

# What's Your Story?

## The Seepe Walters Short Story Contest 2010



**Innisfil**  
**Public Library**



**Produced by Innisfil Public Library**

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# Seepe Walters



Seepe Walters was a well-respected and dedicated member of the Innisfil community until her death in 1995.

She was involved in many different facets of Innisfil life: the Historical Society, 4-H, the Women's Institute, her Church, her family and various political arenas.

It was her love of writing and all things literary which led her to journalism at the University of Toronto, to a job as a freelance correspondent with the *Daily Construction News*, to teach English to immigrant children, to work with the Barrie Literacy Council and to ultimately help found the Innisfil Friends of the Library.

Seepe Walters' commitment to her community and specifically her legacy to the Library, which is now supported by three incredibly dynamic Friends of the Library groups, is being remembered through the Innisfil Public Library's Seepe Walters Story Writing Contest.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

The Innisfil Public Library would like to congratulate all the students who entered the 9th edition of the Innisfil Public Library's Short Story Contest. This contest has been known as The Seepe Walters Short Story Contest since 2004, in memory of the woman who was a driving force behind the creation of the original Friends of the Innisfil Public Library group.

The contributions of many have made this contest and this publication a reality. The Innisfil Public Library would like to thank the Friends of the Library, the Ferraro family and Chapters – Barrievue location for their ongoing support and sponsorship; the generosity of our newest sponsor, Staples; the judging panel: Amanda Quibell, Chris Simon, Erin Damery and Lesley Wilde for accepting such a difficult job; and of course, the efforts of all the incredible young writers who submitted entries. Although there is only one name on the Seepe Walters Award plaque, you are all winners for having the courage to pursue your writing dreams.

Many thanks to all those involved. And to everyone else, we hope you enjoy the stories submitted to the 2010 edition of the Seepe Walters Short Story Contest.

Kathy Hammer  
Children's Services Librarian  
Innisfil Public Library

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## **THE 13<sup>TH</sup> OLYMPIAN**

**By Tori Hayward: Grade 6**

It was a cold and rainy day, a day I wish never had come. A day that basically ended my normal life. My name is Victoria. I am in grade 6. I have caramel coloured hair and blue-grey eyes “like the ocean” some people say. Last of all, I’m different. No, I don’t have a disease or anything like that. It’s just that weird things happen to me. Bad things.

Even then, people say I’m a lucky charm. When I’m around other people, good things happen to them. My friends get a first in everything they do, but only when I’m around. Anyway, I was walking home along the busy streets of Toronto as cars whizzed past me spraying muddy water all over my face.

“Spah!” I sputtered, “yuck!”

Suddenly the air became tense and everyone around me became blurry and still. It was like someone pressed the slow-motion button. Out of the corner of my eye I could see someone charging towards me. The figure was tall. Way too tall to be human. I slowly turned around. I gasped as a cold gust of wind hit me, making me fall backwards. But it wasn’t the wind that made me gasp. In the middle of the man’s forehead was one big round eye! A deep rumbling laughter filled my ears. A cold shrill voice;

“We found you, Nike.”

I stood there frozen. I didn’t understand anything. Nike?? The one-eyed man was still coming towards me. I came back to my senses as a cold raindrop hit my forehead. I still didn’t understand what was going on but I didn’t stay to find out. I bolted across the road and into our tiny apartment. I stared out the window but nothing seemed to be wrong. Was I imagining it? I slowly walked to my room. My thoughts were racing. I lay down on my bed and stared at the ceiling. I stayed there till night. I was just about to drowse off into sleep when I heard the doorbell ring. My mom opened the door and let someone in. I couldn’t see either of them but I could tell by the voice that it was a man. And there it was again. That name. Nike. I trembled. The way that man said it, it was like...like it was something to be terrified of. The man and my mom kept talking. I could only hear snatches of words. Finally I got up out of bed. I couldn’t stand it anymore. I got the feeling that they were talking about me. I crept out of my room and into the kitchen. There, sitting, were my mom and a strange man. My mom’s face paled when she saw me there. She jumped up and started to say something when the man turned around. He caught his breath in shock but then placed his hand on my mother’s arm. They locked eyes for a moment then my mother sighed and said,

“Victoria, we need to talk.”

My thoughts were racing. My mom sounded so anxious.

“Victoria” the man said. “You know the myths about the Greek gods and goddesses?”

“Yes” I murmured, now terrified.

“Well” the man said, “They’re not myths.”

I stared at him, thinking it was some kind of joke. I looked at him, then at my mom, waiting for them to smile, but their faces stayed the same; grim and serious. The man started to say something.

“And Ni...Victoria. There’s more. You..you’re a...goddess”

“Nike” I whispered.

“Yes.” He answered. “Nike, Roman name Victoria. Goddess of victory, music, running and luck.”

I had no idea what to say. Finally I said, “Didn’t she loose her arms?” It sounded dumb but I couldn’t think of anything else.

“Bah” the man said. “That’s just stories!”

“Oh! And you are...?” I asked.

“Well, Hermes!” he said like it was perfectly obvious. “The messenger”.

I heard a flapping of wings. I looked down and saw that Hermes was wearing some winged running shoes. I thought they were supposed to be sandals but I didn’t say it out loud because it didn’t seem polite.

“The important thing is that we get to Olympus safely” Hermes said as if I could read his mind.

“Olympus?” I said, breathlessly. “Is there really such a place?”

“Well, if there’s such things as gods and goddesses then there’s an Olympus!” Hermes said. “Now, eat this.”

He shoved me a cookie. My stomach was rumbling and the cookie looked so good. So I took a bite. I heard my mom yell, “No!” but before I could say anything I disappeared in a flash of grey smoke.

I opened my eyes and gasped! I wasn’t in my mom’s kitchen anymore. I seemed to be floating on clouds that covered the ground. It was so bright. I looked up. The sky



was golden! Buildings that looked like Greek monuments dotted the landscape. Grass, greener than any grass I'd ever seen before, was to my right, and forests were to the left. But what really got my attention was the biggest monument of them all. I mean, all the monuments are big because the gods are 30 feet tall, but this one was huge. And golden. So bright it was hard to look at. Tree nymphs and naiads were running around holding trays with food I couldn't quite name. Creeks gurgled by and trees stood with juicy fruits hanging from them. I looked over and Hermes was there.

"Welcome to Olympus!" he said.

He started walking so I followed. As I walked, satyrs and nymphs knelt. I admit it. It felt really awkward. I tried to tell them to stop, but I found myself tongue tied. I kept on walking. We were heading towards the golden monument. I put my foot on the stairs leading up to it. I almost laughed out loud. My foot looked tiny compared to the step that was meant for gods that were 30 feet tall. Wait a second. I jerked up like an electric shock went through my body.

"Aren't I supposed to be tall? I mean, like, 10 feet tall or something?"

Hermes laughed. "Only if you want to. All you have to do is concentrate on growing taller".

He pushed open the doors and led me into a ginormous golden room. The ceiling was so high I couldn't see it. 12 thrones stood in the shape of a U. Giant gods walked around talking but when they saw me they went back to their thrones. Hermes grew to his normal size and I felt a bit awkward being the size of a cockroach so I tried thinking about growing taller. I pictured myself 10 feet tall and suddenly I was! The ground started getting further and further away. I looked up and there I was, a giant goddess!

"Nike" A man I guessed was Zeus, called out.

"Yes I answered. Looking him straight in the eyes. I felt braver. I wasn't scared. Zeus seemed a bit surprised but he kept on talking.

"You are very powerful, an Olympian, in fact."

"An Olympian?" I said. I know that the Olympians were the most powerful gods but there were only 12. Zeus, Hera, blah, blah, blah. But Nike (well, me!) I was only a minor god I thought.

"Yes" Athena said. "You are part titan, part goddess. Your mother was a goddess and you rather a titan."

Anyway, "interrupted Apollo. "You need to travel to the underworld to rescue Styx, your mother from the depths of Tartarus and make it back alive!"

“Apollo!” Artemis scolded.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Well, your mother married a titan called Pallas, your father, who was an extremely powerful titan. But then there was a great war between the titans and the gods. Styx fought with the gods. This angered Kronos and so he kidnapped her in Tartarus. Sadly, we can’t do anything to save her, because only someone who shares her bloodline can.” Athena said.

“So, you want ME to go to the underworld and save her?” I said, totally bemused.

“Well...yes! But remember this, you have some important powers. You have some control over water because your mother’s father is Oceanus. But you better get going. You’ll figure out more about your powers as you go along.”

Suddenly they all vanished except for Athena.

“I’m sorry, but I don’t...” I started.

“Don’t worry. You’ll do fine.” She said. She flicked her hand and I suddenly appeared on a tall mountain, standing at the door of a cave. I could hear screams coming from inside. The Underworld!!

I stepped inside and gasped as a humongous dog...and I mean, like a 20 feet tall dog, rushed at me. I screamed and fell to the ground. Just as the dog jumped over me, I realized he had 3 heads. It was Cerberus! The dog Hades used to guard the underworld. I jumped as far as I could. I landed on his tail. He jumped around trying to shake me off. It was a bumpy ride and my hands were getting slippery. With a shriek, I fell off and landed right in the middle of the doorway to the underworld. Cerberus bounded towards me and in the last second I jumped away. Cerberus crashed through the door and outside. With a bark of delight he loped down the mountain and towards the city. I wasn’t sure how the local people would like that!

I kept on walking through caves and around pits of lava. Suddenly, skeleton guards came rushing towards me and started firing their guns. I had no choice but to run! Up ahead I saw the sluggish cool waters of a river. Styx! Hope flooded through me. I closed my eyes and did a flying leap into the water. I plunged in and surprisingly it didn’t hurt me as I thought it would. I guess that’s because Styx is my mother. I willed the water to head towards the entrance of Tartarus. The river crashed through the walls and soldiers fled for their lives. The river carried me swiftly through tunnels and caves and right into Hades castle and past his throne (which he didn’t look too pleased about!)

Finally I could see the pit. A deep, pitch-black, never-ending pit. The air became colder. I started to get really scared. The river slowed to a stop. Then it all rushed away. I stood at the edge of the pit. Numbness started to creep up my legs.

“Oh goddess of the river Styx” I started to say. I don’t know how I knew what to say. The words just flowed out of me. “I summon you out of Tartarus.” A flash of gold light burst out and a figure began to form. Then, suddenly, there she was!

“Nike” My mother said. Her voice was full of love. “Here.” She handed me a cookie I bit into it and disappeared with my mother.

I opened my eyes and there I was. Back on Olympus. Everybody was clapping and cheering. I saw two nymphs carry in a beautiful silver throne with carvings decorating it. Out of the corner of my eye I saw my mortal mother standing there and clapping too! The nymphs set down the throne between Athena and Artemis and motioned for me to sit down in it. So I did.

“All hail Nike!” Zeus proclaimed “The 13th Olympian!!

## **BUTTERFLIES, BUDDIES AND FUN**

**By Aniela Libicz: Grade 6**

Once, long ago, when your great, great, great, great grandma might have been a little girl, there lived a boy named Patrick. Patrick was an only child in a family that lived by the Mississippi River. You see, Pat's parents were one of the first ones to settle by the Mississippi River. So, there were no people around for miles, and miles, and miles..., and miles!

It was July 6, 1786 when Pat saw a wagon, by the river's edge. Quick as a flash, Patrick was in the house, telling his parents about the wagon he had seen. Mrs. Livingstone, Pat's mommy, put on her bonnet, Mr. Livingstone put on his boots, and they walked down to the river to meet and greet the newcomers. It was just one small family; Mr. and Mrs. McRae with two children. After introductions, both fathers talked a bit and agreed that this piece of land was big enough to hold two small families. This is how the 13-year-old Patrick got two new friends; 13-year-old Emanuel and 11-year-old Emanuela. This group of three had hundreds of adventures together. Patrick would even end up marrying Emanuela when they were both much, much older...

But today... they were not thinking of love (unlike the writer of this story). They were thinking of how they could catch a butterfly. That's when our story really began, in the Livingstones' backyard. Now, Emanuela loved butterflies. Patrick and Emanuel also did, they just wouldn't admit it. When Emanuela asked the boys to catch a butterfly, their first answer was a strong "no". On second thought, they decided to help her. They could afford it just because there were no kids around who could possibly laugh at them. Emanuela was delighted to hear the boys had changed their minds. Since she had no idea how to catch a butterfly, she really needed the boys' help. After obtaining parents' approval, they grabbed an old book about butterflies, a mesh and a jar with holes in its lid.

The three friends set off immediately toward a sunny meadow, not too far away. They saw a couple of butterflies and decided to follow the bigger one, which seemed to look like a Monarch. They caught it when it stopped to rest on a beautiful flower. Emanuel took out the book and looked for a drawing that would best resemble their catch. Emma quickly found a match. It surely was a Monarch. Quite content that they had found the right insect, Emanuela started picking flowers for Ma.

The boys waited until she walked quite a distance away and secretly opened the butterfly book and looked at this professional drawing. Their Monarch looked pretty much identical to the one in the book: it had orange wings with a black outline, its body was black with white spots, had two antennae but there was still something wrong with its wings. They looked and looked but could not find anything in particular. Suddenly, Emanuel felt a hand on his shoulder...

"Are you reading the butterfly book?" Asked Emanuela.

“No way....! It was just sitting right here..., the wind must have opened it... We don’t read butterfly books, we are boys!”

“Come on, admit it, I’ve been watching you read it for five minutes!”

“Ok, ok, we did, just please, don’t laugh at us...”

Holding back a hurricane of laughter, Emanuela promised not to make fun of them.

“Now, that you know that we are interested in butterflies, we can tell you what we’ve found: this butterfly looks pretty much like a Monarch but there is something in it that is different. We just can’t put a finger on what it really is.”

Emanuela took a closer look. Thoughts flew through her head a hundred miles per second:

“Wings have the right shape, colour is correct, body is black with white spots, antennae and legs are a perfect match.... Hmmm, what could it be?”

All three of them were very determined to solve the mystery. Suddenly, Emanuela remembered that Ma had once told her that there is a butterfly that mimics the Monarch. There was a way to tell them apart, she just could not remember what it was. She decided that she would try to find a picture of the other butterfly. She gently flipped the pages and soon found something interesting. It read:

“The Viceroy butterfly is one of nature’s mysteries. It mimics the Monarch, which eats milkweed, toxic to other animals. Birds know not to eat Monarchs and because the Viceroy resembles the Monarch so much, they stay away from it too. The most recognizable difference between the two is a black stripe on Viceroy’s back wings. Monarchs don’t have it.”

Excited about her discovery, Emma read the paragraph out loud. Emanuel and Pat were a bit embarrassed by a younger girl, OF ALL PEOPLE IN THE WORLD!

Inspired by this experience, they started a small club, which became very popular when more families moved into the area. They named the club: “SuperBUTTERFLYGilisticexpialidocious Adventure Club”. In the years to come, our three friends shared many more interesting adventures. In 1910, a famous governess, named Mary Poppins, liked the name of their club so much, that she changed it a bit and used in one of her most popular songs. Very few are aware of the fact that Mary was Patrick’s and Emanuela’s granddaughter...

To Be Continued (next year)

## **STINKY LE POO**

**By Bruce Quibell: Grade 6**

This is just great. I'm lost in the forest because of that stinky dog, Stinky Le Poo. It all started when I was 7 and my parent's little poodle, FeeFee La Fou became a famous show dog.

My parents yell at me when I call FeeFee La Fou "Stinky Le Poo" instead and when Stinky eats my favourite candy (Fireball Extreme) they say,

"Don't feed FeeFee candy."

My parents love FeeFee but not me, they feed FeeFee but not me, and when they forgot my birthday that was the last straw. FeeFee had to go!

I tried to sell her but my parents saw the ads in the newspaper. I've tried everything. She won't mess up her hair, she won't run away, and she won't pee on the carpet.

Finally after 3 years I found the perfect plan to get rid of Stinky Le Poo. When we go to FeeFee's next dog show in British Columbia I will take FeeFee on a walk into the forest and loose her. I'll just tell mom that she was eaten by Big Foot.

On the day before the dog show I was ready for my big plan.

"Mom can I go on a walk with FeeFee?"

"Yes but keep her clean."

So I took FeeFee into the forest. It was a big forest with lots of trees and plants. I knew I had to go deeper into the forest so Stinky could not follow me back. I kept going until I saw the sky getting darker and I thought now would be the perfect time to lose Stinky Le Poo so I ran back. I kept running until I noticed that I was lost!

This is just great. I'm lost in the forest because of that stinky dog Stinky Le Poo.

I finally got my revenge but now I had to get back to the hotel. It was getting dark so I wanted to find a place to sleep.

I kept walking until I found a nice little cave. I knew I shouldn't go in but the forest was dark and scary, wolves were howling and it started to rain. It was so dark I couldn't see anything, so I lay down and I felt something fluffy.

It was too small to be a bear so it must have been a wolf! I was scared so I ran around trying to find a way out when I hit my head on a rock.

When I woke up early in the morning I was laying on the cave floor with Stinky Le Poo sitting on me. I was angry at Stinky but when I heard growling I got scared. I saw a pack of wolves enter the cave!

The wolves noticed me and then they came walking over slowly. A big gray wolf with blood on its fur was about to bite me when,

“ROAR!”

Stinky Le Poo let out a big roar and scared the wolves away. That sounded like it came from a lion not a tiny dog.

I was surprised that a small poodle could scare away a big pack of wolves.

I started walking away because I knew the wolves would come back but Stinky was following me so I ran. After a few minutes Stinky stopped following me but I was too hungry to care so I stopped to look for food. All I could find was some fat, slimy grubs and a few grasshoppers

I decided to climb a tall tree and hope to find a McDonald's but all I saw were trees and Stinky Le Poo. While I was climbing all the candy I had left fell out of my pocket. I was really hungry and really mad at Stinky. I was thinking of a way I could eat her. So I climbed down but when I got down I saw Stinky eating my candy. I was so glad Stinky found my candy I didn't eat her. I knew I had to make a fire so I found a pile of sticks but I had to light it. On TV I saw a man make fire with two black rocks. When I found some dark rocks behind Stinky they fell apart and made my hands stinky so I washed my hands in a small river. When I found black rocks that didn't smell it was getting dark. When I made fire Stinky peed on it, I tried again but Stinky peed on it, and again until I was so tired I fell asleep.

Mom and dad called the police to find Stinky and me and when they came, I was asleep. Stinky used the reason she can't eat Fireball Extreme.

“BOOM!” Explosive farts.

From that blast the police found us fast and took us home just in time for the dog show. FeeFee won with the most explosive performance. FeeFee and I are friends now and mom and dad love me for teaching Fee that cool trick.

## **THE NEW PUPPIES**

**By Emma Kell: Grade 6**

“Yay!” cried Shirley when she woke up. Then, she ran to wake up her twin brother Noah.

“Today is the day we’re going to the kennels!” Shirley and Noah yelled as they ran out of their bedroom and up the stairs.

Mom and Dad were already downstairs eating breakfast.

“When can we go? When can we go?” the children cried in unison.

