



# MENTOR'S NOTE



Greetings and welcome to *Lit Kids Magazine's* Issue 4: HEART STRINGS AND FAMILY THINGS!

First, a peek behind the curtain. *Lit Kids Magazine* features writing, photography, and art from kids ages 5 to 13 from all around the world! Our young creatives can choose to participate in a month-long revision process with the *Lit Kids'* mentors to polish their work for publication, or they may decide to keep their piece original. Either way, *Lit Kids* offers a fantastic opportunity for kids to experience the publication process firsthand, and we're happy to do so!

In this Issue, our central theme captures the essence of family togetherness and complicated emotions! Our mentees ran with the theme in unexpected directions, reminding us that being part of a family has its ups and downs. You'll find an honest glimpse into life and trials of the heart in each of these pieces, as well as nods to different cultural backgrounds and family traditions. We couldn't be prouder of the hard work exhibited by our young mentees, and Issue 4's publication fully embraces them into the *Lit Kids Magazine* family.

As we bid farewell to 2024, we remember our inaugural year as a whirlwind adventure, and I'm particularly grateful to the talented and selfless individuals who made it possible. A huge thank you to my team of mentors for helping make this dream of mine a reality, and an even bigger thank you to all the kids who entrusted us with their dreams. 2025 will carry its own set of challenges and no doubt boundless excitement, but never forget: we're all in it together and each hurdle is its own accomplishment!

Congratulations to these talented kids and keep an eye out for big news on the horizon! Stay creative and keep shining, everyone!

Happy Reading,

Rebecca Weber

*Lit Kids Magazine's* Mentor-In-Chief

P.S. If you enjoy Issue 4, please subscribe to our website to receive updates about open submissions and

future issues! Also, if you know a creative kid who deserves the spotlight, please point them in our direction. We open to submissions quarterly and can't wait to highlight new voices!

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# WRITING



Ava Day Lugo is an 11-year-old 6th grader from Kings Park, NY. She has a passion for everything related to creative arts: musical theater, acting, dancing, singing, writing and YouTube content creation.

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**011**

**by Ava Day Lugo**

011 years of laughter

011 years of cheer

011 years of wallowing

011 years of fear

011 years of fun

011 years of brains

011 years of courage

011 years of pain

011 years of doubt

011 years of hope

011 years of success

011 years of failure

011 years of people

Avoiding me like a stranger...

011 years of agony

And 011 years of tears -

of speaking, singing, screaming, to all of those who'll hear

011 years of going distances

No matter short or far

011 years of not knowing

who my true friends really are.

Most people, they forget how there's a 0 in 011 -

they ignore it, or delete it, or simply leave it out

Sometimes I feel like the 0

And think that I don't count

My heart is sad and lonely,

My emotions are distressed

My body's numb, and hollow,

And I sigh that I haven't any real friends.

I look over yonder

Near the classrooms next door

and I search for peers to hang with

the ones who aren't a bore

My birthday came round quickly

A party planned with only family; no others who'd attend

But to my surprise, true friends arrived bearing gifts in their hands!

My heart, it started pounding

My mind lit up with joy!

I finally fit in without faking

Long conversations with the new friends that I'm making

They stick up for me and really care

When I'm feeling blue they make me red by complimenting my hair.

Hope is the light that keeps the darkness from closing in -

If you stay with it your "011" year will be a big win.

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George Sterner is a 9-year-old sports lover who lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has one brother and loves guitar.

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### The Myth of the Kaprestein

by George Sterner

One day a demigod named "He" (short for "Haphestionan") found his mom, Elena, dead on the floor. Even crazier, there was no blood anywhere...even in her body, without any blood on her or in her.

He felt like his heart was about to explode. But even through his grief, He knew he had to avenge his mother.

So one day, He went on a quest to find the monster who killed his mom. To aid in his quest, He brought his magical flaming sword and half-obsidian, half-diamond shield.

Eventually, He found a dead corpse on the ground. And it didn't have any blood in it either.



Later, after camping out for a few days, He found a big, long snake tail and stabbed it with his sword.

Then he looked up to see a giant monster! It had a long snake tail, a woman's body, two big ears, ginormous teeth, and only one eye. It was a cyclops—a cyclops called the Kaprestein!

The Kaprestein glared at He defiantly, grinning with all her teeth.

Then, without warning, the monster picked He up and threw him on the ground.

He stood up and stabbed the Kaprestein in the back with his sword, and then he stabbed her in the eye.

The Kaprestein couldn't see, so He took advantage and cut out the Kaprestein's heart. The blood came gushing out, went through the corpses of Kaprestein's victims, and created the river Styx.

