

**No**  
**AUTOGRAPHS,**  
**PLEASE!**



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**PLEASE!**

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**209 Stories by**  
**Sixth-grade Students of**  
**Berkshire Middle School**

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EDITED BY  
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Title by Madison Harbort.

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## To the Authors

Your editors congratulate you!  
This book is a showcase for your vivid imaginations  
and creative talents (and it's really thick, too).



ROOM 107:  
THE VIP LOUNGE



# 1776

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*When the British attack the home of Daniel Blake, he is swung into the greatest adventure and the hardest decision of his life in 1776 by Antonio Christopher Delgado.*

I was 18 in the year 1776, living a happy life in Dublin, Ireland. I was just about to finish school. However, during the month of June, things became tense as word of the British-American war spread. On the night of June 24<sup>th</sup>, all of the tension was released. Like a silent pack of sea monsters, the British fleet sailed over the horizon as the sun was just rising, displaying a beautiful aurora of colors, from pinks to various shades of red, yellow, and orange. We had already seen how powerful the fleet was when they turned Belfast into a heap of ash and cinders. And we were next.

The British had fired three cannonballs at us, one of which ripped our small cabin to shreds of wood and dust. At that very moment, when we had just gotten to the escape boat, a miracle saved us. We pushed out of the bank, and our boat immediately sank. Then at that very moment, seven American ships trailed behind and opened fire on the British fleet. Three of the eight British ships took damage, one was sunk, and the rest got away. That was when I, Daniel Blake, began the greatest adventure of my life.

After I boarded the smallest American ship, we set sail for an unknown destination. About 25 minutes after departure, I fell into a deep sleep. Even though it was very fitful, I rested enough for the next day's tasks. The next day, I woke up, helped the crew with the ship's mast and sails and any of the captains' requests. The same routine continued for five repetitive months.

At about five o'clock on November 25, I woke up to the sound of bustling and conversation. We had landed on the dock on the outskirts of America. I was grateful we had reached land. When I first saw the city, I thought we were in New England, but we were actually in Essex, Vermont. The city was small, but it was buzzing with people. Essex was not very impressive. Its buildings weren't very tall or striking, just small and rural. We walked about half a mile to our cabin, which wasn't very miraculous either. It didn't look very safe, and I thought it couldn't get any worse. Nevertheless, when I heard a knock on the door, it did. There was a man dressed in a blue jacket with a red undershirt and tan trousers. I knew he was an American soldier, and I also knew they were here to help. He asked my name and age. After I told him my name and age, he gave me a wax-sealed envelope containing a letter. When I opened it, I discovered that it was a draft for the American Army. As I looked over the draft, I had a most unbearable fright as I read over the list. My name was on the list. Daniel James Blake.

When I entered the army headquarters, I discovered that there was a prisoner tied to an iron bar in the northwest corner of the room. She hid most of her face. Her eyes were the only feature visible. They were the most beautiful eyes I had ever seen. "What is your name?" I asked.

"Madeline Jacobs," she whispered. I immediately wondered why she was tied to the post.

I asked, "Why are you tied up?"

“I was captured by the army just because I am from England,” she told me. I thought I heard her begin weeping. I felt badly for her; it was heartbreaking. Although I knew she was a citizen of the enemy, I really wanted to help her. She seemed like the most peaceful being I had ever seen.

The next morning, Madeline was to be tried and hanged at Montpelier on the last Monday of the month. I had to make the most important decision of my life. I didn’t know if I should commit treason to save her, or have to let her die. But I decided I had to save her. I just had to. I had one week. So when the sun fell over the horizon, I carried out “Operation Save Maddie.” I brought a clip, picked the lock, and Maddie and I fled to safety. When we thought we were out of harm’s way, Maddie gave me the warmest hug anyone had given me before. Suddenly, we heard yelling and out of the gloomy shadows appeared a muscular soldier, musket drawn, running full speed at us. Naturally, we ran away, but when we thought we had lost him, I felt a terrible pain in my left calf. I

dove into a bush patch with her. We were safe for the moment. When I looked at my leg, I was struck with a horror so terrible; I thought I might faint. I was shot through the bone and muscle with a musket ball. The hole on my leg was no bigger than a dime, but it felt as if I had been stabbed with a stiletto.

When the soldier was out of sight, I spotted a ship in the distant docks. I saw Maddie’s face light up. “The ship is from England!” she exclaimed. When I turned my head away from the ship, I saw Maddie crying tears of both joy and sorrow. “The captain is my father too.” I checked if the coast was clear and told Maddie to run for the boat. The captain turned and saw her running, and with an amazing smile on his face, hugged Maddie as she climbed aboard. I knew that, finally, Maddie was going home. I couldn’t have felt better. I had saved Maddie. I turned away, in sorrow to see my friend leave. I returned to the army headquarters without anyone knowing I had left. After all the events passed, no one was the wiser of my exploits.

## Abnormal

---

*In **ABNORMAL** by Kate Whalen, Rebecca struggles to act normally when she annoys everyone on the plane by her odd personality. What will the passengers do before their heads blow up?*

“*A* hhhhhhhhhhh!” I yelped as I was running for the gate. My bags were flying everywhere. I turned around, struggling to get my suitcase back up in position and just as I turned my head back towards the gate, I ran into a little old lady with a walker. Since she was so light, she flew about three feet into the air and about five feet away.

“Oh, sorry,” I told her, running over to her and yanking her up from the ground.

She now felt impossibly heavy, probably because I felt so strong earlier, and now it was significantly hard for me to lift her up. After yanking for about a minute, I checked my watch, realizing what time it was and how I was not going to make it to my flight, so I decided to drop her.

“Rebecca Weller,” announced the loudspeaker, “Please report to gate 24 immediately!”

*Oh great, now everyone knows I can’t*



*make my flight*, I thought. I looked around down the aisle getting a glimpse of gate 24. I started sprinting realizing that I was about a 50 feet away from the gate. Finally, I reached the gate and before I knew it, I had given the flight attendant at the door my ticket, calmly walked down the tunnel and onto the plane. I shuffled through people to get to my seat and then I grabbed my suitcase, picked it up, and tried to throw it into the compartment above but my bags slipped and fell. All of a sudden a flight attendant came over to me and tried to help me.

"Here's your bag," the flight attendant told me politely.

"I got it," I screamed. I snatched my bag back from the flight attendant.

"I'm sorry," yelped the flight attendant. "I was just trying to help." Everyone on the plane noticed. I pulled up on my suitcase to put it in the overhead compartment above me but I lost my grip and dropped it again. Everyone on the plane stopped what they were doing and stared at me. I knew I was making a racket. I picked up my suitcase again, threw it on the shelf and then closed the latch, smiled sweetly, and walked away. Then I glanced at my ticket to learn where I was sitting. I found my seat, which, like all the seats, was dirty and ugly. They had such a repulsive pattern they should've been on the T.V. show *What Not to Wear*, the plane chair version. Then I imagined that each one of them probably was lice-infested. *Eww!* I thought to myself. I walked down the row about two feet and there was my seat. When I looked down, I noticed that a petite, yet wealthy looking ten year old was going to be sitting in the seat next to me. He was doing Instant Messaging on his laptop, texting on his phone extremely rapidly and listening to music on his iPod.

"Excuse me," I said. He failed to respond. "EXCUSE ME," I said even

louder.

Then he looked up about three seconds later and said, "Oh... do you sit here?" in a snotty voice.

"Yes," I said in an annoyed voice." *How many gadgets does he have?*" I thought. He stood up and let me through and I plopped down in my seat. I glanced at the woman sitting next to me. She had long dark brown hair, almost black and was very, very tall. She had many magazines in her hand and quite a few books and journals. Of course, the most important thing on her lap was her laptop; at least it looked like it was the most important thing.

"Hi. My name is Rebecca," I told her as I set my pillow down on the headrest for fear of head lice. "What's yours?"

"I'm Susan Schulz," she said in a voice as if I should know who she is.

"What do you do for a living?" I questioned her.

"I'm the editor in chief of *CosmoGIRL*, the coolest teen magazine ever! We've sold over a million copies just in Maine. Here, take a magazine," as she tossed the magazine into my lap.

*Wow. I don't think I'm going to like sitting next to her. She's just a meanie!* I thought to myself. "Oh cool. I'm an author." I told her. As, I was sure she already hated me and all I told her is my name. I know that the plane ride's only four hours but it was going to feel like an eleven-hour plane ride, oh well. "Where are you going?" I asked.

"To a wedding," she said.

"Me, too," I told her.

"Interesting," she said. Then I saw her mumble, "Not."

"Please fasten your seat belts. We will be taking off shortly," the flight attendant announced.

"How do you fasten a seat belt?" I asked, feeling stupid.

“You stick the shiny thing into the leather thingy,” the boy with the gadgets said.

*Click.* The seat belt made a noise that I had not heard before, so I did this: “*AHHHHHHHHH!*” I screamed so loud that the whole plane heard. I screamed until the flight attendant came over.

“Ma’am, is there something wrong?” she asked me.

“Yes, I heard a faint but monstrous and deadly noise.”

“It was the seat belt,” said Susan. “Haven’t you ever been in a car?”

“Yes, but it sounded different,” I replied.

“UGH,” Susan mumbled.

“Freak,” the flight attendant said as she walked away. Then she mumbled something else, but I couldn’t quite make out the words.

“Uh, we still have to keep our seat belts on, don’t we?” I asked Susan.

“Yeah,” she said.

“I really have to go to pee.”

“Pee? T.M.I.” Susan said the word “pee” as if it were the most disgusting word ever. I just ignored her, stood up, and walked towards the back of the plane where the bathroom was.

Just as I opened the door, the plane shifted. I slid all the way down to the front of the plane. It was horrible. And the worst part about it was that somebody forgot to flush and there was pee flooding the bathroom. Plus now, everyone on the plane hated me. The flight attendant gave me the nastiest glare anyone ever gave me in my entire life. Then I walked back down to my seat on the plane.

I was getting tired out from everything so I decided to take a nap. I slept for about an hour. When I woke up again I had to go to the bathroom. I stood up and opened the latch and I walked inside. I closed the door and I went to the bathroom. All of a

sudden, I heard this faint screaming voice like a little girl coming down the aisle of the plane. It got louder and then all of a sudden, before I knew it, a little girl was sliding the bathroom door open and she saw everything!

“Hey, get out here!” I screamed. Then the little girl turned around and started screaming at the top of her lungs running for her mom as if a monster was right behind her.

“I’m sorry, little girl!” I yelled. “I didn’t mean to scare you.” Then I closed the door, locked it, and washed my hands. Once I was done wiping my hands dry, I pulled on the latch and tried to open the door, but it wouldn’t budge. I got scared so I started crying.

“*Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh, wah, wah, wah,*” I whined.

Then I heard Susan come up to the door and knock, saying, “Are you okay?”

“I can’t open the do—” Then before I could finish talking, she slid open the door.

Soon after, the flight attendant started to come down the row with snacks. “Finally,” said Susan. The attendant pulled up next to us and Susan asked if she could have some pretzels.

“NO, NO, NO!” I yelled. “Not before you sanitize!”

Susan looked at me like she had no clue what I was talking about. While she was looking at me funny, I was digging in my purse for my fifty-pound bottle of Purel. “Here,” I said squirting about a pound of Purel on her.

“That is way too much!” she screamed. “You are ruining everything! You are so annoying! First, you don’t know how to buckle a stupid seat belt, and then you irritate the whole plane by getting out of your seat when you’re not supposed to, and now you’re showering me with Purel.” And the thing I hated the most about the lecture

was that the stupid flight attendant was just standing there next to her little cart, giggling. After she gave me a whole lecture on the horrible things I did wrong, the flight attendant walked up to the front of the plane and announced that we would be landing soon.

“Yes, yes, yes!” Susan yelled.

We pulled into the airport, and I decided I owed Susan an apology. I said, “Sorry!” and she just ignored me and walked away. I think she was happy that the flight was ending.

As soon as we got off the plane, I overheard her talking and it sounded like

she really was going to the same wedding as me. This was going to be a long weekend for her and possibly the bride. I felt so bad for Susan.

My cell phone rang. I picked it up, and it was the bride. She said I would be staying in a room with a girl named Susan Schulz when I got there and that we were both bridesmaids. Then I started running to catch up to Susan to tell her that we would be spending most of our time together in the hotel room and that we were bridesmaids. She did not take the arrangement so well. To be honest, she fainted.

## The Adventures of Madagascar

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*In THE ADVENTURES OF MADAGASCAR by Vanessa King, the Smith family goes on a family vacation, and it becomes something that they never would have expected!*

It was a very exciting day in Madagascar for the Smith family. The Smith family was thinking of what they were going to do this summer. When the youngest child, Molly, fell asleep, she dreamed of going to a land of princesses and princes where they were having a royal ball. When the oldest child, Tom, fell asleep, he dreamed of going on a treasure hunt and fighting pirates. Lastly, when the parents fell asleep, they dreamed of going on a cruise.

When the Smith family woke up in the morning the family sat down to eat breakfast. “Where do you guys want to go for vacation?” asked Dad.

“How about a royal ball in Disney World with all the best princesses?” asked Molly.

“No, that sounds boring. I want to do something more boyish,” said Tom. “How about an island full of fighting pirates?”

“No, I am scared of pirates,” said Molly.

“How about a cruise?” said Mom.

“That would be fun!” said Molly and Tom.

“So I will plan it for next week on Monday,” Mom said.

“But it is already the weekend,” said Molly.

“Then I guess that we better start packing.”

A few days later it was time to leave for their cruise. They got on the ship. “Welcome aboard, everyone,” said the captain. “We will be leaving in five minutes.”

The Smith family was ready to leave for their awesome cruise. Molly wanted to go in the pool, Tom wanted to go to the arcade, Mom wanted a tan, and Dad wanted to eat, sleep, and read the newspaper. So Mom took Molly to the pool, and Dad took Tom to the arcade.

Then about five minutes later everyone heard something: “Hello, we are close to an

island, but we do not know which one. We will check with you in a second.”

The family went back to the room for some fun. The Smith family watched movies and ate popcorn. “Hello, there is a problem with the ship, so everyone must off get the ship in twenty minutes. Bring your own food.” So the Smith family gathered their belongings and started to pack everything that they had brought with them.

About ten minutes later the family went to the front of the boat. Everyone was there. The Smiths waited and waited in line until they got their own boat. “All right, everyone, I am your lifeboat supervisor, Jeff. I am going to take you back to

Madagascar.”

“Do we bring the food that we were supposed to bring?” someone asked.

“Yes, and if you did not bring any food with you, I brought some from the dining room. Ok, is everyone ready?”

“Yes,” said the people on the lifeboat.

About two days later everyone on the lifeboat was ready to get off the boat. “Hey,” a person yelled, “I see something right over there. It’s Madagascar over there.”

“We are here!” everyone shouted. Then, all the families went back to their homes. And the Smith family was happy to be home.

## The Best Softball Season Ever

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*A school’s softball team hasn’t won a game in two years! Now their equipment is disappearing. What will happen next in **THE BEST SOFTBALL SEASON EVER**, by *Angela Satullo*?*

Sitting at my desk, not paying attention to the teacher, and tapping my pencil to the clocks second hand....

TEN, NINE, EIGHT, SEVEN, SIX, FIVE, FOUR, THREE, TWO, ONE. “*RING RING*.” The school bell rang and everyone ran out the door.

It was softball season and I wasn’t going to miss the first practice. When I got in the girls’ locker room there was the team: Laura, Molly, Julia, Carmen, and me, Mattie. Then there were the newbies, who I didn’t really know yet.

“LET’S GO!” yelled Coach Mel.

Coach Mel came out with a big bag that said *The Varsity Shop*. We all knew what it meant—uniforms, but it was way too early to be getting them now.

“All right, gals, for being such a great team last year I think you should put away those

old rotten bats and balls,” Coach Mel said.

Then Laura pointed out, “But we haven’t won a game in two years!”

Coach Mel replied, “It’s not about how many games you win or lose; it’s about how well you play the game. And you’re the best in my book.” Then she dumped the bag. There were brand new shiny bats and bright yellow balls!

What a great practice we had. Before we knew it, our moms were here to pick us up. I walked home because I live really close to the school; all I have to do is jump the fence that leads into my neighbor’s yard that lives across the street from me.

While I was jumping the fence the neighbor’s old pesky dog, Jeff, came by. His shaggy, dirty, dark brown fur bounced up and down as he came closer and his drool left puddles on the grass. He was and always will

be the dirtiest, smelliest dog in the universe. He almost attacked me, but before he could lay a paw on me, I shouted "GO, JEFF," and the dumb dog ran away. When I told my mom about the dog, she made me start taking the long way home. Why couldn't our neighbors have a cat?

At our next softball practice there were fewer bats than I thought there were, but I wasn't sure. I don't even know if Coach Mel noticed because she was too busy putting the newbies Bella, Sarah, and Megan, in their positions.

On the third practice, Coach Mel was pretty upset, but we didn't know why until the end of practice. Finally, she called a team meeting. Everyone sat crisscross on the picture's mound.

"All right, here's the problem," she said. "I bought you gals SIX new bats and TWO DOZEN new balls and now there are only FOUR new bats and only EIGHT new balls."

I knew I was right the other day, so I was the first to ask a question, "Do you know if Principal Mallorie let the boys' team borrow them?"

"I'm positive the boys' team didn't borrow anything. The first one I asked was the principal," Coach Mel replied.

"Who would do such a thing?" Carmen asked.

"Maybe it's not a person," Laura pointed out.

"It's not like an anteater snuck out of the zoo, picked a lock, and stole our equipment!" shouted Carmen.

"Sorry; it was just a suggestion," Laura said backing away from Carmen.

When I got home, I invited Laura over and we thought things through.

Coach Mel asked Laura to put all the balls and bats away on the first practice so she counted aloud, "Two red ones, an orange, a blue, a yellow, and a black one, then two

boxes with twelve balls in each."

I added, "On the second practice she asked Molly to put things away and I was right there when she did it. There was one red, one blue, one yellow, one orange, and then a handful of balls."

"It must have happened after practice, and the only people that have keys are Mr. Mallorie, Mr. Scott, the janitor, and of course Coach Mel," Laura remarked.

"We can cross Mr. Mallorie off the list and Coach Mel."

"Then so far Mr. Scott is our only suspect," sighed Laura.

The next day after school Laura and I took a trip to the janitor's room where we found Mr. Scott. After a long talk with him, we crossed his name off the list we made the day before. This left us with no suspects and a really lame sheet:

Missing Equipment Mystery  
Missing stuff: 1 red bat  
1 black bat  
4 balls  
Suspects: ~~Mr. Mallorie~~  
~~Mr. Scott~~  
~~Coach Mel~~

On our way out, we slipped the sheet into the first recycling bin we saw.

The next week my neighbors and their dog Jeff went out of town so my mom let me jump the fence until they came back home. I was glad because it takes a lot longer not jumping the fence.

For one WHOLE week, none of balls or bats disappeared. But I shouldn't really say that because when Coach Mel was having a meeting with the parents the team practiced. When Bella was up to bat she hit a ball over the fence and the ball landed in a Dumpster. None of us wanted to climb a fence and reach in the smelly dumpster so we just let it sit there. The best part was that Coach Mel didn't even notice!

On Monday, the equipment started disappearing again. Laura made a missing sign:

MISSING

4 bats

Colors: red, black, orange, yellow

7 softballs -- yellow with red stripes.

If found please give them to Mr. Mallorie

She put them on everyone's locker, she taped them on the mirrors in the girl's bathrooms, and she asked her older brother to tape them on the mirrors in the boy's bathrooms. There wasn't a place in the school you didn't see one.

Nobody had seen the missing equipment.

At the next practice, Coach Mel looked really tired. She handed Megan the keys to the storage box and asked her to get the equipment out.

"OH MY GOODNESS," Megan screeched.

Everyone ran towards the storage box. Megan came running out with the equipment bag. It had a big hole in it! She dumped the stuff that was in the bag. There were three bats and five balls. No one spoke.

The next day we had an assembly. Mr. Mallorie kept blabbering about respect and honesty. Then he said, "In two days the girls' softball team will play their first game of the season. We surely don't want them to lose."

Someone from the crowd yelled, "But they always lose!"

Then another boy added, "The last time they won a game was two years ago!"

"That's enough comments!" yelled Mr. Mallorie. "The purpose of this assembly is to find the missing equipment so the girls can get off to a winning season. I am going to offer a reward to the person who returns

it – a free Icee for an entire month! No questions asked." That sure did get a lot of people interested.

On the day before our first game, my science teacher chose me to help with the school garden. "Sweetie, can you go get the little shovels from the shed by the field?" asked my science teacher.

I gave a simple reply: "Sure." What wasn't simple was finding the shovels. I looked everywhere in the shed and couldn't find them. I finally went to the last place in the shed there was to look, and I found a pile of leaves. When I brushed them away, there was a hole. Let me tell you, it wasn't dug by a human. It was clearly a dog. The only dog that lived close to here without an invisible fence was Jeff.

My mom was out of town on business, and my dad let's me do just about anything, so I invited Laura over for a sleepover. The dog, Jeff, went in the house at 7:30 p.m. and didn't come back out until 6:00 a.m. Laura came over at 7:00, and at 8:00 we went to the backyard. If we found the stuff now we would have it for our first game. We found a hole in a millisecond and dug everything up. The only problem was we only found a doll with a missing leg, three dog toys, a dog dish, and a doll leg. I found the dog house and Laura crawled in. There she found all the missing balls and two bats. Laura said, "Coach Mel is going to be so surprised."

We got home at 8:45 and stayed up to 1:00 in the morning from all our excitement. At school Laura actually fell asleep in math. I had to throw ten paper planes at her to wake her up. This wasn't good because after school we had our first game.

When Laura and I arrived at the softball diamond for the game everyone was there. They were all really nervous. When we showed them the bats and balls, they

became excited. Laura explained the story. They all laughed when we said a dog was the thief.

Bella said, "Laura was right, the thief was not a human after all."

After everyone did their share of laughing, we were all pumped for the game.

Last year when we played this team we had zero runs and they had thirteen. When I looked at the batting line up, the worst batters were up first and I was one of them. As I was busy checking the lineup Molly put an ice-cube down my jersey, I screeched so loud that everyone else joined in. We were having fun and we were all excited. Maybe we did have a chance of winning.

"All right, gals," Coach Mel yelled over to all of us, "no more shrieking until we win this game!"

"Don't you remember last time we played them? The score was zero to twelve!" Carmen pointed out.

"Make that thirteen," Julia moaned.

Sarah got three strikes before you could spell Mississippi, then Carmen got three strikes just as fast, and then I was up.

"Strike one!" yelled the ump. I swung at that one too early.

"Strike two!" I felt the hairs on my back stand up. If I hit the next one, I'd be running to first, and if I were lucky it'd be able to make it to second.

*WAP.* I hit a pop fly. I took off as fast as I could! It flew into the outfield and no one caught it. The first base coach pointed

me to second so I rounded second and slid into third. I did it; I was safe! Now it was up to Laura. If she hit a good one I'd be running across home plate.

Laura hit a grounder to the second basemen, I ran home as fast as ever but the second basemen threw it to home and I was out! That was three outs, which meant we took the field and it was their turn to bat.

As the innings wore on, we improved some and were able score some runs. It was the end of the game, last inning, bases loaded, two outs, and our worst batter was up, Molly. The game was tied at 2 to 2. Molly hit a big one, a great big one. We all held our breath. Would someone catch it? NO, she hit a home run, sending Megan, Sara, Laura, and herself home. WE WON! WE WON OUR FIRST GAME! Megan and Laura dumped a bucket of cold water on Coach Mel. To our surprise she yelled, "Ice cream, my treat."

When we sat down with our ice cream Bella spoke up, "I predict this will be our best season ever."

"Me too," replied Molly and Megan at the same time.

"Me three!" Laura added.

Lastly I said, "No one can stop us now, not even Jeff."

We did have our best season ever. We didn't win all of our games but we sure won a lot of them. We never did find the rest of the bats, but that will just have to be a mystery to all of us.

# A Brother's Fight

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*In A BROTHER'S FIGHT by Sarah Fried, two brothers are lost deep in the woods of British Columbia. They are in the fight to stay alive. Will help arrive before time runs out?*

**F**LASH, FLASH went the lightning!  
POW, POW went the thunder! It was a wonderful weekend of camping gone wrong. Tommy and Tyler were on a hike at the time. The rain was coming down so hard that they could barely see two feet ahead. Tommy and Tyler were holding hands and their dad *was* right ahead of them, but as they searched for each other, they drifted farther and farther apart.

"Daddy!" screamed Tyler.

"Tyler!" cried Tommy.

Their dad said nothing; he wasn't there.

Tommy and Tyler, aged 13 and 10 respectively, are deep in the woods of British Columbia in late April. A storm had just hit and it had hit hard, with lightning and hours of pounding rain, never stopping. They had been separated from their father in the storm and were freaking out. They are in the fight to stay alive.

"Tommy, I'm scared. I want Daddy!" Tyler cried at the top of his lungs.

"Shhhhhh! Hush up, Tyler. I do, too, but I just have to remember what my scouting book said about a survival situation like this. Oh yeah, I believe that it said that the most important thing to do is to find a source of food," explained Tommy.

"Oh, great, that's just great. A source of food out here? That's impossible!" cried Tyler.

"Well if you would have been quiet like I told you to, you probably would have heard the sound of running water!" exclaimed Tommy.

"What will running water do for us besides make us ill from drinking it?" asked

Tyler.

"Well first of all, have you ever heard of something called fish? And secondly, you do know that all you have to do is boil water and it's safe to drink?"

"Ohhhh, smart, but we still have to find a way to catch the fish and build a fire," muttered Tyler.

"Well let's see what is in my trusty backpack, a soaking pack of matches, a dry pack of matches, a mosquito net, an extra fleece, a Swiss army knife, and a blanket," announced Tommy.

"That's good, 'cause all I have is one very wet stuffed bunny," explained Tyler.

"Hey, that's not all you have, you have some unused glasses that you're *supposed* be wearing right now."

"I have a plan, Tyler. It involves that loose string hanging from your shirt, worms, part of your glasses, a rock, and some hard work," explained Tommy. "Make a strong fishing line out of that loose string of yours', toss your glasses to me, and when you're done making that fishing line start collecting worms."

"Yes sir, captain Tommy."

Tommy and Tyler worked for hours making fishing gear. Tommy made a fishing hook by breaking part of Tyler's glasses, bending it, and then sharpening the end with a rock. Then, when they were finished, they put their creations together, added a stick, and voila: a fishing rod complete with worms. All their hard work depends on these couple of hours of fishing.

"Come on Tyler, we have to get down to the river fast," Tommy said anxiously.



Tommy and Tyler fished for hours, going up and down the river, switching off who fished. They got a couple nibbles but no catches.

“Tommy all that hard work was for a wormless fishing rod!” Tyler cried.

“It’s fine, it’s only been one day without food or water,” Tommy explained.

“But Tommy, I’m hungry.”

“Well I’m sorry, but today that’s how it’s going to stay.”

They were walking through the woods when Tyler tripped on an aluminum can.

“Ouch!” cried Tyler. “Stupid can!”

“No, not stupid, this is a stroke of luck. We can use this can to boil water. Yes!” Tommy shouted happily. “This also means that someone has been here before. But there’s no use, that person hasn’t been here in a long time. This kind of pop isn’t even made anymore. Hurry, Tyler, go collect firewood. We only have about two hours of daylight left.”

“I’ll get some water then help you.”

Tommy went all the way back to the river for some water while Tyler was searching everywhere for some dry wood. Pretty much all of the wood was soaked due to the storm that had hit the day before, but Tyler was determined to find some firewood. When Tyler returned to the campsite, he returned with a wimpy looking pile of firewood. Tommy had some extra time so he decided to collect some firewood and kindling. He returned with a weak looking pile of firewood too, but had also found a cattail weed; the fuzzy stuff makes great tinder.

Tommy set up some firewood in a formation that he had once learned at Boy Scout camp. He set some cattail in various places. He lit a match that didn’t blow out before he reached the cattail in about ten tries. After about four or five more tries, he got the wood to burn also. He fed more

wood into the fire and then Tyler decided to go collect some more firewood.

“Whew, we finally got a fire going and are on our way to boiling water,” Tommy said with a sigh of relief.

Tommy set the can of water over the fire and waited about eight minutes until came to a boil. In the mean time, Tyler had come back with as much firewood as he could find. Then the wait was over and the water was ready.

“Mmmm, hot water. Here Tyler have some.”

“Mmmm, you’re right that is good.”

That night the brothers slept on Tommy’s blanket and extra fleece, happily filled with hot water. They had the fire going and every so often being the older brother Tommy was up to feed the fire.

“Awwww,” Tyler yawned at his first sight of daylight.

Tyler eyed Tommy wandering about.

“Hey Tommy, whatcha doin?” questioned Tyler.

“Oh, just looking around. Tyler come here and tell me what you see,” said Tommy.

“Well, I see small red balls in a bush,” explained Tyler.

“No, much, much better than that, these are edible berries that I learned of at a scout meeting, but I forgot the name.”

“Yay, food!” Tyler screamed.

“No Tyler, unfortunately they are not fully grown,” Tommy explained. “They won’t do us much good, but they’ll give us some nourishment for now. Prepare to eat something very sour.”

Tyler took a bite. It was horrible, but it helped stop their stomachs from growling, but the boys wanted a proper meal, FISH.

He had found a bendable branch that fit through the top or bottom of the net, depending on which way you look at it,

where the string went through. He tied the ends together with vine. Tommy thought of that show and thought that it would be simple eventually, after plenty, more horribly sour berries and some very frustrating moments, they had a fishing net, which they hoped would be successful. They headed to the river to catch some fish. They waited and waited for fish, they tried many strategies. When Tyler just stood very still in the middle of the river where it was shallow, a stupid fish about ten inches long just swam right into the net.

“FOOD!” they cheered in excitement.

Tommy put two sticks with V’s on top on each side of the fire with one long stick placed in each V connecting the two together. The long stick was put through the fish from head to tail after being gutted and the scales had been taken off. His dad had once taught Tommy how to do that when he went camping. Every so often, Tommy and Tyler turned the fish. They had some time to rest before the fish was done.

*Oh, I miss Dad right now, Tommy thought to himself. Yeah sure, it has only been two days but I miss him.*

Tommy got up to check the fish and he knew that it was done because the skin

started to peel. Tommy took the first bite using his Swiss knife.

“*Dee-licious!*” exclaimed Tommy.

Tyler took the second bite. They took turns until they were full. Tommy made sure that he threw the remains far away so that the bears wouldn’t come.

They slept wonderfully that night, the same as before.

The boys repeated this for two days with a little extra fun here and there like climbing trees or playing catch with rocks. Until one day, they heard a sound...A sound of a helicopter... the sound of a rescue copter.

The boys shouted and shouted until the ‘copter spotted them through the trees. They were saved! Hooray!

When they arrive at the helicopter pad, they were greeted with hugely open arms... their parents. After they had been separated from their dad on the hike, he had hiked all the way back to his car and called 911 to send a search and rescue ‘copter for his boys. Everyone was so happy that they were all alive and safe. Tommy and Tyler told their parents about all of their adventures, like fishing and cooking and playing in the trees. They were all grateful to be one family again.

## Bye Bye Billy

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*Jessica’s new baby boy is discovered to have a life-threatening brain tumor. Will the doctors be able to save him? Find out in the story*

**BYE BYE BILLY**, by *Meredith Hawkins*.

**I**t all began 12 years ago when Jessica Lockhart, a popular cheerleader, and George Healy, a star football player met at Harvard University. After they met they couldn’t get enough of each other. From sunrise to sunset they spent every waking

moment together and eventually they fell in love. Four years passed and, before they knew it, George got down on one knee and proposed.

A few months later on a warm summer day in a little white chapel in Sedona,

Arizona, Jessica and George got married. In the church there were purple curtains and colorful stained glass windows. When Jessica walked into the room everyone had to stop and stare. She was wearing a white dress with sparkles. She also had a long veil in the back that followed with every step she took.

“I will love you forever and always,” Jessica said.

George replied with a loving smile and said, “Forever and always- I promise.” The wedding was one of the happiest days of their lives.

On May 17, 1998 Jessica gave birth to one beautiful baby boy, Billy. For years it was clear to everybody that they were the happiest family around. But one day, in August of 1999, Billy started acting weird. He was always kind of strange but today he was really acting up.

“Stop that!” Jessica and George kept saying constantly. After a few days of strange behavior Jessica decided to take Billy to the hospital, just in case.

After about half an hour in the check up room the doctors told Jessica, “We must take scans of him because something is definitely wrong.

“Is it serious?” asked Jessica.

The doctors replied quietly: “We don’t know if it is serious yet.” Then they walked off with Billy and headed to the scanning

room. After they were done, Billy took a seat on Jessica’s lap while the two doctors went into a room to discuss the scans. While they were in there Billy played with blocks.

Then a kid named Ryan came up and asked, “Can I play with you?”

“Sure,” Billy replied. Billy and Ryan were playing very nicely until they were interrupted by the two doctors who came out with questionable looks on their faces. Jessica was informed that Billy had a severe brain tumor and will definitely die within two months.

Jessica was speechless. All she could say was, “This is such a shock to me.”

Since Billy was supposed to pass away soon, Jessica let Billy invite his new friend Ryan home. They learned that Ryan’s mom was very sick in the hospital and needed to undergo very serious surgery with an 80 percent chance that she would not survive.

A few months later on Valentine’s Day of 2007, Jessica walked into the family room and found Billy dead with the T.V. still on. Jessica and George thought that they could cure their eternal sadness by adopting Ryan. Ryan’s mom’s surgery was unsuccessful and he was headed to the orphanage. But thanks to Jessica, he had a new family. The new family journeyed on to live happily for years.

## The Cafeteria

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*When a boy in the cafeteria cannot buy lunch, he goes on a hunt for money that may be harder than he thinks. Will he be able to find money? The world may never know in **THE CAFETERIA**, by **Josh Knoll**.*

One day I walked into the cafeteria and waited in line. The musty stench mixed with buttery mashed potatoes and the sound of kids laughing filled the room.

I had my ID card so I would not be sent to the back of the line when I arrived at the red doors. As usual, there was a buffet of food. I asked the lunch lady for double

mashed potatoes (that made my mouth water), some chicken, and an Izzie. Finally, I got to the front I took out my ID. The lunch lady swiped it and it said that I didn't have any money. She told me I couldn't get lunch without money. I dropped my food on the floor in frustration. I ran around in a circle screaming because earlier this morning I didn't have breakfast (and there were mashed potatoes).

I looked through my pockets looking for money. I asked everyone in line if they had any money to spare (all I got was a few pennies). I asked the person behind me to hold my spot in the line. I ran around the cafeteria looking for any amount of money. I saw someone drop a couple of dollars, but they picked it up before I could get there. I had gotten one dollar and 50 cents. Then the lunch lady said that lunches here are three dollars.

I got mad. I said, "There must be some exception for me, Max Flenderson!"

Then the lunch lady exclaimed, "Oh, wait, this isn't Flenderson; this must be the

wrong account."

"WHAT? You mean I ran around for nothing?"

"Yeah, pretty much," she replied. You could not believe how irritated I was at that point.

When I sat down with my friends, Dave asked, "What took so long?" Then I explained the whole situation.

"I want to go get a slushee; nobody eat my lunch," I said. When I got to the line, we had five minutes left.

I was second in line when Mr. Moll yelled, "Two minute warning!" That meant I couldn't get a slushee. *At least I got an Izzie in the lunch line*, I thought to myself.

When I got back to my seat, Dave was drinking MY Izzie! I screamed, "Why did you drink that!"

"I don't know. I was thirsty."

"Well, so am I!" So I took the Izzie and drank what was left of it. Then our table was dismissed, and I was left all alone eating my lunch.

## The Case of the Innocent Daughter

*In THE CASE OF THE INNOCENT DAUGHTER by Emma Godin, a young showgirl's diamond ring mysteriously disappears, and Sam Spud the worst detective in town, is on the job. Will Sam Spud find her ring in time for her next show?*

It's a hot summer day in Las Vegas, one of those cities where if you didn't watch your back you could wind up getting shot!

Hi, I'm Sam Spud. I am a detective. I was in my office waiting for another case to come around the corner and hit me in the face, when all of a sudden a young lady walked in. She was dressed in red leather from head to toe. Then she said, "Are you Sam, Sam Spud?"

I had no idea who this girl was so I said,

"Yeah, so what's it to you?" I wanted to make sure that she wasn't here for some stupid missing hat story. Turns out it was more serious than that!

She explained that she had a case that would be hard for me to solve. She told me how her diamond ring had been stolen; she knew that I was the detective for the job and, like most people; she wanted a great detective to solve the mystery! I asked for her name so she gave me her show name,

Miss Kitty Cat. She also told me her real name was Margaret McLaughlin. She was a showgirl at Delida Deloda. Now she also told me that this ring was her lucky ring and if she didn't have it by her next show then she would be ruined! Her next show was that night, so I grabbed at the chance to check the place out and establish some suspects.

When I got to Delida Deloda, in the first row was Money Maker Man Miller. He was dressed all in black from his black leather hat to his black shined shoes. He was the owner of this joint. I thought I would ask him a few questions when the show was over. Kitty Cat was performing at this point in the show so I sat down and watched the show. I noticed that all of the other girls were standing behind Kitty Cat. That could have made them angry enough to steal the diamond! I also noticed that Miss Kitty Cat was doing unusually badly tonight. I looked on her left hand index finger where she told me she always wore her ring, her lucky finger, and the ring was not there. At the end of the show I watched Money Maker Man Miller. He was talking to the loveliest girl in the entire room. She had a depressed look on her face. Her name was Miss Megan Mary. After she left I went up to Money Maker Man Miller and asked him a few questions.

"Money-Maker- Man Miller?" Sam asked.

"Yeah who's asking?"

"Sam Spud the detective and I would like to ask you a few questions about Kitty Cat's missing diamond ring!"

"Oh yeah I heard about that. Well, ask away, but you won't find anything on me."

"Ok, where were you the night before last at 12:30pm?" I inquired.

"I was counting my money."

*A likely story*, I thought. So I asked him a few more questions. "Did you at anytime

did you go to Miss Kitty Cats dressing room alone?"

"No," he sneered.

"Then what were you doing yesterday at between 4:30-5:00 when you were not at the club or at your house?" I knew that because I talked to his doorman at his apartment and the security at the club.

"Why do you need to know?"

I didn't want to answer that question so I left him, for now.

I went to the next suspect, Miss Megan Mary. She was the next suspect because for detectives anyone is a suspect. I asked her the same questions I asked Money Maker Man Miller. Another likely story, she said that she was at the mall. The rest was on a strictly need to know basis and apparently I didn't need to know! Then I went to the daughter of Money Maker Man Miller. She was just heading out to go out to her b-b gun practice when her b-b gun accidentally made a direct hit out of the bag. Just then, the stolen ring fell out of the bag.

I took Money Maker Man Miller's daughter to my office but she still refused to admit that she stole the ring; instead she insisted that she was framed! I had an inspector come in to check for fingerprints. On the ring it had the fingerprints of Money Maker Man Miller, Miss Megan Mary, Miss Kitty Cat and Money Maker Man Miller's daughter. To solve this mystery I brought all of the suspects into one room.

So I continued to ask questions that they could not trick themselves out of answering, like I would ask one person if they knew where another person was at a certain time. Then I came to a conclusion that it was, "Miss Megan Mary!"

"Okay, I did it I did it all! I set the gun to go off at the exact time Sam walked into the room. I put the ring in her bag. I DID IT ALL!"

“But why?” I asked.

“Because I deserved the role on that stage and if I couldn’t have it then no one could!” I had no choice but to cuff her even though it pained me to do so.

But on the upside, I had solved the mystery just in time to have some delicious hot chocolate and a sandwich for lunch. And Miss Kitty Cat went back to her spectacular shows.

## The Case of the Missing Diamond Earrings

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*In THE CASE OF THE MISSING DIAMOND EARRINGS by Elizabeth Lohr, Megan loses her diamond earrings in school. Will Megan’s friend, Jenna, who is good at solving mysteries, be able to help her? Or will the earrings be lost forever?*

Megan was tearing open gifts at her Grandma’s house on Christmas day when she came across a little present and was excited to see that it had her name on it and wondered what it was. When she opened it, she was thrilled to see two shimmering, gorgeous diamond earrings!! They were stunning and the way they shined made Megan’s mouth wide open in surprise like she was about to scream. The first words that came out of her mouth were, “Thank you so much, Grandma! I will wear them to school tomorrow and everyone will be jealous!”

The next day at school, Megan showed all of her friends her new earrings and sure enough, they were very jealous. Throughout the day, Megan made sure that her diamond earrings were visible so that everyone in her class could see them.

In gym class they were going to swim, so she set down her earrings on a bench in the locker room so that they would not get wet. She dove into the icy cold pool. The gym teacher, Mrs. Collins, was working them very hard. She made them swim six minutes nonstop. If they touched the bottom, they would have to start all over again.

After swimming, the students dragged

their tired bodies to the locker rooms and Megan took a long shower before going back to get her belongings. All of her other belongings were there but she could not find her earrings! “*Why would anyone want to take my diamond earrings from me? Should I tell my mom about this? No I shouldn’t. But she probably needs to know. I guess that I will just tell her after I find them, if I find them.*”

At lunch, Megan searched for Jenna the Great, who read mystery books. Megan knew Jenna always solved the mystery in the book before the book gave her the answer. When Megan found her she asked, “Will you please help me solve a mystery?”

“What is the mystery?” asked Jenna the Great.

“I lost my diamond earrings and I know that you have never solved a real mystery before, but could you try solving mine?”

“Sure, but first I will need to know where you were when you lost your earrings and if you have any people who don’t like you,” Jenna replied.

“I was in the locker room, and, yes, I do have people who don’t like me,” answered Megan.

“Well then, first we will look in the

locker room,” Jenna replied.

“Okay,” agreed Megan. When they arrived at the locker room, they poked around, but they couldn’t find the earrings.

Then, Jenna the Great asked, “Do you have anyone who dislikes you in this class?”

“Yes, her name is Erin, but I didn’t show anyone my diamond earrings except my friends,” answered Megan.

“Well then, it must be one of your friends. So, do you have any of your friends in your gym class?”

“Yes, Isabella, Leah, Christina and Grace are in my class.”

“Are any of them mad at you or jealous of you for something?”

“Well, Christina is kind of jealous and upset with me because she used to be best friends with Allie and now Allie is my best friend,” Megan replied.

“I’m guessing that Christina took your earrings because of what you just told me, and also because I found drawings of diamond earrings in her swim locker. Tomorrow you should look by her locker or see if she has your earrings in her book bag,” suggested Jenna the Great.

The next day, Megan looked by Christina’s locker, in her book bag, and in a secret compartment in her book bag she saw her diamond earrings! At the same moment, Christina saw Megan looking in the book bag and screamed, “What are you doing?”

Megan replied, “What are you doing with my diamond earrings?”

“I know it looks like I took them, but I really didn’t. I wasn’t even out of the shower in the locker room by the time you

realized that they were lost.” Megan believed her. At lunch, Megan went back to Jenna and told her what she had found out.

Jenna proclaimed, “There is no way that Christina could have taken them. Can you give me any other information?” Then Megan remembered that Erin might have seen the earrings when she was wearing them. Also Megan remembered seeing the backing of an earring in Erin’s locker that she had forgotten about it until now. Megan still didn’t trust Christina but she thought that she would just ask Erin about the earrings first. She told Jenna that it might have been Erin. She explained to Jenna “Maybe Erin slipped the earrings into Christina’s book bag.” So Megan and Jenna walked over to ask Erin why she had done it, if she had done it.

Erin confessed to Megan and Jenna, “Fine, I admit that I did steal your earrings, Megan, because I was jealous. You always get the coolest stuff! Also, I wasn’t the only one who did it; Christina put the earrings in her bag for me so you would not think that it was me.”

“Another case solved! My first real life mystery!” exclaimed Jenna the Great.

“Thank you so much!” Megan exclaimed to Jenna.

After school, at Megan’s house, Megan told her mom what had happened. Megan’s mom gave Erin’s and Christina’s parents a call. After that, both girls were grounded for a month. Megan displayed her earrings proudly every day. Jenna helped solve other cases in the school with Megan as her assistant.

# Catnapped

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*Cool Pajamas is a normal New York City detective working on a case when he gets a mysterious phone call. He finds out his girlfriend has been kidnapped. Find out what happens in **CATNAPPED**, by **Michael Hirsch**.*

**R**ing, ring! The phone's obnoxious ring tone broke the silence.

"Yo, wassup?" the detective answered the jingling phone.

"We got your friend," the mysterious voice sneered.

"What? Who is this?" shouted Cool Pajamas, the best cat detective in New York City. The man hung up. Cool Pajama's girlfriend Out da Bag had been kidnapped! Then Cool Pajamas went to his 1996 Impala with 26-inch rims to go save his friend from the New York gangs. *How could this happen to her? Where is she?* Cool thought to himself while sitting in his car.

Cool drove to the courthouse to see the last case Out da Bag had worked on, since she was a lawyer. Cool saw that she prosecuted a man whose name was George "Not My Hands" Davis. Apparently he was a low-ranked officer for one of the New York gangs. Cool's black fur shone in the faint light of the courthouse. As he was walking out, the white spot on his neck shaped like a carton of milk itched. So he scratched it and walked back to his car, curious as to where Out da Bag was.

The next day Cool went to his favorite restaurant, Le De Plue, a French restaurant. He was about to have a meeting with the chief of police Chocolate Allan.

"Do you have any leads yet?" asked Cool in a raspy, mysterious tone.

"Only one. If you want you can investigate it."

"Sure," Cool purred.

"Well, here is our lead: a note sent by

someone to our main station."

Cool snatched the note and left in a flash. Outside the restaurant, Cool read the note. It said that he needed \$250,000 by 11:00 P.M. at Central Park to release his girlfriend. Cool went to his Impala and drove off.

Cool drove through New York City. He passed through a red light and noticed that nothing out of the ordinary was happening. Suddenly, BOOM, a car slammed into the side of his vehicle making the glass shatter and the car honk it was like getting 100 piercings all at once. Cool was knocked unconscious. He woke up about two minutes after the crash and reached back to feel his head. It felt like small anthills had erupted all over his head. He drew his hand back and checked to see if there was blood. His hand was covered by red sticky blood. He barely had enough power to get his phone and call 911. He stepped on the gas and drove to the hospital as fast as he could. He survived only because he had nine lives, now only eight.

Later in the hospital, Cool learned that the other driver had died. It turned out he was a suicide driver paid to kill Cool. He looked at the clock beside his bed and it was 4:30 p.m. At 5 p.m. Chocolate Allan visited him. Cool told Allan that he needed \$250,000 to get back Out da Bag and to solve another crime.

So Cool checked out of the hospital and dashed away to the New York City money vault. When Cool was going to the vault people were guarding it and they had very serious, still faces. Cool was acting, well,



cool. He was sweating. It smelled like a sewer when Bob opened the vault. Then they both walked in the door and slammed it shut. Suddenly, he was surrounded by a sea of green, and it smelled like money. Allan gave Cool a suitcase of \$250,000. Then Cool said, "Bob couldn't you have made the suitcase lighter? It's heavier than a train and furthermore, why do you have an underground vault 25 feet below the New York City streets surrounded by 10-foot thick walls of cement?"

"Security reasons," Allan answered. "And because it is fun coming down here," he added.

It was 11 o'clock and Cool was walking to the middle of central park. Cool was thinking about what he was going to do. He smelled grass and fresh flowers. He could hear the babbling brook under the old bridge. He was sweating like he was wearing 50 more coats of fur in Arizona in summer time. Cool was very worried and nervous. What did they do to his girlfriend, Out da Bag, and where was she? Or maybe it was a trick? These thoughts kept circling his mind. The suitcase that Allan gave him was getting heavier, and he felt like his arm was about to fall off. Cool almost tripped over a rock in the middle of the path.

Just then Cool heard a noise a couple feet ahead. There was Out da Bag surrounded by three burly security guards. Each gripped a gun, and then the meanest looking one spoke, "Where is the money?" he growled at Cool.

"Right here," Cool faked a weak, scared voice.

"All \$250,000?" another guard barked. Out da Bag was tied to a chair and had an apple in her mouth so she couldn't talk. Cool gave the men the suitcase, and right when the man picked it up Cool punched him squarely in the face. The guard was bleeding and he had dropped his gun. The

third man got out his gun and pointed it at Cool. Cool picked up the gun that the guy he punched had dropped. Cool was sweaty and nervous. He was never more scared in his life.

He lifted the gun pointing it directly at the guard. *BAM!* Cool shot right next to the guard, and it sent him running in fear. Cool quickly pulled the apple out of Out da Bag's mouth.

Later on, Cool took Out da Bag out to dinner so they could get caught up with each other. They went to their favorite place, a bar called Sportsman's. When Cool and Out da Bag arrived at the bar, Allan was there watching some football with some of the guys from the NYPD. Cool went up to him and tapped Bob on the shoulder. Bob turned around and looked at Cool. "Hey, you got her, Cool! Nice job."

"Thanks, man, I'm just glad it's over!" Cool exclaimed.

"How about I buy you and Out da Bag something to drink?" Bob offered Cool.

"It's fine, really" Out Da Bag said, yelling over the people in the bar after the Giants scored a touchdown. After Cool and Out Da Bag had their dinner and drinks, they went home. As a reward, Cool was given a new car from his boss. It was an Escalade with 30-inch rims. When Cool and Out da Bag arrived at his apartment, they heard a noise from his penthouse.

"What is that noise Cool?" Out da Bag asked, frightened.

"I think I left my TV on or something. I'll check it out," Cool answered.

Cool walked in, and there were two guys in suits. One was skinny and looked pretty weak. The other man was tall and robust. They both held guns. Cool quickly pulled out his gun and shouted, "Freeze, dirt bag!" Both men turned around and looked at Cool. The men had their guns ready.

"What are you doing here?" the skinnier

of the two asked.

“Yeah, we thought our guys took you out at Central Park.”

“Well, apparently they didn’t,” Cool replied. “But the question is, what are you doing in my apartment?”

“Oh just looking through your safe,” the skinny man answered.

“And what did you think I’d have in my safe?” Cool once again asked.

“Looking for money and the case that sent Not My Hands to jail.” This time the fat guy answered.

“You guys are dumb! Why would I have those files here?” Cool asked sarcastically. Cool pulled out another gun and pointed it at both men’s heads. Cool then slightly lowered his two guns and shot both of the men’s guns. The guns went flying. Then Cool pulled out his police radio and called the station. Three minutes later Chocolate Allan and some of his officers arrived.

“You’re both going downtown,” Allan yelled when he walked into the apartment. “Cool, what happened over here?”

“Out Da Bag and I were coming back

home and these two guys were here.” Cool replied.

“Well, Cool, that didn’t help but these two aren’t going to see the sunlight for at least ten years for attempted murder and theft,” Allan told Cool.

“Allan, I’ll see you at work tomorrow. Out da Bag and I need to get some rest. It’s been a long day.” At around midnight the house was cleaned up and the cops were gone. Cool and Out da Bag were lying on a couch in their living room quietly processing what happened in the past week. Out Da Bag broke the silence.

“Cool, I’m glad that’s all over. I haven’t seen you in a week.”

“Me, too! I’ve been worried the whole week trying to get you back. It was terrible without you,” answered Cool.

“Well Cool, now it’s all over and we can just get some rest and continue our lives.” Then the two slowly slipped away into a sea of dreams. The next day Cool felt refreshed after finally getting some sleep after a long, painful week. Their lives went back to where they were before Out da Bag was CATNAPPED.

## The Chase

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*A boy finds himself with a flash drive containing top-secret information. National security is at risk. Find out what happens in **THE CHASE**, by **Matt Gallo**.*

It was a rainy day. At my window seat in science, I could see the dirt slowly disappear in rapid rising water and watch it turn to a brownish color. This morning at breakfast the Channel 9 weatherman said it was going to rain for three days straight, which sort of stinks when it’s a Friday. I was supposed to hang with my friend Spencer all weekend. Right when we got out of the hall I asked Spencer, “Spence, are we still on for the weekend?”

Spencer replied with the worst possible answer. “Sorry, James, I can’t. My mom is sending me to Camp 2+2=FUN for the weekend.”

The rest of school was a drag. I was loaded with tons of homework. That’s what’s awful about being twelve at a middle school in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

School finally let out. As soon as I got through the main doors, I was drenched in cold water but managed to keep the flash

drive in my pocket dry. I had to; that flash drive held top-secret information about an international spy ring. I had to get it to the right people to stop the spies.

I looked around for my dad, but he was nowhere to be seen. *I wonder where he is*, I thought. But right at that moment, my cell phone rang. *Finally*, I said to myself.

I started to answer, but I saw out of the corner of my eye that someone was staring at me. *I missed the call!* I decided to call 911 but before I could make the call, I saw the man walking towards me. *He's after the flash drive!* I began running. The rain started coming down so hard I couldn't see more than ten feet ahead of me. But then someone jumped me, pulled out a gun, and said, "Hand it over!"

"I'll hand over *this*," I said as I swung my backpack into his gut as hard as I could. That thing is heavy. He doubled over in pain, and I ran as fast as I could right into another man. My heart was pounding so hard I could hear it. I looked up, and lucky for me it was my math teacher, who just so happens to be my boss.

"Thank God it's you. Now what do I do?" I asked.

"You've got to keep that f-drive safe. Do you understand?"

"Yeah, I understand," I said.

I saw my dad's car pull up. I jumped in. "How was your day at school, Son?"

"Boring as usual," I replied.

The car ride home was weird. My dad was acting funny, but I couldn't figure out why. When we arrived home, I took my coat off and hung it on our weird brown rack that looked more like fifty S-hooks than a coat rack. I stepped into the family room, tossed my backpack on the love seat, and collapsed on the couch. Sweat was still trickling down my face from trying to get away from that man.

I flipped through the channels on my TV. My dad rushed in, gave me a glass of this weird-tasting stuff, and ran out before I could ask him what it was. *That was weird*, I thought.

I started to feel drowsy. I found myself in a strange place. It was an alleyway. There were two people. One guy looked homeless, and the other looked filthy rich. The homeless man was wearing a collarless shirt, a ripped-up puffy winter coat with the hood up, ripped-up old jeans with a huge hole in the knee, and dirty old sports shoes. The rich guy had on a fur coat, expensive jeans, and cool skateboard shoes.

I couldn't move. I saw that I was tied up. I tried to wake up from this nightmare, but I couldn't. I wasn't sleeping; this was real. There must have been something in the drink my dad had given me. I wiggled myself out of the ropes.

"He's waking up. Now he'll talk," said the homeless man. *What are they talking about?* I thought. I had forgotten about the f-drive in my pocket.

*Good thing my mom made me take those martial arts classes. Except she thought I was taking them to learn self-discipline.*

Do I need to tell you that I beat them up and tied them up with the same ropes they used on me?

I still had my cell phone, so I called my boss. "Hey, Chief, I have the men who were after the f-drive. Can you pick them up?" I asked.

"Good work, James. We'll be there soon."

### 13 Days Later

My mom drove me to school this morning early so I could meet with my math teacher. I told her my math teacher needed to see me about my grades, but he was really going to give me the Golden Spy

award. When I arrived at his room, I was excited, but he looked dead serious.

“Mr. Watson, where’s my dad?” I asked.

“He’s going away for a long time,” he replied. “Well, then, let’s get on with it. I don’t have much time. I have tests to grade,” he said grumpily. “Just kidding with you, boy,” said Mr. Watson.

I tilted my head down a little bit while he muttered something about bravery. “I shall now give the Medal of Bravery to James R. Turner.” He put it around my neck. I felt powerful, like I could do anything in the world without worrying at all.

“This is the best day of my life.”

## Cody and the Dangerous Battle

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*Two eleven-year-old kids, Cody and Jack, endure a life-changing experience when they are drafted for the war. Will they survive? Find out in **CODY AND THE DANGEROUS BATTLE**, by *Devin Jackson*.*

A country from the Middle East called Skyrie was bombing the United States because the United States owed them over \$2,000,000. Their first attacks were in New York, Miami, and Phoenix. The United States was surprised by the attack and needed to fight back. They needed more troops to fight so they created a draft. After the first draft, they still needed more men so they drafted boys under the age of eighteen.

Two eleven-year-old kids, Cody and Jack, were drafted together. They were best friends but very different. Cody and Jack both took risks, but while Cody jumped right into something, Jack preferred to take his time and consider the consequences. They were both from Beverly Hills, Michigan and had been friends since they were in Pre-school. They were asked to report to Kinridge, a military base in Kinston, North Carolina.

Upon arrival, they were placed in a squad with twelve other people. They were the only people under eighteen except for one other kid named Max. Max was eleven and came from Cincinnati, Ohio. He loved to use guns and was thrilled to be in the army. When they were in training, Jack got

caught under barbed wire and did not know what to do. He did not notice anyone around him and knew he could not move.

Max was running on the track when he saw that Jack was trapped under barbed wire. He immediately came over to help him. When he pulled him out, Max asked, “Hey, you all right?”

Jack said, “I’m fine, but thanks for helping me out. What is your name? I’m Jack.”

He replied, “Name’s Max.”

Throughout boot camp, they also went through an obstacle course and had to be able to pass through it in under three minutes. Cody and Jack completed the course in just over two minutes. After they graduated from boot camp, they were put in an elite squad with Max because Max had finished the course in less than two minutes. When the squad finally came together, Jack said to Max, “Hey, this is my best friend Cody.”

Cody replied, “Hey what’s up Max, and nice job on the obstacle course.”

The code name of their squad was B5. Their job was to blow up Skyrie’s main base, which was in Miami, Florida. They were dropped off by helicopter thirty miles

from the enemy's main base. B5 had to stay hidden until they reached the enemy's main base or they had no chance of surviving. They were dropped off and hiked ten miles before they made camp and slept. The next day they hiked fifteen miles and when they were five miles from the enemy base, they had one person keep watch and the rest slept. They took turns and each of them stayed up for about a half hour for their shift. On Cody's watch, he spotted an enemy soldier off in the distance who was heading toward them.

He quietly woke the others so he would not be heard by the enemy. Cody's squad ambushed the enemy soldier and buried him so they wouldn't be discovered. After they had buried him, they all congratulated Cody for alerting them. Max said, "Great job keeping watch." Jack came over and gave Cody a high five.

When day broke, they moved right up to the perimeter of the enemy base and waited until most of their soldiers had gone to battle. When there was only one squad left, they attacked. The enemy quickly gained reinforcements so B5 had to retreat, but they did not lose any soldiers. When B5 reached the drop off point, they contacted the main base. It took two days for a transport to come. When they returned to their main base, they waited about a week until going back to try again. During that week they went through some additional training and Max was again the fastest in the squad. Cody said to Max, "Where did you get so good at this?"

Max replied, "I'm from Cincinnati, Ohio but I lived on an army base for ten years before I moved to Ohio. I was also the fastest kid in the mile at school."

Jack said, "That must have been really cool. I wish I could have grown up on an army base, too."

Max said, "It's not that cool because it

made me work harder than most kids."

When their squad tried again, they were dropped only twenty miles from the enemy base. They made camp for the night. The next day, they moved to within five miles of the enemy. Before they attacked, they blocked all communications from the enemy base by slicing the antenna without being seen. The moment of the attack, they realized two enemy squadrons were returning to their base. This time, Cody's squad couldn't retreat so they were captured.

During their capture, if they talked they were punished so they had to keep quiet. Cody, Jack, and Max were locked up in a small twelve by ten room with two bunk beds in it. The walls and floor were made of cement and it was freezing. They also had a toilet and sink in one corner. They were given food three times a day but had to stay in their room to eat it. It was very frustrating for Cody, Jack, and Max. It felt like it took forever for them to be rescued.

After five weeks, reinforcements broke them out. One night, Cody thought he heard something but then he was not sure if he had been dreaming. Within two minutes, their door flew open and a US soldier told them to hurry and follow him. Cody, Max, and Jack helped the soldier find the rest of their squad. Once they were taken outside, they realized that the enemy was outnumbered and had been captured. Just then, three more enemy squads were being dropped off by aircraft. The U.S. soldiers put Cody, Jack, and Max in a shelter because the kids were only supposed to shoot if absolutely necessary. They stayed there for two days and were worried about what was happening. Finally, the shooting stopped and the last five U.S. soldiers came and retrieved the boys.

When they came out, there was thick

smoke in the air. They also saw that a few cabins were burning. They had to wait about a day for a transport to come and pick them up. While they were waiting, they put out all of the fires and stripped off some of the wood to make a campfire so the transport could see them. They slept in the enemy base so they didn't have to set up tents.

When they returned back to their main base, they discovered the enemy was retreating all around the country. The U.S. had won. Cody, Jack and Max were invited

to Washington D.C. to the Capital to each get a medal. The medals said they were true soldiers even though they were so young. They were all very proud. Since they had been drafted just to serve in the battle against Skyrie, they were released from the military and could go back home.

Two weeks after Cody and Jack returned to Beverly Hills, they received a call from Max saying he was moving to Beverly Hills and would be going to their school. They were all very excited.

## The Crash

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*In **THE CRASH** by Amanda Whitelaw my sister gets all the presents she wanted. However, she was in for an unexpected surprise.*

August 15, 2008 was my sister Heather's birthday. My sister Megan invited a friend over named Joanna. Heather invited more people to come over to help celebrate her sweet sixteen. She got what she wanted; a camera and a case for it and she loved it as if it was her child. Once everyone got here, we went outside. We were playing in the street and in the front yard. Later, we were called for dinner. It was very good since we had chicken, french-fries, and a salad. It only took us only 30 minutes to eat. Afterwards, we went back outside and Megan and Joanna wanted to go to the Franklin Cider Mill to play on the sidewalk. When they left, I went inside and started watching TV.

When Megan and Joanna were returning home, it was difficult for Megan because Megan was on a power wing and Joanna was a normal razor scooter. The sidewalk was very steep. Joanna wanted to go back, so Joanna told Megan, "I will meet you at the top."

"Okay," Megan said. Before she knew it,

Joanna was off. Megan thought that Joanna would not cross the street. Megan yelled to Joanna, "We need to cross!" All that Joanna heard was the word "cross." Joanna crossed without looking.

At first, she was fine in the first lane, but the second lane was a little tricky. All you could hear were tires screeching and Megan yelling at the top of her lungs, "Joanna!"

Heather and her friend Annie heard the whole thing, so they went racing to see what happened. When they got there, Joanna's eye was all bloody. Heather called 9-1-1. Annie went to go see Joanna while Megan went running back to the house. Her face looked like a tomato and tears were streaming down her face.

At first, I thought she was faking it. Then in a blink of an eye, I saw my mom and Tim running to the front door. They both went to the fire station where Tim worked. When my mom got to the scene, she ran right over to Joanna to see what happened. She was comforting her in her arms, but Joanna was still freaking out.

When Tony, the fire chief, and Tim got to the scene, Tony's voice did not comfort Joanna one bit. It was then that my mom came back to our house. She grabbed her car keys to go to the hospital because she could not ride in the ambulance with Joanna.

Later, when my mom called me from the hospital, she said, "Joanna's eyebrow is all bloody and she is all scratched up, but she will be fine. Just tell Megan that it is not her fault." Then as soon as I knew it, she hung up.

I went over to Megan and I exclaimed, "It is not your fault," but she was not paying any attention to me she was staring off into the distance with all of my sister's friends. Then a phone rang. It was the house phone, and it was my friend Kelsey.

She asked, "Is everyone okay? I heard a really loud noise."

"Everything is okay, yes!" I answered her, relieved. "Bye." I hung up.

### The Next Day

The next day was fantastic. I was so happy that Joanna was getting out of the hospital. Megan and my mom get to see her! I was so excited that I could not wait so see her with her scratches all over her face. I knew that that would look so cool, but with her attitude, she could pull it off. When Megan and my mom went to see Joanna, I was still sleeping. I could not believe that they had left me behind. Anyway, Joanna was going be fine. Once she got back to school, she told everyone, "I got attacked by a bear!" Everyone knew that she was lying. I mean, who could be attacked by a bear in Franklin?

## The Day My Parents Went Missing

In **THE DAY MY PARENTS WENT MISSING** by *Lena Parker*, James's parents suddenly go missing. Now James must find them with the help of his Aunt Sally.

Kim and Jared were not an average couple. For one thing, Kim always colored her hair, and Jared buys a new TUB of gel every morning! One afternoon when Kim came back from her daily shopping spree, Jared did something bad.

"Where should we go tonight?" she yelled up to her husband on their balcony. She didn't wait for an answer; she just went straight up to her room and started packing.

"What's going on tonight?" Jared asked calmly. He had forgotten their fifth anniversary. Kim stood there wide-eyed in the doorway, with her chin hanging there. It was almost on the hard wood floor.

Then Jared figured it out. "Oh... I... am so... sorry! What can I do to make it up?" he asked apologetically. "By the way, you might want to get that." He said shyly pointing to her chin.

The next morning, Kim decided to forgive him. While she was telling her 10-year-old son, James, about how they were going to leave and go to a hotel for a late anniversary, the phone rang.

"Hello? Oh, I was just about to leave my house to go on vacation. You said I could. Remember? Do you need me for an emergency? Why not? FIRED? But, I understand. Ok, bye."

That phones call just set her off. *Just*

*hold yourself together Kim. It's ok. This vacation is to rest and to calm down. Afterwards, I can look for a job. Ugh! I still can't believe that Jared forgot our anniversary. Stop, just stop and relax,* Kim thought to herself.

They all got in the car and drove off. They dropped James off at his crazy Aunt Sally's house. "Why do I have to go here? She always dresses me weird and calls me Bobby or Sara!" complained James.

"It's here or your grandfather Earl's house. Take your pick, Son."

"I love it here!" James lied. He didn't dare go back to his grandfather's house after what happened last.

"Why, hello, Bobby!" shouted Aunt Sally.

"Why, hello, crazy," replied James.

"How old are you now, four?"

"How 'bout ten."

"Anyway, Bobby, don't come in this house with those soiled clothes! Take 'em off and let me dress you!"

"Not out here! People can see me!" yelled James. He ran into the backyard. Sally followed and dressed him in a blouse and skirt.

"What am I wearing?" yelled James.

"Oh, shush, Sara. Be glad you aren't one of those appalling boys!"

"Listen, you foolish hog, my name is James. I am going to ignore your stupid little comments. I'm going to call my parents."

Later on that day Aunt Sally asked James, "What did your parents say, Sara?"

"The lobby said that they were missing!" James started to cry all over his outfit.

"We can go look for them after we change those clothes!" Sally gave him a new

outfit to try on. It was a pioneer dress. They started their search in downtown.

"I hope my friends don't see me in this," James mumbled under his breath.

They had been looking for hours. They went into random people's homes and asked for them. They made signs that Sally tried to eat. They were about to give up when one woman said they were inside her restaurant.

"Mom? Mom!" yelled James when he saw her. "We have to find dad!" he yelled.

"Your father is in the bathroom, Son. Now... go back home," she snapped.

"But the lobby said you guys were missing!"

"The lobby said we were *gone*. We were walking out the door when he said that."

"Oh. Well, I guess we'll be leaving now."

"One question: Why are you wearing a dress?"

"That is for me to know, and for you to find out."

"What? I am your mother, your caregiver, and I don't particularly like your tone!"

"I'm just trying to match yours! You are being mean for no reason."

"Maybe I'm still mad about losing my job!"

Then James felt bad for saying that. "Is that why you went on this vacation?"

"I went to relax, but when I got fired, I realized I needed it even more."

"Oh, sorry. We'll leave now."

"But, really, why are you wearing a dress?"

"Aunt Sally dressed me." Then they all laughed.

On their way out, Kim said, "By the way, you are still in trouble."



# Defending Promises

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*An eighteen-year-old boy named Steven Smith joins the army airborne without knowing that on his first mission, the United States will be attacked. Will he or even the world survive? Find out in*  
**DEFENDING PROMISES** by *Jo Jo Martin Bourgeois.*

On February 21, 1945, James walked to Figstion High School in Oakland, New Jersey. Because the war casualties were piling up quickly, they posted bulletins everywhere to keep the town informed. It seemed everyone knew someone who was in the war at this school so they decided to put up a bulletin board of the news and what was going on in the hallway next to Mrs. Toci's room. There was a casualty list, a list of battles won and lost, and a list of all the people who died in the battles. Seeing the new lists posted at school, I did not even get halfway through the list before I saw it, Steven J. Smith, my brother, on the death list. I could not feel a thing, other than like throwing up or just bursting into tears as I did yesterday when the priest and officer told my mom and me the bad news. It truly was horrible. I fell to the ground and tried to sit up but I couldn't. I could not even think. I was let out of class early that day, but I didn't know what to do. I could only think of two things, my brother passing away, and the form that I had filled out and handed in two days earlier. The form I handed in was an enrollment for the U.S. Army Airborne.

One week later, I was told to report to Camp Pendleton Airborne training. Once I arrived, they told me I needed to train quickly. They needed our help at the war front. We did not have much time. What was supposed to be an eight-week training session was being shortened to four weeks. I began training as one of the hundred soldiers trying to earn the title and respect

of being called Airborne. Sergeant Dang was our Drill Instructor and he was tough as nails. He was a thirty-five year old man that yelled louder than anyone I ever knew. "Men, you have volunteered for the 81<sup>st</sup> Airborne and the training you will face is the toughest in the army," Sgt. Dang yelled. "The training has to be hard to condition you to jump out of a perfectly good airplane and land behind enemy lines without losing control when you are under fire. If you can make it through my training you will learn to stay cool under fire." I would hear Sgt. Dang repeat that phrase at least 100 times during our training.

Sgt. Dang told us he had to push us harder than usual since our platoon's assistance was desperately needed on the battlefield. During our third week, Sgt. Dang told us, "Men, I know about half of the men that started with you have been assigned to other units because they could not handle the extensive physical conditioning. However, we only have one more week left to master our ground skills to prepare you for your first jump from an airplane."

We performed daily physical training all day with practice jumps from the platform towers that were 100 feet tall. Every time someone would be at the edge ready to jump, the Jump Master would yell, "Who does the army trust the most?"

And the entire platoon would yell "Airborne!"

We were all exhausted after four weeks of hard training, but ready to go and fight

for our country. Sgt. Dang told us that after some sleep tonight and a warm meal tomorrow, we would board our C-130 plane and complete our first live jump to earn our Airborne wings to wear proudly on our uniform. We all cheered and retired early after dinner.

Early the next morning we gathered near the loading area after breakfast. Sgt. Dang was standing with our Commanding Officer who told us, "Men, I realize you have been through four weeks of tough training and are excited for your first jump. I want you to know that your first jump will be with full gear and live ammunition because the United States of America was attacked last night and our platoon is needed in New York City."

The look of fear was in everyone's eyes. NYC attacked! We could not believe that anyone would ever attack the United States. Sgt. Dang barked out, "Men, you heard the man, we will be loading up with full gear and live ammo, so let's get moving."

While on the plane, Sgt. Dang told us who we would be facing. It was the Nazis who had surrounded our city with soldiers after bombing the city all last night. Unfortunately, it was the German S.S., and they were some of the best-trained fighters out there. He gave us some quick training on our new rifles, but because we had not fired them yet we would have to find out our accuracy and how it felt to fire the rifle when we landed. The guy next to me said that he had shot one like it before, but he looked pretty clueless. I said, "Great to know Gunner" as I nicknamed him for pretending to know so much about the new rifle.

About two hours into the flight, the pilot announced we would be approaching the drop zone in thirty minutes. Sgt. Dang commanded us to all stand as he told us, "The tradition has always been to give you

your Airborne Wings pin upon successfully jumping out of the plane. However, today I am giving each of you your wings because I know you will all successfully jump and go on to fight Airborne style."

The thirty minutes passed by very quickly with some people starting to lose their cool and get nervous. The jumpmaster sensed this and tried to calm everyone down by telling us, "Jumping out of an airplane is one of the safest things you could do." But it did not help at all. Tom continued, "If your parachute quits on you or fails the odds of getting to your back up chute at this altitude is slim."

Gunner just shook his head and said, "We will be fine."

Tom said, "Don't you hear those anti-aircraft guns down there?"

Gunner replied, "Of course I do. We are Airborne; they are supposed to shoot at us."

Seconds later, the jumpmaster swung open the door, only to find New York City looking like one humongous campfire. Just then, an anti-aircraft round hit us at the door opening and the Jump Master was blown out of the airplane. Someone yelled, "Oh my God his chute is not opening and he is unconscious."

Panic quickly started to build when the backup jumpmaster stood up and yelled, "Red light, stand up! Hey! Pull yourselves together!" Then he screamed, "Who does the army trust the most?"

Then everyone yelled, "Airborne!" just like training camp.

Then, "Who do the ladies love the most?"

Again, "Airborne!"

And then last, "Who do the Nazis fear the most?"

"Airborne!"

The light turned green signaling time to jump and then everyone yelled, "Whoaya!" And like the soldiers we were trained to be, we all took our first leap proudly.

The next thing I knew I was running down

the plane. I got to the door and then I stopped for a moment. I told myself, *Come on, Smith! You have to jump!* Then someone ran up against my back and we just flew out. It was Gunner who pushed me out of the plane.

We landed next to the Empire State Building, or what it used to be. It was reduced to rubble. Gunner was having a little trouble unhooking his parachute so I went over to help. Gunner and I were taking cover and trying to take out as many Nazi's as possible as we tried to regroup with our platoon. Gunner was an excellent shot and I was holding my own ground with my new rifle in this madness called war.

We quickly realized that we had lost most of New York City. The Nazi's had bombed almost every building and the city seemed to have disappeared. There was a lot of confusion with hundreds of people just running around with nowhere to go.

After two days of tireless fighting, we

decided to go into hiding since we were outnumbered thirty to one. We found a building that was partially destroyed with hundreds of dead Americans. On the twelfth floor we located a radio, turned it on low with the same news repeating over and over and over. The Nazi's had taken control over Long Island, NYC and were planning to move into New Jersey. We turned off the radio so no one else could hear it and decided to use this building as our temporary base until reinforcements arrived, if they were to arrive at all.

We quickly realized that we had to press on ourselves. We were Airborne soldiers, and we would fight until death. We stripped the dead soldiers of their ammo, clothes, and supplies to help us survive. We eventually met up with fellow soldiers and civilians. We prayed for reinforcements. Although outnumbered, every one of us fought with all our might to uphold our promise to defend THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

## A Desert Journey

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*Naima and her little brother, Iman, become separated from their clan, the Nomads of the Wind. Will they find their clan, or will they be lost in the desert forever? Find out by reading **A DESERT JOURNEY**, by **Isabelle Molnar**.*

Naima woke up, the sun shining through the thin white fabric of her tent. She quietly jumped off her mattress; made of a large sac filled with soft, white desert sand. Naima wrapped her yellow and blue scarf around her head and ran outside into the cool desert morning.

Naima lives in a world invisible to humans in the deserts surrounding the Nile River Valley. They are like little elves about as small as mice and are divided up into three clans: Nomads of the Sun, Wind, and Moon. Her clan is the Nomads of the

Wind, and they must go wherever the wind takes them. That is the law of the clan.

Naima inhaled the cool air and looked down at her dress. The wind was blowing west! It is leading them to the Nile. She had to go tell her mentor, the shaman of the clan.

“Zina, Zina!” cried Naima excitedly, bursting into the shaman’s tent.

“What is it, child?” the shaman croaked. “Is something wrong?”

“The wind is blowing west! To the Nile!”

“Really?” she asked, stepping outside. Zina closed her eyes and put her hand in the air.

“You’re right, child,” she said, smiling. “You’re going to be a great shaman. I’ve taught you well.”

“Thank you, Zina.”

“Now, go tell your family the good news,” she ordered, shooing Naima off with her hands.

Naima walked back to her family’s tent, where her mother and brother were beginning to stir.

“Naima!” called Tabita angrily, “Naima! Where is that stupid girl?”

“Here, Mother,” Naima said, ducking her head under the low entrance of the tent.

“Where have you been?” snapped Tabita. “You’re supposed to be making Morning Meal!”

“I know, but I have great news! The—” said Naima excitedly.

“What is it?” asked her little brother, Iman, cutting her off.

“I was just about to explain!” she snapped. “*Anyway*, the wind is blowing west, to the Nile!”

Tabita nodded. “This is great news. Now, start making Morning Meal! Or else no food for you!”

Naima walked over to the fire, which was already lit by her mother. While she waited for the fire to settle, she pulled out the sacks made of lizard skin filled with dried fruits, berries, spices, grasses and edible bush leaves and twigs. She took out a small pot, filled with broth made of chicken fat, stolen from a nearby human camp, threw some spices and grasses into the broth, cooked it and served it to her family.

For the remainder of the day, Tabita made Naima do almost all of the chores while Iman played bush-ball (similar to soccer) outside with his friends and Tabita

went to speak with Azizi, the clan leader.

Today was unusually hot. It was only the beginning of spring and temperatures were reaching over 100 degrees! Naima sweat under her scarf and black cloak, and she nearly ripped off her scarf, but it is against the laws for grown girls and women to have their heads bare.

After a hard day’s work, Naima quickly ate Night Meal of salted and dried berries and settled into bed. She soon fell into a deep sleep.

Soon after Naima and her brother had fallen asleep, Tabita was kneeling near what the Nomads call “A Place of Pray” where the Nomads can pray in their homes. She prayed for her husband, who had passed away, for a good afterlife, and for good fortune for the family.

Tabita slowly rose and went outside to get cloth for clothes. She walked over to the small market in the middle of their camp. They bring the market wherever they travel so people can trade. As she walked over to the market, the wind started to pick up. The sky darkened—a sandstorm. The sand started stinging her face as she tried to run back to the tent, but ended up going the opposite direction. Then, in all the confusion, Tabita confused two younger children with her own and ran off with the rest of the clan to safety.

Meanwhile back at the tent, Naima was sleeping. Well, not really. She was so tired from all of the hard labor she had done yesterday that she didn’t want to open her eyes or get up. Naima thought it was a bad dream and forced herself to wake up. By the time she got up, the storm had subsided.

Naima gasped. Cold sweat ran down her face.

“What a vivid dream!” She shook the sand from her hair. Sand! She looked around the tent, or what was left of the

tent. It was covered in sand, and the white fabric was completely torn up. "I slept through a sandstorm?" she shrieked. "How could anyone sleep through a sandstorm? Not even old Afi could, and all she does is sleep!"

"Naima?" said a shaky voice. "You're not dead?"

"Iman? Of course I'm not dead! Oh thank goodness you're not hurt!" Naima dusted off the sand covering his body. "What happened?" she demanded, gripping his shoulders.

"Well," Iman began, shaking all over, "I- I woke up to the sound of wind and sand pounding on the tent. I knew right away that it was a sandstorm. I ran outside, forgetting you were there, and saw everybody screaming and running around like panicked chickens. Then I saw Mother with Badru and Chippo. I called out to her. She must have mistaken them for us and run to safety. I tried to follow Mother but I lost sight of her.

"Then I remembered you and I ran back to the tent and dug through the sand. When I saw you lying still, I- I thought you were dead, so I said a quick prayer and went to search the camp. The storm had subsided, and I could see clearly. No one was there! I was so scared. I slept for a few hours, exhausted, and then was woken up by your shriek."

After Iman told his story, he suggested that they should stay another night. Naima said it was a foolish idea and refused. They fought over it for a while. Iman won, after screaming and crying and jumping up and down.

The next day, Iman and Naima set off hungry and thirsty. Not a good start. They walked for weeks, struggling to find enough food and water. They met kind clans who let them stay for a night and gave them food and water for the journey, but could

not help them any further. Soon they ran out of food. Even though Naima ordered Iman not to eat as much, he stole the last of the food in the night. At least he learned a lesson, but that was not important. They needed that supply.

"Naima, look," Iman called three days after their loss of supplies, "a river!" They ran over to the rushing water. "It's huge!" he gasped excitedly, screeching to a halt at the river's edge, "Come on, Naima, take a sip! It looks nice and cool."

"Iman, don't—" but it was too late. He thrust his tiny hand hungrily into the rushing river. The current was too strong and pulled him into the water.

"Naima, HELP!" he screamed, sputtering and coughing as water was forced into his mouth.

"I'll save you!" cried Naima. She jumped onto a rubber human raft going down the river. Unlike the usual humans that she was used to seeing who the same look as their species, these had light skin and brown hair. Their noses were small and pointy; they wore strange tight rubber clothing with puffy bright orange vests with series of complicated buckles and had dark things covering their eyes.

After a few frightening minutes on the human raft, she caught sight of her brother clinging onto a tree branch hanging over the river. She had to grab hold of him somehow.

Just then she found a rope tied to one of the human's belts. They wouldn't notice if she pulled it off. They were having too much fun. She pulled with all of her might. It came off and she thrust it to Iman.

"Grab it!" she shouted over the rush of the river and the excited cheering of the strange men.

He did as he was told and Naima pulled him on board. They both bounced to the other side of the raft. Naima pushed Iman's

wet body off her.

“When I tell you not to do something,” panted Naima, “listen!”

“Well, at least we’re safe,” he replied.

“Let’s take some food,” suggested Naima. “I can smell it in that bag over there. We’ll only take enough for a couple of days. We’ve reached the river valley. Here it is lush and green with much food. It won’t take long to find the clan now.”

Naima and Iman snuck over to the huge bag of food. There they found fruit; a bar of dried oats, nuts and strips of dried, and strips of dried meat.

“Mmmm,” Iman breathed in the mouth-watering smell of the fragrant meat, “That meat smells delicious. Let’s take some meat and fruit.”

“Good idea. But we have to figure out how to carry it. Oh! Look, Iman!”

Naima spotted a purple bag tied to one of the human’s belt. It was perfect! She slowly untied it and took out the large coins inside them. Iman broke the meat into pieces small enough for them to eat and loaded the meat and nuts into the bag.

When it started to get dark the humans pulled the raft to shore. They set up a huge shiny bright green and white tent. On the side were strange symbols that looked like REI.

“These humans are so weird!” Iman whispered.

“Yeah,” said Naima, nodding her head in agreement.

Soon after, the humans lit a fire, which lightened Naima and Iman’s spirits.

“Let’s stay with them for a night,” Naima suggested, and she looked at Iman’s baggy eyes and thin bony arms, legs and face, “We need rest and we will be warm.”

So they ate by the fire, snuck into the humans’ tent, wrapped themselves in one of the humans white shirts and fell asleep.

Three days after the human encounter,

they were resting on a leaf, and a small Green Bee-Eater bird flitted up to their resting place. She was a beautiful bird with a yellow head and orange and green body with a black stripe going through her eye.

“Hello!” she chirped, making the children jump, “I’m Ablā. You must be Naima and I man.”

“‘Eemon,’ not ‘I man!’ It’s just the spelling!” Iman snapped.

“Sorry,” Ablā grumbled.

“Yes, we are Naima and Iman,” Naima cut in. “How did you know?”

“Well, your leader has been sending out search parties,” replied Ablā, “Ooh, Azizi will be so proud of me! Come on, hop on my back, I’ll fly you to your camp.”

The view was beautiful from the sky. The land was lush and green and the Blue Nile sparkled in the sunlight.

After the beautiful flight over the river, they reached the camp, which was crowded with animals waiting to get their search party assignments.

“Azizi!” called Ablā, “Azizi! I’ve found them! Look, look!”

“They’re back!” a little boy squealed.

The clan cheered. They ran over to greet them. People were asking them loads of questions, showering them with hugs and kisses.

“Back up everybody, give them space!” Azizi ordered.

“Where’s Mother?” asked Iman eagerly.

“In her tent,” replied Azizi. “She won’t come out.”

They ran over to Tabita’s tent. They saw her curled up in the corner, muttering random words. “Mother!” called the children. They ran over to Tabita. She looked up.

“You’re alive!” she cried and embraced them. They all burst into tears of happiness. “Tonight,” announced Azizi, “we shall feast!”

Everyone came to the feast that night, including the animals. The platters were piled high with delicious food and there was lively music and dancing with colorful decorations. Everybody wore their best clothes and happily chattering and laughing

and singing along with the music.

Meanwhile, Iman and Naima were eating like they'd never eaten before, talking with friends and family, telling stories of their journey, singing and dancing, as happy as ever. They were home.

## A Dog Named Cookies

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*In **A DOG NAMED COOKIES** by Taylor Webb, a puppy named Cookies has some tricks under his tail to fool his owner Valerie, but these are not your typical dog tricks.*

It was the last day of school and Valerie was excited to get home to her new puppy, Cookies. Cookies was a very loveable small chocolate lab. They always had the best of times until one day something out of the ordinary happened. Valerie was at school talking to her friend Hayden. Hayden was eleven years old just like Valerie and they had known each other since preschool.

"Hey Valerie," Hayden said. "What are you doing this weekend?"

Valerie answered, "Oh, I have to stop at to the pet store to purchase some more dog food."

"Oh, do you want to go to the new movie, *The Sunrise*?"

As Valerie was about to answer, the school bell rang, and she didn't get a chance to answer the question. Valerie arrived home from school and found her dog Cookies, flying in mid-air. Valerie thought it was a dream and started pinching herself. She kept blinking her eyes at Cookies. She was amazed at what she was seeing at right in her own kitchen.

"Oh, Cookies what are you doing? What did you eat? What did you get into? Are you a magical dog?" she asked.

All these different questions were racing

through Valerie's mind. While Valerie was trying to figure out what happened, Cookies floated back down to the kitchen floor. Valerie decided to call Dr. Blue, the veterinarian. When she was on the phone with Dr. Blue, she saw Cookies go into another room. Valerie took the phone with her and followed Cookies into the room. She saw him rise up into the air again. As she was talking to Dr. Blue, Valerie dropped the phone and screamed. Dr. Blue was worried that something could be seriously wrong, so he hung up the phone to rush over. Valerie picked up the phone and tried to talk to Dr. Blue, but he wasn't there any longer.

About ten minutes later, she heard the doorbell ring. It was Dr. Blue. Valerie was happy to see that he was here, but she just wanted to see if all of this is really happening.

"Valerie, what is wrong?" Dr. Blue asked anxiously.

Valerie responded, "I don't really know. I saw Cookies fly into the air." By the time Dr. Blue glanced at Cookies, he had dropped down to the floor.

"Valerie, are you sure you're not seeing things?" Dr. Blue asked quizzically.

Valerie answered, "Yes, Cookies has

done this two times.”

Dr. Blue said, “You know this is impossible, Valerie. I think you should get some rest. I’m going to leave now, but I’ll check in later.”

“No, Dr. Blue, you must believe me!” Valerie grabbed his arm trying to get Dr. Blue to stay.

“Valerie, I think you’re just seeing things. Now, I’m leaving. Goodbye, Valerie!” Dr. Blue said, as he was turning towards the door. All of a sudden, Cookies flew back up in the air. And this time Dr. Blue saw it.

“See? I told you he has magical powers,” Valerie squealed with excitement.

“No, Valerie, I don’t think he can have powers. No animal in the world has them,” Dr. Blue said with disbelief. “Come on, we

have to go to tell everyone!” he yelled.

Valerie then answered, “No, I don’t want everyone to hear about this, because this flying magical dog isn’t right. I don’t want everyone after him because other people might think he is worth money if this flying isn’t just a trick.” The two of them sat down to discuss this, and Cookies started flying again, but they never looked up. Valerie and Dr. Blue could not think of anything to solve the mystery. They just wanted to watch Cookies fly!

“Oh, Valerie I have to get back to my office, but if you need me I’ll come right away.” Years passed and Valerie never found out if he was a magical dog or just a regular dog, but she kept the secret never to tell.

## Earth Never Quits

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*Captain Kevin Malarky must command the battle against the Cryptors. Can Kevin lead his battalion to victory? Find out in **EARTH NEVER QUILTS**, by Kevin Roy.*

In the year 2023, aliens invaded Earth. The aliens came from the planet Z in the galaxy of Andromena. On planet Z, there are many trees and bushes and there are also open, arid spaces. Planet Z is a very mixed climate planet.

The trouble all began when the aliens started making secret visits to each of the earth’s nuclear missile plants. One night, Russian guards exposed the aliens at their facility and began shooting at them and their ship, but the deadly intruders quickly blew the guards away. At the same time, other missile sites from around the world reported missing nuclear warheads. It was obvious the aliens planned to take over Earth and the nuclear missile sites.

Then one unlucky day for mankind

came. The aliens had returned and killed innocent people. Though it did not start in America, every country sent their military leaders to the White House to discuss this situation with the president and his military advisors, to gather and plan their defense of Earth. The leaders formed a worldwide military and combined their soldiers into one Navy, Army, Airborne, Marines, and Air Force.

The Airborne was lucky because they already had a hero within their ranks. His name was Kevin Malarky. He was a brave captain in the Airborne who was physically strong, tall with brown hair and brown eyes, and knew much about military strategy. The world’s new military placed the Navy and the Air Force on the coasts



of every country that had a nuclear missile plant. The Marines, Army, and Airborne were on land in each of these countries preparing to defend the missile sites as well. All of Earth's countries were together to fight off this evil enemy.

When radar tracking showed the aliens were heading for North America, everyone was nervous, even Kevin. The aliens came from all directions. The Earth's defensive experts estimated that the alien invaders numbered more than 500,000. From those who witnessed the earlier attacks, the military had a chilling physical description of the aliens. Named the Cryptors, they looked something like a human being, but in a very frightening way. Their skin was a dark purple red. They were bald, and they stood seven feet tall. They were muscular and very strong. Their uniforms seemed baggy and filthy. They wore belts around their khaki baggy pants complete with combat boots on their feet. Some wore bulletproof vests and some didn't wear any shirts. Every one of them appeared to be well trained and very experienced in fighting. Then the most frightening thing happened in history. The Cryptors attacked.

Soon after the fighting began, it started to rain and turned quickly into a downpour. In the torrent of rain, Earth's bravest men of the military were dying. It was dreadful. As the Cryptors were disembarking from their ships, the Air Force men were being shot down and the Navy men were sinking on their battle ships. The Cryptors were too strong and they soon got past the Navy and the Air Force. The Cryptors were unstoppable as they headed toward the middle of the United States and the nuclear missile sites and Captain Kevin Malarky.

Kevin and his men were loading their guns, assembling supplies and getting ready for the deadliest battle of their lives. The U.S. scout trooper spotted the Cryptors on

radar. Immediately, he sent word and the men moved to their battle stations. The soldiers began blasting away at the fast approaching Cryptor ship. The Cryptors, caught by surprise, were shot down one by one; the Cryptors finally had their turn to get a beating. But even though Kevin's troops were firing their cannons down on them, the remaining Cryptors eventually reached the base. Now Kevin's men were being killed by these horrible beasts. Then the men watched the most horrible thing happen. The Cryptor's mother ship landed and their commanding general jumped out, landed on the ground, and shouted, "I am General Tobisha, surrender or die!"

Chillingly Kevin yelled, "We will never surrender to you ugly, filthy beasts!"

General Tobisha replied, "So it is," and ran at Kevin with sword flashing. This final match would be fought between the two soldiers, no technology, only their lightning quick minds, reflexes, and sharpened armor to aid them. A machete was quickly thrown to Kevin, and the duel began. Tobisha took the first swing and their machetes hit and made a clanging sound. Tobisha swung again. Kevin ducked and landed a stab to Tobisha's gut. Tobisha was still alive and punched Kevin in the face. Kevin then swung his machete at him and missed. Tobisha tried to stab him, but Kevin backed away and their swords hit again. Kevin quickly swung his sword and stabbed Tobisha, and then took the sword and took Tobisha's head off. The duel was over, but the war was not. Kevin had already loaded seven nuclear missiles into the world's fastest military stealth aircraft.

"Help me get into the plane – fast!" Kevin shouted to an officer named Craig.

Craig quickly responded, "Yes, sir" and raced to the aircraft. Once on board, Kevin ordered Craig away from the aircraft. "Be careful," Craig said, and then offered, "and

blast them back to their planet!”

“I’ll do my best,” said Kevin and he closed the door.

Craig thought about what the Cryptors would soon face, and said aloud, “It’s payback time.” Then he looked up to see Captain Malarkey take off after the Cryptors.

Kevin reached the mother ship as it prepared to fire a green laser at the Earth. Getting within firing distance, he locked the missiles on the Cyptor ship and fired. The mother ship blew up. The impact and the spewing debris killed most of the Cryptors and the rest of the Earth’s soldiers killed the

rest of them. Then it was over and Kevin said to his troops, “That was one heck of a war. Fine work, men.”

In the weeks and months that followed the war, they started to rebuild houses and buildings all over the world. Kevin was awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest medal of all. People all over the world would soon tell their sons, daughters, and grandchildren about this moment in time. They told about all the brave men and women that fought and died in the brief, but important war.

## The Epic Battle

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*In **THE EPIC BATTLE** by Parker H. Tredwell, a story unfolds about the moles and the hedgehogs in Africa and their quest for more land. Boba the hedgehog’s leader is the underdog and must try to prevail over General Jingo, the mole leader.*

In a small province in Africa, there lived moles and hedgehogs. The moles had many more tribe members and they were running out of space and needed more land. The moles needed the land because they had too many tribe members. The hedgehogs wanted the land for pride. Typically, neither of them works. They sleep in a bed; and wake up once every year and stay up for 24 hours. It was during this time that the problems started. So the moles went to go and take the land, but the hedgehogs were determined not to let them get any of their land.

The leader of the moles was General Jingo and he gathered his citizens and said, “We will have land my people, it will only be a few more days. We first have to go to battle to get the land. The hedgehogs want the land too. It will be a fierce battle but I know we can win.” The moles were nervous about the battle but confident they

could win.

Boba was the leader of the hedgehogs. He was also talking to his tribe about victory. Boba told his people, “WE will win this battle! I know we can even though we have fewer men. Our machines can help us win the dreaded war that comes in days.” the hedgehogs were also anxious about the battle but had faith that they would win.

It was an epic battle that began on a rare, rainy day in Africa. The wind was blowing fiercely and lightning lit up the sky. The battle started with the moles putting their Monkey Walkers into position. Then the hedgehogs got their Marts into position (these are four legged machines with a cannon top.)

Before the battle, 10,000 moles were scattered around the battlefield on the left and on the right. They were armed with their AK-47 weapons. They had a hundred

Monkey Walkers and also a lot of Bazookas. They were determined to destroy the hedgehogs and win the battle. They knew it was important for them to win. Their families were depending on them.

The mole's faces were flaming red and they were grinding their teeth so hard that little pieces of teeth began falling out of their mouths. General Jingo counted his platoon and screamed, "All commanders ready?" The commanders showed they were ready by holding their AK-47s up in the air. They shot one bullet for yes. The moles of the platoon started loading up their guns.

Meanwhile the hedgehogs were already loaded and set to take on the moles. The hedgehogs only had 4,000 troops and were at a big disadvantage. They took aim with their M-16 rifles while moving into position. Boba shouted "all commanders ready!" and their system of yes was just like the moles, one bullet for yes. They were all

ready and the battle was about to begin.

The battle has just started and the moles were winning the battle because they had so many troops but the hedgehogs were ready to use the Marts, which were their secret weapon. They put them into position and fired at the moles. Once the hedgehogs started to use the Marts, the battle took a sudden turn and the moles were losing the battle.

The mole leader, General Jingo, also had a secret weapon. He told his troops to use the Monkey Walkers and the moles began to make progress and they defeated the hedgehogs once and for all!

It was a bloody battle and sadly, the underdog lost. However, the moles truly did need the land to feed their people. General Jingo congratulated his troops on a battle well fought and once the sun went down, they went to sleep. They would wake-up a year later to enjoy their victory over the hedgehogs.

## The Escape from Auschwitz

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*In **THE ESCAPE FROM AUSCHWITZ** by Willy Briggs, a lone man seeks to free the prisoners of Auschwitz. If he fails, his death will be imminent.*

**I**t was 1943 and World War II coming to an end as the armies of Hitler were being pushed back. However, in the worst concentration camp in the world, a lone man thought to release the prisoners and destroy it. This is his story; let him be praised.

My name is Fredrick von Schlosser. My body is forced to work in Auschwitz, but my spirit will never obey Hitler. I watch in horror as more people that are innocent are taken to the gassing chambers. My blood boils as I watch officer after officer beat the prisoners mercilessly. One day, as I

watched them take the prisoners to the chambers, I noticed a little boy wearing a Star of David on his necklace. An officer grabbed it and tore it off the boy's neck; he threw the star down and stepped on it. As the boy was lead inside the chamber he cried, "Pity me Adonai!" I turned away in disgust of my comrades. My people treated Jews like savages and I was partially to blame.

At the start of WWII, I had agreed with Hitler and was the most loyal soldier ever. I then started to rise through the ranks to become a colonel. In 1942, the German

army moved my post to Auschwitz. The first year I was following orders, now I made my own opinion.

I have become acquainted with a little Jewish girl named Anna. When I met her, I was giving her food. She came up to the bars and asked, "Can you help my mommy? She is very sick and there isn't enough food!"

"Stop talking to that guard, Anna!" I heard her mother cough, "He wants us to die!"

"It's okay," I said trying to calm the mother, "I'm not like all the others, I will do what I can to help you." I whispered to the little girl, "For now all I can do is this." I handed her less than half a loaf of bread.

As time went by I could not take it, I started bringing her more food. I did that everyday until September. It was on a cold autumn day when an officer named Clause von Abendroth stopped me in the hall. "Those Jewish ladies in the barracks you are taking care of seem to be doing quite well; you wouldn't have anything to do with it would you?"

"That would be treason and I would be hung before I helped out those Jews!" I replied. "How dare you even think I would do such a thing?" Claus slowly walked away from me looking nervous; suspicious I was up to something. I was lucky; I knew some officers here would have taken me to the chief who Hitler left in charge. Some of them started to look at me strangely and I knew they had suspected me. I had to act fast; I needed to get Anna and her mother out along with the others. I was trying to help them live longer, but instead I put myself on a tightrope over fire; one false move and I would be dead. I knew I couldn't just leave them, so I constructed a plan in order to get all of them out safely. There was a Polish base fifty miles away and with a proper food supply they might

make it. I had collected all the supplies and food that they needed in a few weeks by giving them extra food in their meals, which they stored. I snuck in some weapons and prayed that we'd never have to use them. After three and a half weeks, I couldn't give them any more time because in another two weeks it would be too cold to travel.

Now at 2:00 a.m., Anna, her mother, the rest of the Jews and I snuck out of Auschwitz. It was there that I realized I could never go back to Germany until this war was over. "I will come with you," I said to them. I then grabbed my hat, threw it on the ground, and stepped on it. I stripped out of my uniform and in a matter of seconds; I looked like one of them. Then we ran. The night was cool and silent; you could barely hear our feet. The moon shone brightly and we were able to see. The wildflower, Edelweiss, glistened like a fallen star shining in an endless field. We sprinted all through the night and about halfway through the morning I heard the siren go off.

"Everything is going to be okay," I heard Anna's mother whisper, "Everything will be alright Anna." We kept running as if nothing could stop us, or so we thought. At about 7:30 a.m., we were found by a German battalion that happened to have a Panzer tank with it. I pulled out my rifle but the soldiers aimed their MP40s at me and I was told to stand down. I went to grab Anna's hand but it wasn't there. I looked around, and then I saw her. I started to move toward her when a soldier shot me in the leg. That distraction I created gave her enough time to scurry past the tank free and unseen toward the Polish camp. Her hair was flying behind her as the sun showed the true color of her hair, red. The sun was warm on my face and I couldn't feel my wound. Then, the other

Germans took us back to Auschwitz and the other officers immediately recognized me. They wanted me dead.

I was put in a cell for three days. As I was sitting there, I thought to myself, *I made my choice, and this was my fate*. I realized this war was more than sad; it was terrifying. However, more importantly, I realized that I *had* a heart, unlike all these others.

On the third day I was informed that the people I tried to help escape were going to be gassed. I felt like a murderer. It was unfair. I had done something right! I did not deserve this. I felt like *wertlos*. I, on the other hand, was going to have a firing

squad.

“Hey, Fredrick,” the officer said as he opened the cell door, “it’s your turn.”

“I’ll make you wish it was yours!” I spat at him. I charged at him, and he pulled a pistol to my head. I kept going, but he smacked me with the handle of the pistol.

“Try,” he mocked. “I’ll blow your brains out.”

As I was led to the execution room, I spat on the officer’s boot, and he punched me in the gut and threw me into the room. As I heard the countdown, I screamed, “DEATH TO HITLER!”

And so ends the story of Fredrick von Schlosser. May he rest in peace.

## The Fab Four Saves the Day

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*In THE FAB FOUR SAVES THE DAY by Demery Gijbbers, the children and driver on Bus 2 are captured by the Dragster Dragon. Can the Fab Four beat the Dragon and save their fellow students?*

“Please sit down!” John the bus driver told the three boys in the back of the bus.

“It’s finally Friday!” Cambria said to me.

“Did this week seem unusually long, or is it just me?” Sarina asked us.

“I definitely agree. It was from all that homework. It’s finally the weekend and we don’t have to do anymore *superhero* work,” I made sure no one heard me say *superhero* because we try to keep it a secret.

We all can fly, but we each have individual powers. I am really strong and I can create force fields. Cambria can turn invisible and can stretch. Sarina can transform into whatever she wants or shrink whenever she needs to. And Natalie is waterproof, fireproof and more. She can also stop time.

This week we had tons of homework,

and there were two burning buildings, three burglaries, and six potential car crashes. We were just very busy and we couldn’t wait for the weekend.

The bus driver then shouted something nobody could understand. We all looked at each other and shrugged our shoulders. Then we felt a rough patch and the bus came to a hard stop. Then everyone looked at each other with wide eyes silently wondering, *What is going on?* The bus had run into a low telephone wire, and the front burst into flames! The bus driver told everyone to exit out the back emergency exit door.

The first one out was one of those crazy boys and when he jumped out we all heard a big splash. We rushed to the door and looked out to see where the big splash came from. It wasn’t him. It was a huge boat with paddles in a vast body of water.

Then as the flames were inching closer every second, we all jumped out onto the boat knowing it was the only way to stay alive. Once we were all on the boat, we watched our ride home sink into the water. *I must be dreaming.* I thought. *There is no way we are in an ocean. This is unbelievable!*

We all just sat there for a minute not saying a word, and then Mike started laughing so hard that he almost started crying. Then everyone else joined in until we realized we had no idea where we were. John the bus driver told everyone to remain calm while he got out his cell phone and called 911.

“They’ll get a rescue ship and send it out to us.” He told us. When he got his cell phone out, it slipped out of his sweaty palms and into the water. He looked at the kids who always had their cell phones, but they all said looking a little scared, “The principal banned them from school, sorry.” He tilted his head down and started whimpering. We had no form of communication.

Cambria looked at me, I looked at Natalie, Natalie looked at Sarina, and we all nodded knowing it was the right thing to do. We had to let them know that we were the Fab Four so they wouldn’t be suspicious about us flying and using our powers.

Sarina stood up and jumped into the water. John the bus driver started screaming at her but he stopped when he noticed a motorboat come out of the water. Cambria, Natalie, and I high-fived and leaped into “The Sarina.” Everyone followed and Cambria looked at the convenient GPS and found that land was only a few miles away! By the time we got to land it was about 5:00 p.m. We got some fresh fish and everyone soon fell asleep.

*BOOM, BOOM, BOOM!*

“What was that? It woke me up!” Sarina

exclaimed.

“I have no idea! It woke me up, too, plus everyone else. It sounded like a giant running from something, or to something,” I added.

*BOOM, BOOM, BOOM!*

The noise was getting louder and louder, and in no time everyone was jumping with the booms. By the time we got back in The Sarina, a humongous dragon appeared before us. He had a long dark neck and red scaly skin. His ears and nose were humongous. He had “Dragster” tattooed on his right, front leg. He looked side to side then down at us and blew fire out of his mouth and nose! He lowered his head and flipped the people-filled boat into his mouth. Luckily, it landed vertically and he couldn’t swallow it. I jumped out onto his tongue and used my muscles to open his mouth wider and we all jumped out of there. Well, Cambria, Natalie, and I did. Sarina was still in the dragon’s mouth because she was the boat! The dragon couldn’t close his mouth but he still ran away with all of the kids plus John the bus driver. This looks like a job for the FAB FOUR! We ran off after the Dragster Dragon.

We followed the dragon down a dark path. We grew suspicious but we had to save our peers. We continued to follow him until we reached a long wobbly bridge that led to a dark castle. We crossed the bridge after the Dragster and into a dark room.

The Dragster was taking them into a dark room in the basement. The dragon spit the boat out into the room, closed the barred door, and locked it with a key, which he then ate.

Sarina turned into slime and slid through the bars. “We have to get that dragon!” she demanded. “Come on!”

We raced after the Dragster as he was leaping up multiple flights of stairs. We

finally arrived at a bedroom that looked like a queen had lived there. The dragon ducked behind the huge bed.

“Does he know we’re following him?” Sarina whispered.

“I think so. Why would he duck behind the bed if we weren’t following him? He is probably trying to hide,” Natalie said.

We heard whispering behind the bed and then an evil laugh. It most definitely did not come from the dragon. The laughing didn’t stop.

“Aaahhhchhhooooo!”

“Bless you,” Sarina said to me after I sneezed. “Uh-oh.” The dragon suddenly lifted his head above the bed and noticed us all standing there.

“RUN!” Cambria shouted. We bolted out the door with the Dragster close behind. We ran through the castle not knowing where the exit was. We flew toward a door and opened it. Somehow, we ended up on the front steps that led to the bridge.

“Jackpot! YES!” we shouted. But the Dragster was right behind us. We raced across the bridge with the dragon right on our tails. We stopped at the end when we realized part of the bridge was missing.

“Let’s fly over,” Sarina said.

“We can’t; it’s snowing, and if it’s snowing, our flying powers don’t work. If our flying powers can’t work, we obviously can’t fly,” Cambria moaned.

“We’ll have to fight him,” I added. As the Dragster drew closer, we got ready to use our powers to save our lives.

The Dragster went for Natalie first. He blew fire at her. Cambria, Sarina, and I started screaming. However, Natalie just stood there because she was fireproof!

The dragster flew back into the castle. We high-fived and turned towards the missing part of the bridge and tried to figure out what we could do to get over it

until the dragon returned with something in his mouth. He spit it on Natalie. She looked down at her leg to see what it was. It was a bomb!

“Natalie, stop the clock!” Cambria shouted.

“Shhhh, she knows what to do. She just needs to concentrate.” Sarina insisted.

*BEEP, BEEP, BEEP, BEEP.* We could hear the beeping coming from the bomb and our palms were sweating.

*I can do this,* Natalie thought. *Just concentrate, I can do this, I can do this.*

*BEEP, BEEP, BE—* It stopped.

“Yes! I knew you could do it, Nat!” Sarina shouted.

Natalie threw the timer off the bridge. Nevertheless, the Dragster wasn’t done yet. Next, he blew fire at Sarina. She turned into waterfall, and the fire faded by the time it got to her. She was just too clever for him.

Then he charged at Cambria, but she grabbed a rope on the side of the bridge. I grabbed her feet and she stretched out and tripped him! And last, but not least, he blew fire at me. I ran to where the bridge was closer to the castle where the others were and I detached the bridge from the ground. Then I threw the end towards the sky so it appeared to be standing in front of the dragon. The fire poured forth and lit the wooden bridge on fire. The whole thing burned to ashes and the dragon fell to the water. He crashed to the rocks at the bottom and died.

“Whew, that was close!” Cambria said.

“I know. He really disliked us,” I added.

We walked into the castle, down the stairs into a dark, dark room. “Hey, look!” Natalie exclaimed. She flipped a switch and the room became very, very bright. We saw the dungeon where the kids and John the bus driver were. We all looked at Sarina. “I’m on it,” she said. She observed the keyhole thoroughly. She looked at me and

nodded. She disappeared and a key fell to the ground. I picked it up and put it in the keyhole. It fit perfectly and the door opened with a loud screech. Everyone was free!

“Now we just need to get home before our parents go crazy!” Cambria cried.

We took the same dark path back to where we came from almost a half a day ago. We reached the beach and saw a scene that nobody could ever believe. It was our school bus on the road right where we crashed. The weather was just the same as well. We climbed on the bus and sat down. We all just sat there for a minute not saying a word. Then Mike started laughing so hard that he almost started crying. Everyone else joined in. John the bus driver started driving down the road and took the usual route home.

Sarina, Cambria, Natalie, and I jumped off the bus and ran inside. “Mom! Mom?” I yelled. When we saw her in the kitchen making dinner, we rushed to her and hugged her like crazy. “I missed you *so* much. It was really weird. You would never believe what happened.” I reached for the phone. “Do you want me to call the police

and tell them we’re home because I assume you called the police? I mean we were gone for almost two days!” I saw her face. She looked at me like it was all gibberish. I said, “Mom, are you listening?”

“Honey, what are you talking about? You have been at school all day.”

“But it’s Saturday.” I was extremely confused.

“No, Dem, it’s Friday.”

I couldn’t do this anymore.

The Fab Four walked down to the basement. Again, we sat there for minute and no one said a word. Then Sarina spoke up and said, “Maybe it was like a time warp thing. Where the time in wherever we were continues and the time in the real world stops.”

“We’ll just have to go with that for now,” I said. “We can’t spend too much time pondering this. We should go for a fly or something.”

So, we set out around my neighborhood remembering everyone’s great use of powers when we fought the Dragster. Nobody would ever know the great deeds we did except the kids and driver on Bus 2, and that was fine with us.

## Fairy Town

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*In FAIRY TOWN by Natalie Biehl, two fairies named Jasmine and Rosy are captured and thrown into a dungeon. Can Aunt Cherry get them out of the dungeon?*

Once upon a time, there was a girl who was also a fairy. Her name was Jasmine. Jasmine was a fairy that could fly. Jasmine lived in a place called Fairy Town. Fairy Town was a very happy and joyful place. Jasmine was a very pretty girl with golden curly hair. She loved where she lived but she was afraid of what was across the street.

Across the street there was a town a very little town called Spooky Town. Spooky Town was a very mysterious place. It was a place where everyone wore black clothes and acted a little strange. Everyone in Fairy Town was afraid of Spooky Town and stayed away.

Jasmine was a very nice fairy and had many friends. Her best friend was Rosy.



Rosy was also a fairy and could fly. Jasmine invited her best friend Rosy over to play. They were getting in the way of Jasmine's Aunt Cherry so Aunt Cherry suggested that they go out and get some fresh air, go shopping.

Jasmine said, "Alright," and Rosy said, "Sure why not? We could go shopping at GLITTER, GLITTER."

"Okay, but don't stay out too late," Aunt Cherry said. Jasmine and Rosy went off to go shopping.

Rosy and Jasmine went to their favorite store called GLITTER, GLITTER. It was a great store that carried makeup and clothing. When they were in GLITTER, GLITTER, they saw someone unusual for Fair Town. They saw a girl who was wearing all black and had earrings all over her face. She was from Spooky Town. There was nothing fun and glittery about her.

Jasmine was thinking, *What is she doing in this store, and why is she staring at me? Maybe I should get out of here.* So Rosy and Jasmine decided to leave. Right when they walked outside the door the girl grabbed both of the girls and took them to Spooky Town.

When they got there, they were thrown into a gross dungeon that had a very musty

odor. There were spiders and spider webs, and it was very cold inside. They could hear screams from other people. They were so afraid they started to cry. This was the worst place they had ever been. They knew it was getting late and Aunt Cherry would be getting worried about them.

At about 6:00 Aunt Cherry was getting a little nervous, so Aunt Cherry decided to go looking for them around the town. Aunt Cherry went to every store, but there was no sign of Jasmine and Rosy. Aunt Cherry decided to go across the street to Spooky Town. It took a lot of guts to go, but she had no choice.

Once Aunt Cherry stepped into the town, she was very nervous. She looked everywhere but there was no sign of the girls. Finally, Aunt Cherry saw the dungeon and saw Jasmine and Rosy. Aunt Cherry tried to get them out but she could not. She tried a key she found, but it did not work. No one knew about Aunt Cherry's magical powers, and she had never been forced to use them until now. So, she said her magic words, and she did a magical dance, and the door finally unlocked.

She grabbed both of the girls and flew home before anyone knew they were missing. They were never allowed to go shopping without an adult.

## The Floating Island

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*In THE FLOATING ISLAND, by Oriane Michel, an elf and a dragon live on a mysterious floating Island. When an evil dragon comes to annihilate the Island, will they have the power to stop them?*

Shadow breathed in the fresh, crisp morning air. She watched the green rolling hills in the distance. The birds were singing loudly. Shadow was an elf. She had thin slanted eyes like a cat. She looked like an average 12-year-old, but she actually was 120 years old.

Elves age ten times slower than humans age and are immortal.

One morning, she decided to go for a walk in the woods not too far from her house. In the woods, she stopped at her favorite place where the trees formed a perfect wall that no

one except Shadow could enter. She could enter because thanks to her powers of the Earth, Fire, Air and Water, she could control anything that had to do with any of the four elements, so she could ask the trees to let her in. This time when she entered, four holes had been dug to form a square around a strange stone that had writing on it. The stone read:

*Place a flame in the first,  
a drop in the second,  
a gust in the third  
and a sprout in the fourth  
and thou shall summon me.*

This was strange, but it could not be without reason, she thought. She decided to go and do what it said. She started a flame in the first hole; she put a drop of water in the second, a gust of air in the third and the sprout of a rosebush in the fourth. The moment she had finished, the stone glowed, and a great majestic roar was heard coming from the sky. Shadow looked up. Circling above her in the sky was a dragon about 15 feet tall. It landed on all fours in the clearing and Shadow heard a voice in her head saying, *"Hello young one. I am Star. Why have you summoned me?"*

Shadow stared at Star. "You can talk in my head?" asked Shadow.

*"It is the only way I can speak,"* the voice said.

"You mean sort of like telepathy? Cool!" exclaimed Shadow.

*"Why have you summoned me?"* questioned Star.

"I just followed the instructions on the stone," she answered uncertainly.

*"The stone? You must come! It is of utmost importance! We MUST see Glaedr! You must come. Ride me."*

"Ride you? Ummmm... Are you sure about this? I can't ride you!" said Shadow, aghast. It was a great honor to ride a

dragon.

*"Yes, I am certain about this. Now get on my back!"* shouted Star.

She climbed onto her back and Star lifted. After many hours of flying, they came upon the floating island. It was a beautiful island that floated on the water with a forest teeming with life, great towering trees whose dense foliage blocked the sun for most of the time and rocky crags where dragons made their nests. In the center of the Island, there stood a great hollow mountain shaped like a sail, similar to a ship's sail but made out of rock. It caught the wind and acted like a sail for the island. Shadow could see dragons roaming around and others sunning themselves.

*"We are here. Glaedr will be waiting. Except if another dragon has died."*

"Another dragon? What do you mean? What are you talking about? Who is Glaedr?"

*"Patience, Shadow. All of your questions will be answered by the great golden dragon Glaedr."*

Star landed on the island, near a spring of blood-red water.

"Err...is the water supposed to be that color?" asked Shadow. "I hope not."

*"No. It was once crystal clear. An evil dragon named Ur'baen poisoned the spring and now we are dying. I wish that I could kill Ur'baen and set things right but only Ur'baen knows the antidote so I cannot kill him for fear of never finding the antidote."*

"So...why am I here?" Shadow asked nervously.

*"You are here because you summoned me. You are my rider, and I am your dragon. You must help us find the cure!"*

For the first time Shadow noticed how sick the dragons appeared. They were thin and ragged. Some could barely stand, let alone fly.

At that precise moment, Glaedr landed.

He was a majestic golden dragon, over a hundred feet tall and most probably the oldest dragon on the Island. As he touched down, Shadow heard a voice in her head, weighed down with age say, *“Hello, Star; hello Shadow. I see that the stone has popped up from its prison. Oh dear, I will have to push it back in again, but not now. You must have a lot of questions.”*

“What do you mean, ‘popped up from its prison’? What is going on? Who is Ur’baen? What’s wrong with the water? Where can we find the antidote?”

*“You are very curious. That is good. The stone is an ancient stone that is imprisoned several hundred feet below ground in a cave. It can only come back up in time of great need. The stone was written by a great dragon whose name I do not know. The spring has been poisoned by a poison that only Ur’baen knows of. It is slowly killing us, because we need the water to survive. The antidote can be found somewhere to the north, an old man, a friend of mine, knows the antidote but he speaks in riddles so beware! May you have a safe journey.”*

“You’re letting us go? Cool! I mean, thank you, Glaedr,” stammered Shadow.

And so they went, flying north, searching for a cure and for Ur’baen. After many weeks, they met an old man who uttered the strange words:

*“You must blow fire upon the water  
The poison shall depart  
To kill the mighty dragon  
Lightning from the sky.”*

And then the old man vanished. Star and Shadow went and searched for Ur’baen. Four days later, they found him, sunning himself. He was a ruby red dragon and huge. When he saw them, he roared and flew into the sky. Time to battle! Ur’baen then said in their minds, *“Leave this place or die!”*

“Never!” yelled Shadow.

*“Then die!”* he roared.

Ur’baen opened his mouth, and a pillar of flame shot out towards Shadow. She used her power to make the flames fly harmlessly to the side. Ur’baen stared, surprised that his attack had missed. Then Shadow remembered something. The old man had said, *“To kill the mighty dragon, lightning from the sky.”* That was it! She summoned forth all her power and struck the dragon in the chest with a great bolt of lightning. He fell from the sky like a crumpled rag doll. He hit the rocks with a sickening thud and then flew straight back up!

Then she remembered Glaedr’s words: *“He speaks in riddles. Beware!”* The old man had said *“Lightning from the sky!”* She used her whole power to start a mighty thunderstorm, the mightiest of all! She used her power over the wind to push Ur’baen to the center of the mother storm, the name the dragons give to such storms. Once Ur’baen was in the center, the storm sucked in all the power of the air and sent out the strongest bolt of lightning of all, strong enough to make hydrogen bombs look like firecrackers. Ur’baen fell from the sky, howling in pain such a terrible scream that it would ring in Shadow and Star’s ears for many days afterwards.

They flew back to the island. They told Glaedr how to heal the spring, and they all blew fire upon the water, as the old man had said. The fire healed the spring and revived all the dragons. Shadow personally went and gave a sip of the crystal clear water to every single dragon, whether they were sick or not.

Glaedr thanked them and honored them with the rank of Guardians of the island. It was such an honor to be named a Guardian! Star and Shadow lived forever as guardians of the dragons on the Floating Island.

# Freddy & Tommy– Best of Friends

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*In **FREDDY & TOMMY – BEST OF FRIENDS** by Noah Turner, two best friends face a harsh reality. Will this break destroy their friendship?*

At the edge of a picturesque, flower-filled meadow was a pristine pond filled with colorful stones, clear water, cattails, and lily pads and teeming with life. In this pond, lived the families of Freddy the Frog and Tommy the Turtle. As the story goes, Freddy the Frog and Tommy the Turtle were born into this Eden on the same sun-drenched morning, and, as fate would have it, the two became close friends. The two were inseparable; they swam together, they sunned together, they explored the meadow together, they did everything together. They swore that they would spend the rest of their lives as best friends, living in close proximity.

However, fate saw it differently. One day, Freddy the Frog's parents told him that they would be moving to the other side of the meadow to rejoin their extended family. Freddy the Frog was crushed. How could he tell Tommy? Would he ever see him again after he moved? He couldn't believe what he had heard, and he begged his parents to reconsider, but they were intractable.

Off Freddy went to tell his best friend, Tommy. Upon seeing Freddy swimming towards him, Tommy knew something was awry. He immediately asked Freddy what was the matter. Freddy broke the bad news, and the two friends just sat there, staring aimlessly at their sad reflections in the pond. Wondering if there was a way to hold onto their friendship and the promise they made to each other. Finally, Tommy the turtle broke the silence by suggesting to Freddy that they contrive an excuse that

would prevent his family from moving.

"Tell your parents that you cannot possibly cross the meadow, because you are deathly allergic to all the different flowers," Tommy suggested.

"No. No, that wouldn't work," Freddy responded, "My parents know we play in the meadow all the time."

"Hmmm," said Tommy, "Hey, I got it! What if you told them that you sustained an agonizing injury to your leg and, therefore, you cannot make the trip?"

"No," Freddy shook his head dejectedly, "that won't work either. They've seen me hopping around all day. Uh, I guess this is goodbye."

"Well, then. There's only one thing we can do," said Tommy. Freddy perked up.

"What's that, Tommy?" said Freddy, excited to hear Tommy's plan.

"Let's tell them the truth," said Tommy matter-of-factly, "Let's tell them how much our friendship means to us, and there's no way we can live apart from each other. No way. They would have to give this thoughtful consideration, and realize the value of our friendship. Surely they would stay put for the sake of our friendship and how important it is to us. They just can't say no."

That evening, Tommy the Turtle went to Freddy's lily pad for dinner. After dinner, Freddy and Tommy confronted Mr. and Mrs. Frog, and told them exactly what was on their minds. The young friends became very emotional, and after their discourse, Mr. Frog looked intently at Mrs. Frog. Mrs. Frog looked intently at Mr. Frog.

Tommy and Freddy looked at each other with expressions of hope. Mrs. Frog looked lovingly at Freddy and Tommy, and then, turned back to look at Mr. Frog. Mr. Frog turned to look at his heartbroken son and Tommy with compassion on his face.

Then, as if they were reading off the same sheet, Mr. Frog and Mrs. Frog looked

at Freddy and Tommy and said, “That story really touched us. Really. It touched us deeply. We’re leaving first thing in the morning!” They immediately jumped up on either side of Tommy, grabbed him by the shell and literally tossed him off the lily pad. Tommy and Freddy never saw each other ever again!

## Gang Sights

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*In **GANG SIGHTS** by Dylan Lange, Roger and Ben have to save Roger’s dad from the clutches of death. Can they do it without killing themselves?*

**M**y name is Roger. I am eleven years old, and I enjoy karate. One Friday morning, my friend and I had a little more fun than we expected.

It was 2008, and my dad had just gotten a new job. He was really good at it. My dad and I were sitting on the couch. My dad was on a work call and I was flipping through the TV channels. All of a sudden, my dad exclaimed, “Come on, I have to go to a warehouse for ReMax. We can pick up Ben on the way there.”

Ben is my best friend. He is twelve and really big. We became friends in karate class. He likes it even more than I do. He lives close, but not close enough to walk. I answered, “Sure, let’s go.”

We left and picked up Ben on the way. After we got there my dad told us, “Stay in here, it should be fast.”

So we waited. The warehouse looked vacant. After 20 minutes I started to get worried. We got out of the car and walked up to the building. Once we got through the door I couldn’t believe my eyes. There were probably three big guys, all with baseball bats. My friend Ben is pretty big but nothing compared to these guys. Plus they had bats. The only thing

we had was surprise. So after some bloody knuckles because of punching the big guy, we got a bat without anyone noticing. It took us fifteen minutes to get the rest of the men. By this time, I had a broken rib and Ben had a broken left arm (luckily he is right-handed). We started searching for my dad, but we couldn’t find him.

Five minutes later Ben yelled, “Come here!”

When I got there he was looking at the ground, “Look there’s a trap door!” I looked closer and there was a trap door, which had been hidden by a red rug. We opened the trap door very slowly so they would not notice us and then looked down there. My dad was in there with ten people guarding him. Our plan was we would turn off the lights, get my dad, and then run. In five minutes we were all sprinting towards the car.

My dad was so happy that we saved him. The instant we were in the car driving toward the hospital he called his boss and yelled, “I quit unless you never send me into a warehouse with angry gangs who are upset because the bank foreclosed on their loan.”

The boss returned, “I will send the FBI next time.”

# The Girl and the Horse

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In **THE GIRL AND THE HORSE** by *Julie M. Stroba*, at camp Amira finds out that she is afraid of horses. Will she overcome her fears?

In the summer of 2003 there were some Girl Scouts going horseback riding in the city of Tacoma, which is in Washington State. The camp has 20 activities you can do, and no boys are allowed. The camp is next to a lake where you can sleep in cabins, but if you are a Daisy you get to sleep in a building. The Girl Scouts' names were Julie, Anna, Amira, Connie, and Magali. Their counselors' names were Log Cabin, Butterfly, Ladybug, and Bell. Well, that is what they wanted us to call them.

The next day we were assigned our horses. Magali got John, Connie got Tacos, Amira got Luke, and Julie got Dory. Magali was so happy.

"I was kind of happy and kind of scared," Connie said.

"I am completely scared," Amira mumbled.

"I'm glad I get to do this," Anna said.

"I am so happy," Julie announced.

Amira kept saying, "I can't!"

Everyone else said, "You can."

"The reason I am afraid of horses is last time I fell off the horse and I broke my arm and almost got my head squished. I don't want to get hurt," Amira muttered.

Julie tells her, "I will do it with you if you promise to try to do it by yourself afterwards."

And Amira accepted. "I will try, but you must promise to help me with it."

"All right, come on. Let's go see Luke

and Dory after we see the counselors so we can do it by ourselves," said Julie.

"Nice boy, Luke," said Amira.

"Nice girl, Dory."

"Ready, Amira?" said Julie.

"I'm ready. Then let's go."

"Steady, Luke, let's go."

"I can't do it. It's too hard," Amira said.

"You can just keep trying," Julie said.

"I can get on the horse, but I still feel like I am about to fall off," Amira said.

"You can just hold your hand there and if you want to you can put your hands there," Julie said.

"I'll try, but don't get mad if I don't make it.... I'm doing it, I'm doing it!" shouted Amira.

"Good. I knew you could do it. Amira, are you afraid of horses now?" Julie said.

"No!" Amira shouted.

"Do you know that sometimes horses are afraid of us?" Julie said.

"No," Amira said excitedly.

*Later that evening*

"Girls, guess what? Guess what?" Amira said in a happy voice.

"What?" all the girls yelled.

"I'm not afraid of riding horses now!" Amira said.

"Who taught you how to do that?" the girls asked.

"Julie taught me how not be afraid of horses," Amira said.

# The Green-Eyed Necklace

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*The girls thought it was going to be a typical day at the mall until disaster struck and everyone started disappearing. Then a strange woman appears with the strangest story to tell in **THE GREEN-EYED NECKLACE**, by **Simone Porter**.*

On a scorching hot day in August, a group of fun, talkative girls named Jazmine, Samantha, and Christiana decided to go to the mall to hang out, shop, and meet their friends in the food court. When they went into Abercrombie to shop for a while, Jazmine wandered off to the back of the store like she normally does which is every time they go shopping. There Jazmine saw a woman struggling with a man who was trying to steal her purse. Jazmine ran to security and when they came, they wrestled the man to the ground. The woman gave a quick, “thank you” to Jazmine and was gone like the wind.

After walking a few feet from where the incident took place, Jazmine stumbled across the strangest necklace. The necklace was a statue with beautiful green glowing eyes attached to a gold chain. Jazmine thought it was kind of cute and put it on. *I bet I look so cute*, Jazmine thought she then ran to Samantha and Christiana and said, “Hey look at this beautiful, antique necklace I found.”

Sam and Chris looked at each other and continued walking paying no mind to Jaz and her weird necklace. While the girls were walking along, Jaz kept looking at the necklace. She would occasionally give an unenthusiastic response to some comments that Sam and Chris said, but all of her attention was on the necklace. She turned it around and saw some sort of ancient writing on it. Jaz thought to herself, *this must be Egyptian, African, or maybe even Hawaiian. I mean it is amazing*. Finally, Jaz

spoke up, “Guys, there’s no tag on here, so it must not be from the store.”

“You’re still looking at that thing?” Sam exclaimed.

“Yes, I mean it’s unique, just look at it.” Jazmine said, mesmerized by the necklace.

“We are looking at it and it’s UGLY, U-G-L-Y, UGLY!” Chris yelled.

As they walked down to the food court, they grew cold and it felt as though the air was being sucked out of their lungs and their insides were getting ready to burst. It was like nothing they had ever felt before; they tried to scream for help but could not. They just collapsed there, reaching their hands out for help, but nobody was there to answer and no one else was affected. Suddenly, everything went black and they were out cold on the floor.

When they awoke, the lights were flickering and everybody was gone. As they caught their breath, they stumbled to their feet, ran to the main doors, and pulled; but the doors didn’t budge. Then the lights were off completely and suddenly something began to glow in the distance. It looked like a person’s eyes. It began to glow an icky yellow color. “What is that?” Sam screamed with tears in her eyes from fear.

Sam, Chris, and Jaz screamed as the ghostly figure lifted off its feet and started to chase after them. Then it disappeared quickly but they still heard the mumbling of some strange words. Soon they heard the little pitter-patter of feet and what sounded like the giggles of little children, and then

they turned around to a horrible sight. Little dolls with razor sharp teeth began chasing them. They ran but the dolls bounced on them, biting and clawing. "I'm bleeding!" Chris screamed.

"Help!" shouted Jaz and Sam.

Then, there was a loud POOF! The dolls were gone. The only thing sound they heard when they left was "got to go potty." As the girls lay on the ground, the figure rushed over them again but this time with Chris in its arms. It was impossible! Chris was right next to them, or so they thought. When they looked over, she wasn't there. "This must be magic," Jaz said. They stood up and searched frantically, looking everywhere for Chris. She was nowhere to be found, and then from the end of the hallway a blinding light beamed right into their eyes. "I can't see!" Jaz yelled. Then there was a muffled scream. The blinding lights went off and Sam was gone.

Jaz was all alone, and it was up to her to find her friends! As she searched, it felt like hours had gone by, even though it was only minutes. Then as she was looking in the window of stores at the mannequins, one of them moved and then all of the started to move! Stunned Jaz backed into a corner, "What do you want? Please leave me alone! HELP!" she screamed.

Suddenly a person appeared in front of Jaz. It was the woman Jaz called security to help earlier. The woman jumped in front of her and said, "Where's the necklace?"

"What?" Jaz said.

"Give me the necklace, if you want to live!" the lady yelled.

"Oh the necklace," Jaz said. Jaz was completely baffled with all this stuff going on. Jaz did not give the necklace another thought.

She snatched it off her neck and then the lady yelled, "Return!"

Then all of the mannequins returned to

their spots. The lady turned to Jaz and said, "Thank you for keeping my necklace safe. You see, I must have dropped it in the scuffle. Now listen, my child. This is a very powerful necklace, and it may be evil at times if you don't know how to control it. Yes, I know it sounds crazy, but certainly, now that this has happened, you must believe me," the lady said in a strong accent.

"But I wasn't thinking those things Jaz said confused.

"Yes, you did my child, see your brain is full of thoughts and they're all mixed up. You could have been thinking anything at that time; it was so crowded." The lady replied.

"But how can a necklace hold so much evil?" Jaz asked.

"It's a secret power only known to those who possess the knowledge of magic of my people," the lady replied.

"Okay, but I still don't understand!" Jaz exclaimed.

"That's okay dear. It's for me to know and understand. You are not trained in the way of my people," the lady said.

"Okay, but will my friends be ok, because they were taken away by these creatures. They were all bloody and bruised." Jaz said worried.

"Yes, they will and I'm the expert, so let me handle this," the lady said sarcastically. Oh and I have one favor to ask of you," the lady whispered.

"Okay," Jaz said.

"You mustn't tell anyone about me or my help or I will have to visit you again and all the help I have given you will be undone," she said in a soft voice.

"But who are you? What's your name?" Jaz yelled.

"Fatima, I am not from this country. I am from somewhere deep in Africa. I use spells out of ancient spell books used by my



people long ago,” Fatima said.

“What else?” Jaz said raising her voice.

“No, I have said too much; just promise me you won’t tell anyone!” yelled Fatima.

“I have to know if my friends will be ok.” Jazmine begged.

“Yes, I have already told you they’re fine,” Fatima said annoyed.

“Okay then, since I cannot tell them about you or what happened, what am I suppose to say?” Jaz said concerned.

“Just tell them they fell asleep in the movie theater,” Said Fatima pacing back and forth.

“Okay were not in the movies so...” Jaz

said correcting Fatima.

“Just do as I say and all will be well, now close your eyes,” Fatima said smiling.

So that’s what she did and after a few words Jazmine was in the movie theater. When Sam and Chris awoke they asked what happened and she did exactly what Fatima said to do. “You fell asleep in the movie,” Jazmine lied. And from that day forward she never told a soul about what happened. She often wondered what would happen if she did tell anyone. We all know though that she didn’t really want to find out. And Jaz took that secret to the grave with her.

## Haunt on I-696

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*Sisters Amber and Aquamarine are driving down I-696 one night when their car stalls. While fixing the car they experience some very unnerving things. In **Haunt on I-696** by Carolyn Dimitry they find out that seeing doesn’t always mean believing....*

**O**n a dark and cloudy night with a new moon, two sisters were driving on I-696. Amber was 15, and Aquamarine, who everyone called Aqua, was 17. After about an hour their black Viper started to stall, so they pulled over to the side of the road. Amber worked as a mechanic, so she decided to fix the car. Aqua was deathly afraid of everything, so she waited inside the car.

After awhile Aqua decided that she should wait outside with Amber while she fixed the car; it was scary not being able to see her. As Aqua stepped out of the car, she thought she heard someone whisper, “*Aquamarine.*”

She walked over to Amber and asked, “You need something, Sis?”

Amber was surprised to see her. “What are you doing out here? I thought you were staying inside the car, you’re an absolute

chicken at night!” She asked, trying to decide if she was pulling her leg or just being kind. A second later, she actually felt someone pull her leg. Amber yelped and jumped.

“Why’d you do that?” asked Aqua. Amber told Aqua what had happened. Aqua replied, shakily, “I’m going to get back in the car now.” and, frightened, started to walk back to the car when someone with a very deep voice said, “*Wait, Aquamarine.*”

She walked back to Amber and, kind of annoyed asked, “WHAT? I was just about to get in the car when you called me back! You know, being out at night creeps me out.”

Now Amber was really confused.

“I never called you in the first place, Aqua!”

“That’s right! You didn’t. Then who did?”

I heard a male voice. I just thought it was you because you're the only one here," Aqua cried.

"You thought I had a male voice! How could you!" exclaimed Amber.

"Who cares? Why would I hear a male voice?" Aqua pondered.

"I don't know!" screamed Amber, "Let me finish fixing the car."

"Fine!" Aqua yelled turning to find something was pulling on her sweatshirt. She pulled away from it and was shoved to the ground. Terrified, she called out to Amber.

When Amber turned around, pointing to the direction she was shoved from, she cried, "Look!"

"Amber? C-can you see it too?" she asked. When Amber didn't have any response other than to stare at the direction she was pointing, she very, very slowly walked backwards to the car. She slid inside and locked the door. After seeing a full-body apparition of a black figure that

looked like a floating man about six feet tall holding its right arm outstretched holding something, you would, too. Especially if, when you looked at it in the right angle, it looked like it was holding a gun!

Aquamarine sat in the car, waiting, shivering from what she saw. After a little while Amber started pounding on the door to be let in. She had finished fixing the engine, not noticing that Aqua had locked the car. Aqua unlocked the door, and Amber gunned the engine and it started immediately.

She drove home while the two of them discussed the things they had heard or felt. They eventually came up with the possibility that a spirit had done the work that night. They thought that their haunting was over (they ended up convincing themselves a spirit was bothering them); neither of them had noticed the black cloud hovering behind them the entire ride home....

## The Heroes of Detroit

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*Our heroes have to stop the evil Sharp. Can these ninjas defeat him? Find out in **THE HEROES OF DETROIT** by James Joseph.*

There once was group of four Ninja dogs. They lived under Detroit. They and their master are mutants. The master's name is Master Knuckles and he is a hedgehog. The dogs' names are Stewie, Bart, Tails, and Dan. Stewie is the leader. Bart is the best at technology. Tails is aggressive and when things don't go as plan. And, Dan, unlike the others, is a partying dude.

It was morning time and Master Knuckles called out, "Boys, it is training time." The dogs appeared a second later.

"What move are you going to teach us?"

asked the dogs.

"A new move?" yelled Dan. Master Knuckles got out some sticks and asked one of the dogs to turn off the lights.

"All of you will stand on these sticks, while you attack me," explained Master Knuckles.

Later, Stewie was in the entertainment room, watching TV. Stewie then changed the channel to a news program. The news reporter talked about a bank being robbed. Then Stewie turned off the TV. It was 9:00pm. The dogs jumped in the XWheel. Tails turned the keys to start the dog's

truck, the XWheel. Tails drove the XWheel and stomped on the pedal.

After thirty minutes, Tails asked Bart, "Bart, have you located the bank yet?"

"Yep!" replied Bart.

"There's the bank," said Dan.

Tails kicked the pedal and the XWheel sped off with a blast. Soon they were next to the ninja's truck. Tails pressed a red button and two guns on either side of the XWheel came out. The guns shot the truck with the ninjas in it. Then, the truck stopped, and the Ninjas popped out. The truck exploded into a fiery cloud. All the dogs got out and took out their weapons. Stewie ripped a symbol off one of the Ninja's jacket. The scared Ninjas ran away, leaving their loot. Then Dan picked up a stick that was on the ground and threw it. The stick hit the two Ninjas in the back and made them fall to the ground. Tails took the end of his spear and hit the Ninjas on the head and left. The dogs returned to the warehouse, parked their truck, and retreated to their lair.

Master Knuckles asked, "What happened?"

"The Ninjas got arrested," said Tails.

"We have a symbol from the Ninjas," exclaimed Dan. Master Knuckles looked at it.

"That is The Sharp's symbol!" Master Knuckles shouted.

"Who's 'The Sharp?'" asked Dan.

"He is my old enemy. He murdered my master," stated Master Knuckles. For a moment, the hedgehog looked sad.

"We have an evil enemy then?" asked Dan.

"YES!" all of them shouted.

"I will track down The Sharp on my laptop," said Bart.

"I'll look on TV," said Stewie.

"I will look on the computer," shouted Dan.

"I will look around," shouted Tails. Soon they ran to the warehouse, where they kept their XWheel and other things.

The dogs ran to the warehouse and jumped on their truck.

"Getting into the building is difficult because of security," added Tails as he turned the XWheel into a parking lot.

"This place is full of weeds," said Dan.

"Let's go," said Tails.

They ran to the door of The Sharp's warehouse and knocked it over. There were no Ninjas on the first floor. On the second floor, there were 20 Ninjas. Stewie took out his sword and sliced the 20 ninjas. They all were groaning in pain. On the third floor, they found The Sharp. The Sharp was talking to a Ninja and suddenly Stewie came out and kicked the Ninja. Then the rest of them came out, leapt into the air, and raised their muscled legs. The Sharp blocked the dogs, but Master Knuckles was too fast so he landed on the cracked wall. There were more cracks in the wall now, as The Sharp got up from the wall. Master Knuckles punched The Sharp into a lit candle. The Sharp caught on fire and it began melting him. The fire spread onto the building.

"Let's get out of here," Master Knuckles said.

They made it back to the XWheel and Tails engaged the ignition and drove away.

"Look, the Ninja clan is escaping and The Sharp is escaping as well," said Dan.

"The Sharp is alive?" yelled Tails.

"Doesn't matter because they don't know where we are, now let's go home," said Master Knuckles.

Later the dogs went out again to check on things. Stewie was thinking, "*Is The Sharp alive?*" They all decided to go to The Sharp's old headquarters. The Sharp's old place looked burnt and smelled like smoke.

"Ok, let's go patrol the city," said Tails.

They drove into the city and they heard some glass break. The dogs reacted quickly.

"It's The Sharp's Ninjas again," whispered Stewie. But he was wrong. Ten men looked like they were part of a gang.

*It's like we're in a movie*, thought Dan.

The ten large men had weapons. They had broken into a building. One said, "The thing better be here."

"Here it is!" yelled the shortest man. It was four special papers.

"Now we will be rich enough to get more supplies to conquer Detroit city!" exclaimed one of the men.

"They don't call us MoneyFather for nothing," said the tallest man. Stewie took out a broken dagger and threw it. It sliced through the paper leaving a thin hole. All ten men fired their guns at where the dagger came from. The dogs leaped out with their weapons. *Pop*.

The men fired again but the bullets missed them. The men could finally see the dogs clearly.

"What are you?" shouted one.

"You dogs are like ninjas," said the man with the hole in the paper. Then Bart slipped out a remote to the XWheel from his pocket. He pressed a button and there was loud bang. Then the XWheel burst in, making a hole in the wall.

"Nice truck," mumbled one of the men in awe. Bart was pressing a lot of buttons. A gun came out and blasted some wood that crashed down on all of the men. There were police sirens in the distance. The dogs drove off fast and a Big Rig truck came. It had the word MoneyFather on it. It started shooting at the XWheel. The two trucks were now on a four-way road, full of cars, trucks, and other vehicles heading towards a tunnel. Tails decided to turn around and hit the other truck.

"That must be the rest of the gang," said Stewie.

Bart typed on the truck's computer to attack the other truck. Tails hit the Big Rig in the front. The damage on the Big Rig's engine compartment was smashed and the whole engine was exposed. The damage on the XWheel consisted of dents and marks. A warning on the computer told that XWheel had endured some very small damage. Bart ignored the message and typed on the keyboard that he should fire the guns on the vehicle. The Big Rig started speeding up and hit many vehicles on the road. Tails pressed the gas pedal and dodged the Big Rig truck. The Big Rig truck hit the wall. Police cars came and the XWheel drove off.

The dogs told Master Knuckles about the new enemies they fought.

"They learned a lesson," said Master Knuckles.

"I learned how to use your laptop and I know your password, so I was on the Internet tracking down The Sharp," said Master Knuckles.

"I have to change the password," groaned Bart.

"We have to prepare to take down The Sharp," said Tails.

"We will go at 7:00pm because, I want to play video games," said Dan.

It was 7:00 p.m. Everyone was in the XWheel. They got to the Detroit harbor, where the warehouses were. They got out of the truck. Just then, The Sharp and the whole Ninja clan came out.

"You are not doing what you did last time," said The Sharp. The Ninjas were running to attack. Master Knuckle and the golden dogs fought until they got to The Sharp. Master Knuckles fought The Sharp and kicked The Sharp into the blue river water. The Sharp's armor was heavy and he was drowning. The dogs and the hedgehog got in the XWheel and drove away.

It was the next morning. "Hey, guys,

look what it says in the paper!” screamed Dan. “It said some of the MoneyFather gang escaped jail.” The dogs ran to Dan.

“I can’t believe it!”

“It doesn’t matter because we are more powerful than they are,” said Stewie.

“Let’s get them,” said Bart.

## The Identity of Jacob Austerlitz

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*In **THE IDENTITY OF JACOB AUSTERLITZ** by **Patrick Allen Takata**, a man runs away from his village home in the Alps and goes to war. Things turn ugly when his friend falls in love with his former wife. Two friends. One woman. Who will survive?*

**W***aterloo, Belgium, 1815*

Franz and Jacob hid in the bushes as a French soldier passed by. The soldier was a lad of about fourteen. He had no shoes and his bare feet were covered by nothing other than a piece of linen cloth. His uniform was tattered and worn, and was ripped in the shoulder, on which there was a linen bandage, red with blood. His face was full of dirt and tears were in his eyes. He clenched his wound hard and cried out in pain. The destitute young man sung a French battle song to himself:

*Allons enfants de la Patrie,  
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!  
Contre nous de la tyrannie,  
L'étendard sanglant est levé,  
Entendez-vous dans les campagnes  
Mugir ces féroces soldats ?  
Ils viennent jusque dans vos bras  
Égorger vos fils, vos compagnes*

The man suddenly fell to the ground with a groan of anguish. Franz, being the kind man he was, rushed to help the man. Jacob ran after him and the two raised him up, and carried him to the nearest hospital. This happened to be a Prussian hospital, a mile south. The soldier was a French one, as you recall, and he was in Napoleon’s

army, which had just been crushed in defeat. Jacob was a soldier in the Austrian forces at Waterloo, and Franz was in the Prussian army. Franz and Jacob were the best of friends, and had been through many battles together. They felt more like brothers than friends did. They both rejoiced at the fact that Napoleon had been defeated, and that Europe was forever safe from a tyrant like him. Franz was a physician prior to joining the service, so he asked that he could care for the soldier. The doctors let him do this. He dressed and bandaged the wound carefully, careful so not to touch the wound and contaminate it.

After he was done, and the soldier awoke, Franz asked, “What is your name?”

“Pierre,” replied the soldier. “I come from Bordeaux.”

“Quite a long way from here,” he replied.

“Yes, but I will try to get home as soon as possible.”

Jacob had overheard. “I could rent him a cart. What is your address?”

“I live at number 45 Rue Saint Denis.”

“I know another man who is healthy. He lives in Bordeaux. He will take you there.”

“Yes,” said Franz. They turned to leave.

“Wait!” said the soldier, “I would like to give you these as a debt of gratitude, for

taking such good care of me.” He reached into his pockets, pulled out two pistols, and gave them to Franz and Jacob.

“Thank you,” said Jacob.

“No,” said Pierre, “thank *you*.”

Franz and Jacob left the field hospital, got on their horses, and started to go back to their hometowns. They decided that they would ride until the rode parted at a fork, and then they would go their separate ways. They stopped a clearing in then forest to water their horses. “Are you married?” Franz asked Jacob.

“Why do you ask?” inquired Jacob.

“Well,” said Franz, “in all the years we’ve known each other you’ve never told me about your background, and I was just wondering.”

“It is complicated,” sighed Jacob.

“Tell me!” persisted Franz.

“Well,” said Jacob, “when I was about as old as that soldier we helped, I was betrothed to a woman in my small village.”

“Her name?” asked Franz.

“Alexandra,” answered Jacob.

“Was she beautiful?”

“Yes, but I didn’t love her.”

“Why?”

“Because I was too young to marry. I was fourteen, she was thirteen. After a few years, something happened.”

“What?”

“You see, my village is in the heart of the Austrian Alps, and an avalanche came down on the village. Thankfully, no one was hurt. Except me, well, sort of. In the confusion, I ran away. I saw them from a distance searching for my body, and ran off and joined the army once I was sure they all thought me dead. I regret leaving my wife, Alexandra. I was twenty, and she was nineteen. She was three months pregnant.”

“Well...” Franz was interrupted by a rustling in the bushes.

“What was that?” whispered Jacob.

Suddenly a group of four men jumped out of the bushes with guns and aimed them at the two friends.

“Give us all the money you have!” shouted one man.

“Please,” said Franz, “We don’t want any trouble.”

“Just hand over the money and get it over with!” shouted the second. The robbers snatched the satchels of Franz and Jacob, and found 50 schillings and a couple of handkerchiefs.

“*Psst!*” whispered Franz. “Do you have the pistol that soldier gave you?”

“I do,” answered Jacob.

“On the count of three, we pull them out, and take our money back. Ready? Three!” They pulled out their pistols and started shooting. The robbers had conveniently forgotten to search the bags the two carried on their backs. Two of the four men went down instantly, and one shot Jacob in the leg, stole his horse, and rode away. The other was about to steal Franz’s horse but was kicked out of the way by Franz, and Franz mounted his horse and rode away.

Franz rode on for about an hour, and realized that he hadn’t the slightest idea of where he was. He tried to build a shelter out of a piece of tarp he was issued in the military, and this worked for about two seconds and then it all came crashing down. Next, he built a shelter out of twigs and sticks he found lying on the ground, that didn’t work either. So he wandered for about three days. He was tired, hungry, and without shelter for the night. He was forced to eat insects and berries he found in the forest. Sometimes, he would have a squirrel for dinner, if he were lucky.

He came to the mountains, and he rode on a path through them. He rode for four, cold, miserable days. He got frostbite on his cheeks and caught the worst cough of

his life. He found a cave in the mountainside and lodged there.

Franz lived in the cave for another three weeks, three strenuous, agonizing weeks. Spring came. He finally decided to go out and look for civilization one last time, for he had been looking for either food or civilization for the better portion of the three weeks he was there.

Franz found a valley in the mountains. In the valley, there were about ten children playing in the fields. At the top of a hill, which led into the mountains, there was a village, and sitting near the bottom of the hill, there was a group of men and women, discussing the business of the day.

Let us turn our attention, dear reader, to a particular woman that was sitting alone, removed from the crowd, on the side of the hill. She had taken her shoes off and had let down her hair. She always did this when she was in deep thought. She seemed to be deep in thought as she looked on at the children playing in the fields. She had beautiful, dark brown hair and deep blue eyes. Her flawless complexion glowed like the radiant sun as she laid her head down on the smooth, cool grass.

Her name? Alexandra.

After a while, she sat up as her daughter came up to her.

“Mamma,” her daughter said to her, worried, “the children are teasing me.”

“Why is that?” said Alexandra, picking up her child as she cradled her in her arms.

“They are making fun of me because I haven’t got a papa,” replied the child, weeping. “They’ve all got papas, why not I?”

Alexandra looked worried. “Julia,” said Alexandra, “your papa is with the stars in the sky, and with the angels of heaven.”

“Uncle Johann is not my father?”

Alexandra sighed, “No, nor is he your uncle.” Franz had become so entranced by

Alexandra’s beauty that he came up to her, when everyone else was gone. He came up to her, but she backed away. She was horrified by his ragged clothing and dirty face and hands that she gathered her child in her arms and ran away.

Franz was greatly humiliated by this and he walked, head low, back to the cave. He thought to himself: *That was the stupidest thing I have ever done* as he walked back to the cave. Alexandra, as you have most certainly guessed, was in fact the woman who was betrothed to Jacob. After he had been “killed in the avalanche,” her father found a new husband for her, a man by the name of Johann. Little Julia, whose mother didn’t consider Johann to be her father, just called him Uncle Johann. Alexandra ran back to her house to tell Johann about the man that approached her.

“There is a man in the forest,” she said.

“What do you mean ‘a man?’” asked Johann.

“A man came up to me in the fields when everyone was gone and I remained with Julia. He came up to me. He looked like a hermit, or a madman, or a criminal.”

“Alexandra, really! You’re just seeing things.”

“I am serious.”

“All right! What did this man look like?”

“He looked just like Jacob.”

“It can’t be.”

“It could.”

“It can’t.”

“It must.”

“All right!” said Johann, “I’ll go and check it out.” Johann went to the tavern to tell his friends, Fredrik and Wilhelm, about the problem.

“Wilhelm, Fredrik, we have a problem.”

“What sort of problem?” said Wilhelm.

“Well,” said Johann, “Alexandra says that a man came to her in the fields.”

“What sort of man?” said Fredrik, who

couldn't be less interested.

"She says he looked like a criminal or a hermit, or something or other. She says he looked just like Jacob," said Johann.

"All right," said Wilhelm, downing a swig of whisky, "let's go and check it out."

"You say you are looking for a man named Jacob Austerlitz," said a voice from behind the three. "I know a man named Jacob Austerlitz." The stranger had a French accent.

"You are French?" asked Johann.

"*Oui*," replied the man, "I do recall a man named Jacob Austerlitz helping to save my life when I was wounded at Waterloo."

"Your name?"

"Pierre."

"Come with us," said Johann. The man did.

"What are you doing in Austria?" asked Johann as they walked through the valley.

"I am stopping here on a business trip. I intend to go south to Italy. I am a stockbroker. I am going to finalize a business deal at the Milan Stock Exchange."

"You know what Jacob looks like?"

"Yes."

They came upon the cave where Franz was hiding. Franz came out of the cave and Johann said, "Is this man who saved you that day?"

"Yes, one of them."

"What's all this then!" said Franz.

"Is he the man?" asked Johann.

"Yes, he is."

"Wait.... Is that you, Pierre?" asked Franz.

"See," said Pierre, "he recognizes me."

"What?" asked Franz, confused.

"Jacob," said Johann, stunned, "It is you."

"What?" repeated Franz. "No...." But they were already dragging him off to the

village to tell everyone that they had found him. Franz thought to himself, *Wait, let me get this straight. They think I'm Jacob, and they use Pierre as a confirmation that I am Jacob, which I'm not.*

Alexandra went up to him and kissed him. Confused but happy, he led Alexandra into their house. Johann came and gave him papers to sign, because Jacob's father died within the time he had been missing, and Franz had to claim his inheritance.

Over the next few weeks, Alexandra and Franz grew more and more attached to each other. Franz grew to love Alexandra even more than before, and the two had developed a strange relationship. Franz dared not to utter the truth, and Alexandra was growing suspicious of "Jacob." She thought that there was something different about him, that he was slightly taller and had a more youthful countenance than before. But the two grew to love each other, as if the affair with Jacob running away had never happened. Alexandra was talking to "Jacob" one night, and Franz decided that he could not contain the truth any longer.

"Oh, Jacob!" said Alexandra.

"Please!" said Franz. "I am not your husband."

"What?" said Alexandra. "Surely you are jesting?"

"I am not your husband, I am serious." He said, "My name is Franz von Hess."

"What?" stammered Alexandra.

"Please," said Franz, "you have to understand." And he told her everything. He told her of the war, of the robbers, and of how he got lost.

Alexandra gripped his shirt hard. You could see the flame in her eyes as she said, her voice shaking with anger and hatred, "So you left him there to die!"

"I had no choice!"

"You little...."



“Please,” said Franz, “I love you.”  
 “What?”  
 “I... love you.”  
 “You do?”  
 “With all my heart and all my soul.”  
 She loosened her grip. “I am kind of fond of you, too.”  
 “You are?”  
 “I am.”  
 “You are candid?”  
 “I am.”  
 “You love me?”  
 “Yes!” said Alexandra as she embraced him. “Oh yes!” They were interrupted by a loud knock at the door.  
 “I’ll get that,” said Franz as he went to the door and opened it. It was Jacob.  
 “Franz,” said Jacob, “what are you doing in my house!”  
 “Jacob!” shouted Franz, “I thought you were dead!”  
 “I am not!” shouted Jacob. “What is the meaning of this! Well?” Jacob picked up the papers on the desk. “What are these?”  
 “Er...”  
 “I know what’s going on!” said Jacob. “You leave me to die, and then you steal my inheritance!”  
 “I...”  
 “And then you try to steal my wife!”  
 “Well...”  
 “Enough!” shouted Jacob as he cast his glove down at Franz’s feet. “We meet in the forest clearing tomorrow morning! And we shall see who the real Jacob Austerlitz is.” The room was silent.  
 The two men met in a clearing the next morning. Johann, Fredrik, and Wilhelm talked to each other in secret.  
 “What are you going to do?” asked Wilhelm.  
 “Yes,” added Fredrik, “if Jacob gets killed, then the other man will take Alexandra for his wife. If the other man is killed, Jacob takes her as his wife.”

“It seems like a hopeless situation,” said Wilhelm.  
 “Gentlemen, I have no intention of giving Alexandra up,” said Johann, “I have a plan.”  
 “We’re doomed!” cried Fredrik.  
 “It is simple,” said Johann, “When one dies, I offer him this glass of wine in congratulations. Little does either of them know that the cup is poisoned.”  
 “Have you read *Hamlet*?” asked Wilhelm.  
 “It won’t turn out that way!” replied Johann as he prepared the cup for its début.  
 Alexandra, meanwhile, had taken her shoes off and let her hair down from its bun. She thought, *If Franz dies, I would have Jacob for a husband. If Jacob dies, I will have him for a husband, but no one will approve of this. And if the both of them die, I will have Johann for a husband! Ugh!* She was so conflicted and deep in thought that she did not notice Franz coming up to her.  
 “Alexandra,” he began.  
 “Oh,” said Alexandra, startled. “You scared me.”  
 “Listen, if I die, I want you to have this.” He took out a necklace from his pocket and gave it to Alexandra. “It was my mother’s,” he said.  
 “Oh, Franz,” she said, kissing him.  
 Jacob broke them up. “Are you ready?”  
 “As ever,” said Franz as he walked up to his place in the field.  
 Jacob thought, *We could be laughing, we could be happy. But instead, we are about to try to kill each other. What’s the use of that?*  
 The shots fired. Jacob fell. Johann went to offer the poisoned wine to Franz.  
 “Don’t mind if I do,” said Franz, taking the wine from him.  
 “No!” cried Johann as the poisoned

wine touched Franz's lips. "It's poisoned!" he blurted.

Franz felt dizzy and started hyperventilating and collapsed. As the

seconds led his body away, Alexandra fell to the ground, weeping as the seconds and Franz's body disappeared into the fog.

## Journey to Gold

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*A mysterious map washed up on the shores of the Thames River starts an epic adventure for one young man. A dangerous journey, a bounty of treasure and the kindness of strangers from a distant land make an unforgettable story in **JOURNEY TO GOLD**, by **William Schwartz**.*

I hugged my mother tightly then I boarded the ship. I was on my way to go treasure hunting in the Caribbean. "I'll be back, I promise," I shouted to her, as I watched tears run down her face. For all she knew, she might never see me again, and I was her only child.

My adventure began one Saturday morning, down by the docks in 1503. "See if any fresh fish have arrived Thomas," my mother said. "A boatload was due to come sometime this week and we could have some for supper," she continued.

We lived a short distance from the River Thames and I often walked by it, watching the boats coming in and out of the murky, brown water. Even as a young child, I'd always imagined a world away from our small home. Now, at the age of nineteen, I was as strong as an ox and was a head taller than most of my friends. I was ready for adventure and adventure found me.

As I approached the water, I saw something shine in the river. I was curious so I rowed out in a friend's old wooden rowboat to investigate. The rowboat creaked when I rowed but soon I was fishing the shiny object out of the water. The shiny object was just a bottle, and I was about to throw the bottle back in the water when I noticed it had something inside, a piece of rolled up paper. It was

quite damp but I could clearly see that it was a map!

The map was of the Caribbean, a part of the world that had only recently been discovered. It showed landmarks and an **X** on an island at the end of it. I was filled with excitement when I saw it. I just had to find the Island where the X was on!

"You can't go chasing around the world for treasure that you don't even know is there," my mother pleaded. "It's so dangerous, what if the boat sinks or you get a disease or you are attacked by pirates?"

Despite the risks, my mind was set. "I'm going to find that treasure mom, and we'll become rich," I told her. Life had always been so tough for my mother, ever since my father died of the pox ten years earlier. I was determined to give her a better life than the hard work she did at the local, standing for hours each day serving drunks rum and beer.

For a year, I borrowed money from my friends and local businessmen, promising all of them, "I'll pay you back with a good profit." Of course I couldn't be certain of this, but luckily they had faith in me and finally, I had enough money to hire a crew and rent a ship!

The ship was called the *Explorer*. The captain was an old man who had traveled many journeys across the sea. After being

exposed to the sun and wind on the open seas for so many years, his skin looked like tanned leather, but his eyes were a piercing bright blue and looked younger than his years. The Captain was not a tall man but I could see he was strong, and I knew I had to put my trust in him.

I yelled “Good bye,” to my friends and set sail on March 26, 1504. On the first night on the ship, a small storm blew across the sea. I stayed in the cabin the whole night because I was seasick. In the morning I climbed up to the deck and saw that everything was soaked, “I was very seasick last night,” I told the captain.

The captain explained, “It always happens to people who haven’t been out to sea before, you’ll get used to it.”

In the second week, one of the members of the crew fell overboard. Luckily, he was all right, but a little shaken up. The journey was uneventful in the first month. All we did was eat, sleep, and help out on the deck, but then everything changed as a massive thunderstorm came our way.

I woke up in the middle of the night to the sounds of the ship creaking as it battled the fierce wind and stormy seas. The ship seemed to be rolling dangerously as the waves hit its sides with a lot of force. I clambered up to the deck and saw that the captain and the crew were all hard at work keeping the ship under control. Then a huge wave crashed into the ship and I heard one of the masts break off and fall into the ocean. Another wave hit, and I could see we were taking in water. The ship started to sink, lower into the water. The captain shouted, “Abandon ship!!!” The crew and I jumped off the ship, but the captain stayed on, trying to save it. Then the ship and captain were pulled into the dark depths of the ocean to their watery graves.

I looked around me, but I couldn’t see

any of the crew. I started swimming, to where, I didn’t know. Soon I ran out of strength and just closed my eyes and let the sea take me.

I honestly don’t know what saved me, but when I woke up, I was in a hut and a young girl with dark skin was putting cold water on my head. I sat up, alarmed. “Where am I? Who are you? Where’s the ship and crew?” I asked.

The girl could not answer me. She just shook her head and started speaking a language I didn’t understand. Her voice seemed kind and gentle. Then a large man entered the hut and I was frightened. Would he be a friend too? I had heard stories of savages who killed white men! But he too, seemed gentle, as all he did was motion for me to eat the food that he had laid out in front of me.

Suddenly, I remembered the map, checked my pocket, and pulled out the map from inside it. I opened up the map carefully. Miraculously, it was still readable. The ink hadn’t smeared too much although the map was wet.

I showed the people in the hut the map and they motioned for me to follow them, past many huts like the one I had been in. They were made out of wood with palm fronds overlapping the top to keep out the rain, and provide shade during the hot days. It seemed like each hut was just one room, and from what I had seen, the furniture was simple. There were small tables made of wood and furs from large animals spread on the ground sleeping.

Men, women, and children came out to look at me, one of the first white men they had ever seen. We passed through the village, when my rescuers stopped and pointed to a path. At the end of the path, was a clearing and I saw mounds of gold and precious gems. The girl put some gold bars in my hand and motioned for me to

take more. I couldn't believe how generous these people were. Not only had they saved my life, but they had given me their gold too.

Now, I just had one more problem to face, getting home. I tried to tell them that I needed to find a way back to England, but they didn't understand me. I got a big stick and drew a picture of a boat in the sand and soon they realized what I was trying to say.

My new friends helped me build a boat by cutting down trees and putting the pieces together. The mast was made from

leather – it looked like no boat I had ever seen and I prayed it would last my journey. It took several months to complete the boat and during this time, I got to know the people in the village well.

The girl that saved me was named Keecha. I taught her some simple words in English. “I go England,” she told me one day, because we had become very good friends.

I could tell that her parents were worried, but I told them that she would be safe with me. Then we set sail—me, my treasure, and my new best friend.

## Kelly and Katherine's Big Day

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*Kelly and Katherine are best friends. When Katherine confesses that she likes the same guy as Kelly, things with them might not turn out how they want it to be. So who is going to get the guy? Find out by reading **KELLY AND KATHERINE'S BIG DAY**, by *Kelly McGowan*.*

**H**i, my name is Kelly. I have blonde hair and brown eyes. My best friend Katherine has brown hair and brown eyes. We are both 13 years old. I am good at math. And Katherine is really good at science, so when it came to problems, we knew exactly how to help each other.

Katherine and I are best friends and we do everything together. I would even go to Katherine's softball and cheerleading games. Katherine would go to my swim meets and volleyball games. We would both cheer each other on.

One day at lunch recess Katherine and I were walking and talking. We were telling each other what happened in school that day. All of a sudden, I see Scott Miller; he had light brown and blonde hair and brown eyes. Scott played basketball, and he ran track and field. He was a really good and a fast runner! I could not believe how cute he was. I was thinking, *Scott is so cute. My*

*heart is pounding out of my chest.* His long, sandy blonde hair was blowing in the wind so his face shown even more clearly, every second.

“Kelly?” Someone is tapping me... I look around to see who it was. It was Katherine ruining my dream about Scott.

“What?” I said.

“Did you even hear what I was telling you?” Katherine said.

“Sorry,” I said, “I was daydreaming.”

The whistle blew signifying lunch was over. It was time to go to SSR (Silent Sustained Reading).

We were in the same class reading silently. While the teacher was on her computer and not looking at us Katherine and I would whisper to each other about random stuff. I didn't know what to say this time because again I was only thinking about how cute Scott was. Yes, I was daydreaming while you are supposed to be

reading. This has never happened to me before. I really needed some help or to get over this guy, Scott.

After about 15 minutes, the bell rang. It was time for me to go to Science and Katherine to go to Language Arts.

While I was in Science, I still kept daydreaming about Scott. Then the bell rang again and it was time to go to Gym, which was the last hour of the day. Katherine and I were in the same class, and Scott was also in our gym class.

It was time to change into our gym uniforms. So in the locker room Katherine and I were talking because our lockers were right next to each other.

All of a sudden, Katherine starts acting really weird and nervous. I was wondering what was going on, so I said, "Are you okay, Katherine? You seem really weird... right now."

Katherine said, "Well, you know at lunch recess when you told me you liked that guy Scott?"

I said, "Yes," in a mysterious voice.

"Well, don't get mad or anything, but I kinda like him too...." Everything was silent for a while. I was going to say something, but the teacher yelled in the locker room because we had a lot to work on. So we both walked out of the locker room with our gym clothes on. It was somewhat awkward, too, because no one was talking.

"Okay, class, we are going to play a basketball game. Kelly, Katherine, and Scott, you are on one team and Chris,

Jordan, and Mallory on another," The gym teacher said.

So we all played the game, and Scott was a basketball player, so of course we won! Katherine kept talking to Scott and saying how good he was. I was just on the side being really jealous and angry at the same time.

After that day was all over, I went home and thought about Katherine and Scott.

So first, I called Katherine and we talked for about thirty minutes fighting over Scott. At the end of the conversation, Katherine asked, "But what if he likes me and not you or the other way around?"

I thought about it for a while, and I was thinking what I always think when this stuff happens. I just said, "You know what? You can have Scott, because you are my best friend and I wouldn't want to lose you over some guy," in a nice voice.

It was silent until Katherine said, "Yeah, you're right. We are best friends. We should stick together." The conversation was over for that night.