“We aren’t going until this afternoon.” Mom stated firmly. “Sit down and eat something. You want to have enough energy right?”

“Alright.” mourned the twins, only managing to eat two bites of their toast.

Later, at the kennels, it didn’t take the twins long to find a lot of cute dogs! Their final choice was two newborn golden labs, whose mother had been hit by a car. They were so young; they still had to be bottle fed. When Dad told the cashier which two puppies he wanted to buy, the twins were hysterical with joy.

On the way home, with the puppies in a cardboard box between Shirley and Noah in the back seat there was some arguing going on. Shirley and Noah couldn’t leave the puppies alone.

“I want the girl one!” said Shirley.

“No! I want the girl one,” Noah disagreed.

Mom was quick to solve the matter. “Shirley gets the girl because she’s a girl and Noah gets the boy because he’s a boy.

This didn’t dampen their spirits for long, though.

“My puppy’s name is Rocky!” cried Noah.

Not to be outdone, his sister shouted “Mine’s name is Princess.”

So, from that moment on, the two twin puppies belonging to the two twin children were named Rocky and Princess.



When they arrived home, Mom carefully carried the box downstairs to the basement. She put it right beside the furnace, between the twin's rooms. They would be warm there, she thought to herself.

"Now, I'm going upstairs to find some of your old baby bottles. I bet those puppies are hungry! Your father is busy in the workshop so I want you to go the supermarket, and in the animal section, there should be some doggy milk replacer. Get a small bag, and come back straight after!" Mom instructed. "Got it?"

At the store, Shirley and Noah had no trouble finding what they were looking for! They were very excited and told everybody (cashiers, customers, and even the nasty old cat they found along the side of the road) about the newborn pups.

When they got home, their Mom showed them the baby bottles that she had found.

"You mean we actually ate out of those things?" Noah cried in disgust. But, he still showed interest while his Mom and sister mixed the milk replacer in the big mixing bowl and poured it into bottles.

"Ready to feed your puppy Noah?" Mom asked. "I bet Rocky is hungry!"

"Alright! Let's go Shirley!" Noah cried as he raced down the stairs.

Shirley sighed as she picked up the half-filled bottles and followed her 3 minute younger brother down the stairs. Sometimes he could be so silly!

Downstairs, Noah and Shirley settled themselves on the newspapers around the puppy bed. They picked up the tiny, fragile dogs like babies, and began to feed them. There were only a few problems...

Rocky wouldn't actually suck on the bottle, and half of what he actually got down he spit right back up again, and with every mouthful that Princess took, half of it dribbled down her chin.

Now, all of the four inhabitants of the basement were tired and covered with milk. The twins put Rocky and Princess to bed, cleaned up, and went to bed themselves.

Noah and Shirley woke up early the next morning. They fed the puppies their bottles and went upstairs.

While the family was having breakfast, Shirley asked who would take care of the puppies while they were at school. Mom was quick to say that Dad could watch them, because his carpentry shop was in the backyard. She also said that the twins could feed them when they came home for lunch. She was very clear that nobody would have to

miss school over the matter. The twins had expected this, of course, but they had still hoped that they could stay home.

Another few days passed and the puppies began to teeter around on shaky legs. The very same day Dad made a wooden box in his shop, which Mom lined with an old blanket. Noah and Shirley could tell that Rocky and Princess were happy to be out of their old cardboard box.

Another week passed, then another. Rocky and Princess grew bigger. Now they were able to run around and they could even jump up onto the twin's beds. They no longer had to be carried up the stairs, and they were always at the door to meet Shirley and Noah after school, with their tails wagging.

Soon, Mom and Dad decided that the twins could take the puppies to the park, as long as they promised to be careful. Shirley and Noah carried the little golden labs outside, and placed them in the baskets of their bikes. They rode slowly and carefully, just as Dad had asked.

When they got there, they set Rocky and Princess on the ground, and sat down on the nearest bench.

"Remember the day when we got them?" Noah asked, sighing. "It seems like such a long time ago."

"Yeah!" agreed Shirley "I can hardly believe that it was only a month! It feels like forever!"

"I know! I don't remember not having them!" Noah said as he watched his dog Rocky, and his sister's dog Princess run and jump in the warm afternoon sunshine.

# **THE AMAZING TREASURE HUNTERS**

**By Carter Vaine: Grade 3**

Rick is good at climbing rocks. Rick is a treasure hunter too. Sammy is good at hiding. Jacob is a scientist. Carter studies gold and the four boys are good friends. They found a treasure map in Canada leading them to Egypt. So they went on a plane to Egypt.

Rick brought a pickaxe, laser, and a compass. Sammy brought an invisibility shield, a shovel, and a flashlight. Jacob brought a metal detector, monster spray, and a notebook. Carter brought a camera, a broom, binoculars, a magnifying glass, quick dry glue and a smoke machine. They each had a backpack to hold everything.

The treasure map said to go north. Rick took out his compass and they went north towards the river Nile. They had to find a way to get to the river. They started to walk. Carter looked through the binoculars and up ahead he saw camels. They rode on the camels following the map to the secret passageway.

It was under the ground. They first had to get by a scorpion hole. To get by the scorpion hole, Sammy had to use his invisibility shield. There were 555 scorpions. The boys went under the shield. The scorpions did not see them go by.

At the entrance of the passageway there were two 300-foot long pythons. They hissed at the boys. Just then Carter took out his smoke machine and the pythons could not see the boys walk by. They made it safely past the pythons.

Just ahead was the passageway entrance. So they went into the passageway and Sammy took out his flashlight. Sammy shone the light into the passageway. The passageway was 3 meters long. Carter took a picture of ancient writing on the walls of the passageway. When they reached the end of the passageway they saw the river Nile. They swam across the river.

The map said to go into a pyramid, find the key and beware of the monsters. So they went into the pyramid but before they could get the key they had to knock out a mummy. They had to use the laser. They knocked out the mummy. The key was behind a glass wall. Rick used the pickaxe to break the glass wall. Rick got the key. They unlocked the door. They found a rock monster. Jacob used the monster spray to knock out the monster. The boys found another key in the monster's hand. They used it to unlock another door and saw a treasure chest guarded by a sandman. Sammy got out his shovel and began shoveling the sandman's feet until he was gone. Carter got his quick dry glue and stuck the sandman to the ground.

They tried opening the treasure chest but they needed a key. Jacob checked the notebook. It said under moss rock. They looked all around to find it. Carter looked for the rock by using his magnifying glass and picked it up and found the key. They unlocked the treasure chest.

It was full of gold lots and lots of gold. Carter studied the gold to see if it was real. It was. They took it home to Canada. They shared the gold. Each coin was worth \$1, 000 000. The boys hid their coins everywhere in their homes.

When Carter was hiding his coins he found another treasure map.

Another adventure is about to begin.

# **THE GHOST OF TERROR ISLAND**

**By Danielle Tooley: Grade 3**

There are a lot of tourists that say they will go to Terror Island but make an excuse not to when they hear the stories of the ghosts that lives there.

In a small town named Miasis there lived two very brave and adventurous teenagers named Ellie and Jason. Jason went to school and heard some students talking about Terror Island. As soon as Jason got home he told Ellie what he had heard and looked up Terror Island on the internet.

He read a couple of sentences to Ellie, "It says there is a spa and four hotels." Jason said.

Always looking for a new adventure Jason registered them into one of the hotels and told Ellie to start packing. Jason quickly packed his bag and then knocked on Ellie's door.

"Ready to go?" he shouted. No answer. Jason put his ear to the door and heard Ellie's favorite song cranked on her radio. Eager to get on with the adventure Jason burst into Ellie's room, "Stop fooling around Ellie, I'm ready to go, what have you got packed so far?" He shouted.

"It won't take me long Jason, all I have to do is pack my accessories, jewelry, make up, clothing and shoes." Ellie replied casually.

"Have you packed anything yet?" Jason roared.

"No" Said Ellie, "I said it won't take me long, and stop bossing me around little brother." Ellie snapped back. "Jason, how long will it to get to Terror Island?" Ellie asked while stuffing things into her bag.

"It will take about an hour in the car and then a half an hour on the ferry." Jason explained. "Why on earth are you packing those high heeled shoes?" Jason complained.

"You just never know when a pair of pretty, black heels will be needed." Ellie explained.

Soon they were on the road and before they knew it they were walking up the ramp onto the ferry. The pair found a spot to sit and were settling for the ride when a girl approached them.

"Bonjour." She said with a smile.

"Bon-what?" Ellie questioned.

“Bonjour means hello in French” Jason noted.

They continued their ride on the ferry and before they knew it they were there. They started to look for the closest information booth. Then they saw a small wooden cabin and it had a little sign on it that said “Terror Island Information Booth”. Ellie bolted toward the information booth so fast she almost ran into it.

“We are Jason and Ellie Carmichael which way to our hotel?” Ellie blurted out.

“Relax!” Jason snapped.

“Your hotel is called The Terror Island Spa Resort and Hotel.” said the friendly lady with a smile. “Here is a map and here is your hotel, hope you have a nice stay” She said pointing to the map.

“Thank you, bye.” Ellie and Jason said.

“We need to turn left here onto Rose Street, there it is!” Jason said pointing to an old building.

“Let’s go!” said Ellie. They went inside and were surprised to see a lot of people. They asked the woman at the front desk what room they were in.

“You will be staying in room 378, take the elevator to the third floor.” The woman explained.

The pair found their room, started unpacking and hanging their things in the closet.

“Hey, there is a secret door in here, lets open it!” Jason said anxiously.

“No Way!” Ellie screamed.

“Why not, Ellie.” Jason asked.

“In horror movies bad things happen if you open secret doors and plus you shouldn’t just go around opening secret doors.” Ellie explained nervously.

“Fine, Ellie.” Jason said with a smirk.

“At nine thirty we play by my rules.” Ellie said.

“That’s fine.” Said Jason “but it’s only nine o’clock.”

Ellie argued “Check the clock, Jason.”

It was actually nine thirty already so they said good night and turned out the lights. At ten o'clock, when Ellie was fast asleep, Jason got up and opened the secret door. All of the sudden two icy hands grabbed him, pulled him in and locked the door.

In the morning Ellie searched the whole hotel. Then she remembered the secret door. Knowing her brother was adventurous she opened the secret door with trembling hands. The icy hands grabbed her, pulled her in and to her horror locked the door. The ghostly figure started talking,

“You will be perfect to turn into ghosts with my magic spell”.

“OK....wait a minute, you are not turning us into ghosts.” Jason said angrily.

Waving his arms the ghostly figure chanted, “Turn these ordinary humans into a ghostly bunch.”

Jason and Ellie felt shaky all over, sparks were flying and then they got sick to their stomachs.

“Now you are one of us and can be trusted with all ghostly secrets. Come, I will show you the Book of Spells. Be very careful, there are spells that will turn you back into humans and you will lose all of your ghostly powers. There is a lot for you to learn but in time you will understand the full extent of the gift I have given you.” explained the ghost.

“Here it is.” Jason and Ellie looked at each knowing they were thinking the same thing and then leafed through the ancient book. They found the chapter that had the spells that would return them to their human bodies. The ghost took the book from them and locked it back in its case. When they made sure the ghost was gone they looked at each other sadly and knew that they would be ghosts forever.

“Do you think we could use your high heel to break the lock?” Jason whispered.

“But I’m going to break my shoe.” Ellie said regretfully.

“What’s worse, Ellie? Being stuck here forever or breaking your shoe?” Jason argued.

Ellie slipped off her shoe and slammed it into the lock. The lock opened and they lifted the lid of the case quickly.

“Chapter 13” Jason said.

“I know, I know.” Ellie snapped.

“Read the spell, Ellie.” Jason said panicking.

“We have to say it together three times.” Ellie explained.

“Ghosts no more, human in my future. Ghosts no more human in my future. Ghosts no more, human in my future.” The pair repeated.

They felt shaky again and saw sparks flying as they felt themselves return to their bodies. They ran toward the door and burst through, breaking the lock. Back in the hotel room neither of them spoke but worked together packing their things. There was no fooling around this time. They left the hotel and island without speaking to anyone. When they arrived back home Ellie demanded,

“Promise me we will never return to Terror Island, Jason”.

“I promise.” Said Jason.



# **THE STORM THAT CHANGED MY LIFE**

**By Erin Vanderburg: Grade 8**

The door slammed right in my mother's face. With tears streaming down my pale cheeks, I leaped off the front porch, and continued fleeing down the winding road. I could still hear my mother cursing and yelling for me, "Skyler, if you don't come back here right now, you are dead!!", but I ignored it. I did not need her. I did not need her invading my mind. The night was dark, and I could just see the road ahead by the dim streetlights. Yah, I guess you could say I had run away.

From home. Toward the city park. I had nowhere else to go. My only company, my baby blanket, a hand-held radio, and a small, framed photo of my family. I can't believe how far I had run! I had now made it over 8 blocks from my home, the last place on earth I wanted to be right now. I glimpsed back at the photo for a quick moment.... BAM! My face landed smack on the pavement. Ouch. Suddenly, an excruciating pain slithered up through my arm. As I investigated my hand from the ground, I found that the family picture frame had shattered, and my hand was pierced with most of the glass. Gripping my hand, more tears welled up in the pain. I stood up to a surprising wind that almost blew me over. Slowly, I removed the glass from my hand, and built up the want to keep moving. Before continuing, I wiped the dripping blood on my denim shorts.

After another hour or so, I came across a sign that said "Herbert St." That was the street the park was on.

Finally. My wrist watch signaled it was 12:24 am. As I continued walking, my eyes fluttered; I was getting very tired. I felt a large drop of rain on my forehead. Sure enough, it was raining. The park was just ahead, so I sprinted along the path, attempting not to fall again. The wind continued to pick up, blowing leaves and other loose objects around the scene like a rag doll! Great, we were going to have a storm! Where would I stay overnight? I had now arrived at the park jungle gym, and was still searching for a place to sleep temporarily.

The swing? No. Monkey bars? Only if I wanted to break my back...wait. I saw the jungle gym plastic tunnels; that would work! At least I would be sheltered from the wind. On that thought, I raced for the dark yellow tunnel, stressing to get dry. Headfirst, I dove into the shelter, and tried to make it seem comfortable. I laid out my blanket overtop of me for warmth. Come to think of it, it was getting quite chilly. Since the frame of the family photo had broken, I used the taste-less gum to stick the photo to the rounded wall of the plastic tunnel.

I just stared at it then. My mom and dad stood in the back row, smiles as wide as their faces. My brother and I, with straight backs, looking tall and smiling as well. I remember that day. The Christmas card photo, 2008. That was when my mom and dad were still together. Still happy. Ever since then, everything went bad.... A light across the sky and the pounding of rain awoke me from my dream. I guess I had been sleeping for a

while. Yet again, I looked at my watch. 2:00 am. By now, the wind was extremely fast, and you would have to be a real suicidal to go out there! Wow! This storm was getting worse by the minute. Surprisingly for a person like me, I was getting worried about it. I should have waited until tomorrow night to leave.....

My thought was interrupted by a large grumble from my stomach. Darn it. I had forgotten to bring money with me, or even eat something before I left! Oh, the pit of my stomach was now rumbling like crazy! To ease it from my mind, I switched on my radio. With a little tuning, it began to sputter out slightly frizzy dialogue. A light tune then played, and I tried to immerse myself with it, and take the weather out of my mind.... Hmmm., hummm, huuum.... My eyes then closed. Again, I abruptly awoke to more fuzzy words. "STORM.....POSSIBLE.... SHELTER..." That was all I could make out. "Oh no...", I thought. Time: 5:00am. Then I turned the tuning dial once more with a trembling hand... "POSSIBLE F4 TORNADO MOVING FOR THE SHERMANTOWN AREA." It blurted through the small speakers. "Oh God", I whispered in pure fear. What would I do? My mind was racing – was I going to die? Where do I go? I had seen the movie TWISTER at my friend's slumber party; but they were demented storm chasers! That would be no help!

Then the thought hit. Would my mom know? No, she probably won't. I needed to go get her. I know we fought, but I need to go save her! I took a couple of deep breaths, and then raced out into the torrential rain and wind. Home was so far. All I could think of; dying, mom, tornado, and how far I had gone. Suddenly, the photo flew from my grip, and through the current of wind. Shock filled my emotions, and I ran in a desperate attempt to get it. No matter how far I went, the picture was always farther. I looked up to find hope...

And then I saw it. The massive black tunnel of fate, holding lost lives and debris. I couldn't move. CLOSER IT SPUN... Why wasn't I moving? Why wasn't I fleeing, trying to hold on the sliver of hope for life I had left? I WAS IN ITS PATH...

I knew I was going to die. It was over, done. I could see pieces of trees, and coloured plastic floating through the monster.... It had hit the park. I watched in terror as it uprooted plants and the local community center. Now only a football field away, I was ready to take my last breath, and be sucked up by the tornado.... Suddenly, I was pulled backwards by a force. Through a thick door in the ground, and tumbled down a small flight of stairs. I panicked, I was ready to die, and now I was being held hostage??? Quickly I stood and turned to face a small family; two parents, a frightened girl, about my age, and a crying baby.

"Stay down!" said the man, when he pulled me back to the ground.

Still extremely confused, I looked back at the man, and then out the window of the bolted door, the tornado was just overhead. A storm cellar! We were all silent for the next 30 minutes. After then, the tornado seemed to have calmed, and hopefully smothered

down to nothing. We sat up, and I gazed around at the family, stunned, and then spoke. “Th-th-thank y-you.” I piped up.

“Thank God you are ok!” the mother shrieked, “What were you thinking, being outside in this weather??!?”

I told her the story up until then. It was kind of awkward at first, but then I got to know them. They were the Lane family. They had just moved in a week or so ago, and they lived a block away from my house.

“Wait! My mom!” I remembered in astonishment, and then attempted to open the thick door. Mr. Lane then came over, and used a key to unlock it. Everyone evacuated the cellar to the disaster above. The 6:00 sun was just dawning, and it revealed a terrible sight. Houses left in pieces, cars upturned, and stuck in trees. The once peaceful neighbourhood of Shermantown was now a natural disaster site. The whole family followed my bee-line toward my street. When I saw my house, I had frozen up.

It was collapsed, and I had no idea whether my mom had escaped or not. The maroon, shingled, roof had caved in on the walls, and the family car was nowhere to be seen. Like last night, I fled down the sidewalk, noticing the small drops of blood stained on the road, and some leftover glass.

“MOM?? MOM!!” I screamed anxiously into the rubble. Where was she?? I suddenly heard a quiet moaning. “Mom?” I asked again. Then, a dusty hand emerged from below a piece of drywall. Surprised at the sight, I rushed over and used all my might to lift the drywall. “Skyler... what?” she tried to say. Mom was covered in dust, bleeding from her head and limbs.

“Mom! You are ok!” I exclaimed in relief. “Mr. Lane! She is ok!!! Call the ambulance!!” I yelled across the yard. He already a cell phone in his hand. Carefully, I picked up mom and carried her over to the small patch of grass that was still showing. Every time mom tried to speak, her mouth opened but nothing came out. “It’s ok, mom. The ambulance is coming...” I assured her. For the third time I the past 24 hours, I shed a few tears.

