

The Oracle
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The Oracle

A Student Publication of the Webb School

We'll make
it yet!



In this issue . . .

- An Epic Apology
- Creative Submissions
- Webb . . . Then & Now
- Thoughts on Freedom

A DEEP AND HEARTFELT APOLOGY FROM YOUR FRIENDLY CREWMEM- BERS OF THE U.S.S. ORACLE

(written in turn by two parties)

Observant members of the Webb community may have noticed something missing from our lovely campus, and we don't mean our old friend the stump. For those haunted by a vague and ephemeral sense that there is an immense void in their lives that had previously been filled on a semi-quarterly basis, take heart - there is hope yet.

If you find yourself waking in the wee hours of the night, feeling cold and empty. Or if you've been uncharacteristically reading the local paper, only to find it droll and mild-mannered. If you're wondering where all the good things in life have gone; search the heavens no further - your answer lies only as far as the next paragraph.

Here at last is the pinnacle of literary perfection that is ...

THE ORACLE!!!!

So, wondering why you haven't already heard from your lovely Oracle staff? We'll bet you are. And if you aren't, it's about time you started wondering, because honestly now, where are you without the Oracle in you life? Besides on Pluto, that is. Oh wait, Pluto's not real; all the more reason why you need the Oracle. Yet, you could justifiably be thinking that the Oracle has made itself more scarce than the infamous Carmen Sandiego.

In which case, you may find yourself asking, "Where in the world is the Oracle?" We would like to express our grave remorse for keeping you in this terrible purgatory of non-Oracle-ness. We regretfully admit that a series of unfortunate and quite unforeseen events/circumstances have delayed, or, rather, wrought

havoc upon, the process of publishing said Oracle.

When we first embarked on our voyage at the beginning of the year, all went swimmingly. We had glorious visions of bi-weekly publications; anticipating long hours of sorting through the plethora of submissions piled on our desk to painstakingly select the most moving and elegantly penned of the lot. We made chapel announcements, then waited with broad smiles and clasped hands for the jostling crowd of would-be Oraclers to arrive at the meetings.

This supposed swarm of scripters did not, however, actually make it to any of the meetings. We assume this resulted from our ill-planning and inconvenient meeting times, or perhaps a freak accident in probability. Perhaps we unwittingly planned the meetings to overlap with a "Webb School Creative People Interested in Literary Activities of Any Sort" meeting, in which free pizza and soda was being handed out. Or perhaps every possible candidate

for the Oracle was absent that day. Perhaps even, all of these people who would have of course gone to the Oracle meeting had to instead re-lace their left shoes, which had mysteriously come unlaced shortly before the meeting, and which turned out after all to be a surprisingly time-consuming chore that left no time for attending any meetings. Whatever the case, we know the lack of participation in the Oracle can't be because we don't have any good writers here at the Illustrrious Webb School. Right?

So it seems an alarming number of our crew members have, for a myriad of reasons, fallen overboard, leaving a scant few to man the vessel that is The Oracle. As modish, masterful, and majestic as those remaining few may be, begetting a project of such high caliber requires much hard work and effort. But did we despair? Oh, no! We put our noggins together and produced some of the most astounding pieces of journalistic writing yet to grace the printed page,

such as had never before been seen in the history of man.

Unfortunately, these pieces were doomed to remain unseen. Just as we had finished sanding the mahogany case that would someday display our future Pulitzers, an angry Chinese Fireball broke into the room, breathing fire and brimstone on our fine piece of woodwork. Woe is us! The scaly beast proceeded on a fire-spewing, progress-stomping rampage. Using large sticks and some well-placed "your momma" jokes, we eventually drove the dragon off, but not before he had breathed firey hot death over all our hard work, reducing it to ashes. We even lost yet some more of our staff. Let's face it: no one can write for a periodical from the inside of a dragon's belly.

The dragon vanquished, we gathered up the remnants of our hard work and set about to rebuild. The months dragged on as we painstakingly recompiled our lost treasures word by word. As we completed each document, we moved the hard copy to a top-secret igloo-base in Antarctica, where we were sure it would be safe from marauding

dragons. But there was one thing we didn't count on: Antarctic Snow Yeti. We arrived at our secret cache with our last document in hand only to find our hard work yet again lost; destroyed by the callous yeti, who loves nothing more than to devour the written word - paper and all. In the heart of Antarctica amidst a raging blizzard we fell to our knees and cursed the heavens. There was no answer save the whisper of wind-driven snow.

