



# what's your story?



2015 Seepe Walters  
Short Story Contest



# *more* inside

**Produced by Innisfil Public Library  
November 2015**

# 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 two 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 14th 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, and the Ferraro family for their ongoing support and sponsorship; as well as the judging panel: Kelley Armstrong, Lee Edward Fodi, Joanne Levy, Maureen McGowan and Danielle Younge-Ullman 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 2015 edition of the Seepe Walters Short Story Contest.

Melissa Harris  
Innisfil Public Library

## **DISCLAIMER**

The viewpoints and opinions expressed in these stories are those of the individuals themselves and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints and opinions of the Innisfil Public Library or its staff. Some content may not be appropriate for all audiences. Parental discretion is advised.

## Table of Contents

<b>Seepe Walters Short Story 2015 Winner .....</b>	
Timeless By: Stephanie Stockwell (Gr. 11).....	1
<b>Junior Division Grades 3-6 .....</b>	
Frank and the Jimmy-thing By: Jack Quibell (Gr. 6) .....	6
French School Fears By: Mihaela Gavrilova (Gr. 5).....	8
Midnight Butterfly By: Isabel Pullen (Gr. 5) .....	10
Wildfire By: Alyssa Johnstone (Gr. 6) .....	11
Piggies and Ice Cream By: Abigail Sampson (Gr. 6) .....	13
The Portal By: Ben Rayner (Gr. 6) .....	16
<b>Intermediate Division Grades 7-8.....</b>	
Mountain Island By: Mark Kogan (Gr. 8) .....	18
Jurassic Library By: Kayla Warburton (Gr. 8) .....	23
The Outbreak By: Jorja Correia (Gr. 8).....	28
My Song By: Emily Enns (Gr. 8) .....	34
Pirates By: Drew Lehman (Gr. 8).....	37
<b>Senior Division Grades 9-12.....</b>	
Taken By: Alyssa Goswell (Gr. 11).....	40
Snake's Garden By: Hannah Petlock (Gr. 9) .....	49
Rumpelstiltskin By: Terry Luan (Gr. 9) .....	54
Nor Heaven, Nor Hell By: Lauryn Marks (Gr.11).....	57
Selfish By: Story Quibell (Gr. 9) .....	60

Timeless

By: Stephanie Stockwell (Gr. 11)

*Time: An intricate series of cause and effect; a linear sequence of actions and reactions; of events and consequences, carefully measured from attoseconds to eons; a constant in the universe. But what if this unbreakable chain becomes broken?*

The day began like any other. My alarm went off at 6:00am, so naturally, I rolled over and immediately fell back to sleep. My day truly began when my mother's shrill voice shattered my peaceful slumber.

"Amy! It's 7:30! Doesn't your bus leave for school in fifteen minutes? You'd better get up. You don't want to be late!"

My eyes sprung open. I leapt out of bed with my mind racing and my heart pounding. I dashed around like a madman, shoving my schoolwork into my bag, yanking a brush through my long brown hair that was horribly tangled from having been slept on for the previous eight hours. I saw my panicked brown eyes and pale, but otherwise unremarkable, face staring back at me in the mirror as I desperately tried to make my disheveled rat's nest look at least somewhat socially acceptable. I snatched a piece of toast from the toaster after brushing my teeth, and scarfed it down as I bolted out the door. There was no way that I was going to miss the bus that day. I hated being late.

I made the bus with only seconds to spare; it pulled up to the curb the moment that I reached the bus stop. Relieved, but out of breath, I panted as I hauled myself up the stairs of the bus and plopped myself down in my usual seat at the back of the bus next to my best friend, Melody. We chatted about the usual things, the TV shows that we'd watched the night before, the school projects that we had on the go, the impossible number of tests that we had to study for and how they had all mysteriously been scheduled for the same day. Despite how often the teachers claimed innocence, we always had that sneaking suspicion that the teachers would have secret meetings after school so that they could all plan their tests for the same day, just to make life more difficult for us. We both knew that this wasn't really true, but it was a satisfying notion, and it certainly would have explained a lot.

The bus slowly came to a stop in front of our school and we thanked the bus driver as we filed out the door one by one. Melody and I shuffled into the school's crowded halls and made our way to our lockers, where we passed the remaining few minutes before class in pleasant idle conversation with our usual group of friends. None of us could have ever predicted the reality-shattering incident that would occur later that day. If I had of known what was about to happen, had some inkling of a feeling foretelling what was to come, I would have savoured every word of the last true conversation that I would ever have with my friends, instead of silently worrying in the back of my mind about how I would ever be able to finish all my projects and study for my tests, instead of quietly wishing that I had more time.

At exactly 10:46am, it happened. There was no blinding flash of light, no earthshaking tremor, no deafening sonic boom, nothing to indicate that anything had changed. The only reason

at first that I noticed at all was the fact that I had been looking at the clock at the time. The teacher seemed to have been wrapping up the lesson and I had casually glanced over out of curiosity to see how much time we had left in the class. Just as the clock's second hand reached its highest point, it came to an abrupt halt. I thought nothing of it at the time, for the clocks in my school were never known for their reliability. From classroom to classroom, the time shown on the clock always varied; some clocks hours ahead, some minutes behind. Others had never worked for as long as anyone could remember. So, it came as very little surprise to me when the old black and white clock happened to stop ticking.

It was when I returned my attention to my teacher that the chill ran down my spine. It started at the nape of my neck and slowly worked its way down, raising every one of my hairs as it went; making my every nerve tingle. My whole body went numb, for what I saw in that moment shocked me to the core.

My physics teacher stood before me absolutely motionless like one of those eerie wax figures one might see at a wax museum. He did not blink. He did not breathe. He did not move a muscle. His lips were frozen mid-word. His eyes still held the spark of enthusiasm that they did moments before, as he described to us how we could use calculus and an equation of a line from a distance versus time graph to calculate an object's velocity and acceleration at any given point. But something had gone horribly, horribly wrong.

Panic rose in my chest as I quickly glanced around the room. All around me were rows upon rows of students, all apparently frozen where they sat. One ill-fated boy had been in the act of picking his nose when time had stopped, and this was the unfortunate position that he had been left in. I almost laughed, but the sound turned into a sob in my throat. I ran for the door, and thankfully found that I was still able to interact with objects despite the halt in time's progression. It seemed that my actions still had effect within the moment that I was trapped in. I turned the doorknob and sprinted down the hallway, looking into each room that I passed. Without exception, they were all filled with people that were left perfectly motionless. They were all deathly still.

When I had searched every room in the school and found no one left untouched by the phenomenon except for myself, I broke down and cried. I am not ashamed to say it. I was terrified and alone. I was surrounded by people, but I was alone; absolutely alone. My heaving sobs echoed down the silent corridors, and I cried until I could cry no more.

At this point, I managed to pull myself together. I knew that getting upset again would do me no good, so I decided to make the best of the time that I suddenly had on my hands. I returned to my physics classroom and I collected my things. I had wanted more time, and now I had it. I brought my papers and books down to the library and I sat down to work. I figured that I could finish up my projects and study for my tests so that I would be right on top of things when time resumed. How foolish I was.

I quickly found that anything that relied on batteries or electricity no longer functioned. The anomaly had penetrated even to the subatomic level, and anything that uses batteries or electricity relies on the movement of electrons, which had also been frozen when time came to a stop. So, anything electronic had been left stuck in whatever position it had been in before the

disaster occurred. Nonetheless, I found the information that I needed in the school's ancient set of encyclopaedias and its vast collection of other books, albeit slowly.

Hours and hours passed, or rather, should have passed, if something had not gone horribly wrong with the universe. I had no real way of knowing how long it actually took me, but eventually I found myself left with nothing to do. I had finished all of my assignments to the absolute best of my ability, and for what was essentially the first time in my life, I felt completely prepared for my upcoming tests. I was at a loss of what to do next.

An idea sparked hope in my mind as I felt a strong desire for some fresh air. I had not been outside since the glitch in time. I thought that, perhaps, just maybe, the rest of the world had not been affected; that this temporal anomaly was limited to only the school. I rushed outside, and the little hope that I had dissolved instantly.

The outside world's transformation was even more striking than that of what took place within the school walls. The sky was filled with flowing, billowy clouds, all completely motionless. The leaves on the trees, still bright with autumn colours, had been frozen halfway through being tossed by a gust of wind. The cars on the streets were stopped dead, as if parked, and the people within them immobile. Those who had been strolling the sidewalks when the disaster had struck were left fixed where they stood, often midstride or mid-conversation. Even the air itself was as still as death. It was as if I was trapped inside a photograph. The effect was beyond unsettling; my brain insisted that what I saw was impossible, but my eyes maintained that what I saw was true. I stood alone, stranded in a single moment of time.

Life beyond that point lost any true meaning. I did what I wanted, when I wanted. I had no responsibilities, no obligations. No places to be, no people to see. I lived my life in the moment, because it was the only moment that I had. I read every book on the bookshelves in my bedroom that I had been meaning to read for ages. I read every book in the school's library, then the public library. I made friends within the pages, tried to ease the constant, never-ending solitude that grated on my sanity like a metal file, slowly grinding it to dust. I would ride my bike for miles, searching in vain for some other sign of life. The closest that I ever got was my own shadow. At least it always waved back at me when I stopped to say hello.

What sustained me the most, I think, was the music. When time had stopped, there had been an instrumental music class in progress at my school, and so the door to the music room had been left open. The music room had always been my favourite place in the school and I found returning there to be a comfort. The twenty or so students and my music teacher frozen in their places partway through playing a piece of music were unnerving at first, but I soon grew accustomed to their lifeless presence. After a while, if I imagined hard enough, it was as if I was playing with them. Almost as if I wasn't alone.

I started with my clarinet, switching back and forth to the bassoon. They had always been my favourites before time had stopped. I played every piece of music that I could get my hands on. The teacher had an extensive library filled with books on musical history, theory, structure and instrumental technique. I absorbed them all. Never did I feel more at peace than when I was engrossed in a well-practiced song. If you've ever played an instrument, truly played an instrument, you'll understand. When you play a piece often enough, something incredible happens; your muscles take control and your mind lets go. The music flows from you like a



living, breathing thing with a life of its own, and brings with it all of the feelings, the emotions, that you bring to it. The sensation is indescribable and the satisfaction that it brings in unprecedented. I would play until my lips grew numb, my lungs throbbed and my fingers ached. And then I would play again. When I grew tired of one instrument, I would start fresh with a new one. After bassoon and clarinet, I taught myself soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, oboe, trumpet, trombone, euphonium, French horn, even tuba. I learned to love each of them in their own way. I was very grateful for the plethora of new reeds, valve oil, slide grease, beginner instrument books and stacks upon stacks of sheet music that my music teacher always kept on hand.

For whatever reason, I never could master the flute or the piccolo, so eventually I gave up trying. But I was satisfied with the other instruments I had. They became very good friends of mine and I cared for them deeply. I would polish them meticulously, swab their keys and oil their valves. They were precious to me. Together with my imaginary orchestra, we would fill the silent world with sound, and the halls of the school echoed with our music.

Periodically, I would check on my human friends and parents to see if they were alright. I had memorized their locations and I visited them often. My mother had been frozen in place at home while sewing a quilt and my father had been at work when the devastating change took place. I had to walk a great distance to see them, but it was not as if I did not have the time. My friends had all been frozen in their classrooms at school. I would come and talk to them, ask them how they were, and imagine that I could hear their responses in my mind. They kept me company sometimes when my book and instrument friends just were not enough. Now and then we would have wonderful conversations with each other. We would reminisce about the past and all the fun times that we've had. My friends had always been hilarious and I found myself in stitches on many occasions just thinking about the things that they would have said if they could. Other times I would break down and cry with them, telling them how much that I missed them, even though they were technically still there. In fact, that was probably the hardest part; being so close to my friends, and yet so very far away. I would yell, scream, and even try to physically shake them to break them free. I tried everything and anything that I could think of that might have any effect on them at all. But nothing that I ever did made even the slightest difference. My friends remained forever frozen in time, never moving, never changing, always as still as death. I came to accept this as reality. There was nothing that I could do to change it. This would be my life now. I was destined to be forever alone.

My life, if you could call it that, spiralled downward from there. What had sustained me before no longer brought me any pleasure. I spent less and less time with my book and instrument companions, although I could constantly hear them calling to me, begging me to go to them. More and more I found myself wandering the halls and the streets of the town aimlessly, speaking gibberish and nonsense aloud just to hear my own voice; to reassure myself that I had not gone deaf. I still visited my frozen human friends, but the conversations that I had with them only left me with a profound sadness and a great sense of longing. I had not even a shred of hope left that I would ever live a normal life with other human beings, so I suppose I must have come to a point where my mind simply snapped. I had been visiting the lifeless frozen shell of my friend Melody when it happened. I was half-heartedly telling her a corny joke that I had once read, in a weak attempt to quell the never-ending sorrow that I felt. When I told her the

punchline, the strangest thing happened: she turned to me and she laughed, a light, almost musical, beautiful laugh, just as I remember her doing often so long ago.

“That was awful, Amy!” she said, still laughing. Her blue eyes twinkled. “Your jokes are the absolute worst!”

It was then that I knew that I had completely lost it. All around me, signs of life returned to the world. The clock began to tick once more, and my physics teacher resumed wrapping up his lesson. He paused and he looked at me, the only other person in the room who was standing.

“Amy, are you alright?” he asked, clearly concerned about my wellbeing.

I nodded and sat down at what was once my desk, next to Melody. I sat down in bewildered silence as the teacher brought his lecture to a close. As the clock struck 10:55, the bell rang, signalling the end of class. Melody stood up and packed away her things.

“Come on, Amy. We’ve got to go. We’ve got chess club today!” she told me, as a wide smile spread across her face.

By now I had figured out what all of this was. Clearly, it was a fantasy of my own creation. Time could not possibly have resumed, because it had never truly existed in the first place. It was only a silly notion that I once had; a foolish idea that I had come up with to help me pass my endless and empty existence. I vaguely remember laughing at the thought because it was so preposterous.

But I packed up my things and followed Melody out the door anyway, into the halls that were bustling full of people. I decided that even though I knew that this wasn’t real – after all, it couldn’t be – I would rather live my life among friends, among other living things, be them real or imagined, than spend another infinite eternity alone in a timeless universe.

**Frank and the Jimmy-thing**

**By: Jack Quibell (Gr. 6)**

*Based on a true story*

Frank, a black pug, waited by the window. His family would be home any minute. He had the perfect life and the perfect family. Everything was just how he liked it. He had the perfect routine: wake up, get his butt rubbed, eat breakfast, have his morning poop so his people could have something to scoop, get his butt rubbed, get a treat from each person when they said goodbye for the day, and then sleep on the couch until his people came home. When they came through the door, Frank gets his butt rubbed again, has dinner, get his ears rubbed, have his afternoon poop (his people really did seem to like to collect it), get more butt rubs, a butt and belly rub, then go to bed then repeat. Everything was just the way Frank wanted it to be. He usually waited by the window around the time his family were supposed to come home. They always gave him treats and sometimes they even brought him a new toy.

Today as usual, Frank was waiting by the window when mommy came home in her big red van. As she walked up the driveway, he noticed something different. She was carrying something little and black. Frank couldn't tell what it was. She was holding it and appeared to be kissing it. Frank tilted his head. Is it a baby? Is it a new toy for me? What is it? Mommy brought the new thing inside. Frank rushed to greet her at the door. She put the little black thing down. It had a tiny little black pug nose, and it looked at him with big brown eyes and wagged a little curly tail. Frank jumped back. It looked like one of his turds had come alive.

"This is your little brother. His name is Jimmy," Mommy said. Frank kept his distance. He didn't think the Jimmy-thing was to be trusted. He thought there was no point worrying about it and that it would be leaving soon, and it would be all about Frank again. He found a comfortable place where the sun warmed up the floor, and fell asleep.

Frank woke up when he heard some noises. Bruce was setting up a crate for Jimmy. Strange, Frank thought. Well, this Jimmy-thing was probably only staying one night. Frank hoped that he had nothing to worry about.

Mommy was so distracted by the new Jimmy-thing that she totally forgot about Frank's butt rub. When the rest of Frank's family came home, they forgot about his butt rub too.

Frank didn't like this new Jimmy-thing. He was hogging Frank's family! He peed and pooped everywhere, even in Frank's bed! Frank tried to explain to him that you have to go outside for that. The Jimmy-thing chewed on the walls, which wasn't so bad in Frank's opinion, but then the Jimmy-thing chewed and ripped up all of Frank's toys. What a savage! The Jimmy-thing tore open the toys and pulled out the stuffing, spreading it all over the house. Frank found the head of his favourite toy, Bob the Frog, under the couch in a pile of shredded fluff. The toys he didn't rip up, he took outside and left in the rain. Such disrespect!

The Jimmy-thing did sleep a lot, and curled up beside Frank in a little warm ball. Also, meal time was extra nice. The Jimmy-thing never finished everything in his bowl, so Frank could always get a bit extra. Maybe it wasn't that bad, he thought.

One day, Frank was enjoying his morning nap when he realized there was no little pest bothering him. He got up and looked around the house. When he couldn't find the Jimmy-thing, Frank was worried. Frank started barking and running around the house.

Mommy yelled at Frank and told him to be quiet. For some reason, she wasn't worried about Jimmy. Dad was coming through the door and Frank raced outside.

"Frank, come! Come back, Frank!" dad called. Frank didn't turn back. He would have to find that little black ball of fur. That Jimmy-thing was really just a helpless little baby alone in the world and it was Frank's responsibility to find him and bring him back to his family.

Frank was halfway down the street when he saw Jack running towards him. Oh good, Frank thought, someone to help me find him. But when Jack caught up to him, he just yelled at Frank. "Bad dog! Don't run away! Come home now!"

Frank wished he could speak human then he could explain to Jack how he was just trying to find his baby. Jack brought Frank home and put him in the backyard. Frank went to hide under the bushes, where he could sulk. Under the bushes, he saw the little black furry ball, all curled up. Frank got excited. He ran in big circles around the yard. The Jimmy-thing was safe! The little puppy started chasing behind him. Frank noticed that he was much faster and more majestic than the silly little guy. He had so much to teach him.

Ever since then, they've been best friends. They sleep together, they play together, they wait for their people to come home together, they get their butts and ears rubbed together. They do everything together and that's just how Frank likes it.



## **French School Fears**

**By: Mihaela Gavrilova (Gr. 5)**

Lindsay was laying on her bed in her new house. She was thinking about her old house in Canada that was big and roomy and she could have two rooms. Now her family lived in France because they needed to move for her father's job. They needed to stay for a whole year! She would've been fine with it if she didn't need to go to school. Next week she had to go and she knew it was going to be horrible.

Nobody would be able to understand her and she wouldn't be able to understand anyone because she did not know how to speak French. She couldn't get to sleep so she put on her favourite song, "Happy". It always made her feel calm. She turned it on and was ready for the calm feeling to come over her, but when it turned on she couldn't understand a word! It was all in French. She sighed and went to sleep.

