

2011 SEEPE WALTERS SHORT STORY CONTEST

What's Your Story?



Innisfil Public Library

Produced by Innisfil Public Library

Innisfil, Ontario

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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 10th 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, Chapters and Staples for their ongoing support and sponsorship; as well as the judging panel: Barbara Love, Chris Simon, and Deirdre Fitzgerald 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 2011 edition of the Seepe Walters Short Story Contest.

Kathy Hammer
Children's Services Librarian
Innisfil Public Library

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Diary of a Puck</i> By Ty Steele	1
<i>The Attacks</i> By Luc Baier-Reinio	4
<i>Green Gummy Bears</i> By Story Quibel	6
<i>The Underground Room</i> By Lucas Chu	9
<i>Attack of the Evil Zombie Pizzas</i> By Jacob Bradley	12
<i>The Wild Stallion</i> By Kaitlyn Brown	14
<i>False Angel</i> By Raquel B. Vachon	16
<i>Frogs</i> By Bruce Quibel	23
<i>Changes of our Life</i> By Rabecca Smith	27
<i>Adventures in Atlantis: The Caves of Despair</i> By Stephanie Stockwell	29
<i>The Diary</i> By Tori Hayward	36
<i>From the Ashes</i> By Katrina Alves	41

<i>The Little Things</i> By Jessica Bell-Jackson	48
<i>The Lion of the Sea</i> By Madeline Smith	52
<i>Beautiful Lies</i> By Kayla Leigh Sanders Coulson	59
<i>Uninhabited</i> By Alicia Mirtsos	68
<i>The Visitor</i> By McAuley Montpetit	70

Diary of a Puck
By Ty Steele: Grade 6

Dec. 1

Dear Diary,

Finally, out of some huge box and on the shelves I went. I was feeling round and black. I was the puck on the top of the pile. I was so excited to find a home and be put on a shelf, when some all-star puck jerk yells from all the way across the aisle, "You'll never be bought! What dummy would want to waste their money on you?" Wow, what a rubber head! But I wasn't leaving this spot until I was bought. Well, I had no choice. Then some huge narrow thing says, "Hey, you dummy. I want to hit you. I don't know why, but I want to hit you." I was scared of him. Now he calls me his nemesis. What ever that is.

Sincerely,

Your extremely scared friend NHL

Dec 2

Dear Diary,

Today a wonderful thing happened. A boy picked me over any puck out of the store. Me. And of course he picks my nemesis Easton. What luck! The boy started bundling Easton up with sticky white stuff. I thought we must be going somewhere cold. I wish we didn't. We went to a colorful cold place. I was dropped by a two-legged zebra then Easton started smacking me, just when I told him not to bully me. The boy was trying to hold him back but he couldn't. Then I figured out the boy was controlling Easton because people screamed "pass the puck Joe". Easton's name is Easton so they must have been talking about the boy. Everybody wanted me. Everybody was chasing me. Then Joe hit me into a big red and white monster. Everybody seemed happy he did this to me, especially Joe. Then I was dropped by that two-legged zebra and Easton whacked me again but this time into a bumpy rock that lead to more people.

Sincerely,

Your bruised friend NHL

Dec 3

Dear Diary,

It was a long night last night. Three things I don't like happened. First, I was alone. Second, I was in the dark. And it was cold. But, it was worth it because I have a new best friend. I was picked up off the bumpy rock in the morning by a boy named Jeff. Jeff has a hockey stick named Jofa who explained to me why Easton was hitting me. He said that we're athletes and we were the most important part of the sport. He said they boys couldn't play the game without us. He said my job was very important. Jofa said that the cold place is an arena and the two-legged zebra is called a referee. He also said that the red and white monster isn't even alive. Wow, now I'm the rubber head.

Sincerely,

Your embarrassed friend NHL

Dec 4

Dear Diary,

Today, I learned more about Jofa and his family. It turns out Jeff is Joes younger brother. As soon as I learned that, Easton was sitting in the corner and said "Listen to Jeff and Joe. They are fighting. That means we're going to play a rough game of hockey tomorrow." I had wanted to ask "why tomorrow?" but then he interrupted me by saying he was going to hurt me tomorrow. I think they will use me as the puck in their game.

Sincerely,

Your scared friend NHL

Dec 5

Dear Diary,

Today was the day where my problems with Easton ended. We played a game of hockey, Joe and Easton swung at us hard but Jofa and I dodged them. Jeff made Jofa hit me into the net and we were winning. It stayed like that till the end when Jofa pushed me ahead and I turned on my side to dodge Easton but then Joe kicked me into Jeff's net. It shouldn't have counted but according to Joe's rules anything goes. So it was all tied up. They started with a face off and their dad dropped me. Usually Jofa goes after me. This time he chopped Easton in half. Joe was forced to forfeit. Jeff won the game against his older brother. Now I'm on a shelf. Jeff retired me. 'Living the dream' on a shelf.

Sincerely,

Your happy friend NHL

The Attacks

By Luc Baier-Reinio: Grade 5

“Hello, India! I am Ezra Barooah, king of your land. I am addressing you with this speech because I have heard of many terrorists attacking citizens in crowded areas. I have set up a department for...” a gunshot is heard. It slammed into Ezra Barooah’s body, knocking him back into the wall behind him. Two more and the king is dead, lying in a pool of blood.

Ahmed Jena woke up at 7:00 in the morning. After having breakfast and putting on clothes, he walked down the driveway and checked his mail. “Nothing, nothing, ah!” he exclaimed. “To Ahmed Jena. Surat, India. 50 Murical St. From: Montevideo, Uruguay. 278 Carter rd. “ Ah ha!” He ripped it open. “Hello Ahmed. Congratulations on killing the king! We still have two more targets; His son, Dasras Barooah, and the wife Alexandra Barooah. I expect them both dead by May 23. It’s May 2. Jose Eduardo.” The terrorist frowned. That only gave him 21 days to kill them both.

A car pulled into the driveway on 977 Jenison St. “Watch your step Madame”, Umesh Dirasbe said to Alexandra Barooah. “Have a nice stay little man”, he said to Dasras Barooah. They walked over to the tiny house, and opened the door. “Here we are!” Alexandra said. “In the heart of Surat, India!” “Great” Dasras mumbled. He was still saddened by his father’s death. “You’ll sleep in the bedroom”, she said, pointing at a bedroom to the left, “and I’ll have that one.” “All right”, he replied. He walked over to his new room and put his things down: clothes, games, and diary. After that, he walked back to the main room. “Mom, where’s the food? Mom...Mom...Mom!”

Carrying Alexandra Barooah while running wasn’t easy. Jena stopped, readjusted her, caught his breath, and kept running. He studied the street signs as he ran. Rani Talab, Nanawata, and then, Murical. He quickly cut and stumbled down half the street. He ran to the door of the house, opened the door, but realized this wasn’t his house. As a man shouted, “hey! What are you playing at?” Jena sprinted out and ran 2 houses down. The man ran outside his house and swore about “bloody kids” and walked backed in. Ahmed Jena finally did find his house and ran in. He tied up Alexandra, and placed her under a table. “Now, my dearest Queen,” Jena said, smiling, “I left a note at your house, saying to come to a special spot, with 1, 000, 000 rupees. So, I’ll have two dead royal members, and an extra 1, 000, 000!” Alexandra screamed. She knew Dasras could call the police, but who knew what he’d do?

Dasras found the note, and read it out loud, “Dear Dasras, you little pumpkin, I have your mom, and I’ll be prepared to kill her if you don’t bring 1,000,000 rupees by 879 Nanawata St. on Monday. Love, ☺.” Very scared, Dasras had no other option then to call the police. “Hello?” a voice said, “hi, it’s me Dasras Barooah, and a terrorist just took my mom and is asking me to bring 1, 000, 000 rupees at 879 Nanawata St. on Monday.” “Wait; did you say 879 Nanawata St?” “Yes.” “The only logical thing to do is to have a look inside that house.” “What about me?” “Ah, yes, we can’t leave you. We’ll pick you up as soon as possible.”

Jena had anticipated the police plan. He brought Alexandra to 879 Nanawata St. He climbed up to the second floor windows, opened a window, and jumped in. It was the washroom. He realized this is an ideal spot to hide. He threw Alexandra in a corner, and carefully tied his own hands, and used a towel to cover up his mouth. Downstairs, he could hear yelling. "Police! Open up!" He smiled. So far, the plan was working out nicely.

The policemen crashed the door into the hallway, almost knocking the owner Shah Katrina, over. "Hello?" Shah called. "Police! We're searching your house!" "OK." Shah was confused. He didn't know what he did wrong; he shook his head, and went back to drinking his coffee. Meanwhile, the policemen walked around the living room, looking in odd places, such as under the couch.

Upstairs, Jena was thinking carefully. Alexandra could tell the police and he'd be arrested. He needed them both dead quick. He could run off but Eduardo wouldn't be happy. He decided he'd kill Alexandra now. He felt his pockets for a gun, or knife. He had none! He needed to escape, quick! He couldn't get down the window without breaking his leg. "Darn!" He muttered. He had tied himself up. He didn't do a hard knot, but every second wasted was bad. After, he untied himself; he opened the window, because there was no other way to escape. He noticed there was a pipe he could try to slide down. But before he could jump, the door opened, slamming Jena into the sink. "Aghh!" he cried. "My god!" a voice shouted. "It's the queen!" two men ran over to her, while a man walked towards Jena. "Are you all right?" He said. Jena nodded. He knew the queen would reveal the truth, so he decided to run. "Hey!" The man called out. "Catch him!" But a husky policeman was already blocking the stairs. Jena tried to knock him down, but he was no match for the muscular man, who soon threw him to the ground. Jena knew he had been busted, but refused to say anything, except his name. But the queen sorted things out. She explained how Jena kidnapped her, tied her up, left the note, and climbed into this house.

Jena went to a court almost immediately, and was quickly charged for murdering and kidnapping. It was also revealed that he was responsible for 5 other deaths. He was sentenced to life in jail, and the royal family soon moved back to New Delhi. The policemen also searched Jena's house, and found many more notes from Jose Eduardo, including the one he sent about murdering the rest of the royal family. The letters described many other attacks planned. The police caught Eduardo but no charges were brought against him, because he died of a heart attack the next day. And in the end, as Ghandi says, good always triumphs.

Green Gummy Bears

By Story Quibel: Grade 5

Stella Avery was always first, and that was just the way she liked it. Stella was first on her class list, and so she got called first for attendance. She is the oldest because her birthday is January 2nd. She was one of the only ones who had never got in trouble from mean Mrs. Green, the angry principal of Goodman Public School. Stella was the smartest in her grade because she got 99 out of 100% on her math test, and Mrs Dane hung it right in the middle of the test wall for everyone to see. All of Stella's art teachers said that she is a truly gifted painter! In gym everyone admired how she could score 5 baskets in one game, and in science when they made volcanoes, Stella's was the only one that actually exploded. Her baking soda lava almost hit the ceiling. The band teacher loved the sound Stella's flute made as she practiced for the talent show. She was planning to play her favourite song, *Love Story* by Taylor Swift.

She gets invited to every party. Everyone copied her and they wanted to be like her. When Stella wore a shirt that said "I ♥ Jacob!" (from *Twilight*), every girl in school wore a sticky note on her shirt that said "I ♥ Jacob!" Even the boys wore sticky notes, but theirs said: "Go Jacob" or "Jacob Rocks!"

The only thing that was not so perfect about Stella is her secret bad habit. Once, when she got really mad, she spat out a green gummy bear, and it stuck to the ceiling. She liked the way it sounded, splat, and the way it stayed there on the ceiling, looking down at her. It made her laugh, and she forgot why she was mad. Ever since then, if she was feeling angry, she would suck on a gummy until it was just the right amount of gooey stickiness and then shoot it out with her tongue, making that loud splat. She found that the green ones worked best.

The next day of school came and there was a new student her named Alexis Adams. When they did attendance, Alexis Adams came before Stella Avery. Stella was second. With birthdays, Alexis was older -- her birthday was January 1st. Alexis was even in the newspaper the year on the first day of her life: First Baby in Barrie. When Alexis did her math test she got 100 out of 100 right. Mrs Dane moved Stella's to put Alexis' perfect test in the best spot on the bulletin board. In art class, the teacher said, "That is the most beautiful painting I have ever seen in all my years of teaching art." During gym, Stella got 5 baskets but Alexis got 7. She said she was on the basketball team at her old school. In science when Alexis's volcano erupted her baking soda lava hit the ceiling and left a little pink mark. The band teacher said, "Alexis, hearing you play clarinet is like listening to angels sing."

One of Stella's friends was throwing a party and she invited Alexis instead of Stella. Stella went to the staircase at the school and spit a green gummy bear. Splat. It stuck there, smiling down at her. She felt better.

The next day Stella decided to do something about Alexis. She decided she would make everyone forget about Alexis and remember Stella. When she went to

school to next day, the loud angry voice of the principal Mrs. Green on the announcements said: “Students I have been noticing green gummies bears all over the school and it is very difficult remove them. Whoever is doing it you better stop now or you will be in big trouble! Thank you, have a nice day.”

Stella had a sticker that said “I ♥ Edward” (from *Twilight*) and put it on Alexis’ backpack. Stella told Tammy about the sticker and then Tammy yelled, “Oh, wow, Alexis! You like Edward too? I always liked him, but I was just too embarrassed to say!” Then, everyone else that was around said, “We like him too!” Stella went to spit some more gummies.

It was finally the weekend. Stella’s grandpa was coming to take her golfing. She didn’t really want to go; she was worried that someone might see her, and make fun of her for hanging out with old people on the golf course. She loved her grandpa, so she went anyway.

Once they got there, Stella saw someone who looked very familiar. It was Alexis! Stella knew what she was going to do. The next day Stella went to school she whispered Alexis’ secret to Tammy then Tammy told Steve, Steve told Julie, Julie told Sam, and just like that everyone in school knew about Alexis playing golf and loving it. Once Alexis walked into school Tammy said, “Hey, Alexis, Do you really love to play golf?”

“Yeah, I play golf. It’s fun. Once I got a hole-in-one! It was awesome!” Alexis excitedly said.

“Wow, you must be so good at it! Tell us more” said Tammy as everyone was nodding their heads in agreement and walking with Alexis, leaving Stella alone in the hallway.

There was another announcement: “Students, this is Mrs. Green speaking and I have been noticing more green gummies stuck to the ceiling. You will have to let the teachers look through your lunch bag, backpack and desk. If you are caught with green gummy bears you will be suspended for 25 days. Have a nice day.”

“I know what has to happen next,” Stella said, through a smile. *RING* went the bell. Just as planned, Stella snuck in to Mrs. Dane’s math class and put a pack of green gummies in Alexis’s desk. *RING*, Alexis sat at her desk she put her hand in her desk trying to find her pencil but instead she found a pack of green gummies. She opened it and said, “I always wanted to try spitting one of these things.” She took it out of the pack and spat it, *splat*, just as the teacher came in.

“Alexis, what are you doing?” asked Mrs Dane. “Miss Adams, you are in big trouble!”

Alexis looked around. Tammy said, “Go Alexis! That’s awesome! She’s the green gummy girl!” Everyone laughed and said, “Alexis Rules!”

“STOP!” Stella yelled, “It wasn’t her! It’s me! I’m the green gummy girl! I just put some in Alexis’ desk today!” Mrs Green walked in and said, “You two -- come to my office now!”

Alexis and Stella both went to the office. “I hope I don’t get detention,” said Alexis, “I need to practice.”

“Practice for what?” asked Stella.

“The Talent Show. I’m playing Love Story on my clarinet.”

“What?” Stella yelled, “That’s MY song! You can’t play that! You steal everything! I used to be first until you came along and ruined everything!”

Mrs Green heard this and said, “Girls, I have an idea. You two will both play *Love Story* in the talent show together. You will practice every day during recess and lunch break. Understood?”

The girls groaned, “Yes, Mrs Green.”

The next day they played back-to-back. After a while, they realized that they sounded really good together. Stella didn’t want to say so, but she might have sounded better with Alexis than on her own. Alexis bought a package of gummy bears for Stella. They practiced every day for the next 3 weeks and became good friends along the way.

“Welcome to the 1st ever Goodman Public School Talent show, we hope you enjoy our performance,” announced Mrs. Green. Alexis and Stella were the last ones to go. They played perfectly.

“That was awesome, we did it!” they said to each other, giving a high five.

When they bowed to the audience, Stella felt something go *splat* on her forehead. All of their friends cheered and laughed and threw green gummy bears at them.

The Underground Room

By Lucas Chu: Grade 6

"What's that!?" Jin shouted. A small insect was crawling up his shoulder, the insect jumped on his head! "AHHHHH GET IT OFF ME!" yelled Jin, running around in a circle hysterically. "It's just a grasshopper." Jill explained. After a couple of minutes, they were walking down the path to their lonely cottage. The sun was setting and the moon was rising Jin and Jill were sleeping in their soft beds, Jin had a room with yellow paint and Jill had a room with pink paint.

That night Jin woke up by a mysterious shoveling noise, he set off outside where he could search for the mysterious noise. "Hello..?" Jin said slowly. "Hello..?" He repeated, "Is there anyone there?" then the shoveling stopped as if the person wasn't there at all. The next morning Jin told Jill what happen last night while they were eating breakfast.

Jin and Jill went outside after breakfast and searched for the area where he heard the mysterious noise last night, but it was no use. "Hey, Jin would you like to go fishing?" Jill asked. A couple hours later Jin and Jill were laughing on the dock and catching some fish! "Hey, Jill I think I caught something!" Jin quickly said. Jill came rushing over to Jin, they both pulled as hard as they can! "Wow! This is one heavy fish!" Jill said with laughter. Jin and Jill finally picked up the line and found a shovel! "I don't think this is a fish!" Jill laughed. The shovel was smooth, small and silver it had a wooden handle with a small key attached to it. "I wonder if this was the same shovel used last night." Jin thought.