Which brings us to today. Believe it or not, despite all our trial and turmoil, we have indeed managed to assemble and publish [something] for the viewing and reading pleasure of the Webb community. While we immensely regret the delay, we feel that, given the grim circumstances, our wonderful readers should find it in their loving hearts to forgive us. We would also like to remind anyone and everyone that any contribution one may offer to our venture will always be welcomed with open arms. Thank you, and good night.

Dear
Dorothy,

Dear Dorothy,

Every time I open my eyes, I see flashy things. They look like little monkeys trying to grab my pupils. Little skinny monkeys with paisely eyes and fractal fingers. Do you think this has anything to do with the new schedule? Or those giant mushrooms in the dell? Please help, they're starting to ask for bananas.



Dear Reader,

I would suggest you give them bananas before they rip out your pupils. But keep in mind, they are only imaginary monkeys. Imaginary bananas should suffice.

Advertisement

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Looking for a Good Read?

**Blimey O'Reilly: A Review
of the Georgia Nicholson
series by Louise Rennison**



Author Louise Rennison

Women have Bridget Jones and girls have Georgia Nicholson.

Louise Rennison writes diary-style novels in the Bridget Jones style, complete with that wonderful British wit

and bizarrely hilarious situations.

Georgia is just as hapless as Bridget but younger, making her perfect for middle schoolers (or even some highschoolers.)

Rennison's uniqueness is in the glossary, which is worth reading on its own. Rennison (or Georgia, rather) explains all her Britishisms so that all of us in Hanburger-a-gogo Land can understand. Words like: pingy pongees, boy entrancers, nunga nungas. I'm not entirely certain these are normal English words, but Georgia seems to think so . . .

The *Georgia* books are delightfully fast reads, so you can probably find the time to read one or two in the fragments of time **BASICS** leaves. They're like fictional candy, and everyone loves candy, right? Yummy scrumboes.

— Laura Sherrell

***The Devil Wears Prada* by
Lauren Weisberger**

Though I've heard the movie version is good, the novel *The Devil Wears Prada* was a huge disappointment. It was written with the skill of an amateur, and the entire plot was repetitive and infuriating. The main character is thrust into variations of the same situation for about 300 pages (Miranda needs something, Andy goes on search, anger ensues), and she makes only the tiniest of changes by the denouement. Quite honestly, the only reasonable reason to bother with this book is for the pretty clothes, which Weisberger describes in envy-inspiring glittery detail. Other than that, don't bother.

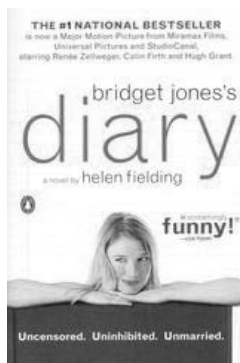
— Laura
Sherrell



*. . . Read a good
book lately? Tell us
about it!!!*

Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding

Have you ever felt like the fattest woman in the room? No, you don't need Weight Watchers, just read



Bridget Jones's Diary and all your fears and fat issues will disappear in your laughter. Bridget regales you with day-by-day descriptions of her faux-pas and self-help-book aided love life.

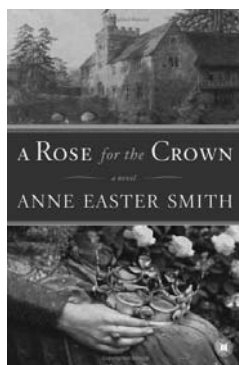
Author Helen Fielding creates a charming character whose personality reflects a little something of us all. And what would a wacky heroine be without her best mates and a crazy family. Bridget begins her diary with resolutions for the new year, which include to stop obsessing about her dishy boss Daniel Cleaver, to “Reduce the circumference of thighs by 3 inches...using anticellulite diet” and naturally “form relationships based on mature assessment of character”. Bridget goes down the rocky road of inter-office dating and falls for the guy she hates. This book explains why mums love infomercials and how to become a “professional” TV personality. If you liked the movie, you have to read the book. There's sooo much BRIDGET to go around!