The next day when we were both in Social Studies together with Scott, something bad happened. Scott came over and said, "Kelly, I like you. Do you like me?" I wanted to say yes soooooo badly, but Katherine was right next to me and I thought about last night.

So I said, "NO." I was very proud that I said that, and Katherine gave me a high five. We laughed a couple times, too. I felt good after that. I was happy that I have a best friend like Katherine.

# Likey Jones and the Kingdom of the Diamond Skull

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*In LIKEY JONES AND THE KINGDOM OF DIAMOND SKULL by Jordan Palmer, the diamond skull was stolen from the Detroit Institute of Arts a month before the grand opening. This is a job for Likey Jones and Max Hornblende. Will Likey and Max get the skull in time for the opening or will the skull be lost forever?*

On Saturday, September 17, 1938 Likey Jones was reading the newspaper and an article caught his eye. It read: I.A.M. MADEOFBEANSMAN stole the diamond skull from the Detroit Institute of Arts in Detroit.

The article said “I.A.M. MADEOFBEANSMAN went to the Amazon Rainforest and hid the skull in a cave.” This looks like a job for Likey Jones and Max Hornblende. They said they would meet each other at the grocery store around the corner from their house. From there they would go to their friend’s, Beanie Wells, house to take a plane to the Amazon Rainforest.

“Wait a second,” Likey said. “Did you hear something suspicious in this disastrous Rainforest?”

“Yeah I did. It sounded like a crack,” said Max. They walked in the forest and found a cave.

Likey said, “Watch out for booby traps. They could be anywhere.”

Max asked, “Where is the skull? We’ve been searching for hours Likey.”

“Don’t worry, Max, we’ll find the skull soon,” said Likey. After 48 hours, they finally saw a sparkling light in the distance.

“Wow, look at its luster. The color is very bizarre, but I think this is the skull,” said Likey. They were so happy and excited. They replaced the skull with a bag of sand. Once Likey picked the skull up, the booby

trap set off.

“Oh no, we are going to die!” they both yelled. They started to run as if they never ran before. Then all of a sudden a big Monster truck driven by I.A.M. MADEOFBEANSMAN came and tried run Likey and Max over but the truck ran out of gas and stopped. Likey quickly put a tracking device in I.A.M. MADEOFBEANSMAN’s ear just in case they lose him again.

Max said, “Whew! That was a close one. I thought we were going to die.” Once Likey and Max got outside of the cave, the Bean people tried to shoot them with bow and arrows.

“Oh snap, now we are gonna die,” exclaimed Max. Likey told Beanie to start the plane so when they got in the plane they could fly away.

“Uh, Likey, they’re getting closer by the second!” Max yelled. They finally got into the plane, flew back to Detroit, and took the skull back to the DIA in time for the Grand Opening. Since Likey and Max brought back the skull, the Mayor of Detroit, Frank Couzens, paid them each \$1,000,000 for bringing back the skull and to thank them.

\* \* \*

“Why do I have to get arrested?” asked I.A.M. MADEOFBEANSMAN.

“Because you did a very bad thi—” However, before the Officer replied, MADEOFBEANSMAN shocked him with

the Officer's taser and the Officer went unconscious and was knocked out for hours.

"Finally, I am free again. Time to get the skull again. Mwahahaha."

Meanwhile at the Pistons, Clippers game, "Come on A.I., make that three. Yes! Thank you," said Likey.

"Likey, do not overreact like that over a three-pointer. A.I. is just a decent shooter. Anyone can shoot a three," Max explained.

*"Everyone turn your attention to the big screen. This is breaking news with Kia Anderson. There has been a robbery at the DIA again. I.A.M. MADEOFBEANS-MAN is on the loose again. The police are looking for Likey Jones and Max Horblende to help them find I.A.M and put him to jail again. This time no one can find him because he found a tracking device that Likey put in his ear the last time they met.."*

"Wow, we need to get to the police station, stat," Likey said.

Police Chief Ronald Igoudala said, "You both have to take a cruise around the world to see if he is anywhere in the world, but remember this is not for fun this is serious we need to catch him before he sells it to a very important person and we may never get it back. So pack your bags today because you are leaving as soon as possible." They went to the Blue Water Bridge and got on board quickly.

"Goodbye, Mr. Igoudala," they both said. "I believe in you, Max and Likey. You can do it good luck," said Mr. Igoudala.

"Finally we arrive in France. No sign there, but some people saw him after I described what he looked like. Now are in India still no sign, but again people recognized him when I described him. Our Last stop is California, but no sign of him anywhere. Wait I just saw something over to your left start to run like he or she did something wrong," said Likey.

"After it," exclaimed Max.

"He's getting away," Likey cried. He finally tripped over a keg of water and got wet.

"Yes we finally caught him no he will be put to jail forever," yelled Max.

"I would have gotten away if it were not for you two...two ignorant pieces of meddling garbage," he said. They told the chief and he was delightfully excited.

"At least he's in jail for eternity, but I think that having an arch nemesis around is adventurous," said Max.

"I just hope he's not coming out of jail again," said Likey.

The radio crackled loudly, "Breaking news - I.A.M. MADEOFBEANSMAN strikes again," the radio announcer interrupted their thoughts.

"Oh brother, here we go again," they said despondently.

## Lisa's Dream

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*A girl finds herself on the streets without the guidance or support of her parents. When she learns about a singing contest, Lisa decides to enter. If she is able to win the contest, she could make a better life for herself in*

**LISA'S DREAM**, by *Carlie Goliday*.

There was a girl named Lisa who was 13 years old. She lived in Miami next to a church on 10th Avenue. Lisa lived on her

own and attended church every Sunday. The pastor at the church looked after her. She was not an orphan, but her mom did

not come around and her dad—well, Lisa hardly ever saw him because he was hardly ever there. She lived in a vacant area with a lot of crime, but she never got scared because she knew the Lord was watching over her.

“Lisa!” the pastor yelled. “Come get your breakfast before church starts.” It was 10:00 a.m. Lisa was very tired and did not want to get up, but she was going to do it because it was her big day, her solo song. Lisa had always wanted to be a singer, but she never went to school because she couldn’t afford it. Lisa would not say it, but she hoped her father was coming this week. She never knew when he would show up since he lied so much and did drugs.

“Lisa!” the pastor yelled again. “Come on.”

“I’m coming, I’m coming, gosh.” When the pastor and Lisa arrived in the main part of the chapel, Lisa started getting prepared to sing her solo. She loved to sing, but she was still nervous. After church, she went outside for air. She realized she was very hungry.

“Lisa darling,” she heard a booming voice in front of her. She looked up and saw her father.

“Father!” she yelled with joy. “Where have you been?” Lisa asked.

“I’ve been...in and out.” her father replied, not answering her question.

“Oh, well, I have not seen you in forever. I’ve missed you so much.”

The service was over, so the pastor came outside and walked towards Lisa. Seeing her father, the pastor said, “Hello, Richard.” That was her father’s name.

“Hello, Father,” Richard answered.

“You did not come to service today,” said the pastor with a sly smile.

“Well, I tried to make it, but I guess I was a little late,” Lisa’s father mumbled

quietly.

“Well, it starts at 10:17 and runs until 11:00. Just arrive between those times and you’ll see us here.”

“I’ll try,” he said with a big smile on his face.

Meanwhile, Lisa had stepped back into the church. An ad pinned to the bulletin board caught her eye. In large, bright colors it read:

**IF YOU’VE GOT TALENT,  
YOU CAN COME TO OUR  
TALENT SHOW!  
YOU CAN WIN BIG MONEY,  
BUT ONLY IF YOU APPLY.  
JUST SHOW UP WITH A PARENT OR GUARDIAN  
AND APPLY AT THE  
SAINT THEATER!**

Lisa started getting excited. She definitely wanted to do it so she ran outside to tell her dad. She found her dad and said, “Dad, Dad, look!”

He looked over the paper and spoke. “Oh, very nice.”

“I’m going to apply for the talent show. I am going to get you help. You see, Dad? It says it right here. Look at the money I could win!” Lisa squealed.

Then her father cut her off. “Lisa, enough, I can do this on my own. Just let me be the father, please.”

“Yes, Dad,” answered Lisa dropping her head.

“Now, Lisa darling, it’s time for me to leave,” her father said.

“NO! Stay, Dad, please!” Lisa begged.

“I have to leave now. I’m sorry, Lisa.” Her father kissed her goodbye, and she watched him walk down the street. Her eyes filled with tears, and she began to cry.

Witnessing this, the pastor whispered, “Come on, honey, I’ll go with you to the talent show. I will go with you.”



“Thank you,” was all Lisa could reply, but she was still crying.

\* \* \*

It was the day of the Talent Show. When Lisa arrived, she walked into the Restroom to comb out her thick, black shiny hair. She dabbed on caramel-colored lip-gloss. She took a last look in the mirror and stepped back out in the auditorium. “Well, we’re here Father,” she said to the pastor.

“I know, he said with excitement. “Did you get your number and all that other stuff?” he asked.

“Yes, they said my number was 346. They will call it out when it’s my turn to go on,” Lisa replied. So now, they waited and waited. Finally, they heard Lisa’s number.

“It’s my number,” Lisa said shakily. She stepped on the stage. She was so scared. Lisa spoke into the microphone. “I’m going to sing ‘Listen’, from my favorite movie.” Her hands were shaking, so she placed them alongside her body, and she began to sing. A beautiful sound came out of her mouth. She sang and sang, and when she

was done, everyone cheered.

More people performed, and finally it was time to line up to hear who would win this year’s ‘Who’s Got Talent’ winner. “It is Lisa Groth!” the announcer shouted. Lisa could barely believe it. She was so happy. She stood up and accepted her prize. She was awarded the grand prize money and a scholarship for the school of her choice and a beautiful crown. When she got home, she looked at the check. She was going to be able to buy a new house for herself and her dad. She could not wait to share the good news with him. She put the money in the safe and went to sleep.

After two months had passed, Lisa saw her father again. She ran up and hugged him and she shouted, “I won, I won! I’m going to buy us a house and go to school and get you a car and some help!”

“That’s a good pathway for your life, Lisa darling,” he said with a smile. “And guess what, darling?” he continued. “I got a job at a car dealership.”

“Oh, my gosh, Daddy, that’s good. We both are getting a good start.” They both hugged each other and just smiled.

## The Lost Treasure

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*In **THE LOST TREASURE** by Isaac Abbo, four teenage boys find a treasure map. Will they be able to reach the treasure or die trying?*

**I**t all started with four best friends on a hot, lazy summer day with nothing to do. School was out and in July of 1950, they didn’t have much to do. They all decided to meet at Jason’s house. Jason was the leader of group since he was so strong and smart. Sam arrived first and of course, he was eating his most favorite chocolate bar, the Nutty Bar. Sam is the fat and stupid one and he always wants to eat. Jack

and Robert were at the door. Jack is a jock but not very smart, and Robert is good in school but is a dork. It’s kind of weird because they’re twins. They went inside and couldn’t decide what to play. Jason got an idea of going to the attic to see if there were any board games they could play.

While they were searching for a board game, they noticed that the attic was a very dusty place with so much stuff crowded

together they could barely walk.

Soon, Robert shouted, “Hey, guys, I see a brown case!”

“Its cylindrical, actually,” said Jason.

“It looks like a tube to me,” muttered Sam.

Robert reached for it and pulled it out. He tried to open it, but with his bony arms, he could not do it.

“Wow, this is really hard to open,” Robert gasped as he was out of breath.

“Here, let me see it,” said Jason confidently. So he handed it to Jason who opened it with one twist. They pulled out a long rolled-up sheet of paper and smoothed it out. Their eyes lit up! It was a treasure map. They knew what they were going to do on that day.

The next morning the boys started packing, supplies for their journey to find the treasure. They headed towards Jason’s Beach. It was very beautiful with interesting rocks, white sand, and palm trees blowing gently in the breeze. They unrolled the map. It showed a number explaining how to get to the treasure. The first hint was, “Walk 50 steps toward the north. You will arrive at a small boulder.” Of course, then Sam protested, “I’m getting hungry.” They all agreed to eat lunch by the small boulder. As they ate, they talked about what they would do with their share of the treasure.

Sam announced, “I want to buy all the chocolate bars in the whole wide world.”

Jason added, “I’m probably going to buy my own baseball park.”

“I’m thinking of getting a work out set so I can stay fit,” laughed Jack.

“And I’m going to build a spaceship and go to the moon,” said Robert standing up.

After they were done eating and talking about their dreams, they continued their journey. They looked at the map and it told them to take 20 steps east by the two very huge boulders and press their hands into a cracked square. They did and a little hole appeared just big enough for them to get through. Then Jason, Robert, Chris, and Sam started walking very gently so no booby traps would go off. Inching their way, up the stairs, Sam took a misstep and landed on a booby trap.

The lights shut off and they heard gunshots screaming past them so they ducked down, and they quickly crawled across the ground screaming. Suddenly everything went silent. So they stood and took out their flashlights, but this time they walked slower and more carefully. The foursome began to jog a little faster and just then, they saw it—a golden light! They moved towards it. There at the end was a glistening, sparkling waterfall with gold at the top and bottom of the waterfall. They dove into the water and swam to it. They couldn’t believe their eyes. There it was: the treasure they had always dreamed about! “Wow, this is amazing, but really heavy,” grunted Jason.

“That’s why you got to be strong,” said Jack. The four friends all carried the treasure back to Jason’s house scarcely believing their luck. Soon the word spread so much that they were on TV. They made all the newspaper headlines. They were also able to make their dreams come true.

Some reporters surrounded the boys. “What are you going to do with all that money? Have you thought about that?”

“Oh, we have, sir. We definitely have a plan,” said the boys in excitement.

# Making Up for Betrayals

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*In MAKING UP FOR BETRAYALS by Drake Ryans, Seph's Dad goes on an unexpected business trip and doesn't come back when expected. Seph gets shipped off to a dull boarding school. The school year is suddenly more interesting when Seph meets Mick....*

“I am going to be on a business trip for awhile,” Seph’s Dad told him in the living room. Seph didn’t think much about it.

“OK, Dad. See you later,” Seph said.

“Chris, are you ready to go?” said a man that Seph’s mom had just let in the house who had probably been waiting in a car.

Seph’s father told the man to give him one minute alone with Seph. While they were alone, Seph’s dad told him all about how he ran one of the most successful spy businesses in the world and Seph’s uncle was his Dad’s right-hand man. Before Seph could say anything to his father, the man that had come out of nowhere appeared and forced Seph’s dad out of the room. It appeared as if he had been listening in on their conversation and felt he had to put it to an end.

Since it was still summer vacation Seph had all day for the past two weeks to think about what his Dad had said. None of it made sense to Seph until one day a man came to their house. The man had told Seph’s mother about this fantastic boarding school that just happened to be far away from home. His mother was completely sold at the end of his speech. As the guy was leaving, Seph saw a nametag that said Mr. Loser, but the weirdest part of him all was he was the guy that had come and got his dad to go on a “mission.” Seph’s mom spent the rest of the day telling Seph about his new school. She had said it was just temporary but he knew it wasn’t.

*I hate this school. I hate it. I hate it. That*

is the chant Seph recited to himself before he went to class every day. He still hadn’t forgiven his mother for making him go to this private school. Seph knew he wasn’t going to be able to survive the school year without something more interesting to do than this boarding school offered. The name of the school wasn’t even interesting. Seph had only made one friend. His name was Mick. Seph and Mick shared the same beliefs about this school, like that it totally reeked. They were often caught sneaking around after curfew.

“Hey, Seph, what’s up, man!” Mick exclaimed. Mick and Seph had first hour together. As soon as Mick got close enough to Seph so no one else was within earshot, Mick launched into his idea about a new club. “Seph, I have been thinking,” he said. “We should start a club for all of the kids in the school who are like us. The club will be for smart, cunning, and athletic kids who want excitement in their lives at the boarding school for losers. Do you like my idea so far?” Mick finished, out of breath and clearly excited.

“I think your idea’s brilliant.” Seph knew it might not work, but he put on a good face for Mick. Seph suddenly went cold. All of his senses went numb. He could hardly breathe. There was the man that had come and gotten his father! It was Mr. Loser. He had some suspicions that his father had been kidnapped because he was mysteriously sent to boarding school. So he knew this man was bad news, and if the club actually worked, this would be his first

assignment. He would assign it to himself, to find out what this man was up to. But Mick would probably want to be involved, so he would just have to go without him knowing.

“Seph, call me crazy, but I think we should skip class because we have a lot of planning to do,” said Mick.

“Let’s go,” Seph heaved. The two boys hurried to their dorm. Once they were in Seph’s room they locked the door and began their scheming. By lunchtime they had their list of students they wanted in their group. All of the students on their list had different things they could do for the group, like Kate—she could charm anyone. Mick also had skills that were valuable. He was very good at hacking computers. Everyone else was both smart and quick-witted. Seph and Mick decided they would call everyone later to inform them about the club.

“The members in our club are snoops, but our name shall be ‘Risk Takers.’ Seph, I think we need to come up with a secret meeting space,” Mick sighed. He had lost all of his exuberance towards their club because he suddenly realized that there might not be any place that was not suspicious.

“Mick, I know just the place! You know how our school has two basements? We should use the lower one; no one ever goes there!” Seph exclaimed, clearly pleased with himself.

“It’s settled,” Mick exclaimed, jumping with joy. While they walked to lunch, Seph was putting a list together about how he was going to ask the other students if they wanted to join their club. But when Seph looked over, Mick was coming over with all the kids who wanted to join their club. All of them bearing grins excitedly scurried over to meet him to find out when their first meeting would be.

“Let’s skip our afternoon classes,” Seph nervously exclaimed. As they made their way to the basement, Seph knew what his first assignment to himself would be: Mr. Loser, the man whom Seph thought kidnapped his Father.

Seph waited all day, for he was going to find out what Mr. Loser had done to his father. He was right outside his office. A light was on, but Mr. Loser probably just forgot to put it out. He pushed the door open, and there were Mr. Loser and his uncle with rifles, quietly talking.

“I am afraid Mr. Seph knows too much. We will have to kill him,” Mr. Loser commented. If Seph was going to die, he was going to do it like a man. He steadied himself. *Bam!* He opened his eyes and his uncle was on the ground losing blood quickly.

“Seph,” his uncle said in a voice that was stronger than his condition. “Forgive me.” He wasn’t going to give up on his uncle just yet because whatever was going on he knew his uncle wasn’t the mastermind behind this whole plot. But one thing was certain: He was going to find out who it was. If he didn’t act soon his uncle was going to be dead.

“Somebody help!” Seph screeched. Right after Seph said that, there was the rest of the club, and Mick had already called an ambulance. It felt like it took forever, but when the ambulance got there, they quickly carted off Seph’s uncle to the hospital. Seph rode in the ambulance with him. When they got to the hospital, Seph’s uncle had to go into emergency surgery. So Seph had to wait for what felt like hours to see his uncle. The nurse came out and told him his uncle was stable and he could go see him. He almost snapped at her for the wait. When he got in and the nurse left, he took a deep breath and socked his uncle to get him up.

“Seph, is that you?” he whispered. “Do I really deserve that, Seph? Because I am about to tell you something that might be a surprise. Your father and I are...”

“I already know what you are. I want to know why you kidnapped your own brother and almost killed me,” Seph said.

“I only was a part of the kidnapping of your father, and the reason I did that was for the money, which I needed badly. But if you want to know why your father was kidnapped and killed, you have to find Mr. Loser. He is still at the school, lying low,” his uncle said.

*That’s all I need*, Seph thought. He walked up to his uncle’s bed, and since his uncle was still on life support, he unplugged it, and his uncle went limp. Then he turned out the lights and walked out and told the nurse his uncle was asleep and not to disturb him for awhile.

Seph caught the bus back to school and thought to go back to his room to change his clothes that had blood on them. When he got to his room Mick was impatiently waiting for him.

“Seph, do you want me to come with you when you face Mr. Loser?”

“How did you know I was going to face him?” Seph asked.

“I just figured when I saw the angry look on your face. The good thing is we will be prepared because while you were being super-dramatic, Katie and I took the guns from his room. He had many, so take your pick, but I get the big one,” Mick said with a goofy grin on his face, like this is what he lived to do. This gave Seph some suspicion because no kid should like doing stuff like this. He just picked two simple handguns. He just realized that he hadn’t changed his clothes, and it didn’t look like he would be.

They walked silently to the teachers’ dorms. Once they got there, they found Mr. Loser’s room and knocked on the

door. He walked to the door and opened it and calmly let them in like he had been waiting for them.

“So, Seph, has your dear friend Mick explained everything to you?” Mr. Loser asked.

Seph looked at Mick, and before he could say anything, Mick said, “Seph, Mr. Loser is my father, and I was supposed to kill you at the beginning of the school year for my father. The guns that are in the room have been under my bed for the whole year, but I just couldn’t bring myself to kill you.”

“How noble,” Seph spat.

“Seph, I don’t think you understand. I am the head of a mob that your father was spying on for years, and he knew he was dead when I came to pick him up that day at your house. Your mother was the one that didn’t know. She is dead now, just like your father, and I am guessing your uncle is, too, because you probably thought he was behind this. So one by one, we have killed your family and eliminated our biggest enemy in the spy world,” Mr. Loser calmly finished.

Seph knew they were going to kill him, but he wasn’t going to go down without a fight. He was going to take them with him, and with three quick draws everyone’s guns were out. Before anything happened, Mick whispered, “Duck!” Seph did. When he thought it was safe to look up, there was Mr. Loser lying on the ground with blood rapidly spilling from his body; he died. Then Seph looked over at Mick who had received a shot to the lung. He still had his gun pointed at his father, but then he changed his aim toward Seph and said, “I have to fulfill my duty and die with honor.” With one swift movement, he shot Seph.

*Death is like falling asleep*, Seph thought, *only easier*. That was Seph’s last thought.

# Max's Quest

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*In **MAX'S QUEST** by Michael Shi, a young boy somehow makes a weird creature hatch. Max had no idea that this creature will lead him to a life-risking adventure.*

It was a bright, sunny day in a small stone cottage located in the middle of the forest. In this cottage, a young boy named Max was sleeping. Max woke up with a jolt when the rooster crowed. He yawned and started to get dressed. After he finished getting dressed, Max heard footsteps coming closer to him. Max's father came into his room and said, "We only have enough food for a couple more days, you need to go hunting and catch a deer."

"We have enough money to buy some food. Why can't we just go to the market?"

"I told you already! The tax collectors haven't come yet. If they come right after we go to the market, they will take our house away from us. Do you want that to happen?"

"Fine! I'll go hunt a deer and bring it back." After Max ate a small breakfast, he left with his bow and arrows and half of the family's food. Max's family couldn't afford a horse, so Max had to travel on foot. Once Max had traveled for a couple hours, he found tracks of a herd of deer. After a day of tracking his prey, Max isolated a weak and wounded deer. The sun was setting and Max was hiding in the bushes. He aimed his bow and shot the deer in the heart.

Max was so happy that he had hit the deer in the heart. This was a thing he had been trying to do since he was a little kid. As Max was bringing the deer home, he found a strange, green rock lying on the ground. Max picked this stone up and brought it along with the deer. Once he got home, his excited family prepared a feast

with the deer that he caught.

The next morning, Max's rock dropped on the floor and cracked. Max picked it up and inspected it. He was angry with himself for breaking this strange rock. An hour later, Max noticed that the rock's cracks were getting larger and larger. A couple minutes after Max noticed this, the rock burst open and a strange green creature with two spikes on its back came out. Max stared at the creature and pinched himself to make sure he wasn't dreaming. He named the creature John after his grandfather who had died a year ago of a heart attack. Max created a small tepee-like den for John to live in. Max soon found out that John liked to steal things and cause mischief. For example, one night, while Max was sleeping, John came out of his den and snuck quietly into the house. John slowly open Max's bedroom door and crawled in Max's room. John looked around and saw a shiny object. Max's watch was shining in the sparkling moonlight. John was curious about what it was and stole it.

Max's parents noticed that Max was rushing through all of his chores and going outside all of the time. They also noticed that Max was eating more food than usual. Max's parents tried to find out what Max was up to all of the time but they only saw Max playing outside next to his tepee-like structure. After a couple days, John grew to be very large and Max found it really hard to keep him hidden. Max had a fear of John being seen because he thought that his parents might want to sell John to the circus.

One night, Max had gone to the park to play with John while his parents were sleeping. When John was gone, a group of odd, blue men stealthily snuck into Max's house. While they were in his house, they took out a strange bottle of a strange-smelling liquid and smashed it against the wall and set it on fire. They ran as far away as they could from it and in about ten seconds the house exploded into tiny pieces that rained down on the ground. After Max and John left the park and saw Max's house, they sprinted to it and saw that it was in ruins and parts were still burning. Max sprinted away from the ruins and ran in the direction of the nearest town. That night, he cried himself to sleep with John at his side.

In the morning, the blue men attacked again! They came with their bottles of liquid and matches. They almost killed Max and John, but because Max created a distraction they got away.

Max and John decided to immediately run away and try to survive in the forest. They traveled by horse and tried to get away from the strange men.

It wasn't long until the blue men had caught up with Max and John. Strangely, the blue men could run faster than the horses that Max and John were riding. The blue men grabbed Max and hit him with a club, which knocked him unconscious.

When Max woke up, he saw John tied to a tree, trying to get to him. It took him a while to remember what had happened. Then he noticed the blue men sitting behind him, noisily eating their lunch. Max realized that he was starving and asked the blue men for food. The blue men talked to each other quickly in another language, and one of them stood up and walked over to him. He told Max in English that he would get two loaves of bread and a bowl of water every day.

That night, when everybody was sleeping, Max tried to think of a plan to get away from the men. He thought long and hard, but he couldn't figure out what to do. It was then that Max realized he had been drugged. Max came to the conclusion that the drug was in his food and water.

For the next couple days, Max dumped his food somewhere in the bushes or behind a tree. After Max had been captured for a week, he was so thin that he could slide out of his chains.

After escaping, Max freed John in the middle of the night. Once Max and John were both free, they made their way out of the forest. Max was so excited to be free that he accidentally stepped on a twig and noisily cracked it. Max froze in his tracks and one of the men stirred, but he thankfully went back to sleep.

After Max and John escaped, they made a plan to get away from the blue men. Since the men were fast and amazing trackers, Max and John decided to go to a village and get protection there.

On the way to the village, Max and John found a glowing, blue cylinder. They picked it up and heard the blue men shout and start to chase them. Once the men got close to Max and John, they ran away at the sight of the cylinder.

After this, Max and John went into the nearest town and asked them about the cylinder, but nobody knew what it was except for one person, a mysterious old man. Max asked him, "Do you know anything about this strange cylinder?"

"Can I look at it?"

"Sure," said Max, handing the cylinder to the man.

"Where did you find this object?"

"On the floor in the woods."

"This object contains great power that could destroy the world. Keep it with you at all times, and don't let anybody else have it."

“Thank you,” said Max.

When Max and John asked the other villagers what they thought about the old man, all of them said that the old man was crazy. Max went to sleep in an old inn where he thought about what the old man had said. Max decided that he would try to use the blue cylinder.

The next morning, Max woke up and tried to find the old man. Max looked in his old shack and found a note.

Max and John,  
I have gone to try to find the secret of the cylinder. Whatever you do, don't follow me. I can take care of myself. If I find the secret and am still alive, I will come back and teach you about it.

Max wanted to follow the old man, but he knew that he would just slow him down and then he might not find the secret. He decided to stay in the village.

After six long months, Max and John saw the old man walking towards the village. They ran towards him and pestered him with questions. Finally, the old man told them to stop asking him questions and help him to the village.

Once he got back to his old shack, Max and John asked him if he had found the

secret. The old man said that there was no secret and the blue cylinder was just a fake. The real cylinder was destroyed many years ago when it had fallen into a Dumpster.

Max and John asked him, “Where did the blue men come from?”

“The blue men were hired assassins. I believe that the blue men were hired by the king to capture John from you,” replied the old man.

Max and John asked the old man, “Why would the king want to capture John?”

“John is a strange animal, and the king believes that if he could get John on his side, he could conquer the world.”

“What do you think that I should do now?” asked Max.

“You could run away from this village, or you could try to avoid detection by the king by lying low and staying here. I think that you should stay here, but you can do whatever you feel is best.”

“I think that we should stay here. You probably know best,” said Max.

Max walked back to the hotel where he was staying and went to sleep. For the next couple of months, Max lay low and didn't do anything to attract attention. Max and John lived a long life, and the soldiers never bothered them again.

## Might ‘n’ Magic

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*When Natherith pulls the magical Halo from the ground, he learns it is his responsibility to save his town of Metalmark from the evil Goblin King. Will he do it? Find out in **MIGHT ‘N’ MAGIC**, by *Hakeem Easter*.*

“Hey, guys, let's go to the river lands,” I said. “That will be the perfect place for practice.”

“Yeah it's hard to practice here. It's ok. But the lava pit?” Gorum said. “I know

that we can swim in anything, but lava? It gets hot sometimes.”

“I agree,” the rest of the group said.

“Well, it's unanimous: to the river lands!” I yelled. Let me introduce myself.



I'm Natherith. I came upon a little town called Metalmark and I am a metal worker, in training. My dad is the head metal worker of the whole world of Teva. I make the basics things like swords, spears, shields, and throwing darts. My dad doesn't think that I'm ready for the big stuff like axes, two-handed-swords, and muddle bombs. Muddle bombs are bombs that carry a heavy poison that bursts out on contact, paralyzing the nerves and weakening the muscles. And someday I'll be famous for smithing. Sometimes things don't go as well as I planned. I'm short, like a goblin but skilled like a mantic (a skilled warrior that specializes in water). Now back to the story.

"This is perfect!" Gogith said.

"I told you guys," I said. "Now we better hurry and finish practice. It's almost time for daily inventory check. Then let's get started!" I said. When we finished dive practice, I ran over to my home to get ready for inventory check. My dad and I are always ready. We only have five rooms to worry about: my room, dad's room, the weapons room, the ore condiment room, and the tunnel that connects to the cave where we get our ore from. The inspector is a little lazy, so it went by fast. But then all of a sudden someone cried for help.

"Bandits!" the watchmen cried. Everyone hid in their rooms as they ransacked the houses and took almost everything. These were creepers and jerks. My dad and I hid in the cave and waited. Several hours passed, and we searched for people who survived. There were a few. We all know that only one person could do this: the goblin King. He almost destroyed the village one hundred years ago. He was defeated by the great and noble warrior Vencides (also known as my dad). He defeated him using the legendary sword, Halo, the sword of fire.

"Dad, what are we going to do? The armory the shaft, and the well were all destroyed."

"The only way we can defeat the Goblin King is to get Halo. It's the only way," my dad said.

"But that's impossible; Halo's been lost for one hundred years!" Mr. Vivi said.

"True, it may be lost, but you don't know who hid it," my dad said.

"You hid it? Mr. Vivi said.

"Yes! Now let us hurry. But I must warn you all, even though I was the one to wield it before; there may be a new hero. Now let's try to get it out." my dad said.

"Get what out?" I asked.

"The sword of cores," Dad replied. He places his hand on the ground, and then a little red object came out from the ground. Then he pulled it out with great force. Then there stood halo.

"Dad you hid it in the ground? My friends and I dug up the whole village once." I said. And we still didn't find it.

"Well, you didn't dig deep enough." Dad said. So we all tried to pull the sword out of its resting place. No one did but I didn't try because I didn't think I was the one. But my dad made me try and in total surprise, I pulled the sword out of the ground. And my dad told me it's my responsibility to save the world (and I though sports dads were tough).

Before we went to the goblin kings castle I had to learn a lot of stuff. First, I had to take a year of getting stronger. Then in-between, I learned some sword techniques, combos, and the most important - the six finishing moves. The six finishing moves are the only way I'll be able to defeat the goblin king. The first move is sticking down; I have to strike when knocked down or asleep. The second move is shield hit. I can strike with my shield, giving me a chance to make a combo of

slash, dash, and striking down. The third move is a magic spell that finds your opponent's weakness. The fourth move makes you feel weak, but cast a shadow of yourself so there are two people you have to fight. The last and final move is a magical inscription, *MODIAR NOBALUM MASES*.

After the three years it took for me to learn all of the moves, it was time for me to face the goblin king. My dad told me that the goblin king isn't that big but my dad was huge - 8 foot 9 inches. Now as we marched to the castle there were no guards, no traps, and no bolts of voltage. But when I got up to the goblin king's throne room (while my dad and my friends were guarding the door), I saw him asleep right in his throne and I thought it was the perfect time to use striking down on him. When I was about to hit him, he grabbed me.

"Well, well, well, look what we have here." The monster said. "Well I wasn't expecting this."

"That's right, you weren't. Take this!" I yelled. I put a smoke screen in his eyes to

blind him. It only stunned him a little, but it was just enough to make him let me go.

"Well aren't we the smart one, if you don't want to end your life then you shouldn't make me angry," he said.

"Well the life that you're going to end is not my butt. It's going to be yours, what now?" I said feeling stupid.

"Huh?" he said in confusion.

"Let's just go!" The battle was long and hard, but in the end, it was perfect. I did all five blows perfectly. Then I finally saw the inscription. "Get ready to die demon, MODIAR NOBALUM MASES, MODIAR NOBALUM MASES," I chanted.

"Stop with those accursed words. STOP, STOP, STOP!" he shouted. And in a big bang he vanished into thin air, leaving nothing but a mysterious orb. Suddenly, Halo started to circle around the orb, absorbing its power. Then Halo restored the land, the trees, the rivers, and the brooks, everything. Then everyone came back from the darkness and then everything was back to normal.

## The Mile

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*Cameron Walker is running in the town of Jackson's annual mile run. Little does he or the other runners know about several deadly obstacles that they have to face. Will Cameron survive? Read **THE MILE** by **Matthew MacMichael** to find out.*

Most people think that running a mile is bad. A mile is nothing, NOTHING compared to the mile that I will describe in this story.

Cameron Walker was at the starting line of his town of Jackson, Michigan's annual mile run stretching. His curly brown hair looked like tumbleweed on top of his head. The crowd was cheering behind him as the

other runners stepped to the starting line. Neither Cameron, nor any of the other three hundred twenty participants in the race knew anything of the obstacles that lie ahead. No one knew about the Lava pit, Monster Lake, Tornado Plain, Quicksand beach, and the worst of all, the Crusher.

Cameron was in the middle of a group of mostly adult runners. There were a few

college and high school kids, but no other 11-year-olds like Cameron. *Bang!* The official's cap gun went off, signaling the start of the race.

The runners started up a small hill and on the way down, Cameron heard screaming. He couldn't see what was happening because tall people surrounded him, but there was an orange glow in front of him that gave him a good idea: lava pit. When he had run a few more feet, Cameron saw a bubbling orange pool of lava in front of him. There was no path that he could take around the pool. Thoughts raced in his mind: *What the? This is worse than I thought. Who would put a lava pit in the middle of a race? It's... It's a trap.* He jumped on a floating chunk of rock that he saw. Then a new question appeared in his mind: *How do I get to other side of the pit?*

Just then, a stick floated in front of him. Cameron picked it up. He used the stick as a paddle and paddled to the other end of the pit. Then he got back on the trail. None of the spectators had seen any part of the chaos that went on at the lava pit because the hill in front of the starting line blocked their view.

Cameron had moved from 215th place to 198th place in the race because of all the people that fell in the lava pit. The trail curved to the right along to a peaceful-looking lake. Cameron picked up his pace.

Suddenly, the lake started bubbling and splashing. A gigantic wrinkled green head rose out of the water. Its neck was about the length of a small building. It made a fierce roar, and picked up Cameron by the leg with its sharp teeth. Cameron stared at the monster, dangling many feet high above the lake, feeling that horrible moment when his blood rushed to his head, and seeing the monster's menacing red eyes focused on him. The other runners all stared at him, screaming, hoping that they weren't going

to be eaten like he was going to be.

Cameron snapped out of his daze. With his free foot, he kicked the monster in its lip. Startled, the monster let him go. *Plunk!* Cameron hit the water hard.

He came up gasping for breath and swam to the shore as fast as he could. He dashed back onto the trail as the monster started picking up other runners behind him. The trail went straight through a bunch of trees, and then leveled out into a plain-like area. *This is weird,* Cameron thought. *I never knew that there were plains in Michigan.* That plain happened to be Tornado Plain. Then Cameron saw a spiraling gray cloud of dust coming right at him.

Amazingly, Tornado Plain was pretty easy to get through. Cameron lay in a ditch and waited for the swirling gray twister to go spiraling behind him to suck up the slower runners. Quicksand Beach was also not very difficult. All Cameron did was walk on his tiptoes through the quicksand, defying the extreme sucking power of it. Some people, sadly, were pulled in, never to come out as the lethal quicksand acted as their grave. Cameron had survived, but the worst was next.

The most fatalities were at the Crusher. It was a giant metal machine meant to smash trash at landfills. It had two big steel blocks that went down and crushed whatever went between it. Cameron was now in 59th place after the last two obstacles, and he had an idea of how to get past the Crusher. While the top block of the crusher went up, Cameron would jump on it. Then once it got to the top, Cameron would jump off and run up the big hill to the finish.

Cameron reached the area where the Crusher was. He noticed a man hanging on the top block who was about to be crushed. "Help!" he cried.

Cameron heard the man's plea and sprinted toward him, knocking away everyone in his path. "I'll save you!" Cameron shouted to him. Cameron tackled the man and lifted him to the top block. The man scrambled up the block, jumped off the other end, and started to run to the finish line. Cameron didn't hear the man yell "Thank you! Thank you!" as the Crusher came closer, and closer, and closer. Cameron closed his eyes waiting for the Crusher to smash him to bits.

Cameron opened his eyes. He was surprised when he realized that he had not been crushed yet.

"I'm alive!" Cameron shouted. He sat up and looked at the back of the Crusher. He

noticed that the conveyer belt that made the Crusher's top block go up and down was missing. The top block was at the top. So with the block at the top and no conveyer belt, that meant...

"Uh-oh."

Cameron rolled onto the ground as the top block of the Crusher crashed down, missing him by an inch. Cameron climbed over the now useless Crusher to the finish line. Cameron finished in 12th place, the best finish for a kid in the history of Jackson's annual mile run. Cameron was disappointed that he didn't win the race, but Cameron didn't know that *survival*, not winning, is the name of this game.

## Mr. Mean the Monster

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*Billy was a normal kid, in a normal school or so he thought. Little did he know his math teacher was after him in **MR. MEAN THE MONSTER**, by **Ethan Lockwood**.*

Once, there was a boy named Billy. He was friendly, energetic, and cool. He was nice to everyone and everyone was nice to him, except for the math teacher, Mr. Mean. He was known for giving people F's, which is what he gave to Billy when he did not capitalize the first letter of his name on a big test. Since Billy received a failing grade, he had to go to school early to retake the test. He had to work in a dark, cold, scary room. The room was filled with the stench of elderly teachers and sweat socks. In Billy's opinion, the detention room was the worst room ever. The test seemed a lot harder than the one he failed and he needed help, so he went to the teachers' lounge. Then Billy witnessed the scariest thing of his life (besides the detention room)!

A huge green and furry monster that was at least seven feet tall was putting on a

costume. The costume looked exactly like Mr. Mean! Billy ran down the hall so fast he could hardly breathe. At the principal's office, he burst through the door. The principal, Mr. Far Tee, was sitting at his desk playing with a rubrics cube. He said, "Billy, you know not to run down the hall."

Billy tried to speak, but he had to wait until he caught his breath. He finally choked out, "Mr. Mean is a giant green monster wearing a human suit!" Mr. Far Tee rolled his eyes and looked up at the ceiling. Billy realized this was not going to turn out well.

Mr. Far Tee said, "I know you dislike Mr. Mean, but do you really expect me to believe this story? Go on back to class and don't bother me again. I have important work to do." Billy left the principal's office and shuffled to his first hour class, Math.

When he walked into class, he could tell Mr. Mean knew what was going on. Mr. Mean pulled Billy into the hall. Billy thought Mean was going to eat him right then and there, but instead he screamed, “You left your test unfinished and you are **SUSPENDED!**”

Mr. Far Tee had given up on his rubrics cube and was walking down the hall checking in on all the classes, just as Mr. Mean was yelling at Billy. He said, “I need you both in my office to explain what is going on.” Mr. Mean got very angry, so angry that his once pale face turned bright red and two tiny horns poked out of his head. After ten seconds, he started turning green. That was when Mr. Far Tee started to run, but it was too late. Mean was now in his true monster form. The principal would not last long with the seven-foot monster chasing him. He dodged around

the corner and sprinted down the hall to the cafeteria.

Mr. Mean crashed into the cafeteria right behind him. But, Billy and his buddies took the short cut and beat him there. Billy shouted, “Say hello to my little friends!” Everyone threw all the cold, stale school pizza at Mr. Mean. Mr. Mean was allergic to cheese. His face puffed up to the size of a watermelon. His eyes were buried under big, puffy, green mounds of furry flesh. Big monster tears dripped from them. Everyone laughed at the “scary” monster. Mr. Mean ran out the door and down the hall to the side exit. He crashed through the door with a big bang. No one ever saw him again. Ever since that day, Billy was a hero and Berkshire Middle School was safe from all mean teachers, until the science teacher, Mr. Mad, gave Billy an F-.

## The Murderer

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*In **THE MURDERER** by Kai Mason, a notorious murderer has broken out of jail. He connects to Chelsea in a very sad way. So what will happen to her when she runs into this murder in the dead of the night?*

“**T**his just in, the notorious murderer Ray Edden has broken loose from the Bayside Jail today. If you see him, please call the police immediately.” A mug shot of a man flashed up on the screen. Creepy.

My dad switched off the TV. His mouth was drawn into a straight line and he was completely silent. I could see his sadness, his anger, his fright. He missed mom. She was the only person that could make him smile. She was as radiant as the sun. She showed us hope, like a small light in the darkness. I could only imagine how painful it must have been to have the person he loved taken away from him by this madman

Ray Edden. The day she died was the first time I saw my dad cry. After that, he showed no expression at all; no smile, no frown. “Chelsea, are you OK?” he asked. He must have seen me staring at him. I wanted to ask *him* what was wrong.

“Oh, sorry, nothing. I was just thinking,” I replied.

I looked outside at the towering clouds and the aquamarine sea. It looked so peaceful; you couldn’t have imagined that something so gruesome could have happened here. My mother had been killed here, drowned by Ray Edden. Ever since then, I had been afraid of death. Sometimes, I’d think that she was still here,

just to remember that she wasn't. Why did it have to be my mom? Why couldn't it be anyone else? I used to cry. But after many years of mom being gone, I stopped. It was no use. She wasn't coming back, and I knew that. For a long time after that, the sea was like my mother. When I couldn't sleep at night, the sound of the waves and the ebbing tide sang me soft lullabies that would calm me right down.

I stepped out of the room and to the beach. It was deserted with broken glass and rotten wood littered all over the sand. For hours I stood there, thinking. This is what I did whenever I was sad. I let the strong wind push me around. For the first time in a long time, I felt free. It felt better than being cramped up in that small house with a depressed dad. To be inside that house with my dad hurt, because it made me think about my mom. But now, I felt like nothing could hurt me, nothing could get me. But I was wrong, terribly wrong.

I waded in the shallow water absentmindedly, like I was looking for something that wasn't there. The sun was beginning to hide beneath the ocean. And then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw something or someone move. I stopped, and told myself that I was just imagining things. But when I saw it again, I turned and looked around. There was a figure lurking in the palms somewhere. My heart was hammering. It was the scariest thing, for a murderer to be on the loose, and for you to be outside at the same time. I crept forward to where I saw the figure. I called out, "Who's there?"

No answer. I finally decided that no one was there, so I cautiously started home. I was breathing hard. It was the dead of the night. Everything looked different, and lifeless. The only light source was the moon. Somewhere along the horizon, a wolf howled. I couldn't recognize anything.

I had been walking for a long time. Then, suddenly, I realized that I was lost.

Everything looked sinister. The trees cast creepy looking shadows on the ground. My head was spinning. I was going into panic mode, and was on the brink of tears. I was scared and cold. Most of all, I wanted to go home. And then, I crashed into something. I fell on the ground, and turned to face the thing I had hit. My eyes opened wide in fear and I dragged myself away from the figure that stood in front of me. It was a man. The man had an unshaven beard and long, greasy, hair. His cold, dark eyes seemed like black holes that would suck you in forever. He was wearing a bright orange jail suit. I knew this man. I tried to scream, but it wouldn't come out. The first feeling that came after shock was anger. I wanted to kick him, shove him, yell, push, and scream at him. But I couldn't, because in Ray Edden's right hand was a gun. All I could do was stand there and look clueless, but I really wasn't. I had a lot of clues. Ray Edden had a gun, he was on the loose, and I had seen him. All those clues meant that Ray Edden was going to kill me. I knew I was right, but I hoped I was wrong.

Like me, it took Ray Edden a couple seconds to realize what had happened. But as soon as he did, he took two quick steps toward me, and pointed the gun to my head. I heard the *click* of Ray Edden putting his fingers on the trigger. I was frozen with terror. "Don't move," he said. His voice was deep and rough. "Speak a word to anyone about me, and I will find a way to kill you." He let go and pushed me back with such force that I fell on to the ground. He turned around and began to trudge away.

"Wait." I called. My voice was shaky. "Wait!" I called again.

He stopped. "Why did you kill my

mom?" I asked. I had always wanted a reason. Ray Edden turned around and glared at me with those cold, dark eyes. I could hear my heart thumping in my chest. I knew that any moment this man could kill me. Any moment, I could be dead. I was surprised to hear him answer.

"I killed her because... nobody ever listened to me."

"What?"

"My parents were killed in a shooting when I was very young, and I was sent to live with my aunt. She pretended nothing had ever happened to my parents, so when I was sad, she never said anything. She just let me be sad. Even at school, nobody knew what happened to my parents, and nobody took their time to listen to me. I could never express my feelings. If they had taken the time and listened, they probably would understand and care. Nobody felt any sympathy for me, and I grew up having no friends. All my life, I have wanted somebody to relate to." He looked back at me with those cold, dark eyes, and I could see a hint of sadness in them. For a moment, I had the most peculiar feeling. I actually felt sorry for this man. But it wasn't fair. Why did I have to be the one that Ray Edden could relate to? Why my mom? In seconds, my temper rose and I was mad.

"Why my mom? Why did you drown her and not anybody else?"

"Before my parents died, they would always take me to the sea. It was their favorite place to take me. After they died, I would come here every day. It was a place full of memories. Sometimes they would make me cry, and sometimes it would make me smile. And one day, I saw a man, a little girl, and a woman playing in the water. They were smiling and laughing, just as my parents and I used to. I was so jealous. I wanted that little girl to suffer, to feel the

same way I did when I was young. So, when I found the woman alone, I took her head and shoved it down in the water."

"No." I whispered. Tears were spilling down my cheek. "No, No, No! WHY? Why did you take her away from us?" I screamed. I took Ray Edden's shoulders and shook him. "Give her back! GIVE HER BACK!" I yelled. It just wasn't fair. I pushed him again. "GIVE HER BACK! GIVE HER BACK!" He pushed me away, and pointed the gun at me again. I wasn't scared anymore. I didn't care. "Go ahead," I said, "Pull the trigger. At least then I can see my mom again. At least then, I can be happy."

I closed my eyes and waited for him to shoot me. But he didn't. Instead, he threw the gun on the ground. I looked up and stared at him. Something had changed in him. I could tell. I realized that this was the only time that I could get away from this man. I stood up and looked at Ray Edden one last time, and ran as fast as my feet could take me. My vision was blurred with tears as I ran through the darkness. I didn't know how I got back home, but I did. I burst through the door, and my dad asked, "Where've you been Chelsea? What's wrong?"

I shook my head and darted up the stairs to my room. I collapsed on my bed and fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

I awoke the next morning to the sound of cameras, sirens, and shouting. I looked out my window. There were many photographers and reporters surrounding my house. I could hear the newscaster on the TV saying, "What happened to Ray Edden?" What *did* happen to Ray Edden? I went outside to see what had happened. I pushed my way through the crowd, and I almost screamed. It was like a horror movie. There, on the sand beneath the clear blue water lay Ray Edden, the water around

him stained with red. The words “*I’m sorry*” were etched into the sand. He had shot himself in the head. I could tell, because in his right hand still lay the gun he was clutching not so long ago. His face was a pale, grayish color, and his eyes were wide open. His greasy black hair waved around in the water like seaweed. This image would haunt me forever. My heart gave a jolt.

It appeared Ray Edden *had* understood the pain he had caused for many people. He wasn’t merely a cold, heartless, murderer. He was, at one time, a normal

person, just like anyone else. His pain had changed him into something evil. I wasn’t happy. Ray Edden didn’t deserve to die that way. Nobody deserved to die. Ray Edden had a heart, deep inside, and I had found it. But death was nothing that I could control. I just had to live on. Death had looked me in the eyes and I’d fought it away. Death had claimed my mother, and there was nothing I could do about that. I wasn’t afraid of death anymore. There was absolutely nothing to be afraid of.

## Naomi’s Secret

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*Naomi and her mother share a special bond. Naomi discovers her mother is keeping a secret from her. Now she has to choose. Should she disobey her mother or follow her heart? Find out in **NAOMI’S SECRET**, by **Melissa Whitefoot**.*

Naomi brushed her long golden hair while humming the lullaby her mother sang to her since she was little. Her hair shimmered with each stroke of her brush. Naomi was getting ready for the ball that comes once a year. But this was no ordinary ball because she was turning 15 tomorrow. She had a special gown made for this occasion. It was a long, gorgeous dress made of red silk and velvet with diamond crisscross shapes going down the middle.

Just then, Naomi’s mother entered the room. “You look so beautiful and I have a surprise for you,” said her mother. Naomi’s mother had kind eyes, and an open generous heart just like Naomi. You know how your father is at war, right. Well, he is coming home with his troops.

Naomi was speechless. “I haven’t seen him in years, since I was 12 years old!” Naomi shouted. “I am so glad,” she said.

“Great!” said her mom.

After our little talk, my mother helped me pick out some shiny red high heels and a sparkling diamond necklace. The diamond was 25 carats and shaped like a heart with a silver chain. Then she filed and painted my nails red to match my outfit. We started walking to the ballroom when she arrived, her eyes lit up at the colorful decorations. She sat next to her mother in front of the stage.

Then the Master of Ceremony stepped onto the stage and began to speak. “Good evening,” he announced. “Now that we are all here we shall begin. We are all hoping that Naomi Marsh has a marvelous birthday. We all know that this is a very special time and this tradition has been passed down for generations. Naomi will dance with all the young men of our kingdom. Here is our first dancer!”

After two hours, the Master stopped the dancing and said, “Let’s all sing ‘Happy Birthday’ to Naomi. A one, a two, a three,



and here we go!” The voices were so loud that they echoed in her ear. She felt relief when the song was finally over. The Master of Ceremony continued, “We have one more dancer here. Ready?” The young man stepped on to the stage. He was wearing black shoes, a black tux and his hair was thick and black. His big brown eyes sparkled with excitement. He stepped down from the stage onto the dance floor.

He held his hand out and whispered, “May I have this dance?” He looked Naomi’s age, only about five inches taller. She took his hand and they danced. Their eyes locked on each other. They smiled at each other the whole time. They must have danced for about two hours.

Then the royal chef brought out the biggest cake ever seen! At first she couldn’t believe her eyes, but then spelled out in giant, frosted letters were the words, “Happy Birthday Naomi!” It was decorated with frosted roses and balloons. Naomi and her guests ate all of the cake and the ball ended. Naomi felt as if she has just been to heaven, but it was going to get even better. She was going to have the biggest adventure of her life.

*BAM!* It echoed throughout the whole castle. The mail was here! Naomi ran to the front door and saw an envelope lying on the floor. She opened it and gasped. A large piece of folded paper popped out of the envelope. It was a pamphlet for high school. *What on Earth is this?* she wondered. Then when she was about to open the pamphlet, she heard loud banging footsteps on the marble floor. It was her mother.

“Oh, the mail is here. Please give it to me!” Before Naomi could follow her order, her mother snatched it from her and ran right back up the stairs. Naomi wasn’t sure why her mother acted like that. She

had never seen her like that and wondered what was this “high school” thing? Why didn’t her mother want me to see it? There were so many thoughts and questions running through my mind. Then she had an idea.

“Why don’t I just go upstairs and see what my mother is keeping from me?” she said to herself. That is exactly what she did! She scampered up the stairs, ran all the way down the hall and slowly cracked open her mother’s door. She peeked inside; the coast was clear, so she ran inside and spotted a golden chest with diamond heart designs. Naomi yanked on the chest but it would not move. There was a lock on it, but it was not an ordinary lock. It was just an indent in the chest shaped like a heart. “What kind of key would go in there?” she whispered. She started looking from top to bottom but didn’t find anything! *This is hopeless*, she thought to herself.

Naomi looked down, and kicked the ground when suddenly something caught her eye sparkling in the light. It was the diamond heart-shaped necklace. She immediately placed it in the heart shaped lock and the top swung open! “Yes!” she squealed while jumping up and down with joy. She reached inside the chest and pulled out the pamphlet. Then right when she was about to open it, she was interrupted again from loud banging footsteps. Naomi froze and dropped the pamphlet on her mother’s bed. Her heart was beating fast. She looked all around the room and ran into the walk-in closet. She opened the door a crack, just enough to see her mother, and the butler rush into the room.

“Do you think she was in here? What if she saw it?” asked her mother with a worried face.

“No! She couldn’t have. I knew we should not have let her look through the mail,” the butler Robert scowled. “My dear

queen, couldn't we just let her go to high school? I mean it is such a pleasurable experience. She will get to learn about the outside world, and maybe even make some friends."

"Look, Robert, I know it might be an amazing opportunity for her, but you must understand that Naomi is happy here, and she has opportunities and experiences here as well."

"Like what?"

"Like princess stuff! Now I think you know that I would love for Naomi to go to high school and I only want what is best for her, but I'm still not over what happened to my father," the queen whispered.

"I know that was a very painful time for you and all of us, but we have moved forward, and perhaps you should, too."

Naomi suddenly felt as if she were about to faint, but knew that if she did her mother, the queen, would hear and she would be discovered. So she kept it together. But on the inside she was exploding with anger and her breathing got faster. Her palms were dripping with sweat. Naomi felt like running away and never coming back. "What is my mother keeping from me? What is high school? What are they talking about?" Naomi whispered. After a few moments, she came back to earth and calmed down again.

It was at that moment that the queen screamed, "It's open! The chest is open! Naomi, where are you?"

"Look, the window is open. She jumped out the window. Let's go get her!" Robert exclaimed. They both rushed out of the room calling her name. Naomi stepped out of the closet, walked over to the bed, and picked up the pamphlet.

Hoping she would not be interrupted again, she slowly opened the pamphlet. Reading it aloud she said, "Would you like to go to a high school with all the classes

you can imagine? Well, at Weldwerths High School, that's exactly what you can get! There are about 900 children signed up already. So hurry up! Sign up if you want to be in the lottery." Naomi looked down at the picture and saw a whole bunch of kids holding hands standing in front of a huge building as big as a castle. This was quite weird for her; she had never seen any other kids other than herself or her relatives.

She looked at all the kids and her eyes stopped on someone. That someone had black, thick hair and big brown eyes. She knew who it was. It was that guy who danced with her at the ball. Then she noticed this high school was located in Wary City on Weldwerths Street. It even came with a map.

Without thinking that night, Naomi quietly packed her bags and left. She ran out of the castle through the garden and snuck past the snoring guards. She was out of the kingdom for the first time. Naomi went exactly where the map told her and she was finally there, Weldwerths High School. She slept in the bushes near the building and woke up early the next morning. She saw hundreds of kids scattered everywhere finding their classes, but Naomi didn't know where to go. So she asked a kid who told her to ask the office. When she got there, she found a tall lady with red curly hair. "Hello, how may I help you?" The lady asked.

"I'm new here, so I need a schedule. My parents sent me and are too busy to come," Naomi told her.

"I understand. I'll give you an extra schedule." Her schedule said her first teacher was Mrs. Tallish.

When she got there, guess who she saw? It was that kid she had danced with at the ball. It turns out he was in all of her classes! His name was Eric.

After a while, everyone loved Naomi and talked to her because she was so nice to them. Also, she got really popular because Eric is popular and every day after school, he would come and talk to Naomi!

Just as life was going great, the phone call came. They called Naomi down to the office. When the secretary told her it was her mom, Naomi freaked out and asked if she could speak to her in private. So the secretary led Naomi to a room. "Hello," Naomi said.

"How could you run away from home!" the queen exclaimed.

"How could you keep this from me?" Naomi yelled back.

"I didn't want to hurt you! You see when your grandfather was in high school, he was shot by his enemies I would hate for that to happen to you," her mother said.

"Hurt me? This is helping me! I don't have any enemies. I like everyone and everyone likes me. I'm happy here!" Naomi shouted.

Her mother thought about this for a moment. "Oh I didn't know that. Of course I'll let you stay! Love you, see you after school," her mother said.

"I love you, too! See you after school." After Naomi hung up she realized her life was going to change for good. She wasn't going to have to keep secrets any longer!

## The Night Ride

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*In **THE NIGHT RIDE** by **Kayleigh Yates**, Alex loves to ride her horse, Star. However, a normal night ride turns to Alex's worst nightmare.*

Alex is 13 and has a raging temper. She will do anything for horses. Her skin is light and her hair dark-brown, but she has iceberg blue eyes. She has a wonderful horse named Star.

Star is an old racing horse that was going to be put down with a bullet! That is, if she was not adopted. By the time Alex found out through a flyer in the town square, the owner was already getting prepared for the shooting. Alex had run down the road and gotten there just in time. The man who was going to put down Star was dressed in camouflage pants and a Harley-Davidson cap. His blue shirt had a huge mustard stain right in the middle.

"Ready, aim," started the shooter.

"STOP!" shouted a bystander. "There is a girl in the way."

"What are you doing here? You're in the way!" shouted the gunman.

"I'm here to save Star, *my* new horse,"

exclaimed Alex.

The gunman stared at Alex. "You can take her home," he sighed calmly, lowering his rifle.

Alex stormed out of the stable's center hallway because she had just seen the mess Star had made. "Star messed with the tack room again. She ripped up two brushes," Alex moaned angrily.

"Oh my, I had no idea she went down that way. Well, come have some oatmeal dear," sighed her mother Beatrice.

After breakfast, Alex went to the kitchen to pack a picnic for herself and Star. She made mashed oats for Star and a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for herself. She brushed Star with the currycomb she got for her birthday and dug out her hooves with a hoof pick. Alex slipped the bridle over Star's head and tightened the bit. Alex also put on a saddle blanket and saddle and

finally pulled the girth strap tight. She mounted her horse and led her out the stable door. Star trotted happily toward Moonlight Lake but Alex tightened her grip on the reins and turned her horse to the forest behind the ranch her parents owned. The forest was bright green and lush.

They had not ridden long before they found a lovely open space that was clear of trees yet had plenty of grass to snack on for Star. Alex found some blueberries to eat with their lunch. It took them about a half hour to eat. Alex had brought along her brushes to brush Star after lunch and before they start to ride some more. They started riding again after a good brushing.

Alex was humming a tune when Star suddenly started to whinny. All of a sudden, her horse bolted, zipping back and forth between trees. Eventually Alex was able to calm the mare down, but only after two minutes of utter terror for Alex. They came to a stop in a grove and Alex could see it was getting dark so she glanced around, looking for the best way home. Nothing looked familiar and Alex's breathing grew shallow with nervousness. She realized did not know where to direct Star. At that moment, something rustled in the bushes. Alex hopped off Star, the sweat glistening on her face. She heard footsteps get closer when all of a sudden Alex felt a tap on her shoulder. She abruptly turned around and saw a face of a man. She had no idea who the man was, so she swung a fist straight at the face in front of her. He hardly flinched. She grabbed onto the shoulder of the masked man as he flung her to the ground. She continued punching and kicking the stranger. As she looked up, she watched in awe as Star galloped towards him and tackled him. Alex went flying in to a bush and she broke her wrist on impact. The man lay there, unconscious.

By now, it was completely dark except

for the bright moon shining in the sky. After about two hours, they finally found their way out of the forest. The entire ride Alex winced in pain as Star did her best to step carefully along the graveled pathway. It was almost as if Star knew her rider was injured and was doing her best to take care of Alex.

Several days later, Alex told her friends Carter, Lily, and Lisa the whole story. The rest of the foursome was very surprised.

"That man was caught two days ago robbing a deli," explained Carter.

"I wonder why he wanted you?" pondered Lisa.

"No idea, but at least he is behind bars," Alex sighed.

"Maybe he was doing something in the woods that he didn't want anyone to know about," commented Lily, "and you happened to wander into it!"

"I wonder what he would be doing in the woods? Really, a man like that wouldn't be in the woods too much," stated Lisa.

"I'm ti—" started Alex.

"Shhhhhh," cut in Lily.

"Wha—?" Lisa started.

"Shh," Lily said. "Did you hear that?"

"You're paranoid and hearing things," Alex told her.

"Maybe," Lily sighed.

"I got to go. See you later!" Lisa shouted as she ran down the street to her home.

Lily started to kick the ground and clumps of dirt went flying. She said, "I wish they would open up the woods already. That caution tape has been up since the attack."

"I know," complained Alex. "Let's all go home."

"Yeah, you're right. Bye," Carter agreed.

As Alex walked the long walk home, she heard things, too, but she convinced herself it was just her imagination.

# On The Run

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*In ON THE RUN by Elizabeth Vos, Claire is failing school and not getting along well with her step-mom so she thinks about running away. Will she do it?*

“I’m passing back your tests from last week now,” announced Ms. Shrouse.

*Please let me get an A. Please let me get an A,* I was whispering to myself. I had been failing every homework assignment and test in this class. I thought I knew how to do everything, but I kept getting all the answers wrong. I had so much on my mind. My dad died about two weeks ago and ever since, my step-mom has been extremely mean. Now I know what Cinderella felt like. Sweep the floor! Take out the garbage! Clean the dishes! It just happens to be that when friends and guests are over, she plays the grieving widow, so everyone feels sorry for her. She married my dad for him, not me. Every time he left the house, she made me do extra chores, but when my dad got home, she told him that she had worked her butt off doing everything that I had done. When I told him the truth, he wouldn’t believe me.

“Suzy, please come get your test. Claire, please come get your test,” the teacher called.

Suzy and I were best friends. I walked up to the teacher and I wasn’t any happier when I saw my test. It was just as usual: I failed. Something kept bothering me, but I didn’t know what. Maybe it was that I was going to be stuck with my step-mom for the rest of the day since Suzy couldn’t play today. She was my only friend.

After school, on my way home, I did some thinking. I would go missing for half a week. I hated being with my step-mom with nothing to do! If I stayed in my room so that I wouldn’t have to be with her she’d

ask me what was wrong. I can’t just tell her that she’s the worst person I’ve ever met! I wouldn’t leave a note and I would bring a few things with me. When I got home, I grabbed my large sports bag and an extra pair of clothes from upstairs. As I started packing I started thinking too. My step-mom doesn’t do anything with me. She just sits around on her stupid old laptop or watches T.V. for pretty much the whole day! She needs to get a job and exercise way more often or else she’s going to get really fat! I thought to myself as I went downstairs and took a few meals worth of food and water for the half a week that I would be gone. I took some money and my dad’s old cell phone and I shut the door tight on my way out.

I looked around for the nearest crowded area so that I could blend in. Then, I spotted a funeral going on in the park. Behind the park there was a forest made up of pine trees. That would be a great spot to camp for the rest of the day and possibly the night as long as I didn’t get lost.

I walked into the forest and realized how big it was. I didn’t want to get lost, but I didn’t want to be too close to the border of the forest so I walked a little bit further, but when I turned around again to make sure I was far enough, I couldn’t see anything besides pine trees. I started running and searching for a way out of this pine maze. I got really dizzy so I sat down and drank some water. When I stopped seeing two of everything I got my dad’s old cell phone out of my bag and used it to call Suzy. I knew I could trust her.

“Hello?” Suzy answered.

“Hi, Suzy, it’s me,” I cried.

“I’m busy! Where are you? Your mean old step-mom called me a whole bunch of times.”

“Um...I’m lost.”

“What! Where?”

“I’m lost in the forest near my house. You know the big forest with all the pine trees behind the park.”

I kept thinking about what was going to happen next. I was waiting for someone to come and then someone did. It was a police officer. I was surprised my step-mom wasn’t yelling my name or that Suzy wasn’t here. *My step-mom is a coward and probably scared that she might get lost, I thought to myself. She called the police!*

The police officer was coming towards me, and I freaked out.

“Come on, I’m bringing you to your step-mom,” he told me.

Why should I go with him? I’m not going with him. I haven’t ever seen his face before and I’m supposed to go with him. I thought some more. All of a sudden I was

running as fast as I could. Why was I doing this? I turned around to see how much further I was. Then I saw her: my step-mom. I thought that I didn’t like her. But instead, I turned around and started running the other direction. It all happened so fast. I jumped into her arms and started crying. We hugged each other for so long. I had made a big mistake, but surely she would understand.

“I was so worried about you. Why did you run away, Claire?” she asked me.

“To tell you the truth, ever since Dad died, I haven’t had any fun with you the way I did with Dad. I’m failing some of my classes and I know how obsessed you are with my grades. So I decided to get away from everything and in half a week from today I would come home and start new.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” she asked me.

“I’m sorry. I thought that if I told you you’d get even madder and make me clean more dishes and have more chores and be grounded for a super-duper long time,” I answered.

## Peril of NY, NY

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*Harry Wilkens gets a job with the F.B.I. When someone makes a threat on New York City, it is up to Harry and his partner to stop him. Will he get there in time? Find out in **PERIL OF NY, NY** by **Michael Bajorek**.*

**H**ello, my name is Harry Wilkins and this is my story. It all started about four months ago in my old job at a nuclear power plant. My boss was a total idiot who made all the wrong decisions and of course, I was his financial advisor so I got blamed for every bad decision he made. Then one day he made one terrible decision. He went bankrupt, the plant closed down, and many people including me lost their job.

I spent the next few days looking for a

job. I did a couple of interviews and, well, no one wanted me. I tried to avoid the fact that I was the financial advisor for someone who went bankrupt but it just kept coming up. I thought to myself, *there is no way I will get a job. It’s been hopeless attempt after hopeless attempt*, and then I came by something in the want ads that was rather peculiar. There on the page were the numbers 6, 2, 9, 10, 15, 2, and more. So I thought it over for a while. The number

6... a, b, c, d, e, and f! F is the 6th letter of the alphabet. So I solved the rest of the message using this method. The message read, "FBI job open requires six-week training. Meet at 31248 Wilpont Dr., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on Nov. 2, 2015 at 7:48 P.M." Then I thought to myself, *It's October 20. Well I still have thirteen days. Better start pumping the guns.*

Thirteen days later, I was in the best physical condition of my life. I had never felt better. Their training was the hardest thing I had ever done. After the six weeks' training, I was a solid sharpshooter. I learned how to move quickly without being seen. But today was the big day. This was the day they would announce who made it into the FBI.

"First," the man announced, "Harry Wilkins." I felt so accomplished that I had made it in. I just wanted to shout for joy, but that would have been completely embarrassing.

My first few assignments were nothing more than chores. I followed my partner through all the assignments and cleaned up the messes. While all this was going on the government received a threat: "I demand 20 million dollars or else I will destroy New York City," the deep-voiced man said. "You have two weeks to give me the money."

Right then the FBI received a call from the government. "We need your help. Some lunatic threatened New York City, and we need you to deal with it!" the vice president of the United States yelled.

"Agent Freeman, I want you and your partner to handle this," the FBI chief exclaimed. I couldn't believe it. I was finally going on a mission that meant something, since Agent Freeman was my partner! We were going to start the investigation the next day.

The investigation was going terribly; in

three whole days we had found nothing. On the fourth day we were waiting to see if the criminal would call once more. It was late so we brought a TV since things could get really boring. We turned on the news, and there was a multi-billionaire donating the rarest crystal in the world to a museum. All of a sudden he got shot in the throat! Agent Freeman was sound asleep so I woke him. "Look at this!" I told him. He woke with a jump.

"Wow, who would do that?" he asked worriedly.

"I don't know," I said, "but I think it was the same person who took the crystal. Look it's missing!" I guess everyone was so caught up in seeing him they didn't even notice the crystal was stolen.

The TV station let me look over the video but only because they had about 40 copies. So of course I looked over the video several times, but all I could tell was that he had a black coat. I only noticed two things peculiar about the coat; it was missing two buttons, and it had a dry cleaning tag that said, "Best in town." I talked to agent Freeman and I told him that I thought that the murder related to the threat to New York City.

"My theory is that the crystal powers the weapon that will be used to destroy New York City I don't think this is just some lunatic, I think this is a serious criminal we're dealing with," I said worriedly.

"Very interesting," Agent Freeman said, "but how did you come up with that?"

"Well, like I said, it is just a theory, but it is our only lead," I said. I told him about the coat. He said that he would look into it.

Two days later we found the dry cleaning place. We talked to the first person who worked there.

"Agents Freeman and Wilkins, FBI," I told her.

"How may I help you," the preppy-

looking girl said.

“We are looking for the owner of a black coat possibly missing a button,” agent Freeman said quietly.

“Why don’t you speak with the manager? He keeps the owners of the clothing on file,” she said.

She walked over to the office and spoke to the manager “Here is the file,” he said as he slid the file to us. It leads us to two people Kenny Ray and Allen Green. I talked to Kenny Ray while Agent Freeman talked to Allen Green. Agent Freeman and I met each other after we interviewed the men.

“Well Kenny Ray didn’t have any useful information,” I said. “How did it go with Allen Green?”

“Mine was unsuccessful as well, I guess we hit a dead end,” he said disappointedly.

I got the next day off because the government decided just to pay the crook off. He had us beat, so I decided to take a trip down memory lane. I went to the hospital where I was born and all my old schools. I visited my old friends and all of my old jobs, but when I came to my latest job at the nuclear power plant, someone else was there. It was my old boss, Mr. Green, and he had the laser and the crystal!

“No one will find me here!” he yelled maniacally.

Later I went back to H.Q and told agent Freeman what had happened. So we went back to the building where Mr. Green was there. “I better take a practice shot, or shall I say, warning shot, to show that I am serious. I will have that 20 million before I know it,” he said. We jumped into action right as he was about to pull the trigger and we knocked the laser down, he tried to run but we caught up to him handcuffed him and put him in our car and took him to the slammer.

“OK, you get your one phone call,” the

chief of police said.

“Trace that call,” I whispered to agent Freeman “and listen in to what he is saying.” The call traced to a place one half a mile away from the plant.

“Brother, bring the backup laser to the power plant and shoot the FBI headquarters. The coordinates are in the computer. Just put in the password and fire away,” he said casually.

Agent Freeman and I got in a police car, put on the siren, and floored it to get to the power plant. We saw Allen Green from the interviews arriving with the laser and we ran in. As we arrived Allen fired his gun at us we took cover behind a crate. Agent Freeman ran toward him to stop him from shooting H.Q and was shot right in the stomach. “Noooo!” I yelled. I threw a stun grenade in his direction. He grabbed his head in pain. I took the crystal out of the laser, grabbed agent Freeman out of the building and placed a detonator on the laser and drove as fast as I could out of there. Suddenly the building blew up and luckily there weren’t any other buildings close to the explosion. The laser was destroyed and New York City potentially saved.

When I returned to Headquarters, I received a round of applause from every one of my co-workers. Agent Freeman was not with me because he was in the hospital recovering from wounds, but the doctors said he would be fine. Then the chief approached me slowly.

“Agent Wilkins,” the chief said softly, “I think that I am going to appoint you one of our head operatives. As for Agent Freeman, he will become the number two in charge. I have been looking for someone to take my place when I retire,” he said proudly.

“Thank you,” I replied. “It is a great honor, sir.”



# The Pirate Wannabe

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*In THE PIRATE WANNABE by Matthew Schweiss, Joe wishes for an adventure so he becomes a pirate with his friend Mario. Will their dream come true?*

It was 2076 on a warm night in Louisville, Texas. There was a twenty-one year old man named Joe. He lived with his wife Alice. Joe's dream was to join the Navy for the adventure of his life. He was going to apply the next morning at 7:30 sharp. He wanted to get a good night's sleep so he would be ready to get up early. The next morning he got up and put on some jeans and a leather bomber jacket and drove off in his turquoise Jimmy. When he started the engine, the car made a *vroom, vroom* sound like a racecar. When he arrived at the recruiting office, he saw pictures of ships and boats. The line was short, maybe ten or fifteen people. Joe met Mario who was standing in line behind him. "If I don't make the Navy, I am boarding a pirate ship," said Mario.

"I want to do something adventurous too, so could you hook me up with a job?" asked Joe. After a long wait, the doctor finally arrived to give them a medical exam. After they left the recruiting office, Mario went to Joe's house to watch football and eat flaming hot Cheetos, their favorite snacks. They spent more the rest of the day together watching football, bowling and then became best friends forever.

The next morning at ten fifteen, the phone rang. Alice picked it up, and then gave it to Joe. It was the man from the navy. He said in a sad voice, "I am sorry you did not make the navy because you have a heart murmur." Joe was upset so he called Mario about the job on the ship. Mario told Joe that he did not make the Navy either.

"We will meet at the Saint Marks Harbor at 8:10 a.m. so we can board the pirate ship," said Mario.

So once again Joe set his alarm for seven thirty in the morning. Joe did not fall asleep until 10:00, which was extremely late for Joe. When his alarm went off he knew that he better get up or else he would be late for the ship. The first thing that he did was pack his suitcase. When he went downstairs, his wife Alice said, "Goodbye."

Joe replied by saying, "Goodbye, Alice. I will see you in a little bit."

Joe left at about 7:45 and he got there just in the nick of time because the pirates were boarding the ship. The ship was the color of gold. The sail was red with a skull and cross bone. The pirates boarding the ship looked just like ordinary people.

By the time everybody had boarded, the captain said, "Here is what you are going to be wearing from now on." He held up a black suit and a hat that looked like a jumpsuit. Mario and Joe wondered why they had to wear that uniform. The captain stated, "All of our mates need to wear the same uniforms so that we work as a team."

The captain of the ship introduced himself. "My name is Ronald," he said. Ronald asked if anybody had any questions about the ship. Of course Mario raised his hand. Ronald called on him.

Mario asked, "What happens if the boat sinks?"

Ronald said, "We would jump into the lifeboats and hope that somebody would pick us up. We would use flares if we were overboard at night."

Joe asked, "What is a flare?"

Ronald indicated, "A flare shoots up into the air and is bright red and would get the attention of a rescuer. Pick up your new uniforms and go change into them. In fifteen minutes we will all meet back here for your first lesson."

After fifteen minutes the crew came out in their uniforms. Ronald explained to the crew that the first lesson was going to be about knots. The first thing that they learned was what types of knots they would use on the pirate ship. Ronald told them that the most common knot that they would use was a sailor's knot, which would be used for tying the boat to the dock. After the lesson was over, the captain was going to assign bunks. He told them to line up in a single file line. Mario and Joe became bunkmates by order of the captain. Then the motor started and they set sail.

Mario went over to the pile of suitcases to gather his belongings. He accidentally picked up the wrong suitcase. A big, scary pirate came and nudged him and said, "Keep your dirty hands off of my belongings." They started to argue, both

claiming that the red suitcase was his. The argument escalated to a shoving match and then Mario was pushed overboard. The other pirates heard a splash. They ran over and threw Mario a life ring. But it was too late; the propeller had already chopped him up. There were body parts floating behind the ship. The captain had to report it to the police.

The pirate who pushed Mario overboard jumped off of the ship just before they got to the docking place and swam to shore. After much searching, the police found the pirate who pushed Mario overboard. The rest of the crew was very happy except Joe. *I'm so sad now that Mario is gone* thought Joe.

He missed his best friend, Mario. When the ship docked, Joe got off because he went on the ship for adventure, but was sure that the excitement of the adventure was gone without Mario. Joe drove home in his Jimmy to surprise Alice. She was so glad to have Joe home again. He was happy to be home, too. He didn't need any more adventures!

## Plane Crash

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*Kathy is going to see her family because she moved away when she got married. The plane crashes, and she has to find a way to survive in*  
**PLANE CRASH**, by *Chris Kakoç*.

A girl named Kathy went to the airport to go to see her family. When it was time she went on the plane. It was about one hour until she took off. She was flying for about five hours. She fell asleep. When she woke up, she heard people screaming and yelling. Then they crashed.

She was lying on the ground. After five minutes, she finally she got enough energy to get up and search for anyone who might

be still alive, but she was the only one.

She got off the plane. She was frightened because she was the only one there. Then she started to wonder where she was. She looked around her. She saw a lot of sand, and then she saw camels. Then she knew that she was in a desert.

She wanted to eat, but there was nothing to eat. She was tired. She wondered what time it was. She thought then. She thought

it must be around 10:00.

She looked for a good spot to sleep. She slept for about ten hours and woke up. She was really hungry and thirsty, but deserts are dry, so there were no rivers and nothing to eat. She thought in about five days she was going to die.

She got tired of the desert and started walking. Luckily, she found a camel and rode it all through the desert. She was trying to find her way out of the desert.

She rode the camel for about three hours. Then it looked like she found her way out. The camel led her to her destination.

She got off the camel and walked through the trees and bushes. Finally, she saw an airport. She went to the airport and asked for a plane ticket to Arizona.

After that, she got off the plane, grabbed a taxi to her house, and ate until she couldn't eat anymore.

## The Real Orphans

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*The death of her grandfather, Kenya's only living relative, leaves her alone in the world. How will she survive? Find out in **THE REAL ORPHANS**, by Lilly Havis.*

Kenya muttered something to herself as she crumpled the torn out page from her old notebook. She sadly tossed the paper ball at the beautiful scenery in front of her. After landing, the paper rolled its way down the hill, successfully avoiding the plentiful shrubs and trees in its way. Kenya watched as it neared the bottom of the hill. Now it was surely going to fall into the lake, but Kenya didn't seem to care. Then out of nowhere, an overused sneaker blocked the paper and forced it to a stop.

"Trying to pollute my lake, are you Kenya?" It was James Dooligan, Kenya's grandfather.

"No, not at all, Granddaddy," was Kenya's reply. "I was just frustrated at my many attempts to get this painting just right...all apologies."

Not bothering to reply, the elderly man plucked the paper from the ground and straightened it out. After studying it carefully, he looked up.

"Are you able to tell me what is wrong with this?" he held up the painting for affect.

"It isn't good enough to go up on the kitchen wall. I just want you to have the best."

"I think I have a good punishment for you," the old man chuckled.

Kenya froze. She had never really been punished before. James went out back and grabbed the hose. He smiled as he soaked her. Kenya laughed. She grabbed a water gun from the garage. Soon after, the two were laughing and soaking each other and water was everywhere.

When Kenya was born, her mother lost so much blood that she died. Her father took care of her for about a month, became extremely depressed, and committed suicide. Before he killed himself, Kenya's father dropped her off on the doorstep of James, the baby's grandfather.

Since then, James acted as a dad to Kenya rather than a grandpa and Kenya saw him as such. It is also why she never saw herself as a "real" orphan. When she was little, Kenya would watch *Annie* the movie and say, "Annie's a real orphan,

NOT ME,” with a great big smile on her face.

Now Kenya was 12 years old. She had black hair that flowed down to her ankles. James tried to cut it once, and that was a big mistake. Since then, Kenya’s ear was split, and rather unattractive looking. She loved to sketch and paint. James homeschooled her, which was the only choice considering that there were no schools because of how unpopulated the area was. She didn’t have friends, but that didn’t bother her.

James and Kenya lived in a small cottage on the outskirts of a small town in Idaho in the middle of nowhere. It was painted bright green with a sign on the door saying, “My home is your home.” Inside it appeared cluttered yet organized, comfy but cramped. All along the orange walls were Kenya’s paintings, each of a beautiful tree or flower, something she had seen outside. Next to the others, there was one of her and James. Outside, it was like a nature lover’s dream. There was a gorgeous lake surrounded by various plants and trees. There were all sorts of wildlife such as squirrels and deer. It always smelled of roses. It was just one of those places you would never want to leave. That is why Kenya was surprised that there were no neighbors and no public buildings. Once every 2 months, James would send Kenya to the city to buy all the necessities.

One day, Kenya was outside painting. She leaped for joy. She had finally gotten the painting right! She ran to the cottage. What she found in the kitchen was not at all what she expected. There was James, on the floor dead. She didn’t even have to make sure . . . she just knew. He was old, and it was his time. She had to accept it, but she couldn’t. She lay down next to him and cried. She stayed that way all night. She had absolutely no idea what to feel. She

wanted to think he was just taking a nap, that he would wake up feeling fine like he had that morning. She wanted to join him, but she knew that that definitely wouldn’t solve the problem. She’d been living in a dream life since James opened the door and took her in. Now was the first time she was really expressing her feelings. She was overwhelmed with all of the feelings going through her head. How much she didn’t want to have killed her mother, but forced herself into thinking she had. How happy she’d been here, how thankful she was, how much she loved James, how much she would miss him, how she was to move on. She was slowly making herself sick as she felt all the things she’d been holding inside. The first words she said were, “I’m a real orphan now.”

After she got up, Kenya went upstairs and grabbed *Annie* the movie. She sat back down and stared at it. When it was over, she played it again and again, until eventually she fell asleep. Kenya had nightmares that night, not about James but about her and about the orphanage that she’d have to go to. When she woke up that morning she decided to stay at the cottage and to take care of herself.

The next day, she brought her grandfather outside and covered him in a tarp. She said goodbye and left feeling depressed as ever. Kenya began to fall into a routine. She would wake up, paint until about noon, eat lunch, turn *Annie* on, and watch it repeatedly until she fell asleep. In Kenya’s mind, everything was going fine . . . until that night.

Kenya was startled out of her repetitive movie by thunder. Ever since she was little, thunder was her weakness. She would sit on James’ lap all night in a thunderstorm, but now he was gone. Kenya broke out in tears. After about 30 seconds, she couldn’t take it any more. She ran and

grabbed a portrait off the wall that she had made of her and left.

She stood outside and cried for a brief moment before she started walking. She was going to the city. After a while, Kenya was even wetter than the time James sprayed her with the hose. She walked until morning and found a comfortable piece of ground to sleep on. She woke when it was night and the terrible storm was back. Then, about 2 a.m., she found the orphanage. She sat at the doorstep and cried. She felt like it was her babyhood all over again.

In the morning, Mrs. Applebaum showed up to get the mail when she found Kenya. She picked her up and took her inside. Kenya woke up to find herself in clean new clothes and in bed with a cold cloth on her forehead. There was a woman knitting just beside her.

“Vell, goood to see yo bright and shiny today.” The woman spoke with a German accent. “It vas so scary to vind yo sitting der las night. I’m Mrs. Applebaum.”

Kenya’s voice was shaky to start, “I-I-I’m Kenya.”

“Vell, nice to meet yo, Kenya. I will be taking care of yo for now. So how deed yo get here?”

Kenya told her everything. Before she knew it, Mrs. Applebaum was hugging her whispering “It’ll be okay, baby; ve’ll take care of yo.”

The next day, Mrs. Applebaum drove Kenya to the police station to report the death. Kenya told the kind officer everything. He nodded and took notes. He told her that she would stay at the orphanage until the social worker came and made it permanent. He assured her that there shouldn’t be a problem with it, and she should make herself comfortable. So, that’s what she did. Kenya met all the girls and found her bed.

The following day, the social worker arrived. He asked Kenya a series of questions, evaluated the orphanage, and took a lot of notes. She nodded and told them that it was fine if Kenya stayed there. She told them to leave it to her to make everything official. Then she left.

After that, Kenya was considered one of the orphans. She had learned where everything was and about all the girls. Things seemed great, but Kenya was still miserable getting over her granddaddy’s death.

A week later, a new girl came. She had short blonde hair, and wore entirely hot pink clothing and diamond jewelry. She carried about six bags. She took her place right next to Kenya.

“Hello there. I’m Leah, and my mother was a famous actress. What about you?”

“I’m Kenya. I don’t know a thing about my mother.”

The girls laughed. Leah was the next to speak. “I’m so happy we met! We’re obviously very different, but I have a feeling we’re going to be great friends.”

*I’d have to see it to believe it,* Kenya thought.

But Leah’s words came true. The two started hanging out together, and they felt comfortable talking about their families with each other. They sat next to each other at lunch, and played games together when they couldn’t sleep. The girls astonished everyone with their unique friendship because the two were so different.

One day over lunch, the girls were talking about what life would be like if they had never met. This was not an easy subject to discuss, but it was much easier than eating the lunch that was served that day. Neither of them was sure what it was, and they didn’t really want to know.

“If we hadn’t become friends, I would

probably be so depressed about granddaddy that I'd make myself sick," Kenya remarked.

"I would just be lonely," replied Leah. "None of the other girls seem like very good friends."

But Kenya didn't hear her. She was too busy realizing that she had now felt at home, that she saw everyone at the orphanage as family.

"It's not so bad being a real orphan," Kenya whispered to herself.

## The Robbery

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*Two boys, Alk and Luke, both get blamed for stealing the world's largest diamond. After escaping from jail, they set off to make things right. Will they succeed? Find out in **THE ROBBERY**, by Sunny Patel.*

In a dark jail cell somewhere on the West Coast, there lay two poor people, dirty and hungry. A cop came out and gave them water and they croaked, "We are innocent," as they did every time the cop came. The cop just stood there and laughed. Then, one of the prisoners, Alk Laper, got so angry that he stood up with much difficulty to face the officer. Surprisingly, Alk spilled his water on him and punched him in the face.

The cop fell over, and Alk's friend Luke John came up to him and asked, "Is he out?" The cop stirred and Alk bent down and punched him again.

"Yup, out cold," he replied.

Alk and Luke were about seventeen when they were at the *Museum of Gems and Minerals* in Phoenix, Arizona. They were looking at the world's largest diamond when the manager came and asked, "So boys, how is it going?"

"Good," they both said at the same time. "We were just looking at this very cool diamond."

"Oh, you like it, don't you?"

"Yes, it's so shiny and cool!"

This began a long conversation with the manager. This also led the manager offering them to get closer and TOUCH the world's largest diamond. They both eagerly said yes.

So, the manager took them into a small, secured room and pressed a button to release the diamond. WHOOSH! They were facing the world's largest diamond. Alk touched its smooth, shiny surface and passed it to Luke, who curiously brought it up to his eyes and fiddled with it. Finally, they passed it to the manager. Alk and Luke said their goodbyes to the manager and went home. Six hours later, the diamond was stolen, and can you guess who got blamed? If you guessed Alk and Luke, you are absolutely right! The manager said that he took Alk and Luke to see the diamond. The court sent both of them to jail.

Now, in the jail cell, we saw how Alk had knocked the cop out. After that it was all like a movie. The criminals (or innocent prisoners in this case) stole the cop's keys and his gun. Something else they didn't know was what the gun did. So Alk tried it on Luke. Well, let's just say Luke was really shocked at what "the thing" did. It was a Taser gun.

They burst into the cop lounge and surprised all of the police officers in there. They ate all of the donuts and coffee since they had been starving for days. After that, they hopped into a police helicopter and flew out of town. Behind them, they saw four other police helicopters and they

swerved up, down and sideways but only made one copter crash, three to go. They saw a tree and swerved around it but the copter behind them did not see the tree so he crashed. And the other two didn't see the other tree right by the first one. Finally the chase ended, they landed in a small village where they could stay. In the village, they told the villagers their story and the villagers agreed to protect them.

In the village, one day, a few cops came by and asked if the villagers had seen two kids. The villagers said no, but the police didn't listen. So the cops just rampaged through the village and searched everywhere, but could not find them. Alk and Luke, hiding in the trashcan, were silently laughing at the cops.

After two weeks in the village, Alk and Luke decided that they had to prove they were innocent. So they go to the city in order to change everything: hair, clothes, names, and style. Now, Alk looked totally different with his green eyes and handsome face. He was skinny, but he wore baggy clothes and his new name was Klam Reeses. Luke had blue eyes, brown hair, baggy clothes and his name was changed to Joe Lucas. They investigated the Museum but, unfortunately, couldn't get any clues. Then, Alk had an idea! They should find the manager who showed them everything.

They waited near the museum until it was closing, and for the exact same manager that closed the museum. When the manager drove away, the two runaways ran to the parking lot and hijacked a Ford Flex. They followed the manager and, finally, caught up to him as he was entering a neighborhood. The manager stopped at the biggest mansion. Luke told Alk to park a couple blocks away from the mansion so the manager wouldn't get suspicious.

They got out of the car and snuck into the house. It was amazing inside with

antique furniture and big chandeliers. They snuck into the basement and looked everywhere for clues. Alk didn't even know what they were looking for, but they kept going and found many of closets and checked them all. Then Alk saw a closet under the stairs and opened it. At first, he did not see anything, and then suddenly he spotted a button on the side and pressed it. POP! He then saw a compartment above that held the world's largest diamond. *This is it*, Alk thought. *I'm going to be free!*

The compartment held their ticket to freedom. He climbed on Luke and got the diamond but when he turned around, the bank manager was standing there. The manager was holding a gun in his hands and asked, "Well, well sneaking around, are we?" Both Luke and Alk were surprised at the entry of the manager that they lost their ability to move or speak. The manager slowly walked up to them and demanded, "Hand over the diamond." Alk handed it over to him and then the manager shot Luke twice and ran. Alk picked up his friend, ran to the getaway car, and put Luke in the backseat. He took out the gun and put it into his pocket. He then drove as fast as he could towards the hospital.

After, Luke was admitted to the hospital while Alk was off looking for the manager again. Thirty minutes later he saw the manager's car parked in front of a building. He ran into the building and on the top floor he saw the manager getting on a helicopter. Alk shot the manager in the back, and shocked him many times with a Taser until he was unconscious. He was just about to make the manager a grease spot on the ground, but he thought that if he did that he would get blamed for throwing him off the building. Instead, he took the diamond and the manager's phone. He called the police and told them the whole story and that it was the manager who had the diamond.

An hour later, Alk was in the court, telling the judge everything that happened in the past five weeks. The judge noted the story down and said that Alk and Luke were free with a \$10,000 prize from the government. With the good news, Alk hurried to the

hospital to find Luke who had a cast on and was relieved that he was okay.

After that both boys were businessmen. Luke became a Master Developer for McDonalds and Papa Romano's Pizza, so he was rich. And Alk, he ran for president.

## The Russian War

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*In **THE RUSSIAN WAR** by Paul Tremonti, it is getting colder, and America has gone to war with Russia. John Evans must battle the frigid cold and the Russian troops. Will John survive, or will the Russian soldiers overwhelm him?*

**M**y name is John Evans and I was born on July 3, 1989. The year was 2010 and I lived in Rapid City, South Dakota. I woke up with a start. I was freezing. I went downstairs and turned on the TV. The news said the temperature was ten degrees Fahrenheit. So I climbed down my basement stairs and got my winter clothes out because I knew I would need them. As the day passed on it grew colder. At night the temperature was zero degrees Fahrenheit. The next there was four feet of snow. Also that day the temperature fell to ten degrees below zero. The next day it declined until it got to -50 degrees. I went to a sporting goods store to get improved winter gear. The next day I was outside when I saw a sign posted on the side of an old building. It said that America was going to war with Russia because they were giving too many weapons to terrorists. So I decided that I would help the United States. So I gathered my personal belongings and got on the train to Washington D.C. When I got there seven hours later I got off the train. Then I took a bus to a recruiting office and because my profession was repairing vehicles got a position as a tank mechanic. I said "Thank you."

The recruiter there said, "We need all the

help we can get." So I got my uniform and was sent to boot camp. After about 15 weeks of hard training I was sent on a nine-hour trip from Lethbridge, Montana to the coast of eastern Russia. We stopped at Seattle, Washington and in Anchorage, Alaska. Then they dropped us off in Kurgan, Russia. The original commander was wounded in battle and I was the new tank commander. I was assigned my tank crew. Their names were Paul Lawrence, the main gunner. David Johnson, the machine gunner. There was Alex Brown, driver. Also Scott Daniels, the gun loader then there was me, the tank commander. A few days later we were called to our first mission. We were all scared to death but none of us showed it. Not one of us spoke the entire way there. When we got there we all stared in shock. There was hundreds of dead. Some U.S. soldiers but mostly innocent civilians. The odd thing was the civilians were Russian so my crew and I knew that the Russian army didn't kill them. At first we thought it was a bombing accident but with closer inspection my crew found bullet holes.

"Terrorists," I said. We couldn't find a better explanation so we agreed that it was a terrorist attack. Even though none of us



could find a better explanation we all wondered why terrorists would attack their own weapon suppliers. When the hairs on my neck stood on end I knew that something was wrong. I ordered my men back to the tank and when I turned around I was looking down the barrel of an AK-47 and into the eyes of a terrorist. Behind him were three other terrorists with AKs. He was clearly the leader of the group. I could hear the snap of my crew's weapons locking into place. I instinctively reached for my own sidearm pistol but the leader beat me to it and knocked me in the head with the stock of his AK-47. The last thing I remember was hearing gunshots.

When I woke up I was being rocked around in the back of a covered truck. My head was throbbing and I could feel a lump where the terrorist had hit me. Johnson had a bullet wound in his right arm and we had to take care of that. When we got Johnson patched up we all decided to just sleep for a while and rest our limbs. I hardly got any sleep, I stayed awake because my throat was dry and I was really hungry.

When everybody was awake again the truck had stopped. After a few minutes the end opened up. My crew and I squinted because we had gotten accustomed to the dark. When our eyes adjusted to the light we could not believe what we were seeing. It was a huge complex. It was about one million square feet. It housed what looked like a giant missile launcher. I guessed it was a big ice ray. I guessed right because a few seconds later blasts of super concentrated ice particles were launched into the air. We were forced out of the truck. When no one was looking we snuck away and when we were almost out of sight someone shouted and we knew that we had a minute to get away I picked up an AK and grabbed someone's radio. After several minutes of intense fighting we finally found the exit and got out. Then we ran for 3 minutes straight when we thought no one could get us. I used the radio and got in contact with the Pentagon. I said, "You need to bomb coordinates 55.866 and 158.659." Within the hour three planes were coming to Russia. A hummer came and picked us up. That was the most important day of my life.

## The Secret Admirer

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*In THE SECRET ADMIRER by Cambria Rush, Samantha and her best friend Nicole try to identify Samantha's secret admirer. Will Samantha find out who he is before the holiday dance?*

In Blue River, Colorado, there lived an average teenage girl. Her name was Samantha Rileys, and she was a tenth-grader attending Blue River High School. Along with her best friend Nicole Price, Samantha worked at one of the two Starbucks Coffees in their small town. In Blue River, everyone was like family, so that is why Samantha was so surprised that she was unaware of the identity of her secret admirer.

"I just don't get it! I know all the guys in

this town but I know that none of them can write poetry like this," Samantha exclaimed.

"I don't get it either, Sam. How could you be that dumb that you didn't even see him leave the letters?" Nikki laughed.

"Nikki, I'm serious! There aren't many guys in this town, and there's only one high school. He said he went to Blue River High, so I probably see him every day, and I just don't know it. For all I know my secret admirer is Snotty Steve, my biology partner."

“Eeewww! It couldn’t be. Your secret somebody has too neat of handwriting,” said Nikki.

“If you’re not going to help me, then I won’t show you the next letter,” threatened Sam.

“Ok, ok, ok! I’ll help you,” cried Nikki. By then they were at their lockers. The bell rang, and they both sped off to their classes.

After school, they met in their usual spot, the school mascot bench in the commons. As Sam sat down on the dolphin, she pulled out her history binder to do some of her homework. When she opened her binder, she found a new letter. *How does he do that?* Sam reflected to herself. Before she had time to read the letter Nikki was walking over to the bench.

“So any new letters?” Nikki asked, already knowing the answer.

“Yeah, do you want me to read it to you?” replied Sam.

“Of course!” So, they walked to work and Sam read the letter aloud.

*December 2, 2008*

*Dear Samantha,*

*If you haven’t found my last letter yet, it was in your ice skate. Please don’t ask. I wrote you this little poem so you know how much I love you. Here it is.*

*If I went to bed  
without thinking of you,  
Sleeping and dreaming  
is not what I’d do,  
I would toss and turn  
all night long,  
Because Sam, you are  
what makes me strong!*

*Love Always,  
Your Secret Admirer*

“Aw, that’s so sweet! You’re what makes him strong,” Nikki said.

“Ha ha, he’s desperate. I don’t get why he doesn’t just tell me who he really is. He has absolutely no chance with me if I don’t know who he is,” said Sam.

“Maybe he’ll ask you to the holiday dance. It’s coming up, and you still don’t have a date. I think you want him to ask you. You said no to six guys already, and you haven’t even talked about Max. You were all over him until you received the first letter,” Nikki pointed out as they strutted into Starbucks.

“Let’s change the subject. No, let’s change the subject and get to work. We’re busy today.” The place was filled with the smell of chocolate blowing with the wind. That was what all of the employees looked forward to when they came to work.

They slid their employee cards just in time so that they wouldn’t be late. Their cards were very important. Every employee in the two Starbucks Coffees in their town had one. Like their boss always said, “If you lose your card, you lose your job.” The card did not say your name on it, but it did have your top five choices at the store. Sam’s card went like this....

As Sam and Nikki threw on their uniforms, Sam realized she got another letter. She found the letter taped to the back of her apron. She put it in her backpack to read later so she would not distract herself or Nikki. Nikki saw her put the letter in her bag and told her that it was a good idea.

When they got to the counter to start working their shifts, Max (Sam’s old crush) came to talk to Sam.

“So, are you writing any new poetry lately? I am,” grinned Max.

“Not really. I’m busy with school and my job. You know, stuff like that,” laughed Sam. Nikki was standing behind Max

mouthed cheesy pick-up lines. Max always used them, but Sam liked that about him. Sam always said that a guy needs humor. Some of the lines Max would use would be “Can I have your picture so I can show Santa what I want for Christmas?” and “Do you believe in love at first sight, or should I just walk by again?” Once Sam and Max finished talking Nikki started chatting with Sam.

“Do you think that he might be the secret admirer, Sam? He said all this stuff about poetry and, like, you know...,” Nikki said.

“Well, maybe, but we’ll just have to see, right?” questioned Sam.

“Put the puzzle together, Sam! You found a secret admirer letter in your Starbucks apron. Then, a guy that works at Starbucks asks you if you like poetry and that he has been writing some. You also had a letter with poetry in it. Can’t you see? He is just making things too easy. He obviously is your not-so-secret-admirer!” Nikki practically yelled.

“I know it seems like him, but I need more information before I commit my brain to thinking that Max is my secret admirer,” Sam said, frustrated.

After work, she took out the letter and read it to Nikki.

*December 2, 2008*

*Dear Sam,*

*I know that you have already read the letter in your history binder and are wondering why you’re getting two today. Or maybe you’re thinking that I should give you a hint of who I am. If the second one is right then you will be very happy after you read this letter.*

*When I was on my way to work at Starbucks coffee I realized that I lost my Starbucks card. I know you work at*

*Starbucks and know that at this point my job is in jeopardy. Please help me find the card because I really need this job. If you find the card, then I want you to go to school and at lunch announce you found a card. Maybe if you read my question you will also say that whoever can name the top five choices is your holiday dance date.*

*Will you go to the holiday dance with me?*

*Sincerely,  
Your Secret Admirer*

“Are you thinking what I’m thinking?” asked Sam.

“Yeah. Wait, what are you thinking?” said Nikki.

“I’m thinking that Max didn’t work today and maybe he lost his card and he is my secret admirer. We need to find his card so I get myself a date to the fall dance,” Sam told Nikki.

“Oh, this will be great. I go to the dance with Ryan and you go to the dance with the secret admirer dude. Now we’re both happy,” said Nikki. After they joked around a bit about who might be Sam’s secret admirer they were on the street where they took different turns.

“Bye, Sam!”

“See ya, Nikki!”

The next day at school, Nikki was not at the dolphin bench where they usually met. Sam figured Nikki was sick or working on her science project in the school library. After she waited a couple minutes to make sure she wasn’t coming she texted her. “Where r you?” she texted.

“Looking 4 the card. I’m desperate to know who it is.”

“Where r u though?”

“In the drop off loop.”

“K c ya in 2<sup>nd</sup> hour. Bye”

In second hour, Nikki seemed very

excited. She had found the card! Sam and Nikki jumped up and down together until the Algebra teacher, Mrs. Baschwin, personally escorted them to their seats. Nikki passed a note to Sam saying they would announce that they found a card at lunch. Sam agreed with Nikki with their secret eye language.

At lunch, Sam announced that they found a card and about half of the sophomore guys rushed up to get in line. Max was one of them, and Sam seemed almost positive about who it was. She kept her thoughts to herself and continued announcing. At the end of the lunch period, six guys got the correct match. The guys were Max, Derek, Luke, Jake, Cody, Shane, and Brian. Sam and Nikki decided to ask the guys at the next lunch period where the two spots were that she found the secretly signed letters on December 2, 2008 and the one spot she found a letter on December 1, 2008.

At that lunch period the next day, the six guys came up to her once again. It was weird for Sam knowing that one of the guys was the secret admirer.

She asked Max first, "Where were the two letters left on December 2, 2008 and the one letter left on December 1, 2008?"

"Umm...let me think. On December 1 it was in your ice skate, if I remember correctly, and the next one in your locker...right?"

"NO! Oh, my gosh, you tricked me, Max! How did you know everything? Ugh, go away!" Sam yelled at Max.

The second guy was Derek and he

guessed, "Let me see...it was in your lunchbox."

"Nope, next guy, please. Ok, Luke, what do you think?"

"Oh, me already? Ok...all right, now I remember. It was definitely in your sweatshirt pocket," Luke said.

"NO! All of you are such liars. Give me some truth, please. Do you know, Jake?"

"Yeah. I left the first one in your bedroom."

"Nope! Next!" yelled Sam.

Cody said, "I think I left one in your backpack."

"Uuhhh, let me think...no!" Sam said. She was getting grouchy so she asked the fifth guy.

"Do you know, Shane?"

"Yeah, I left your first letter in your ice skate, and I think I left the next one in your history binder. The next one I left on the back of your Starbuck's uniform."

"Oh my gosh. Shane, you're my secret admirer!" said Sam happily. "Your poetry is beautiful, and the answer is yes. I will go to the holiday dance with you," Sam said as she handed Shane his card.

"Thank you. You know, everything I say about you is true. I wanted to tell you that Max was trying to make you think it was him, but I didn't want you to know it was me."

"Oh, I'm just glad I get to go the dance with you. We're going to have such a great time!" After they talked, Nikki watched them walk out together happily. The dance went as planned, and Sam and Shane stayed together for a very long time.

# Silvermoon City

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*Steven is an average person living a normal life. However, today nothing seems normal. What will happen on this adventure? Find out when you read **SILVERMOON CITY**, by Steven P. Varjabedian.*

**I**t was quarter to midnight. I had just gotten home from a long, hard day of work. I worked at a local library.

After turning off the lights, I switched on the television. It was dark except for the flashing lights of the TV. Flipping through channels, I looked at all the different shows on. I happened to turn on the news.

"Tomorrow's forecast will be cloudy with a 60 percent chance of rain," said the forecaster in a deep voice.

"Not again!" I cried in pained voice. I did not want to think about it, so I closed my eyes and turned the television off.

The next morning I woke up to another day, just like any other. I got out of bed, brushed my teeth, and headed to work... again. At 9:28, I was at work.

"Hey, Steven," an employee greeted me.

"Hi Joe; any new books come?"

"Yeah, we have a whole stack of them behind the main counter." I went to the main counter and took a large, heavy stack of books. I laid them out and began to scan them onto the computer. That was basically my job.

As I looked through the books, my feet started to get cold. I ignored it and kept checking the books. Then my knees and legs started feeling weird and cold. I looked down; something strange had been swarming around my legs. Just swirling around and around, it rather hypnotized me. I did not know what to do, or what this was. So I let out a loud screech. "AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!" I screamed. But I was too late; I was out of my office now.

I looked around me. Tall metal towers were everywhere. I looked to see some towers way higher than others did. Some towers were higher than others were, and a lot of them had weird, strange colors that you would not see normally. In another area, I saw what looked to be a park. There was a glamorous water fountain. And some tiny obstacles that looked very interesting. It seemed like this was a very smart city, with many high-tech things. "Wow," I said quietly, in a low voice.

"Pretty cool, aye?" the little gnome responded in an Irish accent. He had a green hat and suit with a white shirt under the suit. Kind of like a leprechaun.

"Where am I?" I said bewildered.

"Why, you're in Silvermoon City," the gnome proudly replied.

"How did I get here?"

"We sent a portal."

"Why me? I am just a regular person."

"That is kind of what we do. Sometimes we like to give normal, average people a little fun."

"Well, what is there to really do here?"

"There are games. Like gnome race and gnome battles."

"What is a gnome race?" I wondered. I was completely puzzled.

"Why, just follow me!" The gnome led me through some weird places. I looked at all of the trees. They looked exactly like the ones in Dr. Seuss books. Then we past some long towers until we got to a field. I looked and saw a big block with numerous holes. Kind of like rat holes, but bigger. Inside the tiny hole, you could see another

layer of a large, red, block with holes in it.

“Why are there so many tiny holes?” I asked.

“The object of the game is to run as fast as you can then squeeze through the holes until you get to the finish line.”

“Are you sure I can even fit through the holes...?” But by the time I had finished my question, he was gone.

“You better come quickly if you expect to win!” The gnome yelled and smiled back at me. I ran past the gate and onto the field of many obstacles. I looked around the obstacle course and saw a very small tunnel. How would I get through?

“Wait!” I screamed, “I can’t get through!” By the time I said that he was already at the finishing line.

“Ha-ha, I win! You lose!”

“But I—”

“Loooooooooooooser!”

“Let’s just go to gnome battles now!” I demanded.

“Whatever you say...” The gnome conducted me through a long route of stores and food shops. I wanted to ask him to slow down, just to see everything, but I was also eager to see gnome battles. Soon, we walked into a dome. I looked around. There were many other people with some armor and long, thin swords. I wondered if this game would get me injured.

“We are here.”

“What do I do now?”

The gnome handed me a shield. “Put on

this armor and grab a sword.”

“Okay.” He grabbed the sword and led me to an open area. A gnome ref called the match. I was not just going to hit someone with a sword, even if he had armor on, so I just stood there. The little gnome facing me jumped up and tried to attack me and knock me down. In the end I was too tall to fight, so I won by forfeit.

“Ha-ha! Who is the loser now?” I taunted.

“Isn’t it time you returned?”

“Yeah, I guess.” I replied. The gnome led me out of the dome and to a large, blue tower. We followed spiral stairs all the way to the top.

“See the portal?” He pointed to a little glowing circle on a wall.

“Yup.”

“Now step back, and run right into it!”

“Is this a joke?”

“No!” The gnome responded. “Remember not to tell anyone about any of this.”

“Okay.” I ran right through the portal and ended right back at my desk. It was as if nothing had ever happened; it was 9:30, and I had a stack of books on my desk to check.

I felt better now. I was very happy, even though I was at work. I thought this had been an amazing day already. It was just as if I took a week vacation, or met with a friend the other day. It was the wildest experience in my life.

# Spartan 117

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*In SPARTAN 117 by Jack Blumberg, Lieutenant O'Brian finds himself on a spaceship. He and his crew are on a routine mission, but as it turns out, there is nothing routine about it.*

It is January 15, 2021. This is a historic moment as the first Green Party woman is about to take her first steps into the White House as the new president of the United States of America. She had an overwhelming victory winning 45 of the 50 states. However, this paled in comparison to the fateful challenges that lay ahead for the U.S.

Two years earlier during a routine space shuttle mission of the Spartan 117, a crew of ten and one primate suddenly vanished from radar and seemingly disappeared from existence. Or so it was believed until February 21, 2021, when it made an emergency crash landing on the coast of the outer banks in North Carolina. The U.S. Navy was the first at the scene and after prying the shuttle door open, there appeared to be no sign of life. All hope was lost, until they heard a noise coming from deep inside the uninhabitable engine room. There was Lieutenant Sully O'Brian and the single primate George W. They were both barely alive and incoherent. They were transported to the nearest government medical center and all was kept top secret. Days were spent trying to revive the two survivors and extensive test were done to find any clues into their mysterious journey. The only information found was a piece of paper with the words "The Human Race will never recover" scratched on it.

Three weeks after landing, O'Brian finally regained consciousness, Corporal Lewis, head of the U.S. government's special operations unit, came to debrief O'Brian. "Lieutenant O'Brian, your shuttle

was missing for almost two years. What can you tell me about that time?" quizzed corporal Lewis.

"The last thing I remember was we were preparing for our return and everything was status quo. Then all the sudden Lt. Gabriella Marcozzi turned a ghostly white and blood started to come out from all her pores. Then she began attacking our fellow officers until Corporal Mark Tarnowsky killed her with a laser gun. We discussed our situation and concluded that Lt. Marcozzi's incident was isolated. Within two days, the rest of the crew all began to have similar symptoms. I remember hiding in the engine room even though I could barely breathe down there, but after that I don't really remember much."

"You mean you can't remember anything? How you survived? Nothing?" Lewis asked, trying to contain his frustration.

"No, sir, nothing," O'Brian sighed.

"I'm sorry, but it seems almost impossible..." Lewis was about to continue when an officer came in the room and whispered into Lewis's ear. "Get the president on the line," Lewis said quickly as he stood up to leave the room.

"Wait, there is one more thing I remember. While I was in the engine room, I have a memory of George W. feeding me and taking care of me. Actually there are a couple more things I remember about this mission," O'Brian realized. "I remember thinking somehow that whatever was happening was not natural and life as I knew it would never be the same."

“Thank you, Sully,” Lewis said in an exhausted voice. “I am going to talk to the president, so you will remain here until I come back.” Corporal Lewis left the room and returned to his office. He dialed the private number, which is only to be used if the world is coming to an end!

“Madam President, I have something very important to tell you.” Lewis was talking into the phone as fast as he could.

“What is it?” the President asked.

“We seem to have a situation of great importance. I believe we have a potential disaster here.” Lewis could hardly get the words out.

The president interrupted Lewis. “How sure are you, because reports of unexplained deaths have been flooding the Center for Disease Control.” Before he could answer, he fell to the ground, blood running from his pores.

A few minutes later, the president was briefed on Lewis’s death and now the epidemic swept across America. Within one day, millions were dead. Sully was recovering and now being studied for his seemingly natural immunity to this pandemic. The president had to make some very important decisions about what to do next. Her advisors insisted on concentrating all people who were still alive to designated camps. They would have to build walls and quarantine themselves from anyone or anything. They would also have to set fires and spray chemical outside their walls to try to kill whatever it was that was spreading this disease. This sadly was the only option for the world. The president, with her love for nature and mankind, was about to destroy it.

It took only a week, but the job was done. The president was now to make a public address. “I am sorry to inform all of you that even though the virus has slowed down its rate of infection, it shows

no signs of retreat. We must all go into protection behind the wall of our camps. Not all family members will be allowed in; you must be cleared.” She went on to explain as much as she knew about the devastating situation that had occurred. She then watched as the people filed into the camps and as more people died, and she watched as they burnt and abused her country.

George W. found a home with the president, and thank god because if not for him she would not have been able to cope. Three months went by and the disease seemed to wipe itself out. There was no sign of it anywhere. The people slowly returned to their homes, and, little by little, they put themselves together again.

“It’s a miracle that we survived this apocalypse,” the President said to Lieutenant Sully over a light lunch at a little cafe that had just opened its doors again.

“Words can’t describe my pain and my gratefulness,” Sully sighed, “but I can’t help but feel that it’s not over yet. I mean, we never really figured the whole thing out. Millions died, and I know I had something to do with it. What was it that came back with me on that ship?”

“I don’t know, and maybe we’ll never know, but I can only be glad we were able to make it through. We won’t be flying to outer space anytime soon. We barely have the funds to bring our country back to one-third of what it used to be,” the President said with sadness in her voice. “One thing I do know is that George W. has helped me through all of this and he seems to know exactly what I am thinking. He makes me feel happy. I love him for being my savoir.”

“Me, too. If it weren’t for him I’d be dead right now. I owe him my life,” laughed Sully at the thought of their love for this monkey.



Little did they know that somewhere, hidden in the woods, was a quintuplet family of monkeys. They were cute as could be, and they were George W's. You see, George W. was a female, and she was the

original carrier. During Sully's blackout in space, she was put in the real George W's place and told to destroy the Earth. She nearly succeeded once, but now she has five more chances to succeed.

## Surviving the Storm

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*A family of three, soon to be four, lived in Redford, Michigan, on Fairfield Street. One day, a tornado appears and is heading towards the house, but with the high winds, the family does not hear the sirens wailing. Will they survive? Find out in **SURVIVING THE STORM**, by **Remy Combs**.*

When my mom was eight months pregnant with me, she decided to take my big brother for a walk. The sun was out, which made the weather hot and the air thick. On the way home, she saw some dark clouds in the distance, but she figured she had enough time to get home. She said goodbye to the neighbors, and walked home. When she got there, my dad was asleep in his bed.

Later that day, the clouds covered the neighborhood sky and started to turn a dark green. My mom was cooking in the kitchen, when she heard the weather forecast say that there could be a horrible tornado. My brother was scared of the loud clapping of the thunder that shook the house. My mom called to my dad, "Honey! Come sit with Tharron." He answered with a loud groan. Just when he got to the living room, the lights and TV went out. My mom said the wind was so powerful, she couldn't see the backyard garage! She thought that they should go downstairs. My dad said that it was probably going to pass over us.

Suddenly, the roaring came. It was like the sound of a thousand diesel engines running. The thunder was so loud it shook the house. As my mother and father ran to

take Tharron downstairs, the back door suddenly jerked off its hinges and slammed open. The wind that rushed through was so powerful it slammed my parents onto their knees. My father still had my big brother in his arms, underneath his chest. My mom tried to protect her pregnant stomach and landed on her hands and knees right over it. When the wind calmed down a bit, they were able to make it to the basement. When everything grew quiet, my dad went back upstairs to check to see if it was okay. He called to my mom, "Bring Tharron upstairs! We have to go!" When she came up to the dining room, she saw a gigantic hole in the ceiling made by a chunk of chimney brick. Through the front window, she could see a giant oak tree, over 100 years old, uprooted and lying across the entire street and onto a neighbors' roof. She looked around at the damage to our home. Everything was waterlogged. She was devastated.

They smelled gas, so they went to search from where the smell was coming from. They looked around, but they couldn't find the source. They left the house immediately. They gathered our two boxers, Gunny and Lexis, and climbed into the car. They went to my Uncle Tony's

house and my dad asked him if he could go back to the house and save what could be saved. When Uncle Tony got there, he saw that the garage was gone, the left side of the house was gone, and the roof was gone.

Two months after the storm, we went back to the old neighborhood. Mr. Bell, one of our elderly neighbors, was looking at

the damage to his own garage. My dad stopped the car to see how he was doing. He said that he and his wife were fine and wanted to see how that baby was doing. He turned around and pointed to me and said, "He's just fine. That's Remy there." Mr. Bell was happy to see me. I'm just glad that my family survived the storm.

## Time Warped Dream

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*In **TIME WARPED DREAM** by Nate Sturley, Wyatt gets caught in a parallel universe where he is a famous warrior. But he doesn't realize that he's going to war!*

The date was Oct 15, 2010, and Wyatt had just finished dinner. Wyatt went up to his room and started to look at the TV. The show that he started to watch was a documentary on the Thermopylae war; Spartans vs. Persians. He thought to himself, *I wish I could be in that war.* Then he went to sleep thinking about the TV show about the Thermopylae war. When Wyatt had fallen asleep, he started talking in his sleep like, "Ouch stop hitting me." Over and over he said these things. Wyatt had experienced all sorts of weird things in that dream he had.

Wyatt woke up at that point, sort of. He really didn't wake up. He thought he was in his bed, but he was really in 480 B.C. in Central Greece in Europe. He was in the Thermopylae War! When Wyatt figured this out, he ducked down and crawled behind the nearest safe spot, which was a nearby boulder. While he watched the battle, he wondered, *Where am I?* Wyatt was behind the boulder for about ten seconds until he was spotted by a warrior.

Wyatt got pulled up by the warrior, and the warrior screamed, "What are you doing, sir?"

"I don't know," said Wyatt.

"Hurry, sir, we're losing warriors," said the warrior. Then Wyatt ran off and asked a nearby nurse who was healing a warrior who he was.

She gasped and said, "You're Spartacus, sir."

"Really?" asked Wyatt.

"Yes, sir," said the nurse.

"Wow!" exclaimed Wyatt. Hearing this, Wyatt was stunned. He walked towards the Roman soldiers and got ready for war.

The war was tough. Swords and spears clashed with shields and Spartacus was probably the most aggressive. Horrible screams could be heard in the distance! All of a sudden three Roman soldiers lunged at Spartacus with their swords. They missed and Spartacus returned with a blow to each of their heads, 1, 2, 3 in a split second their heads were gone.

It was a long battle, but then on day 22 that faithful day King Spartacus got struck in his heart and he fell and with him his 300 soldiers. They had to surrender to the Persians. The war was over.

Wyatt then woke up, but in a Dumpster! He thought about it for a while and then

realized that it wasn't real, so he fell back asleep. At that point Wyatt, or King Spartacus, was dead, lying there in his war dream and about to get his head chopped off by the Persian king.

"I have won. All will remember this day that I, Xerxes, the King of Persians, defeated Spartacus," said Xerxes to his army. Then, suddenly Wyatt woke up for real and was on his bedroom floor where

he had wet himself out of fear and deep sleep. He got up and put on new pants and went to the bathroom because he still had to go to the bathroom. Wyatt then went downstairs and asked his parents to go get ice cream.

They said, "Sure, let us get our jackets."

And Wyatt said, "Great, you can listen to the dream I just had."

"Sure, that sounds good."

## A Trapped Life

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*In **A TRAPPED LIFE** by Andrea MacMichael, Mel and Sara Allen have been kidnapped. Together, they want to escape. Will they find their parents or will they be captured?*

"This is the last straw child! If you try to leave one more time, I'll lock you up! Now get back to work!" bellowed Carlos Golapin.

Carlos Golapin was a notorious criminal who had been spying on Mel's family for years. His buddy, Steve Larchek, had kidnapped Mel's sister Sara, who was five years old. Golapin and Larchek wanted to be millionaires.

Mel learned from an illegal online website she fell upon one day, how to print counterfeit money. She had typed in mel.com, just out of curiosity. The website ended up being about how to counterfeit money and keep it a secret from the government.

Carlos and Steve thought they might as well kidnap both kids, because who knew how smart the little one might be?

"You can't do this! Why can't you take me to my daddy?" Mel cried. However, before Mel could protest anymore, she was tumbling down the basement steps and the door was locked behind her. It was a beautiful day in Riverside, California. The

sun shone brightly and the birds chirped outside the kitchen window upstairs while Mel was locked in the basement, practically starved.

Her sister, as Mel knew, was taken somewhere else by another bad person because they thought she understood how to make money.

"That was mean of him! Where are Mom and Dad? Why is this happening?" Mel questioned. "There has to be some way out of here, it's an old mansion." So Mel quietly pushed walls and looked for any sign of a way out. "There's no hope!" Mel grumbled, "I give up."

Night soon fell upon the mansion, and Mel just leaned against the wall, sobbing. "That horrible criminal left me here to die! What do—" Suddenly, a loose board in the wall broke free, and Mel fell right on her back, totally shocked. "Whoa." She carefully brushed the cobwebs aside, and peered down the endless tunnel of darkness. "This is my way out." She breathed. This tunnel was like a sewer, but had gravel on the bottom and dirt with

plants growing on the walls and an eerie feel to it. She carefully felt her way around until her eyes adjusted to the darkness.

Just then, Mel heard the door creak open...and the criminal's thundering voice...but the rest was left in her footsteps as she ran for her life.

To Mel, it seemed as if she was trapped in a nightmare. She jogged through the path in her cute butterfly jeans and red Ludington State Park shirt, taking many nervous glances behind her.

### Ten Days Later

Mel sadly said, "I miss Sara and Mom and Dad!" Her chest heaved, and she fell over. After a short time, Mel pulled herself together and made her way across the rough gravel ground in the tunnel. Her eyes caught sight of a shiny wheel connected to a large metal door covered with rust. She pulled the wheel right but it wouldn't budge. She pulled left and heard a high-pitched click after much groaning from the door. Gently, she tugged on the wheel and then stared, her mouth gaping, into a room of a house.

"You will never, I mean never go outside again, child! Never again!" Steve Larchek yelled. Mel caught the last bit of a horrible, screaming conversation. This house had many photos of money. The dull white walls stared into Mel's eyes. *This is the creepiest room in the world.* Mel imagined. "What is going on?" she demanded.

"Who in the world...? No! Mel Allen. How did you get here?" The grey-bearded, stone-eyed Steve Larchek started to say. Mel gave him a mean look, even though she was very confused. *How does he know my name?*

"Sara!" Mel shouted. "Oh my gosh!" She held Sara close and whispered, "I finally

found you." She set Sara down and panicked, "Is there any way out of here? There has to be some way! Tell me."

"Umm..." Sara looked all over, "Ohh! Right there! Hurry! Behind the chair—" The sisters started to run.

"What is going on here? I demand to know!" shrieked Steve Larchek. He lunged at the girls, but they were too fast. "You kids get back here!" Steve boomed. Sara pushed through the other metal door with Mel following close behind.

"Hurry," Sara yelled. "That guy with the beard is fast!"

"Well," Mel panted. "The door closed and I saw a security lock on the outside. We're safe."

### Weeks Later

The girls were scared and cold. All they ate was the food that Mel had stolen when she was trapped in the mansion. Every night they would huddle close together and shed tears of pure sadness because they missed their parents and wanted to be home. Their clothes were ripped and stained with tears and mud. They just prayed they could reach their mommy and daddy soon.

"I don't think I can make it Sara," Mel said while coughing.

"We will reach home. We can make it!" Sara reassured Mel. They began to reach an open end of the hand carved tunnel of gravel and dirt.

"This reminds me of our backyard!" Mel said, amazed. Ahead of them was a dense forest with a little bungalow and tree house out in the backyard.

"Yeah," Sara concurred, "I see our tree house and Mommy and Daddy!"

"Huh?" Mel was left in disbelief. She couldn't understand how this was actually happening or that they had found home.

“Mama and Dada!” Little Sara went running with her arms spread wide. Her parents were sitting on the back deck.

“Sara!” they cried. Lisa and Craig Allen’s faces lit up at the sight of both of their daughters who had gone missing for so long.

“Is that Mel?” her father asked.

“Mmm hmm,” nodded Sara as she skipped with joy. Her chocolate brown braids bounced off her back.

“I can’t believe it.” Mel whispered,

astonished, “I thought I would never see them again.”

Mel began to get up, now that she knew she was back at her home in Scottsdale. Mel shouted to her parents, “*I am going to tell them everything that happened!*” When she stood, she spotted a black figure sneaking across the grass and bounding after Sara. Horror struck Mel’s face. Her heart skipped a few beats. “No! Sara! Look out—!”

## Warfare 2056

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*In WARFARE 2056 by Ethan Webster, a commander must lead his troops to victory against rebelling robots. He knows that these robots will never surrender and they will fight to the death.*

“There goes Rex,” mumbled Joseph.

“Yeah, I still can’t believe that he was promoted to commander in just three days,” Nicolai replied.

“Fastest promotion in history,” Joseph acknowledged as he watched Rex pull on his gloves.

*It’s so cold*, Rex thought as he patrolled the river. He was right. It was the coldest winter on Earth and Rex was right in the middle of it. He and the rest of Delta Squad were on duty in the ruins of Detroit and Windsor defending the riverfront in the year 2056. They had been waiting for several weeks for an expected robot attack on the Detroit River’s edge.

*The robots may be tough*, he thought, *but we are tougher.*

He looked up and spotted a pair of snipers perched on the balcony of a nearby shopping center. They waved at him and he gave them a thumbs-up and started back. As he walked, he looked at a picture

in his wallet. In it, he saw a small boy who was his son.

He had just finished his patrol of the river, and was now at the Delta Squad HQ about a mile from the river. He had just reached it when an APC roared by and pulled into the HQ.

“The robots have overrun Windsor, they are crossing the river,” the driver stammered.

Rex immediately ran inside and told Sergeant Shriver, “The robots have begun their assault.” The sergeant was quick to respond. “Jenkins, get on the radio and call for reinforcements. The robots must not cross the river or we will be overrun!”

At the river, the crew of a Centaur anti-tank gun loaded the gun and fired yet another round at the incoming robots. As they ejected the shell, someone screamed, “This is it, this is the big one.” The rest of the crew agreed as bullets flew around them.

Rex was standing in the upstairs window

looking for attackers when a knife whizzed by his head and impaled itself in the wall behind him. Rex immediately ducked and took cover. He could see a robot squad moving down the street. He opened fire and destroyed the lead robot. The rest of the robot squad scattered for cover.

Rex started to run, seething at his luck at being on duty during the attack. *I'm never ever going to pull guard duty again!*

As he came downstairs, he saw his good friend Private Marcus gunned down by a robot. Rex immediately threw a grenade and destroyed the machine gunner, screaming, "That was for Marcus, you lousy lump of metal!"

Sergeant Shriver came running up to Rex. "That was one heck of a fight, Rex."

"I know," Rex replied.

Back at the riverfront, the robots were surprised and confused by the human resistance. Delta Squad pounded the robot defenses and barraged them with artillery. The robots were being annihilated. Finally, the robot general sensed disaster and ordered a retreat. As the robots fled, Delta Squad cheered and chased after them. They had sent them packing! Once Delta Squad reached Windsor, they stopped and dug in, drinking and singing long into the night.

At HQ, Rex was giving his report to General Joe when the Supreme General of the Army (the SGA), called and asked for Rex and Delta Squad to report immediately to Jacinto Plateau for a special assignment. Rex agreed and took Delta Squad with him to Samba Air Base, where they entered an assault chopper and flew to report for duty.

As soon as they landed, the SGA came out to meet them. "Commander, it has come to my attention that the robots have positioned their battle station in orbit near the moon. They have destroyed our outpost and are moving rapidly toward

Earth. It is imperative that we stop them and destroy their station. I want you to lead the commando raid. I am ordering you to leave immediately."

Rex was honored. "Yes, Sir. You can count on me."

As Rex approached the robot battle station, he marveled at its enormous size. Equally impressive was the human fleet closing in on the station. Rex realized that we, the humans, would win. Not only was our fleet bigger, stronger, and more determined, but we fought for our lives and our childrens' lives. The robots merely fought to fight—they had no family or home to save. The gunship Rex commanded ducked and twisted to avoid the incoming flak from the station. As they flew up and down, Rex began to pray. He prayed for his family, for his life and for the future of mankind.

As the gunship landed on the robot station, Rex yelled out orders and Delta Squad began their assault. They penetrated the defenses and rushed to plant charges on the reactor that supplied energy to the station. They rounded a corner and saw General Bob, the chief of the robots, waiting for them.

Bob opened fire and blazed away with a flamethrower at Delta Squad. Rex and the squad ducked for cover and returned fire. There was an extended firefight but Rex managed to throw a S.T.I.C.K.Y. grenade at him. As Delta Squad passed, Bob exploded. When Rex saw him explode, he gave a cheer and started to run faster. He knew they were starting to gain the upper hand. When Delta Squad reached the reactor, they began setting charges while fighting off robots and machines. When they finished, Delta Squad started running for the gunship. Rex followed them and gave them cover.

They reached their gunship, fired up the

engines, and blasted out of the station. As they looked back, the station exploded in a gigantic fireball as the reactor charges detonated. Down below, the SGA realized the fight was won. People everywhere cheered as they realized they were safe.

Once home, the SGA greeted Rex. "I never could have done that without you, Rex."

Rex replied, "Thank you, Sir. It was my honor." Crowds were cheering, "Let's go, Rex! Let's go, Rex!"

### One Week Later

Rex couldn't believe that he was here, in the ruins of Detroit, being awarded the Medal of Valor for defending the Earth. He looked around and saw Delta Squad standing off to one side cheering him on. He looked forward and saw the whole

124th Legion standing silently at attention. The General made a speech and praised him for his valor and courage. As the crowd cheered, he smiled humbly.

After the presentation, he felt a tap on his shoulder and turned around to see his wife standing there with his little boy. He kissed his wife and picked up his son and danced around with him for hours.

After the festivities, he was cornered by his buddies, who congratulated him on his success. As soon as he managed to get away, he was ordered to report to the General. He followed the soldier to the General who was waiting anxiously for him. The General gave him an envelope and said, "These are your new orders; don't open them until you get home."

"Yes, Sir," he replied, and Rex took his wife and son went home.

## The Weirdest Day

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*Tabitha Maskovich is Ivy's worst nightmare. When Ivy gets revenge, will she be able to live down the embarrassment? Find out in **THE WEIRDEST DAY**, by Katherine Voigt.*

Dear Journal,  
Today was a great day. Oh, who am I kidding, today was horrible! My day went like this: First of all I was late for class and Mr. Delores was about to bite my head off! Sheesh! And then in all my other classes I was late so I got a detention. Let's not even think about what I had for lunch, cardboard and wallpaper paste, that's what all the kids call our cafeteria's pork chops and mashed potatoes. Really, there is only one thing I like about middle school: knowing that my mom picks me up every day after school.

I have no free time to myself. I have tennis every Tuesday, Thursday, and

Saturday. On Monday, Wednesday and Sunday I have ballet and debate. On top of that I have to practice my violin. Every night I go to bed at nine pm and wake up at five am. That's only eight hours of sleep. I would like to have more time to go to the mall, and chill with my friends. See, I bet just reading this schedule makes you feel like going back to middle school- not!

My main problem is this girl named Tabitha Maskovich. She gets in my face every time I show up at school. She's like, "Hey Ivy, did you poison anybody?" or in this really weird nasally voice she says, "Now children (her buddies) you know not to touch poison ivy."

So I decided to seek revenge and here's what happened. I wanted to put itching powder in her gym clothes so when she put it on (the school uniforms are all identical—same blue shirt with red shorts) she would get all itchy. It turns out she had a similar idea. When we each put on our gym clothes we started jumping up and down like kids at the fireworks when they hear the ice cream truck approaches. Only this was not fun. I felt itchy, when I finally ripped my shorts off in the girl's locker room, I discovered that she had filled my shorts with ants from the science lab. At the same time, Tabitha was wriggling like a small pink worm about to be squished on the sidewalk. She ran into the showers and splashed water all over her gym clothes. When we changed back into our normal clothes, she discovered the itching powder in her shorts. We glared at each other.

It wasn't always this way. Let me take you back to fifth grade, *Journal*, and tell you about my first volleyball experience: AKA: the day Tabitha and I became enemies. Every year in elementary school the fifth grade teachers play volleyball against the fifth grade students. Tabitha was on my team (fortunately) and we were friends. During practice one day, Tabitha served the ball and it hit me in the face. She started laughing.

Other kids started laughing too. One of the girls said, "Hey, look, your face is swelling up." And it was. I went to the office for ice and when I returned, Tabitha had told everyone that I was in the office crying like a baby.

"That's not true," I said, but lots of girls believed her, and they decided to become her friend instead of mine. Over the summer, I spent most of the time with my family, and when I came to sixth grade,

Tabitha had changed a lot.

Instead of wearing her usual jeans and a t-shirt, she was wearing a dress, tights, high heels, and make-up. My mom still made me dress like a kid, and I was a little jealous of her. I wore overalls and a pink t-shirt or blue sweater often. It's not that we were poor; it's just what my mom made me wear. I still had friends, but they were in different classes than I was, and I had four classes out of six with Tabitha. Every day, lots of Tabitha. Or should I say, TMT: Too Much Tabitha.

And there we were, itching and dripping in the girl's locker room. We both ran to see the best school secretary ever, Mrs. File. She gave us talcum powder, but before we could put it on, the "end of the day" bell rang. *Whoosh!* She splashed it into the air, and we both started sneezing. Mrs. File started sneezing! Tabitha started giggling. Then I started giggling. Then Mrs. File started giggling. Then our principal came by and he started snickering (because giggling is a sound girl's make, I think). I realized, at that moment, that a bad day could become a weird day, which could actually become a good day. Tabitha and I learned that a person is a person, no matter what her name is, or what stories she makes up about you. A friend should be a friend.

Well, we didn't make up completely, but we still talk to each other (a little) so it's not as bad as it was. Sometimes I think about my textbook in fifth grade (we studied Shakespeare) with Shakespeare's last couplet of "Sonnet 30":

*But while I think on thee, dear friend,  
All losses are restored and sorrows end.*

Forever a writer...  
Ivy Lingiham



# Will They Be BFFL's Forever?

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*All friendships go through difficulties. Will GiGi and Lola make it through the biggest challenge of their friendship, or will it be doomed forever? Find out in **WILL THEY BE BFFL'S FOREVER?** by Megan Downey.*

Two girls are first-class best friends. They would walk up to each other, hug, and squeal, "BFFL here!" BFFL means best friends for life. Lola, one of the girls, is always laughing, a swimmer, best friends with GiGi, and has a positive point of view over anything that happens.

Now who is GiGi? GiGi is Lola's best friend. She is a swimmer, makes a joke out of everything, and loves gossip. They both have a lot in common. However, they were on two different swim teams, which is where the story begins.

Every time that the girls' swim teams were about to face each other, their mothers would plan a vacation with their daughters, like a girls' getaway. They did not want the girls to face each other for fear they might not be friends anymore.

One day, GiGi stopped by at Lola's house. Soon the two girls began to gossip and paint their nails. "NO WAY, I can't believe that they're going out," cried GiGi. "I love Jeffrey. He's the star quarterback, and he would love me more than Heather," she said laughing.

Lola responded, "He so would. I think that you can make her look bad, and then he'll break up with her." They finished painting their nails in silence. They had nothing more to say. They had already talked on the phone that day for three hours.

Right before GiGi left, they both said in unison, "Good luck with the swimming competition!"

"Wait, what are you talking about? I'm facing you," said Lola.

"I think it will be a fun challenge," said GiGi. "That's why our mother's don't know." GiGi and Lola did not want their moms to know because they would go on another vacation.

The day of the meet arrived and the girls walked up to their mothers. GiGi explained first, "I'm facing Lola, and there is nothing you can do to stop me." Lola did the same with her mother. Each mother desperately tried to book a plane anywhere. However, neither of the two had any luck. They were biting their nails so much they had to get sixteen more fake nails. The mothers knew something was going to happen. Even the dog whimpered at the thought. Their mothers really did not want the girls to get mad at each other, but they knew there was nothing they could do.

GiGi and Lola both stepped on the block. The starter said, "Swimmers, take your mark." Then the ref blew his whistle. They were swimming the 200 freestyle. They were on the last length of the pool and GiGi and Lola were neck and neck. Everyone was wondering who was going to win the race. The coaches on both teams looked like they were going to explode. The crowd was going wild. Then the whistle blew. The pool went silent. Lola was in the pool. Where was GiGi? GiGi was up on the pool deck, with a trophy and a gold medal. She had won.

Lola got out of the water and pushed GiGi in the pool. GiGi pulled Lola in with her. They broke out into a big fight. They were screaming at each other. Lola said, "Why did you take this from me?" Then

the coaches went in to break them up before GiGi could answer. After the race they went up to each other and GiGi and

Lola decided it was just a race, not something to break their friendship up for. That makes them both winners and friends!

## A Wizard's Tale

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*John looks like an average kid and he acts like an average kid. But behind his normal disguise, there is a wizard. Will John be able to make it out of a dangerous situation without using his powers? You'll find out in **A WIZARD'S TALE**, by **Xavier Archie**.*

“Hey, look I didn’t want to be a wizard, but I didn’t really have a choice. It all started with the first generation of my kind. See, wizards weren’t always nice and wise; we used to be very barbaric. However, not all of us were evil. My ancestors were the first generation of good wizards; they were pretty weird, but wise. The others, however, had different ideas for not just all who opposed them. but all mortals, too. Don’t take the mortal thing personally; it’s just what we call humans. Anyway, we were forced into hiding because being nice wasn’t only against our laws but against our history. Unfortunately, there were other wizards out there looking for us and not the kind of wizards whose attention you want to attract—kind of like Lord Voldemort in *Harry Potter*, but real and not quite as ugly. That was the beginning of us and hopefully it won’t be the end.”

Hi, my name is John. That long story you just read wasn’t fiction. That was my ancestor’s history. I wish that I wasn’t a wizard but I am, a poor 14-year-old kid living in New York. Most people don’t realize you’re a wizard until they look back on all the weird things that happened when they were near you, like the water fountain blowing up when you walk past it, or the bus spontaneously bursting into flames as soon as you step off of it. Even the books

in the library burst into flames if I’m nearby.

Being a wizard is hard most of the time. It just makes you miserable. However, it does have its perks—like being able to walk on walls or turn invisible. Now the bad news is that I’m trapped inside a warehouse with BAD wizards around every corner.

It happened like this: I got an invitation to a party. I should have known that it was a trap. I mean, who throws a party in an abandoned warehouse and invites the weirdest kid in the school?

As soon as I walked into that door, I knew something was up. All of a sudden the door slammed shut and I thought I was alone, but boy was I wrong. Then suddenly a bolt of lightning landed one-inch from my face. I darted forward not knowing anything but that if I didn’t move quickly, I was going to be extra crispy. I took cover behind an old steel column and prayed that they didn’t see me dart that way or else I was done for. My eyebrows were nearly singed off. My face burnt like crazy! It took a good chunk of hair off my head too! I could have teleported out but a weird charm was blocking my ability to use magic. I counted to ten and lunged from behind the column, only to stare into the stubby cold-hearted mastermind Vladimier. “At your service,” he says, grinning and smiling wildly. “Foolish boy, haven’t your parents

taught you not to go to suspicious parties? Ha, ha,” he laughs crookedly.

Now the guy was a grade-A nutcase if you ask me, but I mean, an old guy villain? You do the math. “At least I’m not as blind as a bat in daylight!” I taunt. I rack my brain and quickly scanned the room left to right. I spot a big pole and figure I can use it somehow as I dodge Vladimir. I rush to the pole thinking this could be it for me if I don’t make it to this pole. I get to the pole, flip it up to my hands, swing around and while holding it like a baseball bat, I swing right into his jaw. *BAM!*

“Yeeeeow!” he yelled.

I was aiming for the ribs, but with death a few steps away, you kind of lose control. He flings back and when he wakes up, I’m gone, because I mean, who would stick around with prune face still alive? Plus, once I knocked him out the spell wore off. I wish I could have seen the look on his twisted, ugly, and wrinkled - well you get the point. I’ll probably have to deal with this stuff for the rest of my life; but I’ll deal with them later for now, I’m just happy to be alive.

## Wrong Plane

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*In **WRONG PLANE** by Sarina Kaushik, a simple trip to their Grandma’s home in Ohio turns into a huge adventure when two siblings, Anna and Jack, board the wrong plane.*

“**A**nna? Jack? Got all your things? We’re waiting by the car!” their mom yelled from downstairs.

Anna answered, “Ok, Mom! I just got to get my book! Jack, are you ready? We’re leaving in five minutes!” The two kids jumped into the car after about four minutes.

A little later, their mother started, “Guys, aren’t you excited to go on a surprise visit to Grandma’s? You’re going to have a great time!”

Jack answered quietly, “But I’ll miss you, Mom. It’s going to be a whole month!”

Since Jack was only five, he was always missing his parents. “Awww, Jack, you’re going to have such a great time, you’ll forget all about me,” his mom said.

It had been thirty minutes in the car and they had another thirty to go. Anna thought, *Hopefully Jack and I will know what to do at the airport, you know, because I’m only 15. Well, we did go over it*

*with Mom and Dad thoroughly. Time to review what I need to do: After we get to the airport, we find our way to the plane, land, get the luggage, then take a bus to Grandma’s, have Grandma be surprised, go back on the plane after a month, and then I’ll be home. Ok, got it.*

After the long car ride, they were at the airport. There were long lines at the luggage drop off, people waiting or going through the security check, and people walking to their gate. Anna and Jack’s parents helped them get the boarding passes and giving the luggage to the airport staff. They hugged their parents good-bye and headed off to find the gate. Now Jack and Anna were on their own. The ticket read gate 22, but the second two was faded so it looked like gate two. They arrived there and took a seat. On the ticket it also said the destination: Cleveland, Ohio, arrival time: 5:30 p.m.; time in plane: four hours.

It was finally time for them to board the

plane. The gate employee quickly looked at the boarding pass, and then ripped off one end. In the plane Anna and Jack settled in. There were many rows of chairs, gray and black. People were boarding the plane. The usual airplane smell got to Jack and Anna. Jack said, "How long are we going to be in the plane, Anna?"

"About four hours. Mom said to call once we are off the plane," Anna answered.

It had been five hours now and Anna's mom called on her cell phone. "Anna, why haven't you called me yet? It's been five hours already! You arrived at Grandma's, right?"

Just then an announcement came on, "We will be arriving in Miami, Florida in approximately two hours." Anna and Jack's mouths hung wide open. They were supposed to land in Ohio, not Florida! The adventurer she was, she didn't tell her mom.

"Uh, Mom, sorry I forgot." Just then she realized she's not supposed to use cell phones on a plane. She couldn't just hang up on her mom, so she just decided to whisper.

"Oh that's alright! Was Grandma surprised? Oh and in case something happens, don't forget about the money we gave you. Can I talk to her?"

"Um, uh, no, because, um, she's taking a shower. Bye!" And Anna hung up. She was speechless.

*Oh no! We went on the wrong plane! What are we going to do? I better not act like I'm freaking out or else Jack will cry,* Anna thought.

"Anna! Why didn't you tell Mom? What are we going to do in Florida!" Jack asked worriedly.

"Relax, Jack. We got on the wrong plane. Um, we'll be ok, I think. Plus, there's nothing much Mom could've done about it either." Anna answered, trying to

smile. "But Jack, the only thing we really can do without getting in trouble is call Grandma and tell her what happened. I mean, Grandma is fun; she'd keep a secret. She knows Mom would freak out if she knew."

Once they landed in Florida, Anna dialed Grandma's number and Grandma answered, "Hi! Anna, I haven't talked to you in ages! How are you?"

"Good, good. Grandma, can you promise not to say anything? Ok, well, we are on a surprise visit to your house, but then we went on the wrong plane, and now we're in Florida. Grandma, please don't tell Mom."

"Oh my goodness! Are you ok? I don't know; I have to tell your mother!"

"No, please! We have money. And one more thing, if Mom ever calls you to see how we're doing just say we're fine."

"Ok, ok. If there's anything wrong, call me immediately. Take care!" They both hung up and Anna was very relieved.

They took a bus to the Bed & Breakfast that they booked last minute. Usually, Bed & Breakfasts are like houses. From the outside, the building looked 70 feet high! There were bright green palm trees surrounding the golden entrance. The living room was fancy and inviting. A shiny chandelier was hanging from the ceiling and there was a plasma TV and four comfortable sofas. So Anna went into the living room where there was a desk for checking in and out. She asked how much it would cost for one room with two beds. The man at the desk said \$200! "Jack, it's \$200 but Mom said to use the money in case something happens, and actually, something did happen!" Anna explained to Jack, smiling at her own idea. She turned around so she was facing the man at the desk again, "Ok, we'll take it."

Later, Anna and Jack were enjoying the

beautiful, warm Florida weather at the beach. The clear, crystal blue waves crashed along the shore. They spread out two towels on the white, silky sand. Anna had a feeling they were going to have a great time! But at the same time she was worried, because she was actually to be with her grandma right now. At least Grandma knows about it.

After a week, Jack and Anna had bought tons of food at snack shacks by the beach. They had raspberry smoothies, chips and salsa, and vanilla milk shakes. They also played with and used toys, games, and drinks and room service and other expensive things since they still had a lot of money left. Later that day, Anna visited the spa, while Jack was in the hotel, calling room service every five minutes. They both thought that this was the life!

Several weeks passed by, seeming like days, and Anna all of a sudden realized that their parents were expecting them home in four days. She headed down to the lobby and asked the man at the desk to please get her a plane ticket back home. She gave him \$50. Once he was done she thanked him and looked at the price of the ticket. It was \$1000 per person. That was \$2,000 total. Anna went upstairs to their room and took out her money.

“Oh no! I am \$200 short! What are we going to do?” Anna panicked. She knew no one would lend her any money. She ran to get Jack and told him the news. They decided their only choice was for Anna to get a job.

The next day, Anna bought high heels so it looked like she was older. She luckily got

hired at a grocery store because they were desperate for cashiers and helpers. The first day was hard because she wasn't familiar with the routine, but she eventually got the hang of it. She worked three more days and earned the \$200 she needed. They had to leave the next morning so she started packing. She also had to come up with a plan.

“Jack, we need to come up with something. When they ask for our money, what should we say? You know, since we spent EVERYTHING.”

“Hmm, how about we say we donated it to Grandma's church charity?” Jack said.

“Hmm. Good idea. That would be very generous of us. If Mom ever talks to Grandma about the money we ‘gave her,’ hopefully she'll go along with it or else we're in big trouble,” Anna replied.

The next day, at the correct gate, they stepped into the plane. Anna and Jack both decided that the trip to Florida was great and they'd promise not to tell anyone about it until they were at least 30, because then their parents wouldn't be able to punish them.

Anna and Jack arrived a little earlier than planned, so they lifted their luggage off the conveyor belt. Soon, they were waiting outside the airport. Then their mother popped up hugging them both.

She asked, “How was it at Grandma's? Oh I missed you so much!”

“It was great. We can't wait 'til next time.” Anna winked at Jack and they both smiled. They really couldn't wait for another adventure like that one!

# Zahra's Discovery

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*In ZAHRA'S DISCOVERY by Madison Harbort, a girl named Zahra finds out there is no food or money for anyone in her homeland of Kenya, Africa. Zahra feels she needs to save her village. Will she be able to pull it off?*

In Kenya, Africa there is a girl named Zahra. Zahra is very kind and she loves to spend time with her family. With her mom Valynda, dad Abimola, brother Bakari, and sister Zakiya, things can get pretty hectic. She is fearless. There's wildlife all around her that she can explore all day long.

One day Zahra decided to explore in the forest. As she was out in the wilderness, she saw a lion! She quickly hid into the bushes hoping that the lion would not see her. The lion got real suspicious and could smell a young girl hiding somewhere close by where the lion was standing. Luckily, the lion decided to give up and he ran away.

Zahra loved living in Africa, because she could explore, and wherever she went she saw wildlife. From lions to birds, and tigers to snakes, she loved it. There was always a beautiful sight everywhere Zahra went. Like the Lions that would cross the dirt road at night and during the day she saw very rare birds.

On her way back home she went into her house and she noticed something was different. Her family seemed sad so she tried to cheer them up with some stories about what happened while she was exploring, but it didn't seem to work. She heard her mom talking with her dad in the kitchen. The kitchen had walls the color of a bright red flower. There were chicken decorations all around the kitchen. Zahra went and looked in the fridge, there was nothing there. She looked in all the cupboards, and again, there was nothing

there.

"Great, there's nothing to eat but chicken decorations!" Zahra said. "What's going on?" she asked her parents.

"Honey, it's hard to explain," her dad started to say.

Her mom interrupted, "We don't have enough money to buy food nor does anyone else in Kenya."

Zahra went to a bazaar the very next day. There was stuff to buy, like dresses, shoes, toys, and house wares. After she was gazing at all the merchandise, she noticed that there was not one person there at the bazaar except for the people, who were selling things.

"Why aren't there any people here?" Zahra asked the merchant.

"Well, I don't know but I have heard some rumors that there isn't any money, but I guess I didn't know it was this bad or I wouldn't be here wasting my time!" Karina, the merchant, told Zahra.

"Well my parents told me that times were tough right now but I had no idea that it was this bad!" Zahra exclaimed.

"Well," Karina started to say, "I think you should keep your money and save it for food or clothes when you need it."

Zahra left and decided to explore around Kenya and look around for things like apple trees and crops in the ground. She wanted to make sure there was enough food for her family when there was none. She was exploring outside a village near Kenya and as she was exploring she found a big pile of leaves in a very unusual place.

She wondered what would be under there so she decided to look and see. Zahra moved most of the leaves and as she was moving the leaves she found a large, silver, metal, platform that was about an inch off the ground with a big label on it marked "FOOD." She opened it up and there were all types of food. There were noodles, herbs, vegetables, and fruits. There was even a water purifier for the river so they could drink fresh water, without dirt specks in it.

Zahra said, "It must have been put there underground recently, because all this fruit is fresh!" At the bottom of the trunk there was a note. The note said, "For whoever that finds this trunk with food, I hope you

will be blessed in a time of need. I hope this will help you on a road to success."

Zahra quickly went home to tell her mother about it and her mother was so happy, but she made sure that she only used it when they desperately needed food. Zahra told her mom about the note and her mother said that the person was looking over Kenya and they were very thankful. Zahra was a heroine in her hometown of Kenya, Africa. All of the people loved her because she loved to explore and through that she had been to find the food that her town so desperately needed. They rarely ever ran out of food again. Zahra was a savior!





ROOM 115:  
THE EXECUTIVE SUITE



# 9 of Hearts

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*Zilly is an alien. He needs to win a game so does not get executed. The game takes him from his own planet to Earth in **9 of Hearts**, by Katherine Sullivan.*

There was an alien named Zilly who had just turned eight years old. Zilly was a weak, scrawny, chubby, and short alien, but he was very clever. Kids made fun of him because he was always last in the 50-lightyear run.

On Zilly's planet, when you turn eight, you have to play a special alien card game, and you get executed if you don't win. The object of the game is to go into a holographic world and find holographic cards, but you have to go through obstacles to get them. Even though they are in a holographic world, all wounds and chemicals are real.

Some cards have more value than others. The lowest of value is robot card, and the highest was the nine of hearts.

All of the other cards except the nine of hearts were hidden in obstacles where you have to use strength. The nine of hearts card was supposedly hidden in a place where you would never expect.

The day after Zilly's birthday, he would have to have his card game against the robot computer. It is tradition that the day before the alien card game they have a big feast of battery acid, purple zigzag eggs, and cable pork. That night, Zilly got lots of sleep, and the next day it was time for the card game!

Zilly was in a big stadium with many chambers and many other aliens. A few other aliens were going to play, too. He could hear his classmates snickering and talking about how an asteroid was going to kill him.

Suddenly Zilly heard slimy tentacles echoing through the main hallway! Everyone was silent. He felt a chill down his spine. The chief opened the door slowly and walked to the podium and call him up! "You!" he said.

Zilly was stunned. "Me!" The Chief nodded his head. Zilly stepped in a chamber and started his game!

At the beginning of the card game he had to select a holographic world to go to. He chose the human world: Earth. He was the only person who chose Earth because everyone else heard stories about people from Earth taking aliens to labs to test them, and sometimes the chemicals kill the aliens. But today, Zilly decided to be brave, and he ended up in Las Vegas.

Zilly had heard in class that there were a lot of casinos that have cards. Zilly was walking about looking for a casino. He ran into many people, and he felt unsafe when people stared at him. He did not think he would find a casino. When he found a casino, he gave great big smile.

Zilly put on a human disguise and went into the casino to play poker. He played poker and he drew a card from the deck, and, when he picked it up, he could see red hearts. When he put it in his hand, he could see the nine of hearts! He screamed with joy and ran out with the card. He returned with the card and won the game.

Now, Zilly will not be executed. Everybody cheered for him because he was the first to find the card. Zilly lived happily ever after.

# The Adventures of a Fly

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*In THE ADVENTURES OF A FLY by Bella Hourdakis, three flies try to do the impossible (well, at least for a fly). Come on a fun adventure with three plucky flies—Rosie, Lola, and Fly—as they attempt to fly to all fifty states in the United States.*

**W**hoosh! It is a very windy day on a really long journey. As I look down I can see the trees swaying. From where I am you would think that I am an airplane, but I am simply a fly. I am planning to fly to all the 50 states in the United States. I know it's a big journey, especially for a fly, but I can handle it as long as I have my two best friends, Rosie and Lola. To make the trip faster we will hop on a truck when we cross over I-75.

First, though, we will visit New York. We plan to visit the Statue of Liberty.

When we got there my friend was so amazed he ran into it. It took us almost an hour to pry him off.

We are now five states into our trip and so many other adventurous flies have joined us. We have had a blast. We are going to visit my relatives in Florida. Hopefully it will be warmer and less windy.

We are here in Florida at my relative's house. We went to the beach for a really long time because the weather was so great. We are only going to stay for a little bit so we can go to California and see a few old friends. Before we go to California we have a long way so we are going to visit the Grand Canyon. It will be nice to take a break and see an awesome site.

"California is so cool," everyone said, and, "Look at all the movie stars!" We will head back tomorrow and see a few sites along the way such as Mount Rushmore and the Sears Tower.

We are now passing the Sears Tower in Chicago, Illinois. We are staying far enough

away so no one gets stuck!

Mount Rushmore was awesome; from where we see it, it is enormous.

"Wow, what is that?"

"I don't know; let's go check it out."

We went so far out we did not know where we were now. We knew we were getting close, though, so we kept going. Then someone shouted, "UFO!" Someone else screamed, "Skyscraper!" I knew what it was—a blimp.

We all jumped on the blimp because it was heading in our directions towards home. We had an exciting ride! It was fun watching people on the ground trying to figure out what we were riding on. It's not every day that a person (or a fly for that matter) sees a blimp. We have to keep moving if we want to get home in time for the holidays. We are passing so many great places, so we visited a few more places just for fun. The fun had to end at some point, though.

We are now in our home state of Rhode Island. We were so excited when we passed the "Welcome to Rhode Island" sign. We are about thirty minutes from home and could not be any more excited to tell our family about the great trip we had and about all our new friends we met along the way.

We are at our front door ready to burst with excitement. We walked in and had quite a surprise. They had thrown us a "Welcome Home" party. It's nice to be missed. Our journey was great, but it is time to get home and rest for a while. I am really tired from a great long journey.

# The Adventures of Nick, Ryan, and Mike in British Columbia

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**THE ADVENTURES OF NICK, RYAN, AND MIKE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA** by *Jaime Ettinger* is about three friends who go on an adventure into the deep woods of British Columbia. As luck would have it, the beast seems to find them.

After graduating from the University of Michigan in spring of 2008, three friends by the names of Nick, Ryan, and Mike decided to go on a vacation to British Columbia. They had known each other their whole lives and were inseparable. When they went to college they even played football together for the University of Michigan, and always hung out together after classes.

They were all close, and so were their parents. Every month or two they played cards. The boys played poker and blackjack, and the parents always played euchre. The last time they played, Mike said, "That was a wild game of poker, wasn't it?"

Nick then said, "Yes, it was. That was the most intense and longest game that I have ever played."

Nick was a take-charge kind of guy who always had great ideas for a new adventure. One Saturday night after a long game of cards, Nick came up with an idea for a trip that they had never taken before. Nick said, "Why don't we go on a hiking trip into the wilderness of British Columbia?" They had heard that there was the possibility that a mysterious beast had lived out there, but no one had ever found it. The closest anyone came to finding the beast was seeing shadows during the day, hearing howling sounds at night, and finding huge footprints in the sand. Many people have attempted this trip before, and

some never returned.

These stories scared them a little, but foolishly they thought they were up for the challenge. They had camped and hunted before, but nothing of this caliber.

Since the three of them grew up in the same high-class neighborhood, they were able to charter a small plane to fly them from Michigan to British Columbia. It was a bright, sunny day when they took off, but once they were airborne Ryan immediately started to feel dizzy. Ryan said, "I need to sit down and catch my breath because I feel like I am going to throw up." He was afraid of heights, and Mike felt pretty much the same. The little plane felt like a roller coaster.

Thinking fast, Nick called a huddle, much like he did on the football field, and said, "Guys, this is just like when we played against Michigan State. You have to be tough, have no fear, and hang together." This seemed to work because it wasn't an issue the rest of the way.

Ryan and Mike said "Thank you" for calling the huddle and telling them what they had to do to feel safe. "I feel a whole lot better," Ryan said. Nick said, "Thank you, guys. That really means a lot to me."

When they landed, the situation was a lot different. The winds were howling, and there was a heavy rain. Now they had to figure out how to get to their final destination. Nick said, "This is where it starts to get tricky. Just stay next to each

other, ok?" Mike and Ryan agreed with a little bit of a nervous "Ok."

Since it was dark and cold, and there were miles of trees, rocks, rivers, and swamps ahead of them, they decided to make camp.

In the morning the skies had cleared, and they were on their way. They had a handheld GPS unit to guide them along the slippery paths, and took many breaks to admire the beautiful scenery. By the end of the day, they had made it to their initial campsite. Mike said, "We're here. The only problem is that we have to set up camp all over again."

They were exhausted, but managed to set everything up. They grilled some steaks that they had packed before they left, and then played several hands of poker. Eventually the long day had gotten the best of them, and they decided to get some sleep.

It didn't take long, however, before they were all suddenly rocked awake. Off in the distance they heard a terrible roar. Immediately, Ryan jumped up and yelled, "What was that?"

Nick responded, "I have no idea, but whatever it was, it sounded hungry."

Shrugging it off, they all decided to go back to sleep, but in a few minutes they heard it again. This time it sounded a lot louder, and closer. Nick cried, "What is that thing?" They all stared at each other with a look of fear. Nick then said, "We better go out and investigate."

Armed with a pistol, bow and arrow, axe, and flashlights that they had brought from home, they decided to go out into the wilderness toward the sound. It didn't take long for Nick to spot a sign nailed to a tree. Nick read it aloud: "Beware - Wild Beast in the Vicinity."

They all stopped dead in their tracks, eyes bulging out, and just stared at each

other. No one wanted to move. Nick wondered who would have put up such a sign, and why. It was certainly a warning, but was it from the people who never returned, or was it put up as a joke?

Ryan then said, "Do we really have to keep looking for this beast? I'm ready to turn around." But Nick said, "We have to keep moving." Somehow they all found the courage to continue.

As they were walking, the bushes to their right started to shake violently. They froze in their tracks again, unable to move, and the bushes continued to shake. Something was there, and they knew they couldn't turn back now since finding the beast was part of the original plan.

They slowly approached the bushes and parted the branches and saw the biggest, grossest, ugliest, and smelliest thing that they had ever seen. It was huge! It must have been eight feet tall and was hovering over a caribou it had just killed.

Just then Nick stepped on a branch, and it snapped with a loud crack. The beast then jumped up and howled with anger. The three looked at each other in shock, and then decided to run. The beast growled and started to come towards them.

They knew they could not outrun it, so at the count of three, Nick gave the order to turn around and fire their weapons. There were at least six shots and two arrows fired, and the beast was still coming at them. With no time to reload, they decided to run again. While running they were somehow able to reload and when everyone was ready, Nick gave the signal again. This time they were able to stop the beast dead in his tracks.

Mike, freaking out, immediately whipped out his satellite phone, and started to dial 911 for help. He had feared that there were more wild beasts out there, and they needed help.

It seemed like forever, but within about an hour, two helicopters appeared over the ridge closing in on their signal from the phone. Once the copters landed, they jumped into the chopper and hauled the dead beast in with them. They wanted to take it all the way back to Michigan so the proper authorities could figure out what it was.

When they arrived at the airport, the governor and press greeted them. Mike

said, “We will never go on a trip like that ever again.”

Ryan and Nick said, “You got that right.” They were treated as heroes even though they felt like they did what any other person would have done in the same situation.

Home at last, the trio promised each other that their next trip was going to be a simple one. Venice Beach in California came to mind.

## Ancient Greek Mania

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*In **ANCIENT GREEK MANIA** by Philip Manning, Alexander and Claire accidentally go back in time and wind up in ancient Greece. Will they be stuck in ancient Greece forever? Will they even survive?*

I am Alexander, and I am twelve years old. I have an annoying know-it-all twin named Claire, and we just had the scariest adventure of our lives.

Here is how it started. Our family had just moved from San Francisco to Baltimore, Maryland because my dad’s job with Chrysler sent him over here to work. Claire and I got out of the taxi that had taken us to our new house from the airport and helped unload the stuff from the moving van. Then we explored our new house.

It was awesome! There was a basement with a pool table and the living room had a seventy-inch plasma television. When we looked out the window at the backyard, we saw that it was huge, and we couldn’t even see it all. “Hey, let’s go see what there is outside,” said Claire.

We went outside and saw that all the way at the other end of the huge yard there was an awesome swimming pool. Walking over there, we passed by a large raspberry bush.

“Stop! Wait a minute,” I said when I noticed that the bush was practically

covered with fresh juicy raspberries – my favorite. I just couldn’t walk by without at least sampling them. We were picking the plump berries when I noticed the dark ring of grass under it. And no, it was not a shadow.

Claire, who had just popped a handful of berries into her mouth, said, “Come on, I want to pick out my new room!” As she moved away from the bush, she stepped into the ring. The ground beneath her, in the ring, seemed to dissolve into a dark, black hole, and Claire screamed as she fell into nothingness. Instinctively, I jumped in after her and I was falling, falling, falling. Then I saw black.

When I opened my eyes, we were sitting on a winding dirt road. As far as we could see in every direction there were fields of grass and groves of trees bearing large purple olives. I noticed that a dark ring of dirt, similar to the one back at home, surrounded us. “What the heck happened? Where is our yard?” Claire asked, bewildered. I was looking around.

“I want to know what type of bizarre

neighborhood this is,” I exclaimed. “Since when does a neighborhood have trees instead of houses? I thought Baltimore was a city for people, not squirrels.”

“Come on!” my sister said impatiently. “We can’t keep sitting here on our butts forever. Let’s walk down the street and see if we can get directions to our house.”

Twenty minutes later the small street that we had been walking on merged into a larger one. Small shops selling food, cloth, and other items were scattered around. I could see some sort of outdoor theater with people performing a play of some sort. The street, shop, and theater were crowded with people that were wearing what looked like white dresses. And these were *men*. “Look at those guys’ clothes!” I said to Claire.

“Yours aren’t much better,” she replied. I looked down and saw that my Abercrombie t-shirt and jeans had turned into the same outfit that the other men were wearing! I saw that Claire was wearing what looked like a big square piece of white cloth pinned in various places.

I walked up to a middle-aged man and asked, “Where are we?” The man looked at me blankly. “Hello? Do you speak English?”

The man said, “*Ego operor non agnosco quis vos es sentential, puer.*” I guess not. I had no idea what language this guy was speaking, but a quick glance to Claire told me that she knew. She talked in gibberish to the man, and he answered. She nodded, and he walked away.

“He speaks Latin. Thank God I took Latin class back in San Francisco! He said that we are in Olympia, Greece. But that doesn’t make sense, because none of this looks like it did when we had that vacation in Greece with Mom and Dad. We must have gone back in time!”

“Ha, ha! Of course we are back in time.

All those years of scientific research means nothing compared with two kids like us!” I said, my voice dripping with sarcasm.

“Oh, yeah, then how do you explain all of those buildings with ancient Greek architecture that are in perfect condition? And why don’t we see any cars, trucks, or even people riding *bicycles* on this road? And speaking of the road, why is it made out of dirt, and not paved? And that’s not even including these people’s weird sense of style!” Well, that did bring up a good point. Leave it to a girl to make a boy feel stupid.

“Okay, fine. We are back in time. How do we get back to the 21st century?” Even my sister couldn’t think of an answer to that one. “Let’s just go where everyone else is going,” I said, and started walking, Claire right next to me.

After walking for about five minutes, we came to a beautiful marble structure with huge white columns. A huge statue loomed above them, showing a muscular man sitting in a throne holding a staff. A bunch of people knelt on the ground below it with their heads down. I had to admit, it looked kind of funny. I mean, it’s a statue. These people needed to get a life.

Claire pointed at the statue, and excitedly said, “That must be Zeus, king of the gods.”

“The guy that blows stuff up with lightning bolts?” I asked.

“The one and only,” she replied.

We kept walking along when I saw rows and rows of grapevines. “What are they going to do with all of those grapes?” I asked. “Is this an earlier version of Welch’s Grape Juice?”

“I don’t think that’s quite what they had in mind,” Claire replied. She pointed to a group of men (wearing dresses, of course) drinking wine from huge ornate wine glasses made out of clay. Those things had



to be seven inches tall! Next to the men were three wooden tubs that, when we stepped closer, we could see were full of grapes. A man was standing in each one, stomping away at the grapes and turning them into purple juice. Then they went and got barrels, filled them with the juice, and carried them away. “Now it will ferment into wine,” said my know-it-all sister.

Suddenly, I heard loud cheering. I looked in the direction of the sound and saw a huge stadium. I asked Claire, “Do you want to check it out?” She nodded, and we headed toward it.

When we got closer, we saw that it was basically a huge running track, surrounded by rows of seats that were packed with people. Claire, of course, knew exactly what it was.

“The Olympics! We are actually about to watch the ancient Greek Olympics! That means we must have gone back in time to at least one or two hundred years before Christ! Come on!” She hurried down the road toward the stadium with me hot on her heels.

As soon as she saw the actual entrance, Claire stopped dead in her tracks. The stadium entrance was guarded by two guards, clad in armor, each holding a spear.

