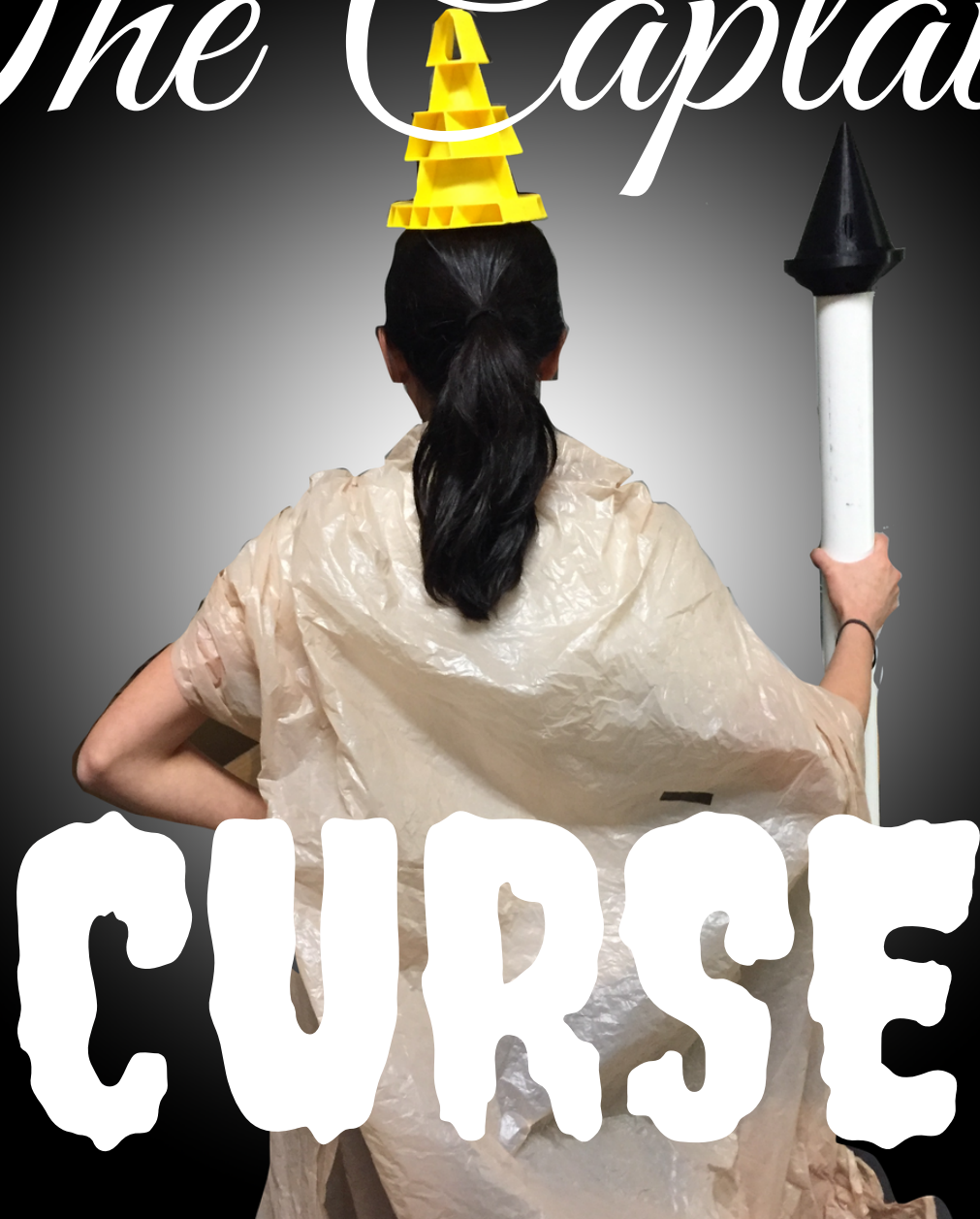


The Captain's



CURSE

There was once a girl named Christy. By the sweltering summer that marked the end of her sophomore year, Christy had been in her high school's robotics club for two years. She reveled in the mental engagement, competitive spirit, and team bonding that VEX Robotics Competition brought to her life. Just thinking and talking about robotics lit her right up!