-- Elizabeth McClary

A Rose for the Crown by Anne Easter

A Rose for the Crown by Anne Easter Smith is a historical novel set in England before the War of the Roses. It tells the story of Kate Haute who is born a peasant, but through family connections, circumstance, and love becomes the mistress of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who later becomes King Richard III. This book is perfect for anyone who enjoys learning some about history, while having a good exciting read. The book is long, as it depicts most of Kate's life span, but this allows you to really get to know, empathize, and root for her as a medieval woman following her heart through dire circumstances. Kate and Richard could never marry, but they loved each other till death. The story has a bitter-sweet ending, with the out-

break of the War of the Roses and Richard's deposition, but it leaves you with more to think about. It compels thoughts that dare the reader to wonder if I had a chance to love someone I could never be with would I do it? Was I willing to risk my honor, my good name, for happiness? I felt touched by her story, though fictional. I give it two thumbs up.



-- Elizabeth McClary

Hide in The Corner

By Emily Read

Her fear was consuming her.
It was nearly
Deafening.
Everyday she sat there

In pain and misery
Never losing the courage

To go run and
Hide.
Everyone hates her

Couldn't they just die?
Or maybe she could kill them.
Right here right
Now.
Everlasting
Revenge is sweet.

Paramitsha (Faerie Tale)

By John Michael Hurt

I wasn't afraid of the gypsies. I went right up to the wagon and said hello. Over dinner the night before, my father had told my mother and my sister and I that they were there on the west side of the orchard, and that he had told them they could camp there for a week if they wanted, but no more. My mother didn't like that, and she made a disapproving face. "Just a week," My father said flatly. "They ain't going to hurt nothing in a week." My ma shrugged and said nothing. I decided I would go over and have a look at them. I had just finished my final year of secondary school and the summer was in full swing. I still had to figure out what I was going to do. I had

Sudoku!

		5	6			3	1	8
3					9			
		6						7
		1		2				
8			5	6	7			4
				1		6		
4						2		
			7					6
5	7	2			6	9		

thought about college. With government help I might be able to afford it. Or there was the army. For now I was drifting in that world of indecision, and there was always a funny feeling in my stomach like when you have had a strange dream and you're not sure you're awake yet. Sometimes I would look at myself long and hard in the mirror as if I might see some clue there to who I really was, where I was going; as though there would be a map on my face to guide me to the future.

... Continued on
page 13.

Not Knowing

*A little girl's view from the
9/11 plane on her way to
NYC with her dad to see her
mom*

By Emily Read



Cate B. by Rachel



Alley by Rachel

I got on the plane,
Heading to NYC.
So happy to be going,
Not knowing what'd become
of me.
Everything was great,
I was having fun.
Not knowing
What was to be done.
10 minutes after take-off,
the plane was high jacked.
I, not knowing,
Was having a little snack.
The captain struggled
For control of the plane,
Not knowing
It'd all be in vain.
The men walked up and
down the plane,
Pointing guns here and there,
Demanding silence,
Everyone was scared.
I sat there for a while,
Not knowing what to do.
I was so scared
That I'd never again see you.
I saw the centers from afar,
Not knowing it'd be the last.
The plane swerved toward
them.
I prepared for the crash.
Turns out I was right,
I'll never again see you.
I love you very much, Mom.
Me and Daddy will miss you.

Random Stuff

Houston says:

**“If you don’t indulge
in dessert, then
you don’t deserve
to live.”**

How To Deal With An

Uncivil Person in

3 Easy Steps:

1. Open *Choosing Civility* by P.M. Forni and turn to “How to Act” (page 182).
2. Read.
3. Close the book and strike the uncivil person with it. Repeat if necessary.

(Note: The hardcover edition is particularly effective.)

Editor’s Note: The Oracle does in no way support the use of this or any publication for the purposes of inflicting harm.



Sudoku!

						7
9		5	6		2	4
			1			9
8				9	2	
	4					2
			5	8		3
	7			5		
	6	3		8	1	2
1						

*Photography by
Ms. Mary
Sessions*



Webb School . . .

