

# Y O U N G H A R L E M F I C T I O N C O N T E S T

OUR GOAL in issuing a writing competition to the Harlem High Schools was to spread the creative literary talent of young writers looking for an opportunity and a forum to preview their work. We are happy to announce that the winner is 17-year-old Lizmary Burgos of Louis D. Brandeis High School. Enjoy!

## The Shadow

By Lizmary Burgos

Once Adam Huley had choices. Once, long ago. He remembered how, back then, living was as easy as breathing. He remembered his childhood. The hours spent in the creek with his two best friends, the endless pranks they played on everyone in their tiny town, far from civilization. And he remembered Sara.... Most of all, he remembered Sara. Sweet, loving, Sara....

But that was many years ago. Too far into the past to change, but not far enough for Adam to forget, even with his gray balding head, his weakened knees, the long, deep wrinkles on his face, his hands, perhaps even his heart.

"Stay with me." If Adam closed his eyes, he could go back to that day, many years ago. He remembered the exact color of Sara's dress, the exact color of her eyes, and the sweet fragrance of her

honey blonde hair. He remembered everything. Even when....

"No, Sara- you know that."

"Then... then take me with you." Her warm brown eyes began to fill with tears, as if, deep down, she knew the outcome of all this. Adam had taken Sara into his arms then, he remembered.

"Darling, you know I can't. It'd be too dangerous." Sara began to tremble. Adam could feel her trembling beneath her loose yellow dress.

"Then why are you going?"

"Because I have to. It's for our future." Adam tried to explain, but Sara, her petite arms around him, held him tight, not really wanting to let go.

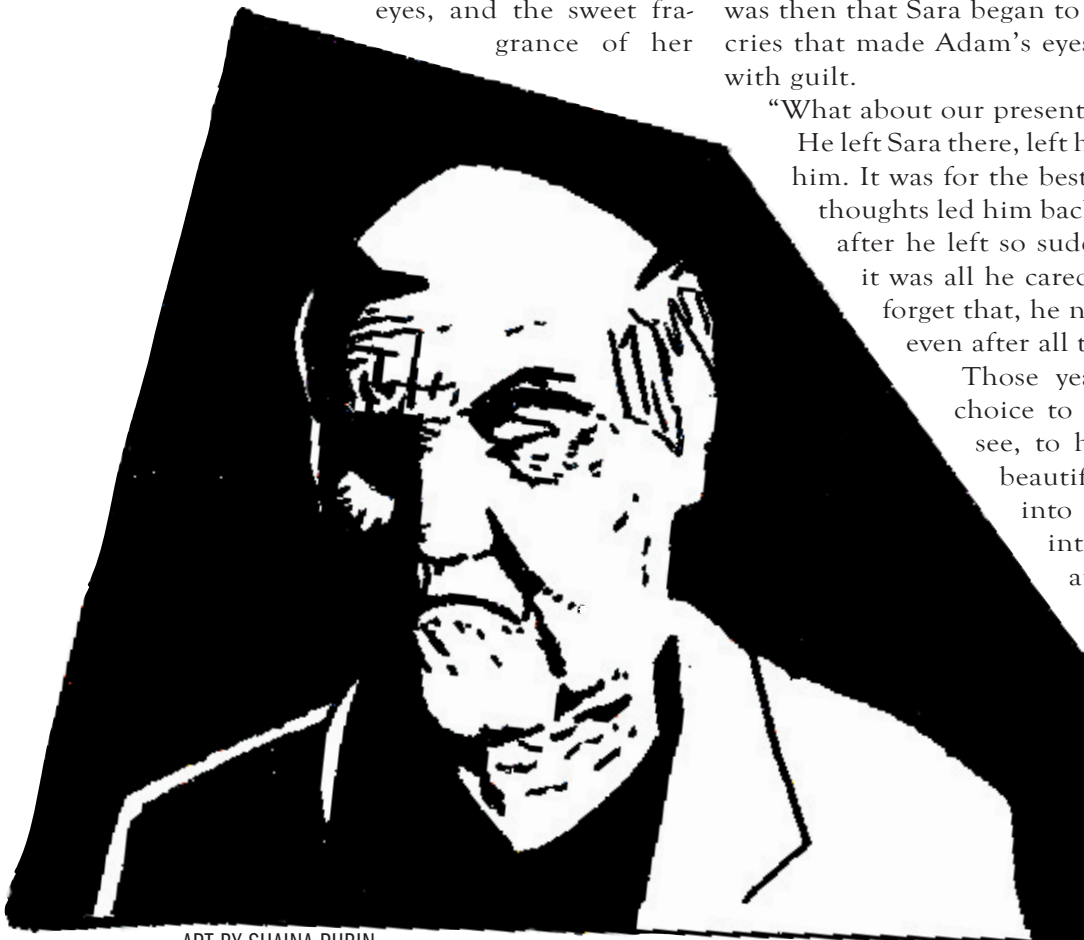
"What about our present? What about our now?" It was then that Sara began to sob. Deep, soul wrenching cries that made Adam's eyes well up and his heart fill with guilt.

"What about our present... What about our now?"

He left Sara there, left her sobbing and breaking for him. It was for the best, he thought, whenever his thoughts led him back to Sara. The years went by after he left so suddenly. The years with Sara, it was all he cared about. Even if he tried to forget that, he never did come back for her, even after all those years.

Those years he could've made the choice to knock on Nancy's door to see, to hug his only daughter. His beautiful Sara. But one year turned into two and the years turned into decades and... now he was an old man, lonely, broken, with only his thoughts to keep him company and that one haunting question that had shadowed over his life the day he turned his back on Sara, many years ago...

"What about our present... What about our now?"



ART BY SHAINA RUBIN