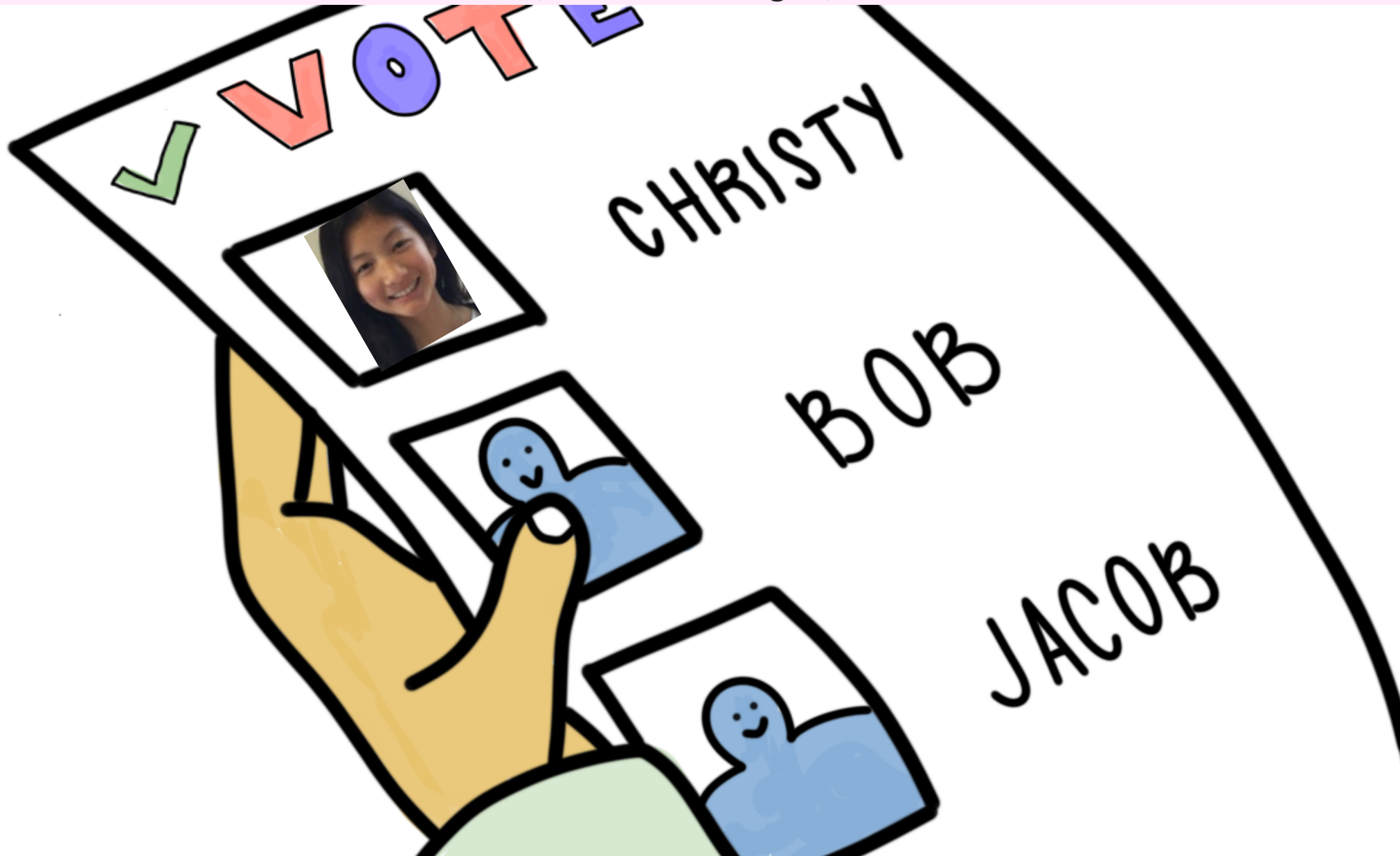


Hi I'm Christy!

Christy is the passionate robotics captain of Girl Powered Team 5327C from Dublin, California. But she and her team weren't always like that....

On fire with her passion for building robots, Christy took the plunge and decided to run for team captain. However, there was something strange about the list of students running for captain...