It was Monday morning and Lindsay's mom was telling her to get ready for school, but she didn't want to. She didn't want to get ready, she didn't want to go, and she didn't want to live in France! Her mother got her stuff ready, she forced her into the car, drove her to school, and shoved her into class.

Her teacher walked up to her and started speaking some gibberish language. "What?" Lindsay asked hesitantly. Her mother kneeled down to her and told her that the teacher had said, "hello you must be Lindsay, nice to meet you." "Oh, nice to meet you too", Lindsay said. The teacher didn't respond, she just looked at her. Her mother told her that the teacher only spoke French. "I wish people could understand me. That would make everything here so much easier." "Well you'll just have to learn French then, I'll teach you a couple words tonight" her mother said. "Okay, have fun at school", she said while waving goodbye.

Lindsay slumped into her seat, and everybody was staring at her! "Stop staring at me" she shouted as loud as she could." Everybody just looked at her confused. She sighed and remembered that they couldn't understand a word she had just said. She put her head down on her desk and listened to the most confusing lesson of her life. It was the longest day ever!

When Lindsay got home her mom handed her a stack of papers, she said, "Your teacher asked me to translate your work into English so that you could keep up in school until you learn French. When you finish I will teach you some French." "Fine", Lindsay said, "but you better leave me with some reading time tonight because my chapter ended on a huge cliff hanger, and I must find out what happened!" "Okay," Lindsay's mom said, "I'll make sure you'll have some time by making my French lesson short, but you need to do your work quickly."

"Okay", answered Lindsay. She ran to the table and rushed through her work. Then her mom checked her work and rushed her through a French lesson where Lindsay learned to introduce herself. They finally finished at eight o'clock and Lindsay ran to her room to finish another chapter of her book, and then fell asleep.

The next morning Lindsay was really excited because with the French lessons she had with her mom yesterday, she would actually be able to introduce herself to some of the kids. When she got to school she couldn't wait until lunch, because then she could talk to people. The teacher started another confusing lesson, she put her head down on her desk and listened. Today she actually understood some words!

The bell finally rang for lunch she rushed into the cafeteria and looked for somebody who was sitting all by themselves. she spotted a girl sitting alone at a table. She walked over to her

and started talking, but what she didn't realize was that she was just talking gibberish. She must have been talking rather loudly because everybody in the cafeteria was laughing, especially the girl right in front of her. Lindsay ran away crying and decided she would just have lunch sitting in the hallway. "It's as good a place as any", she said to herself.

Lindsay went home very embarrassed that day. She ran home, burst through the door, flopped down on her bed, and just laid there. Lindsay's mom went in to check if everything was okay. Lindsay said everything was fine and that she just had a bad second day. "Okay" her mom said. Well here is your work for today. Finish it and then we'll have a much longer French lesson because you learned almost nothing yesterday. I'm sorry but you'll have no time for reading today."

"That's fine", Lindsay said. She went and got her work done again. She didn't understand why she needed to go to school if she was doing all of the work at home. Then Lindsay went and called her mom for a French lesson, they both plopped down on the couch and began.

"Okay, so Lindsay, how do you introduce yourself in French?". "I forgot" Lindsay said, so her mom taught her again. "To introduce yourself you say, 'bonjour' or 'salut' they both mean hello, and then you say 'mon nom est Lindsay' to say what your name is. This time don't forget it!" Just when they were about to move onto the next part of the lesson the doorbell rang. Lindsay's mom went to answer the door and she saw a girl about Lindsay's age.

Lindsay's mom started asking the girl who she was, after a listening to Lindsay's mother talk for 20 minutes she said she was here to see Lindsay. Lindsay's mother went to get her, she told her she had somebody was waiting at the door for her. When Lindsay got to the door she saw the girl who she had walked up to her that had laughed at her. The girl struggled to say, "I would like to apologize." She really just ended up saying something like, "uh wou lik tu apoolacheese." At least you could still make out what she was trying to say.

"Oui", said Lindsay's mom looking confused, "voulez-vous me voulez traduire?" Lindsay had learned that had meant, would you like me to translate? It was said so much in front of her. "Oui", they both said at the same time and laughed. The girl began, Lindsay couldn't understand a word she was saying, she was using very complicated words. Lindsay's mom turned to her and said that the girl had said, "I would like to apologize for laughing at you today", Lindsay's mom looked confused again. "I'll tell you later mom", Lindsay said.

The girl started again, once again Lindsay didn't understand a word. Lindsay's mom turned to her again and said that she had said, "when I was in second grade I was new to France too. I went to introduce myself, and thought to myself I'm going to say, hello, my name is Amy. Instead I started to talk and didn't realize I was just crying out gibberish, just like you did."

"Your name is Amy?" Lindsay asked. Her mom turned to the girl and said, "vous êtes nom est Amy." That part Lindsay understood. "Oui", said Amy. Amy, started going again, this time the girl even used more complicated words, but Lindsay understood the short words. Her mom turned again, and said "tomorrow I would like to introduce you, and maybe teach you how to speak French a little better." Then Amy turned around and waved au revoir.

Lindsay asked her mom if she still needed an explanation about what happened, she said "no" but she was really sorry about what happened. "Okay then let's continue our French lesson." "no", her mom said, "you'll just learn French in school."

"Okay" said Lindsay and she went to her room to sleep, but couldn't get to sleep because of excitement. She put on her favourite song, "Happy", and she had no problem with it being in French. She drifted off to sleep with great hopes for tomorrow.

## **The Midnight Butterfly**

**By: Isabel Pullen (Gr. 5)**

Once upon a time, in the far away magical land of Zambaletia, a land made only for butterflies and moths, there lived a butterfly and her name was Crystal. She looked like a butterfly, with her brightly coloured wings and middle, but she was different.

You see, Crystal only came out at night, and was attracted to light, and for that reason all the other butterflies in Zambaletia teased her. They would call her names and make cocoons between two trees and get Crystal to come out during the day. Being naturally attracted to light, she would fly towards the sun, and get stuck in the cocoon. It would take her hours to get out. The worst part was she had to get out alone.

One day, Crystal decided she was fed up with all the teasing. She packed up the few things she had and decided to run away. She vowed to find a place where there was no sadness, anger, fear, or bullies. Crystal made another vow. She vowed that she would find her parents, whom she had been separated from just after she hatched.

So she set off, and got hopelessly lost. Everything she passed looked the same!

What a predicament! She flew around for days and days,(or should I say nights and nights). One night while flying, Crystal flew into something, and all of a sudden couldn't move. She didn't know what was happening until the spider's mandibles were right in her face!!!!

Just as the spider was about to pounce on her, a flash of colour appeared, and all of a sudden, the spider was falling. THUD! The spider hit the ground. Hard. Crystal looked around. She saw two moths with bright wing spots.

"Who are you two?" Asked Crystal. "My fairy moth father and fairy moth mother?" "Not quite", answered the one Crystal assumed was the male, "but close. We are your parents. I am Mark Moth, and she is Ally Moth." Crystal was dazed. After all these years of being separated from her parents, they had finally reunited. "But, if you two are moths, wouldn't that mean that I'm a moth too ", asked the dazed Crystal. Ally Moth replied, "Yes Crystal, you are a moth."

What about that magical place? Well, Crystal found that place, that place with no sadness, anger, fear, or bullies, and that place was called home. Wait, that's not all. The butterfly bullies came looking for Crystal, but not to apologize. They looked for her, so that they could tease her. They got what they deserved.

What happened? Well, let's just say, the spider got his meal. On the other hand, Crystal led a happy life and was loved by every moth in Moth Town!

## Wildfire

**By: Alyssa Johnstone (Gr. 6)**

I remember. I remember the innocent cry of the wolverine. I remember the bright light from the... no, not a wolverine, silly me. Wait, maybe I should introduce myself, plus, every story has a happy beginning. My name is Alyssa Johnstone, it is 2015, and I am the bravest girl in my grade 6 class, well, at least I think so.

It all started in 2014, right after we entered the wooden gates of Algonquin provincial park, I was so excited I felt like jumping out the window every time I saw a chipmunk stare at me with it's cute button eyes. Oh ya, I'm also the weirdest in my class, and the shortest. I looked away from the window, beside me was my 15 year old sister, Sarah, chewing gum and on her phone. Like, there's a reason why there's no wifi here. "*Ok, stop!*" My mom yelled as my dad almost backed the camper into a tree, while I, keeping my eyes peeled, looked for chipmunks.

I didn't spot any, so I decided to walk around the nearby woods. As I scrunched the top of the bag of peanuts, making it sealed like it was before I opened it, I creped through the woods. *Cheep! Cheep! Cheep!* The sound of chipmunks echoed through the forest, a blue jay swooped down like a meteor, nearly making a leaf explosion. "*Jeeze,*" I said with a whisper. My hand moved aside from my forehead, and suddenly, I saw a greyish blur appear in the distance, it was hard to see from the sunlight beaming into the trees. My vision cleared, and there it was, a big, hungry, grey wolf.

I stood dead silent, but after a while, I took the slowest step back, and examined the wise wolf. It glared into my eyes like it was reading my mind, and literally a second later, it vanished, leaving no harm to this delicious dessert... sorry. My eyes were glued wide open the whole walk back. After one step forward, I already caught a whiff of dad's steak dinner. When I made it to the campsite, he said with a grin "*Hey, long time no see!*"

Making him jump, I screamed. "*I SAW A WOLF! IT WAS LIKE...*" My sister rudely interrupted. "*Wolf? Are you sure it wasn't a loose dog?*" I looked down at my muddy crocs. Eventually, I looked back up, waved my hands in the air like I was swatting mosquitoes and said "*Nevermind.*"

I took my heavy, juicy steak inside the camper (on the plate of course), sat down at the table and sank my teeth into my steak like a... wolf! When I was done eating, I took a big breath. I had nothing to do next, but just take a nap, that lead to the next day. *Caw! Caw!* Went the morning crows, in other words, my alarm clock. It was 8:46, chipmunk time! After breakfast, I was so excited about the chipmunks I nearly ran into the door to get out. My heart jumped up to my throat... but sank back down until I noticed I scared all of them away with my body slam. I trotted into the woods like a clydesdale and for some clueless reason, looked for wolves... in the morning!! The blue jays sounded like crazy monkeys.

I peered through the forest, looking for my wolf... friend? No, not yet.

I smelled the air, the flaming stench of gasoline filled my nose. But I didn't care, I mean, I have to share one bathroom with four people after eating bean burritos. I leaned on a



tree, almost giving up my search, until I turned around and here it was again, I was face to face with a starving, snarling grey wolf.

I should of washed my hands after eating that bacon. I made no sudden moves, only when the wolf did. He began walking towards me very slowly, like he was stalking up on a moose. I pushed my back against the tree so hard it was like I was hugging it from behind. The wolf I called Dusk, now, went behind the tree, sniffed my bacon hands and... I felt a wet and rough surface slide against the back of my hand, and again, and again, I felt it.

I didn't take one step, even though my heart was racing. Additionally, Dusk stopped to focus on my face. We examined each other, gazing into each other's eyes, and suddenly, Dusk bolted. I bolted as well, I had enough wolf slobber on me. When I came tumbling into the site, tripping over roots, everyone was yelling at this big tattooed guy that had a massive bonfire two campsites away from us.

The first thing I heard was a woman bellowing *"If you don't put out this fire, we're calling the park rangers!"* They stomped off angrily. While I was still out, I spotted him spraying more gasoline in the fire and walks off! Half an hour later, I saw smoke, not from the man's fire though, from the forest. I don't know what gotten into me, but I went in the forest.

I sprinted around the trees, dodging bushes, as I heard a high-pitched whine, and I saw the fire now, and nearby was Dusk and... pups! Now, I remember. I remember the innocent cry of the wolf, I remember the bright light from the burning flames. I had to get them out of there. I ran like lightning to get to the terrified wolves, and when I did, I never expected this from a wolf, but they made puppy eyes at me. I ran back and forth, trying to tell them to go that way to be safe, but they were probably thinking I was crazy. I had no choice, but to take his pups.

I was almost in tears thinking of how horrible this will turn out. Dusk snarled and snapped at me, I shrieked. I grabbed the two pups, stumbled back onto my feet, and ran. I felt so bad, Dusk chasing after me, the petrified puppies that I was holding upside down, ooh, man. It was the worst. I dropped the pups in a pile of leaves, almost to the exit of the woods.

Dusk ran past them and kept going after me, but eventually, he went back to his pups. I caught my breath and wiped the sweat off my forehead, with my jaw dropping to the ground. I thought to myself *"Well, our friendship is toast!"* I was shocked when I got back, because we were leaving even though we were supposed to stay for two weeks. The reason was that the rangers were fixing the park from the fire, and having a little chat with the man who started the fire. I was upset, but happy.

Our camping trip was ruined, but I saved lives. And the message is: Nothing is impossible, no matter how risky it is.

## **Piggies and Ice Cream**

**By: Abigail Sampson (Gr. 6)**

One day there was a group of five piggies. Their names were Bob, Mickey, George, Jamie (George's best friend) and Carrie. It was a nice hot day and they had a craving for some delicious ice cream. So they walked around the block, past the bakery, through the mall and into their favourite ice cream parlour. The piggies looked at all the flavours. There were so many it was hard to decide! After a couple of minutes, they decided what they wanted to get. The server behind the counter asked them what they wanted, and seemed happy to help them. The piggies all ordered different flavours. Bob ordered coffee ice cream, Mickey ordered vanilla, George ordered butterscotch, Jamie ordered chocolate, and Carrie ordered cotton candy. They all walked outside the parlour together and sat down at a nice wooden table. As the piggies were eating they looked back at the front door of the parlour. It was packed! The line of customers was so big that it continued outside! Next thing they knew, the manager was outside running towards them.

"Help!" he said, "I don't have any more ice cream! Do you have any?" Sadly, the piggies had already finished their ice cream. Oh no! If there was no more ice cream, and the piggies didn't have any, what were they going to do? Then, Mickey got an idea. "Hey guys," he said. The piggies were at full attention so Mickey continued. "Maybe we can go around town and see if anybody else has ice cream. And if worst gets to worst, we go outside of town." You see, the piggies had never been outside of town before. They think it's a dangerous and mysterious place. So they were really hoping that worst wouldn't get to worst. Anyway, off they went around town asking people if they had ice cream. First, they went to old lady Mida's house. Mida opened the door, "Oh, hello piggies! What brought you to my front door?" she asked. Jamie said, "Well Old Lady Mida, the ice cream parlour has no more ice cream and a lot of people want some. I bet they're getting mad right now, waiting in this heat. Do you have any?" Mida shook her head. "No, I'm afraid not. Poor customers." The rest of the piggies nodded in agreement. Soon enough, the piggies were off walking to the next house.

As they were walking they saw the lineup of customers in front of the ice cream parlour. "We better hurry up." said Carrie. So the piggies hurried on to the next house, nice man Jerry's house. They knocked on Jerry's door, and it wasn't long until it opened. "Well, if it isn't the piggies! How can I help you guys today?" asked Jerry. George answered this time. "Okay," he said. "Th-the ice cream p-parlour has n-no more ice c-cream. Can...you help?" You see, George isn't the best talker out of the piggies, but they gave him credit because after all, he did it! "Good job, George!" said Jamie. She was proud. "Anyway," started Mickey "back to the ice cream story." The rest of the piggies (except George) gave Mickey a frown because George had just made a great accomplishment! Oh well, what can you do? Some piggies out there are like that. But they're still best friends! Mickey started talking again, "Because there's no more ice cream, everybody's going to get mad! And we don't want to go out of town, no way!" The piggies shook their heads. "Well, I wish I could help you but I don't have any ice cream," Jerry said sadly. "Maybe you can visit Gabrielle's house," he said, "I bet she has some!" The piggies took this suggestion. Anywhere there was the possibility of getting ice cream, they'd go. "Thank you!" said the piggies in harmony, and they left.

They went to Gabrielle's house, but she didn't have any. So they went to the houses of Damian, Harry and a lot of others I don't have to mention. But they all didn't have ice cream

either! The piggies stopped to look at Bob. His face was stiff and his eyes were filled with fear. "What's wrong?" asked Jamie. Bob stood there and then began to speak. "Do you think worst...has got to worst?" The piggies stood there too. They didn't know what to say. They knew that they had visited every house (and almost every shop) in town, and none of them had ice cream. Finally, George broke the silence. "You know what guys?" he said. "M-maybe we just h-have to be c-courageous and s-step outside o-our comfort z-zone." Carrie patted George on the shoulder. "Well said George, well said." George smiled, "T-thanks, I try my b-best." Who knew he could say something so powerful! But the piggies had to discuss this. Would they really go outside of town? I mean, who knows what's out there! They discussed the matter and at the end they decided...to take a vote! Carrie and Mickey voted not to go, and Jamie, George and Bob voted yes, they should go. Majority wins, so they headed out...outside of town. "Oh my gosh" said Mickey. "What?" asked the others. Mickey continued, "There's the sign. It says: Thank you for visiting the town of Zooville." All the piggies looked to the left, and sure enough, there was the sign.

About 15 minutes later, the piggies came to a halt when they heard Bob exclaim, "Guys, wait! I think I found something!" The rest of the piggies got excited and ran to where Bob was. "Wow..." they all said in amazement. Sitting there, half buried in the dirt and shrubs, was a big, wooden chest. It had a silver lock on it. The problem was, there was no key! So now, they had to find a way in. "I hope ice c-cream is in t-there," said George. The rest of the piggies agreed. "We should split up and find the key!" said Carrie. "But we can't all go by ourselves" said Mickey, and the other piggies agreed. "Well then, we go in groups!" suggested Carrie. It was a good idea but there were five of them. You can't split five in half. Soon, they figured out who would go with who. Bob, Mickey and George decided to go north and east, Jamie and Carrie would go south and west. Once it was settled, they headed out. As Bob, Mickey and George walked north they found tracks. "HMMMMM," said Mickey. The other two piggies looked at him. It was almost like he was investigating. "What are you looking at?" asked Bob. Mickey looked at Bob and George, "I found tracks, look." The three piggies looked ahead and observed the footprints. "They're definitely not the footprints of piggies or cows or any animal in town, I'm positive!" said Bob. Mickey seemed to be very interested in this. "W-well..." said George, "m-maybe it's from those creatures we saw..." his voice slowly drifted off as he pointed at a car that was parked at the gas station. "You mean those creatures?" asked Mickey (sometimes he could be a bit of a know-it-all). "Y-yeah," replied George. Maybe Mickey had seen them before, but he sure hadn't. "Oh, those are just humans..." Mickey started his whole thing about what they were, and how he was so smart. Nobody was really listening though. They'd all heard it before. "Maybe we should just follow the tracks," said Bob. George nodded in agreement. So the three piggies followed the tracks.