Just then, multiple ambulances revved around the corner. Immediately, two men exited the vehicle and placed mom on a stretcher. I rode all the way to the hospital with her. She ended up only having a broken leg and wrist.

Now, it is a year later. Mom has fully recovered, and we are living in a temporary home with the Lane’s. Their daughter, Emily, is my best friend. The surrounding community that was not affected by the Tornado has been very generous. Homes are still being rebuilt, and the town is in progress to being back to the way it was. Life is better now than it ever was before.

Yesterday, I took a walk to where the park was. Some clean-up efforts were still being made. Just then, I found the family photo lying on the ground, like it had never been touched.

By: Skyler D. story for Maclean's Magazine.

## **DREAM LAND**

**By Amanda Kalinics: Grade 8**

When you fall asleep do you ever dream of a place with no worries? A place with no sickness, death, or destruction? A place of peace and happiness where no one has any problems or hardships? This place has many names, but I call it Dream Land.

A long time ago Dream Land was a perfect place that you visited when your eyes got heavy and you lay down on your bed. Dream Land was full of flowers, crystal clear streams, trees with leaves of every colour, and unique creatures. It was like nothing you could imagine unless you had seen it for yourself.

Nothing was born evil in dream land; everything that was created there was perfect and loving. So evil found its way to dreamland through the form of a little girl. Her name was Sandra.

Sandra was only 5 when her mom died of cancer. From that point forward Sandra was a personal maid to her father who became a drunk. When Sandra's father would ask her to do something she would do it no matter what it was. When she disobeyed she would get beaten.

Sandra was a smart girl who always got good grades. She loved school because it got her away from her father. Sandra was also beautiful. She was blonde just like her mother but she had her dad's green eyes.

When Sandra visited Dream Land for the first time she was nine years old. She walked in the fields of roses without thorns climbed the rainbow leaved trees. Sandra's heart was finally full of peace in a life full of so much sorrow and pain. But then she woke up to find herself in her bed. Every night she would go to Dream Land and every morning she would come back to her old dark life.

Sandra grew frustrated with Dream Land. She couldn't understand why she couldn't just stay there forever. So she visited the library of eternal knowledge that was in Dream Land, and for many nights she spent her time searching for the answer.

After a year of searching she found a book of spells that was supposed to have been destroyed. In it she found the answer that she was longing for most. A spell was given in the book that would allow her to enter Dream Land permanently. But two conditions went along with the spell. The first was that she could never re-enter her old life. The second was that she would have to give up her goodness to Dream Land. She accepted these conditions and cast the spell over herself that bound her to dream land. Her human body on earth died in her sleep that night.

The Dream Land took her goodness and left her with only pain, anger, and hate. She met a creature in Dream Land who fell in love with her. His name was Raphiam. She

eventually convinced him into believing her hateful ways were the right ways. Together Sandra and Raphiam started to destroy parts of Dream Land as revenge for all she had gone through.

They visited villages of the creatures that lived there and burned them. She captured every family from certain houses. She would make the men work as slaves or soldiers, and if they refused she would kill their whole family in front of them and then kill them too.

In time people became loyal to her and worked as voluntary soldiers. She made her slaves build a fort in the mountains for her and her soldiers to be safe. She had a dungeon deep inside the mountain where she kept the slaves families that only she and Raphiam knew about. The fort was heavily guarded and the only way in was through the front gate and you would have to get permission.

Her army of loyal solders was very strong and high in numbers. In a matter of a year most of Dream Land was drained of colour and happiness. Sandra stopped taking hostages but made the lives of the creatures miserable.

Her power grew and her hold on Dream Land tightened. She made Dream Land dark and full or terror. When humans entered through their dreams they would all be having nightmares.

And that was the way Dream Land was until a 13 year old girl went there for the first time. Her name was Alison. She too had a hard life but unlike Sandra she took all the bad things in her life and changed them into love.

Alison wasn't scared of Dream Land when she got there. She appeared in a village of the creatures. A baby blue ball that went up to her knees rolled over to her. Then legs popped out and it looked up at her. It was furry and quite cute. It just stood there and looked at her. Then it spoke. "It is not safe for you here."

It popped out an arm and grabbed hers. It led her to a small hut close to the center of the village. Inside the hut was another of the furry ball creature but this one was hot pink.

"Hello new comer I am Jay and this is my wife Taya," said the blue ball creature.

"I am Alison. Why did you take me here?"

"Dream Land is not a safe or happy place anymore little girl. You must wake up as fast as you can, or hide in a safe place," Jay said.

"I don't understand. Why isn't this place safe? It looks kind of pretty," Alison said.

“Dream Land used to be beautiful. But now evil is upon us and we can never be saved,” Jay replied

“Evil?” Alison asked.

Jay explained how Sandra had taken over Dream Land and changed it for the worse. He told her about Sandra’s fort in the mountains and the guards that live there. By the end of the story she knew what she had to do.

“Can you take me there?” Alison asked with a smile.

“I know the way to the fort, but it is a two week journey because we can only travel at night while you are here. But I must warn you if you enter the fort you may never leave,” Jay said with a serious face.

“Okay,” Alison agreed.

They packed what was needed and set off. They traveled through a forest that surrounded the left half of the village. This was the forest of 10 000 eyes. Everywhere they walked they were being watched by big red eyes. The eyes were meant to scare people off but it didn’t scare either of them.

Next they faced a raging greenish-blue river. It was so deep they couldn’t see the bottom and they couldn’t swim through because they would drown from the current. The only way to cross was a bridge made from ice.

“The bridge is slippery we will need lots of time to cross and it is almost morning we will wait until tomorrow,” Jay told Alison.

Jay and Alison set up a place where Jay would sit and wait for Alison’s return. When morning came around Alison started to fade away and re-enter her life. Then at night she closed her eyes and found herself next to Jay who was almost done putting things back into his pack.

“Welcome back Alison,” Jay said with a smile.

“Are you ready?” Alison asked.

“I’m ready as ever,” Jay said. Then he turned and walked toward the ice bridge.

It was around fifty meters long but only one meter wide. The ice was so shiny you could see your reflection on it. It was also pale blue and hazy so you couldn’t see the water rushing under it. Alison reached down and touched the ice with her pointer finger. It was so cold it sent goose bumps up her arms and chills down her back.

Jay pulled two pairs of thick climbing boots out of his bag. His pair was too tiny, it could probably fit a toddler. He gave her one of them and she sat down on the wet purple grass to put them on.

“They are for grip and warmth,” Jay said as if he read the question right out of Alison’s mind.

Once the boots were on Alison stood up. Jay pointed to the mountains in the distance. You could see the giant fort. Its walls looked strong and tall. The only things between them and the mountain was this bridge and a field.

“That is Sandra’s fort. It is heavily guarded and there is no way to brake in. I hope you planned a way to get yourself inside,” Jay said with a concerned face.

“I did, but let’s just focus on getting us across first please,” Alison replied.

Jay nodded and stepped onto the bridge his little foot started to wiggle a little bit but he stayed strong. He looked back at Alison. “I’m going first, once I get there I’ll tell you what to do.”

He pulled a rope out of his bag and tossed one end at Alison. She didn’t know what to do with it so she just held on to it. She watched as Jay walked across with ease and grace. Once he got across he told her to start slowly walking across the ice. She stepped on the ice and her foot slid a bit to the left. Then she put her other foot down and started to walk. The ice was slippery under her feet but she was determined not to fall. It took a long time but she finally got across without falling.

Jay told her that they would cross the field and then rest. So they crossed the field which was harder done then said. The sun was hot and the field had no shade. Also patches of the field were black which drew more heat.

When they reached the bottom of the mountain Alison disappeared into her normal life. Then night came around once again and brought her back.

For two weeks Alison and Jay climbed the mountain. The climb was painful and hard because of the heat and all the breaks they had to take, but finally they found themselves standing in front of the main gate.

“If you destroy Sandra everything that she has done in Dream Land will fix itself. The dead will not come back but the damage and darkness will fade. Her warriors will all disappear with her,” Jay whispered into her ear

“Okay,” Alison whispered back.

“This is where I leave you. Good luck, and be careful,” Jay said with a smile.



“Thank you so much Jay,” Alison said.

Then she watched Jay turn and walk away. Alison walked toward the gate with her head held high. She had no weapons and she has never fought anyone before but she knew that she would succeed in killing Sandra.

One of the guards step in front of her and asked why she came.

“I have come to offer my services to the almighty Sandra,” Alison said.

The guards look at each other and let her inside. One of them led her through the huge fort and into a castle. Inside they took her into a hall with a beautiful throne. Sitting in it was a gorgeous girl. She had blonde hair and green eyes that were full of hate.

“Come here little one,” Sandra commanded Alison.

Alison walked up to Sandra and bowed her head in respect.

“Leave us,” Sandra told her one guard.

“Why have you come?” Sandra asked.

“My name is Alison and I have come to destroy you! You may be able to kill me with force and power but you lack one thing, and that is love. You have killed many things here in this beautiful land and I have only one thing to say about that. I forgive you! I understand what you have done and I forgive you! I feel one thing for you and that is LOVE!” Then Alison leaned in and kissed Sandra on the cheek like a mother would do to say goodnight to a daughter. The love that Alison showed Sandra was too much for her to handle. The second Alison’s lips touched Sandra’s cheek Sandra turned to dust.

Alison ran from the hall and outside just in time to see all the guards turn to dust and all the slaves and their families run from the fort. The darkness disappeared to show colour and beauty. All was saved and all was perfect once again.

## **BETTER IN TIME**

**By Kaila Tims: Grade 8**

I'm an orphan, Marissa thought. I'm a poor, hopeless child who is all alone. I have no one. I am a lonely mortal who eats scrambled eggs every single day with exactly one glass of orange juice even though I hate it. I don't have a mom and a dad either, I hate that too. They died in a car crash when I was 3.

Marissa pulled her tiny suitcase towards Miss. Ace's Nissan sentra.

"Come now, dear. We have a long ride ahead of us. Don't look so grim. Today you will meet your new family."

Miss Ace was Marissa's social worker. It was her job to place Marissa in the right home. Marissa was a 14-yearold girl with curly brown hair the fell down to her shoulders and vivid green eyes. She was a troubled child, people assuming that her numerous penalties were just pleas for attention, it was obvious that trouble was quite fond of her. Miss Ace knew that deep down Marissa could face love again. It would be so hard to have everything taken away at a young age, wouldn't it? Marissa played lots of mean tricks on people, but her favourite one was forcing another one of the orphanage children to do her dirty work. They didn't dare say she forced them. But as she got older Marissa did less of it, it's not that she thought the better of that strategy, no, she decided that ignoring people worked just as well, but with less effort.

Marissa didn't quicken her already-sluggish pace. She glanced at the dark, stormy sky before stepping inside the car.

They did not talk most of the way. Marissa wasn't a chatty person. Miss Ace knew her so well by now, that she didn't bother with useless talk that would only fetch a grunt or forced reply. Marissa liked to keep her thoughts to herself.

The two of them were headed towards Uxbridge. It was a lovely countryside stated about 8 hours away. In Uxbridge, an eager, newly married family awaited her arrival.

The dark sky started to move quickly, the clouds stirring rapidly, swirling into strange shapes. Suddenly, a loud thunder erupted, and the sky exploded with raindrops. Marissa rested her head on the window, staring at the big, wet drops that pelted down upon it. It rained for quite a while.

"Oh, I hate this dreadful weather." Miss Ace said.

"I like it," replied Marissa.

The drops seemed so ominous, attempting to penetrate the cars windshield. They tried to force their way in at every angle possible. The drops tried to get at Marissa. But

they couldn't. It was like they knew there was some type of shield preventing them from gaining entry, stopping them from soaking everything warm and dry. Marissa liked the shield. If it was always there, nothing could hurt her. On second thought, that wasn't really true. The windshield hadn't protected her parents, at all.

"Here we are!" Miss Ace cried out excitedly.

"Huh?" Marissa found her eyelids opening. Apparently, she had fallen asleep.

As sleep slowly escaped from her eyes, Marissa drank in the view unfolding in front of her. There was a large property, filled with tall oaks, maples and blossoming flower gardens. Situated in the midst of them was a house. It was white and old fashioned, with a wraparound deck and tiny, decorative pieces of gingerbread trim.

"Welcome to your new home."

A man and a woman stepped out from the house. They were young-looking. They smiled and waved.

"Hello! I am Paige, Mrs. Cross, and this is my husband, Rick. You can call me whatever you like, even Mom, if you feel comfortable."

Marissa forced the best smile she was able, fighting against the glare she wanted to give. No one could ever replace her mother and father.

"Oh, come here!" Mrs. Cross gathered Marissa up in a big bear hug.

"Look at you! You're beautiful! Oh, I am so glad you're here!" she gushed.

When she was released, Marissa and Rick looked awkwardly at each other. She extended her hand, and he shook it, breaking into a big smile.

Marissa took a deep breath, steadying herself. Stepping through the front door she expected the worst, but was instead, surprised. She noticed her pounding heart beginning to slow, nerves beginning to mellow. The place looked wonderful and full of warmth, as if it had been set up completely for that purpose, and it just needed people to occupy it. Not all residences had warmth; the orphanage certainly didn't with its bland walls, creaky furniture, dusty bookshelves and doors that were decorated with cobwebs. Almost anything was an upgrade from the orphanage. Granted, Marissa had only lived there for a few weeks, until other adequate residence was found for her.

Marissa's eyes were in frenzy, darting around quickly, trying to see everything all at once. She had never seen a place so fashionably decorated.

The inside of the house really was spectacular. There was shining hardwood floors, high ceilings, reclining furniture, modern abstract art, and strobe lights. It was very chic.

Rick, Mrs. Cross, Miss Ace and Marissa all sat down in the living room. Mrs. Cross pestered Marissa with all sorts of questions, but the replies she got were hardly satisfying. The girl seemed far away, in another world. Miss Ace decided that she better get going, so she said one last goodbye. People had a habit with Marissa, they never had a one way ticket into her life, and they always had that ticket out. Accepting the morbid replies, Mrs. Cross announced defeat for the night, suggesting that Marissa put her things away in her room. She would be speculated another day, perhaps tomorrow. The girl must be drained.

Marissa's room was freshly painted a pale pink, and had all the same modern characteristics as the rest of the house. Her and her things seemed out of place. It was as if everything was too perfect for her. She knew she didn't belong here.

Marissa jumped onto her bed and sank into the plush sheets. She cried, tears spilling down her cheeks, just like the day before, and the day before that. She shouldn't be enjoying this; she had to remember her family. Marissa felt angry at Paige and Rick for being so nice, for being so likeable, for being... exactly the kind of parents she imagined, maybe even fantasized about. Hating herself for this, she angrily reminded herself that she couldn't forget her memory of her mother's voice, couldn't forget the sanitary smell that clung to her father's coat when he came home from the doctor's office, she couldn't forget her real parents, no matter what. Something quite strong was tearing at her, and she whimpered and sobbed for the pain and remorse in her neglected body had accumulated for years and lay there forever untouched, building up and up and up. When there were no more tears to surface, she let herself be transported to another world. A world that didn't have death and car crashes, for it was a world where everyone was completely happy. Every day was the best day. No one was forced into anything. Marissa envied them.

"You are going to meet the neighbors today, honey,"

"Marissa, dear? Did you hear me?"

Marissa felt herself slowly being tugged away from her dream world. She grabbed and pulled, but it kept slipping away from her. Her eyes began to open, and she was surprised and dismayed to see Mrs. Paige Cross a few mere centimeters away from her face. Why was she staring so intently at her?

"Good morning Marissa, you are going to meet the-"  
Marissa sat up quickly, backing away from Paige's face.

"I heard you," she interrupted brashly. Immediately, she regretted her ill temper, even early in the morning. She blushed. Humbled, Marissa told herself to be kinder; after all, she didn't have to be adopted by this family, and she certainly did not want to be sent back to the orphanage. Luckily, Mrs. Cross didn't seem to hear the harshness in her words. She smiled, got up, and left the room so Marissa could dress.

Marissa floated down the stairs. This all felt like some kind of dream. What did she do to deserve a beautiful home with delightful people who were ready to care for her and love her?

The warm smell of pancakes greeted her nose. Rick had made them. She ate greedily, tasting the delectable food for the first time in ages.

Marissa realized that her quiet, tough girl act would get her nowhere. Besides, Paige's laughter was infectious. She found herself smiling and laughing along to Rick's jokes, her mouth resuming a shape it had not known in a while. The death of her parents seemed so far away, a faint memory.

Breakfast was finished, finally. On her way up the spiraling staircase, something glittering caught Marissa's eye. Stepping closer, she was immediately drawn to the vase, its colours swirling in her glazed eyes. She bet it was worth a lot of money. Staring, she was completely transfixed by the craftsmanship and intricate designs. It was quiet, no one was around, and this was the perfect moment to snatch it. The thought entered her head so temptingly, just like a single piece of candy before her, so tiny and innocent, but at the same time it was a big threat, hard to resist. Marissa fought over the candy in her head, rolling it between her palms, turning it over, tugging at the corners of the wrapping, then finally unwrapping it and popping it in her mouth. The taste was too sweet but she swallowed it quickly anyways, ignoring the guilt of the indulgence. Bravely, hands quivering, Marissa took the small vase and walked straight to her bedroom.

"Has anyone seen my vase?"

Paige was scouring the house, desperately looking for a clue to its disappearance. Nothing. How had it gone through her security system? She reminded herself to check it later. On her way to the closet to get the vacuum she ran into Marissa, her cheeks glowing and her eyes sharp, a wisp of a grin she wore on her face. Paige wondered what was up with her, but advanced through the hallway. The vase had to be found.

By now, Paige was in full panic, calling all her neighbors and friends and relatives, seeing if anyone knew anything about the vases location. Her eyes were full of tears, and she had to keep wiping them away.

"It's been in my family for years," She whimpered.

Marissa sat through all of this, grinding her teeth, finding it quite difficult. All she had to do was open her mouth and all this trouble would be over. She watched as Paige shakily put the phone down and started to vacuum.

Marissa knew the truth about the vase, its guilt reproaching her like an old friend. This isn't right. She had hid the vase under her bed, until she decided what to do with it next. Hanging her head, she sulked upstairs, disturbed by the recent events. Many tears hit her pillowcase.

Eyes still watering (didn't they EVER run out?!) , she snuck down the stairs, vase in hand. Creeping silently like a mouse before a sleeping cat, Marissa strode past Rick who was so readily absorbed in today's newspaper, lounging on the sofa, completely oblivious as of what was to happen in the following events. It was evident this was his 'quiet time'.

Marissa also suspected Rick had also unplugged himself from the outside outlet, in a way avoiding all the busyness happening in the house (who wouldn't need a quiet time?!), partially from there being too much energy going around, he had typically a calm, quiet disposition, and therefore needed a break, taking a wise precaution, that small, but needed step, that helped prevent the blowing of a fuse. Marissa could tell Rick had a temper when it was tampered with. She did not want to see him irritated!