“Let’s *not* go in through there,” I decided. Claire nodded. We went around the back and saw a wall surrounding the back side of the stadium. It looked like it was made out of baked mud. There were small gaps between the bricks, just large enough to be used as hand and foot holds. I clambered up the side like a monkey, Claire right beneath me. When I reached the top, I sat down with my legs hanging down on the other side. My sister came up right next to me.

“Wow!” The view was incredible! Nobody noticed us; their eyes were all fixed on the track below us. It was then that I

noticed the people running on the track. Oh my God! I put my hands over my eyes and heard Claire do the same. “I am *so* scarred for life,” I heard her say.

What they do not tell you in school about the ancient Olympics is that the athletes were *naked*. No one else seemed bothered by the runners’ lack of garments. They obviously were used to it. However, Claire and I were *definitely* not.

Claire scooted back from the athletes proudly displaying their birthday suits. However, she forgot she was sitting on a brick wall and scooted a bit too far. With a yelp, she lost her balance, and flapped her arms like a rabid duck, trying to maintain her grip on the wall. I reached out my hand and caught her just in time.

However, several people heard the yelp and looked up at us in surprise. As soon as they saw Claire, they went berserk. They started yelling, “*Adepto ex hic, puella! Is est pro men tantum!*”

“What are they saying?” I asked Claire.

“They are saying that girls aren’t allowed here,” answered Claire as she half climbed, half fell down the wall. I am embarrassed to say that my descent down the wall was even less elegant, if you can imagine that. “Let’s make a run for it!” she yelled as she hit the ground.

A guard dressed in armor started running toward us, swinging a sword menacingly. That sight made my legs move like a cartoon character’s. We ran past the statue of Zeus, along the dirt road full of shops, down the winding road in the olive tree groves, and finally found the dark ring in the dirt. I pushed Claire into it, and followed her. We started falling, and I saw black.

When I opened my eyes, we were sitting under the raspberry bush – in our year, and more importantly, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We were both wearing our perfectly faded jeans

full of holes. "Let's never do that again," Claire said, and for once, I totally agreed with her.

As Claire sprinted off toward the house,

I just couldn't resist reaching back and grabbing just one more handful of those juicy raspberries.

## The Appearance

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*In **THE APPEARANCE** by Kurt Ladriere Manion, Jimmy Borisal, age twelve, must survive in the world of the year 3451, the year everything changed. Jimmy has no choice of a career except working with his most hated creature ever.*

**I**n the year 3451 a new biological species called Sporati has surfaced into the world of discovery. The only remaining text from this year is this LOGBOOK. So open your eyes to a wonder and a terror that seized humanity within its unrelinquishing grasp.

---

January 5, Year 3451. Time: 23:47

My mother was wailing in the night, waking me from my fitful slumber. I groggily shuffled my feet and reached for my light switch, but then a faint blue glow caught my eye. "Again?" I asked myself.

I looked out my window. The thing that kept on trying again and again to lift its head out of the ground failed and sank back into the dirt, going back to where it sleeps during the day.

This had happened every night for the past five days. The things would try to get out of the ground again and again. Every night they lifted themselves out of the ground even more. There were millions trying to get out everywhere; they were bumping each other, they were packed that close.

They kept on morphing into different shapes trying to get out: creatures of earth, of mythology, even creatures that no one's imagination could ever come up with. But they seemed to favor a form that looked like a

headless spider made of pure blue energy, and almost as tall as a car.

I watched them fall one after another, but they seemed even more persistent tonight, like they had to make a deadline. Then my mother's wails of terror brought me to my senses.

I had to sleep. I felt like a rag doll without any stuffing, and whether my mother was truly scared out of her wits I did not care. I would sleep tonight.

I stomped out of my room toward my mother. And before I could say anything to my mom, she started yelling and throwing my racecar collection at me. Bob Rayson, Charles Sancer, and Henry Glotornex were all broken in pieces on the floor. I ran to stop my mom, but slipped on more cars. I couldn't say anything, or I just couldn't think right without any sleep.

"J-Jimmy!" my mother whimpered. "You're not one of them... I'm sorry!" she bawled. She thought I was one of those ground spiders? Maybe no sleep affected her more than me!

Then as I stood up, I looked out the window. What I saw startled me. It was one of those spider things, and it had almost lifted its head. Then, *BAM*, it did.

It shone with light so bright I had to close my eyes, but the light rammed through my eyelids. I slipped on my cars and felt

overwhelming pain on my back as I landed on my broken cars. The spider thing then emitted a foul noise that made my head hurt. My head almost blew up like a water balloon. When I thought the screaming couldn't get any worse, mother joined in with her nails-on-a-chalkboard scream. My head sent off pain sensors to everywhere in my body. All I saw was the undulating movement of the blue, and then the noise stopped.

The blue "cooled down" in color to a cyan. The pain went away, and then I pushed the blue away with my hands. Wait, my hands? My hands; oh, joy, I can see! Then I saw that the blue I had pushed away was actually a bed cover in a hospital room!

Note from the LOGBOOK: For those who were born before the invention of me, a LOGBOOK, I will have you know we record information on the life of whomever's head we are in. A LOGBOOK became mandatory to be put in everyone, because the LOGBOOK records even thoughts and can be used in place of a trial, or evidence on a crime scene. A LOGBOOK can even act like a conscience for a person. For the record, everything above really happened. Jimmy fainted and didn't wake up until January 21... now starting the January 21 log.

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January 21, Year 3451. Time: 23:47

"Here you go, Sonny, I'm givin' you a real chair to watch a real news report on why you are here," said a doctor. When the TV flashed on, an anchorman shuffled his notes and then started.

"To all of you curious about the animals some may call giant spiders, they are really called Sporati. The flash and sound that they make are harm—"

*BANG!* The TV screen shattered and fell to the floor.

"What in the world?" I gasped. I swung

my head around to see a girl carrying a slingshot. She was bald and in a wheelchair. Her face seemed to have no mouth.

"I hate the lying filth these doctors are," she pressed into a voice box.

"What?" I asked this youth. She beckoned me forward, and rolled down the hall.

As we walked/rolled down the halls, we came upon a door that seemed to have an official air. "I wasn't always disabled," the girl typed as she punched in numbers. The door slid open. It showed a room full of people that looked almost exactly like her: no mouth or hair, and in a wheelchair.

"What happened here? I thought the reporter was about to say that what I went through was harmless." That girl typed slowly with tears in her eyes. I looked upon the scene of affected youths. Then it hit me. "They're all the same size. Why?"

Then the girl gave me a look that almost said, "I just finished typing your last question's answer." She typed more. I looked up, but then she punched me, so I didn't ask another question.

"Yes, the reporter almost said 'harmless,' but that is a lie. The light from the Sporati is a radiation field that can mutate anything with a life force similar to their own. Humans and the Sporati are as different as brother and sister, so most half-mutate into these things. The lucky ones, like you, don't get mutated. We are all different ages, but the height is part of the radiation's effect. The doctors showed us a video telling us this. P.S. Yes, it's true, and if you ask another question I will lodge a rock in your vocal cords. See how easy it is to use these things."

Note from the LOGBOOK: Although January 5 was called the Day of Appearance, appearances kept on happening until January 10. The radiation affects adults differently. It slows their heart, making them lie in a bed for the rest of their lives, which is one year. But

that will be explained later.

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January 25, Year 3451

Jimmy and his mother are released from the hospital.

---

January 27, Year 3451. Time: 8:20

When school started, only half of the students were attending school who had been there before break. Inside, the school was pitch black. Before Jimmy could think why, his LOGBOOK chimed in, “I am so excited.”

“What are you talking about... is school canceled?”

“No, even better.”

“They better be giving out free money, or I’ll find out how to disconnect you!” I accidentally said out loud.

“Yours, too?” one of my friends asked.

“The LOGBOOK?” I asked.

“Yeah, mine’s blathering about something being exciting.” Then our LOGBOOKs started scolding us about “talking about LOGBOOKs behind their rear-processors.”

“Good morning, class. I am your teacher’s permanent replacement,” said a man in a lab coat. “There; introductions are done. Take these textbooks—” He was interrupted by a kid asking what the textbooks were on. The man beckoned to the door to show him what they were on. The lights began to turn back on, but the room was still as dark as my basement. Then I realized with horror that the light was more or less a glow: a blue glow!

My nerves tingled with remembrance. “Run! It’s an appearance!” I yelled, and ducked under my desk in horror, remembering the hospital’s disability room.

The teacher’s scolding interrupted my trip down Nightmare Lane. I slowly sat back in my chair. Then the door was slid open by an

invisible hand!

A glowing blue creature strolled in on eight spidery legs. It had a smooth body with no head and three jagged lines on the side that looked like they should have belonged to a shark. I hurled all over the six textbooks that were placed on my desk.

“Please control your bodily fluids next time.”

“Sorry.”

“I don’t want a ‘sorry.’ I want sixty-five bucks. That’s how much you ruined.”

“How about ten bucks? I’ll meet you halfway,” I said, handing him five dollars.

He angrily sent me to the principal, saying “I’ll meet you halfway to one-hundred dollars. Bring it tomorrow, or I’ll meet you halfway again. Class, turn to page sixty-five to see what this Sporati would have done to your classmate if it wasn’t trained.”

---

January 27, Year 3451. Time: 16:00

I walked to my house under my “pet.” At school the weird guy only taught us one subject called Sporatology (the study of Sporati). I didn’t think my mother’s heart could take seeing one of these things. It growled, and I almost kicked it, but thought better.

“I have to live with this?” I asked my self. Who wants to live with a school assignment! My friends had similar dilemmas, but I didn’t want to upset them, so I kept everything to myself, for now.

---

January 30, Year 3451. Time: 9:00

“You may have your daily question now, class,” he said, and as soon as he said it one of the brainiac kids who knew almost everything shot his hand up to the amazement of the class.

“Sir, why do we have these books by Dr.

Newman if they haven't come out yet?"

"Because I am Dr. Newman stupid boy. Now read," Dr. Newman spat at him. He slumped into his seat at the sound of the word s-t-u-p-i-d.

---

June 5, Year 3451. Time: 8:20

"Stay up-to date with everything Sporati-related, and use my books as a main reference. Now go into the world as Sporatiologists, also known as a Sporati scientist," Dr. Newman lectured at graduation. I looked around at the five students that passed his class, me being one of them. Blah, blah, blah.

Then out of my mouth it spouted: "Graduation? Huh, I thought this was another lecture."

Then the annoying Dr. Newman growled, "If you were listening, you are now a licensed Sporatiologist—"

"A what?" I asked, completely helpless. I quickly asked the first things that came to my head. "Graduate? But I didn't learn anything about racecars. I'm only twelve. Is this legal?" and more after that.

"That is past our one question a day, pupil. Now sit," he dismissed me.

"I'm not talking to you as a pupil. I'm talking to you as an equal, 'cause I graduated... I think!" I yelled at him.

"You are a scientist to Sporati—"

"I don't get a choice, but—"

"Sit down, or I'll—"

"You'll what, old man? You already took away my future because *you* need to know everything about this beast." I gestured to a Sporati. It growled, but I did not care.

Then Dr. Newman looked blankly at me and said, "Sporati are the most important thing ever discovered. Did you know that we can use their genetic code for building houses that don't need any maintenance? You build it. Then you're done."

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June 5, Year 3451. Time: 8:50

Jimmy Borisal is arrested for hostility.

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September 18, Year 3451. Time: 0:00

I come home to a dead mother and an overworked sister.

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September 19, Year 3451. Time: 8:00

I went to find a job that I knew how to do that didn't involve Sporati. The Sporati helped in almost everything in our small city. Then I looked across the street after finding out books made from Sporati fibers will last forever, and I saw a pet shop.

I worked there for an hour to try it, and every animal that I fed scratched me, bit me, or tried to KILL me. When I asked the pet shop owner about this he asked me my relationship with Sporati. I told him I hated the vile things, and every animal hissed, growled, or gnawed at the bars of their cages. He reminded me of the fact Sporati could read minds and morph into anything. Then it hit me. The thought hit me, and so did Dijo the monkey's special recipe. If a monkey hit me with his gold, I would laugh and boil my face, but a Sporati? No, that has done it!

I pushed the cage and kicked the beast: the beast that killed my mom, the beast that stole my career, the beast that couldn't have stayed where it belonged! Then tons of paws, flippers, and other things reached for the locks and transformed. Page sixty-five was worse than they made it out to be!

---

November 21, Year 3451. Time: 1:00

I released a scream that felt like it had been held for ages. Many shapes ran to my side,

and I half recognized them as Sporati. I screamed. I was in an endless world of these disgusting things. It hissed, but did no more.

“You ok, Sonny?” a familiar old voice soothed my aching head. “You were sliced up pretty good. You are probably still in shock, so I’m tellin’ you I’m a real doctor and you’re in a real hospital, and you know what else? You got the best medical attention you could possibly get. You got Sporati organs in you for replacements,” he said, excited.

“What!” I yelled. “What! What! What!”

“Don’t squirm! I don’t want to cut your stomach. I need to get your kidney replacement in!” a gruff voice bellowed.

---

December 31, Year 3451. Time: 4:20

Their timing was strange; they had no eyes, so they couldn’t see clocks. It was almost like they had an internal timer. Yes, I am talking to this LOGBOOK like a crazy man,

thinking it is my only friend. Yes, I am also complimenting the Sporati, only because right now two Sporati are destroying Dr. Newman’s body. He was studying them with me for my new degree, which I apparently didn’t get after I put his arm in a sling. But all Sporati are attacking the human race everywhere, and one Sporati is behind me about to kill me. I told it I would make a big struggle for him, so he could have fun with me, if I got to see what happened to Dr. Newman. It was he who ruined my life, not the Sporati...ok, he’s dead.

I HATE SPORATI—I HATE THEM—I HATE THEM! (Doesn’t matter if it reads my thoughts now. It would kill me anyway.)

---

December 31, Year 3451.

Unofficially declared the Downfall of Humanity (no living government to make it “official”).

## Backfire

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*Bullying, in all it’s pointless cruelty, gets you nowhere in the end. Consider the events of **BACKFIRE**, by Chase Cyr.*

There once was a boy named Pat. He went to school at Bullworth Academy, where there were bullies, preppies, townies, and greasers. They all had a different experience of school. Pat was part of the bully’s clan. He tried to help the nerds from all of the other clans.

One day two new boys entered Bullworth Academy. One of the boys’ names was Trent. The other boy’s name was Noah. Both Noah and Trent were snotty rich kids who pretended to be friends with Pat, when they really intended to be cruel to him. Pat was very popular. They decided to be as mean as possible to

him and embarrass him in front of all his friends.

During gym class one day, Noah, Trent, and Pat were at the pool when Noah said to Pat, “Want to swim some laps with Trent and me?”

“Sure” said Pat. He thought the boys were being nice to him, but when they jumped in the pool, Noah and Trent started splashing water in Pat’s face and dunking him underwater.

Pat’s friends were worried he might drown, so Pat’s friends jumped in the pool and began to do the same thing to Noah and Trent. Pat did not realize that his

friends were trying to help him and became angry with them. He thought that they were being mean to Noah and Trent.

Noah and Trent left the pool for the shower room to shave. The shaving cream they used had bacteria in it and caused their faces to break into welts, which began to ooze blood all down their faces. The boys

were taken to a hospital and had to get stitches all over their faces. Some people thought that Pat had done it, while others thought it was Pat's friends' fault.

Noah and Trent realized when they left the hospital that the "trick" they had planned for Pat had BACKFIRED!

## Bad Night

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**BAD NIGHT** by *Noah Goldberg* is a story of revenge carried out in a most terrible way.

One hot summer night, 16-year-old Jim wanted to have some of his friends over to watch some horror movies. He called his friend Chris and asked him if he could come over around 11:00 p.m. to watch a couple of horror movies. Next he called Josh, Nick, Danny, and Noah.

When everyone got there it was about 11:00 p.m. They just hung out and talked for a while until Jim suggested, "We should go get the movies and snacks." They all got in Jim's car and started driving to Blockbuster.

Suddenly Jim screeched on the brakes. They were all like, "What the heck, Jim?" Jim just stared. Noah climbed up front to see why Jim stopped, and he looks and says, "What the heck?" There was something very strange. There was a tall, thin man just standing in the middle of the street.

The boys couldn't see his face in the dark, but there was something shiny in his hand. They couldn't tell what it was, but it almost looked like a knife. Jim rolls down his window and yells, "Hey, can you like move?" The guy didn't budge or say anything. He just stood there almost like a statue. Jim and Noah and all the boys looked behind their car to see if there was

anyone behind them, and when they turned their heads back to the front, he was gone.

All the boys were like, "Holy crap, that was so weird." Jim said, "It was probably just our eyes playing tricks on us."

"Yeah, right. Like we all saw him. It wasn't our eyes," Nick said.

"Well, what are we gonna do about it? Let's just go to Blockbuster and forget about this," said Jim.

They finally got to Blockbuster around 11:45 p.m. They went over to the horror section and looked for some movies. They decided on *The Blair Witch Project*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Saw 1*, and *The Exorcist*. They planned on watching all of them without peeing their pants.

They were walking out when Noah said, "Crap!" Everyone was like, "What?" and that's when they saw him. The same guy was standing across the street.

All the boys ran to the car and jumped in. Jim floored it out of the parking lot. On the way home Josh said, "It's got to be our imagination. I mean, someone can't be somewhere and then a second later gone."

"You're right. It's just our imagination," said Danny.

They pulled up to the house, and Noah said, "Crap, we forgot to get the snacks."

“Yeah,” said Nick. “You know, there’s a Wal-Mart just ten minutes away. Let’s go there.”

Jim said, “Fine, you guys go. I’ll stay here and set up some blankets and pillows.”

“Sounds good,” said Noah.

“Let’s go,” said Nick.

“Okay,” said Danny.

So the three boys went to Wal-Mart and got six Monsters, Flaming Hot Cheetos, and a bunch of candy. They were ready for a sweet sleepover, but little did they know that it would be one of the worst nights of their lives.

When they got back, they discovered something horrible had happened. They found Jim lying on the couch dead! There was blood dripping from his head. There was a huge gash in the back of his head, and there was blood everywhere. The boys were horrified at the sight of it. It made them cringe. They didn’t have any idea what to do.

The TV was on. Something really weird flashed on the TV. It was the guy they saw at Blockbuster and on the way there. They all screamed. Then the guy on the TV started talking. He said, “Hello, Josh, Noah, Danny, and Nick.”

Before he could say any more, Josh screamed, “How do you know our names, you stalker!”

“Remember two nights ago at the mall? I said I’d get you back. Now I will.”

“What did we ever do to you?” Josh said.

“You humiliated me in front of Jessica. Now you must pay the price.”

“Holy crap, you’re Robby!” said Josh.

“Robby, we’re sorry about tripping you,” the boys lied.

“We really didn’t mean to,” Nick protested.

“You liar,” Robby said. “It was so on purpose. Now you will all die!”

The boys were trembling. Then the TV went black.

“Holy crap, dude, we got to like call the cops or something!” Nick ran into the kitchen to grab the phone. When he returned he was pale white. With tears dripping from his eyes he said, “He cut the phone lines.”

“So,” Noah said, “we got to get to the car.” They looked out the window. There was gas spilled all over the ground. All of a sudden—*FWOOSH!*—the gas ignited, and fire was all over the car.

“Holy crap, he’s in the house,” Josh said, whimpering.

“Crap. He beat us to it,” Noah said.

Josh said, “What do we do? We gotta run!” Josh decided to look outside first to see if it was clear when all of a sudden—*SHLING!*—a knife flew through the peeking hole into his head. Josh fell to the ground screaming with blood spraying from his head.

All the boys screamed. Noah’s heart was thumping hard. His hands were sweating. Danny started to cry. The boys were horrified. They had a horrible, disturbing image of it stuck in their heads.

They all bolted up the stairs trying to escape. On the way up Noah grabbed a knife out of the kitchen. They ran into a room and hid under a couch. All the boys prayed that they would live.

Then Noah got an idea. “What if Jim’s dad has a gun here?” So they scrambled to his room and locked the door.

Danny and Noah started boarding up the door while Nick searched for a gun or axe or something, praying that they would find something. Then in the pillow Nick found a 9mm Beretta 92, but when he pulled out the clip, “Crap!” Nick shouted. There was no ammo in the clip.

Noah said, “What kind of idiot would keep a gun with no ammo? There has to be



some in here.” So the boys started frantically searching for ammo. That’s when all of a sudden—BOOM!—an axe blade flew through the wall door, just barely missing Danny’s head.

The boys screamed. They tried frantically to hold the barricade up, but it was no use. The boys, crying, tried to prepare themselves to defend themselves when Noah realized he still had the knife he had grabbed from the kitchen. The door was almost down, so Noah and Danny and Nick all prepared themselves to fight. Noah hid right by the door so the second Robby walked in he could stab him and make a run for the door.

*FWOOSH!* He was in! The boys held their breath. Then Noah sprang out and managed to stab Robby in the leg. He yelped and fell to the ground.

The boys made a run for the door, but Robby grabbed Danny’s ankle, and Danny fell to the ground. Then Robby pulled the knife out of his leg. Screeching, he stabbed Danny in the chest. Danny screamed, writhing in pain. Blood was everywhere.

There was no time to save him. Noah and Nick ran downstairs.

Then Robby slowly started to get up. He limped down the stairs behind the boys. Noah and Nick ran toward the living room. Nick said, “Dude, let’s get the crap out of here!” but Noah said, “No. He killed Jim and Josh and

Danny. I’m not gonna let him get away after what he’s done!”

Robby was still limping down the stairs, so Noah picked up a kitchen knife and marched up the stairs to where Robby was only halfway down. Robby said, “Please don’t. I’m sorry for what I did.”

Noah said, “Well, ‘sorry’ doesn’t bring my friends back to life, now does it?” Then Noah grabbed him and hurled him down the stairs.

Robby was screeching. There was blood all over the stairs now. Robby lay at the bottom of the stairs, trying to get up, when Nick kicked him in the ribs. He groaned and fell down. Then Noah walked over to him and bent down and said, “You really messed with the wrong people. Now you’re gonna die. You should’ve thought about the consequences before you killed Jim and Danny and Josh.” Then he pulled out the knife.

His hands were sweating and adrenaline was pumping, but he just couldn’t stab him when he was on the ground with no chance. He threw down the knife and grabbed Robby and said, “You’re really lucky that I don’t have the heart to stab you.” Nick and Noah grabbed him and dragged him all the way to the police station.

After everything the boys still had horrible images left in their heads and had to see a therapist every week. Life was never the same for Noah and Nick.

## The Battle for the Light

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*In **THE BATTLE FOR THE LIGHT** by Michael Pisano, the elf Elero and his friends must go to Necropolis to stop the Shadow training and Archony.*

Approximately three thousand years ago in a far away land called Archony, there was a great battle between the forces of Light and Shadow. The forces of Light consisted of most humans, elves, dwarves,

and wizards. The forces of Shadow had orcs, trolls, and other humans, who practiced Shadow magic and were called Necromancers. The battle was great, including spell voids flying in the red sky

and swords, axes, and spears clashing on the blood-stained ground.

In the end, the forces of Light prevailed. But, some Necromancers escaped to the villages and taught Shadow magic training in their basements. Some of the orcs and trolls fled to the mountains, caves, and the abandoned dwarven mines.

The Shadow training spread like a disease from town to town until almost every town had at least one Necromancer training class. The Necromancers also taught their sons and daughters. The training continued for two thousand years until one hero and his friends decided to stop the Shadow magic.

\* \* \*

One morning, the elf Elero woke up and felt the Shadow. Someone had opened up a Shadow training place during the night.

Elero was a paladin in the war between Light and Shadow. A paladin is a person that is skilled with Light magic and swords. Some paladins, like Elero, can put blessings on swords. Because of the Shadow training, Elero went to see the King of the Kingdom. Elero said in a powerful voice, "This Shadow training in towns, cities, and villages must stop now. You must send troops through towns and stop any Shadow activity."

The King just stared at him. So Elero looked deep into the King's eyes and saw blackness—Shadow—even though the King had not gone to any Shadow training. The King was possessed.

Elero started telling people in the castle about the King, but nobody would listen or believe him except one young rogue. The rogue believed him because he had a friend who joined Shadow training. The rogue was a thief and was looking for redemption from his old thief ways. The rogue was

human, and his name was Elikill. He was slim, not too muscular, and scarred. He had brown hair with a few red highlights.

Elero suspected that the Necromancer controlling the King was in the land of Necropoly. Necropoly is the land where Light was heading in the Great War, but Light could not open the gate. Some say that the Necrolord, Ecknoll, is still there building his army. That is why Elero and Elikill are going to Necropoly.

When Elero and Elikill left, they had enough food for a week, swords, daggers, and knives for hunting. After a couple of days, they come across a cave. It was the only way to get to the other side. So they went in.

When they went in, they come across corpses, but not just any corpses – dwarf and orc corpses. After this encounter, they move more cautiously.

After three to four hours of walking, they came across a horde of nine to twelve orcs. Elikill snuck up behind the orcs and ambushed them while Elero charged in. The battle was short and quick because Elero and Elikill's blades were light and quick.

They went through many hordes like this until the end when they come across a lich. A lich is a living being brought back in the form of a large floating human skeleton.

The lich stood its ground, and so did Elero and Elikill. Elero walked forward and said, "Return to the Light from whence you came, lich." Then, Elero used a powerful spell.

Suddenly, a flash of bright light illuminated the cave. Then all went black. When all the light went back to normal, the lich was not standing there or floating; but there was a man with blue robes. This man was a wizard, a person skilled in fire, water/ice, or nature magic. The color of a wizard's robes showed his magic skill: red

robes for fire, blue robes for water/ice, and green robes for nature. The wizard said, "My name is Aquaro."

They left the cave with Aquaro talking about how he had become a lich. They were close to Necropoly and had to go over the next mountain range, through a large group of Mountain trolls.

As they moved into the mountain, it snowed until the snow was two feet deep. They walked for a while without seeing any trolls until they were about three-fourths of the way there. At this time, they come across five Mountain trolls. The Mountain trolls were about ten feet tall.

Elero charged and killed two, while Elikill and Aquaro killed the other three. This eliminated these Mountain trolls. When they got to the gates, they went towards them and used a spell to get over them.

When Elero, Elikill, and Aquaro got over the gates, they saw thousands upon thousands of orcs just waiting. They

sneaked away to the tallest tower and got to the top to see the Necrolord Ecknal. He was standing in front of a ball and said, "You fools! Can't you see that you can't stop me? I already have thousands of orcs at the ready; even if I die they will still be let out."

"That's not why we are here," Elero said. Elero then prepared to cast an extremely powerful spell that must sacrifice one willing person in order to destroy all Shadow in the area. Aquaro stepped up to be sacrificed. He said, "I have spent all my time on this planet, so I think it is time that I left."

Elero cast the spell. Everyone heard a loud noise, and then silence. The Necrolord and all the orcs were gone, and so was Aquaro.

Elero and Elikill went back to the city and told the King. The King was returned to normal, and all Shadow training was stopped.

## Be Careful What You Wish For

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*What if a wish took you somewhere you did not want to go? Two girls learn that not to trifle with powers they do not understand in*  
**BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR, by Amira C. Kamoo.**

**H**ave you ever owned a Barbie, all pretty and perfect? And did you ever feel that you had to be as pretty and perfect as Barbie? Yes, well, some people do, and so did my Dear Old Friend. You see, my Dear Old Friend's looks did not measure up to her satisfaction. And she commented on this, and would always complain that Barbie was perfect. And, of course, Barbie is a plastic toy, and is capable of being as perfect as people can make her. I would always tell her this, but she continued to dislike herself. And so, my friend, the

whole story begins here....

It was a chilly winter's night, and my Dear Old Friend was standing in front of her mirror, giving a great effort to keep her long, brown hair flat on top of her head. So I said to her, as I was spending the night at her house, "It's almost midnight, I'm tired, and no one is going to bother about what your hair looks like when you sleep." But of course, she argued that what her hair looks like now will be what it looks like in the morning, so it matters.

"Then hurry up," I said, "or I'm going to

go to bed right now, without you telling me whatever you needed to tell me,” for my Dear Old Friend had been wanting to share a secret with me.

“Fine,” she said, finally giving up on the attempt to keep her hair flat. “What I have been wanting to tell you for ages is that I have found a penny on the street. But it is no ordinary penny. It is a penny of great value, for when you wish on it, it grants your wish!” There was an excited look in her eyes.

I looked at this penny in disbelief. “Let me try,” I said, and took it from my Dear Old Friend. “I wish for a stick of gum,” I said, and surely enough, when I looked down, a stick of pink bubble gum was sitting on my lap.

“Yes,” said my friend, “isn’t it wonderful? I think,” she added, “that I am going to wish on it before bed.” I would like to have wished for more, but out of simple tiredness, I fell asleep.

I awoke with a start, for a strange rattling noise was coming from somewhere in the room. My Dear Old Friend was not in her bed. I was scared. Wouldn’t you be, Reader, if it was the dead of the night and you were alone and strange noises were coming from somewhere?

I switched on the light on the nightstand. The strange rattling noises seemed to be coming from inside the closet. Slowly and carefully, I opened the door.

My friend’s old Barbie house was shaking madly. I took it down from where it was crammed on the top shelf. I opened it to its full extent and gasped at what I saw.

A Barbie doll that looked exactly like my Dear Old Friend was standing there, looking very frightened. She looked much older and more perfect, and her house was as perfect as a perfect house can possibly be.

“Haven’t you ever heard?” I whispered. “Be careful what you wish for!”

“I wished that I could live like Barbie!” the doll said.

“Well, you’ve gotten your wish,” I replied.

“Help me!” she shouted in her perfect girlish voice.

“All right,” I said, “but only because you’re my friend.” I walked over to where my friend had dropped the magic penny. “I wish that I could be where my Dear Old Friend is now!” Then there was a pop, and I found myself almost a foot tall, with shiny brown hair, straight teeth, and a perfectly ironed pink dress. *How unrealistic!* I thought.

My Dear Old Friend was standing next to me. As I had only received about ten minutes of sleep, I was very tired. My friend had not gotten any sleep at all. We flopped down on the Barbie’s bed. Actually, we flopped down on a piece of plastic called a bed. My Dear Old Friend and I hit our heads on the so-called “bed” of Barbie’s and got off of it immediately.

We headed towards Barbie’s kitchen, but of course, nothing worked. Well, unless you count a couple of plastic buttons that made noises when you pressed them. My Dear Old Friend sighed.

“You are quite lucky to have a friend like me,” I said, “because I brought the wishing penny.” I held out the shrunken coin. “I’ll do the wishing this time,” I said. “I wish,” I said clearly, “that my friend and I were back to normal.”

Soon we had become our regular selves once again. As soon as we were normal, my Dear Old Friend said, “The penny must go. It’s hard to be careful what you wish for. And so, one more wish. I wish that this penny would disappear and no one will ever use it again.”

After the wishing penny had

disappeared, my friend turned to me and said, “Now no one will ever turn into another but themselves,” and, giggling as we tucked ourselves into bed, we fell asleep.

And so, Reader, that’s the story of my Dear Old Friend and me. So I guess the moral of the story is: Respect yourself, and be cautious of the pennies that you pick up off the street. And, well—be careful what you wish for.

## Becoming Elves

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*In **BECOMING ELVES** by Allison Egrin, a little girl, Sophie, thinks about becoming an elf. She decides to ask her grandma what she needs to know to make her decision. Will Sophie become one of Santa’s little helpers or just wait to see Santa on Christmas Day?*

One day in a little town called Higurbottom there was a little eight-year-old girl named Sophie. At school one day around Christmastime her class talked about Santa Claus and his elves. That was the day she knew she was going to be an elf.

Higurbottom was about 20 minutes from New York City. Sophie didn’t have parents. Well, she had a long time ago. When they were on a cruise when Sophie was only five months old, the boat sank. Sophie just thought of her grandma as her mom. She just called her Grandma.

When Sophie came home the day after she decided she was going to be an elf, she asked her grandma one thing. “Grandma, what’s an elf?” Sophie questioned as she ate dinner.

“Well...elves are Santa’s little helpers,” Grandma responded.

Sophie and Grandma shared everything. They never heard anything or did anything without the other one knowing about it. Well...that’s what Sophie thought. You see, when Grandma was 18 she enrolled to be an elf. The only thing wrong with her is she was too tall. So, she knew almost everything there is to being an elf.

“Oh, okay,” replied Sophie. “When I

grow up I want to be an elf,” she continued.

Then, Grandma said, “But, there are some expectations to being an elf.”

“Like what?” Sophie asked.

“Well, first, the elves have to get to their job by the Polar Express, which is a train that takes you all the way to the North Pole, which from here is over 8,000 miles!”

“I would love to go on the Polar Express!” Sophie answered quickly.

Grandma giggled a little bit. “Before, they have to have an interview by Internet or phone. If Santa thinks they will do a good job, he has them send him a picture of what they look like, to make sure they are short enough. They also have to like children, enjoy the cold, and be willing to work during the holidays,” Grandma responded once she thought about it for a second.

“I am all of that: short; I like kids, because I am one; I like the cold, because then I can have hot chocolate to make me warmer; and I would work on the holidays,” Sophie insisted.

“If they get the job to be an elf, though, they are trained by a very strict elf, Bitsy,” Grandma informed.

“So, I don’t care. I will make Bitsy some

of your homemade chocolate chip cookies, and then she would be nice to me,” Sophie decided.

“I don’t think that will work, though, because Bitsy is on that new Jenny Craig diet plan. Sorry, Sophie, but she wouldn’t eat your cookies,” Grandma explained.

After that, Sophie finished her dinner of macaroni and cheese. She put her plate in the dishwasher and started her homework. While she was working on her homework, she continued to ask her Grandma about elves.

“Do elves have families?” Sophie wondered.

“Well...,” Grandma hesitated, “of course they do. Elves marry other elves, and then their children grow up they are elves, too,” Grandma laughed at the thought.

“I want to marry an elf, and then have little elf children of my own,” Sophie said while she clapped and jumped up and down. Sophie’s little blonde curls were flung everywhere. Grandma giggled a little bit.

“Well, you have to wait until you are 18 years old. You have a few years,” Grandma replied.

“Oh, all right. Well, how much do elves get paid?” Sophie wondered.

Grandma thought for a second or two, and then answered, “Elves get paid by food

and housing, plus \$200,000 per year,” Grandma said.

“Wow, that’s a lot of money! That’s like all the money in the world!” Sophie could already imagine herself looking like an elf. She could picture the curled up toe red shoes. Sophie thought of how cute she would look with the little pointy ears and the beady eyes. The thought of herself in the matching red and green striped shirt and red pants convinced she would be an elf. She didn’t forget the pile of money she would be sitting on top of. She envisioned a wheelbarrow of tons and tons of little gold coins, jewelry, and dollar bills.

“Where do elves shop?” Sophie desired to know.

“Elves shop at Target, Old Navy, and on online stores. But, it’s getting late, Sophie. You need to go to bed,” Grandma explained.

“Okay,” Sophie moaned. Then Sophie wondered how her grandma knew so much about elves. She decided to wait until tomorrow to ask.

As Grandma tucked Sophie into bed and gave her a hug and a kiss, Sophie knew that when she grew up she wanted to be an elf. That night, Sophie dreamt about her life as an elf when she was older. She realized she could wait because she couldn’t leave Grandma. Who would tuck her in every night?

## Beware of Everyone

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*As Abby watches the personalities of her family members change, unusual things also start to happen in the population at large. Abby must find out what’s going on in **BEWARE OF EVERYONE**, by Heather McClendon.*

You may want to know my name now, but the names that everyone else at my school calls me are weirdo, loser, nerd, geek, and others because they think I’m not

cool. The name my parents gave me when I was born was Abby. I’m going to tell you the biggest adventure of my life. This adventure was so big that it’s bigger than an

elephant and giraffe combined. The story was crazy, and everything depended on me.

Now let me think. It was about two years ago. It was a hot, sunny day, and it felt like 120 degrees. When I left my house, everything was normal, but something was brewing. My best and only friend, Sam, stopped by to pick me up to walk to school. On our way there, we talked about how stupid was the name of our school: Pooper Scooper Junior High. What a name.

When we arrived at school, it felt like the *entire* school was laughing at me. That's because I fell into a huge pot of old chili that was left on the floor. It covered me from head to toe. I was drenched in tomato sauce and burger pieces. Sam couldn't even bear to be with me because I reeked of moldy old chili. All the popular kids were calling me "klutz, klutz, klutz." It was the most humiliating thing ever! Ever!

"I'll meet you later," Sam whispered. I could barely hear her. She sounded like the smallest ant in the world trying to talk to me over all the kids that were teasing me.

"Why meet me later?" I asked. "We're going to the same class." Sam didn't reply, but left in a hurry by power walking.

When I got to the classroom, I was the only one there. My best friend ditched me. The teacher, Miss Lady, started laughing, too, because of the way I looked with all of the chili all over me. I just couldn't wait until the day was over and I could go home. So for the rest of the day, I hid under my hoodie.

A few days later, everyone forgot about the chili incident. Now every cuckoo thing that could happen at home started happening.

Let me tell you about my family. I have two goofy parents, a pet turkey, a pet pig, and two evil twin brothers. My pet turkey's name is Mr. Gobbles, and my pig's name is Mrs. Porker. My pets are married. How

weird. My brother's names are Joe and Joey. They are OK, but annoying sometimes. They do weird stuff. My precocious brothers play evil scientist and have the pets switch identities. They get Mr. Gobbles to oink, and Mrs. Porker to fly. Go figure: a flying pig. Also, my parents look for different ways to have family fun, or what I call family embarrassment. Well, that's what I call a normal day at home.

Now let me tell you about all the craziness in the house. One night when I was sleeping, I heard a loud boom. It sounded like a bomb or gunshot. Then I saw a rainbow-colored light. The rainbow lights formed the shape of a face. It felt like the figure was an inch away from my face. It thought my eyes were going to pop out of my sockets because of the closeness and the light. I thought, *I'm going to be blind*. I definitely could have used some sunglasses. Then the lights went away.

I got out of my bed and ran down the hallway and headed for the stairs. "Mom, Dad!" I screamed. When I looked down the staircase, everyone in the house was there just smiling like nothing had happened at all. Their smiles were odd, offbeat. "What's going on?" I suspiciously asked. No one answered, as if I didn't even ask the question.

I wondered what happened that night. It made me scared, like the time that I misbehaved on Parent/Teacher Conference Day. That day, I thought my parents were going to kill me. The same not-knowing feeling ate me alive. I had to know what happened that night. I need to investigate.

As I prepared to investigate, I needed to think of some questions to ask everyone: the neighbors, my classmates, and even my family. Who was there when the noise and lights happened? Who heard the big noise, and what was the big noise? I know, I

should just use the four main questions: who, what, where and why.

Let's start with my family because they were all acting funny that night. I approached my parents with a suspicious look and proceeded to ask them, "Where were you the night of the boom and lights?" They just looked at me like they did before, like I didn't even ask the question. So, I tried another question. "What were you guys doing that night?" I asked.

This time they answered, but it was really strange because first they looked at each other, and then answered in some language that I've never heard anyone in my neighborhood, or on Earth for that matter, speak. After that response, all I could do is say, "Well, goodbye," and get out of there.

My interviewing part of my investigation was not working so well, so on to the research part. Being a genius, I went to the place to get information: the library. At the library, I asked the librarian where the "parents went crazy" section was, and she said she couldn't help me, but she found a book that might be helpful. The book was *What Are My Parents Now*. I checked the book out in hopes that it would help me out in some way.

I started reading chapter one of the book. The book had so much information that I had to take notes. In the book it said, "If your parents are smiling and staring crazily at you, and there's something they don't want you to know...they're plain crazy, or they're aliens." The book specifically mentioned that if your parents don't say anything to you for more than a day, they are definitely aliens. Eureka, I think I might have something.

Everyone in the neighborhood was acting like my parents. Could it be that everyone's an alien now? My life before this wasn't the greatest, but at least it wasn't

this weird. I want my old life back. "I want it all back!" I yelled.

I think that all the people I know were replaced by aliens from another planet, and the people I know are on their planet. Maybe I'm just on the wrong planet. Anyhow, I need to get away from these aliens and find my family, neighbors, and the people that I know.

I know what to do. I'll build a rocket ship. This is probably a trick. I always wanted to be in space, so I'll do that. You're thinking, "How can a junior high school student build a rocket ship?" Well, I have been in engineering and aviation class my whole life. It's a matter of applying what I learned, but this time on a much bigger scale.

The first time I tried to launch the doggone rocket, it fell apart on me. The second time, it caught on fire, and I had to run to the river to put the fire out. The third time was the charm. It launched me into outer space. Hopefully, I was headed to the right planet with everyone.

Eight hours passed, and I looked out the window to see a planet that could be Earth's twin. I landed on this twin Earth only to land in a city that could be my city's twin. How strange.

Everyone on this twin Earth that I interacted with spoke and acted regularly. Since it seemed OK and I landed at school time, I decided to go to school. Everyone was there, even my parents, for some reason. They were looking for me. I gave my parents and classmates a big hug. Everything was like it was before the aliens.

It was that moment that I realized that this was the perfect life for me. You never know what you have until it's gone. That's the way the story ends, and we all lived happily ever after, at least until the next alien invasion.



# Bombs Away: Elmo's Here

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*In **BOMBS AWAY: ELMO'S HERE** by Nick Radden, Nick challenges Elmo of Sesame Street fame to an auto race. The cast of characters is unlike any found on the NASCAR circuit.*

The name is Nick Radden. One day I was walking down the street in Trickadee. Then Fred Clementine challenges me to a race. So I said, "All right. Where is it?"

Fred Clementine is a big banana—you know, yellow. Fred says, "I don't know; let me think." The next thing I know, Fred's head is the size of a boulder. It explodes. Well, he has passed on.

I said, "Fred has a twin brother, Elmo. Let's call him up!" I was talking to Larry. He is a shrimp and a baldy. He decided to enter the Trickadee race as well.

The next day we picked up Elmo for the big race at the Toilet Bowl. We actually changed the race rules. Now there are no rules. We had the judges (Cookie Monster, Big Bird, and Barney) inspect our four-wheelers.

Cookie Monster checks mine. I left a victory cookie in the seat. Cookie Monster

destroyed it in a second.

Big Bird pecks Larry's! Big Bird finds a cup holder and lays an egg in it.

Barney checks Elmo's, and when no one is looking, he attaches a bomb on the bottom to blow up in nine minutes and eleven seconds. Elmo has his guns locked and loaded, ready to fire.

The race will begin in three minutes, so the bomb still has time before it explodes. Elmo is wearing a cheerleading uniform. I said, "Eww, gross." He does a cheer. The next thing I see is Elmo doing a back flip.

We just left, and I said, "Next week we'll try it again, but at the Dynamite Bowl."

In five minutes the Toilet Bowl breaks in half. Elmo's four-wheeler had that Barney bomb. A couple of peeps died. So did Barney.

# Brian's Middle School Fears

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*In the story **BRIAN'S MIDDLE SCHOOL FEARS** by Chris Gaiters, Brian Scott has a lot of fears about attending middle school in the upcoming school year. His mom hopes to help Brian by telling stories about her experiences when she first attended middle school.*

It was a beautiful summer morning in Columbus, Ohio. It was the first day of middle school for Brian Scott. Brian counted the many oak trees there were from his neighborhood drive to the school. He counted each school bus traveling in the same direction. Brian dreaded each moment as he drew closer and closer to the

drop-off area for kids to enter the building.

Brian wasn't excited on his first day of middle school, because he did not like the idea of walking to so many classes. He wasn't comfortable with the size of the school because it reminded him of a large office building. Brian's elementary school was much smaller, and he felt in control of

his surroundings while being able to stay in one classroom with one teacher most of the day.

Brian was not sure if he would make good friendships with any of the new kids. He often heard of the problems the kids from middle school would be involved in, such as egging the neighbors' homes during the Halloween season. Brian assumed that all middle school kids were bullies.

As Brian had been completing his final grade in elementary school, he started to wonder what his first day in middle school would be like. He concluded it would be a complete disaster. On occasion, Brian would express to his classmates and teachers his desire to remain in elementary school forever. He was not excited about his fifth-grade graduation. It felt like some animal was gnawing at his nerves. He was glad to know that a few of his friends and classmates would join him for his fifth-grade barbecue party.

In the final week of fifth grade, Brian was noticeably quiet and chose not to participate in the year-end festivities. Brian expressed that he was truly sad to leave elementary school along with not being able to attend the summer jump-start program.

Each Saturday morning, Brian and his parents would eat breakfast at the local pancake house. Brian's order would include a stack of hotcakes, one small bowl of oatmeal and a large cup of hot chocolate. Since the school year was over, Brian's parents thought he would be up and ready to go out for breakfast. Instead, Brian's bedroom door was shut. There was no sign that Brian was in his room.

When Brian's mom entered his bedroom, she found him lying flat on his back gazing at the ceiling. Brian's mom knew something was troubling Brian.

Brian began to explain to his mom why

he was sad and he hated to leave elementary school. Brian explained he was afraid to attend middle school because it reminded him of a large hospital or a large office building where people are rushing in the doors and they seem to be late, or rushing in some sort of silly race with huge backpacks pushing into their backs! Brian reminded his mother of the time they were in a large store and he was lost for about five minutes, but it seemed like five hours. Brian was six years old at the time when the store clerk rushed around the store looking for a parent. Brian remembers hearing his name announced on a loudspeaker and customers looking at him with concern, but not so friendly faces. This was an awful experience. Brian exclaimed, "This is what will happen in that big middle school."

Brian's mom and dad decided to stay home for breakfast. Brian's mom cooked his favorite omelet and a huge stack of hotcakes and a large glass of orange juice and a large cup of piping hot chocolate.

Brian's mom sat at the table and began to tell Brian of her experience on her first day of middle school. Brian Scott was surprised to learn that his mother had once felt the same fears. She began to recall how she cried in her first-hour class because she had trouble finding her very first class. She was the last student to take her seat. All of the students glared at her as she entered the room and very nervously looked for her seat. She remembers how she could not open her lock after about ten tries. She finally realized that she had one of the digits transposed. "The office clerk, who was assigned to monitor the halls, immediately noticed I was having trouble," she said, "and I was running out of time. It was almost like she was trained to spot struggling sixth-graders. She was an angel sent from heaven. I named her the locker patrol angel." Brian began to laugh so hard

because he could not imagine his smart, witty mom having so much trouble on her first day of middle school. Brian's mom hated her first day of middle school.

As the morning grew later, Brian and his parents were laughing so hard until they lost track of time. Brian realized that he was already feeling better because he began to express his fears and thoughts.

Over the summer, Brian's mom would tell Brian about the different experiences she faced in middle school. In the final week of the summer vacation, Brian's mom

gave him a middle school photo for him to carry in his pocket to school. She instructed Brian not to be afraid of middle school challenges. She told Brian that she was a friend in his pocket, and he could talk to her anytime and anywhere.

When Brian entered his first class, he pulled out his mom's photo only to recall her funny stories and experiences she had told him. Brian soon forgot about his anxieties he had felt throughout the summer and at the beginning of the school year.

## Chuck Norris

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*Kids think Chuck Norris is the biggest loser in his school. But Chuck has his own path to follow in CHUCK NORRIS, by Jayela Stallings.*

Once, there was a boy named Chuck Norris. One day he was watering his mother's flowers. While he was doing so, some of his classmates were laughing at him. They were calling him names like "girl," "stupid," and "nerd." Chuck always felt sad when they called him names. Sometimes, he even got teary-eyed. He made sure not to cry in front of them, though. That would just make things worse. The main kid that started all of the bullying was Matt Turner. He was the reason why Chuck was getting picked on.

Chuck and all of his classmates were in the fifth grade, but not for long. Graduation was coming up in five days. Everybody was excited except for Chuck. Graduation day was just another day for him. He never went to school.

His parents never knew he skipped school because they worked way too much. His dad was a doctor, and his mom was a lawyer. They both made a lot of money, so they gave Chuck lots of cash and just headed off to work.

All Chuck wanted to do for the summer was to work for an acting company. He did not intend to be an actor, though. He just wanted to own the company one day and be rich like his parents.

On graduation day, Chuck was looking for a job. He called the companies such as "AHH!" Capella, Acme Comedy Theater, and many more. He kept getting answers like "You're too young" and "We are not hiring right now."

Chuck was having a very hard time, until the 121st call to Barbizon Acting and Modeling Company. The conversation went something like this:

"Hello, Barbizon Company. My name is Stacy. How may I help you today?" the lady on the phone said fast.

"Yes, my name is Chuck Norris. Do you have any job openings?"

"How old are you, Mr. Norris?"

"I'm twelve years old."

"Well, you are a bit young, but I'll see how old you have to be to be an intern. One moment please... Yes, you at least

have to be in middle school. Are you out of elementary school, Mr. Norris?"

"Yes, I am, Stacy. Can you set up an interview for next week?"

"Yes. Will next week Friday at 3:00 p.m. be ok?"

"Yes, thank you very much, Stacy. Have a nice day."

Chuck hung up the phone as happy as can be. He ran downstairs to his parents. They were reading the paper in the kitchen with a cup of tea.

"Mom, Dad, I just got off the phone with Barbizon Modeling and Acting company. They said that I have a shot at a summer job as an intern! It will increase my chances as owner of a big company. I have an interview next week at 3:00. Can I go? PLEASE?"

"Well, why not? We can't hold you back from your dream. Maybe for your interview, you can wear one of your nice suits you never wear," said his mother with a frown.

Two weeks went by fast. Chuck was on his way to his interview. He was wearing a brown and gold suit, and his hair was pulled back. His parents weren't there because they had to work. So, he took a cab.

When he got there, he was instructed to have a seat in an office. He sat for about ten minutes. The office looked really rich. It had nice leather couches and a solid wood desk.

"Hello!" said a man that bustled in. "My name is Mr. Wilberg. We are desperate for a new intern because we need to have more people in the office. That's why you got the job."

"Wow! Already? You didn't even ask me any questions. When do I start?"

"Be here at 7 a.m. bright and early tomorrow."

Chuck went straight home to go to sleep so he wouldn't be tired. When Chuck got home, kids were still in the streets playing.

"Hey, Chuck, c'mon, let's play some soccer."

"I thought you hated me, Matt."

"Not anymore. This morning, your dad told us where you were. Since you have a cool job, then *you're* cool."

"If you only like me for my job, then you don't like me for who I am. So I don't care if you hate me or not."

Chuck had never stood up for himself like that. He was so proud that he finally did.

## Come On! Is That Really Necessary!

*In COME ON! IS THAT REALLY NECESSARY! by Kristina M. Raymus, Kristina is the owner of cats named Gonzo, Tiki, Sundae, and Smokey. When she goes away for the weekend, what will they do while she's gone?*

"Guys! You ate my pizza!" Kristina huffed. "Have a little self-control, please!"

Kristina was the owner of four cats (three of which were siblings who turned the other cat into family, too). There was

Tiki who was always getting his long, fluffy black fur into mischief. Gonzo was the grey, white, and black short-furred sidekick, partner in crime with his three other siblings. Sundae was the skinny, calico, cuddly cutie of the group. One moment she

could be purring and sweet, and the next she could be vicious. Smokey was the petite gray with the most attitude of the bunch. She knew what she wanted when she wanted it.

They had recently decided to eat a whole pepperoni pizza while Kristina was paying the delivery boy. "If only Kristina could hear us," Sundae said to her siblings.

"Yeah, then we could give her a piece of our mind!" Smokey replied.

"It's not our fault she left it on the floor to get her money out!" Tiki cried.

"Babies, come on!" Kristina hollered. "You better learn to shape up, because I'm putting you on a cat treat ban!"

The four cats sulked all week, until it came time for Kristina to go to her grandparents' house for the weekend. "I love you kitten. Be good while I'm gone," Kristina echoed through the house, before she got into her midnight blue Mustang and drove off.

"Let's show her to put us on a treat ban!" Tiki growled.

"Yeah, she left that pizza on the floor for us!" Gonzo added.

"I have the perfect plan!" Tiki meowed. It involved trashing the house, maxing out Kristina's MasterCard, and eating all the food they could find.

"Wow, Tiki, you have great ideas," Gonzo purred. "I can't wait to get the new kitty playground."

"I need a catnip dispenser," Smokey replied.

"No, I need a fluffy kitty bed," Sundae argued.

"No, quiet, all of you; we need a

gourmet cat treat dispenser," Tiki meowed.

"Sundae and I will take the MasterCard!" Smokey volunteered.

"Well, I guess Tiki and I will trash the house then," Gonzo replied.

The girls managed to get every cat product known to man. Sundae found this awesome vintage cat clothes boutique website, and got all the clothes and shoes. They had the products left at the doorstep, so no one knew they were cats who knew how to online shop.

The boys totally trashed the house. They had clothes strewn all over the house, and they destroyed Kristina's favorite pair of shoes, Mudd flats with a flat, connecting three-inch heel.

"Let's go eat everything now!" Gonzo mewed with a hungry stomach. Pies, cakes, pizza, and nachos all went into the cats' stomachs.

"I am so full!" they all whined.

They lay back and slept for hours, until they woke to the sound of a key going into the door.

"WHAT THE HECK HAPPENED!" Kristina yelled. "You cats are in so much trouble!"

The four siblings were punished. They had to clean the house, send back all the cat products, and go on an all wheat grass diet.

"Well, I guess we should have known better," Sundae pouted.

"I can't believe we're on a diet!" Gonzo sulked.

"Rrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!" Smokey growled.

"Let's just be good and go to sleep for once!" Tiki yawned. They curled up and went to sleep.

# Cousin Grim

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*Curtis picks up a mysterious medallion. He soon finds out the Grim Reaper wants it in **COUSIN GRIM**, by *Curtis Fischer*.*

“Ouch! What was that?” I said in pain. I was in bed and a sharp pain woke me up. I looked at my toe, and my lizard Shaggy was there. I picked him up and put him in his cage.

I heard some groaning in the other room. We had a room for rent, and we needed the money. This guy named Bruse was renting it. I didn’t like him, and he was kind of a jerk. He shoved me once, all because I stepped on his toe.

I got up, ate breakfast, and then went to school. School is so-so, but language arts and science are fun. Language arts is fun because Mr. Fischer is funny. Science is fun because a dog isn’t the only animal you can play tug-of-war with: Salamanders are fun until the rope (worm) breaks. Then he violently eats it. Then I go home.

When my bus dropped me off, I started walking home. I saw a garage sale, so I checked it out. There was mostly old junk, but something caught my eye. It was a dusty, old, gold X. It was somewhat heavy and about the size of an apple. I asked the lady, “How much?”

She said, “Free,” sounding scared.

“Sweet,” I said, and then I picked it up and ran home. “Well, that was strange,” I said.

My mom was out front talking to someone in a cloak. He was facing away from me. The cloak was too long to see that person’s legs, and his hood was up. I said hi to my mom. There was no response. Her eyes were white. “Mom,” I said, and she snapped out of it.

“Hi, Curtis,” she said, “How was your day today?”

“Ok,” I said. “Who are you talking to?”

“Your cousin Grim,” she said.

“I didn’t know I had a cousin,” I said.

I looked at his face. That was a big mistake. A face needs five things: a nose, mouth, eyes, skin, and flesh. He was lacking two of those needs, skin and flesh, and he smelled! “Mom, this guy is dead,” I said.

“No, I’m not, fool!” Grim said. “Well, halfway,” he said. He saw my X. “What’s that, boy?” Grim said.

I hid the X. “Nothing,” I said. What made him scarier was his gleaming metal scythe and the fact he was floating! I hid the X, because it seemed strange that I get a free mysterious X, and then the Grim Reaper shows up.

I walked inside my house. I finished my homework, watched TV, and then I went to bed, avoiding Grim as much as possible. I woke up around midnight. I heard some creaking. I looked up and saw Bruse standing there with my cousin’s scythe. Then he shot a laser beam at me, but I jumped out of the way.

I called for cousin Grim. He came floating up the stairs. Bruse shot at Grim but missed.

“You failed me! You were supposed to spy on the X and report the wearer, not kill him,” Grim said. Grim took the scythe back and shot Bruse in the stomach, and he died.

“Now it’s your turn,” Grim said!

“But why?” I said.

“The X, you idiot!” Grim shouted. He shot the beam at me, and I blocked it with my X. It created a huge portal, sucking me and Grim in. The portal was big, purple

and black! Inside it was huge! It went on forever.

I put the X in my back pocket. Then I realized I should be running, because Grim was right behind me. “I will kill you, and then throw you in this never-ending pit to cover up the evidence,” Grim said. I was dodging the blasts.

I am glad he was a bad shot. But everyone hits one time, and he hit me in the back pocket. That was where the X was. The beam ricocheted and cut through the

Grim Reaper’s scythe. It nailed him right in the chest. He staggered and fell in to the never-ending pit.

Then there was a blinding light. A portal opened, so I stepped in, and voila, I was back in bed.

I tried to tell my parents, but they didn’t believe me, of course. They didn’t remember a thing: no Bruse, no Grim, nothing! I checked my back pocket. No X.

## The Crazy Hockey Player

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*In **THE CRAZY HOCKEY PLAYER** by Collin McQueen, Jake attempts to take his team to the championship game. Watch Jake and his teammates battle for the title!*

**H**i. I see you will all be coming with me to my hockey game. This is our third game of the playoffs. Since I was sick on Wednesday, at our last game, we lost. Any who, my name is Jake, and I love hockey. I don’t only play in this ice league, but also in one or two more as well as with my friends, dad and neighbors.

All right, well, we’ve just pulled up at the rink. Let’s go get my equipment out of the back.

Hey, Noah, how’s it going?

“I’m excited,” he said.

Great, me too; you think we’ll win tonight? I think we are playing Cameron’s team, it should be pretty easy. Yeah, their goalie is pretty good, but I do not think he will be able to stop us.

The referee dropped the puck, and I instantly knocked it to Noah. My strategy is to swing right over the opponent’s stick so he cannot get it. Ever since I came up with that strategy and perfected it, I haven’t lost a face-off, except for once or twice. We

were planning a quick give-and-go and scored the first goal before the clock could count ten seconds.

After the face-off, I skated down the rink and got on the corner of the crease, just like the coach told me to. Noah passed it to me through the two guys on defense. It reached my almost perfectly angled stick and flew up over the goalie’s shoulder into the net.

Our goalie’s dad gives him ten bucks if he gets a shutout. It’s pretty easy because he only gets one or two shots on him per game, and usually they are within two inches of the ground. Lucky dude. If my dad gave me five cents for every goal I scored I’d be a millionaire.

The final score was seven to zero, as predicted.

The Monday after that, we had a practice at six-fifteen sharp. Our coach talked for a great while, telling us about how we need to do better and what we are doing great on. But after that we got to do a scrimmage and some shooting drills along with the Wisconsin.

In our scrimmages we play on the small rink, and so we play three versus three with one man on offense, one goalie, and one defenseman. We play king of the rink most of the time where you choose your own teams. I love that game a lot. It is where you do two versus two scrimmages; first team to score two wins. Whoever wins gets to stay on the rink.

I joined Kevin for king of the rink. He's my good friend as all of my teammates are, but we in particular work really well together, and we play with our dads a lot. Plus, me and Chris, Nick, and Noah like to get competitive, but just for fun.

Our goalies are pretty good, too. I only score about one-third of my shots on either of them when we play our king of the rink games, and if I may say so myself, I am amazing at hockey.

We finished our last match and came up to the coach wondering what to do next. We must have been very sweaty because the coach certainly noticed and told us that we looked ready. He exclaimed how we weren't going down without a good fight and how proud he was of his team that he had built. We all were proud of ourselves, too.

"Rest up," he said. "Rest up. "He let us go early even though in three days we would play our game. It was *the* game, the

one we had waited all season for.

### *The Championship Game*

My coach said that this was a good team and that we would not shut them out.

We seemed to be holding out well, but they were a lot better than we expected. It was four to three, and we were on a power play. It didn't take long for that power play to end as we scored awfully fast. In fact, we scored in the first six and forty-nine hundredths of a second. Then Courtney went up to offense with me, and she scored with about two minutes left.

They pulled their goalie at one minute fifty-one seconds left in the third. Chris stole the puck from Henry and shot it into the open net. Even though there were forty-eight seconds left, our entire team poured onto the ice and we celebrated. The referee was very mad, but none of us seemed to care. A three-goal lead was going to keep us up even if we only had a goalie on the ice.

We had won the game and the series as well as the cup, and we were just indescribably happy. I thought that it just was one of those moments, the kind where you want to take a picture, so you try, and it is all blurry.

## Dallas and Anthony Go on a Trip to Colorado

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*Two cousins take a break from college to have fun out west in **DALLAS AND ANTHONY GO ON A TRIP TO COLORADO**, by *Austin B. Paritee*.*

**T**his story is about two cousins named Dallas Paritee and Anthony Henry. Dallas is 23 years old. He goes to Ohio State

University. Anthony is 24 years old, and he goes to Georgia University.

One day Dallas thought about his cousin,



so he called Anthony and asked him if he wanted to go on a trip. Anthony said, "Sure. But where?"

Dallas said, "I have an idea. How about Colorado?"

Anthony said, "I don't know." But he quickly made up his mind. "You know what? I'm going."

"Great," said Dallas. "I'll pick you up Friday morning."

Anthony got ready for the trip. He packed all the winter clothes, boots, and snow pants he had. Dallas bought the tickets online, and he also got ready.

Dallas got Anthony, and they drove to the airport. When they got to the airport, they had to go through security and everything. As they got on the plane, they put all their stuff in the drawer, and they sat down in their seats. They ate, and they fell asleep an hour after they ate. They were on the plane for 12 hours.

When they got there, it was 33 degrees. They were freezing, and they were still a little sleepy. Then they were on their way to a hotel near the airport.

When they got to their suite they called room service. Dallas planned they should go skiing the first day, and Anthony said, "That's cool."

After arriving at the ski resort, they got their rentals and headed toward the slopes. Anthony was eager to get started and went down first. After Anthony was about halfway down the mountain, Dallas started down the

slope. Dallas thought he could pull off some stunts, so he jumped off a ramp and landed a backflip.

The boys went back to their suites to get some rest. Anthony said, "How about we do some rock climbing?"

Dallas said, "Sure, that's a great idea." Anthony drove to a camping store to find the tools they needed.

They found a pretty good mountain and started fixing up their tools. Dallas started making his way up the mountain and challenged Anthony to see who could climb the highest. Anthony knew he was climber and beat Dallas up the mountain.

After getting tired of climbing they went back to the hotel and planned their next day. They both came up with the idea of base jumping. Dallas and Anthony were afraid of heights but knew they couldn't leave without trying. They both gave it a shot. They successfully made it to the bottom. Anthony wasn't feeling good afterwards, and they decided to leave early.

When they got to the suite, they had a big dinner and packed their things, getting ready for the flight back home. They decided to spend one more night, and they went around shopping in the mall. The boys eventually spent enough of their money and left.

Their flight was set early at 9:00 in the morning. So they had room service send breakfast up early. They hailed a cab back to the airport and got flights back to their states.

# The Deadly Air Soft War

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*On a dusky summer night, Jack and his buddies gather for an epic battle of Air Soft War – Spartys versus Wolverines. In **THE DEADLY AIR SOFT WAR** by Jack Luyckx, whose marksmanship will lead their team to victory?*

“**A** hhhh...Fritz, you got me!” That was the end of the fun on that dusky summer night. Let me tell you what led up to this eventful evening.

My friends Ben and Dylan and I were at my friend Fritz’s house down the street. We had run out of things to do, and we were bored out of our minds. I suddenly came up with the brilliant idea of an Air Soft war. An Air Soft war is when you get together with your buddies, you separate into teams, and you try to “take out” your opponents with an Air Soft gun. The winner is the team with the fewest people “hit” in the end.

Everyone said, “Yeah, let’s have an Air Soft war!” Fritz got on the phone and called some more friends and asked them if they wanted to play. They all said, “We’re in.”

When the guys showed up we made teams – Spartys versus Wolverines. Our battlefield spread out before us. There were big ole’ fat tree trunks, shrubs and shorter stumps to hide behind. Team Sparty headed out toward our base in the woods while the Wolverines headed for the hill. Our battle was going to take place between these two positions.

We needed to work fast to establish these positions so we could begin the war. Both teams used sticks, leaves, and logs to build their forts. The forts were needed to reload our weapons, and retreat to if necessary.

Our team had some good guns; I had a shotgun, a pistol, and a machine gun. My

teammates had a machine gun and a pistol. Team Wolverine had pretty much the same types of guns as we did. Of course, both teams were wearing protective eye goggles.

Each team hid and got into position. We were ready to begin the war. Wolverines, from their base, yelled, “Go!”

We yelled, “Fire!” from our base.

The war had begun. Connor took one in the arm, and Fritz got hit in the leg. Some guys dove for better coverage after they saw us shooting at them. Then the Wolverines got smart and made sniping holes in their walls. This allowed them to shoot us better without us really seeing their positions. Ryan from Sparty team got shot in the stomach, and Nate nearly missed getting shot in the back.

The Wolverines were putting it to us! Guys were getting hit. Sparty team decided to split up in different directions so it would be harder for them to find us.

I came across a large tree trunk that had fallen over in the woods. I told Ryan to lie down behind the tree trunk until he could find a better position elsewhere. I moved into what I thought was a good position that had a view of the battlefield.

I could see Wolverines running all around. I first used my machine gun and then my shotgun to take out my opponent. While changing positions, I came around a tree and was hit square in the forehead. “Darn! How did that happen?” It hurt a ton, and I knew I needed to rest and retreat to keep my position secret.

I made a little fort just for me in my

secret place (a wooded area to right of the battlefield, closer to the neighbor's property line). It had sniping holes and doorways made from sticks and branches. From there I could see the hill and my opponents. I could also run really far back into the woods and come back up towards the hill a different way to my fort. Then I would snipe away – taking out the Wolverines.

Meanwhile, Ryan was scoping out the Wolverine team, and I could see that he was in good position to hit Ian. Nate was getting pinned down and needed to find another position.

Right at that moment, Wolverine team called a truce. They said they needed some time to improve on their forts and reload weapons, not to mention it was starting to get dark. Team Sparty agreed that the next round would be the last round. Both teams went back to their sides and made some quick adjustments to their positions.

“Time's up!” I yelled.

Wolverine team yelled, “Go!” and Sparty team ran out after them. Fritz and Ian were screaming—they did not expect us to attack so quickly. The Wolverines retreated up the hill as we ran after them. We shot

all of their men in that charge at least twice. When they reached their base again we decided to come up with a different game plan. We retreated back to the woods and waited for them to come back to us.

Finally we saw some movement—Wolverines were now on the attack. Our team was lying down in sniping positions, so the Wolverines couldn't see us well. When they got in good shooting range we fired. Their team fired back, and we were now all running in different directions to get away from one another. We were screaming and yelling and laughing right up until I got shot right below the eye. “Aghhhh!” I screamed and threw my gun up in the air. Thank goodness I had on my protective goggles, or I would've been in big trouble. This war had to end – it was getting out of control! I yelled out to the guys, “I'm done!”

And so that was the end of all the fun that summer night. The Air Soft war that had started out being so much fun in the end was a bummer because I got hurt. I needed to go home and ice my eye. Team Wolverine and Team Sparty would meet another day.

## The Deadly Crush

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*It was a normal birthday party at first, until Christina found herself running from a masked man with a chainsaw! It was the race of her life in **THE DEADLY CRUSH**, by **Jessica Banks**.*

Christina is turning thirteen and decides to have a birthday party at the park with friends. All of her friends and even her three sisters are there. Christina's best friend, Mady, shows up late. When she finally arrives, they open presents.

Christina gets all kinds of cool stuff, including a life-size doll from Mady that she

bought for her because it looks just like Christina. They play games, and have cake. The day is going great until Christina ends up in a fight with Mady.

The fight is about Tyler, Christina's boyfriend, and the way he keeps flirting with Mady. Christina decides to get away from them before she gets angry, so with

her eyes tearing up she takes off on a walk through the woods nearby. As she walks, her mind can't forget the way Tyler kept looking and talking to Mady

Before she realizes it, Christina is so deep into the woods that she cannot see any more light. She starts to get a little scared.

Christina hears a noise. She listens harder and imagines she hears a chainsaw. She laughs at herself and keeps walking. Hearing it again, she looks over her shoulder and sees a man in a mask holding a chainsaw coming toward her!

She gets really scared and runs farther into the woods, her heart racing. She stops again and listens. She doesn't hear the chainsaw anymore, but she also can't see any light at all now. Christina thinks to herself, "I'm lost, and there is a man with a chainsaw after me!" She starts to breathe heavily and sits down on the nearest rock.

She hears something and gets up and turns around. He is right behind her! She screams, "Help!"

She runs and runs, finally stopping and turning to scream at the guy, "Why are you doing this to me? What did I ever do to you?"

The man replies, "I want you to break up with Tyler and go out with me."

Christina screams, "NO, I like Tyler, not you!"

The man with the chainsaw screams back, "Fine! If I can't have you, no one will. I will kill you and Tyler both!" Laughing hysterically, the man starts the chainsaw back up, and Christina screams "HELP!" this time even louder than before. The man just laughs louder and says, "No one can hear you. Scream all you want." And he comes at her with the chainsaw.

Christina runs again, even faster this time. While she is running she remembers

the life-size doll she got from Mady at her birthday party, the one that looked just like her. She has a plan. She looks for a good place to hide.

She sees three bushes that are all lined up and jumps behind them waiting for the guy with the chainsaw to run past, hoping he doesn't see her. After he passes she circles around and runs as fast as she can back to the park. She screams to her friends to call the police as she grabs the doll and runs back into the woods, placing the doll on a rock, hoping it will distract him long enough for her to get away with her family and friends. She makes the doll look like she had passed out and hides, hoping to see his face so she can tell the police.

She hears the chainsaw getting closer and watches and he walks into the opening by the rock. He laughs and takes his mask off, glaring down at the doll.

Christina gasps as she realizes it is Ethan. Ethan was Mady's boyfriend, and one of Tyler's best friends.

She turns and runs as he lifts the chainsaw and starts to cut the doll up. She runs fast and hard back to the park where everyone is waiting anxiously. Christina can hear the sound of sirens in the distance and breathes a little easier. She runs to Mady and the others, yelling to them as she does to run away, and that Ethan has a chainsaw and wants to kill people.

They all hurry to the parking lot of the park just as the police arrive. The police catch Ethan and take him away.

Christina tells Mady about all that happened. She hugs Mady as she cries and promises she won't get upset at her or jealous anymore. They agree to never let a boy come between the friendship they have as they watch the police take Ethan off to jail. They start to hug again, and they were happy until they were 99.

# Decoy

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*John Carter II had a good life until he was framed for two murders. It is up to him to catch the culprit in **DECOY**, by Lamar T. Taylor.*

Once upon a time in Arizona in a remote town called Arrington lived a man named John Carter II. He was a nice man; he always helped out with charity and provided for his family. John was born in the same town where his parents died. His parents died in 1993 in a tragic car accident when John was only five years old. It's now 2015, and John works three jobs and makes 400 dollars a week. His wife, Sara, works in her own diner.

Suddenly, there have been two murders. The victims were stabbed to death during a robbery. The police have a suspect.

Someone knocks on the Carters' door. "Who is it?" yells Sara Carter.

"Sheriff Kelly."

Sara opens the door. "Where's John Carter?" Sheriff Kelly asks.

"At his job in Burlington."

"Where is that?" asks Sheriff Kelly.

"Go down two miles, make a right, and then turn left at the light."

"Thanks, Sara," says Sheriff Kelly.

"What happened?"

"Your husband's fingerprints are on the weapon used to murder those two people."

"John."

"Yes, Mr. Capplie?"

"Sheriff Kelly is outside waiting to ask you some questions, so take the rest of the day off."

"Thanks, sir."

Sheriff Kelly put handcuffs on his arms. "Don't say anything, John. It's for your own protection. I'll explain downtown."

When they arrived at Sheriff Kelly's office, John asked the sheriff what was

going on. "Sit down," said the sheriff. "You have been blamed for murders."

"How?" John interrupted.

"We found your weapon in a nearby sewer with your fingerprints on it."

"How could this be? What time were these murders, Sheriff Kelly?"

"It was between nine and 11 p.m."

"No way, I was at my night watch shift from 9 p.m. until 2 a.m. You can check the surveillance camera. That night I was sitting right in my chair. You can ask my boss. He took attendance."

"Well, your only hope is if you have a long-lost twin who has the same fingerprints as you. Without that you could be facing 25 years to natural life in prison for multiple murders."

John couldn't believe what he was hearing. Plus, the sheriff was making jokes. Everyone know that no two people have matching fingerprints.

"I have nothing further," said the sheriff. "You will have to stay here until we have proof that you were at your job," explained the sheriff.

"John, Sheriff Kelly wants to see you," said one of the guards.

"Come into my office. We have exclusive surveillance. Last night there were two more murders. Both shot to death on your street about ten houses from yours. The weird thing is you were here."

"What do you mean?"

"We got surveillance of the killer." The sheriff looked at John. "It was you. We looked at your records." Just then they

were interrupted by sirens.

“What’s going on?” Sheriff Kelly says. Just as he opens the door, five tall men in black suits said, “Where is John Carter II?”

“Who are you?”

“We are the FBI.”

They took John to their car. A lady in a black suit said, “We need you to help us catch your brother.”

“I don’t have a brother,” said John.

“No one has told you? When you were five years old, your parents got in a car accident. You and your twin were separated. The two of you survived the crash. You and your brother suffered from memory loss. That’s why you don’t remember your brother.

“When you and your brother, Lester, were born, a very unique thing showed. You and Lester had the same fingerprints and looked exactly the same, like a decoy. Unfortunately your brother took a turn for the worse. He ran away from the parents who adopted him and started committing crimes when he was 16. He has been in and out of juvenile detention and prison since he was 16.”

“What do I have to do, Agent?”

“Lester is going to come to your house to trick you. He robs houses in the area. We are going to be standing outside your house for a while. At the first sign of

trouble, we’re coming in.”

When John got home there was a note on his door. It said:

*Dear John,*

*I have gone to live with my mom and dad to get my mind sorted out about the murders the cops said you committed.*

*Sara*

*Knock, knock.*

“Who is it?”

“Lester Giggles. My car broke down in front of your house.”

“Come in. The door is open.”

When Lester opened the door, nothing happened. It was kind of like the world had stopped. Minutes passed by as the two brothers stared at each other.

*Boom!* The police came in the door. “You have the right to remain silent.” They took him to jail. Two weeks later he was in court.

“Lester Carter, you have been convicted of five counts of first degree murder. You are sentenced to natural life in prison with no possibility of parole.”

It was over. John never really met his brother, but he would always be in his memories.

## The Depressed Obese Fish

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*Bill is a fat, jerky goldfish. When he makes a bad decision about legal action, things take a turn for the worse in **THE DEPRESSED OBESE FISH**, by Cyrelle Wheeler.*

Once upon a time, there was a strange couple: Wendy, the normal wife, and Bill the obese goldfish. Wendy was tall, lean, and beautiful, and Bill was a very obese and unattractive goldfish. Although

Wendy had all of her good outside qualities, she was a very forceful woman. An example of her forcefulness is that she would always barge into Bill’s huge castle in his private aquarium without knocking.

This caused many problems since Bill had a very bad temper.

Because Bill was obese and had many health problems, he often had to visit the doctor. Fortunately for Bill, his gills had water jetpacks, which make his travel a little easier. Even though the jetpacks made the trip easier, Bill had to move his gills very fast to make sure the jetpacks did not stop moving. Having to do this made Bill very tired.

Wendy feels very bad for Bill because he is her husband and she loves him in spite of his temper. Wendy tries to think positively and believes Bill could lose some weight. Wendy is all about exercise and health, so it's a wonder that she even married Bill! She gets plenty of exercise at the gym and through cleaning up after Bill.

Bill, on the other hand, hates exercise. Wendy gave Bill an underwater treadmill for their anniversary, and, instead of exercising on it, he uses it as a fin stool! Lately, Wendy has become so tired of Bill's attitude concerning his weight that she is often angry, and sometime she doesn't care how fat Bill was.

On one particular trip to the doctor, a bad thing happened. When the doctor called Bill in, Bill slowly swam up on the scale. The scale read one thousand three hundred thirty two pounds! Bill obviously needs to lose a lot of weight. Bill asked the doctor what he could do to lose the weight. While shaking her head and rolling her eyes, Dr. Cheekabuns replied, "Maybe exercise and stop eating all those donuts."

Bill felt that Dr. Cheekabuns was being sassy. Bill's anger overcame him and he gobbled Dr. Cheekabuns up in one bite!

Now when Wendy saw what Bill had done, she thought he was gross. She had seen him eat many things, but never a doctor! But she also saw how angry Bill was, so she did not say anything. Wendy

was afraid that Bill might eat her, too.

Nurse Pickle, who was the stepdaughter of Dr. Cheekabuns, called the police, and Bill was escorted in fin cuffs directly to jail. Bill and Wendy did not have a lot of money to hire a lawyer, but Wendy was a smart wife and she knew how to use a mop. But how in the world could a mop help Bill in court?

Bill's court day came around, and he didn't even want to get up off his lazy fins and go, but Wendy pushed him. The prosecutor told the court what Bill had done, and the case finally went to the jury. After looking at all the evidence, the jury found Bill guilty and sentenced him to two years on the planet Pluto. Wendy became so upset; she dropped to her knees pleading for the judge to have mercy on Bill. The judge would hear none of what Wendy was saying and decided to send her to Pluto with Bill!

So off they went to the planet Pluto. They left with the helmets and Bill's water jetpacks. The planet was so small; Bill thought it was a jawbreaker. Remember that Bill ate the doctor because she told him the truth about his eating and lack of exercise and his behavior did not change. Bill ate Pluto!

Although the planet was very small, Bill felt as if he had eaten seventy-seven chocolate bars and began to throw up in outer space.

Wendy is looking at all of this and has mixed feelings. She sees Bill suffering, and she hates it even though it is his own fault. But she is also angry with him because he has gotten them into a terrible situation and he will not stop his foolishness!

Her anger took over. Wendy took out her mop, and mopped all over Bill. He eventually died because he hates being clean.

Two years later, Wendy has become a

psychiatrist. She helps obese goldfish that are struggling in their marriage. If the fish is immobile Wendy is kind enough to go to the patient's house.

Wendy is enjoying her life without Bill. Every now and again she goes to Kalahari. When Wendy is not having a little free time or is at work, she likes to spend her afternoon cleaning up her new mansion.

Wendy is now a very successful woman.

She still loves to exercise, but not as much because she is super-fit.

So what has she learned? Well, if you marry a goldfish you have already made a mistake. Never beg a judge to let your husband free, because you will be sentenced to Pluto with him. Finally, enjoy your life; don't let a dirty, lowdown goldfish control you.

## Detention

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*In DETENTION by Jamerah, best friends Jim and Tim serve a detention from Mr. A. While Mr. A and Tim are out of the room, strange occurrences surround Jim.*

“Once again there is no homework,” Mr. A said to the class.

“Thank you. I finally get a chance to play my new video game, *Space Dragons*,” Jim said in a bragging type of tone. Jim's best friend Tim slowly turned around from his seat in front of Jim with his mouth wide open.

“You actually have that game?” A spot of drool fell onto Jim's desk.

“Yep. I just got it yesterday.”

“Sweet, can I play?”

Mr. A then rolled up the stack of papers on his desk and yelled through it, “Detention, Jim and Tim! No talking in class.”

“But...”

“One hour.”

“Mr. ...”

“Two hours.”

“Tim, shut it!”

“Three hours of glorious detention with me.” The whole class turned to look at us.

“Had to brag about your stupid little game, didn't you?” Tim said to Jim in a whisper, his face turning pink from his anger.

“Stay here. I'll be right back!”

“Ughh! Man, I never got a detention before, never ever in all my seven years of school.” Tim looked at Jim with disappointment. “My mom is going to kill me when I get home, so we might as well say our goodbyes.”

“Dude, will you chill out? Gosh, it's just a detention, and since this one's your first, it won't be put on your record, so calm down!”

“I'm still upset.”

Jim pushed his hair up from his face and said, “Stop your whining. You're making me mad, so shut up!”

*Brrrup bbloomp* went a sound that echoed in the cold, empty room.

“What was that?” Jim asked.

“My stomach. I had seconds for lunch today; bad choice for me.”

“Go to the bathroom, and I'll look out for Mr. A.”

“Okay, but if I get in trouble...I'm blaming you!”

The door squeaked as it closed after Tim waddled out and headed for the bathroom.



Jim jumped up from his desk and ran to the door to check for the teacher. He saw Mr. A out of the corner of his eye coming out of the teacher's lounge and gradually walking over. He twisted the knob on the door to go warn Tim about what he saw. Then out of nowhere the lights started to flicker, the computers began to light up, and all the books and shelves began to topple over onto all of the desks in the back of the room.

"Ahhh!" he screeched in a high-pitched voice.

A voice slowly crept up behind him and called his name in a whisper. "Jim..Jim ..Jim."

"Ahhh, how do you know my name? Who are you, and why are you bothering me?"

The voice appeared again in an even louder and faster tone. "Open the door or I'll..." The words trailed off, and a shadow

of a man whose arm connected with a little boy's head appeared in the window of the door.

"Thanks a lot, Jim. I got caught by Mr. A in the hallway because you wouldn't open the door." He lightened his voice. "I thought that you were on lookout."

"That was you at the door?"

"No, it was our good friend 'Friend.'"

"Wait, so what about the lights and...and the shelves? What was all that!"

The after-school janitor walked past the door and mumbled, "Stupid faulty lights; shut off, no warning; I mean..."

Then passed the new school landscaper. "I don't understand why that tree just fell right out of the blue," he said shaking his head.

"Guess that explains everything.... Well, bye, Mr. A." Jim walked out of the school as if nothing had ever happened and ran home to get to his new video game.

## Drama All the Way

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*Two cliques with one secret make a problem between them. In **DRAMA ALL THE WAY** by *Alexia Sharkas*, will the girls involved get really ugly over a secret?*

One day Lanie was in reading class. Valarie was sitting next to Lanie. Valarie told a secret to Lanie about her family that she should have never told anyone. Lanie repeated it to her friends Adrienne and Ashley. Ashley repeated the secret to another person. Adrienne then told the secret to another person, and that person told Valarie's other friends Marisa and Katie, who were Valarie's best friends.

Marisa got angry that Lanie told Ashley and Adrienne. Marisa went up to Lanie and asked her, "Why did you tell Adrienne the secret? Adrienne told Veronica who told her friends, and then Veronica told me."

The next day Lanie went to Adrienne's locker and yelled, "Why did you tell everyone the secret? Marisa is angry at me."

Adrienne said, "I only told Veronica!"

Later on that day in school Marisa kept calling Adrienne, Lanie, and Ashley mean names. Lanie got mad at Marisa for calling her bad names, and she wanted it to stop right at that moment!

When Lanie got home she told her mom what had been happening with Katie, Marisa, and Valarie. Lanie's mom said, "Just ignore them. They are just jealous of you, and they are embarrassed for repeating something that should never have been repeated."

At school the next day it became worse! This time Marisa was rolling her eyes, making faces, and calling her mean names! When Lanie said Marisa's name, Katie said mean threats to Lanie.

During recess in the gym, Lanie's cousin Ian asked Lanie, "What is wrong?" Lanie told him the story. Ian went to Marisa, and asked her, "Why are you mad at Lanie, Adrienne, and Ashley?" Marisa pushed Ian to the ground and kicked him, thinking it

was funny!

On Monday, Lanie, Adrienne, and Ashley went to the Assistant Principal Mrs. Furetardo and told her their story. Mrs. Furetardo gathered all the girls and made them write an apology letter to one another.

The next day the girls made a promise to one another that the next time they had a fight, they would not make it severe and would always remain friends.

## The Eyes

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*Will anyone get away from that thing? That ominous glow in the closet isn't that far away in **THE EYES**, by Brianna Boucher.*

Everything was dark except the green glow of the alarm clock. It was a late Saturday night, and everyone was partying at Keirstan's aunt's house. Emily and her roommate, Miranda, lay silently on the bed.

"Ugh! It's so boring when no one's here, and normally I'm complaining about how it's too loud!" Emily rolled over.

"What...?" Miranda sat up, jerking her head around.

"What? I said 'Ugh! It's so—'" Emily started, but Miranda glanced at her and cut her off.

"No, not you. That creaky noise. You heard that right?"

Emily just shook her head.

"Well, have fun here! I'm going to the party!"

Emily sat up and stared at Miranda as she plodded over to the door. Was she really just going to leave her there? The answer was yes, since Miranda started down the hallway with a "You might want the lights left on."

Emily stood up, bringing herself to the door and looking out into the hallway. Miranda was just slipping out of sight down

the stairs. *Great*, Emily thought, *I'm alone.*

She walked across the room to the window, opening it slightly to bring in a soft breeze. She stared across the lonely, dark, snowy yards spotted with small bare trees and snow-coated bushes. Everything else was flat.

*CREEEEEEEK! The breeze must have opened up a door or something. What else could it be? CREEEEEEEK!*

She closed the window with a slam. *Its hinges must have been frozen or something. But it never used to do that.*

*CREEEEEEEK! What the...? I just closed the window!*

She turned hastily around to see two red eyes strung sideways in between the two closet doors. Something clutched tightly to the two little latches on the door. Her jaw dropped.

But it wasn't that scary! She inched forward to open up the door, only to approach the reaction of about ten thousand sharp, pointy teeth come lunging out. They were about one inch away from her hand. She screamed and ran out into the hall.

That thing; what was it, anyway? How could it be all of a sudden in her closet? She pondered these things while searching through every dorm room's open doorway. But could it even get out of the closet?

She looked back to see the eyes staring back at her through her doorway, clutching the doorknob and pushing the wall. Her heart started pounding as the eyes were replaced with a wicked smile and a hand reaching out toward her.

She didn't want to do anything but run. She whipped down the hallways and out the front door, hobbling out into the darkness. She looked back thinking she wasn't going to see anything, but the door just opened again and showed the eyes. She screamed once more, though it didn't help, and turned to run.

She ran and ran until her legs were sore, forgetting where she was even going. The whole thing had wiped her memory of what was going on. She knelt down to take a breath and looked behind her. A shadow-type figure with its head tilted down so you could only see its eyes inched closer and closer. And the eyes staring back at her were none other than *the* eyes, red and glowing. They bored a hole in her until she realized she *had* to run. The thought was scared back into her: She was supposed to go to the party! She flashed down streets like lightning, curving and twisting and turning.

There, on the corner of the last street, was Keirstan's aunt's house. It was filled with cars with a line going up and down the street. Emily stopped for a second to take in the beauty of safety, and then ran inside. She was finally getting away from it all.

She found Miranda and told her the whole story. She eyed the door carefully and made herself aware of the window, too. In the middle, when she forgot about it, the red glow flashed across the window. Everyone stopped dead and described it to Emily to

see if it was right. Every single description fit.

For the rest of the year, the school blocked off their room and got them a new one. Everyone passed Emily saying things like she shouldn't have had to see that and that would have freaked them out. She was so happy it was over, but so fascinated by how it looked. Why did it hide its face?

Everyone called it the incident of the Eyes. As things started to clear up, everyone was happy to get away from that dorm room and their dorms!

Everyone was to report to the main building for an exciting "beginning of a new year" speech that the dean always gave. Afterwards there was a huge party, with snacks and drinks and games. The only one left in the dorms was Elisa, looking for a good dorm. She walked down the hall to Emily's old dorm, where they had gassed the place out and remodeled. She walked in to a loud creaking noise. *CREEEEEEEK! It must be the vents*, she thought as she walked in and placed her things neatly on the bed.

Emily brought up the end of the parade of people marching toward the main building. A small scream was heard in the distance. Emily turned around to see a young girl staring at a hand closing around her wrist. She tugged and tried to pry free, but couldn't build the strength. Emily called out for help, or at least someone with a phone. They contacted the main office and the police, but they didn't get there in time.

She was found lying halfway out of the closet with streams of red on the white carpet.

Every year, one person picks the gassed-out and redone room and is pulled down out of the blue. Everyone looks out, and tries to come early so they don't get stuck with that room. And everyone stares at the window and waits for...screams.

# Faith's Story

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*In FAITH'S STORY by Isabella Gutierrez, young Maggie loses her beloved dog, Faith. Maggie must find Faith before she's lost forever.*

Who can resist a free puppy? "Let's go to the pet store, Maggie," said Mom. I had really been looking forward to getting a puppy, and today they were free!

When we arrived, there was a small box with a sign reading "Puppies to Good Home." There they were: six tiny little fur balls. I chose the runt of the litter. She was sandy-colored with a big brown patch on her chest. We brought her home.

"Have any names yet?" asked Dad.

"I think I will go with Faith," I said.

"What a beautiful name," said Mom.

Every week Faith learned a new trick. She learned how to do a backflip, play dead, talk, and many other tricks. Faith and I became very close. I loved her so much.

Then one day she would not stay on the lawn like I told her to, and she wanted to chase a squirrel she saw. It was terrible that she did not see that car coming around the corner. She ran out right into the path of the car. The next thing I knew she was motionless on the ground.

Our vet, Dr. Nixon, came in the room. "Is Faith okay?" I asked. Dr. Nixon spoke to my parents and then to me.

"Do not worry, dear; Faith is okay. She was knocked unconscious, but she recovered. Unfortunately, she lost one of her legs and will need a peg leg to replace it." I was overjoyed and scared at the same time. What if she couldn't walk?

When she was finally well enough, she came home. I was so excited to have her home! I never wanted to lose her again. In a couple of weeks, she already knew how to walk very well on her peg leg.

Months passed, and it was just starting to get warm enough to take a spring walk. Faith and I went for a walk. I had just turned ten, so Faith and I were allowed to walk to the store, since I was older now.

We were arriving at the mini-mart when I tripped and felt myself falling. I screamed when I hit the ground. Everything went dark.

"Where am I?" I asked. Mom and Dad said that I had hit my head and gone unconscious, just like Faith. The good news was that I was fine. The terrible news was that Faith was gone. I was still crying four hours later.

"We did everything we could," said Mom. "We drove through the whole neighborhood and asked if anyone had seen her. Later, Dad called the animal shelter and hung up posters, but we could not find her."

The summer dragged on as we looked for Faith. We all were so sad all summer long.

Soon school started, and Faith was not forgotten, but seemed gone for good. I started at the middle school. My first class was math with Miss Karmen.

"Before we start I want everyone to say what they did over the summer," said Miss Karmen. "I will go first. I love animals, and this summer I found an amazing animal. I found this cute little peg leg dog." My eyes lit up, and my heart started beating faster and louder.

"Does it have a big brown patch on its stomach?" I asked.

"Why, yes, it does," said Miss Karmen, surprised.

I was thrilled. "That's my dog!" I

practically yelled.

“I will bring it to you tonight to see if it’s your dog. I am so happy to find its true home,” said Miss Karmen.

When I got home from school, I told Mom and Dad. We all celebrated, because we were so excited. When I saw Faith, I

shouted “Faith!” She came right to me and licked my face.

The next day after school, Faith and I were hugging and kissing so much. We were so happy to be together again.

So that is Faith’s story, and I tell it to everyone. Who can resist a peg leg puppy?

## Fantasy Island

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*Max and Woody go to Fantasy Island. When they get there, they find it’s less like a fantasy and more like a nightmare in **FANTASY ISLAND** by Shruti Mail.*

Once there was a boy named Max. He was extremely adventurous. One day when he was going to the bus stop, he found a brochure. It was about this place called Fantasy Island. It looked astonishing, magnificent, breathtaking, and like the most wonderful place in the world! It took twenty dollars to get on the boat. “WOW!” Max said. “This place is amazing!” So when he got on the bus, he showed his best friend Woody the brochure.

“Well, we should get the money first. How are we going to do that?” asked Woody.

“How about a lemonade stand?” Max asked Woody.

“Okay. Why don’t we go on Saturday?”

“That would be awesome.”

So on Saturday, they opened up a lemonade stand. Their lemonade was as sweet as sugar. They got a lot of customers. At the end of the day, they had fifty bucks. When they were going to bed, they got tickets for next week Friday.

On Friday, they snuck out and got on the boat.

When Max and Woody got there, they didn’t see the kids playing; they were *working!* Everywhere they saw miserable kids. You could see their ribs. It was like

the kids were slaves

They were wondering if they got on the right boat. “Come on, MOVE IT!” a guy said to them. Then another guy put a chain around one of their ankles. They got pushed and shoved into work.

The whole day they were doing stuff like rubbing feet, washing animals, and doing stuff *nobody*, not even the people who likes work a lot, likes. There were no beds at all. They all had to sleep on the floor.

At night, they tried to make a plan to escape. “What should we do to get out of here?” asked Max.

“Well, we could make a boat of some sort,” replied Woody.

“That just might work.”

When they were thinking of a plan, a kid overheard them speaking. “Can I come?” she asked. “I’m Alex.” She looked like she had been there a long time by how so desperately she asked. Max and Woody thought it would be rude if they didn’t so they let her in.

The next day they heard they were fed every other day. They got a cheese stick and nothing else.

That night they tried to figure out what to make the raft out of. “Now I don’t know if the plan will work,” Max whispered.

“What are we going to make the raft out of?”

“How about bamboo? I know where to find a lot,” Woody said.”

“That might work!” exclaimed Alex.

“Shhhh, we don’t want them to hear us!” whispered Woody.

“Get all the bamboo you can, and fast. Tomorrow night, we build and leave.

In the morning, Woody tried to hide a lot of bamboo. At night they built it.

Then they all set off. It was a smooth ride.

When they got home, they called 911. The police arrested the guys running the place. All the kids were safe. Max, Woody, and Alex were heroes!

## Farmer Berkshire

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*Three good friends find a cardboard box that proves to be a time machine. They travel back to meet two people they couldn’t have imagined meeting in **FARMER BERKSHIRE**, by **Samantha Heytler**.*

*Brrring...Brrring...Brrring...Brrring!*  
The bell for fourth hour rang as Mr. Fisher closed the door of his room. I sprinted toward the door at full speed, just in time to hear the door lock click.

I could hear from the outside what was going on inside. Mr. Fisher was yelling at Noah for not completing his homework and at Sherami and Daniel for chasing each other around the classroom. It was the typical start of a language arts hour.

I heard “Oops” from Lexi and a gasp from the rest of the classroom. Then the conversation went something like this:

“Lexi, you will need to pay for that book,” Mr. Fisher said.

“But...,” Lexi complained.

“No ‘buts’; I don’t want to hear it. You will pay me...\$16.16 for the book...ASAP,” Mr. Fisher told Lexi.

I hit the door and tried to get in, but to my loss, it was locked. I knocked softly after.

Lexi answered the door.

“Hey Sam,” she greeted me.

“You’re late,” commented Mr. Fisher, very annoyingly.

“Thanks for letting me know. What would I do without you?” I replied, with a

sassy attitude.

“Don’t get smart with me, or else you will be in detention with me today for lunch *and* recess,” he said, threateningly.

The whole class went, “Oooooohhhhhhh.”

Mr. Fisher was wearing a reddish spacesuit that said FISHER on it. He also had a circle badge that said FISHER and NASA. He was wearing blue sweatpants. He was also wearing white shoes.

When I sat down, I noticed that in the back of the room, there was an old cardboard box. It looked as if the night before Mr. Fisher had a leftover box and made something out of it. I could not really tell. The box was covered with a layer of newspaper.

When Mr. Fisher was done taking attendance, he told us that he did not have anything for our hour and we could do anything within reason.

“Class, you may look at the time machine that I professionally made last night, do your reading log, or read a book silently,” he told us.

“What time machine? I don’t see one,” Ryan said.

“Well, of course you don’t see one because you are playing with your cell phone,” Mr. Fisher said.

“I don’t have a cell phone, FYI,” he told Mr. Fisher.

“He really doesn’t,” Noah added quickly.

“I do NOT need you to butt in while I am trying to talk, Noah,” he said, spitting all over the place. “Class, you may go do what you wish,” he said politely.

I chose to look around the “time machine.” When I went in the time machine, I noticed two big buttons. The buttons were red and blue. A different button was in the time machine, too. The different button was a small, dark-colored button. It was a button that would be hard for the eye to spot, but some of my previous teachers have called me “eagle eyes” for my great eyesight. I had previously been taking classes on time machines and buttons of all kinds. This button was a non-typical button that I rarely ever saw. But, even though the button was rare, I still knew what kind it was. It was a transform button, and transform buttons make things go back in time.

When the lunch bell rang, Mr. Fisher opened the door and went toward Mr. Philips’ room to talk to Mr. Bruyneel and Mr. Philips. I signaled Lexi and Charlotte to come over where I was, which was by the time machine. Charlotte, aka Char, is another best friend of mine. They silently made their way over toward me.

“Why do you want us to come over here?” they asked me, simultaneously.

“Look on the ceiling of the time machine,” I told them. “A button; you guys see it?”

“Ohhhhh, that button, the one that is dark-colored... like a blackish kind of button?” said Char.

“Yeah, that button. Do you know what

it does?” I questioned them.

“Have no clue,” replied Lexi.

“It is a transform button. You know, like a time machine button that will take you back in time,” I told them.

“How awesome is that,” Lexi gushed.

“It would be really awesome, if only Mr. Fisher didn’t find out,” I told them.

“Yeah,” Char commented.

“How about we ask Mr. Fisher if we can stay in his room and finish homework? I have a couple of late assignments for Mr. Fisher anyway, and you guys can say that you need to finish your Reader’s Log,” I suggested.

“Sam, sometimes you have the *best* ideas,” Lexi commented.

“Thanks,” I replied.

We ended up eating our lunch with Mr. Fisher and finishing late assignments. I finished my work while I was eating, so I had the chance to go and do anything I felt like doing until it was next class. I glanced at the clock and realized that I had 23 minutes until next class started. Great! I thought happily to myself. Now I would be able to have more time than anyone to look in the time machine.

When Mr. Fisher was done eating his lunch, he told us that he was going down to the teacher’s lounge to get printer ink for his printer. He said that he was going to lock the door from the outside, and NOT to let anyone in. We agreed to be good while he was gone. All I wanted to do was look at the time machine. I mean, how much trouble could a box do?

Well, it turned out to be a *lot* of trouble. I wanted to take a ride in the time machine, if I could figure out how it worked, and if it really worked. I still was not convinced that the time machine was actually real. But, with my incredible brains for electronics, I finally got the thing working.

I called Lexi and Char over, and told

them to get in the time machine. I hoped that I could impress them by figuring this thing out. Once they were in, I got in after them and shut the door. I pressed the bright red button, hoping that red meant hot.

“Wait, I’m not ready just yet. I left my money in my Chico Bag. Wait a sec,” Lexi said, hurrying out of the time machine, and into the bright sun.

“Lexi, why on Earth would you need money?” Char called from behind her.

“Mr. Fisher said in the beginning of class that I would need to pay \$16.16 for the golden textbook,” she replied, as she sat back down in the time machine.

“Okay, are you guys ready to try this thing out?” I asked.

“I am ready! I hope this thing will work,” Char said.

“I’m ready for whatever comes,” Lexi told us in a gangster kind of way, adding that extra pizzazz with a pop of her shirt.

“Good, ‘cuz so am I, and I want to get somewhere with this old box,” I said.

I finally got the time machine to work, and then we were on our way. To where? I don’t know, but I knew that we were going back in time. The years were going past us, and I saw a man outside. The man looked like a farmer. The man was dressed in misty blue overalls, and a vivid red old shirt. He was also wearing murky brown shoes.

When the time machine stopped, Char looked out her window again. Lexi walks up to the man and starts speaking to him, and says something like this: “Heyyyyyy, man. How are you?” Lexi asks the man, who is apparently confused by her slang.

“What do you mean? I have never heard a girl like yourself talk like that,” he responded.

“Wow, man, you need to catch up with the new slangy language,” Lexi told the man.

“What are you doing here, and why did you fall out of the sky?” he questioned her.

“I come in peace, and I am *not* an alien,” Lexi responds.

Then the man walked behind a stack of wood, and when he came back, he brought back a tall woman. The woman was African-American and had a gold ring on her ring finger. It looked very clear that the two were married.

“Maybe you two can talk about things, because I don’t get what this young lady is trying to say,” he said to his wife.

“Okay,” the woman said. “How about we start with our names?” she started.

“Okay,” Lexi replied. “My name is Lexi, what is yours?”

The woman spoke very clearly. “My name is Isis. Now, can you please tell me what you want with my husband?”

“We did not really want anything. We were sort of taken here by accident by a time machine,” Lexi said.

“Who is ‘we?’” Isis asked.

“Oh, just my friends over there,” Lexi responded.

“I want you to introduce them to me,” Isis insisted.

“Okay,” Lexi agreed.

Lexi brought the woman, and they introduced each other to Isis.

Isis held up her hand like she was the ruler of everything. We shut our mouths.

“If I may ask you one question, it would be nice,” Isis said.

“Okay, which one of us?” we all asked together.

“Samantha,” she responded.

“Okay. I am ready for my question,” I told Isis.

“Why are you wearing a shirt with a buck on it, pants with a red eagle, and plain brown boots?” she questioned me.

“Well,” I began. “These pants are the most comfortable things I have ever worn,



my shirt is the most appropriate for the season, and my boots, well...they are really warm.”

“Anyway, getting back to the point,” Char started. “I think that we should talk about where we came from because we did not come here for any reason, right?”

“Right,” Lexi and I chanted back.

“I think that your husband has been haunting our school,” I replied.

“What?” Isis said, looking confused.

“Yeah, that was Char’s first expression when I told her that a farmer was haunting our school,” I replied.

“Is your husband’s name Mr. Berkshire?” Char questioned Isis.

“Why, yes, it is. How did you know?” she stared blankly at me.

“Well, there have been some rumors about a ghost haunting the school, and I actually have seen him,” I told Isis. “So, why is your husband haunting my school?” I asked her.

“I do not have an answer to that question. Why don’t we all go and find him and you girls can ask him yourselves?” she suggested.

We went to look for Isis’s husband. Char and Lexi looked around the stack of wood, and Isis and I looked everywhere else. We finally found him with some pigs.

“Umm. I do not mean to startle you, but may we ask you a few questions quickly?” Lexi asked him.

“Sure, why not?” he responded quickly.

“What is your full name?” I asked him.

“Oh, that is an easy question. My full name is John Joseph Ronald Frankfurter Samuel Berkshire. But, please do not call me by that name,” he said.

“Boy, do you have a long name!” Char exclaimed.

“Are you haunting our school? The name of it is Berkshire Middle School,” Lexi questioned him.

“If I were to haunt that school, it would be because they haven’t paid me back for the land I have sold to them,” he responded.

I told him we would be right back, and motioned for Char and Lexi to come with me. We moved away a short distance.

“You know what I was thinking?” I started. “I was thinking that we could pay Farmer Berkshire back. That way, he may decide not to haunt the school anymore,” I said. “Do you guys want to try to get enough money to pay Farmer Berkshire back for what Berkshire still owes him?” I asked.

“I am *so* in this,” Lexi said.

“Okay, who brought money?” I asked Lexi and Char.

Both of them just stared blankly back at me. I was trying to think good thoughts.

“Lexi, I know you have money because you just got it before we left from Mr. Fisher’s classroom,” I told her. “Char,” I added, “we will be fine without your money, because I have my mom’s lunch money that I was supposed to use to deposit into my lunch account today. I have like \$200 or so. I think that \$200 is enough money,” I said.

“Well, that’s good news,” Char commented, breathing big, deep breaths.

“Char, it isn’t the end of the world if we do not have money from you. It is perfectly fine,” I said trying to make her feel better.

I walked up to Farmer Berkshire and asked him how much Berkshire owed him.

“Berkshire owes me, uhhh...\$214.67,” he responded.

“Great! I can pay you back right now,” I exclaimed to him, as I handed over the wad of bills and change, from Lexi.

“Okay, so now that we got that over with, we better get back before we get into big trouble,” Lexi said.

We got in the time machine, but when

we got in there, on the wall was a new button that said “HOME” on it. When we were all settled in the time machine, I pressed the button. Isis and Farmer Berkshire were waving up to us as we entered the sky, and then we were magically in Mr. Fisher’s classroom.

When we were out of the time machine, Mr. Fisher was standing in front of the machine with his hands on his hips. He was staring at us with his big, brown eyes.

“Where were you girls? I leave you three alone and what do you do? Try to ruin the time machine. Now, what were you doing?” he questioned us.

“Well,” I began, “I got the time machine to work and we went back in time and met the man who has been haunting the school, Farmer Berkshire!” I responded.

“Yeah, right. You don’t have to lie about it,” he said.

“She isn’t lying,” Char said. “You know, I was there, too, and so was Lexi. And the three of us did everything.”

We told Mr. Fisher everything that happened, and about Isis and Farmer Berkshire. It did go pretty well, because Mr.

Fisher didn’t seem too sure about the Farmer Berkshire thing.

“How about you three go talk this over with Mrs. Feiten, Mr. Clinkscale, and Mr. Moll?” he suggested. “Then you would be able to have all this settled.”

So, we went to the office and we talked to Mr. Moll and Mr. Clinkscale. When we told them about Farmer Berkshire, they had no idea what we were talking about and gave us all Saturday detentions. When we told him that Farmer Berkshire is the man who makes weird things happen in the school, they took back the Saturday detentions. But they were still very confused about what we were talking about. We told them about our experience of how we traveled in the time machine that Mr. Fisher had made for Time Warp Wednesday. They told us that we needed to keep out of the school’s business and to not worry about it.

The good news is that no bad news about Farmer Berkshire has been reported for at least 25 years. At least that’s my knowledge.

## The Friends

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*In the story **THE FRIENDS** by Zoe Kalapos, Katie and Ellie leave on a trip, forcing Sara and Anna to get along. But will they become friends after the fight they had the year before?*

This was a bittersweet trip for me. Going to see my dad in Florida was amazing, since I only see my dad once a year ever since my parents got divorced two years ago.

“Katie, are all of your bags packed for your father’s?”

“Almost, Mom.”

I had already packed all my clothes and books, which means all I had left to pack

was all my jewelry and makeup. Let’s see, let’s see...where is my biggest suitcase? Hmmm. Ahh, there it is.

After shoving everything in the suitcase I had to bring all my bags downstairs. Trying to carry 90-pound bags down 23 hard wooden stairs was not going to be easy.

Sara, Emily, and Anna were by my mom’s car. They helped me load my bags into the white Escalade. My mom had just

bought the car with the money she earned from her new job as a manager at the new bank in town.

“Bye. I am going to miss you guys so much. But I’ll be home in a month.”

“Ok. See you soon.”

“Bye, Abby. Bye, Scrappy. See you next month.” I have two golden retrievers. One of them is named Abby. Abby is the oldest of the two. Scrappy is the second dog I have ever owned.

“Katie, it’s time to go.”

“Be right there, Mom. Bye, you guys. See you in four weeks.”

“We’ll miss you,” they yelled as I hopped into the car.

When I arrived at the airport, it was 3:45. My plane was leaving at 6:00. I still had to go through security, walk halfway across the airport, board the plane, and find my seat.

Loading the plane was busy. I guess everyone had the same idea of a dream vacation.

“I can’t believe that Katie’s gone,” said Sara.

“I know. What am I supposed to do when you’re at your soccer tournament and Katie’s in Florida?” said Anna.

“You have to try and get along with Ellie.”

“You know ever since that fight we had last year we haven’t been friends.”

“Please just try and become friends with her. For me?”

“Ok. I’ll try, for you.”

“Thanks. Gotta go. I have a soccer meeting about next week’s trip. See ya.”

“Ok. Bye.”

“Anna, the phone is for you,” said her mom.

“Ok. Be right there, Mom.” Anna went to the phone and picked it up. “Hello?”

“Hey, it’s Sara.”

“Oh, hey, Sara. Are you getting ready to leave for the airport?”

“Yeah. I’m going to leave in about 15 minutes. Do you still want to come over and say goodbye before I leave?”

“Yeah. I’ll be right over.”

“See you soon. Bye.”

“Bye.”

“Hey, I’m glad you came over,” said Sara.

“Me, too. I really don’t want you to leave. I’m going to have nothing to do for the next four weeks, thanks to you and Katie.”

“Well, that makes me feel good.”

“It’s not your fault. I just don’t want to spend my time with Ellie.”

“You promised me that you would be nice to her. Even though you hate her.”

“I will. Don’t worry.”

“That didn’t sound too convincing to me.”

“I made a promise, didn’t I? You know I always keep promises.”

“Sara, time to go,” said Sara’s mom.

“Okay, Mom, be right there,” Sara called. “Gotta go,” she said to Anna.

“Okay. Good luck.”

“Same to you.”

“Bye.”

“Bye.”

The plane trip for me went by quickly. I sat next to a girl that was also part of the worldwide soccer tournament, except she was in the U-17 age group. I was in the U-15 age group. I arrived at my hotel around 10:30, which was 4:30 American time. No one on my team was close to being tired. We all went down to the lobby, which had a café. We all went to get a salad and pop. It was probably one of the greatest nights of my life.

Back in California, Ellie and I had nothing to do except try and get along with one another as I had promised Sara.

“Ellie, I am sorry that I started that fight we had last year. I realize how much I miss our friendship. And I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay. I regret it, too.”

“Have you had lunch yet?”

“No.”

“Do you want to come with me? I was going to try that new place on the corner.”

“Sure. Just let me run home and get my purse.”

“No, it’s okay. It’s my treat.”

We had a great time at Roast and Toast. The food there is the best. We had so much fun catching up on what we missed over the last year. We realized how much we had in common. We planned a party for the two of us. We had so much to catch up on. At the sleepover Ellie had an idea of a trip to the mall. So the next day we went to the mall. We had the best time.

Time flew by. By the time Katie and Sara got back, Ellie and I had done almost everything we could do in our city.

We all felt so much closer now that Ellie and I are friends.

## From President to Grinch

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*In FROM PRESIDENT TO GRINCH by Sara Keebler, the President of the United States of America is caught in a scandal about stolen toys. Will he lose his job?*

Whoa...what was happening? Something was wrong. Looking in the mirror, he started to scream. The president, George Bush, was GREEN. He turned out to be none other than the Grinch.

Having to be the Grinch, he became evil. So later when the night was dark, he left the White House with his dog for his hideout that he had in case of emergencies.

When they got to the top of the mountain where the hideout was, they ran to the inside. Right away the president went to his sewing machine. Christmas was almost here. He had to start to make his Santa suit. The suit was so that no one could tell that he was the Grinch.

Telling his dog his plan, he started to laugh. The plan was not so nice. Later on Christmas Eve, he would go to all the houses and steal the presents.

He was going to take all the presents and burn them. He didn’t think that one person deserved presents this year. Hearing this plan

made the dog scared. He started to whimper and bark, but the president didn’t care. He put antlers on the dog and left.

### Later

After the president finished taking all the gifts, he started to feel something... something happening. He ran to his broken mirror in his hideout. And the next thing you knew, the president fainted.

The dog was going crazy. The president finally woke up, dizzy from the fainting. He looked around and screamed. He screamed at the anger and frustration he was feeling. It was all because when he looked outside his door, he saw an angry mob with pitchforks, all screaming, “Leave this town! Leave this town!”

The president did not want anyone to know that he was the president of this country. He ran to the back door, but it was

no use; they were there, too. What was he supposed to do? He decided that he would just leave without saying a word. He ran to his car and left.

When he got home, he was relieved. But when he turned on the news to see what was happening, he was in shock! The headline of the night was “George Bush: Stealing from America.”

Almost in tears, he ran to his wife. Right when he got up to her, she smacked him. “What are we supposed to do about this?” she said. “You are an immature, idiotic person. You’re the president! You can’t be stealing from your country. You’re going to lose your job because of this!”

He said, “I know.”

Later when the F.B.I. came to investigate the White House, they noticed something

that they would’ve never thought of. The night when the president was having a bowl of soup was the same night he turned into the Grinch.

You’re probably thinking that this is a weird thing to be saying...but it’s not. The soup was made by the chef that George Bush had fired a year ago. The cook had huge anger against the president. So that night he tied up the new chef and made the soup. In the soup he put a drug that makes you turn into the Grinch.

To this day the president has not lost his job. But he never ate soup again....

The president never turned into the Grinch ever again.

P.S. None of this stuff actually happened. But wouldn’t it be awesome if it did?

## The Great Hero

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*A boy turns ten years old and hopes for fun...until he discovers the perilous challenge that could mean his death in **THE GREAT HERO**, by **Zade Roumayah**.*

“**Y**eah!” said Dylan. “It’s finally my birthday!”

Today was Dylan’s favorite day of the year: his birthday. He had been waiting all year for it. He had just turned ten years old. He ran downstairs as quickly as he possibly could. “Happy birthday, Dylan!” said his parents. They ran over and gave him a hug. He ate breakfast and then watched television until about three o’clock.

Dylan’s mom called, “Come here, Dylan. We have a surprise for you.” He walked over and opened the door to a much-unexpected surprise.

“Happy birthday, Dylan!” they all said. His parents had thrown him a birthday party. Dylan was so happy that he was speechless. All of his family members were

there. Some of the neighbors even came by. The party lasted about four hours, and then everyone had to leave. He then took a shower, thanked his parents for the great party, and went to bed.

That same night, Dylan had a dream that he was some kind of hero and was supposed to save the town. The voice that was talking sounded like his grandmother that had passed away three years ago. “Dylan,” said the voice. “You must go to Death Mountain and kill or be killed by the evil Mantis.”

Dylan was trembling with fear. His teeth were chattering so loudly that it could have started an avalanche.

“You will go tomorrow morning or there will be many serious consequences.”

“Wait, who...who are you?” asked Dylan.

“Your grandmother,” it said as the voice faded away.

It was settled. Dylan must stop the Mantis. It was not for him but for his grandmother. Dylan then shut his eyes and went to sleep.

Dylan’s father remembered that he had forgotten to give Dylan his present. He quietly walked into Dylan’s room and put a golden pen in his bag. Then Dylan’s dad left the room.

Dylan woke up at five o’clock in the morning to start his journey. He brought his bag with the pen in it and some food inside of it. Dylan did not know about the pen. He walked to Death Mountain, and then stood face to face with it. It was time to climb Death Mountain.

There was barely any place to put his feet or hands. The mountain was over one

thousand feet high and his hands felt like icicles. One mistake could cost Dylan his life!

After an hour of hard work, he finally made it to the top. When both of his feet were planted firmly on the ground, the Mantis attacked from his cavern!

The Mantis kicked Dylan, but Dylan swiftly dove out of the way. The Mantis was then running full speed at Dylan. Dylan did not have enough time to get up, so he reached for the closest thing at hand. Dylan picked up the pen and it turned into a sword! Dylan cut the Mantis’s legs off. The Mantis died.

The Mantis fell on the ground, which caused Dylan to fall off the mountain. “Oh noooooo!” said Dylan as he plummeted to his death.

Dylan died, but went down in history as a courageous hero.

## Green Eyes

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*In GREEN EYES by Sherami Fernando, a green-eyed doll is brought to a loving home. Little does the family know that the doll has an evil secret.*

It was a horrifying night. The thunder was as loud as rock stars banging recklessly on drums. I lay on my bed just watching as the dark bare trees brushed against my pale window. I lay there, silent as the foggy road below. The fog was like hands gripping the cement, waiting to take over the road bit by bit. The door downstairs creaked open, and the words that still haunt me today fluttered into the house: “We’re here!”

*CRAP!* I told myself. It was my cousin. Oh, how much I hated her!

As I walked down the stairs, the first thing that I saw was a bright little girl with the widest smile and the ugliest little pigtailed

you could ever imagine. But most people would say they’re perfect. You see, I hate little girls that think they are all “so that” and “so pretty.” It just makes me want to throw a brick at their head and yell, “Now who is pretty!” But now, I couldn’t, because she was my cousin, of course.

She came beside me and sort of twirled her foot and made puppy eyes while she said, “Hi, Cousin Lily.”

“Awe,” everyone said. Ugh, I said in my head and I rolled my eyes. But I still gave her a hug, surprisingly. I noticed that she had brought a little doll with her that had sharp green eyes that didn’t seem to twinkle as they are supposed to. To tell the truth

they didn't seem to twinkle at all. They were as dull as a rusted rock. The eyes seemed to be locked onto mine as I hugged my cousin Lisa.

It was about midnight when they arrived, so we had to go straight to bed after we greeted them.

The next day, I woke up to see Lisa's big head right in front of mine.

"What?" I said in a low, drowsy kind of way. She stepped aside and there was my Aunt Mary sitting on the side of my bed, hands cupped.

"Oh, you're awake; can you stay home alone for today? It's only going to be a couple of hours. We all know how you get cranky when you first wake up, and we are going shopping with Lisa, so I was wondering if you could stay home alone, or do you want to come with us?" my aunt asked.

"No, that's ok. I need a bit of rest anyway, I can stay home by myself," I said glumly, hiding the excitement.

A long time after (2:53 to be exact), I was looking through my backpack for my homework I had to redo. But I couldn't find it. I looked everywhere in my room: under the bed, on my desk. But I still couldn't see it. I even looked in my closet. I paced in the middle of my room trying to figure out what might have happened to it. Then, ding, ding, ding, ding! It popped in my head the way a champagne cap flies off the bottle: LISA!

I had gotten sick of all these things Lisa likes to call "games," like stealing my things and such.

I started rummaging in her room looking everywhere, but I didn't find it. Finally, after some short period of time I went to eat, and then watch TV. I went to bed exhausted.

Now it was about 11:00 in the night, but I couldn't sleep. I was just lying there

thinking of the E that I was going to get because of my missing homework. I scrambled out of bed and told myself that I had to do something about this.

I slowly opened Lisa's door a notch pretending I was a secret agent, but as soon as I opened it... I froze.

Lisa's room was a mess. All her toys on the shelves were ripped; the cotton was hanging on the side like blood veins gushing out hanging on a side. I noticed that all the stuffed animals were ripped and torn, but my stuffed cheetah and all the dolls weren't. I was surprised and relieved my cheetah was ok. I trembled as I stepped in, afraid of what might be inside.

There, right smack in the middle of Lisa's floor, was her doll. It was not any ordinary doll, but the doll that she had when she came in. It was the one that seemed to be staring at me when I embraced Lisa: the green-eyed doll. And what made it even worse was that it had one of Lisa's favorite stuffed animals in its hands. It held it by its leg, just letting it wobble there.

The doll's head slowly turned around to face me. I glanced around looking for any strings that might have been holding the doll up. I took a step back. Now there were two options: a) Run out the door and pretend nothing happened and walk away, or b) actually do something and attack.

I chose b.

I lunged at the doll. But it dodged. There was a pair of scissors on Lisa's desk, and I reached for them, but I failed. I edged closer and closer toward the window. "Attack!" the doll screamed.

All the dolls just leaped from the shelves and surrounded me. "Run!" screamed my stuffed cheetah, but I couldn't. I just froze there, because who has seen stuffed toys come alive?

But as I watched, frozen, the stuffed

cheetah jumped into the crowd of angry dolls. The dolls were swinging their arms in the air like trapeze artists on strings. All the dolls were just crawling all over him like ants on an apple core.

I scrambled up but was pushed back down by the green-eyed doll. I tried to push it off, but it didn't budge. I tried and tried, but it felt like the doll was Super Glued on to me. It just started laughing with its yellowish, crooked, awful teeth. I started wondering why Lisa would buy such an awful thing. There was even orange gooey stuff on the sides. Its teeth were all over, and some were even missing. There was nothing for me to do but just watch as this doll with its hair all around like an overused toothbrush just choked me (or at least tried).

It grabbed the pair of scissors from the table with hardly any effort. I screamed and closed my eyes, afraid to even watch. But then, I felt no weight on me. There was nothing.

I got frightened from what had

happened. First I was threatened by a doll with scissors, and now I can't feel anything. I opened my eyes to see that my now half-torn-up cheetah had pounced on the doll, bouncing it and ramming it to the desk. The doll was unconscious fortunately. I grabbed the doll, opened the window behind me, and chucked it outside. Honks and screeches erupted out the window. I took a peek and saw that my neighbor had run over the doll. All the other dolls just seemed to freeze and fall over like a person being Tasered, except without all the shaking. Soon (I know this sounds weird), they all disappeared afterward.

I gently took my broken-up cheetah from against the desk and slowly sewed up the cheetah using my aunt's sewing equipment.

But then, I heard a car driving up the driveway.

I sprinted downstairs and I saw Lisa, Aunty and Mom. I was glad to see them, but what made me frown was...Lisa had brought a new friend.

## Gunshot

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*“Why now? We were just visiting. It all happened so fast. I wish we had never even taken that nature hike. What will I do without Kelly?” To find out what happens to Margerate and Kelly, read GUNSHOT, by Nick Jevahirian.*

“Kelly, hurry up!” yelled Jenna. “OK!” Kelly yelled back. It was a sunny Saturday afternoon, and the Steven girls were on a nature hike in the woods of Montreal, Canada. They were in Montreal visiting their grandparents for the summer. The oldest girl, named Jenna, said, “I’m going home; it’s too hot.” So she went home.

Then the middle girl, Margerate, said, “I’ve got to go to the restroom. I think I’ll

use a tree, ok, Kelly? I’ll be back in a second.”

A few minutes later, Kelly wondered, “Hmm – what’s keeping Margerate? It shouldn’t take this long. I think I’ll go looking for her.”

When Margerate got back to the spot where she had left Kelly, Kelly was gone. Where was she?

“Kelly! Kelly!” shouted Margerate. Where could she be? Kelly was lost!



“OK, Margerate,” she mumbled to herself, “think, Margerate, think; where could she . . . ?” Before she could finish her thought, there was a loud sound – BANG! About five seconds later, she heard someone screaming.

“Oh my gosh,” thought Margerate, “I remember that sign at the beginning of the trail that said DANGER – OPEN HUNTING.” Margerate raced over to the screaming Kelly, but she was too late. She had been shot in the head.

“Kelly! Kelly! Wake up, Kelly! NO!” yelled Margerate.

Margerate looked back and saw a guy with a rifle for a split second. Margerate called 9-1-1 and told them what had happened. The ambulance rushed over and picked them up and took them to the nearest hospital.

On the way there, Margerate called her mom and dad and told them what had happened. Their parents then rushed to the hospital.

When the ambulance got there, doctors rushed Kelly to the first open room available while Margerate talked to the lady at the front desk.

“What happened?” asked the lady at the front desk.

“She was shot in the head, maybe by a hunter, in the woods!” cried Margerate.

“Oh, I’m so sorry, honey. I’ll call the

police station.”

“OK,” said Margerate, sobbing.

When they got on the line with the police station, the lady and Margerate told the man on the phone everything. “Did you see the man?” asked the officer.

“Yes,” said Margerate. “He had short brown hair, he was white, and he had a black shirt on.”

“OK, I’ll send out a search party for the man that you just described.”

“OK,” said Margerate.

After that Margerate went back to the waiting room. When she got there the results were in. KELLY WAS DEAD! Her mother and father were there sobbing and hugging each other. Margerate joined the group hug.

Later, somewhere in Quebec, a lady in a restaurant saw the report on TV. She looked out the corner of her eye and saw the matching subject. Then she yelled, “Looks like that guy on TV that killed that poor little girl – get him!”

A policeman hit him on the head with a bat and knocked him out cold. Next thing he knew, he was handcuffed and in the backseat of a police car rushing to jail.

Later at the police station, the police get a report that the murderer had been caught. The police called Margerate and her family, and told them that he was caught and in jail.

## Half Blood

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*In **HALF BLOOD** by Tyrone Ramsey, a cop in a small suburban city answers a call on his police radio. He ends up going to a site he shouldn't have gone to.*

“Dispatch 524, Dispatch 524, there is a fight in the alley off of 24<sup>th</sup> and Main Street. PLEASE PROCEED TO SITE WITH CAUTION,” said a police

officer on Jacob’s police radio. Jacob hopped in his car, put on his siren, and sped to the site.

When Jacob got to the site he walked

towards the area with caution. He was being aware of all his surroundings, shining his flashlight in every corner, and looking in every window. Jacob didn't hear anything at first, but then he heard something splat on the ground.

Jacob whipped out his pistol and turned around. He saw blood all over the ground and nothing there. Jacob was kind of getting freaked out. He looked very closely and saw a big hairy thing fighting a man with blood all over him. Jacob shot the hairy thing in the leg.

It turned out that the bloody man was a vampire and the hairy thing was a werewolf. They both walked towards him. The vampire was hissing like a cat, and the werewolf was growling. Jacob said, "Stop walking or I will use my firearm."

Right after, Jacob said, "I will count to three: one, two, three!"

Jacob knew if he didn't react fast something bad would happen. Then Jacob was so nervous at what he was looking at he started to shoot wildly. He shot six shots in each body. Neither the vampire nor the werewolf ever even fell.

Suddenly the werewolf jumped at Jacob and slashed him across the face, and then took a chunk out of his arm. A second after, the vampire dug his teeth into his neck and sucked his blood out until he was pale. Jacob passed out.

By the time he woke up it was pitch black. But Jacob could see outside like he had on night vision goggles. He could hear everything, and even smell more things. He felt his arm, and it was totally healed. He was hairy from head to toe. The first thing that came to his mind was *I'm a werewolf*.

Jacob was having a craving for something, but he didn't know what he had a craving for. He was thinking of blood. So Jacob went in front of a car. When the car got a couple feet away from him he

punched the hood and the car popped off the ground and flipped over him.

The driver was screaming for help, but there was no one around. Jacob walked up to the car and ripped the door off the hinges. The driver was shaking and screaming in fear, so Jacob took a bite of his neck.

A couple hours later Jacob turned back to human. Jacob got in his car and drove home. When he got home he sat on the couch and listened to the radio. About ten minutes later he was asleep.

When Jacob woke up all he could think about was what happened the night before. He felt so sad that he had killed someone.

Jacob took a shower. Then Jacob got a cup of coffee. He got dressed for work and left.

It was about nine o'clock when Jacob got off of work. The library closed at ten, and Jacob drove up there.

When Jacob got to the library he got on a computer. Jacob typed in "werewolves and vampires" on Google search. When all the results popped up he scrolled down to find a good one. He found one that was titled "Half Blood." He clicked on it.

It read, "A half blood is when a human gets bitten by a werewolf and a vampire."

Jacob was thinking, "I got bitten by a vampire and werewolf, so I must be a half blood."

The computer entry also read, "If a werewolf or vampire ever smells or knows that a half blood is living, it will track it down and try everything it can do to kill it."

Jacob's heart started to beat as fast as a meteor hurtling into Earth. He ran out of the library, jumped in his car, and sped home. When Jacob got in he shut the door in relief and locked it.

Jacob walked in his room, turned on the television, and lay down. Twenty minutes later Jacob was asleep.

He woke up to a dead silent room. It felt like something was standing over him, breathing on him, but he just thought it was the fan. Then Jacob felt long, menacing

claws tickle the hairs down his arm. Next he heard growling, and felt a string of saliva drip down his cheek. He opened his eyes and suddenly...“Ahhhhhhh!”

## Halloween Night

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*In HALLOWEEN NIGHT by Shae Brasch, two girls are excited about trick-or-treating together for the first time. But is it fun or horror that awaits them?*

There was an unsettling chill in the air on Halloween as Brittany and Claire got ready to go trick-or-treating. Brittany had been planning her costume for weeks and had put a lot of work into the furry tail and ears that completed her dog costume. Claire, on the other hand, had just gone to the store and bought her cat costume. The girls giggled as they ran down the stairs to show Brittany’s mom, Doreen, what a cute pair they made. This was kind of a special Halloween for Brittany because her mom was usually away on business this time of year and she had to trick-or-treat at her Grandma’s home. But not this year!

Doreen could hear them coming down the stairs and decided to play a little trick on them. As they entered the kitchen she pretended to be in a trance. Both girls stopped dead in their tracks when they spotted Brittany’s mom by the kitchen window with a blank stare on her face. Brittany walked up to her and touched her on the arm, and her mom shrieked out, “BOO!” The girls jumped two feet, screamed, and then burst into laughter.

Doreen decided to tell them the silly Halloween legend that had been around since she was a kid. It had to do with the murder that was committed in their little town fifty years ago. Everyone had heard the tale throughout the years, but the girls couldn’t help but feel a shiver go down

their spines as Brittany’s mom started retelling the gruesome story.

“It had been a cold night just like tonight,” she said. “I remember my Uncle Ted telling me how cold it was as he and his friends walked up old Mr. Leary’s steps to knock on his door. Mr. Leary had the biggest house in the whole town, which was fitting because he also had the most money. When Ted and his friends got to his door, Mr. Leary was standing there with a strange look on his face. ‘Trick or treat!’ they yelled, but Mr. Leary just stood there and groaned. He slowly held up his hand, but he was missing all his fingers, and there was blood running down his arm. The boys ran away screaming.

“Later that night the police went to investigate, and they found Mr. Leary dead on his porch. It was a great mystery as to what happened to him. His death was said to be due to natural causes. But the rumor was the Mr. Leary had been hiding a great deal of money from his brother. It is said that his brother found out and cut all his fingers off. Apparently, he wanted to make sure he’d never be able to steal from him again. All the townspeople said that Mr. Leary was so ashamed that he had a heart attack. They never found the brother, and they never found Mr. Leary’s fingers either.”

That story never failed to give Brittany

the creeps, especially this year because someone had recently moved into old Mr. Leary's home, but nobody had actually seen who it was. Rumors were flying around that it was Mr. Leary's brother. But that was impossible! Nevertheless, all the kids in school kept daring each other to go there to trick-or-treat.

The girls had already decided it was going to be the first house they went to. Troy McGovern, the cutest boy in school, kept teasing them that they were too scared to go, which was kind of true, but they didn't want Troy to know that. Plus, if they went there first while it was still light out, then surely nothing bad could happen! Besides, old Mr. Leary was long gone!

Brittany's mom, who was actually excited about handing out candy, made them promise to be careful. As the girls headed out the door Doreen added in a scary, throaty voice, "Beware of Mr. Leary's bloody fingers; they'll be searching for something to steal!"

Brittany giggled nervously and said, "Nice try, Mom!" The girls yelled out a "Goodbye!" as they ran down the sidewalk with their trick-or-treat bags.

Brittany and Claire were very excited for this year's Halloween because this was the first year they both got to go trick-or-treating together. They knew their first stop was the old Leary house even though they had no idea who lived there now. It was important to them to impress Troy and his friends with their bravery.

As they approached Old Mr. Leary's house, there was still a bit of dim sunlight peeking through the cold grey clouds. The house was surrounded by evergreens and thick overgrown shrubs and was set back away from the street. It was impossible to see his front porch from the sidewalk.

Brittany and Claire could hear kids' voices in the distance, but none were close

by. They both walked up the badly eroding walkway shrouded by trees without leaves. Cautiously, they approached the front steps. Their hearts were pounding in their chests.

A shadow passed by the curtained front window, and a muffled sound could be heard. They weren't sure if it was laughter or moaning. They looked at each other with round, frightened eyes. Should they just forget it and let Troy tease them for the rest of the year?

They were about to run away when the front door opened and an old man walked out on the front porch. He was weathered and bald and smelled like old earth. Brittany and Claire looked at each other again and then said meekly, "Trick or treat."

The old man sneered and said, "Indeed!" With that, he put the goodies in their bags and turned away cackling a wicked, evil laugh. The two girls ran off the porch, and didn't stop running until they were back on the street, where they were soon surrounded by other kids.

Everyone wanted to know what had happened. "Not much," said Brittany trying to hide the tremor in her voice. "Some ancient man lives there. He gave us some candy and laughed at us."

Troy was there and seemed disappointed that two girls had beat him to the challenge. He grabbed some of his friends, and they went up to the old house and knocked on the door. "Trick or treat!" they yelled. Nothing happened. No one came to the door. They knocked again, but they were only met with silence.

Troy and his friends walked back over to where Brittany and Claire stood trying to remain cool. "Well, what did he say to you guys?" asked Brittany. Troy told them that the old geezer must be out of candy because he didn't come to the door.

Brittany and Claire started to feel a bit

uneasy. They were pretty sure they were the first ones at his house. How could he be out of candy already?

Troy asked them what the old creep

gave them. The girls slowly opened their bags and were unsuccessful at holding back their cries of terror. For there at the bottom of their bags lay a pile of bloody fingers.

## Hamster Going to Space

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*In **HAMSTER GOING TO SPACE** by Jessica White, Chocolate is a little hamster whose dream is to go to space. Her chance comes when she is accepted for training. But she still must prove herself.*

When I was a little pup I always wanted to go to space. My dream had not come true yet. I was like every other boring hamster, running on my wheel all day. By the way, my name is Chocolate, but my friends call me Coco. I live in a small cottage by the owl's house and the bunny's hole. The cottage is a brown tree and has green curtains and a little door so only I can get in, not big animals like raccoons, bunnies, and foxes. I will start from the beginning when it all started.

One day I was walking down the street to the wheel, and I picked up the daily newspaper. I saw the most amazing thing that could change my life forever.

It was an ad for animals going to space. It said they needed small, smart animals that could pass the test for going to space. That was my chance. We hamsters are very smart and can handle anything. So I found the sheet to go to the space school. I was so excited! I packed my bags and was off in a flash.

I made it!

It was time to show off my smart self to the world. I had to go to room 115 for training. When I was walking down the hallway this feeling came to me—a good, exciting feeling like when you are about to go on a really big cool roller coaster. Here it is: Room 115.

We all sat down, and I was the only

hamster there. There were puppies, frogs, kittens, birds, and bunnies.

The training was hard and excessive. We had to take all kinds of tests. They had to see how much we could take. It went on for a few days. Then the time was here: The list of who made the space teams was up. I ran downstairs and was at the list in a flash.

There were five animals on the space team. I was looking down the list. There was Benny the badger, Freddy the frog, Kit the kitten, Bridget the bird, and there it was...MY NAME! Chocolate the hamster.

I was so happy I ran around the whole school telling everyone I made the space team. And I had to call my parents and tell them all the stuff we had been doing in space school.

The next day it was my time to shine. I got suited up in the space gear and got into the space rocket with my team.

They told us what we had to do and then they started the countdown: "Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, BLASTOFF!" We were officially space animals.

We made it to outer space, and it was the best time of my life. We were ten minutes away from the moon. We were so happy we were the first home pets to go to space.

We landed on the moon. We took a

sample of it. We were up there for a while dancing and singing, “We made it to the moon!” over and over again. All the people on Earth were so happy that we landed on the moon.

Then we got back on the rocket and went back to Earth. We got to Earth, and everyone was cheering for us and clapping.

I was so happy. I got my medal and went back to my little house in the forest and slept for a long time. Well, it was a long time at least to a hamster.

That was the BEST SIX DAYS OF MY LIFE! I will never forget it for the rest of my life. Well, at least until the next time.

## Headbanger

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*In **HEADBANGER** by Conrad Solaka, watch out for that first bump. It's a doozy!*

One snowy winter day I was really bored, so I called one of my best friends, Liam. I asked him to go with me to the hill at Beverly Park. He came over, and my mom drove us to the park. I was pretty excited while we were driving because I had not been sledding in a few years.

We were there! I was happy to see more of my friends there. It was really crowded and hard to get up and down the hill.

I went down the hill a few times, and was getting pretty good for someone who hadn't been sledding for a while. After a few runs I told Liam I was getting tired, and he said he felt the same way, so we agreed to go for one more run. I was going to go down a normal run, but I saw this really, really cool ramp. I thought to myself, should I really do this? I thought I could, but I thought WRONG.

I got on my Ski-Doo aluminum sled and adjusted it. I was off! Before I knew it I was halfway down the hill and hit the jump. I

should have thought a little bit harder before going off a jump like this.

It felt like I was in the air for a whole minute. When I came down I hit my head so hard I don't even remember it. I was knocked out, and Liam was getting scared because he could not get me up and I had no idea where I was. I didn't even remember how I got there. When I started to understand him, he told me everything that happened that day. Then it all started to come back to me.

Liam pulled me on a sled all the way home to my dad's house because he lives right next to Beverly Park. My mom picked me up from my dad's house a little later, and by then everything was normal and made sense to me.

I learned my lesson that day. Next time I will think harder before I do something that I'm not sure of. I was not ready for a jump like that, especially at eight years old.

# Henzilla

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*In HENZILLA by Nicholas R. Badamo, a hen finds a laser at her barn, which attaches to her head, and starts destroying stuff. Will the hen be stopped?*

**FBI Warning: If you have no sense of humor or get emotionally attached to characters, don't read this story. Also, don't misplace this piece of paper. Consequences include jail time and death. This may be a good story but yada yada yada yada yada bla bla bla bla bla law law law law law law law law law law jail jail jail jail jail don't don't don't not fun not fun not fun bla bla bla bla yada yada. Aghua; tjnghruva.; thiubgvnaeililtuk. elgrhjkeay tiuheg vuiwkahn eruia4hgti urhbne ftaheg tghasoj ghouaeh guiaawy trhygu isgrh sehg uise rgu eiogk rejhn rdfg oigje rgher guerhu geighe guiher ihgtg uihnr ejgh rehgh tgh iehge rhigrh egu ihnjge roai fgerh jug iufg ref hjr dhegu erguirg thru eh tgir ehgtih rei ugg vnagr lag huy reu fiv kjs rbg erjh vbger shtj krhe dnf ueh alh tga healu iha llh ili bflwah arg ilwqla lwa twa. This might also not be real like SpongeBob. I should stop annoying you but I won't. hfbg uiahsy yuih ygue rbv iua endru ahj uia heg rhv fgu iao wh gn wi uhr ay hf u aeg ter ah fu iw es hf jersgbh I'm done now and so early because I need a new computer. So long.**

There once lived a hen that got very bored at her farm. Almost every day all that she did was eat, sleep, and stare off into the distance.

One day, she decided to wander around the farm to try to find something interesting. On the ground, she found a laser gun and thought, "I can give this to my boyfriend for Valentines Day this year," but then the gun attached to her head by jumping out at her with great force. She then killed her farmer, and said, "Look, no hands."

The hen felt she had power after that, so she went to the middle of town and started destroying tall buildings. The hen then found steroids mixed with vegetable juice that she saw Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens drinking. The hen killed both of them, and she drank the potion. That made her grow to the size of Godzilla.

With the hen that big, she was able to set almost everything in the town on fire. But before the hen grew large, some of the civilians thought, "Why can't animals live peacefully with laser beams attached to

their heads?" When they realized that they were going to die, they took it like men (and women) and got run over by the hen and died. When one of the women (who was drunk) died, she yelled, "Why must I die! I only had five kittens in my collection." Nobody could ever understand her.

Soon, the Air Force saw her and started to attack. Then, the hen started to prepare for impact, and she slammed into the airplanes with great force, destroying them.

The Air Force then called Mike Tyson to come over and try to kill the hen. Mike Tyson came to the hen and started showing off his fighting skills. He then realized that the hen was going to kill him, so he hid in a Porta Potty. After Mike Tyson caught his breath, he realized that the hen was making huge dents in the top of the Porta Potty. Mike Tyson then decided to end his life with a full bladder (even though he was in a Porta Potty) because he was going bankrupt and he wouldn't stand a chance against the hen, so he bit his own ear off to death.





that cute be evil? But you'll be changing your attitude about these bunnies when you hear my story about Johnny the savior.

"Johnny, come in for dinner!" Mom shouted loudly. Johnny ran inside.

"Wow, there's a lot of food here. What's the occasion?" Johnny said hungrily.

"Johnny, you don't remember? It's your father's 100th birthday."

"What!" Johnny yelled in surprise. "Wait, if its Dad's birthday, then how come Dad isn't here?"

"Your father is at work, unfortunately. His boss wouldn't let him off of work even on his birthday. Listen, Johnny, you have four hours to get your father a present. Here's some money." Mom handed over a hundred dollars.

"Thanks, Mom. I promise I'm going to get him the best present ever." Johnny sped out of the house. "Now let's see. Where to find a present? Oh, here we go: the gift shop." Johnny went inside.

"Why, hello, young sir. How may I help you?"

"May I please see your bombs and missiles?"

"I'm sorry. We don't stock bombs or missiles."

"Okay. How about explosives?"

"Sorry. We don't stock explosives."

"Okay. How about guns? Do you stock guns?"

"We stock water guns."

Johnny walked out of the store in disappointment.

Everywhere Johnny went he could not find a single thing he wanted to buy—probably because his father was in the military and loved weaponry. "Just great; there is nothing to buy in this town. I guess I'm just going to have to go on ho—"

Before Johnny could finish his sentence a hoard of mutant bunnies jumped out of nowhere. See? Didn't I tell you bunnies

would attack? Now these weren't just any mutant bunnies. One was carrying a machine gun, one was carrying a bazooka, and one had an explosive egg from their last Easter celebration. Well, anyway, back to the story.

"Oh, bunnies, what are you guys doing here?"

"We have come for our prince!" they demanded.

"Wait, what? Did you bunnies just talk?"

"Okay, first of all, we are not bunnies. We are extraterrestrials blasted into this planet and into this wretched form by our king Gublar. We have tracked him down to this planet. Unfortunately, all we know about his whereabouts is that he is in the stomach of a fully-grown male human. Since we do not understand what a fully-grown human is, we are just going to have to cut every human open until we find our prince, starting with you."

"Oh no!"

Suddenly a loud buzzing sound came out of nowhere and one end of a large rope snaked down to the ground next to Johnny. "Come with me if you want to live," came a voice from above. Johnny quickly climbed up the rope that was attached to a ship. Once Johnny was aboard, the ship quickly blasted to light speed.

"Don't worry guys; we'll get them!" one of the alien bunnies said in anger.

"Thanks, Mister. You saved my life!" Johnny said in relief.

"The name is Dave."

"Okay, Dave. Do you know how this whole alien-bunnies-looking-for-their-prince-thing happened?"

"Uh, I don't know."

"You know *something*; I can tell."

"No, I don't."

"Yes, you do"

"No, I don't."

“Yes, you do!”

“No, I don’t!”

Before Johnny continued this argument, he noticed a big book sitting on the floor. “No, wait, don’t touch that,” said Dave.

“Oh, look, it’s a journal. ‘September 15, 2008. They are going to attack and destroy the world all because of that stupid bunny. How was I supposed to know that their alien prince would be inside there?’ So it was you that started all this!” Johnny raved in anger.

“Okay, kid, you got me. What are you going to do: turn me in? Our planet’s already being destroyed, so there is no point.” Dave was right. As Johnny looked out of the spaceship, he could see his whole world crumbling before his very eyes. Fire was burning down all vegetation. Searing heat was evaporating all sources of water, and massive earthquakes were destroying everything in their path. Luckily the one thing that wasn’t destroyed was his house, at least for now.

“Stop gazing out of that window and put your helmet on. We are going into space to try to find a place that isn’t inhabited by

these bunnies.” Unfortunately, everywhere they looked there were bunnies waiting for them. So they went back to Earth to try to reason with the extraterrestrials.

“Look, the humans are here. Let’s get them now while we have the chance.”

“WAIT!” Dave shouted “Isn’t there any way we ca...ca...ca...”

“Take cover! He’s about to puke!”

“Bwahhhhhhh!”

“Hey, look! He spewed out our prince!”

“Since the prince is safe, could you guys stop terrorizing our planet right now?” Johnny said in happiness.

“Well, you did save our prince.”

“But he also put it in danger.”

“I’ve got it. We get to vaporize your friend Dave, and then we will go.”

“Sounds great,” Johnny said.

“Wait, I don’t think this is a good ideaaaaa—” Dave was vaporized.

“Well, goodbye.”

“Bye, aliens.”

So the world was saved thanks to Johnny, and everybody lived happily ever after.

## In the Holocaust

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*During World War II, Jack Godel was taken to a labor camp and separated from his family. He did not know where any of his family members were.*

**Chandler Basch** tells Jack’s true story of survival in **IN THE HOLOCAUST**.

**T**hump, thump, thump! It was the Nazis pounding on my grandpa’s door. That was how it all started. That was a very tragic day that started the Holocaust for my grandpa.

My grandpa was only 18 years old when it started. His family was not prepared at all. Actually, most families were not prepared at all. Right before he went to the

labor camp (which was in Hungary), my grandpa was shaking. He had no clue what to expect. Papa Jack was taken with the rest of his family. Papa Jack had his little brother, Mom, Dad, Grandma, and his two sisters with him.

When my grandpa got there, the Nazis put all the Jews to work. Papa Jack was very worried about his family. He had no

idea where they were, or if they were even alive. There were at least 200 people in my grandpa's labor camp. The most important thing was to somehow survive so he could come to America.

Everyone who survived the camps tried to hide. The place to hide was Budapest. Then the Russians took over Budapest. Though my grandpa, and his two sisters were free to leave the embassy, survival was going to be very hard. The first thing they had to do was to search for food. This was very difficult, and they had no luck finding any food.

The war left the cities in ruins. After the war ended there was no water, and no electricity. The only way to find food was to walk 70 miles south in the freezing winter! After my grandpa and his two sisters walked the 70 miles, at the first

house my grandpa and his two sisters came to they asked for food. The lady said, "I can only give you one potato because there are too many of you." When they arrived in the south part of Hungary there was plenty of available food. Somehow my grandpa managed to survive.

In May 1945, the war was completely over. On his own, my grandpa went searching for his parents. He suspected the worst, but was hoping that it was not true. Unfortunately it was true. His parents had died.

My grandpa went back to the house where he had lived, which was also in Hungary. There he found a letter from his aunt from 1938. Now it was 1946, and that letter made my grandpa want to come to America. My grandpa had relatives there that made him want to come right away.

## Indiana Grasl: An Adventure in the Hidden River Cave

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*Indiana Grasl and his partners, George Longhorn and Alyson Turner, work at the Hidden River Cave. One day, something goes terribly wrong. There is danger in the cave for these three in INDIANA GRASL: AN ADVENTURE IN THE HIDDEN RIVER CAVE, by Zacary M. Grasl.*

The year was 2013. The day was June 20. I'm Indiana Grasl at the age of 17. My friend is Chuck who never gets his haircut. He is also a couple months younger than me. Lastly, Chuck isn't his real name. My other friend, Chris, dreams of becoming the best spy in Egypt. He is short and he is a jokester. He's also a couple months younger than me. We have a summer job to do. My job is the Hidden River Cave tour guide. Chris and Chuck work at the Mammoth Cave. My partners are George Longhorn and Alyson Turner. They are each one year younger than me.

Right now it is our lunch break, and we are going to Wendy's. At Wendy's, I see my friends Chris and Chuck because it is also their lunch break. We decide to join them. We order our food, and I sit down next to Chris and Chuck, and we start talking. I keep an eye on Alyson Turner and George Longhorn as they sit down together, talking. Then Chris tried to scare me when I wasn't looking. "Indy!"

I didn't flinch. I turned to him and asked, "What?"

"Is it just me or are you looking at Alyson?"

I stared at him for a moment and said, "Why? She already has a boy that she likes. So what?"

"So, she might get tired of him," Chris said.

"Maybe. Besides, we have nothing in common," I said.

Then Chuck said, "Exactly, she's funny and you're not funny at all. She completes you." We laughed.

Alyson heard us laughing. "What are you three laughing about?" she asked. We stopped laughing, and Chris and Chuck looked at me.

"We were just laughing about something from *Rush Hour*," I said.

"I love funny stuff. What is it?" Alyson asked.

"It's something that Jackie Chan did. He played a Chinese detective named Lee on a case in America. He was at a museum of Chinese artifacts and they were very fragile. The villains were in disguises and they attacked. Lee was near a large vase and there were villains pushing it over. Lee was trying to keep it up, but the villains were punching him like a punching bag with feet. Lee was doing the same thing until he kept it balanced and he took care of the thugs. When he did, he ran off. After a moment, a gunshot was heard. He stopped and turned around. He saw that it was the vase that was shot. He said, 'Nuts.'"

Alyson laughed. I looked at George and saw that he was also laughing. I turned to Chris and Chuck and they were just staring at me. "I know. I guess she kind of likes me," I said.

After an hour, we finished our lunch. After we ate, we went back to the van. I talked to Chris for another minute. "Man," said Chris. "I'm ready for a pumpkin pie," I rolled my eyes.

"I should have known," I said.

When George, Alyson, and I got to the

Hidden River Cave, we already had visitors waiting in line. I told George to tell the visitors the rules. I had Alyson stand next to George while he talked. George went to the front of the crowd and said, "Okay, we are NOT in small groups; we stay as one huge group. No wandering off, and be careful. Here's your helmets." George passed out the helmets.

Once everyone had helmets on, we headed inside the cave. I had this feeling that something might go terribly wrong, but I kept it to myself. When we came to a sealed door, I said, "Inside here is General G.I. Joe testing a mysterious black suit. He wants to be there by himself so nobody will get hurt. Moving on." As I led the group of people deeper into the cave, I thought about the General for a second, but mostly about the black suit. I know General G.I. Joe because he came to a Navy camp I went to long ago.

Behind the sealed door, General G.I. Joe was getting upset. "Why can't I get this right? I've tried everything!" he shouted. Suddenly, the black suit moved like it was alive and began spreading on Joe's body. He tried to rip it off but it wouldn't come off. Joe fell to his knees and looked up. The suit put black stripes on his face so no one will know who he really was unless he wanted them to. He let out a menacing laughter.

I heard laughter and turned around. Then I thought I saw a shadow. One of the visitors asked me, "What's wrong?"

I turned to the visitor and joked, "Oh, nothing; I just thought I saw Spider-man." I knew it wasn't my shadow because I can't climb on walls. I led the group, and I had a funny feeling. Then I ducked, and two webs shot out of nowhere. The webs got George and Alyson. The two screamed. I quickly reached into my jacket and took out my bullwhip.

Then a strange black figure came out of nowhere and held Alyson and George. Everyone screamed except me. The black creature then said to me, "I'm not Spider-man. I'm...uh..."

I suddenly said, "You must be Venom? Blackie? Mr. Black? I got it: The Blackhead!"

"You'll find out soon enough," the black figure said and started running away up the stones and cliffs with George and Alyson! I started running after it.

I jumped onto a long ledge and uncoiled my bullwhip. I saw a strong, short-looking ledge up ahead. I flicked my wrist and wrapped my bullwhip around the ledge. I jumped into the air, holding on to my bullwhip tightly. My bullwhip unwrapped from the ledge. I was sailing through the air with both feet in front of me. I kicked the black-suited figure in the back. It released both Alyson and George, but Alyson went flying past the ledge and caught a weak rock attached not far from the ledge. George, however, landed on the ledge.

I punched the thing in the face, and the thing screamed in pain. I tried to punch it again, but it kicked me in the stomach. George tried to punch it, but it shot webbing out of its hands, and George flew toward him. The thing kicked George in the face, and George went flying through the air with the force of the creature. I stood there, and the thing turned to me, and the stripes on his face disappeared. He smiled and said, "Hey, Indy." I was shocked.

"My God—Joe," I said.

I shook the shock out of my system, and I leaped to Joe and tackled him. Joe punched me in the face, and I went flying over the ledge. I grabbed my bullwhip and wrapped it around a strong rock I saw at the bottom of the ledge I had fallen from. I swung up and kicked Joe in the jaw.

George started punching Joe in the face. Everyone below us saw Alyson slipping. "Indy, get Alyson!" they all shouted.

I looked at Alyson and saw her slipping. Then she fell! "Hang on!" I shouted.

I looked around and saw a large flat rock beside me. I grabbed it, placed my feet on it and down I went. Alyson was near death as she neared the ground 100 feet below her. I jumped off the stone and I reached for my bullwhip and wrapped it around Alyson's wrist. I pulled her to me and I grabbed her. I saw a ledge, and I wrapped my bullwhip around it. Everyone below us clapped. I swung to a ledge and landed. I let go of Alyson and placed her on the ground. "You okay?" I said with concern.

"Yeah," she said.

The silence ended when George shouted, "Hey, Indy!" I turned around and saw George dodging sword attacks from Joe's sword from his sheath. "A little help!" He finished.

I jumped up and swung from my bullwhip. Just when Joe was about to slash through George, I kicked him in the face. "Run!" I shouted to George.

George stayed put and launched at Joe. Joe shot webs at me, and I went toward him. He uppercut me when I was close enough. I quickly got up and kicked him in the stomach hard.

Joe grabbed his sword and waited for someone to hit him again. Joe punched George in the face and leaped after him! I got up and reached for my bullwhip, but I was too late: Joe stabbed George! "George!" I shouted.

Joe threw George aside, and George fell off the ledge. George fell on the ledge Alyson was on. Alyson kneeled next to him and kept him company.

I got angry. I flicked my wrist and wrapped my bullwhip around Joe's waist. I brought Joe to me and kicked him in the

stomach. Joe fell backwards. Joe shot webbing out at me, but I got out of the way and pulled the web. Joe flew towards me. I tried to punch him, but he kicked me first. I fell backwards.

Joe leaped after me and kicked me. I flew through the air and smacked into a wall. I lifted my head and reached for my bullwhip, but Joe stepped on my hand. "Don't bother, Indy. If only you hadn't been so selfish, your little friend's death could have been quick and painless. But now you really ruined my day. I'm gonna finish her nice and slow," said Joe.

I got very angry and started to get up. I realized that Joe had his sword in his hand. "Time to die, Indiana Grasl," said Joe.

Joe brought the sword behind him and launched the sword at me! I moved quickly and grabbed the blade right before it came to me. Joe pushed harder as I pushed harder.

Suddenly, I moved out of the way and stuck the sword in the stone wall. Joe tried to pull it out, but I punched him in the face. That forced him five feet away from me. I grabbed my bullwhip and wrapped it around his neck. Joe shot out a web and pulled the sword out of the wall. Joe shot out webbing at my bullwhip hand and took it away from me. Then he webbed my hands.

"Joe," I said. "The suit. You've got to take it off," I finished.

"You would like that, wouldn't you?" he said, aiming the sword at my neck.

"I think I know what it feels like. It feels good. The power. Everything," I said. Joe nodded. "But you'll lose yourself. Let it go," I said.

Joe shook his head and said, "I like this

suit." The black stripes started to appear on his face again as he added, "It's makes me happy."

As he was about to kill me, I tried to distract him, "But Joe, I thought that you promised not to kill anyone that works here." Joe ignored me.

I twisted my body, the webs broke, and I grabbed my bullwhip and wrapped it around Joe's hand that held the sword. He lost his grip on the sword. The sword flew behind me, and I swung my bullwhip at Joe's ankles, and he tripped. I jumped on Joe and began punching him in the face.

Everyone in the group began punching the air and said, "Go, Indy!" I ignored them and started punching even harder and elbowed Joe. Joe kicked me in the gut, and I went flying.

I wrapped my bullwhip around the sword and grabbed it. Joe tried to get away, but I had already stabbed him in the gut. Some girls screamed, some people covered their eyes, and everyone else cheered.

I jumped down from the ledge and landed on the ledge where Alyson and the weak George were. I walked up to George and took a knee. "Hey, George. How you doin'?" I asked.

"Better," he said.

I looked at Alyson and saw tears on her face. "We'll get you through this," I said.

George shook his head and said, "No. It is too late."

Before I could say anything, George closed his eyes. Then he slightly opened them and looked at Alyson for the very last time. I felt the last breath leave him. He died.

I looked at Alyson and saw that she was crying.

# It's Pointless, Bub

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*Any kid can tell you that teachers aren't like normal people. Need proof? All is revealed in **IT'S POINTLESS, BUB**, by **Gabryelle Rankin**.*

*Beep. Beep.*

Ugh! It's another day of my life of boringness! I crawl out of bed knowing today is going to be another darn unbelievable unawesome day. My life stinks, my life stinks, my life stinks. Those are three perfectly good reasons, all detailed.

I can smell the Cream of Wheat. Ummm! Creamy.

I sit in front of and eye-to-eye with my seven-month-old sister Sayde. I eat my breakfast knowing I am being watched by a baby. I finish my breakfast and get ready for school and stuff.

I head to my bus stop in the freezing cold, thinking, *If I think I'm warm, I'll be warm*. My bus comes along the road. I head to the back and sit down for the ten-minute ride.

We arrive at the school, and I head for my first-hour class. My friend Alex stops me and tells me today's buzz! It was: *What do teachers do when students aren't around?* He knows that I'm likely to find it out.

I skip first hour and sneak into the office saying I had a meeting to see Mrs. Feiten. Instead, I go look at the teacher files! Let's see here A-R-S-Z... ah! Oh, here it is: Mr. Baldridge's file. Ok! "Wanted at five toy stores, a White Castle, and a Porta-Potty." Not juicy enough! I need something gut-bursting, like...THE TEACHERS LOUNGE! Muh ha ha ha!

I take the secret elevator. (What? A

secret elevator labeled "secret"? Get a load of this.) I secretly sneak down into the elevator. There are so many buttons that I could press. How about the button that says "Secret 1"? Oooh! Good one!

The elevator goes extremely fast, but in a matter of seconds it comes to a slow stop. I step out of the mysterious secret elevator and into a teacher world. Mrs. Feiten is singing. And Mr. Fisher is opera singing while ballerina dancing. Picture that!

I make my way over to the secret table, from the secret teachers, to the secretly mysterious elevator of mysteriousness. I act casual and listen to a conversation between Mr. Clinkscale and Mrs. Mason. They're talking about how they lost their minds, and how the children took them (which is not very hard to believe!).

It's getting boring now. I guess I will go hang outside by the gym door till the bell rings, thinking

nobody will believe what I saw.

I did just that. Five minutes later the bell rang, and Mrs. Feiten called my name. I went to the office and was told to see Mrs. Feiten. She knew about my shenanigans. She had me on surveillance and the whole darn thing! My punishment was to remain in the secret room from the secret table, to the secret teachers, over to the secretly mysterious elevator of mysteriousness. And my eyes burned. It was like teachers were not teachers, but anti-teachers from the secret table, to the—ugh, ugh, just forget about it. It's pointless.

# Jim Star and the Great War

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*In JIM STAR AND THE GREAT WAR by Ryan T. Jordan, Jim has to defeat the largest empire in mankind. Get ready for an action-packed story.*

It was a cold day on February 28, 4820. The main reason it was so cold was that the Planet Dirt in the Lonesome Galaxy (not so lonesome) was the farthest planet away from the sun. Dirt was so far away that the temperatures could get as low as -100 degrees.

Jim Star is a famous galaxy warrior who is very, very talented at pretty much everything there is about war. Jim's arch nemesis is King Bla-Bla. King Bla-Bla is the leader of the Martian Army. Jim's other nemesis is Fiji la-la (Fiji for short). Fiji is the leader of the Zombie Army. These three people are the leaders of the largest armies in every galaxy ever known to mankind. Wars between these three great, powerful leaders go all the way back to 2000.

Jim's father, Noah, had killed both of these king leaders. At least that is what he thought. The two strong leaders had survived the battle and became one elite empire called the Zartians.

On that cold day, Jim sits in a library sketching down ideas for a new spacecraft. The craft would be called the Pig Shoot 3000. This ship would be the biggest ship in the galaxy and in the army. Jim wanted this ship to be better than his old ships in the past. This enormous ship would hold 300 in crew, ten pilots, and 20 in turrets, for a total of 330 passengers. The Pig Shoot 3000 would be adapted for a two-person crew. It would be called the Pig Shoot 1000. The smaller ship would be more for a combat situation.

*Soon after his invention Jim flew back in his ship to his home—Planet Dirt (which, as you might think, is covered with dirt and mud). As soon as he arrived he told the planet scientist about his sketches and asked if he could build it for him.*

## Twelve Years Later

Today, there is a whole plant that is only for building Pig Shoots and other weapons for Jim's soldiers. There were so many Pig Shoot 1000's that every pilot had gotten a partner, and they were assigned to a ship, one pilot and one gunner. Everyone in the army was flying down to Planet War to make it its home base for war only.

On April 28, 4832 Jim and his army flew down to Planet War. But as they came close to the planet they saw other ships orbiting the planet. As they got closer they finally figured out that the planet War had already been occupied by the Zartian Army. Everybody quickly radioed in to Jim. Jim replied, "Keep going and prepare for battle."

The first flight platoon went in on their Pig Shoot 1000's and Jim, along with 300 other soldiers, were on the massive Pig Shoot 3000. The flight platoon plowed a path for the big ship, and it successfully landed on planet War.

Dodging bullets and grenades, Jim and his army were surrounded by Zartians with no place to go. Jim quickly radioed in that they needed some help from the air. Two minutes later three huge explosions went off. A Pig Shoot 1000 had dropped three



bombs very close by.

The rattle of machine gun fire grew louder and louder. The Zartians' fire ceased. Jim and his men pushed forward one mile ahead without even one bullet being fired. All of a sudden all sorts of machine guns went off—1Ak-47s, Thompson, MG-42s, and 50-caliber machine guns were all firing at Jim and his army. Overhead, the Zartians also had a combat aircraft: the Killer. The Pig Shoot was way more advanced and had almost twice the firepower, but there were twice as many killers than Pig Shoots in the air.

Back on the ground Jim was advancing on the Zartians who were running low on reinforcements. Jim had a mission, and it was to find Bla-bla and Fiji. He saw a tall palace-like building about a mile up ahead. Jim told seven of his soldiers to follow him to the palace.

Fifteen minutes later Jim surprisingly arrived at the palace without even being noticed. Jim scouted ahead and saw about

nine or ten Zartians guarding the palace. It seemed like it was only one shot, but Jim's squad killed the guards in an instant.

The squad moved quickly and silently through the palace hallways. Jim stopped at a corner and peeked ahead to find Fiji and Bla-bla being escorted by twelve guards. Jim pulled the pin on a grenade and rolled it along the marble floor. "Uh-oh," a guard squeaked.

*BOOOOOOM.*

Arms, legs, and all sorts of body parts were lying all over the blood-filled marble floor. "Bingo!" Jim whispered.

When they arrived back outside, there were no bullets being fired, and almost everything was calm. There were only twenty of Jim's soldiers wounded and seven dead. Jim thought it was surprising that so few were killed in the firefight.

Jim would be the one man ever to defeat such a large empire in so little time. This would never happen again in the history of mankind.

## JJ

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*In JJ by Zach Van Faussien, Johnny Jones is a private eye detective in New York. He encounters a woman who has seen a family of lions and a ghost. Will JJ make it out alive?*

Hey, so it all started when I was eating a pizza on the sidewalk of Aronville, New York. And I was completely unaware that what was about to happen would change my life forever.

Hi, my name is Johnny Jones. People call me JJ for short. I'm a private detective, and I'm 57 years old. I never get paid for my work. Instead, I live off the money that I made when I sold my Babe Ruth autographed bat. Babe signed it for me one day years ago at Yankee Stadium.

When I was on the last slice of pizza, I

heard a shriek from the Westfronz mansion.

The Westfronz mansion has been empty for a very long time, and Alex Westfronz has been dead for a very long time also. An assassin killed him.

Out comes a woman dressed in a black dress and white high heels, about five feet eight inches, wearing a nametag saying "Rebecca Duck: Realtor," and with blackish/brownish hair.

So like any other private eye, I asked what was wrong. But she just kept on

walking away.

I woke up the next morning with the radio blasting, “Rebecca Duck was found unconscious on the ground, shaking, just outside of the Westfronz mansion. Police officers are still investigating the area.”

“What?” I said. How could she just be lying there on the ground if I saw her walk away from the mansion last night?

As I was putting my coat on someone knocked on the door. “It’s open,” I yelled. In came my best #5 Most Wanted Person friend and detective partner, Blaze. “What did you do this time, Blaze?” I asked.

“Nothing, I just came to ask you if you had heard about Rebecca Duck. And how she was found lying outside the Westfronz mansion shaking,” Blaze asked.

“Yeah, I saw her come out of the mansion,” I said. “But, you know what’s weird? If she walked away from the mansion last night, I’m curious to know why or how she came back.”

Blaze suggested, “Well, let’s go ask the police some questions. But first I gotta get my disguise.”

So Blaze and I got in the cab and told the driver to take us to the police station.

Now let me tell you about Blaze’s disguise. He had on black sunglasses, a blonde wig, gloves (so the police can’t trace his fingerprints), jeans, a Hollywood sweatshirt, and brown boots.

When we arrived at the police station, we went in the front door. I asked the chief policeman, Hank, if he could give us some clues about the mystery. Surprisingly, he agreed and told us the story. Maybe it is because I’ve solved many mysteries before.

“Rebecca Duck was taken to the St. Zach’s hospital at 11:27 p.m. When she woke up she told us that she went into the Westfronz mansion to make sure it was secure enough for her real estate company. When she was in the bathroom, she saw a

ghost that looked like a butler. She said he was a very nice ghost and showed her the way around the mansion. When they got to the master bedroom there was a family of lions on the bed. Rebecca screamed and ran out the house. After she left the mansion, she went to her house and fell asleep immediately, only to wake to the cold night outside the Westfronz mansion. She was found by some delivery boy who called 911 to get her to safety.”

“Is she available to talk to in the hospital?” I asked officer Hank.

“Yeah, she’s in room 6945,” he told us. Then he got up and was inspecting Blaze. “You looks familiar,” he said in his Brooklyn accent.

“Well, I do get on TV sometimes.”

“Yeah. You ever been in the slammer?” he asked, still looking at Blaze.

“No,” Blaze replied.

“That was close, Jones,” Blaze said to me after we left the police station.

“We need to get you a better disguise,” I said.

