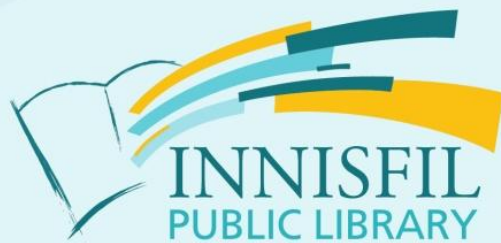


what's your story?



2012 Seepe Walters
Short Story Contest



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**Produced by Innisfil Public Library
November 2012**

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 the 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 11th edition of the Innisfil Public Library's Short Story Contest. This contest has been known as The Seepe Walters Short Story Contest since 2004, in memory of the woman who was a driving force behind the creation of the original Friends of the Innisfil Public Library group.

The contributions of many have made this contest and this publication a reality. The Innisfil Public Library would like to thank the Friends of the Library, the Ferraro family, *Chapters* and *Staples* for their ongoing support and sponsorship. Our judging panel: Chris Simon, (*Innisfil Scope*) Miriam King, (*Bradford Times / Innisfil Examiner*) and Bruce Hain, (*Innisfil Journal*) had such a difficult job with an outstanding 90 entries this year. Last and most important of all 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 2012 Edition of the Seepe Walters Short Story Contest.

Lisa Burwell
Children's Programmer
Seepe Walters Coordinator
Innisfil Public Library

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Seepe Walters Short Story 2012 Winner

The Little Man in the Book Cellar

By: Becca Smith (Gr. 8)

Hanny stood on the very tip-toes of her stocking feet. Down from the top shelf of her small closet, she pulled a bundle of the dullest, greyest, most boring coloured fabric you could think of. She unwrapped the bundle, revealing a rusted and dented old tackle box. From the box, she pulled an old-fashioned, medium sized brass key on a long chain. Hanny slipped the chain around her neck.

She pulled the sweater which had been wrapped around the box over her head. It had been knit out of thick, ugly wool that itched a little and was far too large for her. But it had big pockets, just the right size for carrying your favourite book in, and that's why Hanny liked it. She slipped on her muddy sneakers, which might have been red at one point, and ran out the door.

It was the kind of day where the ground was too muddy and the sky was too dark, like it could rain any second but never did; a day where most every mother would keep their little girls inside, but Hanny's mother was too busy doing bills or sorting paperwork to notice.

Hanny's house had a big backyard with a vegetable garden that grew beans and potatoes and peas; a swing set that Hanny still played on because she was eight and definitely not too old to do so; and a huge shed where she kept her bike and her father kept his tools.

And behind the shed was her most favourite place in the whole world. Her father said it was a “root seller” which Hanny found odd, because who would want to sell roots, or buy them for that matter, but after some exploring she learned that it was an underground room about the size of two broom closets with stone walls and a couple old smelly potatoes on the floor. Her father explained that, that is where they used to keep vegetables at a good temperature before they had refrigerators. Then, he cleaned it out and let Hanny use it as a playhouse.

But Hanny didn't want a playhouse. So, she took all the books from her bedroom and put them on the shelves in the underground room (which she preferred calling it because she had no intention of selling roots) and she opened her piggy bank and went and bought more books and whenever she got more money she would go buy even more books yet, and so on, and so on, until the shelves were full. Hanny would go down there in the morning and come back in time for dinner every day.

Today, when Hanny used the key to open the trap door and lowered herself down into her little library and turned on the light she noticed something very wrong. It was horribly messy down there. Books were all over the floor, opened with their pages wrinkled, and the cushion which she had brought from inside to sit on had a tear and some of its stuffing was pulled out. Hanny would never have left it like this.

“Someone else must have been in here,” She decided.

But how? Hanny had the one and only key and if there was any other way to get in without it then there would simply be no need for a key at all. Then, she heard a small noise, like some very tiny person was running across the floor.

”Good heavens!” Hanny exclaimed, for her ears had not deceived her and a small

man, about three inches tall, wearing a fedora and pinstripe suit with a purple tie and shiny black shoes came running around the corner of a shelf muttering to himself. He shrieked and stumbled backwards into a book of fairytales when he noticed Hanny standing there – a giant to him.

“Hey!” She yelled and he shrieked again, scampering off. “Get back here!” She scooped him up in her hand. “Who are you?” he squirmed viciously in her hand and she felt a sharp pain in her finger.

“Hey!” she yelled again, dropping him, “You bit me.” The drop stunned him slightly and instead of running he backed himself up against the bookshelf and rocked back and forth.

“Please don’t hurt me,” He begged.

“I have no desire to hurt you,” Hanny said, crouching to look at the small man. “I just want to know who you are.”

The man ‘humphed’ and stood proudly, “I,” he said dramatically, “am Edward Williams McConan III.”

“And who’s that?” Hanny asked, puzzled by the man’s strange name.

He looked incredibly hurt, “I,” he paused for a second to think, “am the son of Edward Williams McConan II.” He said proudly.

“Oh,” Hanny said, still confused, “And why are you here?”

“That,” Edward said sadly, “I’m afraid I don’t know.”

“Well, where did you come from?”

“I came from one of these books.”

“Well, which book?”

“I don’t know that either.”

And with that, the man began to cry. Hanny stared, wide eyed at this strange little man wailing on the ground. She picked him up and sat him on one of the shelves, so that she could talk to him, face-to-face.

“How could you possibly, not know? I mean, you must have some idea,” she tried, but the man just cried even louder.

“Wait!” he said, his crying stopping abruptly, “What about you?”

“Me?” Hanny asked, “How should I know?”

“These are your books, are they not?”

“I haven’t read all of them; I’m only eight you know.”

“Well, then why have so many?”

“Because,” said Hanny, “That way I will always have something to read, and never be without a new book.”

“Well, my darling little girl,” Edward Williams McConan III said triumphantly, “you’d better get reading.”

“How will I know which is the right book?”

“The one with me in it, stupid little girl” Edward said.

“No, it won’t be that easy. You can’t be in the book if you’re right here.”

“You’re making no sense.” He huffed.

“It won’t be the book with you; it will be the book without you. But not just any book without you, a book that doesn’t have you but needs you. What do you do? In your books I mean.”

“I solve crimes.”

“Alright, we’re looking for a book about crimes, with no apparent main character, nobody solving those crimes.”

“Now you’re just talking nonsense.” Edward sat down and folded his arms across his chest and put his chin in the air snootily.

“Let’s say you have two photographs, and you know that each photograph has the same three people in it. But, somebody has cut someone out of one of those pictures. If you want to know which picture she belongs in, you don’t look for the one with her in it, you look for the one without her. Every book needs a main character, and since you’re not in there we need to find the book that doesn’t have one. That’s where you belong.” Hanny was pleased by her own cleverness.

“Whatever.” Edward shrugged, not taking his nose out of the air.

Hanny grabbed a book off the shelf and sat down on her ripped cushion, very annoyed by this man.

* * *

Hanny’s eyes were growing heavy. She had spent the entire day flipping through nearly every crime solving book she owned.

“I’m sorry Edward,” she yawned, “But I have to go in and eat dinner now. I’ll come back in the morning and keep searching.”

“Oh, no you don’t!” he screeched, “You’re going to leave me here! I know it! You’re not leaving until you’ve read every book that I might have been in! You got me into this mess and YOU’RE GETTING ME OUT!”

Hanny was very taken aback. “What are you talking about?” she asked, double

checking for the key around her neck and tying her sneakers tightly. “I didn’t get you into this!”

“Oh,” he said, “Right... humph, well then young lady,” he said, acting all important again which annoyed Hanny, “I’m going to have to ask you to stay and continue reading books that I could have maybe been in. You can eat dinner tomorrow.”

“I plan on eating tomorrow, but it is irrelevant to whether or not I do so today.” Hanny put her hands on her hips. “I will come back tomorrow and help you then.” And she started up the ladder.

“Wait!” Edward screamed.

“For Pete’s sake,” Hanny threw up her hands, “Fine! I’ll read the rest of the books tonight then. It’d better be a pretty good book.” She said, muttering the last part to herself.

“Really?” he calmed considerably, “Thank you fair maiden!” he gushed, leaping onto her shoulder as she walked back to her cushion.

She sighed and sat back down.

* * *

“This is it!” Hanny leaped up, startling Edward who had been sleeping on the shoulder of her lumpy sweater. He rolled down and landed on the open book. He stood up, sore and groggy and looked around then up at a beaming Hanny.

“What in the blazes!” Edward shouted in anger, “Who dares wake Edward Williams Mc...” he stopped, noticing the book he had landed on.

“Edward, this is your...” Hanny began but Edward cut her off, not even paying

attention.

“Child! Where – oh, there you are, didn’t see you there.” Edward stood up proudly, “You can stop your search young girl. Thank you for your help, but I suppose I really didn’t need it in the end for I have found my book. Yes, it has all come back to me. This is definitely it! And now,” he stood in the crease between the pages, “Slam it shut.”

“Are you insane?” Hanny exclaimed, ignoring his wrongfully taking credit. “That won’t get you back, it will squish you!”

“Don’t be foolish! Now slam it good and hard!” Edward seemed so sure.

Hanny sighed and lifted book, one hand on either cover. She couldn’t bear to look so, facing the wall with her eyes closed, she slammed. Nervously she looked back. No blood. She opened the book. No Edward. She smiled, put the book in her large pocket, and went inside.

It was 9:34pm when she got in. Dinner dishes were still in the sink and her parents were in the living room. Hanny grabbed an apple and sat on the couch next to her father.

“Hullo darling,” he said, not looking up from his newspaper.

“Good heavens!” exclaimed her mother, “Where on Earth did you find that disgusting old sweater?”

“My closet,” Hanny mumbled, her mouth full with apple.

“Really Hanny,” her mother said exasperated, ignoring the answer to her original question, “You mustn’t talk with your mouth full! Honestly, you’d think we’d raised her in a barn!”

Hanny just smiled faintly and read her book.

After a short while, Hanny stood up. She walked over to her father and kissed him on the cheek and then walked over to her mother and kissed her on the cheek and then she walked down the hall to her bedroom.

After taking off the key and putting it in the box and taking off her sweater and wrapping it around the box and putting the whole bundle on the highest shelf of her closet, she slipped into her bed. She turned off the light.

Now, whether it was in Hanny's imagination or not she couldn't know for sure, but right before she shut her eyes for the night, she could have sworn she heard a small noise, like some very tiny person was running across the floor.

Junior Division Grade 3-6

The Journal of Wishes! **By: Story Quibell (Gr. 6)**

It was the last day of summer vacation. My best friend, Jessica, and I were going for a walk around town, about to pass “*Glenda’s*” when Jess stopped.

I turned, “What’s up?”

“Nothing, I’ve just always wanted to go in there” she said.

I had always wanted to go in too, so I said, “Let’s go.”

Jess and I walked in and saw shelves filled with colourful toys, school supplies, and candy! I bent down and picked up a journal. “It’s perfect for me” I said. The journal was fuzzy, lime green and said “*Wishes*” in purple letters on the front.

When we looked for the check-out, we saw an old woman about 60-70. “Hello, I’m Glenda,” she said.

“I’m Jessica and this is Katy.”

“Never forget the power of a wish,” Glenda said.

We walked out and I said, “I’ve got to get home, because tomorrow is the first day of school.” Once I got home, I ran to my room to start writing in my journal.

Monday, September 4, 2012

I wish that my best friend Jessica will be in my class. I also wish I will get a nice teacher like Ms. Quenelle.

☺**Katy**

I have been going to *Goodtime Public School* since grade 2. Jessica moved here in grade 4. I walked in to my new classroom and saw Jess sitting in the front row saving a seat for me. Our teacher was Ms. Quenelle.

Then Nick Fouler walked in. He was this really annoying and disgusting kid; he was in my class last year. He never brushed his teeth or his hair; you could tell because his hair was always messy. Sometimes he'd come up to you and said, "Hiiiiii," opening his mouth really wide, breathing his stinky breath in your face. And I was so glad I didn't have to sit beside him again.

RINGG went the school bell. Then our principal came on the announcements: "*Welcome back, track and field tryouts this recess.*"

Jess and I went outside and lined up. We had to run and see how far we can jump; they drew a line where you landed, and you found out the next day if you're on the team or not. Jess went first, and then it was my turn. I stepped back three big steps then I run and jump. Jess cheered, then I realized how far I got, I was at the other end of the sand box! The rest of the day went by so fast.

Tuesday, September 5, 2012

Today was the first day of school. I wish that Jess and I will make it on the track team.

☺Katy

The next day, Jess and I found out that we made it on the track team. The rest of the day was good until Nick came and hugged me in front of everyone in the class. I ran home and took a shower then wrote in my journal.

Wednesday, September 6, 2012

I wish for Nick Fouler to move away and that I'll never see him again!!

☺Katy

My little brother Andy (who is 4) came into my room and said, "For you," holding up a bouquet of dandelions.

"Andy, what did we say about bringing weeds into the house?"

"These aren't weeds, they pretty flowers for you. I want a bulldog."

"You already have stains on your shirt. I don't want them on my bed, okay?"

"Okay" Andy said.

I walked into the class the next morning and saw that Nick's desk was empty. Ms. Quenelle announced, "Nick's father got transferred at work, so he will no longer be in our class." *Wow, my wish came true -- how did this happen?*

Thursday, September 7, 2012

Today I wish for a pet (cat, teacup poodle)

☺Katy

I closed my journal and then my mom called me into the kitchen to do the dishes. While I was gone, my little brother snuck into my room, opened my journal, drew a picture of a bulldog and wrote **BULLDOG** in big letters on top, and then closed my book.

The next morning at 7:15am, there was a knock at the door. I came down, opened the door to see that there was a box just sitting there. I opened the box. Inside was a baby bulldog!! “But I wanted a poodle or a cat!” Andy came in, “His name is Goober!” I give Andy *Goober* and run to my room. When I opened my journal, I saw his drawing. *Did Andy’s wish come true?*

Later, I came into my room and found Andy and Goober sitting on my bed. Andy was reading my journal and playing my computer with my TV on full volume. Goober chewed through my magazine, slobbered on my sheets was sleeping on my pillow. “GET OUT!!” I screamed. I cleaned up, and then I wrote in my journal.

Friday, September 8, 2012

I wish my annoying little brother and that dumb dog would go away.

☹Katy

On Saturday morning, I woke to hear mom yelling, “Where is he? Where is he?”

“Where is who, mom?”

“Andy! I can’t find him anywhere! I ran around the block, I checked the garage, his room, and the basement!”

“Calm down. Is Goober here?”

“No,” she said.

“Then he’s just taking Goober for a walk,” I said.

“Will you look for him?”

“Yes! Jess and I will find him!” I felt terrible. *Could this be my fault? Did my Wish Journal make this happen?* I ran to Jessica’s house and showed her everything in my journal.

Jess saw a trail of dandelions so we followed it. The trail went through a dandelion field into the forest. Jess thought she saw them so we started to run. I tripped and dropped my journal into a pond. I got up and we kept running until we found them. Andy and Goober were curled up on a pile of dandelions. I carried Andy and Jess carried Goober.

Be careful what you wish for!!

Alive
By: Angela Luan (Gr. 6)

Dad made me realize how lucky I am to be alive. So after reading this, so should you.