Tiptoeing toward the platform that the vase rested on, she placed it down ever so lightly, looking back to Rick, alert. He hadn't noticed, thankfully. Marissa ran away in a flash. She thought no one had seen. She thought wrong.

Back upstairs Marissa let out a loud sigh. That was too close. Soon the place would be back to normal, Paige wouldn't be freaking out and it would be fine, she told herself reassuringly. My little mishap will be forgotten.

In only a few minutes Marissa heard the rustling of newspapers as Rick got up, finishing today's edition. The vacuuming stopped. There was the tangling of both Paige and Rick's voices. Then there was silence.

"Marissa! Come downstairs, we have some things to discuss." Said Paige, speaking ever so loudly from the bottom of the stairs. Marissa noted the added emphasis on 'things' to discuss.

Uh-oh, a meeting. A meeting she told herself, no biggie. Despite the mini pep talk she gave herself, she still proceeded warily into the basement.

Marissa drew in a sharp breath.

"What's up?" she asked casually.

Paige was about to answer, but Rick interrupted her angrily.

"What's up? What's up? Well, let's see, you just stole our priceless family heirloom! How about that! We're extremely disappointed in you. Is this the way you're supposed to treat your new family? I'll answer that for you, NO, it's not. I can't believe how rude and disrespectful you just were." Rick said crossly, his face was going red, his breathing heavier. Paige put her hand on his shoulder, but he brushed it off and stormed away.

“I’m really sorry, I --,” Marissa was silenced by Paige raising her hand.

“Enough. I had an adequate punishment, but, since you did return my vase, I shall reduce it. Dishes for 2 weeks.”

2 weeks?! Was she serious?

She gawked. She had barely done anything wrong!

Paige gave Marissa a spiky look.

Marissa nodded solemnly, and then marched back upstairs.

After having gotten in trouble, Marissa thought conversation would turn awkward, but she was wrong. She was still welcomed into the warm atmosphere.

Marissa asked about the neighbors. They were an old couple, named the Dylan’s. Immediately upon arrival, they were warm and welcoming, and Marissa felt right at home with them, as if they had been friends for years. With each grin and giggle, it seemed as if heavy weights were being lifted off her body, one by one. The Dylan’s were somewhat amiable.

Mrs. Dylan gave Marissa all the juice and cookies she wanted. She told her stories of her life as a little girl. Marissa listened fervently; she loved stories. Her parents had read to her every single night.

Marissa heard the sound of a door opening and closing. Both Mr. and Mrs. Dylan got up to see who had come. They walked in grinning proudly.

With them, was their son, who had blonde hair and big, blue eyes. They seemed to be full of sweetness, daring, and purpose. He had a perfectly structured face with porcelain skin. Marissa couldn’t get over the soft, innocent immensity of the boy’s eyes, they seemed to be full of charm and adventure, drawing her in, making it almost impossible to look away. She liked this. Marissa could see her reflection in his eyes, her face swimming in the two pools. Was she really blushing?

He moved with a grace and confidence she had never seen before. Granted, the other children at the orphanage weren’t exactly sunshine’s either, but this was completely new for Marissa. The boy wasn’t looking at the adults, like he should have been. No, his eyes were fixed on the beautiful girl standing before him. The boy gave a Marissa a shy smile that made her stomach flip. Even without words, it was a ‘hello’. Marissa looked confidently into the glassy eyes of the boy. “Hi, I’m Marissa,” she said proudly, liking the warm feeling her smile gave her, “And this is my new family.”

At that precise moment, for no particular reason, Marissa thought that it was going to be okay.

Marissa would adjust to her new life, struggling, like a young bird learning to fly she would take off - not easily, but so majestically, that people would wonder what ever stopped her before, a beautiful vision in the sky, she realized something about herself, she had it in her the whole time.

Little did she know that this was the boy that would help melt through her hard exterior. He would help her feel warmth in her heart again, and wash away the dirt and grime from the past. The days would seem lighter and brighter again, the glass now half full. The boy's smile seemed of so little significance, but it gave the promise that he would provide her with love, all the love she needed to live. At last, her heart would heal.



## GOING TO GREAT LENGTHS

By Victoria Sharpe: Grade 7

“Tell me a story, Grandma.” Five year old Jacob was resting in the spare bedroom of his Grandma’s house. His head lay in her lap as she struggled to help him sleep. As a last resort, she agreed to tell a story, one that he would remember for the rest of his life.

“Once upon a time there was a little log house. If you were close, you would be able to hear the hearty laughter of a loving family enjoying each other’s company...”

Caroline and Robert Sharpe had 5 children as well as a house maid. Margaret was twenty two and betrothed to William Blake. Taylor was nineteen and almost ready to embark on his own life as well. Victoria was third born, and loved her family very deeply. Last were the twins, Paul and Teresa who were very mischievous. Although they were best friends at most times, they fought like cats and dogs at others. This was one of those times.

“It’s your fault! You agreed with me! It’s your fault that we got sprayed! You wanted it to happen to us!”

“Enough!” Grace, the house maid, was standing at the kitchen doorway with her nose wrinkled up. “What is going on here?” she demanded.

“It was his idea.” Teresa said at the exact time that Paul said,

“She was just as eager as me.”

“Okay. Teresa you go first.” Grace sighed over the two voices.

“Well,” Teresa began, with a look that meant she was about to try and get Paul in trouble. “We were walking by the river picking berries like mother wanted when we heard a noise in the bushes. I, being the bright one, thought that we should go straight home, but Paul thought that we should throw stones at it to find out whatever it was. I didn’t agree but it was too late, and then this happened.”

“Well, is this true?” Grace questioned Paul.

“Yes ma’am.”

“Al-right. Victoria, would you be a dear and go to the Merritt's house? Bring back some fresh tomatoes will you and bring some of our herbs for exchange.”

Grace bustled about giving these instructions to Victoria while directing Teresa and Paul towards the old washtub in the back shed. Victoria curtsied and left the house.

She was relieved to leave the tension of the house not to mention the foul stench of skunk spray. Elizabeth Merritt was Victoria's best friend and closest neighbour. She lived with her three brothers, her mother and father. And just Victoria's luck, she opened the front door.

"Oh hello Victoria! I was just putting on my shoes to go to the market. Would you like to come with me?"

"Oh, of course." replied Victoria. "I need a walk to get rid of the awful smell of skunk spray out of my nose. The twins got into trouble with one."

"Oh, I remember when David did last month." Elizabeth nodded sympathetically.

"Our house smelt for weeks."

On and on they talked. As they neared the end of their trip their topic of discussion led to the war that had started two months ago.

"I heard that they call it World War Two." gossiped Elizabeth.

"I can't believe that Adolf Hitler would start such a tragedy." Victoria exclaimed.

"Speaking of such matters, when is Taylor leaving? William is leaving tomorrow! It's a shame really but if this war is to be won we should be the ones to win it!" Elizabeth said.

Victoria stopped in her tracks.

"Elizabeth Merritt, what in the world are you talking about?"

"Have you not heard? A law has been sent out that able men ages 18 - 35 must go join the army forces! That includes our oldest brothers. Did you know that young ladies are being recruited as well to become nurses for the injured? I thought perhaps we could go! What do you think? Victoria? Victoria? Come back! Wait for me!"

But Victoria wasn't listening. Her brother was being sent to join the armed forces? She couldn't believe it! Why hadn't her parents told her? When she reached the Merritt's home she thanked them for the tomatoes and started running home. She ate her supper in shock though no one seemed to notice until after dinner when Robert and Caroline called the family together for a meeting.

"We have called this meeting together with some rather urgent news", Robert began. "Well, I see there is no simple way of putting this. So here it goes. Taylor is expected to join the armed forces."

A gasp was sent through the room as the Sharpes reacted to the news.

"What do you mean Daddy?" the shocked voice of Teresa asked.

“Well darling, it means that your brother is going away for a little while.”

“Is he going to die?”

“We hope not, sweetheart.”

This confirmed Victoria’s worst fear. Her parents could sweet-talk Teresa all they wanted but Victoria knew the truth - her brother could die at any given time when he went to war. She was very close to him and she couldn’t bear the thought of being without him for who knows how long. Everyone was devastated. Surprisingly though Taylor wasn’t as reluctant as Victoria had thought. He seemed as though he actually wanted to go. That was when Victoria got the idea. The next morning as Taylor gathered his things, Victoria gathered her things, wrote a quick note to her family saying what she was doing and what she meant to accomplish, and then snuck into the back of the vehicle that was taking Taylor to the army station. Fortunately for her, no one saw.

When they got there, she got out and made her way right to the nurse training quarters. As she peeked into the doors she saw a reception desk with a tired, grumpy old lady sitting behind it.

“Name?” the lady asked unfeelingly.

“Excuse me?” Victoria responded hesitatingly.

“You’re here for the nurse volunteering, are you not?”

“Yes ma’am.”

“So what’s your name?”

“Victoria Sharpe,” she said firmly.

“Okay Victoria, how old are you?”

After Victoria was registered, she was led to the main residence hall where she would be sharing a room with five other girls. As Victoria opened the door, the accompanying nurse gave her a sympathetic look.

“Good luck.” She sighed and walked down the hall.

Victoria picked up her luggage and stepped through the doorway. Surprisingly, the room was unoccupied. She put her stuff down on one of six beds and thought about what she had done. She flopped backwards on the bed she was sitting on. She was drifting off to sleep when she heard voices outside the door. She sat up to see four girls step through the door. The girls’ voices stopped as they saw Victoria.

“Hello. I’m Victoria.” said Victoria timidly.

“Hi. I’m Catherine and you’re on my bed,” the first girl said.

“Oh, um, sorry I didn’t know. Which one is mine?” Victoria mumbled.

“That one in the corner.” announced Catherine. Victoria shuffled over to her bed and sat down. “So what are your names?” she asked.

“Well, let’s see, this is Annabelle Grove, Morgan Nell, and Elizabeth Stacy, oh and by the way,” Catherine’s voice dropped down to a whisper, “She talks in her sleep.”

“I do not!” Elizabeth protested.

“Okay, okay. I’m just kidding around.” Annabelle, Morgan, Elizabeth, and Catherine all burst out laughing.

“Well we should probably get to bed before the trainers come and move us.” suggested Annabelle.

“Definitely.” all the other girls agreed. As they got ready for bed and said their good-nights, Victoria couldn’t help but wonder if she had made the right decision by following her brother. Yes, she told herself, but she still had many doubts. Later that night she heard the door open and close, and a girl come in and lay down to sleep.

The next morning Victoria woke up and was told to get dressed quickly and follow her roommates to breakfast and then to nurse health class. After that she would go for lunch and then to her training class. Then she would have a test, and finally get to pack her equipment bag. By dinner time she was very tired. The day had gone by extremely fast! She didn’t talk to any of her roommates but silently crawled into her bed and slept.

This went on for many days. One day, when her trainer woke her up, she told her to dress herself and make her way down to the main office where Headmistress Martha would be waiting to make a speech. Something very important had happened and judging by the amount of chatter outside the door it was very exciting. The girls dressed quickly and sat down in their designated spots and waited.

“Quiet down! Quiet down. Good, you’re all here. As you know something very important has happened and it will affect every one of you.”

As Headmistress Martha began to speak, each young lady dropped into silence and hung on Martha’s every word.

“The men that have been training in the dormitory beside us are preparing for their time in this dreadful war. As you know, you have been prepared for your time too. Well, your time has come. When those men leave tomorrow, you shall also leave to do your duty as injuries happen. You have been taught many things while you have trained

here and you must use that knowledge to help you through this next time in your life. May you be blessed with strength as you do these helpful deeds! Please listen to your trainers as they direct you through your last steps of nurse training!”

All the girls in the room gasped as they heard this exciting news and everyone found their trainer so that they could finally be on their way. This day too went fast for Victoria and as she lay in bed that night, she couldn't help but wonder if Taylor was going to be one of the ones that she helped to heal. When she fell asleep she dreamed of Taylor and her family back home wondering what they had done when they had found her note. As she got dressed in the morning she felt excited, nervous and just downright worried. What if she couldn't save someone? What if Taylor came in and she couldn't help him? What if Taylor died? To take her mind off these questions, she made her bed and packed her things.

By the time the train was there to pick the new nurses up, she had come to the conclusion that she was a very smart nurse and nothing would go wrong. The scenery was beautiful and Victoria was amazed at how vibrant the colours were. She felt a strange peace looking at it, as if she didn't have a care in the whole world. She was sharing the train booth with three other girls - Jane, Gertrude, and Harriett, her roommate. They were all lovely girls and Victoria wished she had gotten to know them much sooner. She hadn't seen much of Harriett so she didn't really know her but she was going to enjoy getting to. The girls talked all the way to Halifax where they were transported by boat to England.

At Liverpool, England, they were sent to the Lewisham Hospital where supplies were waiting. After a quick tour of the hospital, the young ladies were sent to their work station where they were to familiarize themselves with their area and fellow nurses. Then they were sent to bed. Victoria was so glad that she could finally sleep. She slept so soundly that night she almost missed the wake up bell. The next thing she knew she was in her work space organizing her equipment and already injured soldiers were coming in the building.

Her first patient was a soldier who had been shot in the leg by the Germans. Victoria quickly cleaned up the wound and took out the bullet. The nurses had been instructed to be strong and not to get the patient worked up. Although she managed to do so, it was more difficult than she could've imagined. She sewed the wound back together and called for help. When help came, they lifted the soldier onto the gurney and away he went. All too soon came another patient. Feeling much more confident, she dealt with his chest injury quickly and he too disappeared through the doors separating the recovery room with the operating rooms. Victoria felt now that she could do any operation that she was supposed to as her next few patients came and went through the doors.

Days turned into weeks as she tended to wounds of all sorts and she felt strangely calm as she worked. And then she saw him. There lying on his gurney, waiting for her assistance, was her brother, Taylor. She quickly looked away. She was dealing with a chest injury and had to force herself not to look back at him. When he was finally brought

over, she looked him over and was relieved to see that aside from a major bullet wound, he was quite alright.

“Taylor.” she said quietly. He looked clearly startled.

“Taylor, it’s me. Oh Taylor, are you alright?”

“Victoria? What on earth are you doing here?” Taylor asked in shock.

“I...I followed you from Canada. I trained in the nurse facility right next to your military training unit.” Victoria explained in a hurry. Taylor's gaze softened.

“You came all this way to be with me?” Taylor asked. “Well, you can thank Elizabeth Merritt. She gave me the idea. Now let’s take a look at this leg.”

As Victoria fixed up his leg, she told him everything that happened...

Grandma stopped for a moment before continuing. “You see, even she had to be away from her family for a while. But she did as she was told to and that’s what counts.”

“So that’s the end? Grandma, if you don’t mind me saying so, that’s a terrible ending!” Little Jacob shared his opinion strongly.

“Heavens no, silly child, that’s not the end.” Grandma chuckled.

“Well, Victoria fixed Taylor up quickly...”

“See you around, little sister.” Taylor called as he disappeared into the recovery room.

Victoria smiled and waved back. Although he would be going back to war, it was good to know he was okay for now.

“Someone you know?” Harriett asked from the next table over.

“I guess so.” she smiled back.

After about three hours of good work that day, Victoria felt satisfied. She had taken care of over thirty soldiers. She knew that in about five hours she would get her sleep break but she also knew that she wouldn’t be able to sleep under the circumstances.

“Hey Victoria, can you cover for me? I need to use the loo.”

Harriett had been raised in England, therefore whenever she got the chance would use her British vocabulary. Her loo was her washroom.

“Sure. Be quick about it though, Harriett Rows.”

Harriett also had a bad habit of going to the “loo” all the time.

“Sure thing!”

Victoria knew that it took five minutes to get to and from the washroom and that Harriett would spend five to ten minutes there. Victoria called for Ruth, a cover nurse, to come to take Harriett’s place. Then all of a sudden she heard the explosion. The whole building started to vibrate. She looked around at all the other wide eyed nurses. They were completely terrified. In their work they had completely missed the air raid siren. Gertrude and a number of other nurses started walking around to different people, reassuring them.

Catherine, Annabelle, Morgan and Victoria were chosen to go and check out the damage. They only got as far as the supply room when they saw it – both the maternity and children wards had been destroyed. There were a few flames here and there. Victoria saw a lonely body lying on the floor. Fortunately, both of these wards had been non-functional since the war began. Then why would there be a body dead on the ground if no one was supposed to be in this area? Victoria thought to herself. Then she remembered they had to pass through this hall way on the way to the washroom. Victoria ran over to where she saw the body and cried out,

“Oh no!”

“What, Victoria?” Annabelle asked worriedly.

“I can’t believe it. No! This isn’t happening! Harriett!”

All the other girls ran over.

“Is it really Harriett?” they asked.

Victoria desperately wanted to tell them no, that this was some other unfortunate person but she knew the truth.

“I can’t believe it! I just. Can’t believe it.” And then she started to cry.

After a few minutes just crying and comforting each other, the girls decided that they should continue with their task. They found no more dead bodies and all the girls were relieved to hear that everything was going fine in their operation ward. After many hours, Victoria was able to go and find Taylor. She slipped into the recovery room and was surprised to see how much rubble had fallen. She found Taylor’s bed and made her way over to it.

“Hi.” “Victoria, is that you?” Taylor looked around.

“Yes, it’s me.” she smiled. “How are you now?”

“You mean to say that they didn’t tell you?”

“No, tell me what?” Victoria started to feel alarmed.

What was going on with her brother?

“Well Victoria, when all that rubble fell, some of the glass shattered and it got all the way over to the other side of the room,” he said gesturing to the broken glass. “Well, some of it got into my eyes and although the nurses managed to get it out, it has permanently damaged my sight.” he sighed as he finished.

“So what exactly does that mean Taylor?” Victoria asked almost not wanting to hear the answer.

“Victoria, it means.” he paused. “It means I’m blind.”

Victoria was shocked! As she looked closer, she could see the scratch marks on his eyes. She had one final question.

“So what does this mean for war?”

“Well, I am expected to return home.” he grimaced. “Oh, little sister. This disappoints me even more than losing my eyesight. I feel as though I’m letting down my country.”

“Well Taylor, then let’s let down our country together.” The whole time that Taylor had been talking, Victoria had gotten the feeling that she should retire from nurse work and return home. After all she had done what she needed to do.

“Really, Victoria you’ll come home with me?”

After an hour Victoria tended to her last patient and then filled out her resignation forms. She bid farewell to her friends and fellow nurses. She thanked them for everything and hoped that she would be able to see them another time. Then, she went back into her room for her last sleep in England. She dreamed of her parents faces when they saw her leading her brother up the driveway.

As the boat pulled up to the dock, Victoria felt a strong longing to be home with her family. She stepped off of the boat, almost forgetting that she had to lead Taylor off the boat as well. They bought their train tickets and stepped onto the train. In a matter of hours they had come into Toronto, Ontario. They were both built up with anticipation. And then they were there. They both seemed frozen to their spot. Victoria recovered first and lead Taylor out onto the driveway. Together they knocked on the door and stepped back.



“Be there in a minute.” They heard their mother call out. Then the door opened and out she came.