I don’t think I need to tell you what Rebecca Duck said to Blaze and me, because it was basically the exact thing she told the chief except for a couple times when spit just came out. I asked her how she got back to the Westfronz mansion. She told me that she started to have nightmares and thought she was sleepwalking.

I thought since no one else was going to go in the mansion, I might as well.

On a side note, Blaze did not go with me into the mansion. He said he was going to rob a bank instead.

I went in the mansion, and I didn’t see a ghost. I guessed that maybe he was in another room. I carefully walked in the kitchen: no ghost. In the dining room, there was also no ghost. In the living room, there was no ghost. Next, very quietly I went to

the upstairs and called out, “Butler. Butler! Are you there?” But still, I got no answer. That was my mistake because I knew that the lions would come for me now. So I hid in a closet.

I sat there for about 20 minutes. When nothing happened, I went to the master bedroom to see where the lions were. I carefully opened the door to find nothing but a piece of paper hanging out of an old trunk covered in dust. It said, “Here is the will of Alex Westfronz: I give everything I own to my best friend Todd Jones.” Todd Jones; that name sounded familiar. Oh, yeah: It’s my dad.

Joyfully I ran out of the house with the will and told everyone that there was no ghost and, more importantly, no lions. The

police gave the house to me and threw Rebecca Duck in jail. But I still had one question for the police. “If there were no ghost or lions, why was she still lying outside unconscious?” The doctor said that she probably convinced herself so much that there were lions and ghosts that she fainted. She told the police that by lying about the lions and ghosts it would make the house sell better.

One more thing is that I figured out why Alex Westfronz gave the house to my dad. It’s because Alex Westfronz had no family and he and my dad were partners in business and best friends. I wonder why my dad never told me about that? Oh, well. Hey, at least I got a sweet house.

## Jon’s Legacy

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*On Jon’s first day of school in a new town, he finds that fitting in does not come automatically. He hopes that baseball will help him along in*

**JON’S LEGACY**, by *Lenny Trotta*.

Jon’s plane arrived at Metro Detroit Airport in Michigan from a long journey from Japan. Once Jon and his family arrived at their house in Beverly Hills, they unpacked all of their furniture and clothing. After three hours of unpacking, Jon decided to go into the moving truck to find his red bike, glove, and baseball.

Then, Jon rode around his neighborhood and found a park. He got off his bike and walked toward the baseball diamond. Jon saw some kids playing baseball and asked if he could play. They were rude to Jon and said he could not play. Jon’s feelings were hurt by their mean words, so he rode his bike home. Jon told his mom how the kids made fun of his Japanese accent.

The next day, Jon went to the first day

of school. Jon was excited to meet his new classmates. He was also nervous that he would be made fun of because of his culture.

John met his first hour teacher. He found his locker and placed his school supplies inside his locker for the rest of the day. He put his shiny red lock on his locker hook and went to his first hour class. When he arrived at his class he was tardy because he got lost in the new school building. The teacher introduced Jon to the class, but the classmates laughed at his weird accent. This situation made Jon feel uncomfortable and discouraged.

After first hour class, Jon saw a sign for Beverly Hills Wildcat tryouts. He was immediately encouraged and excited to try out. Finally, Jon finished his first day of

school and went home to see his parents.

Jon's mom asked how his first day of school went. Jon told her that his day was hard in the beginning but it turned out to be okay. Most importantly, Jon told his mom about baseball tryouts.

On Saturday morning Jon woke up early for baseball tryouts. His mom drove him to baseball. All of the boys trying out started to warm up and play catch.

Jon did not have a partner to play catch with, so he went to play with the coach. Then, the boys went to fielding practice. Jon had a hard time scooping up the ground balls, but his outfield performance was much better than his infield practice. Some of the boys were a little jealous of Jon's outfield skills, so they tripped him as he ran back in line.

The best section of tryouts was batting practice. Jon was first up to bat and missed his first two pitches. The boys all laughed at him because they believed that he would not hit the ball. Jon put all of his anger into the next pitch and hit a home run. This made the boys take notice of Jon's excellent baseball skills. They knew Jon could really help the team.

The next school day, Jon noticed that his classmates didn't make fun of him anymore. They respected him and his baseball skills. Everyone wanted to sit by Jon at lunch because he became popular.

When Jon got home, he found out from his mom that he had made the team as the centerfielder. He was so excited to start on a new baseball team, but he really liked having all of his new friends.

## Just Once More

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*In **JUST ONCE MORE** by Shannon M. Doyle, a girl named Laura Rutz builds a wigwam to escape the grief of her dear brother Ryan's death. She wanted to be alone, but hoped Ryan's spirit would visit her. Little do Laura, her best friend, and cousin know what they might experience.*

Laura placed the last stick on her wigwam for the night. She had been working on it since September for her brother, Ryan. Laura missed him a lot. She missed him following her around and helping her. Ryan had died in July in a bicycle accident. He had been riding down their street and was struck by a distracted driver.

Laura built the wigwam as a place to escape her family's grief. She also hoped that Ryan's spirit would find her there and help ease her loneliness. Her family members, all coping with Ryan's death in their own individual ways, accepted Laura's new quarters.

Her mother threatened to take pictures

and start a new magazine called *Better Huts and Wigwams*.

Laura believed in fairytales and fantasy creatures such as fairies, leprechauns, merpeople, and spirits. She also believed every person's spirit would come and visit from the heavens.

Laura had strawberry blond hair and green eyes that twinkled brightly. Laura walked from the wigwam to her house to have supper. Her mom, older brother, Chris, little sister, Annabel, and father waited. Chris was thinking about calling her in when right at that moment she walked in.

After supper, Laura went to bed with a warm feeling Ryan had just come to visit

and was in her wigwam at this very moment.

In the far corner of Laura's backyard stood the wigwam. It was made of sticks, brush, cast-off bricks, and plywood. The wigwam was about five feet tall, and six feet wide in circumference.

It was complete silence. Laura sat up in bed and had a weird feeling somebody was watching her. She lit a candle and got out of bed and got dressed in her knickers-style pants. She put on her long knee socks. Her buttoned down red shirt was a little dirty, but she wore it anyway. She put on Ryan's Irish cap and her own small old fashioned-looking shoes. She ran out her bedroom door and down the stairs. She slowly opened the back door and slid out.

It was quite hard to move the plywood door, but Laura managed. Inside she saw a small little present. She closed the door to the shelter and sat down to open the present. The present was wrapped in royal blue paper with hearts on it and a red bow on top.

It was a little gold bell! Laura set the candle down and hung the bell from the ceiling from a loose stick. It looked nice.

Suddenly, the candle blew out. There wasn't any wind, and she certainly didn't put it out.

"Huh!" Laura gasped with fright. It suddenly got cold, and Laura was alone in the early morning darkness.

"Hello? Ryan?" Laura asked timidly.

Laura reached for the matches she had and relit the candle. Laura then saw a small, misty figure sitting in front of her. She let her eyes adjust and, sure enough, it was Ryan's spirit!

"Ryan?" Laura asked. "Ryan? Is that really you?"

Ryan nodded yes. As bright as day Laura could see him.

"Do you like the shelter?" Laura waited

with an anxious expression. "Ryan, can you talk?"

The expression held on his face seemed to be no, as he shook his head. Laura knew some loved one's spirits could talk, but not all. When they first entered spirithood, they would appear to everyone. Then, after a couple of days, they could disappear and appear as they pleased. But they couldn't talk, unless they were ancient, meaning they have been a spirit for one hundred years.

Laura sat closer to her brother Ryan and shivered. It was a lot colder next to him than where she was sitting. She reached for the candle and put it next to her and became warmer. Laura felt safe next to her brother, even though he was younger. She watched the light of the candle as her eyes got heavy, and finally, she went to sleep.

"Laura? Are you in there?" called Annabel's voice. "Mother wants you."

Laura woke up and opened the door. "Morning! Guess who I saw early this morning?"

Annabel walked in and looked around inside. "Who?"

"Ryan, he was here. I mean his spirit. Look." Laura gestured her hand to where her little brother had been sitting. Laura wrinkled her eyebrows, wondering where he had gone. He had just been sitting there.

"Huh, that's funny. I swear...he was just sitting there. Weird. Well, what did Mom want me for?"

"Breakfast. And how could you pull a fib on me?" Annabel said angrily. She looked around inside the shelter for the second time. "I want to see him, too!"

All Laura could see were the sticks, leaves, tree, and the bricks for the chimney. By now the candle had burned out, and so had the fire Ryan had lit for her while she was asleep.

"He'll be back, I know he will be." Laura closed the door to the shelter and walked

with Annabel to the house, quickly had breakfast, and ran off to Kaylette's house. Laura was running late, but she knew Kaylette wouldn't care.

"Hello, Laura. You are fifteen minutes late," Kaylette said while closing the door after Laura came in.

"Kaylette, you will not believe what I have experienced in the past few hours. I saw my brother, in the wigwam shelter!" Laura looked at Kaylette. "Don't you care?"

Kaylette stared wide-eyed at Laura. Finally she said, "We have a huge science project to do. Let's focus on that instead of your imagination." Kaylette walked up the stairs with Laura behind her. Laura was able to put up with the science project, but kept thinking about Ryan's spirit and the wigwam.

After Laura and Kaylette finished the science project, Laura took Kaylette over to her cousin Michael's house. Laura wanted to tell Michael about her experience.

Michael was Laura's favorite cousin. Ryan had always been Michael's favorite boy cousin, and at every family gathering, Laura, Michael, and Ryan would play together.

"Hey!" Michael said as he opened the door to Kaylette and Laura. Laura had the urge to tell Michael about Ryan and the shelter, but decided to leave it so Kaylette would keep her opinions to herself.

"Michael, I've got something to tell you." Laura couldn't hold it in. She had to tell him. "Ryan was in my wigwam. I had the feeling that he was, so I got dressed and went outside."

Laura told Michael the whole story, and then Michael spoke up, "All right, Kaylette, what do you think?"

Kaylette turned to him and said, "I think she's crazy."

Laura gave Kaylette an upset look. "Michael, maybe you and Kaylette should

come and see the wigwam. You know, camp out and sleep in it."

Laura moved the wooden plywood door from the shelter and allowed Kaylette and Michael to go in. She then put her stuff in with theirs and closed the door. Laura lit a fire and candle and placed it on the small table in there. While Laura's eyes were adjusting, Kaylette spoke up, "Well Laura, I don't see Ryan anywhere. I think I might go, Laura. I'm bored and tired." Laura then told Kaylette that it wasn't that late, and that she still should support her friend's thoughts. "Do you believe her, Michael?" Kaylette whispered.

"I don't know, Kaylette," Michael whispered back. "Laura doesn't lie or joke about this kind of stuff. The only thing she does joke about is getting eaten by spiders, which I think she has outgrown."

"You do believe me, don't you, Michael?" Laura questioned.

"Not much proof yet, Laura. I kind of believe Kaylette. I mean, get realistic. How could Ryan's spirit be in here?"

Kaylette said, "It is just your imagination, Laura. Nobody is in here but us, and nobody is going to come."

Laura turned away and looked at the little golden bell Ryan had left for her, and put it in the little washboard she had helped him make. The small golden bell had a soft ring, but loud enough to hear.

"Oh, Laura, I don't hear anybody in here but us, and the fire's out, just to let you know," Kaylette said. It was cold and there was no light. She reached for the matchbox. It only had two matches left: one for the fire and one for the candle. The fire flared. Then, someone came in.

"L-L-Laura," Kaylette stuttered. "I think Ryan is here, and we're being watched." Kaylette paused to see if she heard something. "I see, I see, look!"

Sure enough, sitting by the fire was Ryan, at last.

“Michael, get up, Ryan’s here!” Laura pulled at his ear. Michael sat up and saw Ryan. “Oh...hi, Ryan. Ryan!” Michael was wide awake now, and said he definitely believed Laura.

Kaylette had something to say, too. “I am a believer now, Laura. Amazing.”

The night went on, and Ryan’s spirit

remembered Kaylette from many sleepovers, and he of course remembered Michael. Even though he couldn’t talk, Ryan’s spirit brought pleasure to Kaylette, Michael, and Laura.

Ryan’s spirit was never seen again. Laura, Kaylette, and Michael never forgot their last meeting with Ryan. They all hoped that in some way, Ryan found his way on the next step of his journey to the heavens.

## The Killer of the Night

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*In **THE KILLER OF THE NIGHT** by Alexandria Paul, a friendly cop named Jack and his partner, Chris, are working on a serious murder case. Little did Jack know that the killer was right in front of him.*

**B**ang! I had to do it. I couldn’t just let him live his whole life in jail for something he couldn’t control, even if it meant killing him.

I always thought that mutants and aliens and people’s souls being taken were just what directors wrote about to make money and be famous. I never believed that that stuff could happen in real life, but boy, was I wrong. I found this out one week ago on March 17, 2001. So you understand the total shock and horror I felt about this whole incident, I probably should start from the day that I will never forget.

I walked into the local police department to start work. As I walked in I realized that everyone was in the morgue on the top floor, so I went straight up to where they all were. Everyone was surrounding a dead body of a middle-aged blond woman who was probably in her late 20s.

“Is this another killing from the X case?” I said in a not amused tone.

We call it the X case because a killing has happened every night by the same person

for about a year and it is extremely frustrating that no one has even got a lead. The whole state has been working on this case long and hard, but we can’t even find a piece of evidence. It is way worse than “Jack the Ripper.”

Our department makes a little game out of this case. Every week two people from our station try to find any information about the killings. When they come back with nothing, they get fired from the case by the chief and he hires another two people. My best pal Chris and I are the only people in this whole rusty-looking department who haven’t gotten hired for the job. But this week is our week, and I’m happier than a dog that just received a chew toy.

“Jack and Chris, you guys haven’t had the chance to get fired on the X case, have you?” The chief said like he really didn’t care. He probably didn’t.

“No, sir, we would be honored to be on the case.” Chris took the words right out of my mouth.

We reached over to look at the corpse.

She had a gunshot in her lower back right through her spine and a gunshot wound up on her right shoulder in the middle of the shoulder blade.

“Get to work!” The chief didn’t seem to think we would find even the slightest piece of evidence. We probably wouldn’t.

As soon as we could, Chris and I made our way out of the station and into a car that would take us to the place where the young lady was killed. We ended up in a dirty old alleyway on 4<sup>th</sup> Street that is home to mice.

We looked for hours and hours and hours after that, and still found nothing. As the sun set the only thing we could find was a dirty old shoelace. Even though we probably wouldn’t find anything else I did a clean sweep of the place.

Chris and I decided to leave the old alley and go get some food. Even though the shoelace wasn’t anything special and we probably wouldn’t be able to get anything off it, I brought it with me. I wanted to do some tests on it in the morning to see if it had any fingerprints on it. Even if it did, we probably won’t be able to identify it because of how filthy it is. The shoelace was still more than anyone else had found, though.

“I’ll pick you up at 10:00 p.m., ok?” I shouted just for the fun of it.

“Ok. See you then, and bring the shoelace. I don’t want someone to steal it while we are gone,” Chris said, just joking. I brought it just to be safe, though.

*Ding-dong.*

The doorbell rang, and I heard Chris shout, “Be right there.”

“Hey, Jack, come in. I’m just looking for one of my shoelaces for my sneakers. Then we can leave.”

“Fine, but hurry,” I said in a rush. Our reservation was in ten minutes, and I hate being late.

He was taking forever. “I bet I could run to Mexico, buy you a shoelace, and when I

came back you would still be looking for that darn shoelace.” I put the shoelace from the crime scene in my pocket and waited on the welcome mat inside his home.

“You’re going to pay for that comment.”

Sure I was.

“Whatever. Let’s just go. I’ll find the shoelace a different time,” Chris said a little frustrated by the fact that he couldn’t find his darn shoelace. I don’t see what the big deal is, though. It is just a shoelace.

We got to the restaurant right on time, and were escorted to our seats. We were there for two or three hours just having so much fun. The time flew right on by. This was the longest we had been out having fun together. Usually at like midnight we would head home. We would go to bed and wake up the next morning and go to work. Or at least I thought right when he got home Chris went to bed.

That wasn’t the case tonight. We stayed out past 2:00 a.m. just having fun. The clock ticked one minute before 3:00 a.m. That is when it happened.

Chris’s eyes turned a bloody red, and his hands started to shake. At that moment I realized that my best pal Chris wasn’t there anymore.

His eyes were focused on the ceiling. The table trembled under me.

“Chris... Chris...Chris...what’s going on?” He didn’t answer me. He looked terrifying.

I started to sweat bullets as questions went through my mind. What’s going on? Is he a vampire? Is he playing a joke on me? Is he going to suck my blood?

Relief crossed my face. He was not a vampire. He didn’t have fangs. Then I got as scared as a little dog again. He might not be a vampire, but he sure is a monster. The word monster appeared over and over again in my head. I had never been so scared in my life. What was going on, for gosh sake?



Then suddenly Chris got up without saying a word and left the restaurant. There was no way I was going to try to stop him right now when he probably would kill me for it. There is no way I was going to get in his way. I just sat there wondering if I should run away in terror or follow him but keep my distance. I needed to sit there and take this all in. Then for some stupid reason I decided to follow him.

He was across the street in a gun shop. What are the odds there is a gun shop right across the street? Chris walked out with a gun. Who would sell a gun to a guy with blood red eyes and shaking arms? How stupid was that?

The question hit me: Had this been a daily thing? Had Chris gone to this gun shop before?

I followed him across the street when it all clicked together. Oh, crap! Chris was the killer. He just didn't know it. Every night at this time Chris turns into a killer and then kills someone without knowing it. Another person takes over him at night. No!

I saw a poor woman cross his path. No! No! No! I fell to the ground sobbing. My best friend for life was a killer. No!

*Bang!* That's when I heard the gunshot. Then the poor woman who probably was just at work late and hurrying home fell to the ground. I would be traumatized for life. I couldn't stand to see anymore. This was horrendous! This is not right! No! All emotions flew through my head. At that moment I felt like I was going to faint. NOT MY BEST FRIEND CHRIS! NO, NO, NO!

I had seen enough. I dragged myself home slowly and crying, but I couldn't sleep all night. I went over the mental pictures in my head of the poor elderly woman crossing Chris's path and instantly dying. I couldn't get my mind off it.

All I knew for sure is that I wasn't going to rat Chris out. I know that's stupid, but you have never had a friend like Chris before. Also, it wasn't his fault he turned into a killer at night. It just happened. I will find a way to make sure he doesn't go to jail or hurt any more people. He doesn't deserve to be a killer. Or at least the man I know doesn't. This whole situation was just so much I could barely remember to breathe.

The next morning I told Chris everything about what he does in the middle of the night: that he was the serial killer that everyone was looking for. I told him that I would never tell on him, and that his secret was safe with me.

He stayed home that day from work to take it all in. When I got to work today I was about to go see the victim of his last night's kill when I saw Chris. He was at work, but he wasn't working. He was in a police car handcuffed and sobbing.

"I swear I didn't tell anyone," I managed to say without crying.

"I know. I did. I can't just go around killing people. I have to pay the price. Sorry." That is all he could say. Then he looked away from me while I took it all in.

A guy like Chris would suffer in jail, and I was losing my best friend. I couldn't take it anymore. It was too overwhelming. I wasn't thinking straight. I was a mess. That's when my heart took the best of me.

*Bang!*

I had to do it. I couldn't just let him live his whole life in jail for something he couldn't control, even if it meant killing him. I just had to shoot him. It was better than him living his whole life in jail.

I guess to make up for it I will go to jail for him. I will live my whole life in jail, and I don't care, because now I know my friend is in a better place.

# Left on an Island

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*In LEFT ON AN ISLAND by Savannah Tatum, five best friends take a vacation and meet their worst enemy: the monster!*

Once upon a time far away there lived five kids that were best friends. Their names were Chris, Sara, John, Madison, and Savannah.

One day they were at the corner candy shop, and they bought packs of Bubble Yum, string candies, and Mountain Dew. As they were eating the candy over Savannah's house, they talked about how they had not been on a vacation in a really long time. So, they all decided where they wanted to go. They took a vote and decided they wanted to go to Gill-a-Goon Island.

Gill-a-Goon was the most visited place on Earth. Gill-a-Goon has all different kinds of parties every night and campfires. No parents went along with the kids, so they had no supervision.

Each of the parents of Chris, Sara, Savannah, John, and Madison each gave them one hundred dollars in case of an emergency.

They took a boat to Gill-a-Goon Island. Six hours passed by, and they were finally there. Right when they stepped off of the boat, they saw trees, cabins, and ponds. John started to scream because he was so excited. This was a dream come true for everyone.

As the four kids were walking to their two separate cabins, they realized Madison had wandered off when she got off the boat. The next thing they knew, Madison was gone!

They split up. Sara and Chris went to look for help, and Savannah and John went to go look for Madison.

"AAHHHHHHHHH!" John and Savannah saw a 23-foot tall monster with red eyes, green hair, black fangs, and a wet dog smell.

Savannah and John were running as fast as they could. The monster scooped John up in

his hand and swallowed him in one piece.

Savannah started to scream at the top of her lungs while running five miles per hour. Sara and Chris came running to see why Savannah was screaming. But when they asked her what happened, Savannah didn't say anything; she was so shocked. Savannah finally calmed down and explained what happened.

Sara started to freak out. She wanted to go home immediately, but the boat wouldn't come till the next week.

The week passed by, and they were so happy the boat was finally there. As they were walking to the boat they met their worst enemy: THE MONSTER!

The monster picked Chris up and ran away. Savannah and Sara screaming. Their jaws went to the floor as they were running to the boat, trying to load their things and get the heck off this island.

Their boat ride was horrible. On the way home they didn't know how they would explain to the boys' and Madison's parents.

Five hours went by. They were finally home. And the five parents were waiting for them. They were so happy to see them. But Savannah and Sara weren't so happy.

As the parents went up to hug them they pushed back. As they were explaining the story the moms started to cry. They didn't know what to do!

The ride home was miserable, and no one spoke to each other. All you could hear was weeping and whining.

At the end there were only two best friends, and they never went on a wacky trip again.

# Lisa and the Food Fight

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*In LISA AND THE FOOD FIGHT by Dylan DeWald, a girl named Lisa goes in a forest behind her house. She finds herself in the middle of a war with chipmunks and dwarves. Lisa needs to find a way to resolve the war, or it could be disaster.*

No one actually liked Lisa, not even her parents. Her only friends weren't actually her friends at all. Their parents forced them to be her friend because her parents owned a multi-million dollar company. (In other words, they're filthy rich.)

One day when her "friends" came over, they just sat in Lisa's kitchen texting each other.

**Katie:** Ugh she's so annoying

**Mary:** I know, let's get rid of her

**Sam:** How?

**Katie:** Let's go into the woods then ditch her.

**Mary:** Isn't that mean?

**Sam:** Not if you had to go to camp with her.

"Hey, Lisa, do you wanna go into the woods behind your house?" asked Katie.

Lisa replies, "My parents don't like me to. I might get poison ivy."

"But Lisa, remember in camp we learned what poison ivy looks like? Anyways you aren't AFRAID, are you?" Sam remarked.

"I'M NOT AFRAID! LET'S GO!"

And off they went to see the wizard, the wizard of Wizardly Oz! Oh, wait, wrong story. All four "friends" ran out into the forest. It was almost getting dark when they entered the forest. They went all the way into the woods, until... they saw a river. They went down the river until they found a log so they could climb across. "Lisa, why don't you go first? You're the heaviest, so if it can support you, it can support us all," Katie suggested. Lisa agreed and went

across the log. When she turned around after she crossed, her so called "friends" were gone.

She was lonely, and it was dark. No one would come looking for her because her parents were in Romania, and if they were home they wouldn't care. She crossed the log again so she could try to find her friends or a way out. She walked for what seemed to be miles. She had no luck.

As she was walking she tripped. There was a small hole in the ground and her foot was stuck in it. Before she could pull it out something started biting it. It was a chipmunk. Lisa screamed.

Out of the blue a dwarf (the Snow White kind of dwarf) ran up to Lisa with a mini spear and chucked it at the chipmunk. The chipmunk retreated back into its hole.

Lisa sat there, astonished.

The dwarf said, "Nasty little creatures, aren't they?" Lisa just sat there, speechless. "Oh," said the dwarf, "You don't know what I am, do you?" Lisa shook her head. "I'm a dwarf, silly little girl."

"That's nice," Lisa croaked.

"It looks like you're hurt. Follow me." Lisa wasn't sure what to do: follow the little dwarf or run for her life to nowhere. It seemed either way she would die. So she followed the little dwarf.

The dwarf brought her to a small camp. By small she didn't mean in its size; she meant everything in it. All the tents, fires, everything was small. Lisa couldn't imagine what a baby dwarf looked like.

The dwarf took her to a tent with a

hospital cross on it. She was about three-fourths of its size.

“Guess you will be sleeping under the stars.” A nurse came out with some bandages for her hurt knee. Lisa fell asleep under the stars.

Lisa woke up to war screams. She just sat up and looked around. There was no fighting to be seen. She stood up. She was taller than the tents, and therefore she could see anything.

Lisa couldn't describe what was happening. It was sad and hilarious at the same time. Chipmunks and dwarves were battling to the death. The dwarves were about three times the size of a chipmunk. The armies were well-trained. Both sides were losing troops quickly. Lisa was amazed at this sight. It was awesome and crazy. The woods were turned into a battlefield. Spears, swords, and arrows were flying across it.

Lisa saw more chipmunk troops coming in. “Man, I think I might just die,” she thought to herself. The reinforcements were able to get rid of the rest of the dwarves and take over the encampment. Lisa was taken prisoner.

“What do you want with me?” Lisa cried. She had handcuffs on and ropes tied around her limbs. Hundreds of chipmunks surrounded her.

“We want nuts,” replied one chipmunk.

“Nuts, nuts, nuts,” screamed the other chipmunks.

Lisa asked, “Why do you want nuts?”

“For food,” replied that same chipmunk.

The others echoed, “Food, food, food!” Lisa just kept on walking.

“Where are you taking me?” Lisa questioned.

“To our leader,” replied the same chipmunk again!

“Our leader, so beautiful, and with those big black eyes. With loads of nuts, and

funny jokes. He's better than you all!” sang the other chipmunks.

“We're here,” said the same chipmunk as always. Lisa didn't see anything. All there was was an open field. “One, two three.” All the chipmunks jumped at the same time.

Lisa fell through the ground, with all the chipmunks. She might have crushed a few... Anyway, a bunch of chipmunks in maid outfits started rebuilding the ceiling to their labyrinths of tunnels and burrows.

Lisa looked around. It was like being in an underground castle. The walls were marble, a light shade of brown. Where the ceiling meets the walls there was a golden-colored strip of metal. Pillars went on in a line as far as an eye could see. The hallways or tunnels were bustling with chipmunks, but all eyes were on Lisa. Lisa turned around and saw a silver door that was as big as the hallway. She definitely wasn't going there if she was a war prisoner, or was she?

“C'mon, fat dwarf, follow me.” Lisa was about to say she wasn't a dwarf, but she decided not to. Not if she was going to die. Lisa followed the leader chipmunk (the one that lead the troops to the camp). She did actually go to the silver door. The chipmunk put a key in a nut that was beside the door, and it opened.

Inside was a throne, with a bowl of nuts on it, of course. The chipmunks pushed Lisa in and slammed the door shut. She was the only person in there.

“Now where did I put that dang old nut cracker?” said a very mysterious high-pitched voice. “Ah, there it is.” The high-pitched voice's owner walked out from behind the throne. You wouldn't believe who it was. Just guess. C'mon, you know you want to! Oh, I'll just spoil it... It was Alvin. Not just any old Alvin. Alvin the chipmunk.

Lisa screamed with joy! She ran up to him and started hugging him.

“Hey babe, watch how tight you’re hugging me. This back cost over 200 grand,” said Alvin. Lisa backed off.

“Who? Why? Where? How?” asked Lisa, curious about Alvin.

Alvin was confused, but just answered, “I was born in this chipmunk colony. When I was young, I wanted to become an actor, so I left it. I left everything. I become known as Alvin the Chipmunk and was famous worldwide. When I came home, everyone loved and cherished me. It was the best feeling I had ever had. Then when the election was held for a new leader I just tried for the fun of it. But the people loved me. They voted me in. Then new problems came with being a leader. Such as other nations.” As Alvin was saying this Lisa was standing there wide-eyed, not expecting such a big answer. “The other nations such as the snakes always had problems with us. Then a new problem came up. The dwarves. They accused us of stealing their mushroom mines, when it was really a simple mistake. Then for revenge they took over the nut forest, which we owned. That’s where you were staying.” Lisa did remember an odd walnut smell... “And that is my story,” said Alvin, ending his speech.

“Wow, I never knew,” said Lisa.

“It’s okay, I know you don’t. That’s why we’re not killing you. But, we have one thing for you to do.”

Lisa asked, “What is it?”

“Well, the dwarves still want you back. They think you’re their secret weapon because you’re one of them, but giant. We need to use that against the—”

Alvin was cut off by a blast through his wall. It was the dwarves. They had come for Lisa. “LISA RUN!” screamed Alvin.

Lisa didn’t know what to do. Could she

trust Alvin? Could she trust the dwarves? Could she trust herself on her decision? Lisa knew one thing for sure, though: She didn’t want to die.

Lisa ran down the corridor as fast as she could. Lisa still wanted to know if she had made the right choice. She did know that if this fight was over food, it seemed stupid. *Why can’t they just share the food?* Lisa thought, thinking one hundred miles an hour. It was so childish to be fighting for food. Then an idea came to Lisa....

“Come with us, Alvin, if you want to live,” said a dwarf. (This is about Alvin now if you hadn’t noticed.) Alvin went with them. As they were heading through the small tunnels that were built for the kidnapping plan the dwarf started singing songs.

“Oh, I’ve been working on the railroad all the day long day. I’ve been working on the railroad...”

“SHUT UP! YOU’RE ALMOST AS BAD AS THE CHIPMUNKS! SHUT UP!” screamed Alvin. Then it was dead quiet walking through the tunnels. After a few hours Alvin could see the light. No, he was not dead. He could see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Lisa walked through the throne room where everything happened. Maids were picking up the place after it was ransacked. Lisa couldn’t let Alvin go. She had to save him and follow her plan. (This will be mentioned later in the story, but not now....)

Lisa walked through the tunnels created by the dwarves in an attempt to save Alvin. Lisa didn’t know why she wanted to. She just felt a connection here she never had. She saw the light at the end of the tunnel. It was beautiful to see after walking in the dark.

She came to the opening. Lisa found herself in a tent sort of room, like a circus

tent. Inside the tent was a cage, like a lion cage. Alvin was in that cage. He didn't seem to notice her. No one notices her. Lisa was about to speak, but she heard something. It was a buzzing sound.

Lisa walked outside. The buzzing sound was a holographic map. Lisa could see everything: The nut forest, the river, the entrance to the chipmunks' labyrinth. She also saw police cars...by her house. She hoped no one had been killed. Then a thought came to Lisa's head. What if they we're looking for her. What if somebody cared?

"What do you think you're doing?" said a dwarf. Out of nowhere, well, yes, really somewhere, but you get my point, a spear went through his head. Yes, it was gruesome. Yes, there were guts. And yes , there were nuts. The chipmunks were back. Lisa's plan could go into action.

Lisa ran in the middle of the battle stopping everyone. They both wanted her. They wanted her to prove they were better. "Why are we fighting? For food? Stop this food fight right now. This is childish behavior. Why can't you just share the food? Ever thought of that?" Lisa yelled.

"We hate nuts!" screamed a dwarf.

"We hate mushrooms!" screamed a chipmunk.

"Then why not just give each other their food back? It was wrong for you to steal it in the first place," Lisa said.

"They stole our food first!" screamed a dwarf.

"No, we didn't; you just misplaced it!" yelled back a chipmunk.

"How can you misplace a forest?" asked a dwarf. Both sides started arguing. Lisa was getting mad. She couldn't stand people fighting over nonsense.

"SHUT YOUR FRONT DOOR NOW!" screamed Lisa at the top of her lungs. Everyone shut their mouths, and

some even dropped their weapons. "Now give each other the food. Can we agree on that?" Everyone agreed and gave it back.

The two different colonies never spoke to each other again, but did get along. Lisa used the holographic map to get home. Her parents were glad to see she was ok, which surprised Lisa. She was never given this kind of affection before. Lisa never spoke to anyone of what happened in the forest. Not that she had anyone to tell; it's just no one would listen to her or care. So she went on with her life. She went to her school where no one liked her. She went to her "friends" houses every so often just to see what regular people's lives are like again.

Lisa went to school, very lonely. Her friends (her new real friends, but same as her "friends") were waiting for her. Her friends had become her friends from guilt, not because they liked her. They wanted to know what happened in the forest. Lisa knew if she told the truth everyone would call her crazy. Lisa just told them that she got lost but found her way home. It would be a simple enough cover-up.

Lisa wanted real friends, real people, to talk to about what happened. She wanted someone who could be close to her.

After a day of school Lisa went home. Her mom was home. Her mom was alone a lot now. Lisa loved it, even though they never really talked. "Mom," Lisa said, "how was your day?"

"Fine...sweetie."

"What did you do?"

"Just worked a lil'."

"Hey, Mom, did you know you're the only one who didn't ask about what happened in the forest?" Lisa asked. The only one who cares, Lisa thought to herself.

"I didn't know that. So, what did happen?"

Lisa told the whole story. Her mom made faces.

“You’ve got quite an imagination!” Lisa’s mom exclaimed. “But I gotta say, that would make a great story.”

“Do you think?” Lisa asked with hope. “Well, I doubt it would make it, but I love it.”

## Locked in the Bathroom

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*In **LOCKED IN THE BATHROOM** by **Charlotte Reader**, two young girls, Olivia and Charlotte, get trapped in their father’s workplace bathroom with no way out!*

*I should have known that if you need a pass to get in, you just might need a pass to get out.*

Have you ever had to go to the bathroom really badly but couldn’t get in? Or out? That has happened to me. It was after hours at the office building M.O.R. Pace. Olivia, my older sister, and I were touring my father’s work building while he completed some work.

At the age of six, I wanted to go crazy and run around a lot, so Olivia and I sprinted down a hallway we termed “the running hallway.” We would race from the left wing of the building to the right wing. Since there were no office windows in that hallway, the people working in the offices couldn’t see us running around like wild women. In that hallway we could get away with anything!

After running around, drinking water, running some more, and drinking more water, we both had to use the bathroom. Since it was after hours, we needed my dad’s pass to open the bathroom. We didn’t know why. What person would want to steal a bar of soap at an office building? He offered to let us take the pass into the bathroom and for Olivia to just bring it back, but we ignored him, and he kept it. Had we known that we needed that pass to leave the bathroom, we might not have

been so stubborn.

About three minutes later, we wanted to go see my dad and ask if we could leave. We tried opening the door, but it wouldn’t open! We screamed for help, and screamed out of fear, “OH MY GOD I’M GOING TO DIE IN A BATHROOM!” but my dad couldn’t hear us. We didn’t know if anyone else was in the building at this hour!

After waiting for ten minutes, which seemed like an hour for Olivia and me, we tried both doors, pushing forward and pulling backwards. We pleaded for anybody to help us. We were exhausted at this point, so we just sat there, right on the bathroom floor.

About one minute after we screeched our screams of terror, we heard a sound. Someone was coming in! As a tall lady walked in, we caught the door on her way in and our (finally!) way out. A giant weight lifted off my shoulders.

We laughed hysterically thinking of how pathetic we acted, and of course my dad heard that, but not our screams of terror. Soon, he rushed to us assuming we were injured from our hysterical laughter, but as soon as we told him of our story, he joined us in our chuckles.

By the way, if you need a pass to get in, keep it!

# Long Shot for Michael

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*In LONG SHOT FOR MICHAEL by Tom Oeyen, Michael's basketball team goes to the finals. Can he handle the pressure?*

It all starts out in Snow Ville, Denver, where an 11-year-old boy lives named Michael. He loves the game of basketball. Like every normal kid on a normal school day, Michael gets out of bed looking like a storm just passed. He goes downstairs to have his usual corn flakes breakfast, and he eats like a monster.

After brushing his teeth and saying goodbye to his parents, he gets his bag and runs outside to catch the bus. When he steps into the bus he immediately sits next to his classmates Dan, Arroyo and Julia. "Hey, guys," he greets his friends. But Dan, as usual, is sleeping.

When they arrive at Snow Ville Public Middle School, Michael goes straight to his locker. But on the way something catches his attention: There is a flyer. It reads: "Boys basketball tryouts after school at 3:30."

"Hey, guys, do you want to join me for the basketball tryout tonight?" Michael asks his friends Dan and Arroyo.

Dan replies, "No, thanks, I am not much into basketball." But Arroyo is thrilled, and both he and Michael couldn't wait till school was over.

*Brrring, Brrring, Brrring.*

School was over! There was a stampede in the hallway at 3:20. Michael quickly ran to the gym to put on his Anthony jersey and went to play basketball. He was happy to see Arroyo.

Michael impressed the coach. After a week Michael received his game and practice schedule. Luckily, Arroyo also got selected. Michael was very excited to be on the team with his friend Arroyo.

The first game was a tight one. But Michael's team would hang on to win it by the score of 57 to 56. His team went 10-0 in the season.

Now the semi-finals were about to start between Snow Ville Lions and the California Honkers. At the fourth quarter it was tied up at 43 all. Michael had 16 points and seven assists. With only one minute to play the game was tied at 59.

Michael got the ball with 45 seconds to play. Then he drained a three-pointer, which made the score 62 to 59. The crowd went wild. People jumped off their seats and started clapping and cheering like a bunch of wild little toddlers.

With ten seconds left the California Honkers attempted a three-pointer but missed. Arroyo got the rebound and dribbled out the clock. The Lions were going to the finals to face the Michigan Monsters.

"SURPRISE!" yelled his parents when he got home. His parents surprised him with his favorite chocolate cake. They wanted to celebrate his victory.

The next day at school the whole building was erupting with excitement about their victory. He could feel his ears ringing.

A few days later Michael slipped on his jersey that read "31." The whole crowd went wild when the Lions came out on the court. They were chanting, "LIONS! LIONS! LIONS! LIONS! LIONS! LIONS!"

At halftime the score was of 31 to 27 in favor of the Lions.

Deep into the fourth quarter the game was knotted at 64.



The clock showed there was only one and a half minutes left to play. Michael got the ball and passed it all the way across the court to Arroyo, who scored. The score was now 66 to 64 in favor of the Lions. Then the Monsters scored a three-pointer, which gave them the lead by one point.

During the last ten seconds, Arroyo gave a magnificent pass to Michael. He was wide open for the shot with five seconds left.

Everything is quiet, and he can feel all eyes on him. The team relies on him to make this basket and seal this championship. He takes a deep breath and shoots the ball. As the ball is flying through the air, he feels like he is going to faint. He knows that if he misses it, it will be all his fault.

As the ball goes soaring through the air, it hits the rim and flies in the basket at the buzzer. The whole crowd goes nuts. It looked like a whole stampede of elephants came roaring through the gym.

“Yes, we won!” yells Arroyo happily. Michael runs to Arroyo and they congratulate each other.

The team gathers around Michael and lifts him in the air. Michael feels like the star of the game. He is so proud of himself and his team.

After the game, the coach announces Michael as the Most Valuable Player of the game. Michael and his friends walk home with a trophy that reads “2009 State Champions.”

## Losing Grandma Judy

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*In **LOSING GRANDMA JUDY** by Sarah Celovsky, Sarah’s grandma gets in a bad car accident. Sarah’s family is anxious about what will happen to her grandma.*

I have always known there would come a time for a family member to pass on, but I wasn’t prepared for it to be one I was so close to.

My dad and I drove home from the cottage, while my mom stayed up there with my Aunt Patti. As we listened to the radio, my dad’s phone rang with the most annoying ring tone ever, and my dad picked up. My mom was on the other line. She told him that my grandma, my dad’s mom, the one we loved, had just gotten in a car accident. She started sliding and got hit by a truck that knocked her into the ditch. Black ice was not seen and forced her off the road.

It was like nothing you would expect. The only thing worse was that she might die.

I tried pushing that thought out of my mind. My dad and I said nothing for the fifteen minutes in the car. It was a time to think about the possibilities of death.

I rushed over to the hospital with my dad. We scrambled in trying to find out what room my grandma was in. Luckily our friend Mrs. Tucker worked there. She helped us find the room.

I knew that my grandma was in great pain, and I went into her room to go talk with her. Even though she couldn’t hear me, I needed to let it all out.

I was in there for only five minutes when a doctor came in and said, “You cannot be in here. You might have a sickness and get the patient sick.” So I had to leave the room.

Mrs. Tucker told me that I could go with

her downstairs to the gift shop. We walked down to the main part, and I got a stuffed animal, gum, and a card.

My mom had arrived a while before us and said that I had to go to the Tuckers' house and play with my friend Sara. I waited with Mr. Tucker, who was hilarious. He told me jokes and played with my stuffed animal dog.

Finally, Mr. Tucker took us to their house. Sara and I weren't quite sure what to do at first. Finally we decided to play with her hamster. We made a wall around him so he could not get out. Eventually, Sara and I put the hamster away.

Sara's dad asked us if we wanted something to eat. We went into the kitchen and had Popsicles. As we ate our sticky, delicious Popsicles we spoke about what might happen to my grandma.

Later on, my parents came to pick me up. My dad took me back over to the hospital; we were to spend the night there. I didn't think I would want to do that!

The next morning most of my family members were there. They spent the whole day saying things to my grandma such as, "I really hope that you get better and we can tell stories and go the beach with you again." My cousins and I played games and had food downstairs.

Later in the day, some of the doctors rushed in the room. I was wondering what was going on. My family members stopped

what they were. I could tell that they were thinking what I was thinking. Is she gone? Did we lose her for good?

One doctor came out saying, "I am so sorry, but she has passed away." We were all devastated, especially my grandpa. It happened so soon, and nothing like we had expected.

There was a funeral. At the funeral, we all wrote a prayer to God and listened to the friends and family speak of her death and sadness. She was to have her ashes spread over the places she loved, and that's exactly what happened to her.

To this day, my family members and I think of her every day and how her death changed our lives in so many different ways. We now go to our cottage and see our grandpa wishing to see grandma, too.

"Dear God please help my grandma. Get better and make sure she doesn't die of anything else that's bad. I am praying for her give her my pray's into her mind. Make sure she's healthy."  
Love, Sarah Celovsky.

This note to God was written by me when my grandma died in January 2005. These are the exact words written by me. The spelling is not fixed to help me remember that time and how young I was when she died.

## The Magic Teddy Bear

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*Erin and TJ find a teddy bear and discover there's something special about it. In **THE MAGIC TEDDY BEAR** by Ariel Boston, the twists and turns keep everybody guessing.*

Erin and TJ were running away from the guard. "Come back here, you little rascals!" They had been playing jokes on

the Eiffel Tower guard, and he had finally found out.

Erin and TJ found a hiding space and

hopped in. Erin and TJ stayed until they couldn't hear the guard anymore.

"TJ, get your foot off of me!" Erin screamed.

"My foot is not on you!" TJ replied.

"Then what's that I feel on me?"

"Aah!" TJ screamed.

Erin was braver and picked it up. "Hey, it's a teddy bear!" Erin exclaimed.

"Teddy bears are for babies," TJ stated indignantly. "I wish we were out of here!" Out of the blue the bear's ears started to glow. All of a sudden they were in their room.

"Wow! I think this teddy bear granted your wish!" Erin said.

TJ peered at the bear. "Hmm, so it did," he replied.

Meanwhile the kids' evil Uncle Priscilla is listening at the door. *I have got to get that bear*, Uncle Priscilla thought. He knocked down the door. "Give me that bear!" Uncle Priscilla screamed.

Erin, TJ, and Uncle Priscilla played tug-of-war. In a flash an ear was pulled off. Uncle Priscilla laughed like he had a victory and jumped out the window (forgetting he was two stories high). "Ouch!" he said.

"We have got to get that ear!" TJ yelled.

Later on, the kids' family went to Aunt Bob and Uncle Priscilla's house. Erin and TJ snooped around Uncle Priscilla's room looking for the ear. Erin came across a mysterious-looking box. Erin shook it.

"This must be it!" Erin called out to TJ.

"Hey, look, there's a Post-it on the bottom. It says: *The key is in the catacombs*," TJ read.

"To the catacombs!" Erin exclaimed excitedly. Conveniently, Uncle Priscilla's house was on top of them.

They found the key hanging in the doorway of the catacombs. A guard came by and stood at the door. "Hey, that guy looks familiar," TJ said. It was the same guard that had been chasing them at the Eiffel Tower!

"Let's get out of here!" Erin exclaimed.

Just as if the guard had noticed the kids, too, he yelled out, "Stop those kids!" As soon as he said it he regretted it. Erin and TJ were acting so sweet and innocent everyone who was there turned around and stared at the guard as if he was the one who needed to be stopped.

The kids rushed back to Uncle Priscilla's house, opened the box, got the ear, and fidgeted through the whole visit. Soon after, they asked their talented older sister Ariel to sew the ear back on. She did. They then wished Uncle Priscilla would forget about everything and be good as opposed to evil.

In the end, Erin and TJ ended up keeping the bear and wishing on it as they pleased. They all lived happily ever after, except the guard, because he still couldn't find those little rascals.

## Maizy the Secret Agent

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*In MAIZY THE SECRET AGENT by Jack Stempien, Maizy is a secret agent dog who must save herself and the other dogs from their evil enemies. Guess who?*

**M**aizy appears to be an ordinary dog, but really she is a secret agent! She is the ringleader of all of the dogs

in the state of Michigan. She has an evil opponent: cats!

Their leader is a slimy, devious, quick,

and nasty little cat whose name is Cookie. Cookie also happens to be the headmaster of all cats in the state of Michigan, too. The cats have an evil plan to kidnap all the dogs in Michigan.

Maizy is on a mission with all the other dogs in the neighborhood. They are trying to find out who stole the dog treats. All the dogs are freaking out about the dog treats. They figured it was Cookie.

All of a sudden the dogs were lost in a cloud of smoke, and nothing could be seen. The thick, dark smoke turned out to be sleeping gas, and all the dogs were knocked out.

The cats took them to the cat cave where they put them into doggie crates. The cat cave was a wet and foggy place. Maizy woke up in a crate with her best friend Ranger, and overheard the cats speaking in a hushed tone, planning a very mysterious scheme. They heard that the cats are planning to turn all the ocean water into milk!

Maizy looked at Ranger and said, "We can't let them do this. I'm lactose intolerant!" Before long the sleeping gas

was too hard to stand, and they were forced into the deep sleep again.

The next time all the dogs woke up from the mysterious, deep sleep, they had foaming of the mouth, nonstop tail-wagging, green fur, and dizziness. They had to come up with a plan quickly before the cats saw them awake, so they began working.

The plan was to use their razor sharp nails to cut through the bars of the crates. They had to plan it just right, or else they would be caught.

They faked their sleeping when the cats were up, and when the cats went to bed, the action started. The dogs cut through the bars, and they all got out. Then they quietly ran down the cat cave hallways without being seen, all the way to the gate. Then they hopped the gate and ran home.

The next morning they saw in the news that the cats were put in a cat kennel by the help of THE DOGS! Nobody knew who did it, but when Maizy saw she chuckled and said, "What a night!"

## The Marine

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*In a tight situation, count on a United States Marine to know what to do. Still, it's a seemingly impossible predicament that Toni faces in THE MARINE, by Tre McDowell.*

As Toni was stuck in a sinking submarine with an M16 rifle in his hand, he tried to get out the door. The door was jammed, so he had to bust out of the submarine. He was standing by one of the holes he had made with his blade when something slimy stuck its arm through the hole. It grabbed Toni by the neck and started choking him.

The thing almost choked Toni to death before he was able to get out of its grip. He started shooting, but then he stopped. He noticed that everything had gotten quiet.

At that moment, the submarine started shaking. Blades started stabbing into the submarine. He started shooting all over the submarine, but the shaking wouldn't stop.

He went to a white and green box and found bottles that said “Breathing Cream.” He grabbed twenty bottles so if he ran out of breathing cream underwater he would have more. He put them in a shoulder bag

and grabbed a few guns, two knives, a bulletproof vest, and a Health.

He took a heavy desk and rammed it into the jammed door. When he did, he busted right through.

## Martians

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*In **MARTIANS** by Julia Trombley, a UFO is about to land. The townspeople will do anything to stop it, but at what cost?*

**W**hoosh... boom... silence. Thunder? Avalanche? Regardless, he gets out of bed, yawns, and lets his eyes adjust to twilight. He quickly slips some clothes on and sneaks around the house until he reaches the door.

There was no other sound. Everything around him is silent, except for the sound. *Whoosh... boom...silence.* He unlocks the door, and slips outside, and feels the slight, cool breeze on his skin.

*Whoosh... boom...silence.* The sound is coming from behind him. He turns and sprints toward the sound; it is constant.

He hides behind a boulder. He cranes his neck so that he can see around the rock. He takes a quick intake of breath. “What is that?” the boy thinks aloud. A massive object slowly floats down toward him.

The sun catches his eyes. It is almost daybreak. He turns and starts running to his house. His father meets him at the door. “Uh-oh,” he says under his breath.

“What is wrong with you? You can’t go off in the middle of the night! You scared your family half to death!” The boy is too shaken up to speak. He points, his hand shaking, to the object; it is closer now, and bigger, too.

His father gawks at the unknown, massive object floating toward them. The sound is very loud now and getting louder by the second.

By now people have started to come out of their houses, awakened by the noise. In a couple of minutes the whole town had gathered and had seen the object.

“Oh my, what can that be?”

“What is that?”

“We’re under attack!”

The town is whispering, murmuring, and shouting all at once. The boy’s father quiets the town down. “Being your mayor, it is my duty to deal with such things. My best men and I will decide how to handle this situation. Then, we will hold a meeting. Please stay under control.”

An hour later the whole town is gathered in the biggest room in the entire place. The women, children, pets, grandparents, aunts, and uncles all gather around the mayor.

The mayor steps up to the podium and clears his throat. “Ahem. We have discussed the matter and have come to a conclusion. We have decided that this unknown object is not one of our own. Therefore, we have to take precautions. We don’t know if it is friendly. We also don’t know if it is dangerous. We have no way of communication before they or it lands, if we give them the chance to land, they might blow us all up. So we’re just going to have to blow them up...”

“That is not just!”

“Not right, not right!”

“What are we going to use to blow them up?”

“Order, please. Can we have order!” the mayor called out to the crowd. They settled down. “If we don’t blow it up, what will we do to protect ourselves?”

A small group of people brushed past everyone rolling a huge machine covered in white sheets. “I...we know how to save us all. It doesn’t involve blowing anything up, though.” The man in the front is speaking. “We scientists also were discussing the present situation. We’ve been working on this machine. It will solve our problems.”

“What is it? What does it do?” the mayor questions.

“Well, if you don’t mind, Mayor, we would like to keep it quiet. We don’t want any panic, do we, now?”

“Oh I see...” The Mayor walked off the podium and on to the ground to meet the scientist. “Well?”

“The machine of ours is quite an accomplishment. It is a device that stirs up so much wind that it could wipe out an entire city. It could cover the UFO with sand within seconds. We originally made this machine to uncover lost cities and artifacts. But right now we have a better use for it. So, all we need to do is take all of our valuables somewhere safe. We haven’t tested it enough to know how much power it can harness. Who knows? It might cover us up instead.”

“This could work.... You’ve got yourself a deal.”

“What deal?”

“Forget it.” The mayor walked up to the podium and spoke to the crowd. “Everyone, I, or should I say we, have come to a decision. People of the city, gather up your valuables and report to the city safe house.” They all scurried away to do their jobs.

“Son,” the mayor said to the boy, “I’m sorry about getting mad earlier. I didn’t

know what we were dealing with or the situation. And no matter what happens, I love you, and I always will.”

The boy speaks in a voice that is barely audible. “I love you, too.” His father nodded, and shooed him away, for the worst was about to come.

The scientists and the mayor rolled the big machine to the boulder and prepared to turn it on. *Whoosh...boom, boom*, and no silence. It was about to land.

“Everybody step away, except for you.” He pointed to the scientist that spoke to him earlier. “We want to avoid as many injuries as possible. So for your safety, the rest of you please leave, and let us do our work.” The other scientists look as though they were going to drop dead right then and there, and they took off running.

A thundering roar shook the ground as the object touched down. A figure emerges from the UFO spacecraft. It was almost human, but not quite.

The mayor was having second thoughts. “What if the plan backfires? What if the machine doesn’t work and they kill all of us instead? What if they are friendly, only trying to discover new places? What if...?” The scientist interrupts his thoughts.

“Turn it on!” the scientist orders the mayor.

The mayor isn’t going to do it. “No! It’s not right!”

The scientist doesn’t really care if it isn’t right. He could easily tell the people of the town that the mayor threatened him and refused to save the city. Then he would become the mayor.

He throws his arm across the mayor’s face and knocks him down to the ground. The mayor is unconscious and has a bleeding nose. The scientist grabs the machine and holds tight. The scientist flicks the switch.

A wind so strong it could alter the trail

of a tornado whooshed around everywhere.

The mayor awakes with a start. He sees faces around him, all hideous and demented. Is he dead? Has he been buried alive?

“Who are you?”

“Lfgjhludf dslfhgldjfg sdjfgjhl dskfjgh! sdfjghlksjfdhg dfhgdfleruvnuw ffgfjhr? scljkflfgrlh tgdfgu ergdfj! gfjhgdfjglsdjfjgs ghregjhvuse gdufg gjfd jfgdgioewdic wrfa uwsdggf afuwawoieg urdfghre jhgfdlaz. uyroiue? Uirsgjfrh ygtkyregt?”

The mayor didn't know what they were saying. They probably don't know what he was saying, either. They point to the machine. The scientist is lying on the ground next to it.

The mayor gets up and runs to the machine. It is on reverse. The mayor looked down at the scientist. Something has

impaled him, right through his heart. *Then the aliens must have saved me*, he thinks.

The mayor turns around to thank the aliens, but they are gone.

With so many thoughts swarming around in his head, he starts back to the town. *What happened to the UFO? The scientist is dead. He tried to kill me. What will happen to his family? What will they do with the machine? Will they believe my story?*

While he was pondering these thoughts, he looks up to see the familiar presence of the round, blue neighboring planet. Everything looks so peaceful there, when everything isn't here. He walks back to the town, wondering.

*Whoosh...Boom...Silence.*

“Crud.” The mayor looks up...

## The Masked Man

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*A family in trouble finds...more trouble. A stranger in disguise is a threat to life and limb in THE MASKED MAN, by Brendan Cullen.*

On a cold November night, the Smith family was driving up north to stay at a friend's cottage and do some skiing. They made a wrong turn and ended up in the middle of nowhere.

The father's name was John, the mother's name was Joan, and the son's name was Jack. They were driving on a very old dirt road. It was snowing so hard that even with the wipers on you could not see anything.

All of a sudden they heard a loud noise. Joan screamed so loud it could have broken the car windows. John stopped the car and pulled over to the side of the road. When he got out, he said, “We have a flat tire.”

Joan said, “That is just great.”

Then their son Jack said, “Are we there

yet?”

John dialed his cell phone for help but was unable to get any reception. John checked for a spare tire but was pretty sure they didn't have one, and he was right. John said, “Well, we might just have to walk for help.”

Joan said, “Are you crazy? It is a blizzard, and it would not be safe for us to set out.”

Jack said, “It is probably our best shot for help, Mom.”

John said, “We really don't have much of a choice. It is too cold to just sit here and wait.” Joan reluctantly agreed.

After a couple of miles of walking, Jack said, “Are we there yet?”

John said, “We don't know where we are

going; we just need to find some help.” Just then, John saw a house in the distance, and he said, “Maybe there is someone home at that house and we can get some help.” So, they headed to the house.

When they walked up the stairs to the front door, one of the stairs broke. Then Joan said, “It doesn’t look like anyone lives here anymore.”

John said, “Let’s go in and see.” He turned the knob. The door was open, and they went in.

They called out to see if anyone was home, but nobody answered. John went looking for a phone to use to call for help. When he found the phone in the kitchen, it was no longer working.

Since it was dark out, John started looking for a flashlight or candles to light so they could see. The only thing they found was a broken flashlight and a shovel in a closet. Joan said, “Let’s get out of here.”

All of a sudden, they heard a loud thud upstairs. John said, “You two stay down here, and I’ll go check it out.” He grabbed the shovel and went upstairs. He walked slowly up the stairs. His heart was beating so fast he couldn’t hear his own thoughts.

When he turned the corner at the top of the stairs, he heard some heavy breathing coming from somewhere in the dark ahead of him. The next thing he knew there was

a person in front of him. He threw the shovel at the person and yelled downstairs for Jack and Joan to get out of the house. He heard Joan scream, “What’s going on up there?”

He said, “There is someone up here – get out quick!” Then John went flying down the stairs to get out of the house himself. The masked man fell down but soon got up and ran after them.

John ran and caught up to Joan and Jack who were both screaming and crying. They were all running so fast that they didn’t realize at first that there were car headlights in the distance. The car was a police car. It was their lucky day.

The policeman got out and saw the masked man running after them. He pulled out his gun and said, “Stop and get down on the ground or I’ll shoot!”

The masked man did not listen and the policeman shot him. The policeman pulled off his mask and said, “We have been looking for this guy for a long time. We think he is responsible for a number of serious crimes.” The policeman called on his radio for help so that the Smith family could get their car fixed and get on their way.

When the Smith family finally made it to their friend’s cottage, they had quite a story to tell.

## Maxie

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*In MAXIE by Kai Selwa, a girl goes to a pet shop, hoping to buy a small, inexpensive pet. Then she sees the cutest thing ever: a baby Black Lab! Will Taylor get the dog, or will her parents refuse?*

“Wake up honey. We’re going to the pet shop today, remember? You need to get up! When you get dressed, meet your father and me in the car!”

Taylor groaned, but then she realized that her mother was right. Today was the day that she was going to the pet shop, and her parents had promised to get her a small pet!



Taylor jumped out of bed and threw on blue jeans and a bright green t-shirt with a dog on it. Then she ran out of the house and jumped in their red Jeep.

When Taylor and her parents arrived at the pet shop, Taylor ran into the store, and started looking for a cute hamster, or a small bird, because her parents did not want to spend a lot of money on a pet. Taylor looked at the hamsters, but they were all old, and Taylor wanted a baby. When she got to the bird section, all of the birds were gone because they needed to be fed in the back room. Taylor was devastated.

Taylor continued to look around the pet shop. She saw mice, gerbils, and guinea pigs, but she did not want one. She walked all around the store, dragging her feet. She eventually got to the dog section.

Taylor knew that her parents would never buy her a dog, but she decided just to look around. She passed a brown beagle, a grey Siberian husky, and a golden retriever. Then she saw the cutest thing: a baby black Lab! Its fur was black, but the tip of its tail was white. Its tail was moving so fast that all Taylor could see was a white blur. The dog's eyes and nose were brown, like

Hershey's chocolate. Taylor instantly knew that she had to have that puppy!

Taylor ran to her parents, and dragged them back to the dog section. She showed them the puppy. She asked, "Can I have it? Can I? Can I? Please? Pretty please with a cherry on top?"

Taylor's mom said, "A dog is a big responsibility! And it costs a lot of money for things like food, vaccinations, and toys."

Taylor replied, "I can give you all of my allowances, and I will feed and walk it every day!" The dog barked. "See?" said Taylor. "He wants to come home with us!"

Finally, Taylor's parents decided that Taylor could have the dog. They told Taylor that as long as she took care it, she could keep it!

When Taylor brought the puppy home, she decided to name it Maxie, because whenever Taylor said "Maxie," he came running! Maxie was a great dog, because he never bit anyone, and he could go on walks without a leash.

Every day, Taylor walked Maxie and fed him, just like she had promised her parents. And every day, Taylor knew that she would never regret buying Maxie!

## McCain's Revenge

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*In the story **McCain's Revenge** by Cooper Peters-Wood, John McCain has gone completely insane with jealousy over losing the election. He longs to take revenge on Obama. This crazy cross-country spree has many twists and turns.*

"What a pathetic election," I muttered while sitting behind my Senator's desk labeled "John McCain."

That "president-elect" Obama didn't deserve to win. I mean, look at how much more experienced I am! He's going to be the president while I remain the Senator of

lousy Arizona. At least let me be a Senator of a fun state like Florida or California! Oh well, nothing can be done now that the Secret Service protects him, or can there?

Something had to be done. I had to cook up some sort of revenge, but what? I've decided to go with a prank-like

approach to my revenge. A prank would be a non-violent revenge that would totally embarrass him, but what?

Tonight I started planning my revenge. I figured out almost everything, including my journey to Washington D.C. and how to penetrate the White House's defenses and security. I decided to follow through with my plan three months from tonight. It would be the perfect time because Obama would be sworn in and getting settled in at the White House. I had covered everything but this: What would my revenge be?

### The next day...

My plan for revenge was sweet. I am going to rig the Oval Office with thousands of ketchup and mustard packets I found in a McDonalds' dumpster. I will place them under rugs and in seat cushions. If Obama put weight on any of them, they will pop open, releasing the vile contents. They will stain and smell terrible. And maybe just for the heck of it, I will stuff a whoopie cushion and a microphone in his desk chair. The plan should work. Let's just hope it's him that springs the pranks.

The next day, I started to prepare for my secretive departure from Arizona. First I would purchase an airline ticket that would take me to Tokyo. Of course, I wasn't going to Japan! This ticket was scheduled for the exact date I was to be leaving for D.C., thus giving my friends and family an excuse for my departure.

There was only problem: word would get out about my not getting on the plane. This ticket scam would only delay my family, police, and other searchers from trying to find me. A man of importance like myself gone missing? For all I know they could send in the military to find me. But they won't know that I don't want to be found. My military training will help me with this. I

will need camouflage and stealth. I've gotten Mrs. Palin's approval to use her hunting camouflage, even though I think it's weird that she would own those clothes. And my training has prepared me for the stealth part.

### Three months later...

Tonight I left for D.C. and Obama. I waited for my family to go to sleep before I slipped out. Once I did, I belly crawled out of Phoenix and started my hike through the desert. I passed through many states uneventfully, but when I reached Colorado, I had a heck of a time scaling the Rockies. Twice an extreme skier plowed me down. And I was almost caught in an avalanche. It will be worth it. Revenge will be mine. One bad thing, though: I am worried that the military is searching for right this very minute.

It turns out the worry was a valid one. It's obvious that the military is searching for me. Four times now a helicopter has passed over and trained a spotlight down over the area. Once I had to duck into a port-a-john, where I met my new friend, Joe, that was in the plumbing industry! I also found a newspaper headlined "Arizona's Senator Missing," which also worries me. I hope my family isn't freaking out about my disappearance. I must push my worries aside and keep going.

Several days have passed since I was in Colorado. I am now making my way towards Pennsylvania. So far it's an easy hike. The only difficulty continues to be avoiding the search-and-rescue teams. They are being real pests. The army keeps searching for me via helicopter, while other volunteers are searching for me with dogs. They have come close to finding me, but the scent of Sarah Palin on my clothes is throwing the dogs off.

*One day of antagonizingly boring things later...*

I've finally reached Washington, D.C., where the real challenge begins. I've located a man with good looks like myself and followed him to his office building. I waited until he got on a conference call before crawling under his desk and stealing his wallet and passport. After that, I high-tailed it out. I've also ditched the camouflage clothes. I would look really stupid walking around with those on. Using the random guy's credit card, I bought myself a new outfit.

Now to the White House, I thought. I purchased a normal tour ticket outside and then headed through security where I was tackled because I had a quarter in my pocket and they thought it was some kind of weapon.

After that "incident," I snuck into a bathroom. There were two Secret Service agents already in there. Why am I not surprised? To my luck, someone knocked something over outside, which made a nasty bang. It sent the agents running. At that moment, I pulled the cord on the security camera, being careful not to let it see me.

With not a moment to lose, I found an air vent and crawled through. Just as I secured it back in place, the two agents returned, followed by a small army of other security guards who must have noticed that the camera was off. As they left, I started crawling.

It's now my fourth day in the vent. I have been surviving on only dust bunnies and a half full water bottle I found. I've spotted Barrack through the grates a few

times, but he was with many other people. I hopped out of the air vent only one time to come face to face with an angry janitor in a boiler room. I was beaten with a mop many times before I could make it back to the vent.

Today's the day! Obama has left on an overnight trip to Kentucky. I slipped into the Oval Office checking for cameras. There were none, probably for confidential reasons that I have no reason otherwise to know. I started to hide my packets. I placed the whoopee cushion in its place, and snuck back into the vent. The next morning, I was long gone from the White House.

I'm back at home, after an explanation about how I used a fake name in Japan for my own safety. It had taken a lot of talk to get the military and press off my back. My family, on the other hand, was told I couldn't call them due to phones being tapped.

After all of the explaining, I sat down in my chair in front of the television and turned on the news. Barrack Obama returned from Kentucky last night, and I wanted to see the result of my doings. After about two hours of weather, it finally came on.

As it turns out, Obama stepped on nearly 703 packets of ketchup and mustard, staining his pant legs and shoes so badly he had to throw them out. He sat on the whoopee cushion while in a very important meeting.

After all that hard work, I began planning for the next President. Will it be Hillary or Sarah? Either way, the revenge will be fun.

# Merle for Office

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*In **MERLE FOR OFFICE** by Kayla Sara Kapen, a cat that lives with her owners has the ability to speak English. She is very smart, especially in politics, so she runs for president.*

This story is dedicated to my cat Merle (1996-2008) who passed away on October 27. I love you.

**M**eow. I mean hello there. I'm Merle McCain, a tourtie cat (cat of John McCain). You might know me; some might call me sweetheart or cutie. My best and most famous name is the President of the United States of America. My vice-president is Pricina Palin (who is the cat of Sarah Palin). You might think that it is strange for a cat to be president, but the humans of America and I know that I can make this country a whole lot better than any president in the history of the United States of America. I had wanted to be president for a very long time, but I was so nervous to share my secret. Now, here's the story of my big adventure of when I became president.

One night while my owners John and Cindy were having a party with their friends, I was just lying there in a meatloaf shape trying to look cute to get everyone's attention. Unfortunately nobody knew that I was there, so I gave a cute meow, and nobody heard me. So then I tried again and gave an even bigger meow, but still nobody heard me.

Then I had an idea. Nobody knew this about me, but I had a special power that allows me to talk to humans in English. So I stood on my two back paws and yelled, "Everyone, be quiet."

All of the people there were frozen when they heard me. One of Cindy's friends said, "Did your cat just yell at us?"

Cindy was about to say something, but I interrupted her to say, "Why, yes, I did."

Everyone was shocked, and John asked, "When did you start talking?"

I said, "When George W. Bush won the re-election. It was because I was so mad that my head exploded, and I knew some cats that could fix it. By accident they screwed my head on too loose and it fell off again, which caused me to lose control and to talk like a human would, and only about one single thing that was going on. I remembered how to meow like a regular cat would. Then the specialists fixed my head again and made sure to screw it on tight, and I still had the ability to talk English but not to constantly talk about sports."

Everyone couldn't believe this. They were hitting themselves to make sure that they were awake. Cindy asked how I knew who George W. Bush was. I told them that I knew who every famous person was on TV, and I was hearing everyone talk about how bad a president he was. When I gained the ability to talk I knew what he was saying, and it was ridiculous.

I was telling them that I had been secretly sneaking out and going to the library to read books about politics, and had been dying to go to Washington, D.C. to meet the government officials to talk about what I could do as president.

Everyone thought that I was crazy and didn't believe me. I felt very sad when everyone started laughing at me.

I wasn't going to give up on my dream, though. I went to the library for twelve hours while John and Cindy were at work,

reading and concentrating as hard as I could, and I got so much inspiration.

In the evening at dinner I talked to Cindy and John about what I was going to do, and they were very impressed. I asked them if they could hold a town meeting and let me give a speech of inspiration. Everyone seemed so touched, impressed, and very happy. People thought that no human would be able to do what I could do, which included bringing more catnip to play with.

John and Cindy decided to take me to Washington, D.C. to run for president. They took me to the Capitol Building to get me qualified for running. At first the people there thought that my owners were crazy, but they changed their minds when they heard about my plan. They decided that my plan was so great that I was one of the two running mates for the election. Everyone there thought that no human could do what I could, so they passed a law to allow only cats to run in that year's election.

They voted a few months or so later for the Democratic Party candidate. It was an American shorthair named Peaches Obama. His vice-president was an American shorthair cat named Bananas Biden. I decided to pick my very good

friend, a Calico cat named Pricina Palin. I picked her because if something bad were to happen to me then she would do exactly as I would do.

It was about half a year of going all over the place giving speeches and of Pricina giving speeches on what to do to help the president.

Peaches and Bananas were together with us and we all happened to be good friends. We did have fights along the way, but we were all happy for each other.

Then, the most exciting day of my life came. That Tuesday when the people of America went to the voting booths to pick the next president of this country, they voted very well. When the announcer said "Ms. Merle McCain, you are America's next president," I was very happy with my friend/vice-president, and I was waving to all the fans. John and Cindy were proud of me and they were really happy when they found out that they were going to live in the White House (or the cat house as I call it).

"I can't believe that my dream came true," I said when I found out that I was president. Now it is my duty to make this country right again and, of course, bring more catnip to the world.

## Milk and Cookies

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*In **MILK AND COOKIES** by Allegra Picano, a boy named Billy comes home from school and finds a plate of cookies on the table. He hopes the cookies are for him, but he doesn't know for sure. What's a good boy to do?*

"Mommy, Mommy," said little Billy Trouse, coming home from first grade, "look what I got on my test." It was a solid A+. "Mom?" Billy asked.

Billy was getting worried. He didn't know where his mom was. He was too

scared to check the house because a burglar might be there. Where was his mom? Was she home?

Then all of his worries went away. He saw a plate of milk and cookies on the kitchen table.

“Are they for me?” he asked himself. Billy was hungry, as all he had for lunch was an apple. He could hear his stomach gurgling. Then Billy had a thought. “I don’t have to eat milk and cookies to have fun with them.”

First, Billy put the cookies on the top of his ears and said, “I’m Mickey Mouse.” Then, he took them and put the cookies on his eyes and said, “Hi, guys, I’m a nerd.”

Billy was not only hungry. Now he was thirsty. Billy took the milk and put it all over the bottom of his face and said, “HO, HO, HO. I’m Santa Claus.” Next, Billy put the milk all over the floor and said, “It’s snowing!” Billy was making snow angels.

But the best thing that milk and cookies are for is...EATING THEM!

Billy finally ate the cookies. “Yum!” Billy said, enjoying the cookies. “Delicious!” Billy said, making milk angels.

“Billy?” Was it a burglar? Billy hid under the table. Then Billy realized it was his mom. So Billy climbed out from under the table, and returned to his half-eaten cookie.

“I’m in the kitchen,” Billy said, as happy as he could possibly be.

“Ohhh, I see you found the cookies and—AAAAHHHHHHHHH!” Billy’s mom screamed.

The kitchen was covered with milk. The cupboards were covered in chocolate. And Billy was a big mess.

“Were the cookies for me?” Billy asked. Mrs. Trowse was still in shock. The only thing that was moving was Mitsi (the dog) licking up the mess.

Two hours later the kitchen was half clean. Billy knew that his mom was really mad at him, so he tried to make her feel better. “I’m sorry, Mom,” said Billy, hoping that she wouldn’t yell at him.

“I accept your apology,” said Mrs. Trowse.

Billy still knew she was mad at him. “I got an A+ on my test,” said Billy.

“You did?” asked Mrs. Trowse with a big smile on her face. Now Billy knew that she was proud of him.

## The Missing Jewel

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*In THE MISSING JEWEL by Claire Nader, sister and brother Emily and Jacob want to figure out who stole a valuable jewel. They’ll need each other to solve the crime and live to tell about it.*

Emily and Jacob are siblings who were walking home from the park on a lonely, silent, cold afternoon. It turned into the scariest night of their lives. There were thieves all over town trying to steal the last jewel in the world!

Emily and Jacob were allowed to go out alone because there were police everywhere. As they turned down their street, they saw a huge crowd running towards them. Emily stopped one of the people among the

crowd, and asked, “What is going on?”

She replied, “The last jewel has been stolen!”

“That’s terrible,” Jacob screamed.

“Let’s go check it out,” Emily said, curious.

Jacob and Emily ran over to the crime scene as fast as their legs could carry them. They saw the museum and the police pushing the crowd back. The police were also hanging up signs. The signs read:

*If you are interested  
in finding the jewel,  
it is purple and very expensive!  
Reward is \$2 million.*

Jacob and Emily walked away silently and headed for home.

When they reached their house, Jacob and Emily sat down with their family for dinner and did not touch a thing on their plates. They did not tell their parents because they wanted the reward all to themselves. When dinner was over, they both walked quietly to their rooms. They began dreaming of the sweet reward for finding the jewel. Emily dreamt of all those shopping sprees she could have, and Jacob dreamt of the video games he could buy. They slept soundly through the night.

They both arose early wanting to find the jewel. Emily went back to sleep because she didn't think there would be much action in the morning. Jacob, on the other hand, was quickly dressed and ready to go. He went straight to the museum and was determined to get inside. He wasn't going to let anything stop him.

Surprisingly, when he went to jump the main gate, it was already open, so he simply walked through it. He knew that only the police had a key to the gate. Then, he heard footsteps, so he dove into a bush.

His heart was pounding 100 miles per hour, and then someone grabbed him! Jacob did not know who it was because, of course, the guy had a mask on. The man obviously did not want anyone to know who he was. The mystery man walked to his house with Jacob on his arm.

When they entered the house, Jacob saw that it was a disaster. Jacob was dropped into a dark room and fell onto something hard. It was a flashlight! Jacob secretly slipped it into his pocket and watched the

mystery guy walk out of the room.

Jacob flicked on the flashlight and said out loud, "Why would this person keep a flashlight where a prisoner is kept?" He then remembered how messy the house was, so the mystery guy probably did not even know it was gone. Jacob then noticed that the flashlight had Chief Bob's name on it. Jacob then knew that Chief Bob had captured him and that he thought Jacob stole the jewel.

He discovered that the walls were soundproof and that he could not tell anyone that he was there. At that moment, Jacob realized that the coat he was wearing belonged to his dad. His dad always carried a cell phone with him!

He reached into the pocket and found the phone. He frantically called Emily and told her that he was kidnapped. He also told her not to worry the rest of the family. So she did not alarm her family and continued to listen to his story.

Emily told Jacob to look around the room some more. He then saw a piece of paper underneath the door. Jacob picked it up and read the note to Emily. The writing on the paper read:

#### *Suspect List*

##### *1. Mayor*

He told Emily to look around the mayor's house. Emily told Jacob that she would do whatever would help him.

The mayor was home sleeping, so Emily had to quietly go through a window. Emily was very good at this because she had gone to spy camp every summer for the last five years. Emily was so worried because at any moment the mayor could wake up.

The inside of the mayor's house was covered with red holographic lines. Emily immediately realized that these red lines meant alarms!

When Emily sat down in the corner behind the edge of the couch, she hit her head. Right next to her, on the wall, was the famous Mona Lisa painting. Emily noticed that there was a stone sticking out of the painting. She had seen this picture before and did not remember a 3-D object. So she reached for the rock and it slipped right out of the painting.

When she looked at the rock in her hand, she realized that it must be the missing jewel. She screamed out, “Yes!” forgetting that the mayor was in the house. The scream awoke the mayor, and he started running after Emily!

The alarm went off, and the police were

called. The police were there in 30 seconds. They found Emily, and she told them the story. After seeing the jewel, the painting, and making a few phone calls, they believed the mayor was guilty.

The mayor was arrested and Jacob was set free. Emily and Jacob received the two-million-dollar reward! Jacob got his video games and Emily got her shopping sprees.

Jacob and Emily told their family and friends what happened, and they understood what happened and why they did not want to alarm them. They all lived happily ever after—well, at least some of them!

## My Video Game World

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*When Jimmie wishes upon a star, his dreams come true—well, except for all the bad guys and shooting. Enter Jimmie’s virtual life in **MY VIDEO GAME WORLD**, by Jimmie L. Tripp Jr.*

**T**his is a story about a boy named Jimmie. He had hard days at school and hard days at home. The things that made him get really tense? His sister and little two-year-old brother!

His mom was always nagging him, too, and Jimmie’s dad was always yelling. His parents wanted him to go on pills to make him focus in school. (P.S. It was his mom’s idea.)

One night he was about to go to bed when he saw a shooting star. He wished to go to his own world.

The next day was a Saturday. So when he got up, he turned on his Xbox 360. He put in *Gears of War 2*. But then he fell into the game!

He was excited at first. But then he thought, *How am I going to type in cheat codes?* Then he saw the hammer of dawn!

He knew something big was coming. It

was the one thing he wanted to beat. He took the hammer of dawn.

When he got into the building he heard someone or something. Luckily it was a sprouter. Then he went in a room with flowers. Jimmie went to the door and out came a berserker. Since the hammer of dawn only works outside, he would have to get the berserker to go outside. *I will make it go outside!* he thought.

Suddenly the berserker ran toward him. He made it run into the support beam. A hole was in the roof. He aimed the hammer at the berserker. The space cannon shot down on the beast. The beast was dead! And the level was complete. Suddenly his mom turned off the game, and out came Jimmie.

He did this every day, and he didn’t tell anyone—not even his best friend.



# The Mystery Cases of Valerie & Herlock

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*In THE MYSTERY CASES OF VALERIE & HERLOCK by Victoria Lucas, two sneaky detectives work to find a lost detective star. The outcome depends on long nights of finding clues.*

On November 15 in the year of 2009, detective Fancy Shoe has left the building. Fancy hasn't spoken to any of her detective partners or solved any cases since last week. However, two very important detectives by the names of Valerie Eirelav and Herlock Shomes have been partying with Fancy on the night of her disappearance. Police have already started searching through Fancy's house, but were only able to find her husband and her children peacefully in their home.

Fancy's husband Mark and also her children were brought down to the police station to answer questions on where Fancy could be. Unfortunately, her husband Mark finally told the police that Fancy had been missing earlier than last week, which would make finding clues harder for Valerie and Herlock.

Now it was time for Valerie and Herlock to solve the case, which is to track down where Fancy is headed. Mark and his children would have to come along to help with details of the full story of why she left. The full team was scheduled to leave tomorrow to find the missing detective star.

The next day Valerie and Herlock arrived at Fancy's house to pick up the rest of the family.

"Well, Herlock, what do you think about going across the U.S.A. to find a lost

detective friend?"

"Valerie, it doesn't really affect my life. It just feels like another group road trip," said Herlock.

As soon as everyone was set to go they got in the car and began to drive.

"So, Mark, since we're leaving, you need to tell us the entire story now," said Valerie.

Mark started to tell his story with his own opinions included. It took one hour for him to finish. He explained how she got too overworked from all of her assignments, and how she told him to promise not to tell anyone where she was going.

"Mark, you can't just get the police involved for no reason to just find a person who's not lost," said Herlock.

"I know, but she's my whole world. I would do anything for her, so I chose to," said Mark.

"Well, Valerie, we might as well just head back to their house and drop them back off. It just doesn't make sense to go on the trip anymore just to stress Fancy out," said Herlock.

So Valerie turned the car around and took the family back home. After two hours they returned home, but no one looked satisfied.

"She'll come back when she's ready, Herlock. Let's not rush her," said Valerie. "At least I hope so."

# Nick and the Hotel Room

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*In NICK AND THE HOTEL ROOM by Nico Romano, Nick watches a scary movie before dinner and bed. After a couple of hours, he wakes up to what he is certain must be an attack by monsters!*

Nick is seven and smart for his age, but he is as wild as an untamed, enraged wild boar. Nick's mom and dad want to visit Nick's grandma in Austin, Texas. Nick doesn't want to go to Texas. He didn't have a choice.

His parents packed their minivan and set out. Mom and Dad made him pack a lot of games that don't run on power, but they let him pack one.

After about 36 hours they stopped at a hotel named My Hotel in Kansas. Before dinner, he saw a scary movie that had big blob-like monsters with green eyes and sharp teeth. At dinner Nick saw stuff that reminded him of the movie he saw before dinner. When they got back to the rooms, Nick asked for some chairs and some clotheslines so he could set some traps.

After he went to bed, he woke up an hour later after having nightmares. Then he saw on the wall what looked like the monster in the movie. So he hid under the covers. Four minutes later he heard a monster breathing. He got up to go see his parents in the next room.

After five steps he tripped into a row of waiting monsters and mumbled, "Ouch." After tripping five times in a row, he yelled, "I

am free!" Then he tripped again and mumbled, "Not again." This time he struggled free and closed the door.

When he closed the door he heard it lock automatically. He remembered he needed a key to get in the room, and was glad he had his pillow with him. He would sleep outside his room on the floor. In the morning, he would go back to his room. Maybe monsters can't see in the daylight.

Early in the morning, Nick smelled ham and toast. So he went in his room only to see that the traps he had set were the monsters he had tripped over. He had been afraid of a couple of chairs and some clotheslines. "I'll clean it up later," he mumbled and wrote a letter to his mom and dad, got dressed, slipped the note under their door, and went downstairs alone.

The breakfast room was past the lobby and the gym. After a good meal of eggs, toast, and ham (which he had more than one helping of), he went back to his room to clean up. He returned the chairs and clotheslines to the lobby, packed up, and went out to put his stuff and his parents' stuff in the family minivan. After that, he never watched another scary movie after seven o'clock in the evening.

# Not to Be Trusted

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*Tia Thomson just got a PSP for Christmas. She thinks one of her friends has stolen it. She investigates, only to find more than she bargained for in*  
**NOT TO BE TRUSTED** by *Aliyah J. McIlwain.*

Tia Thomson just got a new Sony PSP from her mom for Christmas. She loved it. Tia thought she would die before she let anything happen to it.

On Tuesday, January 7, 2009, Tia went to the movies with her friends Mica and Ciara. She was going through her purse for her phone to turn it off when she discovered that her PSP was missing! She wasn't sure where it was. She wanted to investigate without making her friends suspicious.

First on the list was Mica. Mica was Tia's best friend, and they'd known each other since pre-kindergarten. Tia didn't want to think that her best friend would do that to her, but it was worth a try, even though she could risk her friendship in the process. Mica could have taken the PSP just to hurt Tia.

Later that week on Saturday the three girls had their usual once-a-month sleepover. While the other two girls were in Mica's family room, Tia said she was going to the bathroom. When Tia got to Mica's room, instead of walking ten feet over to the bathroom, she searched Mica's room from head to toe. She didn't find a thing but her pink cashmere sweater that Mica borrowed about a month before. That crosses Mica off the list.

Next on the list was Ciara. Ciara was kind of new at their school, so they weren't too sure about her yet, but they gave her a chance. Sunday morning when Tia's mom came to pick up Tia and Ciara, Tia was left outside loading up the car by herself. Tia decided this was the perfect time to check

Ciara's stuff. She found nothing but the sterling silver bangle Mica's mother had given Mica for Christmas. So Ciara was a thief—not with Tia's stuff, but with Mica's stuff.

The next thing you know, Ciara's standing behind Tia with a hurt but mad look on her face. Tia didn't care. She was more concerned about the fact that the girl's a thief.

"Um, Tia, why is my bag open with the bangle that I borrowed from Mica in your hands?" Ciara said furiously.

"Oh, I was just looking for my PSP. Wait, did you just say you borrowed that bangle?" Tia unexpectedly said out loud. *OMG, did I just tell Ciara what I was up to?* Tia thought nervously.

"Yeah. OMG, you thought *I* stole your PSP?" Ciara said, flabbergasted.

"Well, no. You're not the only one," Tia said.

"Wait just a minute. So you had doubts about your best friend, too? That's just sad. I'm out of here, Tia Thomson! We're through!" Ciara said as Mica came outside to help load the car.

"We're through about what?" Mica asked with curiosity.

"Oh, nothing!" Tia said.

"Oh, it's something all right. Tia, why don't you tell Mica how you snoop through our things assuming that one of us stole your PSP!" Ciara said as dramatically as she could.

"You what? And to think I'm best friends with you. I am officially removing the metaphoric bracelet of our friendship.

The ship has sailed!” Mica said as she threw the imaginary bracelet in the dirt and stormed in the house with Ciara to tell Tia’s mom everything.

Tia didn’t expect Ciara and Mica to tell her mother everything.

When Tia got home, of course she got the heat, but not just about the fact that she

went through people’s stuff looking for her belongings. It was also for the fact that she didn’t even think to look at home. Tia’s mom didn’t exactly give her the pink PSP back; she also confiscated it for a month to teach her a lesson.

You say, “So who’s not to be trusted?”  
**TIA’S NOT TO BE TRUSTED!**

## The Oath Breakers

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*Logan and his son David go after a monster in the Arctic’s depth. But, everything changes when Logan is captured. Find out what happens next in **THE OATH BREAKERS**, by *Pierre-Alexandre de Smet*.*

The story of Algorz begins in 2082 when a UFO happens to be flying over Earth. While the UFO is passing over the Arctic Ocean the cargo door is accidentally opened by the alien commander; the legendary whale falls through the sky into the big, blue, and sloshing waves below.

It’s now 2084. Logan, a very experienced sailor, has just heard that there is an unknown creature gliding deep in the Arctic Ocean. Logan then decides to hire a crew and begin an expedition destined to capture or kill the beast.

He finds a crew of over 150 brave men and sailors, including himself and his son David. The sailors ranged from short and plump to tall and skinny. On the crew there was also everything in between.

The building of the mighty sea vessel that is to undertake the journey to capture the beast commences.

After 16 months of hard laboring the seaworthy vessel is ready and bestowed with the name *Titanic II*. The boat is huge: over five miles long. The cargo holds enough room for at least six gray whales; in the armory there are over 200 harpoons guns, 20 jet wings, 20 109-bazooks, and

also one 111-bazook. The 111-bazook is the best weapon available on the market, being able to fire bombs, harpoons, rockets, and bullets. Located in the kitchen there is enough food for 15 years, which is surely more than enough.

The boat leaves the capital city of America, New Fringier. Leaving all civilization behind, the boat drives into the mist heading north.

After three months the sailors have reached the Arctic. Soon the sailors open up their shirts to feel the warm heat. The ice had been gone for years; this was all because of the human’s pollution. Still the water was cold enough to sustain narwhales, orcas, and all the other Arctic animals.

All of a sudden a man cries out, “RUBY HORN STRAIGHT AHEAD!”

All the men rush to the horn of the boat and see a ruby, silver-coated horn sticking out of the water. Logan tells all the men to get out harpoon guns, but he himself takes a 109-bazook and a jetpack. David commands the armed men to fire; as soon as the harpoons hit the whale they broke into halves. The whale roared and jumped into the air.

The sailors hadn't actually seen the true glamour of the whale. They gasped as they saw the gold-covered whale, the fiery eyes, and the mystical mist surrounding it making it look better than a fat and plump mouse to a hungry lion. The weapons clattered as they hit the metallic floor. Only Logan and David kept hold of their weapons.

The whale charged and in one jump ate David's dad. David fell unconscious. David's men brought the boat back to safety away from the whale.

When David awoke he was in his bed with only a picture of his father in his mind. When he came to his senses he remembered his father's death. He cried for hours in his father's memory.

The boat left safety and returned to chase the whale who had eaten their greatest sailor and warrior. After a week they found the monster. This time David decided to attack the thing alone, armed with magical Greek armor (which had been smuggled in by a sailor), a jetpack, and their deadliest weapon, the 111-bazook that had been loaded with rockets designed to kill anything that had gold on it. He flew up behind the creature, aimed, and let loose the rocket. The rocket flew and dove toward the unknowing whale.

All of a sudden a bullet went hurtling against the rocket! *Kablowii!* The rocket blew into tiny pieces. Then out of nowhere a man appeared holding an s2319proto. He spoke. "My name is Algor, and I protect this creature here. You're not allowed to kill this animal," Algor proclaimed.

"But he ate my father, and I must have my revenge!" protested David. Then Algor leaned his ear to the whale because the whale was making weird sounds.

Algor said, "He has told me that Logan is not dead. He's alive living in his stomach. So I will allow you to take him onboard your ship, and then you may have one day

to get your father out as soon as the whale touches ship."

"Thank you. In your name I and the world shall call him Algorz!" replied David. David and Algor brought Algorz close to the ship, and then ropes were dropped and tied around Algorz. They dropped the whale on deck. Their day had begun.

"But I must warn you, if you take anything from the whale you shall be cursed for eternity," said Algor. "Tell other hunters to leave him alone. We will leave soon, but I need a bit more time. I need about two months to finish my space teleportation device." Then Algor parted with them.

David decided to go inside with a rope tied to his waist. He dove in the huge black void that went down the throat. He stopped in a little room, which was probably the big intestine.

He called out to his father, but received no response, so he dove in further. He entered a huge room (which he guessed to be the small intestine) in which he saw nothing. Then he passed a larger room in which he saw a small, crippled man.

David guessed he was in the stomach, about a half-mile in. He tugged on the rope in the signal for pulling the rope, grabbed his father, and together they were pulled up and up until they burst onto the surface.

There was only one problem. David was happy, but his father wanted revenge. When David heard Logan wanted revenge he told him about the curse Algor had told him. Logan cast it aside as rubbish.

Logan decided not to kill the animal, but he sawed Algorz's beautiful horn off with the help of George. George was a dark-haired Indian who had a scar across his face. He was very strong.

On the journey home the crew faced many unusual problems. Only David really knew why.

The curse was finally laid down by Algor (who was actually a wizard). In the beginning it was just a few unimportant things missing, but then it became serious. First there was a huge storm that lasted for 29 days driving them all the way to Iraq. Later after the storm a meteor just happened to be “passing by,” and the meteor dropped right where the boat had been two minutes before. The falling of the meteor caused a huge wave that carried on till Mongolia where they were dropped. The ship took two weeks to have ten helicopters carry it to the border of the Atlantic Ocean.

David repeated his suspicions to Logan, and this time Logan listened to David. They stopped at the nearest town, which was luckily the most religious place in the world. The town was called Dasaginhikalerbrynen, and there Logan, the one who had cut off the horn, placed the horn on the church’s altar, and prayed this:

*Will Algorz and Algor forgive me for my crime, which I myself committed and have been punished for? May the spirits permit the ship, crew, and I to have a safe journey home.*

There was, of course, one problem. George hadn’t done any prayer, and so permanently cursed the crew and ship to a life of horror. Algorz, then feeling sorry, made sure they would hit a glacier on their way home. Instead of having a life of not being able to get home, they died a quick death.

As George died he cried out laughingly, “Ha, the fates have killed me, giving me, an oath-breaker, a better life!” Algorz then cast them into spirits that roamed the seas capturing oath breakers and making them spend eternity with them on the devil ship. While the crew and ship were cursed, Algor and Algorz returned to their home planet away from evil human oath breakers.

## Once Upon a Painting

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*In ONCE UPON A PAINTING by Safia Sayed, Darla is an orphaned girl who lives with her cruel aunt and uncle. Will she ever escape the misery and loneliness of her dreary life?*

Darla sighed miserably as she stretched out on her hard and dusty mattress. She hated her depressed and lonely life, but she had no choice but to live with it.

Darla was an orphan. After her parents died, she was forced to live with her only known relatives, her aunt and uncle. In her parents’ will, their numerous amounts of possessions and wealth were left to charity only. Darla’s aunt and uncle were angry that they did not receive anything, so they took it out on Darla. They thought she was a lovely girl—when she stayed shut up in her attic bedroom and left them alone.

The attic was dark and cold, but better

than the stiff and proper rooms downstairs and the even worse shrill scream of her aunt to leave her alone. Darla would rather be by herself than with the company of her aunt and uncle, but she was constantly looking for a friend. She had none. Her aunt and uncle had forbidden her to leave the house, and she didn’t go to school. Darla lay on her mattress with her miserable thoughts going through her head, and tried hard not to cry.

“DARLAA!” came the piercing cry of her aunt. “I want you to wash all the windows.”

Darla trudged down the stairs to obey

her aunt. She was used to being used like this. “At least I’m not straightening the basement,” Darla muttered. The basement was full of rats, and her aunt knew it.

Darla lifted a wet rag. Anger rushed into her head. “Stay calm,” Darla thought. “Think about something nice.” Whenever she felt like this, that was what she would do: Think about pleasant things she would never find in her own life. “Think about a garden,” she thought.

Back in her room, Darla couldn’t keep her mind off that beautiful garden she had glimpsed in her imagination. “Well, don’t get your hopes up, Darla. Face it. Your life is stuck here in this stupid attic.”

Then she had an idea. She searched in the attic closet until she found what she was looking for. Hidden in the clutter of the attic closet were a paint brush, paint, and some paper. She couldn’t be in a garden, but she could paint one.

She painted daffodils, and daisies, carnations and lilies. There were marigolds and chrysanthemums, roses and forget-me-nots. And finally, she was done.

Darla stared hungrily at the painting, taking in its beauty. Darla leaned forward to take a closer look at an orange lily in a clump of purple ones. “Alone, just like me.”

Suddenly, her head started to spin. She could feel her feet leave the ground. And then, everything went black.

Darla got to her feet. “Where am I?” she wondered aloud. Then Darla opened her eyes and let out a gasp. She was in the garden. Darla was speechless. One moment she was in the attic and the next... “I’m here.” Darla couldn’t believe it.

“I’m dreaming,” she told herself firmly. “It’s just a dream, nothing more.” But as much as she said it, she couldn’t bring herself to believe it. It was just that—everything was so real. The flowers, and the breeze, the sky—everything was just too

accurate to have been a dream. A warm summer breeze with a flowery fragrance whirled around the garden. The sky was the perfect shade of blue, with not a cloud in the sky. Warm rays of sunlight shone on everything as the birds happily chirped away. “I’m really here,” Darla whispered.

But then a thought struck her. “How am I supposed to get back?” said Darla in alarm. It wasn’t that she wanted to go back, but she couldn’t live in a garden forever.

As soon as the thought came to Darla’s mind, she felt the same curious sensation as before. Her head started to spin and her feet left the ground.

She was back in the attic. “It’s magic,” Darla whispered. Darla tried to go to sleep, but she couldn’t stop pondering over the garden....

As every morning, the first thing Darla heard as she was starting to wake was the voice of her aunt, this time telling her to cook breakfast. She got up wearily. But instead of going downstairs to the kitchen to eat scraps while her aunt and uncle ate magnificent meals in the dining room, she decided to do a little experimenting. “If I can go into scenes I create, can I pull things out of them, too?” she speculated.

She took out the painting from last night and, keeping her head away from it, reached out her arm to take a stunning deep red rose, with drops of dew glistening like crystals in the sunlight. The next thing she knew, the blossom was in her hand.

“Darla!” grunted her uncle. “Listen to your aunt and get down here now. The neighbors are coming at noon.”

Darla smiled to herself. Her aunt and uncle were soon going to wish they had never bothered her in her life.

Darla checked the digital clock in the kitchen. “11:30. Time for phase one,” said Darla with a wide grin spreading across her face.

Darla went up to the attic and selected black paint and a thin paint brush. Then she began her work.

Darla took her painting and went around the house, coaxing the contents of her painting out with her gloved hands. Then she slipped away to her attic where she could be suspected of nothing.

The doorbell rang. Darla rushed to the railing and hid behind the wall. Her aunt ushered in several tall and thin ladies. They wore expensive, ugly dresses complete with huge hats to match. Her aunt pleasantly greeted them and took them into the kitchen. “Excellent,” said Darla. “I think I dropped most of them there.” Then she silently followed and found a spot where she could watch everything without being seen.

Darla’s aunt served all the ladies sandwiches. Everything went smoothly until— “It’s an ant! Oh, my word, there are ants in my sandwich!” Darla heard one lady yell. Soon everyone was screaming.

Darla spied more ants creeping into the

kitchen, obviously attracted by the food. It didn’t take long for the guests to see them, too. Soon all of them were screaming even louder, and racing outside.

“Please, wait!” Darla’s aunt called. “Don’t go, I... I’ll make you more sandwiches. Please, ladies!” But it was no use whatsoever. Darla had a feeling she would not be seeing them again.

Over the next few weeks, Darla’s life began to improve. She punished her aunt and uncle some more. She drew herself toys, and a doll that could talk and became her friend. But even as she loved humiliating her aunt and uncle and the new things she created for herself, she realized she was missing something.

The next day, Darla got out a big piece of paper. She began to draw a cozy and comfortable house. Then she drew a mother and a father who were smiling and waving up at her. Darla took a long glance at the attic for one last time. Then she took a deep breath, and plunged into a new life.

## One Day

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*In **ONE DAY** by Lexi Arabo, strange things happen in Mr. Fisher’s room during fourth period. The kids go from class to class to look for clues.*

On the day before Halloween in Mr. Fisher’s fourth-hour class, the classroom became haunted. As students walked in, green mold oozed from the walls, and the desks were different. Some were big, some were small, and they were all different colors. The windows kept going up and down. Now, come on; everyone knows that can’t happen!

“Guys, what’s happening?” Sam said, not in a scared voice.

“Ok, just stop, whoever is doing this!” Chase said.

“Where is Mr. Fisher?” Shannon and Kurt said. Just then the students heard a creepy, bone-chilling laugh.

“Did you guys hear that or was that just me?” Sam said.

Lexi came in late. “Hey, guys, did any of you do the Reader’s—wow, what’s happened in here?” Lexi said.

Mr. Fisher walked in ten minutes after the bell rang, but no one knew why. Lexi was going to ask him why he was so late, but she and everyone else were distracted by the strangeness of the room. When Mr.



Fisher walked in, he kept asking if any of the kids were playing a joke, but no one had an answer. Everyone stood in silence, and then everyone heard the creepy laughter again. Mr. Fisher even heard it. Then Lexi started talking.

“Ok, then, did anyone do the Reader’s Log?”

“Lexi, this is not a time for talking about the Reader’s Log!” Sam said.

“Well, then, why don’t you try to figure out what is happening, Sam?”

“Fine, I will.”

“Good idea, Sam. We will all try to find out why this is happening,” Mr. Fisher said. All the kids were wondering why they got to search the school, but then they got over it.

The whole class went to go search the school for clues, but whenever they asked a teacher who had kids in their class “Do you know what’s happening?” they all received the same answer: “That is happening to us,

too.”

Around 45 minutes later, the kids found something. What they found was spray paint (for the desks), and a smelly marker that was a disgusting shade of green (the same shade as the mold). They also found a recorder. When you press the button you hear creepy laughter, which is really loud and scary. All these items were found in the janitor’s closet.

The kids found out who the person is responsible because on the back of all of the stuff it said “Property of...”

Ok, okay, I am not going to tell you who the person is because I want you to make up your own ending to it.

P.S. I will tell you who I was going to write and it was...Mr. Fisher. He is my Language Arts teacher. The reason I put him is because he is always a jokester in pretty much everything!

## The Outsider

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*In **THE OUTSIDER** by **Donnovann Rezanika**, a boy gets some unexpected news from his parents: They are moving to Texas. He worries about fitting in.*

An eleven-year-old boy with blond hair and brown eyes who stands about five feet tall named Johnny was sitting eating dinner with his parents. His parents said to him, “We might be moving to Texas in a year. We hate the winter and snow.”

He was shocked, disappointed, and angry. Really, he didn’t know what to say. He was speechless.

That night he could not fall asleep. He was thinking about it all night. He was thinking about stuff like what the people would be like. Would they be mean, nice, or shy? Would the area look good or bad? Is

the school good or not? Are the teachers nice? Man, he had so many thought running through his mind.

In school he talked to his good friend David. They have been friends since second grade. When Johnny told him what was happening at home, David was stunned and dumbfounded. He told Johnny to ask his parents if he had to leave. Johnny said, “I’m afraid I do.” He was so confused. All his friends said the same thing: Robbie, Jeremy, Nick, Chris, Andrew, Matt, and Tyrone.

When he tried to talk his parents out of moving, they just would not budge. His

parents would just ignore him. He felt lonely and depressed that he didn't get a say in this. When Christmas came, Johnny did not get that many presents because his parents needed to save money to move.

Well, at least from Johnny's experiences, Texans had good southern hospitality. After his parents tried to cheer him up, he was a little more excited about moving. But he was still worried a little bit. He would miss all his friends in Michigan and the big red and white house on Westbrook Parkway.

His parents showed him pictures of places they might live. Johnny said, "They look really cool, and I'm excited to move now." They bought a house earlier than expected in Tyler, Texas. So he said bye to all his friends at school. Johnny got packed immediately to move.

It was a cozy, secluded little farmhouse with twenty acres of land. His parents said it would take a week to move and get set up.

Just about a week later, before he knew it, he was living in Tyler, Texas. Johnny's mom and dad decided to buy a few horses and a couple of pigs. They told him that they would learn how to raise animals together. That was not Johnny's idea of great fun, but he did love to ride horses.

There was a nice school that was pretty big, nice people, and a good area with lots of trees, green grass, and farms. He got a lot of friends who liked professional wrestling, too, like Johnny did.

The morning time was the best for Johnny. The sun would start to rise out of the east; this would cast a yellow blanket over everything. All the wildlife seemed to greet the day as he did, with such excitement and joy. The birds would begin to sing their songs, softly at first, and then louder as they were joined by their fellow vocalists. The bugs, too, all seemed to spring to life as the earth warmed in the dawn's light.

Johnny's favorite horse was a big black horse named Odin. It happened to be his dad's horse, too. That made it all the more special to him. He loved to watch his dad ride. He never realized that his dad was that skilled a horseman. Johnny enjoyed the time they would spend together out in the barn and on the trail. It really made him feel like a cowboy at times. He thought to himself, "How cool is that?" He was happy they had moved.

Johnny fit in perfectly there. After all, moving wasn't that bad. His whole family was finally happy in their nice little cozy home.

## The Outsiders

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*In **THE OUTSIDERS** by Grant Williams, a group of criminals meet in jail and form a bank robbing team. After their release, the crime spree begins.*

**I**t all started on a cold winter night, December 20, 1960. On this memorable night, Hector Psycho was released from Alcatraz.

Hector had been sentenced to five years in prison for attempted kidnapping. The way he became incarcerated had to do with

his plan to kidnap the Secretary of the Treasury. When Hector was young, the boy who would become the Secretary teased Hector at school, and Hector wanted revenge. Hector was caught in the pre-planning stages, but never actually got caught committing the crime. Hector paid

the price for his sick, foiled plan by spending five years in a rodent-infested environment.

While incarcerated, Hector Psycho met some other sick-minded criminals: Jamal, Alex, and Tony. With so much idle time on their hands, Hector, Jamal, Alex, and Tony got to know each other very well.

One day, these four crazy criminals had a conversation about prison life. "Prison is nothing more than three hots and a cot," said Hector.

"Yeah, I agree. I have learned to be a better, smarter, crazier criminal in this joint," said Tony.

"There is no help or rehabilitation here," said Alex.

"It's do or die, baby. Survival of the fittest in this awful place," said Jamal.

After a few years of getting to know each other, Hector formed an alliance with these criminals. They called themselves "The Outsiders" because of their ability to get information from the outside. Hector was the leader. Jamal, Alex, and Tony followed Hector's rules.

During a conversation over dinner one night, the men discussed why they were "allegedly" serving time in prison. Hector said, "I had a grand master plan. I planned to kidnap the Secretary of the Treasury, William Rogers."

"What?" said Jamal. "Why kidnap the Secretary of the Treasury? Who cares about that fool?"

"I do," said Hector. "He made my life a living nightmare when I was a child. I wanted to make him pay. Give him a taste of his own medicine."

"Wow, man. I'm only in this joint for attempted robbery," said Jamal. "You're deep, Hector. Real deep."

"Yeah, Hector. You're one bad man. I'm doing time for embezzlement," said Tony.

"So what happened?" said Alex.

"My friend got wind of my plan and thought he could get some type of reward money, so he made a call. Now, I'm here," said Hector.

"You got sold out," said Alex. "I'm doing time for lousy forgery. I'm not as crazy as you, Hector Psycho."

Jamal, Alex, and Tony were released approximately two years before Hector. As soon as Hector was released, he went to his apartment in San Francisco and contacted The Outsiders to let them know of his release. Everyone met at Hector's place the next week. After arriving in San Francisco, The Outsiders sat in Hector's apartment for three long days and nights and concocted a new plan. After working for 72 dreadful hours, a master plan was devised.

The plan was to rob one Security and Trust bank in each of the 50 states in the United States. Hector laid out the plan details and how it was to go down. Hector said, "Boys, we are going to accomplish this mission. It is going to take our blood, sweat, and tears. If we succeed, we will become the most famous bank robbers of all time."

"Hector, I'm a little skeptical of this plan," said Alex.

"How do you plan to carry this through? Have you contemplated all the factors involved?" said Tony.

"Quit bugging out, fellas. Hector's got it covered," said Jamal.

"Thanks, Jamal," said Hector. "Glad you got my back."

Hector thought it would be fun to rob the banks by state, starting in alphabetical order. The Outsiders would start in Alabama and end in Wyoming. The plan was set to last about one year: one state and one bank each week. The mission was scheduled to start on Christmas Eve and

end the following December.

The Outsiders headed east for Alabama. They drove Hector's purple van. They named the ugly purple van "Crime on Wheels."

As The Outsiders got closer to Alabama, Alex started to have second thoughts. "I really don't think this is right, guys," said Alex.

"I thought you were a cold hard criminal. Get it together," said Jamal."

Tony tried to calm the group down. He said, "Stop acting like girls and start acting like criminals."

The Outsiders arrived in Alabama on Christmas Eve. Everything was going according to plan.

The Outsiders entered the Security and Trust bank at 11:15 a.m. Hector approached the teller and handed her a note. It read, "This is a stick-up. If you scream or yell, I will kill you." While Hector was delivering the bad news to the young teller, Alex covered the security cameras and guarded the front door. Jamal approached the tellers and had them empty their money into a large garbage bag. Tony was on lookout duty. He was in charge of watching for the police.

Although it felt like hours to Alex, the plan was to only stay in the bank for three minutes. "Thirty seconds and counting!" screamed Hector. As planned, The Outsiders quickly regrouped outside in their predetermined meeting spot and drove off without incident.

"Good job, team."

"We did it, Outsiders," said Hector.

"We actually pulled our plan off. I was a little skeptical, but we did it," said Tony.

"One down and 49 to go," said Jamal.

The Outsiders rented a cheap hotel

room and counted their money. Hector announced the grand total. "We made off with \$25,000. Not bad for three minutes of work," said Hector.

Over the course of the next year, The Outsiders continued their dirty work. There were many close calls and The Outsiders' plans came close to being foiled, but they prevailed and made off with millions. The Outsiders were unstoppable. At least that is what they thought.

After casing the Security and Trust Wyoming bank, it became abundantly clear this would be their next robbery. With limited employees and an obsolete security system, The Outsiders would have little to no trouble making this a successful robbery.

Upon implementing their plan, they soon discovered the few but well-trained employees were going to make it a difficult task. During the robbery, a silent alarm was triggered notifying local, state, and federal police that a robbery was in progress.

After gathering money from the vault and bank tellers, The Outsiders exited the bank peacefully. It was only after driving a few miles out of town that The Outsiders came upon a roadblock. They were surrounded by law enforcement on the ground and in the air. The Outsiders were taken into custody without incident.

The FBI took The Outsiders into custody while they awaited trial. The jury rendered a unanimous verdict of "guilty," sentencing them to life in prison on "the rock," also known as Alcatraz. The criminals were immediately transported back to the place where the plan all began: Alcatraz, home sweet home.

# A Perfect Game

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*In A PERFECT GAME by Patrick Mason, Patrick has made the Beverly Hills Little League team. Patrick and his team are pretty good. Will they beat the Plymouth Whales, or will their season be over?*

This is about the 11-year-old Little League team in Beverly Hills, Michigan. My name is Patrick Mason, and today I've just woken up, and I am in the car going to my team's practice. I made the team, and a bunch of my friends are on the team. This is my first practice, and this will be terrific. My dad is the assistant coach of the team because I made the team. I am pumped up.

We are finally here. We play at Beverly Park. It is 8:00, and we are right on time.

I see one of my friends, Robby. "Hey, how are you doing today?"

He says, "Pretty good. I can't wait for practice, but it looks like a bad storm is coming."

"Yeah, I know. It looks really bad."

Practice is just about to start now. My dad says, "I am Coach Mason and this is Coach Tucker."

"Hi, guys," says Coach Tucker. "I can't wait for the season to start. It will be great."

"Everyone knows each other, so no introducing is needed," says my dad.

"We will be playing in the Berkley tournament Friday," said Coach Tucker. "Today, we will start with a light jog around the field. Then we will do pushups."

After I finished running, I did some pushups until I heard a *boom*. It sounded

like a nuclear bomb just hit the soft skin of the Earth. So I picked up my mitt and bat and ran toward the park courthouse.

After I got there I picked my uniform number. I picked 24 because my favorite baseball player was Miguel Cabrera and he was number 24. The rest of practice had to be thrown off because of the weather, so I went home.

We are in the car going to the tournament. We have just arrived. The game is just about to start, so I get suited up and go. We have to play the Plymouth Whales.

I am an outfielder, and the ball is coming right to me. *I caught it—yes!* I think in my mind.

Batter number two is up. *Bing*. Out two.

Batter number three is up. *Boom*. Single.

Batter number four is up. One, two, three: "You're out!"

We're up to bat now. Robby is up to bat. *Boom*. A triple!

Now I am up. One, two, *boom*, and a double: yes!

Now Matt is up. *Bing*. A single. Bases are loaded.

Luke is up. Home run! Yes, we mercied them! Yes, we won!

All I know is that I am a lucky kid.

# President Bush in War

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*The President issues an executive order that people are not happy with. For his punishment, he must fight in the army against a familiar face in*  
**PRESIDENT BUSH IN WAR** by *Shannon St. John*.

**I**t's November 11, 2008 and one month until war begins. President Bush (or Bush as some people call him) just signed an order that people in the war must stay six months longer. The families that have friends and relatives in the war got mad, and so did all the other citizens of the USA. They started a boycott, that is how mad they got.

After Bush went to court, he was sent to war for false lawmaking. Bush also got kicked out of the White House so his "good friend" Agent G let him stay at his house.

Bush was grateful for Agent G. He was always there when things did not go as planned, or worse. Agent G's real name is Gary, but he prefers Agent G. When he found out Bush was going to war with the Russians, Agent G wanted to take revenge on Bush for all of the things he made him do. Agent G started a plan to take over the country.

The next day when Bush went to the battlefield, it was dark gray in the sky, and there was no green grass. It looked like a cemetery, all gloomy and cold.

*Bam!* A gun was shot, and that meant the war had started. Bush shot three people and almost got hit by a couple of Russians. Luckily for him there was a rock a few feet away. He jumped behind it and lost the two

that were chasing him.

When the day was over Bush had a large scratch across his face. On the second day of the battle the same people came after him, but this time the man he thought was his best friend, Agent G, was with them.

He had no clue why Agent G was in the war. Then he heard someone say, "What should we do now that our old leader is gone?"

"Make Agent G our new leader!"

"OK, then, it is settled. He is now our new leader."

Next, Bush knew he was running for his life. One of the people talking saw Bush and shot him right in the leg. He could not move, but the people from the emergency room came to get him. Luckily for Bush he was not killed, just injured badly.

After he recovered he went back on the battlefield half expecting to be stabbed or shot, but no one was there except two people on Bush's side and two people on Agent G's side. Bush and Agent G went face to face!

When it was over two people were left, one person on Bush's side named Carl, and Bush. He had to do what he had to do.

When Bush was back in charge, he had a funeral for all the brave soldiers and Agent G, the one good man Bush mistakenly took for a friend.

# Reality

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*A criminal who sells snake venom is wanted by the CIA in **REALITY**, by John Stevens.*

Frank had been working with the CIA for the past fifteen years. Frank definitely knew how to catch clever criminals. He had received information about his next case. He had to capture a snake tamer who was allegedly selling rattlesnake venom to the general population.

Frank gathered his files and went out to his car. He heard a crack and looked around at his side window. It had just been shot by a bullet! He got in his car and sped away.

He finally reached the headquarters and ran inside. He ran up to his boss, Fred, and said, “The snake tamer shot at me. He did this because he knew we were coming.”

Frank had known that this man was

going to be clever. Frank gathered his things and headed to the tamer’s house. Frank knew he was going to need some back up, so he called Fred and the squad.

If he had gone in a second earlier than he did, he would have been blown to smithereens. There was dynamite planted at each window and door of the house. He had seen four little girls, and each one was holding a trigger that would let all of the venom spray out of the machines. He climbed down through the hole in the attic so he would not trigger the explosives.

He had taken three of the girls outside. Then as he was going for the last girl, the dynamite triggered.

# Road Trip

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*In **ROAD TRIP** by Melissa Hall, Leah must take a road trip with her family, and she is not too happy about traveling with her three noisy siblings. Through all of her adventures across the nation, though, she finds out this road trip might not be the worst thing.*

Have you ever had to do something you really didn’t want to do? Well, this was one of those times.

“MOM!” screamed my older sister Allie. I couldn’t believe we were already going. It was going to be torture going on a road trip with my entire family. The only reason I didn’t want to go on this road trip is because my family is very hard to work with, especially with two younger siblings.

Allie was not excited about this, either.

“Everybody ready!” my mom said as she picked up her bags. My sister and I ran downstairs and found our bags by the front door. We then jumped in the car.

As we headed into the car I saw it was raining. I climbed in and thought, *What a terrible day to start our road trip.* It was first coming down as a small drizzle, but soon it was heavy, cold, pounding rain. The

water was soaking into my small tennis shoes. The sky was dark and everything was wet, including me.

At first I didn't think it was too bad since my younger sister, Alexa, wasn't complaining, and my younger brother, Alex, wasn't crying. A few minutes later I knew I was mistaken. My sister started whining because she couldn't fall asleep. Alex started to cry because he was getting carsick.

After a couple of seconds of that we had to stop at a gas station to stop the nonsense. It had stopped pouring rain. That made it better, but I was still wet from outside. So far it wasn't off to a great start.

After we stopped at the gas station we were on our way to our first stop: Colorado.

After days of traveling (which felt like it took forever), we were in Beaver Creek, Colorado. We ended up in a fancy hotel with chandeliers hanging and couches that looked like pure gold. There were kids all over the hotel with brightly colored swimsuits all wet from the pool.

We checked into our hotel room at 8:00 p.m. Everyone was very tired. It was like we had just run in a triathlon. We all loved our hotel room with three bedrooms that we fought over.

While everyone was unpacking and taking showers I dropped on my bed and got out my phone to find a text message from my best friend Emma.

Emma- Sooooo how is the road trip??? Little bro and sis annoying u????? txt me back!

Leah- Hey Emma my road trip is not so good so far. Yes they r bothering me!!!!!! Well gtg ordering room service :P ☹ thanxs for asking. Can't wait to get back home! C ya!

After I finished talking to Emma I ordered food. After I finished it I went to sleep in a second. What a day!

As I woke up the next morning I heard a clatter of shutting dressers and tons of whispering. I thought to myself, *What could they be doing at 7:00?* I opened my eyes a little to find Alexa and Allie wearing shorts, tank top and dark brown and pink hiking shoes! "Oh, good, Leah, you're awake!" said Alexa as she grabbed her water bottle.

"We are going hiking?" I screamed.

"Yes, so get your stuff on!" said my mom as she walked out of her room. I groaned as I got out of my bed.

After a terrible hiking day with Alexa tripping over rocks and Alex crying because he couldn't walk very far, I was ready to leave the next day. Also I got an email from Emma saying she was going to Europe this summer, and her phone broke. That meant I couldn't talk to her except by writing a letter. But I knew Emma would be too busy having fun in Europe to respond.

The next hike was actually pretty fun, and it was turning out well. Finally the day came when I packed my bag, and was actually sad to leave.

We were in Oklahoma in a few days. There wasn't much to do there, but apparently my parents loved to look around. "Girls, we are going to lunch, and I want you to stay here and wait till we get back to go anywhere."

"Where would we go?" said Allie with a grouchy look on her face. My parents ignored her and walked out the door.

It was boring sitting on the couch watching television, but it was quiet without Alex since he was at the hotel's day care.

One hour later my parents walked through the door with Alex. Alex was a mess. He was covered in wet, brown, dirty



mud. His pants and shirt were ruined, and his hair was a mess. It turned out he started playing with mud, and he started rolling around in it while they were outside. My parents were not too happy with him and took him into the bathroom and washed him off.

For the rest of the week we went to museums and went on tours around the city. It started to get fun when our parents surprised us with a visit to a brand new water park. I loved sliding down the slides with water spraying in my face and falling into a pool of people. The next day we were leaving, and I decided to start keeping a journal.

Dear Diary,  
Oklahoma has been really fun. At first I thought it was going to be boring with all of the tours, but it ended up being really fun when our parents took us to a fun water park. Everybody in my family loved it, even Alex, who is usually scared of those kinds of things.

Oklahoma was fun, but I was glad once we ended up in...Florida. The drive there was very quiet since we drove at night. I finally got some nice sleep!

Florida turned out to be the best place so far. Alexa and I immediately headed down to the pool while Allie stayed in the hotel room and our parents and Alex went to the gift shop. We had a good time.

"Let's go get a smoothie!" said Alexa after sitting in the sun by the pool.

"Okay, but nothing else because we are going out to eat after this," I said as I took off my big blue sunglasses and got out of my pool chair.

We got Alexa a strawberry smoothie and met our parents at the gift shop. "Hey, Mom, can we go to the beach tomorrow?" I said while I looked around for cool souvenirs.

"Well, Honey, I think that's all we will have time for," my mom said with a frown.

"What do you mean?" I said too loudly, which made people look at me.

"We decided to leave Florida tomorrow night at 9:00 p.m." I couldn't believe it, but I understood. We had stayed extra time in Colorado, and my mom didn't want to make our trip longer since we would be going back to school soon when we got back. We would also be flying instead of driving from now on.

Our last couple of hours in Florida we spent packing, and soon we were on the plane. While I was on it I wrote in my journal.

Dear Diary,  
Florida has been so fun. There isn't a word to describe it. All of my siblings are getting along more and more. Today Alexa, Allie and I played in the ocean, and I collected seashells and made sandcastles with Alex. He loved it! Next we are going to Washington, D.C.! Hope we get a tour of the White House! Well, got to go. Plane's about to land, and I am tired!

Before I knew it we were in Washington, D.C. I was really excited to go there and take a tour through the White House.

We ended up taking the tour the second day we were there. The first day we stayed at our hotel and played games since we were so tired. Before we took the tour my

mom had to have *the talk*. She always had to have it when we were going somewhere important or to a place where you couldn't mess around.

Everything was going well until Alex totally forgot the talk and pointed to a nice silver decoration of a mini White House and said, "What's this?"

I shouted, "No, don't touch that, Alex!" But it was too late. He bent over and touched it. We thought it would fall, but really it just wiggled and then went back to its place. Everyone was staring at me because I was yelling at Alex. The tour guide told Alex about not touching important things in the White House, and my mom scolded him.

Later, we had lunch at a small restaurant. We did not stay long in Washington, D.C.

Dear Diary,  
Washington, D.C. was fun until we started going to museums and going on tours. It wasn't the museums and tours; it was Alex. He wouldn't stop touching things! It got everyone in our family annoyed! We decided to find different activities, but we didn't end up finding anything. My dad decided to just go on walks and go shopping. Even though it was a little crazy everything worked out fine!

After that came one of my favorite places... NEW YORK CITY! We were going to see *Hairspray* the musical. As we were walking to the theater my mom realized she forgot her purse. We ran down

the streets with the lights flashing in our eyes with all different colors. It took a long time because my mom then couldn't find her purse in the hotel room. She finally found it under her bags. Everyone relaxed as we walked out of our hotel room. We still had 20 minutes to get there.

I ran down the hard cement on the sidewalk and into the big theater with a banner under bright letters that said "*HAIRSPRAY!* Tonight at 7:30 p.m.!" Everyone was so excited to see *Hairspray*. I skipped down the long aisles as my dad led us to our perfect seats: center stage, eight rows back from the front. I was so excited I almost jumped out of the comfy red velvet theater seats.

We all enjoyed the musical and sang along with all the songs. Nobody complained through the entire musical.

We couldn't stop talking about it as we walked through the city passing stores, signs on buildings, and taxis rushing all around the streets. Later, I couldn't go to sleep thinking about how much fun I had. But then I thought how in a few days I was going to be back at my boring home in California.

Finally I was home. I was very sad about going back to California, but I was very glad to see my friends.

The next day at school as I walked into my first hour I told everyone what happened on my road trip. I told them all of my adventures. I acted like I was a storyteller. The road trip sure was a time I would never forget.

### One Year Later

"Leah!" yelled my mom from the bottom of the stairs.

"What, Mom?" It was a Saturday morning, and I wanted to go back to sleep. I was upstairs in my room.

"Your dad and I are thinking of flying to

New York this summer with the whole family, or maybe taking another road trip.”

I thought for a moment about all the crazy times I had on the road trip, but also

all of the fun times. I smiled and said, “Definitely a road trip, Mom!” more excited than ever.

## Robot-Aliens from Space

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*Robot-alien from space are trying to wipe out all of Earth's natural resources. A boy named William who is secretly working for the CIA must stop the robot-alien before time runs out in **ROBOT-ALIENS FROM SPACE**, by Aaron Walt.*

It was late May of 2049, and everybody was worried. All of the powerful world leaders were fighting over a new part of space that had been recently discovered. It was said to have powerful resources in it.

William was sitting at a large desk talking seriously with a short pale man in a plain black suit named Mr. Peer. Mr. Peer was the head of the secret services of the CIA. William was a child agent. They had started using child agents about 25 years before, mainly because no one would suspect them to be a spy.

The news William had just received was very startling. Scientists had just discovered evil alien-robots in the new part of space. William was being assigned a complicated mission to detonate a bomb set and guarded in Venezuela by robot-alien. The bomb was there for a reason. Robot-alien were trying to destroy Earth's natural resources so they could put us in their control. It would take some sacrifices, but they were determined.

Therefore, Will's boss put him in a training class for eight hours, and then set him off on his mission. He took a long plane ride to New Mexico for the first part of the trip.

He was walking off of the plane and stopped. There, right near him, was a seven-foot-tall robot with an oval head,

large coal-black eyes, pale-gray skin, and webbed feet and hands. He was disguised with dark sunglasses and a sombrero.

William snuck up on the alien and punched him in the sensitive spot which triggered a nervous system breakdown. The alien then stopped and ran out of the airport and far away before he finally collapsed and exploded. William smiled to himself and walked over to a plane bound for Venezuela.

He fell into a deep sleep and woke up many hours later when the plane touched down in Venezuela. He lazily walked off the plane and gasped. It was 120 degrees Fahrenheit!

He went to pick up his bags with the weapons in them. People kept asking him why he was there, and he kept telling them all the same thing: “I am visiting my sick uncle.”

The CIA had told him to find someone named Juan who he had once worked with. Juan worked with the CIA, too. He had some supplies that he needed. Will quickly found him and got a Jeep, food, water and a bomb detector.

Considering the dense jungle, he made good time. It only took him four hours to find the bomb.

It was in a clearing. It was empty except for a table with a modern-looking oval

shaped metal thing and a bunch of robot-alien. They were talking to each other in a weird mechanical language. He knew the object was the bomb.

Mr. Peer had told him exactly what to do here. First, he started throwing high-powered hand grenades at them. Then, he pulled out a gun and started to fire it as fast as he could.

Once the smoke and dust had cleared all the aliens were gone except for one. This one lunged at Will, knocking him over. Then the alien tried to grab Will's neck with his icy webbed hands. But Will knew karate and punched the robot in the nose and

then kicked him twice in the chest. The robot staggered backward and Will finished him off with a back-breaking kick to the spine.

Will looked at the bomb and jumped. It was about to go off! He ran over to the bomb, ripped the circuit board off and started cutting all the red wires as he had been trained to do. Then he ran like heck.

The bomb began to shake and shudder. Finally the bomb just fell apart with a loud *BOOM!* Pieces of metal and other stuff were raining from the sky. William turned and smiled. Mission accomplished.

## The Robot Invaders

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*When robots try to take over the world, they control every country except the United States. A commander has an idea to beat the last robot. Will he succeed in **THE ROBOT INVADERS**, by Chris Cornet?*

One day at the Japanese Robot Plant the scientist had an idea to leap past future Japan to futuristic Japan. So they built huge and powerful robots.

One scientist said, "Let's make them for war."

Another said, "Also for housework."

One more said, "And as servants."

As they completed the 10,000th robot, a spy from the Mechanic Destruction of Japan (or the MDJ) made the robots defective with an LV4 cubic robotic defective button. After he pressed the button, one of the scientists bumped into the spy, making him drop the button, which then broke into 100 pieces.

All of the robots that were defective took over Japan, east Russia, and North and South Korea by shooting buildings with their programmed guns. Then they moved westward.

When they were taking over Moscow

one of the soldiers shot a robot in the head. This made a hole in the batteries, and the robot blew up from the battery acid in the wires. The soldier told the commander who told others of other countries until it got to the U.S.A.

One by one the robots fell, until there were 500 robots left. Those 500 took over all of the countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe. South America was conquered by ten robots (after they swam across the ocean).

When the robots made it to Texas, Texas launched a full-scale attack on the robots after the commander in Texas said, "FIRE!" After the attack only one remained, which was the biggest of all robots. It took over all of the states but Maryland.

But the army didn't know how to beat the last robot, and all they knew was that if the robot takes over Maryland, the world

would be in crisis.

A commander in Maryland had an idea to skydive onto the robot's head and remove the batteries on contact. He told the president about the plan, and the president agreed.

In an airplane 2,000 feet in the air, the pilot said, "Coming up is the big robot's head." The commander jumped and landed on top of the robot's head where the robot's blind spot is. Since he was very strong, the commander punched into the

robot's head with his fist, removed the batteries, and chucked them as far as he could. The final robot blew up.

The commander got down unharmed. All of America cheered for his victory. After that, a copper statue was built in the capital of every city to note the commander's honor and bravery.

Through all this, the spy escaped back to his headquarters. But the spy was tracked, and the headquarters and life were normal after that.

## The Runaway Girl

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*In THE RUNAWAY GIRL by Nagrom Ztierk, Sara runs away from home because she feels unappreciated. She has no idea what a strange world it is out there.*

"Why?" Sara said as she was marching up the stairs.

"Oh, you know why. Now go to your room and stay there for the rest of the day!" Sara's mom exclaimed.

Sara had just spilled coffee on the nice new rug and blamed it on the dog. For that, she was punished. That was the third time that day, and seventh time that week, that she had been sent to her room. All of the other times she had been grounded.

"I'm sick of my mom. Just because dad's on a business trip selling watches doesn't mean Mom has to be so responsible all of a sudden. I used to get everything that I wanted! But for the two months that my dad's been gone, Mom's taking advantage of punishing me!" Sara told her teddy bear, Flip. "Should I just run away? You know what! I think that I will. Oh boy, Mom's in for it!" Little did Sara know her dad was coming back the next day, and Sara would have gone right back to her perfect life.

Sara had a sister, too. Her name was Rosaline. Her mom favored Rosaline.

Rosaline was at a slumber party. She'd had twelve sleepovers in the past two months! "I'm sick of Rosaline getting her way. It should be me!" Sara went on to Flip. "How about you come with me, Flip?" Sara said. Flip didn't answer, so Sara just stuck him in her pocket. She got her rolling suitcase, and she began emptying her closet. "I'll show you, Mom! Ha!" Sara mumbled to herself.

Once all of her stuff was packed, Sara snuck downstairs and took her mom's credit card, just in case. She tiptoed back into her room where her dog (a large pug), Grumps, was lying on her bed. "Woof!" Grumps exclaimed.

"Be quiet, Grumps. If you were me, you would do the same thing." Sara walked up to her window and opened the locks. She stepped out of the window and climbed onto the tree.

It was too bad she picked a dead branch. *Snap!* The branch cracked. As fast as Sara could, she grabbed onto the corner of the house. She didn't scream because Grumps

would go wild, and she would get into even more trouble. Finally, after ten minutes, Sara jumped down. "Ow!" Sara screamed, covering her mouth. She ran as fast as she could to get away, just in case someone had heard her.

Hours passed, and Sara had not yet stopped. "Flip," Sara said, "How far have we gotten? I know that we aren't headed anywhere, but how far have we gotten?" There was no answer, so Sara decided to stop on the pile of weeds behind an abandoned barn.

Sara rested there for three hours until she felt a tickle on her feet. She was half-awake when the tickle began. "Stop it, just five more minutes, please?" Sara mumbled. Then, all of a sudden her foot felt cold and wet.

Sara realized what was tickling her feet. It was a dog's wet nose! It wasn't Grumps.

It was a poodle the size of an average microwave oven. "Ewwwww, stranger snot!" Sara screamed. Her echo seemed to last forever.

*Ding dong.* Back at home Sara's dad was just arriving. "Hey, I sold all of the watches!" Sara's dad said to his wife.

"That's great, Dear. Rosaline is at a slumber party right now. If you want to say hi to Sara, I think that she is still sleeping, but be careful. She has been quite moody since you've been gone," Sara's mom said with a fake worried face.

"Let me just go see her. Maybe I can cheer her up with something that I bought for her to add to her spoils. Ha, just kidding!"

Sara's mom followed her husband up the stairs to where Sara's room was. "Sara, Sara, are you sleeping? Daddy's home."

"Woof!" Grumps popped out of the covers.

"Honey, where is Sa—" That was when Sara's dad saw the open window. "We

need to go out and find Sara. You go pick up Rosaline," Sara's dad said as he wept.

Hours had passed since Sara's parents had found out about her. Since then Sara had agreed to let the stray dog come on their journey. Sara was growing to like that dog. "I'll name you Abbie. Maybe you and Grumps could get together sometime," Sara joked. Sara sure needed a good laugh. She wasn't getting anywhere, and was really hungry.

All of a sudden there was a big thud. Sara tripped over a soft, green point. Sara pulled it out with all of the strength that she had. Right away Sara dropped the point. Attached to that point was a short person.

"Who dares to disturb me?" the tiny person asked in a strong voice.

"What? Don't ask me questions; you're not the boss of me, Flip, or Abbie! You're just a hobo who can't afford a home and likes to trip people. I don't talk to people who are misfortunate like you!" Sara said rudely.

"You have messed with the wrong person! I sense that you want to go home. Once you learn to be less of a brat, you will no longer be under my spell!" said the tiny person with a loud voice.

"What? Don't even try to scare me, you're nothing but a—"

"Ha, qwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnm!" *Poof!* A cloud of smoke arose over Sara and her friends. The small person was actually a wizard named Radsic. She put a spell on Sara and her friends to keep them from waking up until Sara became less of a brat. That way, Sara would not be able to experience life awake until she became a better person in her sleep. Sadly, Sara's friends have to be punished for Sara's mistakes. They would be asleep until Sara became a better person.

The witch was now back in the ground, ready to trip another runaway brat.

In the meantime, Rosaline was picked up and the family was driving around everywhere. Rosaline started to get worried. “Okay, Mom, I’m getting scared. We have been looking for Sara for six hours. Do you think that we will ever see her again?” Rosaline cried.

“Of course we will, Sweetheart, because I know that—oh my goodness! Sara is lying right there, to the left, on the grass! With a dog!”

Sara’s dad pulled over, lifted Sara up, and put her inside of the car. Rosaline hopped out of the car, too. She picked up the dog and Flip, put them into the car, and told her dad to drive home.

When they got home they were terrified. Sara could not have stayed asleep when she was put in the car, they thought, since she is not at all a heavy sleeper.

“Did she pass out?” Rosaline asked.

“I don’t know,” Sara’s dad said, shaking his head.

Suddenly to their joyful surprise, Sara mumbled the words, “I am a lucky girl. I need no more than what I have.”

*Poof!* Sara woke up. Everyone was relieved. They were too happy to punish Sara. All that they wanted was each other.

Sarah had been dreaming about her life and realized she had much more than most people. That witch had reminded her how lucky she is. Her family benefited from the running away incident also. Sara was becoming a better person!

Meanwhile, Abbie was still in the car. When the spell wore off, she snuck into the house. When there was a loud barking sound, everyone was terrified. They all ran downstairs to find Grumps and Abbie together howling and barking at each other. “They’re going to be such great friends!” Sara laughed, giving her family a great big hug.

All of Sara’s family went to bed feeling safe and happy. Sara never ran away again.

## Runaway Snickers

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*A little girl thinks she is going to have a good day, but her hamster has different plans. Will Taylor be able to keep the hamster safe in*  
**RUNAWAY SNICKERS** *by Taylor O’Shaughnessy?*

Oh, no. Mom is not going to be happy about this! I was home alone and my hamster, Snickers, got under the stove.

I could not see him under the dusty dark stove, even though his blonde fur is so light. I could hear him squeaking like a really annoying bird in the morning. I put a couple of treats under the stove. He did not care. He came close to coming out, but I could not grab him. I tried everything I could think of. I moved the stove a little, but he was all the way in the back. I just kept on trying so my parents

wouldn’t know.

Thirty minutes later my mom and step-dad came home. She asked me, “What are you doing sitting by the stove?”

I told her, “You are going to be so mad at me.”

She asked me curiously, “Why?”

I told her, “Because Snickers got under the stove.”

She got so mad at me, like I ripped up a Coach jacket. My step-dad was mad, too.

I felt a little better when they helped. She said, “Why don’t we just vacuum him up and cut the dirty vacuum bag open?”

trying to be funny. I told her no.

My step-dad said, "We should move the stove a little so she can get behind the stove." We all helped move the stove so I could get behind it.

It was dark dusty and cold. I did not see Snickers anywhere. I told my parents that I saw a hole and could not find Snickers. My step-dad said to check in the hole.

I looked in the hole, and it did not go left and right. It went up and down. I stuck my hand in the hole, and I found Snickers! The hole didn't go that far up. He was nibbling on the plaster. He didn't make any noise. It was dead quiet.

I got him out and rinsed him off. I also had to clean under the stove. There were dust bunnies and fur balls. We moved the stove back, and everything was fine, although there were some scratches on the wood floor. My mom doesn't care about the scratches because we have a carpet.

I'm still kind of mad at my hamster, although I am happy that he is safe. Now everything is good, though that day I learned that I shouldn't play with my hamster in the kitchen, and that hamsters are fast little things.

In the end my mom wasn't angry.

## Runaways

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*In RUNAWAYS by Alexandria A. Kizy, two best friends are having trouble at home. But is leaving home the best decision they could make?*

This story is dedicated to my Grandma Helen because the inspiration for the cottage in this story is one that originally belonged to her father. She allows us to go there in the summer time.

*I guess this was another one of those dreadful days, Debbie thought on her bus ride home from school.*

*First, your mother yells at you because your room isn't clean the way she likes it. Then, you miss the bus because your stupid little brother hides your tennis shoes that you need for PE. Your dad gets mad at you because now he is going to be late for work so he can drive you to school. Later on at school, you figure out that your dog took a chunk out of your math paper, so you get an F on that project. And, of course, your bus is the last one to arrive at the end of the day! Luckily, it was Friday!*

It wasn't all bad, though. Debbie was planning a sleepover with her best friend Patricia, better known as Patty. They were

going to stay up late, watch movies, eat junk food, and prank-call some students from their school.

The sleepover turned out to be a total disaster! Debbie's mom was all over their business, until they pretended to go to bed. When Debbie's parents went to bed, that's when they started planning their adventure.

"Aren't you annoyed with all these rules at school and at home? Wouldn't it be cool if we could get away for some peace and quiet?" Debbie asked Patty.

"That sounds good, but how could we ever get away without our parents?" Patty responded.

"What if we sneak away and go to your family's awesome cottage? It is empty right now," Debbie replied.



“It is empty, but don’t you think we will get busted and get into a lot of trouble?” Patty responded.

“We always seem to be getting in trouble, so how much worse could it be?” Debbie answered.

They decided to run away together to Patty’s parents’ cottage, using their babysitting and yard services money. They were both sick of getting lengthy lectures from their parents and being tormented by their younger siblings.

They worked on a detailed plan on how to sneak away to Patty’s cottage to get away from life in the city. They looked up the cost for transportation in a taxi, and they had enough money for the trip there and back. They also had enough money, between the two of them, for food and extra supplies.

They were going to leave the following Friday night, so they would have more time to plan and to pack. They were going to plan another sleepover and sneak out around 1:30 a.m. They would call ahead for a taxi to be ready and waiting in front of the house. Hopefully, Patty’s parents would be asleep, so they could sneak out easily. They were going to meet up every day for that week to get everything ready. Going over the plan was easy, but performing the plan was another story.

By Friday afternoon, after school, everything was packed and ready to go. They had plenty of clothes, beach attire, snacks, and accessories to last all weekend. They went to Debbie’s house for another sleepover and rehearsed their getaway.

Once everyone in the house was sound asleep, they climbed out of the window and set out. Leaving their houses for the first time by themselves and carrying their bags was an exciting feeling for them.

The cab ride cost forty dollars, plus twenty dollars extra for being driven to

another city at 2:00 in the morning.

So that the cab driver wouldn’t know the location of the cottage, the girls asked to be dropped off in the middle of the downtown area. A little chilled and a little scared, they began the short walk to the cottage.

“I can’t believe our plan is working so far,” exclaimed Debbie.

“Let’s hurry and get there before anyone sees us out here alone,” Patty whispered.

As they walked to the cottage, they realized that the cab driver was only interested in making extra money since he never questioned them about traveling alone.

Once they arrived at Patty’s cottage, they dug up the key from under the rock in the front yard, and crashed on the couch that night.

When they finally woke up the next morning, they heard the birds chirping as softly as a mouse scurrying across the floor. They couldn’t believe they made it! They wanted to get started on the daily activities as soon as possible.

Patty asked Debbie, “Would you like to start the day off swimming or taking a walk on the beach?”

Debbie replied, “Swimming sounds good to me.”

Their day of fun was full of so many options like swimming in the ocean, taking a walk on the beach, sunbathing, or just relaxing. Patty also knew where they could get some awesome French fries. The cottage was on a private beach, so it wasn’t crowded with people.

Playing on the beach was the best! They brought out the big float, so they could float out on the water. They walked to the French fry truck and bought two smalls sprayed with a ton of vinegar. While they were walking back and eating at the same time, they stopped at a nearby park to swing on the swings, like they were back in

second grade.

When they arrived back at the cottage, they wanted lunch. They made sandwiches to take down to the beach. Later, they swam out until they reached the sandbar, and then swam back. Before dinner, Patty and Debbie walked to the Little Store to get candy and ice cream for dessert. Dinner was soup from a can while watching the sunset. The sunset was the most stunning thing ever.

After dinner came a night swim. They waited until it was pitch dark to go in. By the time they went inside, they looked like prunes. They both cleaned up and got their pajamas on before relaxing outside while gazing at the stars. Shortly thereafter, they went to bed.

During breakfast, the door suddenly burst open. Cries of relief filled the room as Debbie's and Patty's families charged

through the doorway.

"Oh my goodness, you girls really are here alone, and you are safe! We were worried sick about you!" Patty's mom cried.

"What the heck were you two thinking?" Debbie's mom shouted.

Despite being furious with their actions, everyone was relieved that the girls were safe. They left that afternoon, and got a lecture the whole way home.

"How did you figure out where we were?" Debbie asked, once her mom had calmed down.

"The taxi cab driver came by this morning to make sure you guys were okay. He told us that you had a late night drop off downtown," Debbie's mom answered.

It turned out that the "greedy" taxi cab driver actually was appropriately concerned and alerted the family about his very young and unaccompanied riders.

## Sapphire the Star

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*A star who's lived her whole life in space with no friends winds up in California. In **SAPPHIRE THE STAR** by JoJo SandercocK, Sapphire has to find a way to get back into space, and it will take the help of a friend to do it.*

Sapphire had always been the dullest star in space. She had also been the smallest, and Sapphire was definitely the loneliest. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't make a friend, even though her home in space was very exciting. There was always something to do. There was a large community of very active stars that had buildings, clothing, holograms, and basically anything you can imagine. But Sapphire still wasn't happy. All she ever wanted was to have a special friend.

One day a miracle happened. Sapphire was just drifting, relaxing, and floating in space when all of a sudden an alarm

sounded. Sapphire had an alarm reference guide in her room, so she ran and got it. She listened to the bell. *Bing, bing, bing!* "Three consecutive alarm sounds," said Sapphire. "Hmmm...oh no! Gravity in space!"

Everyone quickly rushed into the spaceship, the place where there was no gravity. Sapphire made a mad dash for the spaceship, but was trampled by other stars and sucked into Earth's atmosphere. Before Sapphire knew it, she was smack dab in the middle of California, unconscious.

A girl named Carly was walking down a

street. All of a sudden she saw a light lying in the middle of the road. She ran up to it and got a closer look. What she saw was what looked to be a tiny yellow star-like figurine, about as big as a human hand. But then she realized that this star wasn't an ordinary star. It was alive, and breathing! She saw that the star had a face in the middle of the star, and two arms on the left and right points. She also saw that it had two legs on the bottom two points.

Then Carly attempted to talk to the star. She yelled, "Hello...helloooo? Hey, can you hear me?"

Sapphire opened her eyes. She saw a girl staring back at her.

"Hi. I'm Carly, future astronaut, but you can just call me Carly," she said.

"Uh...hi, I'm Sapphire," Sapphire said, a little unsure. "Where am I?" asked Sapphire, dumbstruck.

"You're in California," replied Carly "Home of ...well, nothing, but it's a pretty good place to live. So, anyway, how did you get here?"

Sapphire thought for a moment, and then attempted to answer the question. "Uh, well..." she started, "I don't remember exactly, but I do remember an alarm going off in space, three consec—"

"You live in space?" interrupted Carly. "So then how do you speak English?" Sapphire answered, "We stars speak all languages known to man!"

"Wow! Would you mind if I run some

tests on you just to find out more about space?" Carly asked excitedly.

"Go for it!" replied Sapphire. "I'd do anything for you!"

Carly smiled a happy smile.

Then Carly took Sapphire to her house, and they had a sleepover. They talked about space, and even a little about Earth. They laughed and bonded and felt like they had known each other their whole lives. The next morning, Carly explained some important things.

"Ok... I made a machine I call the Spacinator, which will launch you back into space and hook you onto the 'no gravity zone.' After I finish running my tests on you, I'll send you back up—"

"Will you be my friend?" interrupted Sapphire.

Carly replied, "I would love to!"

After Carly ran the tests on Sapphire, they said their goodbyes.

"I'll never forget you!" said Sapphire.

"Same here," said Carly.

"Goodbye!" they said in unison and hugged.

Sapphire then got in the Spacinator, and Carly catapulted her into the big, blue, radiant sky.

Once Sapphire returned home, everyone wanted to hear her story, which made Sapphire instantly popular. Sapphire had thousands of friends! Finally, Sapphire's wish came true. It was just like wishing on a star, but a person.

# The School Lockdown

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*In THE SCHOOL LOCKDOWN by Laura Goo, Nicole and Lucy are in a school lockdown while evil creatures threaten to take over the school. The girls battle the creatures while risking their lives.*

They surrounded us. There must have been at least thirty. We scrambled to our feet, but before we got up they grabbed Lucy with their vicious claws. I dove under their legs and slid to the end of the hall on my belly. As I looked back I saw Lucy dangling in the air, being pulled away by one of the monsters. I can still remember Lucy's faint voice screaming, "They're going to kill me! They're going to kill me. Help! Help!" It was too late to save her. They had probably sucked the life out of her like they did to the others. I had to find a way out, but how? They were ready to charge at me full speed ahead. It didn't seem like I was ever going to get out of this pickle.

In Michigan there was a school lockdown. Most people will say that they had practice school lockdowns but never had a real one. In Raspberry Middle School on January 14, there was a lockdown. Only this lockdown was to keep people from getting out of the school. My name is Nicole, and my friend's name is Lucy. My experience at Raspberry Middle School is one I shall keep for a lifetime.

It was my second year in Raspberry Middle School and I have to say it was not my favorite year. It was a cold day in January when Lucy and I walked up the cold, icy steps of Raspberry Middle School. "Hey, Lucy, did you hear we are going to have a practice lockdown today?"

"Yeah I think that it is a pretty stupid idea to have a lockdown. It's not like anyone is going to kidnap us in Social Studies."

"Yeah, I guess you are right." When we walked past the science room we heard the crazy science teacher yelling at a kid for stepping on some cords. We walked to our lockers and went to first hour.

After first hour I had Science with Lucy. Second hour was the practice lockdown. Lucy and I met up in the hallways, and we walked to dreaded second hour. As soon as we walked in the room we saw our crazy science teacher, Mr. Alton, fiddling around in his closet. "I will rule the school forever," we heard him say.

"Do you think he is on a new medication or something?" Lucy asked me.

"Hopefully," I replied.

As soon as Mr. Alton saw us, he stopped talking to himself. Right then the announcements came on. "Due to a schedule change our practice lockdown will be tomorrow."

"Wonderful," Lucy half-mumbled and half-said.

During the middle of science, the television started to flash the words LOCKDOWN. The gates to the school closed, allowing no one to come in. Everyone was confused. When Mr. Alton went to call the office the phone lines were dead. All the windows were covered with steel, and there was no way out.

For just a second Lucy and I could swear Mr. Alton was smiling. We heard a rumble in the closet. There was something alive in the closet. The door was locked from the outside, so whatever was in there couldn't get out. Or so I thought.

Two big furry creatures busted open the

door! They were hairy and had toenails as long as my head. They were like giants, but even bigger. They smelled like rotten cottage cheese and athlete's foot. Everyone panicked and ran to the back of the classroom. Lucy and I went under Alton's desk. All we could hear is the rumble of creatures taking the students away in the distance. Mr. Alton had seemed to vanish right before the incident.

Lucy and I sighed with relief that we weren't taken by the creatures. We tiptoed to Mr. Alton's closet and were shocked. There lay the details to his diabolical plan.

He made the creatures, planning to take over Michigan. This was really scary. How in the world were we going to kill off the creatures? In his plans it said that for every human the creatures captured the creatures would multiply. We read through the plans, and then there in bold print was the word ANTIDOTE. The antidote would kill off the creatures but could not save the humans.

We followed the instructions, hoping that we had made the antidote right. During that whole time Lucy and I did not speak, fearing the creatures would hear us.

We saw a creature behind us. Already they had multiplied, meaning that a human had already died. We stabbed the creature with the injection needle. Relieved that it had worked, we ran off searching for more creatures.

We walked down the gray hallways of Raspberry Middle School. Bright posters of orange and yellow filled the hallways reminding kids to sign up for baseball or forensics. We heard the crash of big footsteps around the corner. My heart was about ready to pound out of my chest. I took a little peek around the corner. They were right in front of the principal's office. There was a big heap of them. One turned around and pointed in our direction.

We tried to run, but there were more behind us. They slowly closed in on us. We were surrounded. There must have been at least thirty. We scrambled to our feet, but before we got up they grabbed Lucy with their vicious claws. I dove under their legs and slid to the end of the hall on my belly. As I looked back I saw Lucy dangling in the air being pulled away by one of the monsters. I can still remember Lucy's faint voice screaming, "They're going to kill me! They're going to kill me. Help! Help!" It was too late to save her. They had probably sucked the life out of her like they did to the others. I had to find a way out, but how? They were ready to charge at me full speed ahead. It didn't seem like I was ever going to get out of this pickle.

The creatures looked at me with their hungry eyes as I got up from the floor. I still had one injection needle, and I could see Lucy's injection needle on the other side of the hall. One of the creatures charged full speed ahead and scratched me on the arm. I whimpered in pain but quickly recovered and stabbed him in the stomach. Another one took a swing at me but missed because I ducked. I ran around in circles while the creatures chased me. They all got dizzy and fell to the floor. I stabbed them all with ease.

I had run out of the antidote and quickly seized Lucy's injection needle. I only had one more creature, but he was the biggest of them all. He had green hair and looked somewhat like a mix between a horse and a dog.

I slid under his knees, but he picked me up. I was upside down but still managed to stab him on his head. He immediately dropped me, and luckily, I caught myself with my hands. I hoped that was the last of them.

I opened all of the gates and windows. The funny thing is that it happened so fast

that the police thought it was a practice lockdown as scheduled. The police encountered two of the creatures. That was actually a good thing because they took samples of the creatures. The samples of the creatures are being tested, and the results will come soon.

The police told me that Mr. Alton has disappeared like the other victims. It seems the creatures turned against their creator. I lost a friend, and that alone was the worst part of my day.

I still think about Lucy some days. I wish that one day she would just reappear out of thin air. Sometimes I wish that I had disappeared and she had survived. I have become quite famous and have been on television many times.

In the back of the school under Lucy's favorite tree is a memorial for all who disappeared. Lucy's disappearance made me realize you have to enjoy the good parts of life while you still can. Sometimes things can happen that you least expect.

## The Second Chance

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*In **THE SECOND CHANCE** by **Bridget LePine**, Billy, a handyman, has to make Town Hemmalabi a five-star resort. Billy will have to make houses and buildings. But will Billy be able to do it all in time?*

Once a long time ago there was a beautiful town, Town Hemmalabi. In this town was a builder whose name was Bob. One day Bob disappeared. No one knew where he went. All they knew is that he was gone.

Because Bob left, the town lost its charm. No one was there to fix and repair the broken things, and there was no one to keep the town in tiptop shape. The town used to always get a lot of tourists and residents. Since Bob disappeared, tourists stopped coming and people moved out.

Now it's up to Billy, a person that learned about the town from a Help Wanted sign outside in a tree in Hemawhoha Town, where he lived. Billy will have to build houses, shops, and more.

Billy wanted to stay there and build because he loves helping people. It was a perfect way for him to help out and do something he loves at the same time.

Billy was so giving and nice that he didn't even work for money. He did make some money from tips that people gave

him; these usually added up to \$100 a day, which was an okay payment for him.

May 13 was the day Billy moved in. Mayor Sandy greeted him. The town was so big so Billy was surprised to find out that only a few people lived there.

One of the people there was Daisy, who owned the flower shop. There was also Jeff, a neighbor. Chef Guapo owned an Italian restaurant (most famous for its fresh-out-of-the-oven pizza). There was also Angie who owned the empty hotel.

In the town were a lot of empty lots, which got ruined from being abandoned with no one to take care of the houses. One of Billy's jobs was filling those lots with families and businesses.

When Billy met everyone they were all nice to him and appreciated what he was doing with their town. Billy found out that Mayor Sandy's idea of fun is working. Daisy likes picking flowers in the meadow and having picnics. Jeff likes swimming in the lake and eating Chef Guapo's angel hair noodles with tomato sauce. Chef Guapo

likes to make food and try his new recipes from Italy. Angie likes making cookies and playing soccer with Jeff. Billy told them that he likes constructing items and helping other people. Most importantly, they all got along.

May 17 was the day Billy started working. He made a silver and gold podium for Mayor Sandy. He made three vases that were in a flower shape. Later that day Billy went to Chef Guapo's restaurant and fixed his leaking sink. Jeff had a cracked roof that Billy fixed. He also fixed the slow, unused elevator at Angie's hotel.

On May 23, a girl named Jasmine visited the hotel and was convinced to stay. Billy made a yellow shelf for all of Jasmine's tennis trophies. Tennis was Jasmine's favorite thing to do, and yellow was her favorite color. Later that week on May 25 another guy named Fred moved in. Billy built a bike for him. Biking was his favorite thing to do.

In that week the town became a two-star resort. At the same time a guy named Joe was looking around the town. Joe was also a builder. The town still didn't look great because there were many lots open. "Could I be the builder of this town for \$1000?" Joe asked Billy.

Billy said, "No way, bucko. I love this town and everyone in it. I wouldn't give it to anyone for all the money in the world."

Joe got mad and challenged Billy to a build-off. Billy accepted. He was excited but nervous at the same time.

Billy practiced every day building things, and every day he got faster. One day he looked over at Joe and saw that they were about the same speed. That made Billy even madder.

May 30 was the day of the build-off. There were three rounds of the competition:

- 1- The speed and look.
- 2- The most interesting designs.
- 3- The most useful item.

Before the first race Billy and Joe got the same tools. When the competition started Billy was in the lead, but his tool kept getting slower. Joe won, but Billy said that his batteries were dead.

Angie had seen Joe in the beginning taking out Billy's batteries and replacing them with different ones that looked old and crusty. Angie said that, too. Everyone agreed that Billy should win by default.

Joe's punishment was having to leave right away. He also had to pay a fine of \$250.

By June 2 the town is a four-and-a-half star resort. More people had moved in: Violet, Patrick, Ben, Jenny, Ryan, and Lauren. Sadly there were no more lots, and Billy's job still wasn't done.

On June 3 and they had a town meeting. This town meeting was to plan for what still had to be done. Everyone had lots of good ideas.

"Plant more flowers," Daisy said.

"Yeah, good idea, because we can do that while Billy is doing harder tasks," Jeff said.

On June 4 everyone waited for the newspaper. The newspaper came from a rich town. All the residents try to find out who rates them, but they never had seen a person walking around that they didn't know. They always wondered if they ever would find out who rated them. They were hoping for a five star review but instead they got a four-and-three-fourths star review. "We're so close," Ryan said.

"I know, its getting annoying," Lauren said.

Billy decided to give everyone gifts so they would be happier and the town would get a better star rating in the newspaper.

Billy gave Mayor Sandy a new oak desk, Daisy a new bed in the shape of a flower, Jeff a blue float, Chef Guapo a new cutting board, Angie a new soccer goal, Jasmine a new yellow tennis racket, Fred a new red helmet, Violet a purple couch, Patrick an orange table, Ben a shark surfboard, Jenny a fat lady cookie jar, and Ryan and Lauren a

picture frame.

The next morning Billy opened the newspaper and saw that Town Hammurabi was a five-star resort again. Billy had done it!

Billy lived in that town until he got old and went down to Florida.

## Sicily, Italy 1948

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*In SICILY, ITALY 1948 by Andrew Harnadek, Eric is a WWII fighter in Italy alongside Sgt. Wellburn and James Greene. The three are trying to capture a 50-caliber machine gun. Will Eric survive?*

“Hey, Greene! You come with me! We’ll take the right flank!” yelled Sgt. Wellburn as bullets flew over his head. “Johnson, you cover us! I’ll call if we need help!” explained Sgt. Wellburn.

Eric Johnson loaded his rifle as James and the sergeant stormed the 50-caliber machine gun. As Eric aimed his rifle at the 50 cal, something off to the side caught his eye. It was a sniper in a tree aiming at his friends.

Eric mounted the butt of his rifle on his shoulder, looked down the barrel of his gun, moved the sniper into his sights, and took a shot. The sniper fell out of the tree dead.

*One to go*, Eric thought as he looked at his sergeant who was waving for Eric to come.

Eric stood up and dashed out of his foxhole, kicking up sand behind him and running out into the open towards his sergeant. Bullets flew all around him as he ran as fast as he could. When Eric was

close to his sergeant’s foxhole he fell back onto his side, sliding into the foxhole. “Is everything okay?” asked Eric.

“No. James was shot in the leg,” said the sergeant.

“I’m fine, Sarge,” said James, holding his hand over a bloody wound.

Eric pulled a bandanna out. “Wrap this around your leg. It will stop the bleeding,” said Eric.

“James, you have to stay back here,” said Sgt. Wellburn. “Eric, change of plans. I’ll make a distraction, and you take the right flank. As soon as I start running, you get over to those trees and take a clear shot,” said Wellburn. “Go,” said the sergeant.

Eric jumped out of his foxhole and ran towards the trees. He could see the sergeant shooting from the foxhole. Eric dug his heels into the ground to stop himself. He raised his rifle, stared down the barrel, and took one shot. That one shot hit the gunman in the head, killing him and ending the fight.



# Skeeter

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*In **SKEETER** by **Giovanna Buttazzoni**, a small dog lives a miserable life in a rundown “shelter.” He longs for a family to love, so he creates an escape plan.*

On the outskirts of town there was a small, rundown shack. It wasn't bigger than your average person's garage. It was blue, its door looked as if it might collapse if anyone touched it, and there was a small crumpled sign that read “Lake View Town Animal Shelter.”

It wasn't only the outside of the “shelter” that was terrible. If you looked inside you might just be sick all over the ground.

As soon as you entered the room you could smell the odor of rotting flesh. It's enough to make someone pass out. The floor is littered with trash, and it's just dirt and an occasional rock. Things were bad if you lived there. And it was a home to a few very unfortunate dogs.

One was named Skeeter. He was a small West Highland white terrier. But he looked like a potato sack. He was covered in a mountain of dirt. Skeeter had been abandoned one week before by his family. All Skeeter wanted now was to have a loving family.

In his entire week at the shelter, he was given a dirty bowl of water and half a bowl of month-old kibble. It had been four days since he had finished his food and water. He was becoming weak. He knew he had to get out. His life depended on it.

It was another three long dreaded days of being detained in his cramped small pen. Then the man managing the shelter showed up lazily carrying the food and water. The manager, unaware of the rebellious act about to happen, swung the door wide open. It was then that Skeeter dashed from

behind the pen's unforgiving wall and made for the front door, barking. All of the dogs around Skeeter began to bark as well as they stood against their pens.

The front door was locked and closed. The manager, now realizing what had just occurred, was racing toward the dog. His face showed a scowl, and his eyebrows made an arch that made his face look demented. The manager yelled threats and swore at Skeeter as he ran.

Skeeter was becoming frantic. Skeeter was looking around in high hopes that he would find a way to escape before the screaming man behind him could return him to his pen.

There at the front desk was an open window. Skeeter started to sprint, gaining speed and barking the whole way. Skeeter upturned pebbles and dirt as he ran, his little heart beating faster than ever. He skidded around the corner of the desk, leapt onto the plastic picnic chair, and then to the windowsill. He jumped out the window. He was free.

He felt the cool breeze on his little furry face and could smell the sweet aroma of fresh air. It was Skeeter's first time outside in two weeks. He could actually feel grass. Then it hit him: Where was he going to live?

Skeeter ended up roaming the town of Lake View. He walked up to every person he met and even tried to play games with the children at the park, but he was rejected every time. Though he kept returning to the laughter and sounds of people in the park regularly, he never found one person who

looked as though he or she wanted him.

But Skeeter had heard people talking about him time from time, saying things like “He is so cute” or “I wish I had a dog like him.” No one ever said anything mean, but not one person did anything else. They said nice things about him and then left, not giving him a second thought.

As for food and water, there wasn’t much, yet he managed to dig up a little food now and then from the alleys. He was able to drink from the lake in the park. For now he slept in the tube on the play structure in the park.

Skeeter tried so hard to be friends with everyone he met. And he kept hoping that they would take him home. But everyone thought that Skeeter already had a loving family. They only played with him until their parents took them home.

One day in particular, though, Skeeter remembered sitting in the park watching two girls play catch and laugh when the other missed the ball. From the corner of his eye he saw a little girl no older than six with curly blond hair that reached down to her shoulder, and soft blue eyes. She was pointing at him and whispering to a woman. The little girl looked like her mother. The mother gave the girl a hug,

and then took her hand and started to walk away. But the girl looked back, and a little tear ran down her face.

Skeeter puzzled over the little girl with blond hair for a week after seeing her. Why had she been pointing at him? Why was she crying?

One rainy fall day when he was lazily sleeping in the corner of the playground tube, he was bewildered to find the little blond girl that he had seen only a week before wrapping him in a small blue blanket. She then hopped off the play structure and strode over to her mother, patting him all the way there.

The mother carefully took him from her daughter as soon as she arrived by her side. The mother had merciful eyes. Skeeter knew the answer to the questions that he had puzzled over for a week. What she wanted was to take him home. She had been crying because she was sad that she couldn’t have him the week before.

Skeeter knew what came next. He was taken inside of a car. He lay in the little girls arms. The car soon stopped.

He looked out the window to find a small, but cozy-looking house. Their house. His house!

## Space Travel

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*In **SPACE TRAVEL** by Alexander Pamukcu, the Russian leader has been killed, and America is getting blamed for it. To save their nation from bombs to come, America moves to space.*

**B**ANG! BANG!

The Russian leader Bob Gustavo was assassinated on the cool fall night of Tuesday, July 22, 2015. The Russians knew the leader was assassinated because he was strict, cruel, and spouted pollution to the U.S. The Russians knew only one country

that could have done this: the U.S. The Russians decided to fire nukes at them, but they did not have a lot of money. So they can’t strike too much.

Quickly the news spread in the U.S. that the Russian leader was killed, Russia was blaming the U.S., and it was thinking about

using nuclear weapons. The U.S. government decide that it was going to fire a nuclear bomb right back at them.

All of a sudden the people of New York see a missile falling straight towards them at a fast speed, and it hits the Empire State Building. For a short time the bomb just sat there. In those couple of minutes, people started screaming and running, and then *BOOM!*

The sound was so loud that the people all the way from Washington could hear it. The bomb destroyed everything in its sight and spread all the way from New York to Michigan. It was a disaster. In New York it was a horrible place to be. The bomb laid waste to the land. Buildings were destroyed, and most of the population was wiped out. People were stuck in rubble trying to get out. The blast also destroyed the Statue of Liberty. People were scared and worried that another strike would come. Michigan did not suffer major destruction, but buildings were still destroyed from the blast.

The U.S government thought this was too dangerous to get involved with. The government heard that the Russians are going to send another bomb, so they decided that they were going to move to space because the U.S. had already had some structures that they could use on their moon base.

They only had a limited time and spaceships, so they couldn't bring everybody. Most of the important people were going, like the president, Congress, and the generals.

It took hours and hours to finally get everybody on the spaceships and ready to go. In just a couple of minutes the countdown would begin. Finally when all the people were on board and sorted, the countdown began. Wives said goodbye to their husbands and wished them good luck.

The loudspeaker spoke words and numbers so loud it hurt your ears. Then the moment arrived.

“Five...four...three...two...one...BLAST OFF!”

All the spaceships took off into space. Stars sparkled everywhere as they said goodbye to Earth and made their way to the moon. They were so close to the moon that they could see its blue glistening light shining on the spaceships.

When the U.S. finally got to the moon, it was tough to get everyone out of the spaceships and organized. They only had few small structures. So everyone did their part to help, even the kids. The kids did some minor jobs like see how many people there are and where to put them.

They started to build more structures like condos, apartments, and a big building for the president and the generals. The buildings were shiny and metallic. There were little glass walkways near doors to get around without floating off into space.

Then another problem arose: How are they going to grow food? They thought about it for a while, and then they thought of a brilliant idea: to grow the food in a big glass container with artificial light. So they got to work and built the glass container with lots of vegetable seeds they brought from Earth. Then finally they found some sort of rock with fluorescence to use as a light for the garden.

It did get boring up there, so the children played tag and catch with some mitts that they had from Earth. They also made some games up like moon ball. In moon ball you throw the ball and the ball will float to the other person, which was somewhat entertaining while the adults tried to help grow food and clean clothes.

Living in space was not easy for the U.S. You cannot go outside. All they did was walk around in the glass walkways and visit

other apartments. There were no toyshops or clothes departments. There were just apartments.

Everybody was living a dull, frustrating life for a couple of months until a UFO arrived in the plaza. People stared at the unknown visitors that were coming out of the ship. Really thick fog blasted so that you could not see a thing. Then out of the blue came big, tall, green, and slimy-looking aliens from Pluto from the ship. The biggest alien said, "Greetings, Earthlings. I am the chief alien, and we have come to live with you. We also have more food you can use and some clothes." Everyone agreed that the aliens could stay.

But after a year the people and aliens didn't have food, and people were dying of starvation and running out of clothes. So the government decided that they should move back to Earth and try to work things out with the Russians.

They fixed up the spaceships, and the aliens fixed theirs. The president received news that the Russians knew who had killed the leader (the Ukrainians), so this was the perfect time to leave.

Both ships took off and said good-bye to the moon. Next stop: Earth.

While they were on the spaceships they saw Earth with the green and blue colors shining right on them.

When everybody got off the spaceships, they headed straight back to their homes where they belonged and checked for their husbands, but unfortunately they all died out from another nuke strike from the Russians.

The U.S. was so mad that the U.S. wanted to fire a nuke right back at them for what they did to our country. Right before the president was about to press the nuke button the general stopped him.

They saw a big plane fly right above them. The plane dropped an object down. Inside were millions of dollars from the Russians. The Russians probably thought they should give them back the money that the U.S. had spent for the space travel.

The president still did not like the Russians, but at least they gave their money back. The Russians apologized for the entire struggle and the nuking. The Ukrainians got blamed for killing the leader.

But in a dark alley in Ukraine, a CIA agent from the U.S. pays a Georgian secret service agent for killing the Russian leader. The U.S. government never knew that their CIA actually killed the Russian leader.

Once they figure out which Ukrainian killed the leader, he or she shall die. But the Ukrainians had not done it. *No one ever knew!*

## The Super Fish

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*In THE SUPER FISH by Gwen Fisher, Gwen gets a very odd fish named Flopmouth. It turns out that the fish can do very many things that are very unlike a fish.*

When I was in first grade, I got a fish for my birthday. It was a guppy, and guppies only live for two weeks in a freshwater tank. Two weeks after my birthday my fish hadn't died yet.

So I sat in front of my fish tank, and decided to ask my fish some questions. My mom always told me I had a good imagination. So I said, "Why haven't you died yet?"

To my surprise it responded with a question. "Why haven't you given me a name yet?" it asked back.