Then & Now



The "Big Room" and the Bell Buckle School in the 1800s



"He [Sawney] depised uniformity. 'God made you different. I wouldn't try or be like other people, have hair cut like somebody else or wear clothes like somebody else . . .'"

"The trees on campus were sacred . . . "A boy who so much as pulled a leaf off a tree was expected to turn himself in and plant a sapling on the school grounds as penance

"One subject [Sawney] learned to detest was English grammar. . . His own school of the future never imposed an English grammar on any boy."

"The cloakrooms of the Big Room were known as "whipping rooms."

Students are required to wear a uniform and have mandated hair length.

...

Students must endure grammar, though this isn't necessarily a negative thing.

Unfortunately, "hours" have replaced whipping as the primary form of punishment.

(Quotes taken from *The Schoolmaker*)

Freedom

by Anon.

Since when are civilians the enemy,
In your war for divinity,
A young man picks up a gun,
And shoots a mothers son.

If Freedom isn't Free,
Then you shouldn't be.
Killin' women and children,
Makes you real men,
So now you're on the attack,
Against those who can't fight back

If Freedom isn't Free,
Then you shouldn't be.

All you can do is close your eyes,
As everyone below you dies.
You kill from so far away,
But you have nothing to say.

If Freedom isn't Free,
Then you shouldn't be.

So you say you go to war for God,
But get mad when they start a jihad,
At the end of your crusade,
How many have you slayed?

If Freedom isn't Free,
Then you shouldn't be.

When will you stop the war,
And fight no more?
Only when the gunshots cease,
Will we ever find peace

If Freedom isn't Free,
Then you shouldn't be.

If Freedom isn't Free,
Then you shouldn't be.

Of Trees and Grass

by Phillip Norfleet

As I Walked along the cold, gritty
sidewalk, on my way to yet another Chapel, I
tear at my pinstripe uniform shirt collar and
my regal necktie with the school colors on it. Is
the sole purpose of this collar and tie to suffo-
cate me? To block my Voice and my breathe?
As I seek freedom from this bondage, the
thousands of soft, organic fingernails of the
trees begin to enwrap me, taking me as one of
their own. They wish for me to join them, to
be like them, to be unlike them.

Oh, how I dream of becoming a tree!
I dream of being rooted, but free, to be slen-
der, but wide, to branch out, but remain me. I
walk to one of these precious poplars, stroking
the rough, brown bark with the back of my
tired hand. I look up, and then I look down. I
see the grass, surrounding and idolizing and
hating the trees. I am lucky I guess, to not be a
blade of grass.

To be one, in a see of thousands, all
clones, all small. And every time I would reach
out, become taller, and wider, and wilder, and
more like a tree, I am cut down. Down, down
to the level of my peers, all the same, proud,
and pretty. At the realization, I stroke my
silken hair, the strands curling at the ends with
joy, letting forth a cry of freedom.

I walk by a stump sitting next to the
sidewalk. The rotting carcass of a once glorious
tree, this scar on the earth is all that remains,
with rings like wrinkles and a smell like dead
things. Is all that is free destined to be cut
down? All that reaches for new heights and
lengths, going to be brought down to the
ground by higher powers who care nothing for
them? Yes, I say. But I will not be cut down,
and I will not fall. Because trees and grass have
no mouths, no words, no Voice.

Editorial

On the morning of November 19, 2005, in Haditha in Iraq, one U.S. marine and twenty-four Iraqis died.

According to Newsweek (June 12, 2006 issue) the military is investigating the marine company for possible war crimes. There are "allegations of a cover-up." There are reports of "atrocities in other places, committed by young soldiers who cracked under the pressure of a war fought on a battlefield with no front lines, no easy way to tell civilians from insurgents, and no end in sight."

"Haditha may turn out to be the worst massacre since My Lai."

It is our generation that will have to bear the consequences of these actions. We will be held responsible for a war started before we were old enough to vote. We are the Americans

who will have to continue the fighting or try to clean up the mess our predecessors left us. Will we still be proud of our country? Will we become apologists for our parent's mistakes? Will we stand by their decisions and continue blindly to wage war on an idea, not a country?