When dad died, I cried *a lot*. Most guys don't cry. But I'm not like most guys. I'm not a nerd or a jock. I'm plain, old, boring me. Chris Jackson. My dad was my best friend.

Nobody at school wanted to be my friend. But I didn't care. I had dad. Had. Now I didn't have anything.

Mom gave me the general things like food, water, clothing and shelter. Nothing else. No parties, presents, anything. We celebrated her birthday, but not mine. Dad always gave me the best presents. For my birthday, I wanted a video game. But dad gave me something better. A guitar. Signed by Jimi Hendrix. When I was seven, dad taught me guitar.

See, I was born by accident. Mom didn't know she was pregnant with me until five weeks after. She didn't want to have kids though. But dad convinced her to keep me. So until he died of cancer, he was 99.9% responsible for me. Mom let me skip school today, but tomorrow I am going back.

When I went to school tomorrow, kids teased me even more. "Where's daddy? Is daddy gone? Ohh, too bad. NOT!" It made me feel sick. The day dragged by, with dirty looks from kids and pitying looks from teachers. Finally, I went home.

At home, I started to juggle options. Run away, live my pathetic life, or...? Nobody alive loved me. So should I even be alive?

I ran upstairs. Luckily mom wasn't home. Stopping in the bathroom, I reach for the Advil. I pop one in my mouth. Then two. Suddenly I stop and think. What do I have that makes me thankful? My guitar. My phone. My *dad*. Then I think of mom. Angrily, I pop more and more Advil in my mouth. But I'm not dead yet. So I eat the full bottle. But I'm not dead.

You are young! Live your life. Be happy. Be proud! You are the unique, one and only, Chris Jackson. The alive Chris Jackson...

When I wake up, dad's words are ringing in my head. Did dad somehow keep me alive? When I get to school, a sign is posted up. "Young couple wants to adopt kid". So I go and see that couple. My new mom and dad. From now on, I will be happy. And alive.

Thunder Monkey: The Adventure

By: Jack Quibell (Gr. 3)

Once upon a time there was a boy named James. His nickname was Thunder Monkey. He was called Thunder Monkey because he played his drums as loud as thunder and he could hold his drum stick in his toes just like a monkey could. The drumsticks were always in James's pocket.

He went on an adventure, a quest, to find a treasure chest. It had lots of money and a golden sword. He was going to use the golden sword to fight a dragon.

The dragon was very vicious. It had very sharp teeth. It roared as loud as James playing his drums. The dragon was also very shiny. It was green, James's favorite colour.

The Dragon was loose in the village. The dragon was hunting the king because it liked shiny things like the king's gold coins and also the king wore a bright shiny sparkly crown. Whoever caught it would get a reward from the king.

James really wanted the reward because his family was poor. They were the poorest in the whole village. They were so poor they had to eat grass soup. They only got chicken once a month when the king had a special chicken festival. Everybody got to have chicken except for the vegetarians who had cauliflower and cheese.

Well first thing was first. James had to find the treasure chest. His mom gave him a thermos of grass soup so he would have food on his adventure. He had to go across the jungle filled with giant pythons.

James wanted to go quickly across the jungle, so he climbed a very tall tree and swung from vine to vine. One vine turned out to be a giant python. James screamed and let go, and then he fell to the ground. The python was chasing James. James outsmarted the python by going up and down, high and low on the vines.

At last, James saw a shiny gold bright light. The gold treasure chest shined in the sunlight. There was a giant snake guarding the treasure chest. It was bigger than all the other pythons. It was the King Python.

James carefully opened his thermos of grass soup. The python came rushing and ate all of the soup. The soup was so gross the Python threw up. James jumped into the treasure chest to hide from the vomit. The King Python couldn't see James so he went away from the snake lair.

James put all the money from the treasure chest in his backpack. He held onto the sword and snuck away from the snake lair. He was rushing through the jungle on his way back to his home. Finally he reached his house. He gave the money to his mom. His mother could buy good food like chicken legs, carrots, and Alpha-Getti soup.

Now it was time to find the Dragon.

James held on to the sword carefully. He held on tight. He went through the village until he spotted the dragon. Even when the dragon breathed fire in the opposite direction of James, James could still feel the heat.

The dragon smelled James. The dragon turned around looking with his mean eyes. The dragon tried to smash James but he was fast like a monkey. He rolled away as quickly as he could, but he dropped the sword. All he had was his drumsticks. He climbed up the dragon's beard and stared at the dragon.

"Stop it," he said. James noticed the Dragon skin felt very weird. He saw that the dragon's wings were like the cymbals of his drum set. A scale on its head was like the foot pedal, and big spots on its back where like James's drums.

So James started to play. He drummed out a beat, bompba bompba bomp.

The dragon started to dance. He was a special kind of dragon -- a Music Dragon. Whenever he heard music, he started to dance. The music made him happy and he wasn't vicious anymore.

After dancing the dragon flew back to its cave, and stopped attacking the village.

Everybody cheered for James because he saved the village.

Every once in a while, James visited the dragon. They would play music together. The dragon was actually pretty good on electric guitar.

The prize was lots of chicken for his poor family and lots of money. The family wasn't poor anymore.

The Camping Trip

By: Renee Richard (Gr. 4)

It was the first time my family went camping. We drove hours to get to the campground. When we arrived, my dad set up the tent but it wouldn't stay up. It took him a long time to figure out which poles to use. Then my dad stepped on doggie doo-doo so he was really stinky! At night, we had a campfire and made yummy smores, but raccoons wanted to join us and tried to take them.

Before we went to bed, my mom said to dad, "Remember to tie the garbage on a tree because a hungry bear might come". But my dad thought the bear wouldn't see the garbage on top of the van so he put the bag there. In the middle of the night, my mom, dad and sister woke up because they heard a sound. My brother and I were still asleep. They looked outside and they saw a bear ON TOP OF OUR VAN EATING THE GARBAGE!!! UGGGGH! My sister was so scared that she whispered, "I got to PEEEE"! Dad grabbed the key because he thought that they had an alarm on it so he could scare the bear away, but the keys didn't have an alarm. He tried opening and closing the doors but it didn't scare the bear. He just kept ripping the garbage and eating OLD LEFTOVER FOOD. Yuck! The bear ate for a while then came down from the van.

Mom said to Dad, "Where did you put the pail of minnows?" She was scared when my dad said, "I put them in front of the tent". They were really scared when the bear started sniffing the tent. It made a big mess trying to eat the minnows.

When the bear left, mom and dad took us into the van and we went to find the ranger but he was not working at night. Mom called the police, but they put her on hold for 20 minutes while she was standing outside in a telephone booth because her cell phone would not work. We were so scared the bear would come back for seconds! Finally the police came but they didn't find the bear. In the morning, the van had big muddy paw prints and scratches all over it.

The next day, a skunk nearly sprayed so my dad said, "That's it, we are leaving and we drove hours to get home. So, all I have to say is we had the worst luck on our first camping trip."

P.S. This is a true story of our Family camping adventure.

The Princess That Chewed Bubble Gum
By: Lacey Callaghan (Gr. 5)

Once upon a time there lived a princess. Her name was Princess Victoria. She was no ordinary princess; she was a princess that loved to chew bubble gum.....pink bubble gum to be exact!

And then there were her mother and father Queen Rose and King James. They had banned bubble gum throughout the entire kingdom. Little did they know that their own daughter still chewed bubble gum!

One rainy evening when Princess Victoria was getting ready to go to bed she popped a piece of bubble gum in her mouth. "Oh how I love bubble gum." she said to herself. She sat down on her lace and frill bed she put her iPod in. Meanwhile she had a massive pile of bubble gum wrappers lying around her room that she did not bother to clean up. She was so excited to see her best friend Princess Madeline tomorrow that she was chewing her bubble gum very loud. Her parents could hear her from all the way down the long hallway. King James got out of his bedroom with Queen Rose following him, they both said at the same time "What is that noise?" They both ran down the long hallway opened the princess's door very slowly and saw the massive pile of bubble gum wrappers.

Princess Victoria did not see or hear her mother and father. The queen whispered to the king "Is that a pile of bubble gum wrappers?" The king replied "I think it is!" as they opened the door wider they saw Princess Victoria chewing a big piece of bubble gum.

King James cleared his throat and yelled” Is that a piece of bubble gum you are chewing?!”

Princess Victoria said in a nervous voice “Oh Hi mother and father I didn’t see you there!” She took out her iPod and spit her gum into a handkerchief and pretended to cough. She made an excuse that she was doing a project at Princess School and she needed to use bubble gum wrappers. King James questioned Princess Victoria about the bubble gum in her mouth and she said “It’s just a piece of candy. “Queen Rose said in a serious voice “Alright you pass for now but we have our royal eyes on you!” Princess Victoria nervously said “hah ok.” and her mother and father left. The next day Princess Victoria and Princess Madeline were riding their horses Midnight and Lightning in the magical forest the bubble gum forest. When Princess Victoria said to Princess Madeline “I need a plan to bring bubble gum back!” Princess Madeline replied “I don’t think that can happen, I mean I guess we can try for you and your bubble gum.” Princess Victoria said “Thank you Thank you! “ Princess Madeline said “So what is it going to be?” Princess Victoria said “I don’t know but meet at the Goblins Cafe tomorrow at 12:00 sharp got it?” Princess Madeline said “Got it.”

And the Princesses horses galloped in separate ways and disappeared off into the distance. The girls meet at the Goblins cafe at 12:00 sharp. They brainstormed so many ideas but the last one was the best. Princess Madeline said “How about you invite me over for dinner and all we talk about is bubble gum and how many things it can do for you.” Princess Victoria said “Perfect!” and they clinked their teas. That night Princess

Victoria came over and all the girls talked about was how many things bubble gum can do for you.

Queen Rose said “We will think about it “King James said “Yes we will.” Then Princess Madeline asked “Why did you ever ban bubble gum in the first place?” King James said “Ok I will tell you, so it was years ago when Princess Victoria was little about two years old, she loved to visit the bubble gum forest so we were always in there. Anything could happen in there and anything could be in there. While we were walking a bubble gum bird came and landed on my head when it took off it took all of the hair on the top of my head off. Even though it grew back I always thought of bubble gum when I looked at the bald spot on my head!” Princess Madeline got up and said “That is my mom outside I have to go bye.” Queen Rose got up and said “Well it’s time for you young lady to go to bed.” Princess Victoria said” Alright mom I’m tired.” She was walking up the blue velvet stairs when her father said in a quiet whisper “Nice trick with bubble gum wrapper project thing hah.” Princess Victoria asked” You knew??” her father said “Of course I knew, good night sweetie.” Good night dad “she said

The next morning the queen and king walked into the princesses room and woke her up opened her hands and put a piece of bubble gum in them the princess said “Thank you, thank you!!” That evening Princess Victoria called Princess Madeline and told her the news they were so happy that they went on a shopping spree together! So everyone lived

Happily Ever After

THE END

Lola

By: Stephanie Stockwell (Gr. 8)

It all began when I was very young. I was still nursing from my mama. I opened my eyes one morning and she was gone. I poked my head out of the nest to look for her. Seeing no danger, I climbed down the trunk of the tree to the ground. That's when I finally saw her. My heart started pounding and I felt my eyes widen with terror. She was on the other side of the dreaded black path. My mama told me never, ever to cross the black path. Huge, hideous beasts with eyes that shine and enormous, round black feet travel that path day and night. When the horrible creatures pass, they make a noise as loud as thunder, so we call them thunderbeasts. Mama told me that many a squirrel had been killed by those terrible monsters. But she had been having difficulty finding food ever since the forest was destroyed by relatives of the thunder beasts. I knew that food was scarce, but Mama must have been desperate to risk crossing the black path. My heart was in my throat as she prepared to cross. I closed my eyes, too frightened to watch. All of a sudden, the unthinkable happened. I heard the loud roar of a thunderbeast followed by a sickening thud. My eyes flicked open and I was overcome with panic. "Mama!" I screamed as I saw her motionless body at the edge of the black path. She had almost made it. "Mama! Wake up! Wake up! Please!" But no matter how much I yelled, begged and pleaded, I knew she would never move again.

I curled up in a ball next to her and started to cry, not even caring how dangerously close to the black path I was. I cried and cried and cried. My crying must have gotten the

attention of some creatures my mama had called humans. I had seen them before. They were very kind. They gave Mama some peanuts several times, but I was still too young to eat them. They approached me, slowly at first. One motioned to my mama and they exchanged a few words in their strange language. They left, but returned shortly with a large piece of soft fabric. Together, making soft calming noises, they moved closer. Before I could do anything to stop them, they lifted me into the air. They started to walk, one of them carrying helpless me in their arms. Poking my head out of the fabric, I said my last good-bye to my mama.

They brought me inside their cave and placed me in a small brown cube-shaped object lined with more of the soft fabric. They closed the lid, leaving me alone in the dark. Exhausted from the whole ordeal, I fell asleep. However, my sleep was rudely awakened by the sensation of movement. One of the humans had picked up the cube and was carrying me in it. Then the cube stopped moving and I heard the roar of a thunderbeast louder than I had ever heard it before. I shivered as I realized that I was inside the belly of the beast. After what had seemed like an eternity, I felt the human lift me again. This time the cube stopped moving, I heard only the sound of human voices. The cube was opened and the human picked me up. They gently placed me in the arms of another human. I looked up at it. It was a female. She gently stroked my fur. For some reason I felt safe.

The female was joined by a male human. They looked at each other and smiled.

Then they started to speak. This is what they said.

“So, Dan. If we’re going to be looking after this little squirrel, don’t you think that she should have a name?”

“That sounds like a good idea. How about Lucky Doink? She’s a lucky doink that we’re going to be taking care of her.”

The human female made a face.

“I don’t think so. How about Lola?”

“Carol, that’s perfect.”

“So Lola it is.”

The next few months of my life were full of new experiences, starting with my first meal. I was getting very hungry when the human called Carol held a long hollow stick close to my mouth. I sniffed it. A pang of grief hit me. It smelled like Mama’s milk, only sweeter. I tasted it. It was delicious. I grabbed the stick with both paws and sucked out its contents to the last drop. Satisfied, I curled up in Carol’s arms and fell asleep.

One day when Dan and Carol were playing with me in the grass behind their cave, a young human came to see me. The humans called her Steph. She had come a few times before. She was quiet and gentle and I liked her almost as much as I liked Dan and Carol. I remember that day well. It was very hot and the sun was shining bright. Carol went inside the cave and came back holding something bright orange in a clear package. She passed it to Steph and she held it in front of my mouth. I took a small, cautious nibble. It was cold and sweet and was very refreshing on such a hot day. Before I knew it, I was

gulping down more and more of the stuff until the package was almost empty. Yes, that was a day to remember.

More time passed and before I knew it, I was almost a grown squirrel. I decided it was time to climb a tree by myself. I hadn't climbed one since I had come to live with Dan and Carol, so I was a little nervous. I chose the apple tree and slowly started to climb the base of the trunk. Then my instincts took over and I found myself at the top of the tree. I gasped as I looked around. I could see for miles. All around me there were human caves lined up in neat rows, maples, pines, spruces, cedars and birches. But most beautiful of all was the dazzling blue water that I could just barely see stretching into the horizon far away. I sat there for a long time just admiring the breath-taking view.

After a while, I reluctantly climbed down to see if Carol had anything for me to eat. As always, she didn't disappoint me.