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHH! Mommy, Drewby, Claire. HELP!" I screamed.

Drew, who was across the hall, came first to see me, white-faced, in a corner as far away as I could be from this fish, and staring at my fish tank. Then Mom and Claire came in. They were downstairs cooking dinner. When I saw they were there, I ran behind Drew and told them what happened.

"Gwen, I think your imagination is too great," said Claire. I usually don't believe Claire, but Mom and Drew nodded in agreement. So Drew put me to bed and closed my door. I went to sleep, or at least tried to. My fish woke me up.

"I'm going to call you Flopmouth," I said to her.

"Sorry," Flopmouth said, hearing the annoyance in my voice. "I'm sorry I scared you today. Here, I'll give you a huge fish hug."

"Eww! It's wet," I whispered.

"Of course it's wet. I just came out of a fish tank."

"What else can you do?"

"Well, I can fly, lift heavy things ten billion times my weight, breathe out of water, clean my own bowl or tank, and wash dishes. Oh, yeah, and I'm good at all subjects in school."

"Can all guppies do this?"

"No."

"I have more questions, but tonight I'm too tired. Goodnight, Flopmouth."

"Goodnight, Gwen."

When I woke up in the morning two weeks later, I woke up to this:

"Gwen, it's your turn to do the dishes!" Mom yelled up the stairs.

"I just woke up, Mom. Let me stretch and feed my fish!" I yelled back. "Hey, Flopmouth, can you help me with the dishes?"

"What's in it for me?" she asked.

"Fish treats and a chocolate crescent Danish, and if you want the Danish soggy I can put it in your fish bowl."

"Fine."

"Hop in to your fish bowl...Hey, Mom, did you remember to make a chocolate crescent Danish and got out the fish treats for Flopmouth?"

"Yes, I did... Now, tell me again why your fish has to eat breakfast and dinner with us?"

"She understands what we say even though you, Drew, and Claire don't understand her."

"What about you?"

"We have our own language. Isn't that right, Flopmouth?" Then Flopmouth nodded at me as much as a super fish can nod.

"Okay. Well, I am off to the grocery store to buy more chocolate Danishes. Flopmouth ate the last one. Gwen, empty the dishwasher and do your homework."

"Bye.... Flopmouth, can you help me with the dishes and my homework?"

"Sure," Flopmouth said.

Later that day, I wrote down all the stuff I knew about Flopmouth in my notebook so I wouldn't forget. Flopmouth was in the bathroom cleaning his fish tank and bowl.

# Superz

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In **SUPERZ** by *Eleni Kondak*, Lilac Lane is an orphan girl with a special, unknown power who is traveling with other superheroes—the Superz team. Their mission is to stop Circensaw and her followers from overthrowing the universe.

Deep in the lair of the evil sorceress Circensaw, atop Mt. Irachnet, she and her two assistants Atlanta and Elexina were making a surefire ice disc of power. It included force fields, fire power, water power, ice power, invisibility, and immense speed. Circensaw held the disc between her nails, and laughed about what power they would have.

Meanwhile, at the bottom of the mountain, a helpless orphan named Lilac Lane was placed at the doorstep of kindly old Mrs. Biglohia, who lived alone at the base of the mountain. Then, the disc slipped from Circensaw's grasp and landed on the child. It soaked into her skin, the baby's eyes flew open, and she let out a small, perfect cry.

Many years passed, and Lilac still did not know of her power. On her twelfth birthday, the Superz team stumbled across Lilac's path. One of the team members was hurt, and they went from house to house asking for hospitality. Lilac's guardian welcomed them like old friends.

While they were there, Autumn (a girl with nature powers, but given the gift of a seer) sensed a powerful presence of super-ness with her nature-scan. Knowing that Lilac would be in too much danger here with Circensaw so close, Lily Visions (the head girl) proposed to keep her with them. Holly Ice disagreed, "She is only 12. We must only accept teenagers."

The group took a vote, and decided to keep Lilac. "What will we *do* with her?" Holly asked. "She's too young and

inexperienced." They talked it through, and, even though Holly disagreed, left with her.

As they traveled, Lilac did not show any signs of her power to the team, but they went on. "So, um...who *are* you people?" Lilac asked.

"Well..." Lily Visions paused. "As you know, I'm Lily Visions. I can make things appear before me. This is Holly Ice. She has ice power as you might have guessed. You already know Aqua Loraine and Sky Moon, and this is Amber Wisp. She can fly like Sky, and she can dematerialize like Aqua." Lily gestured toward two red-haired girls. "This is Autumn Leaf and Linda Flame. Autumn has nature powers, meaning she can grow trees, flowers, etc., and she is also a seer. Linda has fire power, and over *here* are our ninjas." She pointed at two armed, black-clad men, one with a flask of a strange black substance strapped to his belt. Lily addressed the ninja without the flask first. "This is the black ninja. He's just a regular ninja, but *this* ninja over here has one of the most fatal and powerful sources in this entire team. If this lotion were rubbed on your skin, it would create a bubbling, burning rash. Over a short period of time, the rash would spread over your entire body, and you would die." Everyone nodded as if to say: "*That's how it goes.*"

Lilac pressed on. "So... what are we even doing?" she asked cautiously. Lily took a deep breath. For a minute, she said nothing; then she suddenly broke into speech.

“Circensaw, the vilest of evil sorceresses, and her fellow cronies, Atlanta, Elexina, and Tentacilla, are trying to overthrow and control the universe. It all started a few years ago. She started a band of evils. We went and tried to stop her, but she had discovered a new power: Her growing nails now shoot lasers that can slice through a boulder ten yards wide. We had to flee, but now we need to stop her. She terminated her old recruits, and found three more powerful ones. Atlanta is stretchy as elastic, so she can reach any planet, win any race, and pass through corridors quicker than even the fastest runner. Elexina was lightly trained to be a ninja. She is not very skilled, but her electric spear is nothing to get near. Tentacilla’s teeth can morph to be as sharp as dinosaur teeth. If we don’t stop them, it will be the end of us all.”

Just then, Autumn spoke up. “According to my natural calculations, you were a baby when you got your powers. It was from an ice disk of power. You are almost as powerful as all of us together!”

Lilac was confused. “If I was a baby, then weren’t you, too?”

Lily’s expression softened. “We are immortal unless we fall in battle. We looked just like we do today even when your great-great-grandmother was an infant.” Lilac didn’t say another word.

Soon, they were at Circensaw’s main fortress. Lily addressed the group. “Okay, gang! We’ve got to get inside that fortress! Iron and black ninjas! You take down the guards. When they’re gone, try to get that Elexina out of the way. Linda, you and Sky get into the control room, and see if there’s a way to get Atlanta away from the main towers. Holly, you’re with me. That leaves Amber with Aqua; you are spies. Dematerialize if anybody sees you. Lilac and Autumn—you guys just stay out of

trouble, okay?” They all nodded, and went their separate ways.

Even though Autumn and Lilac tried to keep out of the way, Circensaw and Elexina found them anyway and had Autumn cornered. The evil sorceress’s lasers contracted slowly around her. “You have one last chance, *child*. Turn to our side, and you live as our faithful servant. Stay with your puny rebel team and you *die*! Now you were saying?”

Autumn turned as white as chalk. “I...” she stammered. “I choose...” Just then, Lilac leapt in front of Autumn, and created a force field, blocking the lasers from them.

“You maniac! You corpse-breath worm!” Circensaw advanced on them, chasing them along the dim corridors. Circensaw’s lasers broke the force field, and she began blocking the entrances to all other doors in the hall. Finally, they seemed to outrun Circensaw. They sped into a dark room, and shut the doors.

“There’s no lock!” exclaimed Autumn. “What are we going to do?”

“Hope this can hold her,” answered Lilac darkly. She held out her hands, her eyes closed lightly. *Fire*, she thought. *Light, something bright!* And then, she opened her eyes to see a flame in her hands. *Get bigger*, she thought. Then, it happened. The flame rose up, and lit twelve candles on a gigantic chandelier that was so big, it lit up the entire room. Lilac was satisfied. It was time to rejoin the team.

The other members of the Superz team were in battle. The Iron ninja was looking for a weakness, any weakness, to strike at Elexina, who was in fierce battle with Linda and the black ninja. Atlanta was pacing back and forth in front of Sky and Aqua, who sat struggling against their bonds. Occasionally, Atlanta would sneer at them slyly. Lily and Holly were struggling with Tentacilla. Atlanta stretched from her

captives to Lilac and Autumn in a single stride. “Well, well, well...it seems we have a couple more guests at our little party! Now we can *really* get it started!”

Tentacilla bared her fangs even more menacingly.

“Yesss, let’ssss,” she hissed.

The Superz team leapt into action. Linda ditched Elexina and began burning off Circensaw’s nails. Aqua dematerialized out of her bonds and undid Sky’s. Aqua and Amber began dematerializing and rematerializing all over the place, driving Tentacilla crazy. Elexina had decided that the black ninja wasn’t worth it, and started slashing insanely with her spear, trying to run Lilac through with it. Lilac was dancing around her, faster than she had ever run before.

Then, a curious thought swept over her. Lilac realized that Elexina had power, but no skills. She understood that Elexina wanted to be recognized as a hero, and not an untalented loser. In one swift movement, she formed an ice sword, and

began a duel with Elexina. Circensaw pushed the weak-trained ninja out of the way. “I’ll deal with this one.” She fashioned a spear out of her only nail that had not been burned off. “This should kill you.”

They dueled like maniacs. Lilac, although she was untrained, battled on. Circensaw’s laser was beginning to melt Lilac’s ice sword, so she changed it to a fire sword. Ice was flying from her open hand, splintering the laser. Circensaw’s face was strained with rage and pain, the sinister sneer long gone. Lilac told her friends to run as she slashed fire at Circensaw’s knees.

“Augh!” Circensaw yelled. “Get back here and die! After them! Don’t just stand there, get them!” but the Superz team was long gone.

Lilac got a medal for saving the day, and an official document that proved that she was on the Superz team. Through the years, they found new members, and always managed to get away from Circensaw, but it was because of Lilac that they are still around today.

## Survival of The Fittest: A Boy’s Journey Through the Holocaust

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*In SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST by Daniel Honet, a boy and his family are sent to a concentration camp. The boy is separated from his mother and two sisters, and must try to survive with his father and brother.*

I’ve never been so scared in my life. Bursting through the door came German soldiers, armed and ready to attack as if war was going on in my house. My four-year-old brother, Max, was in my mom’s arms, and my two sisters Sophie and Leah, ages seven and ten, were in my dad’s. I just stood there gripping my mom’s waist like I did when I was three; for the record,

I’m 13 years old.

It all started when Adolf Hitler decided that the Jews were responsible for the problems that now gripped Germany. We knew it was a lie, but the Germans got stronger and stronger, and now they were in my house!

I looked over my shoulder to see my dad arguing with the German soldiers,



something we said not to do because we heard that if you argue with a German soldier, he would kill you. With that on my mind I ran to my dad and pulled him back to us before the German soldier blew his top. The soldier's face was turning redder by the second. On our way out I grabbed as much as I could carry, and my siblings did the same, not knowing the German soldiers would take it all away.

Outside, the cold air whistled through the crowd of people, slapped my face, and nearly knocked my brother to the ground like a boulder falling off a cliff.

Despite that, I had much more difficult things to worry about. There's a man walking toward all of us with scissors to make sure all our hair was short so they didn't have to worry about us getting lice. After all our hair was cut painfully short, we were put on a cattle car and sent to a concentration camp called Bergen Belsen. The cattle car had more than one hundred people jammed inside, yet it wasn't even big enough for an elephant!

When we got off the cattle car the person next to me fell over. He was dead. When I exited the cattle car German soldiers took the man's body and threw it on the ground. Then they separated the boys from the girls. My father, brother, myself, and all the other men were told where to go, while the women went the other direction.

We arrived at a cell that was a small box-type room with wood beds and no blankets. The wood beds were set up in groups with five wood beds going up, and attached to each bed there were six wood beds going side to side.

When we got to our cell everyone quickly chose a bed while I tried to get a bed next to my dad, but I couldn't stop thinking about Sophie, Leah, and Rachel, my mom. How were they doing? Are their beds next to each other? Are the other

women nice?

The beds were so uncomfortable I didn't sleep for three days. Every morning we got some watery soup and a piece of stale bread, and then we were sent off to work. We would do things that don't make any sense whatsoever, like move one rock 100 yards and then come back for the next. When that was over I would have to do it again. Now that may not make sense to you, but when you're surrounded by men with guns you do what you're told. The little boy next to me (I think he was eight years old) dropped his rock and split his lip. The guard got so mad that the little boy was bleeding and making a mess that the soldier dragged him away, and I haven't seen the boy since.

I was so dehydrated I could barely stand. Then, when I asked for some water, they kicked me and told me to get back to work. We went to bed at midnight, and I was so happy to get some sleep, even though it wasn't for long.

The following week my sisters and I were once again thrust upon the cold of the cattle car's floorboards. We were on our way to Auschwitz while Max and my parents stayed behind. I held my sisters very hard on the cattle car, realizing this may be the last time I'll have with them before we get there. The cattle car ride was long and cold, but I just cuddled with my sisters and never let go.

The cattle car finally stopped at Auschwitz. When we got off the cattle car we were told where to go, and went. On our way I looked up and what I saw will be stuck in my mind forever. I saw smoke. I thought a building was on fire, but it was worse than that. The place with the smoke coming out of a chimney was really an incinerator, the place where the Germans burned the Jews' bodies after they were killed.

Auschwitz was one of the few killing camps. It has a gas chamber where they would have you undress and then take a “shower,” but instead of water coming out of the pipes, poison gas would come out and kill everyone instantly.

Two days after we’d arrived Sophie got very ill and died. I couldn’t sleep that night because all I thought about was Sophie, and the rest of my family.

A new set of Jews came to our concentration camp the night after, and one of them looked familiar. That’s it; she was at Bergen Belsen with us. I had so many questions to ask her about my family, and I held nothing back. I asked her everything.

I found out that my mother was alive, and that my father was staying in the hospital with Max, who had recently become sick. Before I was done asking all my questions we were hustled back to our cells to go to sleep.

The next morning we were shoved out of bed and sent to work again. We loaded and unloaded about 50 tons of sandbags onto a truck and then took them all off and had to stack them in piles of ten. After a long day of work we finally were able to go to bed.

I awoke the next day to the screech of another cattle car arriving to take the Jews

who had been there for months to a different camp. Who knows where we’ll end up next? Maybe Natzweiler, Gross Rosen, Ravensbruck, or even Treblinka. I just knew wherever we were going it wouldn’t be good.

The war dragged on for three more years with no signs of stopping until the Soviet troops entered Germany and Hitler tried to escape. Hitler feared the possibility of being captured, and he had heard stories of how the Soviet troops planned to parade him through the streets of Germany in a cage.

To prevent being humiliated Hitler decided to commit suicide along with his wife, Eva Braun. He’d tested out a cyanide pill on his pet Alsatian dog, Blondi. Eva agreed to commit suicide with him. She could have become rich by writing her memoirs, but she preferred not to live without Hitler.

Who knew a year later I would end up in the middle of my backyard feeling freer than I’ve ever been my whole life? Just the thought that Adolf Hitler was dead and that this terrible time will never happen again brings great happiness to my family and Sophie, who is watching us from heaven, wishing she could share the experience with us, too.

## Susie’s Closet

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*In SUSIE’S CLOSET by Jessica McCoy, two young children get sent up to their rooms. But when they get trapped into Susie’s video game, everything starts to head in the wrong direction.*

**B**oom, Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom!  
“Johnny, did you fall down those darn stairs again? I told you one day you are going to ruin them! And you know I am NOT going to pay the bill! What are you going to do when you have spent all your

money on your action figures?”

“I told you, Mom, that I’m doing an experiment!”

“And what experiment is that?”

“Okay, sure, like you’ve never tried to slide down the stairs and get away with it

without your mom seeing?” Johnny said in an irritated tone. “I think we both know who won that battle.”

“So you mean to tell me that there is no experiment, and I’ve believed you this whole time? Yeah, you’re right, we do both know who won this battle, and for my victory I’m sending you up to your room. Go!”

Johnny’s sister spoke up. “Mom, I don’t get why you have to be so hard on him. I mean, he didn’t do anything wrong. They’re hardwood stairs.”

“Well, Susie, if you are so concerned about him, you can join him upstairs while I go to the market to get dinner. I’ll be back in an hour, and I don’t want to hear any complaints. Genevieve is coming over to baby-sit.”

“Mom!”

“I mean it, Susie.”

Susie and Johnny marched up to their bedrooms fighting the whole way.

They glared at each other and slammed the door behind them. Susie and Johnny didn’t talk for another forty-five minutes.

Susie decided to go downstairs. She still had fifteen minutes, and her mom was never early. On her way out she accidentally kicked her video game into her closet. But of course she was too mad to care.

Johnny had been lying on his bed staring at posters in his room.

Soon, Susie ran back upstairs. Her mom was coming home in five minutes. And then she saw it...

“Ahhhhhh! Johnny! Johnny! Johnny!” she screamed incessantly. “Johnny, come look!

“What is it now? I was in the middle of something very important.”

“Sure,” she said, annoyed. “Just come look.”

Susie’s closet had turned into her video game Humphrey’s Play Palace! What had

she done?

“What did you do?” he said with a grin. “Mom isn’t going to be so happy about this!”

“Johnny, Johnny, don’t.”

“Yeah? And why not?”

“Because, when was the last time mom believed you?”

“Good point. Hey, how crazy would it be if we went in there?”

“Way too...”

And before she could even finish her thought, Johnny was gone.

*I can’t believe I’m going to do this*, she thought, and Susie was gone too.

“Johnny, how could you? Dinner is in an hour!”

“Relax. What harm could this do anyway?”

“A lot of harm. Hey, look. I see a health booth. Do you have any money with you? We could buy health.”

“Or Slurpees!”

“NO!”

Johnny was gone again, and Susie was annoyed, again.

Susie chased him for miles, and soon they couldn’t control their actions. They were turning into the video game characters!

“Susie, I have an idea! We’re one of the video game characters, and we only have one life left.”

“Wow, Johnny, way to point out the obvious.”

“No, I meant if we lose our last life, we’ll be sent home, just like in your game.”

“Johnny... that’s brilliant.”

They searched and searched for ways to lose their last life, but because they were only on the first level it was harder than they thought.

They thought they were doomed, until they ran into Ms. Lolly Pop, who seemed to be a little too happy.

“Hello, I am Ms. Lolly Pop, princess of Lolly Pop forest. And I am here to grant you one wish of any sort. But be careful: I can be very tricky!”

“Okay, I know it may sound weird, but all we want is to go home. You see, my closet has been turned into a portal to this world, and...”

“Don’t say another word. You are our savers. You are the ones who have let us be free from this awful game. You are coming with me.”

“But we want to go home; we have dinner in five minutes.”

“I’m sorry, but if I send you home we won’t be able to get to your world, and all of us will be sent back here. I can’t have that happen.”

“Why not?”

“Well, if you really want to know, I’m not really here to grant you a wish. I am here to capture you. And when that happens, I will be able to earn my wings and be crowned queen. Man, I am good. Now get into the car.”

When Susie and Johnny arrived at Ms. Lolly Pop’s castle, they had no idea what to think. They had always imagined a castle with marble floors, golden fountains and

rich, snobby people. But that is not what they saw. Besides them and Ms. Lolly Pop, everybody else was a slave getting slashed. The floors were dusty and gross, and the only fountain was broken and contained blood of the slaves. They wanted this to be stopped.

“Well, welcome to the promised land. Don’t you just love it?”

“NO! Are you crazy? How could you love this? It is a dump,” Johnny cried.

“Yeah, and the poor people—why are you doing this to them?”

“Because when I was a kid, that was me that was working like a dog! And I wanted none of it.”

Suddenly, a new voice interrupted. “Michael, it’s your line. Unh, cut. Take five. Oh, and Julia, wonderful work today. I almost thought that you were actually Susie! And Michael, we are going to have to work on your part. I’m just not thinking ‘Johnny.’ You make it seem more like a Bob.”

“Hey, Julia,” said Michael, “want to maybe get some pizza from the food court? I hear today there is a special: five toppings for the price of two!”

“Sure, I was headed down there anyway

## The Tail of a Werewolf

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*In **THE TAIL OF A WEREWOLF** by Max Frank, Matt has been bitten by a werewolf. His senses are better, he is stronger, and he is faster. The question is: What will he do next?*

“OUCH! That felt like a car hitting me.”

“You’re lucky it was not worse,” said the doctor as she stuck the very thick needle into his arm.

Oh, sorry; I did not see you. In case you want to know what happened, let me rewind this story a bit. It all started on the

night of a full moon. Three friends, Matt, Maggie, and Andy, were walking in the woods. Matt was feeling kind of weird. He felt like something bad would happen. Sure enough, he was right. A werewolf bit him. It would have ripped him to shreds, but Matt always carried his silver knife around. In the end, that werewolf was dead.

So, now we're back where we started. He tried to convince the doctor that a werewolf bit him, but she did not listen.

The next day he felt better. The bite was gone and there was no scar. He felt stronger and faster.

He had a four-story house. His room was on the top floor. He could smell the waffles his mom made. He was down the stairs and dressed in less than five seconds. His mom said, "How did you get down here so fast?"

"I don't know," Matt said.

"How's your bite?" said his mom.

"It's gone. No scar or anything."

"Honey, want some waffles?"

"No!" he bellowed, "I want bacon!"

"But waffles are your favorite."

"I WANT MEAT!"

"Ok, ok," his mom said, feeling scared of her own son.

The violence with Matt continued until one day when this happened:

Andy asked, "Hey, Matt, why are you doing this, acting all tough? It's not cool."

Matt said, "I don't need to act tough. I am tough."

Andy said, "If you're so tough, then arm wrestle me."

"Fine, then don't cry when I break your arm," Matt said.

Sure enough, Matt did break Andy's arm. But Maggie thought it was just an accident. See, Maggie has liked Matt since first grade, but she will not like him for much longer. On Matt's first full moon he will turn into a werewolf, and after that he will be able to turn into a werewolf freely.

The day after the arm wrestling, Andy challenged Matt to a race. Matt lapped Andy twice before he was halfway done.

That night it was Matt's first full moon. Matt looked at the moon. He felt weird for some reason. He looked at his arm, and

saw it was covered in fur. He had grown a foot, and he was hungry.

Matt heard the other werewolves and tracked them down. They were in a pack, so he went hunting with them. He ate almost anything he saw: a squirrel, four dogs, and fifteen people.

The day after, Matt woke up in his bed. His clothes were ripped. He was freaked out, so he turned on the TV and saw that fifteen people went missing last night. It showed pictures of them, and for some reason he felt like he'd seen them before.

To take his mind off it, he changed the channel to a program on wolves. He started thinking about wolves, and he turned into a werewolf. He thought about being a human, and he turned into one. Suddenly everything weird that had happened to him made sense. He became mad with power.

His mom told him he could not go out at night without her permission, so he attacked her. Matt picked his mom up and threw her on the dining room table. The table had been set, so his mom had glass in her arm. She went to the hospital.

The day after, some bully at his school made fun of Matt. So Matt broke the bully's neck. There was so much violence that he went to jail. But he broke out.

While he was out, he decided to be good. He did not want to cause any more pain. It was hard, but he finally did not hurt anyone. He only saved them. It took him four years. Every day he would do something nice. Then he would do something nicer. He started by getting a kitten out of a tree. Then he put out a fire. Then he started saving lives. He stopped bank robbers and murderers. He went on to be the greatest hero ever.

He now lives in hiding, but when something goes wrong, he's there to save the day.

# Teleporter

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*After a work accident, a man gets transported to ancient times. He's struggling to survive in **TELEPORTER**, by Ian O'Bryan.*

Mickey was a construction worker. He had awards for *Best Worker of the Year, Strongest Builder, and Strongest Building Built*. One day he was bolting together two red poles for a playground. Someone yelled, "Mickey," and when he looked he wasn't paying attention. He bolted his hand.

When he was in the hospital the doctor said, "There is something strange and weird on that bolt that we have never seen before." Mickey's boss let him take a couple of weeks off before he came back.

A couple of weeks later Mickey got a call from the doctor. He said, "Mickey, you need to come into the ER. We have found something wrong with the bolt." Mickey rushed to the hospital. As he was being rolled on a hospital bed to the ER, the doctor said, "We need to give you surgery on your hand or you may die." Thoughts were racing through Mickey's brain like how it will feel to die, and what the world will be like without him.

Mickey was just waking up after his surgery. The doctor said, "We got the bolt out of your hand. Whatever it was that was on the bolt got into your blood."

Mickey said, "So does this mean I'm going to die?"

The doctor said, "Yes, but we don't know how much time you have left."

After Mickey got the shocking news, he looked at his palm. He had a weird scar, and the one from the surgery was on the top of his hand. He pushed the mark, and suddenly he was in ancient time.

It looked like there were cavemen everywhere. He started to run. He didn't

know where he was going, but he was running.

After ten minutes of running he found a cave where he could rest. After thinking it over he realized he had teleported.

When he was sitting there, something peeked around the outside of the cave. It was orange and looked like an elephant, but it was very, very small. He named it Matt.

After a couple of days living there, Mickey found a very large area full of vegetation with a river! Then Mickey figured out how to make spears and other weapons.

One day Mickey heard some noise outside the cave. It sounded like people. He couldn't make out what they were saying. Then four cavemen jumped out of nowhere and tried to stab Mickey.

Matt got Mickey's spear and put it by Mickey's foot. Mickey picked up the spear and stabbed one caveman in the chest. The other cavemen continued attacking him. It was three on one, but he couldn't do anything about that. He didn't like violence, but he had to kill them.

One caveman went towards Matt. Mickey quickly reacted and grabbed a handmade knife out of his shoe. He threw it at the caveman and hit him in the heart. The caveman fell to his knees. His spear fell out of his hand and landed right next to Matt.

When Mickey threw the knife another caveman cut his thigh. Mickey was struggling to not feel the pain in his leg. He was getting weaker by the second.

Matt snuck up behind one of the cavemen and jumped on his back. Matt

started to claw at his neck with his overgrown, jagged, dirty fingernails. The caveman died right away and was bleeding crazily for several minutes. That distracted the other caveman, and Mickey stabbed him.

Mickey fell over. His leg was bleeding very badly. He thought maybe this time he would die.

Matt started to run. Mickey couldn't get him to stop running away. He tried to chase him, but it was hard to run. He was screaming, "MATT!"

Matt was running along the side of a swampy, grassy river. Matt finally stopped and just got a drink. When Mickey caught

up he sat there and wrapped some grass over his leg.

Matt stared him in the eye. Then an alligator jumped up and got Matt. Mickey dived but missed.

Mickey stood there. He saw some blood rise. Then some orange skin rose from the water. Tears started to come from Mickey's eyes. He sat up against an old oak tree, and thought, "This all happened because someone called my name." He then lost consciousness and died within seconds.

In 2011 explorers found his body on an island. Then in 2014 doctors found out what was on the bolt. Mickey was lucky he lived that long.

## Third Hour

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*In **THIRD HOUR** by Amber Ann Abboud, a girl's third-hour teacher plays tricks on little innocent children. When the girl comes back to her classroom, she finds it empty! What will happen next?*

*D*ing, ding, ding. The bell for third hour was ringing. As I sat down in my seat I wondered what would happen in Mr. Fisher's class today. It seems like every day something weird or wacky happens in my third-hour class.

"Good morning, class," Mr. Fisher said kindly. Right now you'd think Mr. Fisher is a nice guy, but he is not all that great. He has a dark side, too. He likes to play tricks on little innocent children. Only a few people know that about Mr. Fisher, and I am one of them.

As my third-hour teacher was admiring his Mr. Potato Head tie covered with Band-Aids (he loves Band-Aids), I felt tired. I needed a drink of water to wake me up. So I grabbed my bathroom hall pass and asked Mr. Fisher to sign it. He did without looking.

What I love about Mr. Fisher's

classroom is it is the only sixth-grade classroom downstairs. That day, the eighth-graders were visiting the new high school they would be going to. And all of the seventh-graders were on a field trip. So the hallways were silent.

It felt kind of weird walking in a hall with no noise around me. But I eventually got to the drinking fountain on the other side of the school (the only drinking fountain with good water). I took a three-minute drink so it would seem like I was in the bathroom.

I lifted my head from the drinking fountain and noticed there were six Band-Aids on the wall. I looked closer and saw there was writing on them. They said "5-4-3-2-1-NOW!" The very second I read the "now," I felt a faint poof. I looked at the wall and the Band-Aids were gone.

I then walked straight into the classroom

and saw that none of the kids were in their seats. In fact, there were no kids in the classroom at all.

The first thing I thought was I was in the wrong classroom. So I looked at the door, but it read “115.” I was in the right classroom.

My heart started to pound like a base drum: *thump, thump, thump*. I could feel sweat on my forehead, and my hands started to get clammy.

I ran out of the room and opened a random classroom door: no one. Then I opened another and another until there were no more doors left.

All of a sudden I heard whispering.

Sweat was pouring down my face. “Who’s there?” I called. There was no answer.

I ran into the science room and grabbed a jagged rock. “I’m armed with— with— um...um... slate!” I yelled.

I decided that nobody was there and it was my imagination. So I thought I should just leave. I tried to open the front doors, but they were locked. I sighed and thought I was never going to get out of here, and I would eventually die.

I turned around and saw Mr. Fisher; I also saw the whole sixth-grade behind him. He had his hands in his pockets and an evil grin on his face, and with *the* six Band-Aids on his shirt. “Got ya,” he said.

## Thomas the Rainbow Zebra

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*In THOMAS THE RAINBOW ZEBRA by Julia Berthel, Thomas is a miserable inhabitant of fairytale land. Will his plan to change this condition lead to the happy ending he desires?*

“I got it!” yelled Fairy Godmother as she flew up to catch the Frisbee.

“No, I got it!” yelled the first little pig climbing on top of his two older brothers.

“I don’t got it...” said Thomas with a sigh “...again.”

Fairy Godmother got it, and flew down to Thomas. Thomas had a look on his face that looked like he did not feel happy, at all.

“Why so sad, Thomas?” asked Fairy Godmother.

“Yeah, Thomas!” said the three little pigs.

“I just can’t do anything that a fairytale character can do,” replied Thomas, letting out another sigh. “I can’t do anything.”

This was not the first time that Thomas had felt this way. Actually Thomas had felt this way many times before. He had been living in Fairytale Land since he was a little rainbow zebra. But over the years he came

to realize that there was nothing special about him. He did not have brothers to play with like the three little pigs, or fairy wings to fly with like Fairy Godmother. He did not have anything. He was just a zebra.

So Thomas went home feeling useless and dumb. When he got to Turn the Page Hill (which was between Beanstalk Boulevard and Grandma’s House), he did not stop. He went right inside, shut the door, and sat down in his favorite safari chair by the window. He stayed in that chair for a couple of days, looking out the window, only to get up for a glass of water or zebra munch.

Then it hit him! He did not need to sit in his chair being depressed! Tomorrow he would go to Mother Goose’s House of Writing, and write himself a story. He would become a fairytale character!

The next day, Thomas got into his car to



go to Mother Goose's House of Writing. He had never seen the inside before, which made everything even more exciting.

After driving for a while, there was a sign which read, "Mother Goose's House of Writing under construction, Villain's House of Writing up ahead"! But Thomas did not see the sign, and so he kept on driving.

A few minutes later Thomas arrived at the House of Writing (it did not say which one), and he skipped in with excitement. The House was full of villains, not the nice fairytale characters Thomas expected to see. "I guess everyone wants to be nice now," Thomas thought, feeling very unsure.

Thomas walked up to the front desk (still a little scared), and the lady sitting at the front desk said, "What? What do you want!"

"I am here to see Mother Goose," he said, shaking. The lady had a devious smile on her face and whispered something to the guy next to her. The guy smiled just like the lady.

"Right this way," she said. She walked Thomas to a meeting room on the right side of the big factory building. When they got to the room, the lady whispered to the wolf from *Little Red Riding Hood*, who was sitting in the room.

"Hi," said Thomas. They looked up from laughing. "Did Mother Goose send you to help me write my story?"

"Of course she sent me," said the wolf. Then the lady left the room, still smiling.

"Now Mister Zebra, what is your name?" asked the wolf.

"My name is Thomas," said Thomas.

"Ok, then, Thomas," said the wolf, "let's write your story."

Now of course Thomas, not being a fairytale character, did not know that they were not going to be helping him. They were going to make Thomas a villain in his book, and all the nice characters would be scared of him. The worst part was they all knew it except for Thomas.

A week later, Thomas was sitting in his kitchen reading the newspaper when he spotted his story in the paper. He read it, and then started to panic. He ran down to town square where everyone was gathered, talking about Thomas.

"Everyone!" said Thomas as he jumped onto a tall rock to use as a stage. "I was tricked into writing this story! I am not a villain!" No one believed him.

"It is true," said his friends. "He is not a villain."

"But he is not one of us, so how do you know that he is not just playing a zebra trick on us?" asked the townspeople.

"Because we know Thomas, and he is not a liar, even if he is a zebra," said his friends. Thomas was glad his friends stood up for him, but he still felt bad.

Thomas went back to his house with his friends, and they stayed there for almost ten days. After the ten days, there was a town meeting. Thomas and his friends went to see what it was about.

"Thomas," said everyone in the town together "we are sorry for not trusting you and your friends and also for saying different is not good. We know now that different is not bad. Different is special."

Thomas was so happy that the whole town had a party! Even the villains came and apologized! Thomas knew that he was different, and that, for the first time, made him very happy.

# The Time I Nearly Cut My Thumb Off

*In THE TIME I NEARLY CUT MY THUMB OFF by Montana Luke Harvill, a young boy named discovers a razor blade. What could possibly go wrong?*

**P**icture this: a three-year-old child in the basement of his house, unsupervised. This doesn't sound that bad. Well, this child is me, and for some reason either I find trouble or trouble finds me.

I was playing with my train when something shiny caught my eye. I decided to go see what it was. I walked over to the cabinet and picked up the object. It was a metal object with a sharp edge. I looked at it for a minute and then decided there were only two possibilities: one, it could be a part to something, or two, it could be a razor blade knife. I decided it was the razor blade knife.

I took it and went into my small tent that I had in our basement. I then got a large box and decided to make a house out of it. I took the knife and put the knife into the box. I started cutting. I thought I looked so grown up using a knife and that later, I could show Mom and Dad what I had done.

Suddenly, the knife stopped. I was puzzled. I thought the knife could cut through anything. I looked in the box, noting that the knife was being stopped by a string. I decided to push until I cut through.

I put my hand about six inches in front of where the knife was. I pushed hard until the string broke and the knife went pushing forward, plowing through the cardboard. Before I knew what was happening, blood was gushing out of my hand!

I ran upstairs screaming, leaving a small trail of blood behind.

My mom was giving the babysitter money and thanking her, and my dad was walking in the door, just home from work. Lucky

for me, both of my parents are doctors.

My mom saw me and said, "Oh," like she wasn't surprised (she usually sees me trying to do stupid "stuff"), walked over to the drawer, and got a small rubber band to put around my arm to cut off the circulation. Then she went into the bathroom and got some bandages for my hand.

My dad and babysitter were standing there not knowing what was happening. My mom yelled to my dad and said, "COME HERE AND HELP!" My dad jumped at the sound of her voice (surprised to hear someone talk after the long drive home) and ran into the bathroom to help her wrap it up.

I was still sobbing at the time when my mom scooped me up and put me in the car. All of a sudden the car lurched forward. I had no clue what was happening or where we were going.

My dad stayed at the house for a while and then went to go get Logan and Landon (my younger brothers) to come and see me at the hospital.

I kept on asking, "Mommy, where are we going?" and she kept saying, "Just to a special place." She didn't want to tell me that we were going to the hospital so I wouldn't start crying again.

When we got there, the doctor sewed up my hand. I had to have a shot to help with the pain, and so I didn't feel the stitches. Later that day I got to go home to my family.

The next day I had a pretty long lecture about the thing I had done, and I got in big trouble. At least it wasn't my head or face!

# A Trip to Chicago

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*A boy is going on a trip to Chicago with his family. On the way a meteor hits, and it's all downhill from there in **A TRIP TO CHICAGO**, by **Alex VanHeusden**.*

One year ago my family and I took a trip to Chicago. It was a lot of fun, but some of the parts were not how they should be. Everywhere we went weird things would happen: sharks attacking, or zombies chasing us—stuff like that. This is how it happened.

As we started the day, I went to school. When my mom picked me up we started our trip. We got to Indiana so I could tell we were almost there. While we were driving, a meteor fell from the sky and landed in Lake Michigan. An explosion of dead fish came and washed out the expressway. Luckily we had just gotten onto the Skyway toll road. After that I was kind of questioning the whole trip.

We finally got to Chicago! We got to our hotel room and settled in. My mom said my brother Eric and I could go to the pool while we were waiting for my mom's friend Rick.

When Rick landed he needed something to eat, so he went to a restaurant. Our mom figured out where he was and we met him there. It was an Italian restaurant. They had so many good things there. We sat down at our table and all of a sudden the lobsters broke out and started to attack people. Many people died that night.

The next morning we went to the aquarium. They had cool fish and stuff there, but we avoided the lobsters. We took an elevator to the basement to see the coral reef exhibit. It was so cool. There were sharks, and all kinds of weird animals behind glass before my brother broke it by "accident." The sharks got out in a tidal

wave of water and tried to eat us. We were lucky because by the time we got to the elevator the bloodthirsty sharks that were still chasing us did not have enough water to get to us and eat us. My brother said, "How did that happen?" like it was not his fault.

Next we went to the 10 Pin Bowling Alley. It was the upstairs of a downtown Chicago building. It was dark, with loud music and great food. We were in the middle of our first game when the floor shook. Then I heard a roar. The floor panels began breaking apart into large gaps. People were falling. Blood was splattering against the walls. The bowling balls were falling and smashing into guests' heads.

I got out safely. When we were out I saw puddles of blood, dead bodies, and hurt people. Outside was a disaster, with cabs turned over and buildings crumbled. That was a crazy night, and after we left the city we finally got to our hotel and went to bed.

That morning, to relieve the stress, we stopped at Odyssey Fun World. They had so many cool things there. There was laser tag, bumper cars, and a Yak ride. That day the rides were possessed. The bumper cars were chasing people around the place. Aliens had come in and modified the laser tag guns to be real weapons. The Yak ride was throwing people out of their seats and into windows. We barely escaped that nightmare.

We went back to the hotel, and that was a long day.

The next day, my family and I went to Coco Key Water Resort. I had a lot of fun

there. Everything was going fine until one of the bolts cracked and the structure broke. The giant water bucket fell on a lot of people, and it suffocated them. Many people died. There was blood everywhere. Then the corpses turned into the living dead, and they were chasing me. I almost didn't make it to the door, but I got there. I went back to the hotel room and went to bed.

The next day was normal for the trip if you don't consider the monster that bit our car, but it was ok. Nobody died...I wish

Eric had died after flying out the back of the car. Instead, he died after the monster stepped on him like an ant, but overall the trip was a success.

### Epilogue

A few months later Alex made some friends. He didn't care about his brother's death. The days were not life-threatening. They still can say they were not hurt in this event—at least Alex, his mom, and Rick can say that.

## The (Un)Friendly Aliens

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*When some friendly aliens land in Ryan's hometown of Boise, Ryan thinks he finds one of their warships. But when he tries to report it, the warship disappears! Will Ryan's friends believe him in **THE (UN)FRIENDLY ALIENS** by **Conor Dolson**?*

“**T**here have been multiple sightings of an extraterrestrial plane-like ship in the central Idaho area,” the TV anchorman reported. “Eyewitness accounts say the ship resembles a very large zeppelin-plane crossover, about half a mile long and 700 feet wide. Police are asking that if you see anything that looks like this in the sky, call...”

Ryan didn't listen to the random phone number the anchorman said. He didn't care because he didn't believe in anything from other planets or galaxies or anything else. If there were life on other planets, he would be the last person who cared.

“Dinner!” yelled his mom to everyone in his house. Being as hungry as he was, Ryan was the first one in the kitchen. When everyone was at the table, everybody started eating and talking.

“Have any of you heard about that supposedly ‘alien’ ship floatin’ around Idaho?”

Nobody had except his father. “I did hear about that this morning in the back of the paper. It's all a fake, probably a prototype by the Air Force or something.”

“Yeah, but a lot of people don't think so. Some kids claimed they saw something through the clouds at recess today, but nobody believed them.”

“They might have seen something. You know, this whole thing seems kind of weird to me. The government hasn't even stepped in and made a statement about it. They might not know what it is, either,” Ryan's dad reasoned.

“Whatever it is, I don't care,” Ryan said. That ended the topic for the night.

The next day, reports flooded in that the ship was coming close to the ground near the outskirts of Boise, in a potato farm. People thought that it might attempt to land. As the ship reached 2,000 feet above the ground, police ordered a lockdown of

the city and ordered the Army to surround the ship while they guarded the city area. When the ship landed, a door opened, revealing a fish-like creature with four legs. It did not carry any visible implements of destruction, and communicated with the soldiers. It said, "Please do not hurt us. We come in peace to learn of other planets."

The troops were taken aback. No one expected them to talk, let alone not have any weapons. Therefore, the general ordered them to pull back. They were allowing the aliens to live in peace on Earth.

"Wow, was I wrong," admitted Ryan to his best friend Patrick the next day at school. "That was really an alien ship, and they are friendly, of all things!"

"I knew all along that the government couldn't do anything like that. That thing is simply too big. My family didn't believe me, but I stood by my thought, and I was right," bragged Patrick.

"Oh, you say that about everything. But at least they aren't trying to annihilate us."

"Yeah." *RINGGG RINGGG RINGGG* went the bell. "Whoops, got to get to class. See you after school."

That day at school, Ryan, like all the kids, couldn't get rid of the thought of the aliens, and how they were friendly. The aliens had already started helping people. By the end of the day, the whole city was cleaned up by the aliens, and people had newfound respect for them.

After school, Ryan and Patrick went exploring the landing site of the ship. They both got to see the aliens, and found nothing wrong with them. Afterward, they played football about a mile from the ship. When Ryan went to fetch a stray throw that put the ball in a large hedge, he found something purely shocking.

"Patrick, come here!"

"What is it?" he asked.

"Just come here!"

"Okay." When he got there, he gasped. It was another, smaller alien ship. It was about the size of a normal living room. It was spherical, and had a platform extending out the back that led to the door. There also was an odd green glow to the ship, but neither of them noticed in their excitement. "Let's see what's inside! This is so cool!"

When they got inside, what they saw was not so cool. The whole ship was filled with futuristic weapons. But when they touched them, they were soft.

"It's a hoax! This ship isn't real at all," said Patrick.

"But the controls are real. They seem to work."

"Whatever. Let's just get out of here and forget about this place." So they left.

Ryan was too amazed at the thought of the ship, and he visited the ship again the next evening. Again, he tested the controls but found that they were now as soft as the weapons had been before. The weapons were still soft, too, and Ryan thought the aliens knew someone had found it and gotten in. So he left quickly, but he continued to take quick visits and found things to be gradually getting harder. He decided to tell the police. When they got there, though, the ship had vanished.

"Kid, you have to learn that you can't abuse calling the police," said one of the officers.

"But it was here. I'm not lying!"

"Quit pulling my leg. We have more important things to do than be called and be used as a prank." They left.

But Ryan knew it was real, and came back yet again. This time it was back, and everything—weapons, controls, everything—was fully functional. He figured out the controls quite easily. It was only a steering wheel that also pulled in and out to adjust height.

“This,” Ryan thought aloud, “is the coolest thing ever!” He was orbiting Earth once a minute. He also found buttons that had pictures of missiles and bombs on them, but did not press them. He knew they had a chance of hitting a satellite or Earth itself.

He knew the ship was dangerous, and thought about what he should do with it. He thought of landing it on the moon or another planet and seeing if there were any escape pods, but thought it was too risky and there was no way to get off except landing. Finally, he decided on crashing it.

He attempted to take control of the ship and bring it towards Earth. Quickly, he realized that the aliens had an inverted sense of direction to humans, and he started heading toward the moon by accident. After some trial and error on the buttons and switches, he found the auto pilot switch and turned it on. When he thought he was close enough, he switched it off, going to manual control.

When he reached about a mile from the ground, he leveled out and sped up. Once he figured he had enough clear land, he took the throttle and dove. He heard metal screeching as it skinned the ground, and felt the floor grinding away beneath him. It was slowing down. Once the platform was gone, the ship flipped forward and did some barrel rolls. It finally stopped after a few minutes of this.

About an hour later, Ryan was surrounded by paramedics. He looked over, and saw the wrecked ship. *Yes!* he thought to himself. He had succeeded in destroying it. After the paramedics asked him memory questions, he asked one of his own. “Where am I?”

One of them responded, “You are in a rural town in Nebraska. Now relax, you

hurt yourself bad in the crash. Those ET guys won’t like this.” Then the paramedic tended to his surprisingly few wounds. “This is weird. You don’t have any broken bones or anything. It’s almost as if there was some sort of protective shield around you. You only have skin wounds, nothing past your first layer of skin.”

“So? There was NO way they could have done that. If they had a shield, they would stop me from getting in the ship in the first place. With that kind of technology, they could have at least locked the doors.”

“You can think that, but it’s nearly impossible to have that happen to anybody and escape that without any sort of broken bone.”

“Whatever you say. You’re the pro at this.”

When he was finally left to himself, Ryan walked over to inspect the wreckage. He knew that there was no way that it could be used again. But he also knew that the paramedic was right: the aliens would not be happy. There was every chance that they had another ship, and wouldn’t be kind about attacking them now.

But he turned out to be wrong, as the aliens did not have another ship. He was right about them being mad, though. As soon as the news of the crash was spread around, the aliens just left. The next day, there was no sign that they had ever been there. Overnight, they had taken off without warning. But there was no proof that the ship Ryan had crashed had weapons on it.

He was hated by everyone in town. They had all welcomed the aliens, since they didn’t have any other weapons and were helping people. Nobody else knew about the ship except Patrick, and he wouldn’t come forward. Ryan spent the rest of his life being shunned by his friends.

# Useless Lies

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*In USELESS LIES by Allison Honet, Sophie lies to her friends about her life in order to fit in. How will her friends feel when Sophie tells them the truth?*

It was a rainy day in September when Sophie realized she was in a BIG mess. She had lied to all of her friends and most importantly her parents. All Sophie wanted to do was fit in.

Sophie went to school continuing to lie to her friends.

“Hey, can we go to your house for our project?” asked Rebecca Goldstein, Sophie’s friend.

“No, it’s, um . . . under construction,” replied Sophie. Sophie lied about having the biggest, most expensive house on the block. She told her friends her house had shiny glass windows, an indoor pool with a sauna and steam shower, a tennis court, and a bathroom in every room. To make her house seem better, she told them that each bathroom was painted a different color with special paint from Australia.

“Where is your new house?” Rebecca asked Sophie.

“Actually, the house is about a half-hour away in a place called Novi,” Sophie said.

After Rebecca heard Sophie stutter when she was talking, Rebecca soon realized Sophie was lying to her. Rebecca decided to still give Sophie a chance to say she was lying.

“Well, where are you living while the new house is under construction?” Rebecca asked.

“In this small apartment, but you really wouldn’t want to come to hang out in it,” replied Sophie.

Sophie thought she was doing a good job of keeping her friends from knowing the truth about her. Unfortunately, every

day was getting harder for her. She now wondered how long she could keep up with the lies.

During recess, Sophie was hanging out with her friends. She hoped nothing would come up that she had to lie about.

“Sophie, can I have your cell phone? I want to put my number in it,” asked Hannah, another friend.

“I don’t want to damage my BlackBerry so I don’t bring it to school,” replied Sophie. Again, Sophie lied about having a BlackBerry when really she doesn’t even have a phone. Her parents think she is too young and can’t take care of a phone. *Aw, man*, Sophie thought, *I really need to get a phone, and fast.*

During homeroom, the students were talking about careers and what they want to be when they grow up.

“It would be really cool if your dad came to school to talk about his job as a professional basketball coach,” Rebecca said.

When Rebecca first said that, Sophie realized she had forgotten she even told her that, but Sophie just went along with it. “He can’t because he is in Florida right now for a game,” replied Sophie.

“What team does your dad even coach for?” asked Rebecca.

“Well, he isn’t really the head coach. He is the assistant coach, for the team in Georgia, but he is in Florida for an away game.”

This lie also proved to Rebecca that Sophie was still lying to her for some reason.

Sophie thought to herself, *Oh my God, I have seriously gone too far with all my lies. What am I going to do? I can barely remember what I told them. If I tell everyone the truth no one will ever believe me again. They will call me a big, fat liar (which is what I am). Maybe I can tell my mom and she can help me, but if I do that I will get grounded for my entire life. (I will probably get grounded no matter what I do.) My parents and everyone will have to find out someday, right?*

The next day at school, in the morning, Hannah ran up to Sophie to talk about the party on Friday that was coming up in two days.

“My mom dropped my family’s limo off at the store to get it cleaned, so can you have your mom drive us to the party with your family limo?” asked Hannah.

Sophie quickly responded, “My mom doesn’t like to put miles on the car because gas is a lot of money. My mom only drives the limo when our whole family can go to like a nice, fancy party, but not just to a kid party.”

Sophie thought, “My mom was right when she told me it is hard to keep track of lies. The truth is so much easier. Would my friends like me even if they knew the truth? I hope Hannah and Rebecca aren’t getting suspicious.”

After school that day, Hannah went to Rebecca’s house. While they were talking, Rebecca asked Hannah, “Have you realized that Sophie has been lying to us?”

Hannah replied, “I never really thought about it, but now that you mention it, the things she says don’t make sense sometimes. Also she stutters when you ask her a question.”

“Maybe it’s time to tell Sophie we don’t believe her,” Rebecca said.

“Yeah, but I still will want to be Sophie’s friend. She is so funny and nice. I love

hanging out with her,” Hannah said.

“I know. She makes me laugh all the time. I could never stop being friends with her,” Rebecca said.

When Sophie got home from school, she realized she couldn’t handle the stress caused by all of her lies. It was time for her to talk to her mom and get help.

Sophie walked down the hallway with her face in her hands. She took a breath and walked into her mom and dad’s room. Sophie flopped onto her parents’ bed and started to cry. She didn’t know exactly what she was crying about. She just knew she was in a mess and didn’t know how to get out. Sophie was hoping her mom would have helpful things to say.

Sophie talked to her mom about all the things she lied about and what she could do to fix them. Sophie’s mom was very upset that Sophie was so silly and had done such a stupid thing.

Sophie’s mom told Sophie, “I don’t want you to be like the boy who cried wolf. He lied so many times that no one believed him anymore when something serious happened.” After Sophie was done talking to her mom, she wrote a list:

#### Things I Can Do to Fix my Lies

- Tell all of my friends that I lied about everything
- Apologize one hundred times and hope everything will be ok
- Never lie again
- Tell everyone I just wanted to fit in
- Hope they understand

As Sophie expected, she did get grounded from playing with her friends, going on the computer, and watching TV for two weeks. Now, all Sophie had to do was apologize to her friends and everyone else she lied to. This would not be easy.

Sophie saw her friends at school in the



middle of the classroom. As she got closer to them she took a deep breath to try to get rid of her shaking.

“Hey, I really need to talk to you guys,” Sophie said as she pulled them into the corner of their math class.

“Ok,” replied Hannah with Rebecca behind her.

“You guys are really going to hate me and never want to talk to me again, but I lied to you, about everything. My family is really poor and we live in a one-story home, with no pool, tennis court or anything. My dad works as a waiter at the corner deli, and the car my mom drives me to school in is the best car my family has had in five years. Also I don’t even have a phone, let alone the BlackBerry. I am really sorry. I promise I will never lie again. I just wanted to fit in and be cool like you guys. I wouldn’t blame you if you don’t want to be my friend,” Sophie said quietly.

“Well, actually, I was just talking to Rebecca about that, too,” Hannah told Sophie.

“Yeah, we didn’t understand why you were lying to us,” Rebecca said.

“I just thought since you guys were so cool, I could make it seem like I was, too, and fit in more with everyone. I know I messed up big time. I am really sorry. Please forgive me! I don’t blame you if you don’t,” Sophie said.

“Well, I don’t know,” Hannah said.

“I guess you were just being foolish,” Rebecca said.

“I will forgive you if you promise to never lie again,” Hannah said.

“I promise!” Sophie said excitedly.

Sophie went home that day and felt like a 100-pound weight had just been lifted off her shoulders. She didn’t have to lie to her friends. She just had to be herself.

When Sophie was lying, her friends never came to her house, but now they go there at least twice a week. Sophie now has a stronger relationship with her friends and parents. Sophie learned the perfect lesson: Never lie; it will only make things worse.

## Vampires

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*In VAMPIRES by Alyssa Forman, Bethany’s life is going well until her parents decide to move and she has to go to a new school. When she meets a mysterious classmate, things look different still.*

“Do we really have to do this?” I asked.

“Yes,” replied Karen sharply.

“Billy,” I squealed, searching for a better answer from my dad. What came was only the same old sorrowful answer that I always got.

“Bethany, we are sorry, but we are going to do this, and that’s final.” Even though it was supposed to be a kind way to break things to me, it stung as much as a slap on the face.

“Again,” I sighed. I would have to move away and make new friends and new everything. It seems like my parents move every time I make some sort of progress! I slowly felt tears sneaking from some unknown place to the tips of my eyelashes, and slither their way down my face. I couldn’t control my breathing. The next thing I knew, I passed out.

“Bethany, Bethany, Bethany.”

“Uh-huh,” I replied. I opened my eyes to see a hand caressing my hair.

“Bethy, honey,” said Karen, “It’s time to pack for Washington.”

I thought for a moment. “Okay,” I said shakily. I steadied myself and walked to the bathroom. I looked in the mirror to see a girl about 15, with hip long red hair, pale skin, tear-stained face and, most noticeable, light, gentle blue eyes that seem to float.

As our car ambled its ways to Washington, I was deep in thought. “What will Washington be like?” I kept asking myself.

It seemed like eternity, but finally we arrived in Washington. “Ugh,” I huffed. It looked as though someone had died. “Black clouds about to cry, gray skies clogged up with waste and most noticeable... the people!” I thought. People scowled as our car rode down the streets, as if that made me feel any better.

As our old Ford screeched to a final stop, I knew this was it. Lying in front of us was our trashed and creepy, old mansion. “Oh, geez, can this get any worse?” As I walked up the rotted path to the house, I looked up at the shattered windows, and then to the moldy door. “This is very welcoming,” I thought sarcastically.

The next morning I started school; I hopped into my old Ford and set off down the street. As I pulled into the lot of my new school I saw that the school was a semi- large school with “Maple High” printed on the side.

I practically flew out of my car and started towards the door. I reached out my hand to open the door but another hand beat me to it. I watched as a medium-sized, muscular, pale hand with neatly trimmed nails politely opened the door for me. I gazed up to see the most beautiful face I have ever seen.

A boy with spiked blond hair, golden eyes that I just sank into, and the most tight, beautiful face structure gazed back at

me. “Thank you,” I said self-consciously and fiddled with a lock of my hair. It seemed like we stared at each other for eternity. Finally he scowled, covered his mouth, and ran into the building. He ran with lightning speed. It was un-human.

I felt my face start to burn with embarrassment as I slowly walked to my locker. I gathered my supplies and walked to my first period.

As I walked into the classroom, there he was sitting all by himself in the corner. A cheery voice interrupted my gazing and said, “Hello, what is your name?” It was my teacher.

“Bethany Kindle,” I replied quietly.

“Nice to meet you, Bethany,” she smiled. “Why don’t you go sit next to Victor?” She pointed toward the boy. And noticeably he straightened, his eyes widening as he squeezed to the end of his seat, and he covered his mouth like he had done before.

“Great,” I complained to myself as I drove home. “My first day, and someone already hates me!”

The next day in my first period was still the same, but this time when the bell rang he handed me a note that read: “Meet me after school.” All day long I was thinking about talking to Victor.

When the final bell rang I started to get butterflies in my stomach. I walked to my car, and that’s when I saw him! He was leaning up against my car, and was staring at me.

“Hey,” he said coolly.

“Um...um...uh...” was all I could manage to say. “Are you talking to me?” I asked, suddenly startled, twirling around to make sure.

“Yes,” he flashed a wicked smile. “Who else?” he replied.

It seemed as if he was as surprised as me when he asked me out on a date, but I was

so excited that my stomach was practically doing flips. “Okay,” was all that I could manage to tumble out.

“I will pick you up tomorrow at six o’clock,” he said softly in a deep, gentle voice.

The next morning, I spent all my time figuring out what to wear. I finally decided on a floral, yellow sundress and small black sandals. I wore my hair in a tight twist, with my diamond-studded earrings.

At six o’clock and not a minute later the doorbell rang. I ran down the staircase to get the door. When I opened the door, Victor stood there in jeans and a tight blue sweater. His blond hair was smoothed back, giving me a better view of his bright golden eyes.

“Ready to go?” he asked me.

“Yes,” I replied. “Bye, Dad,” I called out behind me.

We sat silently in his fancy black car as we got closer to our destination. Finally, the car stopped in front of a river.

He swooped over to my door and opened it for me. He held my hand as we walked down to the river. For about two hours we sat there asking each other questions.

“What was wrong with you during class? Why were you covering your mouth?” I

wanted to know.

“Not now,” he replied.

“When will you tell me?” I asked.

“Soon,” he replied. And we continued talking.

About three months later my parents decided that we were going to move again. “No!” I cried. “I love Victor!”

“Well,” said Billy, “you’re going to have to say good-bye.”

Later that night I called Victor. “I have to talk to you. Meet me at Maple High,” I said.

I drove over to our parking lot, and he was standing there all by himself. I got out of my car, and walked over to him. “I love you,” I said with a tear forming in the corner of my eye.

“Me, too,” he replied for the thousandth time. “It’s time I show you what I am,” he said.

“Okay,” I said nervously.

“Don’t be nervous. You will be with me forever. Don’t you want that?” he asked shyly.

“Of course,” I replied.

The next thing I knew, Victor sighed, licked his lips, and leaned into one last... bite.

“Forever,” he smiled with his gorgeous bloodstained teeth.

## The War

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*Imagine a world where intelligent dinosaurs share the Earth with people in the modern day. That is the world of **THE WAR**, by **Jordan C. Bryant**.*

**M**y family was on vacation, and I stayed home. We are a family of dinosaurs.

This war was the most deadly war of all. People and dinosaurs were dead all over the streets. Blood was everywhere.

It was a glorious day on May 18, 2226.

The sky was completely blue. The war was never near me. It was always far away until now.

Explosion after explosion I heard. I did not wake up until a big explosion bounced me right out of my bed. I smelled natural gas. I heard another explosion. I ran from

my home. I looked back. My home had exploded!

I ran as fast as I could. Tanks and armored cars fired explosives as they raced furiously at me. Tanks were bursting their cannons, furiously exploding like an angry rhino. I ran into an out-of-control crowd, which was taken down by the police with Tasers and teargas.

A bomb went off, and I went flying into the air. I landed in a cave. I heard a lot of screaming.

I ran and stole one of the armored cars. It crashed! I was then taken hostage just like my friends.

When I arrived at the concentration camp, some of the individuals that had come in armored car were poisoned or hanged by enemy soldiers. The concentration camp smelled awful. It smelled like an elephant cage. The place looked like a pig's pen.

I asked the guards why I was here, and he shot one of my friends in the leg two times. The rest of us were whipped and severely beaten, but lived and suffered amnesia, migraine headaches, broken

bones, and scars. I had a few broken bones and bruises, and I could barely walk.

A few years later, we managed to escape the dead zone. We ran for our lives. Two of my friends were gunned down and killed by the enemy soldiers.

We continued to run from the enemy soldiers for days. After running for a few days, we hid out for hours. The enemy soldiers never found us.

So, we ran far away from that death location and built a home. Pepper Support bled to death after a log crushed his legs.

Years later, I was captured by the enemy soldiers and taken back to their concentration camp. Conner Andrews got lucky and later became the mayor, but the city was blown to pieces by the cruel and destructive living organisms.

I was found and captured. I ended up dying in the concentration camp due to the beatings from the enemy soldiers and starvation.

My family survived the attack, but they were the only ones who survived. I never saw them again.

## The War Comedians

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*In THE WAR COMEDIANS by Casey Vordermark, Mike and Jim sign up for the Army. Will the two prankster comedians make it through the heat of battle?*

“Mike, you know what I really hate about airplanes? You pay so much for your ticket, and when they give you food, it’s just a little bag of pretzels or nuts with a very small glass of juice or pop. That stuff is cheaper than a kiddie meal at a fast food restaurant. If you want a cruddy sandwich and chips, you would have to pay five bucks. It is all so overpriced. I tried to bring my own food and drinks from home,

but when they scan your carry-on bag they see it and suspect it is a bomb and accuse you of being a terrorist. Being interrogated at the airport makes flying so much more fun. It’s like a big joke.

“Thanks a lot everyone. I’m here till Tuesday.”

\* \* \*

“Hey, Jim! What are those guys from the Army doing?”

“They want more people to enlist.”

“Should we?”

“No, we’re comedians. We don’t fight; we crack jokes, dummy!”

“But don’t you think...?”

Jim cut him short and then said, “Why don’t we just go back to the club and rehearse?”

Later Mike and Jim went to a table and signed up after all. Mike made it seem to Jim that there are so many people they would never be picked. As they were signing up Jim almost backed out, but the soldier helped talk some sense into him.

After they finished the both of them were walking home and goofing off. They were goofing off so much that Jim fell and hit his head hard. There was a bang and he was out cold for a good twenty seconds. Jim took him to a doctor, who said, “A little rest and he should be good.”

Weeks went by and Jim forgot to tell Mike about them signing up. It was weeks of joking around the entire time.

Then one night they were announcing who made it into the Army on the news. Jim and Mike were watching it together when they heard their names called. Jim stood up and asked, “What in the world? We, or at least I, never signed up for that crap. You’ve got to be kidding me!” Jim had never ever yelled like that, ever.

After Jim cooled down a bit, Mike sat down at his kitchen table.. Truly, their comedy-fooling-around attitude had faded off well by now. Mike started explaining how they signed up before he hit his head and Jim never told him they did. He was going to tell him at the show that night but didn’t have the guts to do it. After all of that fiasco, Jim went home.

They didn’t talk for days on end. They only saw each other twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the comedy club to perform. Even then they didn’t talk.

About a month passed and they both got letters from the Army stating where to meet their squad at the base on Wednesday. When they met there, they got their joking-around personalities back and forgave each other. They both thought that the Army might not be so bad.

They finally found their squad, which was the 501<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. When they heard that, they thought they were going to be pilots, but they really were going to be parachutists. They found out their division was to be the first in and the last out of Cuba. They both let out a low groan when they heard that.

When they found their group, they were surprised that there were other real people and not just no-nonsense, serious commandos. First, there was George; he was very nerdy. Then there was Sammy, who was a big sports fanatic. Barry was just normal; he was married with two kids and had an office job. Lastly, there was a guy named Jon, but he liked going by Juice. He was wild and fun.

While they were waiting for further instructions, Jim, Mike and Juice went around pulling pranks on people with all sorts of awesome stuff. They were using fart makers to make everyone think it was one of the guys they were with. They also put itching powder in every item of clothing that wasn’t being worn.

Finally, when the General made it to their group, they followed them to their cabins. Inside were three bunk beds. Jim, Mike and Juice were on the bottom bunks, and George, Sammy and Barry were on the top bunks.

That night, none of them slept. They were all thinking about what was to come the next day.

They were woken up bright and early at 5:30 a.m. They got up and had to jog three miles. After that, everyone was drop-dead

tired. But Jim, Mike and Juice were really tired because they were goofing off and had to run an extra mile and a half. After that they had two hours in the gym lifting weights. No one lifted more than 150 pounds. Finally, when they finished, they ate breakfast during a military strategy class. The rest of the day they did drills and went to the shooting range, only stopping for meals.

That night, everyone fell asleep right away. The same routine happened for two months over and over again. By the end, the men had good endurance and were very strong. Now they were ready for combat training.

First they learned the grouping signs and formations. Then, they practiced going through buildings. When they got that down, they played situations with paintball guns. Juice got shot a billion times and had quarter-sized welts everywhere. The rest of the guys got shot two or three times. They went through that for about a month.

Their last bit of training was learning how to parachute. Twice a day, for three weeks, they would jump onto a plane full of people playing enemy soldiers. Their mission was to make it to a building a half mile away without getting shot. Only the last two times through they made it successfully.

The group had two weeks at the base before they were flown to Mexico to meet up with the rest of the planes, and then they would be dropped four miles out from the Cuban capital. They would be secure outside the city. Then they would wait until the rest of the troops arrived on shore before they attacked the city. After that they have to defend it until they could get in a new government and enough of an army and police force to protect themselves. Once that was in place, the rest of the troops would board ships and be

taken back to the United States.

The two weeks they had off everyone was quiet. Most people were writing and calling home. The last two days, they got their parachutes folded and backpacks packed. They each had two canteens, some food you need to add water to for eating, a first aid kit, and any other personal items they could fit if they weren't heavy. They also carried a sleeping bag and a gun. They had to carry quite a lot, especially if they were dropping in like they were.

On the last day at the base all the men were gathered for a speech. It was a long but very influential speech.

That night it was very quiet. They could only hear an occasional owl's hoot or a coyote's howl. Even though no one slept, they weren't tired at all. All the adrenalin was pumping through everyone.

As they were loaded onto the first of the two planes they would take that day, everyone was jacked up and couldn't wait for some action. On the plane, everyone fooled around. As soon as the plane landed, the fun stopped and people were saying goodbye.

The second plane was small with only benches for seats. The plane was in great need of new paint and needed air freshener because it had a burnt kind of smell. Also, if you looked closely, you could see an occasional bullet hole or two.

Everyone took a last look at their pictures and gave a hug or two. It was super quiet and really didn't help with the situation. One of the pilots came out and said, "We're jumping in five!" So after that, everyone stood up and put their clip on the bar above them and lined up at the door.

They waited three more long minutes which seemed like hours. Then the green light went on, and right away Sammy jumped. Then, George followed, and then Juice jumped. Before Jim jumped he said,

“Hope this is as easy as the game.” Mike stood paralyzed, but Jim pushed him out, and then Jim jumped.

As they were floating down they could hear the groaning and yelling but mostly the bang of guns. When they were almost down, Sammy was screaming he was hit and couldn't feel his legs. By the time they were on the ground, Sammy was dead. He got shot three times in the back.

They took off the parachutes and ran for cover. As they were running Jim saw his first enemy and shot him. They found a bush and used their GPS to locate themselves and which way they should head.

On the way down the road they found a house full of enemies having a bite to eat. They kicked in the door and opened fire, killing every last one of them. As they were sneaking alongside the road towards the last little building until the city, a machine gun opened fire, instantly killing George. The last three managed to make it to the building and finish the last men off.

Then they waited three nights for the beach reinforcements to come. Every night they would be woken up by mortar fire, sending pieces of land flying everywhere.

When the reinforcements arrived, they attacked the city. Luckily their unit was in the second wave and only had to finish things off. But their unit was one of the few units that had to enter and capture the capitol building, which was heavily guarded.

They battled through the front door with bullets whizzing past every second. They crawled, returning fire, until they made it to the staircase twenty feet away. There they crept up, returning fire when a grenade went off, blowing Juice off the staircase. That left Jim, Mike, and a handful of other troops to storm the main office.

When they got to the doors, they kicked them open and threw multiple grenades in,

blowing everyone up inside. They had finished the second objective of the three. As they waltzed out the front door, they were met by big applause. They still had one more thing to do, though. They had to meet their new unit and defend the city until they could get a new government in place.

The first week went well. They only encountered a couple of enemy soldiers. Then one day there was suspicious activity along the road. Jim and Mike's unit was deployed to secure the area.

As they were walking up the street, a black pick-up truck flew speeding at them. By the time they thought of diving, the truck had hit them. All five men were injured with mostly broken limbs. But that's when things got even worse.

Two men exited the truck bearing two fully automatic machine guns and opened fire, instantly killing three men before getting shot down by Mike and Jim.

They lay there for another fifteen minutes before the medical truck could make it to them. They were taken back to camp, and immediately to the hospital wing to be treated. In the truck on the way Mike said to Jim, “I guess we beat the game, Jim.”

Later, two men came in and told them that all three other members had died. They also told them they were nominated for a medal for outstanding sacrifice and guts to kill two men and stop a fifty-pound bomb from killing anyone.

“What?” said Jim and Mike.

Then the men told them in the back at the truck was a fifty-pound bomb. After that, though, came more bad news. They both learned that their legs were paralyzed and they wouldn't be going back for any more duty.

Two weeks later the same two men came in holding brand new uniforms and said

that Jim and Mike were receiving their medals that day, so they had to put on the uniforms.

They were rolled in their wheelchairs into a van and were driven a couple of miles across camp to the stage where in front of them were thousands of men and women, waiting for the big event. About eight other people also got medals and left the stage. Then they heard “Jim and Michael of Unit 501!”

They were rolled up to the podium to receive their medals, and the General gave a speech on how they stopped a truck holding a fifty-pound bomb.

At the end of the speech the general said, “I heard that you two are pretty good comedians. Since you can’t fight, will you

put on shows for our soldiers around the world?”

They lowered the microphone and Jim and Mike happily replied, “Yes!”

“Hey, Mike, you know what war is kinda like? It’s like a video game that hurts.”

“Now ain’t that funny.”

Their comedy acts went great. Each one was unbelievably hilarious. The acts made lots of soldiers’ lives at war a little bit better.

So for the rest of their time they owed to the Army, they went around the world to different stations to put on shows for the soldiers. They also flew home occasionally to visit and put on a few shows for the home audiences, too.

## The Way to Play the Game

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*From the Tigers’ beloved stadium, Comerica Park, to the Little League fields of the suburbs, players are faced with the question, “Do you stay true to what you value, or do you cheat to improve your game?” Read how a professional baseball player gets caught up in selfishness for winning but tries to remember **THE WAY TO PLAY THE GAME**, by **Alex Hackert**.*

“It is the Tigers versus the Cardinals racing for the American League Pennant. It’s the seventh game, and the Tigers have won three, and so have the Cardinals. This game decides who will go to the World Series and who will have their season stopped.

“Bottom of the ninth, two outs, and bases loaded, and the Tigers are pitching to death or victory. The score is five to two, Tigers’ lead. Zac Winters is pitching with the count three balls and two strikes. The Cardinals clean-up hitter is batting. This guy has had 11 walk-off grand slams this season and wants 12. The crowd is screaming for their lives for the Tigers’ victory.

“The pitch is coming in... STRIKE THREE! The Tigers are going to the World Series! The whole stadium is on their feet and there is no telling how many might go deaf! This crowd is unbelievable! I am Jim Price signing off after an amazing game.

“WAIT! I think something has come up! The umpire is looking angry and is walking towards Zac Winters. He is now announcing to the crowd that the Tigers’ pitcher threw a spitball to end the game! There is going to be a discussion about the severe penalties that await the 35-year-old pitcher. Once again this is Jim Price signing off FSN, Detroit’s number one sports station.”

There is more to Zac Winters than people



know. He is the most successful pitcher the Tigers have had since Jack Morris. That is not all; he is also a nasty spitball thrower. Although he has been the Tigers' number one pitcher, all his teammates and coaches lost respect for him early in his career. It happened when Buddy Fields, the catcher for Zac, spread the news about the spitballs. This season of 2009 is the season that Zac Winters learns some important lessons about the way to play the game as the Tigers fight for the American League Pennant.

Nick is an eleven-year-old boy with blonde hair and blue eyes at the height of five foot one inch. He loves baseball, a lot. But he has not picked the best role model. His role model is the one and only Zac Winters. He hears a lot about him because his uncle is Buddy Fields. Buddy talks highly about Zac in front of Nick, but behind Nick's back, he speaks poorly about him with others.

The story starts at Nick's house two years ago at Christmas. Nick overheard Buddy talking to his dad about Zac Winters. The topic was how he threw a spitball for the past few seasons. When Nick heard this, he got the impression that if Zac Winters does it, then he should do it, too. Ever since that time, he has been the number one pitcher in his little league division. He thought he found the way to play the game.

It is now Nick's 12th birthday. As always, Uncle Buddy came over. He surprised Nick and his parents with birthday tickets to the World Series. That was not all; he also promised Nick he could join him in the locker room if they won the World Series. His birthday was sweet and was filled with Tigers/Zac Winters gear. His favorite present was an official Zac Winters glove. He couldn't wait to show off the glove to his friends.

Later, that same night, he brought up the topic of last night's game, about Zac

Winters' 500th win. Then the news came. Winters apparently threw a spitball to end the game, but as soon as the umpire got the ball and felt the moisture, the ump declared that Winters would get a one-week suspension and also pay a fine of 1,000 dollars.

Nick was shocked and saddened when he heard this. He could not help but think that the Tigers would never put Zac Winters, who was caught like a cheating gambler, back on the team. Also, because he cheated, the ump ruled there was no win on record for Zac's game. The good news is the Tigers still have the win and the ticket to the World Series.

*Sports Illustrated* featured Zac Winters on the cover that week with a huge headline that read, "Is There Any Honor Left in Major League Sports?" The article captured many minds including Nick's. Nick had a lot to think about that week. Should he still believe in Zac Winters, or should he go with the crowd and shun him? Nick thought to himself, "Do I still respect him like I used to? Is it really only about being the best at the game? Is cheating really worth it?" Nick spent that week with these questions on his mind both night and day.

Zac did a lot of thinking that week, too. His heart asked if he still loved the game. What had happened to him that he would cheat? Could it possibly be all the money he gets? Did money become more important than baseball? His thoughts were a whirlpool of confusion, guilt, and grief.

Nick was just taking the mound for the Little League division championship game. It was going to be on the local news and played in the minor league stadium, so the pressure was on Nick. He threw a great first inning of the game with one or two spitballs. He threw them just out of habit.

Zac was walking by the field and saw the game going on. He then noticed the huge

crowd that was watching the game. After the depressing week he decided to get a little attention. He wanted to feel like the big and famous baseball player he was, and so he thought some attention from some fans would boost his spirits.

At the gate he was asked for the entrance fee of five dollars. He didn't care about the few dollars but wondered why the person had made him pay. Little did he know that the ticket man did recognize him but was angry at his cheating, and so he pretended not to recognize him.

Zac made his way over to the stands near a bunch of loud fans. But when they saw him coming they moved away to a different place! Now Zac Winters was confused, but soon he forgot about it and watched the pitcher throw. After a while he noticed it was Buddy Fields' nephew, Nick Fields, warming up for the fifth inning.

Zac had always been fond of Nick and thought of how he played the game just because he loved it. He also knew that he was Nick's favorite player. He began to remember his love of baseball. The problem was that he was not prepared for what happened next.

Nick was just about to throw a fastball in the bottom left corner of the strike zone when he saw his role model in the stands. He had an urge to show off. He threw a spitball to strike out the batter to go into the sixth inning.

Zac saw Nick's secret movement. Sadly, he knew he was copying him. Had his actions been so bad that he was changing the great game into a cheating game? Zac felt horrible that he was setting that kind of example. He felt so horrid he left the game.

Nick looked over to where Zac Winters was sitting for approval, but he was no longer there or anywhere to be seen. Had he done something wrong? There was nothing that he could think of. Or did he leave

because he got a call and had to go? He kept on wondering till his coach called him to the bench.

The next week Zac was back at Comerica Park, but the crowd was against him with loud and rowdy taunts that hit Zac hard as he came out for pre-game warm-ups. A guy tried to run on the field and tackle Zac, but the police got him. Some people say that the guy who tried to jump on the field and tackle him was the Detroit Lions defensive end!

Through all the wild fans the crowd started to notice that somehow, this was a new Zac with a brand new attitude. He walked out onto the pitcher's mound at almost game time. He then did the unexpected. He acknowledged the crowd with a salute and a bowed head.

The crowd became so quiet that you would have thought you were the only one there. The crowd watched as Zac walked over to the stands and began signing balls. The old Zac Winters never signed autographs. The fans stared open-mouthed as he actually shook someone's hand.

Suddenly, the fans were back, giving him one more chance to really play the game. Boy, did he play the game. After, everyone said it was the best game of his life in every way.

In the locker room, Zac Winters was answering the questions of the reporter from *Sports Illustrated* with pride. "I think that was the best and most honest game I have ever pitched. This is the way to play the game."

From Buddy's locker, Nick was watching the interview and listening intently. He then thought about what he just heard. Silently, he vowed never to throw a spitball again. He, too, saw that this was the way to play the game.

# Windows

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*In **WINDOWS** by **Angela Peters**, Laura Anne, an orphan who lives with her grandmother, has never had a real friend. When she suddenly is entrusted to guide a new student around her school, she doesn't know what to think.*

I'd never known much about Mama and Papa, or even Uncle Neil. That was because I'd lived with Gran all my life and no one else. Whenever kids bring their parents to school, I just sit a little taller in my seat and act like it's no big deal. But the truth is that on days like that, I'd lie awake in the dark, in bed, at night, wondering what it would be like if I'd actually had a mama and a papa.

Maybe that night, Mama would've kissed me good night with her gentle, soft lips, and she'd wish me sweet dreams. Papa would've kissed me, and I'd have felt his rough, scratchy stubble, and he would tell me not to let the bedbugs bite.

I didn't have a mama or a papa, though, and it was Gran who would come in every night and lean down and kiss me on the cheek and tell me she loved me. I'd feel her soft, wrinkly face against mine and feel safe. Yet on some nights, I'd just be missing something. It just wasn't there, and I knew it never would be.

Gran and I have lived on the farm for longer than I can remember. It wasn't one of those gigantic, cheesy, hillbilly farms that you see on TV. Our plot was no bigger than an oversized vegetable garden, and it was a nice, quiet, little farm. Since we didn't live off the land completely, we went to the supermarket sometimes, not that I minded. When we did grow crops, though, it was a sight to see.

In the spring, the apple, cherry, and peach trees blossom all over and all the

new, curious, little, animals come to look. In summer, the blackberry and raspberry bushes shine like glossy, dazzling, plump red and purple jewels, guarded by their sharp thorns. In fall, the squash and corn patches seem to be ablaze with their hot, vibrant colors, just as all of the other harvest crops. In winter, it's a dream-like wonderland where everything is covered with white and beautiful icicles hanging from the trees. They glisten in the sun while the snow around them sparkles like diamond dust.

I'm not home-schooled, like most farm kids around here. I wish I was, though. Gran says that she's too old to be a teacher—yet she can sit in the garden for hours—and going to normal school helps make friends and build character. She's absolutely wrong. I'm probably the quietest person in the whole school, and I haven't got one friend. Period. Well, I guess Abraham Lincoln (my Great Dane) counts, but he's a dog, so I can't really do anything with him at school. There was one girl who particularly hated me, though: Alice Nickman. She, of course, had parents, everything she wanted, and more. As if that weren't enough, she'd decided that she also needed to make my life miserable.

I was one of those kids that was used for target practice by anyone who wanted to entertain themselves. Up there with Jenny Hannel and Tom Adricks, I was like a little bunny rabbit that had been dropped in a swamp full of crocodiles.

The teacher was another story. Mrs.

Pleve was nice, but also unobservant and naïve. The most important things that she caught always involved me in a bad way somehow.

I'm not saying that I'm not smart, though; I pay attention in class, and I do as best as I can, not that it makes much of a difference.

I entered my small room to find Abe sitting on my bed, licking the quilt, and looking at me. I pushed his front legs over to make room for my face on the pillow. I laid my head down, and Abe started breathing heavily in my face. I patted his soft black head, and he made a low rumbling sound in his throat.

"Stay."

I dashed up the staircase and pulled down the attic ladder. Once I'd climbed into the attic, I spotted the dusty old brass and wooden chest next to the little steel safe that never opened. I pulled up the latch and heaved open the lid. Inside were photo albums, knickknacks, and everything in between. They were older and dustier than the trunk, but that didn't matter because they were all Mama and Papa's.

I grabbed the olive-colored photo album, and then ran back to Abraham Lincoln. There he was, still sitting on my bed, Honest Abe.

We spent that hour looking at pictures of Mama, and Papa, and Mama together with Papa, and both of them with their friends. I knew every picture in that album, what order they were in, and I'd even memorized their descriptions and dates. I always looked at this album when I was bored. Sometimes I'd be afraid that one day the pictures wouldn't be there, or they'd be all ripped up somehow. It was one of my most valuable belongings, my window to Mama and Papa. They were lots of little windows, actually.

I realized that Abe had left because he

knew this album as well as I did. I put it back and wandered into the study.

It wasn't really a study, just a stuffy dim room with an old wooden desk supporting an outdated computer, a telephone, and a little bookshelf. The bookshelf, to me, was another problem. It only had three books in it: The Bible, a Webster's Twentieth Century Dictionary, and Mama's diary. You couldn't even read Mama's diary because it had a silver lock on it, and we didn't have the key. Gran didn't like the idea of reading other people's diaries anyway. She says it's obnoxious and rude.

"Laura Ann."

"Yes?"

"Answer the problem, please," Mrs. Pleve said calmly.

I'd been slapped back to reality from my daydreaming. I looked at the problem in my math textbook and thought to myself for a few moments, "96.394."

"Please pay attention," Mrs. Pleve said back with a hint of annoyance.

There was a girl standing in the doorway of the classroom wearing a coat and mittens and everything, like it was two degrees outside. Mrs. Pleve immediately stood up and walked to the door. A woman who was probably the girl's mom had now appeared as well and was talking with our teacher in a hushed voice so that none of us could hear.

"Everyone," Mrs. Pleve started, "This is Jane, and she will be joining our class starting today. She is completely new to this area, so someone will need to help her around the school and explain certain things to her." Her eyes darted around through the anxious hands that shot up, "Ahhh, how about Laura?"

What? I didn't even raise my hand! How could she pick me? The last thing that I wanted was a new kid hanging over my

shoulder every second of the day asking oblivious questions to distract me! “Okay. Hi, Jane, my name is Laura Ann, but I just like Laura.” I couldn’t believe what I was saying. “I guess that you take the desk next to mine, over there.” Shut up, mouth! “Here, let me help you with your stuff.” This was going to be torture.

Once I had helped Jane move into a desk and we had caught up with the new lesson for reading, it was Tom’s turn to read. Oh joy. You see, Tom is dyslexic, and Mrs. Plevé has been trying to have him read every class for practice, practice for being embarrassed, that is.

Tom stared at Jane pleadingly as if she would save him from reading. “Het— er, the... wla, er, walrus is a scanif...ant—”

“Here, I’ll help you,” said Tom’s reading assistant impatiently, “Fas—cin—a—ting—”

Tom was already out the door and in tears. “Thomas!” the assistant called after him.

When Tom had finally been coaxed down, he came back into the room and sat down, waiting for the day to end. He started staring at Jane again with a less frantic look than before, though it was still like his eyes were asking something. *Maybe a crush... I’ll check on that later*, I thought to myself.

Alice walked up to him with a sweet-as-honey sympathetic look on her face.

“Hey, Tom, can you read this?” she asked sweetly, holding a sheet of loose-leaf paper in his face with the word “loser” written on it.

My bus was almost ready to go, and the door was closed. Something loud smacked into it, pounding on the glass. The door opened up and of course, there was Jane. The principal gave the driver a note and she

wandered into my seat.

“Whew, I thought I would miss the bus!” she said, catching her breath, “I’m sorry, how are you?”

“Fine,” I mumbled.

“Hey, you know that kid, Tom?” Jane asked.

“Yeah.”

“Does he have like problems or something?”

“He’s dyslexic.”

“Oh. Who made you that scarf, it’s *sooooo* cute.”

“My grandma.”

“Cool, does she live around here?”

“I live with her.”

“What about your parents?”

“They died in car accident.”

“Oh my gosh! I’m so sorry! I didn’t mean to,” Jane said with regret.

“No, it’s really fine,” I replied grudgingly.

“If it makes you feel any better, my parents are divorced. Sometimes it’s like they’re in a different place than I am even when they’re in the same room.”

“Oh, sorry, I didn’t know,” I apologized.

“No, I get that a lot.”

“Same.” I laughed. “It’s not so annoying after a while, or at least as annoying as Abraham Lincoln.”

“Excuse me?” she asked, confused.

“Sorry, that’s just my dog! I guess that I’m so used to talking about him casually, that I forgot about explaining his name,” I explained.

“No kidding, I love animals! Oh, this is my stop. See you tomorrow!”

“Bye!” I called.

When I got off the bus, I smiled to myself. I think I’d just made a new friend.

After I got off the bus, I was seeming unusually, extremely happy.

“Gran?” I asked as I sat down for dinner.

“Mmm hmm.”

“Do you know where the key to Mama’s diary is?”

“Honey, you know I don’t.”

“I know, I just... I was hoping you’d...”

“Honey, it’s gone, and you know it. I don’t mean to be negative, but you can’t keep hoping for impossible things. Your Mama probably took that key with her to the grave.” Gran told me a little impatiently. “Besides, some things are better left unbothered.”

“But you knew your mother! I don’t know what it’s like to have a mom or dad!” I yelled louder than I’d meant. My good mood had evaporated from Gran’s harsh tone.

“I understand that, Honey, but there’s nothing I can do about this. I don’t know where that key is, honestly,” Gran told me sternly.

It was a very quiet dinner that night.

When I got on the bus the next morning, I couldn’t help but feel anxious to see Jane. I mean, she could have been the most hated person in my life a few hours ago, but she’d quickly grown close. I’d spent that whole sleepless night thinking over questions to ask her.

Once Jane had finally gotten on the bus, she sat down next to me and made herself comfortable.

“Jane?” I started.

“Yeah.”

“How often do you see your dad?” I asked shyly, trying not to seem obnoxious.

“Well, this week is Dad’s weekend and Mom’s weekday. We usually switch every week, that way it’s fair. So... how old were you before your parents ...” she trailed off.

“Maybe nine months. Are your parents nice?”

“Of course they are! I know this is sort of random, but, do you like community

service by any chance?”

“Never tried it. Do you?”

“I did a lot of charity work with my community center back home, so my mom signed me up for the community center here. What do you think?” Jane sounded pretty curious now.

“I guess I am, but where did you live before you moved here? Des Moines?” I said a little jokingly.

“California, of course. You know, one of the upcoming projects at the community center is the ‘Reading-Role Model’ workshop, and I don’t want to be there without any friends. You want to help?”

“Wow, California,” I said dazed (that explained the heavy dressing from yesterday). “I’d love to help, but what do we have to do?”

“Well, the workshop is for ‘More experienced readers’ who help young or ‘Under Average’ readers. Basically, you just read stories with little kids, and help them out where they struggle. It’s really fun, the kids are so cute, and you feel really good about yourself at the end of the day.”

“You know, that actually sounds sort of fun. I can give it a shot.”

“I’ll sign us up together after school. It’s at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday,” Jane replied gleefully.

As I got off the bus, I grinned to myself. A change from my regular sulky weekend plans was just what I needed.

When Jane and I got to the workshop, I thought my face would explode with laughter. Tom Adricks was there, and he was wearing a volunteers’ nametag. How could someone who couldn’t read help other kids who can barely read? I wasn’t the only one to notice him apparently.

“Hey, Laura, look over there. Isn’t that kid in our class? Tim, no—Tom!” I guess Jane’s brain wasn’t working right today,

“Oh, let’s go say hi!” Jane ran over to Tom and started chattering away. Immediately, an ear-to-ear grin formed on Tom’s round face.

“Really? I didn’t know that you loved community service, too! That’s really cool!” Jane said ecstatically as she made her way back toward me with Tom.

Humph, liar. Tom never did any community service. Oh, well, if that’s what he wants, that’s what he’ll get.

The workshop actually went pretty smoothly. Jane and I took turns between shifts of working with little kids to help Tom—who seemed to be half volunteer and half “Under Average Reader.” He didn’t throw any fits, though; he cracked a few good jokes, and read pretty well for someone dyslexic. By 4:00, we were all peas in a pod—or something like that. After the workshop, we went to Tom’s dad’s restaurant, and had Coney dogs, French fries, and root beer floats—things that Gran barely permitted the consumption of.

The next day, we went swimming in the pond, even though it was ice cold. We swung off loose branches, and jumped off of the big dock. Abe came with us and splashed into the pond as soon as he saw it, splattering us with water. After we chucked some driftwood into the pond for him to fetch, we headed home.

We took a walk through the strip of woods by the pond first though. I stopped at a bench for a second, and something caught my eye. There was a tree with something carved into it. I took a closer look at it and found that what had been carved into it was a bunch of numbers. 65-23-24. Weird.

I dreaded school the next day, because due to the extreme amount of fun I had experienced over the past weekend, school would probably seem like a seven-hour

slideshow of floral wallpaper prints or something. To my surprise, Tom was waiting at my locker for me.

“Hi,” Tom said sheepishly.

“Hi,” I replied back, a little confused. “What’s up with you?”

“Ah, nothing—well, really, ahhh, I sort of privately wanted to tell you the real reason I came to the workshop.”

“And?” Now I was really confused.

“Well, I sort of—kind of—er—”

“What?”

“Listened to you on the bus,” he coughed up with a grimace.

“You *eavesdropped* us on the bus?” I said a little bit more dramatically than I meant to.

“There wasn’t much else to do, plus, I wanted to know what Jane was talking about when I heard something about ‘Under Average’ readers,” he pleaded.

“Mmmmm,” I replied in a phony thoughtful voice, confirming my crush theory. Tom. Jane. Yep.

“Also, I was wondering if you guys wanted to go bowling on Saturday night, and get ice cream or whatever.”

“Sure, I’ll tell Jane once she gets here, but we’re not gonna do this every night right? My metabolism isn’t completely impervious to Coney dogs, pizza, and ice cream.”

“I get it. Well, here comes another full week of embarrassing torture. You ready?” he chuckled.

“Not a bit,” I laughed back.

Alice was out with strep throat today luckily, and the sky was a perfect blue. It was a pretty good Monday if you ask me. In reading we did group exercises. Jane and I partnered up with Tom to help him. Unlike his assistant, we did a fairly good job for our first time, other than the workshop.

More importantly, though, *I* did well myself this week. I actually moved up a seat

in class from my gloomy corner in the back of the class. Art classes started up, and Jane, Tom, and I had all signed up. I was walking Abraham Lincoln to school now every Tuesday and Thursday, along with Gran, of course. I know. How much more perfect could my life be?

I was up in the attic again a week later on Friday while Jane was rollerblading with her dad. I was looking at the photo album again. Something silver caught my eye: the little safe's tumbler. I scrambled over. I wonder... I quickly dialed in 65... turn left twice... stop—23—what was I doing? Here I was, breaking into a safe, looking for what?—24. The safe vibrated, and the door rolled open.

Inside were a few photos, a little jewelry box, and a bulging leather-bound book. I

picked it up to examine it closer. Its pages were yellow and fraying. I opened it and flipped through it. I found a dried out, flattened water lily flower, and I turned the page.

There was the key to Mama's diary. It was beautiful: gold and silver and jeweled and crafted with intricate designs. I caressed the tiny key in my hands that was so small, and so beautiful, just like Mama's diary. Maybe there were more pictures and flowers wedged in the pages. I could put the pictures in the album, and read the diary, and learn about the flowers, and find *more* journals, and....

I set the key back in the book. I set the book back in the safe. The safe clicked shut and locked.

Some things are better left unbothered.

## Witches School of Witchcraft & Wizardry for Girls

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*In* **WITCHES SCHOOL OF WITCH CRAFT & WIZARDRY FOR GIRLS** by *Taylor Paige Budnar, Brittney and Taylor Safire* have to save the professors of the Witches School for Witch Craft and Wizardry for Girls from an underwater monster.

**I**t was the day of our lives: the day Brittney and I would redeem ourselves as students of the WSWCWG (Witches School of Witchcraft & Wizardry for Girls). My name is Taylor Safire, and this is Brittney Safire. We just got through a day of heroic battling and saving lives. Let me tell you the story.

It all started one mid-morning day at school. Brittney and I were sitting in the food court when suddenly our old friend Gabrelle comes up and dares us to start a food fight. Brittney and I say, "Sure!"

About five minutes later Brittney bursts

out "Ok. Let's start the food fight now."

"All right," I say.

"Ready?" Brittney says, holding meatloaf surprise in her hand.

"All clear," I say, holding a sausage dog in my hand.

"One, two, three!"

Then in that one moment of motionless, dead, excruciating silence, Brittney and I screamed at the top of our lungs, "FOOD FIGHT!"

Suddenly everyone was screaming like wild boars. People were throwing week-old spaghetti, Brussels sprouts, corn, turkey,



mashed potatoes, ham, blue ice slushy with carrots, and many other disgusting foods.

When it was all over Brittney and I had to clean all of it up. It took us three hours to finish. Then as we were going out to our fifth-period class, Brittney and I heard a loud noise, so we ran down the north hall and looked out the window.

*Stomp. Stomp. Stomp. ROAR!*

Then we saw with our own eyes our teachers and professors snatched up by a monster during a faculty meeting, violently thrown in a glass jar, and chained to the bottom of the lake. Brittney and I had no idea what the monster was going to do with them, but we knew we had to stop it.

Brittney and I ran to our room to get our spell book. We ran outside with our wands.

“Quick,” said Brittney, “look for a spell to kill underwater monsters!”

“I’m trying, all right? Gosh!” I said “Ok.”

“Let’s see... dah, dah, dah... fire... ice... wind... aha, water monsters! All we have to say is ‘Apra camosa fiora distroya.’”

*Agg...boom...ROAR!*

“Let’s finish him off, Brittney,” I said.

“Gladly,” said Brittney.

“Apra camosa fiora distroya!”

Suddenly the monster fell and sank to the bottom of the lake. He was dead, and when he fell he broke the chains to the jar, releasing the teachers and professors.

When the headmaster got out and after all of the other teachers thanked us, he confronted us and said, “I hear that you two started a food fight. I am very disappointed in you, especially you, Taylor. However, I am also very proud and grateful you saved our lives, so I am rewarding you girls with gold medals for your strength and bravery.”

“We did it!” Brittney and I said. We knew that this would be a day to remember.

## World of the Black Hole

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*In this story by Ciera M. Stokes, two friends travel into an unknown world where they are not welcome. Will they be able to leave? Or are they trapped forever in the **WORLD OF THE BLACK HOLE**?*

The lights were dim in Emma’s dining room as they ate their dinner. Emma and her mother were quiet as they waited for her father to get home.

“When is Dad going to get home?” asked Emma.

“I don’t know, but it will probably be soon, baby,” said Mother. Emma could hear the anger and sadness in her mother’s voice.

That night Emma’s father never came home. Emma wasn’t very surprised. Father was the type of person who runs away from his responsibilities, and never comes back.

The next day, Emma went to school. She walked back home with her best friend Alexa.

“Where is your dad? Doesn’t he usually drive you home after school?” asked Alexa stopping in the middle of the sidewalk, waiting for an explanation. Right then and there Emma wanted to cry. But she was afraid to cry in front of her friend.

“Well, ya see,” started Emma, “my dad never came home last night.”

“Oh, I see.... You don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to,” said Alexa, feeling sorry for her friend.

“No, it’s fine,” exclaimed Emma.

When they arrived at Emma's house her mom was already putting on an after-school snack. "So, girls, how was your day?" asked Emma's mother.

"Oh, it was fine," both girls said at the same time.

After doing homework, Alexa went home. After that, Emma started getting ready for bed. When she was all done, her mom came in her room and kissed her goodnight.

That same night Emma was fast asleep until she heard *CRASH*. And obviously her mom heard it, too, because she ran into Emma's room. They both hid in Emma's closet for a few minutes. Then Emma walked out. No matter how hard Emma's mother tried to pull her back she managed to squirm away. When Emma walked out there was nothing but broken glass on the floor. At least that's what she thought.

In her room she could see her left window was shattered. And her pretty pink bed covers were all scratched up. Her room was a mess! Emma walked up to her bed and fell through a black hole!

She fell down and hit the ground softly, as if the ground were made of marshmallows. She looked down, and it was! She scooped a little into her hand and munched down hard on it. She had not had a marshmallow in ages, because her mother's money was so tight they could only afford what they needed. And her father's disappearance only made things worse.

But that heavenly taste of marshmallow only lasted for a second, because with a blink of an eye, Emma was in a dungeon. Emma screamed at the top of her lungs!

"Sssssshhhhhh," whispered someone behind her who was covering her mouth. But the voice sounded very familiar. "Don't worry; it's me, Alexa," whispered

the voice.

"Oh my goodness," said Emma. "Thank goodness it's you! How did you get here, too?" asked Emma. So many questions were running wild in her mind.

"I don't have time to answer that. Right now we have to escape!" said Alexa very quickly.

"But where?" asked Emma.

"Just follow me," said Alexa in a comforting voice. But Emma could not be comforted when she didn't know what was going on.

They had been walking for a while, and finally stopped at a dead end. And they saw a shadow that came closer, and footsteps.

"Where are we supposed to go now?" yelled Emma.

"Well, I kind of didn't think it through that far," said Alexa, sounding a little scared. But it wasn't because they were trapped, but because Emma was starting to get mad! And as Emma continued to get heated the footsteps continued to get louder and louder.

"What do you mean you didn't think it through?" shouted Emma.

"Well, I just...I don't know," stuttered Alexa. Then right after she said that word, Alexa started to scream!

"What is wrong with you, girl! You can't just start screaming out of the blue like that!" yelled Emma. Emma saw the scared look on her friend's face and turned around slowly. Emma started to scream, too, but only for an instant, because the thing they were screaming at was a beautiful young woman.

"Y...You.. you're the thing we saw walking down the hallway?" stuttered Emma.

But the woman said nothing and handed her a golden key. Then she motioned for Emma and her friend to follow her. Alexa

and Emma just looked at each other and followed, because they really had nowhere else to go.

“If I die, at least I will die with a nice lady,” joked Alexa.

“You never learn when to stop joking around!” said Emma, very annoyed.

Emma had never thought to look down while they took this trip with this mysterious lady, and then she did. When she looked down she found plush green grass. She had only seen this kind of grass on movies and cartoons.

“What is this place?” whispered Emma to herself.

Then the lady walked them into this wonderful room. The walls were lined with rubies and all types of jewels not even known to mankind. Every last one of them was beautiful. The way they shimmered and the way they just took your breath away was priceless. In the middle of this room was a very old lady with a crystal ball in the center of her table.

The old lady noticed the people walking into her little confined space and shot a look so sudden to Emma that she jumped. Then her anger took a turn, and her lips curved into a smile when she saw the mysterious lady they had been traveling with standing beside them.

“What can I do for you, Mallali?” asked the lady with the crystal ball.

“I am here for these two girls, Odessa,” said the lady she called Mallali.

“Oh. New people to the tribe, huh?” said Odessa.

“Well, no. They are intruders.”

“What! How dare you bring intruders into my room, let alone this land!” yelled Odessa.

“I understand that, but they are just children,” said Mallali very calmly.

“But you know the rules. If they are not born here they shall not be here,” said

Odessa getting quieter by the second.

“I know. I was foolish to take them here,” said Mallali, whose confidence turned into a whisper. “Follow me, girls,” said Mallali.

They were halfway out the room when Emma and Alexa felt a warm hand on their shoulders. “Wait,” said Odessa. “What do you need me to do?”

“Tell Emma about her father.”

“And who is this girl you call Emma?”

“The one on the right,” said Mallali. Emma didn’t really understand this because she was on the left.

“Step forward,” said Odessa. Emma gulped hard and approached the stranger. “Now sit up in that chair,” said Odessa with the sternest voice she could muster. Emma didn’t want to upset her, so she did as she was told. “Now look up at the crystal ball,” said Odessa.

Emma looked up and saw nothing. “But there is nothing on your ceiling to see,” said Emma.

“I said look up, not down!” yelled Odessa. Then it occurred to Emma that everything in this new world was backward. So she looked down at the crystal ball, and saw something she could not even believe. She saw her dad walking in the store. And right then and there she wanted to go there and hug him and embrace his presence. But then she remembered, *If he really wanted hugs and kisses from me he would be here with me right now.*

All of a sudden a tear dropped from Emma’s light blue eyes. This time Emma wasn’t afraid to cry. She didn’t get that lump in her throat like when she tries to hold it in. Even though she didn’t know the woman in front of her, she still let the tears come rolling down her face like a vast river.

“I’m so sorry, sweetie,” said Mallali, walking up to her.

“Can you just take me home, please?”

asked Emma.

“Well, it’s not that easy.”

“Just take me there, whatever it takes.”

“Ok,” said Mallali, understanding her hurt. So they traveled the path they went through before and met at that dead end again.

“Why are we here again?” asked Alexa, who had not been talking that much throughout the trip.

“You will see,” said Mallali. “Take the key out of your pocket, Emma.” She did, and a golden door appeared.

Emma stared at the door, wide-eyed. She had never seen anything so beautiful. It was a pretty golden color with lined rubies on its sides. The knob on it looked like it was handcrafted by an angel. It shimmered like it was in the lightest place on Earth, but

really they were almost in the darkest.

Immediately Emma knew were the key went. She stuck it in the door and turned it. She opened the door and there was a piercing bright light shining out of it. Alexa and Emma walked through it together and when she got on the other side Alexa wasn’t there anymore. All she saw was her mother weeping on the ground. Then she spotted Emma.

“Oh my god, Emma! Where have you been?” yelled her mother.

“It’s a long story, Mom,” said Emma, smiling.

That whole night her mom and she sat cuddling on the couch. And for the first time since her dad had been gone she allowed herself not to think of him.

## World War II

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*In **WORLD WAR II** by **Fritz Moosherr**, Sam is fighting the Germans single-handedly when a German captures him. Sam has to find a way out before he gets hanged.*

“I need you out there now, Sam,” said James, Sam’s general.

“I refuse,” said Sam. “You promised me time off.”

“I know I did, but we need you out there. The Nazis are gaining on us. We are going to lose the war.”

“Fine,” said Sam,” but I expect extra pay.”

*Boom!* Another bomb exploded by the air base. Sam was trying to hide behind a small wall. Another bomb exploded less than 20 meters away from him. He peered out from his cover, and a bullet flew past him.

Sam stood up and started firing at a sniper that was about 40 meters away. He looked up and spotted an airplane carrying

a bomb. Sam shot a few bullets at the sniper and ran towards the vehicle parked ten meters away.

The Nazis were about to drop the bomb when Sam found a sniper rifle on the ground, aimed, and hit the pilot. The bomb fell! Luckily there was car parked ten meters away with the keys still in it.

Sam started driving as fast as he could. The bomb hit the ground and exploded. His car went flying into a building and he got tossed 50 meters away.

When Sam landed he fell on his leg and broke it. He screamed in pain as the dark blood that looked like cherry sauce was rushing down his leg. Sam had to crawl and wrap it up. He tried to move to grab the map out of his pocket. Then the pain

kicked in, and he screamed, as he could not move his leg. He decided that he had to tough out the pain. Sam started his miserable journey to the next base.

It took him one day to reach the center. When he saw it, there was no motion inside the building. He decided to go take a look inside. There was no one. The Nazis must have taken them.

Sam found a gun and some ammo inside. He decided to go to a Nazi training camp and see what he could do.

About two days into the trip he got hungry. He decided to go hunting. He found some buck and started to shoot. He shot and his gun made a loud boom. He thought the Nazis would hear that for sure, so he went and hid in the trees. As soon as he found cover a Nazi grabbed him by the neck and took him right to Adolf Hitler.

Adolf questioned him, but Sam said nothing. So Adolf told his guards to get a rope and he would hang Sam.

Adolf made a long speech before the hanging. There were parties and dancing for the victory. Although the army only had 50 soldiers left, people were still joining to keep them in command.

Sam already had the rope around his neck. He tried to figure a way out.

The guard standing right next to him had a knife on his belt. Sam grabbed it and cut the rope just enough so he could slip away and grab a gun when nobody was looking.

He had a chance. He ripped the rope and jumped for the gun and started shooting everywhere. He got behind cover and stayed there to catch his breath.

He had no idea how he was going to

fight off 50 soldiers. But he knew that the Germans had already captured the rest of the world, and the fate lay on him.

He decided to jump out and try to hit as many people as possible. He hit five German soldiers, and one hit him in the shoulder. He cried out in pain. When the bullet hit it looked like a rock splitting through the water. He thought he was going to die because there was so much pain.

He jumped behind the building and found a sniper rifle. He went up the stairs and looked out the window. All of the men were hidden behind walls. He started shooting. He hit 25 soldiers in 100 shots. The gun had no ammo left. The Germans only had 20 soldiers left. He snuck around the building as quietly as he could.

When he went around the building, a Nazi jumped out, but Sam had good reflexes and fired right away. He took all of the man's ammo and two grenades. He peeked around the corner and the commander was telling ten of his men to go to the right and ten of his men to go left.

Sam threw the grenade. It hit five soldiers. There were only 15 soldiers left. He jumped out and started to shoot. He hit 13, but they were only wounded.

He had to kill two soldiers with only one bullet left. He had no idea what to do. They were both hidden behind walls.

He snapped his wrist as he shot. The bullet went curving through the first guy's head and kept spinning and stuck into the other guy's head. He had hit both of the soldiers in the head. Sam had done all he could do in the fight to save the world.

# WOW!

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*In **WOW!** by Karey Frink, Tristan finds himself with his new pet uni-turtle, Darby. If Darby doesn't get trained, she could get banished from the neighborhood.*

Dear Diary,  
It's Tristan. Let me tell you what happened. I knew it was going to be a different day when my mom brought *it* home!

Mom thought "Darby" was a type of dog or something. But I knew it wasn't. That is when I really looked at her. She had such a cool coat. It was neon blue, had green spots, and her shell was bright yellow. Then I realized that Darby had a horn, too! She was a mix between a unicorn and a turtle. She was no dog. She was a uni-turtle!

That night I awoke to a strange rustling noise in my room. I crawled over to my light switch, and then quietly turned it on. When my eyes adjusted to the bright light, I found my bedroom a pigsty!

I looked at the clock. It was two a.m. I scanned my room to see the damage and to find who did it. Starting at my door, my eyes took in my bed, the bookshelf, Darby, my desk. Wait! Darby?

In the morning, I told my mom, "Darby either has to go to the pound or needs training."

Mom responded, half-yelling, "Tristan, Darby is not going to the pound, and what happened to your room?"

I sarcastically said, "Oh, that. That was Darby at about two in the morning!"

When I said that, Mom wasn't very happy, yet she tried to calm herself down and said, "Okay, I will sign Darby up for training school, but you're taking her!"

Dear Diary,

Training school started today. Darby

loved to play with her class-mates. One of Darby's classmates' names was Jordon. Jordon was a hairless dog that almost looked more funny than Darby does! Jordon was very kind and gentle. She loved other people, along with pets. Darby and Jordon became friends, but Jordon's owner didn't approve of Darby.

Darby was very smart, though the teacher, Mrs. McIssa, definitely hated Darby and me. When the class was over Mrs. McIssa called us up and told me that she wouldn't teach Darby. I didn't ask for a reason, though I was about ready to knock her out. I'm guessing that she wouldn't teach her because Darby looked different. I didn't think that was very fair because she is still a pet even though no one had ever seen a pet like Darby.

We tried other schools. The longest we lasted in them was only a week or less. Whenever the teacher said "Go," Darby would fly off into the sky (higher than the trees) and then float lightly down like a feather. The teacher thought it was unacceptable.

I went to the bookstore and bought some pet training books. I trained Darby at home. She could have won a dog show, if she were a dog. She was great; she could sit, and lie down.

Dear Diary,

It has been about six weeks that we have had Darby, and she has been good. But something happened. Our neighbors came back from their vacation in New York, and my family invited them over for a welcome

back party. When our neighbors came over, we were waiting for them in a row, standing tallest to shortest. Mr. and Mrs. Smith came through the door and looked at all of us: Dad, Mom, my sister Sydney, and me. I watched their eyes, and once they got past me and saw Darby, their eyes almost popped out of their skulls!

I thought I knew what was coming. “What is that!” they would yell, but I was wrong. Mrs. Smith fainted!

I knew what to do at that minute. I picked Darby up and put her in my room while my mom and dad helped Mrs. Smith.

Sydney tried to explain Darby to Mr. Smith. Confused and scared, they went home after Mrs. Smith woke up.

About an hour later they called and asked if they could have another try meeting Darby, as long as she was trained. A couple of days after the Smiths spent time with Darby, they became great friends.

Dear Diary,

Darby will keep making progress in everything she does, but now it's time for a new diary.





ROOM 122:  
THE INSIDERS' CLUB



# Above and Beyond

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*Nicky, the heroine of **ABOVE AND BEYOND** by Francesca Johnston, is a fourteen-year-old girl who goes to a reading session at the library, and soon finds herself part of the story.*

As the bookkeeper took out a book to read, the children went wild with excitement, except for Nicky. She was fourteen and was listening to her iPod, looking at a *Seventeen* magazine, and wishing she was at the mall with Jessica and Caitlin.

“Nicky, it’s time for the story” called the bookkeeper. Nicky groaned and swivelled on her chair turning her back on everyone. The bookkeeper looked at her.

It was as if he wasn’t there to Nicky, he could hear her music from where he was although it was muffled.

The bookkeeper sighed and said, “Alright, this story is called Above and Beyond,” as he opened the book.

“Nidawi was the queen of Salutasia,” the bookkeeper continued reading. “She was very beautiful and she owned a magnificent castle. Many years ago, when she was very young, her father died. Her mother was traumatized and was quiet for Nidawi’s childhood. Her mother became very protective of her at the age of seven she was never to go outside her garden fence. Her garden was glorious, but she was lonely.”

Nicky put down her magazine, and slowly swivelled on her chair to face the bookkeeper as he read on.

“Many years later after her mother passed away, Nidawi took the throne as queen at nineteen years of age. Months later, an event happened in Salutasia no one shall ever forget.”

Nicky turned her music down low. She wasn’t sure of the Bookkeeper, for he

looked at her from time to time, so she was suspicious. She looked at her little brother who was talking to a girl he never met. She was scooting away from him, he got upset, and he was obviously embarrassed. Nicky snorted. He looked back at her and stuck his tongue out; she rolled her eyes and looked at the bookkeeper. Everyone was looking at them.

“What?” Nicky asked.

The bookkeeper looked back at the book and sighed in frustration. He read on.

Nidawi was sitting at her palace balcony, overlooking Rashina, the capital of Salutasia. Suddenly a woman walked by as a guard set up a wanted sign. The woman walked over to the Information bar and gestured the man into the forest. When the man said no, she took out her hand and a blue light erupted into his eyes and he followed her. Then Nidawi set off outdoors where she went into the forest following the woman. All of a sudden a hand covered her mouth and a potion was forced into her mouth.

Nidawi opened her eyes and sat upright quickly to find herself in the premises of the woman. It was dark with stars and the fire was crackling and glowing bright red. She heard voices in the distance, and saw her castle far away.

“Where am I?” Nidawi asked.

The woman looked at her and said, “This is the forest of Eden; I suspect you’ve been here.”

“No.”

The woman stared at her with surprise

and she looked back at the fire “And so goes the saying first time for everything.”

“Hmm,” said Nidawi

“Who are you?”

Still staring at the fire the woman said “I am a minion sent by the Elder cat who is lying in wait for you”

“Why is he called the ‘Elder cat?’” asked Nidawi

“He possesses many powers. Have you never heard of him?”

“I once heard my father say something about the Elder cat when I was younger...”

“Aaaaah... your father was a wise man, I knew him once. A very kind, caring person.” Said the woman

“I know. My mother loved him dearly. But when he...” Nidawi’s voice trailed off.

“Death, a path the wise are willing to take, but the foolish will deny death and ask for eternal life but they may die in the process. You see, as you live, you become more knowledgeable. But there is a price to pay. Life is a gift. It can be taken away” The woman snapped her fingers “Just like that.”

“Speaking of lives being taken,” Nidawi asked. “What about the battle of Nerin? It is getting dangerously out of hand, yet the king of Lirez will not let me help by sending troops!”

“The war in Nerin is getting dangerously fatal!” The Woman spat back. “Soon Salutasia shall be no more. This war has made many people suffer and you can stop it, but the only reason you have been chosen to take the burden of saving Salutasia, is Yizta.”

Nidawi gasped and clutched her necklace. “How do you know about Yizta?”

“My child, we have known about Yizta for hundreds of thousands of years, we are known as the source.”

Nidawi’s eyes flashed. “The source

everyone is talking about? Even the empire knows them.”

“Yes, and they are not to be trusted, save your questions and get some rest, our journey starts tomorrow.”

The bookkeeper closed the book with a slam. Many of the children gasped because they were hypnotized and the loud sound startled them.

“That’s all for today children, I will continue tomorrow.”

The bookkeeper stood up, and put the book away. All of the children were leaving with their parents. Max and Nicky waited for an hour as the rain poured down. When their mom pulled up to the kerb, Max ran in, while Nicky walked slowly, her hair and clothes getting soaked. Her mom realised she was mad.

“So, how was the reading?” asked their mom as Nicky got in the car. They started to drive back to their Mom’s house so they could pack. Nicky’s parents had got a divorce when she was seven. She went to their dad’s house every weekend.

“It was so much fun!” Said Max.

“Nicky? What did you think of the story?”

Nicky was staring out the window, she didn’t respond. Her headphones were in her ears with the music on low.

“Come on Vic, talk to me,” said her mom. “Didn’t you enjoy the reading?”

“It was okay, I guess,” Nicky said and turned the music up to drown her mother’s words out.

Her mom sighed, and kept driving.

Nicky slumped on her bed. Her mother, her brother, and Nicky lived in an apartment in on the outskirts of California. She could hear her brother eavesdropping on her as she walked silently and opened the door. She knocked her brother’s cup of

milk out of his hand and grabbed his shirt.

“Mom!” Max and Nicky screamed at the same time.

“What’s the matter?”

Their mom was running up the stairs and saw milk on the floor and Nicky, a hold of Max’s shirt.

“Nicky! Let go of your brother!”

“He was listening in on me!” shouted Nicky, outraged.

“Young lady you are grounded for the rest of the week,” said her mother. Her face was pale.

“Mom!” pleaded Nicky “I was supposed to go to a movie tomorrow with Jessica and Caitlin!”

“Well, then you should’ve thought about that before you did that to your brother.”

Nicky screamed in frustration, ran into her room and slammed the door to find that she had writing on her bedroom wall. She examined the words closely. They said:

***You will be taken to our world in  
5...4...3...2...1...***

And then suddenly a red light erupted in Nicky’s dark room. She landed in the book where the bookkeeper left off.

As they were travelling through the highlands, they spotted the gates to the Forest of Historial.

“There it is. Isn’t it magnificent?” said Selena.

“Yes it is,” Nidawi said.

The gate, shaped in the form of a large gold birch leaf, shined a peculiar shade of iridescent purple as if by magic. This purple light shined stronger as Nidawi drew closer.

“Selena?” asked Nidawi staring closely at the gate.

“Yes?”

“The gate--why does the purple light get

stronger as we approach?”

Selena became quiet and wondered if she should tell Nidawi all the secrets of the gate right now, or wait until Nidawi was more aware of her role as Queen.

“Now is not the time for that information, dear Nidawi. You must wait until the moment is right before all is revealed.”

This made Nidawi quiver in fear. Is there yet more to learn, she thought? She examined every inch of the wondrous gate in front of her. What a strange world she was now apart of, she thought.

“Why are there dents all over the gate,” Nidawi finally asked.

“They are spear and rock dents,” Selena replied.

“But why would anyone throw things at this wonderful gate?”

“Not everyone can get in you know.”

“Why?”

“You have to be pure of heart. But if you hold Yizta, you will surly get in.”

“I don’t understand why Yizta is so special,” said Nidawi who was looking for a keyhole, running her fingers across the centre of the gate.

“It’s special because it can control anyone and a mythical creature. If you know the words you can summon up Vinackulous, the God of death, but also of life.”

“And do you know those words?” asked Nidawi hopefully.

“Not in the slightest,” said Selena with a chuckle. Nidawi rolled her eyes.

“Elder cat I summon you for the rise of the new holder of the necklace.”

Lightning struck and it was pitch black.

“Nidawi? Nidawi!” screamed Selena.

Nidaw’s heart was pounding she was lost and running.

“Selena...” whispered Nidawi “Selena!” She was now screaming.

Nidawi heard a voice in her head.”

Nidawi, where are you?"

"Genius, Telepathy!"

"Hold Yizta and it will lead you to the Elder cat" Selena's voice was faint.

"What?" But she was gone.

Nidawi pulled out the necklace. Just then a blue ray of light flashed and went straight. Nidawi followed the light. Everything was blue, and then there was a small clearing with a cat sitting on a tree stump. Nidawi examined the Elder cat. He was white and had black symbols covering his body. He had slanted eyes and a small nose. He was unusually large for a cat.

"Welcome Nidawi, we have been waiting a long time for this" he had a surprisingly low pitch.

"How do you know me?" asked Nidawi, scared, but approaching him.

"I am the leader of the source, I am the Elder cat." Said the Elder cat, hopping off of his stump.

"I see you have Yizta, it's valuable you know." Said the Elder cat eyeing her.

"Yes, I know, and about Yizta...Selena said something about summoning a mythical creature, Vinackulous is its name."

Yes, that's true. But you must say it's real name to summon Vinackulous. But only the gods know if you shall remember it, but it is their decision and their decision alone," whispered the Elder cat, who was staring at the sky.

"And if I don't" asked Nidawi. She was afraid of the answer.

"Then all of Salutasia shall fall and crumble."

"And why exactly is this happening?" she was desperate for a positive answer.

"You"

"That's not positive!" shouted Nidawi

The elder cat looked confused. "What did you expect, 'this is happening for reason, just go on with your normal life, and it's not your fault that the world is

falling apart" said the Elder Cat sarcastically.

"Is that bad?"

The Elder Cat rolled his eyes. "Are you serious or not?"

Nidawi straightened up and said, "Yes, I'm serious" then she thought.

"This is just a random question, but how can you speak? You're a cat."

"Every animal in Salutasia has the vocabulary of a human." The Elder Cat licked his paw.

"But, you have the same animals as we do on Earth."

"No, we just have the same animals as you do but different. I can see the magic in them; it's a purple glow. Have you ever seen it?"

"Yes! Outside of the Forest of Historial I saw that it was getting more fluorescent in color as I approached."

"Really, we have never had that kind of thing happen."

"Speaking of my world, Earth, I want to get back to it," said Nidawi, wailing.

"You can't yet. You need to restore yourself."

Nidawi looked confused.

"Yes, you need to have a better view on life. You need to treat people better."

Suddenly a crystal ball appeared and the memory of Nidawi as Nicky appeared. Nidawi watched herself ignoring her mother's conversation and Nidawi felt disappointed in herself. How could she have been so ignorant to her own mother?

"I understand now, I need to summon Vinackulous in the war field."

The sewers are a gloomy place. They had monsters, but not rats. Monsters from the underground, the water, and the lava, all compacted into one place.

Nidawi still wondered what her real name was.

"It's this place stinks, literally." Said Nidawi holding her nose.

"It is necessary. If you want to summon the God, it must be in the middle of a battle field." The elder cat was walking calmly, his face was majestic, but you could see the fear in his eyes.

"What do you fear, do you fear that I may not be eligible to work this." Said Nidawi, who was starting to question him.

"You can do it, not just anyone can. I have told the Gods that you are capable."

Nidawi blushed.

"Thanks, I needed a boost of confidence." Smiled Nidawi

The Elder cat didn't smile back. That's just the way he was.

"There, go up and you will be in the battle field." Said the Elder cat. Before she could think about it, she was in the battlefield, men standing at opposite sides of the field. Nidawi lifted up Yizta and said,

"Viradazalo!" Her voice echoed in the field and all the men stopped and watched. The Elder Cat was watching with a surprised look on his face. He thought.

"This wasn't supposed to happen! What's going on Selena? Selena!" When the Elder Cat fell to the floor the window of him shattered. The men in the field where outraged. She had heard the king's explanation for why the war started and she thought it was reasonable; these are the words he said: "The men of Nerin have constantly been stealing our livestock. We want to get our food back, but we can't unless we barge into their town."

So that's how it started.

"Get out of our way Nidawi! This is not your problem!" he shouted, rushing into the field.

A burst of light erupted in her face and the monster was above her, he picked her up, his mouth widening, showing his black

rows of teeth. And it was suddenly gone, and all was black.

Ships sailed through the seas holding hundreds of men for battle. Nidawi was asleep; thrashing inside the cave, only a candle was lit. BANG! Poof of smoke appeared and then Selena came. After many spells had been used, Nidawi awoke. She was sweating and breathing rapidly.

"My dear, I'm so sorry I didn't find you sooner" said Selena putting her hand on Nidawi's head. It was as if Nidawi was still in the dream she could still see it, Salutasia was gone all men and women dead. "Wake up Nidawi! Don't drift into the nightmare!" said Selena shaking her.

"Nightmare?" thought Nidawi in her dream. Slowly she faded out of Selena's grip.

"Nidawi!"

Nidawi had drifted and was slowly materializing. When she was awake a man was in front of her, it was Joloso, from the empire.

"Where am I?" Asked Nidawi, bewildered.

"You are in a nightmare my queen. Or shall I say our old monarch," said Joloso, smiling a wicked smile.

"What!" exclaimed Nidawi.

"You heard right my queen, I am taking over. This land has been going to the dogs ever since your father left. But no matter, I will rule this world and you can't stop me."

"But I have Yizta!"

"But you won't. Because in approximately forty-eight hours I am sending you back to your world."

"Your plan will never work!"

"Wrong!" shouted Joloso

"But...then how did Selena know so much?" asked Nidawi

"Because she has experienced things you

never will! But she's not going to live for much longer, she knows too much. I will transfer her knowledge into me, and I will be the most knowledgeable being ever to live!"

"You'll never get away with this!" screamed Nidawi.

"Too bad to won't be able to see me rule."

And the dream faded away.

Nidawi sat up.

"So you heard about it, huh? You learned about the empire's plans!" exclaimed Selena "Well, that's the empire for you..." said Selena looking around "Anyway, we have to stop Joloso; I never want to see the sapphire crown on his head!"

"Hold on, sapphires? You said they were extinct for millennia."

"They are; we got them from the Human realm"

Just then Nidawi had an idea. "Time travel!"

"Time travel?" Selena stared at Nidawi, astonished.

"Yes in the fairytales on earth, we heard of time travel. It's when you use mystical powers to warp yourself to the future or past, be it hours, or decades!" Said Nidawi who seemed to think she knew so much about time travel.

"It's not that simple! I will have used most of my energy, and I'll be too weak to fight," explained Selena.

"We have to try," pleaded Nidawi.

"Fine, but don't get your hopes up, now back away if you please."

Nidawi did as instructed and backed against the wall.

"Timozza!" shouted Selena.

White light surrounded Nidawi and Selena as they hurtled through time, watching dated fly by Q46, Q95, W34M,

W73, and so on. It made Nidawi wonder why this had happened to her. She thought of her mother, and how she was doing, Tears flooded her eyes and drifted away as if there was no gravity. Suddenly they came to a stop and fell rapidly. They fell in Joloso's room with a thud.

"Perfect." whispered Nidawi.

Selena brushed herself off and said "What a coincidence." So they started to search through dressers and wardrobes, but finally they found it.

"Selena I found it! It's in this blue box," screamed Nidawi.

"Shhhhhh!" said Selena as she rushed over. "Where is it?" she whispered, eyeing the object suspiciously.

"At the very back." She said and reached towards it. It stung her finger. "Ouch!" she whispered and said, "It's concealed."

Selena smiled "No it's not" And she pulled out a large red bag and put the box in the bag and shook it. Nidawi looked at her as if she was crazy. When she opened the bag a little monster fell out and jumped out the window. Nidawi raised her eyebrow.

"Works like a charm. Now grab Yizta," she said. Nidawi grabbed it and said

"What now?" Selena threw her a knife "Stab it."

"All right." And she stabbed it and all faded.

Visions clouded her; there was a huge explosion from Yizta. And the Mystical wonders of Salutasia were no more.

Suddenly she was at the Bookstore but everyone was gone. She saw LOST signs on electricity poles and every tree in sight, with her face on the cover. A police car suddenly rushed by and then all was silent. Then a woman came over and said, "The store has closed for the day. Please exit"- just then she noticed that she was the one on the



LOST sign. “Oh my, where have you been? The whole world has been looking for you” she said, surprised.

“I hate to go off track but have you seen the Bookkeeper? He read here months ago,” she said walking towards the

bookkeeper’s chair.

“What? We never had a bookkeeper here.” She said staring at her.

And then she saw him reading a book. He winked at her, and faded away.

## The Accident

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*An Air Force pilot travels to the future in **THE ACCIDENT** by Monte Nielsen.*

The year was 2019 and Marc was an Air Force pilot, 26 years old with a wife and a two-year-old son. Marc was assigned to the air raids. This was Marc’s first assignment. He was supposed to destroy an enemy fuel depot. The night before the mission, Marc had a hard time sleeping because like any soldier he was nervous for his first time fighting. In the morning, Marc got all of his gear on and prepared to leave. So he went to the briefing room and went over the plans one more time just to be safe. Then he went and got in his fighter jet.

He took off down the runway, with his squad of planes following him. Finally in the air, he and his men began loading their weapons to prepare for enemy planes. After about thirty minutes, the fuel depot was spotted. At that moment, Marc saw one of his friend’s plane go down with flames coming out of the back wing. Then he saw another one go down, and then another. They began to turn back, to get back to base, when Marc’s plane started shaking. His comrades told him to bail out, but he couldn’t, as if something was holding him down.

After the shaking stopped, one of the enemies shot a rocket at his plane. The shot made a hole three feet from the engine. If the rocket had hit the engine, his

plane would have been blown to pieces. Thankfully, it didn’t, but all of the sudden he noticed the fuel depot disappeared, and his comrades were gone, too. He flew down very fast, trying to decrease his speed, but he smashed into the ground. With a jolt, he flew out of the plane and hit the ground in a soft grassy spot. He was unconscious.

When Marc woke up he didn’t remember his name or anything except the accident. So Marc got up and looked around, he was in an open field. There was only one road running through some trees, so he went to the road and followed it for about an hour. He finally was in a city in Nevada. He went to a café and asked for a Pepsi and for about thirty minutes just chilled out. Then he finally realized that everybody had on different clothes that he had never seen before, like they were from the future or something. Marc left the café and went to a house next to the café where a newspaper was on the porch and the year was 2109. He started running trying to find his air base but then remembered that the year was still 2109. Still, he searched for two hours. He searched, and then he found some rubble and a sign, so marc read the sign. It read **Nevada Air Base 2019**. Then Marc realized that it was gone. His whole life flushed down the toilet forever unless

he could find someone to help him after all it is the future.

Marc went back to his plane got his wallet and left. A car came driving down the road Marc jumped in front of the car and yelled, "Stop" then it stopped. A man came out of a car and Marc pushed him out of the way took his keys and drove away. Two police cars drove behind Marc with the sirens on. So Marc drove off the road to the cliff going one hundred thirty miles per hour. Then Marc stopped very quickly and the two cops flew off the cliff hitting the ground not too much harm to them. Marc drove back to the road and searching for someone to help him get back to his life. Marc went back to town and searched for scientists mostly.

Then this man named Doc came up to him and said, "I know what you want." Doc is a crazy scientist who used to work for the military, or so he claimed.

"Then what" Marc said.

The Doc said, "To get back to your time period"

So Marc drove him to his house they started talking and the doc asked, "Have you been through any unusual things like ground shaking going through an explosion or something like that."

Marc said, "Well, yes, when I was flying in my airplane my plane started shaking."

"That's it," said the Doc, "That's how got you here". Marc was puzzled; the doc said, "That's a time warp like an invisible time machine in the air."

"Oh," Marc said, "I get it. So I went through the time machine and crashed here"

"You crashed?" said the doc,

"Yes," said Marc.

Doc said "Where?" Marc took him there and showed him his plane the doc said "Interesting."

Doc took Marc back to his lab and

showed Marc his time machine and asked Marc

"Do you have any family?"

Marc said, scratching his head, "Well, I don't know"

"Oh, we'll have to fix that." So he took Marc to his Knowledge Machine. He put him in and said "Put those ear buds in your ear." Then the doc pushed the power button.

All of Marc's memories were going into his head like his family, friends, where he lives etc. Then the Doc went on the phone and waited for thirty minutes and a squad of MPs (military police) men broke down the door and handcuffed Marc shoved him in the ground, Marc said

"I thought you weren't working for the military"

"I lied," said Doc.

Marc shoved the soldiers away ran in the time machine and pressed the power button and poof back to 2019 right back to his crashed ship. So Marc jumped back in the road and yelled, "Stop!" and he asked if he could get a ride to the Nevada airfield.

When he got there everybody thought he was dead. His family and friends were there. Suddenly a glowing ring of light appeared and then the scientist was there and the MPs were there, too. They had followed Marc to get rid him because he knew too much about Doc's work. They attacked Marc but Marc beat them all up wham in one MPs face another wham and another until all the MPs were in a pile on the ground now the scientist turn, the scientist ran away and all the MPs were arrested. They had a celebration. His commanding officer said, "What happened?"

Marc said, "You don't want to know."

"All right then, well let's get back to our duties," said the Colonel.

# All Alone

*A boy fights to save his family in ALL ALONE by Micaiah Russell.*

I woke up slowly. I stayed in bed as long as I could, not wanting to face another lonely day in this world.

Walking in the cold, the snow several inches deep and winds blowing in my face, I gazed ahead. Almost at school, I saw a strange boy ahead. It looked like that kid David from my dream. He paid a gang of boys to beat me up. I screamed, “You!” He turned and saw me and started to run. I ran after him. I caught up to him at the school and threw him against the wall.

The bell rang! *RRRRRIIINNNGGGG!* Dang I can’t be late again. Then I went to my locker and I grabbed all my books for class.

As I walked into class Mrs. Yoke called my name. “John Smith.”

“Here,” I replied. My name is the last name on the list.

“Good morning, class,” said Mrs. Yoke.

The class moaned, “Good morning.”

Then Mrs. Yoke walked the classroom passing out a sheet of paper face down. “Pop quiz today. Do not start before I say...” Then she said, “Begin.”

The first thing I did was lay my head on the table. My body started to fade away, and nobody noticed. I slipped into Fantasy Land.

The next thing I know is that I am running in Fantasy Land. Fantasy Land was my safe place until Tyrhon. Now I’m battling with Tyrhon for killing his family. Tyrhon is the reason why my mom, dad, and grandpa died and my grandma is ill. I will get you, Tyrhon, for hurting my family. I will kill Tyrhon to save my family.

I found my family in Fantasy Land. “Mom!” I called. “Grandma is ill? How long has she been ill?”

“Just about all day.”

“Where are dad and grandpa?”

“Son, how are you?”

“I’m not very good. I don’t know what going on with me. Every time I’m at school, I feel weird. I miss you all so much.”

“We can’t talk now. We have only five hours to kill Tyrhon, or he will kill us.”

“Mom, I miss our shopping trips to the grocery store. Jackpot—if the cereal was on sale jackpot. I could choose whatever I wanted. Almost every time you would let me get some candy. I miss how I would get to push the cart. And sometimes I got to choose dinner.”

“John, did you know your dad and grand-pa are right behind you?”

“Dad! Grand-pa! I missed you so much...m m m, pa- pa- pa. Dad, football is not the same without you. I miss you taking me to all my games. I have not been to a car show since you’ve been gone.

“Grand-pa, the fish do bite when you are not around. Remember when I caught my first fish and you let me throw it back? I have not been swimming. When can we go swimming? Can we go tomorrow? I miss you all so much!”

“Son, you can’t stop living life because we are gone. You might as well be dead, too. You must eat right. Always get plenty of rest and exercise. And always do your best in school. You have to be strong for grandma.”

“Ok, so I will try not to doze off in school. Speaking of school, if I’m here and

you're here...how do I know what's going on in school? You are there in a different way. I always get picked on at school. So my wish is to disappear."

"Ok, now that we are all here, we can go defeat Tyrhon. Everyone follow me. We have 30 minutes to kill him."

"Wow, you finally found me," said Tyrhon. "What's in the cooler?"

"Do you really want to know?"

As I continue to fade in and out of classes, the battle to defeat Tyrhon is still going on.

"Now you must disappear for good, Tyrhon, and I will be careful what I wish for." I know Tyrhon's weakness is ice. The cooler has ice—yes! "Mom, Dad,

Grand-pa: Grab some ice. Throw it at Tyrhon. If he touches the ice he will die."

Not much ice left, we must hit him. I saw one ice cube left, so I quickly grabbed the last ice cube and threw it with my best aim at Tyrhon. "Ah Ah! We did it! We did it! We finally beat Tyrhon with only two seconds to spare." I said the magic words to get back home. "Tyrhon, Tyrhon, you are finally gone." The magic words only worked once Tyrhon was dead.

*RRRRRIINNNGGGG!* The bell rang. School has ended. John ran all the way home, happy to see his family all there. "How was school?" said Mom.

"Great!"

## Amanda

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*In AMANDA by Rachel Goldberg, Massie's life is perfect. She has a rich father, a best friend, and she is the coolest person in her whole school. But life has a way of changing when you least expect it.*

"DAD, I WANT THAT NEW DRESS FROM PRADA NOW!" I screamed at my dad.

"Honey there is no need to yell."

"But dad, that dress is for prom next month and I NEED that dress," I tried saying calmly as I breathed in and out trying to stay calm as I argued with my father and gave him my dad-just-give-me-your-credit-card look.

"Okay, here take my credit card, but only your prom outfit and THAT IS IT," my dad announced kind of scaring me.

"Yah, yah, yah," I nodded, not really listening, just looking through my new *Seventeen* magazine.

"Hello? Oh, hey Massie, what's up? Do you think that your dad could take us to the mall? Ok pick me up from my house and

we will head over. Ok, bye!" I hung up my phone and put it back in my new Gucci bag and went to get my dad's wallet.

"Dad, Massie is here. I will call you when we are leaving the mall."

"Honey, don't call me. I will be in court, so my phone will be off."

"Shocker," I whispered to myself so my dad wouldn't hear. He was always working and never had any time for me!

"What was that, honey?" my dad asked me.

"Um, nothing, Dad, I was just talking to myself." Whoa, that was a close one. I walked outside, my head held high, ready to SHOP!

"Hey Massie," I said as I jumped into her dad's Hummer. "Who is ready to shop till you drop?"

“MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE,” Massie and I yelled as we drove out of my big circle driveway giggling.

Twenty minutes later we pulled into the mall parking lot. “We are here,” Massie’s dad pointed out.

“We realized,” Massie snapped back!

“I will be back to pick you up in three hours.”

“Whatevs,” Massie said back while she texted five people at one time.

We walked into the mall. “Ok, well, I have to go and get that dress for prom at Prada that Patricia saved for me. Are you coming?” I asked Massie.

“Yah, sure.”

“Ok, let’s go.”

I grabbed Massie’s hand and we ran to Prada. We rushed in and there on the table was my beautiful, perfect dress that every girl would dream for! I ran up to the table and caught my breath. “My, my, my name is, is, is Amanda,” I stuttered. “Amanda Mill. I have a dress on hold. This dress actually.”

“Yes I believe you do. Please swipe your credit card and sign your name and you can be on your way,” said the lady at the counter smiling at Massie and I.

“Thank you so much,” I said as I signed my name. The lady wrapped my new dress in pink and yellow tissue paper and then put it in the Prada bag.

Massie and I ran out the door almost running into a lady. “Thanks,” I called back into the store.

“Next to For Love 21 and then home,” explained Massie.

Massie and I walked to the other side of the mall to get to For Love21 our favorite accessories store EVER!

We walked into For Love 21 and started to look around and find the best accessories in the whole store! (We have always been good at scoping out stores and

finding the best things possible!)

After walking around the store for about 20 minutes, I finally decided on 3 bracelets and a necklace for prom. I went to the counter and a lady at the counter rung up my bracelets and accessories. We waited about three minutes in line, and then Massie and I walked out of the store.

“Hey Mass, can you call your dad to pick us up? I want to get home and try on my outfit as fast as I can.”

“One step ahead of you.” *Dink, dink, dink, dink* went Massie’s phone as she dialed her dad’s number. “Dad, can you come and pick us up now? Yah, we are going to drop Amanda off at home. HURRY!” Massie yelled into the phone. Why did she have to be so mean to him?

We sat in the car for about 20 minutes on the way home and talking about prom and what we are going to wear and who we are going to ask and the LIMO Massie’s dad is renting for us and all of our friends.

Then her dad drove onto my street and pulled into my driveway. “Bye, Massie. Thanks for the lift.”

“Bye, send me a picture of you in your dress.”

“Kay no problem, see yah!”

I walked into my house and there was my dad sitting at the island in my kitchen.

“Honey there is some news that I have to tell you something but you may not like it,” my dad told me. I am not sure that this is going to be good!

“Honey, when I tell you this it is going to be very serious.”

“Dad, just tell me; I am very serious and adultish.”

“Ok. I am going to tell you. I went to the doctor yesterday for my annual checkup, and they told me that I have lung cancer.”

“OMG! Daddy, are you going to be ok? I don’t want you to die,” I told my dad as I

hugged him to death.

“I am not going to die. Well, at least I don’t think I am going to,” my dad said, trying to calm me down! “Honey, just don’t worry about it, ok? Just go on up to bed and go to sleep,” my dad reassured me.

“Um, ok, Daddy. I will see you in the morning.”

I went upstairs having a flashback of what just happened. Does my dad really have lung cancer? How did this happen? WHAT is going to happen? I had to tell Massie. I mean she is my BFF.

**Richgrll27 has just logged on**

**Everoneluvmassiel23:** hey. how goes it?

**Richgrll27:** my life STINKS!

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** OMG y? I thought u would b so happy bc of ur new dress & stuff?

**Richgrll27:** yah not really... my dad just told me that he has lung cancer! :(

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** OMG UR JOKING!????? Plz tell me ur joking?

**Richgrll27:** no joke. He has cancer. Idk wat to do???

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** I heard that ppl who have cancer... usually end up dead or bald!

**Richgrll27:** omg, I feel sooooo much better now! : p

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** sriry. Oh r u going to Brad’s party @ his house on Friday night??? It is going 2 b HOT I hear! :)

**Richgrll27:** I can’t.. my parents said no...

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** ur rite.. ur life really does stink! Come on... sneak out... ur parents will NEVER know. It’s fine. I have done it tons of times and I have never gotten caught...

**Richgrll27:** idk.. I am just not like that..

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** well if u wanna b @ that party on Friday.. u better start being like that bc that is the only way ur

getting 2 that party... my parents can drive us. They will pick u up a street over and u will be home by 11 or 12. It’s fine.

**Richgrll27:** and wat will I tell my parents? Wat if they come in my room or something?

**Everyoneluvmassiel27:** just tell them that u have lots of hw and u can’t talk at all... and that they can’t come it bc u need peace and quiet. Then put pillows and stuff under ur blanket and sheets to make it look like ur sleeping and get a recorder and record ur voice like it is snoring that way wen they come in it looks like ur sleeping. Oh also u can use 1 of my wigs to put hair on top to make it look like it is ur hair. It will work perfect I PROMISE. Trust me! :) plz?

**Richgrll27:** well... It is a great plan. Sooo????? Ok I will sneak out w/ u.. but this plan better work!

**Everyoneluvmassiel27:** oh trust me... it will!

**Richgrll27:** ok well... I am gona go to bed, it has been a long night. So I will ttyl... bil :)

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** k c ya l8r

**Richgrll27 had logged off**

Minutes passed by, then hours, then days, and then suddenly, it was FRIDAY: the day that I sneak out with Massie to Brad’s party! I was going to wear a really cute pink and black polka dot bubble dress with really cute pink high heels to match. I also had my black Coach purse, so it would be the perfect outfit for an awesome party!

*RING, RING, RING* went my phone. It was Massie.

“Hey Massie. Yah, I am ready to go. Ok, I will sneak out my window and, yah I know. Ok I will. Yah I told my parents. Ok I am coming.” Then I hung up the phone.

Once my feet hit the wet green grass, I

put on my heels, and walked down to the end of the street to wait for Massie's mom's car to drive up. When I saw the black Hummer, my heart dropped. I looked back at my house knowing that what I was doing was wrong, but I was the coolest kid in the school, and I had to be at this party!

"Sup, chica? Are you ready to PARTY?" asked Massie as she danced to Kevin Rudolf's new smash hit, "Let It Rock!" It was our favorite song EVER!

I jumped in the car, and started blurting out with Massie, "BECAUSE WHEN I ARRIVE, I, I BRING THE FIRE, MAKE YOU COME ALIVE, I, I BRING YOU HIGHER!"

After a while of singing I started hearing other music. It was coming from the PARTY!

"We are here," Massie and I squealed together, squeezing each other's hands!

"Ok, girls, we are here. Make sure that you have fun, but stay safe, and NO drinking," explained Massie's mom.

"Mom, we know, we aren't stupid," Massie told her mom as if she was soooo mature.

We walked into the party as if we were on top of the world. When we walked inside the stereo was blasting T-Pain and Lil' Wayne's new song Can't Believe It. Massie and I went over to the snack table and grabbed a cup of punch and went to say hi to everyone.

"Hey Jackie, isn't this party the BOMB," I asked her giggling at my own joke. Massie just stood there drinking her punch and then gave Jackie a smile showing her that she says hi. Massie isn't very talkative to others.

"Hi Amanda, this party is fun. Lol," Jackie said to me.

"Why does she have to always say things in aim terms," Massie whispered in my ear trying to act normal.

"Ok well we will talk to you later," Massie told Jackie and pulled me over to the dance floor. We started dancing to Nelly's smash hit "Hot In Here."

We hung out at the party for a while. We danced and talked and ate, and then danced some more and I checked my phone and it was 11:00.

"HEY MASS, I THINK WE SHOULD HEAD HOME," I yelled over the music.

"WHAT?" Massie yelled over the music.

"I SAID 'I THINK WE SHOULD HEAD HOME,'" I tried telling her again.

"OH OK I WILL CALL MY MOM."

She told her dance partner that she had to go and we went outside where it was quiet to call her mom.

*Click, click, click, click* went her phone as she typed her mom's number. She paused for a minute waiting for an answer.

"Hi Mom. Yah we are ready to get picked up. Ok you will be here in 10 minutes," Massie repeated looking at me telling me that her mom is coming soon, and no to worry.

"Yah ok Mom. I will see you soon. Bye," and she hung up the phone.

Ok, ten minutes, that is all it is. *Don't worry Amanda, don't worry about it.* I tried telling myself, but I just couldn't get myself to believe it. When her mom drove up in front of the house we got in and closed our eyes. We were so tired we had to keep hitting each other to keep us awake.

"Thanks for the ride home," I told Massie's mom.

"No problem."

"Bye Amanda, call me tomorrow," when Massie said that she raised her eyebrows giving me a sign saying that we are going to talk about what my parents say.

I nodded and walked up the stairs leading me to my big front door. I took out my key and opened the door as quiet as I could. I made sure that before I left I

turned off the door alarm so that it wouldn't beep when I came in. I turned on the light hoping that my parents wouldn't be standing there. Click went the light as I turned it on, and all that I saw was my kitchen and dining room. Phew I thought. I went upstairs and changed into my pajamas and went to bed as if I had never left.

I woke up at 10:15 in the morning the next morning because I was so tired after the party last night.

I walked downstairs and ate my breakfast. While I was eating, I felt so guilty for sneaking out last night, lying to my parents, going behind their backs, and all the bad things that I did in that one night. I was never going to do it again.

Days passed by and I still couldn't stop thinking about that one night that I snuck out. Most people [like Massie] would just sneak out and never think about or remember it ever again, but I am not like that. Every one thinks that I do that all the time, and that I am spoiled so I only think of myself. But I am not really spoiled; my parents just treat me well. They know that I go through a lot, because they are never home. Sometimes I think that it is because they don't want to be with me. So I always get out of the house and act like a brat to make up for it. I don't know why, but I just do.

A week passed and I started to get over the sneaking out incident. Today I went over to Massie's house.

"So Amanda, I can't believe you got away with the whole sneaking out thing. I thought your parents would totally find out," Massie said rubbing in my face that her parents don't care what she does and that she can have fun.

"Um Mass, I don't really what to talk about that right now," I told her looking down at my new flip-flops.

"OMG Amanda, just grow up. It is so

yesterday. Just forget about it. You didn't get caught and you had fun at the party and that is all that matters right?"

"Yah sure whatever," I replied "agreeing" with her, but in the back of my mind, I knew that it wasn't ok about what I did.

*Ring, ring, ring* went my phone. It was my mom.

"Hello. Oh hi mom. WHAT? THIS CAN'T BE POSSIBLE! OK, I WILL WAIT OUTSIDE," and I hung up my phone as fast as I could and ran down Massie's long staircase almost running into their cleaning lady Sondra.

"Cupcake Emanda," Sondra said in her squeaky accent and held out a tray of colorfully decorated vanilla and chocolate cupcakes. ("Emanda" was how she pronounced my name.)

"Not now Sondra," I said running towards the door. Sondra walked up the stairs.

I ran down the stairs onto Massie's gravel driveway and waited for the car to pick me up. Massie came outside.

"What is wrong with you?"

"Mass, my dad is in the hospital. A police car is on its way to pick me up," I said out of breath.

I saw the flashing light so I knew that it was the police car coming to pick me up. The car drove up in front of me, and I got in as fast as I could and waved goodbye to Massie, and she gave me the call me sign.

About five minutes later we drove into the hospital parking lot. My heart was thumping so much I thought that it might just thump right out of my body. I got out of the car, and the policeman walked me up to the room that my mom's family was in.

I walked into the room. It was cold and all white in the room I saw my aunt and uncle and their baby twins sitting on the floor playing with their toys. (They were



too young to understand that their uncle might die.) My mom and my other cousins were here. My mom gave me a big hug and she was crying. My aunt, uncle, cousins, and baby twins came and did the same thing. My mom pushed me over to my dad. I stood next to his be. He held my hand. Then, the doctor came in.

"Hello. I am sorry every one, but there is nothing that we can do to save Mr. Mill here." My whole family started bawling and I did the same.

I looked at the ground and watched my tears fall on the spotted green and brown tiles on the floor.

"This is all of the time that you may have with Mr. Mill," said the doctor. Then he walked out of the room and left my family alone.

"Honey, we have all talked to your dad, so it's all you," my mom told me.

"Dad I just want to tell you that I love you," I said through my tears.

"Honey, I will always love you. "When I die, I want you to always have a special place in your heart for me," my dad told me.

"Always," I said. "I love you."

"I love you too," and then my dad's hand lost grip and his eyes slowly closed. He was dead.

After a couple hours the doctor told us that we had to leave. We were all just sitting there in silence staring at the dead body that lay in front of our faces.

I got into my mom's car and we drove home laying my head in the window. We drove onto the driveway and I got out of the car and ran up to my room.

I texted Massie telling her that my dad died. I just didn't feel like talking.

I looked up on the Internet books about spells. Maybe there would be one for being with someone from the dead for a day. AND THERE WAS! All I had to do was

say "Edgbona youlusion." I said it while I cried myself to sleep and wondered what would happen in the morning.

"BECAUSE YOU'RE HOT N YOU'RE COLD, YOU'RE YES THEN YOU'RE NO, YOU'RE IN THEN YOU'RE OUT, YOU'RE UP THEN YOU'RE DOWN. YOU'RE WRONG WHEN IT'S RIGHT; YOU'RE BLACK WHEN IT'S WHITE. WE FIGHT WE BREAK UP, WE KISS WE MAKE UP," blasted out of my alarm clock!

"Good morning honey. I see that you are awake. Why don't I take you out to breakfast? How about we go to Zoë's Pancake House? You used to love it there when you were a kid!"

"Dad, is that you?"

"Of course it's me, honey; who else would I be?"

"But, but, but you died," I tried explaining to my dad. "Don't you remember?" I tried reminding my dad!

"What are you talking about?" my dad asked. But he had this look on his face that looked like he somehow knew what I was talking about, and I wasn't going crazy.

"The spell, it worked! It really worked. I am here with my dad," I whispered to myself hoping that my dad wouldn't hear, thinking I am crazier than I already am to him!

"What was that honey," my dad asked me while he made my bed, his back to me?

"Oh, nothing dad. I was just talking to myself."

"Amanda, you really need to stop that habit of talking to yourself," my dad told me.

"Yah sure whatever. So, dad I am going to get dressed too I will be downstairs in ten minutes and we can go to breakfast."

"Ok honey," my dad said so calmly. This was the best day of my life so far. I am

going to spend it having fun all day with my dad.

I put on my Hollister Girls Just Wanna Have Fun t-shirt and hot pink skinny jeans from Forever 21 and was on my way out the door.

“Are you ready to go?” my dad asked me.

“Yup.” I grabbed my cell phone and wallet then put it in my coach purse and grabbed my Prada sunglasses and got in the car.

*Vroom, Vroom* went my dad’s car as my dad turned it on.

“Dad, do you think that we could spend the whole day together today?”

“Yah sure honey, anything for you. I don’t have work today, so I am all yours.”

We pulled into Zoë’s Pancake House’s parking lot and parked the car.

“We are here,” my dad said as he jumped out of the car. I grabbed my stuff and jumped out of the car also.

*Ding, Ding* went the door as my dad opened it.

“Hello. Welcome to Zoë’s Pancake House. Can I get you a table?” asked a very beautiful lady cheerfully.

“Yes, please,” my dad answered back as he was texting. I just rolled my eyes thinking how rude he was being.

“Only two people,” the lady asked?

“Yah, and a booth please,” my dad said.

“Yes sir. Right this way,” the lady told my father and me. She grabbed two menus and led us to a booth by the window.

“Thank you very much,” I told the lady.

“No problem. I will have someone over in a minute or two to get your drink orders.”

“Thanks again,” I replied looking over my menu just as my dad did the same.

“So, honey. What do you want to eat?”

“I want two chocolate chip pancakes, and water with a piece of lime,” I told my

dad.

“Ok, I will have the same.”

A couple minutes later the waitress came to take our orders.

“Hello, I am Katherine. I will be your waitress today. Do you want to start out with your drink order or food and drink?”

“Food and drink please,” I told her.

“Ok, what would you like miss?”

“I would like two chocolate chip pancakes, and water with a lime please.”

“Yes mam. And you sir?”

“I will have the same.”

“Thanks.”

“No problem,” the waitress said politely, and then took our menus and walked away.

“So, honey. What do you want to do today,” my dad asked me?

“Maybe we can go see a movie,” I considered.

“Yah sure if that is what you want to do.”

We ate our food and then put the tip on the table and paid the bill. After that we walked back to the car.

“Dad, if I died what would you do,” I asked my dad wondering what he would say as we drove home?

“Well, at first I would cry for a while, wishing and doing everything in my power to get you back. Then I would realize that it would be better if I moved on, but always keep you in a special place in my heart. And I would always expect you to do the same.”

When my dad said those words, I realized that maybe he was right. I should do the same. I shouldn’t be trying to bring him back. I do need to get over it; my dad will never come back and be in the real world. It was over.

“Ok honey we are at the movies,” my dad told me as his blinker was clicking on and off waiting for my dad to make a right turn.

“Um, dad, I don’t really want to go to

the movies anymore. Can we go home for lunch?”

“Yeah sure,” my dad told me. I had to tell him the real story of why I am here.

We backed out of the parking lot and drove back home.

“Dad I have to tell you something.”

“Yeah, anything honey.”

“Well, iamherebecauseyoudiedandijust wantedtobewithyouandthenyoutoldmethatif idiedthatyouwouldtryandmoveonbutstillbe nmyheart.andiwanttodotosamething.andyo uprobablydontbelievemerightnowbutitistrue,” I explained really fast, maybe a little too fast for my dad because he had this look on his face that looked like I was speaking Japanese or some weird language!

“What are you saying honey, you are talking way too fast.”

“Ok, I will say it again. I am here because you died, and I just wanted to be with you. Then you told me that you would try and move on, but still have me in your heart. I want to do the same thing. You probably don’t believe me right now, but it is the truth,’ I tried explaining to my dad, but I knew he wouldn’t believe me.

“But honey, I do believe you. I know everything that has been happening. You are here because you went online and found a book that had a spell in it that can have you be with someone who is dead for 1 whole day till sundown. I know it all.”

“But dad, how do you know that?” I couldn’t understand. How would he know all of that?

“Because, I live in heaven, and in heaven you can see everything that is happening down on Earth. What you are doing and your mom is doing and everyone else is doing. I know it all.”

“So, everything that I do, you can see me doing it,” I was soooo confused!

“That is just how it goes up there,” my dad said to me as if everything was just

normal. My dad drove into the driveway and turned off the car. I got out, and he did the same.

“Honey, what do you want for lunch,” my dad asked me?

“Ummmm, what do we have?”

“I can make you some spaghetti if you want. You used to eat that every day when you were a kid,” my dad reminded me.

“That sounds yummy, I will have that,” I told my dad. I was thinking about all the things that my dad and I did when I was a kid. Sledding in the backyard during Christmas time, swimming in the outdoor and indoor swimming pools, and making cookies.

I waited for a little bit for my dad to finish making my lunch.

“Here you go honey,” my dad said as he placed my plate in front of me. On the plate was a bowl of spaghetti, a cut of apple, and some carrots.

“Thanks dad.” Everything that my dad did for me made me think more about what he said about moving on, but still having a special place in my heart for him. I was starting to do the same thing.

“Dad it is almost sundown, and when it is sundown I have to go back home where I belong.”

“But here is where you belong,” my dad tried convincing me.

“No dad, it is not where I belong. You told me that if I died, that you would want to get over me but still have me in your heart and I want to do the same for you but I can’t do that if I am here. Also, I have go home and help mom with everything. I have to go back to school. I can’t live here dad.” I was trying so hard not to cry, but I kept having the urge to just let it all out.

My dad kept looking at the ground. You know how, when you do something that you know is right even though it may hurt someone, well, in the end you kind of feel

good and relieved that you did it right? Well I felt the total opposite. I felt like I had just ripped my dad's heart out and stomped on it in front of his face. But I also felt like it was the right thing to do.

"Dad," I said trying to get his attention. "Are you mad at me," I asking him hoping he wouldn't be.

"I am sad that you can't be with me, but I am glad that you were being an adult and were thinking of others before yourself. You are really becoming a big girl."

When he said those words I thought that I saw my dad shed a tear, then another, and another, and another. Soon his cheeks were all wet and his eyed were red. Then I started to do the same thing. It started out as one tear then it turned into a stream of tears.

"Dad, I want you to know that I am and always will be my Daddy's Girl. So don't worry about me. I love you!"

"I love you too honey."

I looked out the window and there was only a sliver of the sun left. That means that sundown was coming up in about five minutes.

"Dad, it is time for me to go now," I said as I was hugging my dad. I stood there waiting for the spell to take me away.

Then I started disappearing,

"I love you dad and I always will!"

"I love you too," my dad replied with one last tear streaming down his face.

Then, there I was. Sitting in my room. I looked at the clock, and it was 11:00. I put on my satin pajamas and lay in bed waiting to tell my mom in the morning.

Taylor Swift's hot new song "Our Song" blasted out of my alarm clock.

I went downstairs thinking about what I was going to say about the last 24 hours I had with my dad. I took a deep breath and walked into the kitchen.

"Hi honey, what do you want for breakfast," asked my mom?

"Um, I am not that hungry, but I need to talk to you."

"Yah sure honey. What do you need to talk to about? Is it about the whole dad thing, because I am not really in the mood to talk about that right now."

"No mom that's not it."

"Oh it must be about that detention that you got. It's ok honey every-."

"MOM JUST LISTEN TO ME!"

"Ok honey, just calm down. You don't need to yell."

"Mom I am not kidding, but I was with dad! I read this spell in a book and I read the spell and I was with him. Mom I am not crazy. I swear I was with him," I tried explaining to my mom, but she just kept looking down and shaking her head.

"Honey, your dad is dead. You are going to just have to get over it. He is gone, and we can't be with him anymore. It's done with. HE IS NOT COMING BACK," my mom yelled at me making my heart sink down into my stomach. She marched off to her room crying. I was with my dad. I know I was, but there is no way she is ever going to believe me.

I went up to my room and lay on my bed thinking of my dad and how I was with him and all the fun things I did with him in those 24 hours. Then I thought of how stupid I was to go to that party without my parent's permission. Then, he died. I started to cry. But, I didn't know if I was crying because I was sad or because I was happy. I felt in my heart like it was both. Then I heard a little *DINK*. I had gotten an im.

**Everyoneluvmassie123:** hey y how r u fellin?

**Richgr1127:** I have been better! : (

**Everyoneluvmassie123:** awwww u have been through a lot l8tly!

**Richgrl127:** yah... but I am getting used 2 it...

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** that's good! :)

**Richgrl127:** yup...well I gtg

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** K c ya l8tr : (

**Richgrl127:** Oh p.s...

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** yah?!?

**Richgrl127:** my dad's funeral is this weekend if u wanna come..?

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** yah totally. Wat day and time?

**Richgrl127:** well if 2day is Thursday then it is on Sunday @ 12:30

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** yah sure I will b there! C ya l8tr

**Richgrl127:** bye

**Richgrl127 has signed off**

I went back to my bed, and lay down and then drifted to sleep.

"HEY, HEY YOU, YOU, I DON'T LIKE YOUR GIRLFRIEND. NO WAY NO WAY I THINK YOU NEED A NEW ONE," blasted out of my alarm clock.

"Ugh," I moaned as I sat up just waking up from a good night's sleep. My stomach grumbled. I was starving. I fell asleep before I could get any dinner. I walked downstairs and sat down at the kitchen table.

"Good morning honey. Do you still want to go to school today," my mom asked me hoping I would say yes!

"No mom I am not ready yet," I answered back thinking of all of the homework assignments I would have to make up. My stomach started to hurt even more just thinking of it!

"Ok that is your decision."

I walked back upstairs forgetting about my stomach that was yelling and kicking me, begging me to go back downstairs and get my breakfast. But, I felt like there was

this hole in my stomach that made me feel like I shouldn't be there. I couldn't explain it but that is just what it felt like.

My whole day went by like a blur. In less than 24 hours I would have to watch my dead father be lowered slowly into the ground and be stuck there forever. Never getting to see me graduate the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, or see me go to collage, or get my first job. My list could go on forever.

Hours passed and then I glanced at my clock. It was 11:08. It was time for me to go to bed. I un-tucked my perfectly made bed, and fluffed my pillow and then lay my head down on it. My eyes suddenly started to close.

"HONEY, GET UP!"

"Ugh mom you don't have to yell," I said whiningly.

*Knock, knock, knock.*

"Come in," I said.

"Good morning," my mom said perky, like it was just a normal day and nothing that had happened over the past 2 weeks had ever happened.

"Mom since Massie is coming to the funeral, she is going to take me to the funeral. So, you can leave without with me."

"Ok that is fine. I am going to leave so I will see you in an hour," my mom explained to me.

"Kay."

My mom walked down the staircase and walked out the front door. I looked out my window watching her pull out of our circle driveway. And then I heard another *DINK*. Another im.

**Everyoneluvmassiel23 had logged on**

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** heyy r u ready 4 2day??

**Richgrl127:** i am not goin

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** repeat?

**Richgrl127:** I am not goin. I am gonna skip it.

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** u can't do that Amanda. u need to b there! :0!

**Richgrl127:** I don't care! Tell u rents they don't have 2 drive me!

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** k. but I am not helping u out of this if u get in trouble

**Richgrl127:** no prob. NOW GO!

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** k brb

**Richgrl127:** HURRY

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** k they said ok. now wat is ur plan?

**Richgrl127:** I am just not gonna go. I am gonna sleep in & not go.. that's it.. done.

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** & wat r u gonna tell ur mom. When ur not there on time????

**Richgrl127:** u just say "idk were she is. She told me that u were gonna take her." Then the funeral must go on and I wont b there!

**Everyoneluvmassiel23:** okkkkaaayyyy I will c ya l8tr. Bi!

**Richgrl127:** k c ya

**Richgrl127 had logged off**

Twenty minutes later the funeral started and I was not there. I turned my phone off

so that my mom could not call me. I sat there making all different kinds of lists about my dad. My first list was about I love my dad!

### WHY I LOVE MY DAD!

1. He always gave me what I wanted
2. He almost always gave me love and hope
3. He never gave up on me
4. He never let me down
5. He always pushed me to do my hardest when I thought I couldn't
6. He always knew what to say and how to say it and when to say it!
7. He always knew how to cheer me up!  
:]
8. He made me happy and glad to be near him
9. He always helped me through everything!
10. HE WAS THE BEST DAD EVER!

I lay in bed and then I heard the front door open, and I knew that my life from here on out would be different for the rest of my life!

## Another Alien Story

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*There's no place like home in ANOTHER ALIEN STORY by Jaizznalla Grier.*

I went to school one day like a regular boring day at Berkshire Middle School. My mother dropped me off early because of her meeting at 7:30. So as I was walking out the car, I felt raindrops on my umbrella, and I splashed my pink rain boots in a muddy wet puddle on the side of the sidewalk. As I slammed the door uncontrollably because I was so sleepy I

think I heard my mom say softly, "Have a good day, Hun. Don't get in trouble today."

I opened the door to Berkshire seeing informational posters like usual. I lift up the white chain to the hallways as I looked up to see my friend Chris. He approached me in a shocked look. He had sweat coming from his hair and his eyes were big and maybe even a bit creepy somehow. "Hey,

Kayla, that last shot for the basketball game...that was nice. We need to practice some more, though... why do you look mad?" he said.

"I'm not mad. I'm emotionally tired," I said having humor in my sleepiness.

After school, I walked over to Chris's house with my study buddy Winnie. We call her Winnie because she looks a bit like Winnie the Pooh. I opened my journal and in blackish-reddish, big, bold marker was a big V sign with a circle around it. "Oh my gosh!" I said.

"What?" Winnie and Chris said, weirdly at the same time. "There is this weird sign in my book, look!" I said as I showed them the sign in my book.

"What sign?" Winnie said.

"That big, black, bold sign right directly in front of you!" I said.

"She's going crazy. She officially lost it. I thought she lost it when we were in kindergarten and she came to school dressed in a swimming ducky and flip-flops," he said jokingly.

"I'm serious if you don't believe me fine... I'm leaving!"

I walked home very frustrated and wondering why they couldn't see it and why that thing was in my book in the first place

"Bark," Dixie barked, wanting attention

"Awwww, who is a good girl? You're a good girl yes you are yes you are," I said, loving my dog while I was saying, "You're a good girl." All of a sudden she dumped my last amount of clothes (which I was wearing to school tomorrow) in the pool and I changed "good girl" to "Good grief!" I jumped into the pool, getting my clothes like a lifeguard on duty, and I threw them up to the ground. "Oh, jeez, Dixie why?" I said. "I'm going to my room!"

The sun's horizon slowly came down and changed into a white half circle we call a moon. I walked into the bathroom, got

my shampoo and some soap, and I took a shower. I walked out of the shower drying my hair off and my body. I put on my pj's and jumped in my bed. I tucked myself in and all of a sudden when I closed my eyes, wet dog spit was all over my face. I quickly opened my eyes to see. "Dixie! Come on girl!" I said. She jumped up as soon as I whistled for her to come up, and I went to sleep with good dreams.

I walked slowly into the cafeteria the next day, my clothes smelling a little bit like how you dropped your shirt into a tub of water and left it somewhere hanging for a really long time. I sat down at the table, put down my book bag, and got ready to go to the little area where they sold breakfast to the students in the morning.

"Yesterday, ouch.... Crazy day. I couldn't stop thinking about it last night," said Chris.

Chris rode around the corner on his black bike. I heard old dirty wet rain puddles splash onto the sidewalk. "Come on, we need to get home," said Chris. I got on the handles of his bike and we rode home. As we were riding into the sunlight home I fell over off the bike into grass. "Kayla! Are you okay?" Chris said, worried if I was hurt.

"What-what-what was...that thing?" I said in extreme shock and confusion.

"What was what thing?" Chris said very clueless.

"It was blue and purple with slight sparkles and it was smoking. What was that?" I said.

"What are you talking about? I mean I did feel a big lump when I was riding my bike. Then you fell off.... How did you see what was down on the ground?"

There is only one way to find out what that was. It was to go look ourselves. So Chris and I walked over to the small but

toxic smoke arising from the ground. Chris dipped his finger in the toxic-looking sticky liquid, and then he tasted it. "Eww, beyond gross, Chris!" I said, completely grossed out.

"Come on, seriously, just tasting and hey...it doesn't taste bad." I rolled my eyes and started to get serious again with the big plate on the ground. The lights on the plate cut on and then I flew off very fast.

Then I blanked out. The view was getting clearer each time I forced myself to open my eyes. "Come with us you belong here," I heard an alien say.

I walked into the place that the alien's led me to. I was super-nervous. I heard a voice in my left ear saying, "You are not in harm I believe you are the real Princess of x94." Another voice came about too.

It was in my right ear this time. "You're not going to make it! This place is not safe escape fast!" I had a very long panic as I heard the second voice tell me to a escape so I did I shook free by wiggling out of the two aliens' arms and I ran into a odd direction when I was free. "Child we need you come back!" I heard another voice say very upset.

