

## LACC Writing Contest Short story 1st place

**Title : From Cheers to the Birth of Pokémon**

**Entrant : Joshua Moreno**

From *Cheers* to the Birth of Pokémon

Inside some pre-med college student's house, on a quiet street in Milwaukee, a party takes place celebrating the conclusion of finals. In the center of it stands a young insecure girl in a buttoned down shirt and business pants. Her name is Alina, and in many ways she doesn't belong here. Her friends thought this would expose her to some potential dating material, or at least a decent person to put a condom on. But Alina only came to get some space from her mom. Just having come from an argument about the uncertainty of her future, Alina thought it was best to make broader plans on moving out. But now she was focused on the game, and to Alina there's only been one other player who's dabbled with her before. She knows there's no one for her in all of Wisconsin.

M.C. Hammer's "You Can't Touch This" plays for a third time as a young man in an open flannel preaches to a group of drunken attendees about a new comedy program revolutionizing television. He says it's called *Seinfeld* and it's hilariously bold. Another person brings up the premiere of a film that's equally revolutionizing cinema. It's called *Goodfellas* and it's stylishly violent. This tempts Alina to join in the conversation, but she notices a girl sitting alone outside by the pool. She wears a tucked in Queen T-shirt with the sleeves rolled up.

She tells entertainment lovers  
that something called the World

She goes out to meet the pool  
girl by telling her "Radio Ga Ga"

Or

This makes the pool girl smile and introduces herself as Lillian. Alina asks why she's out here by herself. Lillian says she's been dealing with some shit and finds comfort in playing Dr. Mario on her Gameboy. Lillian studies Alina's outfit, "You come from solving homicides or something?"

"I work at a bank, part time," Alina corrects her. She goes on to tell Lillian that she majors in neuroscience. Lillian states she's already graduated with a B.A. in mathematics. "Well here we are, two smart girls too smart for this party," Alina can't stop feeling warmth inside her chest.

The glass door slides opens and a man tells the girls that he's taking song requests. Lillian urges Alina to choose. She tries to keep it cool.

Anything by Sade.

Or

"Train in Vain" by The Clash.

"Sweetest Taboo' by Sade," Lillian adds.

Alina locks eyes with her, "Nice choice."

A couple of weeks later, the two have gone on numerous dates. Lillian has introduced Alina to her Irish terrier named Cliff and her hatred of the banjo instrument along with the whole metal music genre. Alina has introduced Lillian to her fear of driving over 70 miles per hour and her passion for computers. One is clearly Kirk while the other is clearly Spock.

Things slow down when Lillian comes clean about her medical condition. She suffers from VHL, which has resulted into some slight brain damage. To Alina, Lillian has been the slightest bit of hope that destiny exists, so of course she decides to continue seeing Lillian.

Alina ponders on where to take Lillian for their fourth date.

Stay home and cook Kobe

beef with baked potato

while watching *Footlose*.

Or

Take her to a concert of an  
obscure banjo-metal band  
named Pride & Glory.

Once the final Kenny Loggins song plays and Lillian convinces Alina to dance along as ritual, Alina finds the perfect moment for their first kiss. Things naturally progress to Alina being deflowered that night.

Two years into the relationship, Alina and Lillian have made a home in a new apartment. As they move furniture in, the two girls initiate a heated dispute. Lillian argues that the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy should be abolished, while Alina says it provides protection against homosexuals from being beaten or harassed. Words like "asshole," and "hypocrite" are used on one another repeatedly. After a moment of silence, Lillian reveals that she came out to her parents years ago, "They talked to me less after that. Never found out why."

Setting down her things, Alina goes to embrace Lillian, "Can you get a tattoo of a song lyric in the shape of a serpent at this spot?"

"What spot?"

"Right here," Alina kisses it, "so it says '*Sometimes I think you're just too good for me.*'"

"Hmm... show that to me again, I wasn't paying attention."

Alina bites down hard causing Lillian to laugh.

Lillian taps Alina's arm, "Yo, who does this guy think he is?"

In the corner of the room, Cliff humps Alina's pillow.

Alina turns to Lillian, "Can we please put him down?"

"No!"

That night, Alina lies awake while Lillian sleeps beside her. A constant thought about her family's Christmas dinner keeps her from sleeping.

She'll come out to her parents by  
bringing Lillian as her girlfriend.

Or

She'll bring Lillian as a close  
friend and roommate.

Lillian respects her choice. The two continue to live with their strong love for each other a secret. At the dinner, the main topic of discussion is suicide as a famous singer has taken his own life. Alina's parents find Lillian charming and thought provoking.

"You remind me of an old friend of mine," Alina's mother states.

"Must have been a girl way ahead of her time," Lillian smiles at Alina.

Alina's mother goes on to tell Lillian to look after her daughter. Lillian vows to do so.

One figure skater's broken leg and a year later, The Juice is acquitted, the neon fashion trend begins to die down, and Alina finishes college with the help of Windows 95. Lillian becomes obsessed with beating *Zelda*. Alina becomes obsessed with a film about toys coming to life, a pivotal moment in animation and computer

generated software. After appropriately calling her a nerd, Lillian threatens to beat Alina up if the film is brought up one more time.