Meanwhile the two girl piggies were progressing as well. As Jamie and Carrie were walking, they noticed footprints too. "What are those?" asked Carrie. "Those are footprints of something..." said Jamie. They both tried to figure out this puzzle. What place could they have seen those before? Suddenly, something clicked inside Carrie's brain. OH!" shouted Carrie. Jamie turned around and asked, "What?" "Well," Carrie continued "I think I know what the footprints are." Jamie looked up again, "Really?" "Remember when we went to the zoo?" asked Carrie. Jamie nodded. "Ok, well, these look exactly like the footprints we saw!" concluded Carrie. "So then...that means they're human footprints!" said Jamie. Carrie nodded, "Correct!"

The two piggies high-fived each other. "Follow the footprints!" they said together and off they went.

As the other group of piggies were travelling they noticed small, pink dots ahead of them in the distance. "What's that?" asked Bob curiously. "Oh, it's probably the key," replied Mickey. He sounded so sure of himself. "Oh, r-really," said George. He thought Mickey couldn't be sure forever. "I'm positive," replied Mickey. "I don't th-think it's the k-key Mickey. I think y-you need to l-look again," said George. George was positive it wasn't the key. They started to argue.

As Carrie and Jamie were walking they saw pink figures as well. They could also hear a lot of what sounded like arguing. "I wonder what's going on up there," said Jamie. As they got closer they realized it was their friends! "Bob? Mickey?" said Carrie. "George?" said Jamie. Jamie started running and Carrie tagged along. As the three other piggies were arguing they noticed Jamie and Carrie. "What's going on?" Carrie asked. Bob looked at Mickey and Mickey looked at George. Mickey said, "We saw something pink. I thought it was the key, but George didn't believe me." "We saw something pink too," said Carrie "and it turned out to be you!"

The piggies got into a group and looked at the ground. They saw something shiny under a bush. "That's it!" said Bob. "It's the key!" said Mickey with a smile. The piggies picked the key up and followed the footprints back to the chest. Once they got back, they put the key in the silver lock. "Does it fit?" asked Jamie. "It sure does!" said Mickey with a smile. It was the moment of truth. Would they find ice cream inside or would they find a hunk of junk? They were about to find out. They slowly opened the chest and gasped. "Wow! Do you see that?!" exclaimed Carrie. The rest of the piggies nodded in delight. In the big chest was a whole lot of ice cream! Every flavour you could think of! This was just what they needed on just the right day! The group of piggies worked together to haul it back to the ice cream parlour. Back at the beginning, yes they were. They saw the huge line of customers standing in front of the ice cream parlour. The manager came up to them. "Piggies, you're back! And what have you got there?" The piggies opened the chest and the manager almost fell to the ground at the sight. Ice cream! And a lot of it! "This is enough to feed the whole town!" he exclaimed. The piggies nodded. "Well, thank you so much! Finally, I'm able to satisfy these hungry customers!" They all took the chest inside and emptied it out. As the piggies stood outside, they watched everybody get their ice cream and walk out with smiles. That night, just before the parlour closed, the group went and got another helping of that delicious ice cream. They all sat down and said together, "To a great adventure and delicious ice cream!" That, my friends, is the story of piggies and ice cream.

## The Portal

By: Ben Rayner (Gr. 6)

I ran through the oak forest, my sword and dagger clattered against my chainmail under my clothes. I could see the deer running ahead of me. I forgot to tell you, I run and move fast. I have to. I have a special gift to walk between dimensions.

These dimensions are called kingdoms I live in the Earth kingdom. Now back to the story, as I was catching up to the deer, I picked up a stone and threw it. The stone missed so I picked up another and threw it. It hit the deer on the head. "Finally" I said.

I ran up to the deer took the meat off with my dagger. Then ran back to the cabin (yes, a cabin they had cabins in the summer of 1568) I gave the meat to my mom who got to work cooking it. While my mom was cooking, I jumped down the stairs but just before I hit the ground a portal opened below me. As soon as I got to the other side it closed behind me.

Then all went black, when I opened my eyes, I felt a sudden chill. I looked around and saw nothing but white *I must be in the ice kingdom* I thought. I started walking the snow was deep. I was going uphill. When I got to the top I saw a dark spot ahead "a town" I muttered.

I started down the hill, cold and tired. The snow clung to my boots and made running almost impossible, but the town was getting closer with each step. When I reached the town, I knocked on the first door, "come in come in quickly!" he said in a hushed tone.

"What's the rush" I asked "snow wolves" he said. "Snow wolves?" I asked "Yes, snow wolves. They're like your common wolves and lynxes bred together then enlarged and turned completely white" he said. "I need to get back to my own kingdom" I said.

"Yes I will help you" he replied "now lie down here and wait till tomorrow." "What if I find a portal before sooner?" I asked as I collapsed on the bed "then go" he told me.

That night, I woke to a portal opening and I went. On the other side I was shocked to find a sea serpent charging me with an army of sea-men following it. I drew my sword and stabbed it in the eye (one of the only weak spots) and it instantly stopped dead. "Who goes there?" their leader demanded pointing his sword at me "Ben, a friend" I replied.

Sea-men are scaly and have claws also have both gills and lungs. So they knew what I was immediately. They took me to a guest home where there was more oxygen. I soon found out that there were less portals in this kingdom. When I found one I went through it.

I came to the other side and found it was incredibly hot and smelled of sulfur then I saw a shadow run past me I turned around and then the shadow hit me in the stomach hard. I fell back with the force of the blow then the shadow was on me it looked vaguely wolf-like. I slowly drew my dagger it opened its mouth but before it could attack it collapsed a flaming arrow stuck in its side then I felt a blow to my head and knew no more.

When I opened my eyes I was chained to a wall in a prison cell the air still smelled of sulfur and the stones were hot my sword, dagger, and mail were against the wall outside the cell.

A guard came and opened the cell door blindfolded me then unlocked the chain “the king wishes to speak to you” he said in a gruff voice. Then he lifted me up and guided me through the hallways. After what seemed like hours the blindfold was pulled off and I saw a huge dome like room full of the light of fire from the walls and before me there was a great throne.

Blazing light came from it and on it there was a great man a crown of fire on his head. “My lord” I said he looked at me for a long time then laughed “Ben, I have not seen you since you were little” he said. “What?” I asked “I guess you were too young to remember, your mother and I were great friends and would come here often with you.” then a portal opened under me and I could barely hear the fire kings farewell behind me.

Then I looked around and found myself just outside my cabin I opened the door and yelled inside “Mom you have a lot of explaining to do.

**The Mountain Island**

**By: Mark Kogan (Gr. 8)**

James Black was always an adventurous boy. Well, adventurous is actually one of many descriptions that he had. On the good side which his friends, parents, and most people that he met saw him as, you could call him resourceful, smart and cunning, but on the other side... Well, James here had a reputation. A nasty, unjustified reputation among the teachers of his school. It all started in kindergarten when he made some make-shift glue, when his teacher had a shortage. He got some orange juice which he always found to be sticky when he spilled it and some jelly to harden it up. The result was splattered jelly all over the teacher's entire work for the week, which she conveniently left on the very cabinet where she usually kept her supplies in. Well, needless to say, it was a very tense situation. The teacher passed on her opinion to the next teacher, who passed it on to the next, none bothering to give James a chance to improve his image. James would often imagine it would probably be so much better in 100 years time, the teachers wouldn't beat you with canes when you misbehaved; and they would invent all sorts of new technologies. It would be so cool to be in the next millennium, the 2000's! James was excited to grow up; He could change the rules to make that 2000's dream a reality. The 1920's were so dull...

James went to a newly developed school, an idea in progress; it was a mixed school, with both boys and girls. Many people didn't like this idea; his parents thought it would spoil his brain, but James didn't mind this new arrangement; after all, there were now twice the minds in the school to learn from. The school had assemblies weekly on the changes in the school; such an assembly in fact was being held in the school about an enormous change due to happen. James was always excited during assemblies, hoping that there would be a cool change in the school. "I hope they send some equipment from the Navy training area for the playground" said James to his best friend Cameron. "Don't be ridiculous. They're probably just holding some choir demonstration or something like that" – replied Cameron in a bored sort of tone. During the assembly many people whispered between themselves but were quickly quieted by a short look from the caretaker, who kept his prized straps for misbehaving students under lock and key. The principal came to the front of the crowd and cleared his throat; many people were already sitting in bored poses expecting another hour wasted of their day.

"Good morning boys and girls of Experimental school #73. There is to be held a trip funded by the government to send the gifted and top students to Mediterranean boarding schools in order to educate them on the matters of governing a country during war times"

Suddenly there was noise everywhere, people were shouting to each other, wondering who would be sent on this across the world trip. Who were the gifted students? Within a few seconds however they were once again quieted down by the yells of teachers and the cracks of the whips used to get the students' attention. The principal started drawling off the names of people who were to be sent on the trip.

Some people who were called cried, not wanting to be sent to such a faraway place, others whooped with excitement, and still others started panicking not knowing what would happen. It was pandemonium, everyone was shouting, except for one boy. James was sitting quietly waiting for his name to be called. Any second now and he would get to go across the world! At last the names got to B after what seemed forever, even though only 12 names were called,

“Devon Black’ was called, “Ashley Black” and then James (his heart pounding as he heard his first name) Carman. James’ blood ran cold. His name wasn’t called? What was going on? He was always helping others to complete the work that he understood immediately. James didn’t even hear Cameron’s name be called, as well as several other people he knew.

Several hours later James timidly came up to the principal’s office, to find out why his name wasn’t chosen.

“Excuse me sir, I’d like to know why didn’t you call my name for the trip?” the principal scoffed, “All you teachers’ reviews on you have been horrendous! There’s no reason that I should think you were a top student and that’s that”. James dejectedly walked away to his friends.”Don’t worry we’ll bring you back load of souvenirs” said his friends who were picked. But James had stopped listening to their talking long ago; a fire was dancing in his eyes, his brain locked on with a cold hard determination. He WOULD get on that trip, no matter what it took.

The next day officials came to cart off the picked students. James had disguised himself as a cleaner wearing stilts to look taller. He told his father that it was a costume for the celebration prior to his trip; conveniently forgetting to mention that there would be no celebrations nor was he (supposedly) part of the trip. In the school there was a line of kids walking to the sea port to get on to the boat. James cautiously walked next to the students and finally he was walking up the ramp and he was in! He hid behind a book shelf in the library, brought some food and waited. Whenever somebody came inside he would duck behind the shelf.

James’s plan was to reveal himself at the Mediterranean. Then there was no way that they’d go through all of the effort to send him back.

A few weeks later the ship finally arrived at the Mediterranean in Israel. James by then has snuck in and read almost all of the books in the library, and there were many! His brain was bursting with knowledge of stories, language, and his dreams. Once they had docked James cautiously went out intending to find Cameron. However he immediately bumped into Sarah, a snobby girl that James had never liked. She shrieked when she saw him and yelled at the top of her lungs: “Sir! James Black has snuck onto the boat!”. The main captain saw James and pursed his lips. “Shameful! How dare you! But I suppose there’s no point to waste time and resources to send you back – we did bring enough supplies for double the amount of people we have”. James pretended to look ashamed, but he was smiling on the inside: his plan has succeeded.

After teaching the kids for a couple of days on military tactics and defending territory, the teachers decided to move to a new area to learn in different terrain.



“Meet us up on the mountain over there” – said the teacher pointing North. Then they left on horses leaving the kids to carry all of the supplies. “It’s so hot” – everybody complained.

James and his friends played tag with each other, and as a result were much more tired than the others much quicker. “Let’s rest” – begged James and the others to Sarah who was appointed the leader. Sarah looked uncertain at first, but quickly was pressured to do so by the rest of the students.

They climbed on top of a mountain, with lush vegetation, to get some shade. The air was dry, but felt sticky and unpleasantly hot. James felt dirtier than he had ever felt before, but right now his body didn’t care. He felt his eyelids involuntarily drop, and he slept.

A few hours later James woke up to the crashing of waves. Wait, waves? James woke up with a start expecting the “dream” to disappear, but it didn’t. James saw water as far as the eye could see. “This can’t be real, can it?” – thought James.

Soon the others started waking up. Slowly, yawning, not wanting to stop sleeping. His heart was pounding, but he still had the sense to plug his ears once he saw the others wake up. “A-a-a-ah” – screamed almost everyone in a comedic unison. Everybody panicked and cried not listening to sense. James however read a million stories about people being stuck on an island, and they usually turned out all right. It’s not as if they would run rampage and sever pick heads on sticks or anything of that sort. He heard his voice of reason and started calming down.

He started sorting out the million of questions swirling in his head, such as: “How did we get here?”, “What is this place?” – but he couldn’t even hear himself think. Some of the youngers and even elder students were still screaming at the top of their lungs as if they were falling off a cliff.

“Be quiet” – yelled James, drowning them out. Sarah – who was screaming two seconds ago – stopped and faced James. “Who made you boss?!” – she asked angrily. “Oh, no, I’m sorry, please, continue” – said James sarcastically. Sarah blushed realizing the stupidity of her previous question. “OK, we have to realize how we got here and what to do about it” – said James.

James convinced everybody to explore the island, to find clues of their location. Eventually one of the little boys found the backpack that they had left at the base of the mountain to not carry it floating in the water where he put it. “So, we are in the same place where we were before.” – reasoned James – “How did the water get here?”. There were millions of suggestions mostly involving aliens. But eventually they agreed that it was a (very!) high tide. “It’ll be gone in a day or two” – the elders reassured the youngers.

The next few days they set about making shelters, collecting fruit, drinking water from a stream they found, and meeting other basic needs.

The kids noticed that there was a lot of raw material on the island. Some people that were collecting fruit once found a strange metal-type material that they brought to James. James excitedly explained that he read about it in a book, and that it was one of the strongest materials on the Earth. “Where did you get all that knowledge?” – exclaimed boys and girls in wonder. “I just read it in these books” – answered James, pointing to the books that they brought with them.

Suddenly he had an idea. He practically exploded in excitement! “I know! Let’s send some people to explore the island and find all of the material on it – then we can learn about it!”.

Everybody was excited about it and those who were interested went out into the forest to try to recognize materials that they would find.

One week later there were dozens of recognized materials in abundance. James, as he slept in his wooden hat, felt that he was living in an adventure and that it would be the best experience of his life. One boy, Patrick Smith, noticed one of his housemates complain of a draft in the make-shift home that made him cold. Patrick had seen James in his moments of genius and was utterly terrified with offering him his own idea, but did it anyway.

“I was thinking, maybe we could ... Well, my friend complains of a wind making him cold. And I thought... Well, I read in the book somewhere, about brick houses and I think we can build our own brick house with clay.” Patrick said in a very rather fast and breathless tone. “But we need to know how to oven-bake the bricks” – noted James. More confidently now Patrick responded: “I read in another medieval book about stone furnaces where you pumped air to feed fire”.

The whole group spent the next week gathering stones and the leather material that they found for the pump. They built a furnace with the help of many diagrams from the book and trial and error. A month later they built a semi-decent home with chimney and a door on a hinge. Nobody noticed how in a month the tide had not yet left.

Mr. and Mrs. Black missed their son James dearly. The steps of his feet, the jokes he told – they didn’t feel complete without him. But they were happy because they knew that their son was training to govern the country. They were so proud! The teachers of the school didn’t notice that James was gone. A rumor started by a couple of students that James had switched schools, eventually reached one of the teacher’s ears, who told the rest about it as of a fact. Everybody assumed that it was the truth. And when the principal received a letter with the words “James Black” on it, it was no wonder that he threw it in the bin right away. “It’s probably a letter talking about the disciplinary issues of James, I’ve seen him write with his left hand, for god’s sake”.

One year later James and the other have created almost all of the inventions in the books, as well as making their own. They now had electric power which they received with the use of windmills. They made glass and even a greenhouse, where they experimented with plants. That was a particularly exciting field where they altered plants to make them better. The botany experts proudly showed their apple-sized strawberries to the rest of the group as one of their first achievements.

Every time they had a new idea they would build a wing devoted to it in their master building. They had a medic house where they discovered that penicillin fungi would penetrate bacteria walls killing them and they used it to cure many sicknesses. There was a math wing which grudgingly everyone learned to appreciate, a biology wing, a chemistry wing, and even an entertainment wing where plays were held and instruments were played. Light bulbs were made after several (hundred) tries, which cut down the child nightmare rate by 90%. It was a scholar’s paradise with things that you could learn everywhere. But one wing was completely ignored –

the transportation wing. One of the biggest projects in fact was the motorboat. They built a boat and even mimicked photosynthesis to power the boat. “Well, we could go back home very rather quickly with this” – said some of the people after it was built, but nobody seemed to really want to.

“Of course, we’ll go, but I want to finish one more project”, or “I’m sure nobody worries about us yet, and now that we can leave it’s practically a vacation” – were the excuses the people made to themselves to not go.

20 years later they still hadn’t used the opportunity to leave. They had a fully developed society and now that they were adults a new generation was emerging. Now the island residents had a new challenge. They had to make a school for the kids. Many people thought it would be easier to adopt the old method of schooling with the long lectures of information and the caning for misbehaving kids. But James had been waiting for this opportunity his whole life. He had a plan, a plan where schools would actively engage students and build their character, rather than just giving them one fact after the other. James convinced the rest and they converted their main building into an enormous school. It was beautifully built and heated. Children first learned language, the ABCs and the numbers. Henry, one of the kids, was once very bored during the class and said: “This is so dumb, I don’t want to learn this”. “Why, you...” – started Patrick, one of the teachers raising his hand. But he quickly remembered the new rules and said: “Well, OK, but if you don’t know the alphabet, you won’t be able to participate in any of the drama class plays”... For the rest of the year Henry was a start student.

The kids graduated school. Their interests lead them into all types of jobs. Henry himself reinstated the transportation program for flying vehicles, eventually starting to build rocket ships for space.

#### One hundred years later

Various space agencies have found strange – possibly alien – messages being sent from Mars bearing a strange string of numbers. This was the top radio broadcast being viewed worldwide. Scientists at top universities were working hard on deciphering the code. Eventually, after a month or so they broke it. It read: “Conditions good. Mild storms, three hundred kilometer per hour winds, how’s the island?” The scientists analysed details of the message and found references to the Mediterranean sea, 30 kilometers from shore. They saw there what nobody had ever expected to see. It was a futuristic paradise with teleporting watches, invisibility cloaks and top education with tri-lingual students in the kindergarten. The scientists were amazed. “What is this Utopia?” – they asked a 110 years old man who was the symbolic leader of the island. “Well, that’s what happens when you teach people properly” – replied James with a smile. He was glad that by 2015 the rest of mankind finally started having functional learning system more or less. Now the rest of the world had some catching up to do.