I ran off to a different place I am afraid I have never seen before. I did an instant stop to look and see what was around me. The place was big it looked like a place on earth that I do not belong to. I felt confused and scared I turned around quickly checking to see if those aliens were there.

"Oh no what have I done." I cried to myself. "The room started to turn into a greenish red and I heard a war siren go off. I looked around panicking.

I saw aliens and dead things everywhere and it was surrounding me in a circle. I quickly ran as fast as I could get away from my fear. I got far as I ran really fast. I found something very deep I can hide in I sat

down in it and curled up and put a big top of something on top of the deep hole.

The deep hole was filled with people from this planet I was at. "I and my family are hiding from the war... I'm Anna-Bell.... What's your name?" she asked. "Kayla. Kayla Brown." I responded. "Nice to meet you Kayla brown. Are you alone? Where is your family? Are you a hermit? Tell me tell me tell me tell- I cut her off because she was asking too many questions. "I am alone and I don't know how I got here." I said "do you remember the last thing you did?" she asked. "All I remember is my friends seeing a weird sign in my book and then I blanked out." I said sadly. "What did the sign look like?" she asked. "It was a v inside a circle and when I walked down the street bam! I was gone." "Why did you walk down the street?" she said "because I was showing my friends Winnie and Chris the sign in the book but they couldn't see anything so I just got frustrated and mad and then they started teasing me so I got up and I gave myself some air by taking a walk and then I popped up here with two aliens holding each of my arms." I said "wow sad. You lucky you're just here for a moment I was born and raised here with my family and once you're here you can never go back. There is one way to leave here and go to earth but no one knows how."

"Do you have any clue at all a hint of something or a puzzle I can find out how to get out of here?" I said, "I'm sorry but I don't. Sorry." She said. "But I know who do know but you have to go on a quest to get there." Anne said unfortunately. "I am willing to do anything to anything to get back on earth." I said very desperate.

"How can I go to a quest or find what I need?" I said "well you can go to the green land and pass him snowy cross and you will have the answers to all your problems." She



said. "So what are you waiting for go get your life."

I went off down the red road and saw a wizardly looking man standing in front of me. "You came to go back home didn't you?" he said. "Yea I did. How did you know?" I asked the man.

"I'm your guardian angel ask me anything and I can grant the wish." He said. "I wish to go home I ended up here mysteriously I just need to go home." I said, "okay well I know how to do this but

first are you an alien?" he asked very suspiciously "no I'm trying to get away from them." I said

"I know who you are here is a little trick to see if your really a human that don't belong here." "He said sure anything." I said "okay show me the heart necklace with the picture of your brother in it." He said. I looked in my pocket and I found it. "Here." I said this is it. He opened it up and saw the picture. "I think this is it"? he said.

## As the Day Got Worse

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*These are strange times indeed. A normal morning at Microsoft turns into a day like no other in **AS THE DAY GOT WORSE** by Jacob Corbeille.*

Dedicated to my 6th grade teacher Mr. Stearns.

Ah hello, what a beautiful day as usual at Microsoft. I sure am proud to be the owner of this wonderful business. The smell of smoke (from wiring), the sound of clicks and clanks, money being made, and the birds chirping. The factory was a beautiful place and a home to me to; as usual I start my day out with filling out papers and taking phone calls. My wife called at one point and said dinner would be on the table by the time I got home. I was done with all the paperwork now so I decided to go see frank. Frank is one of my best friends and workers. Hey frank, how's it going today?

Oh it's going just fine today thanks for asking Mr. Gates, I just got finished making a new prototype so we can beat those Comcast jerks, with their super fast internet. I made it so it has the ability to go as fast as Comcast and maybe even faster, but it's still got a few bugs to work out like the wiring isn't going right. I have the time to try to make it work out, but I have to go to lunch

really soon with my wife. Think you could help me out Mr. Gates?

I would really, but I also have an appointment with my wife for dinner and I have a lot of work to do. I'll see if Joey will help you, but no promises and I think I might give you that raise you wanted for doing so much hard work and giving me full effort. Since I couldn't help you though I'll give you and I owe you because I really do, so whatever you need just buzz me. Well you should start getting back to work I have to get back to mine as well. Oooooo Joey actually buzzing me right now must be important well I'll see you around!

Ok Mr. Gates I'll be seeing you to and I hope your dinner with your wife goes well. Oh, ouch! I just got zapped! Stupid wires, this-better start to work soon otherwise I might want to switch away from the wiring department like to maybe processing. I mean I'm so sick of this it's like are whole system just doesn't work as good anymore.

Ok I guess we will just have to work together to get things into ship shape around here. Ok, now it's time to go to Joey. Hey Joey you buzzed me? Whoa! What happened to you? You look like a piece of toast fresh and hot from the toaster. Hey is that the new hard drive we've been trying to get to work for months?

Yeah, it's just not working at all now and I think some of the workers want to quit. It's like nobody can do anything right or the work is just too complicated. I'm getting burns and cuts and so much more from this I mean I might have to scramble out of here with those others if this keeps happening. You know what I'm just going to quit now! Owwwwwww. It stings so much, these stupid burns I hate working with technology I think I'm just going to quit so I can get away from it not because it's hard!

Wow, I guess there's really some trouble now. I better try to find a way to fix this before it gets out of hand. I think it's time to take this up with the president of this country, but what will I say that there's hacks in our system or the workers are bad? No. That's the stupidest idea ever; I think I'll just take this to the co-owner who is also my best worker. And, so I did go to him.

Is there a problem? I think I know what you're about to say Bill. You're going to say everybody's quitting and you don't know what to do. I knew it. Well if you didn't figure this out already this is all because of me, ever heard of a fantasy with creatures and other wild things? Well I've hacked the whole system, shut down the buildings wireless access, and nobody can stop me. And, why you ask? Because, you're in a fantasy and I'm the evil creature! I'll be seeing you, not!

Just like that he disappeared and I was stuck alone in the factory with nobody, except the janitors... then my phone rang. It was my wife I told her I'd be home late. I

went out to my car, but my car wasn't there but a note. I've taken your car muhahahaha. Oh my god! He took my car! that's the last straw I'm hunting him down and I'm not going to stop until I have taken care of him. I called my wife back to tell her what had happened, but there was no answer. I had to move on anyways, but I'll go home to stock up on food and anything I will need for the trip.

(Door opens and shuts) I'm home! Weird, it's quiet. As I walked upstairs I noticed a drop of blood on the carpet leading to our room. I changed and then looked in the closet. Oh my god! My wife sat there dead with a gunshot wound in her chest. I called the police, but it didn't matter now because I have to get going because I presume the one I call evil one now did that. When the police picked up they first told me they found my parents dead.

As he set out he heard a noise coming from the forest. He went to see what it was and he found a little girl. Only it wasn't a little girl the evil one had shape shifted into a little girl. He then as quick as lighting lighted the forest on fire. When it was over all I had escaped with was my clothes and me.

After he had escaped he ran to a warehouse down the street. This will make a good hideout till it's safe to go back out. There was a beeping sound going beep... beep... beep... I turned around and there was a bomb going off! 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 ahhhhhh!!! I was sent flying out of the house, but I survived because I landed on a soft pile of dirt.

I thought in my head. (What could happen next?)

I tried to knock at someone's door to see if they would help me. An old lady opened the door and told me to come in so she could make me a nice hot meal. So I began to chow down on my food followed by a glass of hot chocolate. The door creaked

open a little bit and we heard footsteps. So we went to the door and the lady was pulled out the door! Why does this keep happening to me?

So, the evil one has come back for more fun? Well he will get his fun. When I see him again I will do something so that nobody ever sees him again. It's time to go make some money and go to the weapon shop. I decided to take whatever money in the house the women had which was enough to get a small revolver. This was good enough, but I didn't try to get more money for something better because there was nothing else to buy except for pocketknives.

As I walked out the door I noticed a purple light just floating in front of my face. It started to open up and then finally got as big as me and sucked me in! I landed in some weird land that you'd only see in dreams because it had magical beings there. They all came up to me and said how did you get here? Did the evil one take you here? I told them the whole story and they told me he was on his way here. So I took out the revolver and got ready for him.

He flew down from the sky as a bird then shifted into a wolf. As he ran at me I shot him twice, but there wasn't any mark on him. He started to slow down and stop then began to speak and asked me if I was surprised. I told him I was and then he ran straight into me and disappeared. I asked why this had happened, but nobody answered me.

Finally after many questions somebody told me that the only way to kill him is to stab him with the knife of ice. This special knife resides in the land of the snow monkeys. Snow monkeys? What kind of little place you got going on here I mean that's just weird. So let me guess I have to go eat bugs out of people's hair to show them I'm one of them?

Actually you do I know it's pretty weird,

but that's what kind of place this is. Just a little kids imagination that you got sucked into. Well really we came to you, but you got sucked into our land.

So... where do these snow monkeys live at I mean I know it's somewhere icy, but I don't see it.

You have to go over that mountain right over there then go in the valley where the snow monkeys reside. We will send one of our warriors to help you on your journey for there are many demons along the way the worst are the fire giants. Also in the land of the snow monkeys there are a few ice giants, which can be a problem too. I believe that you can do it though for the sake of us all. You can't waste any more time in three days when the sun sets this place will be permanently done for. By the way I was getting about the monkey thing you have to kill the ice king.

How do I kill the ice king like do I need a special weapon or something? You said you need the knife to kill the evil one so what about the ice king and do you need special things to kill giants to? I only have a few bullets left anyways so might as well just give me a sword or something.

Well, there is a flame sword that we have which you could use to kill the ice giants and king. The revolver will have to do with the fire giants though and any other demons along the way use the sword for.

Where is the flame sword then?

You have to fight a troll to win it. The only way you're going to be able to get it though is if my son is able to beat it for he is a very valued warrior. I will send him to go get it now. If he prevails I shall tell him to meet you at the beginning of the forest, which you need to go through to get to the mountain.

Ok I'm here with the flame sword and I'm also going to be going on your journey

with you. First off though I have some friends who want to meet you because they have been sucked into our world too.

Oh my god Frank Joey? I can't believe you're here, are you coming with me?

First we must tell you that we have found someone you may want to see. He doesn't believe it and I doubt you will, but your son has been living here do you remember him? His name is David do you remember?

Yes I remember, but how did he even get here?

Well, this is his dream and he was oed into his own dreams and is still stuck in a deep sleep. We have convinced him to come, but he thinks its best that you guys don't talk much since you are the one who left him at a foster home. So now that that's over let's get a move on.

Ok that's a lot of information which some of I didn't need to hear, but let's start going. Some of the residents here made a map for us. First on the map it says we have to get to the river in the middle of the forest where we must kill some bloodhounds that live there. They wrote that I could kill them in 1shot with the revolver or use a few hits with the sword. Oh well let's just get going I mean the sooner the better and much better at that.

### Several hours later

We finally made it... (Growling)

I think we found the bloodhounds for the fact that we hear growling unless it's just me. Frank take the gun ill use the sword it's party time. (Several minutes later) well that's that there all dead or ran away let's get a move on. Next on the map is to just go straight down the next path to the end where some fire giants reside. Frank gets the gun ready again when we arrive because that's the only thing to help us. Wait Joey here I forgot about my pocketknife.

Ok well were at the end and I don't hear or see any giants. (Stomp) (Stomp) ok never mind here they come. Get ready there supposed to be highly dangerous. I think we should just run before they get here though. (After minutes of running) ok were here I think over there is a food stall, but it looks like the evil one is setting a trap. So let's just go over the mountain and finish this stupid quest.

Frank ready the revolver I see the king, but he's got a giant with him.

Ok.

Ill just go kill the giant quick though. (Stomp) too late.

Who goes there?

Me and what does it matter cause your about to die. (Slash) (Slash) well that takes care of that. Hey! Frank get the king he's running!

Got him! Hey can I keep the knife?

Sure it's not like anything's going to happen at this moment. (There probably is though...)

And so frank did keep the knife, but here comes a surprise. What do we do now?

I guess we go back supply up and then hunt him down. (Whoosh) I knew that would happen if I let you get the knife, but that's my fault for not taking it and you can't blame yourself. He will pay for this. The only thing we can do for now though is go back and rest up because tomorrow and the next few days are going to be rough.

Yeah good idea I'm so tired and I kind of feel bad because I let him get away with the knife, which is very disappointing.

Well that doesn't matter now because we don't even know where he even is now. So were kind of screwed for now and until tomorrow when we have all our strength back. In the meantime I have to spend time with my son too and make sure he's ok with me. (Several hours later...) ok so were back

I think we've all had a long day and should go to bed early.

(Crash) (Crash) I walked outside to see what was going on I looked around and found many homes smashed. I went to search for everyone then I turned around and saw the evil one destroying the place where I was staying. When he left I noticed some of it was still standing so I went to it and it fell down upon me. I looked around some more and saw burnt down trees some other animals and creatures stuck under things and my friends. Worst of all my son doesn't even know me because of me and at a time like this.

Well, it's finally over the end is here and it's time to start a new life. All we have left are the clothes on our backs, but we can make it out in the cold new world. All the people, all the nature, all the things that have been destroyed because I was too late. I can't believe this is happening.

No gates it's all of our faults; I think you should just take it easy now. Go ahead sit down and relax we have a long time to think things through before we get back. I'll go look for some food, want to come join me? I think there's a river over there and I think some apple trees more downstream.

Nah, I think I'll just wait here and watch the sun set with David. I think he needs someone to be with him right now and it would be best for me to since he is my son. You just go now, but if you look for George I think he's also by the apple trees downstream thinking things out. I think it's time you should also go talk to him he's very lonely especially right now.

### Several hours later

Hey, come on! We found a car and need someone to hotwire it. It's time to go quick

before this place gets destroyed! We need to gather everything and everyone now and quick so we don't get stuck here forever.

Ok I'm on my way I'll go get George and Frank and fast. Meet me at the river in 10 minutes, I'll have George and Frank by then. Hey! George Frank come on we have to get to the river in 10 minutes so we get out of here before this place explodes! Unless you want to stay here and live in the sky if you know what I mean. Never mind that just hurry up we don't need food now! George, Frank? Oh my god you stay away from them!

What? You don't like to have a little thrill and fun in life? They're going to stay here and die, so just go home if you even have one anymore.

No! I have a home and so do you! Just let them go free and we can all live in peace or you can die instead!

Hand over the money first! I want it now! I'll throw them off the cliff if you don't agree and if you resist and fight back you'll be in for a rousing time. And, the only reason any of this is happening right now is because you have to leave this world for if not you will cause a rip in the time continuum. None of this is caused by me I'm just here to get what's rightfully mine. I guess I'll have to rip you to shreds though since you won't give up. Rawr!

Ahhhhhh! (Whoosh) (Stab) (Yelp) David! You did it; you defeated him and saved us all. (Sky's clear up) I guess it was him who was destroying this world, not all that time mumbo jumbo. I can't believe you stabbed him. I guess you do have a place in life and know what your good at. Loving your dad. I know what you're going to do when you find a wife, get children, and become an amazing dad. Let's go home.

You bet!

# Bamboozled

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*In a world of dancing tacos, only dancing tacos can truly be sane...or something like that. Our hero Mark faces some odd challenges when he finds himself far from home in BAMBOOZLED, by **Iam A. Dude**.*

“I don’t want to get up mom. Can I just sleep a few more hours?” My mom is crazy waking me up at 3:30 in the morning.” You know mom most kids get up around six” I said. “Then you will be late for school “mom concluded.” Mom school starts at 8:00” I screamed. I slept for a while.

Then I remembered I was pitching at the rivalry game versus the Cobras. I jumped out of bed put some clothes and hustled to school. I grabbed my iPod and ran to school. It was a windy day I hoped it would die down for the game. I was just about to the door when I realized it was 5:30, and school doors don’t open for another 2 hours.

The baseball diamonds where open maybe I could practice pitching my glove was in my bag. I pitched for an hour. When my friends showed up. Then every thing turned orange.

My friend turned into a middle aged man and said come with me when he said that the world turned orange. When I woke up I saw that *I was in a cave, I came back to my sense’s a big orange animal* was in here to and he was going to throw me in the fire. I thought I was sleeping I knocked myself in the head nope not a dream this is bad real bad I started to panic I ran around a found a stick I through it at the monster he didn’t flinch he picked up the stick and poked my head instantly blood came out, I found another stick chucked it at his eye he caught it and poked me again more blood gushed out. Then I found a large rock and threw it at him I hit him right in the

stomach he freaked out and went crazy He picked me up. Then I saw a hole in the cave ceiling I tried to swing through my only chance at life. I swung out of the monster’s fist, I reached up grabbed the side of the hole. I started slipping it was so icy, I scrambled to get a grip I kept slipping and then I heard a large crash I was afraid to look back. He put a pot right under me and was about to boil.

Today was not a good day but not the day I die. My adrenalin started pumping I swung my back pack right at the monster’s head he stared losing his balance and he fell into the pot I jumped down landing on the monster. Who’s laughing now monster. I looked around where is a door in this accursed place. That reminds me I have to go pitch at my baseball game and I have a math test too. I just noticed some voices from the floor a saw the same middle aged man from earth. I flipped out.

“You watched me almost kill myself and all you can do is laugh is that even right and by the way what is you worthless sake leave! I hate you and you stink you selfish full of yourself loser you just wanted to have fun “I screamed. “You are here because you have something special that any other kid does not you are the chosen one. By the way my name is fearless leader .Boom boom something crashed I ran away to the mouth of the cave and jumped out. Fearless leader screamed you must get the obelisk and return it to me right here.

I was outside the cave I, was trying to find a way to walk. Most path ways. I came to this huge dancing taco with hot sauce,

and he was guarding my only chance of leaving this part of the area. I dodged his feet. I ran away from it and ran into this huge thing I thought was a rock but I looked out and found a giant. I had an idea I yelled to the giant “Do you want some food?” “Giant hungry,” the giant said loudly. I brought him to the taco and yelled “eat up”. I couldn’t watch the giant eat he ate like a pig and worse he scratched his butt and kept eating somehow I got dizzy; I tripped and hit my head on something. I looked to see what it was it was the obelisk, what luck! I ran back to the cave and showed fearless leader it.

“I wish I could go home” I said. “I don’t have the power to get you out of this world, I tricked you little child I am the evil most powerful person in the universe just because you gave me the obelisk so be gone bye little child” “Then he laughed his horrible laugh.

What do I do now I thought? Then I saw the most beautiful thing ever the portal fearless evil leader went through was still open I jumped through I saw a bunch of orange and red lights and then a soft tune of music nothing recognizable just some notes that would make you sleepy. I glided the portal for about 4 hours then a green light flickered on and off I tried to grab it but was moving too fast then the green light changed to a clear light then the orange and red turned white then I saw a hologram of fearless evil leader turned on he said “I can’t believe that you fell for that get a live get a job get a brain” he snarled. “You haven’t won yet you don’t know how to drain its power” “I screamed. You’re done for. He had this high-tech plunger thing and put it on the obelisk.” Now I just need the sacred diamond to charge the plunger”, I suddenly got dizzy and fell asleep. I woke up in my homeroom class.

## The Big Day

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*It may be an alternate universe, but football is football in THE BIG DAY  
by Justin Myers.*

One day in 5431 Putnam Drive me and my dad were going to see the most important the 2008 Super Bowl. My dad said the game starts at 2:00 p.m., and I can take ten friends and I took Jason, Max, Jeremy, Austin, Brendan, Oliver, Collin, Jason, Collin, and Matthew. We left at 8:00 a.m., and got all my friends by 9:00. We all were riding when my dad makes a wrong turn, and we all go into a different universe. Where we face all kinds of bad things!

First we land in a parallel universe, and we meet a dragon who tells us we have to face 2 different life-breaking challenges. The first challenge was to climb up a volcano, and then crossed the Bridge of Torcher. We

climb the bridge, and out of nowhere came these meteoroids, and they were rolling towards us. We quickly dodge them we, and we were unbeatable and hours passed and we finally got to the Bridge of Torcher. We crossed the Bridge of Torcher, and then the Bridge start to tear apart, we ran as fast as we could. We were almost at the every end when Jason fell through, I save him, and they were safe. And the dragon said “Excellent Job” you have made it pass the first challenge.

Your last challenge is that we had to play Robot Fighting Tournament where we each have to each other, and the finalist plays against the Robot360 so that we can get

passed the second challenge. The plays in the game are Smash, Strike, Swipe, Defend, and Special. Smash beats Strike, Strike beats Swipe, Swipe beats Smash, Smash beats Defend, Defend beats Strike and Swipe, and Special, and Special beats Smash, Strike, and Swipe. Each player has 100 lives.

The first round and the first game is Jason vs. Max. Ready. Set. Throw Down. 4, 3, 2, 1 who will be the strongest one? Jason said "I will crush you" and Max said "I beat you". Jason and Max begin to fight. Jason chooses Smash, and Max chooses Strike. Jason punches Max and it's now 90 to 100. Jason chooses Smash, and Max chooses Swipe. Max kicks Jason and it is now 90 to 90. Jason chooses Special, and Max chooses Defend. Max does a Special attack on Jason and it is 55 to 100. Jason chooses Defend, and Max chooses Defend. And it is now 75 to 120. Jason chooses Strike and Max chooses Special. Max does a special attack on Jason and it is 40 to 130. Jason chooses Special and Max chooses Special. And it's 70 to 150. Jason chooses Defend and Max chooses Special. Jason does a special attack on Jason and it is 80 to 105. Jason chooses Swipe and Max chooses Defend. It is 80 to 110. Jason chooses Smash, and Max chooses Defend, and it is 80 to 115. Jason chooses Special and Max chooses Smash. Jason does a special attack on Max and it is 90 to 70. Jason chooses Smash and Max chooses Loser. Jason punches Max, and it is 90 to 60. Jason chooses Strike, and Max chooses Loser. Jason punches Max, and it is 90 to 50. Jason chooses Smash, and Max chooses Special. Max does a special attack on Jason and it is 45 to 60. Jason chooses Smash, and Max chooses Special, and it is 0 to 60 and Max is the winner. Max said "I rock".

The Second Game is Jeremy vs. Austin. Ready. Set. Throw Down. Jeremy said "I kick you butt" and Austin said "I will win this game, and there nobody who can stop

me" 4, 3, 2, 1 who will be the strongest one? Jeremy and Austin started to fight. Jeremy chooses Swipe, and Austin chooses Smash. Jeremy kicks Austin and it is 100 to 90. Jeremy chooses Loser and Austin chooses Special. Austin does a special attack on Jeremy and it is 55 to 100. Jeremy chooses Special and Austin chooses Loser. Jeremy does a special attack on Austin and it is 65 to 55. Jeremy chooses Loser and Austin chooses Loser. It is now 55 to 45. Jeremy chooses Defend and Austin chooses Strike. And it is 60 to 45. Jeremy chooses Loser and Austin chooses Loser. And it is 50 to 35. Jeremy chooses Defend and Austin chooses Loser. And it is 55 to 35. Jeremy chooses Special and Austin chooses Special. And it is 85 to 65. Jeremy chooses Strike and Austin chooses Swipe. Jeremy punches Austin, and it is 85 to 55. Jeremy chooses Special and Austin chooses Special. And it is 115 to 85. Jeremy chooses Loser and Austin chooses Smash. Austin kicks Jeremy and it is 105 to 85. Jeremy chooses Loser and Austin chooses Special. Austin does a special attack on Jeremy and it is 60 to 95. Jeremy chooses Loser and Austin chooses Special. Austin does a special attack on Jeremy and it is 15 to 105. Jeremy chooses Special and Austin chooses Swipe. Jeremy does a special attack on Jeremy and it is 25 to 60. Jeremy chooses Loser, and Austin chooses Defend. And it is 25 to 65. Jeremy chooses Strike and Austin chooses Loser. Jeremy punches Austin and it is 25 to 55. Jeremy chooses Loser and Austin chooses Loser. And it is 15 to 45. Jeremy chooses Smash and Austin chooses Strike. Jeremy punches Austin and it is 25 to 35. Jeremy chooses Loser and Austin chooses Loser. And it is 15 to 25. Jeremy chooses Special and Austin chooses Defend and it is 0 to 35. And Austin wins. Austin said "I am awesome dude".

The third game is Brendan vs. Oliver. Ready. Set. Throw Down. 4, 3, 2, 1 who will



be the strongest one? Brendan said “I cool brother” and Oliver said “I going to win the game”. Brendan and Oliver start to fight. Brendan chooses Loser and Oliver chooses Loser. And it is 90 to 90. Brendan chooses Loser and Oliver chooses Smash and Oliver punches Brendan and it is 80 to 90. Brendan chooses Smash and Oliver chooses Special and Oliver does a special attack on Brendan and it is 35 to 100. Brendan chooses Special and Oliver Chooses Loser. And Brendan does a special attack on Oliver and it is 45 to 55. Brendan chooses Strike and Oliver chooses Smash. And Oliver kicks Brendan and it is 35 to 55. Brendan chooses Loser and Oliver chooses Defend. And it is 35 to 60. Brendan chooses Swipe and Oliver chooses Smash. Brendan punches Oliver and it is 35 to 50. Brendan chooses Special and Oliver chooses special and it is 65 to 80. Brendan chooses Loser and Oliver chooses Special. Oliver does a special attack on Brendan and it is 20 to 90. Brendan chooses Special and Oliver chooses Defend. And Oliver does a special attack on Brendan and it is 0 to 90. And Oliver wins. Oliver said “I am a step a closer to victory.

The fourth game is Collin vs. Jason. Ready. Set. Throw Down. 4, 3, 2, 1 who will be the strongest one? Collin said “You are going down” and Jason said “I going to squat you like a bug”. Collin and Jason start to fight. Collin chooses Loser and Jason chooses Special. Jason does a special attack on Collin and it is 55 to 110. Collin chooses Special and Jason chooses Defend. And it is 10 to 120. Collin chooses Special and Jason chooses Strike. Collin does a special attack on Jason and it is 20 to 75. Collin chooses Smash and Jason chooses Strike. Collin punches Jason and it is 20 to 75. Collin chooses Special and Jason chooses Special. And it is 50 to 105. Collin chooses Defend and Jason chooses Special. Collin does a special attack on Jason and it is 60 to 60.

Collin chooses Swipe and Jason chooses Defend. And it is 60 to 65. Collin chooses Strike and Jason chooses Smash. Jason punches Collin and it is 50 to 65. Collin chooses Special and Jason chooses Defend. Jason does a special attack on Collin. And it is 5 to 75. Collin chooses Defend and Jason chooses Special. Collin does special attack on Jason and it 15 to 30. Collin chooses Loser and Jason chooses Special. Jason special attack on Collin and it is 0 to 40. And Jason wins!

The fifth game is Matthew and Justin. Ready. Set. Throw Down. 4, 3, 2, 1 who will be the strongest one? Matthew and Justin start to fight. Matthew chooses Special and Justin chooses Defend. Justin does special attack on Matthew and it is 55 to 110. Matthew chooses Loser and Justin chooses Strike. Justin kicks Matthew and it is 45 to 110. Matthew chooses Special and Justin chooses Special and it is 75 to 145. Matthew chooses Strike and Justin chooses Loser. Matthew kicks Justin and it is 75 to 135. Matthew chooses Special and Justin chooses Defend. And it is 30 to 145. Matthew chooses Special and Justin chooses Strike. Matthew does special attack on Justin and it is 40 to 100. Matthew chooses Loser and Justin chooses Smash. Justin kicks Matthew and it is 30 to 100. Matthew chooses Special and Justin chooses Defend and it is 0 to 110. And Justin wins. Justin said “I cool man”.

Now we are on the second round and the first game is Max vs. Austin. Ready. Set. Throw Down. 4, 3, 2, 1 who will be the strongest one? Max and Austin start to fight. Max and Austin start to fight. Max chooses Defend and Austin chooses Special. Max does special attack on Austin and it is 110 to 55. Max chooses Loser and Austin chooses Defend. And it is 110 to 60. Max chooses Loser and Austin chooses Special. Austin does special attack on Max and it is 65 to 70. Max chooses Loser and Austin chooses

Swipe. Austin kicks Max and it is 55 to 70. Max chooses Loser and Austin chooses Special. Austin does special attack on Max and it is 10 to 80. Max chooses Special and Austin chooses Defend. Austin does special attack on Max and it is 0 to 90. And Austin wins.

The second game is Austin vs. Oliver. Ready. Set. Throw Down. 4, 3, 2, 1 who will be the strongest one? Austin and Oliver start to fight. Austin chooses Loser and Oliver chooses Special. Oliver does special attack on Austin and it is 55 to 110. Austin chooses loser. Oliver chooses Loser and it is 45 to 100. Austin chooses Smash and Oliver chooses Defend. Austin kicks Oliver and it is 45 to 90. Austin chooses Loser and Oliver chooses Smash. Oliver kicks Oliver and it is 35 to 90. Austin chooses Special and Oliver chooses Special and it is 65 to 120. Austin chooses Strike and Oliver chooses Loser. Austin kicks Oliver and it is 65 to 110. Austin chooses Special and Oliver chooses Defend. Oliver does special attack on Austin and it is 20 to 120. Austin chooses Loser and Oliver chooses Loser and it is 10 to 110. Austin chooses Special and Oliver chooses Strike. Austin does special attack on Austin and it is 20 to 65. Austin chooses Loser and Oliver chooses Special. Oliver does special attack on Austin and it is 0 to 75. And Oliver wins!

The third game is Jason vs. Justin. Ready. Set. Throw Down. 4, 3, 2, 1 who will be the strongest one? Jason and Jason start to fight. Jason chooses Loser and Justin chooses Loser and it is 90 to 90. Jason chooses Defend and Justin chooses Special. Jason does special attack on Justin and it is 100 to 45. Jason chooses Special and Justin chooses Defend. Justin does special attack on Jason and it is 55 to 55. Jason chooses Loser and Justin chooses Loser and it is 45 to 45. Jason chooses Special and Justin chooses Strike. Justin does special attack on

Jason and it is 45 to 0. And Jason wins!

The last round and the first game is Oliver vs. Jason. Ready. Set. Throw Down. 4, 3, 2, 1 who will be the strongest one? Oliver and Jason start to fight. Jason chooses Loser and Jason chooses Strike. Jason kicks Oliver and it is 90 to 100. Oliver chooses Smash and Jason chooses Smash. And it is 100 to 110. Oliver chooses Special and Jason chooses Swipe. Oliver does a Special attack on Jason and it is 110 to 65. Oliver chooses Loser and Jason chooses Strike. Jason kicks Oliver and it is 100 to 65. Oliver chooses Strike and Jason chooses Special. Jason does a special attack on Oliver and it is 55 to 75. Oliver chooses Swipe and Jason chooses Smash. Oliver punches Jason and it is 55 to 65. Oliver chooses Special and Jason chooses Loser. Oliver does a special attack on Jason and it is 65 to 20. Oliver chooses Special and Jason chooses Defend. Jason does a special attack on Oliver and it is 20 to 30. Oliver chooses Loser and Jason chooses Loser and it is 10 to 20. Oliver chooses Special and Jason chooses Loser. Oliver does a special attack on Jason and it is 20 to 0. And Oliver wins!

The championship round is Oliver vs. Robot360. Ready. Set. Throw Down. 4, 3, 2, 1 who will be the strongest one? Oliver and Robot360 start to fight. Oliver chooses Special and Robot360 chooses Defend. Robot360 does a special attack on Oliver and it is 55 to 110. Oliver chooses Swipe and Robot360 chooses Strike. Robot360 punches Oliver and it is 45 to 110. Oliver chooses Special and Robot360 chooses Loser. Oliver does a special attack on Robot360 and it is 55 to 65. Oliver chooses Special and Robot360 chooses Special and it is 85 to 95. Oliver chooses Defend and Robot360 chooses Special. Oliver does a special attack on Robot360 and it is 95 to 40. Oliver chooses Loser and Robot360 chooses Loser and it is 85 to 30. Oliver chooses

Special and Robot360 chooses Strike. Oliver does a special attack on Robot360 and it is 95 to 0. And Oliver wins the Championship and we go to our world. We all say "Hooray, and we are going back to our world".

We are at the SuperBowl and it is The New York Giants vs. The New England Patriots. The 1<sup>st</sup> quarter has start and it is 15:00 minutes on the clock. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 12:58 seconds the New York Giants scored a Field Goal and it is 3 to 0. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 11:01 seconds the New York Giants scored a Touchdown and it is 10 to 0. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 8:24 the New England Patriots scored a field goal and it is 10 to 3. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 3:57 seconds the New York Giants scored a Touchdown and it is 17 to 3. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 2:02 the New England Patriots scored a touchdown and it is 17 to 10. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 1:25 the New England Patriots scored a Field Goal and it is 17 to 13. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 0:00 the New England Patriots scored a touchdown and it is 17 to 20. The End of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter the Patriots are winning 20 to 17.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter has start and it is 15:00 minutes on the clock. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 10:50 seconds the New York Giants scored a Touchdown and it is 24 to 20. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 9:45 seconds the New England Patriots scored a Field Goal and it is 24 to 23. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 6:34 seconds the New York Giants scored a touchdown and it is 31 to 23. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 2:45 seconds the New England Patriots scored a Touchdown and it is 31 to 30. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 1:30 seconds the New York Giants scored a touchdown and it is 38 to 30. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter with 0:00 seconds the New England Patriots scored a Field Goal and it is 38 to 33. The End of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter the Giants are winning 38 to 33. We all said

"Let's Go Patriots".

The 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter has start and it is 15:00 minutes on the clock. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter with 13:50 seconds the New York Giants scored a Field Goal and it is 41 to 33. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter with 10:23 seconds the New York Patriots scored a Touchdown and it is 41 to 40. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter with 8:56 seconds the New England Patriots scored a Field Goal and it is 41 to 43. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter with 4:32 seconds the New York Giants scored a Touchdown and it is 48 to 43. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter with 0:23 seconds the New England Patriots scored a Touchdown and it is 48 to 50. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter with 0:00 seconds the New York Giants scored a Field Goal and it is 51 to 50. The End of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter the Giants are winning 51 to 50.

The 4<sup>th</sup> quarter has start and it is 15:00 minutes on the clock. In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter with 10:45 the New England Patriots scored 51 to 57. In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter with 7:15 seconds the New England Patriots scored a Touchdown and it is 51 to 64. In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter with 3:09 seconds the New York Giants scored a Touchdown and it is 57 to 64. In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter with 0:30 seconds the New York Giants scored a Touchdown and it is 64 to 64. In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter with 0:00 seconds the New England Patriots scored a Field Goal and it is 64 to 67. The End of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter the Patriots won 67 to 64. We all said "Hooray, for the Patriots".

Now we go home. My dad said "Did we have an awesome time. We all said in our manly voice "That are cool". Then we took everyone home first we drop off Jason, Max, Jeremy, Austin, Brendan, Oliver, Collin, Jason, Collin, and Matthew. My dad said "Did I have a great time besides the secret universe we went in. I said "That was the coolest thing I did in my life."

# Blood Haven

---

*With a little help from an unearthly power, two brothers will try to rescue their kidnapped parents in **BLOOD HAVEN** by Jacob Minor.*

I dedicate this story to my family for all the help and inspiration they gave me by correcting my spelling errors and punctuation, and especially my two baby sisters, Kira and Abby, for cheering me up whenever I was sad.

**Y**aaawn. Max groaned. “Is it morning?” Max asked in confusion. “Iggie, are you there? Are you going to answer me?” He looked over to see Iggie on the computer. “Why are you on the computer?”

Iggie was the type of person that doesn’t like to talk a lot. “Do you ever stop talking?” Iggie said. Max looked at Iggie in a funny yet weird way. “OK,” sighed Iggie. “Just go back to sleep. It’s still two in the morning.”

“Good idea!” *KSHHH!* they heard from the living room. “What was that?” Max screamed in terror.

“Who do I look like, Merlin the Great Wizard?” They dashed down the stairs and stopped dead in their tracks to see a disappointing view.

The walls were ruined with holes and dents in them. The furniture was all over the place. They looked toward the door to see the windows shattered. Then they saw the door, which was lying sadly, almost falling off its hinges.

“Our house is ruined!” mumbled Max, afraid that people might still be in the house. “Do you think they’re still in the house waiting for a good time to strike when our guard is down?”

“I don’t know, but if they are, we better get prepared.” They ran up the stairs and into their room to find anything useful to protect them. Max just threw on a baseball helmet and a heavy leather coat with two pairs of socks and grabbed a metal golf

club.

Iggie, on the other hand, customized. He put on an army helmet and bulletproof vest and put his favorite jacket over that for good luck. He also put on some long baggy pants with heavy black boots. For a weapon he had a metal baseball bat.

They thought they were ready for battle. They both ran down the stairs. Iggie signaled Max to go down the basement stairs. “But I’m only twelve! I’m too young to die!”

“Hey, I’m twelve, too!” shouted Iggie. “That doesn’t prove any...”

“Just go!” said Iggie, cutting off Max.

Iggie went into their parents’ bedroom salvaging any money or jewelry to sell. Their parents had everything. The bedroom was a wreck. Their bed was almost hitting the ceiling, and a see-through container, filled with jewelry, was still there. Yet Iggie noticed that it was a few pieces short. Iggie stuffed what was left in his coat pocket while Max went downstairs, almost ready to wet his pants.

“Anyone there?” Max said.

The smelly basement had large bookshelves surrounding him. Old books and recipes and bottles packed the shelves. The basement only had two support beams that looked like they were about to fall to the ground and crush Max. “I’ve never seen what was in the basement before.”

*Boom!* A pan fell off a bookshelf. “Who’s there!” Max ran up the stairs as

fast as he could. He found Iggie staring at a painting. The picture was of two boys. One was holding a sword, and the other was holding a bow. "Hey, they look sort of like us."

"Yeah, they do!" said Iggie. "There is a graveyard in the picture. I wonder what that is about." They heard a knock at the door. Max ran to the window and looked through the window but didn't see anyone.

"No one is there. Maybe someone just tried to ding-dong-ditch us. Let's forget about the whole thing and go back up stairs and play our video games!"

Iggie ignored Max and opened the door. He saw an envelope nailed to the door by a dagger. "It's a ransom note!" Iggie shouted "It says 'We'll give them back for the sword called Al'actiaon. Till then they'll be held in our base.'"

"Wow, they're some bad thieves. They told us where they're keeping them!"

"But they didn't tell where the base is."

"We have to find them! No matter what it takes, I'm going to get them back!"

"Calm down, bro!" said Max. "We have to take it step by step! OK? Are you with me?"

"Yeah!" shouted Iggie. "I'll get them back no matter how long or how hard it is! Nothing will stop us from reaching them and bringing them home!"

"First we have to start out by finding them, and then we have to get jobs to get money. With the money we can buy maps, and maybe even a car!" said Max, getting excited.

"That will take too long. We don't have time for that!" said Iggie with anger. "Let's just sell the jewelry that we still have. You know. The things that didn't get stolen."

"What jewelry?" asked Max, having no idea what his brother was talking about. "Where did you get it?"

"I took it from what was left in Mom and Dad's jewelry box," said Iggie. "I figured it was better off with me than those crooks. We can sell it and get the things we need to get Mom and Dad back."

"OK, I got it," said Max. "I know a guy who might give us a fair price for it. One of Dad's friends. Mr. Pinque, down on Chester Street. Let's go!"

Iggie and Max finally get to their friend's store called SoulGems.

"We're finally here, after walking seven miles," said Max in relief. Iggie and Max walked into the shop.

"Welcome in boys, how may I help you on this fine day?" said Mr. Pinque.

"How much will you give us for this necklace?" asked Iggie. Mr. Pinque studied the necklace for a moment, and then looked back at the kids.

"Come in the back room with me, guys. I want to get a closer look at this with my microscope," said Mr. Pinque with a strange look on his face. The boys followed him into the back room, excited that they might get paid a lot of money.

"Where did you guys find this necklace?" asked Mr. Pinque in surprise "This belongs to your father, and he would never let it out of his sight. Has something happened to him?" ask Mr. Pinque.

The boys looked at each other and nodded. "Our parents were kidnapped," said Iggie and Max. They told Mr. Pinque everything that had happened.

"Your dad told me this might happen sometime," said Mr. Pinque. Max and Iggie stared at Mr. Pinque with their mouths open. "This necklace is the key to a legend, a legend called Al'actiaon. I'm glad you kids came to me before running off to do something stupid.

"You see, your mother and father are

the guardians of these legends. Your father was the keeper of the sword called Al'actiaon, and your mother was the keeper of the bow named Al'acquerion. Your mom and dad would fight together against the forces of evil. This force is named 'The Black Abyss.' These weapons are talismans: magic-infused weapons that could destroy the agents of the Black Abyss and prevent them from entering human world."

"So you're saying our parents are guardians of the most powerful weapons known to man?" asked Iggie.

"Yeah, pretty much," said Mr. Pinque.

"Wow!" said Max with his mouth open wide in amazement.

"Where can we find these weapons so we can stop the forces of the Black Abyss and get our parents back?" whispered Iggie so no one could hear him.

"Only the necklace can show you where the weapons are kept," said Mr. Pinque "Only your father and a member of his family can use this necklace. The necklace knows who the user is. You have to imagine the sword in your mind, and the necklace will show you the path to finding the sword."

"Fine. I was really hoping to kick their butts right now, though," said Max.

"Well, you guys are unprepared to fight the Black Abyss. Now go before you're too late!" said Mr. Pinque.

### Meanwhile, at the terrorist base...

"What are we going to do with the parents while the kids are off looking for the sword?" said one terrorist.

"I don't think they are coming to get them; it's taking them too long. I say we just kill them!" exclaimed another terrorist.

"No, we have to keep them alive for now. Or else the kids might find out the

sword and the bow have a special power. If they find out they will not give us the weapons. Have you guys ever thought of that?" said the leader of the terrorists.

"How will they find out the sword and bow has a power? And they're going to have to give the sword and the bow to us anyway, Boss. I mean, we took their parents, Boss. What if we took your parents and held them hostage?" said another terrorist.

"Tie up the parents in the chairs over there, and tie them tight. I don't want to hear a word from them! Or from you! They would find out because love activates the sword and the bow's power," said the lead terrorist. "Tell the scientists to hurry up and locate the sword and the bow, and get me some coffee...with some sugar and whipped cream," said the lead terrorist in anger.

### Back to Iggie and Max after two years of training in the sewers...

"We need supplies now. Let's go for a walk, ok? We need to discuss things," said Iggie. "Let's try to use the necklace." Iggie put on the necklace and thought about the sword and asked where to find it in his mind. All of a sudden a blue beam shot out of the necklace into the distance. The blue beam led them to an abandoned graveyard. "Whoa!" Iggie said. "It ends in this old grave."

The statue was a demon glaring straight ahead with its sharp pointy teeth. "Who dares disturb my grave!" said the stone.

"Who said that?" asked Max in terror.

"Me, the grave of Al'actiaon the great!" said the stone in a strong tone. "What are you little kids doing here," said the stone, "and why are you wearing the necklace of power!" asked the stone.

"We are here to find the sword

Al'actiaon to defeat the Black Abyss!" said Iggie.

"What! You don't look like the person for the job!" said the stone.

"Well, we are. We are the sons of the keepers of the sword named Al'actiaon and the bow named Al'acquerion!" said Iggie.

"Then where are they?" asked the stone.

"They got kidnapped by the Black Abyss," said Max. They explained what had happened.

"Hmm, I see. Well, to get your parents back you will need these powerful weapons," said the stone.

The demon called upon his magical powers, and the sword rose up from its grave. Iggie pulled it up into his hand, grasping it tight.

"Do you think this is the graveyard from the picture?" said Max, thinking of the creepy picture back at home in their parents' room.

"Maybe. I don't know. I didn't get a close look at it before," said Iggie. "Finally, the sword!" said Iggie with an evil grin, thinking of all the things he could do with a sword to the bad guys.

"What if it's cursed?" said Max, feeling a shiver run down his spine.

"It's not cursed, all right? It's just an ordinary sword. Ok?"

"Fine." Max sighed. "But how come every time you find something cool, it always ends up bad? If something goes wrong, don't come to me, because I don't want to be cursed!"

"Whatever, but I'm telling you, it's not cursed. It's just an ordinary sword. Wait, demon, what about the bow?"

"Oh, yes. Here it is." The demon called upon his powers again, and the bow rose out of the ground.

"Only if it's not cursed, then I'll use it,"

Max said looking the other way with his arms folded. "Wait, is it the Al'acquerion? I want to try it out!" shouted Max with inspiration from the picture back home.

Max took a shot with the bow at a wall. "It's perfect! I never knew bows were this fun to shoot with," exclaimed Max, full of excitement.

They went back home to look at the note again.

"Hey look on the back of the ransom note. There's a map that pinpoints a big building. I'm going to guess it is abandoned."

"Abandoned? I never thought I would have to go in a creepy place like that in my lifetime," Max said, frightened from the thought of an abandoned building.

"But hey, we're fourteen now, so we can take a lousy abandoned building," said Max.

"Let's go kick some bad guy butt and get our parents back!" said Max heroically, forgetting about the abandoned building.

Iggie and Max walked through the doors of a creepy old office with pillars holding up the inside of the building. The office was covered in spider webs. They walked up the stairs that went in a spiral. Then they found a computer sitting on an old desk with a soft leathery chair behind it.

"We need to figure out what was going on in this place. Maybe this computer will lead us to a clue," said Iggie, sitting down. He hacked into the computer, and a window popped up with a picture of his father.

"Is that Dad?" asked Max.

"Yeah! I think they have photos on every person they kidnapped!" exclaimed Iggie.

"I wonder what they did here to make it all, you know, messed up. It looks like

they had a fight,” said Max walking around the second floor.

“Did you hear that? I heard voices!” yelled Max.

“Let’s hide in the closet,” whispered Iggy.

The people’s voices they heard just got louder. The strangers entered the room. “Do you think we should hide the computers? I mean some teenagers come in and out of here wrecking our computers,” said a stranger.

“But we already made it look abandoned. Isn’t that good enough?” said another stranger. They continued their conversation in another room. Iggy and Max waited until they couldn’t hear the strangers’ voices.

“Ok, let’s get out of here before they get back,” said Max. They went down the stairs, but Iggy wanted to see what was making that noise under the stairs.

“Max, I found what was making the noise,” said Iggy.

“It looks like a... safe,” whispered Max.

“It looks like it has something in it still,” said Iggy.

“Ok, then grab it and let’s go now!” said Max, afraid the strangers might come back.

They ran out of the abandoned office, which actually wasn’t abandoned from what the strangers said.

They ran home and opened the piece of paper they found at the office.

“Is it a map?” asked Max.

“I think so,” replied Iggy.

“Can we follow it?” asked Max.

“I’m sure we can,” said Iggy.

The map from the abandoned office led them to what seemed to be a carnival. Iggy and Max entered a giant tent and saw that it was deserted.

They went to find out what made the noise when they entered a separate room

in the tent and found a control room. Iggy stepped forward to see cameras looking at a dark room with four people in it. It looked like two of them were tied up and the other two were just shadows walking about the room.

“Wait a second, that’s Mom and Dad! We have to find them!” yelled Max.

“But look, there are more room filled with some kind of moving robots or something.”

“So what? We need to get to Mom and Dad!” exclaimed Max.

“All right, calm down, but ok, let’s go!” yelled Iggy.

They ran into a small building and found a room with a small door. Somehow they managed to crawl through the door, but when they saw what was on the other side they thought that there was no way they were going to live.

On the other side was a shadow—a deadly shadow. The only thing they could see easily was a mask. On the mask was a long, creepy smile, and the eyes were squinted like he had found his prey and was about to sneak about and attack when least expected.

Next to the shadow was one wolf on each side. One wolf charged at Iggy, but the wolf was too fast. The wolves pinned Iggy to the floor as Max grabbed his bow and locked an arrow in place. The shot was a success. The lifeless body fell to the floor.

As the other wolf charged, Max pulled an arrow, but he trembled and missed. Then Max closed his eyes and prayed. He heard a yelp and opened his eyes to see a strange figure in front of him holding out a sword. Max’s sight was blurry, but when he could see, there was a stranger in front of him with a sword that was burning. The sword had gold inscription running along the center of the shiny blade, and the



jagged edges of the blade looked like it could gouge through anything.

Next up was the deadly ghost. The stranger charged up ahead as the ghost shifted left to right. Then suddenly the stranger gripped his sword hard and swung twice. The ghost shrieked and somehow teleported behind the stranger and pushed him into some supplies.

Iggie jumped into the air and swung his sword as hard as he could, but the ghost was too fast. The ghost turned around and grabbed Iggie's sword and punched Iggie in the chest, making him fly to the back of the room.

Max shot a blinding arrow. "Raaaaaa!" the ghost screamed.

The ghost ran with fear. "It ran through a wall. We won't be able to catch it," said the stranger, taking off his hood.

"You're a girl!" yelled Max.

"What did you expect?" said the stranger.

"What's your name, stranger?" asked Iggie.

"My name is Shawn. Why are you in my carnival anyway?" said Shawn.

"This is your carnival?" screamed Max.

"Yes," said Shawn.

"Then what's with all these bad robot circus freaks?" asked Iggie.

"They're inventions gone wrong. See, what happened was everyone was getting tired of the same acts over and over again, so we decided to do a trick no one in history has pulled off before. Then we figured out it was humanly impossible, so we made robots. I guess something made their program chips blow and sent the robots haywire," said Shawn.

"Anyway, can I join your group?" asked

Shawn.

"Sure," replied Max.

Iggie nodded. "OK. Let's go!" yelled Shawn.

They ran out of the tent and into a tiny tent to the far left in the circus. "This is the 'Secret Tent', as I call it. Stay here," said Shawn.

Iggie and Max waited outside the tent, and they heard a couple of noises. Iggie and Max looked at each other. Finally Shawn came out of the tent with a gun.

"Who wants one?" asked Shawn.

"I guess I will," stated Iggie.

Shawn threw the gun to Iggie.

"Ready to go?" asked Max.

"I've been ready," replied Iggie.

They headed off to a dark tent at the very back of the circus. There were no lights and no sounds and no signs or anything, just a dead silent, creepy place. The tent was black with white stripes. They entered the tent to see a view so horrifying.

Their parents were being held captive on a platform that looked like a target. In front of their parents were two really strong-looking people with evil grins across their faces. It wasn't the two strangers who scared them; it was the robots in front of them.

"Get them!" screamed the strangers.

"Charge!" yelled Shawn.

Iggie looked up. "Max, do you see that barrel of fire next to you?" said Iggie.

"Yeah, why?" asked Max.

The robots started to run towards Iggie and Max while Shawn was off rescuing.

*To Be Continued...*

# Bombs Away

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In **BOMBS AWAY** by *Connor Biondo*, a young man goes to war to fight a very personal battle.

It was around 10:25 p.m. in Lima, Peru and I was just finishing my chores when I heard a loud *BANG!* I looked out the window; the town was under attack - again! Diego Diablo was always attacking and pillaging the town.

My family ran to the basement. Soon the house caught fire. We tried to run but all of a sudden I was thrown from the house by a blast. As soon as I got up, I could see all the debris. I couldn't even think because of all the screaming and exploding.

I decided to take cover in a store but that didn't help. The store was leveled in a matter of minutes. Luckily I got out before the gas tanks blew up. It was every man, woman and child for themselves.

Finally, the bombing stopped, but then Diablo's men started to pillage the town injuring anyone in their way. It was complete disaster. No one stood a chance. Anyone who was brave enough to stand up to Diablo's men was taken hostage.

A grenade landed close to me and it blew me into the wall of my favorite store where I always went with my friends to buy cards, gum, candy, etc. The last thing I saw before fainting was Diablo walking by, surrounded by his men.

I woke up ten hours after the bombing. The city was in ruins. I looked and looked but after several hours I heard someone say to me, "Hey kid I knew your mom and dad. They were good people and I know this will be hard for you to understand but-"

"What do you mean you *knew* them?" I asked hoping for a good answer.

"Your family is dead." That was exactly what I didn't want to hear. I had no idea what to do. So I decided to head off into the forest, because there was nothing left for me here.

After packing, I thought over my plan a second time. I said goodbye to my roommates. After dark I slid out the window and started my journey. As I walked through the forest I remembered me and my dad and how we'd always go hunting and fishing in these woods when I was younger. I started to cry when I thought about my dad and the good times we had here.

As I walked through the forest, a large flash of light came beaming through the trees. As I caught my breath, a weird portal-like thing appeared. I'm pretty sure my heart skipped a beat. I read the writing at the top, which said, "Enter to Prove." I stuck my hand through and pulled it back; nothing happened to it. I tried it again; nothing. I finally decided to go through. When I stepped through I saw a flash; then, darkness. I heard a soft voice say, "Jose, Jose!" I opened my eyes to see creatures standing right above me. "Who or what are you?" I asked. "We are exiles of Diego Diablo." My jaw dropped in shock of those words. "H-how do you know Diablo?" I asked confusingly. "We do not have time to discuss, for now you must train."

"Train?" I said.

"For war."

"War?"

"Yes, war!"

So I trained and I trained. Oh yeah, I

trained. After two weeks, I was finally done training and ready for battle.

I rode into battle with the exiles at my side. My switchblade that my dad gave me was strapped to my leg. Everyone was nervous. Diablo's men outnumbered us and they had greater weapons. We did have the higher ground than them. We held the cliffs for more than two and a half days before retreating into our fort. Their numbers were cut in half. We were tired and hungry. The men were complaining and hardly awake. That night, I decided to surround Diablo and ambush him in the morning. At sun-up, we made our move throwing torches and explosives at their camp. Now they knew how I felt when Diablo was bombing Peru. The last words we heard from Diablo were, "There, are you happy? You've killed my men and burned my camp."

"Well, you killed my parents and burned my city," I said. Then Diablo disappeared and then a bomb went off. It blew me into a tree and knocked me out.

I woke up in a hospital. I had tons of shrapnel in my arms and legs. It was torture.

"Don't worry," the doctor said, "you'll live.

"Ugg," I said with pain.

"You experienced a large blow to the head," said the doctor.

"Ahhhh!" I was in too much pain to listen.

After around an hour of pain and torture, the doctors finally removed about a pound of shrapnel.

When I got out of the hospital I walked over to where my house once stood and thought, "It is finished, I am finally at peace."

## The Darkness

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*THE DARKNESS* by **Danny Hemay** tells the tale of two kids who must keep their wits about them if they are to survive the creatures of the darkness.

Once upon a time ago during a winter of 3481. There was a mother that was giving birth to twins. When suddenly, a white tailed wounded wolf jumped through the window and began bleeding on the newborn twins. The wolf began to lick the babies as if they were his own. Then the wolf escaped as the father entered the room.

Then 4 years passed. "Jay and May", is what their dad yelled on top of the roof. Jay and May ran to their father. They were so excited that they playfully jumped on him, which caused him to lose balance and fall off the roof. "Whoa! Wait or I'll fall" the father bellowed. Then mom came out and was

blown off the roof by terrace winds from the snowstorm. Jay and May run to the stairway as they jet their hearts are pumping like a rabbit. When they arrive outside they stair at their lifeless parents. "Man this is such a drag. My folks are dead" Jay calmly stated as he looked down at them wondering how he was going to survive.

"Why did dad have my new game in his left pocket now it's broken" Jay said annoyingly to his sister May.

"I just saw what happen that was a tragic accident while I call the ambulance you can go up stairs and play with Shano my son." said the millionaire.

“Sure” said Jay.

“By the way my name is Keno Hemay, owner of the Hemay manner” the tall man said next to the twins. “So where is Shano?” said Jay.

“Up stairs” said keno

Then the twins ran up stairs to see Shano who was staring out the window trying to remember what he ate for lunch. “Hay you must be...well I don’t know but you’re somebody,” said Shano. Then May told Shano what happened to their parents. “Wow, I can help you get them back just kill the dragon found in the darkness. You also have to rub dragon’s blood on your hands while saying the word encrypted on the sign. It is located on the outside of the portal and they will come back to life,” said Shano.

“Really” said Jay.

“Yes” said Shano.

“Let’s go guys,” said Jay.

“Wait let me call my friend Jalen. He can help us in battle.” said Shano. Then Shano scratched his head wondering what the number was. Abruptly Shano ran down stairs to the refrigerator. “Aha here it is” he grabbed the piece of paper and began dialing Jalen’s number.

“Ok” said Jalen

“Jalen” said Shano.

“Yes” said Jalen

“Go to the darkness portal” said Shano.

“Ok” said Jalen. Shano summoned a giant bird as they flew into the darkness. Before entering Jay and May memorized the words on the sign.

“Lets go,” said Shano

“Where are we” whispered Jay.

“We are at the edge of the darkness, if you talk to a creature, just run because it looks like we have to land.” said Shano. As they began to land the bird stopped because it was scared of the darkness.

“So you are saying we are on our own” said Jay.

“Yes,” said May.

“Ok” said Jay.

“Can we just find the layer and go home?” said Shano.

“Well Mr. I want to be the leader. Where do we go? Should we go through the Pain Castle or the Pain Kingdom?” suggested Jay.

“How about the Pain Meadows. Or the pain shut up you two before I leave you two here by yourselves.” yelled Shano. While they were babbling they did not realize that they had enemies.

*Meanwhile on the other side of the darkness...*

“Boss, can we just teleport to the twerps and destroy them.” said captain.

“Maybe if you could be quiet so we can tell the creator that we found the book of darkness,” said Dark Clone.

*Ring, ring, ring* went the Shano’s cell phone. Shano attempted to pick up the phone. As he got closer to the phone he began to sweat more and more all over his body until he was covered with sweat. When he got to the phone it finally stopped ringing and Shano was relieved. The gang kept going but little did they know that the caller was the creator. His plan was to teleported through the phone and eaten them alive. While at the Cave of Fear a creature was waiting for them to arrive. “Hey lets follow the way to the cave that had fire blowing out of it. Hey what cave is it called? Huh Shano huh” said Jay

“I don’t know this one I’ve never seen that one before. Maybe the sign says what it is called.” Said Shano.

*You must stay away or else.*

*This is the Cave of Fear.*

*Enter at your own risk.*

What does it mean ‘enter at your own

risk?” said Jay.

“If you die its your problem” said Shano.

“Well we won’t get there by standing around we should get going on our way and HAY look it’s a water stream” said May

“Hey, look it’s a person paddling on a boat,” said Jay

“Hi” said the person. “My name is April, can I help you through this river?”

“Sure, but I am a full fledged undine, I was just ranked the greatest kid undine before I when left planet Aqua. So can I paddle? Wait a minute, is that you pigtails?” asked Jay

“Stop calling me that” said April. As Jay paddled while everybody was telling tales of there past for many hours.

Then April pulled out her cell phone and told her friends to go to the Hemay mannor.

“Here’s the Cave of Fear. I’m about to go to the surface world and go to the Hemay mannor,” said April

“Bye bye”. As they kept going they felt bored and went around the cave and the league layer was right before them.

Shano knocked on the door. “Who is it?” shouts a man on the other side of the door.

“Shano”

“Is that you Shano? Welcome back”. Then Shano acted like he was drunk to fit in with the crowd. As the man let the gang in it was a feeding frenzy. Then Jalen called April. “April can you hear me”

“Yes” she replied

“Good, we are about to start an army are you coming”

“Of course but I have to take my friends too. Is that ok?”

“Alright, lets do this and maybe we can really win this battle.”

A strange man was offering guards for

\$200. “I buy 2 dozen,” said Jalen. Suddenly the bird came back and Shano, May, Jalen, and Jay got on traveled through the air towards the cave.

Then they kept moving; the team saw the first dragon “Ah it’s the dragon! Run for your life” screamed Jalen. “No don’t you dare burn a single hair on their heads or I will destroy you” threatened May. Jay had a long tail growing from his spine and a pack of wolves joined in. They all ganged up on the dragon and Jay grew claws and sharp teeth. Once the dragon was down they stopped and Jay looked like a fully-grown wolf from head to toe. After that, May filled a bottle with the dragon’s blood. Suddenly, Jay formed back into a human. “What happen?” asked Jay for he did not know that he turned into a wolf. Afterward, Jay fell asleep. Then May yawned and fell asleep too. “Why did he fall asleep this time there is no reason that he could have fallen asleep twice” said Jalen. Then the team realized that they had a showdown on the surface world. The team woke Jay and May and teleported to the surface. “You” said Shano.

“Yes. Me. I thought I killed all the x’s. Shano you were an x. (An x is a super human that has a special gifts or powers. There were only 6 of them and 5 were killed and one ran away in the great mission 196.)

“Let us fight but in time” said Rai.

“What do you mean?” said Shano x.

“Time sprint,” said Rai.

“What the heck is going on? The world is falling apart I have to get out of here or I will be crushed. Wait a minute we are going back in time so be ready to run” said Shano x.

“Run from what?” said Jay.

“Dinosaurs will eat you alive,” said Shano x.

“Ok. Speed dash. Ha. Amnegal” said Jay.

Then lightning began to form in his hand.

“What’s happening?” said the creator.

“I have a spirit move that takes a lot of inner power and I just hate to waste but for you it is worth it,” said Jay.

“Not if I have anything to say about It.,” said the Creator.

“No don’t do it or it will rip through time,” said Shano X.

“Its too late” Jay and the creator both said.

Then a giant exploitation was started the apocalypse (the end of the world). Jay was knocked out. Then the creator rose from the ground.

At that moment, the creator rips the dragon’s blood off of Jay’s neck.

Afterwards, a giant wolf appeared and set everything on fire. Yet, before setting everything a blaze the wolf gobbled up the

creator it was a meal at thanksgiving. The second dragon was yanked like a chow toy by the wolf. Captain was splattered similar to a bug begin killed by a fly swatter and dark clone was defeated as well.

Shano teleported the twins back to their parents who were still lying on the street. Then Jay and May looked at each other and ran to their parent’s. They spread the blood of the dragon on their hands and they both said the words from the sign read “Ise-ni-son-yon-go-roku-nana-hachi-Q-ju”. All of a sudden, their parents’ raised from the ground and a force pushed them down. “What have you two been doing?” they both said. The twins ran to them and explained their adventure but their parents didn’t believe them. Just then Shano waved by the Hemay Mannor and smiled as the twins drove off in the distance.

## Dreams

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*“May all your dreams come true” sounds like good wishes, but it is considered by some to be a curse. In **DREAMS** by E. Jason Cribbs, Max might agree.*

I dedicate this story to my supporters and fans and parent’s and dog for all the support and help on this book.

**H**i, my name is Max. To the average person, I might seem like a regular kid, but I’m not. Ever since I was a little kid I’ve had a problem. Every time I go to sleep I have a dream. When I awake the next day, my dreams come true. Sometimes it’s only a little annoying. But one day everything seemed to change for the worse.

When I arrived at school, the first person I ran into was my best friend, Ronald. We’ve been friends since we met in Kindergarten. Ronald is a tall skinny kid, with short hair. Ronald is one of those kids that are always getting into trouble. He has a detention every week.

“Hi Max,” said Ronald, “wasn’t last night homework easy?” Ronald didn’t always get good grades. But I must admit he has been trying hard lately.

“Yeah.” I said, trying to encourage this new makeover of Ronald’s.

Our first hour class was math. Every Tuesday morning Miss Daisy writes notes on the board. I pulled out my favorite pen to take notes for tomorrow’s test. The next thing that happened, I will never forget. A monster came crashing through the door. The monster was big, green, and hairy. It must have stood 8 feet tall.

Everyone in the class was afraid. Even

Miss Daisy screamed. All my classmates gathered in the corner trying to get away from this scary monster. Orange goo came out of the monster's mouth.

For some reason, I already knew what to do. Right then, my pen changed into a sword. My clothes changed into armor.

Immediately the scene around me changed. We were no longer in a classroom at school. Instead we were in a large stadium. Everybody was now seated in stands. I was on a horse charging towards the monster at lightning speed. Before I crashed into the monster, I jumped off my horse. Then I tasted the sweet taste of my classroom-polished floor. Everybody was laughing at me. It was only one of my fantasies.

Ronald tried to make me feel better, by telling me that it wasn't that bad. But I know, everybody still thinks I'm a freak because of my little outbursts. "Don't you think it's weird I always go off into fantasy world every day" I asked Ronald. "Yeah, it is," he replied.

My dreams are not so bad when I'm on a date with a superstar. But when I wake up, I'm not kissing a beautiful model; I'm kissing the back of a chair. I'm sure you don't want to here my whining but trust me its going to get worse. I was sitting at the kitchen table studying and praying I don't have an outburst. When I got on the bus to school next morning I was scared because the dream I had last night was not a good one.

Today's the big test and I'm praying that I don't have an outburst. And of course I do. When we are taking the test I see a car flash like I was in a car race. I heard engines roaring. I was in the middle of a car race.

There were loud screams because they heard the announcer shout, "SUPER MAX IS LEADING EVERY BODY IN THIS RACE THIS IS THE RACE FOR ALL

THE MARBLES." Here we go again, I'm Speed Racer. The Announcer said, "HERE COMES SPEED RACER." I crashed. Oh this one's new I'm on Miss Daisy's desk. If you guessed detention, you were wrong. Suspension. My parents weren't too mad. This kind of stuff happens to me a lot.

My parents want this to stop happening to me. So they hired some guy to "hippo" me, I mean hypnotize me. He ended up making me go to sleep which was a bad thing. I had a dream not a normal dream but a crazy dream. I was a chicken.

That's new I am chicken the last thing I want to be is a chicken. Well first of all I would be called a chicken. Plus I will be eaten. Hey who put the lights out? Where am I? You're on the planet Uranus. What's happening to me all they said that this was all going to end? "Space ball is about to begin" Jason Cribbs is up to bat. I saw creeping in the night. What the heck I am in a McDonald's Commercial.

"Why can't you share you nuggets with me?" "I'm waiting come on get me out of here." "Fine I'll get out of here myself." "Hey it's Hancock." "What my name is max." "Hey are you ok with the recent buildings being torn down because of you recent so called heroic acts." "You have cost this city millions of dollars." "I'm just one kid ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh. I can't take this anymore." *Boom.* "Wow I can fly. Back to New York."

*Whamp Whamp Wahhhhhhhhhhh.* "Welcome to the land of Milk And Cookies. I'm Lavagirl and this Sharkboy." "What's up?" "And this is max." "Hey my name is max too." "Hi." "We were just on our way to retrieve peace to Planet Drool." "To defeat Mr. Electric. Would you like to help?" "No I will probably be gone in 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. Bye." "Your still here. And

were going to keep it that way trying to sneak of Planet Drool. Well it's not going to happen." "Now this is my cookie." "Wait don't take are boat." Plop. "Hey I left from the land of milk and cookies." "And you brought us with you."

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh. What happened this doesn't happen often."

"Often so it's happened before so you know how to get us out."

"Yeah by flight."

"Yeah I can't touch you I will burn you."

"Ohhh."

"So how do we get out of here?"

"If I could just remember what happened. I think I have to change back to where we were.

Weweeeeeeeeeeeeerrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr.

Ahhh

"Plop ok that can get annoying."

"Tell me about it."

"Now that you're in my lair dance."

"Were back because that has to be Mr. Electric." "Yes it is me Mr. Electric. And now it's time for your funeral." "Oh no."

"Hubba buba max." "What the heck. I didn't feel anything this time hay there gone. I wish this would all end."

"You have two wishes left. What will it be?"

"What happened to the one I just said?"

"What was it?"

"To get out of here."

"You only have one wish left."

"You're evil. Hey kid think of something that you know that you can wish for."

"I wish for a mountain of ice cream."

"One mountain of ice cream coming u..."

"Hey were am I?"

"I want it all I want it I I want it alllllllllllllllllllll."

"Nooooooooooo not High School Musical. Wow look at the stage manager.

She is fiiiiiine. I think I'm going to ask her on a date. Why am I talking to myself? That was way too quick I didn't get to even ask her out. Stupid brain. Can't you give me some time?"

"You were going to ask me out." "Hey when did you get here?"

"Really I don't know."

"Yeah duh. You are super hot."

"Thanks' so were we now."

"I want you to shoot the target."

"Oh this is a good one were in Wanted."

"Hey that's good high school musical is right next door."

"Well is this your goodbye."

"Yep bye."

"Oh he's back."

And that was it I was sitting in the office felling like I had been in the ocean for day. I couldn't put my thumb on it but I had a felling this was not over.

"Would you like to play again?" "I had a felling he was going to say that."

"Hiiiiiiiiiiiyah."

"What the heck."

"You are safe now but now it time for us to fight."

Hoooooooooooahhhhhhhhh.

"Ok I'm not going to owe did you just slap me oh it's on."

"Bring it fat burger."

"What did you say?"

"You heard me." Three hour later.

"Ok let's take a break I've got a cramp." Boom.

"What was that?"

"My name is Mr. Poopy." "Hahahahahahahahaha oh god that is hilarious. Okay what is your real name?"

"That is my real name. Why you got a problem with it."

"No it's just funny."

"Oh okay. Just for that let's fight for no apparent reason." Boom bam was the only



sound you could hear.

“Your moves are quick but not as mine.”

“Your mouth is big so uh I got nothing else so let’s fight more.”

“Kapow super fly.”

“Bam eye of the tiger. “Nooooooooooooo the crouching tiger. Oh yeah. Slow-mo yyyeeeahh hhhheerrreee wwweee gggooo.”

“POW bam oh ah ouch that hurt your foots in my eye.”

“Well then take it out.”

“You’re mean. I know.” Three hour later.

“Finally the fight is over we are finally safe”. “Everything is over. I can live life without worrying about having an outburst.”

“Oh no the tiger is lost at the school”.

“This is not a drill.”

“Where is super max when you need him.”

“Is it a bird is it a plane no its super max”.

“Hello people I am here to save the day”.

“Can you help us find the tiger”?

“No problem”.

“The job will be done  
ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.”

Where am I?”

“Welcome to the game show that never ends?”

“Perfect. I thought I would not have dreams again.” “So are you going to use a lifeline or answer the question?”

“Could you repeat the question?” “Yes. How is the main star on Hannah Montana?”

“Oh that is easy. Emily Osment. Noooooooooooooooo. Wow where am I.”

“Get off my front lawn.” “Finally I am back at home on Wall Street! That’s not right. Where am I live in studio city? I am really far from where I live how I am going to get there. Oh yeah I can fly.” *Boom* of I go I hope I don’t fall asleep. Then it’s all downhill from there. *Bam* oh no their shooting at me. Plasma ray attack. *Kapow*. Whew that took care of them. *Boom* finally I am home. Everything that ever happened to me is over now that I know that I can control my dreams. This is all over so bye. *Boom*. That sound could be the last sound I would have heard. For it was only Mr. Poopy.

## The Fairy Tree

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*In THE FAIRY TREE by Brendan O’Leary, a boy’s eyes are opened to a secret world that swirls around his Irish home.*

I DEDICATE THIS STORY TO JOSEPH AND JUDY O’LEARY (MY GRANDPARENTS).

“I don’t want to rake the leaves!” yelled Brendan at his Da.

“I’ve already been outside for two hours and I’m freezing my arse off!”

Brendan O’Leary was a helpful Irish son, but even he had his limits. Brendan lived with his family in a small house near Dublin, Ireland. Raking the leaves was one

of his many chores around the house. Helping with the dinner dishes, feeding and walking the family dog, Banshee, and babysitting his little sister, Shannon, was among the others.

“Get out there now, son,” said Da calmly.

Brendan knew when his da meant

business, so he finished his hot chocolate and put on his jacket.

“C’mon Banshee, we’d best get this over with,” Brendan called to his furry friend.

The two went back outside to finish what they’d started earlier. As usual for the time of year in Ireland, it was raining. There was a light drizzle mixed with a chill in the air. Every now and then a nasty wind would pick up and wreck all the piles of leaves that he’d already raked.

“I’m never going to get this finished!” said Brendan to himself rather sadly.

“I don’t even have my costume ready for tonight.” It was Halloween and Brendan had plans to go out with his friends in a few hours.

Brendan was under the big oak tree in his back yard when all of a sudden Banshee started barking wildly.

“What is it, you crazy dog? There’s nothing there. What do you think you see?”

Brendan was looking at his dog and then at the tree. “Hush, Banshee!” Brendan was starting to get nervous. Banshee was a very protective animal and she clearly sensed something in the shadows.

“Who’s calling me?” Brendan thought he heard his name carried on the wind.

He felt a chill run down his back and the hairs stood up straight on his neck. He thought at first he was hearing things, but wait...there it was again.

“Brendan...Oh, Brendan...” It was a crackly, fiendish sort of voice, exactly the kind that would make the hair on your neck stick straight up.

There was a rustling in the bushes and Banshee was growling and tugging on something.

“Let me go! Let me go! I’ll turn you into a toad, you drooling ball of teeth and fur!”

It was the same wicked-sounding voice

that Brendan heard moments ago chanting his name.

Banshee, not willing to give up, managed to pull a small, deformed- looking goblin out of the bushes. “Leave off, you foolish beast!” exclaimed the hysterical creature.

“What in the name of St. Patrick is that?” squealed Brendan. The mysterious creature pushed at the dog and she released him. He scrambled to his feet and began to brush himself off.

Brendan could hear the goblin mumbling, “I don’t know why they sent me to do this; my specialty is riding around at night in the form of a black horse.”

“Oh my god!” exclaimed Brendan. “Are you a pooka? My mam’s told me of creatures like you roaming the countryside at night, tearing down fences and gates, scattering livestock in terror, and trampling crops. No fairy is more feared in Ireland than you!”

“Aye, that would be me on most Samhain nights. But you see the crop is in late and I was sent to pick up the ‘pooka’s share’ this year. My name is Collum; you must be Brendan. There are many others that show interest in your family,” he said as he picked the twigs and grass from his tunic.

“How do you know me or my family?” asked Brendan. He was surprisingly not afraid of the pooka, and it seemed as if he meant him no harm. Besides, he had Banshee, and clearly she made Collum nervous.

“How do we know you? Why, don’t you know that your house sits on the ley line? It’s only the main pathway for all the fairies in Ireland!”

Brendan’s eyes went wide hearing this information. His mother was always hearing strange noises in Shannon’s room and she insisted that she could hear marching whenever she went into the

cellar. No one else in the family could ever hear what she was hearing and his Uncle Shamus felt that she was going “daft in the heid.” Because of these noises that no one else could hear, she began to doubt herself. She was terrorized by them and often was taken ill and spent days at a time in bed. Brendan was left to look after his baby sister, Shannon.

“How did you get here?” asked Brendan.

“We of the fairy world are always traveling about, but the main gates are open on Samhain and passing through is so much easier tonight.” Collum replied matter-of-factly.

“You’ll want to be on guard tonight, my friend. Your baby, Shannon has been spotted by the fairy, Agnes,” warned Collum.

“How can I stop her?” Brendan was desperate to know. He wouldn’t let anything happen to his sister.

“You cannot stop her if she passes through the gates tonight. You will have to come with me to my world and catch her before she comes through. I must warn you, it won’t be easy. Many mortals have made it through, only to be left forever on the other side. Most stay willingly; the fairy world pleases most mortal souls.”

Brendan didn’t hesitate. “Take me with you!”

Collum looked at Brendan very seriously and said, “A few words of caution first. The only way out of the fairy world is to be called by someone who knows you. Do you still want to go with me?”

Brendan nodded his head yes. Banshee was now barking madly and circling the pooka.

“As you wish,” replied Collum. “Grab onto my sleeve, and I’ll pull you through. The dog must stay here.”

Brendan touched the coarse fabric of Collum’s tunic and at once was whooshed

through the hollow of the old oak. Although the trip lasted only seconds he felt as if he were on the edge of a great bottomless pit. His body felt weightless, as if it were dissolving around the edges. He knew that Collum was close, but he felt like his distance could not be measured. He could still hear Banshee barking, although the sound of her yelping was fading.

Suddenly Brendan was tumbling down a small hill. He hit the side of a small hut and came to a stop. Collum was there waiting for him.

“Well, you can’t just lie there like that. One of the wood sprites is sure to find ye and they’ll drag ye back to their tree for sure. Get up, Get up!” Collum was clearly growing impatient with Brendan and was beginning to have second thoughts about bringing him into this world.

“I cannot stay, I’ve me own chores to do. I don’t want any trouble with Agnes either. She is a beautiful fairy and has found that birth is a very difficult experience for her. Many of her children have died. Her newest child did survive, but it is a deformed creature.”

Brendan quickly scrambled to his feet, “You can’t just leave me here!” he cried. “At least tell me how to find Agnes!”

“She lives in this wee village. Listen for the wailing and that is sure to be her.” With that Collum had disappeared.

Brendan was alone, for some reason that didn’t scare him. He wasn’t tired or hungry, and he felt rather brave despite being in a strange land. He had heard that the fairy world was a wonderful place, but he had to remember that he was here for Shannon.

Brendan stepped away from the hut. It looked like no one was home so he began to look around. He looked in the window. All of his favorite foods were on the table and his mother’s sister, Colleen, was sitting

there smiling at him. Colleen had vanished years ago. No one knew what had happened to her, except of course his mother, Mary. She had always known that Colleen had gone to live with the fairies.

All of a sudden the hunger pangs hit him. "I wasn't hungry a minute ago," Brendan said to himself. He could feel a pull on him drawing him to the table and his Aunt Colleen. "This is how people get caught up here," thought Brendan. "I have to resist. I need to leave."

Brendan noticed a quiet road running by the house that led to the small village Collum told him about. He quickly got on the road and ran as fast as his feet would carry him.

He was there in a flash and immediately he heard the wailing. It was an awful sound, the sound of sadness and of loss. Brendan followed the moaning to a clearing in the village square. He came upon the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Her long wavy golden hair was sparkling in the sunshine. She was bent over a baby. Brendan couldn't tell if it was the baby or the fairy that was making all of the noise. She didn't notice him approaching her. Brendan was close enough to see the baby. It had puckered features with yellow paper-like skin, legs as thin as chicken bones, a crooked back, and a full set of teeth that Brendan couldn't help noticing because of all the howling and screeching going on.

Brendan gasped, "So this is the changeling. I have to get the changeling away from Agnes," said Brendan softly. "Maybe then she will forget about Shannon."

The baby, whose face looked like a monkey, continued to howl and screech. Brendan's mother had told him that changelings possess the power to work evil in a home and the only time they are happy is when some problem falls on the

household. No luck will come to a family in which there is a changeling because the creature drains away all the good fortune that would normally come to them.

Brendan watched the fairy, Agnes with her child. She was looking at the baby, but it didn't seem as if she was seeing him. She appeared to be thinking of something else, all the while staying close to her baby. The noise was almost unbearable. Brendan was not used to this kind of racket. Every noise in the square was blending in with this wailing, as if a great storm was sucking in all the other noise in the area and making one awful sound.

"I hear pipes," said Brendan, "but then again, I could be losing my mind."

Just then he saw a group of elf-like creatures, playing Irish pipes, walking toward a shop in the town square. They walked as though they were drunk. The little men were swaying to and fro, staggering, and bumping into each other. They each carried two leather pouches. There were about nine of them altogether, but Brendan couldn't keep count. They looked so much alike and the shifting of the group kept him quite confused. They played and marched into the shop. The sign above the place of business said "Fine Shoemakers of Fairyland." Another smaller sign hung just below it, "First Bank of Fairyland."

"Of course!" realized Brendan. "These men are leprechauns! They are known as tricksters and guardians of ancient treasure. Maybe they can help me."

With that, Brendan decided to follow the group into the shop. He approached one of them cautiously, being careful not to startle anyone in the group. He had heard they could disappear in an instant and they were very hard to find again.

"Excuse me, sir," said Brendan.

The leprechaun did not reply. He kept

playing his tune while walking through the door. Brendan followed him into the shop and down a flight of stairs into a meeting room. He decided to duck into a small closet so he wouldn't be noticed. The closet was full of supplies for the shoemakers. It had all kinds and sizes of hammers and nails for shoes. It smelled strongly of shoe polish and leather. He had a perfect view of the meeting room. A quick dart out of the closet and a dash up the stairs were his escape should he be found out.

At once the music stopped and all of the little men but two took a seat. One younger looking elf, Brendan decided to call Roddy, was looking very nervous. The others were glaring at him and were upset about something. The oldest leprechaun of the group, Brendan called Liam, must have been in charge. He was calling the meeting to order with a tap, tap, tap of his shoemaker's hammer. Roddy was missing one of his leather pouches on his belt and was fidgeting with his hands.

"The Gold Guardian Committee meeting will now begin," said Liam. "As you all know young Roddy has only been out of coin school for a few months now. His teacher had a great deal of confidence in him as far as traveling to the mortal world. Unfortunately for Roddy he was spotted this morning and asked for a fortune by a human. Now as you all know Roddy was supposed to give the mortal his magical silver shilling, which would have returned to his pouch when it was paid out. Instead Roddy gave away his gold coin, pouch and all. Our treasure has been depleted! When one of us loses our gold coin we all lose our fortune. Now we will have to start collecting money again from the mortals."

There was a great deal of talking and chatter among the committee members at

this. Roddy was clearly embarrassed. The tips of his ears were turning pink and his eyes were pointed toward his toes.

"Quiet, quiet! Roddy, do you have anything to say for yourself?" asked Liam.

"I am truly sorry, sir, and members of the committee. I have never been approached by a human before and I was scarit ou o me stokins!" exclaimed Roddy.

"The committee will have to put together a plan to start raiding the humans. You have been very clever in the past and it will be a lot of hard work, but I know we can do it. We start tonight!"

With a final tap of the hammer Liam ended the meeting. As the leprechauns began to break into groups to begin their plans Brendan decided to sneak up the stairs and out the door of the shop.

Brendan glanced down at his watch. Too much time had passed and he wasn't getting any closer to helping his sister. He only had 15 more minutes before he would need to leave for the hill and the entrance back to his world. "I have to hurry!" cried Brendan. "What am I going to do? Wait, first of all I have to calm down. Think! What would my mam do?" he said to himself.

Brendan was walking in circles, talking to himself. He snapped his fingers. Suddenly a fairy appeared before him.

"Who are you?" asked Brendan.

"It is of no matter, sir. I am here to help you. A mortal from your world has sent me to find you. She has been very worried since you disappeared," said the wispy, cloudy figure. "In order to keep your baby away from the fairy Agnes, you will have to make sure she will not be overly admired. For the fairies will be drawn to her. Also no fairy would dare enter the house of a minister. Your aunt and uncle's house will do. Keep her there until she grows a bit." Then she was gone.

Brendan ran for the hill and once again he was there in an instant.

“Brenndann...”

There it was again. He could hear her crying. The sobbing was getting closer. He could hear the desperation in her cries. She almost never came out of the house, let alone confronted her fears in the shadows of the big oak tree.

Brendan was coming out of his trance. He would have given anything to stay in the fairy world. His mother’s cries were pulling him to the surface though. There was a rush through his body and he began to think of Shannon. Did they get to her? Was that awful shriveled form left in her place? The fairy, Agnes, was desperate to find a mortal baby to take the place of her deformed offspring. He had to break through the barrier before the gates closed again for another year.

“Mam, are you there?” Brendan called out.

Brendan could feel her presence. He just needed for her to stop crying and listen. He put his hand through the hollow of the big old oak. He could feel the intense pressure bearing down on him. It wasn’t easy on his body to pass through the gates, but he had Collum, the pooka, as his guide before. His mother would have to pull him through. Brendan couldn’t do it alone.

“Brendan, is it you?” whispered his mother.

“It’s me! It’s me! Grab my hand and pull!” cried Brendan.

His mother hesitated. She had lost too many people to the fairies and didn’t trust that this was her son’s voice crying out to her. There were only a few more minutes

of darkness left. She had to act quickly if she were going to save her son.

The wind was picking up. It was as if the old oak was going to get swallowed up by the fairy mound. Its branches were cracking and snapping at Mary. She held her breath, crossed herself, and reached into the darkness of the tree’s hollow.

There it was, the warm hand of her son, reaching out to her.

“I’ve got you, Brendan! Stay with me, I won’t let you go!”

Mary pulled with all of her might and dragged Brendan through the gates of the fairy world. He looked thin and tired. He could barely stand on his own, but Brendan was home.

“Let’s go and find your da.”

“Wait!” screamed Brendan. “Where is Shannon? Did they get her?”

“Who, Brendan? Who would get your sister?” asked his mother.

“The fairies. They want her for their own,” replied Brendan.

“Don’t worry, son, when you turned up missing we sent your baby sister to your Aunt and Uncle. She is safe.”

Brendan and his mother went up to the house. It was so nice to feel her arms around him.

“You were right all along, Mam. You weren’t hearing things. I know that now,” said Brendan. She was always so fragile and ready to fall apart, but something had changed in her. She was stronger now, and she would need that strength soon. It was not going to be easy to get the house off the ley line. Brendan knew that much, and he also knew what the fairies were up to.

# The Four Queens

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*If they ever want to see home again, four girls must defeat their inner demons in **THE FOUR QUEENS** by *Laportia Atkins*.*

**I**t's a Monday morning, and Tietyonna and I were waiting for our bus. I was always late for my bus, so I called Zerionna she answered, "What?"

I said "What are you doing?"

"Nothing, waiting," she said.

"Are you, walking to my bus stop?"

She said "O—ok I am on my bus now" in like a sassy way. Me I supposed to be like the mean, sassy, sometimes nice sometimes bad sort of person. Some days I can be your worst nightmare, at lease that's what everyone else would say. But I know I am not always nice.

When, I got to school I saw my three best female friends. We always hung out, some days we got mad at each other and the next day we like the friends when no one could tell us anything. We might not have been popular, but we were going be one day. Everyone knew us well, like shack knew ball. So I was like the bossy person. Zerionna was the one who was always talking about people. Chelsy was the one who was the miss know-it-all. Yasmine was the one who got everyone out of trouble.

But when it came down to fashion that was my job. I always told Yas, Zz, and Chels, how they supposed to rock an outfit. Someone always looked crazy or something but that's ok. Zz told me she had a crush on this boy named Josh. He looked like a boy who rose from the dead. I was so sick, and I was mad at her. But hey what can I say she the one who like him. Not me.

When I saw Josh in the hall way at school. I had a little talk with him I said "My best friend likes you.

He said, "Who?"

I said "The light one over there."

He said "Zerionna?"

I said "yes"

"Ok I like her too"

I said, "OMG, OMG, and OMG. Are you serious?"

He said "yes".

I walked up to Zz and said "Guess what Josh wants to go out with you."

She said "what should I say, yes" I said "duhhhhhhhhhhh you would be the craziest girl ever if you don't...but please don't say no Zz don't say no."

So Chelsy walked over and said "o.k. did him really ask you out..."

So than Yasmine came over we were all like "ooooooooo Zz have a boy friend. We continued to repeat ourselves.

So later own that day I got really upset because, my homework was missing and my grades were dropping. I asked Zz, Yas, and Chels if they could come over to do homework and eat pizza together. They agreed and I replied, "Around 3:40 maybe they all said."

"Yeah sure" said chels, and Zz and yas

Fifth hour I got really distracted. Well, not only me we all were since Yas got her phone back, Zz got a boyfriend, Chels got her ears parsed and my grandma passed away. We haven't been the same.

So finally it was our last hour of school, Japanese! That's the best class ever. We had all our classes together and loved Japanese class. All we had to do was learn how to pronounce the words or letters. I am so happy I was in her class.

When, I walked up on Josh. I saw him

talking to another girl I walked up and said "Excuse me he have a girl."

He said "That's just my sister." I felt so stupid.

When, I got on my bus. I was the first person this time. I sat in the back of the bus, turned on my phone and, then I had checked my voicemails. I didn't get any, so then I called Zz, Zz called Yas, and Yas called Chels. We were all on the three way I said are you still coming over. They agreed. So when they came over we did our homework then we had a girl talk about our little things. When Zz told me how she felt about Josh I just wanted to kill her. So as she said "he is hot."

I said "Girl you are out your mind."

After she said that we decided to play hide and seek. Zz was counting like some 4 or 5 year old. She was always it. I never got caught because I had the best hiding spots in the house because. It was my house, after all. When we wanted to make some s'mores on the fire place I had to go out to the woods. Zz, Chels, Yas and I were scared but all we needed to do was go get wood. When they got into the deep woods they kept on hearing things but it was just them. They heard someone who said "Zz, Chels, Teity Yas" in a low, sneaky voice.

When the girls woke up, they were in this village that looked really familiar to Yas. She remembered it from one of her worst nightmares. When she looked around she said "I saw this place before"

Then Tietyonna said "Do you know where we are?"

"No I have never seen this place in my life". Said Tiety

"I have said Yas "Zerionna wake up now".

"Ok, ok I'm up, now are u happy and can you please stop shaking me"? Said Yas

"Chelsy, were did she go?" Asked Yas

"I'm right here she yelled I'm hungry lets look for some food". Said Chelsy

"Ok" we said

As my three best friends I and were looking for food. Zz came across a sign that said "DANGER THIS SIDE IS THE SIDE THAT WILL NOT MAKE IT ACROSS". But she just dropped it thinking that maybe it was just a joke.

"Hello, hello is there any one here" there any one here" said Yas

"Sh I heard something" said Yas

"Sp, sp, sp, over here" said this thing that looked like a half spider half pig.

The girls turned slowly as soon as we looked we was all wonder what is this. Are we dreaming? What's going on? Or better yet were in the world is this. We were all terrified of this half spider half pig.

"You can't be real" said Zz

The half spider and half pig said "well, I am you have come to save are village right?"

"No we did not come to save your village to be honest we have no idea why were here" we said as we approached to the half spider half pig.

"Well my name is fiber what's yours" he said

Zz said "my name is Zerionna but you can call me Zz. Her name is Tietyonna you can call her Tiety. This one is Yasmine you can call her Yas. That's Chelsy you can call her Chels.

"So now you know us let's get to know you". Do you have a family here?

"No, not any more they were all kid napped by the evil demons"

"What did the evil demons look like"? We said as we were walking to his hometown.

"They look just like you four. Said fiber

When we finely got to Fiber hometown we looked around and noticed. How the people/animals came out there homes and worked shipped us.



“What’s going on here” we asked

“My folks in the town have been waiting for you to arrive. And we are very happy that you came.”

“Why are they so happy that we came”?

“Were happy that you came, because you four is will be saving are hometown”.

“What? I’m not saving anyone I’m not your hero. I don’t look like do I have super powers, no I didn’t think so” said Zz

“Zz how can be so selfish I can’t believe you. These things is counting on us, they need us!” said Chelsy

“When have you ever cared about other people”?

“Well if you guys help, than I guess I will to”. Said Zz

So once the girls walked around with Fiber they saw a really beautiful house. Fiber got theme settled into the house the 100 feet high into the sky. There were 20 bed rooms, ten bathrooms, four kitchen, two living rooms and dining room. They thought to them self that this was the biggest house that they have ever seen in our life.

The girls did go shopping and got them some new clothes and shoes, and other supplies they needed to survive with.

*Ding dung!* What that *boom boom!* The girls ran up the stairs into the secret hiding spot.

“I want theme nappy headed girls found”. Said the four evil demons

“Our hair isn’t nappy, is it”?

“Well, yours is ours not. Said Chelsy

“Sh here they come”. Said Zz and Yas

We were all in the attic on the 6 floor. When they had opened up the door they looked around but, they could not find them. Once they left we out they spot and We said “O.M.G. they really want to capture us”

We were very afraid the girls and I were shaking.

“Did you see that”?

“Yeah I can’t believe we all saw them terrible things” said Chels

“Well, we need to find away to escape” said Yas

“How can we turn are backs on them they really need us.”

“Do you really think that I care about them or the people here” said Yas

So, we was all having a really big argument when suddenly

Yas said “what if we die “?

Don’t think like that as tears rolled down our face.

“We will not give up and you should never think like that”! Do you understand me your all ways giving up on something for once just? Please help us defeat the evil demons with out you maybe, we will not make it alive not only not them need you we do too. Cried Zz, chels, and Tiety

“Ok I will not give up.” said Yas

Once we made up, we all started practicing have we were going to defeat the evil demons.

“We really need to get some rest.” Said Zz

“What time is it.” said Tiety

“10:47.” said Chels

“Ok we really need to go to sleep” said Yas

As time went by Zz had a dream, It was about the girl were at the field and the four demons was defeating us until the girls. Did something that they thought was impossible. It had with something to do with our personality.

*Ring.*

As the alarm clock went off and we woken up and got dressed then we when down to the field.

“Where’s every one”?

“They never said that they were going to help.” Said Zz

The girl started to get very nervous

about everything. There knees was shaking and hand were swatting.

“Hello ladies are you ready?” said the demon

“O.M.G” said Tietyanna “did she just sass me? Tiety rolled her eyes at Zerionna “because she said if any one was going to die it should be Tiety”. When she said that I was so frustrated I wanted to cry but I sucked in. Like a big girl I’m 11 I’m not supposed to cry all the time any ways.

When we saw Zz I looked at her and said how you could say that. If we are best friends don’t you think we should act like it?

Zz said, “Yes we really do I hate the way we are.”

“What do you mean?” asked Chelsy

“I mean like the ways you talk behind our backs. Also how Yasmine brags about all her jewelry. Also, how Tietyonna you are so ready to beat the hack out some one if they say something you don’t like, and I know that I can be a little hard, curlew, mean some times”. Said Zz. Awe we’re all sorry the girls hooked arms.

It was about a two minutes hug Tiety would always say “Well beasties should never fight and if we do, we should make up.”

“Do you see that?” asked Chelsy. The demons looked just like Zz, Chels, Tiety, and Yasmine. “I can’t believe my eyes. One looks like me, you Zz and you, Chels. O.M.G, what a shock!”

“I know” said the four demons.

“I’ll give you five seconds to run,” said the demon.

“If we don’t what you go do you old wriggly, floating hair dead thing.” Said Tiety

“That’s the reasons why were here now because of your attitudes sassiness and backstabbing.” said the one that looks like Yasmine.

“If she drops all the weapon’s and stuff girl we gone get it on and popping’ and here”. Said Zz

“Come on girl” said the one that looks like Chelsy.

Chelsy said “do you want me to beat you down thingy”

The demon that looks like, Chelsy said “come on try me”.

Chelsy started to take off her jewelry she told me to hold it for her

I wasn’t holding anything I was to afraid. Until Zz and Yasmine said, “Wait stop, we know to defeat them”.

“How?” I asked.

“All we have to do is work together, if we do that then we will win this. We’ll be home in no time.

Then the dumb demon that looked liked Yasmine said, “At least they didn’t get the part about how all they really have to do is remember all they good times that they had together”.

Zz said “you are one stupid demon you know that.”

So when the girl closed there eyes and remembered all the good times like when they were at cedar point and they were riding the Magnum the girls stated to laugh. Also when the girls went to the Jonas brother, concert. How hard they were screaming.

Also, how on Chelsy birthday we made the boy of her dreams sing happy birthday to her, or when we had went ice skating Zz always fell and Yasmine, Chelsy, and Tiety had to teach her”

“NO!” said the demons.

When we opened our eyes we were back in the woods were we had begun in the first place.

The girls now knew that what’s inside is the part people judge you on.

# Girls

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*Not all monsters act like monsters. See for yourself in GIRLS, by Cherrad Cohen.*

**B**am! Did you break his nose? *Tap tap tap.* Look teacher run. Don't say a thing to the teacher nerd. Are you ok Carl? Did jimmy hit you again? Hummmm no. Don't cover for him. I'm not I promise. Well he is still going to the office. But he will hurt me.

Ha! I got it out of you. He will be suspended for 2 weeks. Pay attention. What are you looking? The hottest female in the school. You know my wife goes to this. She is a teacher. I known that but she has an odor.

*Beep!* The bus will leave in 30 seconds. Bye a got to go. *Vroom vroom.* Yes I made it. The bus opens the door smack. Look the blood.

I woke up. Where am I? This tall monster is 30 feet. I wanted to run but it felt like my feet where stuck. I was so scared. I am a monster from drool world I will not eat you. I dreamed of being a king of my world. But I haft to defeat the monster they garlicky. He is the most powerful monster in our world. Sorry for being rude. Who are you? I'm a nobody from earth.

I want to look hot for this girl. What's the girl name? Her name is Trish. She is hot and she hates me. Why. I'm a nerd. A hot girl like that does not like nerds. I want to change into a popular good-looking man. Good for you. What? All I can do is teach people how to be cool and have girls like them. Wow! Can you help me? I don't know. Please Please Please Please. O.k. first you haft to buy a new pare Jordan's. You haft to give me money. How much? Thirty a week. Thirty what a week? You know,

\$30 a week. What are you, crazy? That is so much money. How am I going to pay you? You could work for me. Ok deal. What do I do first? Well you could help me be king of my world. Ok, I'll help you, monster. Thank you.

I will not let them Help little monster be king. If they want to this crow they will haft to take it from my cold bloody hands. Let's start on making you a girl magnet. What's first? Carl the number 1 thing you haft to do is let's change your name. What? I love this name. But it's a nerd name. I'll change it brad. That'll do. The number two thing you haft to do is change your look. But I love my overalls. You look like a nerd.

Let's try baggie pants and cool shirts without a tie. Last but not lease you haft to change the way you talk to girls. What do you mean? Talk with a deeper voice and you got to take those glasses with tape around them. You're a true nerd. What was that? Ummm nothing. Are you in the zone? I'm in the zone. Who is going to win Trish's heart? I am. Who's going to help me be king? Not me. What! You said you were going to help.

I'll help you be king. Now it's my turn to be coach. First you will make weapons to fight with. Next you will learn to use them to fight. Lastly you will fight! I will not fail you master. I hope you won't but you win. Believe in yourself little monster.

What's that noise? I hear a rumbling sound. That's a warning. What are you talking about? You'll find out soon. First we have to travel to your world. Hold on. What? How did you get here? Time travel. You don't have to lie to me. I'm not lying.

Ok where's your is your time machine. It is right over there. Sorry for saying you were lying. It's not ok don't ever say I was lying.

Well now we are back at my world. Sorry for yelling at you. Whatever. It's louder in my world. *Rumble rumble rumble*. The fool will not get my crown I'm king and it will stay that way. It will be amazing that anybody will live when I release my pack of wolves. Well bye. What do you mean? I have to go home so I can see if your tricks worked.

Aren't you going to help be king? Ho yah that. Hold on. I hear animals. What kind of animals. It's a wolf. We are close to the castle so we need to hide. I saw them sniffing around s then boo.

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! Run, they are gaining on us! We ran into the castle as fast as we could. I saw the King Garlicky. Little monster pulled out his sword then garlicky pulled out his. Then I had to close my eyes. I did not want to see the rest. Four hours later. I opened my eyes. I was crying

because I was so happy the crown was on King little monsters head. Garlicky lay dead on the ground. Thank you. For what? You thought me to believe in myself and be yourself. *Bam* I woke up.

Now that I'm hot you like me. I changed for you too many times. I learned from chasing after that to be myself. Around girls you like and anyone else. You talked about me for a long time.

I started to talk to this other girls it was 1 girl that I liked out of all of the girls. Her name is Marla. I don't like to hold grudges. Do you want to come to my wedding? Yes. Sorry for talking about you Jake. It's okay we still can be friends. Well few years later I had two kids. Their names were Jr. and Hanna. Trish ended up to Marla's best friend.

I became a football player for the Lions. My wife is a teacher and my son goes to Michigan. My daughter is in Groves. Peace love and be you.

## Hello, My Name is Macy

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*In HELLO, MY NAME IS MACY by Shannon Wright, times are hard for 11-year-old Macy Milling. And that's before she starts hearing voices in her head.*

**“B** UZZZZ...IT-IS-TIME-TO-GET-UP....*Buzz, Buzz, Buzz...*”

“O.K. O.K. I heard you,” I thought as I shut off my loud, annoying alarm clock. I looked at the time. “7:50” I said sleepily as I stare at the clock. “7:50! Holy smokes, school starts in 10 minutes!” I jumped off my bed, yank my closet door open, slipped on some jeans threw a shirt over my head, rush down the stairs and scamper into the kitchen. Mom saw me and said “Boy, you’re in a hurry today.”

“Mom, do you see the time?” I yelled as I grab a “Kakos Energy Bar.”

“Yes I saw the time honey. I also see that you are in a hurry.”

“Aurrgg! I don’t have time for this. I’m going to be late!” I screamed as I rushed out the door.

“Bye honey!” Mom shouted to me.

I raced down the four blocks to get to school, but when I got there no one else is there. “Oh great I’m late again.” I said to myself, pausing to look around. “I wonder

why there are no cars in the parking lot,” I thought. I run up to the doors and try to yank them open. They won’t budge. “Great now I’m locked out.”

“Oh looked at poor little Macy locked out of school. Tsk, tsk, tsk, she doesn’t even know,” a taunting voice from behind me said. I whipped my head around. Jen, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade drama queen and major bully, and her gang (Kat, and Lucy) all stand snickering at me.

“Don’t know what?” I asked.

The girls laugh. “That’s for us to know and you to find out.” Kat spat me.

“Tell me! Please....” I plead in anticipation to great to spare.

“No” the girls all said in unison.

“Hey, why are you not in school?” I ask noticing that.

“Oh Macy you poor little thing,” Jen said fighting back giggles, “you don’t even know that it’s Saturday.” The gang all burst out laughing as they walked away. I could feel my face turning red.

I slowly walked back home. Mom greeted me.

“Hey Sugar Cubes why you were in such a hurry this morning?” She asked.

“I don’t want to talk about.” I said with a little more attitude than I should have used.

“Hey I’d watch your mouth missy,” Mom said. “Go get ready for lunch it should be ready soon.”

That’s my life for you. I’m a klutzy 6<sup>th</sup> grade girl by the name of Macy, always pushed around by kids who think their better than me. I ran up the stairs to go get ready.

The next day was as worst as the last one. I came downstairs, ate the same boring old breakfast, did my boring homework, called Emily (my only and best friend), read some books, went on the computer, got ready for bed and fell asleep.

Monday, the worst day of the week in my

opinion. The day when a new week of bullying starts. The day when the teachers are in a crabby mood. The day when homework is piled as tall as the Empire State Building. The day when the kids snooze school. The day when seventh- and eighth-graders tease the sixth-graders. The day when you feel alone no matter how many friends you have.

When I came down to breakfast mom was sitting at the table with a depressed looked on her face.

“Mom what’s wrong?” I asked her.

“Oh, Honey Buns, it’s Emily.” Mom said then bust out crying.

“What? What about Emily?” I ask worriedly.

“Macy, Emily’s not going to be coming to school anymore.” Mom told me wiping away her tears.

“What? Why?” I stammer.

“Macy dear, last night when Emily was coming home from ice skating practice, she and her father were both killed.” Mom choked out and then started crying again.

“What!” trying not to believe what I heard. “Emily, my best friend and only friend, is dead!”

Mom nodded her head and then said, “Yes she is gone forever. Her mother called this morning. I didn’t want to tell you right away.”

With that, I rush up the stairs, yank open my door, flop on my bed and start to cry. I cried so much that a whole lake could’ve formed. “Emily gone, forever. This is the worst thing that could have happened to me.” I thought as more tears start to burst out again. I wasn’t going to school today. I never want to go to go to school again. Emily was the only one who ever appreciated me for who I was. She was the only person who ever thought my jokes were funny. She was the only person who knew all my secrets. She was the only one

who cared (besides my family).

I thought my life would never be the same. Until it changed.

A week had passed after Emily's death. It was Monday.

"Macy breakfast is ready!" My mom called up the stairs.

"Ugg," I said as I open my eyes.

I looked at the clock. "I have time." I thought as I slowly creep out of bed.

After I get ready I walk down the stairs and slump into the kitchen.

"I made your favorite, scrambled eggs with butter on the top!"

"Okay." I said glumly.

"Okay? That's all I get? I spent a hour making these eggs just the right texture and using just the right amount of butter."

"No it's just that... well... school is..."

"What baby?"

"Mom I don't have any friends! And all the girls tease me, especially Jen and her gang.

"I can't believe that girl has any friends. Who would want to be friends with her?"

"Well apparently Lucy and Kat do.

"Honey the key to getting friends is to be yourself. Now eat up or you will miss the bus."

"Okay." I said as walk out the door.

"Oh looked. Macy got the right day, for once." Lucy said from behind me. Jen and Kat giggle. I turn around. I was just about to shout when another voice did it for me.

"Shut up Jen." We all turn around.

"Ugh, you." Jen looked at the girl with disgust.

"I said shut up!"

"Make me!" With that the girl threw a punch at Jen. Kat and Lucy backed away. Jen lifted her head. Blood was dripping from her nose. She looked at the girl with narrowed eyes.

"You are going to get it one day, Caddie

Kaconts." Jen said as Kat and Lucy guide her to her locker. "Both of you." She said looking at me.

"Good luck with that." Caddie called after her and then started laughing. She must have seen the shocked looked on my face because she stopped.

"Hey I would feel sorry for her if she wasn't such a pain."

I nodded my head in agreement.

"So what was she teasing you about anyway?" Caddie asked.

"Well I kind of went to school on a Saturday and Jen was there so..."

"Don't worry! Everyone does it once it their life."

"I guess."

"I just noticed that I don't know your name."

"Oh! Sorry. I'm Macy Milling. You probably know me as a dorky sixth-grader." Caddie started laughing. Then she looked at me saw that I'm not laughing and stopped.

"You probably know this but I'm Caddie Kaconts."

That was the start of a new friendship. Caddie and I were the best of friends. Jen never bothered me anymore but every time she saw Caddie she would shudder and give a painful looked to us.

A month had passed since Caddie had become my friend; and that's when things started to get strange. When I went to bed at night it was like voices spoke in my head.

"*Macy, Macy you have what it takes... Macy...*"

"This is crazy!" I said.

That wasn't the only thing that happened. Every day I would open my locker and a note would fall out. This is what it said:

Μαχψ Μαχψ Ψδυ ήαωε ώηάτ ίτ τάκέζ  
Ψδυ ήαωε ώηάτ ίτ τάκέζ. Φίγς νσ ώε ωιλλ  
ηελδ ψσμ συχεεδε> Δλλσιςυ!

φρομ Άλλσιςυ

I didn't know what it meant. At first I thought that it was just Jen pulling my leg, but then again she would have to be smart to create her own language.

It was Friday, October 13, usually known as Friday the 13th. My day was normal as it normally was.

"Hey mom" I said as I walked through the door.

"Hey hun. Was school okay? Did anything unlucky happen today?"

"Nope! I had a perfectly normal day."

"Good. Why don't you go do your homework?"

"Sure" I said as I rushed up the stairs.

"Let's saw the square root of 3 is..." I stop. Everything becomes cold. Everything was becoming foggy. "What's going on?" I said looking around. "What's happening?" I turn to race out my door, but my door wasn't there anymore! Instead a glowing white portal replaced it! A strange sensation comes over me as I slowly fall into the portal.

"Who is she? Or should I said what is it?"

"Oh be quiet Lexes."

"Whatever."

"Alli?"

"Yeah Mellien?"

"Why is she here?"

"Well..."

I opened my eyes. Three girls were standing in front of me with their backs turned.

"I would like to know that too." I said to the girls.

"Oh! Hi. Umm... I'm Allison, but I go by Alli." One girl jumped in surprise.

"Yo. I'm Lexes. What are you doing here?"

Allie shot Lexes a warning glance. "This is Mellien." Alli said pointing to the

youngest and smallest girl.

"Well hi. I'm Macy. Ummm... where exactly are we?"

Lexes laughed. "Girl we are in Magination! The greatest mind powered planet in the world!"

"Where?" I asked.

"Never mind that. We need your help."

"Help? With what?"

Mellien tugged on my sleeve and pointed to a cliff. "On that cliff is a seed. This seed gives everlasting life to whoever has it in their possession." She explained.

"Why do you need me? Why can't you get it?"

"Just because! Go get it!" Lexes shouted at me.

"And how do you expect me to do that?"

"Just imagine yourself with wings or as anything that can fly!" Alli explained.

"If you said so." I said. I imagined myself as a bird. I flew to the top of the cliff and grabbed the seed. I flew back down to the ground. I open my eyes and in my hand is the seed. The girls smile.

"Perfect..." Alli said.

"Whoa." I said looking down at the seed. "How did I... wow... What happened?"

"You have a power. Obviously." Lexes answered rolling her eyes. "Didn't you know? I mean it was all in the notes."

"Notes? You mean the notes that were in my locker every day?"

"Yep."

"How did you get them there?" I asked Alli.

"It was really Lexes. She did most of the work. I wrote the note and then Lexes got it to you."

"How?"

"Watch." Lexes said. She snapped her fingers and the next thing I know she was standing beside me. She smiled. "I am a

disapreater. I can disappear and reappear anywhere I want.”

“Cool, but you couldn’t appear in my locker. Could you?”

“No. But that’s what we used Mellien for. She can crack any code or solve any riddle.”

“Sweet. Alli what can you do?”

“I can... it would be easier if I just showed you.” The winds started to pick up and the sky got dark and cloudy. Lightning lit the sky and thunder rumbled. Rain started to pour. I looked over to Alli. She stands there with her eyes closed, concentrating hard.

“You can control the weather! Awesome!” I said to Alli as the storm died down. She nodded and smiled.

“Depending on my mood there could be a storm or a bright sunny day. The past few days I’ve been in a bad mood so that’s why there has been so much rain.”

“Come on Alli. Let’s go.” Mellien said tugging on her sleeve.

“Fine little miss bossy.” Allie said jokingly to her.

“We’re off to see Macoon!” Mellien shouts

“Macoon? Who’s Macoon?”

“You’ll see.” Alli said.

“Are we there yet?” whined Mellien. “Can’t we just disarate with Lexes?”

“Mell you know as much as I do that multiple disiprating only wears Lexes out.” Alli said.

“I could try,” said Lexes.

“Are you sure?” Alli ask.

“Positive. Grab on.” Lexes grab my hand. “Whatever you do don’t let go!” she shouts as she snaps her fingers.

For a second everything went black, and then it suddenly gets bright. I looked around no one is there except me. I looked down; white. I lift my head and saw the most amazing thing. I pinch myself just to

make sure I ‘m not dreaming. Emily. Emily is staring me in the face. She smiles and said “Hey Macy. How are you doing?”

“Emily” I said. “I am not doing fine.” I reach out to touch her. Though I saw her nothing is there. “A hologram? Oh... Emily” I looked to where Emily stood seconds before and shout out “Why?” The brightness vanishes and my world resolves again. I am falling. Trees and birds are just a blur now. THUMP. I hit the ground.

“Well that wasn’t too bad.” I heard Alli mumble.

“Alli! You’ll never believe what I just saw!” I said as I walk over to help her off the ground.

“What?”

“I saw my friend; Emily! She talked to me! It was like she was back from the dead!”

“Slow down motor mouth.” Lexes said as she walks over to us. “What happened?” Lexes ask Alli.

“She said that she saw dead friend Emily.” Alli tells her.

“I bet she did. When you dissipate it forces you to saw what you want to see.”

“Look.” Mellien said as she tugged on Alli’s shirt. We all stare to where she’s pointing. A small cave in the side of a cliff.

“We are here.” Alli said as we start to walk towards the cave.

We enter the cave. A faint glow at the end of the cave is the only light we have. When we reach the end Mellien steps forward.

“It’s us. Mellien, Alli, Lexes and a friend.” She said. Slowly the wall transforms into a gold door. Mellien motions to us to fallow. We walk up to chair of gold.

“Macoon. We know you’re here. We have business to attend to.” Alli said.

“Oh you clever little girl.” a high-pitched



voice said as two eyes and hands appear in the chair.

"Please at least try to be serious. We have to show Macy why she is here." Alli said.

"Well what do you need to saw?" Macoon ask.

"We need to show her Jella."

"Jella? Who's Jella?" I ask.

"Jella is the sorcerer who is threatening our world; also the human world." Alli explains.

"What does that have to do with me?" I said.

"You're the only one who can stop her." Mellien said.

"Watch children." Macoon said as she places a finger on the crystal ball.

A figure starts to form in the ball; it looked slightly familiar.

"Wait a minute." Mellien said as she peers into the ball.

As the figure forms completely Alli gasps. I looked back into the ball and to my amazement Lexes's figure appears. "Lexes's? You're..."

"Jella," Alli said, pointing at Lexes.

"You. How could you!" Alli screams at Lexes.

"Don't you understand little Alli. It was all a trap and you fell right into it! The only Jella there is me!" Lexes said with a sinister grin.

"Why? Why Lexes?" Mellien ask.

"Why else Mellien. I wanted to take over the world!" Lexes laughs. The winds start to pick up.

"Alli this isn't the best time to create a storm!" Mellien shouts to her.

"It isn't me!" she shouts back.

I stand star struck watching Alli and Mellien being blown around by the wind.

"The first thing I must do to complete my plan is to get rid of the only force that stands in my way," Lexes turns to me.

"You!"

"Me?"

"Yes you Macy. Good Bye..."

She pushed me into a portal that suddenly appeared behind me.

"Wait!" I scream as I fall.

I open my eyes and find myself still falling.

"This can't be happening." I yelled as I close my eyes again.

When I open my eyes I am sitting on my bed. "Caddie" I mutter to myself. I dash down the stairs and rush out the door. I run to Caddie's house and pound on the door. Sarah, Caddie's little sister, opens the door.

"Do you need Caddie?" She ask as if she knows the answer. I nod.

"Caddie! Macy's here!" Sarah shouts up the stairs. Caddie rushes down the stairs.

"Hey Macy! I'm going to the skate park with Malory at 7:00 want to-" Caddie started to said.

"Caddie! You'll never believe what just happened! Follow me. You too Sarah." I interrupted her.

I drag Sarah and Caddie up to my room as soon as I step in I the room starts to fog up and I feel the goose bumps rise on my skin. My door is replaced for the portal.

"Macy..." I heard Caddie scream. As I once again fall into the portal.

When falling I could hear Sarah and Caddie screaming. I rolled my eyes. THUMP! We landed in the cave. Sarah stood up.

"Whoa." She said.

I heard screaming from the end of the cave.

"Come on." I said helping Caddie up. As our little group headed to the back of the cave, I thought about home; about Mom Dad and Sussie (Our dog). I thought about Emily; about how much she encouraged me to not be shy and to try my best. My

mind couldn't be set on that now though, I had a planet to save.

As soon as I entered the cave, I felt that it was wrong, but now I was positive of it. Mellien was running around the cave trying to slip past Lexes' reappearing figure. Alli, on the other hand, was trying to direct a twister that she must have formed into Lexes. None of the girls were succeeding.

"Think, Macy, think. Lexes hasn't noticed that you're here yet. What can you do to attack her?" I thought. "I've got it!" I imagined Caddie being able to spray any kind of precipitation out from her hands and that Sarah can turn invisible. Before long Caddie was throwing snow balls at Lexes and Sarah was zooming all around the cave tripping Lexes. Alli, Mellien, Sarah, Caddie, and I stood in a group at the end of the cave.

"On the count of three all shoot out your power. Aim well." Alli tells us.

"ONE... TWO... THREE!" Alli shouted. Caddie shot a giant snowball, Sarah and Mellien hit Lexes from behind, Alli was able to shot a lightning bolt at her and I Made and electric ball and shot it at her.

"Nooo..." Lexes shouted as she slowly faded away into nothing.

"You have to go now too." Alli said to us. A new portal appeared and Sarah, Caddie and I said our final goodbyes as we walked into the portal.

"AAAAAHHHHH!" was the last thing I heard. I was falling, falling, falling, darkness. I opened my eyes. All I saw is light. White light everywhere. I looked around expecting to find Missy, Caddie or Alli, but I saw nothing. All I saw is a little glowing glimpse of yellow light. I stumbled to my feet. I hobble over to the light. I reached down to pick it up. PHOOOF! I leapt back. I looked over to where the light was and...Falling, falling, falling, falling, stop.

All I remembered was a blur. Sirens blaring people screaming. Faces flashing before me. "I'm dead." I thought. "I've fallen and killed myself." I opened my eyes. Two pairs of eyes were looking back at me. My heart jumped.

"Honey! Are you okay?!" The owner of the first pair of eyes said.

"Who are you?" I croaked out.

"Oh sweetie it's me. Your Mommy." She told me. "Oh Henry, she doesn't know who she is any more." I heard my mom whisper to my dad.

But that wasn't true. I knew who I was. I was Macy Milling the dorky 6<sup>th</sup> grader at Open Gate Middle school.

"I do to know who I am." I protested to my parents.

"Well of course you do honey. Who said that you didn't?" My mom said glancing over to my dad.

My parents turn their backs to me and talked in worried whispers. "Do you think she is alright?" I heard my dad said to my mom.

"Of course she is Henry! I hope..." my mother said to dad in a shocked manner.

"Mom." I called for my mother; she doesn't hear me.

"Mom." I yelled a little louder; she turns around.

"Yes sugar pie." She said sweetly.

"Mom where are we?" I ask

"We are in the Flowerwest subdivision."

"What! Why are we here?"

"Well we would like to know that as well." My dad said.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, your mother and I were walking Sussie when all of a sudden we heard a strange screaming sound. We looked up and saw what looked like a small girl falling from the sky. Your mother and I ran to where the girl had fallen. And lo and behold you were planted in Mrs. Killeen's

garden. Apparently Mrs. Killeen saw you and called 911. So that explains the emergency crew.” My dad finished.

“Oh...” I said sheepishly.

“Got anything to tell us about that.” My dad said.

“Uhhh... no.” I said. “Mom, Dad where’s Caddie and Sarah?”

My parents exchanged looks.

“Well.” I said getting a little annoyed.

“Honey, Sarah ... Well she kind of fell to and ...uhhh...well she landed on the highway. So...” my mom said hesitantly.

“So...so she’s dead!” I said hoping to get an answer of no.

“Yes.”

“What about Caddie? Is she fine?”

“Yes, she is.”

I let out my breath.

“I can’t believe that...that Sarah dead!”

Out come the tears.

“Oh honey.”

“First Emily and now Sarah!”

Caddie hadn’t appeared in school the next week. Mom told me that she was getting over the grief and misery put into her life. It was Monday and I saw Caddie’s familiar face coming through the door. I expected to see her push people out of the way to get where she needed to go, but she didn’t. She just slowly moved with the crowd.

Jen walked up to her and said, “So I heard you lost your sister. I also heard that you cried like a baby.” She stuck out her

tongue. Then she just stood there. The whole time she had this taunting yet confusing look on her face. I thought that she expected Caddie to fight back or protest, but Caddie didn’t do anything.

Jen made a face at Caddie then gave me a confused look and walked away. Caddie’s eyes welled up. She covered her face with her hands and ran to the girls’ bathroom. She didn’t come to history or math. At lunch I walked down to the bathroom. Caddie was leaning against the wall crying. Her eyes were all red.

“Hey.” I said.

She looked up. “Hi” she said quietly.

Then we just stood there for a while.

“I just can’t convince myself that...” Caddie started then began crying again.

“It’s okay.” I said trying to calm her down

“How is it okay? My sister is-is dead!” Caddie burst out.

“Well think about it. You still got me.”

“Oh Macy, you’re the best friend a girl could have!”

*Bringgggg!* The end of lunch bell rang. Macy looked at Caddie. Caddie smiled. The two grabbed hands and walked down the hall together; past Jen and her gang. For the rest of that day Sarah was forgotten, the girls kept their powers a secret and went to visit Alli and Mellien frequently. Sarah will always be in the hearts of those she touched. Macy and Caddie promised each other to never forget the day their life changed forever.

# How to Save a Life

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*Addie must learn how to deal in **HOW TO SAVE A LIFE**, by Paige Cupelis.*

“I should get my sunglasses then. Oh, wait, never mind; it’s never sunny.” I hated to complain like that, but I really hated Almont.

Six years ago, my mom left to go live in Arizona with a group of her “Yoga Friends.” They were pretty much full-out hippies. She left me with my dad; they had been divorced for years. I hated where he lived. He lived in the darkest, coldest place in Colorado—Almont.

“Come on, Addie. Don’t be like that.” My dad looked sad as I climbed the steep stairs to my room.

“Dad, no offense but this place is so... I don’t even know the word.” The truth was, there were just too many words to describe it here. Cold, boring, depressing, dark, ugly, horrible.... There were too many, but I knew they were all going to break his heart.

“Listen, Addie, I know this isn’t your place of choice. It isn’t mine, either, but I have a good job here, and I know you can live through this.”

*There’s no way I can live through this place.* I knew a few more weeks here and my skin would be whiter than the clouds that we would be lucky to see the sun through every once and a while. “Fine. On one condition.” I knew I was being hard on him, but what was I to do? It really wasn’t healthy for me to live here. “We take a vacation soon to Florida.”

“Aww, Hun, you know that would kill you when you got home.” My dad looked peaceful as I sighed. I knew it was going to be hard.

“But Dad, to be in the sun, for even a few days, that... that would be great!” I was

getting over-excited again. What if it didn’t work? What if we couldn’t go? He was right; it might kill me.

“I can’t do that to you now, Honey.”

I knew it was the end of the conversation. I continued climbing the stairs until only had one step left. Then I stopped, “Dad?”

“Yes, Addison?”

I scowled. He knew I liked being called Addie. He was mocking me now. “I’m sorry. I really didn’t mean to say anything that hurt you. I guess we could go into Denver if that would be easier. I mean, it couldn’t be that rainy there, and I do need a new sweater. We could go and spend the day there. That would be nice.”

My dad looked thoughtful now, like he was really considering it. I smiled.

“Well, it couldn’t hurt. There’s good fishing there I hear.”

“Daaaaa-aad! I thought we were spending this day to-gether?”

“Well, if you wanted to bring a friend, then I could bring John. We’re running out of fish anyway.”

I sighed and went downstairs into the kitchen to prove my point; I opened the refrigerator and showed him the six fish we had sitting there.

“Oh. Well, I seem to...I don’t know, leave you alone too much. Why don’t you ask that friend of yours, what’s his name? Edwin?”

“It’s Edward...” I explained. Edward—my dad hated Edward. What was he doing? “Why Edward?” I was so confused....

Once I had moved in with him, and I had Edward come over, he was like, “A

boy? I don't think so." Edward was honest enough to say we were friends, nothing more, but my dad still didn't really like him.

"He makes you happy... he *is* your best friend."

That wasn't even true. Sydney was my best friend. But truthfully, he didn't really like Sydney, either.

"Not Sydney?" I looked puzzled. Or at least I tried to.

"I don't know, you *are* still friends with Edward, I suppose?" My dad looked suspicious, a look I didn't like nor had seen before.

"Well, of course." I was still friends with him. It was funny how all of a sudden Edward was so important.

"And it's only for a few hours. I don't suppose Edward likes *fishing*?"

That's what this was about. "No, Edward is more of the sailing type. As a matter of fact, I have always wanted to sail. I will invite Edward, and you know what? I *will* learn how to sail."

My dad smiled. "Then it's settled. Sailing, fishing, and you needed that sweater..."

"The sweater can wait; I'll call Edward."

Once I was in my room, I grabbed the old phone. It was beige and outdated, but at least it worked.

"Oh, yea, and Addie?" my dad called up the stairs, the sound bouncing off the bare white walls.

"Yes, Dad?" I was getting *very* tired of him; I knew it was wrong, but I was.

"Remember to ask him to bring a *fishing pole*."

"Of course, Dad..." Stupid fishing trip.... That was my least favorite part.

After I made a mental note to pack a swimsuit for sailing, I went back to the phone. 1-566-856-9723. I punched in the number. It rang two times, and then

someone picked up:

"Hello?" It wasn't Edward; it was a girl's voice. His sister, Jamie.

"Hi, it's Addie." I tried to sound sweet, but I was just annoyed.

"Oh, hi Addie," Jamie said. She was probably smiling. Jamie was evil, she was thinking of a plan.

"Can I talk to Edward?" I needed to get an answer.

"Nope." And the line was dead.

Next, I tried his cell phone. He picked up on the first ring.

"Hello?" This time, it was a guy voice, good start.

"Edward?" I asked. "Thank God!"

"What?"

"Oh yea, Jamie picked up. Told me you wouldn't talk to me and then hung up."

"Aw crap. She's dead to me."

"That's okay. I am going into Denver, and my dad said you could come..." I "accidentally" left out the fishing.

"Oh, that would be great, but I am actually packing to go to Mexico right now."

"Oh. That's okay. Umm, bye." And I hung up. "Great." I was talking to myself. Bad sign.

"Honey?" My dad, *AGAIN!*

"Yes, Dad?"

"Is everything okay?"

"Oh yea, Edward just can't go. We'll still have fun; I just don't have a fishing pole."

"That's okay. We can go do something else. The sweaters?"

"Oh, sure, sure."

"Are you okay?" My dad looked worried, though I was perfectly fine.

"Just tired."

"Okay, you can go up to your room. I'll cook dinner."

Dad was cooking? There was definitely something going on, but whatever. I got to

lounge in my room, with no dad bothering me for more than five minutes. Sad... a climb up a flight of stairs seeming like climbing a mountain. I really needed to lie down.

I shut the door quietly, which was hard since it was a very heavy door to me at that particular moment. My bed looked so inviting, all fluffy and warm. The sheets were looking soft and lovely, and my feet were begging for a break. But I knew I could not lie down. I had to get my backpack ready for Denver. "Crap." I looked down; my dog had spilled all of the contents of the innocent backpack onto the ground, "Not my day," I said to myself.

"Dune, go take a potty break." Dune didn't listen and continued sniffing a pair of goggles I used for swimming. "DUNE! Get your snooty booty out of my room!" Dune jumped to the sound of my yelling, and bolted immediately after I opened the door. "Thanks!" I said cheerfully (fake cheerfully).

After packing, I powered up my old laptop. It was equally outdated as the phone in my room, but it was not beige and ugly. It was a Mac; white is *never* outdated. I went to priceline.com and the cute little garden gnome came up. I typed in tickets to Denver from Almont. It was a cheap flight being only an hour. I went to my backpack and got the credit card my mom had given me before she left. I had almost never used it. The tickets were printing out when there was a knock on the window. "Ahh!" It wasn't that I was scared; it took me by surprise. '*Just a branch, just a branch,*' I thought.

Unfortunately for me, it wasn't just a branch. "EDWARD?" Edward smiled a funny smile. He was standing on a tree, outside my window.

"Hey, just wanted to say goodbye." He smiled again.

"Oh. I'm not leaving until tomorrow."

"I know. I am though."

"Oh." Edward had a crush on me, and he didn't hide it. He smiled and hugged me, and gave me presents on my birthday. I hated when people spent money on me. It was annoying, and I felt I had to pay them back. But, he did it anyway. He even gave me two hundred dollars for my car. I was so mad at him, but my dad took the offer anyway. My dad just didn't want to spend that much money.

So there he was, standing in my room while I was typing on the computer, holding a shiny purple box. I winced. "No, I don't need a present."

"I want to give it to you. Please take it."

"Fine." I carefully took off the lid to the box. It was a camera and flashlight.

"Thanks, Edward. I'll use it when my dad takes me fishing."

"Oh, cool. I gotta run, but remember, stay out of trouble." He hugged me and went back to the tree to climb down.

I went to my bed and fell asleep.

My dad woke me up and I grabbed the tickets out of my printer. I climbed into my dad's ford Taurus and we took off, it was a small town so in 10 minutes we were at the airport.

The airport wasn't like LAX or anything like that; It was a small-town airport, meaning an old McDonald's and a little store that sold shirts that said something cheesy about Almont. Luckily, we didn't have to wait that long in the small airport.

The airplane was luckily nicer than the airport. Could hear the snobby first-class people's TV's. I didn't bother to complain because I knew that the flight attendants really liked the first-class people better anyways.

In an hour, we were there. "Finally!" I was tired, but happy to be in the sun.

The Denver airport was already an improvement. It had lots of places to eat and lots of stores. I picked up a copy of *Star magazine* for something to do while waiting for fish to pull on my dad's fishing trip. I knew he said that we weren't going fishing but I had seen him pack 2 fishing poles anyway.

Outside was even prettier, and It was like a fantasy. Just then a guy walked by,

"Hi my name is Melvin," He said.

"Oh hi." I said. Then walked away, I wasn't supposed to talk to strangers, even being 15. My dad went to the rental car place, and I got In the car.

The car wasn't as nice as the airport, but since we were only there for a day, It was okay.

"So, how's work been?" I really just wanted to get to the nearest store to buy a sweater, I was so cold! I stared outside at the bright city when I noticed it was snowing.

The snow was falling so fast and heavily, that I could barely see. My dad stopped the car and pulled over. "Addie, we better get to a hotel, were going to be here more then half a day. Good thing Edward didn't come."

"Yes. Good thing," I said, looking at the teeny flashlight Edward had given me earlier. I was getting mad at him that he was giving me so many presents and liked me so much, I really didn't want to date Edward, no offence to him.

An hour later, my dad and I were in the hotel room, in a change of clothes and sitting by a fire.

"This is... Nice" It was, It was warm for one thing, and my dad was watching basketball, so I was using the Hotel computer to play an addictive game I happened to have been e-mailed. Just as I

was learning to shoot the ball into the basket, there was a knock on the door.

"I'll get it," I offered. I paused the game and went to the door and looked through the peep whole. It was the guy from the airport. Melvin, was it?

"Umm dad, I don't know who it is." I lied. My dad came to the door.

"Okay Hun, go play your game." My dad opened the door and Melvin smiled and waved.

"Hi, is Addie there?" He asked

"I thought you didn't know this guy Add's?" my dad looked puzzled.

"What? Oh, I don't"

"It's me, Melvin."

"I've only met you once! At the airport! How'd you find me?" I was getting a little freaked out.

As I stood there, with this complete stranger looking at me and somehow knowing me, something flashed back to me. Edward's voice when I called him, it was almost... no I was paranoid. I had to get this freak away from me.

"Addie, you know me. Really look at me." I did. Nothing came to mind except *'get away from me you weirdo freak!*

"I don't see it. Now I am going to play my game and shoot little pixilated balls into baskets with cannons." I was starting to sound stubborn, and I really didn't care. I wanted this freak out!

"I'm Melvin. Yes, I will come in sir."

My dad was just about to say would you like to come in. There was something up with this Melvin kid.

"Hey Melvin, you watch basketball?" My dad and Melvin were talking sports when I went on Yellowpages.com, maybe Melvin lived in the area, making it easier for me to guess.

"Melvin, what's your last name?" I asked. I was supposed to sound interested, but he saw through me.

“If you are looking me up on Yellow Pages, then Try Kelvin Moss, I like to be called Melvin,”

I didn't abject. I typed Kelvin Moss into the search bar and 20,000 matches came up.

“Third one on the 9<sup>th</sup> page,” He explained.

“How do you know this stuff?” I asked. Nothing made sense. It was impossible for him to know all this.

The search page came up, making me forget temporarily about my question. On the page, there was an article instead of information.

*Kelvin Moss claims the medal*

*On October<sup>h</sup>, 1967, Kelvin Moss claims the Jeopardy medal for knowing every answer to a quiz bowl in Denver, Colorado. Kelvin has no remarks and chooses to remain unseen and not put a picture in this article. “This kid was amazing; he was like, 14 and knew all the answers!” A local excitedly remarked. Another says: “This has to be rigged. There is no way a 14 year old knows all this!” Kelvin will be opening a ceremony on October 15.*

“That was 42 years ago!” I yelled. My dad looked at me funny and “Melvin” raced over.

“You figured it out. Thank you Addie!” The truth was I didn't figure anything out except that this 15 year old showed me an article claiming he was 42.

“I didn't figure out anything. I don't get it you, you 42 year old!” I yelled my dad scowled something about new age language and went back to reading the sports newspaper the hotel delivered at request.

“You really don't? Okay then, come sit.” He raced into my hotel suite and sat on the bed. He was so fast I didn't even see him leave. Slowly, I walked in too.

“What took you so long?” He asked, smiling. I sat down.

“Tell me everything.” I said

“Are you sure? Some of it is quite disgusting. You might not be able to listen,”

“I'll 'take it like a man'” I said.

“It was a dark night, my brother Ralph and I were playing flashlight tag, it is quite a fun game, you should try it one time. Anyways, Ralph was hiding from me and I was seeking. Only one thing was different about this game, the calendar said it was 1827.” I gasped, he was older than 42! He was over 100! “Ralph was hiding up in a tree, but he was just a little boy, and his flashlight was still on. I could see him perfectly. I ran up the tree and caught him eating a fresh apple. We lived on an apple farm at the time, anyways, I could hear him eating, and the apple sounded delicious, so I climbed up and grabbed one too. Oh, I remember this part like it was yesterday, the minute I took a bite out of the apple, a strange man climbed into the tree. He was very good-looking if I do say so myself, I did wish I looked like him, I remember that too, but he looked at me, and you know what he said? He said ‘Hurry come with me,’ Now this is a much simpler time, and strangers were not feared as much, kids walked miles alone and there were no cell phones.”

I grabbed my phone to make sure he wasn't taking me back in time.

“So anyways, I said ‘why’ I was a little scared, but I thought he was a doctor or something. He smiled and took my hand, he said, oh you know what he said? He said ‘They are coming’ I was so confused, but I followed him. I knew it was right. He took me to a strange room, and when we were there, he told me who “they” were. These people were strange; they wanted to kill me. I really don't know why, I still don't. He



said the only way for them not to hurt me was to make me immortal. I thought he was kidding, and then he bit me. The pain lasted weeks, and for a while I was just laying in the bed. The man would bring me things and give me what I wanted to eat even though most of the time I wasn't really hungry.

"I could feel the changes taking place. I was getting stronger, and I started to hear voices in my head. They were teeny voices and I couldn't really understand them, but they were there. The pain was settling now, too. I could almost walk again. I remember the day when the man said: 'you are ready.' He was talking about teaching me to use the immortal powers I had gained. There was no flying involved, but it felt, well... super.

"I learned I could run at amazing speeds, faster than any car that anyone sells. I could read minds, see what they see, that's how I found you. I could hear your thoughts about the hotel. And by the way, your tooth brush is in your dad's suite case."

He knew I was looking for my toothbrush.

"Anyways, I had trouble taming my powers. It was hard. Not everyone liked the idea of immortals. I had to hide for a long time, even move sometimes to different places until I was supposed to be dead. When everyone I knew was dead, I moved back to Almont."

"You live in... Almont?" Had I really lived this long in Almont with... *immortals*? It was hard to believe but now that I thought about it, the newspaper headings were fishy sometimes. Like the man who climbed a skyscraper to save a bird who was dying. There were 3 things wrong with that article:

1. How would a man climb a skyscraper?

2. How did the man know the bird was in trouble
3. And why did he care?

"Yes I do live in Almont. I have... seen your thoughts before. You are a very interesting person I do say that. I can also... How can I put this? See human's actions before they do them sometimes... Yes that's how I can put it. But only a few minutes before. Unless the decision is serious, then I see it hours to days before. Like a wedding proposal or a job offering, something, life-changing. Not that all the decisions aren't life changing, they are but..."

I could see where he was going. He was babbling much like... Edward. That reminded me how much I missed Edward, the games we played, the places we hid for hide and seek (I was 15 but who doesn't like hide and seek?) Me always winning, (he was very bad at hide and seek. He was noisy when he was hiding. He muttered to himself and breathed loudly.)

Enough making myself miss Edward. I was with Melvin now.

"Addie, you're not scared by me... are you?" he looked disappointed. Like he'd said too much.

"You'd know if I was. And I'm not." It was true. He would know.

"It's getting late. I'll see you tomorrow, 'kay?"

"Yea, tomorrow, is the snow ever gonna stop?"

"The snow is not a person. I cannot tell. See you tomorrow Addie. Sleep tight, you need it."

And he rushed out the door. He was so fast I didn't even see him leave. My dad walked over to me.

"What was that all about?" he asked.

"Oh, just an old friend from Almont, He changed a lot so I didn't really know it was him."

“Cool. I’m going to hit the hay,” he said. I went to bed too.

Later that night, there was a knock on the door. I put on my sweatshirt because it was really cold and opened the door.

It was Melvin.

“Mel?” I asked. It was 11:00! He was *supposed* to be sleeping or at least not being anywhere near me!

“Addie, I wanted to tell you something. Sophie is... missing.”

“Who’s Sophie?” I asked.

“Oh. I am so sorry. I forgot that you don’t know Sophie. I thought that I knew you from your... thoughts. Sophie is my sister, she was kidnapped.”

“Holy Cow! I can help you! Hold on...” I didn’t even know her.

“You probably can’t. This was a monster. He could kill you with one look. It’s probably better for you to stay here. He’s evil and spares no one.”

I didn’t care about sparing or anything else right now, even though I only had known Melvin for a few days, I felt I needed to help him. I felt that this Sophie was my best friend. It felt... Good.

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So there I was, riding in a car to some place I didn’t even know with someone I met only a few days ago. Foolish, right? But Melvin would never do me any harm. I knew that for a fact.

“You’re not scared?” He asked me as he took control of the wheel after sitting at a red light for a minute and a half.

He looked younger than me... and still, he was *driving*? Even I didn’t have my permit yet and he had his license. This was crazy.

“This is ludicrous.” Melvin looked at me. “You don’t even know her and I am putting you in such danger, what was I thinking. I am absurd. I am taking you right back to Denver with your dad where you

belong.”

My dad, who I had lied to and told him Melvin was teaching me to *fish*. In a lake very far away, they called it ‘Beginner’s lake’ my excuse... So lame.

“You can’t, what are we going to say? The lake was closed to beginners? Like he will believe us ever again.” Just then, like clockwork, there was a call coming in from a number I had never seen.

“Hullo?” I asked wearily.

“Hi, Addie?”

“Edward?” I asked. ‘Unbelievable’ I thought.

Melvin frowned.

“Addie! Hi... I wanted to say hi and see how things were. You know, without me?”

“Oh... they’re good. I met a guy named Melvin Moss from Almont.”

“Melvin? Moss? Oh... Umm, Addie’s? Please... Don’t get too far into this. He’s trouble.”

“How do you know him?” I asked. Was *he* immortal too? If he was I swear...

“He was one of my peers. Then he *changed*...”

So he knew...

“Oh. Okay, I gotta go. I have to eat, you know? Haha... bye,”

I hung up quickly, the laugh was fake, Edward was warning me... I punched myself in the face to wake myself up.

“Addie, don’t do that,” He laughed.

“I’m so confused,” I admitted.

“Sleep Addie. It’s that simple. I’ll wake you when were on the plane.”

“PLANE?” My dad was gonna freak!

“I called you’re dad, he’ll be on him way home as soon as the snow stops.” He explained.

I watched as the light snow pieces drifted in the wind, dancing and flowing like snakes. They were actually pretty, until the cars ran them over and stuck them down to the ground against their will. They

packed them together; they were like all the other pieces now.

I drifted into unconsciousness and the thoughts of poor Edward sitting at his vacation home alone in Mexico saddened me. The thought of what Melvin and I were about to face made me shake; I was a mess. Melvin's arm stretched across the back of the passenger seat as if he knew what I was thinking... Oh duh! He did, he was comforting me. I didn't really care what happened now, I was pretty much unconscious, so I left Melvin be... for now, and feel asleep.

In my dream, Edward and Melvin were fighting in a long river.

"Why?" I asked I was very confused.

Melvin was immortally fast, so he was beating Edward easily, but Edward suddenly got an urge of strength and was suddenly winning.

"WHY?" why were they fighting?

Then, Edward took out a sword. It was getting violent. I needed to step in.

"Stop!" I shouted.

"Addison?" Melvin was shaking me now...

"Melvin?" I asked.

"Addie! You were talking in your sleep, something about an *Edward*?" He looked confused.

"Oh, Edward Benson. He's my friend from school."

"Edward Benson?" He asked. "Oh no!"

"What?" I asked, worried now.

"Oh, umm... nothing, excuse me while I make a call." He took out a really cool blackberry cell phone and punched in a number with a very unfamiliar area code.

"Yes, Jane?" He asked and disappeared.

I could hear the muffled sounds of his voice and the conversation didn't make much sense, which was probably where the muffling was, slurring the words into different words.

"Yes, Edward... The *orange* voice? Oh no! Oh, Jane! How terrible. Edward must be *zooed* at once! Yes... Okay, I will *horse* on. Yes, you are back? Okay, and Addison, she, I think she actually *LIKES* him though... I really think she needs another one of us if we are ever going to find Sophie." He said.

The muffled sounds from Jane were not understandable or didn't make sense, after about 20 seconds of trying to figure out what she was saying, I zoned out.

I must have fallen asleep later because I was in a different hotel room then when I was trying to decode Melvin and Jane's conversation. Had I missed the plane ride?

"Addie, we located a bit of Sophie's scent. We can track her more easily now."

"First I would like to know what you were so worried about Edward for..." I demanded.

"Well, He's... Oh I feel that I should not be the one telling you this, but Edward is immortal too."

"Oh my-" was all I could force out.

Edward... Immortal?

Next thing I knew I was on the ground, passed out, well I knew that after of course...

"ADDISON MICH-"

"Don't you dare say my middle name you... MELVIN PERSON!" I was still to in shock to think of a diss.

"Addie, calm down and I'll tell you the whole story." His voice soothing, I sat down and folded my arms.

"So stubborn, Okay so Edward was immortal at the time, I was just tapping into your thoughts, it was a while ago,"

"How long have you been..." The word wasn't coming to me... "Spying on my thoughts?" I finished

"Not *that* long. A few... Years?" It sounded like a guess. "Not the point. So anyways, my friend Jane has been watching

for you and I have too. We saw Edward in your head and knew he was trouble.”

“That’s what he said about you...”

“Meanwhile, He was head over heels in love with you, so we knew it was going to be hard to keep you safe.

“Jane has been... taking over your friend’s bodies, to keep you safe...”

“POSSESSION?” I was definitely not thrilled. I think Melvin could tell.

“It doesn’t hurt them, they don’t even know. Actually they do all the actions, Jane would simply see through their eyes, too.

“You are still not satisfied? Well he appeared in your thoughts a lot, as a friend I assume, you never mentioned it, you have a very secretive mind you see.”

A secretive mind... my mind was a... secret? I was supposed to be free in my own mind! Now he could see it?

“Oh!” I giggled at Melvin using the term, it sounded... girly, “He has her, and she is in his clutches!” He screamed.

He hit re-dial and Jane picked up at once. “Yes, Uh-huh... Bye Jane.”

“I am not going anywhere!” I threw myself onto the bed across the room from where we were sitting on the couch.

“Addie, we can do this if we try. Come on,” He was begging, He was begging *me* for help with an immortal mission, which I would never even be able to catch up fast enough to participate.

“Melvin, I’m... I’m just going to slow you down, you really don’t want me there, really.” I was coming clean, better save my life and sit at home then tag along and get more then me killed, (it would be my fault, too!)

Melvin took my head in his hands and lifted it up so that my looking-down head was looking up at him. “Don’t you ever, ever, ever think that we don’t need or care enough about you to leave you behind, I will never ever, ever leave you. Ever, do

you hear me?”

That was enough to make me tear up. The words Never and Leave were circling around in my head.

“Aww Mel, I really don’t want to get you *or* Jane or anyone that I don’t even know killed because you simply wanted me to tag along.”

Melvin looked angry with me now. “Don’t you *ever* worry about me, Addison Michelle Hale, ever!”

I was feeling guilty now. “Fine... I’ll come.” *But I won’t be happy about it,*

“I heard that!”

*Crap!* He could read my mind...

“Addie, I really wanted to tell you...” The phone rang, impatiently he punched the TALK button very hard, seeming as if it would break the poor phone.

“Crap! Yes, we’ll be right there...” Melvin flung me onto his back and took off.

“I have heard a lot of you lately Addie,” Jane smiled a crooked smile. She was so beautiful it was difficult to look at her. “You have some wonderful friends.”

“Ha, thanks... They try... I guess, anyways... Jane, right?” Of course I knew she was Jane... but she was making me... nervous.

“No need to be nervous. I’m like everyone else, just faster, stronger and inside your head.” I frowned.

“Okay ladies, let’s follow this monster!” Melvin tried to brighten up the conversation.

We were in Jane’s hotel room, which had a fancy flat screen T.V. All of the sudden, the T.V jumped to life and a strange creature appeared on the screen.

“Holy cow!” I shouted.

In a dark raspy voice, the monster was saying things I could barely make out.

“I have Sophie, and there is only one

way to get her back...”

Melvin winced; he had a vision or whatever he called them, he had them rarely around me...

“I want the girl...” I looked at Jane’s face; there was no way this evil figure was taking Jane or Sophie away from me. When I looked at her face, I saw a different kind of fear, maybe one that proved something else... I had a feeling *she* wasn’t the one he wanted.

“I’ve really got to go.” I felt bad leaving so soon, but I was getting tired from running around so much and figured it was time to go.

“No, Please Stay!” Melvin looked into my eyes, what was I going to do now? With his power, I knew he could make me stay. “We just saw the monster, please!”

“Please Melvin! My dad is going to be really mad.” I looked at him; hopefully he wouldn’t be as selfish this time.

“Please Stay Addie, I need you here!” He looked sad.

“I’ll come back, we’ll find her, don’t worry.” And I was telling the truth, I knew one day we would find her, weather she was dead or alive. Then I shuddered, the thought must be removed from my mind at once.

“Okay, bye Addie!” Melvin waved a sad wave.

I was sad too, Melvin was like a brother to me, he was always there for me, and he always knew what I was thinking (This was against my will, thanks to what he was, but who could help *that?*)

With that, I grabbed the flashlight and my jacket, and set out. It was going to be long way home.

\* \* \*

“Dad?” I looked around; my father wasn’t anywhere that I could see.

“Hi Honey.” my dad didn’t sound happy. “Where were you?”

I knew I couldn’t expose the secret that Melvin had kept for almost two hundred years, so I thought quickly for an excuse. “I was walking Dune. He was being lazy, we took a while.”

“Where’s Dune then?”

*Shoot* I thought, I didn’t think *ahead*. “In the Kennel,” *Exactly where he was before I went to meet Melvin.*

“Okay well he’s probably starving.”

“Actually... He didn’t *look* hungry.” I really needed to leave.

“I have to go to Sydney’s for a project. It’s gonna take a while, I’m sleeping at her house.”

“Okay, But Addie please remember, I don’t like this Melvin person. He’s...” I could tell he was choosing his words carefully. “Strange.”

“Well, I like him. He’s nice and pays attention to what I say.” It was true, Melvin was my best friend. I never had to tell him anything I was thinking. He understood what I was thinking. I never had to explain myself.

I went back to the place where I had left Melvin but he looked sad.

“Hi Add’s... she couldn’t come.” Jane. It made sense. She wasn’t here.

After a long pause, I realized why I was here again.

“Melvin, I have to hurry. Please, do you hear her thoughts yet?” I was tired of looking for Sophie, not that I didn’t want her back.

“Um. Yes! I have only one though. It might help us, she’s thinking.” That was the thing about Melvin. He had to write it down when the person was far away. I watched him take a stick and drag it along the dirt road, writing different words. Then he thought very hard and made a weird face. “Oh!”

This made me worried. “Is there

something you'd like to share?" I really wanted to talk to Sophie.

"Yes, Sophie is near here!" Melvin looked amazed. He took my hand, an uncomfortable position for us, and threw me across his rock hard back, which made me feel like I was 5 again. He took off, running his un-natural speed again. Another thing I liked about him, he was my own personal roller coaster.

I was surprised by how short the ride was. When Melvin let me down, I thought we were still in the same place. Until I looked in front of me, I thought he was joking.

"She's in the house."

It was a beautiful house, off-white with matching shutters and an old-looking door with hand painted details. The bushes were the perfect shade of green (if it's possible for a *bush*...) to match the house. They were well groomed and there was not one over grown leaf. The pavement to the walk way looked brand new, and it was white making that fairly impossible. The windows were clear, and the curtains showed through nicely. If I was close enough to them, I probably wouldn't have even noticed the windows, thinking there were none. The mailbox, a normal detail to most houses, really caught my attention. It was elegant, like it didn't belong waiting and holding the mail. *'All dressed up with nowhere to go.'* That was exactly the right term.

What amazed me the most was when he opened the door. The rug was even amazing. Everything in the kitchen was off-white or pastel. It must have been so of been so challenging to keep it clean for who ever lived there. My sifting was interrupted by Melvin pulling on my arm. I had forgotten he was still holding my hand.

"She's upstairs. I can hear her better in my head now." I followed Melvin as he

raced up the stairs, my hand as his hostage. I was noticeably slower then Melvin, but he wouldn't let that happen. I found myself racing up the stairs to match his walk. Finally, he slowed. I looked around and heard myself gasp. We were in a hallway filled with doors. There must have been 20.

"It's not that big of a deal, Add. We'll find her. I can hear her thought's... remember?"

I laughed at my own stupid behavior. "Oh yea... sorry. I got a little tired. You are a very fast runner you know,"

"Oh, sorry. I get ahead of myself." That was an understatement.

For a minute, it felt like we were talking human to human, not whatever he was too human.

I followed him upstairs, remembering Edward's warning. *Don't get too far into this. He's trouble.* Edward was so worried sometimes. Gosh, I can't have any other guy friends, can I? My thoughts were once again interrupted by a certain pulling of my arm, "Oh!" I got scared, I really didn't notice my hand was still in his, I would have to pay more attention, I was cold and his hand was warm. As long as we stayed friends, this hand thing could work for me, as long as I didn't scare him away with my constant forgetting he was there...

Remembering Edward's warning, I thought of his sad face, What if he knew I was holding hands with the guy he said to stay away from? If the problem was the other way around, it might be more important to stay away, seeing that Melvin might have seen me and Edward, but that was another story.

He pulled me along into the room, and I noticed it was a room with only toilets. He quickly checked them with his mind, and left. She wasn't there. I was guessing he checked off room number 1 in his head. Next we went into a room of garbage cans.

This house was very strange. ‘*Strange Beauty*’ that made sense too.

After a long day of running and looking around in rooms, we had two rooms left. Melvin pulled me into the second room. “Oh. My. Gosh!” It was unlike any other room in the whole house, it practically *was* a house itself.

“She’s in here,” I looked at him, his smile, he knew how happy I was already, maybe even before I did, but we both knew it at some point.

“Sophie?” I called out. Melvin let go of my hand and took it again, maybe to get a better grip. I felt so powerful with Melvin by my side, like there was nothing we couldn’t do. So maybe finding Sophie wouldn’t be that hard. He released my hand once again, but didn’t take it back. He took a step forward and silently moved his index finger back and forth, the signal for “Come Here.”

I followed, as told. Melvin opened the door to the ‘dining room’ part of the house-room. There Sophie was, sitting under the table. “SOPHIE, OH MY GOSH SOPHIE, SOPHIE! YOUR HERE! YOU’RE NOT DEAD! YOU ARE STANDING RIGHT in front of me...” I stopped yelling in the middle of my sentence for a reason. There were footsteps coming up the stairs. “Oh no! Were in for it now!” Sophie looked terrified. Melvin looked worried. If I could see what I looked like, I’m sure It would have been a cross between both.

I caught Melvin looking at the window. “We have to jump.”

I laughed. “Ha ha... Funny,” He wasn’t laughing. “No way!” there was no way I was going to jump out of the window. If Edward knew...

“It’s the only way,” I knew he was right. It was the only way... *TO DIE!*

Sophie looked calm. “You’ll make it. I’ll

catch you.” Oh yea, Sophie was super-strong.

I looked down from the now open window. It was a long jump, but Sophie was there, holding out her hands. I guess I wouldn’t die today after all. By then, my arms would have been sore, but Sophie was down there, holding her arms as if she had just put them up.

“It’s safe.” Melvin had read my mind.

“You-”

“Yes. I’m sure.”

“Wow... you, you read my mind again. I wasn’t even thinking.”

“Oh... Yes, well, not really, Sophie actually can predict the future even if it’s less than a second into it. And I can read her mind, I get information fast. That’s just me,”

I was amazed; I bet everyone in their family had special powers.

“Oh, and, no... were the only ones.”

“What?”

“I read your mind.”

“Oh... Ha, I forgot.” Melvin had to let go of my hand to jump, as soon as he let go, I started shaking, this was unhealthy, I knew I was freezing and jumping out of a window wouldn’t help one bit, but I had to try.

I closed my eyes, and jumped. It seemed like forever before I hit the ground. I opened my eyes and it was sunny. “Shoot,”

“What’s wrong? Are you feeling dizzy? Do you need some aspirin?”

“No. Why would I need aspirin? I’m dead.” My dad was going to kill me; he probably didn’t want me to go jump out a window and die, he wasn’t thrilled with Melvin in the first place, now I was *Dead!*

“That’s the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard, Addie, You are very much alive!” Melvin was there... so was Sophie, I was not dead, or I was in heaven. So this is what it was like, surrounded by undead friends. Weird.

“Mel? I gotta go, my dad’s gonna freak.” And I ran home. So rude. I felt bad; I’d talk to him later.

“Add, you can’t run; you are in Denver.”  
UGH!

“Can I at least drive you home?” Melvin asked.

“Fine. But you stay outside. Just make sure he doesn’t kill me then you can leave.”

When I got home, Edward and my dad were both waiting for me. “Hi? I didn’t know we were having a party!” I tried to act normal or even peppy. But it was too hard, “I’m sorry, Mel needed me.”

“Mel? Mel? I thought you were with SYDNEY!”

“Crap.”

“I am very disappointed in you, Addison. You have never been one to sneak and lie.” I hated lying to him, and that was the truth.

“I know you don’t like Melvin but he needed me! His sister was missing.”

“Now you are going to tell me you helped locate his sister? Find a missing person? Addison, what did you *Learn to fly too?*”

That almost drew it. I was ticked. It wasn’t a lie! Sophie really needed me!

“Sir, if I can interrupt for a minute...” Melvin was at the door, Sophie close behind. “Your daughter helped save my sister from death. She could be dead now.” He pointed to Sophie.

“Yes. I am fine luckily,” I hadn’t heard Sophie talk before.

“And dad, I actually don’t mind the darkness anymore.” Everything was finally perfect.

My dad looked at Edward, who I noticed did look immortal and sighed. “Whatever.” He said then he remember the night talking sports with Melvin and smiled. I knew I was clear.

Sophie and Melvin smiled and Edward hugged me. Everything was perfect.

## In My Corner

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*In a new town, a girl finds acceptance in a most unusual place in the story*  
**IN MY CORNER**, by *Carly Stern*.

Waking up in the morning was not one of my top five favorite things. It still isn’t, it is not even in my top hundred either. I hate waking up early. One of the worst days of my life was on a Monday and I had to wake up extra early and I hated it. *Briiiiiing* went my alarm clock at 7:01. I was late and I only had ten minutes to get to my bus. I ran around trying to find my clothes, brush my teeth, brush my hair, and eat breakfast. I managed to get it all done in time but ended up getting onto my bus as hot as ever. I sat down as usual next to my two best friends Ali and Meg, but something seemed wrong. They were really

quiet when I sat down next to them.

Hey guys is something wrong?” I asked a little nervous for the answer.

“Don’t you know?” Ali asked.

“Know what?” I asked.

“That you’re moving. You didn’t know that? Your parents didn’t tell you?” Meg questioned.

“No, I’m not moving,” I laughed. “What are you guys talking about? I’m not really moving, am I,” I said, starting to sweat even more, if that was possible!

“You are. That’s what your parents told us. Well anyway let’s not think about that.



You're not going for a week. So did you finish your math homework?" Meg said apologetically.

"Yeah I did," I said but I was already thinking of other things. *I'm not moving am I?* I thought. No, that can't be right. My parents would have told me, right? Well, I should stop worrying about it. I'll talk to my parents later, I thought. I was really freaking out by then and I really didn't know what to do. I didn't want to believe my friends but I did.

After school, I ran home not even worrying about the bus. It was too slow. I really wanted to talk to my parents and I also really didn't want to talk to my friends. They had brought it up and I didn't want to talk to them about it. I was out of breath by the time I got home and all I wanted to do was go up stairs and wake up, like this was a dream. I knew it wasn't though and that I needed to talk to my parents.

My parents were sitting at the table like they were waiting for me when I got home.

"Come on and sit down with us. We need to tell you something that's a little important." My mom said.

"Uhhh okay, um what is it about?" I asked. I really wanted them to tell me what was going on and why my friends knew about something before I did.

"Just come over here and we will tell you everything," my dad said as he sighed. "Alright so here's the deal. I quit my job," my dad said "And I found a new job in..." he paused.

"Where?" I asked anxiously

"It's in Florida. I know it's far, but we'll have a lot of fun. I know it doesn't sound great now but it will be," my mom said, but after the part about moving to Florida I wasn't really listening. I was trying to let it all soak in. Then the big question came back to my mind.

"Why did you tell my friends before you

told me? Didn't you trust me? I don't get it. It would have been better if you told me first." I spilled out, the tears already starting to form.

"Well we thought that it would be easier for you to handle it if your friends told you," my mom said. I could tell she was trying to stay calm.

"Yeah well they told me today and I thought you didn't trust me. You did not make the right choice," I said as I ran up the stairs trying to hold back all of my emotions until I got to my room.

Once I got there I let it all out. I cried and tried to figure everything out. I knew the time would have to come when I would have to say goodbye to my friends and my home, but that really wasn't what I was worried about right now. I was really mad at my parents and I didn't know if I was ready to forgive them.

The next day in school I was a total mess. I tried not to look at my friends because I knew I would cry. I tried not to think about anything much.

The next week I knew I was leaving soon. I thought I was bad before but let me tell you, I was even worse then. I looked like I had gotten into a fight with an eight-foot tall gorilla. I didn't want to think about the future, but I wasn't really giving myself the option of thinking about the present. I even had nightmares about it. But still the day was coming and coming fast.

The night before the move I cleaned out my locker and said goodbye to my teachers, which was the easiest part of the move. Then I cleaned out my room that made me cry a little. Now for the hardest part of all: saying goodbye to everything else like my friends, my cousins, my house, my school, my town and just about everything. *I am going to miss this* I thought as I got ready to leave my house.

I felt like I was on a boat sailing away from everything and everyone. I felt like I was going to be seriously seasick and I regretted having too much to eat. I didn't want to leave my home and my town but I knew my ship had already set sail.

I went into my new house hoping for the best. All I ended up seeing was a small run down five-bedroom house. I mean, the five bedrooms were nice, but what was with that mucky smell and dark windows? I quickly ran up the stairs and dashed around to make sure I got the best room. I chose the room with the brown walls and the pink window seat. It was like it was made for me, so clean and just, wonderful. I then got settled in my new room. I put up posters and pictures of my friends and put some of my clothes away. Still something seemed missing. The only thing that really stood out to me was the fact that I didn't have my friends. They weren't here. I wanted to run. Run all the way back to them, but I knew that was just not going to happen. Only in my dreams I thought, and then I laughed because that is something Meg would say.

I thought it would be a good idea to explore the house and get my mind off of things. Let's see, I thought. Jonah's room is here. Mom and Dad's is here. What's this? I found a door and pushed it open. It was really dark and I couldn't see a thing. I started to pat around looking for the light switch.

When I thought I had found it, I pulled it down and looked all around the room. In movies, the characters' jaws drop when they are surprised. That is just what they do, but I'm telling you the truth, mine actually did drop.

There were about one hundred people all around me! When I looked up, I could see the door handle, the ceiling and a window. I was going crazy and I started to

scream.

One little old lady started to quiet me down. "Hush, you're going to wake the children up," she said. That was enough to really freak me out.

"Where am I?" I asked totally in a daze.

"You are in Munchkin Land. Whenever you come into this room and you pull the switch, you will shrink and meet us. If you don't pull the switch, all you see is a dark, creepy room. Once you pull the switch, you will always see us, and you will always be welcome. By the way, I'm Annie."

"Oh thank you. I really needed a break from everything and so it was good that I got it here. So when I come back next time you can help me with homework or something," I said.

"Of course," Annie commented, and then the knob on the door turned! In walked my ten-year-old brother he was a giant. All of the munchkins started running around trying to find their houses. Then Annie whispered goodbye to me and told me to pull the light switch.

I pulled the switch and then I was standing next to my brother. "Whoa! How did you get here," he asked.

"I just walked in. You didn't see me?" I asked my brother. He shook his head. Looking a little surprised.

"Well, I just came in. Wow! I think you need glasses," I informed him.

"Uhhh okay. Well I am just going to go look around some more," my brother said as he walked away from me, though he kept looking back and then finally he turned and ran away. I was so relieved when he was gone. I instantly turned on the light and went to go find Annie's house. It wasn't really that hard to find her. I started to walk around the little town and I immediately saw a dog outside of a house with a bunch of holiday lights up. I ran over there because I had a feeling that a house like

that would be Annie's house. I knocked on the door when I got there. The dog started barking. I almost ran away to find another house on the inviting road, but then Annie came to the door.

"Hi. I'm sorry I don't know your name yet, what is it?" Annie said apologetically.

"My name is Katie. Am I allowed to come in? It's a little cold outside and I'm a little confused," I said already needing to sit by a really warm fire.

"Come on in and don't be shy. Holly won't hurt a fly. Well, maybe she would hurt a fly but only because she is very afraid of them," Annie said laughing a little.

"O.K.," I said. "Thank you so much," Lucky for me there was a fire, nice and warm and a steaming cup of hot chocolate sitting on a red blanket. It looked so nice, I wanted to run up to it, lie down, and just fall asleep.

"So," Annie started "Why did you come here and when did you move in,"

"I moved in today and I was just exploring the house and I found this place," I said staring longingly at the cup of hot chocolate.

"Do you want some hot chocolate?" She asked,

"I would, yes thank you so much," I said, my throat getting dry.

"Alright," she said, already on her way to the kitchen "But I meant why were you wandering around the house instead of unpacking your clothes and stuff. And this time I want the truth," I really didn't want to answer this question but I knew I had to so I took a deep breath and began.

"I really miss my old friends and I didn't want to look at any pictures or see my new town without them being next door. So I started to explore my new house and I found you guys," I yelled over the banging of pots and pans "Do you need any help," I yelled.

"No I'm fine. I am just trying to get this one pot," she said and with one final bang it went silent. "I got it," she yelled obviously very satisfied. Within a few minutes she came in with a steaming hot cup.

"Yumm," I said. And once I had it in my hands I took a nice long sip. It was so delicious, I almost drank the whole thing, but I stopped myself.

After that we just sat and watched the fire rise and fall for a little while I almost fell asleep but right then she blasted me with a thousand questions. Some of them were questions about my friends and others were about my family and me. I tried to answer as many as I could but right when I was done answering one another one shot out of her mouth. After she seemed like she was done she sat up and looked around the room.

"Well after everything that has happened to you with your friends I think that you should call them every day and just pretend like they are at home sick or something. It might be a little tricky at first but it will get easier I promise. Even if it does get hard know that you can come here for help anytime," she said nicely.

"Okay," I said "Thanks, but I think I should go home right now my parents will be looking for me,"

"All right but are you sure you don't want to stay for my famous pizza?" she asked me.

"No I think I'd better go home now but maybe tomorrow," I told her. As I walked out the door I waved goodbye and traveled back to the light switch. I climbed up onto the dresser and then swung to turn the light off.

A few seconds later I was in the hallway of my new house and just in time too. My parents were calling me for dinner.

Dinner was terrible! My mom was really

excited to be in the new house, so she made her super special pizza (what a coincidence) and amazing brownies. They were only good in her mind and I could not wait to get away from the table. She set the steaming, hot pizza plate on the table and looked at us, waiting for us to take a slice. I looked up at my mom who was smiling like crazy and said, "Mom, yeah you know how much I love your pizza, but I'm not really in the mood," I lied I really, really wanted to leave and go eat with Annie.

"I made this special for you though. Just because I know how much you love it," she replied, making a puppy dogface. I looked back up at her and then I took a slice. I can tell you pizza usually can't be bad, except for when my mom makes it. Have you ever tried hard bread with rotten cheese? If you have, then you probably ate my mom's pizza. It's really gross and totally unappetizing. I reluctantly took a really tiny bite just to see if it was any good and it really wasn't good at all. Then I took a big bite to make her think that I really loved it. But before I could even swallow the horrible stuff, my brother flung his pizza at the wall. My dad looked at him and that was all I saw of my brother the rest of the dinner. He ran all the way upstairs and slammed the door.

By then I was really itching to leave the table and run into Munchkin Land, but I knew I was already in too far to get out of eating my mom's nasty pizza. How in the world could I eat that nasty stuff when I was daydreaming about Annie's amazing food? There was nothing not to like about her food, but my mom's was another ball game. "Mom, can I be excused?" I asked choosing my words cautiously.

"Now why in the world would you want to leave the table? Are you not feeling well or something?" she asked back. Well, I thought to myself, I guess there is only one

way out of this one. The only thing that I could possibly do to get sent to my room was get in trouble. I had to think long and hard about something that would get me in trouble today, but not any other time. Finally I thought of the perfect thing, I had to spill everything. I started to talk to my mom and then in mid sentence I knocked my water over.

"Oh woops I so didn't mean to do that," I apologized. Then I started to eat everything on my plate and everything was all over my face.

"Now Katie what in the world do you think you're doing? Were you born in a barn? Go up to your room and then right before you go to sleep come and clean your mess up," my mom yelled at me. Yes, I thought to myself as I tried my best to look upset.

Once I was in my room I slammed my door shut. I know I did not do anything bad, but for my mom that was torturous, she hates messy houses.