What scares me is my apathy, our apathy, our ignorance of our country's actions and the reasons behind them. Do we know what exactly is happening everyday in Iraq? In Afghanistan? Do we know why there are American troops in these countries? I'm not sure I do.

I'm not sure about much of anything anymore.

—Laura Sherrell

Paramitsha continued . . .

The wagon was green with flowers painted on it. It had wood panels on the sides and a curved roof with a little metal chimney sticking out. The chimney had a conical pointed cap on it, and a little smoke came from it and was pulled away on the breeze. The wheels were painted red and yellow. A kind of awning was extended out from one side of the wagon and there were chairs and a table and some other things under it on a rug. Two horses were grazing absently under a big oak tree. They looked like really fine horses, big and strong.

As I walked up, a girl about

my age came around the corner. She stopped abruptly until she saw that I was smiling and that I was alone. When I said hello, she smiled and said hello too. Of course, I noticed immediately how pretty she was. Her hair and her eyes were shiny and her skin was smooth and golden.

"My name's Tolly," I said, holding out my hand. "Tolly Ransom. This is our farm here." I gestured around us. For a moment she looked concerned. I think she thought I was going to ask them to leave. Then I realized she might not speak English, but she came forward and shook my hand and said, "My name is Djidjo." "I'm pleased to meet you."

She bowed a little curtsy. "Will you come sit by the vurdon – the wagon - and have some tea?" Of course, I said yes.

About this time, her father came around the wagon. I guess he had heard voices. He wasn't a big man, but he had a kind of muscularity, a kind of solidness. His dark hair was curly, not straight like Djidjo's was. He had a black mustache, which, along with his brown face made the smile he wore flash white in the shade of the orchard. He walked over and looked at me curiously for a second then said "I am Veshengo, you are welcome to our camp young raklo.

"Excuse me sir, but my name is Tolly," I said.

He smiled. "Oh yes, raklo is only the word for a young man. A young man who is not a gypsy. Chey," he said looking at the girl, "Can you get some tea for us?" She smiled and nodded and went up the wooden steps into the wagon. "I hope everything is well," he said with a concerned look as we sat on the chairs under the awning. "I spoke to the owner."

"Yes, that was my father. Everything's okay. I just came to see you. To be honest, I've never seen any gypsies before."

"Well, we don't usually say gypsies. We call ourselves Rom or Romany. I am grateful to your father. We are not welcomed by most people. The Rom have a culture that has, well, different ways from most people these days. For instance, today many of us live in cities and live like other city people do, but some of the Rom follow the old ways and may ... take things." He shrugged. "I think, though,

most people had a culture like ours many centuries ago. You might say like stealing, but I think many tribes used to take things from other tribes when they could, like horses. Nowadays business people take money away from other people. They charge interest or cheat and this culture says it is okay. So..." He shrugged again and smiled, looking intently at me.

Djidjo came back with the tea and we sat through the warm afternoon that was like a magic spell. The sunlight made stained glass patterns through the orchard leaves, and the breeze was fat and pleasant against my face. The feeling of dreaminess fitted well with the strange unsettled feeling in my stomach, and the tea filtered down like liquid amber into my body. I think they liked me, and I know I thought Djidjo was one of the prettiest girls I had ever seen. We talked about places they had traveled and about the times they had at the big meetings - the Patshiva. When I left, they asked me to come back tomorrow. Djidjo fluttered her big eyes at me, and Veshengo smiled as he waved me on my way back to the world of chores and expectations.

I had felt the meeting with the gypsies was fine. Somehow, with them I had not felt any push or pull from my own world - a world that was always expecting me to make choices, do things, plan and know. With them, I had no role to play, no promises to keep and I had just been me. It was heady and seductive.

The next day I did my chores and got released from duty in the early afternoon. I cleaned up and headed out toward the orchard. The orchard

was on the far side of our farm and it seemed to take much longer to get there than it had the day before. I arrived at the wagon and helloed. For a while there was no response and I had almost turned and headed back, when Djidjo came out of the wagon wiping her hands on her apron and smiling. We sat on the ground underneath one of the apple trees and talked. I asked her what Gypsy life was like, but she wasn't sure how to answer, as that was all she had ever known, so how can you compare. I asked where her mother was.