## **Jurassic Library**

**By: Kayla Warburton (Gr. 8)**

I sprint down the sidewalk, my beaten-up sneakers squeaking with each step. Most days I take my time down this street, what with the old Victorian houses covered with ivy vines, or the historic shops wafting the scent of freshly baked bread down the main street. But I can't slow down today. I practically fly down the street, hardly even noticing the vibrant new imports at the flower shop. My backpack bumps around with each step, and my lungs sting with my uncommon practice of exercise. I nearly miss the entrance to the library, the sign is hidden by an extremely overgrown shrub nobody ever bothered to trim. The library is one of my favourite buildings in this neighbourhood. Hidden down a back road, the little brick thing covered in foliage always fascinated me. I look down at my watch, pulling back the lilac-and-cream striped sleeve of my sweater. It's five-thirty four. School ended nine minutes ago, and I am four minutes late. Pushing open the heavy double doors, I jog through the maze of old wooden bookshelves to the back of the library. Jenny, the kind librarian with thin, blonde hair and long, delicate limbs, pulls me into the back room. This room was added about ten years ago, for all the events the library hosts. One of the walls is made completely of glass, and it overlooks the beautiful gardens, half of it donated by the local flower shop. The rest of the room is white and blue, and the little plastic chairs they use in schools are lined up to face the massive window.

Today all of the seats are filled with people, who seem to be getting impatient. It's only been four minutes! I will never understand the people of this town. Jenny ushers me up to the front, handing me my violin that I keep here for convenience. The parents of the crowd begin shushing their children, and I scan the people for anyone I might know. No such luck. Mom is at work, Dad's looking after my little sister Annie, all of my friends don't exist, and the rest of my siblings are either asleep, partying or studying. I sigh, lifting my beautifully made violin to my chin and steadying my breath. I play freeform, seeing as it's a Tuesday and nobody told me otherwise. Every ten notes or so is either flat or the wrong key completely. I cringe. I really should practice more. Maybe I need a vacation. Somewhere tropical. In the crowd, a baby starts crying, which makes me really question the parents who thought their four-month-old would appreciate an amateur fifteen-year-old violinist playing off-kilter music in the back of an old library instead of a nap. When I finish the song, the cliché tiny amount of applause begins, but I'm just the intro. I hand the violin off to Jenny, who makes her way up to the front and begins playing. A shocked silence falls over the tiny crowd, showing how Jenny should definitely be playing in something much, much grander than a library. Her body moves with the song, swaying with the bow she effortlessly glides along the strings. I leave respectfully, seeing as I didn't buy a ticket. Jenny always says I'm allowed to stay and listen because I helped open the show, but Jenny deserves something far better than that from her audience.

I wander through the building, Jenny's song faintly playing in the background. The main building has a much cozier feel than the back room. The walls are just pure brick, and the lights

are only emitting a warm yellow glow instead of bright white light. The floors are old scratchy carpets and the bookshelves are less than three feet apart. But my favourite area is the far left corner. Two old, overstuffed beanbag chairs sit next to an old-fashioned wood burning metal fireplace, all surrounded by tall bookshelves filled with the science fiction novels. Not the new easy-reads, the old ones that challenge you like *War of the worlds* and *20,000 leagues under the sea*. I walk over to the faded blue beanbag and gently sit down. I made the mistake of dropping down onto it once and the cloud of dust was big enough to choke an elephant. As I turn to reach for *the hitch hiker's guide to the galaxy* for what seems like the 100<sup>th</sup> time, I notice a small wooden box on the shelf next to it. Strange, seeing as Jenny never even considered stocking colouring books, let alone a kit of some sort. I gingerly pick up the box, brushing off what seems to be fifty years' worth of dust. The box is rectangular, with intricate designs carved into it and a rusty bronze flip latch. As I look closer, I see patterns of strange shapes lined up around the perimeter of the box, almost like an ancient language. Jenny has moved on to another song, she must be feeling good today. She won't be finished for a while. I look up from the box, searching for a clue as to what it is. A small, yellowing piece of paper about the size of a business card sits in the place where the box used to be. I snatch it up, more curious than cautious now. I squint at the tiny handwriting on the faded slip.

*This box should not be opened by the faint of heart, for a fascinating yet dangerous thing lies within.*

No name, no clarification, nothing. Just a stupid little message telling me that something bad is in this harmless little box. I throw the card on the ground. *I'm brave. I got rid of that spider in Annie's room despite my arachnophobia. I can open this box.* I slowly lift the latch, which is surprisingly easy considering the amount of rust coating it. As I lift the lid my heart is in my throat. Why? I'm not sure. Maybe I'm not brave enough. Too late now. I look into the box, and see a rough, clay stone. Laughing, I reach for the rock. Nice one, Jenny. As I touch the stone, I jerk my hand back with a cry. Blisters are spreading across my fingers down to my palm, creating an unbearable, almost acidic pain. I open my mouth to scream, and everything goes black, Jenny's beautiful song fading off into the distance.

\* \* \*

I hit the ground from what feels like almost ten feet up. I struggle to catch my breath, the sun practically blinding me. I guess I was found and brought outside. I sit up and start coughing, trying to clear the sand from the fall out of my throat. My hands brush up against something stiff and tall and I jump. Looking around, I see that I've somehow gotten into a field with very tall grass. I stand up, confused, looking for the library or even just a person. But I'm all alone. The field is actually a small clearing, surrounded by massive trees, almost sixty feet in height and ten

feet in width. Vines drape between trunks, creating almost a curtain-like effect. Giant ferns and exotically coloured flowers, the kind of flowers you only see on TV when they go into the amazon or something, fill the gaps of the jungle. The entire place almost seems alive, with a low buzz emanating from every angle, I can practically feel the energy. I take a few shaking steps and stop short when I see the dragonfly on the ground in front of me. It looks completely normal, almost pretty seeing as it's a bright shade of luminescent turquoise. The only reason why I almost pass out is that it just happens to be the size of a modern-day hawk. It flies away, its beating wings making a noise equivalent to the volume of a jackhammer. I take out my cell phone, planning to call either my parents or the mental hospital, I'm really not sure which yet. I press the "ON" button, but the screen stays black. Of course. It's just like me to forget to charge my phone and then end up in the craziest place possible. I start to walk towards the jungle, maybe some of the buzzing is a highway or a government observation building. As I trudge along to the trees, I hear the buzzing stop abruptly. I have seen a lot of movies in my time and most often, whenever all of the small creatures go quiet, it means something big is nearby. I start walking faster. A steady, rhythmic thudding sound rises behind me. I start jogging. I sprint into the jungle, tripping over rocks and concealing myself in one of the giant oily ferns. As I peek out from the leaves, I see the cliché birds flying away and trees shaking. I almost laugh. I guess Hollywood wasn't too far off on that detail. The thudding gets louder, sending vibrations through the ground and rustling the fern around me. Why am I hiding? The worst it could be is an elephant, right? I step out from the fern and back into the sunny clearing, swatting away branches and strange leaves. I look up to the treetops and forget how to breathe. Emerging from between two of the largest trees is a baby beige *Brachiosaurus*. It steps out into the small clearing and raises its tiny head well over the trees. I clench my hands into fists and realise I still have the rock in my left hand. How did I miss that? I shove it into my jeans' pocket and with a jolt I realize that I am most likely not in Canada anymore. Snapping my head back up to the *Brachiosaurus*, I am surprised by my *lack* of surprise. This is a creature that supposedly went extinct over two billion years ago. Shouldn't I be scared or excited? I get knocked over as its massive three-toed foot lands about a metre away from me. I scramble to my feet and sprint for its tail. It clearly knows where it's headed, and I wouldn't survive ten minutes out here on my own. I jump and cling on to the massive swinging tail of a *Brachiosaurus*. I still can't wrap my head around that. One step at a time, I slowly make my way onto its back. We're well into the trees by the time I figure out how to hold on. On our way through the jungle, I start to see dino nests and giant bugs everywhere. Branches the size of maple trees snap beneath us. In the corner of my eye, I catch a flash of movement. Looking back, I see a fallen red leaf twitch on the forest floor, reacting to movement. Maybe it was just the *Brachiosaurs'* tail swinging. I pluck a green, oily leaf from a low-hanging branch and look closely at it. I used to study dinosaurs as if it was my job, I had an obsession. I guess now is when it pays off. This tree existed in the late Jurassic period, as did many of the most famous dinosaurs. I hear a noise to my left, and I see another movement. This time I'm certain that it's not only a plant eater that I am dealing with here. A horrible screech comes from in front of us, followed by a large crash as the *Brachiosaurus* falls

forward onto its knees. I get thrown forward, triggering one of my chronic nosebleeds. Six or seven little dinosaurs crowd around the wounded sauropod, climbing up its sides and onto its back with me. Judging by their yellowish-green speckled patterns and raptor-esque appearance, they seem to be Compsognathus. But that can't be right, Compsognathus came from Europe, whereas the Brachiosaurus came from Africa or the USA. It doesn't matter right now though, as my nosebleed has alerted them to my presence. I run for the base of the long-neck's neck, climbing as far out as I dare. I make it to the base of its skull as the Brachiosaurus shifts back onto its feet, raising its head and sending me about 42 feet into the air. I scream, which startles the beast into whipping its head back downwards and setting off on a limping, uneven run. Through the humid forest. The Compsognathuses seem to have doubled in number, and are catching up fast. Suddenly, the trees split apart and a fully grown dinosaur resembling a T-rex bursts out. I scream even louder as the thick-skinned, scarlet beast swallows one of the small dinos whole. An Allosaurus. The tiny carnivores scatter in a panicked frenzy, leaving the Allosaurus just for us. It sets after us, smelling the blood from the injured knee of the long-neck. The Brachiosaurus is injured, it can't run fast enough despite its longer stride. I glance back and see the Allosaurus sprinting towards us, the long tail of the sauropod just inches from its razor-sharp rows of teeth. I can hardly hear myself think over the sound of six feet pounding against the ground with a combined weight of over three tons behind them. We emerge from the jungle abruptly, bringing vines and brambles with us onto a grassy plain. Approaching us fast is a rocky cliff that drops directly into the ocean. We won't be able to stop in time. But we could turn. The Brachiosaurus is panicked and frantic, it can't make that decision. Still clinging on to its neck, I wrench it to the side, forcing the massive herbivore to turn. We make it by about three inches, startling the Allosaurus. The carnivore screams, a horrendous sound ten times worse than nails on a chalkboard. It tries to stop, but the momentum created by a thirty foot long half ton dinosaur in a full sprint is too much to slow in two seconds. It gets thrown off the edge of the cliff, plummeting over 60 feet to the water level. It lands with a massive splash, surfacing with another ear-splitting cry.

A dark shadow moves towards it, circling the helpless dinosaur. The shape disappears for a split second before a massive plesiosaur jumps up from the water, jaws open, swallowing the Allosaurus. From the looks of it, a Liopleurodon. It submerges back into the water with a scary silence.

The brachiosaurus kneels in exhaustion, and I jump down to inspect its knee. A large tooth protrudes from its thick wrinkly skin, with a small amount of blood trickling down. Not lethal, just annoying. I carefully remove the tooth and clean up the blood with a large leaf. I turn around, and gasp softly.

The field is covered in lush green grass, and inhabited by more dinosaurs than I could ever imagine. Stegosaurus nests and Pterodactyls in the wide blue sky, Triceratops families at the watering hole with Parasaurolophus herds grazing in the distance. And to my right, is a group of beige Brachiosauruses. The long-neck behind me stands and lumbers over to join what I assume

is its family. I stand in awe, stepping out into the field. How did I end up here from just a rock? I wrap my hand in my sweater, reaching for the lump in my pocket. Before I can get a chance to look at it closely, the Liopleurodon jumps, slamming against the rocks in the process. The cliff shakes violently, causing me to let go of the rough stone. I scramble to catch it before it falls off the edge, my hand shooting out from my sweater. The second my finger brushes it, the world goes dark once more.

The cloud of dust rises around me as I collapse onto the old beanbag. I rub my eyes, tears already gathering from the dust landing on my eyeballs. “No!” I never wanted to leave! I frantically grab the stone and brace myself, waiting for the blistering to begin again, for the dinosaurs to come back. Nothing happens. I clench the stone, drawing blood from my hand, practically begging to go back. Nothing. I sink back down in defeat. The rough, familiar fabric of the beanbag chair calms me. I twist around, picking up the book that started all of this.

It doesn’t seem like any time has passed here since I left. Jenny’s at the same point in her song, the sun is in the same place, as is the wooden box that the stone was originally in. Looking closer at the stone, I can see the faint indentation of a bone, of a *fossil*. It looks like a dinosaur tooth, caught in the mud and preserved by time. Gently, I place it back into the creaky box, and the card with it. Maybe that’s enough brain usage for one day. Putting the book back on the shelf, I pick up the box gently, and push through the double doors of the library once more.

On the walk back home I smile to myself, happy for my very own Jurassic library.



## **The Outbreak**

**By: Jorja Correia (Gr. 8)**

### **Prologue**

I look into Sky's eyes.

"I... I'm....s....o...sorry..."

I close my eyes, lift the gun and put it to my head.

"No! PLEASE! LILY!! "

I take a breath and pull the trigger; it all goes black.

---

### **CHAPTER 1: KILLER TEACHER**

"Hey!" My best friend Sky shouts at me.

I wave her over with my hand, she runs over, her blonde ponytail bobbing up and down as she runs.

"What's up," I ask her.

"Not much," she says. "But did you hear about that guy on the news?" I know she's going to tell me anyways, but I go along with it.

"No, what happened?" I ask her, ready to hear an exaggerated celebrity news story. Probably about some couple breaking up or something like that.

"This guy killed this woman and her kid last night! Then he ATE them!" She's almost yelling now. Her eyes are almost bulging out of her head.

"Wow...so sad...that they made this up to create hype for Halloween," I said, shaking my head and sighing. The media these days will do *anything* just to get business up. It's sad.

"WHAT? How can you not believe this? You used to be OBSESSED with this stuff!" She asks me surprisingly, her ocean blue eyes still wide.

She's probably referring to me liking forensic science, or my obsession about creepy stuff.

I shoved my hands in my pockets and look up to the sky. "Ever since my mom die-" I got cut off by the school bell.

To be honest, I was kind of thankful school was starting, for once. I don't like to talk about what happened to my mother.

"Come on!" I say pulling her arm to class.

We push open the doors to the school, and walk in.

---

“As you know,” the teacher starts,

“We have been learning about exponents.” I drown him out after that.

I already know how to do this stuff...I don't need to pay attention.

I sigh and look around the class, trying to forget about everything. My eyes graze over my classmates, who look just as uninterested as I am. I look at the board, posters saying:

“MATH IS FUN!!”

Pfft. Yeah, right. Only Sky thinks math is fun...not me. My eyes finally land on the window; I look outside, and got lost in my thoughts. I'm just thinking about volleyball, my sports team, my final grade in ma-

“EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY! INITIATE LOCK DOWN!” The vice principal almost screams into the speaker.

We all stand up, push in our chairs, and sit along the wall underneath the windows, while letting out a sigh. We know that it's just a drill; it's never real, but at least we don't have to do math for a good five minutes. Sky finds me and sits down next to me. We huddle up all in a line, pressed against the bookshelf.

We wait ten minutes, but no one comes by to make sure the door is locked. One hour goes by. We are starting to get antsy, and nervous; it's never been this long before.

“OK. I'm going to check it out,” My teacher whisper-yells to us.

He opens the door and looks around. He steps outside. We all hold our breath. We were supposed to stay inside. What was he doing?

“AHHHH!!!!” He screams.

Everyone jumps, and grabs each other.

We watch him through the window that leads to the hallway. He turns around with the door open.

“I'm KIDDING!” He says, jokingly.

We all let out a big breath of relief.

My teacher was always a jokester, but seriously? He just broke school code, I was definitely going to rat him out.

Suddenly, from behind someone grabs him and takes him down.

‘AHHHHHHH!!!AHHHHHHH!’ He screams in fear.

We echo his noises, all thinking we were going to die too.

His screams die down. We hear shuffling and weird noises; we all huddle together in fear. I look at Sky, and I can see that we both are terrified. She takes a big breath.

Mr. Myles, the gym teacher, stumbles and shuffles into the class: eyes white, blood everywhere, guts and intestines hanging from his mouth.

“AHHHHH!” We all shriek at the top of our lungs. We all jump up, my deep green eyes widen as big as saucers. We all scatter. Jimmy, a blonde hair, average sized boy goes to run around Mr. Myles, and out the door. The gym teacher grabs his shoulders and sinks his yellow-brown teeth into his neck, and rips a chunk out.

We all scream even louder. Mr. Skitz, our math teacher, gets up looking the same as Mr. Myles, but instead of guts hanging from his mouth, it’s his own blood dripping down his face. In a flash, a bloody hand print smears against the window.

I grab Sky’s hand, push down Mr. Myles, and burst into a running sprint, while our classmates scream at the top of their lungs. We keep running down the halls that seem empty.

We probably should turn back, but we don’t.

“What just happened?” Sky almost yells at me. Still running.

“What do you think? Our gym teacher just ate Mr. Skitz!” I yell back at her.

“Here,” I tell her.

We duck into the girls’ bathroom.

“Lily, you don’t think....?” Her voice trails off.

“What? Everyone’s a-a-a z-zombie?” I say nervously.

---

## **CHAPTER 2: JENNY MILLER**

Sky’s eyes open, larger then you’ve ever seen.

“U...U...HH...UH!” She points her finger behind me, trembling with fear.

I turn around, and I scream. A zombie grabs my arm! I punch it in the face. It doesn’t react.

“Here!” She yells at me, holding her hand out.

I look at her hand, and she has a metal compass. I grab it, and stab it in the eye. She falls, her reflection shows in the big mirror.

We both breathe heavily.

“W...w...ho...who...was that?” Sky says in between big breaths. Hunched over, hands on her knees.

We both look at the distorted face, now with a blue metal compass in her eye. I try to make the face out, until I realize.

“Wait....” I say, shaking,

“Oh my gosh...” I almost get choked up. A big lump in my throat forms.

“Its....its Jenny Miller.....”I say putting my hand over my mouth. Tears forming in my eyes.

“Jenny Miller? The sixth grader?” she questions.

Jenny Miller was a girl on my basketball team. Sky wouldn’t have known her, she only did volleyball in school, but I recognize her.

“I...I think so, but wait.” I don’t finish.

She looks at me nervously and scared.

“She... she doesn’t have a bite on her...” I said checking her over. I look all over her.

“Then how did she....” Sky words trail off while she shakes her head.

I look her over, making sure I don’t miss anything. It’s so small, I almost miss it, but I don’t.

“Look, on her arm, that’s how she turned.....” I trail off.

Sky looks, and sees it. She got scratched. She probably ran to the bathroom to clean it, but turned.

We bow our head’s, and stand in silence.

---

### **CHAPTER 3: THIS IS TEXAS.....**

“Ok, we have to find more kids or teachers.....or both.” I say speed walking down the halls, while the lights flicker.

“Well where would people go that aren’t dead?” Sky says clearly scared yet flustered.