"Diners ready!" Jin and Jill's Mom called. Everyone had a chair with a red pillow on them. "Aw. Salad again?" Jin terribly said. They all ate dinner but Jin was the last one to finish, Jill was second. Their Dad washed the dishes last night. They showed their parents what they found in the lake and what Jin heard last night. "I'm sure that shovel has been there for a while, but no one had found it yet." Dad said trying to calm them down. It was 10:00 p.m., Jin and Jill were in bed. Until Jin woke up to the same strange and mysterious shoveling noise. He woke up Jill and then they went outside to investigate. Still the noise was going "CH.... Clunk." it sounded like if someone was shoveling. Jin and Jill grabbed their flashlights and ran outside toward the mysterious sound! They kept on running and every step they took the sound grew louder and louder, they were so close until. The sound just stopped as quickly as last time. They went home and went to sleep.

The next morning they ate breakfast, then they ran with their flashlights. They kept running to the spot where they went last time and --- "AHHHH" Jin tripped over a handle sticking out of the ground. Jin and Jill inspected the handle bar. Jill pulled up at the handle bar and it opened, Jill started to climb down the ladders while Jin stood there and stared. "Come on! Aren't you coming?" Jill

shouted from the hole. Jin followed her, until they reached the bottom. It was pitch black; Jin and Jill switched their flashlights on. "Found a light switch!" "Wait! Jill Don't---!" The lights switched on and the hallway was about 1 kilometer long! "WOW!" Jin's jaw hung, "See. I know what I'm doing." Jill said happily. They continued to walk down the path and found someone digging. They found a large underground hallway it was about 7 to 9 meters wide and about 4 meters tall! "Hey, You There!" Jill shouted. The man looked around for a second he stopped digging, then he continued with his work. "Jill! Don't talk to him he might be a kidnapper or even a murderer!" He whispered to Jill. "Don't worry so much Jin he's all the way down there see?" She carefully whispered back to Jin. They turned around and looked at the end of the tunnel but when they looked no one was there! "Uh, I thought the man was over there!" Jin said while shivering. So they turned around and started to walk back until "Ch... Clunk." the noise continued and when they turned around they found the man shoveling at the top of the tunnel. "AHHHHH!" Jin and Jill screamed! They ran back to the ladder and climbed as fast as they could! They shut the trapdoor behind them and ran back home as fast as they could. Jin stopped while Jill kept running back to the cottage, Jin went back to the trapdoor and climbed down the ladder. He reminded himself that when they were looking at the man, he had no feet but a wiggling tail! The man was a ghost and he was chipping at a door, Jin ran up to it and the ghost but kept his distance. Jin put his hand in his pocket and grabbed out a key. Then the ghost disappeared and Jin left the key there.

That night at exactly 12:00 p.m. he heard a small "Click!" noise. Jin got up from bed grabbed his flashlight and set off but only this time he knows what it was. A loud shriek came from the trapdoor's opening, he went in and turned the lights on and amazed at what he saw. The door at the end of the hallway was opened! Jin ran up to the door until he saw what was inside. He stopped in amazement and found dozens of refined jewels, diamonds, topaz, gold, sapphire, ruby's and emeralds! Quickly Jin ran up the ghost but this time he came within a meter with it. His face was pale white and his hair was a dark brown, he also had dark blue eyes, and a orange sailor suit. Jin looked at the room through the door, he walked in slowly with caution and beside all those refined jewels a coffin laid there. "John Scar Zar" is what it said on the coffin label. It was a black and white coffin with small little paintings on it. Jin stumbled across a small letter near the jewels "To my favorite and only son John Scar Zar for his achievements in all he had done.---" and the rest of the note was torn off or even *cut* off. "I wonder if I could maybe take one?" Jin grabbed a beautiful sapphire and put it in his pocket but left the rest for John. Jin ran back and climbed up the ladder and walked back home.

The next morning Jin got up and got dressed before anyone was awake. He woke everyone up and said "Look what I have in my pocket!". He shoved his hand in his pocket and took out a handful of broken up rock. "Cool, I wonder where you got those stones from!?" Jill said sarcastically. Jin ran all the way back to where the handle bar is then-- he might have just ran by it. He searched and

searched but there was no trapdoor or a handle bar insight! He ran back home and acted like he'd just made a mistake of putting rocks in his pants.

Eventually, as time went on the whole family moved out to California. A new family had arrived at the lonely cottage they were The Jefferson's. Two kids had been playing tag until the sun was setting and the moon was rising and one of the kids, name Bill, woke up by mysterious shoveling noise.

The Attack of the Evil Zombie Pizzas

By Jacob Bradley: Grade 4

One day, Macaroni Pickle woke up, yawned and stretched. “I’m gonna go over to Robert Muffinman’s house.” said Macaroni Pickle.

Last night, Rob and Mac (short for Robert Muffinman and Macaroni Pickle) had a huge party and had pizza and hot dogs for dinner and dessert. Rob had thrown the leftovers out the window. Mac wondered if there was anymore food left.

Mac began making his way over to Rob’s house. There was a big storm overnight and there were huge puddles everywhere. Mac jumped through the puddles all the way to Rob’s house.

“Rob!!! I’m here!!!!”. There was no answer. “Rob!!!” Still no answer. “ROB!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” Mac was getting frustrated. He decided to just go in. Mac was creeping through the house when suddenly he heard something.

“Yum, yum eat em up!” Mac froze. “MMMMMM!!!!”

“Rob!” yelled Mac as he sprinted down the hallway. He turned the corner.

“Oh my gosh! What is that?” exclaimed Mac as he stared at a rather large creature that appeared to be made of pizza and hot dogs. It was at least 10 feet tall and it was facing the grill. That’s when Mac noticed what was on the grill - it was Rob!

“HHHHELLLLP!” yelled Rob who was tied up on the grill.

“Yum, yum eat em up!” yelled the pizza creature. Mac dashed over, grabbed Rob, and dashed out.

“Rarrgh!!!!” The monster followed. Mac slammed the door shut.

“WHAT WAS THAT?!!?” yelled Mac.

“I dunno!” said Rob.

“He looked like he was gonna eat you!!!”

“That’s because he was!” yelled Rob. “All I know is that it’s a pizza zombie, that must have come to life when I threw the leftovers out the window.”

“You imbecile! I told you not to do that! Now what are we gonna do?” asked Mac.

“I think I know how to destroy it, and it’s army!” said Rob.

“Army? What are you talking about?” yelled Mac.

‘Yeah, apparently there is an army and they’re hanging out in my basement. Let’s get out of here and I’ll tell you my plan”

Rob and Mac began making their way towards the car out front. Luckily Rob knew how to drive. They got in the car, buckled their seat belts. All of a sudden they heard a deep rumbling noise and the army of pizza creatures exploded out of Rob’s house. They both yelled, “Daaaaaaaaa!!!!!!” and Mac yelled, “Step on it!!!!!!” So Rob stepped on it. The car sped forward and the pizza creatures followed. They ran fast for a bunch of pizza creatures were coming.

“Okay, here’s the plan. We just have to drive around here all day until night falls, then all of these guys die. Cause at night they can’t see each other and they start bumping into each other, and their heads start falling off and stuff.” said Rob.

Mac thought for a moment. “Okay, if you’re sure that we won’t get us killed to death, then let’s do it!”

The two friends looked behind them, and they saw something strange. The one pizza creature who had been grilling Rob, started eating all of the other ones. Mac and Rob thought that was weird, and saw that the monster was getting bigger.

“Uh-oh!” thought Mac and Rob. Just then the big pizza guy yelled, “RRRAARRGGGH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” Rob and Mac drove faster.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The creature was getting closer. Then the worst possible thing happened. They ran out of gas!

“AHHHHHH!!!!” screamed the boys. They waited to get crushed by.....BOOM! The creature had tripped over a telephone wire and fell on his face and puffed into smoke. He had eaten the entire army, so now that he was dead, there were no other pizza zombies to attack Mac and Rob. They looked around. No giant zombie, not even a small one. Just a regular slice of pizza and a beef hot dog.

“Yay! “ said Rob, “He died! Let’s go have another party, and this time let’s have burgers instead!”

“And this time, don’t chuck the leftovers out the window.”

The Wild Stallion

By Kaitlyn Brown: Grade 6



CRACK! The thunder storm was getting worse and lighting strikes lit up the sky! She tried running but there was no escaping the horrifying storm, she could see a shadow in the distance it was big, it was getting closer and closer. Suddenly Amanda sat up in her bed and shock herself from the bad dream, she turned and looked at the clock it was 2:45 am, she lead back down and put her head in her pillow and fell back asleep hoping not to have another bad dream.

In the morning she woke up at 6:00 am (just like she did everyday), she got dressed, ate breakfast and went out to the barn. It was her job to feed all the cattle, horses and pigs. The horses had their own stable with a connected indoor riding arena and the cattle in a coverall barn and the pigs in the old barn.

Amanda always feed the horses first, then the cattle and then she would feed the pigs. She walked over to the stables. At Shady Lane Farm they had about 10 horses, 100 cows and 7 pigs. Amanda had her own horse named Chevy, Chevy was a American Quarter Horse. He was a standard chestnut color with white running up his back right leg (from his hoof to his knee) he also had a big white patch starting from his nose to his fore head. Her Papa had bought that horse for her 12th birthday. Amanda had only had Chevy for a year but they could already jump the hogs back, (the hogs back one of the more difficult jumps to do).

Chevy was in the first stall next to Chief. Chief was a white palomino, that used to live there but just recently had her mom found a good home for her. After Amanda finished feeding all the animals she was walking back when she saw her Papa pull into the lane way with the horse trailer on the back. She could see that there was a horse in the back of the trailer “must be another rescue horse” she thought to herself. She grabbed the 4-wheller and drove up to the stables. When her Papa got out of the truck she helped him to unload the horse. When the trailer door opened Amanda could see that the new rescue horse was a beautiful black stallion, his black hair shown in the noonday sun, she could

see that he had a thick black tail and a thick black mane and a tiny white patch on his forehead. He was a wild horse as she had found out later on from her papa. Her mama had rescued him from a race track that was abusing the horses and drugging them. The horse was now just about scared of anything, and especially people.

The next day Amanda went out and feed all the animals and then went back to the stables to work with the new stallion. Last night (well talking to her mother) found out that his name was Spark. She tried to work with him. She was very careful not to make any sudden movements that would scare the horse. But the horse would just buck, whinny and try to get away. After about three weeks of working with Spark Amanda got Spark to trust her enough to let her ride him.

One day well Amanda was touting around the outdoor ring with Spark, out of nowhere came a wild cougar he walked right up to the wooden fence. Spark got scared and bucked Amanda off, she fell to the ground. All she could see was the big fierce orange colored cougar walking up slowly to the huge, scared and board horse flinging its front hooves in the air and whinnying and kicking the ground, his mane and tail flew in the air. Amanda (half unconscious still lying on the ground) tried to crawl away but it was no use, there she lay hopelessly in the dirt. She could now see the big cougar walking slowly this way it got closer and closer and then all of the sudden **BANG!** the sound of a gun shot went off, and the huge cougar laid dead on the ground. When she turned to look at who had killed the cougar, she saw her Papa was already half way over to her he picked her up and ran to the house. He ran in the door and her Mama (who was in the kitchen) came running over, at that point Amanda lay unconscious in her Papa's hands. Her Mama took her and told her Papa to go and catch that horse. He quickly saddled up his horse name Shadow, (a Standard breed Mare) and started for the forest. It took him about 5 hours to find Spark. He was deep in the forest when he finally spotted the black figure in the misty night. When Amanda woke up there was a doctor, her Mama and her Papa by her side, she could hear the reassuring voice of her mother saying "Amanda can you hear me?" "Everything is going to be just fine." She overheard the doctor saying "she is going to be ok, her right leg is broken and she has a slight concussion and should not ride for about 4 months."

For Amanda could still go to school but was not able to work around the farm. After 4 months, Amanda started to work with Spark again, she was a little afraid but she loved the horse and was not just going to give up on him (especially because she had made so much progress already), if she had to she was going to spend all summer working with him. Every day she would go out to the stables and work with Spark. Sometimes she would take him out on trial rides and sometimes she would just walk him around the farm or in the ring. Spark now liked Chevy. It took a while but once he figured out that Chevy was not going to hurt him, they were best friends. Amanda now had two horses, Chevy and Spark.

False Angel
By Raquel B. Vachon: Grade 7

Castiel crouched by the muddy river bank, blank with shock at another mysterious, atrocious discovery.

The elf-like creature lay motionless, engulfed in the reeds, looking so helpless and weak, although, those of her kind were, in truth, fierce and hot-headed. She was pale from the tips of her pointed ears to the slender toes on her delicate feet.

It was a sea nymph.

The only terrifying thing about the peaceful creature was her eyes. The opaque pupils, surrounded by luminescent emerald green irises, were dilated in unveiled horror and panic.

Then, Castiel's eyes dropped to the nymph's navel-less abdomen. Her side was gouged with four long scrapes. It seemed the nymph must have bled to death, due to the sticky green substance that floated in ribbons along the river.

Castiel flapped his feathered wings fiercely, signalling to the others that he needed some backup.

Five of his kind, Dominion angels, appeared by his side, their beautiful faces crumpled with pity.

"Not again," Kakabel whispered in a grim tone. "That's the eighth one this fortnight."

The sea nymphs had been slowly disappearing from the Angels' haven. They always seemed to meet their pitiful end on Nephilim's Palm, the cluster of rivers that washed into the bay of the ocean.

"What's wrong, Voloel?" Nisroc inquired, worriedly twirling his soft, golden curls.

Castiel turned to Voloel. The elegant Dominion, with braided caramel-shaded hair and gorgeous cerulean blue eyes, was sitting on the red river bank, deep in thought, her hands neatly folded over her flowing, bleach-white robes.

"This is a serious matter, Nisroc," she began, in a sweet, musical voice like chimes. "The diminishing of the sea nymphs will scar the ocean, pollute it, invade it. And it will end with our demise. We rely on the constant tides of the ocean to soothe the

human race. The whole world would turn into chaos, animals against humans, brother against brother.

“This is out of our hands. We must consult higher beings. The Archangels can help us. It’s your call, Ezekiel. Choose wisely.” Voloel glanced up at Ezekiel, his black hair like a satin gloss on his head, his wings rough and scarred, his grey eyes full of maturity.

“Sometimes you are daft, Voloel. The Archs cannot help us. They are too temperamental and out of hand. They even argue and dispute amongst themselves.” Ezekiel spoke with a strong, commanding tone, but his luminous eyes betrayed his anxiety and fear.

“They are of higher ranks than us, Ezekiel, and they are in touch with Him.” Voloel gestured toward the sky. “They have power, Ezekiel.”

“She’s right,” Castiel agreed, speaking for the first time. “We need assistance and justice for the foul creatures who have done this sinful thing.”

Ezekiel’s gaze averted to him, the frustration gone from it, just a particular fondness and concern. “Maybe.”

§§§§§§§

“NO!” Raphael’s fist came down on the golden table. It disappeared for a moment, than reappeared in barely a second. He was always the difficult one. “We will not waste our power and time dealing with the dilemmas of wretched sea nymphs! They are the ones who brought the wrath of the ocean upon our humans.”

The Dominions stood on the stone tiles, below the platform where the archangels sat. They had brought the problem to the Council, which consisted of the four archangels, Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, and Uriel, and the seven Seraphim.

Apparently, Ezekiel had been unfortunately correct about the Archs’ tempers and attitudes.

“But, Raphael, I assure you, the harm to the ocean and the sea nymphs will affect *us* in return,” Voloel argued, trying to slip persuasion into her divine voice. “After we help them overcome this, perhaps we can bring justice upon them and quench our wounds.”

“*What in the heaven are you doing?*” Castiel hissed in her ear. “*Don’t give him any ideas, Voloel!*”

“OW!” Kakabel jumped up, and knocked Nisroc into the Seraphim.

They hissed and growled fiercely. Nisroc whined and shrunk back toward Ezekiel. He shook him off in disgust, and gave Kakabel a look of loathing.

“What? He stepped on my foot! It’s his fault!”

Raphael seemed to have stopped roaring; he was staring at the group of Dominions with a look of disbelief. “*What* are you doing?”

“My apologies,” Castiel intercepted before Nisroc could say something stupid and regretful, “My friends here, were just discussing matters.”

Raphael hesitated, and then nodded.

“Very well,” Michael said calmly. “Do you have any more arguments?”

Ezekiel shook his head, and the Archs and the Seraphim huddled together in one group.

“Excellent work, Nisroc,” commented Ezekiel, thick with sarcasm. “Now you’ve convinced them that our wings are on too tight. We won’t hear the end of this.”

“Hey, you’re not exactly a ray of sunshine either!”

“At least I can control myself without angering the High Seraphim of the council I need help from!”

Castiel ignored them, and turned to where the council stood. He observed them quarrelling for a short while.

The flapping of angelic wings brought their attention to Gabriel. He crossed the floor swiftly, but gracefully.

“I am very sorry for the inconvenience,” Gabriel began, smoothing his robes, “but you have been declined. The safety of the sea nymphs is not our problem. The Virtues will show you out.” He held out his hand toward them.

Voloel tensed and slapped Gabriel’s hand away. “We will show *ourselves* out.” Unexpectedly, she grasped Castiel’s hand, and tugged him away. “Come on, Cas.”

§§§§§§§

Voloel paced up and down the cobblestone corridor of the castle ruins they gathered in.

“Perhaps,” Castiel began, “We could summon someone to help us.”

“You’re absolutely correct, Cas!” Voloel’s brightened expression and relieved cry ran short when she tripped over a misplaced cobblestone. “Who do you think would do the job?”

“An angel who can protect us from demons and false angels,” Castiel stated, “Ceilidh.”

Voloel was nodding. “Brilliant. I will summon her.”

