it. This causes drama, since sometimes one teammate would've been much better at a certain challenge, but they accidentally choose the other, who ends up struggling.



## Fast Forward:

This challenge is not seen in every season, but is an opportunity for teams to take first place in a leg. Teams can choose to do this one singular challenge, which is often quite difficult, and immediately skip to the pit stop.



## Detour:

An option between 2 challenges. Teams can also switch between either if they're struggling with one.



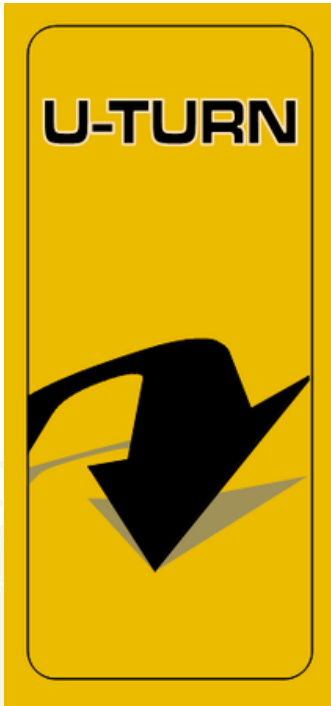
## 2. SIGHTS AND CULTURES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

In most seasons, the show visits around 8-10 countries in 12 episodes! They showcase beautiful views, sights, and cultural practices of the country. It feels like you traveled there just by watching a screen at home. Personally, I've learned really interesting fun facts, and added a lot of destinations to visit on my to-go list. For example, they've visited sites like Victoria Falls in Zambia and Zimbabwe, Schönbrunn Palace in Austria, the Batu Caves in Malaysia, and so much more. In addition, they've done unique challenges like eating scorpions in Thailand, cooking Tandoor oven bread in Armenia, performing Vietnamese songs at karaoke, and playing instruments with a samba group in Brazil. If you dropped me in the middle of Marrakesh, Morocco I bet I could find my way around just by how many times I've seen the city on screen.



## 3. TEAMS

Other than challenges, what really makes each season is the cast of participants. Picking your favorite-to-win team might be one of the most intense things about the show. Out of 11 teams with unique and compelling personalities, it's really fun to pick ones to root for, and others you want to see fail. Not to mention, the show is partnered with other reality survival shows that run on CBS, such as Big Brother and Survivor. Therefore, it's not uncommon to see contestants from those shows participating in The Amazing Race. So, if you are a fan of those other productions, chances are you might see a favorite or two competing in the race around the world.



## 4. DRAMA

Let's not forget the reason why anyone watches a reality show, the drama! The Amazing Race provides many opportunities for teams to mess with each other or go head-to-head. If you recall what Detours are (an option between 2 challenges), then you'd be surprised to hear what a U-turn is and how it affects the game.

A U-turn is usually put directly before or after a Detour and gives teams a chance to essentially "U-turn" another team, forcing them to go back and complete both challenges of the Detour. As you can imagine, this is a huge setback and takes a lot of time and effort. Most teams get eliminated from being U-turned, and thus lose out on the million. Sometimes the U-turns are anonymous, but for the most part it's very clear who targeted a certain team. There have been arguments, betrayals, and bitter alliances just from U-Turns alone. Everyone's tired and stressed from having to work their brain through challenges everyday. This is why partners of a team often fight as well. I've rarely seen a team that didn't get frustrated with each other at least once. When you come on this show, it's a given that you're not going to be seeing eye to eye with everyone, but at least it makes for fun TV!

## OUTRO

I only started watching The Amazing Race when I had a bad case of COVID-19 a couple years ago. I had to be constantly distracted by something, or else I would notice my nausea and keep throwing up. This show ended up being so entertaining that I watched a full season that day (not like I had much of a choice), and didn't have to vomit more than I needed to! That's when my bond with the show solidified, and I became addicted to watching episode after episode.

Anyways, if all these reasons didn't convince you to watch The Amazing Race, then I don't know what will. It's a fun, down to earth reality show that can make your weekday nights all the more enjoyable. It's available on Crave, CTV, or CBS.



# TOOTHE PARTY

Alina Dong

It is that time of the year again. The time I assume the look of an ancient prehistoric creature, inflate myself with air, and perform activities that would only be permissible this time of the year. I am thinking this as I ring the doorbell of my dwelling, with dark, eerie cobwebs hanging from every corner, a skeleton perched, waiting by the doorstep, the pumpkins smirking, and the welcome mat not-so-welcome looking anymore. “Enter at your own risk”. I step inside and greet my maternal figure. “RAAAAURRRRHHH-HH” Today, a black, very pointy, conical hat is standing on her head, and she has put on her dreadful black sleeping robe, with her purple fuzzy slippers. She is menacing. But I am menacing-er. I must assume my final form... I storm up the stairs as if I weighed ten tons, which I hope I did, because then I could tackle my siblings more effectively when they try to re-steal my stolen possessions. I have now reached the boundary of the upstairs hallway, to the gate to the dungeon-esque place I call my bed-room, probably because it has a bed. In fact, I have dressed it in cobwebs too. Sometimes I think the spiders aren’t doing so great of a job, so I have to do it myself. The first thing I do is throw my red Lightning McQueen bag of carrying possessions on the ground, because it makes me look less horrible – and I don’t like it. Raur. I roar at my maternal figure for the key to my transformation, and she arrives soon with the skinned pelt of a gargantuan creature.

I jump into the centre of the pelt, creating a massive earthquake – I hope. My maternal figure assists me in sealing the laceration in the pelt at the back. It goes zzzip. She has now begun to pump the wretched thing with air. It slowly starts to inflate as if it were an oversized demonic sweet potato. As I watch it blow up, I realize the sheer power and majesty I now possess... “RAURRRW” I am terror! With one stamp of my horrendous pancake claws, I can DESTROY THE UNIVERSE.

Now, it is time for the party. Raur.



I am waiting for Rob and Tod to come home. They are two boys aged eight and six, respectively. Richard is picking them up today, as he does every Thursday when I go grocery shopping. However, today I have gone grocery shopping already. It was a quick trip. I am not a good cook, but I like my fair share of, well, attempted Halloween festivities. I try. I have bought the large orange family-sized packs containing candies of all sorts. Kit-Kats, Smarties, Aero bars, Coffee Crisp bars, that stuff. I don't buy the chips, because I am a conservative woman and it irks me terribly to see bags half full of air. And it gets your hands all oily. Not to say the chocolates are much better, because when those little boys eat, they smear the stuff all over their faces. What about hard candies? The crunching is vile. I want to place a ban on candy. It ruffles my feathers. But I try.



Marie told me last week I would make a splendid hen. She said no offence. I was wearing a yellow dress and I had just washed my red hair the day before. A hen wouldn't be too bad. So this week I spent my free time sticking quilted feathers together. It doesn't look half bad. Now I hear the sound of an engine growing louder. Then it stops. Tod raps on the door while Rob rings the doorbell. Tod can't reach it. I have to go.