I nod agreeably. We have emergency plans for everything: a lockdown, fire, tornado, heck we have one for a reindeer in the yard, but no zombie apocalypse.

We turn a corner, as I was about to say something but I’m interrupted when I see them.

Hundreds of zombies in the hall, bumping into each other.

Sky goes to scream, but I slam my hand on her mouth. I wrap my arms around her waist, pick her up, and carry her around the corner. I let go and we both bolt down the hall. We hide in the same bathroom as before, but this time we check the stalls. We hunch over panting and gasping for air.

“How... are ...there...so...many...?”Sky says gasping in between words.

“Well...” I say finally catching my breath. I gulp some air.

“There are seven hundred kids in the school...” I say trying to see if she catches on.

I think she got it.

“So, what do we do now?” She asks leaning against the wall, careful to avoid a blood-splattered mirror.

We sigh, take our bangs out of our face, when I figure it out.

“We should get a gun.” I say, finally. I nod my head, as if agreeing with myself.

“Where are we going to get a gun?” She asks angrily. She shakes her head, and looks back at the ground.

“Well.....this is Texas,” I say walking out of the bathroom.

“Everyone has a gun.”

---

#### **CHAPTER 4: I’M SORRY.....**

Sky and I both grab our guns and put them in our pockets. We found them in the supply closet on the second floor. If you think about it, it’s not very safe. We just knocked down the door with two steel chairs.....’Merica!

Anyways we’re now in a kindergarten class. I have no idea who used to teach here, but they’re long gone now. Lucky for us though, all the kindergarten classes have no outside windows and backdoors for fire drills, so the kids can get out quicker.

“How did this happen?” Sky asks me, like I know the answer.

“I have no idea!” I say throwing my hands up and shaking my head. I think, but come up with nothing.

We both sit down on the tile floor. We were both silent, lost in thought. See a picture, on the teacher’s desk. I think it’s Mrs. Leanly. There she is, with her husband and kids, smiling. I start thinking about my family. My dad, Connor. Huh, I never realized how much he loved me. My stupid brother, Mike, he’s so obnoxious, so funny, so... loving. I start to sob.

“Lilly,” Sky starts,

“What’s wrong?” she says, trying to comfort me.

“I can’t do this.....” I say trying to stop crying. I can’t, it’s just too much.

“My mom died a month ago, I don’t know what happened to my dad and brother, AND people are eating each other!” I say, sobbing even more.

I didn’t realize the growing sound of footsteps, I was so lost in my own world. I ignore it. Wait, it sounds closer than I thought. I turn my head to face the door.

“AHH!” I yell for what seemed to be like the fiftieth time today. My voice is going hoarse.

The zombies were almost pressed up against the glass door. We both spring up.

“WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?” Sky screams. She looks at me frantically.

“Back door, NOW!” I say, finally spitting the words out.

Now they’re slamming on the glass. We run to the back door and try to open it, but we didn’t realize we needed a key. I frantically look around.

“I see it!” I say to Sky. My eyes lock on the shiny silver key, on the desk.

‘MARRRAAAAMMMMAA!’ The zombie shriek their horrific moan as the door comes crashing down, and zombies pile up.

I look at the teacher’s desk. Its right beside the door that’s being overrun by zombies.

I have a choice..... I can either get the key and save us both, or just Sky..... I know what I’m going to do....

I run over dodging zombies. I reach out and grab the key. I throw it. It seems like it’s going in slow motion through the air.. She catches it.

“WHAT ARE YOU DOING?” She screams at me, shaking, and her eyes going wide.

“GO! PLEASE! I GIVE UP! MY FAMILY IS DEAD!” I say. I sob, and shake my head. I can’t do it anymore.

My mom died a month ago from a brain tumor, my dad and brother are probably dead, they have zero survival instincts.

I look into Sky’s eyes, my own eyes filled with sorrowful, and fear.

“I... I’m....s....o...sorry...” I trail off.....

I close my eyes, lift the gun and put it to my head.

“No! PLEASE! LILY!”

I take a breath and pull the trigger, it all fades as my last sounds of Sky screaming, and zombies moaning fill the air. Then, black.....

---

## **TEN MONTHS LATER.....**

Ten months have passed since Lily died. After I escaped from the school, I ran to Lily’s house. As I opened the door I immediately saw Connor and Mike, standing in the living room, talking, and sobbing. I tell them what had happened.

We ended up going back to the school, the same way that I escaped through, if she didn’t sacrifice herself, I would’ve died. We take her body, and bury it, with a cross above it. It reads:

“For the girl who was strong, who could do anything. This is for her. For Lily Anne Demerse-2002-2015”

Now we’re all in Georgia trying to end these zombies, trying to find a cure. For Lily.

One thing I do know is, there are always more lily pads in the next pond over....

## My Song

**By: Emily Enns (Gr. 8)**

My siblings are so annoying. In a cute way, but still, when they wrestle and play very loudly, you'd get as fed up as me. They're constantly trying to do the whip and nae nae in the car. My brother Jake is addicted to Stitches by Shawn Mendes. Maybe he likes his voice, but he probably just likes the music video. My Sister Natalie loves Hold each other and I don't know who sings it to be honest. She just sings on the top of her lungs. She even cried the first time she listened to it. Right now we're in the car driving to go see our grandparents this weekend. I'm excited, and happy to see them. I'm also 18 if you were wondering. I CAN drive. I asked to but my mom said no; she thought I would crash and hurt the kids. Jake is in kindergarten, still a little fella, but I love him to death.

With his small little nose, and wide eyes, everybody loves him. I always encounter "Awe's" when we go through the grocery store aisles. Natalie is a little rascal! She's always pranking everybody and anybody she sees. Little scares to putting flour in my hair dryer, or putting chocolate syrup in my liquid eyeliner! Natalie's in grade 4, with big ambitions. She wants to be a "secret agent" one day for the FBI, I'm sure that would pay well! We were about halfway there and my favourite song came on. My mom always laughs when it comes on because I know all the words, and I sing all of it. "When your legs don't walk like they used to before, and I can't sweep you off of your feet..." I started singing, and Jake was making fun of me. Ever since that song came out I've listened to it every single day while I'm getting ready for school. It wakes me up, it relaxes me, it makes me happy for the upcoming hours, even if we're just writing notes and studying for exams. Everybody started singing it was hilarious! "TAKE ME INTO YOUR LOVING ARMS! KISS ME UNDER THE LIGHT OF A THO -- ""OH MY GOSH" is the last thing I hear come out of my mother's mouth.

Where am I? I slowly wake up, to find myself attached to IV's and - what? There's a tube in my throat. Who are these strange people? I try to talk, I can't, it only hurts. "Oh my gosh, you're awake, thank goodness" this man sitting beside me says. He's holding my hand and I suddenly feel very uncomfortable. "Maddison, don't talk. You couldn't breathe, they had to put a tube in your throat, because your airway was obstructed." A doctor comes in. Oh. I'm in a hospital. But why? What had happened where they had to put a tube down my throat? "Mr. Castle, I'm so sorry inform you that Charlotte has passed, and died at the scene. Maddison has Long term memory loss, it's going to take a lot of getting used to and she won't be able to identify you or any of her siblings maybe ever. Jake is okay, only a broken arm, some bruises and scrapes. Natalie broke her neck since the impact threw her into the window. This is a lot to take in, since you have just arrived back from your trip. I'm deeply sorry Mr. Castle."

Who's Maddison? Oh right, I am. But who are the rest of the people he is talking about? Jake, Natalie, Charlotte? The man named Mr. Castle is crying. Screaming. He looks like he's in pain. Not physically, but mentally.

I'm just staring at him. Watching him feel the pain that I can't feel, can't engage, because I don't know what had happened, who it happened with, or when it happened. But I'm pretty sure it's recent since he just found out about these people and their injuries. Beside me is

some food that I can't eat, some water I can't drink, and some electronics I don't know how to use. He looks at me with his wet, sulky eyes. "Maddison, I'm your dad. My names Dave, but my name to you is dad." He chuckled a little bit and then realized that chuckling made him feel worse. I wish I could say something. I slowly nodded so my tube wouldn't move, and I put my arms out and gave him a hug. He cried even more.

It's been a week. I finally got discharged two days ago, and I can talk. I just don't know what to say. My "dad" keeps talking and talking about how we're going to move to have a fresh start. But I already have one. My "siblings" have the most lucky lives. At least they have their memory. My "mother's" funeral is on Wednesday which is in two days. I can't get passed the thought in my mind where I'm thinking what if this isn't my dad, what if these aren't my siblings. What if my passed mom isn't my mom? It's all too much for me right now.

We're in the car going to Charlotte's funeral. I'm not calling her my mom anymore since I'm not for sure. Even though she's passed I can call her all I want I guess; mom, Charlotte, the woman that apparently caused me this memory loss. I have no feeling towards Charlotte, and I wish I did. The funeral was sad. It rained. Everybody wore black. Strangers or "family" came up to me and said sorrys and I love you's. Some gave me a hug, and some a kiss on my cheek. I felt disappointed that I could not give the family the same love and respect they gave me. On our way back, Jake turned on the radio. This very upbeat song came on and the person who was singing it- well you couldn't even hear them speak. It was like jibberish. All the word in one. I've never heard someone sing that fast! "Daddy, turn it up, it's Pitbull! He's my favourite" Jake shouted enthusiastically! All I could think while he turned it up louder was "oh no, how much longer!" The song neared the end, and another song came on. Slower, nicer melody, softer beat. "When your legs don't walk like they used to before, and I can't sweep you off your feet.."

I love this song, it's so nice, and so relaxing. I wonder what it's called. "Maddison, why aren't you singing?! This is your favourite song, you know all the words" Natalie said." She's right Maddison, you're crazy for this song" Dad agreed. "Take me into your loving arms! Kiss me under this light of a thousand stars, oh darling, place your hand on my beating heart; I'm thinking out loud, baby, we found love right where we are." And then it hit me.

In an instant everything came back to me. Everything. My whole life, my whole family, even the accident. My mother was beautiful, with her graying roots needing a re-do. With her flawless face that any man would ever want, she is - she was, perfect. "Dad! Everything came back to me! I know everything, I remember everyone!" My dad didn't say a word. He just started to cry. But I know it was anything but a cry of sadness. "Oh my gosh, you finally remember me, thank goodness, because I was getting tired of explaining, and explaining, and exp - well you know what I mean. Or do I have to explain that too?" Natalie said excitedly.

2 months later I'm closer to everyone that I've ever been. I live every minute - every second to the fullest, remembering what I've been through and what I accomplished. And some people might not think this, but I am a fighter. I lived a horrible car accident, and passed long term memory loss; because of a song. Nobody would think anyone could survive long term



memory loss by hearing a song. But I did. So I am fighter. I will live each moment in my life thinking - knowing, I'm a fighter, until my death. So, if you ever thought music cannot change a life, think again.

## Pirates

**By: Drew Lehman (Gr. 7)**

Rupert Hawthorne was scrubbing the decks when it happened. It was the year 1745, a time when pirates ruled the seven seas. Rupert had spent two whole years as one of the *Mad Buccaneer's* ship boys. He had left his parents when he was only eleven years old, but he frequently wrote to them. As he was scrubbing the decks, he saw a large galleon with an English flag on the mast. He knew immediately it belonged to the Royal Navy. This was definitely not good news. The English were the *Mad Buccaneer's* mortal enemy, and the crew had been on the run because they were wanted for attacking an English galleon. Rupert knew the English would attack them on sight, so he ran as fast as he could to the captain's quarters. When he finally reached the captain's quarters, he gasped, "Captain Caldwell," Rupert said to Aidan Caldwell, the captain of the *Mad Buccaneer*, "While I was scrubbing the deck, I saw an English Galleon!"

"Do you speak the truth?" Asked Captain Caldwell, who was giving Rupert an anxious and quizzical look.

"Yes, Captain, sir." gasped Rupert.

"ALL MEN!" Captain Caldwell bellowed, "MAN YOUR BATTLE POSTS!" Many of Rupert's shipmates dashed around the ship. Rupert's friend, Samuel Jacoby, ran up to Rupert, and asked "Rupert, what's happening?"

"I spotted an English Galleon!"

"HAWKTHORNE! GET YOUR CUTLASS! BE READY!" Yelled Captain Caldwell, "JACOBY! GET TO THE CANNONS!"

"Yes sir, Captain, sir!" Said Rupert and Samuel simultaneously. Rupert was starting to feel the adrenaline coursing through his body. This was only his second major battle, his first being the one that made Captain Caldwell notorious: their first attack on the English navy. As the English Galleon drew nearer and nearer, his adrenaline turned to anxiety, and his anxiety turned to fear. He wanted to run and hide in his peaceful quarters. But he couldn't. Cowardice was punishable by death. He would have to fight. He stood beside Samuel, waiting for the inevitable. After what seemed like an eternity, the English ship finally got into firing range. Loud explosions from their muskets could be heard from miles away. He caught a glimpse of Samuel firing his cannon and creating a large hole in the enemy's bow. The ship started sinking. *Maybe I won't have to fight*, thought Rupert. But at that very moment, the English sailors threw hooked ropes onto the *Mad Buccaneer*. The English started to climb across them. Rupert decided he could stop the English without killing them, for he was not a killer. He decided to cut the ropes with his cutlass. The other pirates must've liked this idea to, as they also cut the ropes. After all the ropes had been cut, the pirates knew that they were victorious. Most of the English sailors had retreated in life boats. Then Rupert saw the captain of the galleon, which was now almost completely submerged. It was Andrew McCarthy, one of the highest ranked privateers in the English navy. Rupert told Samuel this, and he was astonished. "Are you joking?" Samuel asked.

"No, I saw him!"

“Okay. Let’s join the others in salvaging!” Rupert and Samuel looked down into the water, looking for anything valuable to salvage, when something caught Rupert’s eye.

“Look over there!” exclaimed Rupert. He had seen a bottle, with a rolled up piece of parchment inside. Rupert dived into the ocean and grabbed the bottle. Samuel helped him back onto the ship, and asked, “What is it? Open it!” Rupert popped out the cork and retrieved the parchment. It had all of the region’s islands labelled, it had a dotted line which winded through all of the Caribbean islands and ended in Trinidad. “I don’t believe it!”

“What?” Asked Samuel.

“It’s a treasure map!” Said Rupert excitedly, “We should tell Captain Caldwell!” Rupert and Irving dashed to the captain’s quarters once again. When they informed Captain Caldwell of the exciting news, a wild grin spread across his face. “Excellent...” Said Caldwell, twinkle in his eye.

“What do you mean?” inquired Irving curiously.

“I *mean* that we can escape this life, and start anew.” Captain Caldwell responded. Rupert and Samuel stared at Captain Caldwell. “Ugh, you two really are thick, aren’t you? It means we could purchase land in America or Canada, escape the Royal Navy, and start a new life. Anyways, where is the treasure located?”

“On the east coast of Trinidad, sir.” Said Rupert.

“Then we shall set sail at once! You two will be rewarded greatly for finding this map.” Said Captain Caldwell. Rupert and Samuel were very excited. If they could escape the Royal Navy, maybe they could go back to their parents. Caldwell walked out with them, and bellowed, “Set sail for Trinidad!” But as he said that, the ship’s lookout, William, came down from the crow’s nest with a look of concern on his face.

“Sir, if we go toward Trinidad, we’ll be sailing straight into a storm!” Said William.

“It’s a chance we’ll have to take, William.” Said Caldwell.

“O.K.”, William sighed, as he headed back up to the crow’s nest. And Rupert understood why. This could be a one-way trip.

About an hour later, the *Mad Buccaneer* had sailed straight into the tempest. The waves rose high, and thunder rumbled in the ear lightning flashed in the dark sky, temporally illuminated the sky. *This is insane*, thought Rupert. Just as Rupert thought this, a white arc of lightning flashed through the air, and connected with the mast. It exploded in an inferno of flames. Rupert rushed for some of the water stored below the deck. He tried to carry the water up to the deck, but it was overwhelmingly heavy. “Help! Please, I need help!” bellowed Rupert. Almost immediately, Rupert heard footsteps coming toward him. Seconds later, Samuel and Phillip, another ship’s boy, arrived. “What’s wrong, Rupert?” Asked Phillip.

“The ship’s mast burst into flames, and this water is too heavy to carry up to the deck!” Said Rupert. “But I have an idea! Phillip, you help me carry the water up to the deck. Sam, go round up of some of the others to help us get water.” And without objection, Sam ran up the

stairs and Phillip helped Rupert with the water. Within minutes, with the help of other crewmates, the inferno had been doused. And after a new mast had been raised, the storm cleared, as if the crew had just passed a test, and the storm clearing was the reward. And in the distance, was an island. The crew cheered and danced in joy when the island came into view, but when Captain Caldwell stepped out of his quarters, an eerie silence fell on the crowd. The only sounds were the crashing of the waves against the shore of the island and the birds circling above, hunting for fish. "Alright, crew. I'm proud of all of you, but the journey is far from over." Announced Caldwell, "But the journey is far from over. We do not know if the islanders are hostile or friendly. So we will send our strongest ship's boys to retrieve the treasure. We will send William, Samuel, Phillip, and Rupert. Ready the boats, men!" About three minutes later, two boats were ready. Rupert was paired with Sam, and William was with Phillip. Each boat had a knife, some rope, a shovel, and a duplicate of the map. The boys boarded the boats, and descended into the water. In a minute, they had reached the shores. "OK.", said Phillip, who was good with maps, "We need to go one hundred forty-five paces along the shore, and then ninety paces into the forest. The treasure will be beside a pond." So they started walking. Within minutes, the four friends had reached the pond. "Well," Said William, "Let's get started." Rupert was the first to dig his steel shovel into the soft ground. The boys kept digging and digging. Doubt started to creep into the boys' minds. But then, after seemingly endless digging, the loud clang of metal on metal rung through the air. They had found the treasure.