“In summo vertice ad infima valle virtus Angeli territorii vires, voco Ceilidh, angelus feritas, et potestatem, et defensor adversus daemones angelis falsa, auxilium mea suscipiet,” Voloel murmured, and plucked a feather from her pure white wings, dropping it upon the ground. As soon as it hit the red dirt, it burst into white flames.

The flames engulfed a patch of the wheat field beside the ruins. It burned for a couple of seconds, then smouldered, revealing an Ophanim angel standing in the middle of the wheat field.

She was beautiful in a feisty way. She had dark brown hair, with a long bang down her face to her chin, hiding her long, jet-black lashes. Her face was smeared with dirt and scars of war. In her hand was a black bow, and tossed up on her shoulder was a sheath of arrows.

“You summoned me,” Ceilidh stated, her lips taut in a grimace, staring at Castiel.

Wow, Voloel thought, such open hostility, maybe it’s because he’s wearing the red sash for his robe. She does viciously detest that colour. Or maybe it’s because he’s new to her.

“Ceilidh!” Voloel smiled and greeted her old friend.

Ceilidh relieved Castiel of her piercing gaze, and turned to Voloel. Although she didn’t smile, Ceilidh seemed much happier to see the petite Dominion than she was to see Castiel.

“What do *you* want?” the Ophanim asked with mock annoyance.

Voloel smiled lightly. “We need your help, with the sea nymphs.”

“Oh, I see.” She walked up to Voloel and Castiel. “Uh, who is this?”

“Castiel, angel of travel and new changes,” Castiel murmured.

Ceilidh nodded, and, with each index and middle finger, rested her fingertips on both angels’ forehead. “Let’s return to the river –”

Castiel’s vision went black. His legs buckled, but his heels suddenly smashed into the ground. The edges of the blackness slowly faded back to normal.

Ceilidh had her palm still on Voloel’s head. “Something’s troubling you.”

“What do you mean?”

“Something’s digging at your mind, but you don’t know what.”

Voloel frowned, “Maybe your right.” She paced the side of the river bank. Suddenly, she stopped in front of a cluster of reeds and biennial plants. “That’s it.”

Castiel approached the Dominion. The nymph lay there, its eyes staring to heaven. “What?”

“No, no, Cas,” Voloel insisted, grabbing his shoulder, “That’s it! Look!”

She indicated to a brown fingerprint on the sea nymph’s side, near the scrapes. “It’s chocolate. And look, there, in her blood, there’s syrup, or something. The thing that’s killing them must be a sweet-tooth.”

Ceilidh gasped, “Loki!”

“Who?” Castiel inquired, turning to the Ophanim frozen in shock.

“He’s a Trickster!”

Castiel rolled his eyes. “What’s a Trickster?”

This time Ceilidh rolled her eyes. “A Trickster! Half god, half mortal, a demigod, one might say. They are masters in deceiving and betrayal, hence the name ‘Trickster’. Loki is the Trickster of all Tricksters. Latest intelligence from the Power angels says Loki was looking for a way to enhance his powers to take on the Archs.”

“Take on the Archs,” Voloel asked, “Why?”

“Well, they are the Big Cheeses,” Ceilidh shrugged.

“And why are they killing the nymphs?” Castiel asked.

“Uh, well, sea nymph blood supposedly has magical properties, enhancing powers.” The Ophanim turned slowly toward the sea nymph again.

Voloel caught a glimpse of her sheath of arrows; each arrow had a thin vein of red spiralling down the shaft.

Hmm, Voloel thought, she has new arrows – WAIT! Ceilidh absolutely loathes the colour red. She would never have that on her favourite weapons.

She picked up a sharp stick from the ground. “Who are you?”

Ceilidh turned back to her. “What are you d–?”

“You’re not Ceilidh! Who – or what – are you?” Voloel demanded, waving the stick around. “Ceilidh would never design her arrows with that colour on it!”

“What? What’s wrong with red? You’re crazy! It’s me –” Ceilidh distressed cries stopped. She grinned, and shape-shifted. “Ah, you got me.”

The man laughed and held up his hands. “And I thought I’d actually fooled you. Well, silly me.”

Castiel gasped, and stepped back.

“I repeat, who are you?” Voloel tightened her grip of the stick.

“Why, I’m the guy who’s been committing all these crimes. I’m a Trickster, but I’m not Loki. In fact, I’ve been trying to lead you off the trail with that story about him. Although, I *do* need the blood to challenge the Archangels.”

Voloel grimaced. “Aybel.”

“That’s me!” Aybel laughed again. “Oh, and that Ophanim, Ceilidh, she’ll never see the daylight for many eternities.”

Voloel charged at him, with the stick high, like she was jousting. Aybel stepped back, and plummeted into the river.

Castiel grabbed the stick from Voloel's grasp. He began furiously drawing symbols in the dirt. "I'm drawing a pentagram to trap him!"

"Oh, excellent, you're learning, Cas!" Voloel exclaimed. "Hurry up!"

Castiel finally leapt back. As Aybel climbed up the bank he stepped into the pentagram.

The Trickster glanced downwards, and was frozen. "No!"

"Summon the Archs!" Castiel cried.

"I'm on it!" Voloel mouthed Latin and, *poof*, Raphael and Michael appeared by her side.

"What Trickster?" Raphael yelled. "Where is it?"

"Right here," Castiel announced, "and he has Ceilidh."

A white ash branch materialized in Michael's hand. He spoke directly to the Trickster, pressing the point on his throat. "This is a branch – a very sharp branch, I might add – from the white ash tree that marks where the creation of the world started. It is the only thing that can kill you. Get Ceilidh back, and it spares your life."

"Okay, okay!" Aybel snapped his fingers. The Ophanim angel emerged from a mist beside the Trickster.

"Thank you," Michael said calmly. He bound Aybel to the white ash branch and all three were gone in a lightening flash.

The Dominions were shocked but extremely pleased with themselves. The sea nymphs were now safe.

Castiel smirked. "So now the Archs are in our debt. I like this arrangement."

Frogs

By Bruce Quibel: Grade 7

Once upon a time, there was a young wizard who fell in love with a princess. The princess, named Princess Jaliza Patricia Sequoia Jacaranda Buttermilk, was very beautiful and loving. She loved everything, except for frogs. The princess loved the wizard because he was kind and loving, but she knew that they could not be together because the wizard was not worthy enough and his name wasn't long enough. The wizard knew that he could become a more powerful wizard but he was outraged that his name wasn't long enough.

"What's wrong with the name, Al?" The wizard demanded

"Nothing is wrong with your name," Princess Buttermilk replied, "But my father, the King of all the land, King Frederick Saskatchewan Christopher Gordon George the three hundred and thirty-fifth, insists that I marry someone with a very long name."

"I know what to do," the Wizard said.

"What do you mean?" Buttermilk asked.

"I will study magic to become the most powerful wizard in the world!" The wizard yelled as he ran home.

When the wizard got home, he announced, "I want everybody to leave me alone while I study magic and if you bother me I will turn you into a frog!"

He ran inside and immediately opened his spell book and started training. Everyone in the village knew not to bother the wizard but after a couple days, Princess Jaliza Patricia Sequoia Jacaranda Buttermilk started getting worried, so she asked Frank the butcher to bring him some meat. When Frank got to the wizard's house, he slowly knocked on the door and it magically opened. Frank the butcher walked across the dark room to a desk where the wizard sat hunched over a big spell book. The wizard slowly turned around, he stood up in front of the butcher and yelled, "I said don't bother me!"

With a flash of light, the butcher was turned into a frog.

"Rib-buttt," Frank croaked.

The next day, Princess Buttermilk thought the wizard's house must be getting very dusty, so she told her maid, Muriel, to go clean the wizard's house.

Muriel walked up to the wizard's door. She knocked until it suddenly opened. She went inside and started to sweep up all of the spider webs. Muriel didn't notice the wizard sleeping in his chair with his face in an open spell book, so she kept sweeping until she found a large brown and green frog sitting on the floor.

The frog loudly croaked and the wizard woke up and yelled, “I said don’t bother me!”

With a flash of light, Muriel the maid was turned into a frog.

“Rib-buttt,” Muriel croaked.

“They have been in there for days,” Princess Buttermilk said to Doctor Sheldon. “They must be sick.”

“The wizard said that he would turn people into frogs,” the doctor replied.

“He wouldn’t really do that. He is too kind and loving!” Princess Buttermilk insisted. “Now, go and see if he is okay!”

Doctor Sheldon knew not to argue with the Princess, so he went to the Wizard’s house fearing the worst. He was afraid knocking would bother the wizard so he carefully opened the door and slowly snuck in. The doctor crept across the floor until he stumbled over a broom and almost stepped on two frogs. The wizard suddenly jumped out of his chair. His eyes were bloodshot, his hair was messy and he could barely stand, but he managed to yell: “I said don’t bother me!”

With a flash of light, Doctor Sheldon transformed into a frog.

“Rib-buttt,” the doctor croaked.

That evening, the wizard thought to himself: *I would be done by now if people didn’t come and annoy me.* Right at that moment, an old woman came in and in a weak voice she said: “I am very sick. Can you please heal me?”

“Be gone, witch!” the wizard angrily yelled in a crazed voice, “I said don’t bother me!”

With a flash of light, the old woman was turned into a frog.

The wizard knew how to stop everyone from bothering him. He ran outside and turned everyone he saw into a frog, flashing a bright beam of light in every direction. He even blasted the outsides of buildings with a special green beam that turned the people inside into frogs. All around, sounds of “rib-butt, rib-butt” filled the air. There was no one left to bother him, so the wizard went back to work.

A few hours later, he heard a loud knock on the door.

“You are under arrest for turning the whole town into frogs!” A deep voice yelled.

The wizard opened his door and he saw three of the king's guards with their weapons drawn. He was so insane all he could say was: "I said don't bother me!"

With a flash of light, the king's guards were turned into frogs.

"Rib-butt, rib-butt, rib-butt," they said.

The wizard was so outraged, he ran into the castle and turned all of the guards into frogs. Then he crept upstairs to the king's bedroom, he slowly opened the door creeping across the room to the king's bathroom. He could hear and smell the king in there, so he quickly opened the bathroom door and with a flash of light, the king turned into a frog and splash, fell into the toilet.

"Rib-butt," the King said when he swam back to the surface.

When the wizard left the king's room went to see Princess Buttermilk. When he found her, he said, "Now we can be together."

"You monster! You've turned everyone into frogs! I can never love you!" Buttermilk shrieked.

"You have to love me! There is no one else to love!" The wizard yelled, trying to hold back his tears.

The Princess turned away from him. "I've sent Lord Bartholomew Fizzwidget to go find another wizard who can turn frogs back into humans. Now leave my castle!"

The wizard knew the only way to get Princess Buttermilk to love him was to get rid of Lord Bartholomew, so he used his magic to fly to the dark forest where the other wizard lived. The wizard got there before Lord Bartholomew, so he rested in a nearby tree. The wizard was awoken by Lord Bartholomew saying, "Thank you kind wizard." He watched as Lord Bartholomew began riding his horse back to the village. The wizard quietly used a spell on Lord Bartholomew that would turn him into a big hairy monster.

When Lord Bartholomew got back to the village, Princess Buttermilk was surprised and very scared to see that Lord Bartholomew has turned into a big hairy monster with sharp fangs and small horns sticking out of his fur, but she was overjoyed when he told her that he has brought the cure.

The wizard was outraged that Princess Buttermilk wasn't afraid of the monster. He came up to her and said, "Now you have to love me because he is a monster!"

"He is not a monster! You are the monster! You've turned everyone into frogs and monsters! I love Lord Bartholomew because he saved everyone and I don't care how he looks!" Princess Buttermilk shrieked.

The next week, Princess Buttermilk and Lord Bartholomew got married. Luckily for them, the monster spell only lasted a a month. Then everyone lived happily ever, after except the wizard who was so sad he turned himself into a frog and flushed himself down the toilet.

Changes of our Life

By Rabeca Smith: Grade 7

Everything has to start in some way; as well as it has to end in some way. The way this story ends remains to be seen but it will come. Don't get ahead of yourself. It will eventually end but it starts now, with a single tree that falls down.

In the midst of great evergreen forest a single chestnut tree stood alone. But this tree was old and weary. Soon its roots could no longer hold its weight and it fell; it crashed and its brittle branches tumbled in every which direction, sending chestnuts flying.

The chestnuts burrowed themselves into the ground and struggled for survival. Of the thousands that fell only one made it.

It wasn't until autumn that any sign of life popped up from the spot where the seed had fallen. It barely survived winter but held on, keeping shelter beneath one of the forest's larger evergreens.

By spring the tree was taller and stronger and sprung buds and leaves. Being so small at the time he hadn't held any memory of the ferocious winter he had encountered and it was like he had only just been born.

He absorbed as much of the April showers as he could manage before the evergreens could drink it up and gazed in awe at the gorgeous May flowers that added blasts of colour to the dull forest.

But spring was nearing its end and the days changed. They got longer and hotter and the little chestnut tree grew worried because he was changing too. His branches stretched and his leaves grew larger.

But soon he grew used to this environment and the spring was in his past and, like the winter, was forgotten. He thrived in the summery weather more than any other season before it. The sun managed to find its way through the trees to him and since he was the smallest of the trees he could survive a lot longer with not as much water so he lasted greater amounts of time than the larger evergreens during the dry season.

The Little Chestnut Tree (as the other trees now called him) loved the summer months but was sadly unaware that more change was in store. Since he couldn't recall the other seasons before, he was doomed for only more disappointment as autumn was coming and only more change was in store for him.

Indeed, the days were getting shorter and colder. The Little Chestnut Tree once more grew afraid of the impending change but more fear was all he would feel for quite a while.

As the weather changed so did he. His leaves changed colour and he grew cold

and brittle. This is when he thought he might not make it, for now the memories of past changes and seasons came back to him. He recalled barely making it and realizing he wouldn't have if not for the great evergreen that once stood beside him. Unfortunately, the poor evergreen had not made it through one of the summer's worse dry patches and was now no more than a rotting log that housed millions of insects of all kinds.

After the first snowfall of the season he was absolutely sure this was the end. He had no leaves, he looked grey and sickly, and he was freezing cold. His sap ran down his bark in thick frozen teardrops. He had made up his mind; he would stay put and just wait for the end. He stood through blizzards; he stood through freezing rain; he stood and waited and waited for his impending doom. He stood, freezing cold, until the end came.

But the end didn't come. Soon the snow thawed and grass peeked out from the slush. The air warmed and the Little Chestnut Tree sprouted leaves and buds once more. He was astonished. How could he have survived all that horrible change? How did he manage to endure all that pain?

It took him many years of change and impending death before he himself realized the answers to those questions.

In our life we experience change and often discomfort but we survive because it's part of life and living. We're constantly changing, even right now as we speak. Don't bother with the past; it'll only make you worry for the future. Think of right now, the present; it may not be the best moment of our lives but we're alive and sometimes that's all you can ask for.

That's what the Little Chestnut Tree learned. That's what helped him make it through all those winters. He lived longer than any other chestnut tree ever had.

And that is how this story ends... but also how a million others will begin.

By Stephanie Stockwell

A warm summer breeze drifted through my window. It smelled of the sea and the wildflowers that grew in a nearby field. Unfortunately, along with the breeze came a ray of sunlight. It snuck between my curtains and gleamed right in my eyes. I groaned and rolled over, but the light still found me. I knew I couldn't possibly get any more sleep now. I sat up and dragged myself out of bed. After rubbing the sleep out of my eyes, throwing on some clothes, and shuffling into the kitchen, I poured myself a bowl of cereal. After the first few bites, I noticed something. Dad wasn't downing his third cup of coffee, and Mom wasn't sipping her usual morning tea. They were nowhere to be found! Then I remembered. They had gone on a well deserved vacation, leaving me alone in our small seaside house. For a whole week. A whole week of doing what I wanted, when I wanted. Of course, I had promised not to eat too much junk food, or destroy the house, but still. I knew the next week would be unbelievable. If only I knew just how much of an understatement that would turn out to be.

The rest of the day was rather uneventful. Eight enjoyable hours of playing video games, reading, and lounging around on the couch. It was a perfectly normal day. At least it was until sundown. The sun was a blazing orange. The sky around it was a breathtaking array of colours ranging from a beautiful royal blue to a lovely magenta. The light reflected off the water, sparkling like millions of diamonds. The only sound that could be heard was the crashing of the waves against the shore. I had lived by the sea for years, and never before had I seen a sunset like that one. Or maybe I just never really stopped to look. As I stood back admiring this beautiful sight, a strange sensation overcame me. Before I even knew what was happening, I found myself walking out the door. But I didn't stop there. I continued to stagger towards the strange force. Before long, I felt the cool sand between my toes. Then, the gentle lapping of the waves at my ankles. During this short trek to the sea, the sun had completely left the sky. In its place was the moon. It cast a shimmering light onto the water, illuminating it with an eerie glow. Something within told me to go deeper. I obeyed. My last thought before I submerged completely was wondering how I would breathe.

Amazingly, that didn't turn out to be a problem. I found that I could breathe as easily as if I was on land. It was surprisingly easy to move too. After a few minutes of exploring the spectacular undersea world, I got the feeling I was being watched. I cast my eyes around the sea floor hoping to find the source of my uneasiness. Between two large clumps of seaweed, I saw it. A pair of bright sea green eyes staring right at me. "Hello?" I called nervously. "Is there somebody there?" I took a step closer. "My name is Claire. What's your name?" I asked the mysterious figure. Much to my surprise, a small voice asked, "Are you an Earthdweller?" "A what?" I asked, hoping I didn't sound as clueless as I felt. Still hidden in the seaweed, the mysterious being informed me that an Earthdweller was someone who didn't live above the water. That sent my head spinning. How could someone **not** live above the water? It was impossible to live underwater. Or was it? After all, I was standing more than four meters underwater and I was still breathing and speaking like I was on land. The voice spoke again knocking me out of my wondering and disbelief. "Are you alright?" The mysterious figure asked me as it stepped

out from the seaweed. At first glance it looked like a regular girl. She looked to be about thirteen years old. She had beautiful wavy blonde hair that flowed past her waist. She wore a shirt that appeared to be woven out of seaweed. I knew she was the thing that was watching me when I saw her sea green eyes. Then I saw her scaly green tail. Yes, I said tail. She was a mermaid! As I was trying not to freak out, she asked me again if I was alright. Finally, I managed to squeak out a pathetic yes. "My name's Dolphina." The mermaid told me." So, are you an Earthdweller?" I wasn't quite sure what to say, so I said," I guess so." Despite my uncertain answer, her eyes lit up. "I've been waiting for you! Come with me to Atlantis!" I was stunned. "*The Atlantis?*" "Of course! How many other cities named Atlantis are there? Are you coming?" it took me a minute to decide. I knew I wasn't supposed to go with strangers, but do mermaids count as strangers? Plus when would I ever get another chance to see the lost city of Atlantis? My curiosity got the better of me. I told Dolphina I would go. I hoped I wouldn't regret this decision later on.

