

The Mirror

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Canadian Apocalypse

by Stella Zigouras

In early June, a smoky haze set upon the Northeast, bringing some of the worst air quality to reach the area in years. This was created by the numerous wildfires that have ignited in Canada.

This regional phenomenon has turned Canadians and those living on the East Coast upside down. Canadians in Quebec specifically have been forced to flee their homes because of the raging fires and toxic air. Traveling further south, cities such as New York City and Philadelphia have been greatly affected, due to the pollution, with people having to stay indoors and even resort to using masks when going outside.

Currently 417 fires are burning in Canada. 108 of them are supposedly under control, 91 are still burning but are slowly being contained, and a shocking 218 are spreading uncontrollably. The reason most of the wildfires are raging on is because of the severe drought and exceedingly high temperatures occurring in Canada, making it next to impossible for firefighters to control these fires. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem that these wildfires are going to be stopping any time soon. The predicted temperatures and weather conditions are implying continuous wildfires in the future.

Many countries are supplying equipment and firefighters to take control of this crisis such as New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and the US. Currently the US is sending over 600 firefighters and equipment to help Canada. South Africa is also sending 200 firefighters and 15 managers from South Africa's Department of Forestry to fight the blazing battle.

Air quality is expected to improve throughout the next few weeks for the American East Coast. There has been an increasing amount of cold atmospheric pressure over the northeast region. This has been able to let the smoke from the wildfires enter the US much easier. It appears that this has begun to leave the northeast zone, which will hopefully clear up most of the smoke.

Throughout the past week or so there has been toxic air, the deployment of firefighters, almost pandemic-like conditions, and so much more. Hopefully through help from other countries and change in weather patterns these wildfires will be put to an end, but there is truly no telling what this forest fire season will bring.

Sources: [CBS News's "Are Canadian wildfires under control? Here's what to know"](#) , [Africa News's "South Africa firefighters in Canada to fight wildfires"](#).

The Phantom First Day

by Sophia Schelino

Sophia's Short Stories

It was the first day of school, and Nadya already knew that sixth grade was *not* going to be fun. She had walked into the classroom with hope that this year would be different, this year would be *better*. After all, her name meant hope, a fact that her mother would always remind her any time she was having a bad day. As soon as she walked into her new classroom, she saw them. Her friends. Or they had been. Over the summer, Nadya's friends started hanging out with older, cooler kids. She had only seen them a handful of times. They had been talking as she walked by.

Nadya greeted the girls, and they looked over briefly, said hi, and went back to gossiping.

At lunch, she sat at a table with her friends and the popular kids, who were all immersed in conversation. Every time she tried to talk to her friends, the popular girls would interrupt, and Nadya would be left in silence. The message was clear. *We don't want you here*. Nadya excused herself and ate lunch in the library. All of her classes were more or less the same.

After school, Nadya stood outside the school waiting for her mother to pick her up. Unfortunately, her mother seemed to be running late.

As the buses departed, and students left, Nadya sighed. At least she could write in peace. She grabbed her pencil and began to write. *In a world farther than you and I will ever go, lived a girl. She was never lonely, for her friends were always with her. Her mother was always on time-*

"Hello, dear!"

Nadya jolted her head up, just in time to see a woman yell out of a car window. The woman had wavy golden locks, unlike Nadya's hair, which was pulled back in stiff

dark brown braids. The car itself was old fashioned, a beetle or some similar car type. The woman was smiling in an inviting way, but Nadya knew to be wary.

“H-Hi,” she mumbled, staring at the woman’s peculiar ice blue eyes, so light they seemed to glow.

“Well,” the woman said, confused, “You can get in the car now.”

“What?” Nadya asked. She had never seen this strange woman in her life.

“Oh, did your mother not tell you?” The woman asked, “We are picking you up today.”

“But who are you, and wait-we?”

She looked closer, confused, and realized that there was a man in the car as well. While everything about the woman had radiated light, the man seemed to have the same effect, yet with darkness. Not darkness like a deep cave or a pitch black enclosed space, full of blackness threatening to swallow you. Darkness like a dark room, all cozy and warm, with a feeling of peacefulness. In contrast to the woman’s pale face and golden hair, the man had a deep tan, and dark hair. He smiled.