“Hello, Mother. It’s nice to see you.” Victoria smiled.

“Victoria! Taylor! What a nice surprise.” Mrs. Sharpe cried out with tears in her eyes. “Come in! Come in! You’ll probably have to be going back to war in a while, but I’m sure that you can stay for a bit.”

“No, mother. We’re not leaving.” Taylor grinned. “If you don’t mind, we’ll stay for as long as you want.”

“What about the war? Don’t you need to return?”

“No, mother. We’re staying - for good. We’ll tell you all about it. Let’s sit down shall we?”...

“And they sat down and they talked and though they knew there would be many adjustments to life with Taylor’s blindness, they were happy to be a family again.”

Grandma finished her story with a satisfied look on her face.

“Grandma, I like that story. How come you’ve never told it to me before?” Little Jacob asked.

“Well child, I think that story is more important than all the other ones. You need to know that as you grow up you will need to go to great lengths to accomplish things. Also because you know Victoria.” a small smile played on her lips.

“Really Grandma?” Well, tell me then, who is it? Come on, who is it?” The excitement in his eyes was hard to miss.

“It was me.” Grandma said proudly.

“Wow, Grandma, tell me more about all your adventures!”

“Another time child, maybe tomorrow. But right now you need to sleep and so do I. Goodnight. I love you.” And she left the room. As she checked in ten minutes later, Jacob was fast asleep.

## **CANOE TRIP**

**By Bea Toplitsky: Grade 7**

A small line of smooth black water trailed behind the canoe as Tara and Hannah paddled farther out. The waves weren't too bad that day as they got started, Hannah near the stern steering the boat.

"Where exactly are we going?" asked Tara. It was her first year at the camp they were at that day. Hannah had gone before and said she knew the way.

"It's not too far...depending," Hannah answered. Tara turned around for a second to look at her. Hannah had bright red hair that had streaks of gold in the sunlight, bright blue eyes, and pale skin. She was also very tall for her age; she was 5'6" and thirteen years old. Tara always thought Hannah had a nice voice, but she guessed it must be from all the talking she does; she practiced using it quite a bit.

"Depending on what?" asked Tara, watching the canoes in front of them that carried their cabinmates. Tara had black hair and a badly sunburnt face. She was also quite short for her age. She always hated that about herself; she thought she looked like she was in grade three when really she was turning twelve.

"The waves and the other canoes, mostly," Hannah replied. "It's getting a bit wavier as we speak, actually. We'll need to paddle a bit harder!"

At Hannah and Tara's camp, they got to paddle to a small island and camp out for a night, then return to their normal camp for the rest of the time. Since Hannah was an experienced paddler, she'd been picked to go in the stern in a canoe with someone who wasn't.

"Paddle, Tara! Stop lilly dipping! I need to be able to steer!" Hannah screamed as the boat began to turn.

"I'm"-Tara pushed her paddle as hard as she could-"trying my best."

"Well it's not working!" Hannah screamed over the wind.

Tara's arm started to hurt, but she kept going, scared of what Hannah would say if she complained.

"Hannah!" screamed Tara as a thin, light grey water-snake wriggled past their canoe.

"Don't!" But it was too late for Hannah's warning, Tara jerked to the right to get further from the snake, and the canoe wobbled. Hannah leaned with all her weight to the left to keep the canoe balanced, but when the snake left Tara sat normally again.

Hannah was still leaning to the left and the canoe tipped as she fell out with a huge splash.

Her head popped up right away thanks to her lifejacket, which she had sworn she was too experienced to need. She was ready to yell at Tara, but she noticed that Tara wasn't there. She was alone with the upside-down canoe.

Realizing what could have happened, she tore off her lifejacket (which might have held her back) and swam under the canoe. When she could breathe again (there was a pocket of air trapped under the canoe), she looked around for Tara, who she feared had her foot caught on something and her head was stuck underwater.

"Is the snake still here?" asked a frightened voice.

"Tara!" Hannah yelled. "What are you doing under here? Can you get out? Are you okay?"

"I'm fine; I'm just hiding from the snake," Tara replied. "Isn't this air bubble cool? I love it in here!"

"Tara!" this time Hannah was angry. "Do you know how unsafe this is?"

"Unsafe? This is perfectly safe," Tara looked confused. "Besides, you're the one who's not wearing a life jacket."

"Shut up and get out of here. You have to help me look for land."

"But the snake--"

"Let's go, Tara."

Hannah went underwater and swam back out from under the canoe. When her head was above the surface, she waited impatiently for Tara.

"I was taking off my life jacket," Tara explained as her head came up beside Hannah's. "So where are we going?"

"We're not going anywhere," Hannah said. "We have to wait for the other canoes to turn around and find us. Where's the whistle they gave us?"

"It was attached to some luggage..." Tara said quietly. "Everything we were carrying sunk when the canoe flipped."

"And we were behind everyone because you wouldn't paddle," Hannah said.

“Great. Nobody was waiting for us, either. It might take them a while to notice we’re gone.”

“What do we do now?” asked Tara, ignoring the fact that Hannah blamed her for everything.

“They might not notice we’re missing until they get there, and that’s another hour of canoeing away...I think,” Hannah sighed. “We can’t just tread water for two hours without a possibility of hypothermia-it is the end of August already-so we have to find some close land...there are a lot of islands around here. Go to the other side of the canoe and look in all directions, and I’ll look from here.”

Tara doggy-paddled to the other side of the canoe and started to look around.

“Hannah-there’s an island,” Tara called. Soon Hannah was on the same side of the canoe as her, looking out over the water until she saw what Tara was talking about.

“Start swimming, then,” Hannah said, “it’s a little far, but we don’t really have a choice. I didn’t see anything on my side of the canoe. You can grab the front end of the canoe, and I’ll grab the back.”

“Wait!” shouted Tara after they started heading towards the island, which was smaller than the kind Tara had pictured but larger than Hannah expected, having camped out on smaller islands other years.

“What?” asked Hannah, slightly annoyed.

“Our stuff! I think I can get it without my life jacket on-I sometimes open my eyes underwater,” Tara said.

“We can’t,” Hannah said. “We’re already carrying the canoe and everything that floats: our life jackets and paddles.”

“If you stay here and make sure we don’t lose the spot where our stuff is, I can take everything to the island and swim back here.”

“But Tara-”

“We were carrying our own drybags and one of the food buckets,” Tara said. “We can change into dry clothes and see if there’s anything non-frozen to eat as a snack before they get here.”

“This isn’t about comfort, Tara.”

Tara ignored her and started swimming after putting the life jackets and paddles under the canoe and grabbing onto it. Hannah just stayed where she was, trying to decide

if she should be stubborn and grab the other end of the canoe. But staying there did more good than going with Tara, so she stayed.

Tara swam towards the island, and as the water got shallower, the seaweed came closer to the surface. Soon she was swimming right through it, holding her breath and trying not to scream, telling herself it couldn't do anything.

Soon she came up to the island and saw that it was one humungous rock. As she got close enough that she could keep her head above water and her feet on the ground, she found out that the rock was extremely slippery. Climbing the edge with a heavy canoe would be incredibly difficult.

Tara looked back and saw the black and pink dot above the water that was Hannah's head. She had no choice now, she couldn't just leave Hannah there, and bringing the canoe back would be time-consuming and ineffective.

She decided to swim until it was up to her waist and push the canoe onto the rock while using it for balance. Slowly and carefully, she did.

With a few slips and falls, one resulting in her hitting her chin on the top of the canoe and biting her tongue, she got the canoe up on the rock enough for it to stay. Then she swam back to find Hannah almost out of breath.

"You go swim back to the island," Tara said. "Watch your step when you get there, though, it's really slippery."

Hannah swam away silently. Tara took a deep breath and went under, opening her eyes and twisting until she was facing the bottom of the lake. There was a small opening in the seaweed below her, where the luggage must have fallen.

She kicked and kicked until the seaweed was around her, and after hesitating she went deeper until she was right on top of the luggage. She found a strap and tugged at it, losing all of her air. She kicked off the bag and popped up on the surface, empty handed.

Catching her breath, she prepared herself and took another deep breath.

Hannah sat on the rock, impatiently waiting until she saw Tara's head for the second time. She must have gotten the luggage! But then her head disappeared again. What was she doing?

The more Hannah sat there, soaking wet, the more she hoped Tara was able to get the bags. Dry clothes and a snack might not have been a stupid idea after all. But waiting for their councilors to find them? Hannah decided that after they changed into warm clothes she'd convince Tara to leave and meet them half way.

As time passed, Hannah got more impatient. What would she do if Tara couldn't get the bags? She would be mad, that's for sure. She didn't want to waste time getting them in the first place, but Tara hadn't listened. If Tara was just getting Hannah's hopes up for nothing, Hannah would be fuming.

And what was Tara getting Hannah's hopes up for in the first place? A frozen pack of hotdogs that had to be cooked to be eaten? Somebody else's clothes?

"I got one!" Tara snapped Hannah out of her thoughts.

"What is it?" asked Hannah excitedly.

"Food! Food we can eat!" Tara said, gesturing to the large food bin that she'd recovered. "I've got 12 Rice Crispy Bars-they were for our whole cabin and counselors, but who cares?-, marshmallows which we can eat raw, shredded cheese, and pepperoni slices. The cheese and pepperoni were for pitas, but we don't have anything to cook the rest."

"We shouldn't eat the pepperoni or cheese," said Hannah, "we need that for dinner when they find us. Actually...I was thinking...we should find them. We've got the canoe and paddles, so we should meet them half way."

"Did you go to the place they're going when you were at our camp last year?" asked Tara.

"No. My sister did-she says it's really pretty."

"Then we have no directions. We'd get into a completely different mess than we're in now by getting lost in a canoe, paddling around one of the great lakes!" Tara pointed out.

"We can't just sit here and eat other peoples' food, though," said Hannah. "It doesn't feel right."

"You're right about the food, I guess," said Tara, "but not the sitting here. It's the safest and most helpful thing we can do. I'm hungry, though, so I'm going to have my rice crispy. Then I'm going to go get those other bags."

"The bags!" Hannah jumped up looking worried.

"What?"

"We lost them! There's nobody to show you where they are this time. We won't be able to find them again," said Hannah, sinking back down.

“I got the only one that didn’t belong to us, though,” Tara said quietly. “We’ll get in less trouble, at least.”

“If this doesn’t kill me, then my parents will. That was an expensive camera.”

“Don’t take stuff like that to camp, and especially not out trip, then.”

“You act like you’re the one who’s been coming here for four years in a row!” Hannah snapped. “Well, if it wasn’t for you tipping our canoe, we wouldn’t be here, soaking wet, eating other peoples food on a rock somewhere!”

“I didn’t tip our canoe alone!”

“It would have tipped faster if I hadn’t tried to balance it!”

“And how did that work out?”

“I hear them over here!” called a voice. Hannah jumped; she knew that voice. It was Emily, her best friend who had come to camp with her. “They’re fighting about something.”

“Where are they, Em?” asked Ali, who Hannah and Tara both disliked. Once again she’d insisted on calling Emily “Em”.

“Up ahead. I’ll get the councilors.”

“No, I can!”

“We both know you’d tell them you found Hannah and Tara,” Hannah could tell that Emily was rolling her eyes from the tone of her voice.

Moments later Lizzie and Meghan, they’re councilors, were walking towards Hannah and Tara. Lizzie looked angry, but Meghan just looked relieved.

Hannah and Tara looked at each other thinking, it’s a good thing we didn’t eat the food.

The canoe ride had apparently gone by faster than they thought, and all they had to do was walk to the other side of the island to find their cabin mates.

“All those problems,” said Hannah, shaking her head, “and all for what? So that we can sleep in a tent once and then pack up and leave the next morning.”

“I think that’s the point of the trip,” Tara shrugged. “We won’t forget it for a long time.”

“You might want to stand up now,” Hannah told Tara casually.

“Why?”

“That’s poison Ivy you’re sitting in.”



## **KITCHEN APPLIANCES**

**By Madeline Smith: Grade 10**

Congrat-u-lations!” The host, Henry Gordon, instantly slapped on his bright, toothy someone else just won a big awesome prize and you were there to witness it smile as he turned to the studio audience. One of his large hands hung in the air, pointing to a single word on the wheel next to him, (Vote) as the winner screamed and screamed, her own hands twitching with excitement and going from covering her mouth in awe to nearly ripping her own curly hair out in delirious hysteria.

“You have landed on Vote! The audience will decide your faaaate!” Henry’s contestant had crossed her arms over her chest, literally looking like she was trying to hold back her enthusiasm and it was actually causing her a little bit of physical pain to do so. Henry kept his focus on the audience, “And here are your priiiiizeesss!” He finally turned away from the camera as the curtain behind him was pulled to the side, revealing three separate (and very brightly coloured) panels. The first outlined a very luxurious (and probably over-advertised) trip to Hawaii, a brightly coloured Mahi-Mahi dolphin decorating the logo of a hotel, shimmering turquoise water in the background. The second possible prize was (predictably) a brand-new car, the windshield shining and the red paint-job contrasting perfectly with the lush, green background. The navy blue curtain was now completely pulled away and the final prize was uncovered.

What a letdown, Henry thought to himself as a picture of a brand new set of kitchen appliances was uncovered. The audience never voted for the winner to get those stupid appliances- who really wanted to win a microwave with a matching coffee maker? Henry had seen many, many people land on Vote (well it took up 1/3 of the wheel for goodness sake), but not once had the winner been awarded those fancy-shmancy appliances; they always went for the big stuff like ATV’s or sailboats (helmets and life-jackets not included).

The audience brought out their little electronic voting devices that were neatly tucked under their seats, hitting the 1, 2 or 3 button depending on what they wanted Karen, the contestant, to win. A couple of minutes later a very tense Karen actually leapt into the air, letting loose some more screeches as the panel showing the Hawaii vacation lit up, bright neon lights alternating from fluorescent red to a blinding white.

“10 day trip for 2 to Hawaii!” Henry raised his voice as Karen refused to stop her screams- she was obviously happy with what the audience had chosen. “You will be staying at the Atlantis Hotel in Honolulu!” Karen wailed again, louder. Henry’s own smile faltered a little, keeping himself busy with checking his slicked back brown hair, a little green monster reflected in his eyes.

مادلين

Henry went home that night, plans forming in his head that always ended in him winning a car on his own game show, or if not a car then a house or something similar. He didn't even remember to fill up the plastic bowl that sat in his kitchen for his hungry tabby, Chester- he just went straight up to the wooden desk in his second-floor bedroom, typing like mad on his computer. He went through dozens of schemes that night, trying to see if he could find a way to rig the voting system, how to be absolutely positive he would pass all the little games in the show and make it to the wheel. He even calculated exactly how hard he would have to spin the wheel (depending on what it started on) to be sure he would land on Vote, (thank goodness for Google). He decided though, that rigging the voting system was unnecessary- the audience always picked the cool stuff anyways.

At one point the phone rang constantly for a good 20 minutes, the person on the other end continuously hanging up and re-dialing Henry's number, (either that or he suddenly had a bunch of friends wanting to call him at the same time). Henry ignored the insistent rings, determined to work the kinks out of his plans without being disturbed, but after almost an hour of the phone just ringing and ringing he finally yanked the power cord out of the wall in frustration, Chester skittering away from the clatter the plug made as Henry threw it to the hardwood floor, storming back to his computer screen.

It was long past midnight before Henry went to bed satisfied. He had tried to force himself to sleep a number of times, but every time he would just lie in bed, thinking about all the problems that his idea had, and within 15 minutes he would be up and hammering away at his keyboard. Chester came upstairs when Henry got himself into bed for the last time that night, but Henry took no notice of his pet's irritated meows; he was too busy thinking about what he might win.

#### مدالین

The next morning Henry looked absolutely exhausted. When he entered the studio for another show filming his boss was definitely not impressed with the bags under his employee's eyes. Quite the opposite actually. It was only after being scolded sternly and completely disregarding his superior's words that Henry realized he hadn't yet figured out how to persuade his boss to allow an employee on the show, just this once. He decided he didn't have much to lose so winging it would have to suffice. He wasn't going to wait another day.

"Yeah, sorry, but uh... Do you think I could go on the show as a contestant?" Was the most persuasive thing Henry could come up with as his boss took a break from his lecturing to breathe.

There was a moment of silence as Henry's boss looked confused and surprised, "What? I don't think so."

"Come on, it would be a great episode! The employees see if they can make it through the tests! It would be fantastic! And you wouldn't even have to pay us for the day that we go on as contestants." Henry tried to sell his idea, but the looks he was getting from his

boss told him that he wasn't doing such a great job. "A specialty episode would be great for ratings- we might even be able to beat So You Think You Can Dance Ontario," Henry went on.

"The day we beat So You Think You Can Dance Ontario with that idea is the day everyone loses their ability to dance. I'm not paying you to come up with episode ideas; I'm paying you to host the show. If you still want that job I suggest you get in there and host."

Henry dejectedly watched as his superior turned and left, silently calling him a few inappropriate names.

مادلين

During the show that day, Henry had to resist the impulse to oh-so casually nudge the wheel and prevent it from landing, yet again, on Vote. Yet another contestant screamed like a banshee when she won a \$3000 shopping spree at the West Edmonton Mall. He almost screamed at her to shut up, but getting fired wasn't something he wanted.

At the end of the day, Henry didn't race home to his computer. Instead, he hung around at work, managing to use the computer there instead. He inserted his own name into the contestant list, but the soonest he was able to put himself in was for the show next month, so he was going to have to wait.

مادلين

Henry spent the month leaving his phone unhooked and his cat unfed, (not completely unfed, but enough for Chester to get irritated with his master), working non-stop to perfect his wheel spinning techniques and his fake-surprise screams for when he won, (though his fake-screams of surprise were remarkably better than the ones shown on t.v). He spoke to no one but the viewers watching the game show, and he only did that because it was his job and he couldn't afford to lose his job. His friends came over once in a while to bang on his front door, but Henry decided it was for the best if he just continued to practice spinning his home-made Win Wheel, as he called it, aiming to land on Vote every time. After a week or two, everyone seemed to give up with trying to contact him- he didn't even check his mail any more, forgetting to even think about bills. When game day came, Henry found himself without electricity at home, but he was too excited about his new prize to care. He just barely remembered to lock his front door behind him, bounding out to his car. He hadn't even filled up on gas lately, but not even that could dampen his mood.

Of course his boss wasn't happy when he realized that the only person lined up to be on the show that day was his host, but he had no other choice but to allow Henry to go on stage and play the part of the host and the contestant.

“Hello and welcome!” Henry started up the day’s show, out of his mind with excitement. He expected to see some of his friends or family in the audience, but he hadn’t told them what he was doing- hadn’t spoken to them in a month.

“Today we have a special show- I will be the contestant!” There were some addled looks and confused murmurs from the crowd, but Henry went on. “Let’s see if I’m, in it to win it!” The crowd joined him half-heartedly in the usual chant, but everyone still had some blank expressions.