Then I quietly opened my door and snuck into Munchkin Land. When I knew I was safe inside I started to walk around town. I had lost my appetite so I didn't feel the need to go straight to Annie's house. That was a really bad idea. At first everything was fine and so I went to see what was down a little ways. I soon found a mall so I walked inside. Inside there was everything you could ever imagine. The best part of all was that since I owned this house I could get anything I wanted for free. I quickly ran around to every store and got everything I could get my hands on. Unfortunately for me, the last store I went to didn't know I was the owner of the house. So they called the cops. Soon everyone was parting to the sides of the mall letting the cops run through the building. They came straight at me and grabbed me tight. "Hi I think you have the

wrong girl,” I stated.

“Nope you’re just the girl we were looking for,” One of the heavysset cops replied back, as they dragged me to their car. I was silent all the way until they told me to put on one of those orange suits, which really drew the line for me.

“Can I take my call now, before I put that monkey suit on, I mean lovely orange suit,” I stuttered

“Sure, why not? I mean who in the world would want to come and get a mall stealer,” the heavier-set cop said. Boy did that make me feel great.

“Does anyone know Annie’s number she’s a really good friend,” I said.

“Then why don’t you know her number,” he snapped back.

“Listen I just don’t. Does anyone know her number?” I asked getting a little louder and more frustrated.

“Well I don’t really think that you are going to need a number,” they replied “because she works here,” That was even weirder then anything that had happened that day.

Within a few seconds I was walking with Annie back up to her house. Back in her house we sat down on her cozy couch and started to talk about my friends and everything like that. Then I gasped in the middle of her sentence. “What is it?” Annie asked really concerned.

“I just realized, that I’m starting school tomorrow.

“Oh that’s easy all you have to do is be yourself it is that simple,” she stated like it was the easiest thing in the world.

“It’s not really that easy you know, what if they don’t like what I’m really like,” I said getting worried.

“What’s not to like?” Annie asked me. “I think you’re just tired and of course everyone will love you. Maybe it will take some time to get used to, but in the end

everyone will love you,” Annie said as I walked out the door. Wow that was a super long day, and I was really anxious for the next day.

I got my pajamas on and hopped onto bed. It had been a really long day and I had realized that for once, I was actually really tired. I tried to fall asleep but then I remembered I had to clean my mess. Great, I thought, this should be really fun. I trudged out of bed and ran into the kitchen. Unfortunately, I forgot that the spill was all over and I slipped backward. I landed with a loud bang. The one thing that was really weird was that my parents weren’t up. After I made myself clean up the mess, I went into my parents’ room. They were sound asleep. I had no idea why they went to bed so early, but that didn’t matter. I then walked back through the mucky halls rubbing my head. It still hurt.

When I woke up the next morning, I heard my brother in the room next to me brushing his teeth. I also heard my dad packing our lunches and I knew what a day I had planned ahead of me. I quickly got ready for school and everyone piled into the car.

Once we were at my new school I took a deep breath and undid my seatbelt. I really wished I could run away and just live in a place where there was no such thing as school.

“Come on honey, we are here. It’s time to get out of the car,” my dad said again pointing out the obvious.

“No, that’s okay, I’ll just stay here. And. I don’t know...I’m just going to stay here,” I proclaimed. My dad was not going to take that. He took one look at me, grabbed my arm, and dragged me out. Once I was out of the car and I still wouldn’t move. He pulled me and threatened me until I was finally in that dreadful building. He pulled open the big creaky doors that led into a

dark hallway. I could not figure out what was with this place and its gloomy features. Even some of the kids looked as creepy as the building. My dad took my arm, put a smile on his face, and strode into the office. He accidentally opened the door only for himself and the heavy glass door slammed in my face. Wow, this is such an amazing day, I thought to myself, going into a new school, really scared, and with an almost broken nose, thanks to my dad.

“Hi, I’m Katie’s dad and I was told I needed to sign her up,” my dad said.

“Oh yes the papers are right here. You can start filling these out while I take Katie to her class,” the secretary said as she started to walk out the door. She motioned for me to follow her. When I pretended like I didn’t see her, she came up and patted me.

“Okay, bye dad. See you after school,” I said trying to sound as happy as possible. As I walked through the gloomy halls I looked inside of the classroom windows. Some classes looked inviting, and others looked really, really terrible. Finally we reached my class and as the secretary led me through the door and to the teacher all eyes were on me.

“This is Katie everyone,” the secretary stated. Then she left just like that.

“Hi Katie, my name is Mrs. Tumble and this is math. Just fill in that empty space right there,” Mrs. Tumble said, sounding nice enough to make this hour at least a little enjoyable. As I walked through the rows and rows of seats and sat down at the back of the class I felt totally closed off from the whole class. I could barely see the board and I couldn’t hear a word Mrs. Tumble was saying. It was like they were all just trying to ignore me. All I could really do was slump down in my seat and try to hear, but everything that she was saying was just going right passed me.

Compared to the first hour, the rest of the day was pure horrible. It was filled with staring kids, loud or quiet teachers and boring, boring, boring. I tried as hard as I could to pay attention, but how could I when I was pushed into the only spot open, way back in the room. The bus home was a whole different story. I got on and had to introduce myself to at least ten people. Then I sat down and tried to just stare out the window until someone sat down next to me.

“Hi my name is Sara. I was in your math class today and I just wanted to say hi. You seemed a little lonely,” Sara said.

“Well I guess a little. Hey if you’re good, do you get to move up to the front of the class,” I asked.

“Oh no, all you have to do is ask the teacher and they’ll switch you right away, no questions asked,” Sara said laughing a little.

“Oh okay. Thanks, and my name is Katie,” I said. Finally a friend. I realized later that all you really need is a friend to be by you and stand by you.

“Great Katie. Then I’ll see you in math. Oh, and if you want, I can come ask Mrs. Tumble if you can switch,” Sara said.

“That would be great. Thanks!” I yelled as I hopped off the bus. I had a friend. I really just wanted to run home do a really quick victory dance and then go tell Annie the great news. I knew that was not going to happen though. As soon as I walked through the door I was piled with questions. Some of them were school related and some of them were questions about my new friends. It took about a half and hour just to get through the door. After about an hour of sitting and talking and talking and sitting, I made an excuse that I had to go do my homework. I didn’t even stop at my room. I went straight down the hall to go see Annie.

Once I was inside and the switch was on, I bolted for Annie's house. Huffing and puffing, I knocked on the door as hard as I could without breaking my arm. No answer, I rang the doorbell. No answer. I went to the neighbor's house.

"Hi. Do you know where Annie is?" I asked her neighbors. Right when the neighbor answered my question though I already knew the answer and I dreaded to think about going back there.

"She's at the police department," Annie's elderly neighbor replied back.

"Thank you," I yelled back after I was already halfway to the station. I could hear the door being slammed behind me, but I didn't let that bother me. I ran inside the station, until the front desk stopped me. Right when I was about to whiz right past them they stopped me.

"Whoa there, where do you think you're going?" One of them asked.

"I need to find Annie. Can you help me?" I panted, barely able to get the words out.

"Oh yeah, just follow me," the other cop said. So I did. We walked by five empty jail cells and then we pulled up to a desk. "This is her," he said and then turned around and went back to his desk.

"Hi Katie," someone said from behind me. It was Annie.

"Yes!" I yelled at the top of my lungs. "Hi Annie! I went to school today and I made a new friend. Her name is Sara. Your advice actually worked and I made a new friend!"

"Well did you think it wasn't going to work," Annie said. Then she laughed. "Have you called your old friends yet?"

"Well no but I will tonight. Do you think they still miss me, because I miss them a lot," I said, calming down a little.

"Of course they still miss you. Why wouldn't they?" Annie asked as she sat

down at her desk. "Katie tonight before you fall asleep, I want you to think about all of the good times you have had with them and how you are their friends. I don't want you to think about how much you miss them just how much you are their friends. Only positive and no negative,"

"I'll try, and Annie thank you. I would die if it weren't for you. Don't worry I'm coming back sooner than you think," I said as I ran back to my room. I had a lifetime of things to think about. I had to start my homework, which I should have been doing.

Even after I had gotten used to everything, I still didn't really like to go to school and didn't have to many friends.

Now another one of the worst days of my life was a Monday AGAIN and I absolutely hate Mondays. It feels like you are waking up hours before you are supposed to, and you feel all tired and groggy. I felt even worse when I was walking into school. I knew I had math next. I hate math, no doubt about it. So I walked into my new school with the big, brown, hard doors that creak when you open them. The teachers talking on and on about things that I will never need to know in life.

"And that concludes today's lesson," stated my math teacher just as the bell rang. I bolted out of that room like lightning and I swear I saw a smile on my teacher's face when I ran out of that dreadful room, and I assure you I was smiling too. Next, to science I thought. "Great," I murmured under my breath.

"Good morning students," my science teacher said. "I would like to see Katie up at my desk please, now," "Uh oh," I thought to myself because I knew getting called up by my science teacher was like the death trap had already been set.

"Uhhh yeah, I'm coming I just need

to...ummm...get my things organized first.”

“No Katie, now, I need to see you NOW,” my evil science teacher replied.

“Coming,” I said as I ran up to his desk. By now as you can see I was not in the best mood and I was completely frightened.

“Now,” I said as I got up to his desk, “what do you need to tell me?”

“Yes, well on the test that we just took, your grade was not one of the best. In fact it was one of the worst,” my evil science teacher said. “But you can bring your grade back up if you really try hard and pay really good attention.” After the part where he said I could bring my grade back up I was all ears. And I listened very intently and every word to me was like a gold mine being discovered. I knew that if I kept my grade up my parents would be happy, and I really wanted my parents to be happy.

The rest of the day, I was bored out of my wits. I really could not wait for the day to be over.

When the final bell rang, I dashed out of my social studies class. Then I charged out of that school to go home and relax for once that day.

Once I was home and had told my parents about the science test. I got sent to my room. Of course, why would I stay

there when I could travel somewhere in my own house? When my parents had gone back downstairs, I crept out of my room and into my second life. Once I was in the room I gently shut the door behind me. Finally, I was safe inside. I felt good in my own little life that nobody knew about. I turned the light on and felt safe and like I was home. I ran over to Annie’s house and knocked on the door gently to make sure Holly didn’t howl too loudly. Then I went inside very quietly. I first saw Annie making her famous pizza and it smelled amazing!

Even though my newfound town helped me recover from my near faint attack, I still really missed my old friends. Annie had helped me so much though. I realized that I would keep my friends and they would still be my friends too, but I can’t stop living my life. I can’t let my fears take over my whole life and stop me from doing the things I love best. I loved all of my friends and that wasn’t going to change. I hoped and prayed that day, while eating Annie’s famous pizza, that I always had someone to rely on. I knew that I had two homes and that I fit in. I knew that I had two houses and people that love me and support me, and whenever I just needed to relax, I could always find a place to just sit down and think in my corner.

## Italia French

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*Good and evil face off in a rivalry as old as time in **ITALIA FRENCH**, by Pen Island.*

To all of the people who care. And will always.

Most people, when they hear the words “World War II,” think of the Holocaust. I think of it as a mind-blowing experience. Let me start at the beginning of this twisted tale.

My name is Chazz Sinatra, and I am the oldest of two brothers and five sisters. I have one dad and two moms. I have two moms because my dad lived two different lives. However, that is another story for a



different time. I lived in the small town of Bari, Italy. When I graduated high school, my dad, his first wife (my natural mother), one brother, two sisters, and I moved to France.

We lived in Paris where I met my French friend Pierre. Pierre was a very strange 17-year-old. He was a year younger than me. Pierre was adopted by a local artist whose name was Genevieve Hasbrogh. Pierre and I would always like to explore the far corners of France.

On a very hot day in June, Pierre and I were walking to the local market for lunch. There I spotted the most wonderful, natural being ever. It was an American woman. She was at least 18 years old. After lunch Pierre and I tried asking her on a date.

Pierre must have really messed up or the woman did not believe in “French love” because she punched Pierre so hard I thought she knocked him out. That meant that it was my turn to try for a date. She stated to walk away, and then she ran into the street fair. It was very hard to find her, but I did.

She was drinking a Coca Cola and had a book in her hand. The book was titled *How to Know When a Person Likes You*. That was when I decided to made my move. I went up to her and started to talk.

I asked, “Are you from here?”

She said, “My name is Courtney, and I saw you and your French friend, uhh, Pie... Pierre! Yes, Pierre was that French loser kid who was hitting on me. You and Pierre where staring at me, and I bet you thought you could go far by asking me out, right? Well, unless you have a good attitude and a lot of money it won’t work.”

“I have a good attitude and great social skills. I have a couple five Franc notes and a lot of centimes.”

“Then it’s a date. Where should we

meet?”

“At Le Pont Neuf. Do you know where it is?”

“Yes. What time?”

“20:00 hours. Tomorrow”.

“Sounds good to me.”

The night of the date, when I told Pierre about my rendezvous, he literally tried to kill me.

“Just because I wasn’t able to get her doesn’t mean that you can!” shouted Pierre.

“Well, don’t I deserve a chance?” I said.

“You told me that you had a girlfriend already!”

“That was when I was in 6th grade! In Italy we are not afraid to talk to girls!” That sentence made Pierre so mad that he did the unexpected: Pierre pulled out a golden gun.

Pierre said, “This was my dad’s gun. He carved my name on the side before he died. I thought that I would have to never use this gun, but hey, look where I am now.” Pierre pulled the trigger. At that moment I look at my watch. The time was 20:00 hours. Suddenly, I remembered my date.

The bullet hit me in the gut, but I did not feel anything. Something uncomfortable took over my body. I was not able to move again until Pierre shot another bullet.

This time I caught the bullet. I did not know how I did it. I chucked the bullet at Pierre’s kneecap. Pierre fell to the ground. I kicked him in the gut, and walked away. The uncomfortable feeling came back, shivering up my spine.

When I lived in Bari, I stole from everybody. I would also beat up anybody that was in my way. I was called “robber” or “thief” or a “no-hearted bloody juvenile delinquent.” I only went to jail once. That was for beating up the mayor’s son. I was not always a bad guy. Every Friday night I would go to church and sing in the choir. I

always had the solo part.

I turned around, felt my eyes turn red, and jumped about five feet in the air. I slammed Pierre into a brick wall. I felt fire come from my hands and punched Pierre in the jaw. I did not see Pierre again until two years later.

It was my twentieth birthday. It was also the day I was going to propose to Courtney. I was driving my new motorcycle around town when I heard a bomb go off. The bomb came from the east side of town. It sounded like it came from my neighborhood. I went as fast as my bike could go and when I got to my house, it was gone. But, there was a worse surprise.

There was a man with a cane in his hand and he started to walk towards me. At first I thought it was my dad but then I realized that it was Pierre.

I said, "I thought you were in the hospital in a coma."

Pierre said, "Well you can't always be right."

"Why did you come here, Pierre?"

"Why you ask? Let me first say that I have the right to kill you if I want to."

"You didn't even have that right two years ago!"

"As I was saying, I work for the DDU."

"The DDU?"

"The DDU stands for Destroy Devils Unit."

"What do I have to do with the devil?"

"Everything," Pierre said.

With a flick of his wrist, Pierre turned his cane into a sword and tried to stab me with it. I grabbed the cane, threw it down, and flung Pierre over my shoulder. I felt the uncomfortable feeling return.

"I have the grounds of your house wired," said Pierre as he was pulling out a pen.

"If I press this button on the pen, the whole neighborhood will blow up." I did

not pay attention to that; instead I tried to stab him with the cane.

His thumb was on the button. I stabbed him in his neck as he was pressing the button. The bombs went off.

Next thing I knew, I was floating in mid-air. At first I thought I was dead, but then I realized that I was flying. I did not know how to land, though. At first I thought that flying was a good thing. As usual, I was wrong.

A plane was coming head on towards me two times faster than I was traveling. I tried to land but I couldn't. I made a hard left. The plane missed me but I was not able to level off. I crash-landed into the cold brick stones of a local church.

When I stood up, I felt like a piece of poop. I had a scratch going down my left arm and my face was covered with blood. I decided to go into the church. I thought that the priest would be able to help me with this mess.

"Oh my, come in come in young man. What happened to you?" asked the priest.

"I just survived a bombing in my neighborhood. And, I was accused of being related to the devil," I said.

"What is your name?"

"My name is Roger Sinatra. My dad is Anton Sinatra."

"You mean your dad was Anton Sinatra."

"What?"

"Your dad Anton was a gambler. That was his job. Right"

"Well he would go to the casino at 21:00, and come back at 5 in the morning. How do you know this stuff?"

"I know this stuff because I know the devil. I was his adviser. But, yesterday when your dad said he was going to visit your cousin Frank in America, he lied. Anton went to America to fight with the devil. "

"What do you mean fight with the devil?"

"I mean that when you lived in Bari, your dad went to a casino and bid his soul and your soul to the devil!" He said raising his voice.

"But... but..."

"Your dad became the devil's helper. He had to obey the devil at any cost. That is why you moved to France. The Devil wanted you to move to France. Your dad died along with the devil yesterday, in the beginning of the World War. Your dad's powers were transferred to you."

"How did the devil die? What do you mean by powers? And what is DDU?"

"The devil died because his turn was over. Devils only last for their purpose in time. This devils purpose was over which led to his death. Now you are the last blood relative to the devil, which means that you have to end World War before it gets ugly. Powers are special reflexes and abilities that people get whenever they lose to the devil. DDU is a company that wants everyone that is related to the devil or made a bet with the devil to die. There are about 50 people every year who die because of the DDU. Also, the DDU wants everybody to have blue eyes and blonde hair."

"What can I do?" I asked.

"You can start practicing with the powers you have. No one, not even God can tell when the rest of the powers will kick in."

"Before I go I have one question."

"Okay."

"Why did you become a priest if you were the devil's adviser?" I asked.

"I could tell you. But then I would have to drown you, burn you, and bury you."

"Okay, then I won't until we meet again." I said.

"Until we meet again," said the priest.

I ran out the door expecting more bad news. I hoped this time I was wrong!

As I started walking, I looked down at

my watch and the time was 12:00. I remembered Courtney. I had stop at the Jewelry store to pick up the ring I ordered for Courtney. I went down the alley, past the old red fire house, past another local church, took a right at Rue de Grenelle and went to the jewelry store. Inside, the air smelled like cigarettes and cheap perfume. An old man with a high voice came to me and asked, "What, what do you want?"

"I'm here to pick up a ring."

"Ahh" the man said, looking through a bunch of files. "Are you Dante Pwells?"

"No. I am Chazz Sinatra."

"Chazz Singer... Chazz Saks... oh, here, Chazz Sinatra. You wanted the 5 diamond wedding ring, right?"

"Yep."

"Well, who's the lucky girl?"

"A friend."

"Well then, would you like it gift boxed?"

"No, just a regular box in a bag."

"Dang. You like your life to be simple don't you?"

"You could say that."

"Well here you go. Now that will be 400 francs."

I reached into my pocket to pay the man but all I felt were ashes.

"Can I pay later?"

"What do you mean 'later'?"

"I mean like in five months."

"If you don't have the money give me the ring back!" the man yelled.

The man was staring at me. In the corner of my eye I saw a glint of light on a gun that was sticking out of his pocket. I remembered the words of the priest, "You can start practicing." I also remembered when I punched Pierre into the wall and my hands were on fire. I practiced, all right. I practiced the impossible.

I shot fire from my hands as if I were a pro. The man pulled the gun from his

pocket but it was too late. I watched as he burned to death in his very own store. I turned my head and saw a boy about 16, wearing a suit.

The boy said, "Wow, how did you do that?"

"I could tell you," I said, taking a big pause while looking at my clothes. "But, you would have to give me your clothes."

"My suit! My suit was hand made by my great grand-mere,"

"Well the choice is yours!"

Needless to say, we swapped clothes.

"Now tell me how you did that," The boy said.

"I could tell you but I'd rather show you."

I shot an even bigger ball of fire from my hands. The boy went through the wall and ended up burning in the middle of the road.

I walked out of the store with the ring in my right hand. I got on a black motorcycle parked outside the store. Unfortunately the key was missing. I check in the pocket of the clothes I traded for and found the key!

I drove to Courtney's house knowing that I was three hours late. I went to the front door and rang the doorbell. No one answered. I rang again. No one answered. I tried opening the door. Of course it was unlocked.

I was walking through the house yelling Courtney's name when I found note by the phone. It read, "Roger if you find this note you must know by now that things are going really badly. Pierre is making me write this letter to warn you that you are not safe. Pierre is going to ki..." That was the end of the letter. There was a big, red, dried bloodstain on the paper.

I could not believe that Pierre wanted to kill me this much. I thought about what had happen that day. The day I turned twenty years old.

I ran outside, crying out in anger. I didn't think I could live without Courtney. I jumped on the motorcycle and headed full speed toward the Quay so I could drive it to the Seine. Police sirens were blaring behind me as I was being chased. Then the cops started to shoot at me. I knew I had to blow them up. I turn my arm backwards and shot fireballs as big as bowling balls at the police.

I kept trying to get to the Quay but the police kept messing me up. So, I kept shooting fireballs at them. I finally made it to Quay. The police were about a half a mile behind me. I went full speed off the landing and did a flip over the water. As I was in air I shot the bike down so I would fall into the water. That was the last time I saw daylight for what turned out to be a long time.

Sometime later, I was lying on sand. I tried to move but nothing worked except for my legs. I was able to turn over so I could lie on my back. I looked up and I saw three people. At first I thought that they were the three people you meet in heaven, but one of them was smoking and one was drinking a beer. The third man was very fat and had long black hair.

"What do ya think that is Sonny?" ask the man with the beer.

"It's a man. Can't ya see that the man has a beard," said the man with the cigarette.

"My wife's step-mom has a beard," said the man who was very fat.

"Well, only you would marry a girl whose step-mom has a beard."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"Hey guys can you give a hand and help me up?" I asked.

"Holy sock cake!" all of them yelled.

They all pulled out guns and aimed them at me.

"I think we should kill him here," said

the one with the beer.

"We should bring him to Boss. Boss will know what to do with him," said the fat man.

I realized that they had a logo on their jackets that read "Nazi." On the sleeve though, it read "DDU."

I jumped off the ground and landed on my feet. They pulled out guns and started to shoot at me. After the second bullet, I shot another fireball that blew them all to ashes. I walked away but felt something pull on my pants.

I turned around. No one was there. I felt something grab my ankle and was pulled into the ground. I stood back up in water. I wandered around when someone behind me said, "Welcome to the underground lair of the devil."

I turned around to see a big surprise. It was an old man with a cane and a big grey beard that went down to the floor.

"Try not to be so surprised. This place is not much."

We started to walk through a long tunnel. The walk lasted about 20 minutes. When the tunnel ended, I saw another really big tunnel but with people in workers clothes.

There where people with electronic gizmos, people testing out weapons, and people making weapons.

"Wow. I never knew that you could fit this much stuff underground," I said.

"Well it is a work in progress. But now that you are here you can develop your weaknesses."

"Sure. What?"

"We need to know your weaknesses so that we know what weapons to destroy of the enemy's."

"Okay. But first I want to know who the Nazi's are?"

"I'll answer that later. But now we need to study. In your case though practice."

I was put through a lot of tests. Some of the test were lifting weights, controlling fire, shooting fire, back flips, front flips, and fire resistance.

"Now there is one more test," said my instructor.

"What is it?" I said.

"It is the acid fire test."

"What's acid fire?"

"Acid fire is a gas that we made and it is ten times stronger than an atomic bomb."

"How is a liquid stronger than an atomic bomb?"

"It can kill more people if they breathe it in."

They put me in an empty container. Then green and yellow fumes started to come out of its sides. I felt my insides stop once I took a breath in of the acid fire. I tried to break the container, but it would not open. So, I blew it up.

Once I was out of the container there was no one in the tunnel. Everyone was gone. I started to run but I forgot to hold my breath. I was breathing acid fire and I thought for sure that I was going to die.

I saw my instructor standing with a facemask and a gun in his left hand.

"The DDU is no longer the DDU. They are now known as the Nazi's."

I look around the tunnel and saw a bunch of air machines with acid fire coming out of them. I shot the instructor with a fireball. He went flying into the darkness of the tunnel.

I started to run again. I saw a door on the ceiling but the ladder was pulled off the side of the wall. I tried to jump to reach it but couldn't.

I fell to the ground fearing that I was going to die here, in this unknown place in the ground. As I hit the ground I felt someone pick me up. I could not tell who it was, but their hands were extremely cold. I closed my eyes and my mind began to

wander as if I were in a dream.

I was falling from the sky at about 500 miles per hour. I hit the ground hard. I could still move my eyes and my heart was beating. I saw other people lying next to me. They were dead. I could move my bones but not the meat or skin on my bones. I woke up when someone grabbed my hair. I felt a sword press against my throat.

“Who am I?” yelled the person grabbing my throat.

“Who am I?” the person yelled again.

“I don’t know!” I yelled.

Then he threw me and I hit a wall. He was about to punch me but I dodged it.

“Who am I?”

“I can’t tell with your mask on!” I yelled.

“Oh. My bad. Now, who am I?”

“You’re that priest from France.” I said.

“Correct. Now here’s a towel wipe yourself off. You have a blood stain on your shirt.”

“So how’s life?” he asked.

“Not bad. I mean I my girlfriend disappeared the day I was going to propose.”

“Two years ago,” He said.

“What?”

“You have been gone for two years. You have missed a lot.”

“I can’t imagine. When did the DDU change their name and why?”

“The DDU changed their name because they were able to get Germany on their side. Germany wanted the name to be Nazi not DDU. The name changed about a day after you died. “

“How am I here right now if I died?”

“That’s because God did not that you where ready to die. When you arrived in heaven God sent you back to Earth. “

We stopped in front of a local bar. The bar’s name was “Stan’s Ba-da Bing.” It’s not every day when you see a priest dressed

as a gangster walking in to a bar. When we walked inside, all I could smell was beer and cigarettes.

“What would you like to drink?” said the bartender.

“I’ll have a beer,” I said.

“And I’ll have one, too.” said the priest.

The bartender gave us our drinks, and glared at us with his one eye. The other eye was covered with a patch.

“Those people that said that they were going to help you in the underground tunnel, they lied. They were going to use your weaknesses and make more weapons from them.”

“Where are we?”

“We are in New York City, New York. You floated from France to New Jersey. When I found you in the tunnel I took you to my safe house in New York City. After a while, you woke up and now we are here.”

“I understand. But how did they know where I was?”

“You like to ask questions?”

“I do not know.”

“Anyway, they knew were you where because you were lying on the beach for 5 weeks. Your heart was still beating.”

I started to drink my beer when I notice that the bartender was still staring at us.

“You see this knife?” the priest asked.

I looked down at his right hand.

“Yes. What’s so special about it?”

“This is not an ordinary knife. If I give one flick of my wrist I can turn it into a knife that can rip the soul out of your body and send it to kill another person.”

“Why would you want to kill two people at once?”

“You see that bartender with the eye patch.”

“Yes.”

“He is part of the one and only Nazi group in America. Their leader is a terrorist

whose name is Bill Jacobs. Bill Jacobs is a street fighter and is the strongest person in the world. He could smash you through ten walls and still have enough energy to break your back and crack you in half."

As the priest was talking the radio started to blast news.

"This just in, there is a group of black trucks shooting at police cars. They are heading down Park Avenue towards Broadway. They are carrying illegal weapons. The U.S. military has no idea what these weapons can do," the anchorman said.

"What street is the bar on?" I asked the priest.

"Park Avenue at Broadway."

"You don't think that they know where we are?"

"They know where everybody they want to know about is."

"What?"

As I asked the question a car crashed through the door. The bartender opened a cabinet full of machine guns and handguns. He pulled out a machine gun and aimed it at us. The priest jumped on the bar and with a flick of his wrist he took the bartender's soul out of him. He sent it to the Nazis that were coming out of the car.

Five more cars stopped in front of the bar. None of them were police cars. More people came in toting guns. Luckily, the priest and I were able to overpower our opponents.

A big, fat, muscular guy came into the bar. He was smoking a cigar and holding a machine gun in his right arm and a walkie-talkie in his left.

"Red's you take hostages and Blue's you kill hostages if they don't give answers," said the big man.

He walked toward the light switch and hooked up a small silver box to it. It started to count down from 3:00.

"There's a bomb!" I yelled to the priest but it was too late.

The priest was lying dead on the bar with blood coming out of his chest. I saw a guy pick up the knife. Before he found about the power of the knife, I shot him. I shot 30 other Nazis through the wall with a firebomb. I took the knife out of the Nazi's hand.

I felt a bullet hit me in my right shoulder blade. I turned around and saw the big man. He was wearing a nametag that read Bill Jacobs. I stopped him as he was running to the opening on the wall caused by the car. I jumped in front of Bill Jacobs and punched him in the jaw. He just laughed.

"Is that all that the devil can do!" he smirked.

His voice was as high as Mighty Mouse.

"Like you can do better," I said.

He could do better. He punched me in the jaw. Bill started to run up the stairs that were next to the bomb and led to the attic. He was fast for a big guy. I was faster.

I ran up to the attic, but when I got to the attic I did not see him. He saw me. He grabbed me by the neck and tried to strangle me. I pulled him over my shoulder and flung him out the window. He crashed into the window of the hotel room in the next building. That was when I think I developed super hearing. I was able to hear the bomb strike 0:03... 0:02...0:01...0:00. I jumped from the spot where I was standing through the broken window of the hotel room a split second before the bomb exploded.

I landed on Bill, whom had at least five pieces of glass stuck in his forehead. I dug the knife into his throat and sent his soul in to the fires of hell.

"Who's the tough guy now!" I yelled to his carcass.

"Do you mind!" yelled a person.

I turned my head and saw a man and a woman lying in bed.

“Oh, I’m sorry. Let me just get rid of him.”

I pick up his body and lit it on fire and sent it through the ceiling of the hotel.

“Is that better?” I asked.

“Yes, now do you mind?” The man said raising his voice.

“Okay, okay, I’m going, I’m going.”

I jumped out the window. I landed on the remnants of the bar, which were pretty much in ashes. I walked towards the remains of the priest. Half of his head was burned and the other was covered in blood. His right arm was gone and his left foot was hanging by the bone.

I used the knife to see if his soul was still in there. I dug the knife into his neck and began to slice it open. A white figure came out of his body. I sent the figure to heaven. I took his wallet. He had twenty \$100, five \$50, seven \$20, and thirty-two \$10 bills.

I walked towards Times Square where I saw the newflash.

“Adolph Hitler’s assistant is going to Japan to make an agreement with the Prime Minister of Japan,” was scrolling across the sides of a tall building.

I recognized the description of the man whom they were writing about. It was the man from the tunnel. The man who wanted to know my weaknesses. Two men wearing military uniforms walked up next to me.

“Do you think that we are going to drop a nuke on them Asians?” said the guy on my right.

“Heck no. Besides, the General said that we were going to drop a regular bomb on them,” said the guy on my left.

“He could have lied,” said the guy on my right.

“You never lie about a bombing mission to the people that are dropping the bombs.”

The men walked away. I was thinking how I could get to Japan in enough time to turn the bombs in to nukes. Later that night I figured it out.

I was walking around farmland towards the east side of the city. I saw a plane for sale.

“Who’s there? Don’t make me get my shotgun!” yelled the farmer who owned the plane.

“I just want to know how much that plane cost.” I said.

“It cost \$1,000.”

“Only \$1,000?”

“That is how much 1,000 bottles of beer cost. Besides I never wanted this plane. I stole it when I was drunk.”

“How do you steal a plane?”

“I don’t know? I was drunk. Are you going to buy the plane, because I want to get back to watching the football game?”

“Okay, I’ll buy it. Here’s \$1,000.”

I gave him the money that was in the priest wallet.

“Do you know how to fly a plane?”

“I have seen movies with planes.”

“Well here’s the key, the tank should be full. The plane runs on gasoline. Where are you flying to anyway?”

“Japan.”

“Well have fun with the Asians.”

I started the engine. I had no idea what I was doing. I had never driven a car. I had only driven a motorcycle, which is a lot simpler to control than a plane. All I knew is that, up is down, down is up, left is right, and right is left. I did not even know which way to go to reach Japan.

I pushed the steering wheel down and went up. I only lasted about twenty minutes in the air. I crashed into an open piece of land. I decided to try to use my powers to see if I could fly. It worked. I was traveling at over five hundred sixty-two miles per hour.



I was flying over China when I saw army planes over Japan. One began to drop a bomb. I sped up to one thousand, five hundred seventy two miles per hour.

I hit the bomb a just before it hit the ground. That bomb caused the bomb to explode and a mushroom cloud formed. I flew back into the air. I was falling from the sky at about five hundred miles per hour. I had the taste of blood in my mouth. I landed back first onto a huge piece of glass. I felt the glass get stuck in my back. I made a huge dent mark in the ground. Another bomb fell. It caused me to fly into the air. Once again, I landed on my back. The glass went through my body, but I was still alive. I had millions of smaller pieces of glass in my left arm and my right arm was covered in blood.

I could not stand up. Crawling to a mirror, I was shocked by the sight of blood, glass, and sweat mixed together making me look like a monster. I crawled as farther. I tried to stand up, but the glass that went through the center of my body weighed me down. Pulling it out was slow and painful. There was a whole in the center in my body when I got it out. .

I slowly walked around the remains of the bombed out city. When I got to the waterfront I tried to walk on the water. I could walk, but I had to run to stay alive. I had the power of supper speed. I ran across the ocean until I got to the Great Wall. I did a super jump over the Great Wall. The jump turned into a take off for another amazing flight.

I flew over all of China, including a military base, which was in a “no flying zone.” Out from the base two missiles came toward me. I tried to dodge them but instead I flew into one, which ruined my flight pattern. I crashed into a mountain.

I was freezing. Wearing a t-shirt with holes in it, shoes that look like dead rats

and jeans that look like paper bags, I started to walk. I could not run because I was too cold. I saw a house in the distance with smoke coming out of the chimney. The house was made of red brick. It was only one floor and as big as a cabin. I knocked on the door.

“Who is it?” yelled a man from the inside.

“I’m Frank Vallie,” I said giving a false name.

“I don’t know any Frank Vallie. Are you one of those Asians that want me to move out of my house? I won’t do it unless you pay me \$12,000.”

“I’m not Asian. I’m Italian. Please sir let me in; I’m freezing my two Italian buns off!”

“All right, I believe you. Come in, come in. Welcome to my small piece of heaven.”

“I don’t believe in heaven.”

“Well you have to believe in something.”

“I believe in Hell.”

“I have never met anyone who believes in Hell but not Heaven.”

“I have never met anyone who wants to live in the middle of nowhere, where all you can see is snow.”

“I didn’t choose to live here. I had to.”

“What do you mean?”

“Never mine. Take a load off. I made some fresh beef stew.”

I took off what was left of my shoes. I walked to the kitchen that was the size of my fingernail. There was a small wooden coffee table with a torn black tablecloth on it and two folding chairs.

“How do you survive out here?” I asked.

“How do you survive in the city?” he asked as a comeback. “Here you go. There’s more if you want any.” A ton of beef stew into my small, white, ceramic bowl.

“Why do you live out here?” I asked again.

“Listen to me closely boy.” He pulled my face close to his as if he knew that someone was listening. “Who are you really?”

“I’m Frank Vallie.”

“Don’t give me that Frank Vallie baloney! Tell me your real name!” The mysterious man then grabbed my neck and said, “I know that you are the last son of the devil. I just want you to tell me your name!”

“I’m Chazz Sinatra! My dad was Anton Sinatra!” I yelled at the top of my lungs.

“Go sit on the couch. I need to get something for you. Go!”

I sat on the couch. I felt like the world was pulling me into the ground when I sat. The couch was grey and smelled like a load of dirty laundry. The man came back into the room with a big brown box in his hands.

“How did you know that I am the last son of the devil?”

“A little birdie in a tree told me.”

“Don’t give me that birdie stuff. If you know that I’m the last son you know what I’m able to do.”

“The priest told me.”

“How did you know the priest?”

“I’m the one who told him about you. I’m the one who told him the only way to get to you was to dress as a priest.”

“How did you know that I was going to run into him when he was a priest?”

“He was not a priest. As you hit the ground by the church, he ran inside and killed the real priest and put on his clothes. Did you really think that the devils adviser would become a priest?”

“At first no. But after a little while I began to believe it. What’s in the box?”

“Survival gear for you.”

“Why do I need survival gear?”

“Would you rather freeze to death or live until you are supposed to die.”

“What if I’m supposed to die in the snow?”

“Do want the gear?”

“Yes. What is the gear?”

“Snow shoes, boots, hat, gloves, t- shirt, and jeans. The snow shoes are magical.”

“What do you mean by magical?”

“If you hit them hard enough with fire you can go from Madagascar to the bottom of the world and end up in Canada in a matter of minutes. If you wore the right clothes and where in a lot of trouble it would be an asset.”

“Why won’t it work if I don’t wear clothes?”

“Not if you don’t wear clothes, it’s if you don’t wear the right clothes.”

“Where are the clothes?”

“They are the clothes in the box you idiot! The black boots, green hat, blue gloves, brown boxers, white t- shirt, blue jeans, and the red snow shoes!”

“I need to wear all of these to work the magic of the snow shoes?”

“Unless you want to die in the middle of nowhere, where all you can see is snow and can’t tell if a person is four feet in front of you, no. If you want to live then you should wear this gear.”

“How will you know if I make it?”

He flipped the snowshoes over. He pointed at a big black square on the bottom of the shoe.

“This is a tracker. It will tell me where you are.”

“How will you get to me before I am dead?”

“I have my own pair. Duh.”

He opened the black square.

“This tells you how fast you are going. It will beep once when you hit five hundred miles per hour. It will beep twice when you hit one thousand miles per hour. The highest you can go is two thousand miles per hour. It will beep five times when you

are moving that fast. If you try to go over two thousand, it will beep non-stop until you crash.”

“Can’t I land if I’m going over two thousand miles per hour?”

“Will you live if I slid your throat, chopped you in to squares, and burned the remainders?”

“No.”

“There’s your answer. The snowshoe magic will only work if you are in great danger or you are about to die. Also, when you crashed into Japan, you killed the guy who tried to kill you in the tunnel plus another fifty million people.”

“I guess that means that I did my job and all of this will end.”

“No! Even though you killed the main man or ‘leader’, there is one who is even stronger.”

“Who could that be?”

“The man is hiding undercover as a regular soldier for the Nazis. Tests were performed on this man, which made him stronger and gave him a super power. No one knows what the power is, but all we know is that it is super powerful. His code name is Big Papa; I was not able to find out his real name.”

“Where is Big Papa?”

“Big Papa is going to be at a Nazi ceremony in Germany. He has long brown hair, and blue eyes. He’s about 5’5 and 343 pounds. He will have no speaking parts in the ceremony. This will make it harder to find him. The American forces foolishly think that the German leader Adolph Hitler is in charge of the remains of DDU.”

“How did the Americans find out about DDU?”

“Remember Bill Jacobs. The head of the only Nazi group in America and was destroyed by you?”

“I thought I killed that guy.”

“You did. His body was lying on the

ground in the official DDU jacket. That’s when U.S. government started to snoop around and found one small thing about the DDU which they think is the only problem that DDU started.”

“What’s that?”

“The war that we are in now. The war known as World War II.”

“So, my plains are, go to Germany in the next twelve hours, find Big Papa, kill big Papa, live a happy ending and hopefully stop the DDU.”

“Don’t forget, Big Papa has a big chance to win in a fight against you.”

“How could he have a big chance if we don’t even know what his powers are?”

Instead of answering my question, the man replied, “just change into these clothes and these clothes only; you can’t wear any other type of clothes.”

It took me about one minute to change into everything. I walked outside and I thought I could make it.

“If you want the snow shoes to work their magic, you cannot use the fire power that you have to keep warm.”

That’s when I lost about 67% of my hope. I walked outside and all I could see was bright white snow. I couldn’t even see 1 inch in front of me.

“Have fun!” yelled the man from the cabin.

I grunted and started to walk.

I felt the cold hard wind hit my face. It felt like I was stuck inside a huge freezer with an entrance but no exit. I was not in enough trouble though to use the snowshoe magic.

My legs felt like frozen chicken bones and were as weak as twigs. My arms felt like frozen twigs and were weaker than twigs. But, I still did not think I was in enough trouble to use the magic.

I saw the sun beginning to rise in to the sky. From the sunlight I saw that I had to

go through a huge mountain range. The mountains went high into the sky. I assumed that I was right on the edge of the Himalayas. I was not in any trouble so I began to walk up the mountain.

When I got to what I thought was half way I looked to my right for no apparent reason and saw a small surprise. It was a mountain climber. I thought that it was a girl and I was right. She was wearing a pink jumpsuit. She had an air tank on her back that was connected to her facemask. She had black boots and her blond hair was hanging out of her hat.

“Hi” I said.

“I don’t think that this is really normal seeing a twenty year old man climbing a mountain, but I’m climbing to help save the world. What are you climbing for?” She asked.

Unexpectedly, I saw her pull out a blue knife and cut her rope, which was holding her on the mountain. I watch her fall to her death. I thought about saving her but I did not know her so I let her fall to her death. I looked down and realized that I was standing at a 180-degree angle. This had to be another power. Not a good power but a power that could be useful.

I started to walk again. When I reached the top of the mountain, it occurred to me that for the girl to be on the rope there had to be a person on the bottom holding her in position. That meant that the person would most likely wonder why she cut the rope. It would be bad news for me if that person sent a search crew after me. Hoping it would not happen, I began to climb down.

Just as I picked up my left foot, a strong wind came from the south, which knocked me off balance. I started to fall off the mountain. Hitting a huge piece of ice that was sticking out of the side caused the magic of the snowshoes to turn on.

I zoomed through the mountain range leaving enormous dent marks on the side of all of the mountains. Suddenly, I felt very hot. I looked down and saw sand instead of snow. The sand then turned to water. The water turned to stone and I crashed into the stone. I did not realize that the box was beeping like crazy. I stood up in front of a sign that read, ‘Welcome to Germany’.

I stood up and took off the snowshoes. I opened the black box that was on the bottom of one and found a compass and a map. I looked at the map. The place I needed to be was about fifty-two hundred miles to the east. I then remembered that I could use my firepower to help me since I did not need to wear the snowshoes. I jumped about fifty feet into the air and went about five hundred miles to the west. I crashed into a local supermarket. The building collapsed.

I stood up and jumped about ten feet into the air this time but went five thousand to the east. I crashed into about ten trees, five houses, two supermarkets, and landed on fire in a local soccer building. That time period took about ten minutes. I stood up, but was too tired to jump. I walked outside and stole someone’s black Mercedes. My luck ran out because the gas gauge soon read empty. There was not another gas station for about another thirty-two miles. I got out and stole another Mercedes. This one was yellow. It took me about another five hours to finish the other two thousand, five hundred miles.

I parked the car in an empty lot about seven miles away from the ceremony. I thought about just launching a huge fireball in to the center of the crowd and look for the fattest man. That could end the war but it could also ruin my plan of hiding from the public.

I walked to a public bathroom were a Nazi was taking a poop. When he walked

out I grabbed his neck and slammed his head against the sink. I shoved his head in to the urinal and flushed it while I was still choking him. He finally died. I took off my clothes and put on his clothes. I heard people cheering, which made me think that it was the end or close to the end. I walked outside and people were forming a circle around a big fire. I reaching for the belt that was attached to the suit, I pulled out a grenade. Without thinking, I pulled the metal pin from the hole and threw the grenade into the crowd. I was actually aiming for the podium where Hitler was talking, but I never had a good throwing arm. It landed in the fire, I think. Anyway, it made a huge explosion. I heard buildings fall down and started to run.

I saw an extremely obese man about 5'5 trying to run. He had long brown hair and was pulling off his Nazi jacket. Under the jacket was a black shirt that said 'Big Papa'. He was putting on a straw cowboy hat as I began to run after him. I grabbed him by his shirt collar as he was about to step onto the sidewalk and flipped him over my shoulder.

"What the flip?" he said.

"Surprised? I am too. I never knew that I could lift 343 pounds of fat in one hand."

"I'm not fat. I'm big boned. Besides, muscle weighs more than fat."

I wanted to end the conversation, so I punched him in the jaw with my hands on fire.

"Ow! How did you do that? Hey, you're that last son of the devil. Right?"

"Yeah."

"Well if you are the last son you must know that I'm the real son of the past devil."

"What? I thought that I am the last son?"

"Well you thought wrong. You are not related to the devil. You are related to a friend of the devils. That is how you got

your powers. I have powers too, though. Like you, I can fly, super jump and I'm super strong. Instead of fire though, I have the power of lightning."

"That is not too cool. I mean that because, like, I can kill people super fast and easy. If you zap them once they still have a chance to live."

"The lightning can make you paralyzed. Then I can snap you in half without a fight."

"So scary," I said sarcastically.

"I can also disintegrate you so you would be small tiny grains of sand."

I did not want to listen to him anymore. I threw him into the air and watched as he landed on the hard, cold, stone ground. He stood up leaving dent marks bigger than my body in the ground.

"That's it partner! I'm from Texas. When you mess with me you're messing with Texas!" he yelled angrily at me.

Out of the distance I heard someone yell, "I'll save you!"

It was the man from the cabin. He crash-landed onto a bench, stood up, and walked towards me.

"I told you I had a pair of my own snow shoes. Also, just because I'm old does not mean that I'm not strong and powerful."

"Who are you?" I asked.

"You don't remember me from the cabin?"

"I mean your name," I said.

"I'm Caesar Jerome," He said.

"Well Caesar, I guess you remember me then," said Big Papa

"I don't think so," said Caesar.

"I'm who you call 'Big Papa'. My real name is Mitch."

"Oh, I remember you. Your Mac's son, correct?"

"That's me."

"Wait. The devil's name was Mac!" I said.

“Yeah. What’s wrong with that?” asked Mitch.

I started bursting out laughing.

“You think that the name ‘Mac’ is funny?” Mitch yelled.

“Yes,” I said.

Then a huge beam of light came from his hands. I jumped out of the way before it could hit me. The beam hit the building behind me causing the building to explode.

“Who’s laughing now idiot?” asked Mitch.

This caused Caesar to jump on Mitch. As Caesar was trying to strangle Mitch, he fell backwards onto Caesar.

“I see. It’s two against one. Well, one of you will have to go.”

Mitch started up a beam of lightning. He was looking at me. He turned around and hit Caesar with the lightning. Caesar flew about fifty feet until he hit a building. The building collapsed on him. He aimed his next lightning bolt at me but I jumped to the left. The bolt hit a gasoline truck and there was a huge explosion. I started to run to Caesar to see if he was alive.

“Welcome to your very own doomsday, idiot!” yelled Mitch.

“I’m not dead yet!” I yelled back.

When I got to Caesar, his body was halfway gone. “I need to give you something,” he whispered to me.

“What is it?” I asked.

He pulled out the knife that the priest used to rip out the souls of others.

“I stole it from you before you left the cabin.”

I took the knife from his hand. I watch as his body slowly turned into grains of sand. I felt a tap on my shoulder.

“Guess who?” said the voice.

It was Mitch.

He grabbed my neck and started to strangle me. Mitch picked me up by my neck. I stuck the knife into his hand. I cut off his hand. He walked a few steps to his left and fell to his knees. His soul was coming out but he tried to keep it in.

I walked over to him, grabbed him by his forehead, and slit his throat. No blood came out. Only his soul came out. His soul was not an angel. It was the devil.

His soul turned around and zoomed right into my gut. His soul was inside me beating up my soul. I had no control of my body except for my hands. I cut off my right hand, wishing that his soul would come out. It did. But it did not want to leave me.

Mitch’s soul came charging at me again. This time, before it hit me, I cut off its head. His soul fell to the ground in the middle of the road. I watched as a fire truck zoomed over it. The wind from the truck blew Mitch’s soul away.

I walked over to Mitch’s body. I put my hands on his arm. Once I did that a wind came and blew the skin and meat off his body. All that was left of him were his clothes, wallet, and cowboy hat. I took his wallet and cowboy hat.

I began to walk to the south. To the south and my real home. To my real home, where all of this started. Italy.

# Jeep

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*In JEEP by Evan Cole, Jeep is a kid who is just trying to deal with life and the weird things it throws at him.*

One day, Cabuary 19, 2137, there was a boy named Jeep who always got teased because his name was Jeep some kids had wanted to get a jeep car but the mean kid Kop he could never get over him just because the laws were about to change.

The next night Jeep went to sleep but in his dream it was like no others he had not woke up for four day and all of his family members where nerves but Jeep was having the time of his life the law was 11 years and older with the name Jeep can drive.

The next day he had got an awesome 10 feet off the ground Jeep then he entered in monster rally but it was like no other dream he had but the monster trucks there were acutely real monsters.

Then it turned in to a nightmare it was Jeep and bully the monster truck the last turn bully gets not out and Jeep wins! Jeep was so happy it turned out not to be a nightmare the next day in his dream everybody was his friend except Kop. Kop was starting to get even more annoying Jeep so much that Jeeps head just annoyed it but then kops head almost exploded that he ran away crying.

Jeep said that I need to help kop so when Jeep went over to Kop he just started teasing him again but everyone tried helping him but he just teased them to and he even teased the president.

Kop threaten that he would blow up the world and then they all went into a world with color and shades until Kop started teasing the people there.

“The people in the other world summand a spell that would make Kop nice but he was to mean to summand the spell

on him but five people summoned the spell and he had turned nice for a hour and the all thought it was over”.

After the hour he was even meaner. But after they left the world he had cooled down for the rest of the day the next day he went ballistic so Jeeps called in sleep and Drove all the way to Washington. But instead of knowing or talking about Kop live was starting to get better when Kop left because no more getting teased but now at least Jeep can live a normal live without being teased by some jerk.

But as soon as a new kid “you know what don’t even let me get started with him there is to many things going thru my mind give me a minute . . . . Okay here we go now that I’m focused after Kop left I had the best time of my live ever”.

I had all my friends come over they all got to ride in my truck they all had the best time ever and they all said that he’s not so bad then became famous for having the most friends ever.

Than we even thru a block party for the whole neighborhood and Jeep had the best time ever until a new kid came to school and his name was pal papa but after that the word stop and everything stopped with it and a whole bunch of warrior’s came out of a world like no other.

They came for a kid named Pala and that was the end of him and another kid came at least he was nice but then he had got transferred to another school. And life was bad. As I was still talking things were getting even worse the one kid that was to a different school nice had got transferred to another school. Life for me was pretty hard

do you know how many obstacles I had to avoid. If you had to live my life that would be very no very hard my school was the worst school ever. Now I'm lost I can't even remember where I was in the story. Now I think I know where to start. Here we go life was bad and I was bad I didn't even want to go to school. My wish was to go to a different school. But that would never happened because my mom said it was the best school ever on living kind and that the reason you see aliens at your school and I thought she was she was crazy the

world is crazy even though I never really saw the aliens at my school. Kop was crazy. Things are still going bad for me while everyone is relaxing thinking that I'm ok with everything.

Kop kept on teasing Jeep but everyone told Jeep just to ignore it so it was but then he started to talk about his mom and dad and his dad but then he called president and had the swat and u.s. navy on him and after that no one knew what happened with him after that or he was just a change person but that is part of another story.

## Krawl Attack

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*Do you need a break from school? You could try fighting aliens like Rallen does in **KRAWL ATTACK**, by Connor Chisholm.*

Thanks for the inspiration and help: Kyle, Hailey, the *Detroit News*, the Beverly Hills' *Notebook*, and the *Detroit Free Press*.

I dedicate this story to my dog Lucky.

On a regular Monday, it was a warm spring day in California. A boy named Rallen About "4, 10", brown hair, very skinny was walking down the street going to his school called Lightning Middle School. Rallen's life was not fun. At school he was not the smartest one and defiantly not the most popular. But he is pretty smart. Finally Rallen gets to school and talks to his only friend Chad.

"Hi Chad"

"Hi Rallen"

"So how did it go this morning?" said Chad.

"Awful. When I was running to school a big truck splattered me with mud and before that when I got up my bed was wet! Everything is going bad. The only good thing is that my dog and cat actually did what I said to do and that's not even

something that good! Said Rallen in a loud voice.

"Wow. Sounds like you had a bad day so far." *Bing. Bing. Bing.* "Well that's the bell got to go. By Rallen."

"Okay class I will pass your test out. Your class average was a solid B." "Oh no. This is the test I didn't study for."

"Rallen you got a C. I expected you were going to do better Rallen."

"Well I uh."

"No Rallen, no buts!

"Well class let's get started."

*6 hours later*

"So Rallen how did the rest of your day go?"

"Well it was worse. In my first hour I got a C on a major test. In third hour Mr.





Earth. It's called a cell phone!"

"But this you don't just talk to other people you see them. It's a hologram. Do you want to see how it works?"

"Yes."

"Ok then let's get out of here."

C.O.M. has been turned On.

"Jenna".

"Wow"!

"I see you found Rallen."

"Yep".

"Well I'll bring the ship around and pick you guys up".

"Wait I thought that the ship got shot down by the Krawl".

"Well yes but our ship has really fast repair bots. The fastest and best kind."

"Then why did Aloudus go into the escape pod and come to me"?

"Because Aloudus panicked when I told him not to and jumped into an escape pod and went to you. I bet he forgot we had those repair bots"!

"Yeah sorry Jenna."

"Here's the ship get in."

"Oh I'm sorry we didn't officially meet yet. I'm Jenna as you herd. I'm the ship's polite. Oh and here's your badge."

"I get a badge."

"Yep and a jacket."

"For what"?

"For joining the NKP."

"The what"?

"The Narito Krawl Patrol. Well let me show you the ship. Up front are the main controls, over to the left is the healing room, to the right of me is the downstairs in there is the lab system, some artifacts, and Cyrus express. I'll teach you about those later. First let's get to Kollin and then we'll talk".

Launch off in 3, 2, 1, takeoff.

"Going into light speed in 3, 2, 1 where're off and were here".

"That fast?"

"Well yah that's why they call it light speed".

"Let's go talk to commander and report."

"Wait whose Commander"?

"Commander is our commander."

"Commander we got Rallen."

"Good. Go take Rallen to Dimus and train him."

"Right. Come with us Rallen a trainer named Dimus will train you and give you weapons."

"Yeah let's go"!

"Rallen before this all starts I want to give you two things. One a thing called a primiziod. In this you can hold all you're items and Spectrobes and any other thing. Two there is already an Adult Spectrobe in there. He is very powerful. He was my Dad's."

"Thanks Jenna".

"One more thing a Spectrobe has three evolvments. First he is in his child form not able to fight yet but if you feed it the right minerals then it will eventually evolve. Next comes the Adult form it can fight but it is not at its full potential yet. You need to feed it minerals, train it then you can evolve it. Lastly comes the evolved form it is the most powerful thing. It is very deadly in Battle and looks really cool. That's all. I hope you do good Rallen."

"Well here I go. Hi you must be trainer Dimus."

"Yes I am. So I heard Jenna gave you a Spectrobe."

"Yes she did."

"Well here's another one his name Balbokas. Here's a basic gun, sword and glove .The glove will paralyze enemies, the gun will kill enemies from a range, and the sword will kill close up enemies. Now go into that field and train."

"The first wave of people you need you're weapons. Go."

*Bong. Bing. Sizz.*

"Nice Rallen, I like the three hit combo.

"Next wave you're going to have to use the Spectrobes. Go!"

"Go wait I haven't named you yet. Well how about Zac. Zac use head but and Balbokas use claw attack".

*Bong. Slish. Slash.*

"Nice work Rallen I think you're ready for the real Krawl. Let me tell you one thing though the bigger the vortex the more battles and also the color of the vortex that's what property it is. Wait has you learned about the properties yet."

"No".

"Well each Spectrobe has a property. They are ether Aroura, Corona, or Flash. Both of yours are Corona but each property has a weakness. Flash beats Corona. Corona beats Aroura and Aroura beats Flash."

"Rallen are you done with your training"?

"Yes I am Jenna Why"?

"Because Commander has a mission for you."

"Ok I'll be there in a second."

"By Diams thanks for the help."

"You're welcome!" shouted Diams down the hallway.

"Wow I must teach people well. Or Rallen is a really fast learner."

"What is it Commander"?

"We just picked up a huge signal of Krawl"!

"From where"?

"Wait a second...from the farthest planet Diamonshi"!

"We've had a signal from there for a while but it was never this big! Rallen I want you, Jenna, and Aloudus to go to Diamonshi."

"Ok".

"Wait Rallen no one has ever made it to Diamonshi before"!

"I know that's why I like it. Didn't you hear me before I love a fresh smell of adventure"!

"Fine Rallen since you're the expert we will go"!

"Then what are we waiting for let's go"!

"Come on Aloudus let's go"!

*Huff. Huff. Puff. Puff.*

"Finally we're at the ship."

"Launch off to Diamonshi in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, blast off.

"So how long will it take us"?

"About one minute."

"So uh...did you use to live on Earth Jenna"?

"Nope I was born here and raised here."

~~Bggggggggggggggg.~~

"What the—"

"What was that"?

"I don't know but where heading straight for Genshi the second planet in the solar system."

"Put your seat belts on we are going down"!

"I hope we make out of this alive. Thought Rallen.

*Bang. Bang. Bang. Booom.*

"Is everybody Ok"!

"Yeah I'm good Rallen," said Jenna

"I'm good too," said Aloudus

"Ok then does anyone know what hit us"!

"Nope".

"No".

"Well then the only way to find out is to investigate."

"Let's go talk to the professor Rallen maybe he knows what happened."

"Good idea Jenna let's go."

"Maybe it was just a field test or something. Maybe they were trying to test out there new laser and they accidentally hit us. Ahhh, Professor Bob, nice to see you".

"What happened out there NKP"?

"We don't know that's why we came





“Hold on. Ok the time in Narito is so slow that you only missed one day.” “Yes.” Shouted Rallen.

“Well then let’s goes.”

“Next stop Earth.”

“Launching in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, take off.”

“Let’s go in light speed.”

“Light speed in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 speed off!”

“So Rallen I really hope we see each other again. Maybe there will be Krawl again then we would know who to go to help save us again. Well were here. You live in California right.”

“Right”.

“Well bye Rallen”.

“Bye”.

“I’ll never forget you. Usually I forget people I only meet once but not you. Bye”.

Jenna said in sobbing words.

“Well I guess I should go inside and see what’s up. I should really stop talking to myself too.” Mom. Hello”.

“Rallen! I and your father were worded sick for you. What happened”?

“Let’s say I got lost. But someone helped me get back on track. Someone special.”

“Well you’re just in time for school. Here comes the bus. Here’s your backpack and just go to school.”

*Bam.* The door went and I was on my way to a one-way ticket to bully land.

“Welcome back Rallen. What happened you were sick”?

“Yeah that’s exactly what happened.”

“Hey Rallen come here and I’ll give you a

cup of fruit punch”.

“**No. No no no no no no no no no**”. No more bullying. No more crummy life. I will not stand for this. Now I’ve learned how to stand up for myself, I am not going to just hide in the dark anymore. I am done now. Go ahead and beat me up, I learned how to stand up for myself and not be scared and that is better than being a big fat bully”.

“Your right Rallen. I have been a jerk. If there’s anything that I could do for you name it.

“Well there is one I want to you to come over to my house after school.”

“That would be perfect Rallen.”

“Well I’ll see you till then.”

“See ya.”

Rallen had a lovely life after that and had a lot of fun. Katy ended up being Rallen’s girlfriend and everything was just great.

*Epilogue: Inside the battle room, Diamimus, Naritio*

“Yes it is almost complete. The regenerator is working its almost complete. Yes I have my body back. My powers are almost at their full potential. Wow there higher than usual. Now time for Plan B. Come creatures. Come and rise. You will need some training. This might take a while. Well to start Rallen is the one to destroy. That is his name. You will hunt him down and kill him.”

“Yes sir.”

## Look Out Below

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*It starts with a phone booth but ends up in a much stranger place. The friends in **LOOK OUT BELOW** by Arianna Biggens are about to tumble into adventure. Look out for the trampoline!*

**T**here he is, the boy that I have liked since the first day of sixth grade. He had emerald green eyes, black hair, and he

wore a black shirt every day. He would sit there staring into space. The bad thing was I have never heard his voice, and he doesn’t

even know my name.

“Stop daydreaming in class, Rashelle Hudson,” says Mr. Lyle. “Now please answer my question.”

I ask, “What was the question?”

He said, “What was the tax for the state of Michigan?” I wasn’t even able to tell the answer before the bell rang. I’d run out of the room before he could say anything about staying after class.

I bumped into Josephine A.K.A. Josie in the hall while going to my science class. Today, Josephine had a brown ponytail, a gray hoodie, dark jeans, and the same shiny star earrings that she wore every day. Josephine said, “What up girl?”

I say what I usually would, “Nothing much.”

She said, “See you,” and then walked away.

After science we all were free to go to lunch. I was looking forward to it because that’s when my day would become interesting. At lunch, I’d meet up with Rebecca A.K.A. Becky in the lunch line. She had on a yellow headband, a blue shirt, and yellow skinny jeans. I said, “What up?”

Rebecca said, “Nothing, how ‘bout you?”

I said, “Well, can’t complain.”

Rebecca said, “Where are we gonna sit? ‘Cause those boys just stole our table.”

I said, “Not again! Maybe we should let Nesha handle them.”

Then, after I got my lunch I went over to a different table with my friend Angela. Today, she was wearing a jacket, skinny jeans, heart boots, red hair, leg warmers, and arm warmers.

Angela said, “Ras, what’s happening?”

I said, “Nothin’. Why?”

Angela said, “I found out more about dead boy.”

I said, “You know what, just keep talking about the boy and see what

happens.”

Angela said, “Whatever. I found out his name, it is Nathaniel Collins.”

I said, “Oh my goodness, that’s what I thought his name was.”

Out of nowhere LaNesha came running wearing a brown Baby Phat outfit.

I said, “Hey Nesha, what happened to you?”

She said, “Hey girl, them boys were chasing me. Those boys follow me too much.”

I said, “They did it again. Goodness.”

Josie said, “Did Khari do anything today?”

Nesha said, “He followed me to math class.”

Angela said, “He likes you, why don’t you like him?”

Nesha said, “Cause Khari looks like a pregnant monkey.”

After we stop laughing, Becky and Khari came to the table we were sitting at. When I saw Khari, he had short black hair, a brown shirt, and some tight jeans. He said, “Hey. How ya’ll doin’?” Then he sat down at the table right next to Nesha.

Nesha said, “Boy, back up.”

Khari said, “Why?”

Nesha said, “Get away before I drag your big butt!”

He moves. Becky said, “You know you like him. Why are you even acting like you don’t?”

Nesha said, “Why do you think that I like him? Look at this boy. He looks like a monkey with big head, plus he went out with Ras.”

That was something I didn’t talk about. The worst week of my life. When I went out with Khari all I heard about was how much he liked Nesha, so I got mad. The day after I broke up with Khari was when I first told my friends that I liked Nathaniel.

Then I said, “Girl, you’re the one who

told me to go out with him in the first place, so like you told me, I think you should go with him, he's liked you from the first day you came to school," imitating her voice.

Nesha said, "Skip ya'll, I don't like him and I've all already made two mistakes. I am not about to make another one."

I said, "Your mistake. It had nothing to do with us. It was your choice to go out with Trevor and Jeff."

Nesha got mad and decided to go to a different table.

Then Becky said, "What's wrong with her? You didn't do anything wrong."

I said, "This almost always happens."

Then I went to go get her and apologize. She was still mad.

Nesha said, "No one talks to me that way, and that was not my fault. Josie is the one who told me to do that."

I said, "It's still not my fault. Give me at least three reasons why you shouldn't trust me. You're one of my best friends, why would I try to do you wrong?"

Nesha said, "O.K. I will think about it, if you drop it for at least a day?"

I said, "Deal, we're cool again, right?"

Nesha said, "Yeah girl!"

Afterwards, we go back to the lunch table.

The bell had sounded. It was time for recess. We walk outside which was the only way to get to the gym. We saw Jessica. She was wearing extra tight skinny jeans and a Pistons jersey. She was shivering in the snow.

When she saw us she came over and said, "What up ya'll. How's it going?"

I said, "We're good. Why didn't you sit with us?"

Jessica said, "I was just sitting next to Eric and Tony."

I said, "Oh, ok. Don't worry, we knew where you were. You little stalker, we saw

you sitting next to that boy that you liked. Uh huh."

She gave a caught face.

Angela said, "Look it's him."

Khari said, "What? Who?"

We look in that direction and we saw James. He had on shorts and a jacket.

I said, "Oh my gosh. You still like James, even though he totally burned you."

Angela said, "I know, but he is still so cute."

Khari said, "Hold up, you like James. That is a real weirdo. Matches your personality," half laughing.

Angela said, "Shut up, you're the one that liked Rashelle and LaNesha."

Nesha and I gave a face like "What is that suppose to mean?" Angela said, "No offense."

Nesha and I said, "None taken."

Khari said, "I can go tell him for you."

Angela said, "Too late, Becky already told him."

Khari said, "Oh! Thanks for taking the fun out of it Becky."

Angela said, "We're going to the gym, right?"

I said, "Where else would we be going?"

Angela said, "Maybe to the library?"

Nesha said, "I just saw James go in there."

Becky said, "Yeah."

Angela said, "So, what if I want to study?"

I said, "In other words we're going to the gym."

Once we arrive at the gym we sit on the floor and talk while Khari played basketball. We watch him miss shot after shot.

Nesha said, "I can't watch this anymore, this is pitiful."

Khari said, "Oh ok, let me see you try."

Nesha said, "First of all, I don't try, I succeed."

Khari passes the ball. Then Nesha shot it



and it went in the basketball hoop. She threw the ball back at Khari's stomach.

Becky said, "Dang."

I said, "Hard core."

Angela said, "Wow, this reminds me of a movie I saw, where the boy really stunk at basketball, and the girl beat him."

I said, "Wow, that's random."

Josie said, "Hey, why don't we go to the movies after school?"

We all said, "Yeah."

We went to the movies and we end up fighting about what movie we want to watch. I said, "Let's have a vote, who wants to see *Hancock*?" Becky, Angela, and I raise our hands. I said, "Who wants to see *Madagascar: Escape to Africa*?" in a mumbled voice. Then Nesha and Khari raise their hands. I said, "Who wants to see *Twilight*?" Jessica and Josephine raise their hands.

I said, "*Hancock* won." We got our tickets. Then we gave Khari our money and told him what we wanted.

I was looking around. I come across pieces of a necklace at some vendor's table. When combined, they form one large necklace. The sign said: *If you buy one you get one for everyone you brought with you.*

I said, "Look at this. I want one and we can all match."

Everybody said, "Ok."

So I got them. Then I gave them to everybody.

When we got to the theater we sat in the top balcony. We watched previews until Khari came back. The movie began.

Near what I later learned to be the middle of the film, I whisper to them, "How long is this movie? We have to go; it's almost curfew."

Becky said, "Yeah. Its time to go."

So we snuck out of the movies and went to a large, old phone booth.

Angela, Nesha, Becky, and I were in it.

We all had to call our parents and tell them that we were going to be late. All of a sudden the booth starts to move. Suddenly, a portal appeared on the opposite side of the door Khari thought that we were done with the phone so he pushed his way into the booth. I almost fall through the portal but not before Nesha grabs me. Then Becky grabs her. With every second I inch closer and closer to the portal. All of a sudden Nesha's grip gave out. I fell through. While falling, I hear Becky and Nesha arguing. Becky said, "Look what you did! You lost her, you let go."

Nesha said, "I'm sorry, I wasn't trying to," half crying. "We're going to get her whether you all like it or not."

Angela said, "How are we going to get down there?"

Josie said, "Give me your belt. We can try to slowly lower ourselves down."

Khari said, "Good idea. Though you don't have many."

Josie said, "Skip you. Anyways, let's get down there and catch her."

Then they got all of their belts and one by one they climb down while Khari was holding the one long belt. Jessica went, then Becky, then Josie, then Angela. After they went the portal starts to vanish.

Khari said, "Ummm I think it's time to go!"

Nesha said, "Umm, no, I think we should stay. Before we hit the wall."

Khari said, "Woman up and come."

Nesha said, "I should be telling you the same thing."

Khari said, "I'm about to go... and you're coming with me."

Nesha said, "What...ummm...excuse me."

I yell, "Ahhhhhhhhh!"

He let go of the belts. Then Josie, Becky, Jessica, and Angela start screaming as they start falling. Then they started to get board

so they weren't that scared anymore. Khari sat down with his legs going in the portal and was acting like he was about to push off but instead he grabs Nesha's foot and pulls her in. In shock, she starts to kick at him so he would let her go. She said, "Get off of me." He let go and floated away.

I said, "What happened? How did I fall?"

Becky said, "Nesha tried to save you but you fell and we all thought that you were gone...forever." I could tell that she was filling with emotion.

I said, "You know I'm never going to die. Beauty lives too long." Then she laughs and tries to give me a hug, but I was too far away.

We fell and fell and fell. It seemed as if there was no floor to catch us. I said, "I would love to hit the floor some time soon."

Khari said, "Yeah, I gotta pee."

All of us except Khari said, "Ewwwww."

I said, "I know that did not just come out of your mouth."

Angela said, "If I start feeling rain, something bad is going to happen to you."

Khari said, "Go brush your teeth, I can smell your breath all the way over here. You are stinky."

Before Angela could say something else I said, "Ok, so how are we supposed to go to school tomorrow?"

Josie said, "I'm happy, I was supposed to have a math test tomorrow."

I said, "Yeah, I almost forgot about that."

Nesha said, "What time is it?"

I check my watch and the hands were spinning uncontrollably. I said, "Nesha, I don't know, the hands are spinning."

She said, "What?"

I said, "You know the little arrow, and the big arrow on a clock. Well they're

spinning. Like a jump rope or maybe the wheel on a car."

Nesha said, "I might not be that smart but I'm not an idiot."

Khari said, "Don't...look...down."

Of course I look and I finally saw the floor that I wanted. It looks hard like a street. Khari said, "This is what we get, we should have stayed in the phone booth and just let Ras fall, and everything would have been ok," in a whiny voice.

I said, "Excuse me, um, I appreciate that you're here but you better keep your comments to your self."

Josie said, "Yeah! Shut up."

We all link hands and shut our eyes. We were ready for anything. When we hit the floor we were disoriented because we thought that we were ready for some serious pain, but the floor wasn't even hard. It was a trampoline cover so we bounced.

I said, "Oh my goodness, it's a trampoline."

Angela said, "Khari, your face, it was so funny."

Khari said, "Shut up; I was about to die," in a wimpy voice.

Nesha said, "Who's so strong now?"

Khari was mumbling under his breath.

We continue to bounce for at least two minutes before we were able to land.

We start to look around for people.

Angela said, "They should really get that booth fixed."

I said, "I sort of thought that while I was falling."

I said, "Hey Nesha, this is so weird."

Then all of a sudden Nesha just disappears. Then Becky disappears. We all start to disappear one by one. I was the last person to disappear.

We land in a parked car.

I said, "C'mon let's get out of here."

Khari said, "I see a road, let's go see."

Nesha said, "Let's go find a hotel."

We got out of the car and start to follow the road. We saw a lot of different types of creatures.

We walked so far. We came to a wooded area. It was really creepy since it was dark. We decided that we would continue in the morning.

I said, "Wake up, Neshal!"

Nesha said, "What the heck. Can I sleep please?"

I said, "No. It's almost time to go."

Khari said, "Both of you shut up, I think I hear something."

Josie said, "That's probably your brain sloshing around in your head."

Khari said, "I see it, behind the bushes, I think that it's a human, but I just can't see its face."

He starts walking closer to where he saw the being. I said, "Wait Khari, isn't this the way that the people in the scary movie die, the dumb one goes to see then he gets eaten and the rest of us fall one by one."

Khari said, "Come out, we not about to do nothin'."

The person said, "I am afraid but you don't have to treat me like a coward." He stood and then he walked out from behind the bushes. He looked like a normal person, in fact he was cute, he had brown eyes, dark brown short hair, he had a tan and he was tall.

Jessica said, "Oh my gosh! It's your cute boy twin." As soon as we saw him we all pause, and just stare at him.

Khari said, "What's your name?"

The person said, "My name is Base Clef Blues."

Khari said, "Well, my name is Khari Jones."

Base Clef Blues said, "Are your friends ok?"

Khari said, "I don't know."

Then Khari whispered, "Get your eyes

off of him. What you're going to get is right here."

Nesha whispered back, "What you're going to get is right here if you don't get out of my face," pointing to her fist.

Base Clef Blues walk up to me first and said, "Hello my name is Base Clef Blues. What's yours?"

I said, "What...? Oh hi my name is Rashelle Hudson but my friends call me Ras."

"Well consider me one of your friends Ras," said Base Clef Blues.

Then all of a sudden Becky pushes me aside and said, "Hi Base, My name is Rebecca Werner."

Base said, "Evidently you know my name, but hi anyway," in an annoyed voice.

Nesha walks up to him next and said, "Hi my name is LaNesha Perish." Then Khari almost looks as if he was eavesdropping on their conversation.

I whisper, "Khari, get back into your own business!"

Khari started to back up since he knew that he was caught.

Once Nesha finished, Jessica and Josie went over there. I said, "Nesha, do you know that Khari was eavesdropping on your conversation?"

Nesha said, "I know. His chin was almost on my neck."

We look over to Base and see he was talking to Khari, Josie, Angela, Jessica and Becky at the same time so Nesha and I decide to go over there.

Khari said, "We're from Earth, and I was wondering how do we get back?"

Base said, "Well there's one way, but it's very dangerous."

I said, "What is it?"

He said, "The only way was to steal my sister's guitar and play until you're home."

I said, "Why is that dangerous?"

He said, "My sister and I have had a

rivalry since we were kids, she has always blamed me for our parents' death."

We all said, "I'm sorry."

He said, "Its ok. The only reason I was there was because she threw me out of the castle."

I said, "You live in a castle. It must be beautiful."

He said, "It's just around the corner."

"Base, you sure that this is the only way— oh my goodness gracious," I said as we came closer to the beautiful, tall, old castle.

Nesha said, "Oh, my, goodness."

Khari said, "Excuse me ummm, how are we supposed to get up there?"

Base said, "Ummm, you all were supposed to figure that out."

I said, "Oh, great, Khari has to think."

Khari said, "Shut up."

Angela said, "Anyways, does your sister know that we're here?"

Base said, "Well, we can never be sure, she may know that I'm here though."

Jessica said, "I have an idea. Why don't we get Base to get the door open since he's her brother?"

Josie said, "What part of rivalry did you not understand?"

Base said, "No Josie, she might be right."

I said, "Yeah! He could fake as if he was going in to give her a gift."

Becky said, "And we would be hiding inside."

Base said, "One problem, how are you all going to get the box?"

I said, "We almost had it, dang it."

Jessica said, "Why don't we just go through the moat?"

I said, "Ok as long as you go first."

Everyone said, "Ok."

I said, "There's this new thing called sarcasm. Which one of you is really going to go in that water? Plus we have to get the

door down after we get over there."

Base said, "I just remembered, there's a service entrance."

Khari said, "That would have been good maybe a few minutes ago."

Angela said, "What happened, you strain your brain?"

Khari said, "I'm not even about to argue with you right now."

Base found an unfilled tunnel and we crawl in the tunnel until we get to the top. Once we got up their guards were everywhere. After they saw us they began to surround us. Base said, "Get behind me everyone."

Nesha said, "I'm gonna help you."

The guards got closer and closer by the second. Base said, "Ready."

Nesha said, "Boy I was born for this."

Nesha and Base stood back to back. Nesha kick a guard that was coming her way. Base said, "Cover your ears." We all did as he said. Base had so many guards surrounding him that he scream almost to the point where it felt like I could hear him without my hands on my ears (full volume). All of the guards drop to their knees.

We thought that that would kill them, but it didn't. They stood and said in unison, "Master, what would you like me to do?"

Khari said, "Yeeaaaahhh!"

I said, "That was smooth."

Base said, "Take us to the throne room safely."

When we got there was no one there.

I said, "Look there it is."

All of a sudden we heard a voice that we had never heard before. It said, "Brother, what are you doing here?" Before she could see us, we all hid behind different statues.

This was a lady. Her hair was pink and blonde (it was ugly). She wore some type of feather dress that made her look like a flamingo.

Base said, "Sister, I've come for the

guitar.”

She said, “Where are the humans? This is the way mother and father died. You brought humans into the castle and hid them. Soon enough they found the guns that the guards use. Then, since mother and father decided to go down in the kitchen, they were shot dead. Why don’t you stop helping these imbeciles?”

Base said, “They’re not imbeciles. I want to help them because I want to.”

She said, “Brother, you can’t even give me a reason. You give a reason for everything. The last time this happened you liked one of them and she left you and, yet, you continue to help them. I don’t understand this.”

Nesha and I gave each other a confused look. She starts to search around for us. Base said, “None of your business.”

She was getting closer and closer to the statue that we were behind. When she got around to mine I look at Base and silently mouthed, “What it should I do?”

Then she saw me. She grabbed my arm and dug her nails into my skin and said, “So this is the one.” I scream from the pain.

Base said, “You will never know, there are at least four other girls here.” They walk from behind the statue and came forward to her.

Nesha said, “Those feathers look better on a peacock.”

Base’s sister says, “Ok.”

Khari stays behind. Once her attention was a off of us, Khari sprinted to the guitar, burst the glass and took it.

We were cheering for him. Most of all we were cheering for home. Then he attempts to throw it to Base, but his sister caught it, and broke it in half. We all said, “Noooooo!”

Nesha walked up to her and punched her in her stomach so hard that she fell.

Base’s sister said, “Take them all to the

dungeon.” The guards that were in control grabbed us by our arms and dragged us there. Nesha ran and fought but eventually they caught her.

“Base, I don’t know what to do,” I said. “We’re all stuck in your sister’s dungeon.”

Nesha said, “We got to get out of here some way.” She started walking around as if she was looking for something.

Angela said, “How do we do that, with us being in a tower over twenty off the ground?”

Khari said, “Shut up, at least someone is actually thinking of a way out.”

Angela got real close to his face and said, “If you want to waste your time you can but it’s not worth it because there is no possible way to get out.” She sat back down on the floor. It almost looked like he was going to explode.

I said, “I feel no love in this room. We were friends when we came here and we will find a way out. When we do we will still be friends.”

Angela said, “Who cares about what you say? You’re the one over there thinking about a boy you couldn’t have even if you were in eighth grade.”

I said, “You’re the one that is in the same grade as the boy you like and he called you ugly.”

Khari said, “Ok, timeout.”

Nesha said, “Which means be quiet.”

Angela came up and said, “Make me!”

Nesha started to raise her hand like she was going to slap her. A little bit before the swing carries through, Base came in between them and said, “There is another way out.”

All of us at the same time said, “What!”

I said, “What are you talking about? You said that the only way was to play our way out of here with the magical guitar.”

Base said, “You know the necklace that you all have? Well if you lock them together

to make a bass clef and shake the strings three times and say "Take me home," you can go home."

Nesha asked, "Why have you never told us that before?"

Base said, "Because when anyone leaves, someone dies here."

Khari said, "Well it's time to go" as he took out his piece of the bass clef.

Rebecca said, "No, Khari, I can not go knowing I was the cause of someone's death."

Jessica said, "I have an idea. Why don't we just take everybody with us?"

Base said, "That's nice but where would you keep us? What would we eat?"

Jessica said, "Khari, isn't your mom trying to adopt? Maybe you can stay there."

Khari said, "Yeah."

Josie said, "The rest of them can go to the zoo!"

Khari said, "Do your people like closed spaces?"

Base said, "But still, what would they eat? What would I eat?"

I said, "We have almost everything you have here."

Base said, "As long as you guys have Shrimp Alfredo."

I said, "So you all can come."

Base said, "One problem, how are we gonna get everybody else?"

We called a bird and let it take our message. Our message said: *Help! We're in the dungeon! We need you to help us! We are trying to get you out of here and from under the rule.*

We kept checking the window to see if anyone was coming. I said, "Great, we could have been gone by now and nobody even came to go with us. Let's just go."

All of a sudden we heard screaming. We all ran to the window and found people had come to save us. A person came to our dungeon and we were yelling and screaming

but we got the wrong person. We got a guard. So Nesha went over there to talk to him. The next thing we know he's knocked out and we have the keys. We unlock ourselves and then we went out of the building. We went and called everyone who had come to save us, and we got Base. We asked Base how this was supposed to happen. He told us, "Just hold hands with everyone."

Then we went home.

When we got to our street, there were "Missing" signs everywhere so we grab one for all of us and went to my house where everyone was, talking about another way to find us. We were hiding behind the walls and giving them ideas until they found out it wasn't someone from their group. My mom grabbed a dish and right when Khari decided to jump out, he got hit over the top of the head and then he passed out.

Jessica said, "Miss us?"

I said, "Mrs. Jones, what Khari would have asked, if he wasn't knocked out was, he wants a brother. We found him already. Do you want to see him?"

Mrs. Jones said, "I don't even have to see him."

I said, "Is that a no or a yes?"

Mrs. Jones said, "Yes!"

When Base heard that he walked out to see his new parents.

When they saw us we could tell that they were happy. We went out to eat afterwards.

Base and I sat next to each other and Nesha seemed really happy when Khari sat with her. At school the next day we promised to each other that we would never tell anyone about what we had just experienced.

A few days after that Base came to school with us and he was brilliant. Base joined the basketball team. Nesha was being nosy and decided that she wanted to

know who Base's sister was talking about when he asked who he liked. He said he liked me and now we're going out. Khari and Nesha are going out. Angela is still

chasing after James.

Some nights we still go to that old phone booth and see if it still works.

## The Lost Dog

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*When Lindsey's dog runs away, Lindsey must search in a place beyond understanding in **THE LOST DOG**, by Catherine Ford.*

I dedicate this story to my dogs, Chena and Bucky, and to my whole family.

One Saturday morning I was getting ready to walk my dog, Chena, when my snotty little brother, Mike, came into her room. "I want to walk Chena!" he said, huffing and puffing. Mike was four years old and likes to do everything.

"Well, it's my turn, and why would you walk the dog anyway? You're too little!"

"No, I'm not!" he yelled.

"Yes, you are!" I said.

While we were arguing I heard my mom yell, "Chena's loose!"

"What!" I yelled. I ran down the staircase with my brother behind me. As I reached the end of the staircase, I ran to Chena's kennel to see if Chena was really gone. And sure enough, Chena was gone!

I ran outside to help my mom and little brother look for Chena. My mom called my dad at work to tell him the terrible news. My dad rushed from work to help us look for Chena, and by the look on his face he was mad. He had a big meeting with his boss in less than ten minutes!

As soon as we started looking for her it was getting dark, so we had to hurry. We asked some neighbors to help us look for her, and they did. We looked in the park, the bushes, and all of the other places she would have gone to. Then I really started to panic. It was absolutely pitch dark! So we had to go home. My dad came over to me

and gave me a hug and a kiss and said, "It's OK; we'll look tomorrow."

"I know," I said. "I just want her to be safe."

"I know," he said. I was surprised he noticed my facial expression. Especially when it was pitch dark. But I think he knew I was under a lot of stress. I just wished I knew where she was so I could bring her home. "By the way, Dad," I said.

"Yeah," he said.

"I'm sorry you missed your meeting today. I really am," I said.

"It's ok, bud!" he said.

"Well, let's go back home and get some rest." he said.

"I agree!" And we walked back home.

*I can't believe I'm going to do this, but it's for the sake of Chena,* I said to myself. I was about to disobey my parents' rules and sneak out. I would have to be super quiet because my parents have ears of a mouse, especially my mom. For example, one time when I was sneaking out to go meet some of my friends and my mom caught me because she heard the floor squeak. And she had been asleep for at least two hours. It was crazy! But this time it was for the sake of Chena, and no one could stop me.

I was walking down Spring Water when I realized that I had left my bag in my

room. It had all sorts of safety supplies in case I got hurt or if I got lost. I had food, water, and my blanket to keep me warm. It also had a very valuable thing. It was Chena's favorite toy, Mr. Muffin. Mr. Muffin had been with Chena since she was born. I couldn't just leave that entire bag behind. I had to go back. But I couldn't. The sun was starting to shine, and my parents would be waking up to start getting ready for work and find me, Lindsay Reed, not there!

I started walking down Spring Water again and heard a frightening scream. *It must be my mom*, I said to myself. I started to run.

After I passed a couple of blocks, I stopped to catch my breath. I knew my mom would call the police when she found out. And sure enough, coming down Eastlea, two racing police cars were heading right to my house.

I started to run again. I looked back and *WHACK!* I smacked myself right into a tree. "OWW!" I said, almost crying. I couldn't give myself up. I had to look for Chena.

I could hear the policemen getting closer. And all of a sudden, a white flash flashed before my eyes!

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!" I screamed. Could I, was I, falling through a portal? *No, that's unrealistic. Am I in jail?* I thought. *No, I couldn't be, could I?* I thought again.

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!" I screamed again. I was about to fall onto the ground and hurt myself. *I really need my bag!* I thought.

All of a sudden my feet landed on the ground safely. "It was like magic," I said.

It was like I was in a different world. The ground was all soft and cushy, and there were no walls that I saw. There was a soft sweet smell that I smelled. It smelled

like chocolate. No, it smelled like cherry. "*Chena loved cherries.*" I said to myself with a sigh. "Chena!" I said with a jump. No wonder she would run away to this place. It's soft on her bony little self, it was cushy, and it was her very favorite smell! *But why would she run away here when she could have all of that at home?* I said to myself. That was what I had to find out.

"Where am I anyway?" I said.

"The Gateways of Wonderland." Someone said.

"Who are you and what do you mean?" I said suspiciously.

"I am the master of The Gateways of Wonderland." He said.

"And you are in The Gateways of Wonderland." He said again.

"Show yourself." I said cautiously. All the sudden a figure started to walk out. It was an old man. He was wrinkly and had a very long beard. He was dressed weird; He had a long over flowing robe and a hat. Not an ordinary hat, it was a cone shaped hat with a word on it. It said "*Master*" of *The Gateways of Wonderland*. It was freaky but cool.

"What's your name?" I said.

"George," he said quietly.

"Well, George," I said, "My name is Lindsay Reed."

"I'm looking for a dog named Chena. She has a brown coat, brown eyes, and she is very bony. Can you help me?" I said hopefully.

"Sure," he said. "Actually, we found a dog yesterday, and looked exactly like you described."

"Really?" I said. "Can you take me to her?" I asked hopefully.

"Sure!" he said. And we walked on to the store.

While we were walking, I felt a rush of relief come across me. "Thank you so much!" I said with a rush of excitement.



"You're welcome," he said.

After walking for a while, we stopped at this humongous gold gate. George reached inside his robe and took out a small white key.

*There is no way that small key can go into that big of a gate,* I said to myself. But sure enough, right when George put the key through the slot of the gate, the gate opened and my mouth dropped down. *I can't believe it,* I said to myself. "I can't believe it," I said quietly. "George," I said, "how could that small white key fit through that big of a gate?"

"Well, here in The Gateways of Wonderland, everything that you hold is small while everything you can't hold is big," he said quietly. "For example, the key and the gate. It's very confusing at first, but you get used to it after a while. Ok, let's go see that dog of yours, we think," he said.

"Yeah, we think," I said hopefully. He chuckled. I didn't.

When we walked past the big Golden Gate, there was a shop that said in big bright letters The Top Dog. "It must be the shop with Chena in it," I said under my breath. "George, do you mind if we go in there?" I asked.

"Sure, why not?" he said. And we started to walk.

While we were walking I was still so curious about how I got here, so I asked George. "George," I said.

"Yes," he said.

"How did I get here?"

"You fell through a portal," he said.

"A portal? Are you sure?" I said.

"Sure I'm sure," George said.

I stopped right in my tracks. "A portal. But aren't those like imaginary?" I said, confused.

"In the mortal world they are, but here in The Gateways of Wonderland they're not." We started walking again. "You see,

here in the Gateways of Wonderland, portals are everywhere! But the bad thing about them is that they lead up to the mortal world and easily let mortals through them," he said. "That's how you came here."

We went inside The Top Dog shop. There was a sweet-looking, old lady who almost looked like she could be the same age as George. But I doubt it. As soon as I got inside I started looking for Chena. But she was nowhere to be found. I started to cry.

"It's ok," George said. I knew it was. I just wanted her to be home, and I wanted see my parents again. The old lady came over to us and said, "What's wrong, darling?" in a sweet voice.

"Lindsay, this is Ms. Cook," George said. "She owns The Top Dog."

"I lost my dog. Her name is Chena. I've been looking all day with George and I can't find her. Can you help me?" I asked.

"Well, I sure will," Ms. Cook said. "What does she look like?"

"Well, she has a light brown coat and has green eyes, and she is very skinny and she's a vizsla."

"Hmmm, that sounds familiar," she said. She said "Excuse me for a minute." She went back into this big cage-like door. She was back there for a couple of minutes. My stomach started to churn. She came back with a dog. The dog that she had looked like Chena, but wasn't her. I started to cry. I said thank you and left.

George put his arm around me and said, "It's ok. There's another dog store named Pooch a Palace right down the street."

When we got there I ran inside and asked if they had seen a dog that had green eyes, a brown coat, and that was skinny who was a vizsla. The lady working there said the same thing that Ms. Cook had said, and it sounded familiar. She went in the

back, and then came out with Chena. I screamed, “Chena! How did you find her?”

“I found her wandering around The Gateways of Wonderland. And nobody said she belonged to them. So I took her in. She has been a terrific dog,” she said. I said thank you and ran out the door to see George.

When I saw him he was smiling like he had just been tickled by a tickle monster. I ran to him and gave him a humongous hug and said, “Thank you for everything!”

“You’re welcome,” he said quietly. “You should be on your way now,” he said. Then out of nowhere a portal landed right in front of us. He said I could visit him any time I wanted, and I said I would. I jumped into the portal with Chena. I heard him say, “I’m glad you found Chena.” It was too late for me to say anything. I was already too far into the portal. I just couldn’t wait to show my mom and dad that I had found Chena.

“Ahhhhhhhhhh!” I yelled. I was going through the Gateways of Wonderland portal now. How could I say I found Chena in a portal? I would just have to tell them the truth.

“Ahhhhhhhhhh!” I yelled again. I was going through the mortal portal now. “Awww!” I said.

“Honey, is that you?” my dad said nervously.

“Daddy, is that you?” I said excitedly.

“Yes!” he said.

“What happened?” I said.

“Well, that’s what we’re trying to find

out. What did happen? All we know is that you ran away looking for Chena,” my dad said.

“What?” I said confused.

“Yeah, you ran away to look for Chena, and we started looking for you. I found you right here in the middle of the street,” my dad said. “Are you OK? Where were you?” he said.

“Yeah, I’m fine, but that doesn’t matter right now. I found Chena,” I said, trying to stand up.

“I know. Where did you find her?” he asked.

“In The Gateways of Wonderland. I fell through a portal in the tree on Spring Water, and I met an old man named George, a lady named Ms. Cook, and another lady who looked just like Ms. Cook. I found Chena there,” I said.

“Honey, I think we need to go to the ER. I think you hit your head too hard on the pavement,” he said again.

“Dad, I don’t need to go to the ER,” I said, finally standing up. I pulled my dad over to where the tree was and he still wouldn’t believe me.

We were walking away from the tree when we heard a whistling noise coming from the tree. My dad put his head by the tree, and all of a sudden the portal opened up and sucked my dad into the portal. While I was trying to pull him out I thought I heard him say, “I believe you!”

***BUT THAT’S ANOTHER STORY!***

## Massie

---

*A girl’s life is turned upside down by a move to New York in MASSIE, by Caitlin Forbes.*

“Today is the most beautiful day,” I said to my dad as he woke me up

for school. The sun was shining and it was so hot outside, it was almost as hot as hot

chocolate, on a freezing day, after just going outside skiing and sledding for six hours. Wow, I better get ready for school, my bus will be here soon, I thought as I put on my Gap shorts and Old Navy shirt. Who cares if I don't wear Gucci and Prada? I like how I dress. Well, I guess I do.

I was waiting outside for my bus. "Bye, Dad, I will see you later. Have a good day!" I shouted as I walked to the end of the driveway.

My dad screamed, "Bye honey, have a good day at school! I will see you when you get home. Remember that you are taking the bus home today! Don't forget!"

The bus finally came. I had been waiting for at least ten minutes. I grabbed my bag off the dirty dirt road that had to have been there for a thousand years. I walked onto the bus with my eyes tightly closed. I sat down on at the back of the bus. The next stop was my best bud, Amanda. She sat down next to me and then we both fell asleep on each other. We arrived at school exactly nineteen minutes later. We walked into school and went to our lockers. We are so lucky our lockers are next to each other, how lucky can you get? "This will be the best year ever," I said to Amanda. "Next month is our big trip to Los Angeles. Aren't you so excited?"

"Yes we will have so much fun there. I have to go to math class now, it's at the other side of the building, talk to you later!" Amanda explained.

"Bye. I will see you at lunch," I said walking to science. I sat down in the back of the room next to Kayla; she was all ready started on her science homework. "Hey," I whispered as I sat down so we would not get in trouble.

"Hey," Kayla whispered back to me, when the teacher was not looking at us.

"We have so much homework," I replied when I looked at the board and read

under the homework section.

"Well if you get started you might finish" Kayla said.

"Thank you," I sighed, while busily doing my work. The day flew by so fast, that is what they say, time flies by when you are having fun.

I got on the bus and tried to find Amanda. We sat next to each other. I always get dropped off first. Finally I got dropped off and I ran down the dirt road and up my driveway. I walk inside and put my stuff down on the bench. I ran up to my room and sat down on my desk chair. One new message on my computer. I click on it message from Kayla.

"Honey, come down stairs we have something important to tell you," my mom and dad yelled in unison.

"Ok, be there in a second!" I yelled. I closed all my messages on my computer and ran downstairs. I sat on the opposite side of my parents.

"Massie, we have something important to tell you," my parents said. Their faces looked so serious, I think it might be really important.

"Ok so what did you want to tell me?" I said curiously to my mom.

"Well I know that this might be hard but we will have to tell you some time and we are going to do it now. And whatever you say will not change what your dad's decision," my parents said kind of sad for me.

"Ok I will not be mad at whatever you have to say." I said wanting to know so badly.

"We are moving!" my parents said, wanting to get this over with.

"Are you kidding me! I am so MAD!" I ran out of the room stomping my feet in horror! I slammed my door to my room and I jumped on up bed and put my head in my pillow. I was sobbing for about a half

and hour. My door cracked open. It was my parents.

“Honey, you will be okay. And we will be able to get through it together! I am here for you,” my mom explained with a small tear in her eye.

“I know that I will be okay, Mom. But I am just really sad to leave all my friends and what about Aunt Dana, Uncle David and grandma and grandpa. How are we ever going to see them?” I asked very sadly.

“Well we can come in and visit them a lot and that means that you can come in and see all your friends. And I promise that you can come back for every party that you are invited to.” My Mom said, making me feel better.

“So where are we moving to anyway? And do we know any one that will be there? And why did dad think about moving there?” I said with questions flinging out of my mouth.

“We are moving to New York and it will be so much fun there. Aren’t you so excited? We do not know anyone except there is a kid but daddy has some friends there. I am positive that you will make so many new friends! We are moving there because your dad got a new job that pays a lot more and will be good for our living,” Mom said, telling me everything that she knew.

“When are we moving?” I asked my mom.

“I really wish that you did not ask that question, but we are moving in a week. You might be really mad that you do not get that long to say goodbye to your friends so maybe you should tell all your friends and start packing after school tomorrow.”

“Ok, well I guess that I can’t do anything to change your minds. So I just got to learn to go with the flow,” I compromised with my mom.

“Thank you for understanding. We really

appreciate it. We will be downstairs if you need anything,” my dad explained to me.

I jumped back on my computer and I AIM Amanda. My screen name was **everyoneluvmassie123**.

**Everyoneluvmassie123:** hey what’s up? I have really bad news!!!!!!

**Richgirl27:** hey! What is the bad news?????

**Everyoneluvmassie123:** You will not believe it but I will tell you. I am moving to New York in 7 days!!!!!!!!!!!!

**Richgirl27:** OMG!!!!!! You are kidding right I am crying right know!!!! I am in shock. When did you find this out???

**Everyoneluvmassie123:** I now I just found out!!!!!!

**Richgirl27:** I am so sorry I have to go my dad is calling me. I will make sure to call you later and you will tell me every thing about the big move!! Ttyl!

**Everyoneluvmassie123:** oh ok I will talk to you soon! Byeeee!

**Richgirl27 has just logged off.**

I logged off and I started to pack.

Why is this so hard for me? I just can’t put my stuff in my suitcase if it feels like in it suppose to be in this house. Right where it is, looking so perfect. But I knew that I had to pack it and if I did not pack it, it would be left here, and I would never see it again in my whole life. I finish packing all my clothes besides my clothes for the days that I am staying here. The last thing to pack in my room was my glass pottery. I went down stairs and I got bubble wrap and a couple boxes to put all of my poetry and glass pieces in. I packed them up and

then I was done packing up my room. I was on to the basement because I had so much junk down there. I had to go throw a lot of my stuff away to make it easier to move. Once I threw a lot of it away there was like nothing down there. I brought all of the stuff that was in the basement to my room and put it in one of the boxes that I did not use for my pottery. When I went down to show my parents what I had accomplished, they had already packed up their room and the family room, and now they were on the kitchen and almost done with that. "Wow! You have done a lot. I did my room and the basement."

"Good job, honey; you have done so much! So do you feel better now about the move? And have you told anyone yet?"

"Yes, I feel so much better and I have told Amanda and she was not happy. But I am going to go to New York with an open mind so then I will at least have a better time," I sighed.

"Thank you that makes us feels so much better," my mom believed.

I ran up to my room and showered because it was 9 o'clock. After my shower I got in bed. I read for twenty minutes then I fell asleep right away. I dreamed of moving and making new friends. It was a good thing that I had a good dream about it. I woke up at six thirty and got ready for school. I went down stairs and had breakfast. I had eggs and milk. Yummy! It was delicious it tasted so good. It was seven thirty and I got all my stuff ready and said goodbye to my mom and dad and ran out to the bus stop. I waited for five minutes. I got on the bus and I sat in the same seat that I always sit in. Amanda was the next stop and she got on the bus and sat next to me. We both were speechless. We just did not know where to start. Right when we pulled into the parking lot Amanda said, "Sorry I did not call you last night I was so

busy." Amanda said sounding very sad.

"Oh it's okay I was very tired and I went to bed very early." I explained. We got off the bus and walked in together and went straight to our lockers.

"So does this mean that we our not taking are trip to Los Angles?" Amanda sighed.

"I will see if I can come in town and then we will talk. Or we might be able to go this summer. I have to go to class now and explain to Mr. Kane why I am leaving," I said.

"I will see you at lunch!" Amanda said.

I ran down the hall to science and saw Mr. Kane at his desk. "Mr. Kane I am moving to New York next week so this will be my last week here."

"Oh that is too bad I really don't want you to leave. You are my best student in this science class and you really help all the kids learn." Mr. Kane said while getting all of my tests out because he kept them all year long.

The day flew by so fast and I was so tired by the end of the day. Amanda and I had been talking at lunch and we had made up a plan of when we are going to go online and when we are going to talk to each other. It was a plan and we promised that we were going to text each other when we could not go online or talk to each other.

Wow it was Sunday already and I was not ready for Sunday. Sunday that is not a good sign. No sirree it wasn't. Sunday meant moving day, tomorrow. Also known as doomsday.

I went to the park to meet up with my friends and we said our last goodbyes. We were all crying when I left. I had a tear in my eye, but I made I the best of it so I would not start bawling.

The next day we took off at six thirty in the morning and flew away from my whole

life I felt like I was going to a place that I could never come back to my own town. Thinking about that made me come back to my dream last week. I fell right back asleep. We landed in NYC I was just reading that from the sign witch said, "Welcome to New York City."

We turned on 952 Park Ave. I stopped in front of a very big building. We took the elevator up to the 12th floor. I was the first one in the apartment, so I made sure that I got the room I wanted before my brother and sister got to choose. I know that my sister would have wanted the room I had. She was thirteen years old and she was so annoying but not as annoying as my ten-year-old brother. I ran down both hallways and the last one I went into looked like it was made for me. It was baby blue with orange polka dots. It was perfect.

I decided to go get some new clothes: Gucci, Prada and Coach. I asked my mom where to go. She said Saks Fifth Avenue department store. I looked at every level and I found so much stuff that I liked. I went up the eighth floor and explored for a while. I cracked open the closet door and I found the most beautiful and fantastic thing ever!

It was really amazing. I was shocked. There was snow in a field and it felt like 80 degrees. How was that possible? I was so curious to feel the snow, to see if it was real. It was 80 degrees and I really thought that it was real snow. Something in my body told me that I was doing the wrong thing, and that I should not go in there because something might happen. Someone might be in here. It might be for something that I should not touch. But I was just too curious not to enter.

I jumped down. It felt like was in the air forever. I landed with a thump. AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH! What just happened to me? I just got smaller. I mean

I shrank. Oh no! How am I going to get out of here? I might be stuck forever. Thinking of that made me shake with terror. I had the feeling that I should get out right now, but I came in here when I was not supposed to, and I am not just going to get out of this place, once I just freaked myself out and almost passed out in shock. I am definitely not leaving after all that.

I picked up the snow and it was real. I could not believe it! I knew it was real because I picked it up and it melted in my hand like a wet slushy. I ran around and if you dig really deep I discovered you would find little animal friends in the ground. And they will talk to you and you can tell them about any thing you want and they give you good advice.

I went to go and get my stuff so my mom does not suspect anything. I just could not leave it was just so graceful every one was quiet and you could hear the birds chirping and it was like a warm summer day but there was just snow on the ground. The animals under the ground in their homes are leaving they told us all about it they said, "so we are planning on moving in a couple of weeks. We are moving because we brought only enough food for one year and the year is going to be up in a couple of weeks," the little animals said in a soft voice.

Then I said back to them, "Well that is so sad I got to go I will be back tomorrow."

I went to my stuff. It had not shrunk with me. Oh no how do I get it out of here? I tried to get myself out first. I thought that that would be a smart idea. Then I would pull my bags out. I used the light switch to climb on and I grew. I was a little scared because I was half of my size when I grew, but then I grew to my size. I found a belt on one of the old dresses and

used that to lift up my stuff. Got it!

I ran home to my apartment and finished unpacking. I was really lucky because my apartment was right next to Saks Fifth Avenue department store. My mom was calling me down for dinner right when I got home. The next day was my first day of school, and I had to admit that I was a little nervous and I had never been nervous about going to school. I went to my closet because I did not have enough room in my dresser drawer so I went to my closet to keep some stuff in it.

Wow! This is a big closet and I only have like four things to put in it. Well that is a waste of a closet. What is that in the back of my closet? Oh my gosh, it is another closet. I don't need it though what should I do with it? I just know just the thing to use it for! If it is big enough I could make it a reading center with chairs and it would be the perfect little room. I cracked the door open it was a little room witch led to a cave area. I went in the cave and got on my hands and knees and I crawled down the whole tunnel. AAHHHHHHHHH! I slid down a tunnel to the gander's closet. Where am I? I must be dreaming. I walked out of the closet and I was in the Saks Fifth Avenue Lobby. Wow what a relief I went back in the janitors closet and crawled up the tunnel back in my room! I was so wrong I said that it was a small room that I could make a reading room. Well I was wrong about.

*Dingalinglingling.*

*Boom!* I smacked my alarm clock not wanting to go to school. I was really not a morning person. I hated waking up in the mornings.

"Good morning honey! Wake up! Wake up!" my mom shouted trying to get me out of bed.

I missed all my old friends so much!

(Weeks went by nothing really happened) that just pooped in to my head as I woke up. This is what I think of at home that is why. I think off all my friends.

"I'm up, 'm up gosh. Be down in a second." I said in a horrible mood.

School went fine. I guess. I did not make many friends. And nothing really changed besides my grades they went down a lot! But it was not that bad I was starting to like it little by little. My grades went down because all I did we go to the best place life has ever taken me the eight floor. My mom thought that I was doing my homework in but in reality was in the tunnel down to Saks. I was lonely most of the time and I never told my brother or sister.

My life was pretty good and actually I would get to go to see my friend back home. I was having a good time and this was a life experience and if I did not take it well, I like going above and beyond with my life. Now that I did it, it has taught me a lot of things. And my grades have been getting better. I have learned how to have fun and at the same time do your homework and do every thing that you need to get done. The next day I went back up to the eighth floor to go have some free time. I heard right when I walked in to sakes Fifth Avenue department store that they were talking about a girl.

They said "There is a girl that has been here about every day for at least four hours." The manger explained.

Then the other man said "you should take a closer look at her, she is buying stuff, so who cares we are getting paid, so I could care less."

The other man looked suspicious. He looked around to see if I was here. I hid behind the clothes rack. When he turned around to go back to work I got up and ran across the hallway, to the elevator and pushed the eighth floor. It takes a while to

get up there, I was really hoping that I would not stop at any floors because then I would have to get out at the seventh floor and pretend like I meant to get off the elevator. Yes! I didn't have to stop. I got off the elevator and walked onto the eighth floor, there were old and dusty clothes. And for the first time I really wanted to take a closer look at them. They were actually really cool there was Prada and Gucci from the 1800's and it is 2009, what a big difference. I thought some of it was kind of cute. There was this one shirt that was green and pink. It was really cute. I actually, wanted it! I really should not waste my time I only had an hour until I had to be home. I jumped right in. I was shrinking in the air. I landed on a snowflake. The snowflake brought me down to the ground. I was having so much fun running and jumping on the snowflakes and eating them. What is that noise? I heard it from a distance. Oh it was just my cell phone. OH NO! My phone had not shrunk and my mom is calling me! I jumped on the SEND button.

"Hi Mom," I said screaming into the gigantic phone.

"Hi honey, I am here on the seventh floor waiting for you. Where are you?" my mom replied.

"Uh, oh, oh, oh...oh, yeah, I am in the bathroom," I lied.

"Ok," my mom said.

"I'll be down in a second, oh I mean out in a second," I said fast, scrambling out of the snow and gathering all my stuff.

I snuck off the elevator and saw my mom waiting.

"Hi, mom," I said.

"Your dad just called, you need to get home. He has guests coming over, and you have to clean your room so the house does not look so messy. We will have to come back tomorrow," Mom said.

"Ok, fine by me," I said.

The next day I went back (before my mom came). They removed the eighth-floor button. Oh well, I guess this has been a great experience. I hope I will find another opportunity just like this!

School! I woke up the next morning and got ready and on my way to the bus stop I dropped all my books. This girl named Brianna helped me pick them all up! She was a friend just like all my old friends!

## Max and Laura in Wood Creek Hallows

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*You probably wouldn't expect someone to point out a portal to another world behind a Dumpster. Look for that and the adventure that goes with it in **MAX AND LAURA IN WOOD CREEK HALLOWS** by Mehak Ahmed.*

I dedicate this story to my friends and my family because they are always by my side inspiring me.

When Max and Laura were just babies, their mom had to give them away to an orphanage because they were poor, and she couldn't take care of them. The orphanage that Max and Laura were sent to

was the worst place you can ever imagine.

"Wash those dishes and don't think that I'm not watching you!" screamed Mrs. Bunker, her voice was high pitched and annoying.



She was the one who yelled at people and forced them to do things that she is too lazy to do. And that is why she was so fat and lazy, Mrs. Bunker had thick, brown hair and she had a big, plump face and sausage-like fingers. "Hey, you! Scrape this muck off of the floor!" she yelled at Max. Max was a tall, skinny boy who was 11yr. old, Max was very smart and he had thick, brown hair.

All the other children were hard at work and so was Laura, she was in deep thought about Mrs. Bunker while she was washing the dishes. Laura was also tall and skinny but she had blond, silky hair and bangs up to her eyebrows. She was 12 years old and she always wore her favorite ragged shirt which was a purple and pink shirt that had a smiley face on it that Laura had made into an angry face with a purple and pink skirt. Anyways Laura was cooking up a scheme on how to pay back all that hard work she and her brother, Max, had done. Then she thought about her mother, and she thought if she was dead or maybe she just gave Laura and Max to this dumb place because she didn't like them or something. "No, Laura concentrate!" she muttered to herself. When it was time to go to bed Laura stayed up all night thinking... thinking... and thinking of something so diabolical and mean to Mrs. Bunker. Early in the morning Laura had figured it out this was her best prank yet.

"Get down here and start getting a move on you lazy children!!!!" yelled Mrs. Bunker. *Oh I will* Laura thought *I will*. Meanwhile Laura's brother, Max, was day dreaming about a fantasy world with adventures and quests and something magical happening to him while he was sweeping the kitchen floor. He saw Laura creeping up to Mrs. Bunker *Oh no! She is obviously going to do something horribly evil that will get us in lots of trouble* thought Max. Laura was

as sneaky as a fox, but no matter how much Max tried to signal her he just couldn't catch her attention, finally he snuck over to where Laura was.

"What are doing!" he whispered.

"Payback time!" answered Laura.

"What! Laura don't you know how angry she'll get!" whispered Max. An evil smile spread slowly across Laura's face like thick syrup slowly being poured.

"Oh that's exactly what I'm hoping for." said Laura dramatically. And with that said she continued walking. At that moment Max grabbed her dirty, ragged shirt, Laura spun around, her blond silky bangs fell over her eyes and tripped over a loose floor board, then a flash of white, blinding light and it was all over just like that. Everyone stopped what they were doing and looked over to where it had happened, but there were two people missing at that point, Max and Laura.

AAAAAAAAHHHHHH!" yelled Laura and Max as they were falling through the sky. When they were about to hit the ground they stopped and landed gracefully on the soft green grass. "Wow! That was awesome!" said Laura

"Where are we? And what in the world just happened?" asked Max confused.

"You know what?" said Laura, "I may not know where we are or what just happened, but I know for a fact that you didn't let me take my revenge on Mrs. Bunker, so now I'll just take it on you."

"Laura back off, I saved you from Mrs. Bunker." Max said defending himself.

"Oh yeah, and now look what you did! We are in some psycho universe that is probably three hundred thousand million kajillion gazillion bazillion hundred fifty miles away from home! I would rather suffer the punishment Mrs. Bunker would give me!" screamed Laura "That's not even a number," said Max.

"I...DONT...CARE!!" yelled Laura she started sprinting toward Max, Laura was a really fast runner because she had long, skinny legs. She chased Max all the way to a big, dark, spooky cave.

"L- Let's go Laura." said Max frightened.

"No, wait!" said Laura "Don't be such a scaredy cat." Laura started walking inside the cave.

"I know I'm going to regret this." Muttered Max to himself but he went inside anyways. As Max and Laura crept in, they could hear the *drip of* water, it was very cold in the cave and max was kind of freaking out!

"Umm...Laura I think we should just go home," suggested Max.

"Home? Home? You want to go home *genius*? Okay then, take us home! Go on then what are you waiting for? You said you wanted to go home. Alright, any moment now," said Laura.

"I meant we should just explore this place and discuss what just happened so that we know what we are dealing with."

"Look we are not *dealing* with anything and I don't want to *discuss* okay? And anyways I *am* exploring, right here, right now in this cave." said Laura and continued walking.

"Fine! But once you regret this you just remember you can't reverse time!" called Max after her.

"Maybe in the other world you couldn't!" said Laura. Then without warning a little man popped out of nowhere. "Who in the world are *you*?" asked Laura rudely.

"I am the one who owns half of this magical, wonderful, mysterious world!" said the little man proudly in a squeaky voice.

"And who owns the other half?" asked Max when he caught up to where the little man was.

The little man looked uncomfortable for

a while then he said, "How about ya call me Pete"

"Stop trying to change the subject!" said Laura.

"Look ya guys look like you're lost, how about this I will show ya guys 'round if ya guys don't ask that question and if yer good then maybe I'll tell ya. Deal?" Pete asked. Laura shrugged Max thought for a minute then said, "Okay I guess."

"Alrighty then, tell me about this place you are from." said Pete.

"Well...do you know about planet Earth?" asked Max.

"Well of course I do! I know about every place in this universe!" answered Pete.

"That's where we are from! Now, tell me about this place." said Laura.

"This is a place like no other, its where magical, mysterious, unknown, places lie. It's way too dangerous for you humans to be here," said Pete mysteriously.

"I feel like going on a magical adventure." said Max. Pete hesitated then said, "I guess I could tell you guys the other half of this world. Ya see there is this evil dude who wants to... kind of... like um..."

"Come on already!" said Laura impatiently.

"Take over the world do some horrible things that I don't want to say." said Pete quickly.

"Can we please help!" pleaded Max.

"How could I possibly forget about the prophecy!" said Pete. Laura and Max looked at each other confused. "Alrighty mate let's get ready!"

"For what?" asked Laura and Max at the same time.

After Max, Laura and Jack looked over the plans and files several of times they looked over the map of Evilville. "I cannot believe that Neevils name was Neville," Jack said and then burst out laughing. "Well

you can't spell Neville or Neevil without spelling evil."

"Okay I've got it!" said Max, and he explained the plan to Laura and Jack.

"That is so risky." Jack said nervously.

"Don't worry." said Laura, "Max always has two back up plans, right Max?"

"Actually..." Max began then saw the look on Jacks ghostly face and lied, "Actually I have three."

Max, Laura and Jack flew out of the forest and into the borders of Evilville, it was basicly a dry desert with a few skulls lying around, maybe even some burnt down houses.

"Believe it or not this place had a river and everything was so lush and green and it had a beautiful garden." Jack explained as they flew to the castle.

"alright every one now the plan?" Max asked.

"Yes." Laura and Jack said together.

"Okay I'll give you a signal when the coast is clear." Max said. Then when he gave the signal Max and Laura crept into the castle without being seen and crawled into the air vents.

"Okay so I'll set everything up while you do the wire thingy okay?" Laura said.

"Okay, here is a walkie talky." Max said as he handed it to her. So when Laura left she headed straight to Neevils bedroom, she got a bucket and filled it with pig fat mixed with worms which she had in a jar already and set the first trap which was when Neevil will open his bedroom door the mixture will fall all over him then obviously he would go to the shower that's where she set up the second trap she put a bear trap right in front of the shower so that he would step on it and his foot will bleed which will make him go to the medicine cabinet and get a band aid that's where she put the third trap she put a jack-in-the-box thing holding double sided extra

sticky and strong duct tape that will jump out and tape Neevils mouth shut so when he will go to the shower he would somehow free his hands and use the shampoo which she replaced with extra strong glue then he would feel like he had a long day and go to bed that's where she set the last trap she put the remaining glue on his pillow.

Meanwhile Jack was distracting Neevil by telling him that he was a fortuneteller. "I sense bad things happening to you. Especially in your bed room." Jack said "You must be nice to everyone and let your prisoners go."

"No way!" said Neevil "Go away and you are not a fortune teller."

"Oh yeah, than how come I know that your real name is Neville." Jack said. And Neevil just stood there surprised. "Right, so you better be nice or you will be cursed."

"Yeah right," said Neevil and started to walk away. Jack had to think fast so he started blackmailing Neevil.

While that was happening Max was doing technological stuff like when Neevil touched the door knob it shocked him and he made sure that when he took a shower instead of water he replaced it with blue dye and stuff like that.

"Max Neevil is headed for his room." Jack said in the walkie talkie and Max passed the news to Laura. Laura quickly hurried up and climbed up the vent and she met Jack and Max there.

"Got everything ready?" Laura asked.

"Yep." Max answered. And from the vents they all heard Neevils footsteps coming closer and closer and *BZZZZZZ!* Max, Laura and Jack started laughing in a quiet voice, then Neevil entered the room and...*SLOSH!*

"What was in that bucket?" asked Jack.

“Pig fat and worms,” answered Laura.

“Eeeeww!” Jack said.

“Ew, what is this?” Neevil asked himself, “Whatever, I’ll just take a shower.” Then they heard a loud yelp from Neevil and they hurried to the bathrooms vent.

“Oww! I don’t remember putting that bear trap there. Something fishy is going on here,” Neevil said as he limped over to the medicine cabinet. “Now my foot is all bleeding and everything, oh brother!” Neevil muttered to himself, then he opened the cabinet and, “MMMMMM!” Neevil yelled in a muffled voice when the Jack-in-the-box jumped out with the tape.

Neevil went to the shower he turned it on but he didn’t notice that the shower was spraying blue dye! He took the shampoo (or so he thought) and rubbed it on his hair really hard to make sure there was no pig fat or worms left in it and when he tried to take his hands off his head so he went in front of the mirror and he sees that his whole body was BLUE and realizes that the shampoo was really actually GLUE. He went back into his bedroom (with Max, Laura and Jack following in the vents) and slipped into his covers and fell asleep then Laura took out Neevil’s phone that she had stolen earlier and asked, “What’s the number to the cops?”

“119.” Jack answered. Then 3 minutes later the SWAT and the cops and they came and entered the castle. “Nobody move!” one of the goblin cops said. As they entered the castle and they all went up to Neevil’s room.

“Neevil or should I say *Neville* you are under arrest,” one of the goblin cops said as he put the handcuffs around his wrists, and Max, Laura and Jack came out of the air vents to watch Neevil.

“Thanks kids...wait a minute you two are not a type of this planet, are you a human?” the goblin cop asked.

“Yes.” answered Max and Laura at the same time.

“Cool!” said the goblin cop and left with Neevil yelling and ordering the guards to do something. After all that commotion Jack, Max and Laura all flew back to where Max and Laura first met Pete.

“I guess its good-bye...” Laura said unwillingly.

“For know right? Can we meet you again?” Max asked hopefully.

“Sure, if you can come back the way you did last time.” Jack answered.

“Bye,” said Laura.

“Bye,” said Max.

“Bye; see you guys next time hopefully.”

And then Max and Laura walked up to where they had first landed and then there was a flash of white blinding light and it was all over just like that.

“AAAAAAHHHHH!” yelled Max and Laura yelled as they fell through the sky. When they were about to hit the ground they suddenly stopped and gracefully landed on their feet. “What? Where are we? What just happened?” asked Max confused.

“Well let’s see, number one: we are in front of the orphanage. Number two we just fell out of the sky. *DUUHHH!* Everyone knows that.” answered Laura.

“But what happened to-”

“Shut up! Quick, look Mrs. Bunker is coming.” interrupted Laura completely ignoring him she led him to the dumpster and hid behind it. And she was right Mrs. Bunker *was* coming, and she was headed toward the dumpster. “Oh, no! Not the dumpster, anything but this dump!” Laura muttered to herself. But there was no stopping Mrs. Bunker, Laura and Max squished themselves against the brick wall behind them so that Mrs. Bunker wouldn’t see them. Actually, Mrs. Bunker wasn’t really looking like herself today; in fact she

looked kind of *sad*. Max accidentally made a loud noise against the trash.

“Smooth move dork!” whispered Laura to Max.

“Who’s there?” asked Mrs. Bunker.

Max stood up and said, “My sister and me,” replied Max.

“She’ll be so angry!” said Laura as she slowly got up.

“What are you two doing here and where have you been?” said Mrs. Bunker.

“That doesn’t matter,” said Max bravely “We are sick and tired of you making us do everything that you just don’t want to do!” Laura looked at Max shocked and Mrs. Bunker was speechless. There was a long silence then Laura spoke up, “I know that you are obviously not going to believe me but we were in Wood Creek Hallows it is-”

“A fantasy land where you can do anything you imagine.” Mrs. Bunker finished.

“How did you know?” Max asked.

Mrs. Bunker hesitated then said, “I know about this land because I went to another fantasy land and heard about it. Behind this dumpster there is a portal to Dreamy Creamy Wonderland, all of the lands are named really weird.”

“Whoa!” Laura said surprised.

“It is behind that dumpster.” Mrs. Bunker. With all her might Laura pushed the dumpster and there was the portal it was pink and white and was swirling around and around.

“Cool!” Max and Laura said at the same time.

“Anyways,” continued Mrs. Bunker “After I make sure that you guys are hard at work I sneak out and I go to Dreamy Creamy Wonderland.”

“Why? I thought you were a nasty old mean woman.” Laura said. Mrs. Bunker looked really angry.

“Well guess what? I’m not!” Mrs.

Bunker yelled. “A long time ago my aunt was just like you described, every day she would make me work from dusk to dawn and she just did whatever she felt like doing, for example she would go to the beach while I am scrubbing the floor and like when she would watch T.V while I am cleaning up the table and I just ate small leftovers it was horrible.”

“Well what happened?” asked Max.

“I ran away and-”

“Hold on,” Laura interrupted “What about your mom and dad?”

“They died, so I ran away and I just had a few snacks but this woman found me and sent me to an orphanage, I never got adopted so when I was all grown up I started to work there and then they moved me here and now I work at this place.” Mrs. Bunker said.

“Why do you treat us so bad then?” Max asked.

“Because I always wanted revenge on my aunt and my anger spilled on you guys, I’m so sorry.” Mrs. Bunker said.

“That’s okay.” Laura said. Max and Laura told Mrs. Bunker what had happened to them and the adventure they had gone through.

“Ummmm... could we go through that portal?” Laura asked pointing to the pink and white swirls.

“Sure!” Mrs. Bunker said, and they all went in.

After some years when Max and Laura were all grown up they always paid a little visit to the orphanage, the main reason was to go into the fantasy worlds and be whoever they wanted to be, that was the place where they were free and just let their spirits fly. And as for Mrs. Bunker, she was very kind and went to her aunts’ house and worked things out and Max and Laura learned that everyone has a secret of some sort hidden in their world.

# My Teachers Are Aliens!

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MY TEACHERS ARE ALIENS! *writes Malik Brown. Of course they are!*

*D*ing, Ding, Ding rang Xavier's alarm clock at 6:00 a.m. on a Monday. Xavier was not thinking about how close it was to his wakeup time. Xavier took a couple minutes to get out of bed because he was thinking about the dream he had just been having. He was having a dream that all of his teachers were aliens. In the past, some of his dreams came true. Hmmm. He went into the bathroom to start getting cleaned up.

After he was done, he went downstairs to eat breakfast. He was looking through the cupboard for Frosted Flakes. He didn't see them.

"Crap!" Xavier said. "Now I have to eat my dad's Honey Bunches of Oats."

Xavier had to force himself to swallow the disgusting cereal. When he was done he had to let his dog outside for his morning stroll. When his dog was done, he came to the door when he was done.

Xavier had time so he wanted to get to school early. When he got there he thought he was the only one in the school. He went to the teachers' lounge to check it out. When he got in there he saw something that he thought he would only see in a horror movie.

His teachers were aliens! He couldn't believe it. He always thought that his teachers were unusual acting. "HOLY CRAP!" he said. "I can't believe it! I have to get to the bottom of this."

Xavier thought that if he told some other people then they could help him crack the case. The problem was that nobody believed him. They thought he was an idiot.

"What do I do? Xavier said. "If I don't

get to the bottom of this the aliens are going to take over the world. I am so frustrated. I am going to have to make a trap. It's going to take a lot of thinking. I need to take my time. I need to plan this well. If I mess up the whole city will suffer."

Xavier took a while to think. Then he had an idea. "Yes! I've got it."

Xavier was concentrated on getting people to team up with him to catch the aliens. Most of the people just looked at him like he was crazy when he tried to tell them that all of the teachers were aliens. Xavier had a feeling that this would happen. He didn't know what to do. Xavier was so keyed in on getting people to believe him that he paid no attention to school. He was sitting in class and his teacher finally confronted him.

"Xavier! Why aren't you paying attention? You've been in the clouds all day. Am I going to have to give your parents a call?" Xavier's teacher said.

Xavier said, "Oh come on! I'm not that bad. I'm not any worse than anyone else in the class."

"That's it. You're out of here."

Xavier was sent out of the classroom. He was told to go to the office. Once he got there he was asked why he was sent down. He told them. Xavier was suspended from school and sent home. Obviously he was not happy about being suspended from school. He knew he would have to deal with his dad when he got home. Xavier's dad was really serious about school. One time his dad took all of his wrestling watching privileges away. That ate Xavier alive. He didn't know what else to do if he

couldn't watch wrestling. After not being able to watch wrestling on TV for a while he eventually found other things to do. Xavier was sitting in the school office thinking about all this when another thought came to his head.

"What if I just don't tell them? Ha! I'm brilliant. I'll go home and if nobody's home then I'll go hide somewhere until they get back. Then I'll walk in the front door like I normally would on a normal school day. I think it'll work. We'll see."

After sitting in the school office for a while Xavier was finally able to go home. He walked out of the school building and was on his way. Hopefully his parents were not home when he got there. When he reached his neighborhood he noticed that he was one of the only people that were actually out at the time. More than likely everyone was at work. When Xavier stepped into the door everything was quiet. He was relieved to know that nobody was home. He planned to act like he had been at school when his parents got home.

When his parents got home they asked him how his day was. He told them that his school day was good. He lied. Xavier went about his evening as if it was a normal school day.

His parents went about their normal activities and so did Xavier. Dad watched sports on TV and mom finished up some work prepping for her demo the next day. Xavier did his homework. When he was finished he played video games and even watched some TV with his dad. Good thing he was only suspended for the rest of that day or he'd have to come up with a whole other plan to cover up his suspension.

It was nine o'clock now and it was time for Xavier to get ready for bed. He did his normal which was to take a shower, brush

his teeth, and clean his room. When he was done with all that, Xavier went downstairs to each of his parents to say goodnight. His mom was still working and his dad was still watching sports. His parents were obviously very busy and they did not pay much attention to him. So, Xavier went to bed. He lay in bed for a while thinking about what will happen tomorrow at school. Eventually he doZed off.

Xavier heard his alarms go off. He woke up sleepily and got out of bed. Again, he did his normal routine which was to brush his teeth, get dressed, and pack his bag for school. When all of this was done, Xavier went downstairs to eat breakfast. He was still very tired. In result of that Xavier fell down the stairs and hit his head. At the bottom of the stairs Xavier held his head. His mom's breakfast smelled so good that he completely forgot about the pain. When Xavier got up he was a little dizzy. He walked into the kitchen and his mom said, "Good morning."

Xavier replied, "good morning. What's for breakfast? I'm starved."

"Bacon, eggs, and silver dollar pancakes. Oh and by the way, you look a little shaken. Is something wrong?"

"Oh, I just fell down the stairs. I'm ok though."

Xavier ate his breakfast really slow. Before he knew it he had to leave. About a block down the road he felt like he was being followed. He was nervous. Xavier turned around to see his dog Coco.

"Oh will you go back home you stupid dog." Coco didn't move. "Oh forget about it."

Xavier continued to walk when..."Watch out!" Xavier said. The aliens were coming after him and his dog Coco.

Xavier tried to set a trap to catch the

aliens. Obviously it didn't work. The aliens were just too smart. Every time Xavier set a trap the aliens would find a way to get out of it. Just then he saw the aliens get on a spaceship and take off. *Roar* went the engines. Xavier didn't know what to do. The aliens were getting away.

"Wait." Xavier said. "This could be a good thing. The aliens were going back to their home. But they still had the ability to come back."

Xavier thought for a while. "Since I was not able to seize the aliens then they can come back and still take over the earth. Crap!" Xavier said. "These aliens sure are smart. I'm going to need help to capture them. Without expert help it's going to be impossible."

Xavier didn't know what to do. He decided to just sleep on it. At the time Xavier was sitting in his living room. He walked upstairs and climbed into bed. Xavier slept for hours and hours. He didn't even notice all the commotion that was going on in his room. What he didn't know was that the aliens were searching his room for all of his gadgets that could be used to capture them. They were going through everything. They were bound to find something. That wouldn't be too good for Xavier. Luckily for him he kept a net launcher under his pillow. There was one problem with that. He only had one. There was way more aliens than that. Xavier would be in big trouble when he woke up. He slept for a couple hours longer before he woke up.

When Xavier finally opened his eyes he thought he thought what he saw wasn't real. He rubbed his eyes but he still saw what he saw. Luckily the aliens didn't see him. He slowly and quietly reached under his pillow for his net launcher. He realized that there were more than one alien. He had no idea what to do,

*Should I fire at them with my net launcher and only get a couple or should I make a run for it?* he thought.

Xavier decided to make a run for it. He noticed that the aliens were all positioned far enough from his door for him to be able to slip out the door and get a good distance out of his bedroom door before they even noticed that he was gone. Xavier didn't hesitate for one second. He dashed out of his bed in what seemed like a split second. He only had to juke on one of the aliens then he was on his way out of the door. He had his coat and was out the door in no time at all and the aliens were right behind him. Xavier ran down his street like there was no other option. He knew where he was going. He was headed straight to the alley where he had a hideout under an old building. He looked back to see how much of a lead he had on the aliens chasing him. He saw that he was at least twenty feet in front of them that would give him enough time to slip into his hideout and shut the door. He felt like he had been running for hours even though it had only been about 2 minutes. When he got to the alley every thing went as planned. He swiftly slipped into the old building. As he was shutting the door one of the aliens stuck his big, ugly, green, oversized hand in the space that was left for the door to slide. Xavier pulled extra hard and before he knew it the alien's hand had popped off and was lying on the floor. The alien let out a loud shriek. Xavier knew that he didn't have much time because the aliens would be trying to get through the door. He had some monster killer stored away in his cave. He hoped that it would work. It was worth a try once he had the killer he rushed out the door and started spraying all over. When all the spray had settled, he saw aliens dead on the ground.

"Yes!" Xavier said. "After all this I was



able to save the whole world.” Xavier walked over on of the aliens and said, “Whose yo daddy!” and kicked it hard.

Xavier ran all around town celebrating his wonderful victory.

## Out of This World

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*The truth about Selena is something alien to her—or maybe not—in* **OUT OF THIS WORLD** *by* **Madison Domas**.

This story is dedicated to all my best friends, and of course my family. Enjoy...

A hhhh... what a beautiful day the leaves crunching on the trees, the birds chirping in the sky and that wonderful summer breeze, it truly was a perfect day in Toronto Canada.

I was sitting on the lawn chair sipping lemonade in my backyard. My mom came out of the house to sit down with me and asked me how school was today; I go to an all year round school. “It’s tiring” I said. Then she told me I had to do my math homework after I get done sun bathing.

“Honey” I’m going to go to the Ray’s house for dinner. Your father and I will be back at nine o’clock “ok” I said. I didn’t really care if she was going anywhere I had like half of the night all to myself.

My friend Summer called me and asked me if I wanted to come to her birthday party I had to say yes to her, she is like the most popular girls in school and one of my closest friends. She told me to call Amy and ask her if she could come too. I said I would then I told her bye and I hung up the phone **next** to call Amy.

The phone kept ringing and ringing finally she picked up “Hello?” she asked. “Hi” Amy this is Selena “Oh HI!” What do you want?” Amy said I just wanted to say that Summer wants to know if you

want to come to her birthday party. She also said yes then said that she would call Summer and tell her that she can come too. I said bye then hung up; Amy was my second best friend in the whole wide world.

I pulled my math homework out of my backpack. Then I started to procrastinate by looking at things around me; I get distracted easily. About an hour passed with math just sitting in front of me calling my name “Selena work on math, work on math” I thought about it for a second and told myself maybe if I don’t get my homework done I can’t go to Summer’s party.

So I started working on math again but when I only had one more problem to do I started getting a headache so I took a deep breath went upstairs and got some aspirin.

I laid on my bed and fell asleep. I started dreaming about a whole different world that I have never been to. Looking at all the colors it looked like Earth but seemed cleaner and prettier. Then I heard a knock on my door I woke up really fast it kind of startled me a little bit.

I looked out my square floral window my parents car was there that must mean that their home. I raced down the stairs yep they were home, but my homework wasn’t done I grabbed it without my

parents seeing that it wasn't done.

I snuck back upstairs, grabbed my pencil and did the last problem. Then I put my math in my pink binder and my pink and white striped backpack. I went back downstairs and told my mom about that weird dream I had. When I told her about the dream she made this weird face like she wanted to tell me something but she didn't want to tell me something all at the same time, it was confusing. She tried changing the subject to school, and then to the places I liked to go to, like the mall. She already knew where I liked to go and "whatever happens in school stays in school" I said.

Mom asked me what I wanted for lunch tomorrow for school I said "a steak and cheese sandwich from Tubby's. She said ok, then told me to go take a shower and get ready for bed. I said ok, and then walked upstairs.

I skipped the shower because my Dad was already in it. So I walked down the hall to my room dug in my pajama closet and picked out the blue silk pj's with monkeys holding bananas on it and the matching tank top. I walked over to my bed and turned out the lights.

I wanted to go to sleep because I wanted to have that dream again to see what it was about, to learn more about it. It was only 9:47 when I fell asleep.

I had it! But more detailed it showed the colors the towns the name the planet was called Jillacia, and you could see the towns people waving their hands in the air saying hello, but there was something wrong with the people they were different colors and shapes, sizes and had antennas on the top of their heads! What kind of world is this? I sprung up in bed with a shock.

It was time to get up for school. I jumped out of bed picked out my clothes

for the day went in the bathroom brushed my hair and my teeth put my makeup on and went downstairs for breakfast and to put on my shoes.

My breakfast was frosted flakes and orange juice. I finished it within about 10 minutes I'm a slow eater. I put my bowl and glass in the sink washed it off dried it and put it back in the cupboard, Then I walked out the door. We lived just about a block away from my middle school so I didn't take the bus, I usually walked.

My best friend Taylor and I walked together, we didn't like walking alone. I walked to her house first and waited for her on her front porch. About 4 minutes later she came out it was kind of funny because we were wearing the same t-shirt it was yellow with the name of our favorite store name going across the top we laughed. But not as hard as when Taylor shook her coca-cola and then opened it and it sprayed all over her we both laughed hysterically, but that was yesterday.

We walked to school fast because we didn't want to get another tardy for being late again. We sprinted across the sidewalks and the road to our school. When we got to school the bell rang right when we got into class OH NO! We were tardy great! Taylor and I both got another detention Ms. Sambree was a real tough teacher I wonder what to do now.

I sat in class for an hour listening to boring speeches on Social Studies. When it was my turn to read my project, I climbed up in the tall teachers chair and when I introduced my project something caught my eye, gleaming out the window was a boy I guessed his age I think he was 16 in my grade I felt like I have known him or even seen him. He looked at me with his green eyes it looked like he was trying to say something to me I said I

didn't understand and he shook his head and rolled his eyes and told me to come outside.

"Ms. Selena are you going to start your story or do we have to go on to a different person?" Mrs. Sambree said just take a different person I'll read mine tomorrow I said "ok Bree your up." I sat down in my chair I looked out my window the boy was gone. I turned back around in my chair Taylor looked at me and said "what's wrong?" I said nothing because nothing was wrong. As I looked up at the clock on the wall it said it was 12:00 am "YESS!" four more minutes until the lunch bell rings!

We were just listening to Bree's speech on the Ancient Sumerians ugghhh... how boring even though Bree is my friend her speech was bad. Glaring at the wall clock waiting for it to turn 12:04 I laid back in my chair and listened to my stomach gurgle and closed my eyes.

I opened my eyes to the ring of the lunch bell, Taylor waited for me to get out of the chair she was rushing me "Come on Selena the macaroni and cheese will be gone if you keep sitting there!" I'm sorry I'm just really lazy today "Well hurry" ok, ok, I'm up now let's go.

Taylor rushed out of the door heading for the hall with me grasping on to my wrist really tight and running up the stairs and through the long hall. Finally we reached the lunchroom door walking in, moving through the tables and chairs up into the line.

Waiting for a while, I didn't notice that the lunch lady was waiting to give me my food. Taylor, Bree, Amy, and Summer were saving me a seat I walked over there and sat down. We started talking about boys epically James almost every girl in the school likes him including me. That's why my daydream world is me and him

we are the only two people on this planet, us holding hands sharing popcorn and drinking coca-cola with two bendy straws, Ahhhh...

Summer snapped her fingers in my face and asked me if I was o.k. I told her of coarse I'm o.k. Amy asked if I was in my dream world again I nodded my head up and down and said yes.

As the principal dismissed us for noon rec. all my friends and I threw our lunches away and walked slowly out the doors. We all walked down the halls with each other.

Me and Taylor were talking and Amy came into the conversation she wasn't paying any attention to the ground and tripped over somebody's Dr. Pepper soda can and she fell flat on her nose and started to say OUCH! Repeatedly. She asked us to take her to the office to get her some ice, we did. We waited for her outside of the office door. As she walked out we laughed because her nose was purple and blue. She tried to laugh with us but it hurt her to laugh.

We walked outside I looked around I saw the same boy that was staring at me in social studies he was hiding behind a tree something was on his head I told my friends I would catch up with them later.

I walked over to the boy and introduced myself he looked at me and said I already know who you are and told me he had to talk to me about something important I looked at the top of his head he was wearing a hat.

He started to talk to me well it wasn't really talking it was more of a whisper, "you need to know something that only I can tell you well your parents can tell you too but listen to me" he said in a whisper voice. I'm listening I said to him... his head turned away and he paused, about ten seconds later he came back and

turned his head toward me and apologized for his absence. Anyway, I forgot to tell you my name, my name is Brent he came closer towards my ear and whispered the secret “ I know you, your king farlee and Queen Salaray’s daughter Princess Selena from a planet called Jillacia we aren’t real people were, were, Aliens...

“Yeah right like I can believe that.” I said in a bratty type of voice.

It’s true he said, the only thing that was true in telling me that I was an alien was that I have been having these weird dreams like I’m seeing another planet and, and I’ve seen the name of the planet on their billboard, and I’ve been getting headaches really badly.

As soon as I finished my sentence the bell rang telling us to head inside because our recess was over. He told me I should go inside, I said ok then walked towards the door. I looked back one more time and he was gone. Could he be telling the truth? I said to myself, I shook my head and said no that can’t be true. But how I look at him and then I turn away for one second he is gone. This is kind of awkward but I think he is telling the truth. I approached the door and stepped inside, I looked back one more time and he was defiantly gone.

The nurse took me into the room with the ice, and the cot and stuff you need to be checked if you’re sick. She sat me down on the cot and checked my head to see if it was bleeding or if it had a scratch. She turned around and looked at me and said “nothing”, “nothing” is wrong with your head but I’ll call your mom to come pick you up I said ok and sat there.

Before she left the room she asked me if I had any homework to work on so I wouldn’t be bored for the next ten

minutes. I told her I had no homework and then she walked out after I said that. Even though the nurse was going to call my mom I was going to call too on my cell so I did. It rang for a while then she picked up the phone she told me she is going to be there in 1 minute she is just right around the corner, I said ok then hung up.

She was pretty quick the office called me out of the room because my mom was here. I walked out slowly still holding ice on my head. My mom told me to hurry up because I should get home and get some aspirin so I hurried up. As soon as she got me she signed me out and we left.

As I got in the car I told my mom about Brent she said “oh I know Brent isn’t he a nice boy” I looked at her and said “yeah....he is fine” but he said something about that you were a Queen. Queen Salaray and dad was King Farlee and I was Princess Selena” I said curiously

“umm... Honey I need to talk to you about that its true and yes...” she paused I was waiting for something dramatic to happen. I let her go on “were aliens” she said in a soft voice.

And it’s weird that your name is Lara and your alien name is Salaray and dads name is Lee and his alien name is Farlee why don’t I have an alien name that is added on? I said still curious.

My mom made her thinking face and waited searching through her brain trying to find the answer,” I actually don’t know” she said still with her thinking face on. Soon her thinking face fell off onto her normal face.

Then there was an awkward silence. Soon we hit the road we lived on Hails Rd. we drove down the road listening to 95.5. We turned down the next road, it

was beautiful because it was filled with blossoming apple trees rose petals on the ground the glimmering green grass It looked like someone got married here.

We made are way down the last road we had to turn to, I opened the sunroof to let the beautiful breeze in and that lovely summer scent, truly it was the perfect summer day. We approached our house; as soon as we parked the car in the rocky driveway we opened the car doors and walked toward the front porch.

Mom forgot her keys, luckily I had mine. I twisted the door knob and walked inside, our house was cold inside “good” I said with a sigh of relief. Mom walked upstairs to get some medicine for my head. It was a little sore but not much, she brought down the aspirin she gave me three pieces to chew, as I put all three in my mouth I started to gag, they tasted horrible.

Mom said that they will make me sleepy “I’m glad” I needed I big rest for school. It was about 4:47pm when I got into bed with my school clothes on I was too lazy to put my pajamas on. I wrapped myself in my warm fuzzy pink sheets and my pink pillow, and slowly closed my eyes.

Again that dream of Jillaica, was getting kind of boring so I decided to put these giant dragon things called the slicerianians by a big brass or maybe it was metal box. And it had a jewel in it, it was multi-colored and in a oval shape, how pretty I said out loud. Apparently I was talking in my sleep because I heard mom say “what, what did you say?” I rolled around in my bed and slightly opened my eyes, I saw mom sitting right on the edge of my bed, and then I gently closed my eyes again, and started to dream.

About four hours later I woke up to the sound of coffee, pancakes, and milk. I

hopped out of bed and walked downstairs. Mom looked like she was in a rush, she told me to go put on my clothes and hurry up to go too, than she paused. She walked over to me and put her hand on my shoulder waiting for something to happen, “we are taking you to Jillacia”.

I got all happy and ran upstairs and got my clothes on, brushed my teeth, combed my hair and packed my bag. I rushed downstairs like the house was on fire but good thing it wasn’t. Mom told me to relax and slow down; we had one more hour before we really had to go.

I slouched and sat on the dining room table chair and ate my blueberry pancakes. I was eating so sloppy that syrup got all over my clothes “ewww...” I bursted out, great now I have to go change again. I walked through the kitchen, walked up the stairs to my room, opened my dresser door and picked out my clothes.

My t-shirt read ‘I love cheer’ it’s from my cheer squad and all my friends signed it on the back. And of course, I put on my Abercrombie jeans. I shut my light off, closed the door and walked back downstairs.

I walked back over to my pancakes and finished eating them, then grabbed my plate and put it in the kitchen sink. I stood there gazing out the window and it was gorgeous. Well that’s what I think about every day except when it’s muddy and raining.

I turned around and walked forward to the living room couch. I flipped through the channels. “Great” I said unhappily nothing is on to watch. So I just lay on the couch and watched the ceiling fan go around in circles. Then mom came in and told me to follow her out to the car, so I did but I first grabbed my luggage.

She told me dad won’t be coming

because he has a business interview. I said ok while I looked in her eyes, then she locked the door and we drove off. I sat there gazing out the window as we approached the airport; we lived just five miles away that's how we got there so fast.

We drove to the back and stopped she grabbed my bags for me and as I stood there looking at the black hole in the ground that would take me to Jillacia, mom said goodbye see you in one day said I love you then jumped. I closed my eyes the whole time; it was really fast to get there.

As I came out of the hole I stood there on a land it looked just like the earth but better. But the only thing about it that was bad that was I was different, and I didn't know how to become an alien just like everybody else.

Soon I started to walk, then a girl came up to me well, alien, they all talk normal, she introduced herself to me. "Hello I'm Mariah, are you Selena?" she asked. I said yes, "well me and Brent have been expecting you" Mariah said happily. I just walked with her.

I asked her a few questions about this world, she responded by saying "it's just like earth" then we came up to another girl she introduced me to her. She seemed like the normal typical bratty girl. Anyways, her name was Brooke. And I asked her about the Slicerianians and how in my dream I put them next to a Jewel. "Don't you ever do that? You understand? They could take over Jillacia because of you!"

Brooke got mad when I said that. And it looked like Mariah panicked a little bit Brooke told me, it will be ok "no it wont what are you telling her it's not ok!" Brooke said that again and walked off. Mariah said whispering it will be ok we

just have to fight them ourselves.

She picked up Brent from the arcade and we ran to their closet. She pushed back all of the clothes and there was a ray. "This is to transform you to a human to an alien, we got out of the closet and she put me against the wall and pressed the button. Next thing you know I was all pink with antennas and little puff balls on the top and even a tail!

Thank you so much I look great I hugged both of them and then Selena dropped Brent back off at the arcade and we left to go fight them. We ran as fast as we could to the box, and there they were trying to open the box. They were even uglier in person. Mariah made a angry face, and ran and jumped on their head and I did the same but before I could get there one already broke in the box and grabbed the necklace. I jumped on his head too. And one of them flipped Mariah off their back and then the necklace was tossed but she jumped and caught it before they could get it. We ran off in to the distance soon the slicerianians were on our tails they followed us.

Mariah told me to go back to earth and warn your mom and dad. So I did, as I left Mariah fighting them by herself I felt guilty leaving somebody when they need help. I can't, so I turned around and flew back to Mariah to help her. Soon Brent came around to help too,

Mariah was in the middle and Brent on the left and me on the right. Taking them one by one, getting tired, we almost gave up. We went through all of them, but then the ground started to rumble, and everything started to shake, soon we came face to face with the giant one. As we all stared at the dark green face, the drool dripping from its mouth, teeth crunching together. We backed up and we turned

around and ran we never looked back.

Running, Mariah gasping for breath, same with me and Brent. Mariah told Brent to go with me back to earth while she stays here. "Please get her back to earth safely then come back here we can't have her get injured" Mariah said worried, "ok ill try" Brent said, Brent told me to follow him so I did.

Flying through the space air, the wind cutting through my eyes and apparently Brent's too, we were both squinting. Even though we couldn't look back I did, all I could see was the bits and pieces of Mariah and the king fighting together didn't look like Mariah was winning.

I turned back around, almost there back to earth. Brent couldn't stand the constant screams of Mariah he told me to go back to earth by myself, so he could go back and help. He stopped, I thought I saw a tear running down his blue cheek. I told him to go, "thanks" he said whimpering.

I didn't blame him after all it is his sister. After I said that in my head he flew off. I paused looking down at earth. I took a deep breath and flew down to earth. The clouds coming to my face, a tear rolled down my face. "Why did I do that?" I said to myself and answered "they wanted me too, it will be ok" I said as I sniffed. As I made my way back to earth I saw Taylor's house, next to mine, I was home.

As I rushed in the front door, mom wondered why I was home so soon "They, they, are going to get them" I said repetitively, to my mom. "What, what happened?" mom said worried. They are going to get Mariah and Brent, the Sliceranian king. "Well come on we have to save them don't we!?" mom said in an eager tone.

This time we didn't drive to the airport

because it would take too long. So mom and I, walked into the garage and paused.

An awkward silence hit our ears. "Mom?" I said "what are we doing just standing here on the garage stairs?" I asked anxiously waiting for a response. "You know when you were little you always wanted to know what was under that sheet over there?" mom said pointing to a light green sheet with something big under it. "ummm... ya I guess" I said. Well we are going to take this sheet off and fly to Jillacia with it.

We both walked over there lifting the light green sheet, from the ship underneath it, one, two, three we lifted up the sheet. Wow! I said in excitement that is so cool! I also said, "Hurry up! We have to go now, if you don't want Mariah and Brent getting torn apart", mom said ok!

We both hopped in the ship, strapped in our seatbelt. Mom put in the keys and twisted them to start the engine. We flew off as soon as it was ready to go. We flew out of the garage and up into the sky. It was kind of silent so I turned on the radio, "oh..." I said "I guess the radio doesn't work" I said. "No I'm sorry honey but we never got it updated yet" mom said acting to be sad or maybe she was, I really don't know sometimes I can't tell if she is being sarcastic or not.

We landed just after I thought that in my head. We got out of the ship and dashed over where Mariah and Brent were. "Oh no!" I shouted Brent was down, but Mariah was still fighting it. Mom slipped on her suit, and started to help. I used my upper kick to kick him in the shin. So did mom on the other foot soon he collapsed. Mariah was lying on the ground with scratches all over her face, arms, and legs. I wish I could help but there was nothing I could do. But good thing the king was down.

She grabbed the necklace off his neck and picked up Brent, Good thing he was o.k. mom had more shocking news I could tell my her face. She turned around and told me out loud, “honey, you Mariah and Brent are all brothers and sisters!” Mom said. “Oh my gosh, are you serious! That is so totally cool!” I said out loud I was almost screaming. “Wow how awesome” I said quietly we all hugged each other. And then we saw another ship heading towards us.

A tall man with dark brown hair stepped out of it; I knew it was my dad. I ran up to him with everybody else following me. We all group hugged each other. And we decided not to go back to earth, just to live up here, but of course we brought all of our furniture with us. And we lived happily ever after. Well me Mariah, Brent, mom, and dad all did, I’m not sure about anybody else but we did.

Two weeks later we all sat down at the table for dinner, all of us were eating macaroni and cheese. School was horrible that day, well everything was except for science. I took a test the week before and I had an urge to tell everybody. I shot up out of my seat, spilling my Coca-Cola everywhere splashed on the plates, the food, and even the centerpiece.

“OH GREAT! Selena you spilled it everywhere now there is a big mess to

clean up!” I said loudly to myself. “Gosh you’re so clumsy today is anything wrong?” mom blurted “no, no, I’m just really excited to tell you something about my test grade” I said proudly. They listened like they didn’t even care about the mess I just made. “I got an A-!” I said shouting so everybody to hear. Mariah stood up in her chair clapping shouting “Bravo, Bravo!” mom dad and Brent followed. Mom and dad came around the table and gave me a great big hug and kiss on the cheek, Mariah and Brent just hugged me.

It was the end of the marking period and I just had to tell them I made the Honor Roll too! Everybody was so proud of me and I was too!

Apparently, everyone was done eating so mom and dad picked up the dishes, cups, spoons, forks, and knives, and started washing them. I went to go take a shower while Mariah and Brent got in bed and fell asleep.

I washed my hair with my strawberry banana hair shampoo, then I rinsed off. I got out of the shower after that and dried off, then put my sparkly pink pajamas on, and got in my bed with my cozy sheets then fell asleep. No more dreams about Jillacia probably because Im here, oh well good dreams here I come!

## Pappy

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*A ten-year-old girl looks for a way to get through a trying time. It will take a little help from some new friends who live in a strange place in PAPPY, by Cali Gerbig.*

“G race... GRACE!” my mom called from the other room. “Get your jacket; we’re going to Pappy’s house!”

Yes! Another day at Pappy’s, now I get

to go to bed at 10:00!

“Tell Sara!” my mom exclaimed, scraping off the little tiny bits and pieces of food of the old china my grandma (who



died before I was born) had gotten passed down from her relatives. My mom flew into the room now. She gave me the *Did you not just hear me?* look. Knowing I had no choice, I grabbed all my homework and clumped it into my backpack. I ran up the steps with my red backpack trying to break free from the algebra books Sara had stuffed in here. She needed my backpack today because she had forgotten hers at school.

“Sara... Open up, we’re leaving.” I tapped on her door.

“What! Where are we going?” she asked, her voice annoyed.

“We’re going to Pappy’s. So get ready. Mom says you have ten minutes,” I replied.

My mom was obviously listening because she yelled, “SO HURRY!”

In the car, I was so excited. Pappy was awesome. He always let me do what I wanted. He was just awesome!

Only 20 minutes had passed when Sara’s question shot out. “Are we there yet? I have a movie to get to at 6:00.”

“Sara, honey. Calm down! We have two hours, and it doesn’t take that long for your father and me to eat, either. Trust me, honey,” my mom stated, proving a point and moving her hands along with the words.

I must have drifted into a sleep, because I was awakened with “Grace... Grace.” My mom pulled my shoulder. I made a grunting noise.

“Wow,” Sara said. “Ten-year-old brat.” She stood there, her face looking like she was going to rip me out of the car and bury me under the dirt of Pappy’s driveway.

“Yeah, well, you’re a fifteen-year-old brat,” I spat out as I unbuckled my seatbelt. How could *she* call *me* a brat? I don’t have a cell phone, I don’t *hate* spending time with my family, I don’t lock myself in my room all day and order my little sister

around getting me *my* food like a fat pig! UGH! By this time, I was grinding my teeth together... I grabbed my backpack and jumped out of the car onto the ground.

I walked past all of the red white and blue flowers, the little green tomatoes, and the spices growing on his front porch. I headed for the door and unloosened my jaw. I grabbed the handle and slapped on a smile. I twisted the handle with Sarah now right behind me.

“Pappy... are you here?” Sarah called.

He cleared his throat after a cough. “Hi, Sara!” He came out with a big smile on his face. “Grace!” he ran-walked up and hugged me. He smelled like cologne.

Then he looked at Sara. He winked at me and I smiled a little bit. He picked up his arms and went over to Sara. He hugged her with a little less thought. “How are you girls?” he asked with a slight cough.

“Great. How about you?”

“Fine! Just a little sick. I have to go to the doctor’s tomorrow,” he said, looking at my and Sara’s face. My face had an odd look to it. I looked at Sara and she had an odd look too. She looked at me now. It was weird because Pappy had been sick two times in a row now.

We had meatloaf for dinner. Sara wasn’t too excited about that. “This is gross!” Sara said.

“Really? I think its de-lish!” I replied.

She glared at me like a bull. Then I felt a kick under my knee. “Ouch!” I shouted.

“Grace. What’s wrong?” Pappy asked. “Oh, I, uh...bit my tongue. Ouch,” I said, smiling innocently.

We washed the dishes and packed up, getting ready to leave. Mom was whispering to Pappy as Sara and I were packing. We had finished our homework, but forgotten to put it away. “Just don’t tell them! I’m begging... please,” Pappy whispered.

“Okay, Dad.” Mom and Pappy hugged,

and then we left.

I fell asleep and my mom carried me up to my room without awaking me. *What a nice day...* I thought in my dream. *I hope tomorrow is, too!*

I woke up and mom was crying in the kitchen. “Honey, Pappy.... He’s, he’s—OH!” she said with pain in her voice. Sara hugged her and cried.

“No...no! Pappy? NO! Please tell me it’s not Pappy!” I looked at them. No answer. *Please, please answer!*

“WHAT?” I yelled and screamed and fell to the floor. “No, no” I was sobbing and kicking. “NO WAY!” I screamed, over tears. “No! No! No! It can’t be happening! He’s sick. He’s here, he has to be here!”

That night, I didn’t talk. I didn’t move. I stared at my ceiling, crying at times. I felt as if I wasn’t even breathing. I just sat there; I didn’t sleep at all that night. I mean, not at all.

The next day, at school, I walked around to all my classes with my class. Just slumping around, not saying anything to anyone, not even Ash, my bestest friend ever! I know, I know “bestest” isn’t a word. Who cares? Not me! I—JUST—DON’T—CARE! Sorry. Nerves. Great, here comes the waterworks!

I started to cry again. As I was walking down the hallway, I broke away from the group. I walked down the opposite hallway until I found a door that said **KEEP OUT** in big, bold, red letters. I reached for the handle as more tears streamed down my face. I took a big, deep breath and then (of course) I cried. I wiped away the tears, then stopped being a baby and opened the door.

Big whoop, it’s a storage closet. Wait! There’s a light! Whoa. I walked forward and fell. Wait, I’m falling. “Ahh,” I said. No, really, I *said!* *Without* screaming. Remember? I’m depressed! *Whoa...* I fell

to the ground with a hard thump.

*Where am I?* I thought to myself. *Whoa, this is weird! This isn’t happening! What- Where- what’s going on? How’d I get here? I just fell out of a door. Am I dreaming? I have to be. People don’t just fall out of doors! NO! What’s happening?* I thought. I looked around and everything around me was big. There’s a big flower right next to me. *Am I an ant?* I looked down. Nope, not an ant. Still human! *No... it can’t be! Why? Gah!*

*No way Jose! It can’t be! Not possible!* I looked around. *Crazy, this is absolutely crazy. I cannot believe this.* I had a huge scrape gong from my knee to my ankle. *Ouch!* I had a bruise on my arm, too. Great. *Where am I, anyway?* I thought to myself. I touched the bruise on my arm, *Shoot! It hurts! Why is this happening? What did I do? Why me? Why now? And where am I any-*

“Hey there! Who’s there? What’s wrong? Are you okay?” An old lady walked up to me. I nodded, lying, and looked around. She snorted. “Well, sweetie, we’re in Fan Tassy Land! Where are you from?” she asked looking around. “I mean, how’d you get here?” she asked. I shrugged. That was no lie, although, the first one was. “Well, your quite ball of mess, and you’re a girl of few words, I see. Are ‘ya?” the old lady asked me. I nodded, again. I started to cry. Just because this scenery, it’s sad. I miss Pappy, that’s the main thing. Don’t cry, sugar, dear. Please don’t,” she was practically begging me. “Don’t, your gonna make me cry.” She wiped her eyes. Wow, this lady is nice. I smiled, and then stopped. “Thank you, sweetie. Why don’t you tell me your name? I’m Suzanna.” She smiled a little old smile.

“G-Grace.” I stuck out my hand; it was the proper thing to do with an elder.

She shook it lightly. “Nice to meet you.”

She said. She had an old, sweet voice. For some reason it made me want to smile! I tried, but it didn't turn out how I wanted it to....

"Want to come to my house, to get you washed up? I might have some of my... d-clothes." There was sadness in her eyes.

I looked at her. "What? Are you okay? I don't understand..." I really *was* confused.

"My daughter, she died. She was drowned by her teacher. Luckily, he's in jail now. It was 12 years ago, and she was ten. If she was alive, she would've been 22." She gave a little smile.

"Oh, I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have been all rude, and-"

She cut me off. "Rude? Oh, no sweetie, you were far from rude. Rude is over here, you're over here." She moved her hands as she talked. "You've been rather nice, really," she said.

She pulled me up and walked me to her home. It was small, but cozy. It was red, and shaped like a mushroom. It had white spots and 2 windows. One was on the right side (but over) the door. The other was on the left side (but over) the door. The roof was cream colored. For once, I actually enjoyed this moment. It was weird because, I haven't lived life in a while. Meaning, I haven't been going a lot of places or, looking at anything, or even paying attention.

"It's beautiful," I said, still not getting the mushroom part of it. Maybe cause all around it there were giant fungi and trees and vines and, to the left, there was a waterfall. I could smell the water-mist. *Mmm...* for some reason, I loved this damp smell! "Thanks." She opened the door. It was warm inside, snuggly and cozy. I tried to put on a smile, but it sort of looked like the Mona Lisa's. The Mona Lisa was not my goal, so, I gave up. We walked through the T.V room and the kitchen. The

T.V room smelled like sweet pea and a tad bit of roses. The kitchen smelled like oatmeal with cinnamon- sugar. *Yummy!*

She led me down a hall into the bathroom, where I could bathe. She left a blue towel on the bar that hung on the wall, and a pair of pajamas on the toilet (seat down, obviously!). The towel said 'MAGGIE' in big capital cursive letters. *Maggie... What a nice, cute name!*

"Cocoa when you're done." She smiled and left. I wonder if it was really killing her to have a ten-year-old girl here, since her daughter had died. Wow, she's brave. I'm still moping around as if I have no life, since Pappy died. Maybe she'll tell me how she does it.

I got into the bath and felt stinging going through the long gash on my leg. *Shoot.* I thought. *Ouch. Ouch. Ouch! Stupid cut!* I took the bar of soap and rubbed it onto my hands and then rubbed it gently along my leg. *Ugh. This stinks!* No... really!

It smelled like dried blood and soap mixed together. The soap part of it smelled okay, not the blood though! I got Goosebumps when I got too close to my cut. It hurt, more than the time I fell down the stairs and broke my leg! Okay, big exaggeration there! Totally just kidding! *Ooh! Bad memories!*

When I was done, there was a brush on the counter that said "Maggie" on it. She still has her daughters brush. That's nice. I wrapped myself in the towel to dry. After, I put on the fuzzy blue pajamas.

Wow, Maggie must have loved blue, that's all I see here. I looked into the mirror and washed my face in the sink. Then, I walked out. I found my way to the kitchen.

"How do you do this?" I asked her, quietly.

"Do what, sweetie?" She asked me, confused. "Act like Maggie never existed.

When my Pappy died, I felt like killing myself!" I said, sitting down and sipping the cocoa.

"Oh, Grace. I know life has some bad surprises, but God made us all to live our lives searching, and trying, helping, and succeeding. Not to mope around and cry for the rest of your life," She breathed. "I have crosses all over my house, I pray every night. Just to remind me to stay strong. Now I know she's watching over me. She would want me to be happy. I know she would."

She smiled with power. "And, God made us to love and cherish. That's why I brought you in. You had nowhere to go, nothing to eat or drink. I just knew that if Maggie would say yes to you, so could I." She looked at me.

"Thank you." I whispered. I yawned really widely. "Bed time?" she asked me. I nodded and took my cup to the sink. I washed it out and she led me to a baby blue room. MAGGIE was printed on the door. Next to it, there was a picture of a baby.

Suzanna stroked the picture delicately. "Maggie" she said. I walked into the room. I pulled back the sheets and climbed in. She sat on the bed next to me, "Looks like it's time to hit the hay. If you need me, I'm across the hall. Goodnight Grace." She said getting off the bed and heading for the door.

"Goodnight." She closed the door behind her. I drifted very easily to sleep that night. I had the baby blue blankets pulled up under my neck. *Goodnight, Pappy*, I thought.

"Good morning." I said to Suzanne. I had a small smile that said I'm *happy but can't show it...*

"Morning" "Why are you smiling?" she asked me.

"Well. I'm trying to be brave. It's

working... sort of." I said.

"Oh. Well, it might be hard.

"I know I can do it."

"Okay, if you say so. Breakfast?"

"Wonderful. Do you have cherries?"

She took out a bowl of red tiny fruits. "Mmm..." I breathed in and the scent went up my nose and through my body. I haven't eaten cherries with my pancakes since Pappy died.

"Why such a big smile? Have you never had cherries?" she asked.

"Pappy, I used to have them with him... On our pancakes." I answered slurping down the pancakes and cherries. I laughed. "I feel like a pig!" Suzanna looked at me. "Enjoy!" she smiled and laughed while I dug into my big plate of pancakes, syrup, and cherries.

"Thanks. This is really good!" I told Suzanne.

"Excited much?" she asked.

"I haven't had it in a while! Only with Pappy which was about one or two months. We used to have them every morning. Now we obviously can't."

"I would say." She smiled.

"Well, thanks for all of this. I'm probably going to have to go home soon though. My mother's probably worried."

"Sick." She ended the sentence for me. "I know I was. You're right though. We'll get you home soon. Hank will take you up. He has planes and jets and all of those things. I would take you myself, but I don't know if you'd make it." She laughed a little and I joined in. "When you see a door, you jump!"

"*Jump?*" I asked her.

"You'll be safe, trust me. That's what the old paper boy Matthew did it after he found his dog." *After he lost his dog? Everyone here loses something, I bet. She lost someone, the paper boy. Is there anybody else?*

“Why does everyone here lose something?” I asked her.

She nodded. “The mayor of Fan Tassy found this place and made it for people who need to know how to feel good. He named it, too. He chose fan Tassy land because it’s almost like a fantasy here.”

“I would say!” I agreed under my breath. She looked at me with an “*It’s okay*” kind of look. “Okay. I’ll do it. Call Hank and I’ll leave tomorrow.” I was ready, *be brave, be brave grave.*

“Okay.”

That night I went to bed, quickly. I woke up and heard a roar of an engine. “No time for breakfast!” Suzanna told me.

Hank took me up into the airplane. “1... 2... 3... JUMP!”

I jumped and was in the closet again. I looked back and there was nothing. Nothing but a cloud of dust... I walked out of the school and walked home. When I got there I took my key out of my pocket and unlocked the door. I went up to my room. I smiled and got in bed.

“Huhahhh...” I shrugged out a yawn and got out of bed. “Ewe.” I sighed. I grabbed my brush that was calling my name. “*Brush your disgusting brown hair. You need me; you know you do... come on, Grace! Grace, Grace, Grace!*” I couldn’t resist talking back. “Oh shut up. Who are you to tell?” I stopped, dead on. Me? Me? Was this me talking? Why was I talking? I’m happy! Why am I happy? NO! This is not me... I’m not happy. I pinched my arm. “YOWWWWW!” I screamed and hopped off my bed.

“Grace, Hun?” My mom walked in. She looked at me in shock. “You’re. Not. In. Bed. Honey, what’s wrong?” My mom sat on the bed next to me patting my back.

“I-I-I- umm... Don’t know. I woke up and, I feel... happy. Why mom? Me? I

haven’t been happy since-”

Mom cut me off. “Don’t say it. Please, sweetie, no water works!”

I didn’t listen to her. “Pappy.” I said. I gave a little smile. Owah. I mean, whoa. This is crazy. “HA! Hahahaha. Hah.” My “tush” as Pappy called them, was bouncing up and down on every ha.

“Sweetie. You’re, you! Where’d the enthusiasm come from?” She looked into my eyes.

I shrugged away. “I don’t know... Mom?” I asked her. She was talking to herself in space... or whatever her little planet was “out there.

“Huh sweetie?” she came down to Earth.

“I-I-I-I... I love you!” I hugged her.

She smiled a big smile because she hadn’t heard *that* in a while. “I love you to, baby.” She patted me on the head. “What got *into* you? You were so... not like *this*,” Enthusiasm on the word *this*. “Just, be happy. That’s all. He’s only a dream away... Remember sweetie only a dream away.” She smiled on the word “away”. I nodded.

“What’s the date, mom?” I looked up at her. It’d been a while since I’ve been to school... Oh yeah, duh. SCHOOLS OUT!!! Summer... probably almost over by now, Oh wow.

“Today’s,” she swallowed hard. “August... nineteenth.” She closed her eyes and crushed her bottom eyelids with her top ones. She peeked out of her left one. “You... don’t care?” she asked me, now opening both eyelids.

Why would I? August 19. Why does that ring a bell? Anniversary? Nope. Uh. Oh! I got it. Party? Nope. Maybe a wedding? I don’t know... BINGO! Here we go. Purple Heart week! “Yeah, mom. I’ll be willing to donate.”