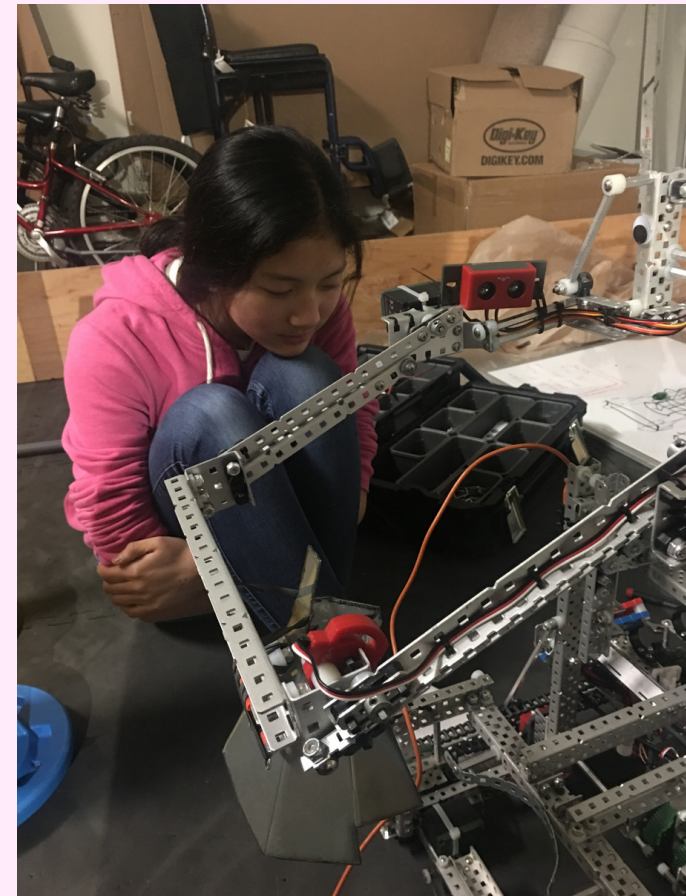
They were all guys!



The day after the votes were cast, an email popped up informing Christy that she had been elected captain! She was overjoyed, and couldn't help but let out a loud "whooohooooooooooooooooo!" She couldn't wait to prove herself to be the best female captain of all time!



But things didn't go as smoothly as Christy planned. No matter the long hours she toiled after the meetings ended, it seemed that her team could not get a fully functional robot together. The lift stuck going up, the chainbar remained obstinately awry, and a 'hype' design she hastily pursued was fruitless. Robot Design was not as easy as it seemed! Team members seemed bored during meets; worse, it seemed that they were really looking to another senior member on her team for leadership.



It was as if there was a curse hanging over her, making everything she did go wrong! The poisonous feelings of insecurity and self-doubt rose like water in a room, choking her.