Henry easily finished the quiz and physical challenges, the only obstacle still in his way was the wheel. He could hear a couple of audience members complaining loudly to each other that he rigged the competitions, or that he already knew how to beat them, but the latter was only true because he had spent three weeks preparing. If every contestant did that he guessed they would probably pass the tests just as easily.

“The only thing left is to...” Henry paused a moment for effect, “Spin the wheel!” He positioned his hand on the wheel just like he had practiced: a firm grip with his pointer, forefinger and thumb on one side, other two fingers on the other, his pinky ever-so-slightly crooked. He took a moment to take a deep breath, then spun his calculated spin.

The arrow on the wheel landed dead center on the Vote section, just as Henry planned. “Now the audience will decide my faaaaaate!” The three prize panels were uncovered: a houseboat, a trip to Paris, or a brand new toaster oven, fancy espresso maker and slim fridge. Henry eagerly watched as the audience brought out their voting devices from under their seat, deciding what they thought the host should won. Henry almost laughed out loud, gleefully hoping for the houseboat, but the trip to Paris would be nice too- he would ask his friend Mara to join him. A romantic week in Paris would be just what he needed to get her to ask him out, it would be perfect!

The moment of tense silence came, and a few seconds before the neon red and white lights could start flashing, Henry began dancing on the spot, pumping his fists in the air and stomping his feet. He turned to see which prize he had won; the fun house boat or the romantic trip.

It was the kitchen appliances that were flashing their blinding lights when Henry spun around and his laughter was quieted. The audience cheered at his reaction.

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Henry went home, hooked his phone back up and called Mara.

“Hello? Hi, it’s Henry. I won some kitchen stuff today, do you want to help me sell it on the internet so we can maybe go somewhere together?”

“Henry? Where have you been? I have a boyfriend now- I tried to tell you but you were never home. And Lucy, Will and Frank went to Paris together. They said you could come if you wanted, but no one could contact you... Look, I gotta go, Ryan is waiting for me.

Bye.” Henry was shocked when Mara’s end of the line went dead. He looked around for Chester, hoping for some comfort, but the cat only hissed angrily at him (which was highly unusual) and curled up for a nap.

Henry was left alone in his kitchen, looking in disgust at his brand new appliances.

THE END

## WHAT THUNDER MAY BRING

By Madeleine Imboden: Grade 10

*One, two, three, four... yes, no, yes... selfish, fulfilling... right, wrong..* Ivy pulled at the petals of a cut rose from a bouquet she had just received. The bunch was made mostly of fresh cut wildflowers, it came from the boy on the farm over the hill. The flowers were crimson red, with bright green stems. Clouds began to blanket the sky, and the trees started to whistle. The wind curled around her body and, at that moment she felt invincible, nothing could hurt her. All of Ivy's worries were carried away by its soft touch.

As the wind blew Ivy gazed hypnotically towards the forest. Sudden realisation broke her trance-like state. She stood up and brushed herself off, sending clover and red petals flying to the ground. Ivy cantered towards her home, she stopped momentarily and admired the vines that crept up the side walls; she had quite the green thumb. She ran inside the red brick house and went to her small damp room. The young woman pulled the yellowed curtains across the aged windows. Ivy pulled back her long brown curly hair, and tied it neatly in a tight bun. She put herself in a lovely gown, she pulled tightly at the strings of her corset and prepared. For tonight she was to see the town's most eligible bachelor.

She went to her mother's dark wood chest at the foot of the bed and pulled out a white bonnet with embroidered flowers and the matching shawl. She must look dashing tonight. Ivy knew that she must impress the British man, because it was her family's wish for her to marry Joseph. His very prestigious family made friends with Ivy's relatives. Many women have tried to charm him, to no avail. Joseph is not the most gentle nor kind, but as she was the only woman yet to wed in her family – which was quite extensive-, she was the one who had to seal the friendship between the two groups.

She left the withered house and set off towards the forest that laid just behind her home. Off in the distance she could see an old farm house. That is where *he* lived, her true love. Though she dare not tell a soul. He is merely a poor farm boy. Her family would not approve. *He* was kind, *he* was gentle, *he* treated her with respect. Quite a gentleman he was. *NO, NO, NO, she mustn't think of him!*

Ivy followed a path darting underneath tree branches she gracefully jumped over rocks and mud. The path became more dense and overgrown the deeper she went in. The branches felt like claws of animals trying to grab at her. *Nathan... he is quite fine. Even for a farm hand... Stop!* Ivy forced herself to think of a different subject. *Joseph Moore* her body shivered at the thought of him. *I don't know what it is about him... He has a terrible aura surrounding him. No time for second thoughts now. I can't evade him because of a hunch...* A cold breeze made Ivy shiver. She breathed a sigh of relief as the trail began to clear. She found herself at a fork in the road. Ivy had a choice. She could choose the right passage, which lead to Nathan, her love; or she may choose the left

passage, where she did not want to go, where she dreaded to go; but being a young lady she knew her responsibilities.

.... She robotically followed the left path. Ivy trudged along, up and down the hills. The sun was setting, disappearing behind the horizon. *If only I could be as mysterious and stealth as you Sun, I have a peculiar feeling about tonight...* The yellow rays of the sun cast a dull glow onto the wooded path. It was slowly becoming flatter and less vegetative. She could see only the silhouette of Mr. Moore's manor, for the sun was just behind its far walls. The castle's blackened walls gave her an uneasy feeling. Ivy quickly cantered through the yard to Joseph's dwelling. She held a dark iron piece in her hand and knocked it fiercely on the metal frame of the grand door. A man stood at the opening door, he quickly ushered Ivy inside and took her overcoat. "To the left Ms. Morgan" He said in his deep voice.

Ivy passed many wood doors with black metal detailing. The hallway was very plain with black candlestick ornaments on the grey stone walls. And on the walls hung few dark tapestries. Ivy turned left at an open door, into a room which appeared to be the library. Beautiful red paintings of flowers were on the shelves. She stood there captivated by them.

"Good evening Ms. Morgan." Joseph Moore said

Ivy startled, jumped slightly. "Good evening." She replied.

"They are quite mesmerizing aren't they?" he inquired.

"Yes. I've never seen anything quite like them before." Ivy answered robotically.

"It's the acanthus plant. They grow down South, they are often used to decorate Greek columns. A legend says that after a young girl's death, her nurse placed all of her possessions into a small basket by her grave. Soon after an acanthus plant grew around the basket and enveloped it. Later a sculptor named Callimachus noticed this plants behaviour and he was then inspired to design the flower and plant as type of ornament."

He came closer and took her hand and pressed his wet lips against it. She sighed *I can do this, I must, it is what is expected of me... I could leave now? And go to the hilltop with the brown and red farmhouse, where the sun rises every morning, I could wake up every day to see its glorious rays cast a bright shade yellow on the rows of corn. How they glow at sunrise... Here the sun sets, and the castle becomes engulfed in darkness...* Mr. Moore had dark brown almost black hair, his dark deep-set eyes almost get lost in his face. A suffocating aroma of roses hit Ivy. "Oh my." She coughed slightly

"Extraordinary isn't it? Don't you love the smell of roses? I do." Joseph replied, oblivious to her coughing.

"Shall we go outside to do some star gazing?" Ivy inquired.

“That would be quaint. Follow me.”

The two descended a small staircase, it was lit by the dull orange glow of torches that hung from the stone walls. As they descended lower the fires seemed to grow closer together, the two finally came to an exit. They came out at the back of the castle. Not a soul was there, no breath or heart beat to be heard. Darkness surrounded them. Ivy sat down first, the grass was damp. Joseph Moore took his place right beside her. The moon hid behind the clouds, and made few appearances that evening, there was a cool wind that blew east to west. As the night wore on Joseph moved closer and closer to Ivy. *Well, he is quite bold.* Ms. Morgan became increasingly uncomfortable; but she didn't move. *I mustn't distress him, make a good impression Ivy!*

She laid down, and he followed suit. The wind blew paths for soft white chariots to pass by in the sky, it also gives sailors a reason to keep going further into uncharted waters, it gives new life to tired, deathly birds; it gives hope. The same wind that creates hope can cause fear, terror and destruction, and it just whispered by and gently kissed her cheek. Ivy did not find it comforting. The powerful gusts cleared the night sky for them while watched the stars; she lay on her back watching the bright glow of the moon float off onto clouds turning them brilliant yellows and greens. Joseph inched his hand and pushed it inside of hers; it was so cold, a tear escaped the swipe from Ivy's free hand, but the wind caught it and blew it away. He slid his hand up her leg. Every muscle in her body tightened. *No.* He began to push himself on top of her. A sharp loud burst of thunder erupted from the clouded sky. She quickly raised herself. The wind blew her hair in all directions. The gusts were more powerful now. “That was TOO BOLD.” She cried. Joseph laid on the ground, stunned by Ivy's sudden reaction, along with the dramatic change of weather. She ran to the staircase, shawl in her hand trailing behind her. *No, no, no, no!* Tears roll down her cheeks.

They're going so fast as if fearful on defeat. But defeated is what she is. Her pain is plain to see, her cries of vain echo through the halls. *That is not the way it was supposed to be. How can I be with a man that tried to... I can't...* She sprinted out of the gloomy building, the doorman started to come after her. He was yelling behind her. His words were carried off by the wind and lost in the stars. Ivy could still hear footsteps, like rocks splashing into shallow water. They grew fewer, then farther away. She kept running until she could hear them no longer...

The humid air floated amongst the trees. She was not used to dark forests, rather she was born a city girl, lighted streets were where she belonged. The sound of car horns were replaced by the croaks of frogs, the hum of the traffic was now a band of crickets playing a rural tune. The first lonely drops of rain hit the leaves and were sent tumbling down on Ivy's head. The young woman was cutting through Applegrove Forest to get home. Chills and bumps ran up her spine as a cool night wind blew by. She began to pick up pace. Going on midnight Ivy convinced herself that even though she is alone, she is much safer now in the country than what she would have been back home in the city at this hour, or at Joseph Moore's house... *Home.* The memories gave her confidence and a feeling of safety on her walk back. Suddenly there was a tug on her shawl. She



screamed pulling at her clothing trying to get it loose. It wouldn't budge. *Someone has me.* She opened her eyes prepared to look into the eyes of her assailant. Ivy jumped. The shadowy dark outline of a menacing tree looked back at her. *A tree? Darling you have to get a hold of yourself.* She unhooked her shawl from the tree's branches and let out a forced laugh. "I'm alright everyone.." she whispered mockingly to herself. The rain came down more heavily now. She turned around quickly on her heel and continued on her way.

An overwhelming aroma of roses came upon her. Ivy looked around but saw no sign of rose flora. Her shawl became caught again, but this time it was not on a branch.. A cold clammy hand covered her mouth as she was dragged deeper in the forest. The flowery aroma engulfing her. She looked desperately into the milky sky, she saw a lightning strike and then she heard the loud clap of thunder ... The thunder commanded the skies, as it sounded all silenced. It was as if all animal flora and fauna stood at attention as it conquered the world above. The loud noise rang through her ears. Mother Nature can summon some beautiful things, but one must beware of what thunder can bring...

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... Ivy stood at the crossroads, shawl on her shoulders overcoat in her hands. An odd noise ringing through her ears. She looked down both trails, she took the right path.

## **NEVER OBSERVED**

**By Samantha Ridler: Grade 12**

Perhaps you are on a bus bench listening to happy birds sing, or huddling under a blanket by the fire as rain pours down your windows. Perhaps all your friends had homework and you were caught on a rainy day with nothing to do. But now and then we all need to pass the time, so let me take you somewhere more interesting.

We presently sit on thick padded chairs, there being enough to seat about 200 people. Despite their thickness, the chairs do not promise a lot of comfort for the next hour or so. Flight lists are posted on a nearby screen and the itinerary item to which the people around us frequently gaze flashes from English to Spanish, both languages only deflecting their sight and causing them to check their watches again impatiently.

Our eyes begin to drift and rest only a moment on each person and object surrounding us. Suddenly called to our attention is the disrepair of the place. It seems old and shabby to our inquisitive eyes. We note the worn seats of our chairs and the well-trodden paths dug into the once thick carpet, like straight-cut trails through forest undergrowth. A large chip in the wall offers mystery of how an obscure airport terminal would acquire such a wound.

You've begun to wonder why I took you here. From the comfort of your fireplace or the sweet chirp of the birds by the park bench, you now feel an oppressive humidity and deathly silence. All is quiet but the agitating tick of a five-dollar clock on the wall. But may I remind you that we are only observers, never observed, and I suggest we begin by observing the man to our left.

Some say people-watching is a rude invasion of other's lives. Not rude as in gum-chewing or picking the nose but rather because the subjects do not know they are being monitored. They say you may see something you were never meant to, but if everyone lived by this rule no one would ever have pet fish. Being a traveller, I say, when in an airport or train station hours pass faster than a jet plane if one keeps his or her eyes open.

In any case, the man to our left is now hunching over in a large raincoat. The sky seems clear today, but the weather has been anything but consistent lately. Still, the room seems too warm for a long, even thin, windbreaker as his in dark grey. He leans forward, a heavy stomach obstructing most flexibility. His hands are clasped and shake ever so slightly; even from here, four seats away, we can guess they are clammy. You begin to feel sorry for him, imagining he is flying to a funeral or to say his last words to a dying parent in the hospital.

ACHOO!

He sneezes nervously.

His jacket flicks open as a camera's shutter and some metal object winks at us.

Don't be so nervous! It could be a cell phone or a set of keys peeking out of an inside pocket. But you look as if you'll soon be sick, so we should probably watch someone else for now. The man across the aisle is checking the time on the wall clock and comparing it to his own watch, glancing back and forth. This is odd, of course, but there must be something more worthy of our attention.

Ah, here comes a young couple, sitting just on our right. The man is tall with dark hair and pale steel-coloured eyes, giving him a ghost-like appearance when combined with his pale complexion. The woman on his arm looks strong and serious, her firm mouth unsmiling. She is very beautiful, but unnaturally so. Her fanciful clothing could be of French fashion and her heavily made-up face could be hiding any number of flaws.

You maintain a natural front as you examine them discretely, but must I remind you? We are only observers, never observed. Don't be afraid to look them in the eye. As the girl looks up at the flight lists you peer deep into her eyes. Within the light brown honey drops you see threads of rippling gold weave horizontally through her left iris and vertically through her right<sup>1</sup>.

You push yourself back, away from her, and I understand that this subtle peculiarity has disturbed you. Would it be the wrong time to mention that the man beside her has lines twin to these running through his eyes, only silver? These are just interesting observations, and that's precisely what we are here for.

The beauty of being an invisible entity, just searching for adventure, is that we are no longer bound by the tick of the clock, nor by the "Delayed" noticed posted by our flight. If you wish we may skip ahead to board the plane or, really, we could skip off to any time or place you wish, but for now we should stick to one adventure. Yes, so the future it is, just 73 minutes ahead is all we need in order to hear the announcer call flight 4791 to board. As the other passengers seated around us begin to form a line in front of the two airport personnel, I lead you on ahead of them into the plane. We are going to the cockpit, and this part may bother you because we will have to pass through the closed door. It's really not as bad as it sounds, though your natural instincts will likely ask you to stop before you walk through the closed aperture. You stop halfway to see what the inside of the door looks like, but there is nothing to see because there is no light on the inside of doors.

Now, in the cockpit, we see the pilot and his co-worker have finished their pre-flight safety checks and are presently relaxing in their chairs. We listen to their idle chatter, but do not pay close attention. Since you have never been in this part of a plane before, we seize this opportunity to look it over. It seems snug, both because this isn't a large plane and because the myriad of buttons gives the small room a cluttered feel. The pilots adjust their headsets onto their ears and call in some codes to the airport base.

We hear the "All clear" return from the radio and the pilot begins circling over to the ramp. We can faintly hear flight attendants on the other side of the door, delivering emergency instructions in both English and Spanish. The pilots chatter over this to each

other. The superior here seems to have heard the directions enough times to relay them back in either language, but his assistant seems new to the experience.

“It’s no trouble, Matthews,” says the pilot, “If you’ve made it through the training, you’ll find this like a walk in the park...” He pauses, “Or rather a flight over a park, I suppose.”

“Well, thanks Jameson,” Matthews responds weakly, still seeming unsure of the encouragement, “I guess I’m being a little silly to worry. It’s just... I just squeaked by on the exams. Not the written ones, those were fine, but I was never strong on the in-flight tests.”

“Like I said: Don’t worry about it,” the pilot reiterates, “Those tests make it all seem worse anyhow. You know they specifically cause problems just so you will have to deal with them? Besides, I’ll be here all the way. It’s only a two-hour flight. This is a good starting route.” Jameson turns, smiling at him, and Matthews puts on a more relaxed face. But as soon as the other man turns back to the controls, the co-pilot resumes his worrying.

The ramp is nearing and the plane gains speed, rushing toward the angled ground ahead. Faster than either of us expected, the incline is reached and we are in the air. Looking from the large window, your face reflects the queasy feeling in your stomach. Don’t be afraid, we are only observers and never observed. We are unreachable to this situation, though it seems so reachable to us. Your muscles calm down and your eyes show a more excited appreciation for the view. Ahead you see mountains and under us you see the outskirts of a large city.

After a few minutes of watching us rise higher, we level off, still with a clear view of our planet since the day has remained cloudless. We hear some muffled sounds from behind the door before a knock. Just three clear staccato beats ringing through the small compartment.

“What would that mean?” asks the nervous co-pilot, adding an extra forte to the note of anxiety in his voice.

“I don’t know,” answers his coach, his perplexed look not calming Matthews in the least, “I’ve never had anyone knock on the door before.”

*Knock knock knock*

The call is repeated, a perfect echo of the first, like a signature of the unnamed caller.

“Hello? What is it?” inquests the chief navigator.

“It’s Jane Brown,” answers a young girl’s voice, “Could you open the door? We need some help.”

As the pilot continues to ask the girl the nature of her intrusion, I take your hand and lead you back through the door. The pilot has good reason to be suspicious, since there is no reason for a stewardess to call on him. And now, on this side of the wall we see just how well-founded his suspicions truly are.

Jane stands with her hands held behind her back by the beautiful young woman we saw before, her husband discretely holding a knife to the girl's ribs. She tries in vain to answer the pilot's questions, strongly depending on the practiced liars surrounding her for responses. But even so, her excuses don't sound credible. The man's grip tightens around his knife, he forces more pressure on it and the girl winces, more in terror than in pain. The young woman whispers threats into her captive's ear and digs her long, varnished nails into Miss Brown's arms.

Your face morphs from horror to confusion, and back and forth between until your features rest somewhere in the middle. You step backward and then foreword, cower away and then bravely face it. You try to push the criminals away. Though you seem to pass through them as the door, the man does react by uncomfortably rolling his shoulders, as if he senses us watching him. But it is ultimately futile and the reaction weakens at your second try. You give up this struggle and look to me with pleading eyes.

"Why can't we help?" you beg me, though you know the answer.

Only observers, never observed. But there is still hope, and that lies in the pilot's judgment of the situation. Follow me back through the door, but only half way this time. Stand like this, do you see? With the right side of your body on one side of the door, your right eye seeing the criminals and their hostage, but your left side in the cockpit with the pilot and his subordinate.