"My mother was named Drita," she said with a little sad smile. "She was very beautiful." Looking at Djidjo, I could easily believe it. "She was suddenly ... very ill and the hospital wouldn't take her in, because...you know. We were camped alone, so there was no help from the Kumpania - the family. She, um, passed away in the vurdon. I was twelve years old. My father still grieves very much. He will not take another wife. He says if he did, her ghost would not give him any peace so why bother. It is his little joke." Djidjo seemed flustered for a minute, but then she smiled and the world was a little warmer.

Vashengo came suddenly through the trees riding one of the horses. He dropped to the ground with a lithe dismount. He looked at me with a very serious look on his face at first,

Sudoku!

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					2			7
3	8						1	4
4			8					
	7			1		8		
				7		5	9	
1				5	8			

then at Djidjo for a second, then his expression softened. I think he saw that we had not been doing anything improper.

"How are you raklo," he asked with a wink as he walked over to us.

I stood up. "Fine, sir," I said as he pulled over a chair and sat with us. "Oh, I brought some things for you." I pulled out the bag I had brought with some presents of food. It was just some beans and potatoes, a bag of rice and some peaches and jam my mother had canned. Suddenly, I thought the simple offerings might be an insult to them. A huge cloudbank of embarrassment hovered near my heart. But they both smiled and it dissipated.

"Thank you for this kindness," Vashengo said. "You know, I think you are almost like a Gypsy in your heart." He jumped up and went

into the wagon and came back with a bottle of wine and three glasses and poured one for each of us. "Let us toast the full moon," he laughed, "it is only a couple of days away," and sure enough there she was, rising above the orchard trees in the east. Her great gold face beamed down in the summer evening as we talked about the place of a man in the world, of sorrow and of Drita, of the power of life and death. Djidjo and Vashengo and I, all talking, and sometimes one of them singing part of a song to emphasize a point. After we had finished the bottle, Vashengo leaned so close that his face was almost touching mine.

"Because you have been so kind and your father has been so kind to us, because I think maybe you have the heart of a Rom, I will show you a special thing." He looked over at Djidjo who suddenly seemed a little nervous. "Wait," he said with a sweeping gesture of his hand, "And you will see something that will surprise you."

Now the twilight was upon us. Two lanterns were glowing under the awning by the wagon. I hadn't noticed anyone light them, but I thought Djidjo had done it while I was transfixed by one of Vashengo's stories.

Vashengo came out of the wagon with a kind of box covered by a cloth. He set the box on the table and pulled the cover away with a dramatic gesture. The box or case was very elaborate like a gilded birdcage, but more complicated than one would expect a birdcage to be. It was very beautifully decorated and seemed to give off some kind of light. There was a little latch on the door that was arranged so that it couldn't be reached from inside.

"Come and see," Vashengo said, gesturing with his hand for me to come closer. I came to the table and bent down to look into the cage. Inside was a tiny person, perfectly shaped, but no more than twelve inches tall. She, for it was very obviously a she, had small diaphanous wings like dragonfly wings. She stood in the cage and once in a while the wings fluttered and she lifted into the air. I saw that the light that emanated from the cage actually came from her. She glowed as from some internal light and she looked almost translucent there in the twilight evening. Most of all, she was beautiful. So tiny and perfect. It broke my heart to look at her because she was so beautiful. Her glowing skin was perfect and flawless. She looked out at me from the cage with a look that was both imploring and sad. Her eyes spoke of a terrible loneliness – imploring but afraid, apprehensive. They spoke of desire and of love, too. I felt that she wanted me to stop the loneliness, as if only I could do this, but was afraid. For a few seconds, her lips moved as though she were trying to talk to me, but couldn't.

"What is she?" I asked breathlessly.

"She is a faerie." Vashengo said, looking from the cage to me.

"But ...a faerie?" I spluttered. "There are no ..."

"What you see with your own eyes, raklo, is true." He nodded at the faerie.

**Look for the next
installment of *Paramitsha*
in Issue #2!**

*We hope you've enjoyed . . .
now go submit something!!!*