He grew up to be a great hero but he was always sad about losing his mom.

Jaimie passionately loves writing stories; it's her ultimate happy spot! She gets her inspiration from a variety of sources, including being a bit of a sticky beak. Whether she's watching people at the park, picturing what her dog would say if he could talk, or fantasising about crazy adventures, her mind is constantly buzzing with ideas. When she's not writing, you can find her reading whatever she can get her hands on, doing little drawings of her characters, or polishing her secret cupcake recipe (believe her, they're fantastic). Jaimie hopes you appreciate her story as much as she enjoyed writing it. Happy reading!

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### The Time That Time Stood Still

October 1st 09:34

by Jaimie Pressinger

The streets were alive with people moving fast, talking, and buzzing with energy. Exhaust fumes penetrated my lungs as people brushed and pushed past me. A myriad of sounds, including crying toddlers in prams and hands glued to hooters, created loud noises that caused the ground underfoot to

vibrate. As I stepped off the curb, feeling the rhythm of the city pulse under my feet, I noticed a bus approaching fast—too fast.

My heart skipped a beat as I tried to hurry across, but it was like everything shifted into slow motion. Then, the bus was right there...

I felt a sharp bolt of pain go through me from the impact.

Just seconds before the accident, I had been thinking about what outfit I could wear with my new shoes, when I saw the bus hurtling down the road. It seemed that it would be able to see me, yet it didn't slow down. Startled and dazed, I tried to move, but it was as if my feet were glued to the ground. In a final attempt to escape, shock overwhelmed me, and before I could move, I was struck...

As I lay on the ground, the trees above swayed peacefully, not caring about the chaos below, light sneaked through the leaves and painted patterns on the ground. In my daze, tiny blue birds swirled above me, dancing about with little children around my head. Or at least that's what it looked like.

Lying there, I realised my shopping and dinner plans with friends would not be happening. Which was ironic because my friends kept complaining that we hadn't seen each other in ages. It looked like it would be much longer now.

It's amazing how much thought you put into something ...

My head spinning, I could hear the distant sound of sirens that were near but sounded so far away. Weirdly, I could smell the exhaust of an engine. I felt numb, almost as if I were outside, observing like one of the nosy crowd. I could tell people were pounding down on my chest, but I couldn't feel a thing. I could hear the cacophony of sounds and a blaze of blinding blue lights from the emergency vehicles; yet at the same time, in my body, it was strangely serene and still.

It's amazing how much thought you put into something and then realize that it doesn't matter anymore.

Then I thought about the past—

I would miss my dog, and how he'd wait for me at the top of the stairs, even when everybody was downstairs. How he came to see me in my bedroom every morning with his toy, hoping I would throw it for him. Finally begging for a walk by pawing at his lead and trying to pull it off the hook. Who would walk him now?

Being pushed on the swings: my legs floating in the air;

My first lick of an ice cream;

My family:

Friday nights with my family, hearing fun stories from the week. Now lying there, I knew that *I* would be missing from that much loved part of my week;

Playing Rummikub with my family and hearing my dad unleashing all of his best Dad Jokes;

Lying in my cosy bed, reading my favourite book while rain patters rhythmically against the window pane;

Mouthwatering smells drifting through the house from one of my mum's scrumptious cooking;

My first day of school and how silly I had been to be shy;

the friends I had made;

all the fun that we had in the playground;

and how much I would miss making all these new memories—

And seeing them each day when I walked through the gate and up the hill.

I would never turn fourteen on my birthday in a few months.

It would never be 09:35 again, nor would it be October 2nd.

But on October 1st, Time Stood Still...



Ten-year-old Auraelia Amlani lives in Herts and enjoys reading. She uses BorrowBox to read *Percy Jackson* on a loop and loves her dad. This is her first published work.

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### **My Dad's Habits**

**by Auraelia Amlani**

My Dad is ever so slightly strange,

He claims he could run an entire mountain range.

His trainers squeak around the room and he never ties his shoes.

I have not seen him without a beard since I was two,  
When he shaved his whiskers and blocked the loo!  
He reads aloud Treasure Island in a disturbing Caribbean accent.  
When he swerves the car, he almost always causes an accident.

His pasta dishes are a witch's concoction,  
And of the ingredients he has no recollection.  
Mum says he is a "crazy genius,"  
I wish he could just clean up after our Puss.

I always think he smells fresh and cool.  
If only he showered after jumping in the pool.  
He loves to tidy up but I think he should stop,  
before he gets a prize for picking up every half drunk cup.

I have caught him messing with superglue.  
And thought he should be placed in a zoo.  
But I do love him so...  
because he never says no!