The trip to Atlantis was a long one. We swam past dozens of schools of fish that were every colour imaginable. We saw an enormous coral reef that was bigger than a house. Hundreds of fish hovered around it. A group of sea anemones had attached themselves to the reef. They seemed to dance to a silent song, gently swaying back and forth. For a while, a small pod of dolphins were following us, swimming circles around Dolphina and I as if they wanted to play. I was amazed at how beautiful everything was. Dolphin barely batted an eye at things that took my breath away. I thought about this for a while. Dolphin had seen things like these all her life. I guessed that things like these were just like some of the things we have above the water. Things like trees, flowers, grass, animals and wildlife. We've seen things like them for as long as we can remember. They're just everyday things that we take for granted. But to Dolphina and the other merpeople, they would probably be as amazing as the beautiful underwater scenery is to us.

As we continued to walk, or in Dolphina's case, swim, we began to get better acquainted with each other. I knew we would become good friends.

Since I had just relaxed all day, I wasn't tired when we reached Atlantis after walking all night. Dolphina didn't look the least bit fatigued either, but I don't think she spent the entire day lounging around. I figured that must be a merpeople thing. Dolphina saw Atlantis before I did. But before long, it was impossible to not notice it. We arrived at the break of dawn. The sheer size of the place took my breath away. There were towers as tall as skyscrapers. There were hundreds of large buildings that were organized in a street-like fashion. I assumed they were houses. The entire city was alive with activity. But it wasn't the rushed pace you would expect to find in a city. Everyone was smiling and stopped to wish each other a good morning. But most amazing was the palace. It was about ten times as big as any of the houses, and was easily ten times as beautiful. Like the rest of the buildings in Atlantis, it looked as if it were made of pure silver and gold. In fact, it probably was. The palace was decorated with thousands of priceless jewels. There were diamonds rubies, sapphires and emeralds the size of your fist. But the jewels weren't the most beautiful part of the palace. That honor was held by a large clear crystal

that was easily five times as big as any of the others. This perfectly flawless gem sat hovering in the tallest tower of the palace. There were wide openings in the top and sides of the tower that let the light of the newly risen sun shine on the crystal. It acted like a prism reflecting the light into dozens of brilliant rainbows that surrounded the city with colour. It was truly an amazing sight. I glanced over at Dolphina. She stood beside me waiting patiently. I realized that I must have been staring at the palace for quite a while. "Are you ready?" she asked me. "Ready for what?" "To go inside of course." I was excited and terrified at the same time, but I nodded and followed Dolphina through the enormous golden doors.

On the other side was a long corridor filled with doors. They all looked similar to the ones we had just entered, but much smaller. Dolphin led me to the very last door. A large letter "A" was engraved in it. Encircling it were three emeralds and three sapphires. Dolphin stepped forward and grasped the door knob. She pulled the door open. It let out an ominous creak. Together we stepped into the biggest room I had ever seen. Unlike the rest of the palace, this room was made of polished marble. Tall marble pillars lined the walls of the room, making it look very similar to an ancient Greek temple. But unlike a crumbling ruin, this room looked shiny and new. At the very back were two identical golden thrones. Unlike the rest of the palace, the thrones lacked any embellishment. They sat beneath the same symbol I had seen on the palace door. Two merpeople sat in these thrones. Dolphina smiled at me and said, "Claire, allow me to introduce my mother and father, King and Queen of Atlantis." You're a princess?" I asked, with my eyes wide. "Oh. Did I forget to mention that?" she said innocently. I had read enough books to know what to do next. I bowed so low that my head almost touched the ground. "Welcome to Atlantis. My name is Queen Aquamarine." Said Dolphina's mother. Her hair was the same beautiful blonde as her daughter's. She wore a long dress that was woven out of the same material as Dolphina's shirt. In fact, the queen and Dolphina's appearances were very similar, except for the eyes. Dolphina's eyes were a bright sea green, but the queen's eyes were the most beautiful blue that I had ever seen. They perfectly matched the precious stone that queen aquamarine had been named after. Dolphina's father spoke next. "Greetings Claire, my name is King Theodore. We've been expecting you. "The king had short brown hair and a well-groomed beard. Dolphina had obviously inherited her dazzling green eyes from her father. He wore a long cape of the same material as the others, but it was red. He continued on with his explanation." Every thousand years we choose an Earthdweller to become our chosen one. They aide us in our battle to protect both land and sea from the horrible evils that are out there." Smiling, he said, "That chosen one my dear, is you." I was stunned. "I mean no disrespect your majesties, but out of all the people in the world, why would you pick me? I'm just a kid." Queen Aquamarine smiled too. "What you just said merely proves our point. You do not take your responsibilities without thought. Many people would have agreed without considering the consequences. Take the last chosen one we selected. Instead of helping us, he betrayed us and broke his vow of secrecy. He tried to profit off his knowledge of the location of Atlantis. We stopped him and wiped his memory before he even left the water, but it was still too close for comfort. We have been much more careful in selecting our chosen one this time. We are confident of our decision." King Theodore looked at me and said, "Claire, you have an important decision to make. Will you join us?" I only took

a moment to decide. Besides, how could you turn down something like that? I looked him straight in the eye and said five words that would change my life forever. "Yes your majesty, I will." King Theodore smiled again. He made me make a vow of secrecy and then presented me with a beautiful necklace. It had a silver chain and a small round silver pendant. In the center of the pendant was a large diamond with a golden letter "A". Around the "A" were three sapphires and three emeralds. It was the same symbol that was on the throne room door. "The symbol on this necklace is our royal crest. It represents the bond that Earthdwellers and Merpeople share. Over four millennia ago, our two peoples lived peacefully together. But then a war began. No one knows what started it. We drifted farther and farther apart. Your people moved to the land, and we remained beneath the sea. Now your people have all but forgotten us, except for a precious few who refuse to forget. But all of us still remember them. In fact, we put them in our crest to make sure we will never forget. This necklace will glow if we ever need you." Queen Aquamarine said as she gently placed the necklace around my neck. It immediately began to glow a pale lavender. "We need your help. Our son Alexander was best friends with the traitorous Earthdweller. When he betrayed us, Alexander refused to believe it. He was driven mad with rage. He ran away and has been plotting his revenge ever since. We have reason to believe that Alexander is going to strike soon. He has stolen enough barrels of oil to devastate our entire ecosystem and destroy all of Atlantis if he spilled them into the water. It's up to you to stop him. He has constructed a secret hideout somewhere within the Caves of Despair." Dolphina spoke for the first time since introducing me. "What? You can't let her go to the Caves of Despair alone! It's the most horrible place in the whole sea!" "We weren't going to, Dolphina. Would you like to go with her? She could use someone with a good knowledge of the sea to help her." "Of course! You know I couldn't let her go alone." "All right. You can go. But you have to be careful." Said Queen Aquamarine. "Now go. You must pack. You will leave tomorrow at dawn."

I followed Dolphina out of the throne room and up a steep set of golden stairs, and down a hall that ended at a single door. "This is my room." Said Dolphina. "It's a bit messy." She opened the door and we walked in. It was the cleanest room I had ever seen. Other than that, it was pretty normal. I sat down on her bed and watched as she pulled two large backpacks from her closet. Since we were about the same size, she lent me a few of her shirts to bring on our trip. After we carefully folded and packed our clothes, we went down to the kitchen and packed enough food and drinks for a five-day trip. Hopefully more than we would need. We brought our backpacks, which were now in serious danger of bursting, back up to Dolphina's room. Dolphina somehow managed to squeeze a small box, some rope, and a first aid kit into her bag. I didn't know what the little box was, but she told me she told me that you never know when you might need one. So I shrugged and let the box pass out of my mind.

Now that we were finished packing, I realized how tired I really was. Dolphina told me that she was exhausted too. So we decided to go to bed early. Being a good hostess, Dolphina offered me her bed and slept on the floor. I graciously accepted. Her carpet was very soft anyway. We were both asleep by the time our heads touched our pillows.

The next thing I knew, it was morning. “Rise and shine Claire! It’s time to get up!” At first I thought it was my mom, but then the last days events came flooding back to me. I stood up and stretched. Dolphina was already dressed and ready. She was smiling and looking surprisingly for this time in the morning.” I’ll race you to the kitchen.” Dolphina challenged. After I got dressed and ready too, I accepted and we bolted down the stairs.

After a quick breakfast of some sort of kelp cereal and manatee milk, we grabbed our bags and were ready to go. We were almost out the door when the king and queen stopped us. I could tell from the look on their faces that they were about to make one of those speeches that royalty is so famous for. “Children, the journey that you are about to begin may be a dangerous one. There may be times when your lives are at risk. You must be very careful. Do you understand?” We both said yes without hesitation. Remember, things in the Caves of Despair are not always as they seem. Your job is to find Alexander, and if possible, return him to us safely. Good luck. “We stepped towards the doors and opened them, preparing to go outside.

The saying that a journey begins with a single step is true. But this step seemed to be the largest step I had ever taken. We didn’t look back, but we could hear the voices of Dolphina’s parents wishing us good luck and farewell for a final few times. We continued on in the direction that Dolphina told me was the way to the caves of despair. It might have been my imagination, but the water in that direction was darker than the clear blue water around it. It reminded me of the way the sky looks when a thunder storm is preparing to strike.

Before I knew it we had travelled more than ten kilometers. We decided to break for lunch. After a sandwich each, we continued our walk. By night fall, we found ourselves in the shadow of the caves. Not wanting to venture into them at night we settled down for another early night’s sleep

By sunrise the next morning, Dolphina and I were preparing to enter the Caves of Despair. Fully grown merpeople had lost their lives in these caves. I couldn’t help but wonder what the chances were that we would come out alive. Dolphina looked at me. Her voice trembling, she asked “Are you ready?” I merely nodded my head. Together we stepped into the dark cave.

I was immediately overcome by the unmistakable stench of rotting flesh. It was nearly pitch black, but our eyes adjusted to the lack of light as we marched on, farther into the Caves of Despair. We walked for about twenty minutes before we reached a fork in the road. There were two identical paths. “That one.” Dolphina said, pointing to the one on the right. She sounded confident, but I wasn’t so sure. Nevertheless, I followed her. A few minutes down the new trail, we came across a large crack in the wall of the cave. We decided to get a closer look. Dolphin stuck her head into the gap. “Hey, the hole opens up farther in. And there’s a light coming from the end of it!” she said excitedly. We bolted down the tunnel as fast as our legs and tail fin could carry us. As soon as we reached the end of the tunnel, we knew we had made a big mistake. A thick stone wall came crashing down behind us, sealing our way out. Suddenly, an eerie laugh rang out across the room.

It sent shivers down my spine. Then, emerging from the shadows came a tall merman. His dark hair and beard were long and unkempt. His eyes were red and bloodshot. They had a glazed look to them. Overall, he had the appearance of a madman. It was Alexander. "Welcome children. I've been expecting you." he spoke slowly, as if he were savoring every word. Dolphina's mouth fell open in shock. "Well, at least we found him." I whispered in her ear. "What do you want from us?" I said, doing my best pitiful innocent child impression. He grinned, revealing a mouth of dirty blacked teeth. "It's quite simple really. I want revenge on the world for every thing it has done to me." From what I've learned about villains from cartoons and comic books, they love explaining their twisted and evil plans. This always gives the heroes time to escape and save the day. I figured it was at least worth a try. "What are you going to do?" I asked him, still using my innocent child look. Dolphina stared at me. She was clearly puzzled. Then a smile of understanding spread across her face. Apparently they had comic books in Atlantis too. She slowly snuck away from us. The insane merman was clearly enjoying himself, rambling on and on about his horrible scheme. Dolphin was sitting on a rock a few feet away. She pulled out the strange box she had packed in her bag two days ago. She began twisting and folding it until it took the shape of a large mallet. Dolphina slowly crept up behind Alexander. Still carrying on about his plan, he didn't notice a thing as Dolphina hit him hard on the head. He collapsed to the floor, clearly unconscious. Not wasting time on congratulations, Dolphina took the rope out of her bag and began to bind Alexander's hands and feet. Then she took a small vial of some neon yellow liquid out of the first aid kit and poured it into Alexander's mouth. "There." She said, stepping back to admire her handiwork. "That will keep him unconscious until we reach Atlantis." "But how will we get him back?" I said, remembering how long it took us to get here without a large merman. She just smiled and pulled out her handy little box. This time she folded it into a large stretcher. Together we lifted Alexander onto it and began looking for the lever that would let us out. We found it quickly and we began retracing our steps back to Atlantis.

The next day, we found ourselves in the city of Atlantis. We were met by an amazing sight. An enormous crowd of cheering merpeople had awaited our arrival. It looked as if the entire city was there. The crowd parted, making a wide path for us. As we walked through the huge crowd, Dolphina smiled and waved at everyone. She was clearly used to this kind of attention. As for me, I stayed as close to Dolphina as I possibly could. I tried to smile at the crowd, but it probably looked like someone had stabbed me with a fork.

When we arrived at the palace, the king and Queen were waiting for us, and they looked immensely proud. Dolphina ran into her mother's arms, giving her a big hug. "I missed you." Queen Aquamarine whispered into Dolphina's ear. King Theodore clapped his hands twice and two armored mermen came and took Alexander's stretcher away. "You have done well, children." The King said to us. "You have accomplished something that older and wiser merpeople have not even imagined attempting. This I believe is a cause for celebration. He led us to a room filled with merpeople. It was decorated with thousands of colourful streamers. It was a party held in our honor. There was wonderful food and music, and everything else you could ever want to have at a party. But before we knew it, the party was over and it was time to move on to more somber matters. It was

time for me to go home. After a teary-eyed good-bye to the King and Queen, Dolphina and I were on our way.

The trip home was spent savoring every moment of our time together. But somehow that only made it go by quicker. An hour or so later, Dolphina and I found ourselves at the place where we first met. It seemed like such a long time ago. "Well, I guess this is good-bye," I said, trying to hold back tears. I was failing dismally. "No, it's only so long," I hugged her as tight as I could. Reluctantly, I let go and began to walk back home. With a final wave, Dolphina disappeared back beneath sea.

I spent my last day alone reflecting on my trip to Atlantis and watching mind-numbing cartoons. Before I knew it, Mom and Dad were home. When they asked me what I did all week, I answered "Oh, not much." They still can't figure out why I was grinning. And to this day I have never revealed the secret location of Atlantis, and I never will.

The Diary

By Tori Hayward: Grade 7

Today was not going to be a good day. Amy Spencer stared up at the old house. Her house. It was big, really big, a lot bigger than the apartment she used to live in with her parents. The old brick walls were crumbling and the house looked slightly crooked. And you could tell the house was about a million years old just by looking at the trees surrounding it. Amy didn't want to admit it, but in the back of her mind she was excited, but also scared. Amy was a shy girl. She had lived in the same house for all her twelve years. And gone to the same school her whole life, and she still didn't have a best friend. Now she was dragged halfway across the country to live in Prince Edward Island. Yeah, she was scared. Amy sighed and slowly went up the steps to the house.

"Outa the way kid!" Amy jerked out of her thoughts and looked around. Two men were heaving a couch in through the doorway. Sweat was trickling off their brows and they were breathing heavily.

"Ki -id, MOVE!" The shorter of the two puffed. Just then Amy's mother came in to direct the men as to where to put the couch. Amy, avoiding her mother's sharp look, quickly slipped away to peace and quiet. Amy began exploring the house. Every second step she took, the old panel floorboards beneath her creaked, and the wind screeched through the cracks in the windows and it began to rain. Like the sky was crying. The wind began to wail; covering up every other sound. Amy covered her ears and beelined it up the stairs and into the room that was to be hers. She slammed the door shut and ran into the closet. There, she curled up into the tiniest ball she could make and began to sob.

Only when the movers were long gone and Mrs Spencer had returned from getting pizza for dinner, did Amy stop crying. She sat frozen, still in the closet. She could hear the distant voices of her parents downstairs. They would be calling her for dinner soon. Amy stood up, slowly stretching. Her tired legs aching from being curled up for so long. She slouched out of the closet and looked around the room. It wasn't so bad. The windows were big and the room was spacious. Amy then made her way to the hall to find the bathroom. It took her a while, it *was* a big house, but eventually she found it. Amy shut the bathroom door quietly then stared into the mirror. She was a mess, her eyes were red and raw from crying, and so was her face. Her hair was tangled, and she had bags under her eyes from nights of worrying about moving. If she looked like this when she went down for dinner her parents would start firing questions at her, and then piling on advice when she told them her worries. She did *not* need that. Amy started scrubbing at her face and slowly de-knotting her hair, and by the time dinner was ready she looked better.

"Well, this house is a big difference from that apartment in Toronto!" Mr. Spencer announced while they were eating. They were all sitting on the couch since the table wasn't put together yet.

"Yes, I agree, this old house is beautiful. Needs a little fixing up, but still beautiful." Responded Amy's mother.

“It's certainly a change for all of us and you'll get a fresh new start in school, Amy. Amy.....?” Mr. Spencer waved his hand in front of Amy's face. She jumped and looked up from her pizza.