We will leave for the party soon.

My friend Elsie wants to be a princess. I told her she couldn't do that if she didn't have a tiara. In fact, my other friend Sophie said the true difference between a princess or prince and a queen or king was all in the headgear. She bought a plastic gold crown and said she was going to be Elsa. She is not Elsa. It needs to be a tiara. If she was Elsa she would need a blue tiara with diamonds and sapphires, I don't care if that's not what Elsa was actually wearing. And Elsie has black hair so I told her she should dip it in the paint her dad is using to paint the kitchen to turn it blonde. My mum said blonde wasn't lemon yellow. I have agreed to be Anna. I think I'll be a better Anna than her Elsa, because I have actually gotten a tiara. Anna is a princess and I don't care if, on Disney, she appears without a tiara. Without a tiara! It simply isn't done. Me and my mum are going to buy my costume today. We're going to Party City and I'm also probably going to buy one for Lizzy, my dog. She's a golden retriever. I think she'd be a good Elsa-dog but Elsie is already going to be Elsa so that doesn't work. My mum said Lizzy would be a good Olaf. That's fine with me. I just have to cover her in fake snow. Or flour. Or baking soda.

Mum pulls up to Party City and we go in. I see an Elsa costume on the rack and it is on sale. I think it looks worse than Elsie's. But Elsie has the same costume, I just sprinkled a lot of blue glitter on it so it looks better. Next to it, I see the Anna costume I was looking for. It is also on sale and my mum takes it to the counter. I wanted fake snow for Lizzy but I couldn't find it. It's kind of funny that me and Elsie and Lizzy are dressing up as winter princesses and a snowman when it's Halloween and it isn't winter yet. When I get home, I take out my mum's all-purpose oat flour and with her fancy teaspoon, I sprinkle a lot of Quaker's Oat Flour on Lizzy. I don't think she minds. It isn't enough, but I know my mum will get super mad if I use all of it. The bag used to be full. And then my mum comes down the stairs with a crooked witch hat. She starts screaming because the dog has changed colour. I tell her that's how it's supposed to be.

My mum leads Lizzy-Olaf out of the door and I follow. We're going to the party and then I get to brag about my tiara and scold Elsie. Soon. Olaf leaves a trail of snowfl - Quaker's All Purpose Flour as she makes her way to the car.



It's horrible. It's terrible. It's exasperating. Sophia is trying black satin bowties on my tail. SOPHIA IS TRYING BLACK SATIN BOWTIES ON MY TAIL. It's despicable. Carden is trying to tie dollar-store felt bat wings on my back. CARDEN IS TRYING TO TIE DOLLAR-STORE FELT BAT WINGS ON MY BACK. Just because I'm a scrawny black cat - yes, I know, doesn't mean - STOP IT! I hiss at Sophia but she is unfazed. I wish I was scarier even though that would only make me more Halloween-decoration-ish. At least then, I could frighten Sophia out of her wits. And she would stop tying satin bows on my tail. Actually, I should fix that problem now. By eating her. I successfully nip her fingers as she's trying to secure the vile ribbon and she starts shrieking. For her mum. What does she want me to do? BE SCARY - OR NOT...? I decide to stalk away but then Carden starts shrieking too, because he just came back from painting electric yellow stripes on the dollar-store felt bat wings of his, and I disappeared. It's what Pikachu would look like if he had a teenage Emo phase. I, fortunately, am not Adolescent Emo Pikachu with Bat Wings. Yes offence.

Halloween is not my favourite holiday. Not saying I enjoy the other ones, because no matter what I will don some form of bowtie on my tail and, while we're at it, a 17th century aristocratic powdered wig on my head, but Halloween, as a scrimpy-haired black cat, is especially atrocious. I wish I could go trick or treating. Candy sounds nice. I wouldn't even have to dress up. I REPEAT! I WOULDN'T EVEN HAVE TO DRESS UP. Now excuse me, there is a hairball-ton of tiny children at my unlocked door, and I must secure my escape... before Sophia returns with that dreaded wig that's probably been passed down from Mozart's great grandpa.

Unfortunately I've FAILED, and now I'm being dragged to their party. Rats. I'll just scare everyone away using my terrifying Halloween-black-cat-powers, also known as dark magic. Or something like that. And then I get to have a good time eating their biscuits and whatever baked goods that don't look that bad.





Parties are great! Parties are great-er, erm, more great, that sounds like my cheese grater, when you're the host. Parties are the, er - greatest, when you're the host and a baker and it's also a Halloween party and there's a bunch of guests yes. Phew. One heck of a sentence, and it'll be one heck of a party! I like to think of myself as this jolly fun grandma type of person. I'm probably younger than your mom. No offence to your mom. I'm not the best planner - not great at planning in advance. But I like to think my organization skills magically poof out of the air when it actually comes time to things. So that's what I'm doing now. I don't know if you're supposed to serve cake at a Halloween costume party, but that's what I'm doing. 'Cause why not? I also have very scary cookies done. They're definitely very scary. On second thought, don't take my word for it. Mr Butterscotch next door did most of the planning. Like actual planning, because I just rapid-fired ideas at him. Maybe I should have dressed up as a machine gun. But I'm actually being Jemima Puddle-Duck from Beatrix Potter's stories. Like I have her whole outfit and all, minus the duck part. Well, I have a bill, but I'm not a duck - felt like clarifying. Anyway.

We're having a costume party? Did I mention that before? Oh, yeah, I did. But it's the superior form of a costume party. It - er - may or may not be a costume contest! But then, it's too hard being a judge. Just waiting for people to flood in now.

That's the doorbell! I welcome Mrs Toffeeefudge, the hen. Well, dressed as a hen. I just know she'll win! Look at those feathers! We're both birds. Does that mean we're twinning? Is that what you're supposed to say? Her two children barrel through the door, along with her husband. Rob is the Flash and Tod is Batman. Mr Toffeeefudge is dressed like an office worker, but he says that's his costume - it's a good costume.

Sounds like my door is being blasted down or something! I open it, and - woah. His mother in that long robe and purple slippers - I can barely make out who it is - apologizes for the dinosaur intrusion. Ok, now that is going to win. Wowwieee!

I hear a hisssss and right past them squeeze in Sophia and Carden, plus their parents. But the real spectacle here is the scrawny black cat Sophia and Carden are trying to restrain - it's not working. Their cat, Missy, looks me dead in the eye and - if cats could do an eye roll, she just did. A real black cat! And she even has striped bat wings and a bowtie on her tail. I wonder who did that.... Yeah. She'll win, for sure! Or it seems like Missy will tear down my walls and eat all the guests, standing at a magnificent 1.5 feet tall.