“We are old friends of your mother. Your mother, Ana, called us, saying that she was busy and needed us to pick you up and drop you off at her house.” These people seemed so inviting, it was hard for Nadya to be suspicious.

“Are you sure?” She asked.

“My dear, I know this might feel weird, but your mother was our best friend when we were kids and she has complete trust in us,” the woman said in a serious tone.

“O-Okay?” Nadya replied, still a bit confused.

“Well,” the woman said, clearing her throat, “come on, get in!”

For some odd reason, Nadya couldn’t help trusting the couple. They seemed so warm and inviting. Slowly, she opened the car door, and stepped in. After checking to make sure Nadya had her seatbelt on, the woman nodded to the man and drove away from the school, and towards her house. “So, dear, where is your house?” the woman asked.

“If you know my mother, shouldn’t you know where her house is?” Nadya asked, suspicious.

“Well, yes, but we haven’t visited in a long time, and I’ve forgotten where it is,” the woman replied.

Nadya told the woman her address, hoping she wasn’t making a big mistake.

“So...” Nadya said awkwardly, “What are your names?”

“My name is Faina,” the woman replied, “And this is Miro.”

Based on their accents, Nadya could tell that both were Russian.

“Are you Russian?” she asked.

“Yes,” said Faina. “We met your mother in Russia.”

Nadya looked at Faina again. She looked Russian, but the man did not. So maybe only his name was Russian?

They kept driving, and Faina asked her a lot of questions. Not too personal, just how her day went and similar things. Miro was very quiet; he hadn’t said much.

After a gap of silence, Faina frowned.

“That’s odd,” she murmured. “I don’t remember that building being there.”

Nadya looked at the building. It seemed very old.

“That’s been here for at least 50 years,” Nadya informed her.

“Really...” Faina said, still looking confused, before she laughed. “Silly me! I guess I didn’t see that building last time I was here.”

They pulled down a street before slowing to a stop in front of Nadya’s house.

“Thank you for driving me!” She said, looking at Faina and Miro for the last time.

“No problem!” Faina replied. “We’ll wait until we see your mother before leaving.”

“Okay, bye!” Nadya said, before walking into her house. She was greeted by her mother, who asked her how her first day of school went.

“It was okay,” Nadya replied.

“And walking home, how was that?” her mother asked.

“Wait,” she said, confused, “was that why you didn’t pick me up?”

“Nadya, I specifically told you that you were walking home today,” Her mother sighed.

“I’m sorry, I guess I forgot,” Nadya said.

Her mother frowned.

“Then how did you get home today?”

“Some old friends of yours picked me up,” Nadya replied, confusion turning into dread as her mother asked:

“What friends?”

Nadya racked her brain, trying to remember their names.

“Faina and Miro.”

Her mother frowned.

“Are you coming down with a fever?” She asked, trying to feel Nadya’s forehead.

“No!” Nadya exclaimed, “Why?”

Her mother looked concerned.

“I haven’t seen Faina and Miro for a long time, but I heard that they died in a car crash thirty years ago.”

“What?!” Nadya exclaimed. “That can’t be true! I saw them five minutes ago!”

She rushed outside to show her mother, but the old car, Faina, and Miro, were gone. The wind blew loudly past her, as if to say that they were never there in the first place.

The End

What is the Purpose of Free Press in Society?

by Noah Solano

There are many different ways to get news in today's fast paced world, but what really is the point of a free press, and who should control it?

These are the questions I was out to answer when I interviewed two journalists recently. I asked both of them two questions: "In your opinion, what is the point of a free press in society?" and "In addition, what obstacles get in the way of a free press?"

The first one to reply was Eyal Press, an accomplished journalist who has been published in impressive newspapers and magazines like The New York Times and The New Yorker. He is also a New York Times bestselling author. He believes that the press has three true purposes. First, "to hold the powerful accountable", second, "to draw attention to problems", and third, "to educate citizens so they can make informed decisions".