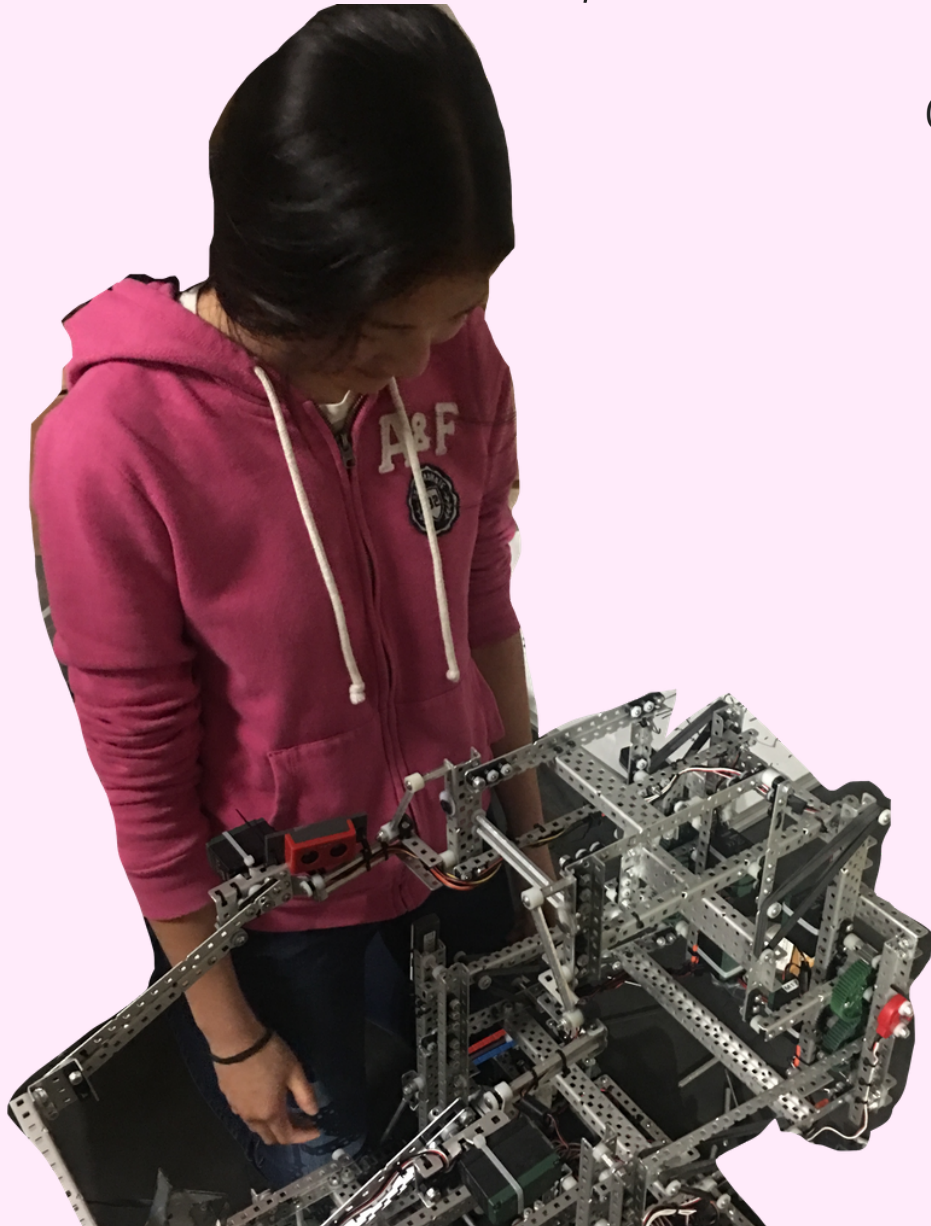


And one day, to top it all off, one of Christy's team members told her that he would rather move to a different team. He compared her to a fellow captain, whose meetings he said were much more fun and productive in comparison.

Oh, did the comments sting!

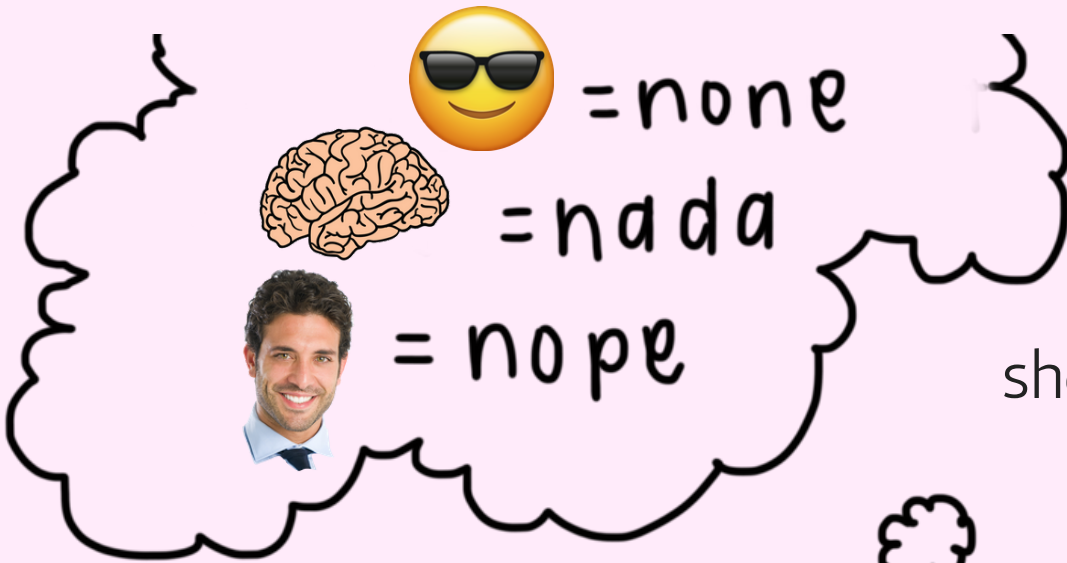
Christy felt like a thousand daggers were being thrust into her abdomen. She wanted to throw up and collapse at the same time.

The curse... It was too much for her to bear!



"Is it because I'm a girl?" she asked herself tearfully. She could never be like the other team captains: charismatic, funny, entertaining. It didn't matter how much effort she put in, or how nice she was: ultimately,

she wasn't intelligent enough,
wasn't cool enough,
wasn't fun enough...



she wasn't **male** enough.



Was there anything she could do? No, there was nothing...