Since I was now almost a grown squirrel, I decided that I needed more independence. I started sleeping up in a tree instead of in the cozy house that Dan had built me. But with this newfound independence came unexpected danger. One night after the sun had set and the moon had started to rise, it appeared out of nowhere. At first, it was just an eerie pair of glowing green eyes floating in the distance. I hesitated, backing up slowly, not knowing what to expect. Then, without warning, it lunged at me. I bolted away as fast as I could, but I could still feel its hot feline breath at the back of my tail. Looking back, I could see its huge fangs glistening in the moonlight. Breathing heavily, I darted up the fence, not stopping for even a moment as I felt a sharp, persistent, jab of searing pain as my leg was twisted in one of the metal links. I managed to drag myself back up to my

tree and I curled up in my nest. I had managed to escape the cat, but my leg was painfully sprained. That night taught me a lesson I wouldn't soon forget.

The next morning, I limped down the tree to look for Dan and Carol. As reliable as ever, they fed me and took care of me. Time passed and the pain slowly receded. My leg was soon as good as new.

To this day, I still visit Dan, Carol and Steph every day. They give me food water and companionship. I've also become friends with a few other squirrels too. What more could a squirrel want? What more could I say? I am one lucky squirrel.

Author's Note

This story is true. Lola actually exists. Earlier this year, sometime in the spring, my neighbors Dan and Carol got a message on Facebook. Some friends of theirs had found a baby abandoned squirrel. Something had happened to the mother, although they don't know exactly what happened, the car (thunderbeast) theory is certainly a plausible possibility. All of the events in this story actually happened, although some creativity was added to the chase scene. (We don't really know what it was that caused her leg injury.) Since Dan and Carol had raised two other baby squirrels, they eagerly accepted the responsibility of raising Lola. And yes, Dan did suggest naming Lola Lucky Doink. Lola is a grown squirrel now, but she still comes to see us. In case you were wondering, I am the Steph that played with her in the story. (And yes, we really did give Lola an orange freezie one day in the summer.) In fact, as I'm writing this, I'm sitting outside with Lola right now. She likes to climb up your leg and onto your shoulder to get peanuts and

sunflower seeds. When you're in the yard you have to keep an eye open because she can sometimes catch you off guard if you're not expecting her to jump on you. She is really cute and is always entertaining. I hope this story makes you think of squirrels in a different light. Not as the annoying creatures that destroy your garden and pillage your bird feeder, but as the beautiful, unique animals they really are. I can say one thing for certain. As long as I live, I will never forget little Lola, and I will never look at a squirrel in the same way ever again.

Unsinkable
By: Sophie Ashworth (Gr. 7)

She was bigger than anything I'd ever seen before. More majestic than the waters she sailed on. So high class, I'd heard the richest man in the world was on board her deck. I pulled my luggage up in the line on the boarding dock. I stared at the mighty ship moored in the water, where the letters across read *R.M.S. Titanic*. It was a dream come true. I mean, you would never have thought me, Jane Browning, 11 years old, would have made it to here aboard this ship. I would be around some of the finest men and women alive. Butterflies danced in my stomach at the thought. I craved the moment when I could step aboard the Titanic and smell the fresh paint, sleep in the new clean sheets and watch the ocean waves roll over and over.

“The ship's leaving in 10 minutes Will! Get in line!” My father Patrick yelled. For my 13-year old brother was still talking to his friends.

“Coming Dad!” He said his goodbyes and strolled over, his bags bouncing behind him.

“I'm so excited!” I squealed to them.

“So am I. I wonder what America will be like?” Will replied.

“Forget America! The real journey starts here.” Dad grinned.

While my father and brother were still chatting, I turned to face my younger sister. “Are you ready Charlotte?”

She nodded excitedly and moved towards the ship to get a closer look. “What do you think is inside?” I wondered.

“Maybe a treasure chest. Or a princess crown!” Charlotte’s 7-year-old excitement made me laugh and reminisce, so when the Titanic officer called “tickets please!” I almost didn’t notice.

We stepped on to the open deck and the dancing butterflies started doing back flips. I could see the whole world from here. I watched the crowds below, waving goodbye to their loved ones. I saw the lights of Southampton England, blinking “see you soon!” to the passengers. The ship’s horn blew, and the *Titanic* set sail.

“Aaah.” I flopped onto the wool blankets of my bed, room 210, 2nd class. It was around sundown, about 6 hours after Titanic had left port. My siblings were putting away our belongings when my dad walked in. “Will, Jane, get dressed and help your sister too. It’s time to go down to dinner.” The three of us groaned, but followed instructions. So leaving our room, we headed to the 2nd class-dining hall. The hall was lovely, with long tables and soft carpets. I loved all the voices chattering about this and that and the smell of warm food being gobbled by the hungry passengers.

We found Dad sitting beside a family of three. A man, woman and girl. “Kids, these are the Redpickets and their daughter Molly. These are my children, William, Jane and Charlotte.” The three of us sat down. While Will and the adults discussed the ship, I glanced at Molly Redpicket. She caught my eye and asked, “So...how old are you?”

“I’m eleven. You?”

“Yes, me too.”

“Are you an only child?”

“No, my brother is waiting for us in New York.”

“Oh! My mother is doing the same!” We continued to chat and discovered more and more the two of us had in common. She was daring, friendly and kind - a good companion. I figured out a meeting spot on the B deck for us and we spent the whole next day exploring the ship with each other. First class to Third class, A deck to G deck – you name it, we’d been there.

I twirled my porridge around the silver breakfast bowl, tired from an early adventure with Molly. I was sitting with my family and the Redpickets. Dad was speaking to Molly’s parents about a special tour he had experienced with the leader of the ship, J. Bruce Ismay. I turned an ear to listen in.

“J. Bruce Ismay? A tour?” Mrs. Redpicket inquired.

“You must have been star struck.” Mr. Redpicket joined in. “Whatever did you talk about?”

“The Titanic, mostly. He kept going on about the fact that it is unsinkable.”

“Unsinkable my foot!” Mrs. Redpicket spat. “No ship is unsinkable, let alone this enormous one.”

“That’s the myth,” my father answered. “Mr. Ismay also said that he would persuade Captain Smith to speed the ship up and get us there a day early. It would make headlines across the globe.”

“Of course, more publicity for the ship.” I mumbled.

“Alright, I’ve had enough.” I glanced up and saw Molly, hands on her hips, brows in a V. “I have had enough of you moping around. I’m bored as heck and I’m positive you are too. Get up, because we’re going to play a game.”

“No-oo-oo.” I whined.

“Ye-e-es! Hide and Seek and I’m it. 10...9...8...”

The game lasted for the morning, until a lunch break was needed. After vegetable stew, Molly and I headed to the open deck. “Let’s go to the library now, Molly. I’ve nothing to read, I’m done all my books.” I explained.

“To the library we shall go!” Molly yelled. The pair of us jogged down the C deck and we approached the room of stories. I walked through the doorway and across the wood floor to the bookshelves. The air was heavy with cigar smoke from the men before lunch, which made my eyes sting and water. But I grabbed a book and sat at a mahogany table. Molly did the same and we lost ourselves in time. Soon I drifted into sleep.

“Jane! Wake up! Janie! Dinner!”

My eyes fluttered open. My brother Will was shaking me.

“C’mon! Dinner!” I hopped up and followed Will out of the library to my meal.

When dinner was over, Dad tucked Charlotte into bed at around 9:30 and shoed Will and I to our friends. “I want you back here by midnight.” Dad said. “I’ll be in the smoking room with Mr. Redpicket if you need me.”

“Thanks Dad. Let’s go Molly! I squeezed her hand and we ran down the hall.

“So what should we do?” I asked. “Why don’t we explore again?” she asked.

“Great! Let’s do it.”

My friend and I wandered around the Titanic’s’ main deck for quite some time, running this way and that, wherever we pleased. Soon, I became bored again. “I want to go somewhere else.” I said. “Why not down below the cabins?”

“Sure,” Molly agreed. We snuck down the staircases to the bowels of the ship. It was pitch black down there, so we waited for our eyes to adjust to the lighting. When they did, Molly suggested a game of “catch me.” One person had to try and catch the other in 30 seconds. She was it, so I counted down from 30 and ran way. I hid behind some crates at the side. “Five ...four...three.... two ...”

The boat lurched and I shrieked and fell to the ground. Molly clutched my shoulders and was knocked down as well. My heart was drumming a solo as I asked, “Molly? Molly, what’s happening?”

“Something hit the boat.” She stepped up and helped me. I marched towards the exit, but stopped dead.

“Do you hear that?” I looked towards the sound. It was a trickling, like ice water the waiters poured into my glass. Molly glanced as well and we both gasped. Water was swishing through a gap in the wall and was halfway up our loafers. I splashed through the doorway, the Atlantic hot on my heels. I turned to the stairs and waited for Molly. She appeared by the door and the water was up to her ankles. I held her hand and we raced up and out. “*Is this really happening?*” I couldn’t help thinking, “*Is the Titanic sinking?*”

“We have to warn the passengers!” Molly exclaimed.

“We must tell our families first!” I started to panic.

But by the time we had reached the smoking room’s floor, the water had risen to up around 5 feet, which meant it had swallowed the lowest deck. Molly and I sped through the hall of E deck, running up to warn our families about what was to come. We made it up to the smoking room and burst in. “Dad! Get up! The boat’s sinking! Water’s filling up! We have to go.” I panted.

“Slow down, Janie.” He popped the cigar from his mouth. “This boat isn’t sinking! Don’t worry, you’re just paranoid”.

“She’s not paranoid. This boat is sinking! We have to get everyone out!” Molly cried. Spiders ran down my spine as I remembered whom everyone was. I raced out, Molly calling after me.

“Charlotte! Wake up, c’mon Charlotte!” I was bending over our bed, trying to get her up.

“Janie! I was sleeping.”

“Char, we need to get out.”

“Why?”

“The boat’s sinking. Where’s Will?”

“He said he was going to see his friend in Third class. The boat’s sinking?”

I pulled her out of bed. “I’m sorry, ‘Char. But you have to get dad, and tell him we’re sinking and that I’m going to find Will. Please hurry.”

I raced down the hallway to third class, and gasped when I looked around. The water had risen three quarters up, and motionless bodies surrounded Will, who was struggling to reach the surface. I tore off the emergency life preserver on the stairway wall, and threw it towards him. My brother held on, and gasped for air. “Will,” I panted. “Swim to me.”

Will lifted his fear-filled eyes up, and kicked his legs. When he finally made it over, he scrambled to get to the next deck. We ran through damp staircases and different floors, until we got to top level.

I trudged to the open deck, soaked and leaning on Will. I frantically looked for my family, and spotted them by the lifeboats. Charlotte and Dad rushed to me, commenting on my wet clothing and asking if I was okay. I explained everything, and searched the crowd for Molly. “Woman and children, women and children!” an officer called out. He saw Charlotte and I, and pulled us to a lifeboat. We were thrown in, among

many other kids. The boat was lowered into the ocean. A crewman paddled us away, and I looked for the faces of my father and brother on the ship. They saw me and waved, which made my heart ache for them to be with me. Rocket flares were sent out, lighting up the sky, proving the danger was real. I wondered if any ship was out there to save us.

Suddenly, the boat rocked. Then I was leaning over the side, and I lost my balance. Head first I plunged in. The first thing that came to my mind was cold. Just coldness, spreading over my body, running its hands down my back, nipping at my toes. I was in agony, trying to fight the ice water to the surface. I finally broke free, gasping for breath. But my lifeboat was gone. “Help me!” I cried. “ Save me!” I waited for what seemed like an eternity, until another one spotted me.

“Need any help?” I looked up, half frozen. Molly Redpicket held her hand out in front. I grabbed it, got on, and hugged her so tightly I swear she couldn’t breathe.

The lifeboat then took us away; so far that the Titanic became the size of my hand.

“Would you like a hot chocolate, Miss?”

“Yes please.”

“And you two also?”

“Yes please.”

I was sitting on a chair in the lounge of the ship *Carpathia*. I was with Molly and Charlotte, my fellow survivors of the traumatic experience known as the *Titanic* collision with an iceberg. I got up from the wooden chair, and I stepped out of the room, towards the railing of the boat. I looked across the Atlantic Ocean in the direction of the sinking. “*How ironic,*” I thought, “*the unsinkable ship has sunk.*”

My Very Own Train Tracks
By: Emma Okumura (Gr. 8)

Dear Diary

I went to see the people again today. They told me when I'll get them, the train tracks. Dad says I'm lucky and I should be grateful, yeah right! I think that's just his way of making me feel better. I don't know why mom and dad would even bother paying so much money for that. I wish they could just let me live my own life! I haven't written about this yet, but my best friend Hanna just moved away. I hope I'll see her soon. I miss her so much

Samantha.

I sighed and set down my pen on my wood dresser. Ever since Hanna moved away everything seems boring. Normally on a sunny October afternoon, much like this one, we would be biking together. But instead, here I am doing my homework, alone, with no intention of setting foot outside of my huge, luxurious house.

"Sam! Your brother and I are will be outside setting up Halloween decorations if you want to come." I was woken from my daydreaming by my mother's voice. I sat up in my chair in which I had been sitting in for more than an hour, doing homework. I hadn't realized that Halloween was so close! Then it occurred to me that I'd have nobody to trick or treat with. I sighed. Why did it have to be Hanna's dad that got the job! Why not Lucie or Daniella. . . no, I shouldn't be thinking like that. I mean, it's good for Hanna's dad, right? Okay, back to algebra. If $2h+8=58$, what is the value of h ?

“Oh, forget it.” I told myself. I abandoned my textbook and went in search of my iPad. I flipped through the games and decided on Angry Birds. Peeeeeewwwww! Pow! I shot my birds intently. As I advanced, things started to get boring. I didn’t have anything better to do, well. . . other than algebra, but my kid senses told me to keep playing, so I obeyed. 10 levels later I

* * *

When my eyes blinked open the clock read 5:03 AM. It was hopeless to try and go back to sleep so I took extra care doing my hair. By the time I was satisfied with the overall effect of my now curly hair, the clock read 6:30. I shuffled over to my closet and picked out a sparkly shirt, then decided on a cute pair of jeans. When I was done with the whole clothing business, I wandered downstairs in search of food. A bowl and a half of Captain Crunch later it was time to catch the bus. I grabbed my jacket and my bag on my way out the door.

“Have a good day!” my mom called.

“Bye” I called and headed to the bus stop. When the bus arrived and swung open the doors, I was greeted by my bus driver. I didn’t reply, nobody ever did. My mood brightened as I spotted my friend Kyley.

“Hi!” she welcomed me in her bubbly voice.

“Hey.” I replied, casting her a shy grin.

“My mom said that she can take us for manicures after school, if you want.” Kyley offered. She had always been nice but we had never really been close friends. I noticed that she’d been making more of an effort to become friends ever since Hanna moved.

“Sounds good.” I decided to take her up on her offer. I glanced at my nails. Yes, they could use some TLC.

“Okay, how about we pick you up at four?” she asked in an official manner.

“One minute.” I pulled out my sparkly iPhone and called my mom. She was all for me going to the spa, and obviously pleased I was making new friends.

“Okay, four o’clock it is!” I said. We chatted as the bus pulled into the school parking lot and we stepped out to face another day of school.

* * *

Later that day, I found myself impatiently waiting for Kyley’s Ferrari to pull into my driveway. A long ten minutes later it came winding its way through my driveway and stopped at my grand front doors. I moved as fast as I could in my dress to meet them, got in the car, and we were off.