I also presented these two questions to Kayla Stewart, a food and travel writer who teaches journalism at New York University and has been published in prestigious newspapers like The New York Times and The Guardian. She also recently won a James Beard award for her article "Sweet Harvest". Similar to Mr. Press, she says that "A free press allows our society to question larger powers, and hold institutions and systems accountable."

Based on these two insightful answers, it seems that the main purpose of free press is to bring attention to problems, and make sure powerful individuals and organizations live up to their responsibilities in a fair and just way.

Mr. Press's response to the second question was as thoughtful as his first answer. He said, "One common obstacle is the government, which in many undemocratic societies tries to jail or punish journalists who dare to question authority or expose corruption. In a democratic society like the United States, the government may not be able to punish journalists in this way, but it can use other tactics, such as calling journalists 'enemies of the people'."

Another way the government may attempt to stifle journalists is by claiming they are “disloyal” or “anti-American” when “they raise uncomfortable questions or expose problems”. However, Mr. Press says that it is “the *responsibility* of the free press” to expose important problems.

For my second question, Ms. Stewart gave a very interesting and wise answer. In her opinion, the biggest obstacle facing free press is fear. Additionally, she explained that both recently and throughout history “state governments, school boards, and other powerful institutions have tried to block free speech, free press, and true American history when it doesn’t align with their misconstrued perceptions”.

Although the first amendment protects freedom of the press, the government has tried to meddle with it in sneaky ways. But as Ms. Stewart says, “It’s imperative that journalists, as well as members of our society, continue holding onto the meaning of free press, as it’s one of the most important mechanisms we have to talk about local and national issues, and demand better for our families, communities, and loved ones.”

Sources: kaylasstewart.com

Eyal Press and Kayla Stewart

For both Mr. Press and Ms. Stewart’s full answers to my questions, click [this link](#).

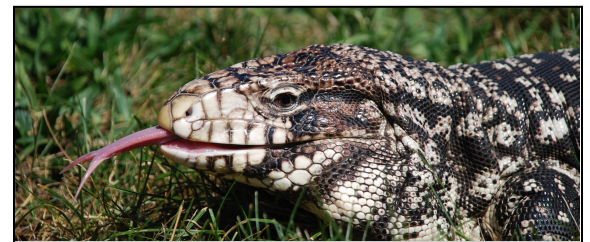
Everything they say is very interesting and smart, so I highly recommend you take the time to read their incredible answers.

Argentine Black and White Tegus

by Zoe Curtis

Meet the Black and White Lizard

Argentine black and white tegus are huge lizards that live in tropical rainforests and savannas in South Africa. Argentine black and white tegus are also known as giant tegus. Tegus are very intelligent reptiles.



What Are Tegus Like Appearance Wise?

Tegus can get as large as 3-4.5 feet long. Males are bigger than females. As babies, tegus are black, yellow, and white with a little bit of green on their heads and necks. They have black, yellow, and white stripes on the rest of their body. Tegus can weigh 2.5-22 pounds total. Tegus can run at very fast speeds for a short amount of time, even on their hind legs!



What Are Argentine Black and White Tegus Like in General?

Argentine black and white tegus are very smart. In fact, they can be color or sound trained for feeding! They are very docile as adults. Tegus have very strong bites that are very painful, even as babies. In fact, their bites are more harmful to your bones than to your skin! That is because of the pressure they are using when they bite. Their claws will draw more blood than their teeth! Tegus go into hibernation-like state called brumating in winter.

Can Argentine Black and White Tegus Be Good Pets?

Argentine black and white tegus make great pets! They eventually come to love their owners. However, you have to handle them often as babies in order for them to be docile and friendly, or they will become aggressive and will do their tail whip, which is painful and can leave bruises.



What do Argentine Black and White Tegus Eat?

Tegus are omnivores. They eat a variety of insects, fruits, vegetables, and meat. They can also eat eggs, scrambled or hard boiled. They can eat insects like mealworms, crickets, and dubia roaches. Tegus eat fruits and vegetables like grapes, raspberries, strawberries, bananas, kiwis, pumpkins, papayas, cantaloupe, and more.