Just as a overpowering wave of emotion threatened to put her under, Christy's mind cleared. Reflecting on her leadership, she remembered rash decisions and countless meetings during which work was not fairly delegated.

Christy realized she had engrossed herself in the details of the construction, neglecting the collaborative aspect of robotics and alienating her members. The issues she had blamed on a curse were all within her power to fix. Christy previously believed that she had to dominate the team to prove herself as a leader. She came to the realization that Girl Power meant that she should strive not to take all the work upon herself like some "one-girl show" but rather seek to acknowledge her members' unique experiences and bring out the best in each one of them for the advancement of the whole team.



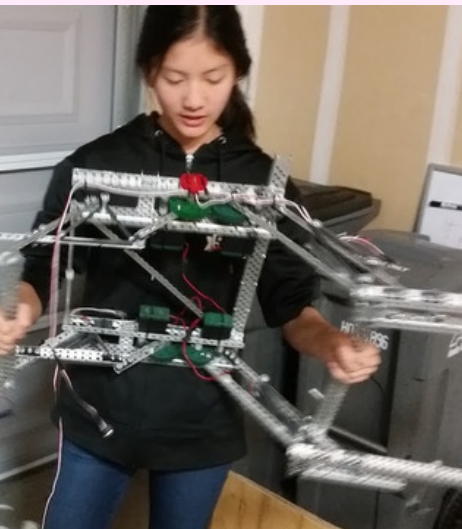
— VIVA LA
5327C!!

"Being a female captain is a blessing, not a curse." Christy told herself with newfound self-assurance. "My team has been, and will always be wonderfully

Girl⚡Powered

Christy got to work right away. She arranged a talk with the unhappy member and they discussed things she could change. During the brainstorming session, she and her team came up with some amazing ideas! Among these: ensuring all members are involved in discussions and decision-making, hosting seminars for members to learn from one another, and keeping positions flexible to enable exposure to each fascinating facet of robotics. The stimulating discussions they began to have as a team made Christy realize that just as building robots was a matter of considering the different variables in pairing mechanisms, she had to also consider the different strengths of her members. She needed her team members for their creative solutions and design perspectives.

The new system paid off. The team's lead programmer held a seminar on the software side of the robot, including PID loops and base control. Equipped with a fundamental understanding of how code directs the robot's movement, build-oriented members were able to design the four-bar more effectively. By putting members' individual engineering experiences together, the team became stronger than any one member could have been alone.



With Christy's change in attitude came also a change in the atmosphere of meetings. Her members joked around more, were more at ease with each other, and generally had a blast!

She put greater effort into planning out meetings, which resulted in greater focus and productivity. She took charge of problems and asserted her authority with confidence. And the biggest smile spread across her face when a member told her, "Today's meeting was fun!"



Stilts but with Crutches...?
An Adventure in Bioengineering



A Friendly Competitive Game
that's not VEX Robotics



Since the lesson we learned as a captain and as a team, we on Gael Force 5327C have always made sure our team dynamic reflects the vital aspect of valuing each member's contributions.

Our team philosophy celebrates the wonderfully different quirks and viewpoints that each member brings to the whole. Aarthi's artistic streak, Koji's mischievous experiments, Gustavo's quiet brilliance - - these aspects of our members all enrich our team. Rather than dividing along the lines of gender, we believe in encouraging collaboration, communication and respect between guys and girls on the same team. Because let's face it - - in the field of engineering, we can't escape interactions between the sexes. It's important to be able to both navigate conflicts and work together toward a goal while maintaining an attitude of mutual respect. In this respect, seniority is no different. Just as our juniors mentor freshmen, younger members can also introduce the team to a new concepts. Each member's ideas are made to feel welcome, regardless of age or gender. United by a love of learning in engineering and the competitive desire to succeed, we on team 5327C ultimately aim to build amazing robots together - - and have a blast while we're at it!



Team 5327C wins the Excellence Award!

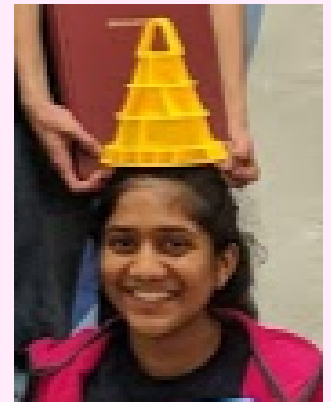
Credits for"
"The Captain's
Curse"
by Team 5327C
Writing and Drawing by:



Christy Koh



Aarthi Muthukumar



Roshni Vakil