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Amelia Lee is a 12-year-old girl living in beautiful Manhattan Beach, California. She enjoys traveling, playing tennis and writing. This is her story.

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### **Little White Butterfly**

**by Amelia Lee**

This time of year is the cold season. To me, winter is the most destructive season of all. Everything is swallowed in white, and our crops are dead. My home keeps the warmth trapped inside like a warm hug, so we don't freeze to death. Me and mama are preparing lunch for our family, deer stew and berries. My

older sister, Citali, is out gathering cama root to prepare for the big feast taking place tomorrow. Papa has been out hunting for more than 3 hours, which is very unusual because he said he would return hours ago, but something must have come up. A horrible feeling erupts from my stomach. What if something happened to Aponee? *No, stop thinking that*, I shout in my mind.

"Koko," my mom says, waking me from my daze. "I'll be right back, I need to cut herbs from the garden for the stew." She speaks gently, trotting out of the pithouse. Just as she steps outside, something catches her eye, making her face go pale and lifeless.

"Koko!" My mother crows. "Koko!"

"What is it?" I say, her desperate tone triggering my nerves. I join her outside.

My heart stops, and I cannot breathe. There lies my father, the head of our tribe, with an arrow plunged into his stomach.

"Aponee! What happened to you?" I wail, holding back tears.

"Me and our best men went out hunting a few hours ago...and one of them shot me."

My mind swirls, and the bones in my body turn into mush. His words replay in my mind, like an endless loop. One of the men shot me. One of them shot me. One of our best men shot me.

"Koko," he says softly, interrupting the screaming noise in my head. "We have been sabotaged."

My dad coughs out red liquid, the color of hatred. His face becomes sallow.

"I'll go get Citali right now," My mom says, trying not to cry. I could do nothing but stand there and watch him die on the cold winter ground. After what seemed like an eternity, Mama returns with Citali. Her eyes are a violent red; she must have been crying. We embrace Papa in our arms like a fragile newborn. Finally, he finds the strength to speak.

"Listen, if I don't make it, you must find this traitor, and you will become Head of our tribe. You are old enough," my father says, gasping for breath. "Find him Koko. I couldn't get a good look at him, but I know he had long hair, and an expression on his face that I cannot describe with words. Koko, you have t-."

My father trails off with a withering expression plastered on his face. That was all I had left of him. An image forever burned into my memory. The world stopped. "No Aponee!" I shout, my mind on a path of destruction. "No please, wake up!"

My words turn into quiet gasps. "Wake up," I say repeatedly. My sister Citali sits in the corner of the pithouse crying and throws her digging stick across the room.

"If I wasn't gathering cama roots, I could've been there to help him," She says, crying in between words.

"It wasn't your fault, Citali," my mom says supportively. "He's in a better place now."

Our shocked expressions are frozen on our faces for a long time. My mother, me, and my sister say nothing. The only sound is the winter wind howling against the pithouse. Eventually, I break the silence, "I will find him," I say quietly. "I will find the traitor and kill him."

Citali whispers, "Father will guide you in spirit."

Three days after my father's death, we held the funeral at the town center. All the families were there to honor him. We wore ceremonial garments. Someone sang a special song to honor my father.

My father's name Aponee means butterfly in my tribe. To me, he had always seemed like one. In the way he walked gently as he shot a deer. And as he lay over the deer, praying softly. When he smiled at me and Citali, it was just like a butterfly landing on your shoulder. It pained me that one of these people honoring my father never had an ounce of respect towards him. When the song stopped, two men carried his corpse off into the dead plain north of our village.

"Goodbye father," I said softly.

Afterward, we had a huge feast of all father's favorite foods: cama root, jackrabbit, deer, and different types of berries. Cold wind blew against my face as I ate. THWACK! A green arrow zipped in front of my face. ZIP! ZIP! THWACK! A flurry of arrows invaded our gathering.

"Everyone -- run back to the village! We are being attacked!" my mom screams. People flew down the hills, running towards giant gorges with tiny pithouses on the top. As I ran down the hill and approached a river, I could see the reflection of a young man with long hair and a devilish expression.

"Your father mistreated my family for generations," he said. "My people served as his slaves. It was my duty to kill your father and next I'll kill you. Have no doubt, your bloodline will be erased."

Another arrow whizzed past me.

*I need my bow and arrow!* I think.

I had left it on the hill. I run, dodging arrows from every direction. Gorges, flatlands, and rolling hills blur my vision. Ice patches from the edges of the Fraser and Columbia rivers are slick under my mukluks. Finally, I spot the bow and arrow that once belonged to my father.