“Dozed off for a second?” laughed Mr. Spencer. Amy didn't laugh. “Oh, come on Amy, cheer up. School starts tomorrow, remember.”

“Let's go get your airmattress ready for tonight. Hopefully I'll have your bed up and ready tomorrow.” Mrs. Spencer said, holding out her hand.

Amy made a face. “Do I have to sleep on it? I think the ground is more comfortable!”

Mrs. Spencer shook her head. “Sorry”. Amy sighed and walked upstairs with her mom.

That night Amy tossed and turned. All she could think about was the new school she would have to go to. She faded in and out of dreams, all of them bad. She also started imagining things; how her first day would go? Would the other kids like her? By the morning, Amy wasn't sure what she had imagined and what she had dreamed.

“Amy, I know you're awake. Time to get up!” Mrs. Spencer chimed as she stood in the doorway to Amy's bedroom. “How was the air mattress?”

Amy groggily sat up and tried to look like she had been sleeping, even though it was probably impossible for even the best of actors to do. Amy felt all jittery. She was sure she had been up all night and didn't get a wink of sleep at all. It was like trying to look sleepy when you're on a roller coaster in the middle of the day.

“I was asleep when you came in” Amy cried defensively, lying through her teeth. Her mother just rolled her eyes and repeated “Get up!”

Amy sat chewing her toast slowly. It was as if the slower she finished her breakfast the slower school would come. Sadly this was not true. Her mother was never late for anything and would make sure Amy was at school *early*, breakfast finished or not. As if reading her mind, Mrs. Spencer told Amy to hurry up with her eating or she would have to go to school on an empty stomach. Her mother hummed cheerfully as she clattered around the kitchen, finding places for her pots and pans.

“I just love this house, don't you?” Her mother sighed happily.

Amy just thought. *Did* she like this house? It was very big and confusing, and Amy kept getting lost. But for the first time in her life she got a big room and a bathroom that she had to share with no one. It was exciting, but also scary she reminded herself quickly. Then she began to sulk again. She should not be feeling excited, she should be feeling sorry for herself.

“Remember, Amy”, she told herself, “you're starting a new school in November. Even the kids that were new in September would have friends by now. Unless they were like her. In that case, they wouldn't want to be friends with her anyways.....”

“Amy! Let's go!” Her mother cried. Amy jumped up, grabbed her new back pack and ran to the car. She grabbed the door handle and pulled, nothing happened.

A bit annoyed she yelled “Mom, the car door's locked.”

Mrs. Spencer opened the front door and she laughed a bit, and then said “We are not driving to school.” And there is no need to shout” She added as she walked down the driveway past Amy's stunned face. Amy ran to catch up with her mother. She slowed to a walk as she hit the sidewalk.

“But Mom, in Toronto it was always too busy to walk to school. You always complained about the traffic and how unsafe it was.” Amy protested.

“Amy” her mother said gently “We are not in Toronto anymore. PEI is so much safer. We can walk almost anywhere.” Amy nodded mutely. So many changes, she thought, and she was silent the rest of the way.

The schoolyard was full of kids, ranging in ages from 4-13. All of them laughing and playing. No one seemed to be new except for her. Amy's mother kissed her cheek, showed her who her teacher was, then said good-bye. Without her mother there, Amy felt like nothing. She stood so still amongst the running and talking kids, feeling more alone than ever. No one paid any attention to her. All of them seemed to see right through her. Like she was a ghost. Her heart started beating loudly. Was a ghost. A lonely mourning ghost. So close but so far away from the real world. Held away at arms distance like she had some kind of disease. Amy's head started spinning and pounding, then she faded away into nothing.....

Unfamiliar faces were swimming above Amy's head. They were blurry and fuzzy. Amy tried to clear her vision. She shook her head, and one face came into focus. A girl her age was standing above her. Behind the girl, Amy could see only white.

“Hi” said the girl loudly.

A sharp voice in the background hissed “Shhhhhh! Or you will have to leave!”

“I'm Sandra” the girl said, ignoring the warning. Sandra had a voice that sounded American. She spoke in a drawl, and she had headphones dangling from her neck. Big army boots were on her feet and she was wearing a big baggy shirt that read “Music is my life”

“W-what happened? Where am I?” Amy asked shyly.

“Well, I was just going to come up to you and ask if you were, like, new, when all of a sudden you, like, looked as pale as, like, a ghost. Then you, like, fainted, dead on the spot, and I was, like, “Oh my gosh! Oh my gosh! Oh my gosh!” and, like, no one was, like, helping you and I was, like, well someone has to, like, do something, like seriously! So I, like, got a teacher, like, really fast and then we, like, took you to the nurse's office and, like, that's where you are now.” Sandra finished her story with a proud look on her face.

“Like, imagine what would happen, if I, like, didn't find you there? You, like, could still be, like, there on the ground!” She said. Amy nodded, still processing the story through her head. The combination of Sandra telling the story super fast and Amy trying to count how many time she said “like” made it hard for her to understand.

“I'm sure someone would have found her.” A kind looking woman came into view. She wouldn't still be there, Sandra.” She turned to Amy. “I'm the school nurse. And you are?”

“Amy” Amy whispered.

“Well Amy, I'm sure you can go to class now. Good thing, too! You wouldn't want to miss your first day!”

Actually, Amy would love to miss her first day, but she didn't say so. Sandra helped Amy up and led her out of the office. Sandra fired questions at her the whole way to the classroom. Amy nodded dully, not listening at all.

“This is our classroom!” Sandra announced as they reached a big room full of grade seven kids. Sandra dragged Amy inside.

“Hello Sandra” the teacher said. “ This must be Amy. I'm Mrs. Graves.” Amy nodded again.

“Is it true that you fainted?” A bold looking girl called out. Amy turned to look at the sea of children all looking curiously at her.

“Yes” She mumbled. The class instantly broke into whispers.

“Baby!” whispered one boy. Amy blinked back tears.

“Amy, take your seat next to Sandra.” Ordered Mrs. Graves.

All through the day, Sandra whispered answers to Amy when the teacher called on her and followed her around at recess. By the end of the day, Amy was feeling exhausted and embarrassed for being the only grade seven to have her mother show up and walk her home.

“So,” her father asked during dinner. “How was school? I heard you fainted. How come?”

Amy stared at the rice and meatballs on her plate. Her mother's first “homecooked meal” in this house. The knives and forks chinked and her mother poured a glass of milk, looking expectantly at Amy.

“My imagination ran away with me” Embarrassed, Amy mumbled, breaking the awkward silence. Her father roared with laughter and Amy tried to look offended, but couldn't help but feel better, after hearing her father laugh.

“OK” her father said, wiping tears from his eyes. “Off to bed!”

Amy ran up the stairs and into her room, laughing. The wooden floors creaked under her bare feet. As she made her way to her bed, her foot caught on something.

“OW!” Amy cried. She grabbed her foot and inspected it. It was not too bad. Amy turned to see what caused all the trouble. One of the floorboards was slightly turned up. Amy's eyes widened. Was it a loose floorboard? She limped over to it and lifted it up. It was a loose floorboard. Amy looked closely. There was something in it. She bent over and reached into the floor and brought out a little plain black book. In gold on the front was the word “Diary” Excitedly Amy opened the book and began to read.....

October 21, 1942

Dear Diary,

Today was NOT a good day. My name is Amelia Henderson and this is going to be my diary. I am 12 years old. I knew today was not going to be a good day because I have just moved into a new house. It is 110 Church Street. I have to go to a new school. I am a shy girl so I am not very happy about it. Well, bye! See you tomorrow.

From

Amelia

Amy closed the diary, her heart beating fast. She had just found a diary, about a girl like her that had lived in the same house as her! She could read the diary every night! Amy didn't mind moving to a new house and school so much anymore. So what, if they didn't like her, she had Amelia! Sandra seemed to want to be her friend and she wasn't so bad. Amy was tired of feeling sorry for herself. She cheerfully got into bed and began to read the diary. Life was looking better. And Amy would make friends and be happy, wouldn't she?

From the Ashes

By Katrina Alves: Grade 9

It was a rainy day. Again. To make matters worse, it wasn't really day. Every hour had the same sky: dark, with no signs of the sun or the moon. The only thing that told Marcus that it was 2:00 in the afternoon was his wristwatch, which still hadn't run out of battery life. He was sitting in his living room, only a week earlier, when he heard a loud banging noise coming from a few miles southward of his house. Strangely, the electricity went out, gas was running short and oil couldn't be drilled from the earth until the electricity was somehow brought back. It seemed like the entire planet had died in a matter of minutes. The only things that were still left living were animals, plants, humans and their robots. Robots were created about ten years before and had been released by the government to the public about four years after that. Marcus had received his two years before, and had named him (since it acted like a male and didn't seem to mind being called a 'he') Ben. Ben was silver in colour, with white LED eyes. He stood about six feet tall, give or take an inch, and was only slightly taller than Marcus himself. He had the voice of a twenty year old male, but was very slender and his features were lean. Unlike Ben, Marcus was fairly large in build, with dark eyes that matched his hair. He wasn't as intelligent as Ben (which was quite understandable, considering that Ben was a robot), and that was probably the reason why he didn't recognize the bang as the explosion of some sort of large bomb. Ben had saved his life the day of the explosion by jumping in front of Marcus and pushing him from the window. Ben himself leaped away just in time, for if he had stayed in front of the window any longer, he would have been destroyed by the large explosion and aftershock that followed. Unfortunately, their small house hadn't survived the blast so well. Ben had rebooted about an hour later and had rescued Marcus from the rubble. They took whatever would last, or what they thought they would need, and they started walking to the police station at the end of their road. No one knew what caused the blast, not even the robots. But everyone knew that they must build a shelter to survive. They had pooled their resources and for an entire week had worked their hardest to build from what was left in the rubble of many homes. After the blast was when the weather started to act up. Marcus could recall quite clearly the confusion of the people around him and himself as they raised their eyes towards the darkened sky. It was as if the sun and moon and stars were blocked out by ash and smoke that was hanging in the air, like a humongous storm cloud that would never cease raining and that would never go away. Almost a hundred people lived in the shelter they had made. Most had lost their families, friends, or other loved ones. Some had only their robots to take care of them. Some were sick or dying of infection. Marcus was sorry for them all. All he could do now was stay in his small quarters and wait for the nightmare to be over. His quarters were on the most eastern corner of the shelter, with two brick walls (the walls of the outside of the shelter), a tarp wall to separate the rooms, and a cloth wall that opened up like a tent flap. This 'door' led to the hallway, where he could go outside or go to other rooms if he was needed, or he could go to the addition for his shift of building more rooms for people that arrived looking for shelter. But, of course, he didn't want to go outside because the acid rain that fell continuously from the heavens was lethal over time, if one was exposed to it for an extended period of time (usually one to two days, depending on the person, from what Marcus had heard). His building shift was

about six hours long, starting at eight in the morning to about two in the afternoon. Ben went wherever he went, and spent much of his energy helping Marcus build the new rooms. Since robots renewed their energy like humans sleep, except they only have to regenerate for about four to five hours, and they could walk through the acid rain for a much longer time, Ben spent most of the shift with the other robots, either looking for bricks or other useful supplies, or rescuing survivors, which turned up rarely, since most wouldn't have lasted long. The other robots, though, were either separated from their owners, came to the shelter with their owners, or (and this happened rarely) they had abandoned their owners because there was no way they would have survived or the owner had told them to leave. Unlike the other robots, Ben had chosen to stay loyal to Marcus, and didn't think that the explosion was liberation from human 'enslavement', but said instead, "The explosion was a mere coincidence. The robots who chose to leave their owners were idiotic, too logical to care for their main purpose, or they were malfunctioning." This, Marcus thought, was a good analysis, for most of the robots that were working at the shelter were in one of these three categories, although some were very much like Ben, and preferred to stay with their owners and help. Ben sat in his chair, opposite the door, and regenerated. Marcus had learned from him that he could talk while regenerating, but he had to stay immobile until the cycle was complete, or until he was needed. Marcus didn't mind the fact that he didn't have to go anywhere, because Ben was usually sitting in his chair regenerating, and he was the perfect person to talk to when one was bored. Although, sometimes, and very unexpectedly, he would meet in the robot room (a room designated for the robots that didn't want to stay in their rooms all the time) with a few of the other 'more intelligent robots' (as Ben and Marcus called them; the robots that stayed loyal after the blast) and they would discuss issues or events that would help or hinder the shelter's population. Other robots would join in to the conversation if they were interested, but the group usually consisted of five robots: Ben, Eva (a medical robot), Rex (a firefighter robot), Bub (a heavy-lifter robot that used to work at construction sites), and Mia (a household robot, like Ben, but with gold plating instead of silver, meaning she was of a higher class of robots). All looked fairly alike, but then again, all had their own attributes. Eva was slender, thinner, even than Ben, and was bright blue (the medical colour for robots). Rex had a larger build, considering he had to have fireproof parts, and was, of course, fire engine red (the colour for a firefighting robot). Bub, being a heavy-lifter robot had the largest build of all five and had taken a lot of wear and tear at the construction sites he had worked at, and now worked at the additions twelve hours a day (he was a brownish colour, the colour for a heavy-lifter robot). Mia was the most learned of all five, specialising in science and mathematics, which helped contribute to the research on the acid rain and its effects on a human, as well as her repairing skills, which helped malfunctioning robots. Marcus sometimes listened to their conversations, which were usually held concerning the condition of the human population and the work on the new addition to the shelter. It was almost two thirty, the time the group had scheduled to meet. This was one of those days where Marcus had decided to join in, and the robots appreciated his contribution to their conversation, since most people in the shelter didn't want to talk to the robots. Marcus nodded to Ben, who started to shut down his regeneration cycle. When he was done, the two walked down the hallway, then to their left, then another left, into the robot room. The hallway was quiet, and so was the robot room. Only a few other robots were there,

other than the other four members of the group. They stood at a table, with a map and a few pieces of paper with different statistics on them. The map was an illustration of the hallways and rooms of the shelter, including the new addition.

“Any news?” Rex asked from the opposite end of the round table.

“Not much”, Ben said shortly, “the construction of the addition is growing slower with every passing shift.”

“I concur.” Bub rumbled, “We are losing workers, both mechanical and organic.” He added, looking intently at Eva.

Eva shrugged, if that is what one would call a shrug, and said simply “The fact is we do not have enough supplies to care for the sick.”

“Or enough parts to mend the robots that need repair.” Mia added, an annoyed tone mingled in her voice.

“Then take the robots that cannot be repaired and use them for scrap parts!” Bub exclaimed (recklessness and acting without thinking outside of the construction site was obviously part of his programming), “Let the dying be put out of their misery so that those supplies can be used for those that will survive.”

“Do you want half of the human population to die, and almost twenty five percent of the robot population destroyed for parts?” Rex argued in a soft voice, knowing that Bub wouldn’t want that to happen.

The room became deathly silent as the robots calculated their actions and ran small simulations of different situations in their circuits.

“What has become of the research on the acid rain?” Ben looked up at Mia from the charts and maps.

“Research is slow. I am the only one in this shelter who has more than a high school degree in chemistry, or any other science for that matter.” Mia folded her arms. That was her answer. Another long pause began.

“Do we even have enough food?” Marcus asked, half wondering if he shouldn’t have asked the question, in fear of what the answer might be.

“Every aspect of this shelter is steadily crawling to a halt, and there are no signs of hope.” Rex answered, not daring to look any of his comrades in the eye. The room seemed to darken at this news and the robots about them hung their heads. Marcus sighed. Whoever wanted to destroy the human race was about to achieve their goal.

“I do have some profound news.” Mia said, studying her charts carefully, “From all accounts, and what evidence we have, my fellows and I believe we have found that the bomb that has put this whole thing into motion wasn’t human at all. Apparently, and this is only the most plausible theory other than terrorism, mind you, that this bomb was specially made to annihilate the human race. The acid rain can only be produced using a very special compound of sophisticated chemicals, which pollutes the atmosphere to such an extent that the rain, and possibly the air, has been made unusable. Whoever or whatever let that bomb go off knew exactly what they were doing, and had the genius to make the bomb itself. As for the air pollution, that has become our priority to study for extensive pollution.” The other robots nodded in agreement to her decision. Marcus didn’t much like the idea of the air being polluted with a sophisticated chemical compound made to kill off the human race. He found that it was quite a diabolical scheme, for aliens he had never met before. After more discussion, the group split again to go back to their stations. Marcus and Ben walked silently to their room, both wondering how they were going to survive. They talked a little about what was happening, and then they both decided that they would sleep for the night. Ben sat, once again, in his chair and lowered his eye brightness, as not to keep Marcus from sleep as he regenerated. They had determined together, at the start of this nightmare, that Ben, while Marcus was asleep, would keep constant readings of his heart rate and such, so that if Marcus had a sudden reaction to the air, or if he went into shock for some reason, Ben would know almost immediately, and would be able to act upon that. But that wasn’t usually a problem, considering that most of the nights he had slept in the shelter had been sleepless ones, if Marcus was fortunate to have a few hours of sleep, they were full of nightmares and half-dreams. For the eighth time since they came to the shelter, Marcus and Ben hunkered down for a long night.

The next morning was just as rainy as the evening before. Marcus had gotten a few hours of sleep, and had a sore back from all of the tossing and turning he had done that night. Ben’s outer plating was dripping with condensation, for the night had been very humid, and it looked as if he was sweating hard. It was quite warm, and Marcus wondered if it had ever been this hot in this area before. After a thorough drying off, Ben ran a self-analysis, as he did every morning, and Marcus changed into his work clothes. They then walked down the hall to the construction site. But what they didn’t expect, was that the rain had come through the tarp the last shift had put on the wall so the rain wouldn’t erode the fresh wall, and now they were facing the fact that an entire 48 hours’ work (which was quite valuable to the entire shelter) had eroded away in one night, and would have to be rebuilt somehow.