The doorbell is rung in succession, and the characters from Frozen burst in. They turn my fall-themed hallway into a river in deep frost. With all the sparkles falling from her dress. Also! There's Lizzy, the Golden Retriever! More like Frozen Retriever! Hah. Ahahahah. I am told the princesses dumped Oat Flour on her. Reasonable, I say. Except she's snowing all over my rug. I can't decide whether Elsa or Olaf will win, but Lizzy comes equipped with special effects, so!

I tell everyone that there will be an impromptu costume contest. They all gasp, including Lizzy (who did a nice big "woooof" for me) but excluding Sophia and Carden's little black cat - although, if cats could do an eye raise, she did. I say "All the winners will get a slice of cake!". See, I was right about baking a cake! I might be terrible at consciously planning, but I like to think the universe writes a bit of foreshadowing into its script. Most people are clustered around the big green plastic IKEA table, with some more respectable-looking people and the little black cat with Mozart's hair-do perched on top of the elaborate-ly old-and-dusty, high purple plush-backed chairs of the "adult table". I started serving cake. Here's the catch - I can't decide, and out of favour for the adults' costumes, I want to hint at everyone being a "winner" - a bunch of repurposed-night-clothes-mom witches, mostly - so I drop a slice of cake into everyone's plates, including a bit for Lizzy and the scrawny black cat.

I stand up on my impromptu stage of a black glitter paint coated Amazon Prime box.

"Whoever has a slice is the winner!", I yelled over the aspiring opera soprano children. Someone asks "Mommy it's uglier than my brother, where'd they get this from? It tastes good, though!" Gobble gobble, munch munch.

"I baked it" And then I laughed underneath my Puddle-Duck bonnet.





# news

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# Andrey Rublev, Responsibility, and Resilience: A Year in Review of the World Number 9's Rollercoaster Season

By: Naomi Low

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An up-and-down season for the Russian tennis player, Andrey Rublev approaches the end of his season with two career titles in his pocket and a handful of lessons learned from his rollercoaster year.

On the one hand, Rublev fought through extraordinary challenges this year just to be able to compete with a clear head. Battling mental health challenges like depression and anger issues both on and off the court, Rublev's outbursts finally got the better of him in the Dubai ATP 500 Championship that took place in late February of this year. The current world #9 lost control of his temper with a court photographer during his semi-final match against Alexander Bublik and was promptly defaulted from the tournament. Immediately stripped of his points and prize money earned from the event, a lengthy board appeal process had his earnings reinstated shortly after.

Though Rublev may have walked away with his ATP rankings intact after Dubai, he proceeded to lose four consecutive matches less than a week after his disqualification. Letting old ghosts back into his psyche, the guilt of his behaviour undoubtedly ate away at him in the following weeks after the incident.



After a courageous mental battle back to the court, Rublev's tide finally changed as he gained a small semblance of peace on the red clay of Madrid. Answering his four-match loss streak with a charging six-match win streak, defeating the current world #3 ranked player, Carlos Alcaraz, on his home soil, Rublev fought his way to his first Master's 1000 title of the year. Despite enduring a high fever and tonsil infection in the same week, Rublev admitted to journalists that his illness drained all of his mental energy, ultimately leaving him free to forget the darkness of the past few months to just play tennis.

Rublev went on to make the final of the Montreal Masters 1000 that summer, defeating world #1 Jannik Sinner on his way to the last round in Canada. In doing so, he put himself in contention to finish his year qualified in the group of the top 8 ATP players in the world. Whether the Russian will clinch the last spot in this year's Race to Turin depends on his last match(es) this week at the Moselle Open in France, where he will face off first against Lorenzo Sonego in the Round of 16.



Rublev after winning his Masters 1000 Title in Madrid.

If Andrey Rublev manages to surpass Alex de Minaur in the Live Turin rankings by the end of the week, it'll be his fifth consecutive year qualifying for the year-end Nitto ATP Finals Round Robin Tournament.

However, regardless of his next results, it is undeniable that Rublev has had an incredible year. Becoming the only player to beat both Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz in the same season and marking 200 career weeks in the ATP Top 10 Rankings, the Russian's accomplishments are astounding.

His results, as well as his affirmations to himself, speak volumes. Although Rublev hasn't confirmed the explicit meaning of the message he wrote on his hand during the Cincinnati Masters 1000 and on his shoe during the Swiss Indoors Basel 500 Tournament, fans took notice of the intentional word right away: "Responsibility."



Whether this note hints at the responsibility he must take for his on-court decisions or bearing the weight of the pressure his career creates, one thing is certain: Rublev is responsible for every moment of his season so far, especially the successes.

Navigating the arduous road of resilience and self-reconciliation in this whirlwind year, the Russian tennis player can be proud of his efforts and the fighting performance he consistently displayed.

Learning to forgive himself and focus on the mental battle each tournament presented, Rublev discovered how to prevail in thick and thin this year, most notably in his five set comeback in Round 2 of this summer's US Open match against Frenchman, Arthur Rinderknech.

Though the 2024 season is approaching its end, Rublev's season is not over just yet. He has one last tournament in Moselle. One last chance to reach the final eight in the rankings: one last responsibility to undertake.





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# feature

# Scary Things

*Anushka Yoganathan*

**THIS IS THE HALLOWEEN EDITION OF THE WRITER'S BLOCK, SO I WANTED TO STAY ON THEME AND WRITE SOMETHING OOKY SPOOKY. I ABSOLUTELY HATE HORROR AND ANYTHING SCARY THAT'S NOT MEANT FOR SMALL CHILDREN, AND TRUST ME, MY LIFE IS SCARY ENOUGH WITHOUT GHOULS AND GOBLINS LURKING IN THE SHADOWS. SO, IN AN ATTEMPT TO EMBRACE THE SPOOKY SEASON WITHOUT CONFRONTING THOSE FEARS, I PRESENT TO YOU A LIST OF TERRIFYING THINGS I FACE AS A STUDENT!**

## **APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY**

**ABSOLUTELY FLIPPIN' TERRIFYING. WHAT DO YOU MEAN I NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT I WANT TO DO FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS OF MY LIFE? I CAN BARELY FIGURE OUT WHAT CLOTHES TO WEAR TOMORROW, AND I WEAR A UNIFORM. THEN, I HAVE TO SUBMIT MY APPLICATIONS AND BASICALLY BEG UNIVERSITIES TO ACCEPT ME LIKE I'M PLEADING FOR MY LIFE IN A SLASHER MOVIE—EXCEPT GHOSTFACE IS SOME UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS OFFICER WHO DOESN'T CARE IF I LIVE OR DIE. IT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE ME FEEL LIKE I'M TRAPPED IN A NIGHTMARE, WHERE EVERY OPEN HOUSE IS A HAUNTED HOUSE, AND THE ONLY WAY TO LIVE IS TO MAKE IT THROUGH ENDLESS SUPPLEMENTARY APPLICATIONS. TRULY THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES.**