The crew cheered as Rupert and Sam arrived with the treasure. William and Phillip were still at the shore loading up. As Rupert and Sam paraded through the crowd, they heard many congratulations. "Three cheers for the boys!" One of the crewmates yelled, "Hip-hip, hooray! Hip-hip, hooray! Hip-hip, hoo-" The cheer was cut short by screams for help, piercing the air like an arrow piercing armour. Sam and Rupert turned around and saw Phillip and William being taken away by the natives. Rupert and Sam looked at each other. They knew what they needed to do. They grabbed the knives from the boats and dived in the water. When they reached the shore, they ran into the forest. Looking forward, the boys could see the glowing of torches. "We are close!" Said Samuel, "I can see their torches in the distance!" In a few minutes, they reached the camp. Phillip and William were tied to a wooden post. Rupert stalked toward the post. "Phillip! Will!" Rupert whispered, almost inaudibly, to the two boys. "When I cut the rope, run. Run like you've never run before." And then, with one swift swipe of the blade, the rope was cut in two. And then, they ran. They could hear the furious yelling of the islanders behind them. Very soon, the arrows came. An arrow whizzed by Phillip's ear, missing by less than an inch. When the boys reached the beach, they dove into the water. Arrows flew through the air swiftly, missing by miniscule margins. The boat grew nearer and nearer. And after seemingly endless swimming, the boys made it. "QUICK! SAIL AWAY FROM THIS HORRID ISLAND!" Yelled William. And that is exactly what they did. And as the screams of the islanders faded, and the Mad Buccaneer sailed into the sunset, Rupert thought, *Life will be good.*

**Taken**

**By: Alyssa Goswell (Gr. 11)**

*A man and a woman approach me, they are wearing dark colours but clearly weren't here for the funeral that ended 10 minutes ago. They walk toward me with blank looks on their faces.*

*I am in a church, the graveyard where they buried my brother is behind it. It's a big church with high ceilings and many pews. There is a statue of Jesus at the front looking down on all of us. I'm not a religious person, to many bad things have happened in my life. If there was some higher power why did they have to make my life so miserable?*

*I stand at the back of the church, away from the other families mourning over the deaths of their loved ones, the ones that also died in the fire. I don't want to stand near any of those families, they will just say they are sorry for my loss, but they don't know how much I have actually lost.*

*Those families still have each other, they have other people they love and who love them, other people to comfort them. Eventually the ones who died will become stories that everyone avoids talking about, or they will talk about the good times they had with them only to remember and be silent and sad. These people will still have happy lives, not me, I have lost everything.*

*"Hello, are you Avasa Gormly?" The woman who was approaching asked me. The man who came with her stood slightly behind her with his arms crossed, looking like he was a personal bodyguard.*

*"Who's asking?" I replied in an irritated voice. I don't feel like talking to anyone right now, I especially don't want to talk to these doorknobs. They will pretend to have pity on me, I don't need that right now.*

*"I am Maira Perilloux, and this is my associate, Benedict Plageman. We are from children and family services. Now can you please answer my question, are you Avasa Gormly?" She said it politely, but I could see right through her. She was annoyed with me, usually that would amuse me, but not today, I'm not in the mood for it.*

*"Yeah, I'm Avasa Gormly. What's it matter to you?" I answered. I just want this conversation to be over and for these freaks to leave me alone.*

*"We are sorry about your loss," she said. Yeah sure you are, I thought sarcastically. "I'm also sorry to have to put this on you, especially after what has just happened, but you are only fifteen and legally are not old enough to live on your own. So we will be putting you in with a foster family."*

*Wait, what? "I don't need to go into that stupid system. I can take care of myself just fine, thank you very much." I snapped. The man, Benedict, looked taken aback at this, but the woman, Maira, kept an eerily calm expression, as if she has dealt with this kind of thing a million times before.*

*"You don't have much of a choice in this matter, Avasa. We will be putting you in a foster home. We will give you two days to collect your belongings. Then we will come to collect you from the 'house' you lived in with your late brother." She stated in a flat voice. Then her and her 'associate' walked away. Leaving me staring after them in disbelief.*

First my brother dies, and now I have to be put in a foster home?

\* \* \*

Now I'm here. Except I'm not sure where here is. The last thing I remember is getting into bed. Now I'm in a dark room, the only source of light coming from under a door across the room from me. I don't know how big the room is, I can't see anything.

I lift my hand to see how far in front of me I can see, but I can't move my hand. My wrists and ankles are tied to a chair. I don't try to struggle, there is no point in wasting my energy. Whoever tied me to this chair was smart enough to make the restraints strong.

I can hear myself breathing heavily, but I cannot feel it. It doesn't feel like it is coming from my body. It has to be coming from me, right? I haven't seen or heard anyone else enter the dark room. Unless someone else was already in here with me.

I know it then, I know that someone else is in the room with me. He starts talking in a low, menacing, gruff voice. "Are you awake yet, little girl?"

\* \* \*

*I haven't cried once since he died, not once. I didn't cry when the police called and told me he had been rushed to hospital. I didn't cry when I arrived at the hospital. I didn't cry when they brought me to him and told me he was dead and died in a fire. I didn't even cry at the funeral.*

*Right now I'm in the apartment where my brother, Arrow, and I lived. It's a small place, there is only one bedroom, a small bathroom, a joined living room and kitchen. There is a dresser in the bedroom that came with the place that holds our few articles of clothing. We don't have a television, computer, or cell phones. The only thing we have for communication is the land line phone that is in the kitchen. I wasn't even sure it worked until the police called to tell me about Arrow.*

*It's a crappy apartment, but it's all we could afford. The walls are paper thin and you can hear things you don't want to hear. The people who live above us always have parties, and the couple that lives next to us are always yelling.*

*It's eerily quiet today though. This is the last day I am ever going to see this place. The place where Arrow and I spent most of our lives. The place we called home.*

*I'm packing my few belongings now. Those people from the funeral will be picking me up at eight. I'm not looking forward to it. I take my backpack and fill it with my few articles of clothing. I pack my few books that I stole from the library (I love reading but don't have the money for it). I then move on to my brothers things. I take his favourite sweater, a dark blue hoodie, and put it on. I then grab his backpack and put his clothing in it.*

*As I get to the bottom of the drawer I find the pictures. We don't have many pictures, just a few. There were the kind from one of those cheap cameras the only takes about 20 pictures. We got them printed off two months ago.*

*I pick up the pictures and start looking thorough them. There are some pictures that Arrow took of me, and some that I took of him. I then come across a picture of both of us. Some stranger offered to take it of us when we were in Xoha park. It was a cold autumn day, you could see that the leaves had lost their green and were now red and orange. Arrow had his arm around my shoulders, his brown hair blowing into his green eyes. He was leaning down a bit to be the same height as me. We were both happily smiling at the camera.*

*I must have been in shock and disbelief before, that would explain why I never cried.*

*As I look at that picture it hits me. He's gone. Forever. I'm never going to see him again. I've lost the only thing that ever mattered to me, and there is no way to get him back.*

*Silently tears start streaming down my face, coming faster and faster, until everything is a blur in front of me.*

\* \* \*

I recognize that voice. I don't know where from but I definitely know that voice.

"I know you did it, little girl, and I'm going to make you pay." He said it with so much venom that I was a little taken aback.

I've hated many people before, and have been hated, but I have never had someone hate me this much. You could hear it in his voice, and I'm sure it showed in his eyes.

"What is it you think I did?" I question him in a calm, stern voice.

He doesn't answer me but a light goes on. It was blinding. It took my eyes a minute to adjust. When my eyes finally did adjust, I could see the room I was in.

The light isn't as bright as I initially thought it was, it was actually quite dim. So dim that I couldn't see into the corners of the room I was in. It wasn't a very big room. It was square with brown walls. The walls had reddish brown stains on them, blood stains I assume. There is only one exit, the door straight in front of me.

I see my captor then. It looks as though he is quite tall. He is standing in the corner to the right of me. He is wearing black from head to toe, except for the pure white gloves over hands that are balled into fists. His face is hidden in shadow.

He stepped into the light then.

He had midnight black hair that hung into his eyes. His jaw was set into angry, tense manner. An angry frown rested on his face. I almost gasped when I saw his face. It was unrecognizable, but definitely unforgettable. It looked as though his face had been severely burnt. It was disfigured and horrifying. He was probably quite attractive before whatever had happened to him.

Once you looked past all of the disfigurement of his face, you could see angry but uncertain dark blue eyes.

His eyes made it seem like this was his first time holding someone hostage.

He didn't say anything for a long time. He just stands there, staring at me.

When he spoke again I was slightly surprised, I thought he was going to just stand there staring at me for the whole night (if it is night).

He didn't say much when he spoke again. But he did 'answer' my question.

"You know what you did."

\* \* \*

*I wake up to loud knocking at the door.*

*It's them. I think to myself as I get out of bed and go to answer the door.*

*I open the door and there they are. Maira Perilloux and Benedict Plageman.*

*"Good morning Avasa. We will give you a few minutes to get dressed and collect your things." Maira says in a 'polite' tone. I nod my head and close the door in her face.*

What did she think I was going to let her in her? No thank you, I don't need her to be in here getting her snobby nose into everything.

*I go into the bedroom and start to get dressed. I pull on a baggy pair of jeans and throw Arrow's sweater back on. I grab the bags and am about to leave when I remember something I need to get.*

*I walk over to the bedside table and open its only drawer. I only keep one thing in here, the only thing that has any value to me anymore. I pull it out and stare at it for a minute.*

*It's a black switchblade. Arrow gave it to me for my thirteenth birthday. He spent too much money on me that year. We could never do anything big for birthdays, but he tried to make mine special for me.*

*I remember what he said to me when I told him that he spent too much on me that year. He said, "You need some way to protect yourself from the horrible world out there. I need to know you will be safe, even if I'm not there. This switchblade will be your protector. You're strong and smart. Use it well Avasa."*

\* \* \*

"If I knew what I did I wouldn't be asking you, now would I?" I snapped. At that moment I realize that I am in the pajamas that I put on before I went to bed, thank goodness they are still on. On the downside, they don't have any pockets, which means my switchblade is under my pillow.

His eyes narrow at what I said, but then he slowly started to smirk.

"Just as I remember you, Avasa."

"How do you know me? Have we met before or have you just been stalking me for a while?" I question him.



His smirk grows wider at this, while my eyes narrow.

“Last time I checked you were the one tied to the chair, not me. So I will ask and answer whichever questions I want. I don’t like those questions you just asked.” He said it in a calm voice.

“Well then what do you want to talk about, Your Highness?” I say it as sarcastically as I can.

He doesn’t seem to appreciate that, I can see the anger flash in his eyes, but it is quickly dismissed. That smirk not leaving his face this whole time.

“Let’s start with how I found you. How’s that sound, Princess?” The last word was full of sarcasm and venom. I narrow my eyes but don’t say anything. Might as well let this nutcase say what he wants.

\* \* \*

*This is the third one. The third foster home I’ve been brought to.*

*The first home was full of uniform, cookie cutter kids and teenagers. The house was this boring white colour, all of the furniture was white and all of the walls were white. It felt like I was in an insane asylum.*

*The foster parents were strict and annoying. They stuck me in a room with five other girls. When I first got there they tried to take my stuff and search me, I wouldn’t allow that to happen. I freaked out, swore at them a bit, and threatened them. I thought they would leave me alone after that but the next day they tried to make me wear one of those hideous uniforms that all of the other foster kids wore. I refused.*

*I was there for two weeks before I got moved to the next home.*

*The second home was way better than the first. I ended up being there for three months. There was four foster kids in total, me, a girl named RJ, a boy named Kyle, and another boy named Gabe. We were all teenagers. I was put in a room with RJ and the boys shared another room. The foster parents were pretty chill people, they let me have my space and only asked that I ate dinner with everyone. They also didn’t ask about how I was put into the system, which was a good thing.*

*There was only one reason that I was kicked out of that foster home. That one reason was Gabe.*

*We were all in that backyard having a bonfire the one night when I offered to go inside to grab drinks and the stuff for S’mores. Gabe offered to come inside and ‘help’ me.*

*I was reaching up into the cupboard to grab the chocolate when he put his arms around my waist and spun me around. I asked him what he was doing, that’s when he roughly kissed me. I pushed him away, he didn’t like that, he came at me again so I threw the chocolate at him; it hit him in the face. I then grabbed a knife off the counter and ran to the back door. He chased me, so I screamed for someone to help me. Let’s just say, the foster parents saw me with the knife and I was out of there the next morning.*

*Now I'm at a new foster home. I've been here for about a week. It's a decent place, they have a big yard and big house. The foster parents were waiting outside for me to arrive the first day. They seem like nice people.*

*I ended up being put in a room with another girl close to my age. Her name is Destiny. One of the stupidest names I've ever heard. She has bleach blonde hair and a stick thin figure. If she had any money she would spend it on makeup and perfume. She also stuffs her bra and wears very revealing clothing. She is most likely going to be a prostitute when she's out of the system.*

*She seems to be unaware that I don't like her, she likes me. That might be because I don't talk to her and she thinks I listen to her. All she does is talk about boys, I don't know how much more of it I can handle. I usually zone out when she opens her mouth. I don't want to talk about boys, the only thing I can think about when she starts talking about boys is of Arrow burning in that fire.*

\* \* \*

*"You're lucky it took me so long to find you." He says in a raspy voice.*

*"Yeah? Why's that?" I snap.*

*He chuckles at that, like this whole situation amuses him greatly.*

*"You're a feisty one, aren't you?" He chuckles again, seem the annoyed look on my face only makes him smirk. "You're lucky because if I had found you sooner, you'd already be dead. It took me about two years to find you. It was hard to find you with you being moved from foster home to foster home. Every time I thought I had found you I was told that you hadn't lived there in months, some didn't even know who you were. But once you ran away and eventually rented out that house, well you were easy to get to." He walked over to where I was tied to the chair and whispered in my ear. "You should really keep your windows locked at night."*

\* \* \*

*I was moved to six foster homes before I ran away. It's been a year and a half since Arrow died.*

*I ran away two days ago. It was easy, the foster parents put me in a room on the ground floor and didn't lock the windows.*

*Right now I'm living in a rundown motel. The room I'm in has one bed and a small bathroom. The room smells old and musty. There is a small dresser at the end of the bed and a floor length mirror in one of the corners.*

*I'm looking for a place to rent out for a few months. I only need it a short time, so I'm hoping to find a place today. I don't want the people from the system to find me, so I will need to find someone who will give me a place and won't tell anyone where or who I am.*

*I'm about to leave to meet with someone who is offering a good deal on a small house on the outside of town. As I head toward the door I catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror. I stop in my tracks and walk over to the floor length mirror in the corner.*

*I haven't looked at my reflection in a long time.*

*I look different then I remember. I am so pale that I look sick. I look my body up and down.*

*I see my unevenly cut brown hair (Arrow wasn't very good at cutting my hair) its longer than I usually have it, it is usually at my shoulders, right now it is at my mid-back. I haven't cut it since Arrow died.*

*My thin figure is even thinner than it used to be, I look like I am on the brink of starvation.*

*My clothes are raggy, but I've always known that. I'm wearing a pair of jeans that are torn, and a baggy black shirt. I also have on my only pair of shoes, a pair of black running shoes with multiple holes in them.*

*There is a slight frown on my face. But the thing that shocked me the most was my eyes. Blank green eyes stare back at me. They look incapable of feeling. They look dead.*

\* \* \*

He backs away from me once he says that. A creepy, satisfied smirk on his face.

I show no any emotion to this. That angers him. He walks up to me and slaps me across the face, hard.

That's when I know he's lost it. He starts talking about insane things that would never happen. He talks in an angry yet normal tone.

"It's all your fault. You killed him and I know you did. You killed Arrow. You lit the match and watched him burn. I've been looking for you since then..."

I stop him there, confused and angry.

"You think I killed my own brother?" I yell at him in disbelief. How messed in the head do you have to be to think that someone would kill the only thing important to them.

He hits me again, hard enough that I see stars float across my vision.

"Of course you did! You had motivation too." He shouted back at me.

That's when the torture begun. He started to punch, slap, and kick me. He did this for a few minutes. I can feel that my nose is bleeding, and that I will have multiple bruises. I can also feel other parts of my face bleeding. He steps away from me, a look of pure anger on his face.

He takes his blood stained gloves off, reveling severely burnt hands. He walks over to me and placed his left hand on my right shoulder. I'm too weak to shake it off.

That's when he says, in a creepy tone, "Don't worry about it Sweetheart, nothing bad is going to happen."

\* \* \*

*He's leaving again. Going to another stupid party.*

*Arrow and I are in our small apartment. He is waiting for his friend to show up. I'm sitting on the couch, arms crossed.*

*He walks up to me then. He squats down in front of me and looks me in the eyes. "You know Avasa, nothing bad has happened at any of these parties yet..."*

*"Yeah, yet." I interrupt.*

*He looks at me with a soft look in his eyes. "You know I won't let anything bad happen to you, right?"*

*"It's not me I'm concerned about." He never has cared about his own life, he's probably only still alive to take care of me.*

*"I know." He says softly, he won't meet my eyes now.*

*"Arrow look at me." I command him. He looks back into my eyes. "I know it's been hard. With our parents leaving us when you were fifteen and I was five. I know you had to be an adult way to soon and take care of me. But it doesn't mean you have to throw your life away."*

*"I..." He starts when there is a knock at the door. Arrow stood up and went to answer it.*

*"Hey Arrow, you ready to go?"*

*"I just need to grab something." Arrow states.*

*He walks in and his party friend, Kakó, follows. Arrow disappears into our room.*

*"Hey Avasa, how's it going?" Kakó asks.*

*"It'd be better if my brother didn't go out partying all of the time." I state in an annoyed voice. Then I say in a louder voice, "I will find a way to stop you Arrow." He doesn't respond but I know he heard me.*

*Kakó walks over to me then and places his left hand on my right shoulder. He chuckles a bit and says, "Don't worry about it Sweetheart, nothing bad is going to happen."*

*I shake his hand off. "Yeah, sure." I say sarcastically.*

*He is about to respond when Arrow walks out of the room.*

*"Alright, let's go." Arrow says.*

*Kakó steps away from me and Arrow comes toward me. I get up and give him a hug.*

*"I love you Avasa, don't worry, everything is going to be okay." Arrow says in my ear, squeezing me tighter than usual.*

*"I love you too Arrow." I whisper back. We break the hug and they leave. Leaving me standing there in the living room alone. Not knowing that that was the last time I was ever going to speak to my brother.*

\* \* \*

I look at my captor. I know who he is. I was about to say something when he punched me in the face. This time the torture goes on for longer, with him swearing at me and saying things that I can't make out. At some points it looked as though he was going to cry, but that could have been my imagination.

I feel like I am losing consciousness, my vision going in and out. I feel as though I am about to die. That's when I feel that he has stopped and backed away from me.

He comes towards me again. He says something but I don't know what, the ringing in my ears is too loud to hear anything else.

He reaches out and puts his hand on my cheek. It looks as though he is about to say something.

\* \* \*

I woke up then my heart beating rapidly in my chest. It was all a dream, well more of a nightmare actually. I'm in my room, in my bed, and there he is, standing over my bed with a knife in one hand and a chloroform rag in the other. The man from my nightmare is here.

The thing I said next shocked him into dropping his knife and the chloroform rag. I see his face pale and his eyes widen in shock. He didn't expect me to know who he was. I shouldn't recognize him, but I do. The thing I said he wasn't expecting. It was something so simple, but so affective. It was only one word.

One word that I said so softly that I was surprised he heard me.

"Kakó."

## **The Snake's Garden**

**By: Hannah Petlock (Gr. 9)**

The angle of the sun that fine morning could be described as nothing but perfect. The pool in her backyard shone a brilliant blue colour, waves gently spilling over the tile edge. At the far back of the massive garden was a wooden gate, the door swinging back and forth in the light breeze. As the boy in the corner of the garden spoke the number ten, he opened his eyes to survey the garden. "Alyssa?" he called, not expecting a response.

