

Honorable Mention, Prose, Grades 10-12, Dahlia Herman

I spin the sphere between my hands, the raised topography brushing against my calloused fingers. My lids fall gently against my eyes as I press my finger hard to stop the globe's spinning motion. I pull my eyes open and look closely at the tiny lettering in front of me; New Guinea it reads. I pull my phone from my pocket and open my *Skyhopper* app. My fingers enter the letters and find the date closest to today, 1 week, sweet.

Once secured, I click off my phone and look to the bright red numbers illuminating my oven, 3:42 am, shoot. I pull off my jeans, though they resist, and let myself sink into the rusty orange sofa, slumber overcoming my consciousness.

One week later

My hand grips the sweaty, plastic handle of my yellow suitcase as I whiz past the hundreds of bodies, each with their own destination in tow. I grip my coffee in one hand as I arrive at my gate, A32 the sign informs me, *on-time*. I hand my ticket to the clerk, his crisp purple uniform wrinkling as he waves me in. "Have a good flight" he says, in a monotone response. I flash him a smile in response, and continue on my way. My feet scuffle with excitement down the carpeted runway to my new escapade.

I reach the plane, and step into the vehicle that will soon be thrusting me to my next feat. I wince, grabbing the cold metal of the buckle, squeezing it until I hear the anticipated click. Once I secure my yellow pack under the leather seat in front of me, I bring my knees to my chest and look out the little piece of circular glass to my side. At first I see myself, wisps of frizz escaping my blonde tied-back hair. My dark brown eyes look tired, but I sense the excitement and anticipation hidden behind them.

I look past my reflection as the ground starts racing behind me. We move faster and faster, my insides not quite catching up with my moving body until we lift. The trees and land shrink before my eyes, the homes becoming figures in a dollhouse, small and perfectly lined in place. Lakes turn to puddles, and football fields become merely patches of green. My body molds into the cushion beneath me. As my eyes slowly close, I feel the plane bend side to side, finding balance amidst its new atmosphere.

I don't realize how long my eyes have rested until a dark voice awakens my senses, and brings light flooding back to my consciousness. "Welcome to Papua New Guinea," the voice declares, echoing throughout the plane, "where the local time is 12:45 pm, and the temperature is 83 degrees fahrenheit. We hope you enjoyed your flight, and fly with us again soon." I grasp my stagnant bag and pull it to freedom, before stretching my dormant legs and then inching to the front of the plane. I step into the day's warmth and feel a breeze pick up my hair and the sun wash over my body. I close my eyes, absorbing the moment, before taking a step. The step towards my next adventure.