## **THE OUAC PORTAL**

**THE OUAC PORTAL SEEMS UNASSUMING, PLEASANT EVEN. BUT BEWARE! IT'S A TRAP; THE PORTAL LURES YOU IN WITH IMAGES OF HAPPY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND BRIGHT COLOURS, BUT ALL THE WHILE, IT'S LYING IN WAIT TO UNLEASH TERROR. THE PORTAL GOES DOWN FOR MAINTENANCE SEEMINGLY EVERY SINGLE TIME I TRY TO USE IT, LIKE IT'S PLOTTING MY DOOM. I LIVE IN CONSTANT FEAR THAT THE PORTAL WILL EITHER REFUSE TO WORK WHEN I SEND IN MY APPLICATIONS OR SOMETHING WILL GO HORRIBLY WRONG, AND IT'LL SEND MY APPLICATION TO THE UNDERWORLD OF UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS. THEN, MY APPLICATION WILL BE SUCKED INTO THE ABYSS, NEVER TO RETURN. MEANWHILE, I'LL BE LEFT IN AGONIZING SUSPENSE, WAITING IN A PURGATORY OF UNCERTAINTY FOR ALL OF ETERNITY FOR A RESPONSE FROM THE UNIVERSITIES I APPLIED TO. .**

## **GRADE 12 STEM COURSES**

**IN GRADE 12, IT FEELS LIKE THE GHOST OF MATH IS HAUNTING ME, LURKING IN DARK CORNERS AND WAITING TO JUMP OUT AND SCREAM EQUATIONS AT ME. ALL THE STEM COURSES ARE INTERTWINED; RIGHT NOW, I'M DOING CHEMISTRY IN BIOLOGY, PHYSICS IN CHEMISTRY, AND CALCULUS IN PHYSICS. AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT I'M DOING IN CALCULUS. WHATEVER A LIMIT IS, I'M GETTING REAL CLOSE TO IT RIGHT NOW. MOST HORRIFYINGLY, THE ROOT OF ALL THE SCIENCES IS MATH. I TOOK BIOLOGY AND CHEMISTRY TO ESCAPE ITS CLUTCHES, AND NOW I HAVE TO DO CALCULATIONS? RESPECTFULLY, NO THANK YOU. IF I WANTED TO DO MORE MATH, I'D TAKE MORE MATH CLASSES.**



## **AP CLASSROOM**

**DO YOU KNOW THE BONE-CHILLING FEAR THAT GOES THROUGH MY BODY EVERY TIME I OPEN THAT GODFORSAKEN WEBSITE? THE HOME SCREEN HAS THE DATES OF ALL MY IMPENDING AP EXAMS, WHICH IS BAD ENOUGH, BUT THEN YOU LOOK CLOSER AND SEE THAT ALL MY EXAMS ARE AT 8:00 AM, AND TWO OF MY EXAMS ARE A DAY APART. IT FEELS LIKE A COUNTDOWN TO MY DOOM. IF I'M BRAVE ENOUGH TO SHAKE MY FEAR AND CARRY ON, I CAN ACCESS SOME OF THE MOST UNNECESSARILY COMPLICATED MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS KNOWN TO HUMANKIND. SERIOUSLY, JUST...WHY?**

## **DIGIEXAM**

**LOOK, I GET IT. THE TEACHERS DON'T WANT EVERYONE TO TURN IN THE SAME AI-GENERATED ESSAYS AND ASSIGNMENTS. THAT BEING SAID, I HATE DIGIEXAM WITH EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING. IF DIGIEXAM HAS A MILLION HATERS, THEN I AM ONE OF THEM. IF DIGIEXAM HAS TEN HATERS, THEN I AM ONE OF THEM. IF DIGIEXAM HAS ONLY ONE HATER, THEN THAT IS ME. IF DIGIEXAM HAS NO HATERS, I AM DEAD. RANT OVER. DIGIEXAM ISN'T EVEN SCARY; I INCLUDED THIS ONE JUST TO TRASH IT BECAUSE I HATE IT THAT MUCH. USING IT IS LIKE BEING TRAPPED IN A HORROR SHOW WHERE YOU'RE FORCED TO WRITE TO SURVIVE, AND HEAVEN FORBID YOUR WIFI GLITCHES. AT THIS POINT, I WOULDN'T EVEN BE SURPRISED IF DIGIEXAM WAS A VILLAIN IN AN EPISODE OF BLACK MIRROR.**

## **THE LEARNING COMMONS PRINTER**

**THE BIGGEST TRAITOR OF ALL. WHENEVER I NEED IT MOST, THE PRINTER IN THE LEARNING COMMONS DECIDES TO ACHIEVE TODDLER-LIKE LEVELS OF UNCOOPERATIVITY. I'M CONVINCED IT ENJOYS WATCHING ME PANIC AS I FRANTICALLY TRY TO PRINT A SCRIPT FOR A PRESENTATION, HOPING SOMETHING—ANYTHING—PRINTS BEFORE I HAVE TO SPRINT TO CLASS. IT'S LIKE IT KNOWS I'M ON A TIME CRUSH AND WANTS TO SABOTAGE ME, FEEDING OFF MY FEAR LIKE A MALEVOLENT SPIRIT. THERE HAVE BEEN MULTIPLE OCCASIONS WHERE I HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO BEGGING AND PLEADING WITH THE PRINTER IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LEARNING COMMONS WHILE IT SITS THERE BEEPING AT ME, AS IF IT'S LAUGHING AT MY PAIN.**

## **THE LIQUID DISPOSAL BIN IN THE CAFETERIA**

**NOTHING QUITE STRIKES FEAR INTO MY HEART LIKE THE LIQUID DISPOSAL BIN IN THE CAFETERIA. IT'S LIKE A CAULDRON OF UNIDENTIFIABLE SLUDGE, SLOSHING AROUND AND PLOTTING MY DOWNFALL. EVERY TIME I POUR SOMETHING INTO IT, I HALF-EXPECT SOMETHING TO REACH UP AND DRAG ME IN. WHAT'S REALLY IN THERE? REMNANTS OF PAST CHEMISTRY EXPERIMENTS? THE TEARS OF STUDENTS WHO DIDN'T FINISH THEIR HOMEWORK? RADIOACTIVE WASTE? WHATEVER IS IN THERE, IT'S PROBABLY SENTIENT BY NOW, OR AT THE VERY LEAST, GAINING SENTIENCE AS YOU READ THIS SENTENCE.**