He walked slowly through the beautiful garden, peering in every nook, before continuing on just slightly disappointed. Alyssa was nowhere to be seen. Instead of trying to find her, he looked for anything out of place in the garden. Although it took him a minute to detect, the boy noticed the open gate, much to his dismay. "Alright, Alyssa," he said. "We agreed not to exit the garden. You know I can't find you out there." He paused for a moment, for this time he had expected a response. "Alyssa?" wearily, he put one foot outside the gate, as fearful as though he may be about to detonate a bomb that was residing in the exact area he happened to be placing his left foot.

"Not funny, Alyssa." He called, but again he heard only the rustle of papery leaves on the trees that towered over him. They looked down at him, as a lion might stand gleefully above the fearful mouse it just trapped. All truth aside, he did feel trapped by the enormous trees that surrounded him, and he had no desire to venture farther into the dark, gloomy forest.

Then he thought of Alyssa, what she would say if he "sissied out". He thought of her playing joyfully in the shade of the trees, and he found the courage to take just one more step. "Alyssa!" he called again, taking another step into the forest. The silence was killing him, and the sun was now blocked entirely by the looming figure of a massive oak tree. Was it an oak tree? All he saw was a tall black shape, hidden well on a background of even more dark shapes.

When he thought about why he was scared of the forest, it gave him all the more reason to venture farther through it, to ensure that Alyssa was safe. He knew he was exaggerating the situation, but he was scared all the same. What if something had happened to her? He squeezed his eyes tightly shut, and trudged farther still away from the welcoming light of the sun.

"Alyssa!" he called, this time his voice quite, and controlled. His pace increased to a brisk walk, as he carefully dodged around the tree roots in his path. The wind picked up, pushing him deeper into the forest. The branches swayed, and the leaves shook, and the sound of water moving rapidly could be heard somewhere off to the right. Weirdest of all, the sound of singing. A soft voice, perfectly hitting notes both high and low. He picked up speed, almost running toward the beautiful voice.

As he got closer, it dawned on him exactly who was singing the delightful song. "Alyssa!" he called, running full tilt through the forest. And then, CRASH. All of a sudden his ankle was in pain, and then slowly the rest of his body. His face was pressed against the cold forest floor— how did it get there? He brought his left hand up to feel his throbbing nose, and felt a warm liquid drizzle down his palm. His nose was bleeding, possibly broken. He only spent a brief moment on the ground, for the singing reminded him of what awaited him at the end of his troubles.

Having decided running through the dark was a terrible idea, he walked quickly, careful of where he placed his feet. It was not long after his fall that he saw light pouring through the cracks between the trees, hurting his eyes, and filling him with joy all at the same time. The voice was gone, but he was not discouraged. He emerged in a shower of bright lights, and soft ground beneath his feet. As his eyes adjusted, he saw a field of bright red roses, all planted in symmetrical rows and columns, and all neatly trimmed to look identical. What was perplexing about the beautiful scene was not the oddly identical flowers, or the lone standing tree in the centre of the field. No, it was the emptiness of it all. Where was Alyssa? He half expected her to jump out from a tree behind him, her voice unable to contain its excitement as she began to laugh at the sight of his face; white as a ghost.

He stood catching his breath in the sunlight, anticipation building inside him. “Alyssa?” he called again, and this time he heard something. The voice was faint, but it was definitely hers. He rushed through the thorns to find her, catching sight of her fallen body in a pale heap next to one of the roses. “What happened?” he asked, but he didn’t need her to waste her breath. Two little marks on her neck made it clear as day, and two more on her arm, both evenly spaced out. “A snake,” he breathed, frantically trying to pick her up, but being gentle at the same time. “Myles” breathed Alyssa, choking on her words. She was pale, and sticky with blood. Myles hobbled back through the forest, walking quickly, feeling pain with every step. From behind him, he heard a hissing noise, and he began to run, as fast as he could toward the forest. When he crossed into the shadows, the hissing stopped, and the snake retreated.

Rushing through the shadows, Myles found his way back to Alyssa’s garden, slamming through the gate and rushing right by the glistening water. Using his better ankle, he kicked open the swinging door and yelled through the house. “Alyssa’s hurt, Alyssa’s hurt!” There was a crash, and then the sound like a stampede of elephants clambering down the main staircase. At the end of the hallway, Alyssa’s dad emerged from the staircase, rushing to his daughter. He took her from Myles’s arms, taking her to a couch in the living room down the hall. From the staircase emerged Alyssa’s mother, phone in hand as she dialed 911.

When they got to the hospital, Alyssa was in and out of consciousness. They immediately hooked her up to loud, beeping machines, trying to make her comfortable on the hospital bed. “Stay awake, please baby” Alyssa’s mother whimpered, clutching her daughter’s hand in two of her own. Myles stood silently in the corner, observing the scene. Listening to her mother, Alyssa fought to stay conscious. She fought the sleep that threatened to take over, pushed the drowsy feeling away. She was fighting it for minutes, before she forgot what she was fighting for.

The cool metal pressed into her hand, feeling oddly natural. She was dazed and confused, the scene looking totally bizarre. “Alyssa!” she heard a call, and turned her head to face her comrade. She looked at the sword in her right hand, and then at the approaching mass of monsters that ran toward them across the beach. Suddenly, she remembered what she was fighting for.

Joining the crowd, she raised her sword and charged the monsters, slaying first one and then another. “I can do it” she said, plunging her sword into another monster’s stomach. The sand was hot between her toes, burning with every new step she took. She ran through the crowd, wading in the water that poured onto the beach. She brushed the tip of her sword through the wet sand, making an M before it got washed away. The water felt good as she surveyed the battle

from a distance, feeling too tired and out of breath to continue. She blinked a few times, trying to stay awake. She felt her sword wobble a little, and she gripped it tight, not wanting to leave her state of consciousness. Her grip wavered, and she found herself awake in the hospital bed.

A young doctor stood above her, looking at a chart in his hands, and speaking to her parents. She squeezed her mother's hands, and looked at the beige walls in disgust. "How long do I have to stay?" Alyssa asked her mother, who looked expectantly at the doctor. "We'll see how you're doing later, you are a little weak right now, and we need to get all of the venom out of your system.

She shut her eyes for a moment to take it all in, and the room disappeared. When she opened her eyes, everything was dark. She extended one arm, and found a solid wall in her way. Twisting and turning, she couldn't find space to fully extend her arms. She felt trapped, like a caged bird longing to take flight. Then, for an instant everything glowed blue, and a piece of chalk appeared in her hands. The walls rotated around her, in a dizzying, nauseating way. Then, they began hissing like the snake that bit her in the rose field. She squeezed her eyes tightly shut, thinking back to that dreadful moment that ruined her game of hide and seek. Her plan was to hide in the trees at the edge of the forest, and enjoy the look of fear on Myles's face when she jumped out at him.

Myles. The first word in her head when she fell to the ground was Myles. Suddenly, she knew what to do with the chalk in her hands; she would finish writing his name. His name was the one that kept her optimistic as she lay on the painful bed of thorns. This was the name of the boy who ventured fearfully into the forest and lifted her to safety. She lifted the chalk to the wall in front of her, writing a Y, and then she was falling backwards. Once again as she fell, she felt the force of the fangs penetrating the tender skin on her neck and arm. She heard it hiss in her ear, and she saw the ugly beige walls of the hospital.

Alyssa put a cold hand on the side of her face, brushing a piece of sweaty hair from her eyes. "Are you alright, dear?" her father's worried look made her cringe. How long had she been here? How long had they been here? And then, for the first time in her fully conscious state, she noticed Myles lurking in the corner. "Myles." She breathed, shutting her eyes.

This time, Alyssa was too frightened to immediately open her eyes as she had done before. A piercing shriek rang out through the air, and Alyssa opened her eyes, startled. Looking around, she figured she was in some kind of prison. Although she was not in a cell herself, the walls on either side of her were lined with barred rooms. There was a single incandescent light bulb casting eerie shadows on the floor, but not doing much good to light Alyssa's way. Although it was quite dark, she made her way down the hallway, in the direction she thought the scream had come from. While she was walking, it happened again. This time she plugged her ears, for she was definitely closer now. Remembering the tangled roots on the forest floor, she moved carefully through the darkness. Was she imagining it? Or was the floor really transforming into the earthy ground that had led her to this miserable place?

She strained hard to see the floor, but found it still to be made of dark concrete. She had not been walking long before the hall branched off, and Alyssa could think of nothing better to do than wait for the sound of shrieking to continue. What was strange about this place was the lack of guards. If this was a jail, wouldn't there be security patrolling the halls to keep the



delinquents in line? Stranger still, was the silence. An odd girl walking as if in a trance would surely catch the attention of the prisoners inside. Curiously, Alyssa walked up to the nearest cell, not close enough to be grabbed through the bars. At first, she was horrified. She saw a bony human figure crouched in the corner, looking as dead as it did alive. Then, in a flash of light, everything changed. The halls were still dark, but the cage looked different. Inside was no longer the pile of living bones, but a little dog, starved and frail. Alyssa grabbed the bars and pulled as hard as she could, but to no avail. The heavy door would not budge, and the dog would not move from its corner. What could she do to help it, even if she could get it free? She seemed as much a prisoner as the poor little thing in the cage.

Then, as she turned to go, she heard the shriek again. This time, the cages around her rattled. She spun around to see several bony hands grabbing the bars, white knuckled and strong. What she noticed was odd; the cages rattling formed the letter L. As she realized this, the entire scene disappeared, and she was back in the hospital. She looked up into her mother's eyes, noticing more fear to be found there than she herself felt. Myles remained in the corner, watching. Click! The door opened and in walked her doctor. No- it was not her doctor. It did not bother Alyssa that it was not her doctor, but rather the thought of an octopus fitting in her doctor's white coat was more bothersome. "Make it go away." She said, tilting her head toward her parents. Her father nodded, unsheathing his sword. What was he saying? She was losing focus. "Is she alright?" asked her father. "Why did she refer to you as 'it'?" her mother asked the doctor, her voice frantic.

The octopus had no reply. Of course not, it was an octopus. Instead, he extended one of his many tentacles, and handed Alyssa a black pen, and a piece of paper. She put the paper on her lap, but the pen had no ink. Instead of leaving a black trail, it made a screechy noise when she pressed it against the paper, and she looked expectantly at the octopus. He nodded his head in understanding, and moved across the floor to her bed, leaving a trail of slimy water in his wake. He placed himself right next to Alyssa, extending a tentacle toward the page. She took it in two hands, and began to write her note. When the tentacle touched the page, a large blob of ink surged out, splattering most of the paper. Disappointed, she let go of the tentacle and lifted the page to the light. The white space formed the letter E.

Alissa opened her eyes a minute later, rubbing the sleep away. She felt energized now, refreshed. The doctor looked at her wearily, and she wondered why he had such a strange look on his face. Next to Alyssa, her mother sat with a piece of paper in one hand, the other one tightly holding Alyssa's.

"Alyssa, this is Dr. Bell, he's been looking after you." she said, as if Alyssa didn't already know that. She nodded, wondering why everyone was acting so strange, and why Dr. Bell was subconsciously rubbing his wrist. "The good news, Alyssa, is that you are getting much better. The antivenin caused a bad reaction at first, but it seems to be working now. How are you feeling?" Alyssa rolled her head to the side, blinking sleep from her eyes. Hadn't she just done that? She was really tired now, and couldn't be bothered to focus on what was being said to her.

All she could see was the forest, dark and gloomy. She had never thought of it this way before, because she loved the forest. All her life she had enjoyed playing in the trees. She had never, never ventured into the rose garden before. She quickly drifted through the forest, making her way to the sunlight at the other end. When she got there, she saw the lone standing tree in the

midst of all the pretty flowers, only they weren't pretty anymore. All of the flowers were dead, and the snake slithered around the branches of the tree happily. She took one step into the garden, and the snake stopped, making its way toward her silently and stealthily. This time it didn't sound like hissing, but instead it was speaking English. "Mine, Mine! My garden you fool, leave now. MINE..." Alyssa looked at the snake, understanding its relevance. It formed an S as it slithered towards her, and then it was gone.

She was in the hospital again, feeling oddly complete. The machine that monitored her heart rate was slowing down, the lines reducing their angles to an almost straight line. Her mother's grip tightened, and she couldn't bear to see their faces a moment longer.

Completely content, Alyssa saw her surroundings change to white clouds, a pale blue sky and a blazing sun. There were nearly transparent people around her, drifting by life as contently as she was. No one seemed to have any regrets, which struck her as odd, and woke her from her daze. She regretted leaving the world behind at such a young age. Regretted leaving her parents and Myles, and all her other friends. She saw her house, and it pulled her in. She saw the snake, far below her, mourning its dead garden. And she saw peace, waiting on the other side of the door. All she needed to do was step across the threshold, and she would be home.

Her parents sat in chairs hugging each other, and Myles stood in the corner, too stunned to cry. The machine that read her heart rate showed a single horizontal line, and made a long, sad noise signifying the death of Alyssa Morgan.

How was this possible? This was the thought of everyone in the room, Alyssa included. She had not stepped through the door, she had resisted the lure of eternal peace, and she had kept fighting. Less than half a minute had gone by, and the machine was spiking. Her eyes flew open, and shone a brilliant blue in the sunlight that poured through the window. "You didn't think it would be that easy to get rid of me, did you?"

There was silence, as everyone took time to cry. "The venom is out of your system, Alyssa," the doctor said, leaving the room. For the first time since they got there, Myles moved out of his corner. "Found you, Alyssa. I win."

## **Rumpelstiltskin**

**By: Terry Luan (Gr. 9)**

Once, in a country that has long since been lost in the sands of time, there lived a couple. This couple had seemingly been the happiest couple in the country. The husband was a wizard who had fought in the Magicka Wars. He had returned from the war a hero, receiving many medals from his country. He had also earned the nickname Rumpelstiltskin, for the many scars and lacerations had left him looking more like a Rumpelstiltskin (a Rattle ghost) than a man. His wife on the other hand was one of the most beautiful women in the village, perhaps even the country. Her beauty could move mountains and stop waterfalls, and was envied everywhere. In fact the differences between the appearances of these two were so vast, many could, and have debated how this marriage could have lasted. Some say that the wife continued being married, for the money-for a hero does not live poorly-and some say it was as a result of pure love, but in the end the only people that will ever truly know is the couple themselves.

For many years after the war the couple was happy, but happiness cannot last forever, for then it would not be precious. Soon all the years had caught up to the couple and they both started yearning for a child, someone they could pass on their legacy. Alas as the wife was past child bearing age they had to start looking for alternative ways to have children. They tried using special medallions, magic talismans, and lucky rabbit's foot but nothing worked. They tried using horseshoes, and even four leaf clovers but still nothing worked. The woman tried everything in hope of bearing a child for many years but to no avail. However one day, a god, feeling pity came to her in a dream in the form of a raven. It told her, and only her to go west until she came to a land where instead of humans, pigs lived in houses and find a house that was supported, not by bricks and foundations, but chicken legs. He told her to go up to the door of the chicken house, knock on it, and ask for some Rampion (Rapunzel). He then said for her to boil the rampion for 3 days and drink it. It said then, and only then would she be able to bear children again. After having this dream, the wife was overjoyed, and terrified at the same time. She was overjoyed for she had finally after many years, found a way to bear children, but she was terrified that in order to be able to bear children she had to talk to the person living in the chicken house. This was because in that house there lived a highly infamous witch, who over the centuries had amassed many names, the most well-known of which being names such as, Morgana le fay, Circe, the most famous being Baba Yaga. This fact caused her to pause and question whether she really wanted to have a baby.

Eventually after thinking long and hard she decided to go with her husband to this witch's house and because she was so scared, she decided to take the rampion herself from the garden of the witch hoping that the witch would not notice, or care. That day she and her husband went to the witch's house. It was a long and arduous journey, but at last she arrived at the witch's house. When she arrived, however she encountered a problem. In the witch's garden there was only one rampion left in the garden, so taking the rampion from the witch's garden would definitely alert the witch. The wife, terrified about stealing from a witch began to doubt herself. She doubted whether stealing the Rapunzel, and disobeying a gods order was a wise choice. Alas a faulty human can only come up with faulty reasoning. Thus, in the end, she decided to steal the Rapunzel from the witch.

Now comes the all familiar story about Rapunzel, when the wife stole the rampion, the witch caught her, and in exchange for the rampion, she had to give up the baby to the witch. However, many people don't know what happened to the husband and wife after the witch took her daughter. A couple of weeks after the witch had took their daughter, the wife, gone mad with despair, killed herself. Later the husband after learning of his wife's death took a much darker attitude. Some say that to get revenge on the witch he spent many years in solitude studying magic. Some say that to get revenge he made deals with forces that were beyond human, and some say all that rage building up in him, for all those years fueled him into turning into something darker. Either way in the next few years he grew extremely powerful extremely fast, and because he blamed the witch for his child and his wife he swore to exact his revenge on the witch.

In the next few years the man who was formerly a hero, a wizard in the hundred years war, nicknamed Rumpelstiltskin for battle scars he'd gotten sacrificing himself in the war had died. Whatever he'd done to himself in order to try and get revenge on the witch had transformed him into someone more than human. It had cost him his soul, and left behind a literal Rumpelstiltskin. It caused him to start hating the name Rumpelstiltskin, wanting to keep any shred of humanity in him. The witch on the other hand, throughout the years had unbelievably gotten more cruel and vicious. Throughout the years she had tried to eat children, she cursed many people, and at one time trying to do good becoming a queen. That however could not last, and she got exiled for trying to kill the princess.

After many years, and chasing many rumors the husband finally found the witch but a kingdom away from the village he used to live in. He found no satisfaction in killing her however for killing her would not bring his wife or child back. As he was walking in the kingdom where the witch used to live however, he heard of a girl who could turn straw into gold. This peaked his interest, for he had thought that this was a magic that only he knew about, so he broke into the castle in order to see who was the girl who had the same magical abilities as him (for turning straw into gold was an extremely hard task even for someone as powerful as him). However when he broke into the castle walls, instead of finding an extremely powerful magician he found someone the face of his wife in the castle. This was the reincarnation of his wife so she didn't remember him, but still he grew hopeful. After seeing that his wife couldn't actually spin straw into gold, he offered a deal. He would do it for her in exchange for something of hers to remember her by. Seeing the strange man that appeared in her room as her only chance she gave him her necklace in exchange for spinning gold for her. The next day he visited her again. This time she gave him her ring in exchange for him to turn the straw into gold again. The third day he decided that instead of getting a possession of the girl's this time he wanted what he lost all those years ago. He wanted a child. Someone he could watch grow up and someone who he could pass on his magic to. She was desperate though, and she agreed to the deal.