Sources:

[Animalia's "Black and White Argentine Tegus"](#), [Criticfact's "Black and White Argentine Tegus"](#)

Ideas to Keep in Mind For the End of the Year

by James O'Sullivan

Don't Play Too Hard

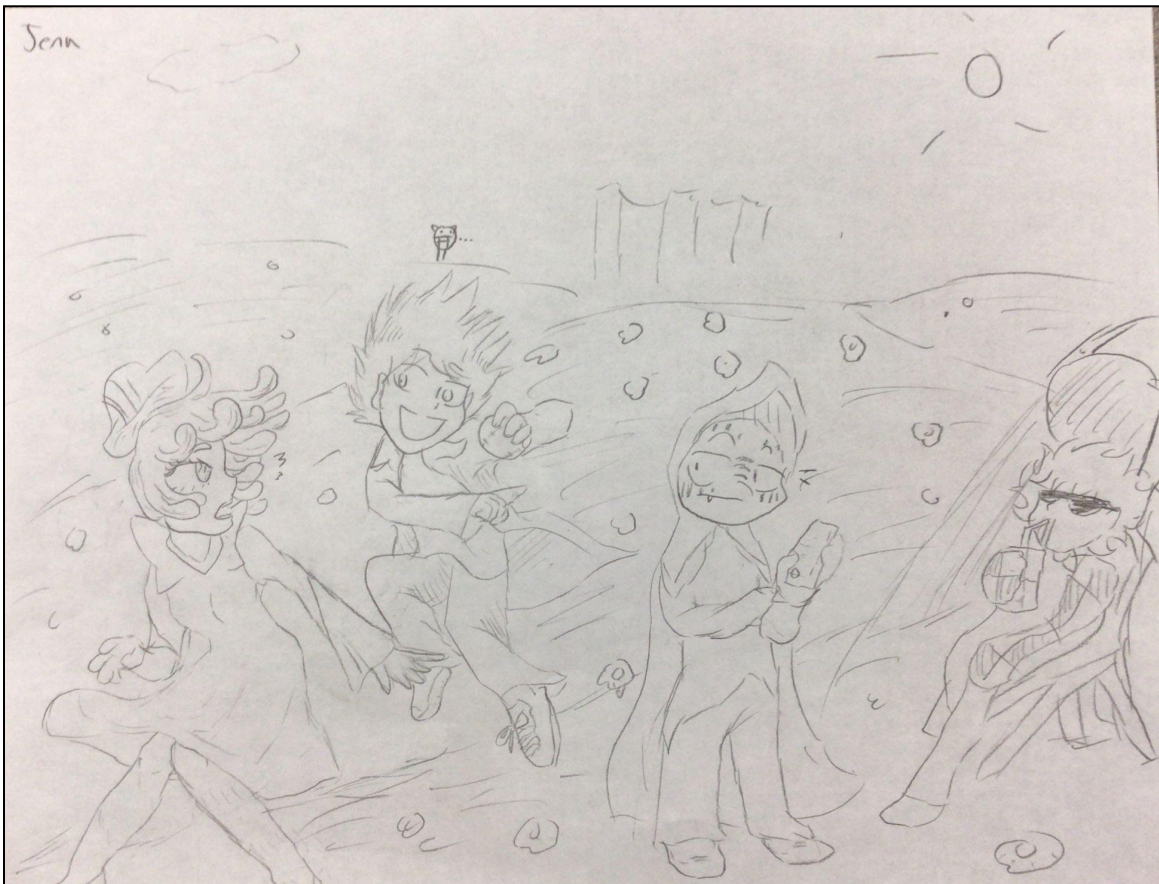
At the end of the school year it is important to keep in mind not to play too hard. Don't hurt yourself right before summer vacation, so that you can do the things that you want to do over summer vacation. Don't be like me and sprain your wrist on the last day of lacrosse practice right before your last game.