From your left we hear, all in a whisper, "Well, what should we do then, do you think?" from the co-pilot, "If you think they are criminals, I guess we shouldn't open the door?"

"Well, why do we *not* want the plane to get high jacked, Matthews?" Jameson cleverly whispers this answer, a question for a question.

"Obviously if they highjack the plane we'll be killed!" the other not so quietly retorts, without catching the tone in Jameson's voice which betrayed his question was a test.

"So, it has nothing to do with the passengers," he says simply, then his tone changes to a more serious pitch. This question is life or death, "Are you willing to sacrifice the lives of all these passengers to save the two of us?"

His voice beginning to slip out of its whisper, Matthews says, "No, I guess not. So then what do we do? If we don't let them in, we're leaving them to rampage the rest of the plane and if we do let them in we're basically handing over the steering wheel. I suppose you want to let them in an try to fight them off?" The co-pilot sits back in his chair, arms folded

like a young girl, and huffs at his frustration. The most aggravating part of an argument is knowing that you truly have less experience.

“I have a plan!” announces the pilot, quietly but emphatically, before picking up his radio. He clicks it on; introduces himself, his plane, and his flight number; and relates their situation, “Me and my co-pilot, Matthews, have good reason so suspect we are about to be high jacked. I suggest sending rescue planes out ASAP, since I am hoping for survivors. The plane will be on auto-pilot for a while but we’ll try to land it in the Gulf of Mexico...”

As he continues to relate details, we’ll switch our attention to the other side, where new movement is occurring. The heavyset man in the dark grey raincoat is coming up the aisle towards the huddle by the cockpit door. A cart has been wheeled in between the couple with Jane and the rest of the plane, restricting the flyers’ view of their actions. The man begins to wheel the cart away but catches a glimpse of the woman’s hands clamped around the stewardess’s wrists. He coolly sidles back to his seat, not showing any recognition of what the husband and wife are doing.

We hear a brief, “alright, now no matter WHAT anyone says into this radio, DON’T stop the rescue planes and DON’T stop monitoring this flight, alright? Alright. Over and out.” The pilot relaxes. He presses the button to initiate the seatbelt light and turns to his assistant, giving him a nod. The lower ranking pilot presses a button to open the door.

Jane is pushed in first and the other woman is close behind. She takes one hand from the girl’s arms to pull a gun from her belt. Her husband is right beside them and, all cramped in this little space, he relocates the knife to Jane’s throat and slides the door closed with his foot. There is still a small crack between the door and its frame but the passengers outside can’t see enough through it for anyone to worry. We follow the group in, both our eyes in the cockpit now.

The woman makes her demands to the pilots as her husband begins skillfully tying up the stewardess with one hand. After her arms are tied, his wife takes his weapon and holds it to the girl’s throat again as he ties her legs and gags her. They throw her to the corner and continue. The man takes back his knife and places it at Matthew’s neck.

Jameson remains calm but his co-worker seems shocked and is presently gaping at the two invaders. Only now that the woman has finished instructing Mr. Jameson where his new destination is can Matthews speak.

“Who are you?” he blurts.

“There’s no sense in asking something like that. Who cares? They have a gun, so whoever they are we’d best listen to them,” answers Jameson calmly, easing the law-breakers.

He seems happy to do whatever they ask, to the point where the woman is very suspicious. But her husband tells her to stop worrying.

“You’ve got a gun to his head! Of course he’s glad to do anything you say!”

Though seeming unconvinced and keeping an ever-watching eye on both navigators, the woman relaxes slightly. Just as she begins to think their task is as good as complete, the door slides open again and in walks the grey rain-coated man from the terminal, he himself holding a gun also. He closes the door again, this time all the way.

In this new confusion, the married man points the knife toward the newcomer and his wife alternates aiming the gun at each pilot. But her attention is soon absorbed by the new addition to their party and the gunpoint rests on Matthews. At this moment, the pilot discretely adds his own handgun to the weapons, and without warning points it at the woman and shoots. Her husband mumbles something about his sister. She falls dead and Jameson quickly takes the weapon from her hand and tosses it to his assistant who points it to the man with the knife. He, in turn, points his knife to the other man with the gun and all the while poor Jane is whimpering in the corner.

The man whose wife or sister was just killed suddenly jumps back to tackle the gun from Matthews, now realizing his weapon has been outranked. His sudden movement triggers the rain-coated man’s finger and he fires at the other criminal without properly aiming. Matthews falls dead, blood dripping from his head. Tears stream down the stewardesses face as she tries her best to hide her head. Matthews’ killer gasps in horror seeing he shot the wrong man and the second criminal stands up from the co-pilots body, holding his late accomplice’s gun. He points it to Jameson’s head and says simply,

“Drop the gun, pilot!” knowing the other gunman will likely favour this move. Still with his original plan up his sleeve, Jameson drops the gun, and at this moment the heavysset man shoots a deadly blow at the other criminal. He picks up the last two guns from the floor and the dead man’s hand, places one in his belt, and trains the other two on the pilot.

He states his demands and again Jameson willingly obliges. He takes the controls and begins turning around. We are just turning up from the south of Mexico and are near the centre of the Gulf. Without warning Jameson jerks heavily on the controls pulling the nose of the plane up and up, higher and higher.

The plane stalls. It begins spinning downward and, in the confusion, the gunman loses his target and shoots aimlessly, hitting the metal box of a first-aid kit. The bullet ricochets, hitting the shooter himself in the thigh. He falls over, cursing himself for shooting his partner<sup>2</sup>. The plane crashes into the water at Earth-shattering speed. The water is like cement, but the front of the plane takes the greatest part of the crash.

And now we are back by your fire as it crackles with warmth and comfort, or sitting again on your park bench. The birds are chirping lively, as if nothing in the world could go wrong and you listen to their coaxing song, trying to believe them. But you’d best hurry up because the bus has just arrived.

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<sup>1</sup> Lines like this in one’s eyes imply they have a twin

<sup>2</sup>This makes his partner Matthews

## **GATEWAY TO ADVENTURE**

**By Giuliana E. Ruffolo: Grade 11**

Giuliana walked down a hallway with a mop and bucket on wheels. She was mopping the floor because she worked for a billionaire who owned a collection of various artefacts that were on display in his personal gallery. He had recently held a viewing, and many people had come to see his latest edition to his collection; a rare ancient Egyptian tablet. Giuliana was looking forward to seeing it. She always had a fondness for the ancient Egyptian culture, it fascinated her greatly. She even learned how to speak and read hieroglyphics. Almost done mopping the hallway, she made her way into the viewing room. It was near midnight, and everyone had gone home. The gallery was completely empty, excluding a security guard here and there.

She finished mopping, but before she left she wanted to see the tablet. Walking over to the glass case it was in; she gazed at it with interest. In front of the tablet, there was a description.

*This tablet was discovered on the outskirts of the Valley of the Kings, and was most likely part of a pharaoh's burial riches. It is solid gold, and was engraved with skill. It was probably part of important royal documents. It has yet to be translated."*

"Hmm... this couldn't be all that hard to decipher." She muttered as she began putting words together in her head. "Looks like some kind of rhyme." She began reading out what it said slowly in English tongue. "That's odd. I wonder what that could be pointing to... it doesn't make much logical sense."

"What doesn't make logical sense?" Asked a voice from behind her. She rapidly turned around to see that there was a security guard behind her.

"Terence?" She exclaimed. "I didn't know you had this shift." She said with a smile.

"I got transferred." He replied. Giuliana had known Terence for quite a while, they were good friends. "So, what were you talking about before?"

"This tablet, the scribe must have been in some sort of delusion of something because it makes no sense. It speaks of giant blood thirsty lizards and warriors. It must be some old riddle or rhyme."

"What does it say exactly?" Terence asked. "Maybe it's a story."

"It reads: He who is entered into battle with the great Zarus must battle his many evil lizard children. Beware oh warrior, for Zarus has never been beaten." She said slowly.



“Maybe Zarus is one of their gods? Or what if he was the ancient Egyptian version of the boogie man?” Terence replied.

“I’ve never hear of Zarus before, but I suppose it could be possible. I mean we haven’t discovered all their gods yet. It is rather baffling. Maybe it rhymes in Egyptian; it could just be a nursery rhyme or little song. They had a lot of those.” Giuliana said. She proceeded to repeat what she said, but in the ancient Egyptian tongue. “It doesn’t rhyme.”

“I wonder what it means. I guess someone will find out one day.” Terence added. Just as he said this, however, the tablet began to vibrate rapidly.

“What’s happening to it?” Giuliana asked as she peered at it. “It’s shaking so much it could break the glass!”

“Step back!” Terence shouted as the glass shattered and fell to the ground. The tablet crashed to the floor as well, and completely stopped moving all together. A small door opened in the bottom of it, and it ejected a small crystal. “I wonder what that’s for.”

“It appears to fit perfectly right here in this little space at the top of it.” Giuliana said as she inserted the small diamond like crystal into a slot which was just above the text on the tablet. Suddenly, as soon as the crystal was in place, a beam of light shot across the room and projected what appeared to be a large, circular window; similar to a gateway. On the other side there was a colossal forest full of trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses. She looked at Terence. “Maybe it was a pass phrase?”

“Let’s check it out.” He replied as he warily began walking towards the gateway.

“Think it’s just a really old motion picture... or is it real? It looks quite real to me...” He muttered.

“Only one way to find out.” Giuliana replied as she gingerly moved her hand toward the ‘hole’. She stuck her hand clean in, and it broke through with no problems. She started moving forward more, and soon she had entered into this other world. “Come on, Terence. I’m not doing this alone, and bring the tablet with you.”

Terence grabbed the tablet and ran through quickly. “Where are we? This doesn’t look like anywhere I’ve seen before.”

“Look how tall all the plants are. That fern is as tall as me!” Giuliana replied with surprise. “Look down there, there’s a trail. Let’s follow it.”

“Aren’t you a little concerned about our situation? How do we know we can get back?” Terence pointed out after the portal had already shut.

“We can bother with that when the time comes. Right now, I think we should explore. Besides, if were to get stuck anywhere, a forest like this couldn’t be better.” Giuliana replied with a grin. “Now let’s go.”

“Alright, you’re probably right anyway. We should be able to get home, but if we’re stuck here and we get killed I’m going to blame you.” He muttered as he followed her.

Some time had passed, and the two of them found themselves at a large river. “So, where do you think we are, anyway? What if we’re in some kind of alternate dimension, or what if I’m dreaming?” Terence asked Giuliana confident in her identification skills.

“Well, I can assure you it’s not like any place I have ever seen in real life before. This is the first rainforest I’ve ever been in. “All of the plants are extra large for some reason, and they all look rather ‘primitive’ in a way. I haven’t seen any grass or complex flowers yet either. So far we haven’t seen any wild life.” Just as Giuliana uttered these words a dragon fly the size of a small hawk flew by their heads speedily. “Did you see that? That was a huge dragon fly!”

“That was massive!” Terence exclaimed. “I’ve never seen one that large befo—.” He stopped, gasped, and pointed at something moving in the oversized bushes. “What... what do you think that is?”

“I didn’t see anything.” The bushes moved again, but this time more vigorously. “I saw that... it could be a large bird of some sort stuck in there.” She replied slowly. It moved more, and this time the creature stuck its head out of the bush. “Oh my goodness!”

“What the hell is that?” Terence shouted as he took multiple steps back, almost falling in the stream. He turned to run, but Giuliana grasped his arm to prevent him from doing so. “What are you doing? We have to get out of here!”

“Running will make it want to chase you, Terry. It has a prey drive just like modern-day animals do.” Giuliana whispered.

The creature ejected itself from the bush, and pranced over slowly with an inquisitive look on its face. It was a large bipedal predator covered in brownish green feathers. It stood about six feet tall, and had a long tail making it at least eight feet long. Underneath its coat of downy feathers was a thick hide of dark brown scales. This creature was a species of raptor called deinonychus. “I think we should go now... it’s coming closer... come on Giuliana.” Terence whispered.

“Do you realise that if we run, it’s going to make him want to chase us more! Not to mention, that’s a deinonychus; they’re pack animals. There could be a dozen lying hidden in the brush. The best way of staying safe is to hold your ground, and don’t be

afraid. Most pack animals can sense your state of mind.” Giuliana said quickly back as she stared at the raptor in the eyes.

The deinonychus advanced towards them even more, and then started to smell them. He nuzzled his snout into Terence’s Kevlar vest, and pulled out a half-eaten chocolate bar. He dropped it on the ground, and nibbled it a little. He didn’t really like too much, and decided to see if Giuliana had anything appealing to ‘offer’. He began sniffing her as well, but found nothing of interest. After he was done checking them out, he darted off to his pack.

“So now do you know where the heck we are?” Terence demanded. “Oh, I think I know. A place I do not want to be. You better take me home before we see any other dinosaurs that can disembowel us or otherwise compromise our ability to live.”

“Terry, you’re over reacting some. Do you realise what we’ve stumbled upon? We’re in the early Cretaceous period, and you’re asking me to leave? You know how long I’ve dreamed of seeing a live dinosaur? Since I was four years old. We can’t go yet.” Giuliana argued.

“And you saw one, so we can go. Was it not you that said the Cretaceous period was the one of the most dangerous times to be alive?” Terence replied aggravated.

“This is only the early Cretaceous. This time is just as the dinosaurs were coming off of their prime. This is even before the tyrannosaurus rex, the nanotyrannus, the iguanodon, the ankylosaurus and the velociraptor. Some of the largest dinosaurs aren’t even around yet, other than the sauropods that is. Besides, if you were in dinosaur times and you were stuck with one person of choice, would that person not be me?” She replied logically.

“I guess so.” He hesitantly said. He clenched his teeth. “I’m... I’m gonna trust you on this one, but you better put those dinosaur skills you’ve accumulated to good use, got that?”

“Relax, do you think we’d still be here if I didn’t think that we’d be fine at the end? Now, we should go check out that clearing and get our bearings.” Giuliana replied as she pointed towards the valley.

They made their way to the clearing, and looked around. At first there didn’t seem to be any life what so ever, but after a short while a large herd of sauroposeidons marched into the valley looking for food. They gathered around a patch of monkey puzzle trees positioned near the middle of the clearing. A flock of pterosaurs glided behind them as they fed. The flying reptiles would land on the sauropod’s bodies and eat parasites off them, creating a symbiotic relationship. A small group of astrodons entered into the clearing as well, looking to eat some low growing plants. Stalking them in the corner of the field was a tyrannotitan.

“Wow.” Terence uttered as he gazed at the giant reptiles. He pulled out his cell phone, and took a picture of the scene. “Look how huge they are! Why, they’re massive!”

“Aren’t they beautiful? I’ve never seen anything this amazing in my entire life!” Giuliana replied.

“What should we do?” Terence asked her. “Should we stick to the forest, or should we go out into the valley?”

“We should avoid the valley. It’s too dangerous; it’s where all the larger carnivores hunt. They can get larger prey in the valleys. Then again, the forest is the hunting ground of the smaller therapods, the raptors. They use the trees and bushes for cover, and will normally engage in stealth attacks and ambushes.” Giuliana replied. She looked at her watch, and realising that it was incorrect, she looked up at the sun. “It’s around noon, so I’d say we should stick to the forest for now. Come night fall we should really get out of there though.”

“Let’s go then.” Terence replied in agreement.

They entered into the forest, and explored a little more. There were many large types of insects. At one point, a giant butterfly landed on Terence’s back, and gave him a scare. As they kept moving, studying every little detail around them, they came across a trail. They followed it for about a half an hour.

“It’s getting really warm out here.” Terence said as he wiped drips of sweat off of his forehead. “And I am rather hungry. Can we stop for a bit?”

“Alright. We should take a rest. If you want to cool off you may want to think about taking off some of your guard uniform. That vest must be really warm.” Giuliana replied as she sat down on a rotten log. “Then we can go look for some food. There’s got to be all kinds of stuff you can eat around here.”

“That would be nice. There must be some fruit trees, or berry bushes around here somewhere. I bet there would be some by that river we were at before.” He replied as he slipped his vest off, and rolled up his shirt sleeves. “Hey, there’s something crawling on your back, and it’s big!”

“What? What’s on my back?” She replied.

“A big centipede or something that has a load of legs.” He said. He lifted his hands and held them apart by about two feet. “It’s this big, and it’s red.”

She didn’t move, knowing now what was on her. It was a prehistoric centipede, and it was a resident of the rotten log they were sitting on. “Don’t touch it, okay. If the little two inch long ones in present day can cause a lot of pain when they bite, how bad

would it hurt if this thing bit me? It's also probably venomous. Let's just let it come off by itself." She said as she tried not to move.

"Are you sure... I bet I could knock it off your back without it biting you." Terence replied.

"Don't take the chance, Terry. If it does bite me I could very well die. There's a species of present day centipede that lives in Australia. It can grow to almost as large as this one, and they are extremely aggressive. There is no anti venom for a centipede bite because they are so incredibly hard to milk." She added as she felt the dozens of legs tickle her back. The insect crawled up onto her shoulder, around her neck, down her back again and finally onto the log. She got up, and motioned for Terence to do the same.

Terence got up, and picked up his vest. He brushed it off, and put it on. "Let's go find something to eat before that thing comes back."

They walked down the trail a little more, and came across a fruit tree. It had yellow fruits on it the size of apricots. There were little mammals eating the fallen fruit, and primitive birdlike reptiles were eating the fruits still in the tree. They didn't seem to notice Giuliana and Terence.

"How about these? They look palatable. All kinds of animal are eating them, so it is unlikely they are poisonous in anyway." Giuliana picked one off of the tree, and took a bite. "And they must be ripe, because they're quite sweet." She handed one to Terence. "Try it."

He took the fruit, and tasted it. "They are good." He said with a smile. He grabbed a few more off the tree and put them in his pocket. "I'm taking a few of these home."

"Now we should find some water." Giuliana added after she had grabbed another fruit. "Let's see if we can find that river."

"As long as we don't run into the deinonychus again, I'm cool with that." Terence agreed. "I'm pretty sure it was that way." He pointed south.

They walked south for about a half an hour, and reached the river. It was much calmer at that part of it, so calm that wasn't really a river. It was more like a stream.

Giuliana had a small, empty water bottle with her, and filled it to the top with the stream water. "Look in the water, over there." She said to Terence as she pointed to a deeper part of the stream. "Look at that salamander!"

"It's huge! What kind of salamander gets that big?" He exclaimed.

"That's called a koolasuchus. They are the last species of giant amphibian, and this one is part of a dying race. They are carnivores, and eat small dinosaurs and

mammals. This species will live for another few million years.” She replied. “This one’s small, it must be young.”

“He’s really odd looking. He has such a big head.” Terence said. The koolasuchus had a large spade shaped head, short legs, a long, thin and muscular tail and was about three feet long. Its eyes were large.

The sound of a splash echoed around the forest. The koolasuchus darted under an old fallen tree that had landed in the water.

“What was that?” Giuliana said as she looked in the direction of the splash. “It sounded large.”