Lillian gets the “Rachel haircut” in order for Alina to live out her fantasy of having sex with Jennifer Anniston. The David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA offers Alina admission. Lillian gets a promotion to VP at her job. The two sit down one night to discuss what comes next for them.

Alina will move to LA and  
work her ass off for med  
school. Lillian stays with  
Cliff to make money.

Or

Lillian will find a new job  
while living with Alina and  
support her through  
school.

Alina quickly settles in the city and makes friends with like-minded people who are also obsessed with Yahoo! and the growth of the internet. Lillian took on more responsibility at her job, worked longer hours, but had more time to listen and appreciate music. She would tell Alina about her infatuation with the Spice Girls while Alina would praise a shop called Starbucks as the next church. Long distance calls would be made daily, which eventually became weekly. Both girls are too busy and too bored to talk about anything other than work and studies.

Mount Everest takes the lives of eight people. Alina’s mother dies in a car accident.

Alina comes back to her hometown and takes time off school. She falls into a state of slight depression. Lillian comforts her as best as she can, while Alina attempts to relieve her grieving father.

Time passes in this year of heartbreak as Princess Diana's funeral takes place, Cunanan murders Versace, but the Packers win the super bowl. The ladies look at movie show times on the paper.

They decide to witness more  
brutal killings of the Ghost  
face serial killer.

Or

They watch Leonardo  
DiCaprio sacrifice himself  
for Kate Winslet.

"He surely could have fit on that fucking door," Lillian scoffs after their second viewing of the movie.

"You need to learn how to draw," Alina teases as she wipes away her tears.

That night, Alina finds Lillian's hidden medication underneath their bed. There's significantly more of it. She also learns from a neighbor that Lillian had previously fallen on the stairs before. Alina decides to confront Lillian about keeping vital things from her, and Lillian lets go that they aren't married. They owe each other nothing.

"Al..." Lillian doesn't mean what she says. That day, Alina is asked if she really wants to go down this path seeing as it would be the last chance to eject.

The two choose to call it, and  
have Lillian live with her family.

Or

Alina is determined to take  
care of Lillian on her own.

The girls pack up their things, Cliff is dropped off to live with Alina's father, and the two head to Los Angeles.

Lillian doesn't work as much anymore. She's taken up the guitar, sketching, and literature at home while Alina continues on her med degree. Alina notices Lillian's mood changes and stillness. The beach becomes the only time for the two to be happy together.

At a bar one night, the two watch Brandi Chastain take off her shirt and run in her sports bra after winning the world cup. Lillian holds Alina's arm and kisses her in front of the entire crowd. This marks the first and last time they're truly affectionate in public.

As Alina continues to delve less into work and more into Lillian, they begin to stay home a lot more. Lillian no longer carries motivation to leave their apartment. One day she asks Alina for chicken noodle soup.

Alina wants to cook it  
herself but must go out to  
buy the ingredients.

Or

Alina orders take out food  
from a nearby restaurant  
and puts on TV.

Out at night, several protests are assembled against the NRA and military intervention in other countries. Alina gets to the grocery store to find a news report on the TV of George W. Bush announcing his presidency plan. When she arrives home, she finds Lillian on the living room floor. She drops to her knees...

Alina is kept from planning the funeral. She attends, nevertheless. She stays with her dad for the week. One afternoon, while her father cooks for her she pets Cliff who now has glaucoma developing in both eyes. Her father tells her that he's surprised there wasn't a computer meltdown due to the change of the century. Alina looks at him.

"Computers have evolved.

They're smart now."

Or

"I'm gay."

For a moment, the entire house goes quiet. He struggles to get the right words out. Alina yells at him to say something.

"Hi Gay, I'm dad," he manages to make Alina smile.

Immediately tears flow down her face. She hugs him tightly.

Years later, on a loud night in a Boston hospital, Alina walks down a hallway leading to urgent care. A nurse gives her two files.

A fourteen-year-old

girl has developed an

extensive rash.

Or

A man in his early

thirties has a

fractured nose.

She enters the patient's room to find him holding his nose tilted upwards. She asks what broke his beak, and he explains that a bar fight escalated too quickly.

"Bar fight, huh? Someone hit on your girlfriend?" Alina examines his nose.

“Nah, some asshole was going on about how disgraceful it is for Massachusetts to become the first state to pass gay marriage,” the man answers.

Alina smiles at him, “Should I take a look at the other guy?”

The man chuckles, “Only if you want to find more of my blood on his shirt.”

Alina is taken back.

Alina drives her three-year-old son, Freddie, to a daycare. He plays Pokémon on the relic of a device that is a Gameboy. Over the radio, President Barack Obama repeals the Don't Ask Don't tell policy as crowds cheer. Alina changes the station only to find a familiar song. Her heart rate increases on instant as she recognizes Sade singing, *“If I tell you... if I tell you now... will you keep on...will you keep on loving me-”*

Alina sings to her son for  
the remainder of the ride.

Or

Alina switches off the  
radio station.