When we arrived at the Paradise Spa, we were escorted to our seats. As we soaked our nails, we chose out colors. I settled on blue while Kyley got pink. We chatted while they did our nails.

“Have you heard about that new movie Moonlight?” Kyley asked.

“No, did it get good reviews?” I asked with interest. It sounded like Twilight.

“Yeah, so so.” Kyley spaced out, lost in thought. A few moments later we were told our nails were dry.

* * *

“Thank you!” I turned and called as they dropped me off at home.

“Hey, how was it?” My mom asked as I slammed the front door. I would still be outside if I knew what was coming next.

“The office called and said they’re ready!” She exclaimed. My jaw dropped and I threw my hands up in disbelief.

“ALREADY!” I bellowed. “But you said that it would be months before they’re ready!” I objected. I could feel tears coming.

“Yes I know but they said that you were old enough to manage them.” She soothed.

“I guess I don’t have a choice. . .” I mumbled. “When do I get them?” I looked up.

“Tomorrow.” She answered. That was NOT the answer I was wanting. I didn’t know what to say, so I did what most dramatic 12 year olds do, I turned ungracefully and ran up to my room, tears running down my face, and slammed the door shut in my wake. But this perfect drama couldn’t last long and soon my mother came and knocked on my door.

“Can I come in?” She asked.

“No.” I sobbed, couldn’t she see I needed some peace and quiet?

“I’m sorry, okay? I didn’t know this was so upsetting to you.” I could tell that she meant it, but I wasn’t going to show her my soft and forgiving side just yet.

“No.” I repeated.

“Oh! I didn’t mea-“ She started to speak but I couldn’t keep my mouth shut long enough to let her finish.

“No mom! You don’t understand! I’m the *only* kid at school who has them. Everyone else gets to live a normal life except for me. They all think I’m weird, and in case you don’t know, that’s a *bad* thing.” I had the feeling my speech had a big effect on her. I could hear her as she descended the stairs, clearly finished trying to reason with me.

When I was sure she was gone I opened my diary.

Dear Diary,

Today could possibly be the worst day of my entire life. Mom’s taking me to see them TOMORROW. I can’t believe she would do that without asking me first! Anyways, I don’t want to think about that right now. I went for a manicure with Kyley this afternoon. I feel like a Princess, well, an extremely unlucky one! Right. Not thinking about that. That’s all I think.

Samantha

I set down the diary and flopped myself down onto my bed. Eventually, I cried myself to sleep.

I woke up to my stomach growling. I stayed in bed until my alarm clock started buzzing, then punched the snooze button and reluctantly got out of bed.

As I sat in school watching the seconds tick by on the clock started to feel bad about my fight with mom last night. I pushed the thought aside as the musical sound of the bell rang through the speakers. I stuffed my homework in my bag, and Kyley and I went in search of our bus.

Finally we spotted bus NAS7 at the back of the line. On the way home I told Kyley everything that was on my mind. Unlike school, the bus ride didn't last long enough and soon it was my turn to get off.

Later on after watching my weekly episode of Vampire Diaries, I headed upstairs to get ready for bed.

“Bed time!” Mom declared half an hour later. I wasn't in a rush to get in another fight so I put down my iPad and waited.

“Aww! But I'm on level nine and if I turn my iPod off it won't save!” My little brother protested.

“No, sleep is more important than gaming devices.” She reasoned. Video games, not 'gaming devices' I corrected her in my mind. There was a thump as he set it down.

“Be careful! Money doesn't grow on trees!” Mom scolded him. This was one of the many

phrases she liked to use. Our family just laughed because we were wealthy. Eventually she came and shut off my lights. I unwillingly fell asleep after 10 minutes of counting sheep.

When I awoke the first thing I thought of was that today was my appointment. After I pampered my hair and got dressed, I went downstairs. A surprise waited for me on the table.

“Thanks mom!” I called as I picked up the iTunes card. Within ten minutes I had spent all the money. At 9:00 mom called me to get in the car. My heart thumped as we accelerated off into doom.

* * *

I walked through the front door of the building and was handed a beige file by the kind secretary and told to go and wait upstairs. I nervously kicked the legs of my chair as I stared around, desperately trying to distract myself.

“Samantha” A red-haired assistant called me. I got up and followed her down the hall.

The whole time they worked I was distracted by my iPad. I guess I had freaked out for nothing because it wasn't bad at all. They asked me lots of questions and got me to fill out paperwork.

I was relieved when we were told that we were done. But as we drove back home I had no idea what the next few years had in store. . .

Two and a half years later

Dear Diary,

BEST DAY EVER! I'll finally be done with them! I'm so excited! It wasn't as bad as I expected, but

I still can't wait! Mom's calling, G2G! Ttyl!

Sam

As we pulled into the familiar parking lot of the office, my heart thumped with excitement. I rushed out of the car and into the building.

"Hello Samantha!" I was greeted by Chrystal, the secretary. I knew her well by now.

"Hi!" I smiled at her, grabbed my file, and bounded up the stairs. I sat and waited for one of the assistants to call me.

"Sam!" Sasha called to me, brushing her red hair out of her eyes. As soon as I sat down I turned on my iPad. As they worked I checked Facebook, nope, nothing new. I update my status and move on.

"Here you go Sam!" I was interrupted by Sasha. She held a pack of something wrapped up.

She handed it to me with a grin on her face. I tore the paper off to reveal a pack of Juicy Fruit gum. I flipped it open and a note fell out. It read:

Sam,

Congratulations! You're done with braces! Please enjoy this gift for taking great care of them!

-Your Braces Support team

That same week my mom had an even better surprise waiting for me when I came back from school. As I walked through the door I almost had a heart attack. Hanna was in the kitchen waiting for me. I was beside myself with happiness. We spent the day catching up on news. As she pulled out of our driveway after dinner I had a strange thought. *I wish I could get braces again.*

The Something Box: a Fictional Account of an Author's Journey
By: Aniela Libicz (Gr. 8)

Everyone has a wish, a dream that is hidden under layers of emotion and time. A longing that pulls on your soul every now and then, reminding you that it's there and it's waiting. Something that you would walk across the world just to do, give everything you have just to pursue that little nudge, but also something that you place into a box, lock and then bury deep, in the soil of your heart. Something like a silver sword that would plunge into every adventure or challenge, but also something that you could never reveal, never show. You could never open that box and reveal your something, because... well, just because.

It is something that everyone has. Some people follow it, they open their box and begin a journey that isn't easy but always pays off at the end. Other people don't even know they have a something; they are way too busy with "stuff", to even notice their quiet calling. Others can see, very plainly; hear, very clearly; know, ever so strongly what their secret calling is. They know but they keep their box locked tight and live with only a little nudge.

As I write this story I will try my hardest to open my box and explain my something...

My box is quite unique; it isn't my determination of beating the next level of ANGRY BIRDS or surviving third period French class. I don't want to be a super star or meet Justin Bieber. My longing isn't even placed in my skating, swimming or climbing trees. My something isn't even becoming a princess (a pirate one to be exact). My box is securely locked around only one thing, only one dream, one something.

Hello everyone, my name is Katrina Ever-White and I am 23 years old. I am an unmarried woman with one secret passion. I have no living family and only one friend in the whole world, Su. Now for everyone out there that has a best friend I must say that you are indeed quite lucky. Now I don't mean a shallow "fashion or gossip" BFF, I'm talking about someone that could recite your every word; someone that is always one step ahead but also one step behind. She knows what you're going to say even before you say it and it's mutual. It's like you're made for each other, well that's like me and Su.

Su was the kind of person that only clicked with some people. Now I'm not saying that she wasn't friends with everyone, because she was. I mean she was hard to figure out. She was steady but so unpredictable; you think you understand her, that you know what she's gonna do next when BOOM, she shows up at your house and tells you that she's gonna be a writer.

Now when I opened the front door to my house that quiet March evening Su immediately got to the point; she gave me a quick hug then blurted out excitedly: "I'm gonna be a writer!" she exclaimed smiling.

It took me few seconds of staring to realize that she wasn't kidding.

"But b-b-but but but"

"You're stuttering girly," Su said in a matter-of-fact voice.

"But you hate English!!!!!!!!!" I yelled back.

"I know," she said so cheerfully I began wondering if she was really and truly okay.

I stared at my best friend, just when I thought I had her figured out and well, “A writer, really?” I finished my question out loud.

“Yup,” Su smiled and gave me a hug. “I have to go Catty; I just came over to tell you the good news!”

Su smiled and was already half way to her house before I finally snapped out of the shock I was in.

“My best friend... a WRITER,” I thought to myself, “but she hates English, she can’t spell for the world and grammar drives her NUTS! Then again... this is Su I’m talking about.” And I was talking... to myself... out loud! I took a deep breath (to this day I still don’t know why I felt so nervous.) I know now that I haven’t completely figured Su out but I do know that she would be on something new soon. I was 12 when this happened and I gave her a year tops for this writing passion of hers. Well... now I’m 23 and she still hasn’t given up...

When we were 14, Su wrote this amazing story and entered it into a writing contest at a local book store. The winner would receive a scholarship of 500 dollars and a contract publishing 10 of his or her next stories in the newspaper. Su was so excited and started writing a story immediately. “A Game against You” was the title she chose. It was about a girl named Lilly and her biggest crush: Peter. Basically one day they were picking berries in an out of bounds woods -the only place they could be alone. They would go there every few days trying to escape, even if just for a few hours, all the worries back in their village, which was ruled by evil giants! Lillie’s father had been hanged for hunting

illegally and her mother and sister had been left heartbroken so Lilly picked berries to keep her family alive. One day as Lilly and Peter were picking further into the woods than they had ever gone before suddenly Peter fell into a kind of trap and broke his leg. Before Lilly could even react, a dwarf wagon had appeared from nowhere and threatened to tell the Pace-Boxers (a.k.a the authorities) if they didn't come with him. Not wanting to get caught Lilly and Peter climbed into the wagon. Now of course this had been a lie and the dwarf took them straight to the queen (a mermaid) and the king (a giant) the rulers of their world. There, the two of them were made to fight against other human prisoners in a cruel arena out in the desert. They were the main attraction in the "Man 2 Man" festival that occurred every ten years. However, on the night before the festival Lilly and Peter managed to escape. Unfortunately they died only steps from their village because of some poisonous fruit candies they had gathered for food.

Even though the story wasn't on the most positive subject matter, it was still a great story. Su entered it in with high hopes and waited for the final verdict. After about a month Su received a blunt letter stating that her story had been the first one to go. The judges all agreed that it was a disgrace and repeated many times over that writing really wasn't her thing and perhaps she should stop before she embarrasses herself further.

Su ran over to my house and we cried and cried and cried and cried! She burned the letter and along with it all the copies of her failed story. After she had calmed down enough to talk she told me to do the same. For arguments sake I burned all the rough copies that she had given me but kept the original one safe in my jewellery box. I

decided right then and there that I would give it to her on the day she became a writer... again. Su would keep going, I know she would. I mean after five years of trying she wouldn't stop now.

Over the next few months I helped Su heal. I know she had been hurt but I knew she would write again. On her 20th birthday I was starting to lose patience. It had been two years since the last time she had written anything and probably the worst two years of her life. You see her favourite subject was our life dreams: she would talk about writing and I would talk about archery. The difference between us though was that she had actually followed her dream, if only for a little while. She always tried to convince me to try, "Just try, once, for me," she would say but I always dismissed her plea with an explanatory phrase like: "This chapter you wrote was quite interesting" or "I hope you start writing that story soon, I have to know what's going on!" All in all I completely ignored her when she talked about archery; Su would smile sadly and change the subject but somehow always found a way to start it up again at one time or another.

Even though Su never pushed, I got to the point where I almost tried archery class-almost, but not quite. The day I was going to sign up (if only to stay loyal to my friend) Su lost the writing contest and stopped nudging me towards my dreams. With no one to nag at me each time an opportunity arose, I lost the determination that Su had poured into me and instead tried to help her out of this writing phase she was going through. My "box" slowly shut and my something kept quiet, until one day...

"Knock, knock, knock."

“Come in,” I shouted just a little too loudly. Su stepped in and smiled uncertainly as she gave me a hug, I noticed that she was shaking slightly and waited for her to explain what was going on. Su took a step back and bit her lip.

“You’re starting archery next week,” she said beaming.

“Oh Su!” I gave a little yell, “I’m so happy; I knew you would come around.”

“I have to admit,” Su said apologetically, “I never thought I would ever start writing again. I mean that day when you said, and I quote: ‘You start writin’ I’ll start shootin’.” Su finished almost in tears.

That was one thing about Su; her mood changed easily, but only slightly, I mean even when she was crying she was still happy!

I passed Su a tissue but she was already leaving.

“Bye Catty. I just popped in to give you a hug.”

“Oh Su,” I thought, “She really needs to learn...”

“Learn what?”

Su’s voice made me realize that I had been talking to myself, AGAIN!

“Learn that eavesdropping isn’t very nice!” I said quickly. Su looked at me but didn’t say anything else, picking up her purse she stuck her tongue out at me, laughed and started her journey back down the road of writing.

Time passed and we both followed our dreams; Su wrote story after story after story, took English classes and worked vigorously on her spelling. She entered a famous writer's contest and was awarded with fourth place. She strived to achieve more, never content with her present level, always aiming for a higher mark. Fourth place turned into third, then into second and after that; first - every time. She was a role model to everyone who followed their something, never giving up for long, always returning to her dreams.

I, on the other hand, shyly attended my first archery class and loved it from the first shot. It was plain to everyone that I was doing what I loved, even though the first four years were mostly just trial and error, working constantly on technique and accuracy. I still had tons of fun and even made some friends!

I was very excited for each lesson and poured my heart into every shot. After many years I finally entered an archery contest, after Su's constant nagging and surprise, surprise, I placed in second! Su (of course) went through my closet dozens of times to find something suitable for me to wear for the awards ceremony.

On one of her many crusades in my closet, Su found my old jewellery box that held the original copy of her failed story. She was so happy and mad at me for keeping it after I had sworn to burn it, she decided to make a few changes and turned it into a bestselling novel; Giants were turned in to the Capitol; Peter was split into two characters: Peeta and Gale. To thank me, while getting back at me Su (otherwise known as Susanne Collins) turned Lilly into Katniss Everdeen.

Slowly Susanne's once failed story turned into something special. A book that kept many up at night; a gift received only because she had opened her box and followed her something.

The Battle of Titan
By: Reed Percival (Gr.10)

I: The Fortisian Warrior

I look out into the bleak black abyss and long to be home. I miss my friends from school. I miss the parties, the good times. But most of all, I miss my parents. Unfortunately for me, home is nearly 500 billion kilometres away.

I push on the window and float away from it. I start swimming in the air towards the elevator. The doors shoot open, and two tall young men wearing orange-camo fatigues float out.

“Hey, Mountie!” shouts one of the soldiers.

“Where are your skates, Clarke? Leave ‘em in the igloo?” snarls the other. The two soldiers snicker together, and drift away.

I ignore them. They are American soldiers, and technically on my side. In fact, we’re part of the same army. We’re citizens of a common country. But that’s not how it is in Fortisia. All that matters is roots, and former Americans hate former Canadians. Racism plays a big part in Fortisian society, as it had in American society before all this started.