“To lose that much of the wall will cost the shelter much time, energy and supplies to rebuild.” Ben stated as Bub came to stand by the wall to inspect the damage.

“None of this is any good anymore.” Bub said, looking at a half-eroded brick, “But we have a bigger problem... the food supplies are running dry.”

Bub looked at Ben, squarely in the eye as he said those last words. Both knew that the humans would die in a matter of days, and when the humans were gone there would be

no one to keep the robots in check or do any inspections for mould or rust developing in the robots' circuits. Soon after the humans were gone, the robots would 'die off' as well.

"We must start repairs now, then." Ben said, picking up old bricks and throwing them aside. Marcus joined him immediately, and soon, many more had come to help them, both robotic and human.

When most of the wreckage had been cleared away, which was almost five hours later, Bub told the others that they could leave for a short break. All left, except for Ben, Marcus, and Bub, who stayed behind to check the building supplies a few metres down the hall. Ben had gone for a short walk to scavenge more bricks and other materials that were scarce. Marcus laid new bricks on the wall, trying to stay under the tarp roof that sheltered him from the drenching rain. Suddenly, and quite to his surprise, Marcus found himself looking at the wall in dismay. A puddle had formed at the foundation of that wall and was eroding the bricks in which it came into contact with. From far away, someone called at the top of their lungs, "FLASH FLOOD!"

Immediately, the shelter was in frenzy. People were running to and fro looking for a safe place to hide. Marcus saw some of his closest human friends run into the rain, looking in vain for high ground. Marcus watched, numb with sorrow, as their thin, underfed bodies melted like wax in the oncoming torrent. Their lifeless corpses crumpled to the ground in a matter of agonizing minutes. Marcus was so numbed by this he didn't realize that Bub was shouting at him. The moment he did, a large chunk of the wall fell over onto him. Piece by piece, the wall came crashing down on top of him. The pain was immense, and he thought it would never stop. He felt searing pain in his feet and legs as the rain slowly seeped into his clothes and slowly ate away at his pants. Half unconscious, Marcus got up and ran for his life, in the direction in which he thought the hall was in. But as he ran, it never occurred to him that he was running into the rain! His vision blurred by rain and blood, Marcus ran through the wreckage, not thinking, not hearing the others screaming his name. He ran for what seemed like hours, but could have been minutes, or even seconds in real time. The pain was so bad now that he could feel it no longer, and the only thing he thought he could do as keep running, and someone would save him if he kept running. His heart pounded and his head throbbed with loss of blood through the blow to his head. A clear thought came into his dull mind like another knock to the head: he was certainly going to die.

But a voice, as calm and clear as the untainted spring rain (or what it used to be), called out to him from the rain and the haze of his own mind, "Halt."

Marcus skidded to a stop. He didn't know who had spoken to him, but he trusted the voice anyway.

"Lie down and rest; you are in good hands." the voice softly commanded, and for a moment Marcus thought he was in heaven and the voice was his mother's. The pain lessened as he laid himself down, and he noticed it wasn't raining.

"Am I in the shelter?" he asked dazedly.

“You are in good hands.” the voice softly repeated as he drifted into the calmest sleep he had had since the explosion.

Marcus woke up suddenly and with a start. He didn’t know where he was; the room was brightly lit, with a white floor, ceiling and walls. Marcus found that someone had bandaged him. The bandages were a soft, white material that stretched and moved with his skin, even on his knees and elbows; it was a material he had never seen before. But he didn’t have long to ponder this, for a few seconds later a woman came into the room by a door he had not seen before, a door on the wall to his left. The woman, if that was what she was, was tall and slender, clothed in untainted, unstained white from shoulders to feet. She herself was an ivory colour, very sickly pale for a human, and Marcus knew she wasn’t human at all. Her eyes were large and had silver irises and very big, very black pupils. The whites of her eyes were without vein or redness. Her entry into the room was quite graceful, her bare feet gliding silently on the floor. She stood very rigid for a moment, supposedly pondering about the ragged human before her and what she would say. When she did speak, Marcus realized at once that she had been the voice that had brought him here in the first place.

“I am sorry.” she said helplessly.

“For what?” Marcus asked; he was quite confused.

“For what my people have done to your planet.” she explained softly.

“Apology accepted.” Marcus said as he steadied himself on the strange white floor.

“Unfortunately, that bomb was sent by a totally different generation of our people. My generation followed that bomb, hoping to disable it. We didn’t have the time. Now, we wish to make amends, and we would like to live with your people and help you build your cities and your towers again, so that the human race can live as they once were.”

“That will be almost impossible. The atmosphere is almost depleted. We don’t have a lot of time left on our hands.”

“Even now the atmosphere is being mended and strengthened as it was in its prime, by researchers and scientists here, on our ship.”

“A space ship?”

The woman nodded slightly. Marcus agreed and they went to the surface together. He once again found himself in the shelter, in the meeting place where all of the people met. Marcus told his story, and the alien woman, whose name was Vio, told them of her generation’s plan to help the humans rebuild their world. The entire population of the shelter agreed, and messages were sent to the other shelters, via robots, that aliens from a far place had come to mend the atmosphere and stop the rain. Messages were sent back saying that the other shelters would gladly receive their help.

For another few weeks, the rain never ceased. But the acidity level went down slowly but steadily, and soon Ben and Marcus and all the other people walked onto the soil again. It took about seven or eight years for the world to mend its most terrible wounds. Beautiful white towers were built, hospitals with even better medicine from Vio's people, houses of all shapes and sizes. The great white spires of the sky scrapers stretched up into the sky; the tallest were for mending the atmosphere. Marcus got a good paying job as a council member, being one of the five people to represent the humans while the other five were aliens representing their people. They had many affairs to be discussed ahead of them, but he and Vio had many good high hopes for the two worlds. Ben stayed with Marcus and was eventually upgraded with new alien technology. The other four loyal robots joined the council when the discussion concerned the robot population and when they weren't busy with repairs. Science became more advanced by the day. Scientists in both races had found that humans and aliens were more alike than they had thought. A marriage and two children later, Marcus and Vio still believed there were many more adventures before them. Space was almost in their reach once again, and Marcus couldn't wait to see the stars up close. Their children, on the other hand, heard many different tales of robots and runaway bombs and space ships and aliens and acidic rain that never stopped. They became very successful, even in their youngest years.

And as Marcus said, "And they lived happily ever after to the end of their days."

At least, it would be on that planet. Who knows how happy things would be on other planets?

The Little Things

By Jessica Bell-Jackson: Grade 10

The writer looked down at his notebook, reading the words he had set down before him. The words on the page were a jumble of mismatched ideas, ones that would not fit. He cursed to himself, ripping out the page and throwing it beside him.

He sat outside his grungy apartment building on the sidewalk, leaning up against the building. The 28 year old man wore a plain black wool hat, covered in holes. His dark-brown jacket had dirt patches on it, and his blue jeans had faded and seemed too big for him. His hair was black, greasy and slightly curly as usual. He was a writer with writers block.

The man was already completely broke. He worked at a grocery store down the street, and still couldn't pay the bills, or rent. To him, it had to mean that everyone and everything hated him. His mother left him and his father when he was a boy, and his father beat him. He was close to starving to death by this point, and yet he was supposed to believe in a god.

Let's just say him and the church never saw eye-to-eye.

He watched the people pass by, watched them give him dirty looks. He rolled his eyes at the people. It was fall, nearing winter, and it was getting colder outside. The morning's air was crisp and fresh.

A boy in front of him dropped his bag. Out of it fell books, papers, binders and pens. He was clearly a student. The boy chuckled, and dropped to his knees to start throwing the items in his bag. A breeze blew, making the papers fly towards the man. The man grabbed the papers, and put his notebook aside.

"Thank you!" The boy said, continuing to place things into his bag. The man got up, and handed the boy his papers. "Don't mention it," he roughly said, turning to go back to the wall. He stopped, thinking better of it and dropped down to help the boy pick up his things.

The boy looked at the man, and smiled. "Thank you, again." Then he added, "I'm Bastian."

The man nodded. "I'm Wilson." Wilson continued to place things into the boy's bag. When it was full, Wilson handed the bag to the boy and walked back over to his wall, sitting down with his pen and notebook in his lap. He was so close to the paper that his nose was touching it. He heard laughing, and looked up to see Bastian still standing on the sidewalk in front of him, grinning.

“Do you need something?” he cocked an eyebrow, confused. Bastian shook his head, still grinning, “Nope! I was just wondering what you were working on.” Wilson frowned, and ran a hand through his greasy hair. “I’m writing a story.”

With that, Bastian’s smile grew wider. “Are you a published author?” Wilson nodded uncomfortably.

“What books have you written?”

“My most popular one is called ‘Voice of the Unheard’ but I doubt a boy like you has heard it...”

“That’s one of my favorite books!”

Wilson looked at the boy in question, while Bastian looked at the man in excitement. Wilson was definitely not a well-known author. In fact, he was lucky that he had three books published. No one ever read them, anyways. That’s what Wilson thought at least.

“So you have writers block, then?” Bastian frowned. Wilson nodded. “Where do you normally get your book idea’s from, then?” he asked. “They are about my experiences in life.” Wilson said bluntly. Bastian nodded, keeping the frown on his face.

“...‘Voice of the Unheard’ is a...pretty sad story,” Bastian stated uncomfortably. “...about a boy who grows up in poverty, with a deadbeat father and a mother who hates him. He finally speaks out, and yet his life turns into crap anyways.”

“So?” Wilson rolled his eyes, getting annoyed with the boy. Bastian smiled. “You should be happier! You’re alive and breathing, with no health problems or deformities.”

“Well aren’t you just the optimistic brat.” Wilson stated. The boy smirked, “Well aren’t you just the pessimistic old man.”

“What are you, 14? I don’t think you should be telling me how to live my life.” Wilson spat, growing frustrated. “I’m 17 actually,” Bastian laughed. Wilson raised an eyebrow.

The boy was almost Wilson’s height, with a white collared shirt, black plaid. He wore light blue jeans and a smile on his face. His hair was a light brown color, and leaned to one side of his head. It was straight, and short, all-in-all the exact opposite of Wilson’s.

“I’m just saying, though, if you die tomorrow, you’ll have wanted to live life to its best!” Bastian smiled. Wilson shook his head. “No thanks. When you get older, you’ll understand that life isn’t what it’s made out to be.”

At this, Bastian frowned. “Whatever you say...” he muttered. They stared at each other for a few moments, before the boy finally spoke out.

“You know what you should write about?” Bastian asked. Wilson blinked at the boy, wondering what he would say.

“It should be about a struggling author trying to make it through life, getting his life changed around by a random stranger.” Bastian grinned. “Are you trying to assume you’re going to change my life around or something?” he smirked. The boy laughed, “Of course!”

“I should get going. Don’t want to be late for school!” Bastian smiled, waving to Wilson. Wilson nodded his head to the boy. “I hope to see you again! It was nice meeting you!”

“Be seeing you,” Wilson said, as Bastian walked away. As Wilson thought, he chuckled at the boy.

He sure as hell wasn’t making a story like that.

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Wilson pulled his dinner out of the microwave, and practically threw it onto the counter when he realized its heat. He scowled, blowing on his hands as he closed the microwave door. Grabbing an oven mitt, Wilson brought the dinner to his living room, and placed it on the coffee table.

One look around Wilson’s apartment and you would walk right back out. It was definitely not the prettiest apartment, with its ugly carpets and what used to be pure white walls. The rooms were incredibly small, barely livable space for one person, and it smelled a tad bit musty.

He sat down on his couch, and turned on his TV. The TV was very small, and was placed right on the coffee table. The couch was large, but ripped and stained all over. It was used for Wilson’s bed, as well.

The TV automatically turned onto the news, and ‘Breaking News’ was at the bottom of the news channel, bold and in red. Wilson furrowed his eyebrows, and turned up the TV.

“Breaking news! In down town, a local boy named Bastian Camber saved a man from being shot in a grocery store near one of the schools. A man began threatening someone in the store for money. When he refused, the criminal pointed the gun at the man. Camber pushed the man away just in time, before being shot himself. Camber died this morning in Aurora Hospital.”



A picture of Camber was shown next to the news reporter. The boy Walter had met that morning stared at him, smiling and full of life.

Wilson stared at the TV screen, before turning it off. He continued to stare, the irony of Bastian's words seeping through his brain. *If you die tomorrow, you'll have wanted to live life to its best!*

Wilson suddenly stood up, and walked over to his desk. He chuckled as he picked up his pen and started writing. He knew what he was going to write about now. It might not have happened yet, but Wilson hoped that it would.

It was going to be about a struggling author trying to make it through life, getting his life changed around by a random stranger.

# **The Lion of the Sea**

## **By Madeline Smith: Grade 11**

### PROLOGUE

Two duelers faced off on a nearly empty beach, the woman wielding a borrowed rapier, its owner watching from the group of pirates huddled near the two. The man, a wiry Scotsman, his mane of red hair tied back with a silken purple ribbon, carried a nasty single edged cutlass, the blade huge and heavy, ready to cleave bones in half.

“Begin!” The quartermaster spread his arms and backed the crew away from the challengers, eyeing his sword in the hands of the slight woman facing off against his captain.

The Lion of the Sea - Captain Lynus McKinnon- made the first move in the spar, aiming an easy-to-block heavy swing at the woman’s shoulder. She managed to keep her arm attached to her body by blocking the blow, but her blade curved precariously against the Lion’s strength. She ducked away, intending to keep from snapping her weapon.

Amongst the throng of pirates watching in earnest, the helmsman was following the fight through the veil of guilt, every close call between Evangeline and Lynus’ blade a direct result of his poor choices. How had Evangeline even gotten here? What was she doing dueling an infamous pirate captain in order to be a part of his crew? A woman had no place amongst pirates, especially these ones. He winced as she narrowly missed taking a massive strike from the cleanly sharpened blade of Lynus’ cutlass, the galvanized movement she made in order to evade apparently causing her some pain, though the helmsman had not seen her take a hit. Had she already been injured before the fight?

There was a rumbling of praise from the crew as the captain made contact with Evangeline, slicing a purposefully shallow gash into her forearm, a move that surprised Isaac Every, the helmsman. His captain looked like he was fighting to kill, but he had hardly delivered a scratch.

Evangeline was struggling. She was almost never fully on her feet, rolling around on the beach to avoid incoming attacks like a pig rolling in mud. She had not hit the captain with more than enough strength than to simply poke loose a few silver buttons on his coat, and she seemed have an unrelenting grimace of pain on her face, though her shoulder was not inhibiting her. It was hard for Isaac to hold back the urge to step in and help her to her feet, rather than allow the one-sided fight to continue; Eva constantly slipping in the sand, her boots lacking any apparent traction. She dove to the side again, a few of the crew actually forced to step backwards to avoid being crashed into.

She swung haphazardly in the Lion’s general direction, her eyebrows raising when her opponent gasped, faltering. Still on the ground, Evangeline hammered her heel against his hip, but the captain only stumbled. She scrambled backwards, the crew

moving with her, and Lynus stepped forwards, brandishing his cutlass in Eva's face. Isaac looked away.

## ONE

It still itched and stung, the aggravated skin so swollen that the three letters stamped onto the sailor's skin were beyond deciphering until further healing. He was immensely grateful for this; had he not been shamed enough without his new captain seeing the brand and recognizing the sojourn Isaac had experienced with slavers? The slavers that had slapped it on him were callous enough to place them on a messy looking angle, the burn black in some places and an uneven red in others.

"Distracted, are ye, Isaac?"

Lynus McKinnon, otherwise known as the King of the Sea or the Lion, spun the wheel from underneath his helmsman's hands, Isaac jerking his hands away from the spokes.

"Sorry cap'n, what was the heading?"

"Taken care of now 'm afraid," Lynus nodded at the wheel he had just turned, the schooner creaking as the masts tilted to accommodate the new direction.

"Take a break, wee lad. We need to save those arms of yours for our lady friend tonight," Lynus winked and turned to leave, but Isaac stopped him with a startled sputter.

"Evangeline? But...she's signed her art'cles! She's a proper member of the crew! I couldn't do that do her... I won't condemn her!"

"Calm yerself, man! I wouldn't mar her first week aboard with 'at! But we do have more than one lady friend aboard, remember. Dear Miranda, did ye forget? I've been letting her take a break, but she's back on duty fer tonight, and she's oh-so excited m'boy."

The Lion left Isaac leaning on the immobile part of the helm, his cool grey eyes easily picking out Evangeline's petite form from amongst the clusters of pirates on the deck, pulling off his blue bandana and tiredly running his hands through his blond hair.

John Elwins, the quartermaster, had taken her hand in his and was showing her - yet again- how to write her name. She was concentrating intently on her task, while John seemed mesmerized with her dark plaited hair. Pulling away from her teacher, Eva winced when the former placed an affectionate hand on her upper back, likely congratulating her progress.

So the corsairs must have whipped her! Must have done quite a good job with it too, considering it was still painng her, and had likely kept her from fighting properly in

her duel against her new captain. Still, she was lucky; her life was spared, and luckier still, she had been offered a place amongst the crew. She was no doubt ashamed of her poor performance, however, and the crew encouraged those feelings.

It angered him sometimes when the guilt triggered suddenly from such thoughts, the knowledge that he had abandoned her and the rest of his crew. And he had still done nothing about it, nor was he in the process of even attempting any sort of plan.

His eyes darkened. He would take back his beloved ship and save the lives of his crew, the crew that was loyal to the last second of freedom. No matter what it took.

## Two

He only went to Eva when Spurrier moved in to formally greet her, giving her his form of a welcome.

“So, the cap’n took pity on ye, eh?”

Isaac watched as Eva turned from the quartermaster, her shy smile slipping at Aaron Spurrier’s expression. It was a cold look, one that everyone (including the Lion himself) had received at one point or another, patronizing and arrogant. When he caught her quickly donning her mental armor, her brief look of dismay disappearing, his countenance casually morphed into one of sly mocking, as if he was silently laughing at a small child’s inexperienced mistakes.