"Only one arrow left!" I scream.

And then I remember my father's words. *When you have only one chance, you give everything you have.*

*I'll have to make it in one shot,* I say to myself.

The blue arrow barely grazes my face as I pull my elbow straight back and launch. Something in that moment evokes a memory from nearly 20 seasons ago. I remember a young child with long black hair, gathering cama roots. My father hit the child with lasso pits, and nearly stabbed him with an arrowhead. His mother got down on her knees and begged my father for mercy. He took her by the hand and led her up a hill, returning with red hatred on his hands. The mom was never seen again. Why was he so cruel to this family? Was he trying to make the boy a stronger man, or was he just heartless? A dry wail awoke me from my daze. The mysterious man lay there with my arrow plunged in his thigh.

"EYAHHHH!" He wails over and over again.

"No!" I scream out loud. "I will be back." My legs sped through the dry terrain until I got to the village. "I have shot the intruder!" I scream so loudly the pithouses rumble. "We must heal him please!" I scream even louder this time.

Heads poke through pithouses, people emerge clutching deer hides, cama roots, and rock. The old medicine man comes out with healing tools I hadn't seen before. "Take me to him," he says in a rickety low voice.

The whole tribe goes silent. Salmon stop flapping, deer don't gallop, the wind goes still. Me and the man trot through the terrain passing the rivers, and neighboring villages. The man with the long hair lays on the ground with blood on his leg.

"Ahh let's get you fixed up eh?" The medicine man says gently. Out of a bear hide basket, he pulls a thick mixture and a deer hide. Carefully, he pulls out the arrow.

"AHHH!" he screams.

"I know it hurts, but you will feel much better soon." He lays the creamy ointment on the wound, and ties a strip of deer hide around it. "There, better?" The old man asks.

"Yes."

We both walk back to the village helping the long-haired man stabilize his wounded leg. And then I see it. A little white butterfly floating with the wind.

"Good job Koko," it seems to say. "You made me proud." The butterfly lands on my shoulder then floats off into the wind. "I love you father!" I whisper, holding back tears. "I love you."

The butterfly swooped down in circles, drifting off into the sunset. Once we got to the village, I lay my weary head down on the floor of our pithouse. Sunsets after, winter drifts away, leaving warm floors, and new harvest. I am now the head of the tribe, feeling more wise than ever. Whenever I feel nervous, I know in those moments my Aponee is with me. Facing challenges and feeling pride with me. We are one. Together. With each other forever.

Samantha is 11 years old, and a 6th grade student in Kings Park, New York. Some of her favorite hobbies are playing guitar and piano, writing songs and poems, and reading.

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### Wildfire

by Samantha Scaduto

A mother's anger is like a bonfire

Blazing bright in the dark

Deadly if you get too close

But held at bay by compassion, love, and empathy

Cold at first touch, even bitter,

But soon overcome by heat

Heat, scalding heat,

Bright and orange and red and terrifying

But it's not the fire that is so frightening

No, not at all  
The fear comes from deep in our hearts  
Where love lies like a pearl on the seabed  
The smallest point of beauty holding back a whole ocean of anger  
Yes, this is where the fear is  
Because getting too close to a mother's fire  
Can burn away that pearl's shield  
And the ocean is too strong for even a family to keep at bay  
No, a mother's anger is a bonfire  
Burning bright until it runs out of fuel  
When replacing the blazes are ashes  
Ashes falling from the air  
Bright and orange and red and beautiful  
Filling us with warmth that the fire never could  
And never will  
  
A son's anger is like a controlled burn  
Meant to burn away the fuel of the others  
But sometimes igniting them  
A son's anger comes quickly and planned  
Every word and every motion another sign  
Another hint  
Another small tell  
Sometimes these signs say sorry  
To try and say that this fire isn't meant to hurt  
Just to keep the others at bay  
But sometimes the fire gets out of control  
And can start other fires  
Sometimes on accident  
Sometimes not



But these fires have signs too  
Even though they are harder to see  
And their words are deafening  
Even at a whisper  
But no, a son's anger is a controlled burn  
Kept at bay and planned  
As much as a fire can be, anyway  
And though sometimes runs free of bonds  
But it is trying to stop the others  
From igniting  
And maybe we need it  
Yes, we probably do  
But this anger comes out too many times  
And it burns a little more each time  
  
A father's anger is like a house fire  
Causing more destruction than any other burn could  
At least outside, anyway  
Blowing through doors and burning through souls  
Hotter and fiercer  
Brighter, blinding  
Blinding judgment, blinding sight  
Clouding the air with tension and smoke  
The kind of fire that starts with a joke  
Or a fight  
Or an oven  
Or a word  
And always ends with locked doors  
And wet pillows  
And broken spirits

And wishes  
That will never come true  
Because nothing compares to this fire  
To when it smashes you with it's flaming fist  
Right in the heart, where it hurts  
To when you feel like digging a hole and burying yourself  
Where it will never get to you again  
But no, a father's anger is a house fire  
Breaking and taking instead of helping  
Kept at bay by the walls  
Shouting and falling  
And taking control  
Why are all the smoke alarms broken?  
  