## **THE LOST AND FOUND**

**AS I WALK PAST THE OVERFLOWING LOST AND FOUND, I SHUDDER AS I WONDER WHAT LURKS INSIDE. A LONELY SHOE, STUCK FOREVER SEARCHING FOR ITS SHOE-MATE? SOME HORRIFYING LOVECRAFTIAN HORROR? A WATER BOTTLE FILLED WITH UNIDENTIFIED SLIME THAT ESCAPED FROM A LAB? I HALF EXPECT TO SEE SOME HELLISH ENTITY SLOWLY EMERGE FROM A PORTAL TO THE UNDERWORLD FOUND UNDER A PILE OF LONG-FORGOTTEN GYM SOCKS, CLUTCHING A CRUMPLED MATH TEST AND WAILING ABOUT LONG-LOST DREAMS. WHO KNOWS WHAT HORRORS LIE IN THERE? CERTAINLY NOT ME.**





## **SPARES**

**OK, HEAR ME OUT FOR THIS ONE. I HAVE TWO SPARES, AND I LOVE THEM. I GET WORK DONE, GO TO TIM HORTONS, GO TO STARBUCKS, GO TO THE BURGER'S PRIEST, YOU GET THE PICTURE. BUT THE REAL MENACE HERE IS WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN YOUR SPARES ARE, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY'RE DURING FIRST PERIOD. PICTURE THIS: YOU STROLL INTO SCHOOL LATE AFTER SLEEPING IN DURING YOUR SPARE, AND THEN YOU REALIZE, WITH HORROR, THAT YOUR SPARE WAS YESTERDAY AND YOU JUST SKIPPED CLASS! ONE MINUTE, YOU'RE LOUNGING ON THE COUCHES OF THE COMMON AREA. THE NEXT, YOU'RE SPRINTING AT BREAKNECK SPEED DOWN THE HALL, DODGING SCARED GRADE 9S AND HOPING YOU DON'T FACEPLANT TO BEG YOUR TEACHER FOR FORGIVENESS. THIS HAS HAPPENED TO ME, AND IT RANKS AMONG THE TOP 10 WORST MOMENTS OF MY LIFE.**



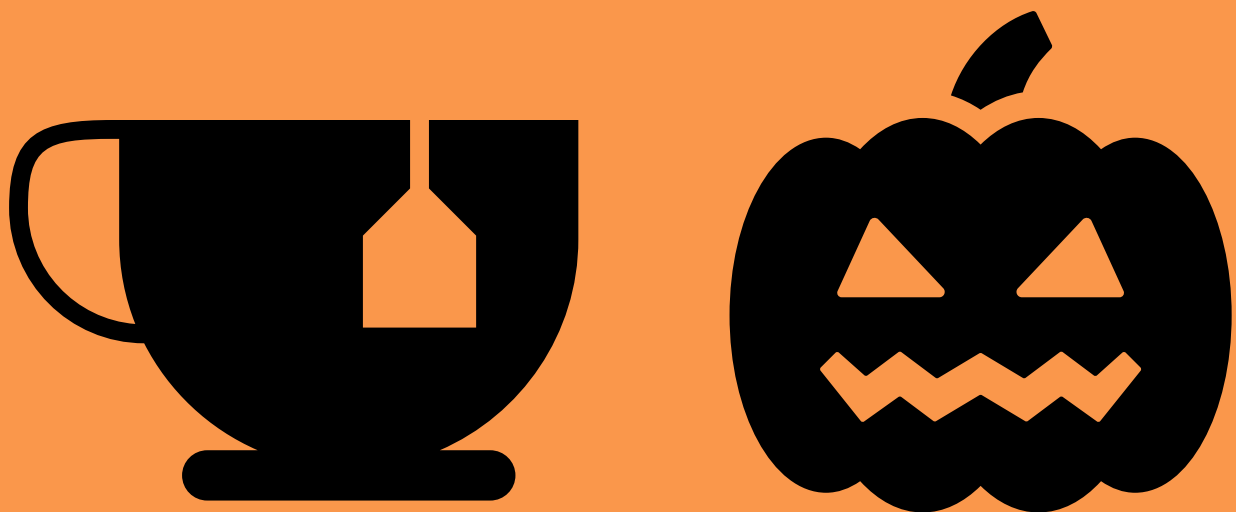
## **THE BELL**

**THERE IS NOTHING QUITE AS VISCERALLY SOUL-SHAKING AS THE SCHOOL BELL. I HAVE ONE DIRECTLY ABOVE MY LOCKER, SO I HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF GETTING JUMPSCARED BY IT AT LEAST TEN TIMES A DAY. IT'S NOT JUST LOUD; NO, IT'S DEAFENING, AND I'M CONVINCED I'VE SUSTAINED PERMANENT HEARING DAMAGE FROM IT. NO HORROR MOVIE HAS JUMPSCARED ME LIKE THE BELL DECIDING TO BLARE AT 150 DECIBELS WHILE I'M TRYING TO PUT MY LUNCH AWAY. FORGET PENNYWISE; THIS BELL IS SCARIER THAN HIM, MICHAEL MYERS, JASON VOORHEES, AND FREDDY KRUEGER COMBINED.**





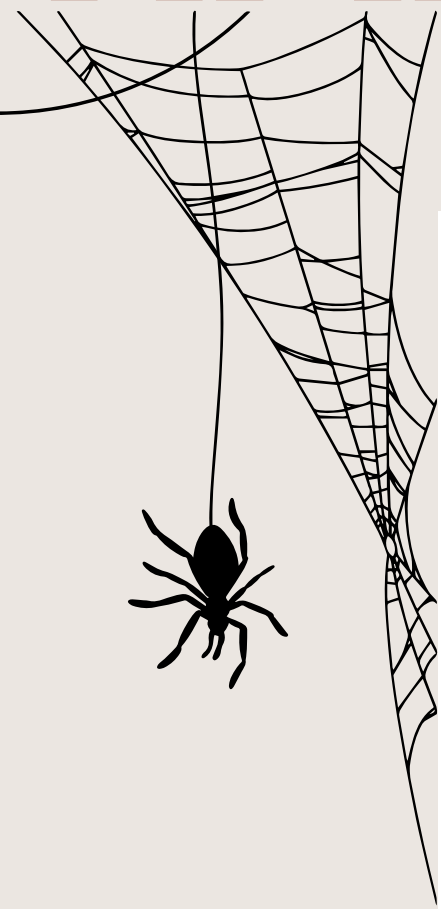
**THIS HALLOWEEN, WHILE EVERYONE ELSE IS RUNNING AWAY FROM ZOMBIES AND BATTLING VAMPIRES, I'LL BE RUNNING AWAY FROM MY MONSTROUS RESPONSIBILITIES AND BATTLING MY OWN DEMONS: UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS, OMINOUS AP EXAMS, THE EVIL OUAC PORTAL (TO THE UNDERWORLD), THE GHOST OF MATH, THE DASTARDLY VILLAIN KNOWN AS DIGIEXAM, THE TRAITOROUS AND POSSIBLY SENTIENT LEARNING COMMONS PRINTER, THE DISGUSTING LIQUID DISPOSAL BIN, THE ELDRITCH HORRORS OF THE LOST AND FOUND, THE BLOOD-CURDLING BELL THAT HAUNTS MY EVERY DAY, AND THE HORROR OF MIXING UP SPARES. SO, WHILE YOU'RE OUT TRICK-OR-TREATING, I'LL BE FIGHTING THE BEASTS WITHIN OUR SCHOOL'S WALLS, ARMED ONLY WITH A THERMOS OF TEA AND A RAPIDLY DWINDLING WILL TO LIVE.**



**HAPPY HALLOWEEN!**

# **HALLOWEEN FOODS**

By: Lukas



Unfortunately, for me to explain the history of Halloween foods, I will also need to explain the history of Halloween in general. I do not like history, but I do like food.