Years passed. The girl in the dungeon had throughout the years become the Queen of her kingdom. The husband, now many centuries old had travelled through many countries, and seen many wondrous sights. He had seen the prince who had claimed to be frog once, and the princess who had hair as fine as spun gold (not realizing that she was his own daughter), until finally one day the Queen who had long ago made a deal with the husband, had a child. When he heard of this he travelled across kingdoms to claim his baby. This time though she was more hesitant in giving her child up. The man feeling compassion decided to give her a chance. Hoping that the

Queen would remember her past life, he said that should she remember his name she could keep her baby. After many days and asking many people for common names it seems her baby was lost forever to the man, but fortunately on the last day, a messenger came from a far off land saying he had the man's name. He had returned saying that he had heard a group of witches singing that a Rumpelstiltskin had struck a deal with the Queen and that he had managed to get the queens child from her. This time when Rumpelstiltskin returned she guessed Rumpelstiltskin hoping that the rumors were true. Unfortunately ever since he had lost his soul, he had loathed the name Rumpelstiltskin. As such he grew extremely angry. This is where the story splits. Some say that he was so angry he flew out of the kingdom never to return. Others say that he grew so angry he drove his foot so far into the ground that he would stay there for all eternity. Some even say that at the mention of Rumpelstiltskin he flew into a rage so hot that he killed everyone in the kingdom. Who knows? He may even be living among us at this very moment. Just be wary of the next time you say the word Rumpelstiltskin for you might just invoke the anger of a little man.

## **Nor Heaven Nor Hell**

**By: Lauryn Marks (Gr. 11)**

I grew up in a big apartment with a small family of only my two parents and my older sister (who I now rarely speak to), and have never been sure of where I stand. I have been at the top of my classes all throughout my life but have never seemed to fit in anywhere: not in the big fancy penthouse my parents bought, not at school with the thousands of kids and most definitely not in the city where I have lived my entire life. I've wanted to move ever since the plane crash, but haven't brought myself to pick up and leave. There is a part of me that wants to fly far away from this city, but there is this other part of me that screams at myself because leaving New York, means leaving my parents behind.

I haven't been myself ever since the accident. My two aunts and uncles showed me support within the first month after my loss, but they had to continue on with their lives, something I had dreamed about doing. That year I was supposed to go back to Columbia University, in the fall, to get my Bachelor of Science as I had already completed my third year, but I was unable to. My motivation went limp. Getting out of bed seemed like a mission every day. I would get anxiety over the things that could happen to me: car accidents, random shootings, etc. All I could think of was death and how it happens to the most unfortunate of our human race.

My parents were the most generous, wonderful, and flawless people that I had ever met. I aspired to be just like them. Both being so involved with their work (which is part of what made them so wonderful), left me not enough time spent with them. Both were involved with medicine; my father a heart surgeon and my mother a brain surgeon. They saved lives left and right each day and because of their great paychecks, they contributed almost half of each one to a number of different organizations for a number of different causes. They were incredibly inspiring people and my goal was to do exactly what they had done, therefore I remained incredibly focused all throughout school.

Every day since the accident, they have crossed my mind millions of times. It has been nearly five years since it has happened but it seems like yesterday. Everyone has moved on except for me. It's like I've stayed frozen in time with no hope of moving forward.

As each day passed, I tried my best to forget but it is those things that you try to forget that are most ingrained in your memory, therefore trying to forget is what kept my parents alive. It was not so much that I wanted to forget my parents, but I wanted to forget what happened to them... forget that they were gone.

My sister and I had not spoken since before the plane crash. Before then we were relatively close for siblings with an age gap of ten years and I regret not cherishing our relationship then as much as I could have. She left years before the plane crash, and not on a good note. Like was stated previously, my parents worked constantly which resulted in a number of dinners in front of the television with my sister. She wasn't very content with never seeing my parents so when she could get out, she did. She didn't believe in neglecting your children for your job, even in the case with my parents where it was a job that saved lives, therefore when I

was ten years old she left, leaving me by myself. Despite the age gap before she left, we were still close, sharing a number of inside jokes, favorite movies, and novels.

To this day I have never stopped reading, in fact it is what helps distract me from my parent's accident and deaths. I am able to lose myself in reading the different stories of a number of characters. I have lived thousands of different lives all by reading.

One day, nearly a month ago, I was walking from my apartment (which was my parents') on Fifth Avenue. It was my father's favorite kind of day: sunny and warm, but there was just enough crisp in the air for anyone to realize that it was fall. New York City was rumbling as per usual as I was making the dreaded walk of the week to the public library, from which I would check out a new set of books. I make this outing only once a week to get new novels to replace the old. This outing, though it had been done practically hundreds of times, was different. I usually looked down and took the route I'd taken ever since it had become a routine, but for some reason I looked up and took the longest route possible. I noticed things I had never noticed before: the street vendors selling jewellery that sparkled in the sunlight and the amateur paintings done by adults trying to pay that month's rent. I noticed the dozens of people trying to hail a cab, the young teenage girls walking with their backpacks to school, the tourists snapping pictures of the city, and the businessmen and women on their way to what was probably their second meeting of the day, though it was only ten o'clock. In that moment, I realized that I was alone. I was alone despite the thousands of people that were around me. I realized that there were all of these people around me that had bright futures or at least were working towards one, while I was just standing there, on my own, with no hope of a future and no drive to work towards one. I felt hopeless. Pathetic.

I found the nearest subway station just a block away, for I wasn't in the mood, or the mindset to speak to a cab driver. I ran faster than I had in years, down the steps, dropping the books, the lives I had lived in the past week, from my arms. I knocked over the very people I had observed above ground just moments before and got on the subway. I knew exactly what I was going to do. I didn't know where but I knew what, and nothing could stop me. No one could stop me.

-----

I got off the subway when I knew I had reached an abandoned part of the city. A part that people rarely visited, and a place that no one would look, if there would be anyone who did. There were a variety of buildings, short and tall, with broken windows and shards of glass on the streets below them. From where I stood, I saw the tallest of all the buildings and walked straight towards it. As I reached the bottom of the building, my heart began to beat faster and louder until it was the only thing I heard. I didn't focus on anything around me, I marched straight into the building and began to climb the stairs. I laughed to myself, something I hadn't done in years, at what I was about to do... the step I was about to take. As I got closer to the top floor, the numbers nine and ten passing my view I could feel the adrenaline coursing through my veins, the burn of my legs, and the shortness of my breath. As I reached each floor I could only think of the freedom I was about to reach... the freedom I would soon experience... for I was going to meet my parents.

When there were no more stairs to climb, I searched for a door knob as it was dark in the stairwell. Once I found the door knob, I turned it, and as it made an abrupt screeching noise, I stepped into the sunlight and breathed in the fresh, crisp air. I took ten steps to reach the edge of the building, and when I reached the edge I stopped. I shut my eyes, took one last breath and then jumped. It hadn't taken much thought for I hadn't cared whether I lived or died. I felt like I was flying for a brief moment and then I opened my eyes and I slammed into something, *hard*. Pain coursed through my entire body and I screamed because I had nothing to lose. Suddenly, it stopped. My mind went blank and my body turned numb. I couldn't feel anything. Everything went black.

Out of nowhere a spark appeared in the blackness. Within that spark, I felt a burning sensation, which began at my feet and worked up towards my legs, until I was completely engulfed in flames, or so it seemed. It was the only thing I could feel and all I could see.

All of a sudden, a clear image fought its way through the flames. A pure, white, shining circle that looked free of pain. I dragged myself over to it as it became a place and desperate to be free of the writhing pain, I didn't stop until I reached it. As I got closer, the flames seemed to die off, and the burning sensation had become more manageable, until altogether it disappeared. When I did reach the pure whiteness, I encountered a barrier. I could see through it, but no matter how hard I pounded on it, I couldn't break it.

Out of nowhere, I could see two people submerging from the softness of the white of the circle of the pure place. They were walking towards me as I realized that they were my parents! My parents who I could not wait to see again! I couldn't wait to feel their arms around me as we would squeeze into a strong embrace once we were closer together.

"Mom! Dad!" I screamed out, as unfamiliarity wrenched through me when I heard my voice, for I hadn't spoken in so long. "Help me! I can't get past this barrier!" I called.

My parents looked at me confused. They stared at me like I was a foreign being that had crossed their vision. My mom whispered something to my dad and in the same moment I was engulfed in her silk-smooth voice, "Who is that child? I wish we could help him, but he's lost." Her voice echoed until there was nothing left.

It was my turn to be confused. I stared at both my mother's and father's eyes for what seemed like days, weeks, or months. They looked at me the same way one would look at the victims of death. They had no idea who I was, but I thought that if they looked just a little longer they would see me. They would see that I was their son who spent his entire life desperately trying to be like them. I wanted to be who they were because they were the heaven and I didn't want to be in hell. Instead of being either I was stuck in a black place from which the flames and the burning, and the white purity were visible. It was nothing, I was nothing, stuck there...frozen, with no way out. I had never been myself because I had spent so much time trying to be like my parents- the heaven, so I lost myself. I lost who I was; my identity, trying to be something I wasn't. I became stuck in a place that will be neither heaven nor hell. I became stuck in nothing because I lost myself in trying to be everything that I wasn't.



## Selfish

**By: Story Quibell (Gr. 9)**

"Stop being so selfish, Grace Amanda MacDonald!" my mom yelled at me. I knew she was mad because she used my full name. My little cousins were coming over and I had complained. I didn't want to deal with those little kids and their snotty noses and sticky fingers that touch everything. They always grab my things and break them. Last time, one of them was chewing gum and it ended up in one of my old doll's hair. Sure, I hadn't played with it in a long time, but still.

"I'm not selfish!" I yelled back at her, slamming the front door behind me. I walked away from my house. I didn't want to deal with those brats, my cousins.

I walked down the trail in the woods near the beach. I saw a flash of bright pink ahead of me. A little girl wearing a big puffy princess dress stood in the middle of the pathway.

"Hello," I said.

The little girl watched me with her wide, blue eyes. "Hello," she said.

She was very small to be out on her own. I looked around, but I didn't see anyone with her. "Are you by yourself? Where are your parents?" I asked.

She looked around, and then spun back around to me. Her hair was in springy curls that bounced around her face when she turned. "Not here."

"Do you know where they are?" I asked. She shook her head no, which made her curls bounce.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"I'm Sally," she said proudly.

"Nice to meet you, Sally. I'm Grace." I said. "How old are you?"

She held up four fingers, saying, "This many."

Who would leave a four year old alone in the woods? I thought. I would never do that, not even to my annoying cousins. She was too little; anything could happen to her.

"Where do you live?" I asked.

"In my house," Sally answered.

"Where is your house?" I asked.

"On a street."

I sighed, pretty sure she was trying to annoy me. "Well, what street do you live on?"

She had a puzzled look on her face. "I don't know, but it has houses on it."

*Is she serious right now?* I thought. *What an annoying little kid.* "Do you know where we can find your parents?"

She thought for a moment, studying me with her wide eyes. Her curls bounced when she shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe they went to get ice cream."

I couldn't exactly leave her there, on that path in the woods, but I didn't want to waste my whole day with this kid. Fortunately, the ice cream shop was nearby. I asked the ice cream shop clerk if she had ever seen Sally before or if she knew Sally's parents or if anyone had come in looking for a little girl. The lady looked at me in a bored way and said, "No, kid. Sorry. Are you buying something?"

The ice cream shop was cold. Sally was shivering so I gave her my sweater.

"Does that lady know where my mommy and daddy are?" Sally asked as I zipped up my sweater for her.

"No, but we will find them."

She looked at me with her wide eyes, her curls springing around her face. "Promise?"

I sighed. This was going to take longer than I thought, but I promised I would help her find her parents. She was looking around the ice cream shop and saw all the flavours. She pressed her face on the glass display.

"Can we get some ice cream?" she asked, sticking her bottom lip out a little and widening her eyes. Now that she mentioned ice cream, I wanted some too.

"Okay, fine. What's your favourite flavour?" She looked into the display, pressing her nose against the glass. The shop lady looked annoyed.

"I want to try that one," Sally said, pointing to black licorice flavour.

"I don't think you'll like it" I said. "I don't know anyone who actually likes that flavour." The shop lady muttered, "I like it."

"I like it too! I like it too!" Sally crossed her arms.

"It doesn't taste good," I said. I lowered my voice, "It's yucky."

"I will like it! I like dark chocolate! I will like this!" Sally's voice was high-pitched and loud.

"It doesn't taste the same as dark chocolate. Why not just have chocolate or vanilla? Or look, they have cotton candy. That's my favourite – that's the kind I'm getting. Do you want to try it, too?" I asked.

Sally was stubborn. "No, I want black licorice." She crossed her arms and scowled at me.

"If I get it for you, then you have to eat every last bite, deal?"

She smiled and nodded, shaking her curls. I bought her a small black licorice ice cream cone and a large cotton candy for myself. She licked her ice cream, and wrinkled her nose.

"I don't like it" she said, shoving it at me.

"Remember, we made a deal – you said that you would eat every bite."

"But I don't want to. It's gross!" Her lips started to tremble. "It's not fair! I don't like it! It's yucky!" Her high pitched wail echoed in the ice cream shop. "I want new ice cream!"

The ice cream shop lady narrowed her eyes at me. I didn't have any more money to buy another cone.

"Here, we can trade." I switched Sally's cone with mine. She hugged me, her nose was running and she wiped it on my shirt. Then, she started to lick the pink cotton candy ice cream. It melted, dripping down her wrist onto my sweater. *Great*, I thought. *Now I have gross ice cream, a snotty shoulder, and pink ice cream on my favourite sweater.* I tasted the black licorice; it was bitter and disgusting. Why would they bother making such an awful flavour anyway? I tossed the licorice ice cream cone in the garbage. The ice cream lady furrowed her brow.

After Sally finished my ice cream, she wiped her mouth on both sleeves of my sweater. I asked her again where else her parents might be.

"Maybe they went to the store." She pointed across the street to the Dollar Castle. A police car whirled by. I held on to Sally's sticky little hand and we crossed the street. We went inside the store, and walked down every aisle. I turned down the pet supplies aisle and asked Sally if she had any pets. When I got no response, I turned around. She was gone.

I called for her and heard a muffled giggle. "Sally, come out now!" She giggled again. I found her in a costume rack. I put my hands on my hips.

"It was just a joke," She said, and smiled at me. When I didn't say anything, she threw her arms around me.

"Where else might your parents be?" I asked.

"Maybe they went to the library," Sally said, shrugging.

The library wasn't very far; I took her hand and started to lead her there. More police cars were passing by, and then a firetruck rushed down the street. When we got to the library, Sally was amazed.

"This is the coolest place ever!" she said. We walked up and around, looking for her parents. When we got to the children's section, Sally grabbed my hand and brought me to one of the picture book shelves.

"Read to me!" she said, grabbing some books. Some of them were my favourites when I was little, and it was kind of fun to go through them again. I lost track of time, reading with her. It wasn't until I checked my phone that I realized how late it was getting. My mom would be upset if I wasn't at home when my cousins got there, so I needed to find Sally's parents soon. We were on our way out of the library when a librarian asked us if we were staying for story time. Sally looked at me with those big blue eyes.

"The story today is *The Fairy Princess*," the librarian said.

Sally bounced up and down. "Please, please, please! Please, with a cherry and sprinkles on top! Can we stay for one more story, please?" She widened her eyes and pouted her bottom lip.

"Okay fine," I sighed, "but after we're going to find your parents and go home."

She clapped her hands and bounced. During the story, she sat on my lap her curly hair tickling my chin. After the story we left the library. We went outside, to find a lot of police cars and firetrucks on the street.

A police man was talking into a bullhorn at a group of search and rescuers. "We need to spread out. We have to find Sarah James tonight!"

Wow, I thought, *a lot of people are getting lost today.*

"Ok, Sally," I said, "I have an idea. Tell me your last name, so I can maybe look up your address."

"My name is Sally," she said, slowly. "S-A-L-L-Y," she spelled it out for me.

"Yes, I know, but what other name? What is your last name?"

She looked at me, blankly.

"Sally what? Sally... Smith? Sally Green? Sally... what?"

"Oh, you mean that I'm Sally James," she nodded.

"Yes! That's what I mean," I said. *Wait... where had I heard that last name?* I looked over at the search and rescue group, who were heading off towards the lake.

"Is your full name Sarah James?" I asked Sally.

Sally looked at me thoughtfully. Then, glancing down at the sidewalk, she whispered, "That's my *in-trouble name*. Sarah James is what mommy says when she's mad. Sarah Margaret James when she is really, really mad."

"They're looking for you!" I pointed to the police cars. "I heard them say your name."

"Am I in trouble?" she blinked her wide eyes.

“Probably not, but I could be,” I moaned. I took her hand and lead her to the police officer, the one with a bullhorn. “Excuse me,” I said.

“One moment,” the officer continued to yell out commands to the search and rescuers, and then he talked in his radio to someone else. He held up his hand to me when I tried to interrupt him.

“Excuse me,” I said, a little louder.

“Listen, young lady,” The officer was angry at me, “You are being selfish. I am trying to conduct a police investigation here. A little girl has gone missing...”

I could feel anger bubbling up from the pit of my stomach. I felt my face grow hot, and my hands, still coated with Sally’s sticky ice cream, got sweaty. I could feel the rage filling my whole body, and it tasted like black licorice.

“*Selfish!* You’re calling me selfish!” My voice boomed out, louder than the bullhorn. “*Selfish!* I wasted my whole day trying to find the parents of this little kid! I bought her ice cream! I gave her mine! *Selfish!* She took my sweater! She wiped snot on my shoulder! She hid from me! *Selfish!* I read books to her! I AM NOT SELFISH!”

The crowd stood in silence. Then, Sally’s little voice chimed in, “Yeah. Grace is not selfish.”

“Thank-you, Sally!” I said.

“You had her?” The police officer said. “You kidnapped this child?” He grabbed the handcuffs from his belt.

“You are under arrest for the kidnapping of Sarah James. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.” He put the handcuffs on me, and put me in the back of a police car. I was terrified. What was happening? I didn’t kidnap anyone. What could I do? My mom was going to kill me. Would anyone believe my side of the story?

Among the crowd, I saw the ice cream clerk. She was explaining something to the police officer. He was nodding. Then, I saw the librarian come. The police officer wrote down some things in his notebook.

I saw a lady and a man pick up Sally and hug her. The lady had the same big curls as Sally, and the man had the same colour eyes. They were hugging and kissing her.

A few minutes later the police officer opened the door and took the handcuffs off me.

“I’m sorry for the misunderstanding,” he said.

I scowled at him, but decided not to say anything.

Sally’s parents rushed over and gave me a big hug.

“Thank you for taking care of our baby girl!” the mother said, “You did so much to keep her safe and happy!”

“You are the most unselfish person we have ever met,” the father said. “Would you like to be Sally’s babysitter?”

This was going to be a nuisance. I had better things to do. But then, Sally came up to me, and gave me a hug. She widened her eyes and pouted her lip. Her curls bounced around her face.

“Fine,” I sighed.