“If he had taken pity on me, he would have allowed me a clean death!” came her reply, her voice lifeless in determination to give him nothing to taunt with. Elwins gave First Mate Aaron a warning from behind Eva’s shoulder with his washed out green eyes, the captain’s cat’s nine tails ready and waiting in his cabin, but Aaron ignored this nonverbal cautioning, quick with a comeback.

“Ahhh, an honourable one are we? Well, sweetheart, you are about to go through hell and back before we reach port again. There be no honour in hell. Only pain and suffering ye see.”

Evangeline only looked at Spurrier, “I have already been through hell. Repeating the process will only give me scars of which I can add to my growing collection.”

No one noticed as Isaac silently crept closer to the confrontation, shamelessly eavesdropping lest things get violent, which was likely.

Spurrier looked Eva up and down, greedy green eyes perpetually narrowed as he looked down his pointed nose at the world, limp brown hair always cut too neatly for his profession. “You look to be free of scars to me, m’dear. Perhaps later you’ll hafta show me them. In my cabin.” He winked, guffawed with laughter, and left to tend to his duties. Elwins gently took Eva’s arm to prevent her from going after him, a retort already on her

lips. He turned her to face him, but Isaac moved away from them, feeling this moment may be a little too private for his ears. He didn't particularly care what Elwins had to say anyways, it was Evangeline he would need to speak to, hoping that she knew the whereabouts of his ship, *Magdala*, and the dogs that stole her away. What gall his own employers had, stealing away everything he had and sending him to dance the hempen jig, simply because he refused to transport their slaves along with his own cargo. And now his own crew had become the very thing he had tried to protect.

Evangeline had silently joined Isaac at the helm, interrupting his thoughts. She was frowning at the moodiness of his visage, or perhaps she was simply deeply inspecting his new brand. "I thought you would be happy. You're here, free to do whatever you like, kill men, take some gold... You hardly look like a man who's slipped away unnoticed from the rest of his enslaved crew." Her tone was light, as if she was legitimately concerned that he was not taking full advantage of the rewards he had been granted for his exemplary actions. Isaac stared at her, cornflower blue eyes thoughtful and glazed for half of a second before they angrily focused on her aloof olive eyes.

"Don't do that t'me! I'm not to blame for what those men did, and are currently doing! Will it comfort you to know that I feel guilty nonetheless? Those men were my brothers and you act like they meant nothing to me, replaced in a moment with *pirates*!" He hissed, sharply taking her arm and moving her away from the centre of the deck, gripping rather tightly in case she resisted. She did not. She allowed herself to be pulled as if he wanted to tell her a juicy secret, not defend himself against her accusations.

"No it doesn't, actually. You have no right to be feeling guilty when you should be sharing their punishment!"

"Sharing their punishment? I had a punishment of my own, if you'd believe it," his hand went to the burn on his cheek, "And how dare you talk to me about punishment! Are you not here speaking with me? Free and amongst loveable pirates is hardly where the crew is right now."

"I am going to sink their ship. I promised to return to free them, unlike you." Evangeline looked away, stubbornly holding to her accusation, "You are the one that abandoned us; don't turn yourself into the victim."

### THREE

Evangeline had kept to herself for the next few days, often seen speaking earnestly with Elwins on the uppermost deck. Isaac let her distance herself and get used to her new duties aboard the ship. It was their first Friday at sea that he dreaded, and the day came too soon.

Lynus had called both Isaac and his first mate to his quarters, the crew seething with both anticipation and anxiety, all (including Elwins) leaving Eva in the dark as to what the big event was. It was growing dark before Lynus summoned his men, their

musician singing a quiet wordless song, the beat fast and anxious. The pirates knew that this was the night they would be allowed to take out any and all frustrations, bonding as a crew over a simple task.

Isaac waited with his captain and Spurrier on the lowest deck of the ship, rats scurrying about, the entire room swaying methodically to the sounds of the ocean. The captain had groomed himself specifically for this occasion, his hair brushed through (likely with his fingers), and his signature purple ribbon large and ostentatious.

“Purple is the colour of royalty m’boys,” he would often tell them whenever he caught one of his men glancing skeptically at the feminine accessory, “Am I not the lion ‘o the sea? King?”

Even now, with a whimpering woman at his feet and a scrawny man chained to her, Lynus McKinnon held to his most honourable title, the man smirking as the crew began to enter, rowdy from drink and high expectations.

“Welcome, men. I have quite a night planned for ye,” The ‘King’ smiled darkly, candles lit in various spots across the deck, the dim light just enough to allow them to see what was happening. The air was thick with the smell of both crew and prisoner’s sweat. Isaac tensed when Eva entered closely behind Elwins, her eyes instantly going to Isaac and already blaming him for what was about to happen. He didn’t even attempt to mime to her that this was not his doing; these were pirates. Pirates did as they like.

“Captain, I cannot do this,” Eva murmured, just loud enough to be heard. The woman cowering on the floor weakening her, “Please, I do not wish to be a part of this.”

Lynus looked at her incredulously, “You do not *wish*? Well, with manners like that, my dear, I should say ye will ruin our fun! Be off!” The captain sharply waved her away.

Hurrying away from the torture that would soon befall the innocents Lynus had captured, more than half of the crew looked as though they wanted to follow her lead and escape the obligation to hurt innocents for their captain.

Isaac watched as Elwins’ eyes followed Eva as she left, remorse briefly flashing across his face before he found a knotted whip thrust into his hands. Remorse replaced itself with a strange sort of bloodlust and anger, the need to rage at someone and something that was living, breathing, and could hurt. The quartermaster cracked his weapon against the bare shoulder of Miranda, a bright red patch appearing on her skin, pinpricks of blood popping up as she cried out, scrambling away, only to find Lynus blocking her exit.

Isaac would do nothing to stop him. Elwins had a true need for this; this was his form of therapy –a cruel one, no doubt, but therapy nonetheless. He could do no chastising to his son, no family screaming matches. This would be the only way the man

would one day mourn his family properly. Isaac dare not interrupt his captain's ritual, and neither did the rest of the crew.

"Every! Isaac, would you do us the honour? We should like to move our guests to the deck, get some air..."

Isaac could only agree with his captain's request, a length of rope carried with them as they moved to the top deck, Miranda's hands tied together behind her back. She tried to dig her heels into the unrelenting wooden boards, but Spurrier was hammering his foot into her back whenever Elwins could not get her to move.

"Cap'n, is this really necessary? It will kill her eventually, you know that?" Lynus' dull brown eyes seemed to come alive with the idea of killing off one of his slaves, slowly and painfully.

"Good, I've grown bored of her. We'll find us a replacement, someone more... compliant."

"I will not be the one to do this. Hang her by the neck, it be kinder."

The Lion laughed at this, "Yes, but what enjoyment is there in that?"

#### FOUR

Out on the open deck, dark sky above them, the darkness complete and without stars or moons to light their way, Isaac's eyes found Evangeline leaning on the rail in the candlelight. Each of the crew carried either a lantern or a candle stump melted onto a bit of wood. The captain ordered one of the lither men to scrabble their way up the main mast and throw the rope over it, turning it into a sort of pulley. Miranda was brought forward, her hands bound behind her back, struggling wildly. Lynus leaned in close, "The beatings will continue until moral improves 'm afraid, darling." She wept and squirmed fiercely.

Isaac caught Eva turning to them, the guilt that she had been ruminating over quickly flashing to her usual anger and contempt when she saw their little concession. She stormed over, just as Bowdin, the skinny little carpenter/surgeon, tossed the rope over the mast, Elwins beginning to tie it to Miranda's wrists.

"***Stop this!***" She screamed at them, "Why would you do this to a woman that has done you no harm? She is an innocent! She does not deserve such treatment just because you captured her!"

Lynus turned slowly to face her, "Actually m'dear, she is not completely free of guilt. She tried to duel me, as you did, to join my crew. But she pretended to be a man. She tried to trick me, and I will not allow that! You, on the other hand, have the respect to at least show yer true self."

“That does not sentence her to such a fate, surely! You men, how could you take part in this? I can stay silent no longer! I was once part of another crew. An honest merchant ship. Corsairs came, with letters of marque to attack our vessel. They enslaved the entire crew, including myself! Those good, decent men still feel the whip as I did, and I need a ship as swift as this to take them over! I call you to help a woman in need!”

The crew was silent for a moment after her speech, a couple of them viciously swearing at the mention of corsairs, but Isaac instantly stepped forward, old feelings for the woman that once sweet talked her way into being his cook, unearthed. “I will steer the way.”

“I think that is rather not yer choice, Every.” Lynus said sharply, “This is my ship. You will steer to these corsairs only if I *wish* it.” He looked at Eva, clearly thinking things over. “What’s in it for me, lass?”

“I will not rally your crew to mutiny. Unless you would be interested in becoming the Governor of your own island, then I’m sure something could be arranged,” came Eva’s honeyed reply.

“The King of Sea has a shred of honour when it comes to a maid in need, and purging his kingdom of unwanted men. Nevertheless, your little crew will have a debt to me, and my ship. Understood? I will also be having any and all spoils, to be split amongst me crew at my pleasure.”

Evangeline knew this would be the best offer she could ask for, “Yes, yes, whatever you want. I just need your manpower.”

Lynus McKinnon turned to his first mate’s disbelieving face, Aaron spluttering something about following a woman’s orders, but Lynus gave the man a good shove towards Miranda.

“Take ‘er downstairs,” he dictated, “We’ll have time for punishment with them corsairs in my gun range. Get cleaning me blunderbuss.”

THE END  
(of part 1)



## **Beautiful Lies**

**By Kayla Leigh Sanders Coulson: Grade 11**

I came to the world slowly. Or was it my world? No, it couldn't be. Even with no sight, no sound, no anything, I knew this was not where I was from. I was somewhere else. I just needed to figure out where.

Sound came first. Although there was nothing to hear, I could listen to the silence. A wheeze, a gasp, a huff, I'd found my lungs. I was breathing. I was breathing, so I was alive. I hoped.

Feeling. I was on something soft. A bed? My fingers stroked the surface, sheets. I'm in a big fluffy bed. At least it's not a coffin... no, I don't feel sides.

Ok, it's time to open my eyes. I'm afraid, afraid of what I'll see. I don't want to see this world that is not mine. Alien to me. But I'm only human.... I need my sight.

Sky. Blue, bright, never ending sky. I'm outside? On a bed? No wait. Its not my sky. My sky has a sun, this sky is warm and bright, but there is no sun. Only blue.

I sat up, my body slow, not used to moving. I'm not outside it seems, I'm in a room. A room with a sky. Not my room. My room has posters, my desk, my guitar, my room smelled like laundry. My room FELT like my room. This room was bare save for the white fluffy bed. The walls are a blue that match the sky, so perfect it's impossible to make out where the walls end, and the sky begins.

I sank my toes into the deep white, lush carpet and I stand up. Quickly I take stalk of myself. Relieved, I see that I'm still wearing the clothes from last night, only without socks or shoes... I knew it was silly, He had obviously carried me into this room, and tucked me in the bed, but they hadn't changed my clothes... it was a small comfort. Leather jacket, red tank, jeans and the iron bracelet that my grandmother had warned me never to take off. My head still felt slightly fuzzy, but other than that I seemed fine.

It was then that I noticed the absence of a door. How was I supposed to get out of here! Had he brought me in through the sky? Was he going to leave me here, too slowly die on this white perfect bed? Or was he watching from somewhere up there? Mocking me as I slowly went insane?

The worst part was that I should have seen this coming. I knew he was trouble from the second I saw him. Kahl. Anger started to clench in my gut as I thought of his name. I wasn't sure how exactly he was involved in this, but I knew he was part of it. I should never have agreed to go with him! I'd been hoping that by agreeing to his stupid date, I would be able to get him to leave me alone. Stupid. Stupid. Stupid!

Clenching my fists I began to pace back and forth across the empty room. I had to get out of here. I looked up to the sky and decided that raising hell seemed like my best option.

“Kahl! What is this? I need to talk to you right now! Do you hear me?!” I screamed his name again and again, demanding, ranting and calling him the worst names I could think of.

“Miss? I’m afraid that won’t do much good,” a small quiet voice said from behind me.

I whipped around, immediately bringing up my fists to face an attacker and froze. She had appeared out of nowhere, seeming to have materialized from the wall. But that’s not why I froze. This girl... she was not human. It almost looked like she was wearing a torn, tattered dress, but the long strips of gauzy material were attached to her, with cream white, porcelain skin peaked out from where the gauzy strips weren’t attached. They even hung down from her head in the place of hair. And her eyes, her eyes were empty black marbles, that swirled with rainbows, the way black oil did in the sun. But what was the most alien about her, was that she was beautiful, her cheekbones sharp and her nose small. She was an ethereal little doll.

I stood there, unable to move, or to speak. She simply stared at me, saying nothing, her expression looking more and more worried by the second. She took a step towards me but I stumbled back and tripped on the edge of the bed, falling onto the mountain of pillows.

“I’m sorry miss. I didn’t mean to startle you.” she said.

“Who- who are you?” I asked, the question rubbing agenisised my throat like sand paper. She gave me a tentative smile before answering.

“You can call me Mai. I’ve been sent to help you get settled,” she replied.

That snapped me out of it. Immediately my earlier outrage was remembered. I stood up with as much dignity as I could and got right up in her face to make my point clear.

“Settled?! No, there is no settling here because I will not be staying here! Do you understand me? You are going to take me home! And when I get home, Kahl is going to leave me the hell alone!” as I was screaming I noticed the light in the room change. The sky had turned a dark raging purple, and a vortex of swirling black clouds had appeared, as I watched the walls changed to match and the bed turned into shades of crimson and ebony, iron details curling around the bedpost.

Mai gasped in delight, “oh I just knew it! Look how quickly this place adapted to you! I knew you were meant to be the one from the minute His Majesty appeared with

you in his arms. Your nothing like the last girl, it took weeks before the walls would even turn colour. Oh this is just so romantic! And so beautiful. I'm glad I finally have something to work with here" with that she advanced on me, sitting me on the bed and pulling a hair brush out of thin air and running it through my thick dark hair before I could even blink.

"Wait. His Majesty? What do you mean? What the hell is going on here? Why does everything change here? What are you?" with each question I tried to turn my head towards her, and each time she pushed me back and continued brushing my hair. Eventually I gave up and let her at it. Besides, her thin fingers were weirdly soothing, and it was a little easier to think when I didn't have to stare into her intense, black eyes.

"I won't answer all your questions. It's not my place, but I can explain some of it. Now as you may have already guessed, Prince Kahl is part of it." She informed me.

"I knew it!" I jumped off the bed and began pacing, keeping my eyes trained on the sky. When Kahl had first stepped into my class, I'd been just as fascinated with the new kid as everyone else. With his fire red hair, and his dark chocolate eyes, he'd walked in and immediately spotted me. That's when I felt something was wrong. He just made me feel sick, way down in my core. I'd felt this almost uncontrollable urge to run whenever he looked at me, which was often. As if that weren't enough, I'd hated him as a person. Bossy, cocky, over-confident, he thought the world belonged to him on a silver platter. I'd watched as he'd ploughed through anyone who stood in his way, with no thought for anyone but himself. The first time, he had asked me on The Date, he hadn't even asked, he had told me where to be, what time, and what to wear. I just hadn't shown up. Every day he asked me again and again, every time something different, and every time I said no. He'd gotten more and more persistent, each day getting more and more volatile, it got to the point where if any boys at school so much as talked to me, he'd confront them. Eventually I gave in, and the second I showed up, he'd grabbed me around the waist, kissed me hard, and everything went black. That's when I woke up here

I brought a finger to my lips, remembering the kiss.

Slowly, I turned back to Mai.

"What. The. Hell. Are. You?" I said slowly. Mai stood up, the gauze twisting and withering around her lithe form.

"We are Fey." She told me matter of factly. "We have been here since time. It is because of us that your world can have balance. We exist with your world, in step with it, just hidden in dark corners. And because we have given so much to your people, we decided to take a prize. You."

Oh god. All the stories my grandmother had told me came rushing back, the ones that had given me nightmares. The ones I had dismissed as fairy tales when I'd gotten too old to believe in such things. Tales of things that would come in the night and replace

your children with piles of sticks, and laugh as you buried it as your child. Of things that would come out of the lake, and trick you into riding its back, only to drown you, feeding off your last breath. Of beautiful girls who would offer you delicious fruit that would cause vines to crawl under your skin. Things that would lure you into their world, where you might not come out for 80 years, all your family dead, your life gone; evil things, soulless things, damned things.

And I'd fallen right in the middle of it. I was not in my world, I was in theirs. There was no way out.

I sank to the floor, despair filling my eyes with tears. "no no no no no no, oh god no. No no no no no" I mumbled to myself over and over. I felt a hand land on my shoulder and immediately flinched from underneath it, not wanting to be tainted by her.

"Well that's not a very warm welcome." A deep familiar voice intoned.

I scrambled up, dreading what I'd see, but knowing it was inevitable.

It was Kahl.

Without thinking, without planning, without anything, I attacked him, pounded his chest, scratched at his face, anything to hurt him. I hated him. He had taken everything from me.

And he just stood there.

He didn't flinch, he didn't fight back, he didn't even try to get me off. He simply stood there with a stupid little smirk on his face. After a while, I realized I was getting nowhere and backed away from him. Tears I didn't know I'd been crying cascaded down my face.

Mai had disappeared. Kahl stood, managing to look bored, amused, and regal all at the same time.

"Why?" I whispered.

He looked up, and I noticed the sky was now completely overcast now. I was shocked to see it had started to rain, the rain drops falling, threatening to drench everything, but disappearing a few feet above my head.

Kahl leaned against the wall, immediately gold tipped rose thorns began crawling from the floor, surrounding his profile, but not touching him. He paid no mind to the sharp points directed towards him. I remembered what Mai had said about the room reacting to me, and wondered if my hate had caused the roses to sprout.