Let's begin.

Halloween originated as a Celtic festival known as Samhain, which was a festival that took place on the 1st of November. For the Celts, whose calendar ended on what we now know as October 31st, this festival bridged the gap between the farming season and the cold winter that was to come. They believed that the separation between humans and the spirits was weaker on this day, which meant that spirits could come and damage their crops, or engage in other forms of mischief.

Around this time, a tradition began in which people would carve faces into turnips to ward off spirits. Does this count as part of the history of halloween foods? I don't know. I wouldn't eat a raw turnip.

A slightly more food-related part of this festival was the baking of soul cakes. In England, poor people and children would beg for these small cakes on Halloween. In exchange for the cakes, they would promise to pay for the household member's dead relatives. This tradition continued until the early 20th century.

While described as cakes, they look a lot more like cookies to me. They contained many spices that one might typically associate with fall, such as cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg. They also contained dried fruits such as raisins or currants.



Could they have been the precursors to the modern pumpkin spice?

Probably not.

Would I eat these?

No.

In the 18th century, many matchmaking/romance-related traditions emerged around Halloween. Some cooks placed rings in food to bring luck to whomever ate it, usually in mashed potatoes. In my opinion, I would not like to be halfway through a delicious plate of ketchup-covered mashed potatoes and realise that I have swallowed a ring. However, I do like mashed potatoes.

Would I eat this?

Yes.

In another tradition, women would peel apples and throw the peels over their shoulders. With any luck, the peels would land in the shape of their future soulmate's initials.

Would I eat these?

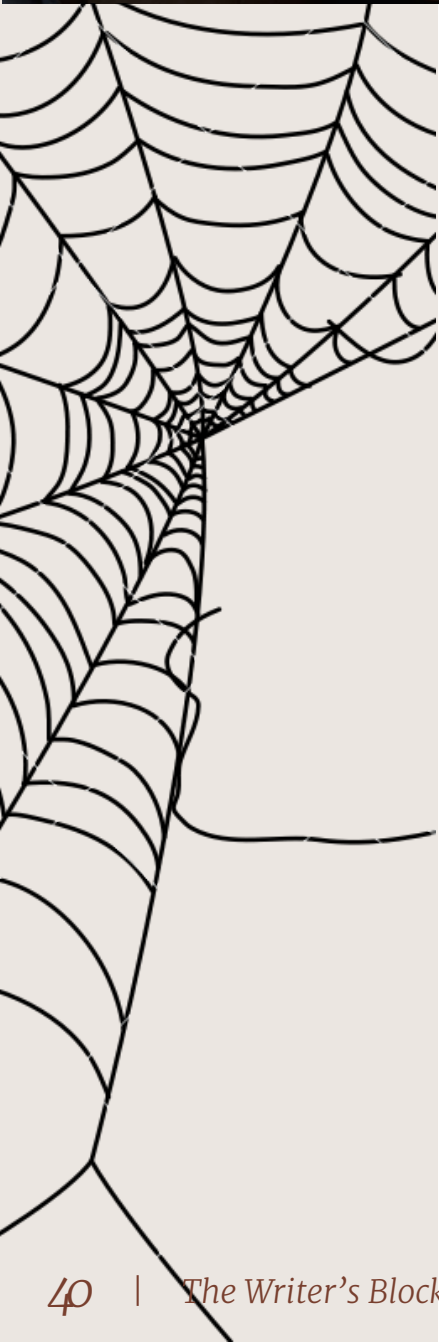
Probably not, as peels taken off the floor wouldn't taste too good.


The tradition of bobbing for apples also started around this time, where the first person to get the apple would be the next person to get married.

Would I eat these?

Probably, though this would obviously depend on if someone has already bitten my apple or not.

Several hundred years later, Irish immigrants brought the festival to the United States. This helped the spread of several traditions which eventually evolved into what we now think of when we think of Halloween. These include traditions such as trick or treating and wearing costumes.





In the late 19th century, one of the most controversial Halloween candies was created. It was designed to look like corn because more than half of Americans at the time worked in farms.

Would I eat these?

Yes. They're not that bad. If anyone wants to fight me on this, I invite you to send me a Teams message with a date and time.

Nowadays, when you look up "Halloween foods" on Google in a desperate bid to research an article that you forgot you were going to write, you find many modern Halloween-themed recipes. Many of these involve making regular food look scary by adding ketchup (to represent blood). Others might involve drawing or printing halloween-themed designs onto baked goods and other treats.

In conclusion, while traditions and the history of holidays like Halloween might be constantly evolving, they continue to create new and delicious treats

#### Sources

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# word on the street

# WORD ON THE STREET

This year, the Writers' Block presents Word on the Street, an opportunity for the school community to send in their (anonymous) work to be featured in our issues. Enjoy!



"Hey, sweetie, can you come down to the basement for a moment?" my mom's voice said. My mother and I turned to each other in horror from the upstairs bedroom closet.

I felt the wind brush against my shoulder as I walked home after a busy day. Looking towards the fall-coloured trees, I saw the leaves and branches around me standing stock-still.

I heard my mom calling me from downstairs, but when I got to the stairs, I saw her behind me, whispering, "I heard it too. Don't go."

As I swallowed the dry Popeyes biscuit, my throat tightened. The water pitcher was empty.

A week ago, the media club came into our class and filmed us doing work. The final video was posted yesterday and should be 100% refined, so why was there a stack of floating textbooks where my best friend was supposed to be?

I've always wondered what 1000-year-old humans look like. Would there still be flesh and bones? Shrivelled skin with no meat left? Is it even possible for a physical body to be left? Boy, was I really regretting that wish now.

Once every fortnight, Vikram received a text from his little sister's number saying, "I'm watching you." He brushed it off as a joke until he saw her reflection smiling creepily at him from the dark rectangular window.

-Nikan

Whenever I'm missing my daughter, I always look at her class graduation photo, but her expression seems to change every time. Today, she had disappeared from the picture altogether, her presence on the wall replaced by cries echoing through the hallways.

-Louisa

"Looking sharp today," he told himself in the mirror. His reflection slowly nodded back in response.