A daughter's anger is like a wildfire  
Unstoppable and deadly  
Driven by sadness and longing and hate  
And madness and waiting and wishing  
Ignited by any of the others and igniting any of the others  
And nobody can escape  
When there's fire coming at you from all sides  
And you can't breathe from the smoke  
And you can't see from the ash  
And you can't hear anything except for your own screams  
And your home and your life are falling down around you  
And you can't pretend it didn't happen tomorrow  
Because you'll still have those scars  
But you don't know how it feels to be that fire  
To feel like your heart is burning and breaking  
And you know you're already broken inside and outside

Because you're still burning  
And you can't feel a thing except burning pain  
And heat and hate  
And you're crying but you don't care anymore  
Because that saltwater won't calm the inferno  
Of your broken heart and fractured soul  
And your tortured mind  
And you can feel yourself turning to stone and fading away  
And you think it might be better that way  
Because you're tired of helping everyone and doing your best  
And acting like you're not being torn apart from inside  
But you can't let it out  
Yes, I am holding back a wildfire.  
  
No, I don't want to talk about it.

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Shreya is a 13-year-old poetry enthusiast who enjoys writing Haiku, Free Verse, and the occasional Limerick to express herself artistically. When she is not writing, her other hobbies include playing the piano, reading, and taking walks outside in nature.

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### **Home Away from Home**

**by Shreya J. Singh**

Dawn

Smog

Lies

Thick

Near the ground  
Entangled with  
The pungent  
Mangroves  
Nearby  
Footsteps fall  
Along the fence  
Decorated  
By  
Painted boards  
Bright spots  
Of color  
Near  
Our family apartment  
As the sun rises  
Smog lifts  
Humidity settles  
Life starts  
In the city.

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Hazel is a kind, sensitive person who loves art and music. She recently discovered musical theater and is an orphan in *Little Orphan Annie* this fall. When she isn't inventing worlds in art and stories, she enjoys playing Lego with her brother, putting on puppet shows, or reading quietly in her room.

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**Family: A Poem**

**by Hazel Cotton**

Family is that feeling that makes you warm and cuddly.

Family is what says you're mine and I love you.

Your family is one of a kind, no one has a family like yours!

That family is yours and always will be yours no matter what.

There's no going back no matter, no matter.

That family is yours forever, forever.

My family is special and so is yours, so be thankful because there's none like yours!



Rowenna is a nine-year-old poet who was just elected to student council for her fifth-grade class. She loves reading and is competing in her school's *Battle for the Books*. Her current favorite genre is tied between middle grade Fantasy and middle grade graphic novels.

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**Do Drops**

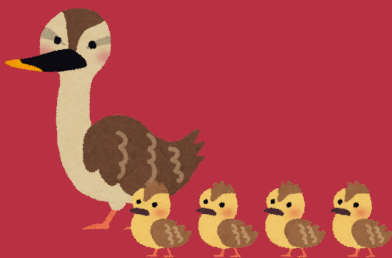
**by Rowenna Doucette**



**Skipping This**

**by Rowenna Doucette**





# ART



Lyla loves being creative. She enjoys building, painting, baking, playing, and coloring. She's a kind girl who values "girl time" with mom, as the eldest of three children and the only girl!

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## Girl Time!

by Lyla Flanagan



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Zayn Mamaji Kapadia is a 6-year-old happy boy who lives with his 4-year-old brother Amir Mamaji Kapadia, his Mama, his Papa, two feline fur brothers, and a canine fur sister! Zayn and Amir spent the first few years of their life in different homes in foster care and came to their forever home in 2022 when Zayn was 4 and Amir was 2. Zayn and Amir are excited to share their drawings of the adoption ceremony, especially their special bowties they picked out for the occasion!

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**Two Brothers: My Bowtie**



by Zayn Mamaji Kapadia (w/Amir Mamaji Kapadia)



I am zayn  
Mamaji I am  
Kapadia adopted  
I am Amazing  
I am wonderful  
I am wearing  
a bowtie



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# THE END

(SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!)