I climb into the shiny steel elevator and press the mess hall button. It’s lunchtime for the soldiers onboard the *Fortisian Warrior*, and I’m itching for a cheeseburger. The

doors slam shut without a sound, and the rockets outside the box go off. Without gravity, something needs to propel elevators up and down. Seconds later, the doors burst open and I swim my way into the room.

The mess hall of the *Fortisian Warrior* is a great big hall about as long and as wide as a football field. The ceiling is a giant window, and I can see countless stars, all looking like tiny specks of light. Even the sun looks puny from here. A massive dull orange ball blocks our view of Saturn. It's Titan, our destination. This will be our last meal on the ship before we get there.

In the vast hall, there are thousands and thousands of soldiers in orange military fatigues. I hate our uniforms. They look like a cross between prison jumpsuits and rapper clothes from the '90s. The only reason we wear these stupid uniforms is so we can blend in to the orange methane atmosphere of Titan. Our uniforms are heavily insulated, as the average temperature of Titan is almost -300° Fahrenheit. They also have a sort of parachute we can activate. It's basically a flap of material between our arm and side on both arms. But it's not meant to protect us from a fall—the thick atmosphere of Titan would protect us from that. They are to be used like wings to fly through the air, and surprise our adversaries. This could only be done on Titan, due to its thick atmosphere and low gravity.

I grab a floating, lukewarm cheeseburger and a Coke from the kitchen. I float out and look for Bobby. He sees me before I see him; Bobby is waving at me from the far upper corner of the mess hall. I quickly glide over to him.

“Hey Bobby,” I say. “How’s your day been?”

“Not too bad, Private,” jokes Bobby. He’s a Private First Class, and likes to gloat.

“Ah, Bobby, the only reason it’s you who got the promotion and not us is because you’re from Houston, not Toronto,” I retort. Bobby understands why I get bullied by the other soldiers. Bobby’s American, but he’s a good guy. He was, and still is the first good American I’ve ever met since the Union.

“You may have a point,” admits Bobby. He then shouts in a gruff voice, “Nevertheless, I’m your superior officer, and I expect you to act like soldiers around me!”

We both laugh together. He’s imitating Sergeant Bowers, the most atypical sergeant in the army.

“Clarke! Get over here so I can kick your ass one more time before Titan!” shouts an American.

Bobby stops laughing. “Shut up, Andrews, save it for the Chinese.”

The beefy American, Andrews storms over. “Make me, Williams! What are you doin’, hangin’ out with a Mountie, anyway?”

Bobby gets in his face. “I don’t know. Way I see it; we’re all Fortisian, aren’t we?”

“Born American, die American. Screw Fortisia,” he snarls.

Bobby grabs Andrews by his tangerine collar. “You stay away from us, Yank!”

Suddenly, a metallic booming voice blares over the speakers. “Attention Fortisian soldiers. We are just above the atmosphere of Saturn’s largest moon, Titan.”

Bobby and Andrews forget about each other and scream for joy. So do I, and every other man on board. We have finally reached our destination!

“China’s ship has already landed on the other side of the moon. They are most likely stationed right below us now. We must battle for this hemisphere before we can land.”

I frown. It looks like we’re going to test our suits early.

“All soldiers must now head to the armory. You will be given weapons and other supplies. Immediately afterward, put on your masks, and head to the escape pods. At exactly 1300 hours, all pods will be deployed. Be ready for battle.”

At that, every soldier in the mess hall starts swimming towards the emergency elevator. It is large enough to hold the entire Fortisian army, but it’s a tight squeeze. I quickly get in the elevator with the other soldiers. Once everyone is inside, the great steel doors slam shut. They open again quickly, and we swim into the armory.

The armory is a giant room not unlike the mess hall. The only difference is that this one is filled with weapons.

The reason that the governments of Fortisia and China voted to wage war on Titan instead of Earth is because of these weapons. They are powered by nuclear fission, and

give off extreme amounts of radiation. Anyone found with one on Earth is put to death.. Titan is the closest place to Earth that, if these weapons were used there, Earth and the stations on the moon and Mars wouldn't be harmed. The radiation can penetrate atmospheres, destroy ecosystems, and kill someone the very second it touches their bare skin. So much radiation is given off during a war that it would probably wipe out life on Earth if the war was anywhere closer.

I grab an orange machine gun, an orange blade, and an orange pistol. I look up at the glass ceiling. It is completely orange. I check my zero gravity watch. 12:56. I quickly swim into an escape pod, and think about my parents as it blasts off towards the ginger moon.

II: The Battle of Titan

There are about 30 men in my pod, and all are staring at me accusingly. I hate this. Why did the United States, Canada, Mexico and Cuba have to become one country? Everyone who isn't American is seen as a loser, a dog, an enemy, even. All this was because of Mason Elliott, fiftieth and final president of the United States. He claimed that the Fortisia plan would unite the continent, but all it did was outcast everyone except the USA. And then he got greedy. That's what started the whole war. Fortisia invaded Taiwan, and China retaliated. The UN said that we had to fight somewhere else for the sake of the planet, and here we are.

Suddenly the pod comes to an instant halt, but it isn't even as bad as a fender-bender on Earth. The low gravity and thick atmosphere slowed us down, so slamming

into the ground feels like stopping in a car. The doors open and I am the first to step out onto Titan. I instantly fall over—I haven't experienced gravity in two years, and even with the vigorous training, my legs are weak as blue milk. The Americans laugh at me, naturally, but they stumble too. The ground is covered in orange chunks of material that I understand is methane ice. I slowly get up, and walk my way around slowly. In about two minutes, I'm back to normal. So is everyone else. We get ready to fight.

I look around, and all the soldiers I see are donning orange uniforms. Where are the Chinese? He said to be ready for battle. Maybe they haven't reached this hemisphere yet.

Out of the orange sky, a black thing swoops down and grabs a member of my squad. His screams of terror are quickly silenced, and a body slowly falls down, his throat sliced open.

In the distance I see this happen to more soldiers. Suddenly a black thing comes down on top of me. He pins me to the ground and takes out a knife. I fight him, but he's too strong. He is about to overpower me, until I find the trigger of my rifle, and squeeze it. A massive blast shatters the silence, and a green bolt of fire blasts him off the moon.

The projectiles our guns shoot are lasers, not unlike those of the classic Star Wars movies. They burn through all materials, so our uniforms aren't made for protection, but for heat and radiation resistance.

“They’re above us!” I scream at my comrades. “Use your glider suits, take off!” I flap my arms like a bird and fly up into the air. I see hundreds of black shapes diving at our soldiers. I shoot them and fly in their direction.

I dive to the ground. I land right on top of a Chinese soldier, and shoot him in the head. I instantly shoot upward into a crowd of more Chinese. I shoot most of them, but the last one comes at me with a knife. He wrestles me and gets a hold of my gun. He is about to shoot me when he is nailed with green light and killed. I look to the direction of the shot. An orange-clad Fortisian is standing there, with a nametag that reads PFC R. Williams. It’s Bobby!

He comes over to me and shakes my hand. He points downward, and I nod. We need to go to the ground. We both dive down.

I see a mass of orange and black bodies strewn over the ground. We lost about a thousand men, but we won the battle. A colossal object floats down from the sky. It’s the *Titan Warrior*.

Just as the ship hits the ground, I see a black mass on the horizon. I realize that it goes all around the horizon, and that it’s surrounding us. My heart sinks as I realize what it is.

China anticipated the loss of the battle. Those soldiers were just a fraction of their behemoth army. Now they were going to come at us with everything they had.

“*THEY’RE COMING!*” I cry. Now all the soldiers see what is happening, and rush to fight the oncoming Chinese.

Bobby and I scream as we run towards the black wall of soldiers. We could see millions of them. Red flashes of light kill many of our allies. Our green flashes avenge them. I take to the sky. Bobby follows. We shoot as many black-clad Chinese as we can before they ascend to the clouds with us and attack us.

I stab a soldier near me. I can see the fear in his eyes as he dies. Bobby has gone insane, seemingly shooting randomly, but hitting his target every time.

“Die, die die! That’s what you get for screwing with Fortisia!” he shrieks gleefully. Nothing could prepare him for the one from below.

A red laser silences my friend and blasts him into space. I scream for my friend, but he is gone.

I fire randomly in the direction of down. Surely I’m hitting whoever killed Bobby, but I don’t care. I just don’t care anymore.

Suddenly ten Chinese rise up from below and take aim at me like a firing squad. I go berserk with the gun. I kill them all but one, and he gets a shot at me.

The laser goes through my gun, destroying it, and hits me in the right glove. It burns through my flesh and takes off my hand. Searing pain races up my arm and I scream. I pray that death may come soon to end this, this terrible pain, the worst I have felt since they killed my parents.

They were Chinese. I was adopted. When the war started, President Elliott made sure all the Chinese born immigrants were deported. My parents had each spent less than

a year in China before they moved to Canada, but no matter. The Chinese government saw them as spies, so they killed roughly two hundred million Chinese-Fortisian deportees, including my parents. A day after I got that news, I joined the army.

I think that I may join them soon, but then a blast of red light kills the Chinese that took my hand. Friendly fire. I am still in great pain, and I fall to the ground. I fall right in front of the ship. Medical officers stationed in front rush to my side, and I can see light and my parents and home, and I black out.

III: The End

I wake up. My mouth tastes like vomit. My mask is off, and I'm in a white room. I get up from a bed, and walk over to the door. I open it, and see General Isaiah Silver giving a speech to about 50 other soldiers.

“And so, we have two options: surrender, or die and take as many of them with us as possible,” he says grimly.

A silence comes over the room. One soldier asks, “Why don't we put it to a vote?”

I speak up. “What the hell happened?”

Everyone looks at me. For the first time since I joined the army, I am granted respect. “Son, we lost. They ambushed us with everything they had. What you see here is what's left of the Fortisian army. One way or another, we've lost,” says the general.

“So what happens now?”

He frowns. “We give up, or we take all our remaining missiles, and blow up Titan, killing everyone on it.”

Someone else speaks up. “Could we attack the actual country of China?”

The room erupts in discussion. A man in a white lab coat says, “No, no. A missile can’t be fired from Titan and hit Earth. It’s physically impossible.”

The general looks like a light bulb just turned on in his head. “We don’t have to fire from Titan. We’ve got a back-up.”

He presses a button on his control panel. A glass map folds out of the wall.

“In the event that we lost the war, we installed secret missile bases on the moon. These can be controlled from here. We can aim it at Shanghai and hold the Chinese for ransom. If we fired a missile there, over 100 million people would die. We haven’t lost yet!”

The room erupts in cheers. They are shouting “*SILVER 2052*” and celebrating. Eventually they disperse, and I am alone in the room.

I look at the glass map. It has buttons for every major city in the world. Touch one, and a missile destroys that city. It’s like something from a James Bond movie. Beside it is a pad controlling all the missiles on Titan. As I look at these things, my mind opens, and I have an epiphany. Maybe it was induced by all the morphine in my system. But I think I just realized something that was true all along. China killed my parents. But Fortisia sent them there.

Washington D.C. has a population of 10 million, almost all politicians. They knew we were outnumbered. Why did they send us here? Why not use Chinese-Fortisians as soldiers instead of sending them to their deaths? Why not allow women to fight for their country? Realizing all this, I close my eyes and press two buttons.

At that moment, every missile hatch on the *Fortisian Warrior* opens and shoots a rocket at the other hemisphere of Titan. And on the Earth's moon, a secret hatch opens and fires a missile directed at Earth, in the direction of the Mideast coast of Fortisia.

The Chinese are celebrating when it hits them. Eleven million soldiers instantly turn to dust. The orange moon of Saturn shakes.

The American soldiers in the ship turn and look at me, and realize what I have done.

“NO!”

A bullet hits my chest. Not a laser, a bullet from an old Colt handgun. The general doesn't trust laser guns.

The pain is there, but nothing like a laser. I can feel blood spurting from my side, coldness and warmth at the same time. It almost feels nice, welcoming.

The soldiers race over to the glass map, and vigorously try to undo what I have done. They fail.

I think of my friend Bobby. I think of my parents. I will see them soon.

In Washington, the politicians are at work, unaware of what will happen. I smile when I think of that, and I hope that what I have done will fix things. It won't, but I hope. I hope I go down in history for the boldest, vilest, and greatest deed ever done. I think of all this, and feel my lung fill with blood, and see my parents, and nothing.

Epilogue

They knew death was imminent. As the shockwave of the missiles raced towards them, they huddled together. Some cried, some thought of their families. A small voice started to sing,

“God bless America, land that I love”

Everyone listened to this and sang with him the song they had known and loved. They cried, and saluted their old country, and sang,

“Stand beside her, and guide her

“Through the night with a light from above

“From the mountains, to the prairies

“To the oceans, white with foam

“God bless America, my home sweet home

“God bless America, my home sweet home.

And then they were gone.

To Love a Painting
By: Jessica Bell-Jackson (Gr. 11)

Reina Hill believed she was completely alone in the world. She was a fifteen year old girl, with long red hair. Square framed glasses hid her eyes, while the clothing she wore was just one size too big.

Her mother and father loved her, she knew, but that didn't mean they cared. They did not ask how her day was at school. They did not ask her where the bruises she had come from. In fact, they rarely spoke to her at all. Were they embarrassed of her? She did not know.

School was a horror show for her. Her ideal day was to go to school, be ignored, and go home. That was rarely the case. She was on her own at school, with no friends to back her up when she was bullied. She didn't even know why they did it. Students would knock books out of her hands, and push her. Talk about her behind her back, and in front of her. She tried making friends, but to no avail; no one was interested.

There was no need for it. She was normal. Just because she dressed different was no reason to treat her as if she were nothing.

There seemed to be one thing that brought her happiness. Art. It was her sanctuary. Her haven. The only thing that could brighten her face after a long day of teasing and neglect. Reina practiced her artistic skills as much as she could, with every medium she could place her hands on. Painting, sculpting, sketching, even photography. She was no Picasso at the artwork she completed, but it made her happy.

The city she lived in was opening up an art gallery. It was only a few minutes from Reina's home. On her calendar, she marked off the days until its grand opening. The day of the opening, a Saturday, she was the happiest she had been in her whole life.

Reina threw on her worn sweatshirt with some faded jeans, rushing to get ready. She grabbed her phone and camera, placing them in her pockets and rushed out of her room.

She ran towards the door in excitement, before hearing a loud, annoying sort of voice call out to her. "Reina! Where are you going?" her mother called out, emerging from the living room. "To the art gallery. It opens today," Reina held the door knob in anticipation as she waited to be dismissed.

"Why would you want to go somewhere so boring?" her mother asked in honest confusion. Reina tensed up slightly, but relaxed when her mother continued, "Well go ahead. Have fun." Reina was practically already out the door as she yelled to her mother a quick thank you.

The door slammed behind her as she took giant leaps across the lawn. Once on the sidewalk, she ran as fast as she could towards the gallery.

To others, the building might look plain, like a usual gallery. To Reina, it was beautiful. Because in it held the solution to all her problems. It held the happiness she would have every day.

She walked in quietly, looking around in excitement. Today was a free admission day, but even then, not that many people were around. A comfortable amount. She pulled the sleeves of her sweatshirt up a small amount before walking quietly down the halls. The

further she walked, the fewer amounts of people she saw.