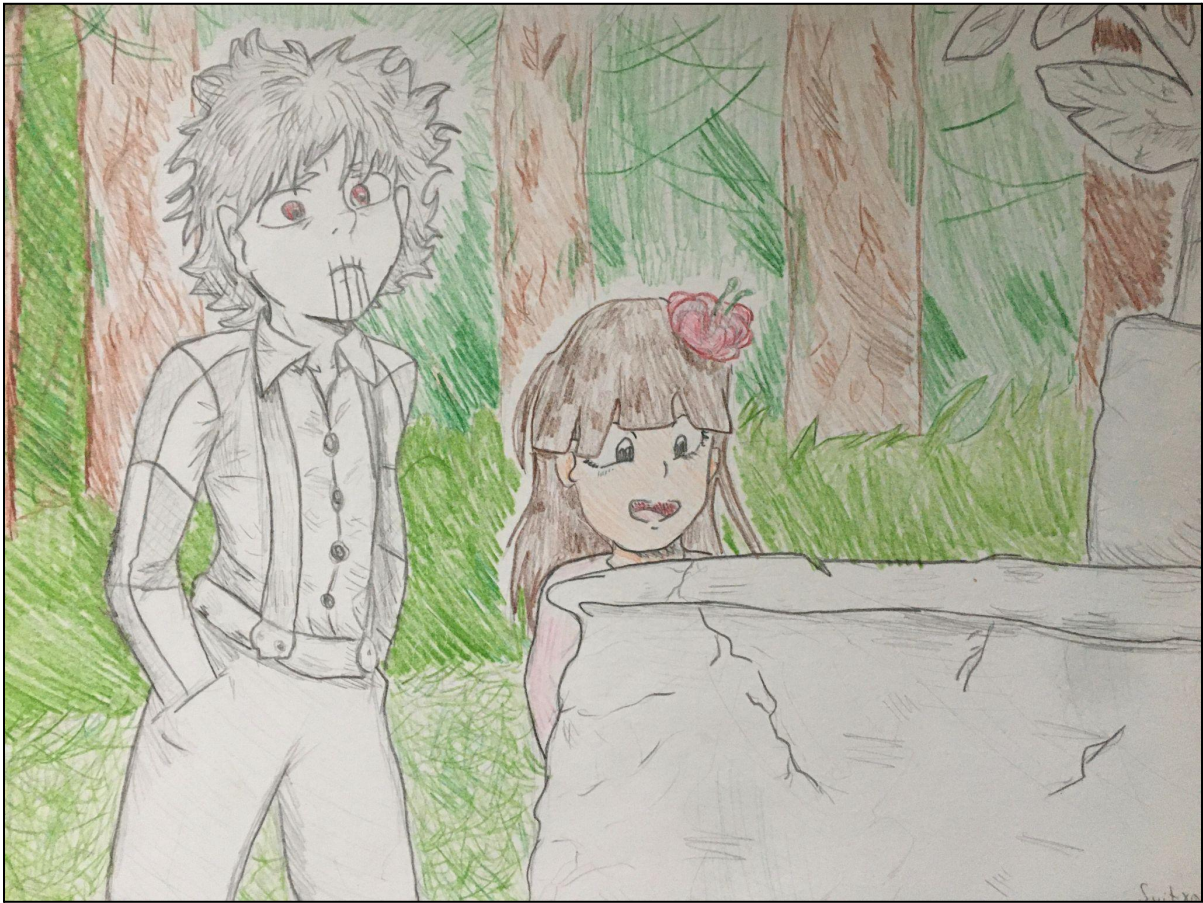
Teachers Are Done For the Year

At the end of the year, teachers just want to go into break. That means that they don't really care about grades anymore. So you should do your best work now at the end of the school year because they will be easy with the grading. Do this especially if it is a quiz like the 7th grade Spanish finals, which you need to pass to go to the next grade level in the language.

Some drawings I did

by Suitcase





The 9th Amendment of the Constitution

by Zoe Curtis



Until next time!

Have a great summer!
Thank you for reading the Mirror!

[Pictured: Zoe Curtis, Jena Chamas,
Editor Noah Solano, Stella Zigouras,
& Ms. O'Malley]