-Sirin

I could never swim, but now I feel that I'm drowning. I've even got all the symptoms, except I haven't stepped foot into any body of water for years.

I live alone in my apartment on the 13th floor. So why do I always feel multiple pairs of hands pulling me towards the balcony every time I enter the front door?

The previous owners told me the house would be perfect if it weren't for the loud sound of the wind at night. As I hear the slow creaking of the floorboards make their way toward my room, I do wonder if it is still the wind.

I woke up on the front porch of an old wooden house with no memory, and in an open notebook beside me were messy scribbles surrounding the word "Demon." The door creaked open, and the glow of recently burned crucifixes inside the house accompanied by a haunting voice greeted me. "Why are you still here? Why have you come again?"

I heard that VR can make you feel like you're actually in a video game, visiting haunted houses and running from ghosts. I'm really wishing for a VR set right now.

200 years ago, a group of wicked spellcasters disbanded when their leader mysteriously disappeared. To this day, nobody has even seen the body. Me? I wish the body was still an unmoving corpse.

The shower water chilled my body, making my bones numb. Yet I couldn't leave. I hadn't taken a shower in years, always avoiding it, even when everyone else said the water was warm. I closed my eyes and willed the cold away. When I opened them, there was a strange sensation of feeling weightless. A wicked laughter filled the air.

I'm really clumsy, so when I was walking home October 31st and tripped over my own feet, I wasn't surprised, and braced for the impact. What did surprise me, however, was that I didn't hit the pavement with a resounding crack. I opened my eyes, and a nightmare greeted me.

I decided to be a serial killer for Halloween, with fake red marks on my costume to simulate blood. I decided to wear it to bed to spend less time getting ready the next morning, but when the police swabbed my dress to check the "blood," I didn't expect someone to be identified.

The gates to the graveyard creaked open before me, where millions of ghosts had been said to populate the area. A friendly ghost waved to me. My hair raised as I realised the friendly ghosts were the only ones here. Where were the others?

I live alone in my apartment on the 13th floor. So why do I always feel multiple pairs of hands pulling me towards the balcony every time I enter the front door?



# the whisperer

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# THE RIZZLERER 18

the whisperer



*"[something something something]"*

- graphics guy



*"i heart whisperer"*

- whisperer fan

I whispered whisperingly, rizz-  
ingly rizzing [REDACTED]. I had to find  
out who was caught in the troubling  
trap, but I first needed some comrades  
to help me find out who was caught in  
the troubling trap, a task which re-  
quired me to have comrades to help me  
find out who was caught in the trou-  
bling trap.

The rizzlerer (not to be confused  
with our all-american hero, me) rizzed  
in the previously mentioned rizzlery  
manner. I did not care. For I was too  
busy attempting to contact my cowardly  
comrades to convince them to come with  
me on my curfew-cracking caper.

I knew that my time in the omi-  
nous hallway of the third floor near  
the grade 9 common area would soon  
come to an end, and yet I needed answers  
before then. Why had the shouter de-  
cided to trap me in these woebegotten  
halls? Why had there only been four  
issues of the Writer's Block last year?

These questions ran through my mind,  
but alas, they were unanswerable. A fog  
began to gently nestle itself into my  
mind, pacing about and making it dif-  
ficult to think.

"Excuse me? What do you think you're  
doing?" I gave the fog an affronted  
look.

"Skibidi skibidi"

My heart sank. In the gaping caverns  
between my glial cells and my neurons,  
where my axons dangled limply, I could  
feel my brain begin to rot.

That's right.  
This is The Whisperer, Brainrot  
Edition.

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## SECTION 1

I found myself  
transported back to the parking lot  
where it all began.  
"Erm, what the sigma?" came a voice  
from beyond the accursed dumpster  
beside the parent bench waiting site.  
I wasn't exactly sure if the voice came  
from the Gen Alpha youths running to  
their parents, or if it came from a god.

- INVESTIGATE THE NOISE (SECTION 2) or
- INVESTIGATE THE DUMPSTER (SECTION 3)

## INVESTIGATE THE NOISE SECTION 2

I whipped around to see who was so cleverly wordmaxxing. But I could not see anyone. An ominous sound was coming from the pothole in the road, though.

Oom... it was the sound of Tibetan singing bowls at 741 Hz, and also Mr. Grinson's humming. I knew this was the case because Mr. Gray and Mr. Winson's beards grew at different angles, and when added up they became concave - thus, they could be of any numerical value, which equaled 7, 4, and 1.

I had a bad feeling, so I followed it to the sinkhole. A malevolent army of beard hairs, poised for the attack, rose out. Expecting the worst, I braced myself for more critique on the Grade 9 science exam which I had had to retake so many times. But they were not Mr. Grinson's beard hairs.

"Haha you just got fanum taxed" said the million voices of the unskibidi beard. I gaped in shock. It could only be one thing: a new mega-beard.

- WORSHIP THE BEARD (SECTION 4) or
- RUN FROM THE BEARD (SECTION 5)

## INVESTIGATE THE DUMPSTER SECTION 3

I whispered maniacally to the delicious-looking dumpster  
"Hello vro... Do you know where that voice came from?"

The dumpster did not reply, for it was an inanimate object. However, she looked at me longingly, and I could feel a familiar softness in her gaze. I couldn't tell exactly what I recognized, only that the dumpster reminded me of someone I once cherished.

"Do I... know you from somewhere?"  
The dumpster did not move once more, as it remained inanimate.

But I felt some distinct sense that the dumpster was nodding at me.

I approached the dumpster, but couldn't bear to look inside. An idea of who she might be was beginning to bloom in my mind. I wasn't sure if I could handle the thought of being wrong. But being right? That was something I had wanted for an infinitely long time.

- OPEN THE DUMPSTER LID (SECTION 6) or
- WALK AWAY (SECTION 7)

## WORSHIP THE BEARD SECTION 4

I dropped to my knees in the middle of the crowded parent bench. Tires screeched and cars skidded and crashed into the cafeteria around me, but I paid no heed. All that mattered was what was within the beauteous sinkhole.

"Beard, forgive me, for I have sinned," I declared contritely. My breath caught with reverence on every word. "I await your forgiveness, or you may smite me." I felt beard hairs caress my forehead kindly. "You may rise, Whisperer. I am The Beard. Not Mr. Gray's beard, not Mr. Winson's beard, not Mr. Grinson's beard, but something better and wholly separate from any person. I do not belong to anyone. Mr. Winson's beard often said, 'I am God'. Such puny concepts shall never apply to me. I am not God. I am The Beard. Bow to me again please."