Her eyes stared at each piece attentively, analyzing every detail placed into the lovely works of art. Some pieces seemed too perfect to be real. Others, the artist intentionally made their art imperfect. All of the artwork she saw was beautiful. She took many pictures with her camera, making sure to get the best angles, the best lighting.

She reached the beautiful, small garden that was art in itself. The area was completely empty. Reina looked around the garden, seeing all of the different types of plants. Soon she reached the back of the gallery, an open space in front of the garden. It had only paintings hanging from the walls. She quietly looked at each piece of artwork. And then, she saw it.

It was a lonely painting in the middle of the area. A stone bench sat in front of it for resting. Reina walked towards the painting with her mouth hung open. She stood in front of it, examining the artwork. It was a man, probably just a few years older than herself, his head and torso showing. He had pitch-black hair that was shaggy, wonderfully painted. He had a slightly strong face shape. One of his hands was raised, revealing a gun. A brown jacket was placed over him, with a plain background of a reddish-black. The most stunning thing about it was his eyes. They were a pine green that seemed to look right through you. This was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen.

Looking below the painting, she read the information below it. The painting was labeled 'Hunter'.

“Nice looking painting, huh?” a dark voice spoke behind her before she could read any

more. She turned her head to see the man in the painting. Her eyes went wide, darting back and forth between the painting and the man. He laughed, standing up. Reina turned her body to face him.

“Excuse me, is this a painting of you?” she questioned. He smiled, nodding, “Yeah, that's me. My name's Hunter. And yours?” “Reina...” the young teenager turned her head to the portrait.

“I'm afraid I don't do the portrait much justice in looks,” he chuckled warmly, standing beside Reina with his hands in his pockets. He wore the same jacket he had in the painting. “I think you look exactly the same, besides the gun of course,” she smiled politely. They stood staring at the painting for a few moments before Hunter spoke once more.

“So I take it you like art? I haven't seen many other people around here,” he turned around, motioning with his arms at the area. It was still empty of people, besides Hunter and Reina. “I love art, I've been waiting for the art gallery to come out for a while!” she grinned.

He looked surprised for a moment, before his gaze turned into one of excitement. “I have for a while as well! Maybe we can look around together?” She nodded almost instantly, a large grin on her face. Hunter grinned back, “Let's get going then!”

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The day flew by. They learned a lot about each other, from where they were born to what their favorite colours were. The best part about it, she felt like he was her friend. He

listened, and seemed to really care about what she was saying. He was a nice man, polite and honest.

“I’m 18,” Hunter stretched, sitting down on the bench in front of his portrait. The two had just completely and thoroughly observed the gallery. “Just turned 18 a few days ago.”

“I’m 15,” she smiled, sitting down next to him.

“Oh, really? You look older,” he stated in surprise. The lights had begun to turn on, it was beginning to grow dark outside. She shrugged and laughed, “I think I look my age.”

“I need to be heading home now. I don’t want my parents to worry,” Reina sighed, with pursed lips. Hunter seemed to frown in a disappointed way. “Will you come back here at all?” he asked, “I’ll meet you here next time you come around if you do.”

“I’ll come back. But how will you know I’m here?” she asked, standing up. Hunter stood up with her, smiling at her as he replied, “I’m going to be here pretty often.”

She laughed slightly. “I’ll come back tomorrow, okay? Hopefully I’ll see you.”

“You will,” Hunter spoke, giving her a goodbye hug. “I promise.”

~

For days and days after, they would meet at the same spot. Right in front of his portrait. She paid to go into the gallery each day, which was not very expensive. She came so often that the receptionist would smile and tell her to just go in some days. On school days she would go right after the bell.

She enjoyed seeing Hunter. He made her feel important, special. She couldn’t help but go

red thinking about him, or being around him. She soon realized she had a crush on him.

“I just find it so cool that someone made a portrait of you!” she smiled as they walked around the garden in the shimmering sunlight. He shrugged, but grinned, “I guess. I think a sculpture would have looked pretty awesome too!”

Reina laughed, and saw people turn and look at her funny as she laughed and spoke with Hunter. Reina tried to ignore the people none the less. They must have thought they were being obnoxious and loud, or something.

“Hey Reina, can I ask you something?” Hunter stopped, facing the teenager. She faced him as well, nodding. “We're friends, right?” he asked. She raised an eyebrow, before laughing. “Of course we are!” At this his smile grew even deeper. “Good.”

~

Slowly, their feelings for each other grew and grew. Reina would even discuss her deepest and darkest secrets. The day she finally spoke about the bullies at school, she couldn't continue speaking. She cried. Hunter seemed to hold her so tightly that all of the pain melted away. They stayed like this for a while.

“No matter what anybody says, Reina, know that there will always be someone out there that cares about you.” She didn't believe that for a moment, but she nodded anyways. She just wanted to make him happy.

“I'm being honest,” he smiled gently. She frowned, “I don't know anybody who does.”

“I do,” Hunter smiled, running a hand through his hair. “Heck, I care about you so much;

I think I might be in love with you.”

She didn't realize he even said it until a moment later. Her mouth dropped, but she quickly closed it again. “You do...?” she asked. Hunter stared into her eyes for a moment before slowly nodding. His eyes. They were the exact same as the portrait depicted them. Stunningly beautiful.

“I love you too...” she muttered, not being able to control her mouth. She went a very dark red, and Hunter took the moment. He placed a hand on her cheek, and kissed her very lightly.

Her very first kiss.

It was magical to Reina. She kissed him back for the small amount of time it lasted, before they pulled away slowly. They stared at each other, before Hunter rested his forehead on hers. “Can I call you my girlfriend now?” he asked with a grin. She laughed, relaxed once more. “Yes you can.”

He grinned happily, pulling her into another, deeper kiss.

~

Reina got home just in time for dinner. Her mind was only thinking about Hunter, as her parents spoke to her. They had told Reina they had some important things to speak to her about. They sat at the dinner table as they ate. Reina took a bite out of her spaghetti as she thought, and listened.

“Reina, we love you very much...”

I can't believe it...I'm in love with him, and he's in love with me!

“...we need to diagnose it before...”

I can't wait to see him again. My very first boyfriend.

“...we'll take you to the doctors as soon as-”

“I'm sorry what about doctors?” Reina stopped her wandering mind. Her father gave out a loud sigh, before continuing, “We're taking you to the doctors as soon as possible. Were you even listening to the conversation?”

“No,” Reina said bluntly, not caring as she placed more food in her mouth. Her father's face seemed to go red with anger. Her mother looked pale.

“I'm not going to the doctors, plain and simple,” Reina stated, placing her fork down.

“Please Reina, this is for your own good!” her mother's eyebrows creased in sadness. But still, the teenager shook her head, “There isn't anything wrong with me.”

“People have been coming to us, telling us you have been talking to yourself in the gallery!” her father stood up, a strained look crossing his face. “I'm not. I've been spending my time with my boyfriend,” she furrowed her eyebrows. Now people were picking on her by telling her parents she was crazy.

“Boyfriend...?” her mother slightly smiled. Her father on the other hand didn't seem to believe her, “You do not have a boyfriend. There is something wrong with you. We have had many people tell us that they have seen you talking to yourself, all around the gallery. We are getting you help. And that is final.”

“So what, you think I'm crazy?” Reina raised her usually calm and quiet voice. “Fine! I'll go and find out for myself!” she yelled, pushing her chair out of the way and running out the door. She didn't stop to close it behind her. She heard her father call her name, but she did not listen. She just ran.

~

The gallery was still open at this time, luckily, and she rushed through the doors. She quickly paid the receptionist, before walking quickly through the halls.

She spotted him sitting in front of his portrait, and a smile came onto her face. He had to be real. She sees him, she feels him. He has to be. “Hunter?” she called out softly once she was behind him. He turned around with a frown, before plastering a big grin on his face. “Hello my dear, I wasn't expecting to see you again tonight!”

“Are you real?” she asked desperately. Hunter stared at her for a moment before furrowing his eyebrows in confusion. He stood up and faced her, placing a hand on her shoulder. “What do you mean? Of course I am.”

“Mom and dad told me that I'm hallucinating. That people have been seeing me talk to myself,” she placed a hand over his hand, near tears.

“...Hunter?” Reina spoke low and with worry. His expression had grown slightly pale, and sad. Even guilty. He soon turned around and walked around the bench, standing in front of his portrait.

“Come here please...” he mumbled. Reina hesitated for a moment, before following him.

She stood next to him. "I'm 18 years old, Reina," he stated bluntly. She frowned, and nodded to agree, "You've told me that before."

"That's the age of the painting, love. It isn't a portrait, it's someone's imagination. The man is not named Hunter, the painting is," he said it in near one breath, his eyes shut tight, "I'm not real."

Reina stared at him for a moment, when tears began welling up in her eyes.

"...but...you're the only person who cares about me...you're my best friend...my only friend."

"I wish I was real," he blurted out, turning to face her. "But I'm not. And you have to move on. You have to treat whatever you have, make yourself get better. I can't help you, Reina. You have to help yourself."

She stared at him for what seemed like eternity. Her first love didn't even exist. "You're not going to see me anymore, okay? Don't come back here...not until you get better, at least. Go and fall in love with someone else, okay? There are more people who care about you than you might think. If you can get a painting to fall in love with you, you can get a lot more real people to," Hunter ran a hand through his hair, not knowing what to say.

"...Okay. I won't come back until I'm better," the tears rolled down her cheek as she spoke, but she meant it. It was to help her, after all. She realized that she was basically crazy.

Hunter looked relieved. "I love you, Reina. Know that. And know a lot more people love you too."

“I love you too,” she kept her voice as steady as possible.

They pulled each other into a warm, large hug. Then, they backed up slightly to kiss. It was a gentle, soft kiss, one that Reina would remember forever. And then, she couldn't feel it. She couldn't feel his arms around her, or his lips. She opened her eyes. He was gone.

She never did see Hunter ever again. Any hallucination of him, at least.

Reina was diagnosed with schizophrenia. A weak version, but schizophrenia none the less. The doctors prescribed medication for it, and she took it throughout the rest of her life. Although not cured, she would not hallucinate anymore. She paid attention more, and dressed herself better. She fell in love with a man whom she married, and had children with. She had two kids, a boy and a girl. Both healthy. Both showing no signs of schizophrenia. Finally, Reina was something that she always wanted to be. She was happy.

She knew that it was the life Hunter wanted for her. The life that she wanted for herself.

Reina visited the portrait once a year, on the day that the gallery had opened. She had told her husband about her time with the portrait. He found it odd, but loved her none the less. She truly loved him back. One day, a few days before her daughters fourteenth birthday, her daughter asked her a question.

“Mom, who was your first love?” she asked. Reina raised her eyebrows, but then grinned.

Clearly her daughter was in the middle of falling in love herself. “My first love was a painting named Hunter. He was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. We were very

much in love.” Her daughter was thoroughly confused, but ignored the odd response.

Reina knew it was odd that her first love was a mere painting. But she would not have had it any other way. Hunter would always be in her heart. Even if he had just been a painting.

Shrimp Special
By: Madeline Smith (Gr. 12)

It had been almost 20 minutes since the man sat down in the restaurant in his neat dress shirt and tie, starkly stiff and aloof in juxtaposition with the general buzz of laughter and clinking cutlery surrounding him. Heading to his booth with his drink in hand (a glass of house red wine), a young waitress put on a fresh smile.

"Here you are! I'm sure you'll like it, we get so many compliments on our wine."

"Okay, thanks." His words were gruff and his eyes were focused on the plain watch on his wrist. Swirling the wine in his glass, he didn't notice when some of it slipped over the rim and splashed onto the white table cloth. The waitress flinched at that, but her smile remained and she told him she would be back in a few for his order, retreating to check on her other tables.

He arrived at 8 pm, and it was now 8:34.

Balancing two orders of shrimp for the attractive couple in the booth adjacent to him, the young waitress gave him a nod and a smile as she passed, but his menu was still wide open. As she passed him in her return to grab some extra seafood sauce, she found his menu folded in front of him. She pulled her notepad from her apron pocket, pausing next to him, "Are you ready to order?"

"No. I'd like more wine. I'd like it in under an hour, this time."

"Oh. Well, not a problem! I'll get that right away, sir." She swept away his empty glass and stashed her notepad, returning in record time with a fresh glass of wine.

"Can I offer you a bottle, sir? If you enjoy a few glasses of wine with your dinner, it can really be cheaper than-"

"Fine. Bring me an extra glass." He still refused to look up from his watch, but now his phone had been brought into the picture too, a text waiting on the screen.

"Another glass, sir?"

Before she could hastily comply with his request, the man was already spewing out defensive words, "Yes! My lady friend will hardly be happy to come all the way here just to be forced into drinking sour wine straight from the bottle! Or perhaps you think that would please her, Debra?" His eyes lingered a moment on the borrowed nametag pinned to her chest, "Not a particularly modern name, is it?" His blue eyes roved over her less than perfect form, "But then I suppose you weren't exactly born in the 21st century, were you?" He lowered his face back into the glass of wine in front of him, exposing the neatly gelled dark hair on the crown on his head.

"Actually," her voice was eagerly bright, "My name isn't Debra. It's Lizzie- Elizabeth. Still not quite the most popular name of the century, I suppose!" She gave a little laugh, met with silence. Turning to leave, he caught her eye.

"Thanks for letting me know, Lizzie. Now I can live happily. The success of my entire evening was resting on the knowledge of your name."

Shifting uncomfortably, Lizzie answered quietly, “Well, we met just last week at Sarah’s party, so I just thought you might remember me if I told you my name. . . I’ll ah, I’ll go get your wine now, sir.” She scampered out of there.

By 9PM, he was almost out of wine. It took careful planning to avoid revisiting his table for as long as possible until he had to physically flag her down with a flapping hand, shaking his empty wine glass at her across the restaurant. Hurrying to his table, Lizzie reached for the near-empty wine bottle to pour him the last glass it held within.

“No! I’m clearly saving that for my date!” His hand snapped up to slap hers away, “Have some courtesy, *Lizzie!*” He pulled the bottle of alcohol to the far end of the table, his words loud enough to grab the attention of the blond couple chatting quietly over their shrimp, Lizzie recoiling from his touch.

“Sir!”

“It’s Carson, honey.”

“Has your date contacted you at all?”

Carson glowered, sinking into his seat, “She doesn’t need to alert me to anything if she’s only a few minutes late. It’s considered fashionable. No one shows up right on time.” He checked his watch, “She’s only three minutes late, anyways.”

Lizzie folded her arms, “So you came an hour early for some pre-dinner wine?”

“Obviously you aren’t very knowledgeable on the subject of date etiquette.”

“Date etiquette means greeting your date with red wine on your breath? That doesn’t sound much like a gentleman, to me.”

“Gentlemen aren’t hip. Women want bad boys. Am I wrong?” His blue eyes met her brown ones until she anxiously glanced down at the notepad ready and waiting in her hands.

“Sir, I am really going to need you to order something. I can’t offer you much more alcohol, but we have a two for one shrimp special today for only-“

“Do I look like I can use two servings of shrimp, Lizzie?” He gestured wildly at the empty seat across from him, knocking the unused second wine glass off the table as he did so. Glass shattered at Lizzie’s feet. Unable to restrain himself, Carson burst into laughter at the glass glittering on Lizzie’s black work shoes as if she had bedazzled them.