“I need you,” he stated simply. “My father has decided that I need a project of sorts. I consulted with the fates and your fate showed up. You are to stay here with me, and one day, when I deem you ready, become my consort.”

“No,” I told him. “No I, I won’t agree to that. You can’t do that!”

Suddenly, Kahl’s hair ignited, the flame red hair turned to actual flames, his chocolate eyes hardened, and widened, and his long fingers stretched and sharpened, turning gold, matching the thorns, each finger now tipped with a golden blade. It was like a cover had been taken off my eyes, and I was seeing the monster hidden behind his human façade. There was nothing human about him now.

I had never been more terrified in my life, but I was damned if I was going to show it. I stood my ground, locking eyes with him, not backing down.

“I don’t think you understand, you really don’t have much choice in the matter. Your fate was sealed the second you agreed to come with me. That’s all I needed. Really it was quite easy, I’d been hoping for more of a challenge.

“Mai has been instructed to bring you anything you need, but in the meantime, my father wishes to see you.” He looked me up and down, and I couldn’t help but squirm under his intense gaze. He gave a grunt of assent and held out a hand to me.

“You have got to be kidding me. If you think I’m going anywhere with you...” I stood ridged, refusing to move.

“What is staying in this room going to accomplish?” he asked, exasperated.

“I’m not kissing you again. I’m not coming near you again. I don’t trust you.” I told him flat out. He stared at me for a long moment, the flames on his head dancing and twisting.

“I don’t need to kiss you to get where we need to go,” he told me

“Then why did you?” I asked. I refused to remember how his lips had burned against mine.

He shrugged, “Because I wanted to.”

“Why me?” I needed to know.

“I believe that is a question best answered by my father. And might I say you are extremely lucky my father is infinitely more patient than I. However his patience will not hold forever.” Again he gestured for my hand, but I hesitated.

“Who exactly is your father?” I asked.

“The king of the Unseelie court, a title he has held for eons.” It was then that Kahl gave up on me willingly coming with him for he grabbed my hand. There was a swirl of heat, like sitting in the grass on the hottest day of summer, closing your eyes and turning your face to the sun.

The next thing I knew was standing in a long corridor. It looked like the inside of a log. It was long and domed, the walls covered in bark. Roots and plants protruded from the walls, with huge flowers blooming at random intervals. Brilliant jewel colours and the size of my head, and they glowed dimly, illuminating the hallway. The ground was covered in soft moss, lush and vibrant green.

With the dim light and the steady fire from his hair, Kahl’s face was cast in shadow. I was disappointed to see that not one of my scratches had left a mark, although maybe he had glamourised them away like his human face.

I looked around for his father but we were alone in the hallway. He had tricked me...again.

My grandmother had told me that it was impossible for the Fey to tell an untruth. It was because they were so much a part of the earth, that telling a lie was something unfathomable to them. “The way a tree can’t lie about its age, or an owl can’t lie to the mouse” she’d once said to me. Oh how I wished she was here, she’d know how to get me out of this. So many times she had warned me, and now it was all in vain. Had she known they would come for me? So many questions I should have asked.

Kahl had never said he was actually *taking* me to his father. He had only said that the King of the Dark court wanted to see me. I needed to be more cunning. I had to be smart if I ever wanted to get out of this place.

Kahl started walking but I stayed put. He continued walking until he was nothing but a bright spot of flames down the hall, not once looking back. I stood for a few more seconds before I decided that being with him was better than being here when some other Fey came around when I was alone.

I jogged ahead, only to find Mai holding a torch.

“Where did Kahl go?” I asked her.

“He went ahead to the court. I’m taking you there now. But I think it best that I give you some advice first. You reek of iron, so stand a few feet away if at all possible,” she glanced down at my iron bracelet, “You might want to take that off. I’ll hold onto it for you.” She pulled a piece of cloth out of her dress/gauze and wrapped it several times around her hand before offering it to me.

I clutched at the bracelet, remembering grandmother telling me that iron burned the Fey, it weakened them. Her house had been covered in little iron knick-knacks, she'd even had iron nails plastered to her door.

There was no way I was giving up my only weapon, so I just shook my head and stared her down. The smile slipped off her face, and her oil slick eyes swirled faster. For half a second her lip curled in a snarl and the tatters whipped around her feet, but then she blinked and plastered on the sunshine smile again. Huh, that was interesting. I guess something evil lurked behind this little doll face. Was there anything that wasn't a mask for something else?

"Well I'm sure this goes without saying, but it will be better for you if you are respectful. Don't look him in the eyes, when you approach him, you should kneel, low as you can. You must remember he will soon be your king." Mai began walking and rather than be left behind again, I fell into step beside her. I nodded my head, trying to look like I was taking what she said to heart.

Then we stopped as we came to a giant wooden door. Intricate Celtic knots ran along every inch of the dark cherry panels. There was no handle, but Mai reached out and lightly touched the door. The Celtic knots glowed, so faint it was hard to tell if it was my imagination or not, and the doors swung inward.

I couldn't help it. I gasped. If the hallway was a branch, this was the trunk. It was impossible to see any ceiling. All around the room the Fey walked and milled around. They were beautiful, and grotesque. Several short men were playing cards at a nearby table, snarling at each other with needle thin teeth. A giant ogre looking thing was cupping a small green woman in his hands. She had long pointed wings and white long hair, and she looked about the size of my thumb. Every time the ogre would let her go, she would desperately try to fly away, before he pinched her wings and yanked her back, laughing loudly.

I looked around for Kahl, but I didn't see him anywhere.

High, fast music was being played by a trio of girls at one end of the room. They looked identical to each other, and they all moved in synch with each other exactly, even blinking in unison.

"Well, well, well, you've decided to join us I see," intoned a powerful voice. Even with the room filled with noise, everyone heard him. He had not spoken loudly, or with any particular infliction, his voice simply carried *power*.

I looked across the room and saw him. Sitting on his throne; raised on a dais. The King of the Unseelie court.

The throne looked like it was made of bones. Hundreds and hundreds of bones. Bleached white and from every living thing imaginable. Bird wings, ribs, the hooves of deer, and most disturbing, human skulls rested on pillars behind the chair.

The king himself was the incarnation of every bad dream. His skin was a deep polished ebony, shining with sapphire hues. His hair was black, and cascaded down his back in an inky curtain; feathers, beads, small bones and braids were threaded through, looking like they had been there for centuries. A circlet of thorns rested above his head. His eyes where the light filmed blue of the blind, yet I could feel his gaze piercing my soul. His lips were the exact same colour of his eyes, the same colour of a dead man's.

The room fell silent. Even the small green women, with an opening to escape did not dare move. I felt a tug on my jacket and I was shoved down to one knee none too gently by Mai. But I refused to look away. I would look him in the eyes, no matter how hard it was to hold his gaze. No matter how painfully my soul twisted.

"Come here," he ordered. Immediately I began walking, though it was not by my will. The throngs of Fey parted for me to pass, some indifferent, some grimacing, others gaily and hysterically smiling. When I reached the dais, I stopped, and looked up at the king.

"Young mortal. Come closer. Allow me to see the girl chosen to tame the wild flame who is my son." He motioned me closer, but this time left me to choose whether I was going to obey him or not. I decided to be diplomatic and pick my battles.

I stepped up onto the dais.

"I do not accept this life," I told him. There was an audible gasp from the back of the room. The king, never taking his eyes off me snapped his fingers, and I turned around just in time to see a knight, armour made of dirt and twigs slit the throat of one of the needle tooth men. I guess he had been the one to let the gasp slip.

The king smiled at me and stood. The throne of bones twisted and grew, becoming a grizzly wall decoration behind him. He placed his fingers under my jaw and lifted my face up, examining it for a while.

"Such spark. The spark and the flame. I quite like you my dear." He mused. Finally he broke my gaze and looked at something over my shoulder. I was latterly trembling from the sheer force of trying to stay upright. It was like he has sapped out all my strength, leaving me empty and hollow.

"Father." I turned around to see Kahl kneeling. He got up and regarded me.

"My child. My eldest. You are a wild fire. Always moving, destroying anything you please. But I have decided you must learn to control yourself. You are my greatest weapon, but you are un-trust worthy. There will come a day when you will sit on this



throne, if that day were now, you would be just as likely to burn your own kingdom as your enemies. This girl here will tie you, she will ground you. Do you understand?" the King's affectionate smile for me had disappeared, he now truly liked like the ruler of the dark court.

"I understand..." Kahl seemed to hesitate before continuing on, "but is it wise to attempt to tame the fire? Many have been burned. I am concerned that by attempting to kindle the fire, you will snuff it out." He looked at me, "not that I wouldn't enjoy attempting to tame *her*."

Alright. That was the last straw. "No, I will not. I refuse. I'm not *taming* anyone. I'm going home!" I didn't even understand why I was here. What exactly was the purpose of bringing me to this damned place?

The King looked at me the way you look at a toddler throwing a tantrum, amusing, but in the long run not entirely important. "Dear one. The fates have foreseen that after centuries of free rein, it is now time for my son to take a wife."

I gaped. No. No. No. Oh the tales. The tales of young girls being taken from the path. The girls with red hoods, taken by the wolf, never to be heard from again. And I was standing right in the jaws of the beast.

I remembered my resolution to be clever. Maybe I could convince him that I was not the right girl. Reason with him

"but, no! We're not even the same species! He's fey! He'll live for centuries after I die! What's the point? I'm only one human girl. There has to be hundreds of girls here, Fey girls who would make a much better princess or whatever!" I glanced at the three twins. They all wore the same expression of distain, as if they smelled something horrid.

"Oh but not for long, young mortal. You won't be different from him for long." He said

"What do you mean?" I asked, not understanding.

"I mean that even as we speak, you are becoming a part of this place. Already it is becoming attuned to you. Once you are bonded to my son, the change will be complete. You will shed your human shell for something so much more suited to you. Little Spark, you will be Fey!" his last words were sent out over the crowd who immediately began cheering. But there was a hard edge to it, as if they weren't celebrating a new princess, but reviling in the prospect of a new play thing.

That's when I began screaming.

End of Part One

## Uninhabited

By Alicia Mirtsos: Grade 11

On a dark night, a small ship crashed ashore an island, seemingly uninhabited, the passengers and crew did not survive, all but one. The ship was a cargo ship, it would be missed, but not immediately, and no one would know of her survival. One girl was left alive to fend for herself on this treacherous island, densely forested, with no form of contact with the rest of the world. She was isolated. But she was strong and resourceful, she *would* survive this, the island would not take her life. But she knew, if help did not come for her soon, she would have to escape herself, or perish, alone, and that simply would not do. She had a bright future ahead of her, and being the strong wise girl she was she was prepared to do whatever it took to survive.

From first glance, she knew that she would have to scavenge for food, for the even the island's animal population was seemingly sparse. So, as soon as the sun was on the horizon, she ventured into the forested area of the island. The fruit trees were plentiful, but they were also very tall. Reaching the top to gather food would be difficult, not impossible, but not safe either. While within the forest, she could hear an animal's cry. She knew from instinct that the animal that gave that loud cry could not possibly be small, but she also knew it was a good distance away, and therefore, not to venture too deep into the forest, though the possibility for food would be greater. She began to turn back, and inspect the beach she had washed up on, and found it easy to find her way back; there was only one path through the trees, her own. No one and nothing had ventured this far in quite some time, a good sign, a sign of safety on what she began to think of as *her* beach. But also a sign that no one will be coming for her soon. Under any other circumstance the view from the beach would've been quite peaceful, serene, and beautiful but now, it said only one thing. Isolation.

After the first few days, she began to realize that no one would be coming to rescue her, at least not soon. For all she knew, no one knew she was missing. Not only possible, it was likely, all the others who had been on the ship with her were most certainly dead. So, she began to prepare for a longer stay. She had mastered the art of climbing tall trees, and could survive on only fruit for a while, but she knew she wouldn't have enough strength to continue without protein, she needed to learn to fish; it was the most abundant food supply nearby, aside from the fruit. In the meantime however, she would begin to collect extra food to store, so she would not starve when she could no longer climb trees, or when the trees stopped producing fruit, not that she intended to be there that long, but she was always prepared for the worst.

The days wore on, and she knew she would need to build shelter, and she would need to gather water, she had found a small stream, but it did not provide much, but it was raining almost everyday, and she knew she could collect rain, and have a more substantial source of water. The rain was also a problem, she feared she would get sick, and, without medical aid and being surrounded by a new environment, she would die. This may or may not be a problem, but regardless some protection from this dreadful rain would be nice. So, she set to work building structures, a system of pipes leading to

basins she had built to collect rain water, a building to store food in, and a building for her to sleep in. It would require much work, but it worked not only her body, but also her mind, and so she did not think as much about the terrible fear she felt for the future. The least thing she wanted was to fall into a depression, that would ensure her death, and she was happy back home death was not an option. She soon fell into a consistent schedule, collect food, purify water, build, eat, and start over. Her final project was to somehow alert anyone flying above, that she was there, but it had to be something that would not be easily washed away by the abundant rain. So, she wove together branches, leaves, and vines firmly together forming three simple letters S.O.S. While not the most effective way, it seemed to be the only thing she could do that would stand up to the almost constant rain. She could only hope that her absence would eventually be noticed by someone. Her only family had died on that boat, and while she fought not to think about it, but it broke her down and she collapsed onto the sandy beach, her hair falling in front of her face as her body wracked with sobs. Now that she had allowed the thoughts in, she feared that she would allow her strong resolve to crumble in the impossible situation she had been forced into. She couldn't help but wonder what her mother would do, she was always so impossibly strong, she had been through so much, but she knew there was no way her mother could have possibly survived the wreck and not have made it to her island. She had accepted the fact that her mother was gone, she would have to make it alone, there would be no help from her family this time.

When at last her buildings were finally finished, she realized, no help may be coming at all. And set to work building the perfect watercraft, something aerodynamic, but strong, able to withstand strong ocean currents. It wouldn't be easy, but it would keep her busy, either until she was done, or until help came at long last. Her sources of food were abundant, and her fishing methods effective. From the beginning, she knew she would weave a tight net to catch an abundance of fish, but she would not keep extra fish she caught, for they would rot and turn her other food sour. She took only what she needed and survived well on that island, though she always lived in fear of the creature she first heard the day after she washed up on shore, and continued to hear every night since.

## **The Visitor**

**By McAuley Montpetit: Grade 12**

He lay awake in his room. The room with the familiar, almost natural smell of Old Spice and tobacco smoke. Though common, these circumstances always seem a bit strange to him. He's not sure why he's awake, considering it's noon and there is nothing to do. It's also strange that he can't identify the source of the Old Spice scent; he only wore it when visitors were expected. There haven't been any visitors recently. He pulls himself off the bed which consists of a bare mattress, ripped comforter, and a stained pillow lacking its case. As routine, he begins to slothfully drag his feet towards the bathroom with the compulsory lit cigarette hanging from his mouth. Feeling for the light switch in the darkness, he hesitantly flicks it on. This hesitation is also routine for him, because oddly he is always worried about what will show up in the mirror that day. When he sees his reflection he calms. It has always been his belief that smoking is an ugly habit, though he also believes that he is an exception to the rule. He lingers in front of the mirror as one would in front of a significant other before a long, lone trip.

He ashes into the sink and begins to fill the bathtub with hot water. It seems that the only joy for him these days has been bathing in the warm, enveloping water. Just as he settles into the bathtub, he hears a knock at the door; a visitor. He is mildly surprised, but remains soaking in the tub without a second thought. The front door swings open and footsteps begin to creep towards the bathroom. He is no longer surprised by this visitor, as his focus is on the warm water surrounding him. The visitor calls for him, but he is reluctant to respond. The footsteps are getting closer, the heel-toe sound echoing through his mind. The visitor then welcomes themselves into the bathroom, coming dangerously close to disrupting the only peace available in the house. Their gazes meet.

He imagines that to most people a visit like this would seem usual, but however few and far between, visits like this have become routine for him. This thought reverberates in his mind. He begins to realize what a man of routine he is, though his routine is far from the usual. It is a very strange routine indeed, but it has been all he knows for as long as he can remember. This visitor, like the ones in the past, is missing a crucial part of their identity; their face. It is nothing but a blur, a whirlwind of grey hues. It's up to him how long this visit lasts, because he recalls the past visitors leaving as soon as he greets them. However disturbing he assumes this visit should seem, he is in his tub. The warm water he is floating in lets him accept this strange yet usual visit. He decides to let the moment linger. That is when the truly unusual thing happens, the visitor speaks first. This has never happened before.

“Hello, Patrick,” squeaks the blurry visitor.

At first Patrick ignores the faint voice he hears. “I’m in my bath,” he tells himself, “I am not to be disturbed.”

“I don’t wish to disturb you; I wish to stand by you.” This strange statement makes the visitor seem all-knowing to Patrick. His attention to this mysterious visitor is

now starting to grow, and the strange yet oddly familiar voice becomes louder and more prominent.

“Please accept my help. There is peace outside of this bathroom.”

With every word spoken by the visitor, both the voice and message become stronger. By the end of the sentence the voice is now overwhelming to Patrick, ringing through his ears and bubbling in his brain. Patrick is scared to the point of shock, unable to move or respond to the visitor. The visitor steps closer to the tub, and the water seems to begin to drain.

“Listen to me, I can help you.”

The once overwhelming voice now seems more familiar than ever, as if the message was being implanted into his brain as opposed to spoken to him. The visitor steps closer yet again.

“Take my hand.”

Patrick hesitates, but without realizing it he listens to the strange order. He reaches up and grasps the increasingly more familiar hand. Suddenly the bathtub is empty. No more calming, numbing, all encompassing water to protect him from his biggest fears. Patrick looks up to realize he is no longer in the tub, but in front of the sink, blinking as if he had just awakened from a dream. The other’s face is now totally clear to him. As Patrick stands, mind clearer than ever, staring into the bathroom mirror, the only thought in his mind is how he will rid his apartment of the now unnatural scent of tobacco and Old Spice.