- OBEY THE BEARD (SECTION 8) or
- BE DOUBTING THOMAS (SECTION 9)

have u noticed the g  
ics got lazier? no u d  
dont ask me why smee  
graphs r tabbed an  
arent dont ask why th  
arre random spaces ev  
where i dont think i  
member how to use ind

RUN FROM THE BEARD  
SECTION 5

As I made my frantic escape, evading angry children who shouted "On Ohio?" and "On skibidi sigma rizzler?" at me, I found myself lost in the mythical glen of Bayview. This valley behind the school housed many Prep School students who'd been disturbed from their recess time.

"Look at that mango mango mango" the evil children chanted evilly, reappearing in the distance. Was that meant to be a clever play on words? Combining the ubiquitous "mango mango mango" meme song with the phrase "look at that man go" was juvenile at best. I scoffed at these peasant children running around in their ratty Air Forces with their moplike broccoli haircuts. But I didn't have time to feign superiority; I suddenly remembered I was running for my life from a gaggle of skibidi-children. "Well, this is certainly not skibideal," I said to myself, as I dodged the mangoes that I was suddenly being pelted with. One mango hit my head, covering me in purple goo. Purple goo? You may ask. Yes. Purple goo. I didn't question it until I felt my redorange-blondeblueblack hair sizzling. "Oh skibidear," I thought, "this is really not skibideal."

I ran to the Don River, dodging angry geese that were performing some sort of goose ritual on a traffic light to dip my blueorangeblackredblonde hair into the swirling sewagey yumminess of the water. "Ahh" I said, as the noxious purple goo removed itself from my scalp. Entangled within the noxious purple goo were the beard's beard hairs. It had been so close behind that it too had been hit by the mango mango mango's strange purple goo. As the beard hairs danced with the current down the Don River, I thought I saw them coalesce for

a moment into a tortured face. Kneeling on the banks, I shook myself out of my trance, and wondered what I was doing.

► TRY AGAIN?  
SECTION 5

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OPEN THE DUMPSTER LID  
SECTION 6

"Well. I have chosed to open the dumpster lid. This is a good choice. I do not regret this choice that I made of my own free will" I said aloud. A nearby pile of unwashed uniform blazers looked at me in a rather strange manner, before scuttling off to their humid home in the lost and found. With any luck, they would soon be released from their collective misery.

I gently placed my gnarled stone hand upon the lid of the dumpster, and lifted the lid. At first, I couldn't process what I was seeing. Piles and piles of paper were covering the shattered remains of a wooden handle and what looked like the sorrowful remnants of a playful kitten's ball of yarn. I said hello to my dear friend Maurice the Dumpster Creature as he scampered away, before taking a large whiff of the delightful scents captured within this holy dumpster.

I could smell cleaning fluids and deep regret for not living life to the fullest. The cleaning fluids appeared to be a delicious flavour of bleach. Bleach is a base with a high PH. P is the 16th letter in the alphabet. 1+6 is 7. The number of this section is 6. 7-6 is 1. One. First. My first love. The Mop. "Mop? Is that you?" I trembled.

She nodded, with what little strength she had left. Immediately, I knew what had occurred. Instead of peacefully



passing away into her next life, she had been reincarnated into the body of the dumpster where her corpse lay. I didn't know how much longer she had. I was scared, no, terrified in that moment. I didnt know how to face her, so I ran.

Cowardice is what it was.

► TRY AGAIN?  
SECTION 1

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WALK AWAY  
(SECTION 7)

I walked away from the ominous dumpster, for it was too ominous for me. I politely asked my legs to take me anywhere else, perhaps to the cafeteria to enjoy some scrumptious "chicken" or pickles in a plastic bag that they sold one time. "Wow. I sure am excited to eat some pickle. mmm pickle. i said as i walked to the pickel.

My legs appeared to be rebelling against my will, for i found myself at the dumpster once more.

'woha there buddy busetr, whatare you doing?' my legs didnt reply because they are legs. 2 legs. 2 squared is four which is the number of sides a square has. squares are cool and swag shapes because they are not circles. i dont like circles. and yet, that was where my legs were taking me. in circles. wowie. what the skib

it looked like my legs would not take me anywhere other thna the dumpster. gsuys i think i have to open the dumpetr.

► OPEN THE DUMPSTER LID  
SECTION 6

OBEY THE BEARD  
SECTION 8

I bowed again, feeling compelled. What else could I do? There was clearly no other choice than to do what such a venerated beard had commanded me to do. I could never be a doubting Thomas. "The Beard, what are you doing in the sinkhole in the parking lot, frequented by the Red-Hot Itchyworms? How have you not been attacked by them yet?"

"I am The Beard," The Beard expalined. One of the longer hairs at the end of it fluttered imperiously in the wind. "I govern the wild lands of Philosophy class and The Four Funny Countries and the universe. i have waged wars against Crescent for millenia. i cannot be attacked oh no"

Raton had launched himself out of the April 2024 issue of the Writer's Block toward the Beard and gulped down a large fraction of his hairs.

"Raton no biting," I scolded. but I stopped short upon seeing The Beard's seething hairs.

► RUN FROM THE BEARD  
SECTION 5

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BE DOUBTING THOMAS  
SECTION 9

"We got bowing to a sentient Beard before GTA 6," I scoffed under my breath. "I think I would like to play Scrabble before I bow again" I said to The Beard's face.

"ok tootsie sure" The Beard snapped its hairs and Ms Dybala rolled up in the Relaxi Taxi carrying some scrabble tiles and chalk. "Now we can play a three person game" Ms Dybala began to sketch a large Scrabble board on the pavement.

I was too shocked at the ease with which the bear hd acquiesiest to my request to acknowledge the presence of the



peculiarly mindwashed yet dignified Princess of Alaskan Cheese. Beards were not meant to do such lowly things as play scrabble with hillbillies and uneducated oafs.

"Who are you really?" I asked, suddenly enraged. "Who is it behind that beard?"

I lunged forward. "No holy beard would ever play scrabble with LOSERS LIKE ME!" I yanked fistfuls of the beard, but they shimmied out of my tenuous grasp. I felt their intangibility beneath my fingers and I had a shivering feeling. I knew what this was. This creature was using the occult dark magic of mental math to shield its true self.

"the Math Scouts?" I whispered in disbelief. but like an apparition, they were gone. I thought back to my stint in Reality, where I had also stood in this parking lot and been confronted by MACARTHUR and Ms. Radical Lee. It seemed things were taking a turn for the worse. The Math Kingdom had truly been corrupted by the Shouter.

Ms Dybala stared blankly at me for a second. "I am beginning to feel weak without cheese," she whispered. "Mistress, please," I said, horrified, and helped her back to her chariot. "I shall be wiser next time and stock up on provolone." The cheeky monkeys and sneaky sneakertons fluttered with worry. I saluted anxiously as she fell into the Relaxi Taxi and it rose into the sky, bearing away one of my only allies left.

All I was left with was a sense of foreboding: there was something gravely wrong, something I could not place my finger on.

► TRY AGAIN?  
SECTION 1

we're back!!!

# **the writer's block**

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