“Perfect! Here you go Amy, have some alcohol!” He proceeded to dump the wine onto the broken glass, a puddle of red forming to match the stain on the tablecloth. Lizzie leapt away from the splash of wine, evoking an almost sheepish “Whoopsie!” from her patron. With a sigh, she warned him away from the broken glass as she hurried to retrieve cleaning supplies.

Bustling past her manager as she gathered a dish rag and garbage bag for the mess, she received a disapproving frown; Carson would have to order soon or get out.

As soon as the hardwood floor was clear of wine and glass shards, Lizzie apologized to Carson for any inconvenience, the blond couple stepping around her on their way out.

“You’re saying sorry?” Carson snorted, “Oh, why thank you. Much appreciated.” He unfolded his menu, running one finger along each option as if thinking intently over each one.

Lizzie decided to try to sell the shrimp deal one last time, "Hey, if you go for the shrimp deal you can always take the second dish home! It's really quite good when heated up-"

Half-hidden behind his menu, Carson peered at her over his menu, narrowing his eyes and retorting, “I really don't think that having a container of shrimp stink up my fridge for a week would really help me bounce back from a rejection. So that’s a no. No thank you.”

"What about some dessert, then? End the night on a higher note, perhaps?"

"Nah."

"Soup? Nice, warm bowl of soup is comfort food for a lot of people-" A shake of his head and shrug of his shoulders gave her his answer. With that, Lizzie left him, telling him to look over the menu and let her know when he was ready.

It was now 9:36PM. The restaurant closed at 11PM and it seemed as though he was planning on lingering for as long as possible, ordering just enough to keep Lizzie's manager happy. He waved her over again, banging a hand on the table to grab her (and the other diners’) attention.

"Can I get something for you?" Lizzie didn't bother retrieving her notepad this time.

"I really don't think you nagging me all the time will encourage me to order!" Carson looked up at her from a glass of wine he had coerced from another waitress while Lizzie had left him alone.

"Sir-"

"It's Carson! We've been over this!"

"Look, you are the one who waved me over here! While I'm sorry your date didn't show up, it really isn't appropriate for you to be taking it out on me."

"Pfft, fine then. Get me some more wine."

"I'm sorry, but I don't think that's a very good idea. I really can't do that for you, Carson."

The latter sighed audibly, thumping his elbow onto the table and resting his head onto his hand. He used his free hand to muss up his hair a bit, silent long enough to make Lizzie restless and unsure if she should stay or go. With his hair noticeably less perfect, he quietly handed her the menu he had received almost 2 hours prior, "I guess I'll go with the shrimp thing, then."

"All right," Lizzie stored the menu in the hostess' podium by the front entrance, clipping up Carson's order for the cooks. A few cautious glances his way during the fifteen or twenty minutes it took for his order to be ready put her mind more at ease. She caught him twice with his head resting face-down on his arms, otherwise he would simply be

leaning back and staring up at the ceiling, thankfully causing no more trouble. Sadly, the restaurant lacked any ceiling decorations.

It was now 10:04 pm.

No smile graced either customer's or server's face as the shrimp plate was placed on the table, along with the second serving already packed up in carton and doggy bag, "Enjoy your meal."

"Actually, while I appreciate it a little more sincerely this time, I kind of wanted a proper plate for the second one," Carson handed her the doggy bag and unrolled his napkin-bound cutlery, sending Lizzie off to re-plate the shrimp.

"Here you are." Briskly setting down the shrimp and leaving a fresh carton with him to take any leftovers home, Lizzie prompted him about the bill, to which he replied, "That won't be necessary yet."

"Okay. I'll be around if you need me. We close at eleven."

Lizzie found his hand on her arm again, but this time it was without the tipsy, almost territorial anger of 9 pm.

"Wait, wait." He nudged the extra shrimp dish across the table to the seat Lizzie assumed Amy would have occupied, had she come, "I was actually hoping you might have it? As a way of my apologizing for my behaviour tonight? I shouldn't have acted the way I did; I was just upset my date didn't show up. It isn't like your services are in high demand right now, right." It was true- the place was practically empty.

Lizzie paused, weighed her options, and signalled to the other waitress on duty as she slid into the booth, “I guess I shouldn’t turn down dinner.”

“Great! And you look just as pretty in an apron as you did at the party.”

Lizzie smiled shyly as the two dug into their meals.

Meanwhile, the only Amy that Carson knew was throwing her arms around her husband as their two year anniversary came to a close.

THE END

Dewey's Day at the Campground

By: Madison Fitzpatrick (Gr.11)

'Hello.' I said, as I walked up to the forest ranger. She was standing beside the standard issue red Jeep Cherokee; her blonde hair fell like a waterfall down her shoulders. As she turned, her eyes twinkled like sunlight across an aqua stream. I had never seen someone so beautiful in my life, I guess that's one of the main reasons I come back here every year.

She looked at me with a big smile. 'Oh, well hello Dewey. Back for another great summer are you? We have lots of new activities and games you can play. Is your friend Charles with you?' Charles was my best friend from school. He'd always come up with my family and I for two weeks of the summer. I loved having Charles with us, but sometimes when we would get to play games with the other kids no one would pick us to be on their team. Charles has asthma and I have glasses as thick as coke bottles. Charles and I aren't the best looking kids either.

'Yes ma'am, he's helping my parents unload the van.'

She bent down to my level of sight. 'Dewey, how many times have I told you to call me Mallory?'

'Since I was seven.' I replied with my head down staring at my feet.

'And you're just about ten now, so that's three years.' To be honest I really didn't want to call her Mallory, she was still a woman in my eyes.

She looked at me staring at my feet and tilted my chin up with her hand. ‘Oh well, I still love how your polite. Now go help your parents unload the van and I’ll see you at the campfire later.’

She put a smile on my face as usual and I ran to the van looking back behind me a few times to see if she was watching me, but she wasn’t. I got to the van and all that was left was my back pack, sleeping bag and Charles. Charles popped out of the back seat, not saying anything, just looking at me. I grabbed my back pack and sleeping bag and closed the trunk. I went to close the van door when Charles sat on the floor of the van dangling his legs outside. I looked at him and asked ‘What?’

He piped up. ‘You talked to her didn’t you?’

‘Says who?’ I snapped back.

‘You’re blushing.’

‘Move’. I pulled Charles out of the van and locked it. I started walking toward our camping area and Charles followed beside me.

‘You know you’re never going to get her.’ Charles said as he was kicking rocks. At that moment I wanted one to bounce up and hit him in the head.

‘How do you know?’ I asked.

‘Well let’s see, when do you think you’re going to see her next?’ Charles asked that question with excitement in his voice which worried me.

‘She told me she would see me at the campfire, why?’ I was curious to know what Charles was getting at.

‘If you really believe you can get her I dare you to try to kiss her!’

‘You’re crazy Charles!’ He was out of his mind, I would be kicked out of here and my parents would take away my allowance forever.

‘You’re just chicken.’

‘Am not!’ That’s one word I hate being called.

‘Then I double dog dare you!’

‘Fine!’ What did I just get myself into? Mallory would never kiss me and I didn’t have the guts to do it. I have never kissed a girl before, or even had a girl look at me without laughing at my appearance. But I had said yes to a double dog dare, there’s no being a chicken now.

Charles and I had reached the camp area where my family usually camps out. Mom and Dad had set up the tent already; you could tell we camp a lot because every hook, rod and rope were tightly pulled and placed to perfection.

Dad was starting to make dinner on our small portable barbeque we brought and Mom was applying herself with bug spray. Charles and I had started making our beds when Dad called us for dinner. We had burgers and fries. My Dad’s burgers were the best burgers I have ever tasted. One time Charles took one of Dad’s burgers home to his house and asked his Mom to make her burgers like my Dad does, but that didn’t really end well.

After we ate Charles and I got our sweaters on for the campfire and made sure we had marshmallow sticks and all the ingredients for smores.

There were about ten other kids there with their parents. Some were younger than Charles and I, only three kids were there that we knew were our age. Jimmy Falcon and his two sidekicks Rory and AJ were sitting on the logs throwing burnt marshmallows at each other. This wasn't a surprise to me, these types of actions occurred regularly. Jimmy would get Rory and AJ to pick Charles and I up and dump us into a poison ivy bush, or one time they found a bee's nest and forced us to poke it with a stick.

Clearly we weren't going to sit next to them and luckily there was a spot beside Mallory. Charles glanced at me reminding me of the dare I had accepted earlier. Mallory asked me to make her a smore while everyone was joining in on her camp songs. I roasted the marshmallow perfectly and added it to the chocolate with graham crackers. I handed the smore to Mallory and the expression on her face when she took her first bite proved that I did a good job.

'Dewey, this is perfect! Thank you!' Mallory said with a smile. She still had chocolate in between her teeth but I didn't care.

'Perfect enough for a kiss?' Once I said that, Mallory's eyebrows rose up and Charles nearly choked on his smore.

'Maybe for a kiss on the cheek.' Mallory bent down to kiss my cheek when I turned at the last second. Our lips met and it felt like the sky parted and birds were

singing. It felt like that until the palm of her hand met the side of my face. I looked at her but she didn't seem all that angry, I thought she was blushing.

Charles grabbed my arm and dragged me out all the way back to our tent. We ran so fast I could have won an Olympic gold medal; I thought Charles was sure to have an asthma attack. I had done the unthinkable, I kissed a woman and Charles was there to back me up. Charles was so proud of me, but all I know now is that this is going to be an interesting summer.



The Tall Man
By: Kayla Sanders Coulson (Gr. 12)

I glanced out the window again. He wasn't there. But he was watching. He was always watching.

I shivered and pulled the covers tighter around me. Part of me wanted to call for mom. Just to have her be in the room. But I knew she would just look under the bed, heave an exasperated sigh, and leave, muttering about how I was too old for this. I was pretty sure she was looking into a psychologist. She thought I was crazy. Maybe I am crazy.

But whether or not I was crazy, there were two things I knew for certain. He was coming for me. And there was nothing I could do to stop Him. I shivered and pulled the covers tighter around me, as if that could protect me.

Suddenly, I couldn't breathe. Something was stuck in my throat, and I gasped for air as I started coughing and hacking. No, I wasn't sick. This is what He did to me. First the coughing, then the dizziness... then everything else.

I fought back as black spots teased the edge of my vision. The horrible pressing darkness. The lack of air. The crushing fear. All to no avail. I wanted so badly to scream, but I couldn't summon enough air into my lungs.

He was here. His outline stood stark in the door way. He was so tall, His head reached the ceiling. His grotesque arms hung limp, almost brushing the floor. And all in

black, He was wearing a black pin striped suit, his blood red tie the only splash of colour on his long slim stature.

As He slowly drifted to the end of my bed, shadows clouded my vision and I knew no more.



A thin, high pitched ringing filled my ears. I opened my eyes to find myself standing in the forest behind my house, with no recollection of how I had got there. In the clearing I had often played in when I was younger. Just a second ago I had been in my bed.

I was surrounded by people; however none of them noticed me. All of them were dressed in old clothes from the 18th century. Everyone was screaming, angry hateful screaming, at something I couldn't see over the crowd of people. I pushed my way to the front, no one so much as glancing at me. I didn't know any of these people, or where they had come from, but I had to know what was going on.

When I got to the front, I saw a woman on her knees, grief written all over her face as tears streamed down her cheeks. She was keening and pulling her hair, shrieking into the air.

“He took Johnny! My little boy! Gone! Gone! My sweet little Johnny. You monster! You Devil!” she broke off in incoherent wailing.

Two stern looking men brought a tall, well-dressed man around a tree and into the clearing. Though his face was hidden in a burlap sack, he held his head high.

He was not as freakishly distorted, but still, I knew. This was The Tall Man. The monster who had been watching me for weeks. I watched as they led him to a noose, swinging gently back and forth in a breeze that did not exist.

As he came into view, the crowd swelled. Shouting names into the air, holding him accountable. These were the names of missing children. Ann, Robert, Isaac, Marry, and Johnny. He had taken them all. Just as he had now taken me.

“Justice! Judgment! Go back to Hell Devil!”

My eyes wide, I watched as they fitted the noose around The Tall Man’s neck, while he simply stood there. He looked so... calm.

The men yanked on the other side of the rope, jerking The Tall Man into the air. Suddenly I felt a rope tighten around my own throat. Desperately, I clawed at my neck, but there was nothing there. I fell to my knees even as I could feel a coarse rope cutting off my air.

“H...he...help,” I managed to gasp. But, like before, no one took notice of me. I wasn’t there. Simply a ghost of myself.

Tears stung my eyes as my face turned blue. Here it was. Here *He* was. I was going to die with Him. This is what He did. He stole children so they too could feel His

death with Him. So they could know the pain of having the air stopped in your lungs.
Again and again.

The last thing I saw was The Tall Man's feet dangling just inches from the forest floor.

I lost all sense of time after that. It could have been minutes, or hours, or days. A flurry of images past my vision, and I could only hold onto them for a second before they were gone, showing me the next gruesome picture.

A roughly drawn circle with an X through it, carved into a tree, smeared in blood on a brick wall, scribbled again and again on a notebook. The Tall Man standing behind a line of trees, sketched in black and whites. A little boy, staring blankly ahead as The Tall Man leaned over him. A Man, screaming hysterically as he searched for the children he would never find. Rivulets of blood, lazily dripping from a pale, limp hand. And finally, The Tall Man, standing under the tree from which He had been hanged.

With that last image, I saw something I had always known, but never fully realized.

The Tall Man had no face.

My fingers sunk into the soft underbrush as I pushed to my feet. When I looked down at myself, I saw that my pajamas were caked in dirt. My feet were bare, covered in blisters and small cuts; as if I had walked barefoot for miles.

I coughed into my sleeve, and found that my saliva was tinged with pink. I stared at it for a long time before everything came crashing down on me.

He had taken me.

I stood there, hugging myself as a whine started in the back of my throat that I could not seem to quiet. Where had I gone? How long? What didn't I remember?

The dream... or was it a dream? My throat felt sore where I rubbed at it, searching for the rope.

The only thing that got me moving, the only thing that kept me from curling up on the damp ground, was the thought that He might still be out there. Watching me even now. The thought made me want to scream.

Every step hurt, and every breath rasped against my throat like sandpaper. My fingers were stiff from cold, and tears fell silently down my cheeks. But still, I kept walking until my house came into view. Even my house wasn't safe anymore. He had taken that away from me.

As I walked up to the sliding door, I caught sight of my reflection in the window. My hair was plastered to the side of my head; my eyes were dark and hollow. My clothes were torn and there was a smear of blood at the corner of my mouth.

But what caught my attention, was the line of dark bruising around my neck. Quickly, I averted my eyes and went inside.

It was amazing how everything looked exactly the same. I felt like I had been gone for weeks... months... years. But when I found the calendar, I saw that I had only been gone a few hours. Luckily mom had already left for work. If she caught me like this, there was no doubt that I would be locked up in a padded room. But then, maybe that was a good thing. He couldn't get me there right?

The numbness had left me, and now, I was angry. I would not, could not, let Him rule over the rest of my life. I was done being toyed with. I did not care how, but this needed to end, because I could feel the strings of my sanity starting to come loose.

As I turned on the shower, I started to lay out a plan.

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A week went by with nothing. I wore turtlenecks and scarves to cover the bruises on my neck. I tried to act normal, act like my life was normal. I don't know how well it worked.