“Could have been a tree or something.” Terence replied. Then where the splash came from a groan followed. “Trees don’t make noise like that, though.”

Giuliana started to move towards the place where the noise came from. “I bet it was a dinosaur.” She said as she motioned for Terence to follow her.

“What if it’s a dangerous dinosaur, Giuliana? Think about it, it pretends to fall in the water and needs help, and then we come over and help it only to be tricked into getting eaten.” Terence reasoned.

“Terence, dinosaurs have never seen humans before, and they do not have the ability to think in that way, their brains aren’t nearly as complex as ours are. Besides, it wasn’t that large of a splash.” She replied logically. They went over to where the noise was, and there they found a very young dinosaur.

“What kind of dinosaur is that, anyway? There was big ones out in the valley, but this one must be dwarfed or something.” Terence said once he saw the little dinosaur.

“Terry, it’s not a dwarf; it’s a hatchling. This type of dinosaur is called an astrodon. It is a species of sauropod. This one couldn’t be more than a few weeks old.” She replied.

“You’re speaking Greek to me. You know I have no idea what all those technical terms mean.” Terence informed her.

“A sauropod is a four-legged, large, long-necked dinosaur that eats vegetation. The astrodon is a species of smaller sauropods, only reaching at maximum sixty feet long and thirty feet high. Larger sauropods managed to reach up to one hundred and fifteen feet long, weighing one hundred and five tons. This astrodon is very small, only being about four feet long. It looks very thin, and it’s injured.” She explained.

Terence bent down next the little astrodon. “It appears that it has some lacerations on its ankle. I can fix that.” He said as he examined the young dinosaurs wounded leg. “Accept I lack antibiotics, bandages, tape and even if I had all those things

the bandages would have to be changed once a day.” He turned to Giuliana, “I think... we should bring him back.”

She looked back at Terence. “That could have dire effects on the timeline, for all we know this baby dinosaur could have a vital role in our future.” She replied. “Then again, I can’t go home knowing that this little guy died prematurely. I suppose we could. We can’t know for sure that it would mess anything up.”

“So it’s decided, we’ll bring him back. Where are we going to bring him once we get him back, though?” Terence asked.

“There’s no one at my house that I know of right now. My brother might be there, but if it’s still midnight when we go back, if we can get back that is, then he’ll be asleep. I have all those supplies at my house, except if we get back there it might place us in the museum. Hopefully there are no guards around.” She replied.

“Okay, we have this figured out now. So you read the tablet, and we’ll go back.” Terence said as he gingerly lifted the young astrodon. It grunted a little, and then squirmed slightly. “Calm down, we’re trying to help you... boy are you heavy.”

Giuliana set the tablet on the ground, and positioned it correctly. She read out the inscription on the tablet, and the tablet began vibrating. It produced a beam of light, and the portal was recreated. “It looks like it opens to the museum.” She said as she watched Terence walk through the portal with the little astrodon. She picked up the tablet, and followed them.

Terence put down the astrodon once he made it through. “He is really heavy.” He uttered. “Now let’s get him back to your place.” Terence picked him up again. They walked down a long hallway that led to the entranceway. Giuliana had put the tablet back in the shattered case it was in before.

They reached Terence’s car, and put the little astrodon in the back seat. “You know the way to my house from here, right?” Giuliana asked as they pulled out of the parking lot.

“Of course I do.” Terence replied. He stepped on the gas, and they got to Giuliana’s house quickly. They pulled into the driveway, and removed the dinosaur from the back seat.

“Come on, before someone sees him.” Giuliana urged Terence to pick up the pace.

“You’re not the one carrying a one hundred and eighty pound dinosaur!” He replied as he entered the house.

“Shhh! I think my brother’s sleeping. If you wake him up, there’s no telling who’s going to find out about this. I’m going to have to bribe him with a new video game or something to keep him quiet.” She said as she walked into the living room. She grabbed some towels, and motioned for Terence to follow her. “Put him here.” She said after placing the towels on the sofa.

“Perfect. Nice and comfortable.” He said once the little one was on the couch. He patted it on the back. “Where’s your first aid kit?”

Giuliana ran and grabbed it from the closet. “Here, there should be bandages, antibiotic cream, and tape in there.” She replied as she handed him the kit.

“Thank you.” He took the kit, opened it, and removed the desired items from it. He examined the wound on the dinosaur’s leg. “This looks like it’s been here for a few days. It could be infected. Pass me the cream please.” He put more than enough antibiotic cream on the wound, and wrapped it up in bandages. “There, that should do it.”

“At this age they’re hungry all the time. This one appears particularly thin. I’ll be back in a minute.” Giuliana said just before she ran up the stairs. She had gone into her bedroom where she kept a few potted plants. “These ferns should do the trick.” She showed him the ferns, but he refused them. “That’s not a good sign. He should be all over these.”

“Hopefully he’s just low on strength, and it’s not something worse like a parasite. He could just use some rest. We should let him sleep some, and offer them to him in the morning. You have to make sure he’s hydrated through the night, and keep him as comfortable as possible.” Terence said. “Now, it’s late. I’m tired, so I’m going to go home.”

“Wait, he still needs a name. We have to name him before you go.” Giuliana pointed out.

“A name, huh. Why don’t we call him something tough to suit his largeness? He is a big lizard, after all. Something like Tank, or Titus.” Terence suggested.

“How about Armour? I think that suits him.” She replied. “I think it’s a good name, considering he most likely is male according to his vivid colouration. When their backs and heads have multiple colours in that manner; all those reds, blues and greens, it usually means that they need them for attracting mates.”

“Well, I do really have to go now. See you later.” Terence said. “And I think Armour is a good name. See you later Armour.” He patted the astrodon on the head gently.

“You’re welcome to come back in the morning to see him if you want.” Giuliana offered.



“Thanks, I hope he’s better by tomorrow. Bye.” Terence replied, and then left.

Giuliana sat down next to the little astrodon and stroked its back. The amazement of the day was still settling in. She expected to wake up, and find that it was a dream. She had always wanted to see a dinosaur, a live one, now she was taking care of a baby sauropod. “Maybe he’s thirsty. Are you thirsty, Armour?” She asked him quietly. She got up, and came back with a bowl of water. “Here you go. Have a sip.” She held the bowl in front of the astrodon. He sniffed the water, examined it closely and then took a drink.

“That’s good. You need as much water as you can get right now.”

“What in the name of a motherless goat is that?” Exclaimed a voice from behind Giuliana.

Giuliana got up from the crouching position she was in and turned around

“Mike. What are you doing up? I thought I was being quiet.” She replied still with a low voice.

“That doesn’t answer my question. What the heck is that? Can you not see it? It’s right there, on the couch.” He said pointing at the dinosaur. “And why are you so dirty?”

“Trust me, Michael, it’s a long story. In short; I was at work, Terence and I went back in time, we found this little guy and we brought him back to help his leg there.” She explained. “Please don’t tell anyone about this, please. It’s extremely important that no one knows.”

“Wow... just hold on a second here. Let’s rewind this a bit. You think you went back in time? Are you on drugs or something?” He said in a tired voice. “Okay, I’m your brother, and normally brothers are supposed to trust sisters but this time I think you’ve fallen off the deep end.”

“Well do you have a better explanation as to why there is a baby astrodon on the couch? Think about it. Would it be easier for you to believe that I cloned it myself in my make-shift laboratory in the garage? Or maybe I got him on eBay? Come on, use the brain you were born with, there’s no better explanation. Where else could he have come from?” She said agitatedly. She felt that it was completely illogical to assume that she wasn’t telling the truth. How else could a one hundred an eleven million year old animal be sitting on their couch?

“You do have a point there. You better explain this in detail to me in the morning, and take a chill. I won’t tell anyone. Good luck hiding a four foot long lizard.” He replied.

“You know Mom and Dad won’t be home for another week. I’ll have figured out what to do with him by then. Maybe Terence can take him or something. It will be discussed when he gets back.” She said, sitting down next to Armour.

“Fine. I’m too tired to debate with you right now. So, what exactly is this thing?” He asked.

“This is an astrodon, and it is a baby. Astrocons are a species of sauropod that lived in the early Cretaceous period; we found this around one hundred and eleven million years ago. Astrocons are related to the brachiosaurus, the sauroposeidon and the argentinosauros closer than any other type of sauropod. This one will likely grow to at maximum sixty feet long. However, considering our air isn’t as clean, the food isn’t as healthy, the water is dirtier and our oxygen levels are much lower now than when his species roamed the Earth, I think he won’t reach that size by a long shot.” She elaborated.

“And how do you expect to take care of something that is longer than like seven cars? And I’m not even going to ask how you went back in time to like millions of years ago.” Michael replied.

“Like I said, he may not get that big.” Giuliana said. “We can talk about this in the morning, I’m sure Terence will be back by then. For now we should sleep.”

Michael agreed, and they went to bed. Giuliana regularly came down to check Armour, offer him food and water, and make sure that everything was okay with him.

Morning rolled around, and Giuliana was up with Armour when Terence knocked on the door. “Here I come.” Giuliana said as she got up from the couch. She went to the front door, and opened it. “Hey Terry. You should see how much better Armour’s doing. Come on.” She walked back down the hallway to the living room where she left Armour.

“Where’d he go? He’s not on the couch anymore.”

“There he is.” Terence replied with a smile. Armour was in the kitchen drinking from the dogs bowl. “He’s strong enough to walk on his leg. That’s excellent.”

“We should bring him more food. He ate all the potted ferns I had last night. We should bring him the forest, and let him graze a bit. We can bring the dog while we’re at it. Buddy loves the forest, and it could be good for Armour to interact with him.” Giuliana proposed.

“But what if someone sees him? Then what will we do?” Terence pointed out.

“I know a way to this big patch of low growing plants surrounded by trees. No one knows about it but me, and the way to it has nearly no chance of having any contact with anyone. Mike, Buddy and I go there all the time. I’ve build a little shelter on the

land, and I have to say it can stand up to even the worst of weather.” She replied, reassuring Terence.

“Okay, great. I’ll go get Armour, you get Buddy.” He said as he walked over to the young dinosaur.

Giuliana hooked Buddy up on a leash, and gave one to Terence for Armour. He put it on Armour.

“So, this is it, I assume?” Terence asked as they entered a small clearing in a cedar forest.

“Yup. See, it has all kinds of ferns, bushes, flowers and mosses. Anything he could ever want regarding food has got to be here.” Giuliana replied. She took off Buddy’s leash. “Here Buddy, let me throw your ball.” She threw the ball, and Buddy chased after it. “Let Armour off of his leash, Terry.”

Terence took the leash off of Armour, and he showed him a patch of ferns. “There you go, little guy.” Armour started eating as soon as he saw them. Terence walked back over to Giuliana. “I have a question.”

“Yes?” She replied.

“Well, how large to astrodon’s grow to, anyway” Terence asked.

“Oh, about fifty feet long.” She replied “Sometimes the really large ones will get to sixty feet.” She replied.

“How do you expect to take care of a creature that’s longer than two busses? What are we going to do with him when he gets larger? It’s going to be really hard to feed something that big and how long is he going to live? You’ve even said that some sauropods can live up to one hundred years.” Terence pointed out.

“In order for him to get to fifty feet, he’s going to have to put on one ton a year in weight, once he’s about forty or fifty years old he should be completely full grown, and stop growing. These live about that long. They become mature at around fifteen or sixteen years of age. Weight gain slows down at about twenty. I think we can worry about largeness when the time comes.” She replied logically. “Not to mention, the oxygen amount in the air during his time was nearly three times greater than it is now, the air was cleaner, the water was fresher, the food was more wholesome, less natural disasters, and everything was bigger. With the conditions now, I highly doubt he will even reach thirty feet. Considering paleontologists have discovered quite a few “dwarf” astrodon’s as well, he could be a dwarf meaning he could only reach fifteen or twenty feet. We have a big piece of land, with a heck of a lot of plants. Remember, I used to live on a farm, one twenty foot long dinosaur couldn’t be as hard to take care of as thirty cows, a dozen pigs, and a herd of horses.”

“Okay, but even then. Twenty feet is pretty big, and that land isn’t yours, it’s your parents’ land. Will they be okay with a twenty foot long dinosaur eating their plant life?” He added.

“Don’t worry about it Terence, I have it all figured out. My mom and dad love dinosaurs the way I do. Only my brother doesn’t, and even then he found out and he thinks it’s cool.” She said as she threw the ball for Buddy again.

“Alright. I should have known you had a plan, you always do.” He replied with a smile. “I suppose we should bring some of these ferns back for him, considering those are the ones he seems to like the most.”

“I agree. There are tons of them, so it shouldn’t be a problem. We have a big freezer in our basement so we can freeze some for the winter.” She added. They gathered up a great deal of ferns, and brought them along with Armour and Buddy home.

### **Epilogue:**

Three years had gone by, and Armour was about ten feet long. Life was going well for him, and Giuliana loved him a great deal. Terence came over nearly every day to see him as well. Giuliana only told a handful of people about him, in order to protect him. She was always worried that the wrong person would find out about him and take him away, but she had done a good job so far of keeping him a secret from the world. Her parents loved him as well, and they even built for him an extra-large barn for him to use and sleep in during the winter.

As for the tablet that had caused the whole scenario, sadly it was destroyed in a fire along with a large sum of the other artefacts and relics in the collection. It seemed no one would ever again see the dinosaurs in their prime, and Armour would go down in history as the very last dinosaur to ever again walk the Earth.

\*All the dinosaurs, plant life, insects, arthropods as well as other aspects of the prehistoric life in this story are all accurate to one hundred and eleven million years ago. All facts are as accurate as possible, and behaviour and diet among other facts are all accurate.

### **3 MORE DAYS**

**By Ekroop Sekhon: Grade 10**

3 more days. That's it and I'm finally out of this hell hole. No more bad food, no more group and best of all no more Tracy. It'll just be, by myself. Again.

Before I ended up here, it was just mom and me. No other family. As for my dad, well let's just say I never knew him. He left when I was 7 months old. Apparently a child was too much to handle and there was a lot of things he had to do in his life other than raise one. That was his excuse when he left. What a jerk. Oh well we were fine without him.

I grew up just like any other kid. I went to school, did my homework, played with the kids in my neighbourhood and even had sleepovers with my best friend. My mom worked 2 jobs but still made time for me. I could always go to her when I had a problem or needed advice. We were so open that we never had arguments. I loved life and thought that nothing could ever change it. Boy was I ever wrong.

It all started about 2 years ago; my mom had just begun dating this guy named Rob Maxwell. I never liked him but my mom was so happy around him that I didn't dare say anything. Soon after, I regretted that because slowly my mom seemed to be drifting away from me. She barely had any time for me anymore and started caring less and less. Life from this point just went downhill.

When Rob and her went out on dates, mom always got back home late at night. Sometimes she didn't come home at all. I was scared to be home alone and tried to tell her about it but she didn't really seem to listen to me. Since she was out all day and night either working or spending time with Rob, I really had to become independent.

Every kid wants to be more and more independent, but trust me; it's not the best thing in the world. First I got a job so I could have my own spending money. Then I bought a cookbook so I could make food for myself. Even though my mom was pretty much absent most of the time, I still felt it was ok, as long as she was happy. That's when mom changed again, for the worse.

I was just getting back from school and saw my mom's car in the driveway. Surprised to know she was home at this time, I knew something must've been wrong. When I got inside, she was in the kitchen crying and drinking. She was shouting things like "How could he?!" and "Why god, why?!" When I asked her what happened, she just pushed me away.

After a couple hours, she still didn't really stop drinking and skipped dinner even though I begged her to eat. Later on the phone rang and my mom rushed to answer it. "Is that you Rob?" I heard her practically scream into the phone. Curious to find out why my mom was so upset, I picked up the phone to listen on the other line. I heard Rob say "You know we're done Charlotte. Now come pick up your stuff, it's outside my

house.” “No Rob, wait, what did I do wrong? Please let’s work this out!” my mom pleaded, but he had already hung up.

From that day on, my mom’s life only consisted of alcohol and crying. I was worried about her health, but there was nothing I could do. I felt so helpless. I knew my mom could do better than Rob, but she just gave up completely.

Eventually, my mom stopped going to work and the bills started piling up. I worked extra shifts and kept up with the rent but our cable got cut off and sometimes we didn’t have hot water. Now I was not like any other kid at all. I didn’t have time to hang out with friends, I stopped having sleepovers so people couldn’t see my mom drunk all the time and I was basically taking care of my mom rather than the other way around. I really missed my old mom and I cried from time to time at how much my life had changed.

One day when I was getting back home from work, I saw that my mom’s car wasn’t in the driveway. Usually when it isn’t there, it means she’s gone to the local Beer Store to get more alcohol. I went inside and noticed there was message on the phone. I pressed play messages. Although I was worried before about my mom, it was nothing compared to how I felt after hearing that message.

She left me. By myself, all alone. Without a second thought. That was all I could think. The message was from my mom. She said that Rob had called while I was at school and asked for her back even though he left her about 5 months earlier. My mom said yes without a doubt and now they were moving to Alaska or something. How could she? I was her daughter for crying out loud! Rob was just someone who would probably leave her again. The I fell to the floor and just cried.

After an hour, I wiped my tears and stopped feeling sorry for myself. All I felt now was anger, towards Rob and my mom. I hated my mom for leaving me but I tried to be strong. I thought I could do this alone. I didn’t need her, after all in was already taking care of myself. This wouldn’t be too hard. I could do it.

And I did. It wasn’t much different except that I really was all alone. I was especially scared at night but I didn’t cry anymore. It was my mom’s stupid decision to leave me so there was no point in missing her. She probably didn’t even think about me at all and I tried not to think about her. I went to school, worked, paid the rent, bought groceries and cooked for myself. Not very hard, I was getting by.

But my independence only lasted about 2 and half months. It was my neighbour, Mr. Dickson’s fault. He noticed that my mom’s car was never home and neither was she. So he called the cops on me. The police asked where my mother was and so I told them she left. I had absolutely no chance, so there was no point in lying. Since I wasn’t 18 yet, I wasn’t allowed to live on my own so they called social services. That’s how I ended up here, at Miss Wilson’s Home for Girls.

Tracy was my social worker. She's the one who came to get me and "helped" me settle in. She was really rude and wasn't exactly sympathetic. She still comes around to check up on me once or twice a month but hasn't changed. All the other girls here aren't friendly either. They're like the mean girls in high school. Most of them have been here longer than me and so they make nasty comments about me. None of them are my friends, but it's not like I mind.

I still have to go to school and I got another job closer to here. The food is terrible, way worse than cafeteria food. Also we have to go to group once a week. It is just a time for all of us girls to talk about our problems and feelings. I absolutely hate it. It gives the mean girls more reasons to pick on me and some other girls. We have a bedtime too, which is really lame. You have to be in bed by 10pm, no excuses. I bet you even jail is better than this "home." In case you haven't noticed, I hate this place.

So after about a year and 2 months of torture, all I'm waiting for is 3 days. 3 more days and I'm leaving Miss Wilson's Home for Girls. 3 more days and I'm free. 3 more days till I'm 18 and allowed to live on my own. 3 more days and I'm alone, again.