My mother gave me strange looks. I felt like I had been marked, like everyone knew what He had done to me, but that was crazy. I kept my head down, dotted all my "T"s and crossed all my "I"s. But most importantly, I had a plan.

I wasn't going to wait around for Him to come take me again. I was going to Him. And one way or another, this was going to be done.

I waited until my mother had fallen asleep, then prepared. I laid out everything I would need. A flashlight, match sticks, a water bottle filled with gasoline, a baseball bat, and finally a camera.

“I’m done being your puppet,” I whispered as I gathered everything and slipped out the back door. The screen closed with a click loud enough to make me wince.

I stared into the dense forest and started to lose my nerve. Every dark trunk looked to be Him, standing there watching. I realized that there was a distinct possibility that once I walked into that forest, I might never walk out again. But my only other option was to sit around and wait for him to come get me. Or to allow my mother to lock me up in a psych ward. I could see how easily He could drive me to that. He could push me back into the farthest corner of my mind, and all that would be left would be the empty shell of who I used to be.

I clutched the flashlight, and took the first few steps into the forest. In the gloom of the woods, my house quickly disappeared from view. I knew where I was going; I could retrace the path to where I was going with my eyes closed, so I didn’t switch on the flash light. I was afraid of what I would see. The only sound to be heard was my own steps, softly pressing into the earth. It seemed too quiet tonight. But I kept walking.

As the minutes passed, panic started to build in my chest. I looked frantically at every tree, searching for His pale face. Without meaning to, I started to whimper. I wanted to go home. I wanted to be safe. I ran blindly through the forest, running from Him, to Him, I had no idea.

Finally, I stopped. I stood in the clearing. The same clearing where it had all began.

I flipped on the flashlight and pointed it at the tree. There, carved into the trunk, was the circle with the X through it that had been in my dream. It had never been there before. Then I pointed the light at the branch that the rope had been hung from. I thought I could almost see the indent where it had dug into the wood. I wondered how long they had let Him hang there.

Gripping the flashlight with my teeth, I pulled out the bottle of gasoline and poured it on the base of the trunk. Then I took out the matches and the camera. When He showed up, I would have proof.

Slowly, mechanically, I placed the flashlight on the ground, and lit a match. The first one burned to my fingers, scorching me until I dropped it where it went out on the ground. The second one did the same. It was not until the third one that I could actually bring myself to touch the flame to the trunk.

I jumped back as flames clawed up the tree. Once the gas burned off, the tree would catch. Or so I hoped.

I took out the camera and pointed it at the tree, in my other hand, I held the baseball bat. The hairs on the back of my neck stood on end, and I knew He had come.

I stood frozen for a second, expecting him to attack me from behind. I stared at the flames licking the air in front of me. Then I wheeled, clicking the camera feverously, hoping to get a picture.

Flash. Flash. Flash. Flash. With every spark of light, He was closer, yet he never moved. Then He stood only a few feet from me, radiating, rage, malice, and a sick, perverse pleasure. I dropped the camera to the ground, and tried to swing the bat, but my limbs would not move. I was stuck, unable to move.

There He stood, looming over me. The heat of the fire at my back. And then I screamed and screamed and screamed.

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Anna Walker's body was never found. During the police investigation, a tree was found in a clearing where it was speculated Anna had visited before she disappeared. It seemed to be unharmed other than the scorch marks that ran half way up the trunk, and the carving of the circle. It was assumed Anna had carved into the tree, and then set it ablaze. After three weeks, Anna was declared a runaway. Her mother soon accepted that her daughter had been unstable, and moved from the property. One year after her disappearance, a letter was sent to Mrs. Walker with no return address. Enclosed in the envelope was a single photo.

Anna standing before the tree, flames outlining her form, and a tall long shadow falling across her body. Scrawled across the back of the picture were three words that haunted Mrs. Walker until the day she died.

She's Mine Now

Life is What you Make It

By Tawni Fus (Gr. 11)

School is boring. Work is boring. Having nothing to do is boring. In all reality though, life itself is truly only as boring and unfair as you make it out to be. If you believe it to be so, it will be. If you think that writing an essay for English class is boring, look at it differently. Look at it instead as a chance to get your point across. Don't write it for English class; write it as if you're writing to the town mayor. Write it as if, with the help of this essay, you can help make the most important decision for your town.

If you continue to look at things as if they're boring and unfair, like that essay, well, basically that's exactly what they'll be. If you think that the essay is boring, you'll find it such a chore that you'll be doing both the rough draft and final copy the night before the final copy is due. As soon as you begin paying attention to your surroundings and stop thinking negatively, everything for you will change. Trust me on that one; I nearly learned that lesson too late.

When I was just about to turn thirteen, my mother told me exactly that. When I was young, I was generally never a happy child. My dad had left when I was seven, and because I was daddy's little girl, I was a terror towards my mother. Even though I threw so many temper tantrums, my mother never gave up on me. The week before I was about to turn thirteen, I finally realized that. When I was thirteen, exactly three days after I'd just reached the age, my mother had died.

What I hadn't known, was that the entire time I'd thought that my father had left because he hated us and didn't want us to be a family, he had actually been working in

the city, to help pay for all of the treatments my mother went through. I refused to talk to him for almost six years under a false impression. He left us, in hopes that with the extra testing and medicines that it would help my mother get better. At the same time, I hadn't known the entire time that my mother was fighting cancer. For seven years my mother fought, overcame, and succumbed to breast cancer. I found out about her cancer the winter when I was twelve, in January; five months after my birthday.

The week before I turned thirteen was the week that everything changed for me. My mother was in the hospital at the time, and she'd just finished getting treated and I'd finally been told - after two hours of waiting - that I could visit her. When I entered the room, I'd sat beside her and she'd given me a half smile; at which point I knew that the talk we'd have that day would be serious. After she finished speaking to me that day, I went home crying. That specific visit was the time that I'd learned that my father hadn't left us because he wanted to live a different life. I'd learned that he'd moved to the city to get a better job to support us as well as help pay the hospital bills.

The day after that, the same thing happened. I entered her room after finally being allowed in, and we just talked. She apologized to me for keeping these things from me for so long, and I couldn't believe that she was apologizing to me. I told her that, and apologized to her for being so self-centered. I ended up going home crying after that talk, too. If I hadn't been so quick to assume that he'd left for good, I wouldn't have been so rude towards my mother, and I would've been able to create a wonderful relationship with her. Instead, we had one of the worst relationships and mother and daughter could ever have.

For the third day in a row, I visited my mother again. We didn't talk about much, for the first hour of my visit we just sat in silence. She'd had a bad day; the treatment had definitely begun to take its toll on her. Twice that day she had to ask me to pass something to or hold something for her. On multiple occasions I also noticed her hand shaking terribly when she held even just her cup of water. After a short conversation of pleasantries, we lapsed back into silence. Just as I was leaving, she told me I should call my father. Before I could even ask how I was supposed to do that, she told me where she'd stored his home and cell phone numbers.

When I got home, I did as I'd been instructed. It was another day of crying, because my father forgave me. I couldn't - and still cannot - get over how big their hearts are. I don't think I'd ever be able to get over such hate if it had been me in their positions.

The fourth day of visiting turned out to be much like the previous one. When I got in - after another two hours of waiting once again - I told my mother about how he'd forgiven me so easily. I told her how I couldn't believe how easily both of them had gotten over my attitude towards them, and she just smiled and told me that that was just what a family did. I'd repeated that I still didn't think I'd ever be able to forgive my child if he or she ever treated me that way, and she just continued her smiling, telling me that when I was a mother myself that I'd understand. I told her that I would make sure that if something like this ever happened to me; where me and my husband were separated for whatever reason, that I'd tell my child just to make sure that he or she didn't have such hate towards either me or my husband. She told me she was proud of me, and that I

should continue talking to my dad. I promised her that I would, and I promised her that there would never be a day that I didn't come and talk to her either.

The fifth day of visiting her was her worst yet. She couldn't pick a single thing up without shaking more than a leaf, and she had to have either I or a nurse help her hold her glass of water. That day, a nurse remained in the room the entire time. We didn't talk much that day either, since the nurse obviously didn't know of our family issues, and I could tell my mum didn't want others to know about them. When I got up to leave, she called me over to her and gave me a great big hug. She grasped me as tightly as she could, which was scarily not very tight at all, and told me once again that she was very proud of me. She told me she loved me more than anything, and that I'd better remember to call my dad. I jokingly told her I could never forget because she was always reminding me.

The day before my birthday, I'd arrived late. My dad had called just before I left to walk to the hospital, and I'd gotten distracted by trying to think of something I wanted for my birthday. I'd told him that I wanted mum to be able to live for my birthday, and that I wanted him to come visit that day too, so that we could all be a family just for a day. When my mum asked me what had kept me, I had given her a vague answer stating that I'd spoken to him, but that I wasn't going to inform her of what we'd talked about; which was something I usually did. When she asked what I wanted to do for my birthday, I told her it was a surprise and that she was definitely going to be there for it. When she reminded me that it was extremely tiring for her to do much when it required walking somewhere for a period of time longer than ten minutes, I assured her that she'd be able

to be there for it. When I hugged her goodbye that day, I could tell I'd confused her with my unclear answers. I smiled secretly to myself, already looking forward to what would happen tomorrow.

I was standing impatiently near the window overlooking the road at my aunt's home. Because of my mum's cancer, I wasn't allowed to live by myself, and had been lucky enough that my mum's sister lived near where we'd used to live, and her home was conveniently close to the hospital as well. When my father finally arrived, I ran towards him excitedly while throwing a quick goodbye over my shoulder. I didn't exactly want my aunt freaking out wondering where I'd gone, especially since she was home this time. Usually she wasn't home when I left to go, but I always made sure to leave her a note. Heading to the hospital, you could feel the excitement growing. When I'd called my father the previous evening he'd agreed to buy a cake and had told me that he'd picked it up before he got me, and that was why he was later than he expected.

When we finally arrived at the hospital, I nearly forgot the cake and nearly ran into three different people because I was so excited. All of the nurses who I'd become familiar with were laughing at me, because they all knew why I was so excited. A few of them also wished me a happy birthday, but I was rushing so much that I couldn't form any sort of reply. I made sure to calm myself down just before I entered my mum's room, since I didn't want her to begin to freak out because I ran into her room. Chances are her first thought would be that I was being chased by some stranger, and I didn't want her to worry herself so much when she was this weak. After calmly entering her room, I began telling her in a singsong tone of voice that I had a surprise to her. Laughing at me, she

asked me what it was. With perfect timing, my dad entered the room just after she'd asked. For the first few moments, she just stared at him.

I glanced excitedly back and forth between them, waiting for someone to say something. My mum looked at me then, and I saw tears in her eyes. I instantly ran forward, assuming something was wrong. When I got right beside her, she suddenly hugged me tightly. "You brought me a surprise." She said thickly, and I could tell her eyes would be leaking tears. "It's your birthday, but you brought me a surprise."

For the rest of the visiting time, my dad and I had sat beside her and we all just talked, had fun and got a chance to be a family. We all enjoyed the cake, and after taking our slices shared it with the nurses that visited. I think that in the end a few of the nurses who did come in only came because they knew we had the cake, but since they didn't say anything about it neither did I. After the visitation hours were over, my dad drove me home, hugged me and told me he'd make sure to visit again sometime soon. For about the first time that entire week, I managed to fall asleep with a smile on my face.

The day after my birthday, I wasn't allowed to visit my mum for even longer this time. I was told that her treatment of the day wasn't as good as the previous ones, so she was being forced to rest before she could deal with the excitement of someone visiting her. I tried pleading, reasoning, promising that I would be as silent as a mouse, but nothing swayed the doctors. Finally, an hour before visiting hours were over, after waiting for four hours, I was allowed in. I was extremely patient the entire time, and because I was waiting so long my aunt even came and checked up on me to make sure I hadn't been kidnapped. For the most part, our visit was once again spent mainly in

silence, and I helped her do basically everything this time. Our visit ended after just twenty minutes because she was so tired, and I went home worried. If she was getting this tired, does this mean she doesn't have much longer to live? When I asked my aunt that, she told me to shake the thought from my head, that my mum was just having a really bad day. I went to sleep that night still worried, but the positive thought that it didn't mean that she wasn't going to leave anytime soon was also there.

On the ninth day of visiting, I was happy to find out that I was able to go and visit her after the normal two hours of waiting. Both of us grinned at each other, and she proudly raised her glass to her lips all by herself. As miniscule as the movement was, I found myself cheering for her as she successfully drank her water without any help at all. After finishing her little cup of water, she looked at me with a serious expression on her face. My cheering died down, and I prepared for her to tell me something as important as the first day I'd begun visiting her consecutively. "Everything is boring." She'd begun. "But only if you see it as such. When you begin looking at everything positively, you begin to realize that nothing is boring. Not even the writing assignments you get in English. The moment you view things as if they're all positive, you begin to realize life isn't as bad as it seems." When I asked her why she was suddenly telling me that, she told me that it was because being cooped up in bed for weeks on end made her rethink her outlook on life, and how she had to come to appreciate all the little things. I didn't quite understand her logic, but I told her I would think about what she'd said.

Going into the hospital on the tenth day, I could instantly tell something was wrong. Most of her usual nurses were missing, and those that were still out and about

were solemn looking. I tried to ask them what was going on, but all of them were avoiding me, or so it seemed. Every time I went to go talk to one of them, they always seemed to have something ‘more important’ to do. After trying to enter my mother’s hospital room and failing, I went to wait in the waiting room, assuming she’d just had a longer session or something like that. When I saw strangers exiting her room, and other strangers heading towards it, I grew upset. Why wasn’t I, her daughter, allowed to visit her, but strangers were?

I went over to the receptionist’s desk, and decided that rather than just show her I was here; I’d been coming long enough that she knew who I was visiting when I came, I would actually ask her. Her response was very brief; all she told me was that my mother’s doctor would find me. This worried me even more. When I still saw the strangers walking around, going back into my mother’s room and exiting it at different intervals, and when my mother’s nurses continued to avoid me, my worry just multiplied. Finally, after an agonizing hour, my mother’s doctor found me. His words crushed my entire world.

“I’m sorry, but your mother passed away last night.” I found myself numb, unable to cry, unable to scream, unable to do anything but stare blankly at him. She couldn’t be gone, she was perfectly fine yesterday. She was even stronger than she had been in days! He patted my shoulder awkwardly, and told me he’d call my father and my aunt. For the two weeks leading up to her funeral, I continued to remain numb. It wasn’t until she was finally being placed in the ground in a beautiful maple casket, that I finally broke down. My father tried to console me, but I wouldn’t let him. I hugged my knees to my chest,

and knelt beside what was to be her grave. I cried out for her, wanting her back for even just a day more, just to say goodbye. I knew it was too late for that subconsciously, but my conscious brain wouldn't let the thought take over.

After a week of bursting out crying at random intervals, I had a sudden epiphany. If my mother was able to be so positive when she probably knew she didn't have much longer left to live, I should be extremely positive because I knew I still had my whole life ahead of me. I should be positive, look at the good things in life. I still had my father, and my aunt, she was still here, just not...here. The words my father had told me washed over me, "She'll always be with us even if we can't see her." He was right. She would always be with me, and my time for mourning was over. She wouldn't want me to be depressed or so upset; she wanted me to be positive. Wasn't that what she told me? Look at the good things in life, and the world won't seem so bad. Finally, her words sunk in.