“Donate what?” mom asked, confused.

Umm... Okay, freaky. Mom’s talking

about something I don't even know about... And I'm talking about donating to purp- The light bulb popped on. PAPA! Today is Pappy's 89<sup>th</sup> birthday. Odd, how could I forget? Ooh Oh Ooh Oh!!! OH! "Mom, today's Pappy's 89<sup>th</sup> birthday." I said with a straight face. She smacked her face with her hand a fell backward into a laying position. Luckily my bed was under her... now *that* would've been a smack!

I gave my mom the '*weirdo, weirdo, WEIRDO ALERT!!! Red alert, red alert...*' Kind of... I have a face for everything. "I'm no weirdo, this is just great." She gave me the '*I know you like a book*' look. THAT IS SO MINE! Gosh. My own mother stole my look. Well, we're even now. Cause I stole her *actual* look. People always tell me I'm a twin of my mom. They call me "Mini Katy" Her name is spelled like *Cattie* but its Katy like Katie or Kati.

My mom got up and kissed me on the head. She gripped the door handle and looked back. "Just a dream" She walked out. As her footsteps started to fade, I heard her ask "Sara, want to see Pappy's grave today? It's his birthday."

"Sure, but... What are we going to tell Grace?" Sara asked her.

"Grace get dressed. We're going to see Pappy at his grave." She looked at Sara and smiled. "What?" Sara asked mom, confused.

"She's grace." Mom said when I came out of my room with my hair all brushed. I smiled.

I went up to Sara and hugged her. "I love you." I said.

She smiled and hugged back. "You too

sis." I smiled more.

"I LOVE LIFE!" I screamed as we were outside getting out of the car.

"This is his grave." Mom said. Sara went first. She kneeled down, and placed a bunch of flowers. She prayed and then got up. I got down and prayed;

Dear Pappy,  
I love you so much,  
I miss you too,  
At first I was regretting all this,  
But I know you would love me to live  
my life,  
So now I know you are only a prayer or  
dream away,  
I love you so much,  
You don't know how many times I want  
to say that,  
I LOVE YOU!  
Please,  
Pappy,  
Be good up in heaven,  
Again,  
I love you so much!  
-Amen-

I stood up and took a crayon out of my pocket that had been sitting in there for a while. It might be a good thought since we always painted together. I put it next to Pappy's grave. "I love you" I whispered and turned to face my family. I went and hugged Sara who was crying. And, I started crying, too. But underneath the tears, shot a smile. Me, mom, and Sara huddled together, our arms around each other, and walked back to our car. "I love you..." I whispered.

# The Perfect Wedding?

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*Is there such a thing as a perfect wedding? Carrie thinks she make it happen in THE PERFECT WEDDING? by Claire Goatley.*

*D*ing-dong, ding-dong! went the doorbell for the sixth time that week. “What do you want?” said a young blond girl to a deliveryman holding numerous bouquets of flowers.

“Um, yes, I am here to deliver these flowers to a girl with the name of Carrie Robinson.”

“Yes, that’s me,” she said in an annoyed voice. She gently took the flowers from the man’s arms and carried them to the nearest table. Noticing that there was a card inside, she took it out to read it. She had a fairly good idea of who they were from because she had already received six others this week. The note read:

Carrie,

Meet me at Palate Pleaser for dinner at 8:00 p.m. tonight. See you there.

Love, Jack

“Tonight!” Carrie exclaimed. “Why tonight out of all nights?” she said angrily. Then she stopped and paused to think; it was okay, because she missed him so much!

After showering and carefully primping for her boyfriend Carrie looked at the clock. It was 7:50 p.m., so she ran to get her purse and dashed out the door.

As soon as Carrie arrived, she sprinted into the restaurant looking all around for her boyfriend, Jack. She saw his glimmering face sitting at a table for two. She ran over into his arms and gave him a big hug. “Oh Jack I have missed you so much!” she said as they hugged again. She sat down on the

lovely white cushioned booth and admired her good-looking boyfriend.

They talked for a long time. Throughout the conversation Carrie could not help notice that Jack had a nervous look on his face. He looked like he was about to do something that he had never done before, but she ignored it because she could not imagine what he could be nervous about.

Out of the middle of nowhere Jack’s face began to turn redder and redder. Then at that moment he said, “Carrie I can not do this anymore.” He got down on one knee and he began to say, “My beloved Carrie Robinson, I love you too much to stay as boyfriend and girlfriend. Will you marry me?”

“Oh, of course I will!” said Carrie in a sweet yet shocked voice, as she plunged into his arms.

Immediately she started thinking, “Oh my goodness. I have never thought about this before. I have no idea of what my dream cake is, what my dress will look like, or even who my brides maids should be.” she said. “You know they always call a wedding the brides day, but how is it going to be my day if I do not know what I want, and I have not even thought about your tux?”

“Honey, you will have plenty time to think about it. We are not getting married for another six months, so go home and get some rest. I think you are just a little tired, and please do me the honor of letting me pick my own tux,” Jack said and walked her to her car.

“Ok, I think you are right; I just need a little sleep,” and she ran to her car.

The next morning when Carrie woke up she was a nervous wreck. She kept blaming herself for never even thinking about what she would want if she ever got married. She had never really pictured herself getting married. Neither did her friends because no guy really ever liked her except for Jack. It was not because of her looks, because she was a very beautiful woman. It was because she was not very honest or respectful. She always did things that her friends told her not to do and lied to them constantly. These two character flaws were the reason that she was 41 years old and had only ever had one boyfriend in her life, and that one person was Jack. This is why she was so shocked that Jack had asked her to marry him. But you know what they say: “There is someone for everyone.”

That morning she went straight to her computer and typed in “weddingcakes.com,” and then typed in “the perfect fairytale wedding cake.” There were no results. She had a little temper tantrum, and then proceeded to try a new website, myweddingcake.com, and typed the words “the perfect fairytale wedding cake” again. A picture of a beautiful pink cake with a rose swirls around the outside showed up. She examined the cake carefully but decided that it was just not the one for her. After a while Carrie gave up on the cakes and went on to something else.

She visited beautifulweddingdresses.com and looked through selections of dresses. She found a silk dress that had a little white rose in the corner, but it was too plain for her. The next dress had too much pizzazz with all different colors and sparkles. Then she saw a beautiful pink dress with a white rose in the top corner and a white swirl going all around it. She absolutely loved it and printed out a picture of it.

Carrie thought that she better find a matching tux for Jack because he would do

a bad job of picking out one for himself. So she went to perfecttux.com, and she saw on the home page a tux that was light pink with a white collar that matched the color of her dress. *Perfect!* she thought and printed out a copy for him also.

Now that she had decided what they would both wear she thought that it would be a good idea to show her fiancé what he would be wearing on their big day. She called Jack and said that she had picked something out for their wedding. She didn’t tell him that she had picked out his tux because he had told her not to, but she was sure that he would not be mad at her when he saw that she had picked out such a beautiful one. She thought that it was extra-romantic that they were going to be matching.

“Hi, honey!” Jack said as they sat down in their booth at Coney Island.

“Hi!” she said in an excited voice, eager to show him what she had picked out.

“You told me that you had picked something out for our wedding. What is it?”

“Okay, well, I know that you told me not to, but I saw it and I just had to,” and she handed him the picture of her dress and his tux.

“Um, it is nice, honey, but I kind of thought that we could pick them out together. I pictured us going to a wedding store and buying them there where we could actually try them on instead of getting them off of the Internet.”

“Yes, I know what you told me, but these were just so awesome I could not help but pick them.”

“You know what, honey? I am not really in the mood for this. I think that we are taking this a little too fast. Why don’t you just keep these in mind, and we will set aside a couple days a week after work when we can meet together and make our



selections, okay?"

"Okay," she said, and each of them returned to work. He went back to Verizon Wireless, and she went to her house where she was a professional TV watcher.

The next day they met for lunch again. Both of them were having a bad day, so neither of them was very happy. They proceeded to get in a fight over how fast they should take this whole thing. Carrie wanted to get married in the next month, and Jack wanted to wait. They both knew that Jack's decision was the best, but for some reason Carrie was just being a brat about it, and she kept saying, "This is my day, and it has to be perfect."

Two months passed, and the couple had decided the service was to be held in St. John's Church where they both attended every Sunday. Their wedding cake would be a beautiful vanilla cake with a white icing with red edible roses around the edges and in the center a picture of them holding hands. Together, they both decided it was quite beautiful.

Now the last thing left was their outfits. Carrie still wanted the pink tux for him and dress for her, but Jack wanted a white tux for him and a blue silk dress for her. Considering that those were the colors that they had decided to use for their wedding it made sense, but Carrie said that she wanted to stand out.

"But honey," he said, "that dress looks so beautiful on you."

"Okay. Maybe you think so, but I don't, and this is my day!"

That made Jack very angry. "Well, if it is supposed to be your day then you don't need me there!" he said and dashed out of the door and went home. Carrie had a feeling that he would come back to her, being that she was so beautiful, so she paid their lunch bill and went home.

Carrie was sitting on her bed. She

looked at the dress that she wanted, and she said, "You know what? I am going to go ahead and buy that dress. Who cares what he says?" So she did, and it was delivered the next day.

As soon as she got the box with her dress in it, she opened it and put it on. She went to go look in the mirror and saw that suddenly she could not see through her right hand and then her left. Then she could not see through the whole right side of her body, and then she disappeared.

All of a sudden I looked at my surroundings. Standing next to me was a girl that looked exactly like me. I was frightened because of two things: First, I was in a totally weird place that I had never been before, and second, there was a girl standing next to me that looked exactly like me. I asked her what this place was and why I was there, but I got no response. I tried to get her attention by saying, "You whoo?" but there was still no response. Was she deaf, or maybe she could not see me? Was I in a world where nobody could see me? All of a sudden I became totally confused. How did I get to a world where I was invisible? Well, actually that isn't exactly the right word. The right word would be that I was totally UNSEEN.

All of a sudden, next to me there was girl that looked exactly like me fighting with her fiancé. "No! This wedding is supposed to be my special day and if I don't like it. I think that we should change it."

"But honey," he said, "I love this tux. It fits me perfectly, and it is the perfect color. I know that it does not match your dress, but I think that it is a very nice suit."

"No! No! No! This can't be happening to me. All I want is a perfect wedding and to do that we have to have matching outfits. Now is that so hard?"

"Well, yeah, actually it is," said the

groom. Have you ever thought that not everything has to be perfect? And just because you want it does not make it perfect!" He walked out of the shop in tears.

"No! That can not be me," I said. I did not act that harsh.

Then I heard a voice behind me, "Well, actually you did." I turned around to see Jack standing there.

"Did I really act like that?" I said.

"Yeah, you sort of did," he said and held his hands out the way you would if you were asking somebody if they wanted a hug. I took the invitation and grabbed him for a hug.

"Wow, I am so sorry I acted like that."

"Hey, I have a question for you: How do you know so much about this place?" inquired Carrie.

"Umm, well, I have been meaning to talk to about that. I own this place. Well, actually, my father did. He found it when he was a kid. He was sent here because he was not being thoughtful of others, and then he figured out that whenever he was not being thoughtful, he could come to this place. He started to be mean to his friends so he could come here. Then when I was a little boy I purposely behaved badly so that I could come here, too. I followed his same routine. Now I have the power over this place. I can send people here or come here on my own.

Carrie gasped, "Wait, so you sent me here?"

"Yes, I did, and I am sure that you want to know why. I sent you here because you weren't exactly acting like you."

"What do you mean?" she said.

"Well, you were just getting too over-involved. When I asked you to please not pick out my tux you went ahead and did it anyway. That makes me kind of worried

that our relationship will not work out. Do you know what I mean?"

"Yes. I think that I have an idea of what you are talking about."

"I sent you here because you did not care about anybody but yourself."

"Look, Jack, I said I did not mean for this to happen.

"I know that you didn't," he said to me.

"All that I wanted was to have a perfect wedding, and I guess that I got caught up in that so much that I forgot to think about anybody else... ." Se buried her face into his chest and said, "I am sorry!"

"Oh, honey, it is okay, but I am the one that should be sorry," he said.

"No, it is not okay. I am glad that you sent me here. It has made me realize that I need to be more thoughtful of other people."

"I am glad that it helped you," he said.

"We can still get married in two months."

"Yes, I would like that," Carrie said and hugged him. She then told him that sending her here was probably the best thing that he had done for her in a long time.

I met Jack the next morning where we had agreed to meet the night before. He did not say anything to me for the first few seconds. I knew that he was happy because his face was glimmering with delight, but I also knew that he was tired because he was constantly rubbing his eyes.

"Good morning!" he said to me in that gentle voice of his.

"Good morning!" I replied.

"Did you sleep well honey?" he asked.

"Pretty good," I replied, totally lying. I had slept horribly that past night. How was I supposed to fall asleep when I was thinking of so many things? I am in a place that most people do not even know exists, and I am getting married in two months! (Of course I kept these things all to myself

because I did not want to start another deep discussion between us.)

“How did you sleep, honey?” I asked him.

“I slept well,” he replied.

“Hey, I have question for you. How do we get out of this place?”

“All that you have to do is hold the hand of the person who sent you here and says the words, “I am sorry.”

“Wow, that’s not all that hard,” I said in excitement. “So let’s try it now.”

“No. Let’s stay here for a while in the peace and silence.

“Look, Jack. I want my own bed back and I want all of my family back. I miss them.”

“But don’t you love this place? I thought that you told me that did.”

“Jack, it is not that I don’t like this place. It’s just that I want to go home, you know, to my regular life.”

“But you can have a regular life here you know. You can live it the same way,” he said to me.

“Jack, you do not understand. Our lives are back in the real world, and you know that we cannot live the same way here. There are not the same people, and not the same places, but most importantly I do not have the same feelings in my heart. Being back at home makes me feel happy and safe, and being here makes me feel frustrated and confused. Jack, I am sorry, but I have to go home.”

“Carrie, come here and sit down next to me on this beautiful silver rock. I am sorry for the way that I have acted. There is something that I have to tell you. My mom also came here with my dad, and she found this place, too. Every time that I come here it makes me think of how great my mother

was, and that just makes me want to stay forever.”

“I am so sorry. I had no idea. You should have told me.”

“Look, it’s okay, but can we stop arguing? I have had enough for a week. Now let’s go home and work this all out. What do you say?”

“Okay, sounds good to me!” I responded.

So we held hands, and I made my sorry speech. “Jack, I never meant for any of this to happen, and I am sorry. Will you forgive me?”

“Of course I will!” he said, and off we went.

I suddenly reappeared in my kitchen just like I had never left. I quickly picked up my cell phone to see if Jack had returned safely. It rang twice, but then I heard his sweet voice answer with a “Hello?”

“Hi, Jack,” I replied, and then continued to tell him how much I was glad that he sent me to his special place. I told him that it has made me a better person and helped me realize that I need to work on how I treat him.

He replied with, “Oh I am glad that it helped you but I am sorry I sent you there in the first place. I never should have done that.”

“Oh, it is okay. I am glad you did. I have a question for you though. Are we still getting married tomorrow?”

“Yes, of course. I want that more than anything in the world!”

As Jack gently lifted the veil off from my face for the wedding kiss, I knew that this was one of those stories that end with happily ever after.

# The Portal That Went Horribly Bad

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*In an unremarkable cornfield, a strange phenomenon is responsible for sending unsuspecting people far from home in **THE PORTAL THAT WENT HORRIBLY BAD**, by Ethan Goatley.*

There once was a boy named Aiden. He was an average kid that lived in Arizona. At age eleven his grandpa died from heart trouble and Aiden suffered terribly from the loss. He began having trouble at school and bullies named AJ, Ryan, and The tough guy that didn't have a name were all picking on him.

The bullies and Aiden shared the same bus stop. As the boys got off at their stop, the bullies pushed Aiden into a big bush and after that he never went near those bullies again. On the bus he would avoid them by sitting way in the front and when it was time to get off he would leap right off the bus and run to his house as fast as he could. He was mad and frustrated at the same time because he had to deal with these bullies. He was so sad he wanted to go sit out in his tree house. He grabbed a basket for picking corn from the field and just ran to his tree house as fast as he could.

After about a half hour in his tree house he got out to go pick the corn from the field. When he got there he suddenly noticed a huge portal right next to him. He decided to go inside to see where it led, so in he leaped.

Back at the house Aiden's mother was watching a show on missing people in the United States. There was a report on the show about a kid in a cornfield who disappeared out of nowhere. All of a sudden, she remembered that she has not seen her son for about four hours and that she had sent him to the cornfield to pick corn for dinner. She ran outside as fast as she could right to the barn to get the

Ferrari F550 spider that was for "emergencies only." She zoomed at 500,000 mph right to the corn field and she instantly saw that he was not there and that the corn basket was lying on the ground with corn cobs spilled all over the place. She zoomed home at 500,001 mph to call the FBI for help.

As she waited for the FBI to arrive, she continued to watch the show about the missing boy on TV. The story reported that portals were popping up across cornfields and that a mother was struggling to get her child out of a magical funny bunny land that he had entered in to through a portal while out picking corn. This worried Aiden's mother even more. What if her son had entered the portal? How would she be able to get him back again? Aiden could be in very big trouble.

She went back to the field to look for her son and again she saw the basket of corn on the ground and said to herself, it can't be that portal. She screamed as loud as she could and ran home. She instantly called the police and in ten minutes the swat team was there to look for this portal that had popped up in the middle of the cornfield. When the boy walked into it, the portal had moved to a different location so that when the police scanned the area there was nothing to be seen that related to the case.

One agent, who had his own airplane, flew to the Grand Canyon and saw a purple spinning object. He had watched the show that Aiden's mom had seen and recognized it. He called the police immediately. Aiden's

mother was told that the portal had appeared in the Grand Canyon so the SWAT team was notified and they rode donkeys down to the bottom of the canyon to investigate. They merged into the portal, searched the area and they found Aiden and the boy on TV that was missing. When the boys were released, the SWAT team was still in the portal and could not get out. But that is a different story.

A plane was flying and out of nowhere the pilot sees a giant portal right next to the Mississippi River. He notifies the FBI. They remembered a similar report so they called the SWAT team to come to the Mississippi river with the FBI. As soon as they got there the SWAT team reacted fast and headed straight for the portal and as soon as they arrived a boy named Billy was pushed out and again the portal disappeared in thin air with one of the SWAT team members still in it.

Another portal pops out of the middle of nowhere. The phone rang at the headquarters of the FBI. It took about 2 hours for the FBI and SWAT to get there. The family was crying right next to the portal because the whole family was on an afternoon walk when all of the sudden a portal popped up at the Mississippi River and the dad walked into it to see what it is but as soon as he walked into it he was trapped. When the FBI and SWAT team were there they walked into the portal, but as soon as they got the dad out of funny bunny land the portal disappeared and the SWAT was still in the portal.

It didn't take time to figure out that something was terribly wrong because they were losing SWAT team member all over

the place. Then they remembered that the men had their portable radios on them so they cried for help and the FBI heard them. They looked were for the men utilizing the tracking device chip in the portable radios. Then the FBI tracked them and the tracker said what are you guys doing going at 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,001 mph? They replied saying, "we are in a trapped portal that maybe going that speed."

Aiden ran towards his mom and gave her the biggest hug in the world. He started to say, "Mom I missed you so much. I am so sorry that I scared you like that."

"It's ok honey. I am just glad you are back. So what do you say we go home and have some supper?"

"Ok mom that sounds great!"

They ran home and were watching TV while their supper was cooking in the oven and they saw that the SWAT S.W.A.T. was caught in this mysterious portal and they can't do anything to budge it open. This all happened after an eleven year old boy was stuck in the portal. The FBI acted fast and called in the S.W.A.T. Team and they arrived in five minutes by helicopter. They shoved him out and the portal disappeared but this time the portal appeared only one foot away from where it was last. A FBI agent was there and he said he was going to retire after this was over with but he decided that he would risk his life to save a world full of people. So he walked in the portal and every S.W.A.T. member was safely evacuated. Ever since he has been appreciated for saving hundreds of lives. But to this day, no one has ever seen the portal again.

# Prisoner As My Father

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*In PRISONER AS MY FATHER by Jason Gross, Tyler has just learned that his dad was killed in a police war. So who is this look-alike who claims to be Tyler's father?*

Hello my name is Tyler. I'm going to tell you a sad story about my dad. It all begun like this.

"Attention all units, attention all units. There is a riot on the South of Liver Pool Street. All units respond."

*Chhh.* "This is Jim responding. On my way now."

"This is a code 11!" Jim said. "I need backup help! There are are 100 people here. All have guns and are shooting at people. We have ten people injured. Get a chopper."

*Riiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiie.*

There were `more people coming. They all had pistols and smoke bombs.

Soon the riot was over.

Later that day my dad came home. "Hi," he said to me.

I said hi to him back.

"Let's go out to dinner, all three of us."

"So they're a big riot today?" Tyler asked.

"Yeah!"

"Well, I'm glad you're ok. I mean, you could have gotten hurt!"

"I know. There one guy that got away. I know what he looks like."

"Oh!"

"Let's order, ok?"

There was a man he looked hurt and homeless. He asked the person "got a coke?" Ya. "I will have one" he said. "Hum" said the dad, "that guy looks familiar". "Wait a minute he is the guy that escaped the riot, He killed 6 people!" "I'll call the police" mom said.

Ten minutes later the police arrived.

*Riiiiirue*

"Freeze, put your hands up in the air," the police said. "That's him" my dad said. He was a cool guy I said to myself. The guy said to my dad "if I ever see you again alive or dead I will shoot you, you better hope I do not get out of prison" and then he was gone.

"Dad you look like you have seen a ghost." Then my dad told me and my mom what happened and what he said to me. After that my mom said "Jim it's all right he is behind bars he cannot get out".

We were watching T.V. and then came a breaking news alert this is what they said. "A prisoner who killed 6 people at the riot today escaped, he left a note that said this!" I'm on a quest I'm going to kill Jim the police guy who put me here in the first place he will die soon. After that my mom turned off the T.V. my dad was in shock. He just sat they're almost frozen. We were all tried to get to talk to him but he did not talk back.

13 hours later

Attention all units, attention all units there is a riot on the West side on Jackson Street who is responding!? Hello this is Jim I'm heading their now need backup. This is the station we're sending over units and a chopper. When Jim arrived there was gun fire Jim looked up and saw him the guy who said he will kill him, then the guy said "good bye" boom He fired the gun then everything went quiet something hit me hard in the stomach then I was on the ground. In the

distance I can hear sirens then there was a chopper and then I saw my friend Frank he was saying something but I could not hear him “then Jim said pris shoo me plastic” and then he died in Franks arms.

It was a nice cool evening there was a knock at the door. My mom opened the door and then she saw something sad, a policeman was standing at the doorway as soon as she saw him she began to cry. I ran downstairs and asked the police man what happened. He first said this “Hello my name is Frank I work with your dad, there was a riot he was shot” right after he said those words I was lost in my own mind, he said some other words that I did not hear after that. After a while we all went in the living room. We sat for a long time, after that Frank spoke. “I know this is a shocker to you but right before he died he said pries, shoo me, plastic.” My mom told him what happened the day before so my mom explained pris means prisoner and shoo me means he shot me so the prisoner shot him she said.

But I do not know what plastic means. Hum well thank you for your time Frank said. After that I ran to my room and shut my door after awhile I started to dose off I was getting sleepy and then my room started spinning and then the next thing I knew, there was a hobo over me. He said, “Where in gods did you come Sony.” Ah, ah, ah, ah I was in my room last, sir. “Well aren’t you funny let me help you up?” I was on my feet when I heard a siren and then I saw my dad after that I said to the hobo “I need to go now” after that I was off.

“This is sooo strange” I said to myself. I wonder if this is the riot that my dad died at. There was somebody In front of my dad he said “Hello I thought I said I was going to kill you so I am.” At the same time I pushed

him to the ground, the gun went off. I looked up and then I saw my dad bleeding as soon I saw that I thought he was dead. But the bullet just missed him from hitting his lungs he said to me thank you son. I heard a riiiiiiiiiee sound and then I saw frank he said “what happened here” I said that the prisoner that escaped last night killed him. Oh. Well we need to get him in the chopper and fast!

Dad, dad, dad wake up dad. Uh, uh, uh, uh were am I son!? You’re at the hospital; you’re going to be alright. Is that ugly guy is in jail? Yes. Yes he is in jail. “Tyler are you ok?” mom said, “Yes I’m fine why?” “Well you do not look fine honey.” Well any ways let’s go and get and get a smoothie.” I said.

### One month later

“Hey Frank see you later” Jim said at the station. Hey. “See you later” “ya see you later, bye” Jim said. He was walking out the back door like always he parks his Corvette in the alley so nobody finds it. There was somebody walking towards me so I headed to my car.

Then the man came in view he produced a gun and then he said “we meet again” Boom he shoot me in the leg I cried out. Meanwhile inside Frank heard a noise he didn’t think of anything so he continued getting dressed. Meanwhile “Hello” he said in the alley. “You just always come back for more! Well let me tell you who I am I look just like you, that’s why I said plastic remember when I shot you at the riot.

Well I escaped from prison again but under a new id, yours. Now after I shoot you I will drive you’re car to your house and I’m going to act like you got it? Well, goodbye then.” Boom. Something hit me hard in the stomach everything went silent after that he came towards me and then shot

me again. Meanwhile inside Frank heard that sound again but much louder he ran outside and then he saw Jim close the trunk door.

Jim said hi how are you what is your name again? Frank, remember where best friends. Ya, I was just joking with you man. See you. Then the Jim sped off. Meanwhile. Jim was in the car he went to the docks got 2 grass bags out of the car that was full and then Jim put some flowers in there and then pushed him in the 1,500 foot deep water below.

“Hi honey” Jim said when he got home. How was work good? “Yes” I said. You sound different are you ok? Yes, I just got a cold. Let’s have dinner I made your favorite fish and shrimp. Jim thought to him O.M.G I hate that I’m allergic to it. So he thought of an excuse he so he told his wife that he did not like fish anymore.

It was 7:30 a.m in the morning and I had to go to the bathroom so when I opened the door I saw my dad just got of the shower. He was standing in front of me and he dropped his shaver and he had a tattoo it was a snake and an eagle. I said “when did you get a tattoo I said Ah, ah, ah yesterday. Wait tell I tell mom I said but before I could move he slapped me across the face so hard that tears started as soon, as I felt it. Right after that he said if you ever tell mom that or anything else I will hurt you more.

After that I ran to my room shut the door and then began to cry.

### 16 hours later

Where, where you honey, are you smoking?! You’re drunk what is it with you? You are sleeping in the basement tonight. I was in my room when I heard what had happened. My cheek was still red from this morning. I was thinking that night on how my dad changed so much in the past day and

then I remembered what Frank told as dad’s last words were to him “pris, shoo me, plastic.” I was trying to figure out what the word “plastic” meant and then bingo.

The next morning when my so called dad went to work I went to the computer and I typed in the description of the guy. I saw that there was a finger print needed. So I had set up a plan I’m going to have him drink out of this glass and get his finger print. In order to identify him.

### 12 hours later

Hi dad will you like some beer? Yes I will thank you. So he took the glass drunk it and then gave it back put this away now please. Took the glass and I ran upstairs to my room and then took the glass out and then I got the fingerprint.

### 14 hours later

My dad left for work and then I got on the computer and then I scanned it in and it showed. This guy’s name is Tom he is a wanted con. He weighs 138 pounds, he is 6.1 feet, and he is allergic to fish. Escaped from prison for the second time. \$10,000 award. As soon as I read this I called Frank “Hello?” “Hi, Frank this Is Tyler I need you to come over right now it is an emergency!” “What is wrong” Just come now “ok? I’m on my way.

*Ding, dong.* I got it I yelled. Hi Frank come in I need to show you something look. He looked at the computer screen and said o my gosh. So this is the guy escaped two times ya. Wow that is amazing but you said this was an emergency. Yes, well my dad has been acting strange lately and he got a tattoo and he does not like fish any more and he said he was allergic to fish. My dads loved fish, but do you have any evidence about



this? Yes I do I got a fingerprint scanned it into the computer an then this showed up. Oh we need to find him right away. He said tell your mom was leaving and then let's go.

Jim you are under arrest for fake id of the real Jim. Tyler did you tell them about what happened? Yes I did. I said if you tell them I would kill you so I am. After you go the questioning room, said Frank as a joke.

Hello, Tom how is you these last days? Well then let's talk about what you did with the real Jim? "I shoot him three times after that I put him in the trunk and then I saw you remember when I asked you what you're name is well that was me After that I took him to the docks. I put him in leaf bags I put flowers in them and then tied a brick pushed him in and then after that I went home and I'm sure Tyler told you the rest." Well that is some story you have there're anything else? No. Well let's see what we should charge you with? Let's see murder, kidnapping, shooting an officer, breaking out of jail for the second time and threatening a child, and child abuse. That is the rest of your life in the most secure prison ever, ok.

It was midnight in July. We got back home and my mom was talking to Tyler. She said, "Son I'm glad that you put him behind bars. I'm proud of how you told the

police about it but we need to put all that behind us now we need to start a new chapter of our lives. After all Jim is, well you know." My mom kept on talking, but I did not hear her. Eventually I went to my room and sat on my bed.

I stared at my fish tank and then I began to get tired. My room started to spin. My body fell to the floor, but never hit it. I was falling and falling into the past. I heard my name being called. "Tyler, Tyler, Tyler. Wake up, wake up. It is Saturday. "Uh, what, what happened, were I'm I," What month is it? It is July today. Yesterday it was June why? 'Nothing.'" Where is dad? Ah, Tyler remembers dad died in a riot. Oh, ya. Honey let's go to the Ronald fast food place for breakfast, ok? Ya, sure, let me get dressed. Well that was a weird dream I had. I hope that never happens to me again. I hope dad has a nice after life I said to my self.

### Three years later

Well they say that when you get a step-dad it is a new start for a second chance in life. Well I think I'm getting a second chance. My new dad works with the F.B.I... "Figures, my mom married another law worker." 'Hopefully he does not get shot by another guy and, hey like I said it is a new life for me. My mom walks in and says, "Honey were having a baby!" Like I said it's a new life.

# The REAL Story of the Bermuda Triangle

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*Fred finds that the Bermuda Triangle can really mess up a kid's Ocean cruise vacation in **THE REAL STORY OF THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE**, by Christopher Coburn.*

**Y**ou know those stories about the Bermuda Triangle? It's all mysterious right? All those others stories you hear. Fake. I'm here to tell you the real story.

"Finally it's winter break!" I say.

Oh, I forgot to introduce myself. I am Fred Figlle. I have hazel eyes, brown hair, and I like to wear jeans and an "I'm with stupid" shirt. I am an athletic, adventurous 11-year-old who is sometimes a jerk. I go to Tortellini Middle School in Denver Colorado.

I was so excited when I got home. Our house is a big two-story house with a ton of rooms. It was so nice for school to be out for two weeks.

My mom is an average 40-year -old who is with brown hair who works for a car company. She is, of course, always nice and overprotective. My mom then told me something very strange. "Fred, for winter break we are going to go to Miami, Florida on a cruise ship for a week. We leave to fly to New York tomorrow at noon. I hope you have fun, and by the way, I packed all your clothes."

Now last summer I went on a motorboat with my uncle and I fell off, so I had my doubts about going. The only boats I really like are jet skis. I don't know why I like them; maybe because they make me feel like I am skiing. I go skiing a lot because I live in Denver. It's a ton of fun.

I went into my room where I found my pet bunny Pancake there, playing. Pancake is a white and brown bunny who is always

ready for adventure just like me. We named him Pancake because when we got home from the pet shop he went and took a pancake that my mom had made.

I took him out of his huge cage and fed him a pancake. That's his favorite food. He also likes waffles, French toast, and vegetables.

Pancake's cage has three floors. The first is his playroom with toys, a hamster wheel, and a trampoline to jump on. The second is his feeding room with food and water. The third is his bed, which is a pillow for a mattress and a light blanket. The whole place can be heated or cooled, by using a button that Pancake presses.

I remember one time when I took him to Cedar point and he rode the dragster with me. That was awesome! Pancake likes to do the things that are dangerous and fun, like me.

I packed my bag of pranks, my iPod, some Halloween candy I saved, my PSP, and Pancake.

I heard the door open and ran towards it. It was my dad. He must have got home from work.

My dad is a really cool 40 years old who always likes to come to my hockey games. He is also good at hockey, like me.

For dinner tonight my mom made lasananga. She then told my father about the trip. My dad took it the opposite of what I did. He thought it was a good idea and that we need a vacation.

My dad works on a computer all day

designing seats for cars. Maybe he thinks that being cooped up in the office, he needs a vacation the most but I disagree. Middle school is a lot more exhausting than you think.

My dad has black hair and on workdays wears a suit and a tie. On weekends he wears whatever.

We're going to New York City.

We get out of the taxi that took my mom, my dad, and me to Denver's airport. After we did the entire bag checking stuff my mom asked, "Are you hungry?"

My dad said, "Yes."

I said, "I'm famished," so we went to one of the restaurants in the airport and ordered cheeseburgers and shakes.

We were lucky. We got first class seats.

On the way, I ate an entire ice cream sundae. I also played a prank on an old lady. Everybody thought she farted, but it was just a whoopee cushion.

Our plane ride over to New York was 2 hours shorter than what it was supposed to be.

"Here we are, New York City," said my mom.

"It's amazing," my dad said in awe.

"It is way cooler than Denver," I said.

"So we are here and have three hours before the cruise. I think we should go shopping and go sightseeing," my mom announced.

"Sounds like fun," my dad said.

"Let's go," I said, agreeing with my dad.

We went to a toyshop, a clothes shop, even fudge and candy shop. At the toyshop I got NHL 08 for my Xbox. We all got new clothes at the clothing store. And at the candy store called Sweet Tooth we got chocolate mint fudge.

We then went to the empire state building. My dad got pictures of it. It was so tall; I thought planes could fly up there.

On our way over to Yankee stadium we passed a man who said, "Please, I need ten more dollars to take my taxi. Can you give me some money?"

Now I had ten dollars in my pocket and thought about giving the man the money, but remembered how they're a lot of money scoundrels in New York and decided not to.

My mom gave him the money, and the man replied, "Thank you."

My mom then scolded me and said, "Fred, that wasn't very nice. You should have given the man that money."

In my mind I thought, *Blah, blah, blah.*

Before I had the chance to reply, I saw something. I saw the man that we gave the money to wave down a taxi and head off.

I then said, "Sorry, Mom."

Our last stop was the statue of liberty, where our cruise would be.

We then waved down a taxi and headed towards the Statue of Liberty.

During the taxi ride I took out my bunny Pancake and gave him some mint fudge. I timed it perfectly so that my parents were looking out the window.

Uh oh my mom saw I brought Pancake. She said, "Fred, why did you bring Pancake?"

I said, "Don't worry, Mom, I brought two weeks' worth of food, water, and bunny biscuits." (Bunny biscuits are biscuits for bunnies that I made. They contain vegetables, a sweet sugar, and pancakes.)

I then added, "I even brought his cage."

We finally got to the statue of liberty and went inside. It was way cooler than in the maps and pictures that I saw.

We're off to Miami Florida.

As we boarded the cruise, I spotted one of the things on my Christmas list. It was water powered, and unlimited fuel jet ski.

This was the top Jet Ski on the model. It had red blue flames on the side that made it even cooler. It is my number one item on my Christmas list.

I gave Pancake another piece of pancake and suddenly Pancake says in a cute bunny like voice, “Can you put chocolate on my pancake next time?”

I thought I was going crazy. I pinched myself. Hard. Pancake muttered something else, so I thought this ship was a little weird. I decided I liked it.

We found our cabin and unpacked everything. The cabin was amazing! It had a 1,000-gig iPod with all my favorite bands and songs. It had red, green, and blue lava lamps and the comfiest beds I’ve ever lain on.

“Fred, were going to the adults-only pool. What are you going to do?” said my mom.

I said, “I’ll chill here and go on the Jet Ski rides and meet you by the rock wall. Is that okay?”

“That’s fine,” said my dad.

“See you later,” I said.

“Bye,” said my mom.

“Yippee!” I yelled in excitement. The Jet Ski was more fun than I could have ever imagined. All of a sudden a fierce wind blew me in the wrong direction.

“AAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!” I said. I was so scared, it was worse than the time my aunt Nancy made exploding apple pie. Thanksgiving was a lot better after the firemen left.

Anyway, suddenly my seat became slippery and I nearly fell off. I looked down and saw my jet ski was now a dolphin! I was so scared I blacked right next to Pancake.

It felt like a long bumpy ride, and probably was. Then, all of a sudden I felt this icy wetness and heard a splash. As I

came to my senses, I realized I was sprayed with water! I then felt a familiar ball of fuzz, and I knew it was Pancake. I didn’t know that it was Pancake who threw the water.

When I opened my eyes, I saw Pancake surfing on water holding a now empty bucket! I didn’t know bunnies could do that.

I then saw the most interesting place I had ever seen!

Have you ever read those stories about the lost city of Atlantis? If you have that’s what this place looked like, only one hundred times better. The cars were dolphin-pulled chariots, the houses were made of gold, and everybody was half human half fish. Everything was made of solid gold! In the center of the city was a huge palace.

Pancake and I decided that my best bet was the big palace, so we set off.

I made it to the entry gate and saw the guard. I asked him, “Where am I?”

The guard said, “You’re in the city of Atlantis. Would you like to speak with the king?”

I replied, “Yes.”

The guard then proceeded to open the enormous door.

I stepped inside and another guard escorted me to the king. I think I got the idea of what he looked like, because on every wall there was a golden-framed picture of the king. I could tell because under every picture there was a sign that said, “The King.”

When I got there, I was greeted by a loud booming voice and an enormous man, also half fish, with a golden shirt and white hair. He was holding a golden trident.

He said, “Hello, young one, my name is Atlantia, ruler of Atlantis. Our people are facing a time of crisis. We are threatened by the magma people. They are about to

destroy our nation. We need you, Fred and your bunny Pancake to go and destroy these people and to save our city.”

I replied, “How do you know my name and my bunny’s name?”

Atlanta then said, “We brought you here to help us. We have been tracking you. You must first go and find the magma people using this dolphin to guide you. You will face the army of fire ninjas and the magma monster, who will hold a fire spear. If you destroy it, the magma people will lose all power. Good luck, young warrior and Pancake.”

Suddenly, Pancake and I were flying on magical dolphins. I played with Pancake for a bit and then fell asleep.

Suddenly I woke up with a jolt because I thought that the dolphin went faster, but realized I was falling!

Then, Pancake flew off the dolphin and saved me! That little bunny sure is helpful. I saw the dolphin ride off without turning back and thought we were done for. All I saw below us was a forest of rocks and trees. Then Pancake went and turned the forest into a lake before we were going to hit it. I felt a cold splash as I fell softly into the lake. Pancake and I were both fine as we swam to shore and I suddenly realized I wasn’t wet! I then knew why.

A fire ninja was right next to us! Apparently he didn’t see us as Pancake and I crept to a nearby tree. Pancake stole two walkie-talkies from the ninja. I thought he would get caught but the ninja didn’t see him. We turned them on and deleted all the other ninja’s power to their phones. We gave ourselves names for the phones. I was FredManRed4, and Pancake was BunnyWithSyrup9. I said to Pancake, “We should stick together. That way we will be close enough to help each other if something goes wrong.”

Little did we know something would go

wrong very soon.

We crept through the forest for a bit. Then suddenly I saw a beam of light, pointed to the light, and called in to my phone. I said, “Calling BunnyWithSyrup9 Calling BunnyWithSyrup9.”

Pancake said, “Yeah, FredManRed4?”

“I found a an opening. Come over here, BunnyWithSyrup9,” I said

As Pancake arrived we looked through and couldn’t believe what we saw. “500 Fire ninjas,” Pancake said.

I said, “How do we defeat them all?”

Pancake then said, “Simple.” Suddenly a huge wave swept over the ninjas! I thought they were done for, but it looked like they had different plans.

The ninjas then started to come full force at us!

Pancake and I started to do karate on them. Pancake threw me something I didn’t recognize at first but then learned it was a sword. I called on my phone that we took from the ninja. I said, “BunnyWithSyrup9, where did you get the swords?”

Pancake replied, “I beat a ninja and took his swords. We can use these to destroy all of the other ninjas.”

I charged into battle. Pancake and I did attacks, flips, sidesteps, and bounces off trees to destroy half of the ninjas. It was like a James Bond movie. Pancake and I were surrounded by an army of ninjas. We were back to back.

I called in. In our code I said, “BunnyWithSyrup9 flipperoo sword flip.” In human language that means Pancake will flip in the air and attack. He will be on my shoulders.

Pancake flipped in the air and all the ninjas did too. It was like a hovering air battle. Pancake would end it soon. A thundering roar of waves splashing came from the west and the east. The noise was so defining I almost fell over. Suddenly two

huge waves crashed over the ninjas but fought back. A huge torch was raised into the sky. The torch was lit by an enormous match, and suddenly the land felt like it was in an oven.

But Pancake fought back. Waves started to crash as fire and water attacked. The thick steam made the battle seem more intense.

Pancake threw awesome waves and the ninjas threw fire at him. It was the most amazing thing I have ever seen! I started to shake as I had no idea what Pancake was experiencing. He could be low on energy, or could be hurt, and where did he get the water from?

I was worrying so much I passed out.

“FredManRed4, FredManRed4, wake up,” I heard. I didn’t know who the caller was. I then recognized it was Pancake.

“FredManRed4 look over here,” Pancake said.

I turned and what I saw amazed me.

All of the ninjas were lying on the ground!

“FredManRed4 you should have seen that. It was amazing,” said my fuzzy little bunny Pancake. I did a flip and used a wave to knock out all of the ninjas.”

“Pancake,” I said, “we need to try and find the Magma Monster.” Pancake and I went to try and find out where the Magma Monster might have been.

We were lost and we knew it. We wandered around for what seemed like hours. Then we saw a flash of light, and Atlantia appeared.

“Here is a tracking device so that you can find the magma people. You have destroyed their army. You still need to defeat the Magma Monster. You will also need this.”

He handed me a golden trident filled with a purple powder. I wonder what it’s for.

“Good luck. Your journey is almost over,” Atlantia said.

Then, just as he appeared, he was gone.

I held the tracking device and called in to Pancake. “BunnyWithSyrup9, let’s go through the forest. We can be hidden from the town.”

“Ok, FredManRed4,” Pancake said.

We got to the castle and looked around. We saw a lava moat surrounding a thick high wall. On the wall there were dragons that shot out flames. They were pretty dangerous. I saw a door and called in to Pancake.

“BunnyWithSyrup9, follow me. I found a door,” I said, pointing to the door.

The second we went inside, I knew we were in trouble.

There in front of us was as fire ninja boot camp.

I wasn’t ready to become a marine. Pancake and I went and hid behind a crate.

“What do you think we should do, Pancake?” I said.

Pancake replied, “I think we should attack using the swords.”

“Wait. I see an electrical switch. We can beat one up secretly and then we have a disguise. We can say the swords are broken and take them, and fix them so they will shock them,” I said.

Time to put our plan into action.

“Hey, buddy, over here,” Pancake said.

“Ok,” the guard said. We beat him up.

“Excuse me,” I said to all the other fire ninjas. “All of the swords you have are broken. I will fix them free of charge.”

They all gave me their swords. I “fixed” them by hooking them up to a generator. The fire ninjas exploded.

We found the magma monster and stared at it. The creature was fifty stories high as he had fire cannonball like arms, a spiked up hair do, and was made of a fireball. You could say he was scary. And if

you did, you were right.

The only thing in the room was a fire doughnut shop that got me an idea. "Pancake," I said, "we need to get to that doughnut shop." We ran to the shop like Usain Bolt. But that just wasn't fast enough. A series of fireballs shot at us. We were just about to get hit by them, when Pancake whirled a wave at the fireballs so they disintegrated.

I just started to wonder, where did Pancake get all these waves? There was no water around in the fire country. That was there only weakness.

We got to the doughnut shop and I quickly wondered. Then it hit me: Jelly-filled! The jelly has a lot of water in it and is sticky.

"Pancake!" I yelled. "We need to stick this monster together. Can you make a baseball bat out of water?" I said.

Pancake said, "Sure." He made a bat, and we swung jelly doughnuts at the monster. I felt like David Ortiz. We were hitting home runs at the monster. *Smack!*

The doughnuts did the trick. The monster was glued. He tried to move and collapsed on a wall. We escaped through a back door in the doughnut shop.

"Hey, Pancake," I said.

"Yeah, Fred?" said Pancake.

"How do we get back to the city of Atlantis?" I said

"I'm not sure," Pancake said.

Then a Lamborghini Murcielago came out of nowhere with a note on the front. The note said, "Need Transportation? Use this. Autopilot is on. This is our finest piece of transportation. From Atlantis."

We got in the car and couldn't believe our eyes.

We were staring at the car. In the inside it had the comfiest heated seats I have ever sat in. There was a huge TV with 500 channels, a DVD player, and a Wii. There

were personal butlers and a built-in restaurant. I understand the note now.

Six hours later we reached the city of Atlantis where a crowd had gathered and Atlantia was at a podium. I stepped up to the podium.

"Thank you for saving the city of Atlantis," said Atlantia, the king of Atlantis. "As a token of gratitude we give you a medal, this time portal, and this trident. The trident can be used to open a time portal. We have this portal as well."

The crowd of Atlantis people that had gathered roared with cheers. It felt good to save a whole city, especially the city of Atlantis.

"You may travel to anywhere at any time," said Atlantia. "We will give you these dolphins so you can return to the cruise, and oh, by the way, we will need to talk with you about your bunny, Pancake. Return here in one week."

I thought about what Atlantia said about Pancake. I also am wondering about how Pancake destroyed those fire ninjas. I know I couldn't do it.

We returned to the cruise and I was so surprised. I thought my mom and dad would ground me for life, but surprisingly they didn't. Apparently Atlantia stopped time so my parents didn't know I was missing.

My adventure was so great I almost told my mom and dad. Almost.

The cruise was a blast as I ate yummy food, swam in the pool, went in a hot tub, and even climbed a rock wall. Our time in Miami was just as good, as well as the plane ride back to Colorado.

One week later I went to Atlantis and talked to Atlantia about Pancake. He said I had to go on more missions to find out more.

I went in the time portal and found out that Pancake comes from this bunny family

called “The element bunnies.” Pancake is the element water, and his two brothers are the fire and earth elements. They team up and save the world in its times of crisis. Atlantia said I had to help the bunnies because I was their leader. It sounded fun being able to control my favorite animals on Earth to help save it.

Our first mission was to stop global warming. I now visit Atlantis every week. It’s a fun job to save the world every week along with the help of super-powered bunnies.

So now when you hear those stories about the Bermuda Triangle, will you believe them?

## The Red Brick Road

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*Witches and Tiny and Fire – oh my! Follow **THE RED BRICK ROAD**, by **Roxy Taylor**.*

I dedicate this story to my friends and family.

It was the warmest day of the school year so far, which meant it was the most annoying day of the year. The first reason this that today was the worst was because the math test was today. Only the smart people passed. If you didn’t know an answer you’ll fail and have to go to summer school. At least Roxy had new friends that she wouldn’t be embarrassed about, or hopefully wouldn’t be embarrassed about.

Right after gym class I was totally happy that Amber finally asked me to be her partner for swimming. Amber was just so cool she couldn’t stand to be away from her popularity. We talked all threw the lesson then Ryan got blamed for talking when we were talking instead. Now swimming ended and all of the girls in my swimming class are getting dressed for the nicest hour of all, Spanish. In Spanish we’re pretending to be famous Hispanic people. Lucky for me I’m being Selena Gomez, born in Texas, raised in New York City. As I put on my skinny jeans, black shirt, with a purple tank top, and my new red converse shoes. I started to head out the door until Nora caught up with me.

“Roxy you just have to tell us what

happened in gym class with Ryan; did it bomb or did it just spark?” Nora softly spoke into Roxy’s ear. “Did it totally burn or did it toast, did it...”

“Nora you should really pay less attention on reading and more on the class clown” Roxy always had to tell Nora who did what and how it ended up after class.

“Sorry but I’m in the best part in my book where..... Oh you probably wouldn’t care about books instead of gossip. Tell me now please, I’ll pay more attention next time.” Nora’s plea made Roxy more surely that she was becoming more and more popular each minute.

“It **TOTALLY** was a complete burn, and it was the biggest bomb like... ever! You should have heard the smack his stomach made; it was like a cannon ball. I swear he lost 10 pounds in that belly flop, and so did the pool. Oh my gawd something just bit me.” Roxy was scared for the bit but happy from the belly flop Ryan made.

“Oops, that was you, I meant to bite Derek?” Nora said with the biggest smile on her face.

“Oh just be quiet already. I want to



know who bit me... it hurt.” Roxy was whining like a three-year-old.

“*Hola*, my people,” Amber said with a playful smile. “Your leg isn’t tasty AT ALL! You should really put some vanilla on it, makes it taste better and it smells great. Try it, seriously, try it.”

“Omg, you have got to do something with your freaky nose, really you can smell anything from like a mile away. Yeah, and you think I’m the one who needs....” Nora yelled, when it wasn’t needed.

Roxy interrupted by quickly saying, as fast as possible, “I just have to have more homework in math, just so little it can’t be healthy for my smart brain.” Roxy tried to sound realistic when a teacher walked by and was about to say something to them. As the teacher walked by them Roxy burst out laughing like crazy, saying “Are you serious, I was just kidding, I can’t believe you’d actually think I wanted more homework, and in math. You have got to be kidding me.” Roxy burst out laughing next to Amber trying to make Amber laugh, nothing came from Amber until Roxy stopped, then she started up again when Amber did. Of course Cam walked by so that’s probably why she trying to give her I’m-so-funny-you-should-ask-me-out laugh. Roxy suddenly had the thought that she wasn’t popular like she used to think. Maybe Amber hung out with me because I was friends with Cam. I’ll talk to Amber in History; there’s a sub so I’ll have about 30 minutes to talk to her.

Roxy dug through her Gucci purse and turned on her phone and decided to text Nora.

**Norathecoolio:** When r u going 2 txt Amber????? Ur class if ½ over.... HURRY UP OR TALK TO HER DURING LUNCH, WHERE ALL HER FRIENDS R, NEAR CAM .

**FoxyRoxy:** I WILL GIVE ME SOME TIME GOSH!!!!

**Norathecoolio:** I gave u time now give my news

**FoxyRoxy:** fine I’ll do it right now, reading time... wait we’re supposed to be filling out a sheet. I’ll do it @ the end of the day; you can come w/ me if u want.... Bbl (be back later)

Roxy closed her phone.

“Everyone put your head down except you Ryan, come with me to the office, NOW!” Ms. West sharply and harshly made mumbling sounds and throws her hands in the air time to time.

“Finally I can get some sleep in this boring class, might as well turn on some soft music now.” Roxy softly talked to herself, quiet enough that no one next to her could hear her...

“Oh my gawd, where am I? At least I know where I’m not, I’M NOT IN HISTORY ANY MORE” As Roxy looked around the colorful place, she saw Tiny, her dog, running toward her, it looked like Tiny was scared of something. Roxy ran up next to Tiny and hugged it as tight as could be, she was so happy to be out of school and in... in... in somewhere that’s not school, home, or anyplace she’s been before.

Minutes went by and I was already hungry, if I was hungry that must have meant that Tiny was a tiny bit hungry. “Is someone hungry Tiny, are you hungry?” Roxy was talking in her baby voice; the she saw something and talked normally. “Tiny, want to go see if that little preschool over there can give us some snacks if we behave ourselves. It seems like the teachers are small too, like half the size of me. Like munchkins.”

“It’s okay everyone; she doesn’t seem mean like the Amber that came an hour ago.” A mysterious lady dressed in a dress that didn’t have any other color but pink. She had blonde crimped hair and a tiara.

She looked like me when I was a little girl, but with blonde hair not black.

“Excuse me where am I, and who, may I ask, are you?” Roxy was trying to sound as polite as possible though she was really angry that it wasn’t a preschool.

“Oh yes, my name is Marlin, I am the “mother” of these wonderful “children.” I would give you their names but there are far too many to tell, maybe if we have more time throughout this visit of yours.” Marlin spoke the words like a flutist playing the softest song ever.

“Visit? Sorry but I haven’t gone on vacation yet, I’m waiting for Thanksgiving break. I might go to Chicago. Wait, what children are here I see no little people surrounding my feet hugging my legs wanting me to play with them? Little kids always go to the feet first, I know trust me... I’ve babysat for years.” Roxy got kind of scared when Marlin mentioned the children, she went straight to Tiny when she heard the words “far too many names to tell you” that really got her wondering.

“Children, children come out to play with this new person named, honey what’s your name?” Marlin was looking around and talking to me at the same time I didn’t know if she was talking to me or the “children.”

“Oh you’re talking to me. My name is Roxy and what’s that?” Roxy’s long fingernail was pointing straight toward this mushroom dressed person hiding behind a pond with little flowers that were moving side to side. Roxy slid closer to Tiny and asked one more time, but with more fear than the last “What is that?”

Marlin looked at the flowers and the mushroom people then laughed as if she was a crazy scientist. Then Marlin said while looking at Roxy with one of her crazy looks, when she finally stopped laughing she said “Those are my “children.” They’re

called munchkins. They dress up as flowers or mushrooms so they can blend in when a stranger comes... like you for instance. We’ve never seen you before.”

“Listen I have to go find my way back to school. So that would be great if I could just, you know; have someone go with me to somewhere that get me away from this this colorful place. That would be great if you could tell me where to go or to lend me a munchkin and some food for the trip. That would be great.” Roxy, the middle school girl had no idea who to have helped her, where to go, or who to trust.

“Well I would simply just love to go with you and provide safety or shelter, but I have a special show on tonight. Maybe I’ll catch up with you later. Until then I’ll give you safety until the trail leaves munchkin land. Until then, follow the yellow brick road, wait. The last time someone followed the yellow brick road she got caught by flying monkey.... Dorothy made it safely but it was scary to watch. So follow the red brick road then see what happens. Give me a call when you reach the helpful place.” Marlin looked at Roxy with a smile then looked at her puffy pink dress and responded with a “Fine, follow the red brick road then go straight to Elvis Tower, someone will meet you there. Follow him to Elvis Tower. Don’t go near the Wicked Witch of the West, she gets jealous easily. You should’ve heard her blabber on and on about those ruby slippers.” Marlin moved closer toward Roxy and whispered in her ear “I didn’t really think the slippers were that great.” Roxy didn’t get any of that speech but she just wanted to get out of the land of munchkins before they broke out in song.

So then Roxy and Tiny were off with no sign of food or water (except for Tiny’s drool, Roxy would NEVER do that though).

“Can we ever not run? It’s extremely hard to run and walk a Great Dane at the same time; if you don’t believe me then you try to run AND walk him at the same time.” I handed Pepper the rope to Tiny’s leash then shouted to Tiny “Go Tiny.”

“NO FAIR, YOU CAN’T DO THAT!” Pepper was sprinting across most of the forest without stopping once.

“Maybe I’m being too hard on poor Pepper; after all he did give me his deepest darkest secret. Man I’m good at talking myself into things like this.” I took a deep breath then quickly shouted at the top of my lungs “TINY, HEEL!” I started to dart after Pepper and Tiny; they were okay from what I could see. But then again Tiny was on the ground like when plays dead; and Pepper was lying in a pile of flowers.

“That will teach them to mess up my table cloth... it’s all crinkled because of those three. Fire, take them in, I’ll find the girl; GO NOW!” Wow she was actually even more annoying than what I’ve heard so far. Well I should go before her. “I SEE YOU, SO COME OUT LITTLE GIRL! NOW OR ELSE I’LL POUR WATER ON YOUR LITTLE SALT FRIEND!” The witch saw me... now I’m in big trouble; I hope everyone else is okay so I can run out of here without worrying about them.

“I see you so don’t run little girl and don’t talk so I don’t know where you are.”

It seemed like she was trying to make me say something because she kept on talking and saying “and don’t talk” most of the time. Maybe she was trying to make me say something so she could actually find out where I was hiding. What if she didn’t really know where I was hiding and just said that to make me run away to drag attention? Oh she’s really good at this; to bad I have no idea what to do about Tiny and Pepper. Should I risk it and see if they’re really in trouble or should I stay hidden and keep

myself safe... this is way too confusing? I’ll stay here, no I won’t; yes I will... I have no idea what to do. I’ll do both I guess; I’ll look out of the bush a little to see if anything bad has happened to my baby or Pepper. And if they’re not in trouble, I won’t make a mad dash... but if they are, I guess I’ll have to save them.

“1, 2, 3” I whispered to myself as I took a long peek out of the bush I was in. Thankfully I saw nothing, but Fire standing up on legs. Of course that was weird, but not as weird as Tiny and Pepper running for their lives. I didn’t see the witch behind them. I saw nothing at all... at first. When I turned around, I saw the witch. I wasn’t so scared of that than I was of what was behind the witch... a bear. A giant 8 foot bear standing up on its hind legs.

“Oh my gawd” I stared soft but then as I said “gawd” I screamed so loud that tiny and pepper stopped running and looked at the bear with no fear. In fact Pepper walked over to the bear grabbed its ear, after some struggle, and pulled it so the bear was lying down.

“I told you not to eat Roxy, she es buena” I had no idea that Pepper could speak Spanish. “Ella son simpatico” Pepper looked at Roxy, Tiny, Witch, and Fire and they all had the same look on their face that said “what- the- heck- is- that- man-talking- about-?” Pepper looked at them like they were stupid or something and slowly said “It means she is friendly.” The bear speaks Spanish; it’s only weird enough to be in this place.

“Okay, excuse me for one second please.” I dug through my purse thinking “wow, I should really organize this, and tell ALL of this to Nora. Omg she’ll freak out when she hears about this.” Finally I saw a shiny cover of her iPhone. I picked it up, turned it on, and when straight to the speed dial list. Nora was on #38, I hope she

wasn't sleeping again or I could never tell her about "this." My phone only had one more bar left so I had to make it somewhat useful. I typed in #38 and the phone started to ring, and ring, and ring, and ring. As I heard Nora's voice come up in the speaker but then the phone died, right as Nora answered... it died. I was pretty unlucky today now that a witch was after me, my phone died, and that I was stuck in this creepy place.

"Well where should we go now, I can't call anyone to take me away from this place so, let's go back to the munchkin land so I can get out of here ASAP." I was getting really annoyed with this whole place, and perfect people with perfect lands, and perfect... everything. I had way too much perfect in one day.

"I'm sorry dear" Marlin said in a perfect voice "you have to go forward to go back." And of course a perfect reply no one would understand.

"Well then" I turned my back on them so I could rethink of how to get out of this situation. I came up with one; and it wasn't the best idea I had. "I'll go see the witch and ask her to poof me back to school, it would work wouldn't it? I mean she's magic and stuff right?"

Marlin said "she isn't just going to poof you back to school she's the evil one."

"Yeah" Pepper said "she's right, she isn't going to do that she is evil really really really really..."

"Okay thanks Pepper I get it" Marlin said.

"Well this was a great conversation I should be going now with Tiny, that's all folks." Everyone just gave a weird look as they watched Roxy run as fast as she can to the witch's house to get poof back to school.

On the way there I saw something in the bushes, it looked like Cam, but I wasn't

quiet so sure. "Hello, is anyone there? Hello" I was as if I was in an opera. "Cam is that you?"

"It depends who it is? Who is it?"

"It's Roxy and Tiny! What are you doing here this is the witch's house?" I asked

"Oh, umm....? I have to tell you something Roxy I was caught by the witch and she took me here and now I can't leave."

"Oh, dear what are we going on to do about that?" What if I was trapped like Cam, that would be horrible?

"Hey, then what are you doing here I would never see you here even at the bad witch's house?" Cam asked.

"Well I just came to get poof back to school I hate being here ever since I left all weird and bad things had happened.

"Cam...Cam where are you?" Get over here right now" the witch squawked like an old raven. "I have been looking for you everywhere!" When the witch found Cam talking to Roxy she got really annoyed. "What are you doing here Roxy? Get out, can't you see I'm busy?"

"Doing what" Roxy thought in her head. Roxy saw Tiny next to her getting closer and closer to my legs, I knew he was getting scared.

"Oh, Mrs. Witch I was just wondering"

"There is no wondering in the house"

"Sorry I mean asking if you could send me back to my school?"

"Sure honey, only if you can get me your little friends and then I'll send you and your cute little puppy back to your school."

Roxy had to think this over for awhile. "Well what if don't try them over to you? What would happen to me? Would I like... die or something like that?"

"Yeah pretty much; or I'm just gonna trick you out of it but isn't that basically the exact same thing?"

"No not really, tricking is like a practical

joke, killing is like... how do I put this; BAD!"

"Whatever; can i just be let go... please. I've had enough of it here, every time someone walks past me you get all 'Who is that Cam, no flirting remember?'" Cam said imitating her "Cam.... Cam come here Cam, WHY AREN'T YOU HRE CAM!"

"Yeah,I think you must've forgotten that I'M IN CHAINS!"

"Well maybe you'd like to come inside and warm up with us, would you?"I said with a playful grin on my face.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa....'us?'" the witch said utterly confused. "I was thinking more of just me and Cam." The witch must've been jealous when Cam agreed that I should stay because then the witch was all, "Cam why don't you sit next to me at the table; you can feel a lot of warmth right here."

I was in front of the witch but behind Cam, so when the witch said that Cam and I sat down together.

"Excuse me, but you're in my seat, Roxy." The freaky face gave me the chill until it reached my lower back.

"Well, there's a seat on the floor... and I think it has your name all over it." I said trying not to laugh.

"Well at least I'm still next to Cam and the candle." The witch glanced up at Cam when Tiny walked right next to Cam.

"You're such a cute puppy yes you are, yes you are." Cam sounded like a mother talking to her newborn baby. "You are just so adorable, let me scratch your fat neck." The longer Cam scratched the fatter Tiny's drools were, and one of the biggest drools went right on the candle and on the witch.

"Oh my gawd, Tiny, you can't do that," I said while my hand was covering my open mouth, trying to cover the sound of my laughs spilling out.

"You are out, out I said, OUT!" The

witch certainly had a huge temper that day so Tiny and i just left.

"Nice to see you again Cam, oh, and don't call me... my phone is dead." I slowed down when I said "again" and "don't call;" just in case the witch didn't hear me. But, her red face and running toward me gave it away that she was annoyed.

"You better run Roxy, or I'll run over you like a Foxy," the witch said as she cased me around her "house."

Roxy was hiding right behind Cam while the witch was still checking all the rooms. "Roxy under the table quick, she's coming soon" Cam was so helpful when it came time for need.

"Roxy stay still, I think I know where you are" the witch said looking near the table's perimeter. "Oh come on Roxy at least say something useful...please."

"Why would Roxy tell you where she is so you could lock her up like where I was?" Cam had a look on his face that told the witch to step off.

"Well it doesn't matter where she's going it just matters that she's trapped with me where no one can hear her scream, I mean cry, I mean laugh." Yeah I didn't really believe her when she stuttered twice and they were about hurting me or being in the process of hurting me.

I whispered to Cam that I was going to sneak for the door, Cam just had to get Tiny outside after I made the exit. I slowly snuck toward the door where a whole bunch of pots and giant boxes were. It was the perfect place to hide myself. I was so close to the boxes and pots I could smell the dust around them. Finally, I reached the boxes and the pots and I was about five inches from the wooden door. I slowly opened the door, thin enough so I could squeeze through. The only problem I was afraid of was that she would see me sneak out.

“Do the hair swipe” I mouthed to Cam. Whoosh, his hair caught the witches attention long enough for me to rearrange the boxes and squeeze out of the dusty old place.

“Hey, witch, I think someone needs to tinkle really badly.” Cam said; trying to follow the directions of Roxy.

“Okay, I don’t see how you can leave me then so, it’s on the left from my room. Fire, point to Cam where my room is.”

Oh my gawd, Fire was with the rest of the group though. Does that mean that they’re all here, with me; oh they are just the best?

“No, I kind-of meant Tiny, I think someone needs to “go.” Cam said

“Well, I’ll take him for you” the witch looked at the windows and rooms for me to be found. I had to duck so the witch could not to see me. I couldn’t hear her heels creak the wooden floor or Cam protest. But i hope he would, I love Tiny more then anything in the world and if Cam gave him up... he would be so dead to me.

Cam ended up walking out 10 minutes later, without Tiny. I could only think about Tiny. I cared about how Cam didn’t bring Tiny but i cared WAY more about Tiny then a person would think.

“Where is he, what have you done with Tiny, does she still have him? You better start speaking man or there is going to be a whole lot of ugly going around.” I was so angry at him that everyone walking away from me.

“Well” Cam stuttered “See I told the witch that I was with someone so she could get off my back, but apparently that made her even more made so.... I was sent away. Without Tiny, listen I’m really sorry but I can make it up. I know where they’re headed; but she’ll come out of her house really soon looking for us so I suggest that

we hide first.”

All of us climbed on the branches of the trees right in time to see the witch storm out of her house with a leech for Tiny, I hope he wasn’t being abused. But with the small drops of drop, the sad face, and him looking for me wasn’t the sign of relief for me.

“We have to follow her” I said when she left “ I can’t let her take Tiny from me, not without a fight.” Marlin was way to scared to go I guess because right after I said that, she fainted, oh well, one less person to take care of.

I was confident and pretty sure I could get Tiny back, but then we crossed a river, and a steep hill, and now we’re going down a steep rocky path that lead to a castle (we think the witches), actually no path, just rocks. We flipped a coin on who was to go first, and guess what... it was me.

“Fine, fine, fine, I’ll go this time but you have got to take one for the team next time.” I was scared yet brave at the very same time. That was until i saw the freaky flying- bunnies they had as soldiers. At least they weren’t lions or I’d be dead by now.

“I heard flaps and bunny sounds and I really don’t think it’s possible that a monkey and a bunny can be breaded as an animal, really what would the name be?” after a moment of thinking I came up with “bunnky... now that was suitable for me.”

“Roxy, focus” Pepper said to me as if he had to go somewhere important.

“Well maybe we’d be their already if I hadn’t had gone first.” I said with pride. I crouched down low and tried to touch the ground with my nose.... kind of like a really really short table, short enough to touch the ground.

I snuck past all the guards so far, but I was pretty sure that their was tons more inside. Nope just 1 guard my height and 2 shorter.

"Psst, psst, psst... Roxy over here."

"What who said that?" I asked while my eyes darted everywhere around the room.

"It's us.... Cam, Fire, and Pepper." I sighed as they stepped into the room. "Man, you should've seen the look on your face." Cam giggled and tried to make the face I made before.

"Whatever, can we just go find Tiny now."

After a few minutes of walking around the castle we found nothing but empty rooms and no sound coming from them. After a few more minutes we found a room filled with whimpering and the witches voice. It must've been the room with Tiny in it; what other room was there?

Cam slowly opened the door after another coin toss and he found one flying bunny, Tiny and the witch.

"We have to get the witches and the Bunnky's attention so someone can run in and save Tiny."

"Fire it's your turn to take one for the team" we tossed again and Fire was picked to go.

"Witch, witch come quick" Fire pretended to be one of her soldiers "I found Roxy and Cam over near the exit."

"What, how, I was just near the exit?" The witch sounded like she didn't believe it at all, "how did you find out?"

"I was marching right near their practicing my marching moves." I shouldn't went instead of Fire he wasn't that good.

"Come men, let's head out." well the witch believed it so we were off the hook... for now.

The Bunnkey came running up behind he witch, which meant that the room was cleared out except for Tiny. Fire pointed to the exit then waited until the witch and the Bunnkey was out of sight.

"Come on guys we have to hurry this up.

I didn't think this place is that big to lose them." Fire looked like he was about to faint like Marlin.

"Fire stay here, the rest of us will go up and get Tiny, then we can all leave for the Elvis Tower." We quickly climbed up the stairs into the room and saw Tiny roped around a chair, what an easy way to get out of this.

"Tiny are you okay, what did those mean people do to you?" Roxy said as she untied Tiny and let him slobber and lick all over her and Pepper.

"We did nothing to him?" the witch said as she stepped into the room with her Bunnkey minion.

I gasped as I turned around to see Fire still on the ground and Cam standing right next to her with his face frozen.

"Leave Cam alone" I said with a brave look on my face, a little later I repeated myself "Leave him alone." When the witch didn't leave him alone I told Tiny "Run Tiny, get her boy, go get her." Tiny jumped on top on the with and Cam ran ran Pepper and I and sprinted for Fire (who by the way was still passed out) and we ran out the exit.

Tiny caught up with us a little later but we were all together no matter what. We all ran as fast as we could toward the Elvis Tower with the Witch catching up behind us. We ran and ran and ran for hours of straight and pure running until we finally got to the Elvis Tower.

*KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK* went the doors of the Elvis towers as our warm sweaty hands knocked against the cold perfect wood.

We entered to tons and tons of munchkins looking up at us, as all of my group looked around in the sea of strangers; we saw one person that was in front of everyone with a mayor badge of his vest.

“Excuse me sir, we need to speak to Elvis of Elvis tower. I want to go back to school right away.” I was tired sweaty and wanted to leave ASAP.

“Well you should clean up before you see him.” The mayor suggested.

“Yeah, no... we just want to get out of here and be done with this place.” Cam said wanting to leave to.

“I will tell her you’re ready.” The mayor said walking over to the phone.

“Her?” My whole group said.”

“Yes, I am the Elvis Tower and I’ve known you’ve wanted to come and see me” Marlin said in her sweet and perfect voice.

“Wait, you were with me the whole time, but you never even told me about that. I could’ve been at school this whole time if it wasn’t for your secret.” I was really surprised and mad at Marlin.

“Sorry but this will make it all better.” Marlin said as she handed me a tambourine and said “Repeat after me while saying ‘ I

want to go to school’ three times.... no more and no less.”

I did as Marlin wanted me to and when I woke up there I was back at class with Amber West starring at like a freaky stalker.

“What the...” I couldn’t finish since little miss jealous (Amber) was interrupting me.

“So Roxy how was Munchkin land with Fire, Tiny, and Cam?” Amber asked with a grin glued onto her face.

“Did I talk during my sleep again?” I asked with a sick feeling in my stomach.

“Oh yes, yes you did Roxy and now I know that you’re not as tough as you want us to think. Are you?”

“Actually Yes, I am tough. Tough enough to beat you like the cheapest drum ever. Truest me, the break easy.”

“Ms. Amber and Ms. Roxy go down to the office right now.” Our Sub said with her high squeaky voice.

“Okay, I’m done here anyway.” I finished my day with the best exit ever.

## Starting the New Life with Bridget Johnson

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*How many times can a family move before the kids decide enough is enough? See for yourself in **STARTING THE NEW LIFE WITH BRIDGET JOHNSON**, by *Isabella Adelman*.*

“Mom, do we have to move?” Bridget asked as she cried. “I am going to have to leave all my best friends.”

“Don’t worry,” Bridget’s mom said, “You’ll make many friends in Aspen; Jade is waiting in the car with your father. As Bridget walked down the little black road with the little pebbles side by side, Bridget thought of all the great time she had in this house. As her mother and her sister Jade called here from the car. Bridget fell to the floor and started to cry. Her mother ran out

of the car and had to carry Bridget down the road into the car. When the car moved Bridget new it was the end, this time the real end. There was no turning back. “Bridget and Jade do you want to go say bye to your friends or will it be hard for you to say good bye.”

“Don’t worry mom we want to say good bye to our friends.” First they went to Bridget’s friends house whose name was Jane and all of Bridget’s friends would be there. When Bridget got out of the car she



wanted to cry but she wanted to stay strong. Well Bridget hugged all of her friends one by one she had a little tear start to come down she knew it was time to leave because she did not want to start to cry and drop to the floor again. So she got back in to the car and they left. Then Jade said bye to her friends with no care. But when it was time to say good-bye to her boyfriends there was a break down. "This was the problem and always has been." Bridget said. After a few minutes later my dad had to help my mom get Jade in to the car. It took about ten minutes but they got her somehow. As I looked out the window when my father was driving I knew it was going to be hard. I had so many favorite stores that I loved, and the people knew me at those stores. Finally Jade said, "We are here." So we put all of our stuff on the plane. Then we got on. When the plane took off. It was a little bumpy so we all did not eat for about an hour. Finally we got there. When we got our car I was excited to see our house. We pulled up in the driveway a few minutes later. "Wow," my sister said. "Our house is awesome." The only thing I cared about was the rooms so I said mom which room is mine. So my mom took me and my sister up stairs to see the rooms. "This is your room." mom said to jade, "And this is your room Bridget." As I walked in to the room I had to turn on the lights because we landed at 9:00 pm. When I looked around I saw little balloons on the wall with different colors and a circle shaped bed. As I scanned the shades that would cover my window my mother walked in and said "Honey you should get to bed you start school tomorrow. So I got out the suitcases and unpacked my entire clothes. Then found my pj's and got to bed. Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!! I screamed when my alarm clock woke me up then my mom walked in and said "Let's

get dressed you don't want to be late for school." So I got dressed and we had to stop somewhere to eat because my mom was getting food while we were at school. So I got dropped off at school and started to walk forward.

The bell rang right as I walked into class, everyone knew what to do. The teacher was standing and looking at me and she pointed at a book so I grabbed one. I sat down, and she said "please sit in your assigned seat. So I walked up to here and told him I was new and didn't know what to do. Then she had an embarrassed look on her face. Then she helped me and told me everything I needed to do. When the bell rang she told me where to go to and how to get there. So the day was pretty good, until lunch. Everyone sat together I was the only one without a friend. There was a rusty table at the end of the lunchroom. No one was sitting there so I went over there and took a seat. I felt like a tear was about to come out of my eyes. I tried to stay strong but it couldn't stay in. All the sudden, tears ran down my eyes and everyone stared to stare. My face turns red and my body shook. I Ran to the girl's bathroom. After a few minutes a girl walked in and helped me. She told me where everything was and Everything I needed to no. By the end of the day it was like I knew where everything was without help. There was one problem. What was here name so I asked here before we went on our separate buses. Her name was Kelly. So as I got on the bus I went home. "Hey mom, Oh." "Hi Bridget how was school?"

"It was ok why?"

"How were you?"

"I was fine; Jade didn't have the greatest day. Too bad for her. Anyways I am going to go up and do my homework."

"Ok come down in an hour."

"Why?"

"I have a surprise for you."

"Oh, ok."

"Ok what do I have for homework today?"

"I have math, science, social studies and language arts. Ok so I will do math first."

$4/6 + 3/6 =$  Oh wait I know this. Um oh ya it's  $7/6$ , but that needs to be turned in to a mixed number. So it would be  $1\frac{1}{6}$ . Ok, next problem.

As time passed by it was an hour so she knew her mom wanted her down stairs so she went down. "Mom you wanted to see me."

"Yeah I did, I know that it has been hard for you both when we moved here so I got you each a puppy. Here this one is for you Jade and Bridget this one is for you. "Oh wow!" Bridget and Jade said. "Thank you so much. Bridget what are you going to name yours? I will name mine Oreo because it is black and white."

"I will name mine Queen Pretty because mine is so pretty. Anyways I was going to the nail salon with my friend and she made two appointments I'll have to call and make that three. Hey Miranda," Jade said to her friend when she saw her sitting down getting started. So I hopped up there and my puppy got sent to another room to get hers done. After we were finished we went for ice cream and I got my puppy a dog ice cream. I loved my puppy. After we were finished with the ice cream I and my doggy went home. We made cookies and had a lot of fun. Then Bridget and I took our doggies to go for a walk in the park and then a picknick. So when we got to the park we set out our blanket and ate something's and brought dog treats for our dogs. They really enjoyed everything we gave them. Our puppies loved us. We walked them back home and on the way we saw puppies walking. Our puppies were playing with the dog for a minute or to,

then we had to go. "That was fun!" Bridget said.

"Yeah it was fun. Oh hey mom, hey kids how was the walk?"

"It was good."

"Hold on, your father will be home in a minute. I have to take this call. Hello," my mom said. "What!" she yelled, "This must be the wrong house. Oh my g-d. Bye, um kids I just got off the phone with someone and we all need to talk." We all sat down on the couch as my mom started to talk, "Um your father was on his way home and he got in to an accident and he went to the hospital and he died." My mom had billions of tears rush down her face. For the next week we didn't go to school and when we did we were not jolly and we all wore black. After 3 months we were all fine and my mom was engaged. She got married a month later and her wedding was amazing. I was the bridesmaid and so was my sister. The flower girl was our cousin, Layla. She was 4 and so cute. The ring boy was our cousin, Johnny, and he was 6 years old and he was Layla's brother.

The wedding was beautiful and it didn't end till 4 in the morning. We had a wonderful brunch also. There were bagels and toast and eggs it was all so good. The man my mom married was named Jonah. But now I will call him dad and so will Jade. We will also have another two sisters and a brother. One of the girl's was 17 and her name was Maddie and the other girl's name was Lilly and she was 2 years old and the brother was Joey and he was a twin with Lilly. They all moved in with us and we were building a house and were going to move in to it in a day. So we were all packed. All of our boxes were ready, that night was touchier. I had to sleep with Jade, the two twins, and Maddie. The worst part was the twins were crying, Jade kept on moving and Maddie took up most of the

bed. The morning was much better than the night. We moved in to our house and we each had our own room. We all saw our rooms, my room was awesome. When you walk in you see cherries on the wall with a white background behind them. My bed had bright red sheets with a star in the middle. And there was a button that when you clicked it my bed moved. I loved my room. Later that night I walked downstairs and saw my parents getting ready to go out. It was Saturday night, that's why. My sister Maddie had to watch us. I went to bed pretty early because I was tired and when I woke up in the morning I fed the dogs and had breakfast. It was the month of December and almost Chanukah for some reason I wasn't excited because it wouldn't be the same without our real dad. But it really was a great Chanukah after all. We went to Florida and went to the beach every day it was a blast. We stayed at our grandparents' house. On the last night of Chanukah something happened that none of us knew would happen. My sister Jade ran away. The reason we found out she was gone was because, I couldn't sleep at night so I went down to have some cookies. She was in the bed when I left but when I came back up she was gone. So we all went outside to try to find her. We looked for hours. The twins (that were in strollers) and I that had to stick together. So we looked on the rocky path and the wet grass. But my mom called me on my cellular device. And told me that she found here someplace that was 30 minutes away from the place that we live at. But she got home and that night we bought a huge cage for that even a bear can fit in. Jade had to sleep in it for a whole month. Until my mom thought she learned her lesson. After a month, Jade really did learn her lesson. After a couple of months a lot happened, I finished school and I went to camp Ramah, I said good bye

to my parents, I hugged my twin sister and brothers they were three. Then I got on as the bus started to move I waved my hands. I sat with Jade on the bus because she came also. It was a long ride and when we got there we unpacked and had dinner because we got there late. That night I said the shma before I went to sleep. Kaka doodle doo my closer said with a funny smile. Then we woke up and went to eat. I saw my sister at breakfast, we said hi to each other then huger then she walked beck to here table and I walked back to mine.

Hey I said to my new friend Shenaney, well that was her nick name her real name was Ashley and she lived in New York. I went and sat with her at the table. Then she and I went to the breakfast table. She got eggs and I got bacon. When we finished with our breakfast, today was telly day. Telly day was when you can do whatever you want for the whole day. So me and Ashley went to the park, it wasn't really a park. There was just a set of swings. Our camp doesn't have slides and things like a real park would. Then we went to play on the stage. The stage was a deck with a whole bunch of projects you could do. By the end of doing our projects it was time to eat. So we went to the dinner table and got some noodle soup and bread. Then we got to our cabin and it was movie night for all the girls. So we went to the deck of the stage. There were a lot couches to lie on. We watched the movie nana Jane. It was a new movie that no one had seen. I t was suppose to be about a girl that didn't have a life but then got one. It was a weird movie. A lot of girls fell asleep watching it. Shenaney and I didn't, but there was one more girl that didn't fall asleep. So we walked over to her and we started to talk. Then we asked her what her name was, her name was Natalie Rose, and we all became pretty good friends. When the movie was

over that night, Natalie Rose slept in our cabin with us. It was a blast. But as we couldn't fall asleep during the night we looked out the window and saw a face.

"Ashley, who is that?"

"I don't know." We all got really scared. So we all walked out the doors of the porch and we saw a man and he grabbed us and took us on his boat. We all cried. His face looked like a criminal in a way. But he wasn't he ended up being Ashley's dad. For the rest of the summer we stayed with him and it was a lot of fun we played games and sang songs. It was a lot of fun. But the summer came to an end sadly, when I said goodbye. As I saw my mom, she had bad news to tell me. So listened and she said were moving back to the first place we lived.

"Mom you can't be serious. We moved houses two times; I made all new friends and now you're telling me we are moving back! This is terrible."

"Bridget this is the way life goes. Things change and people change. So when are we moving back. Bridget there is nothing to worry about we are leaving in 2 months." That's what all moms have to say because they don't want their kid to worry. "Bridget, come on I'm being honest." "Sure you are. Jade are you home?" "Bridget I'm up stairs." Trod trod, trod, trod, as Bridget goes up the stairs. Jade did mom tell you the terrible disastrous news. Ya she did. Jade I don't understand why wood moms do this to us. I don't know Bridget. She said something like this is the way life goes. I don't know she just said something like it. Oh well I am not going to let it happen. Try all you want Bridget but parents are old enough to boss us around and make us do anything they tell us to do ok so it is happening. I hate when you're right because I don't like to be wrong. It's ok that were moving back. Jade how can

you say that! Well because we are going to see are other friends that we left behind and I really want to see them again. Good point. Bridget think of it this way. You are going to see all your old friends. You could face book or aim with your new friend that you met here and then everyone's happy. No I would still not be happy. I would want to see them. Well if mom gets you a Mac commuter of your own which means not steeling mine than you would be able to I chat? Good point. I should talk here in to that. Ok Bridget now why don't you do me a favor and leave my room to ask here and take your time well you're at it. Ok be back soon. Sure whatever as long as you give me a little space. Sure. Mom can I get a laptop for me? Well you are going through a hard time so sure you can oh thanks. Um I'm going to Ella's ok. Ok be back in an hour so we can have diner. Ok love you bye.

Ella I'll miss you so much, I will to Bridget, and I will totally try to come and visit you. Thanks Ella but nothing you say will make me any happier. I can't believe my parents are doing this to me again. First they said we had to move to Aspen and that we would live there but now. We have to move back to New York again. When we moved here I didn't want to but now that I have been here and have met you I don't want to move back I want to stay here in this nice snowy weather. So when are you guys going to leave because I might have a plan Ella said. Well we are leaving in 2 weeks. Anyways what type of a plan are we talking about? Well my brother and I created this thing that can make things more snowy or icy. We decided to make it so it would be more fun to sled down the hills. Ella what does that have to do with anything? Well we can sneak to the airport since it is only 2 miles away from your house we can go there and Ice up the plains

and we can make a lot of snow on the road that the plains go on before talking off. Wow Ella we should do that. So In 1 week can you get the machine to be perfect and extra? No problem. All right so I'll see you tomorrow. Ya see you tomorrow. Bridget time for dinner. Coming mom, mom I have a question. What honey. Mom you know what I am going to say. No I don't. Why are we doing this again? Bridget we will talk about this latter. Ok. Ok. Now go sit down it's time to eat. All right but as soon as we are finished eating I am so going on strike. Bridget I have changes our planes so there is no time for you to go on strike. What do you mean? We are leaving tomorrow. Oh my g-d. Mom I will be back in an hour. Oh my g-d I got to get to Ella's house as soon as possible. What should I take? Oh wait I have a bicycle. Hu, Hu, Hu, Hu, Hu, Ella I need your help! What's the problem? My parents switched our flight for tomorrow morning. We have to get that machine ready. Come on lets go then. Ok get some ice and put them in to garbage bags we will take a wagon tonight because we are going to bring lots of ice so we can make it terrible. All right and what are you going to do. I am going to get a lot of air in to these machines so we can make it slippery. Ok ready let's do it. Cold ha this is so cold. Bridget how many bags do you think you can do in an hour. About 30 minutes why? Never mind just wanted to no. 1 hour had passed. Ella I'm finished and have got to get home soon. So where should I meet you, and when? You can meet me at the airport. Remember where all black and be silent. Don't go thru the front door go out your window you can't let anyone no. Ella I am going to have my sister come also because she's heart broken. Ok just make sure she keeps it silent. By see you soon. Hu, Hu, Hu, Hu, Hu, Hu. Well that was a great ride.

Jade I need to talk to you. What is it? Well Ella has a machine that can make things slippery and snowy. I am meeting here at the airport tonight so we can do things do it so we won't need to leave. We are going tonight at midnight. So do you want to come? Ya sure I'll do it. Mom and dad went out to talk about things over dinner so she made us dinner and now we are home alone. Ok so what time is it right now? It is 9:30 pm well we have a lot of time. So let's eat and then we will get everything ready. All right but we have to leave at 11:00pm so we can get ready. So what's for dinner I can't destroy things unless I eat because I'll be out of energy. We have ribs. Yum these look good. Well dig in Bridget. MMMMMMMMMMMMMM these are great! Can we turn on the TV well we are watching; Sorry Bridget the TV is broken. Oh well ok. Here I'm done but let's take a nap for a while because tonight will be one busy night. All right all go in my room to work on my report because we are not leaving tomorrow. I'll stay down here. Ok but do you here knocking. Ya mom and dad are probably home. I'll get it. Who is it? Mom and dad. Oh hi mom and dad how was dinner. It was fine. Well I'm going to go take a nap because I'm tired and jade is watching TV. By trod trod trod. Jade I told mom you were watching TV. Because I didn't want to tell what you were actually working on. Ok thanks I'll turn on my TV incase she comes up her. But what time is it. It is 10:15 pm. Ok so I am goanna go take a nap. Ok by. Ok let's see what's on to watch. Oh her is a good show Wizards of Waverly place. Well it's just me and you me teddy, Zzzzz... after a while it turned to 11:00 and Bridget's mom came to wake here to get in to here Pj's and she did. Good night Bridget. I'll see you tomorrow. Love you mom goodnight. After Bridget's mom left. And Bridget heard a knock at her

door. Bridget can I come in we got to go. Come in let's go. I got dressed in my black Pjs. Hey Bridget I need help opening the window. Ok on three one two three.

Jade you go down first jade. All right. Are you down. Ya I'm down. Now your turn, Jade whispered. Ok here I come. Ouch I caught my hair in something sticky. Ouch don't worry I got it out. Ready let's run come on. Wow look how pretty the lights shine down on the bushes. Wow they are really pretty. Ok I see the airport and I see Ella she is waiting by the red pole. Ella we're right here. Hey guys ready to ruin things. No I want to destroy. Ok ready I brought three sprays. One makes it slippery, which I will do. You too will make everything snowy. There is more ice in those bags for refill. Ok break on three. One two three. Chhhhhhhhhh as Bridget sprays it makes that noise. Pachhh Jade makes as she is shooting her machine. And Ella is making a shhhhhh sound as she sprays here machine. Wow Bridget and Ella say. We did well Jade says. Well by Ella see you at school tomorrow. By guys. Let's run before mom and dad find out good idea.

Trod trod trod trod here we are back at home. You climb up first Bridget. Ok then you next. All right I'm in. Ok I'm coming up. Ouch I hit my head on the latter. Ahh I'm in now let's shut the window. One two three. There we go. Now go to bed and I will to. Good night Jade. Good night Bridget.

*Zzzzzz.*

9:00 am. Jade are you here mom, dad. Bridget jade said, come on mom and dad are talking on the phone with people from the airport. All right we will schedule for tomorrow, you can't do tomorrow than what can you do. In a month Bridget's father and mother said. Oh gosh, this is ridiculous. Kids we need to talk to you. Ya dad Bridget and Jade said we can't go home today there next time that we can take a flight is in a month. Oh don't worry dad and mom honestly it's ok. Bridget and Jade said. They made machines for each season and they never ended up moving. And that was their happily ever after. Their parents were mad that they never moved but soon it turned into their happily ever after also.

## Stone Casters: The Extra Eye

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*One dragon and three friends are on a quest for one thing: the power of the eye. **Lucy Willow** tells the tale of **STONE CASTERS: THE EXTRA EYE**.*

“**H**uh, huh, huh,” Jessica panted as she ran along an earthy passage, following the dim light that was at the end of the path. Jessica, growling in frustration, ran faster to see what the light was. “Yes!” she said as she reached the end of the path. Then she stopped and listened and what she heard was this:

“Master, I must ask, why do we need the

eye's power? You are already very strong, why waste time on something we do not need?” said a low, grunting voice.

Then a growl sounded in which words were discerned.

“Power I do not need? O contraire. I beg to differ, Wolf Paw. I need this power. It will allow me to take full control of the monster community.” The voice paused,

and then said, "Speaking of monsters, have you rallied the evil thing, the greatest of all monsters yet?"

"He is still firm on killing the girl himself," said Wolf Paw. "He is threatening to eat me and you if we badger him again."

"Very well, very well, we will stop. I will show him when I have the eyes power, we will show him!"

Then a cold, merciless laugh sounded. Jessica stumbled back and tripped on a root protruding from the ground. Then she saw a lantern being cared by a young man.

"Who's there?" said the man.

The laughter dyed away.

"Who's there?" the man repeated, and then a monstrous thing came from the mouth of the cave pushing the wood from the hastily made door.

There was a flash of blue. Jessica saw the outline of an eye on the monsters forehead. The man stumbled back dropping his lantern and the monsters jaw opened. A glowing white light penetrated the darkness. Jessica was fighting to stay conscious. She had to find out what that light was then she fainted.

A moment later she opened her eyes to find that she was in her own bed.

It had been a dream.

"Good morning Sweetie" said Jessica's mom.

"As if" said Jessica, in a voice of such sassiness that her mother looked at her and let a piece of bacon burn on the stove.

"Oh drat and I wanted these to be prefect for the salad tonight."

"Salad" Jessica repeated. Her mom only made salad when company came over. "Who's coming over tonight?" Jessica asked, pouring herself a bowl of cereal.

"The Smiths with Crise and Emaly."

Jessica stood there, mouth full of milk, having just taken a drink from the container.

"The Smiths?" Jessica said again in a shook up voice, not that she had any problems with the Smiths or their children, Crise and Emaly were her best and only friends, it was just that, when they came to dinner her mom always seemed to embarrass her.

Like when she was four, the Smiths came over and her mom started ranting on about this new diaper brand they were using, Jessica was so embarrassed she ran into the bathroom crying and her dad had to brake down the door to get her out.

That Saturday was a normal Saturday. Jessica did her homework, watched some TV, and kept her cat and her lizard out of her room. Then 5:00 p.m. was here and the Smiths arrived. They sat down to dinner and Jessica said to Crise and Emaly,

"I had a weird dream last night"

"The one with the floating baby head?" asked Emaly.

"No!" Jessica said shocked.

"It was obviously that dream with the monster and the glowing light" said Crise.

"How did you know?" asked Jessica.

"I just do," said Crise. "Did you see what the light was outlining?"

"Yes," said Jessica, "it looked like an eye"

Then a voice from the end of the table said "No, Karmander, down! Jessica, control your lizard!" It was Jessica's mom and Karmander, her lizard, was swinging from one of her mom's arms. Then Jessicas cat, Purl, joined in the fun and jumped on her mom's other arm. Everyone was laughing but Jessica quickly ran up, grabbed Purl and Karmander and put them in her room.

Dinner was over shortly after that and Jessica, Crise, and Emaly went to her room.

"Tell us about that dream then" said Emaly.

"I don't know," said Jessica trying to remember.

"WHOA!" said Emaly, "something

moved on your forehead. Concentrate again.” Jessica concentrated again and Crise and Emaly both yelled. Emaly handed Jessica a mirror. Jessica looked just in time to see what looked like an eye close on her forehead.

“I have always been different, now I know why” said Jessica. “I have to see the monk. He knows almost every thing. He can help me.”

“We’ll come too,” said Crise.

“Yah, you can’t go by yourself,” said Emaly.

“O.K. lets go,” said Jessica.

They snuck out the window. Surprisingly, Purl and Karmandor came too.

“To the Monk we go,” sang Emaly, as they trudged off.

The spring air was nice on Jessica’s face as she, Crise and Emaly walked toward the foothill of the Northern Monk.

“So does the Monk really have a challenge to stop people seeing him?” Emaly asked?

“Most people who go to see the Monk never come back” Crise said.

“Look, we’ve reached the top!” said Jessica. Before them stretched a flat land.

“That can’t be right,” said Emaly. “It’s supposed to have a hill.”

“It’s an illusion, we have to get past it,” said Crise.

They looked up and down, looking for something to help them,

Then Crise, Emaly, and Jessica herd “Could this be it?” “I think it is!”

They looked down and saw Purl and Karmandor beside a dark hole.

“Hello?” said Jessica in a confused voice.

“Jessica, we found a way through!”

It was Purl. Purl had talked!

“Purl?” said Jessica.

“Yes it is her,” said Karmandor.

Jessica stared, open mouthed, at her pets that could now talk.

“How do we get through?” said Crise.

“This hole here” said Purl.

They all climbed in and tumbled down a glass slide and landed at the gates of a monastery.

“Welcome, Jessica the Eye Wielder! Welcome, Crise the Sky Knight! Welcome Emaly the Fairy. I have been waiting for you.”

“What did you call me?” asked Jessica getting mad.

“And me?” said Crise

“I’m a fairy!” said Emaly in delight.

“You I called the Eye Wielder,” said the monk pointing at Jessica.

“You I called a Sky Knight and yes, dear, you are a fairy,” said the monk pointing at Crise and Emaly.

“Come in, I have something to tell you” said the monk gesturing them into a lush field

They sat down and the monk began, “I must tell you what you need to do.” Jessica, there is no need to interrupt me for I am answering your questions” he started.

“Once there was a great team. This was long, long, ago though. They lived to serve one thing and one thing only, the power of the eye. They fought battles for it, they built castles for it, but then one day during a battle to protect that power, and a young woman who was in the castle at the time was tempted to see the power. When she entered the room, the power was missing. She saw a small lizard had taken it. Using the magic she possessed, she snatched the power from the lizard and the moment she touched the power, the power controlled her body and lived in her.”

“The lizard became a dragon by the name of Dragonair, who is still alive today. The woman was your great, great, great grandmother Veronica, Jessica.” He looked at Jessica, Crise, and Emaly.

“Your true selves have arrived,” said the



monk. He smiled and brought a long mirror from behind a tree and there was a strange silence.

“Whoa” all the kids said.

Jesica had jeans on but also a weird pink sash. Her bangs were pulled back to show an eye that was bright pink in the middle of her forehead.

Emaly was wearing a short skirt with a tank top and she had Wings!

Crise had jeans on and a blue, yellow and white short sleeve shirt but he had a sword in his belt.

“I give you Jesica the Eye Wielder, Crise the Sky Knight and Emaly the Fairy,” the monk said.

“You will need food and warmer clothes,” said the monk as 3 robes flew to the side of each teen

“What about food?” asked Crise, pulling on his robe.

Then a backpack appeared and Jesica looked inside. There were apples and pears and sandwiches and pies and a couple packets of juice mix.

“You gave us juice mix but we don’t have any water” Crise pointed out

“You are vary observant young knight,” said the monk. “You will be following the Spirit Creek that will give you water. But...” he paused “You must watch for it” the monk said in a low whisper.

“What is it?” asked Emaly confused by his sudden change of voice.

“The water troll” said the monk.

“Glutamas trollit is its proper name,” said Karmander.

“Whatever” said Purl in a sassy voice and everyone laughed except Karmander who had being snuffed.

“Very well Jesica, I know what you are thinking. If you want to get rid of your eye, you will need the orb of the eye. Do not interrupt we do not have much time” Jesica had started to speak. “The orb is in the

possession of dark Dragonair. If you follow the Spirit Creek through the mountains, you will find his layer. Now Go!!”

They picked up the pack of food and started off. A short distance away they found the Spirit Creek and saw that it was beautiful and crystal clear.

“I was worried about drinking from a creek but this is nice,” said Emaly. They continued walking; Purl and Karmander right behind them, watching the clouds and the sky turn light.

“I’m tired” said Emaly, “let’s make a camp”

Jesica and Crise used their robe’s to make an overhang in case it rained and Emaly went to get water. Jesica got out sandwiches and fruit and a juice packet. Emaly came back with the water and they sat down to eat.

“Wonder what are parents are doing?” said Crise.

“I have no idea,” said Jesica looking at Purl and Karmander who were nibbling a sandwich between them. After the group finished their meal, they all fell asleep.

It seemed that very little time had passed before something woke Jesica up, but when she opened her eyes the sun was setting. Crise and Emaly were awake and fighting a fist that had come out of the creek. It was the fist of the Water Troll the Monk has warned them about. Emaly was flying and kicking the fist and Crise was trying to use his sword but he did not have the faintest idea what it was for. So far he had only managed to give the troll a good manicure.

Then Emaly did something strange, a ball of light shot it from her hands and the troll was eliminated. He sank back into the creek and was gone.

“I can shoot light balls! Cool!!” said Emaly.

They quickly packed up their stuff and left the clearing fearing the trolls’ return. “I

hate walking” Emaly whined.

“Why don’t you shut up, were almost there” said Jessica in an irritated voice

It was true; the mountains were coming ever nearer.

“Caw, Caw,”

“What is that sound?” asked Emaly.

“Probably a bird” said Crise.

“*Caw, Caw, Caw*” the bird continued and without notice it quickly dove toward Jessica and cut her on the shoulder with its beak.

The bird was about to dive again when a stone flew up and hit the bird in the head. The bird fell with a thud to the ground.

“Where did that rock come from?” asked Crise.

“No idea” said Jessica as all three looked around for the source of the rock. Without solving the mystery, the gang quickly moved on.

The mountain was drawing closer and up ahead they saw a cave mouth. They had just reached the clearing were the cave entrance was when they heard a rustle of tree branches and an animal sprang to the cave entrance.

They look at the animal and a giant spinx looked back and spoke to them.

“I am guarding this doorway to Dragonair’s cave. If you wish to pass you must answer my riddle:

They follow and lead, but only as you pass  
Dress yourself in the darkest black  
And they are darker still  
Always they flee the light  
But without the sun there would be none  
What am I?”

“We need to think about this,” said Jessica.

“What on earth” said Emaly. Next to them, Crise was muttering to himself. Jessica could hear words the words “Dark . . . created by sun . . . flee light.” Then he shouted out “Shadows!” Without a word to

Jesica or Emaly he turned to the spinx and said “Is the answer Shadows?”

She smiled and said, “Yes” then she leaped into the trees and was gone.

They proceeded into the cave and gasped. They were in a large, cavernous room and in front of them was a glass case containing an orb. Crise got his sword and tried to break the glass with the blade but it had no effect.

“When will I learn how to use this stupid thing?” Crise yelled.

“You will never learn fool,” said a soft voice from a corner. It was the dragon, Dragonair.

He shot fire at Jessica and she dove out of the way. The fire hit the orbs case and shattered the glass. Emaly made a sun ball and shot it at Dragonair it hit him full in the face. He screamed in pain and fell backwards. Crise jumped up and sliced Dragonair’s neck. He gave a last snort and was dead.

“Grab the orb and let’s GO!” said Emaly bringing Jessica out of her trance. She was still staring at the life-less body of Dragonair.

“I didn’t know I could do that,” said Crise admiring his swordsmanship.

Jesica grabbed the orb and ran out of the cave. Purl and Karmander were waiting for them outside.

“Well done,” said Purl.

“Thanks” said Jessica. “How are we going to get home?”

“The Backwards River” said Karmander pointing with his tongue to a river on the other side of the cave that was flowing South instead of North.

“I can try to make a raft with these,” said Crise holding up his sword and a broken log.

Only minutes later Crise had a row of logs laid out and was arguing with Karmander about how to keep the logs together.

Emaly flew towards their project and said, “I can help with that” and bound the

logs together with her fairy powers. In the meantime Crise went over to a tree and stripped some of the bark with his sword.

Jesica just sat there watching and wondering.

Why didn't she know what her powers were? She kicked a rock in frustration. After all it had been her idea to visit the monk, and now it seemed she didn't have any special powers at all. "All I have is a stupid extra eye on my forehead," she mumbled. From out of nowhere, a stone flew up and dropped down on the top of her clenched hand and the words that her mom had told her when she was ten years old suddenly came to mind.

"You were always the late bloomer" she had said and a glow of hope glimmered inside Jesica.

"Ready to go?" asked Crise, pushing the raft into the river. All their stuff was on the raft. The girls and Karmander and Purl were on too. Crise gave a mighty push and jumped on. They floated with the current. They were going home!

"So Karmander how do you make an eye diminishing potion" asked Jesica.

"All you need is pure well water and the orb," said Karmander.

"Doesn't this river lead to the Lake of Realization?" asked Crise.

"Yes it does," answered Purl.

"Why is it called the Lake of Realization?" asked Emaly.

"Lots of people go there when they have problems and they find solutions there," said Purl.

After that they all took a nap. Jesica woke up hours later and saw the mouth of the river. The sky was dark with clouds and a rumble of thunder warned them a storm was coming.

There was a jolt and the raft shook so violently that it almost tipped over. Everyone else woke up and then something

rose out of the water. It was a horrible slimy thing with glowing green eyes. It was a lake monster.

Emaly screamed and Crise drew his sword. Jesica just stood there looking up at the piercing green eyes. The monster lunged at Emaly. Emaly shot a fireball at the monster. Then he went for Crise. In defense Crise raised his sword. The monster lunged once missing him on purpose. Crise lost his grip on his sword then the monster lunged a second time and missed by millimeters. The monster lunged a third time and Jesica knew that the monster's aim was true this time.

"No" she screamed as the monster made its move. Jesica was in front of Crise blocking him from the monster. Jesica's hair stood up and she was rising in the air.

The monster's attention was now on Jesica. Emaly and Crise were staring at Jesica, amazed at what they were watching. "Do not hurt my friends" Jesica yelled in a voice like thunder and she raised her arms and brought them down to point at the monster there was a clap of thunder and a flash of lightning.

The monster sank down into the lake. Jesica floated down to the raft and then fainted.

"She's a caster," said Karmander. "A wielder of light and storm, a caster of stones and pebbles."

"Jesica!" yelled Crise, shaking Jesica, trying to walk her up.

"Let me do it" said Emaly. She made a ball of light and shot it at Jesica.

"What happened?" Jesica mumbled sleepily. Then her hair shot up like lightening, like it had to kill the river monster "Where is it? Where did it go?"

"The monster?" asked Emaly.

"Of course the monster, what did you think I meant, Creamed Corn?"

"Thank goodness you're O.K." Said Purl.

“We thought your soul had left you,” said Karmander.

“Huh?” said Jessica, Crise, and Emaly

“He means he thought you had died,” said Purl.

“Oh” they all said.

It was still dark and stormy looking. “See if you can clear this up Emaly” said Crise.

“O.K.” said Emaly. She shot a ball of light at the sky and as she did, the dark clouds vanished and the sun came out.

“That’s better isn’t it Jessica?” said Crise. “Jessica?”

Jessica was at the edge of the raft looking as though she was considering jumping in the water and swimming away, the orb was still in her hand.

“Land Ho!” shouted Emaly. “Whoa” Emaly said as she jumped on the shore. She had noticed that her wings had vanished and her clothes were changing to those she had worn when they had left.

“I’m changing, too,” said Crise. His sword had turned to wood and his clothes were returning to normal.

“Jessica, your eye, its closing!” Emaly yelled.

“We’re entering, hiss, the world of, hiss, common men and. hiss, leaving the world, hiss, of magic, hiss” said Karmander.

“Yea meow! What he meow said?” Purl said.

“You’re losing your powers of speech!” said Jessica.

“It was, hiss, nice, hiss, to talk to, hiss, you Jessica” said Karmander.

“Yup. Meow, best, meow, time I’ve had in a, meow, while” said Purl.

“Oh, O.K.” said Jessica sadly.

“Meowwww” Purl said.

“Hisssssssssssss” hissed Karmander.

“I’m sorry they can’t talk any more,” said Emaly.

“Don’t need it” said Jessica following her own train of thought.

“What?” asked Crise.

“I don’t need this orb,” said Jessica.

“But the whole point of this journey was to find the orb and make the potion that would make your eye go away” said Emaly in exasperation.

“No, the Monk sent us to discover our true selves. Emaly, you found out that you are a fairy, and Crise, you found out you are a sky knight” said Jessica. “And I found out I’m an eye wielder and that is what I’m supposed to be. This orb is going to the bottom of the lake.” And using the caster power that had not left her yet, she cast the glowing orb into the river.

There was a pause.

“Well that was exciting,” said Emaly.

“Meow” said Purl

“WHERE ON EARTH HAVE YOU BEEN? WE HAVE BEEN WORIED SICK!” Jessica’s mom yelled at the top of her voice. Jessica and her friends had finally mustered up the courage to return to Jessica’s house and the moment they got in Jessica’s mom started to yell at them.

“Mom Purl and Karmander got out my window so I had to go and get them” Jessica said hurriedly as her mom stopped for a breath.

“Oh but why didn’t you tell us? We could have helped” her mom said reproachfully.

“Because we were so worried about them,” said Emaly.

“Oh, O.K., you two go and call your parents” she said pointing at Crise and Emaly.

Two or three minuets later Mr. and Mrs. Smith came in to see their daughter and son.

“Bye” said Emaly.

“Yeh, see you latter Jessica” said Crise.

The door shut and Jessica looked at her mom. Tears were rolling down her mom’s

cheek and Jessica felt like she had never felt before. She felt love. Love for her family and friends. She ran and hugged her mom.

“I love you, Mom,” said Jessica  
“I love you, too, Honey,” said her mom.  
“I love you, too.”

## The Tale of the Two-Tailed Monkey

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*Being different can make life difficult, but strength comes from differences, too.* **THE TALE OF THE TWO-TAILED MONKEY** by **Robert W. Cort** considers these ideas.

There once was a monkey known as Shadow. He got this name because he would lurk in the shadows a great deal and did not socialize much with the other young monkeys. He would sneak back to the community at night and often be gone before the others were awake and active. Shadow was different. He was extremely insecure around the other young monkeys. He tended to live his days playing out a variety of fantasies in the rain forest. He was “Super Monkey” in the rain forest all by himself. He initially practiced his Super Monkey abilities by swooping from tree to tree catching leaves before they hit the ground. After mastering this, he moved on to saving little bugs from bigger bugs or small snakes. Eventually he started to save tree frogs and small mammals from bats and snakes. He would wait until they were very close and he would time his rescue. This would make him feel better about himself.

The reason he spent so much time by himself deep in the rain forest and involved in a variety of fantasies, was because he was so different. Most of his potential friends in the large monkey community had laughed at him, especially behind his back. They laughed behind his back because his backside was different—he had two tails.

Even though his parents, Yum-Yum and Link, were very proud and loving towards him, all the other adult monkeys only

tolerated him and the other young monkeys poked fun at his birth defect.

Little did they know that Shadow had become such a good climber and lived the life of “Super Monkey” among the little creatures outside the monkey community.

Most monkeys use their great arm and leg strength for climbing. The tail is critical for balance and can be of some help in hanging from the branches. Therefore, having two tails helped to create additional strength and balance. Shadow was developing some pretty super climbing and rescue skills—even though he was “Super Monkey” in his mind only.

Shadow liked to play a little “chicken” with a local panther family, which bordered on a decent size pack. He would swoop down close to them and just out of their reach. Sometimes he would hang around with his back to them eating a banana, encouraging them to stalk along a big branch. He would leap to a far away branch or vine at the last minute, as they were leaping to capture him. He would have a great chuckle, but tried not to laugh too loud. He really enjoyed the panthers, even though they did not like him at all and he was in great danger.

The next time he returned to the panther area, they were nowhere to be found, but he could hear their roars and cries close to the river. Shadow decided to swoop over to the river and check out what was

creating so much panther noise.

To his dismay, the adults were in a panic racing up and down the river. One of the young cubs had been swept away and a massive croc was heading for the cub. Shadow was afraid and did not want to see this cub eat alive. He really did enjoy his panther herd. He did not know what to do. Suddenly a voice inside of him said, "It is now time for SUPER MONKEY." Before he could come to his senses, he was flying from branch to limb to vine and limb again. Just as the croc opened his massive jaws to consume the little cub, Shadow saw the cub's tail sticking out of the water. He had one chance to grab the cub, but so much weight to carry. He grabbed hold of the vine with his two tails reaching as far down as possible with both hands. He wasn't sure if it was too late, but grabbed the cub and heard the massive jaws close. He was afraid to look, but the cub was hanging on for dear life. Shadow was so excited he didn't even notice the cub's claws were deep into his arms. He had one or two more vines to swing on before reaching the panther clan. He had intended to drop the cub by the pack, but there was too much weight for the last vine to carry. He heard it snap and wasn't sure where he would land. He hit hard and fell in the middle of the panther family. He thought he was near death or soon to be consumed. The cub quickly ran to his mother and the massive herd leader approached Shadow. He thought this was it. To his great surprise, the panther started to lick his wounds on his arm from the cub. Before he knew it, the rest of the pack was licking his cuts and dirt away from his fur and the little cub he saved had crawled into his lap.

The panther leader told Shadow they would walk him to the edge of his monkey village. He was worried about showing them the village, because panthers were

predators of monkeys. The leader assured them they would never prey upon any monkeys in his village. They would even stay close and keep a protective eye on Shadow and his village. He was also a little worried about entering his village in the middle of the day, but he was feeling a bit more confident about interacting with his fellow monkeys. He also had a wonderful story to share, which should help him be accepted by the village.

He said good-bye to his new friends and entered the monkey village. All the monkeys were surprised to see Shadow in the middle of the day. The teasing started immediately by the other young monkeys, but some of the elder monkeys started to arrive too. The village leader spoke, asking Shadow "why they were so lucky to have Shadow in the village with the sun so high in the sky."

Shadow thought for a while about what to say and suddenly the entire story started to flow. Not just saving the panther cub and his new panther friends, but how he had been training over the last two years saving bugs, frogs, and small mammals. He even slipped once and referred to himself as, "Super Monkey." When he finished telling the events of the day, he was facing almost 50 monkeys from his community. Nothing but silence and blank looks on 50 monkey faces. All were waiting for the leader to say something. He also noticed his parents and siblings in the crowd, but looking confused rather than proud. The leader then let out a huge laugh and asked Shadow if he had been eating any of the forbidden berries. All the other monkeys started to laugh---all but his family who just turned and walked away.

Shadow could not believe what he was experiencing. He was so embarrassed and hurt. He didn't even attempt to defend his story. He realized how crazy it sounded.

He turned away and left the camp, with both tails between his legs. Some of the youngsters actually threw sticks and stones at him on the way out, but nothing could hurt as much as all the laughter. He did not have to go far into the woods to run into the huge panther leader. The panther told him he saw everything and assured him that someday the community would embrace him.

Shadow did not return to his community for sometime. Gathering food was always easy with his great climbing skills and he was use to being alone. He went deep into the forest to help deal with his sadness. He returned to his rescuing games of bugs, frogs, and small mammals. With time, he started saving bigger creatures and then one day he even saved a young monkey from a leaping leopard. He could not enter the competing monkey community with the scared youngster, because monkeys would often kill another clan member. The young monkey was certainly thankful and couldn't help but notice the two tails. After a couple more little monkey rescues around other monkey communities, legend started to build about the lone monkey, with two tails and some even called him "Super Monkey."

After being away for a couple months and deep in the forest, Shadow really started to miss his village even if they did not miss him. He especially missed his family. He decided to return home. The trip would take many days, if not weeks.

Not long into the trip, he saw a creature far away that he had never seen in the forest. It looked like a monkey, but its entire body, fur and face was white. He got closer to observe and could not believe the beauty. As he closed in on the all white creature, he soon discovered it was in fact a monkey and it was female. He observed her for an entire day. He gained confidence

to approach her. Her name was Aspen and she told him why she was all alone and pure white. Apparently a white monkey is very rare—something like one in a 100,000 births. However, white monkeys are considered bad luck to the community, so the community leader kills them at birth. Aspen had been hidden by her Mom and Dad, until she could hopefully fend for herself. She had only been on her own for a couple days and had many close calls with predators. Shadow proceeded to tell her about his many adventures and how his two tails forced him into these adventures. Oddly, she didn't seem to care about the tails and really seemed to enjoy his company. Shadow talked Aspen into traveling with him back to his village, but cautioned her that they would probably live on their own, just outside the village.

The journey took much longer, because Aspen was less gifted with her climbing skills. Also, Shadow had become fully-grown and very strong. They became very close and took some time to smell the flowers and watch the other creatures along the way.

Shadow was so taken by their time together and Aspen's beauty, Shadow had forgotten to tell her about his panther friends. As they got close to the village, Shadow got excited and separated from Aspen. Until he heard her cry and she was racing up a tree to escape a young, but large panther. He did not recognize this panther and raced faster than ever and barely saved Aspen. When he turned to stare down the panther, it was wagging its tail. He was shocked to learn it was the cub he had saved. His name was Lucky. It did not take long for all the other panthers to gather around Shadow, Aspen, and Lucky. They were so excited to see Shadow and to meet his friend. They spent the day together and caught up on Shadow's many adventures.

Shadow was saddened to learn a couple young stray monkeys from his village had become prey to a tiger. The panthers apologized and told Shadow they tried to keep a watchful eye on the village, but they can't protect the few little ones who stray into the forest and away from the village. Shadow felt terribly guilty and angry, thinking he could have helped.

Just before nightfall, they heard terrible cries for help and panic from the village. The panthers and Shadow raced to the village. The panthers could not keep up with Shadow. Aspen stayed away with two of the young panthers for protection. Shadow could not believe his eyes. Two tigers were after monkeys in his village. Most had raced to safety, but several of the young monkeys were trapped in a tree that offered little protection. Also, a huge tiger had chased his parents and the village leader up a tree and was very close to them, but they had more time than the young monkeys. Shadow made his decision and flew from tree to tree, so fast you could hardly see him. With one arm and his extra tail, he grabbed two young chimps at a time. In less than a minute he had cleared the six young monkeys and had placed them in a better tree for protection.

The panthers started to enter the village, only to create more panic. The monkey village did not know they were friendly. Also, panthers normally stayed far away from tigers. They started to surround the tree, which Shadow had cleared of young monkeys, now containing a lone and confused female tiger. She decided to hold her spot and roar at the panther clan.

Shadow was almost out of time with the other tiger and could not carry his parents or the leader out of the tree. They were too large. The tiger was focused on his prey and had not noticed the panthers or his trapped mate. Shadow did not know what to do

and was terrified. Just as the tiger was about to leap on his mother, he grabbed the closest vine and with all his might threw himself at the leaping tiger. He hit the tiger in his side and both lost their balance. On the way down the tiger struck Shadow and sent him deep into the forest to an area loaded with many jagged branches.

The tiger landed on his feet as many cats do following a fall, but was shocked to see the large number of panthers around him. He was not afraid and in the history of the rain forest a panther had never attacked a tiger. He roared a few times, but they did not back down. He was not afraid and started to walk towards the forest. The panthers did not intend to fight, only to guide the huge tiger away. Just then, Yum-Yum screams, "My son is dead!" since no monkey could survive a fall into those jagged branches, and she could barely see his lifeless body. Even with this, the panther leader did not want this battle, but out of nowhere Lucky came flying onto the back of the unsuspecting tiger. All bets were off and they now had to fight. It was quite a spectacle, but no tiger could survive over 15 panthers attacking at once.

It was very sad and all in the village could not believe what had happened. Shadow had been telling the truth about his skills and his panther friends. He had saved many on that day, but was gone. Finding his body would be tough with how thick and dangerous the spiked branches were to move through. The panthers told the village leaders about Aspen. A group of leaders and Shadow's parents went to her. They were sad to lose Shadow, but happy to gain his unusual friend. She had brought luck to their village, so she would be safe with them. Upon their return, they discovered Shadow was not dead. Although he was wounded from the tigers claw and hitting his head when he grabbed



the last branch for safety with his two tails. Although dazed and bloodied, he would survive.

Shadow and Aspen became the most loved couple in the village. A surprise birth came within months and all were excited to see the baby. Not only did it have two tails, but it was as white as Aspen.

News traveled throughout the jungle about the great luck this couple had

brought upon the village. Competing village leaders had already heard about the two-tailed monkey who had saved their young monkeys from predators and had brought the white mate into his village—bringing great luck and joy. Soon competing villages were united and all the special monkeys born with defects were embraced, rather than killed.

## The Talent Turn Around

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*Tyler has a complicated life during his first year of middle school. He has been teased and thrown into lockers, and he has lost all of his friends. He has one chance to rescue himself from this situation in THE TALENT TURN AROUND, by Austin Farrington.*

**B**ullied, teased and abused by his parents. And worst of all, no friends. Now that's dreadful. This is the life of an 11-year-old boy named Tyler. He has this dreadful life and doesn't know how to change it. He wants to get help but is too shy and self-conscious.

So like I said, he wants to get help and he really needs it. He is shoved into lockers and gets pushed around in the hallways. I don't know how this happens, but it seems like every time he gets bullied, there isn't a teacher in sight. Maybe if there were a teacher nearby, he wouldn't be so afraid. He could try to get the help he needs. If he doesn't get the help he needs he will keep leaving school with bruises the size of golf balls.

Nobody really knows why he is always the one getting teased. The kids call him names and laugh at him at school. It's probably because he's so shy. Maybe if he would speak up for himself, he might not get picked on and the name-calling would stop. But being shy is a hard thing to grow out of.

The worst thing about being shy for Tyler is that since he won't speak up, about being abused is that then this happens. When he comes home from school, he makes those golf ball bruises turn into the size of a baseball. When he comes home from school and his father notices that his jeans are ripped from being pushed into the lockers, his father snaps. Then he takes off his belt and beats him with it. He thinks that Tyler is not trying to take care of his clothes and that he doesn't appreciate what his parents have to do in order to buy him new clothes. Every time he comes home with dirty or ripped clothes, his parents have to pay to get them washed and fixed.

His parents live in an apartment and do not have a lot of money. They are very unhappy and hate their lives and they also take their anger out on Tyler. He gets bullied, teased and abused by schoolmates. Then Tyler comes home to have his parents do the same thing to him too. But there is one thing that he is very good at and that he enjoys. That is hockey.

He was so good at playing hockey that

he got moved up to an older and more advanced age group and team. Also his only friend Zach moved teams with him. They have been on teams together and have known each other since they were babies.

So during Tyler and Zach's first game something very bad happened. Tyler had the puck, and he was skating down the side of the rink, when out of nowhere the biggest kid in the league came straight towards him. He checked Tyler, who went flying through the glass and fell to the ice. He went into a coma.

Tyler was transported into the clouds in the sky. He was dazed and confused. Tyler was scared and did not know what happened to him. Then suddenly an angel came out of the clouds beneath him. The angel told Tyler that he is trapped there until he learned how to have a better life. One part of him wanted to go home, but the other part of him wanted to stay and learn how to have a better life. He could not make up his mind.

After a little bit of thinking, Tyler decided that since he was trapped there, he should learn how to have a better life. Then Tyler told the angel that he would agree to learn. Then the angel told Tyler to follow her. As they walked on above the clouds Tyler told the angel how bad his life was and how he wanted to change it.

Then they arrived at their destination. There was a big blue door in front of them that said, "The room of realization." The angel told Tyler that when you go into this room, you would know all of the things that you need to learn in order to have a better life. So Tyler walked in and shut the door. It was empty. Tyler walked around for a while and found nothing. It was just a plain old empty room. Then Tyler went back to the door to get out of there because nothing happened. He was hoping to leave

and go find the angel and ask her why nothing happened when he went into the room. Suddenly the door disappeared, and Tyler was amazed. He did not know what to do. He thought that maybe if he banged on the walls someone would hear him or the wall would break.

It was no use. Tyler got tired, lay down on the floor, and looked at the ceiling. He saw a vision of himself getting bullied and teased. He saw the same boys from school, the ones that tease him and call him names. He saw himself being pushed around by them and being laughed at by the other kids watching. But this time he saw himself standing up to them. He pushed the bullies down and told them to back off. Then the bullies got scared and ran. The other kids patted him and on the back and told him, "It's about time you stood up for yourself – good going, Tyler!" Tyler felt himself smile; he liked the vision he saw of himself standing up to the bullies.

Then he saw another vision of himself going home with muddy pants from the fight. He saw his dad getting mad at him for coming home with muddy clothes. His dad was so mad that he was going to whip him. But then Tyler told his dad what happened at school; this was something he had never done before. He never had the courage to do it before. After explaining everything to his dad, Tyler's dad told him that he understood. His dad also told him that he was very proud of him for standing up for himself. Then the vision went away. Tyler was so amazed; he couldn't believe how everything turned out once he stood up for himself in the vision.

Tyler got up from the floor and began searching for a way out of the room. He knew that he needed to get back to living his life, but this time he was going to do it the right way. The room of realization worked, helping him to realize how he

should live his life. He suddenly saw a crack in the wall; he moved closer to get a better look at it. He poked his finger into the little hole in the wall, and then suddenly something bit his finger, which caused him to punch the wall really hard. This caused the crack in the wall to get bigger and pieces of the wall to fall off. He began breaking the wall apart and peeling away pieces of the wall. He continued to pull and break apart the wall until there was a hole that was big enough for him to crawl through.

He decided to crawl into the hole in the wall and kept on crawling until he was on the other side of the wall. He was in the clouds again, but there was no one in sight. He didn't know how to get out of the clouds, since the angel never told him. He was hoping that he could see the angel again. He wanted the angel to help him get out. Tyler panicked and started running across the clouds, he ran in different directions trying to find a way out. He wanted to find his way back to his life, and start living it the right way. He wanted a second chance, so that he could make it better. He started to scream for the angel to help him. All he heard in the clouds was silence.

Tyler searched long and hard. He wanted to find a way out so badly. But he could not find anything. He sat down and started sobbing. Then he started to pray to find the angel. After he whipped off his tears off his face with his hand and stopped praying, the angel appeared. The angel asked Tyler what was wrong. He began to explain what was wrong. He told her about the vision he saw and how he wanted to go back to his life again and make the vision a reality. He told her about how he learned from the mistakes he had made in his life, and that he wanted a chance to fix them. Tyler told her that he knew that he

had to be confident and stand up for himself, if he ever got another chance at life. Then the angel flapped her wings and sent magical dust his way. He closed his eyes and saw himself making his way back into his real body again.

When Tyler woke up in the hospital he was confused and tired. Once the doctor noticed that Tyler was awake, he told Tyler all that had happened.

When Tyler was first brought to the hospital, the doctor had noticed all the bruises and cuts all over his body. Then the doctor asked the parents if they knew anything about them. His parents said yes, and then they made up all of these excuses about why they beat him.

The doctor told child support services and they took his parents away. They weren't going to be allowed to see Tyler anymore. Then the next day, Tyler's hockey coach John (that he has known since he was a baby) came to the hospital to see if he was okay. Tyler and Coach John had a very special relationship.

As Coach John walked in, the doctor explained the situation. He told him how Tyler's parents got taken away and how he didn't have anyone to care for him now. Then the hockey coach said that he would take care of Tyler and adopt him. Coach John said that he had always wished for another son like Tyler. He wanted his son Zack to have a very special brother like Tyler.

Once all the adoption papers were signed and finished, Tyler's doctor and his coach got all of his belongings. They took them right over to Coach John's house and moved them right in. The coach made Tyler's room very special and decorated it with different hockey things. Tyler immediately felt comfortable and safe in his new home!

Once the doctor finished telling him

what had happened Tyler was very happy. Tyler was happy that he was going to have a new and better life. Also, the best thing for Tyler was that the Coaches son Zach was the most popular and nicest kid in the school. So then Zach could help Tyler have more friends.

### Epilogue

In the end, Tyler's life went through some twists and turns. He got bullied, teased and abused by his parents. He had

no friends, and went into a coma. But now all of that changed. He is now having a great life with his new family that treats him with love. They are never cruel. Also thanks to Zach, Tyler has lots of friends now and does not get bullied and teased anymore. This turn around in Tyler's life happened because of one thing, his talent.

This was written by Zach, Tyler's new brother. Tyler told me everything that had happened and I wanted to get the word out to other people about Tyler's crazy life.

## The Trip That Never Ends

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*Is it magic? Is it a dream? Matthew Cook writes about Max's amazing adventure on the snow-covered mountain in **THE TRIP THAT NEVER ENDS.***

Chris and I went snowboarding at Boyne. I was dressed in my multicolor polka dots, Chris in drab black. It was almost time to leave. We were taking our last run on the largest hill when a snow squall appeared. I was almost to the end. I felt a slip under my board and then I was gliding left towards the lodge. I swooped expecting a fall. I closed my eyes. It felt like I was flying.

When I opened my eyes I was at an unfamiliar chalet. It looked just like the ones in the Swiss Alps I had seen in the movies. I opened the door. The room was filled with smoke but no fire could be seen. I held the door open, wondering what to do next.

After the smoke cleared I once again realized that I wasn't at the lodge in Boyne. Sitting in the chalet was an old man in a wooden rocking chair. He told me his name was David. I sat down on a huge bear rug. There were skins and mounted heads of every animal imaginable. David hobbled

over and sat on a chair close to me. He told me not to worry that I would make it home. I learned that David was a magician. Born in Scotland, he was the 13th of 14 children. David studied magic with Houdini and Blackstone before either one of them was famous. I sat and talked with David for what seemed like a very long time. I wasn't afraid and I didn't think about my friends at Boyne.

As I rubbed the fur beneath me it started to warm up. I thought I could feel the skin move. David was holding a warm mug of hot chocolate. He motioned for me to have one. It seemed like magic. In front of me on a small table were a large pot and two more mugs. A plate of my favorite cookies sat next to the pot. The cocoa was warm and sweet. I became very sleepy. Was this a dream?

The bear rug underneath me felt like it was hugging me. It was soft and warm and comforting. The mounted heads covering the walls didn't frighten me. The animals

seemed to be smiling, their eyes warm and moist.

The more I sipped on the chocolate the sleepier I became. David told stories of life in Scotland. He performed simple magic tricks. He pulled quarters out of my ear. He taught me card tricks and built houses of cards. He encouraged me to pursue my dreams. He became my friend.

As the sun began to set David pointed his finger at the fireplace. Immediately a roaring fire appeared. The flames flickered. I stared at them and stared at them. The flames started to look like people and animals. They sang and danced in a circle. One jumped out and lit the lantern at David's feet. David smiled and his face looked much younger.

The animals on the wall started to shake their heads and the bear rug held me tight. I knew something big was about to happen.

Gazing at the flames, images of my family arouse from the circle. I saw my mother, brother, and grandparents. Now I wanted to go home. The room felt cold again. I felt like I had been gone for hours. David smiled again and this time his eyes twinkled. He told me to be patient, my visit would end soon.

The wind outside began to howl. Snow was flying. Quietly I sat and stared at the flames. David came over and held my hand. His hand was strong. He told me that my thoughts and wishes would take me where I wanted to go.

Once again I felt safe and secure. I wanted to stay with David but I also wanted to go back. Chris was looking for me and my mom was waiting for me at home. David told me of his family. He said he traveled by ship from Scotland to New York. He had many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He told me of his life before coming to the chalet. One story was about a great

granddaughter who followed him everywhere. She was an independent, stubborn child. He said that he felt the girl was still searching for him. He really missed her. As David told his story the snowstorm lightened up. The whole world outside the chalet was white with glistening specks like diamonds. I grabbed my board and headed for the door. Turning to look at David to say goodbye, he was gone. I turned back to the magnificent mountain, stepped out the door, and snapped my bindings. The run down the mountain was fantastic. Again I felt like I was gliding on air.

Coming to a sudden stop, I was back at the lodge at Boyne. Chris was standing there looking confused. "Where did you go, man? I thought maybe you got trapped in the snow slide." We headed into the lodge to warm up.

As the day ended and we waited to be picked up I told Chris of my adventure. I don't think he believed me. We slept on the way home.

Once at home I wrote down everything David taught me. I knew card tricks and magic tricks. I told mom about David's story of the little girl. She smiled and her eyes sparkled.

The next day mom and I were walking in the woods by our house. We came upon a small cabin with smoke coming out of the chimney. We were curious since we did not remember ever seeing a cabin. We entered the cabin and to my surprise we saw a familiar face. David was sitting at a small table near the fire. Mom ran up and gave him a huge hug. How did she know him? How did he get here?

Then I was more confused. Mom was that little girl that David spoke of. David was her grandpa. How did this all happen? How did he end up with me in the snowstorm? What about this cabin? The big question now was: "Is this a dream?"

# Where Am I??

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In **WHERE AM I??** by *Katherine Malhotra*, *Melanie Powers* is the geek of the clique. But one weird day, everything changes.

**A**ugust 31, 2008

On the IM chat page...

**Powertome123:** OMG! Kelly! It's our last day of Summer vaca!

**McSwimmer4life:** I know! I hope we are in the same class as each other!

**Powertome123:** I no! But guess what!? my mom said that I have 2 go to the salon with her! And really, I don't need pampering, do I???

**McSwimmer4life:** .....

**Powertome123:** Thanx 4 the support! G2G!!! To the s word place c u 2moro!!

**McSwimmer4life:** BiBi! Me!!

**Powertome123** has just left this chat page.

The next day

"Wow!" That's all I heard on the first day of seventh grade.

"Wow Melanie your looking pretty good for a...a...a...a person that I didn't really know last year. You would understand if you were me, I mean it is a hectic, hectic world these days. I have just been SO busy! And as I said, you were understand if you were me ." Gigi the "popular" one said to me! Actually me! But it wasn't the best hey what's up? Greeting to say to a person who looks pretty cleaned up like me.

"Hey Melanie looking good." My BFF Kelly said right as Gigi turned her head and reconnected with her friends.

But right before I could walk off with her and tell her about my Summer, yes, the one, the awful Gigi occurred.

"Come with me." Gigi said.

"No thanks, I have to reconnect with my friends." I said.

"Ohhhh...I see that's all these girls do this day don't they." She said so valley girl like, also surprised like the one time in second grade she said 'when it snows, it's because the angels in heaven have really bad dandruff.'

"Yeah... bye!" I said trying to get away. But again, I couldn't she just had to stop me.

"Sit with me at lunch, we could make some arrangements...just the two of us." She said mysteriously.

"Fine." I said annoyed, like really annoyed! I'm sure you have felt it. It's the feeling that maybe your talking to someone and this person just keeps interrupting...so annoying!

"WHAT! You said that we would never sit with them! They are blood-sucking, friend-stabbing people!" Kelly exclaimed.

"Kelly, Kelly, Kelly, I'm just kidding." I said. I thought she got the memo when I said 'fine' really annoyed, guess not.

"No you are not!" She talked back to me which hurt... she walked away and was sniffling like she was about to cry too.

I didn't do anything that day, didn't eat my very first meal as a real seventh grader at the real seventh grade lunch table, didn't participate in class which made a great impression on my teacher...until 6<sup>th</sup> hour. I go to a poor school in downtown Alaska. I help out a boy named Willy.

"Hi!" Willy said very excited to see me as always.

"Hi?" I said sadly, happy, confused all

at the same time because Willy loves me, but he's nine and I'm thirteen, and he just always wants to make me smile, and it always works!

"I made you a book...read it! It took me some time!" He said handing me the "book." (At least that's what he said it was! It did not even look like a book!)

"Okay" I sat down. Well, actually pushed down by him anxiously so I could read his "book."

I started reading the story out loud... it was about a girl stuck in her journal...spooky! Just kidding!

It was snowing that day, really high. So high that every school in our district didn't have school! It was 7 inches exactly. And I was thinking this while I was reading the first page to Willy. Then he left to go to the bathroom. He took FOREVER! I got up after ten minutes because my foot was asleep so I started walking in circles... about ten times then, something weird happened.

"AH!" I said because a burst of sunlight shot through the foggy window and was blinding me!

"Hey, what's that? Over by the book?" I said pointing at a blue vortex appearing in front of me.

"I'll go check it out, don't worry guys, I got this one." I said confused, and so was everyone else because they were looking at where I was pointing and they didn't see a thing.

"AH! Beanbag!" I said while I was walking over to the vortex. I just tripped over a beanbag chair, is it me or am I a klutz? And fell into the vortex which was right in the book! I woke up sort of in this hypnotizing portal that was taking me one place to another. I couldn't lift my head because it was aching after the fall I had over the stupid beanbag!

It was weird, because when I "woke

up", I was in that story watching everything I read come to life! It was déjà vu! It was snowing at the exact same pace as the real world snowed! Also, it was the same height and everything! And it looked about seven to eight inches, the same as the school back over in I don't know land! I didn't get why Principal Burns would never give us a snow day!

"Ugh! Where am I?" I said that ten more times after that walking in a circle over and over and over again! Déjà vu! Except my foot wasn't asleep.

The last time I said 'where am I' I had more problems to face.

*"Melanie Powers please report to the office please...Melanie Powers."*

"Great." I mumbled to myself because right as I leaned my head against this locker to catch my breath, my hair was stuck in the lock! Everyone was laughing and staring, and I was blushing! I finally got it out, you don't want to know how.

"CRRREEEEKK!" Went the door as I entered the office.

It was so odd, because when I entered, it was like my school office at my school...just in pencil form. It was like my school I knew exactly where everything was, at least I won't be lost around school when I'm going class to class.

"Aww Darby!" I said looking at the picture of a dog with Ms. Goldberg the Office Assistant.

"Are you Ms. Melanie Powers?" Ms. Goldberg said in her Australian voice.

"Yes it is...but without the Ms part at the end...wait, scratch that I'm not married...yet." I said trying to convince Ms. Goldberg to go out and see the world and get married. Also, covering up my humility of saying 'aww' in the weirdest voice when she was right there in front of me! Why am I just always bad luck today?

"Ha ha...yes um, Ms-I mean Melanie,

you are supposed to get your schedule for this year and your rules.” She said rustling through papers on the section M-P in the giant filing cabinet.

“Hmm you are not here...oh, I know why.” She turned away going all the way to the back of the office. But as she was saying that she was staring at my clothes, my hair, my face, my shoes...then left.

“Bump!” Went the box as she set it down on the table. It was pink, frilly, and said ‘Special Gal Schedule for Only Pretty Gals Ha Ha!’ I guess a box must be really pretty because it said ha! Oh so tough! Just kidding!

“Oh la la!” The box said as Mrs. Goldberg opened it.

“Hear you are.” And passed me the papers.

“Um, excuse me Ms, but umm why is there a stinger on this paper?” I said curious but saying it so she wouldn’t think I was dumb...like Gigi. Speaking of her, where is she? Is this journal actually without a popular person? Then ten seconds after that moment, I was proven wrong.

“Buzz.” Went 5 girls coming in with antennas and stingers on them.

“Well duh! Because you are pretty and have the looks and last time I checked...the brains. And the antenna...well, that is for earning the privilege to be an... excuse me, drum roll please! Thank you... to be a queen bee!

“Oh...goody!” I said seeing people staring at this girl who was talking to me.

“Now come on, let’s go.” This I guess popular girl said.

I saw girls frowning at me whispering and laughing as I walked by them. Some had their hair in a doo like ‘X’.

“Who are those people?” I said as we walked down the stairs leading to a row of lockers.

“Those are the ex-friends. They are the people who once were your friends.” She said saying like she was the only one who knew that.

“Oh, and who are they?” As we walked by people with phantom of the opera masks on their faces.

“Those are the frenemies. Another girl said talking quietly as the ‘queen bee’ was fixing her hair.

“The happy side is when they are your friend, and the frowning side is when they are your worst enemy!” Kristi said to me..I saw her name on her Chanel purse.

“Oh.” I said walking past them confused because they looked just like my friends back in normal land, Kelly, Britt, and Susie..but their hair was in the doo of an ‘X’ also!

We all sat down introducing ourselves at the cleanest, pinkest table I have ever seen in a lunchroom before!

“I’m Melanie, and you are?”

“This is Kristi, Cassie, Natalie, and Rachel and I’m FiFi.

“Um, hi, and yeah, um, I’m going to go sit over there, with those people, I think I know them. So... ta ta!” I said in a hurry.

“WAIT! Wear your antenna so they know who you are.” FiFi said.

“No thanks. Those look kind of silly anyway!” I said, speaking the truth! It’s like whatever I say here, is what I would never ever say in front of an adult!

“Excuse me!” FiFi said with her face getting red as an apple ever could be. See, because some adults might have a sensitive bone in their body.

“You heard me!” I said as I was walking away from the table.

“Wow! She is one tough cookie!” Cassie said, with Rachel, Natalie, and Kristi nodding in agreement behind her.

“Hey, I’m Melanie, what’s your



schedule?" I said in the silly voice I always say to my friends.

"It's probably not the same as yours because your schedule is with all the popular girls and boys and with catering services!" Kelly said.

"Yes, don't forget the catering services." Susie said dozing off wishing that she could have catering services.

"I'll change it. Do you really think I want to spend my almost whole life trapped in the school with the Bees?" I said talking like the Bees were a hazardous disease that you could die from.

"Bzzzzz!" Went the bell.

"Thank you for letting me talk to you..hope to see you again, I got to go to gym!"

"We all do too!" Susie said with everyone smiling in the background.

"But you have to be skilled because Mrs. Nixon is a toughie!" Britt said, really meaning that Mrs. Nixon stinks.

"Good afternoon 7<sup>th</sup> graders." Mrs. Nixon said. "Today we are climbing the rock wall of fear!" She said yelling at the end.

"Susie, Kelly, Brittany, and friend go on...NOW!" She said like she hated her job so much.

"What's the difference from this and a regular rock wall?" I said nervously so I wouldn't know what to do and look like a fool!

"Just if you fall off, you fall into this pit that's never-ending until you face your biggest fear!" Susie said like it was no big deal.

"Oh, that's not that bad!" I said climbing up the wall...trying not to show my fear!

I saw Britt showing off her skills then once she went side to side to far for the show off, she fell, and the mat swallowed her up!

"See you in a few!" She said right before she got swallowed.

"Don't get nervous Melanie, you are a strong girl and can face your fears!" I said going past the halfway point.

There was this one little stone that would always wobble, but thanks to my mom I got a pair of some track long legs!

*SQQQUEAKK!* went the stone as I touched it on the back of my heel of my shoe as I passed it by.

I patted myself on my back , which was a really bad idea, and then, yup, you guessed, I fell head first going backwards into the mat! But thank goodness that mat had an opening for me to not crack open my head!

"Oomph!" I went as I fell into the pile of springy cushions.

*WOOOSSHH!* went a vortex forming right in front of my eyes. All I saw was a mirror image of me before I went to the salon. The vortex looked like

"So when's the fear coming?" I said just looking at myself in the mirror fixing my hair but I noticed what I did the reflection didn't do what I was doing it was saying all the things that I wasn't doing to my friends after I went to the dark side. I was kind of scared at first too because what if the person in the mirror would come out and attack me?

"Why do you have to leave us? Did we really need you as a friend? You think we are not important enough?" Each voice was one of all my friends.

"I'm so s-sorry! I didn't mean to leave! I'm such a horrible friend! You need me as a friend! I need you guys as a friend! You guys mean the world to me! You are 111,114,444% important to me!" I said yelling and crying because whenever I think of my friends and what I did I just need to go away, to somewhere nobody can see me cry!

“Then show that to us.” The real Melanie said to me.

“I will, and I don’t care if the popular kids beat me up everyday because of it! I will always be there for each and everyone of you guys!” I said falling on the floor crying trying not to show my eyes getting red.

“Thank you, and I know you can do it!” The real Melanie reflection said to me.

And then when I said “Thank you!” There I was sitting was back on the gym floor sitting criss- cross applesauce looking at the guys climbing.

“What happened?” Susie said very curious giving me a tissue.

“It was-it was- it’s too hard to explain!” I said not to spoil my rep.

“Well, it is fine..the first time I did that I couldn’t speak!” Kelly said to me.

“Is there any other thing I should know about?” I said talking in a whisper to Kelly.

“Not that I know of just-.” She couldn’t finish. The bell rang.

“Bye!” Everyone said to me.” And I waved back.

Knowing that I was probably not having a class with any of them in a long time!

“Is this room 122? Um, social studies? Mr. Stimac’s class?” I said lowering my voice when I saw all the Bees together sitting in the far back corner flirting with all the popular guys.

“Yes, it is. Welcome Melanie, FiFi told me that you were in this class but, sorry you can’t sit with her all her bees are sitting with her..we are doing a debate about the Democrats and Republicans, do you know anything about that?” Mr. Stimac said to me just hoping I was a regular girl who was smart, pretty, and nice.

“Don’t worry Mr. S I’m not as dumb as those girls, and I would be delighted not to sit next to those bozos!” I said being funny.

“So where do I sit?” I said.

“Next to Brian... sorry, he’s a little smart.” Mr. S said.

“You mean geeky it’s okay, I have lots of friends who are guys who are geeky!” I said.

“Hi Brian, what side are we on?”

“Um hi! Sorry, I have never really talked to girls... just my mom! And we are the Democrats... do you want to face FiFi? She’s supporting the Republicans.” He said about to faint.

“Oh, of course I would love to see what she knows about something! Where do I go? On the chair okay.” And I stood on the chair proudly.

“Just remember, Mr. S knows that we are smart and stuff, just FiFi gets really mad if she does not win the debate... so let her win!”

“In your dreams... I’m so not letting her win when she obviously has the IQ of an apple core!”

“Alright, ladies are you debating each other? You are! Then come this way to the sound proof room where nobody can hear your debates.” Mr. S said normally, like who knew who would win.

As the three of us walk in, it is dark and there are stands with a microphone with spotlights shining on both of the stands I knew that it was my time to shine.

As me and FiFi walked through a squeezed tight hallway that a mouse couldn’t even fit through, we got on our announcing stands and I heard someone say ‘Let’s get ready to rumble!’ And we flipped a coin to see who would go first.

“Heads!” I said as the coin was half way through the air.

“Scat! I wanted to say heads! I will pay you \$1,000 so I can get to say heads and you say lousy old tails!” FiFi said getting her puppy dog face on.

“Sure..I would love to take 1000 smackeroonies! From you! You are so kind! Oh and let me say this as loud as I can Tails!” And felt so lucky saying it.

“Tails it is!” Mr. S said.

“Oh boo hoo! You just wasted a days worth of allowance on silly old me!” I said like I was taking over gears of being a bee to a regular person.

“Grrrr!” FiFi said as her face was getting bright red.

“Alright, is everyone ready to transform?” Mr. S said.

“Yeah. What evs.” FiFi said filing her nails.

“TRANSFORM?” I knew that wasn’t in the manual! I mean what if I don’t transform right? What if I..break the ice! A.K.A DIE!

“Yes, transform into the whatever you like. Something like..IDK a bear to scare the contestant, or if you facing a boy..you could turn into the prettiest girl alive, of course I tried that once I just stayed the same! Oh even a crushing machine can’t stand my looks!” FiFi said acting like she was the pretty -pretty princess of dumbbell village!

“Okay..crushing machine I really do love this school!” I said making my will.

“Just come on!” FiFi said pulling my arm.

*POOF!* went a puff of smoke as I entered the machine. A keyboard appeared as I coughed from the smoke.

“Okay...what do I want to change into? What to do, what to d- oh yes, I know! If I want to make FiFi feel as horrible as can be, I’ve got to look better than her, feel better, and just want to be better,” I said talking my thoughts out loud.

“Type person! I would like to be the most prettiest girl alive!”

*REQUEST ACCEPTED,  
MS. POWERS.*

“Eh Ma God!” FiFi said as I walked out of the machine.

I was wearing Prada! With a Gucci handbag. With a little bit of some Chanel added into me.

“Oh.” Mr. S said as I walked passed him.

“Is everything ok? Mr. S?” I said very curiously.

“Just..never mind. I just thought you weren’t going to change, just be yourself. I thought you wouldn’t think looks would matter!” Mr. S said very upset.

“Oh.” I said thinking about what he said.

“I’m waiting!” FiFi said not changing a thing of her looks.

“I thought we could change the topic up a little bit, how about popular kids in school or cliques you may choose?” Mr. S said directly staring at me.

My eyes started tearing up. I mean really, who would treat people differently? Oh! Here hair isn’t like ours, lets make fun of her forever! How could someone be just that mean?

“Mr. S, um could I change back into the regular me? Like not being a person that I’m not, because this would be the best topic to be yourself.” I said tilting back my head to make sure the tears wouldn’t come pouring out of my eyes.

“I was hoping you would say that.” Mr. S said with the biggest grin on his face.

“I’m ready now Mr. S.” I said just feeling much better being myself in my black all star shoes, leggings with a tan mini skirt, and pink and white tank top with my black north face. Ready to go!

“Alright, FiFi, how would a person be popular?” Mr. S said hoping that she would say something else than...

“Clothes, wealth, looks, and shoes, and phones, and oh umm jewelry, and their house and-”.

“Thank you FiFi, Melanie?” Mr. S said looking at me like he was begging me for mercy if I didn’t say....

“I don’t think it’s about the clothes and wealth and such, I think it doesn’t matter what you wear, it’s what really is what’s on the inside and how you treat people, and what I mean by that is like, you don’t have to friends who are all popular, spoiled, dumbbells! Like people who like sports, because who would know that you might like that sport too, or um, oh yes! Like a “nerd”. Because not to brag to say that I have so much friends just, I have lots of friends that are interested in books, and video games, and comic books, and I think it’s called YU-GI-OH. Because, WHO KNOWS! And I really don’t think it is hard getting to become popular, I really think it is hard staying in! As one of my favorite book series the Clique author would say at the back of the book. And being popular really means that you hate everything. Like, you really don’t have friends, you just sit with them at lunch, or you don’t think that you are beautiful, or a caring person. Because, a caring, loving person would stay with their friends, not just go sit with popular kids one day and never talk to your ‘friends’ again. Just-just-just..what the?” I said as I say a golden ring appearing above my head. Holding my tears back too still confused.

“Mr. S! Don’t fall for it! She is just adding dramatic affects! And besides if she really wants that crown for being popular, she would have to take it from me and I don’t think that she would want to take that from the most popular girl in the district now would she?” FiFi said worriedly that I wouldn’t do..

“Actually, I don’t have to take anything from you because I have a crown for a reason. And I don’t know why you had it because, you need to become popular by

being nice and kind and I don’t know a heart-filled soul!” I said filling like a lift got lifted off my shoulder because I just learned something that I didn’t even pay attention to when I was reading my books or seeing right in front of my face...it was that to be popular, don’t be a spoiled person! Be someone who is just kind and friendly to people! And that is what I am! I just didn’t keep the persona that I had! I just thought it was all that other junk! I’m so happy! Because when I get back out of this scat hole, I know that I am going to just dress normal and keep being the way I am because, apparently, I was fine just without all of that stuff. I am so happy nothing could possibly go wrong now! Nothing could ever change my mind of not, not being popular!”

“So what happened in there?” Britt said as I left the sound proof room.

“Just I got popular for a reason, for good, not bad.” I said in my shy voice.

“No way! You got the halo!” Kelly yelled like a girl from one of those horror movies.

“Yeah, I feel really great!” I said watching to see if anyone around saw the golden halo on my head. (The golden halo means I’m popular! I feel like a movie star!)

*RUMBLE, RUMBLE, RUMBLE!* came a crowd full of boys and girls tugging my arms so they could be my friend or ask me out (those were the boys saying that). And then, something hilarious happened..

“I’m sorry Mr. Do you have an appointment with Ms. Melanie Powers today?” Susie said with her arms crossed like she was my own personal bodyguard. You had to be there to see it.

*RRRRRIINNGG RRRRIINNGGG!* went the bell for 4<sup>th</sup> hour. I went slowly up the stairs because I knew I wasn’t going to be tardy.

“Bye Kelly, Susie, and Britt!” I yelled as

I was half way up the stairs.

“Bye!” I hardly heard Britt say while I was almost done walking up the stairs. I giggled because she has a funny little voice. She is so small!

“Hello Ms. Yalyo!” I said as I showed last night’s math homework.

“Hello Melanie. I believe you have your work complete so your good to go!” She said collecting my paper because we were having a quiz.

*Bing Bing.* “Sorry for the interruption, but another snowstorm is occurring, and this is a red alert—I repeat, a red alert! Only the most popular kid in school can save us all!”

Everyone shifted their heads at me.

“Well?” Erik said the jock in my math class said.

“Well, let’s stay calm and let’s line up at the-.”

“AHHH!” My teacher said.

“What!” I yelled as loud as I could.

“It’s coming I can see it coming! The storm! We have to go somewhere safe..where!” Ms. Yalyo said about to faint.

“Oh! The basement!” I said remembering that the safest place in your house is your basement when there is a storm or tornado.

“Come on!” I said yelling at everyone.

As everyone in my math class was safe, I ran to the office to announce that everyone should go to the basement to be safe. And at that second I probably heard 1 million footsteps running to the basement.

“Hurry everybody! It’s probably 1 mile away!” I said sweating and biting my nails down to the last nub.

“Is everyone okay? I mean safe and sound?” Ms. Yalyo said again, about to faint.

“I think everybody is in safe and sound except for..oh yes, you!” And I pushed her in the direction of the basement.

*Thump, thump, thump.* My heart went as I ran around the school seeing if anyone got left behind.

“Nope, not here, or here, oh what do you know not here!” I said looking in any kind of spot a person could hide in. I ran back downstairs going to make one last announcement saying:

“This is Melanie, if there is anybody not in the basement that I didn’t see, please report to the basement as soon as possible! Actually, NOW! And if you don’t know where the basement is I will be here at the front desk for five minutes, after that, I am going to the basement. Please, don’t be scared, if you are not in the basement, the storm will probably reach school in about 15 minutes, so don’t worry. Please hurry though. I will stop speaking now.” I waited for five minutes because, really, it does not take that long to go down stairs or up them. I waited an extra five just in case someone was dozing off and he realized, “Hey, there is a storm coming, let me come down now, even though Melanie said that 5 minutes ago.”

Nobody came. Everybody must have been in the basement safe and sound. I was scared to death because now, I only had five minutes to go downstairs to the me.” I mumbled to myself.

“Finally!” I yelled, once the elevator stopped. “That took two minutes of my precious time!”

The lights went out and I heard Kelly scream like a “girl in a horror movie, scream.” It was here, right now, and I couldn’t do anything but find the door. You know, being popular is harder than it looks. I mean, why didn’t FiFi ever save the day? Was it because she was popular, but in a snooty, bad way? Never mind. Where is that door? I will die!

“A dead end! No! It can’t be possible! Everybody went down here! No where else!

No where!" I said with a tear in each eye.

elevator, which takes forever, and then read everyone's name to see if they were there.

"Lucky me." I mumbled to myself.

"Help! Help us! Please!" It was FiFi. Well, she is a bad listener. But there was someone else with her, actually, three more people.

"Oh thank goodness! I can't find the stinking door!" She said with her hands on her hips.

"Me either. I was supposed to be the last one down here...did you here my message on the PA?" I said looking at the two girls behind her that were beautiful, but like a tiny shadow behind the last girl who had red hair with streaks of pale, pale, very pale yellow.

"Ha yea, about that..." FiFi said nodding her head to the brunette with the sweetest sunglasses on her forehead.

And at that very moment when she looked away from the brunette, back at her nails, then smiling at me...

*WHOOSH!* went the top of the school, who knew that a snow storm could do such a thing.

"AHHH!" Went the girl hiding behind the red head, let's just say she was probably a person who is, what's the word? I guess interested in math, and books.

A face appeared in the swirl of snow. It was not FiFi because she was right next to me, but I couldn't believe this but Gigi. She was wearing the most perfect things. I think trying to impress the girls behind me.

"To be safe, you have to get through me." She said with a little smile at the end.

"Wait! No! It's not fair! I will be left behind, I just know I will because she's perfect, and I'm not perfect, only in my dreams." The 'nerd' girl said crying with her hands on her eyes and her knees on the ground.

"Oh boo hoo. Live with it, nobody can ever like you." Gigi said laughing still, trying to impress the other girls behind me.

"You three can go." She said talking to the girls behind me.

"You know what Gigi? I had enough of your garbage! You just can't except that me and this girl are smarter than you, we'll make a better living because of our knowledge, and have better grades, and you know that. But you just think it's funny to make fun of people that are better than you, so you can THINK that you are perfect..but sadly, you are not." I said with my arm around the other girl.

"I'm going to blow you away, somewhere that you can't contact anybody, the computer lab!" She said laughing.

"Thank you Gigi, because we can IM, e-mail, or blog to people, nice choice!" I said with me and the other girl's thumbs up sarcastically.

*POOF!* went a cloud of smoke and we were gone.

"Actually, Gigi was right we can't contact anybody..the power is out!" The girl said with boogers coming out of her nose.

"Well, when you have laptops that are always charged there's a little change in plans." I said holding a laptop up with me signing in on IM.

"I love 2008!" The girl said.

"Hopefully, Willy is on. Probably not, but cross our fingers, and don't ask about Willy," I said, logging in.

"YES! He's on!" I said jumping up and down doing a smarty pants dance.

On the IM chat page...

**Powertome123:** Willy! I'm going to die if u don't help me rite now! And I'm serious I will die!

**Powertome123:** Hello? Willy? It said you were on! Ugh! I will e-mail you k?

**Powertome123 has just left this chat.**

On e-mail...

Willy, I need your help! This girl and I are stuck in this place and we need you to help us get out! Please Willy!

I sent the e-mail. Then I got a reply, from Willy, thank goodness!

Hey Mel, umm your stuck in like what, a journal? Not that I would know or anything just, never mind, if your stuck, look in the glossary books on the middle table, the third from the right should have a blue dot on it, turn to page 147, it will have 7 words highlighted, ONLY read those words. If it doesn't work tell me.

"Okay, um, could you get the glossary book third from the right, it will have a blue dot on the spine, could you give that to me please?" I said reading the e-mail over again just to see if I missed a step.

"Here you go." The girl said.

"Alright, now when I read these words you cannot say a word, not even snuffle, or cough, or sneeze, or breathe..really loudly." I said with a serious face.

"Promise, just do what you need to do." She said.

"Okay, page 145, 146, 147, here we are seven highlighted words. Alright, Stuck but happy, transport because I'm sad."

A light started glowing from my halo and I started fading I grabbed hold of the other girl because I knew she didn't want to die or stay in her miserable life.

"Wow, are we inside a hypnotizing thing?" I said watching the swirls hypnotizing me making me fall asleep.

"Oh my gosh! I saw this before I came to cartoon land! I must be coming back!" I said so happily.

When I woke up I was still on the platform watching the swirls go round and round and round, and round but where did that girl go? She must of gotten dropped

off already I hope. I was thinking this all in my head. But right when I was going to fall asleep a force brought my head up and a navigation voice said:

"Take the next turn right then you will reach your destination."

"Wait, my house?" I said in a sleepy voice. It sounded just like the navigation system I had in my phone. Then the swirls went away and I could see my house and my phone guiding me to my home! I wasn't stuck! They actually let me win! Whoever "they" are.

"You have reached your destination." The voice said.

*WHOOSH!* I dropped from the "sky" right on my trampoline getting a butt burn when I landed.

"Oh my gosh! I'm home!" I said looking confused.

I was so confused of what had happened! I couldn't get why me, why I had to be the sacrifice to go in the stupid journal with FiFi a.k.a. Gigi! I mean really, I would have been happier without her! I couldn't get it, I just couldn't get it! It was like I was living my life over and over again... just in magical land! There had to be someway why I was put in this mess feeling the ways I did...it had to be something! Of course! "It is so obvious! It's because of..." *THUMP!* I bumped my head on my headboard of my bed... I'm such a klutz. Anyway, it was because I had to feel everything that my friends were feeling! And how to get them back to be my friends! I came out me but a new person too, I hope it works. I was different because I didn't want to be there in that place to be a queen bee because I never was and I was never going to be! Because I didn't do what a normal bee would do, she took my bee privilege and I was never the perfect person, because Gigi and FiFi the queen bees knew that I couldn't sting

anyone with hurt thoughts!

And the journal that Willy gave me..it is about my life! I think Willy knew what I was going through all along! He wanted me to change my life so I could get my life back into place!

“Ah ha!” I yelled that on my bed jumping up and down. I could hear the springs under my feet about to burst under my feet.. I ran to my Apple computer kept buzzing Willy on IM until he finally got on.

**Powertome123:** WILLY!

**Thewillman44:** Yes my darling

**Powertome123:** Yea don't call me that...ever again!

**Thewillman44:** Did you want something or not?

**Powertome123:** Yea I did... did you write that journal..about me?

**Thewillman44:** Y would u say that?

**Powertome123:** Because I tell everything to you..and u no that! And how did you no that I changed my wardrobe and girly stuff like that?

**Thewillman44:** ...do u really want 2 no?

**Powertome123:** Yeah that's why I'm on IM right now typing to u!! But if you're a stalker I'm logging off and switching my class out of community service.

**Thewillman44:** Trust me this isn't stalking, but when you were at the salon the day right b4 school..I was there with my mom.

**Powertome123:** LOL! U go to the salon!

**Thewillman44:** No I was there with my mom...she brought me there because my dad was at work!

**Powertome123:** U could have said that before!

**Thewillman44:** Anyway, at that time I was writing the story about your life and when I saw you and wrote down that everyone would love you and you could be so popular and I wanted that to be true for you so I asked my mom to bring me to the book shop to buy a magic book so that would come true!

**Powertome123:** O PUH-lease! That is so the never ending story like!

**Thewillman44:** I really didn't think that it would work!

**Powertome123:** Where did u get the book? Maybe if I find it I could make everything come back to normal!

**Thewillman44:** 4235 West Avenue right next to the Grammy's Delightful Cheese Factory.

**Powertome123:** O I would die if I didn't have their cheese! I will back in a few. TTFN!

**Powertome123 has left this chat.**

*Clunk, clunk, clunk, clunkity, clunk* go my oversized slippers as I run down my humungous stairs. As I get down the first three steps, I notice I'm slipping so I slide down the railing...so sweet! CAUTION! ONLY GO DOWN OVERSIZED STAIR RAILINGS UNLESS YOU ARE IN AN ABSOLUTE EMERGENCY. AND KIDS, YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME! (Wink, Wink.)

“A-Roof A-Roof!” went my pooches as I was almost done going down the railing. I hopped off, threw on my coat, then my all stars. And got on my motor scooter (that cost 1000 dollars...thanks, Daddy!) And was off!

The weather was colder than I expected it to be, but thank goodness that Benjamin (butler) packed a thermos full of hot chocolate with mini marshmallows in the mini fridge.

“Oh, goody! And he packed an extra pair of mittens and hats! What could I do without him?” I said like I was British even though I am 23 percent British.

“Finally! 4235 West Avenue. Oh, this better work if it does not...well I just wasted some very delightful hot chocolate!” I said in the British voice that I am very good at.

“Excuse me, hello? Bonjour, Hola? Ohio? EXCUSE ME!” I yelled very loudly.

“Ring, ring, ring, ring, ring, ring, ring! I rang that bell until it could not ring no more.

“Sorry there, now, missy what can I do for you?” This very old country lady said chewing more and more hubba bubba in her mouth.

“Um..hi there, I was just in the



neighborhood and was wondering if you have a say magic book?" I said very sarcastically.

"Well, yes we do! YOU are in luck!" She pointed her finger right at my eye when she said you.

"Yeah...well, could I have it?" I said very eagerly.

"Here you go, and watch your attitude...and also, it's \$3.45."

"Here you go. And I don't have attitude!" I said walking out.

It was a long way back and when I came back to my house the journal was there sitting there on the front porch with a note attached to it this is what it read:

*Dearest Melanie,*

*I hope this will make everything better, if it does not, it is my fault.*

*Willy.*

I ran to my room looked through the pages and looked at page 458-the transportation spell.

"Yes! I know this has to be the page!" I said quietly to myself so my parents couldn't hear what I was doing.

"Lobby, Bobby, Ding-Dong! Circle around transport so nothing happened!" I said what the spell said to say.

It didn't work I think I needed someone who was in the story to help me

and say the spell with me.

"Um, Kelly!" I said and called her up saying that it was an emergency. She said she will be at my house in 5 minutes. She came.

"I know this is weird...but say this spell with me!" I said very eagerly.

"Fine whatever, like I have anything else to do." She said like it was the worse day of her life.

"Lobby, Bobby, Ding-Dong! Circle around transport so nothing happened!" I checked the journal while I was saying that. All the pages were erasing, all of them! Kelly looked sick ( I think her mind was getting erased). And when she snapped out of it I asked..

"Do you remember being a frenemie and an ex-friend with a giant x on your head?" She looked very confused.

"I only remember bees lots of bees!" She said ."But not the other stuff.

"I remember that too. But thank goodness it is over because we're friends and we will go down together and anywhere in between." Then we hugged and watched Scary Movie 4 all day long! I knew I'm that brilliant! And I learned something that day, if you want to feel good about yourself just treat people the same, when I thought that, I knew once again I was still, that brilliant!

## Where Is She?

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*Katie can't reach her mother on the phone, and Katie can't understand what her dad is telling her. In **WHERE IS SHE?** by Nina D. Cedro, something is terribly wrong.*

"Wake up, Mom!" I said tapping my mom's shoulder. I was so excited for my first day of ice skating.

"I will become a professional ice skater."

I remember saying that earlier this week when I heard I got into the class.

"WAKE UP!" I yelled while I shoved my mom.

“I’m up, Katie!” mom said as she stretched going to her bathroom. “Go eat breakfast; I’ll be down in ten minutes.”

My name is Katie Humble; I’m twelve-years old and about to enter the eighth grade. My parents’ names are Nancy and David. I also have a one-year-old brother named Ryan. I’ve developed a new hobby. I know I stink at it, and fall all the time, and look like an idiot with my helmet and snow pants. But ice skating seems cool. My mom is making a huge deal of me getting into a hobby and meeting new people in my class. It’s like she has a telepathy. When I’m about to talk to someone she runs over to where I am and pulls out the baby pictures. It’s soooooo embarrassing. She always says, “Isn’t she ah-dorable?” Thanks a lot, Mom. This is one of the reasons why I’m not popular.

When we pull up to the ice rink I jump out of the car without saying goodbye to my mom. I was desperate to find my three best friends: Claire, Grace, and Selene. We haven’t seen each other all summer. We’ve all been apart for two months. We only have a month to think about how we are going to rule the school when we’re only going to start the eighth grade. We also have to plan a day to practice ice skating for the big ice show in two months. TWO MONTHS! I don’t know how my friends and I could live. We were already getting bullied by Brittany, the most popular girl at our preschool-eighth grade school called Revine. She was only entering the sixth grade with us and she was already the most popular girl in the school!

Ohmygod! There they are! My only three friends in the world. We haven’t been with each other for so long. We all squealed when we ran up to each other. After reuniting, we all ran to reserve our lockers. We didn’t even have to reserve them. Our names were engraved on the lockers.

“Dang, Jesus totally loves us!”, Selene said. “I can’t wait until we get on the ice”, Claire said. “Well you better get your skates on our class starts in five minutes!”, Grace said with one of those you better hurry up looks.

When my friends and I got on to the ice, we were all shivers. We should have brought more than a sweater and sweatpants. Wow, our ice skating teacher was right in front of us leaping and spinning everywhere. She must have been an Olympic champion. “Who knows how to skate backwards on one foot?” Kelsie, our instructor, asked. A couple if girls that were in the second grade raised their hand. I felt totally embarrassed.

When practice finally ended, we all grabbed smoothies from the food court and waited for our parents outside on the warm but breezy summer day. After drinking, my friends parents came right on time. My mom was nowhere to be found. Maybe she ran into traffic. I’ll wait here another couple minutes. What could it hurt? I’ll just wait here another ten minutes.

Where is she? I’ve been waiting here for an hour. She said she’d be here right after practice ended. 248-536-9842, that’s mom’s number. I’ll just call her. Ring.....ring..... “Hi you’ve reached the voicemail of”. Great she’s not answering. I’ll just call dad. Wait, I can’t, he’s at work. I’ll call him if mom’s not here in ten minutes.

“Dad, where’s mom?” I said into the phone. “A police car is coming to the ice rink in about ten minutes”, dad replied. “Katie I have to go, the police car will be there in a couple minutes. I love you”, Dad said then hung up. The police car pulled up outside. I went into the police car confused. What was dad talking about?

When I got into the police car the police officer asked, “Are you Katie Humble?”. All I could do was nod. Nothing came out

of my mouth. Without checking to see if my seatbelt was on the police officer started to drive. I had so many questions to ask, but had a little voice to speak with. What was wrong with me? I was always so talkative. Maybe my mom's car ran out of gas and she's at the police station waiting for me. Everything's fine, just take deep breaths. Inhale.....exhale. And repeat.

Whoa! Why are we pulling up to a hospital? Why is he opening my door? What are we doing here? All these questions won't come out of my mouth! Why are we going inside? Where's my mom? Where's my dad? Where's my brother? MOM! DAD! RYAN!

Ohmygod! My mom is lying in a hospital bed. My dad and little brother are sitting down next to the bed. "What happened?" I asked my dad. "While she was on her way to pick you up," Dad was saying. "She got into an accident." An accident? But how could that happen? I've got to get some water. I pushed the button on the TV remote to call the nurse. She came in immediately. "What do you need sweetie?" she asked me. I glanced over at my little brother who was crying. Maybe I could cheer him up. "Can I have a glass of water and milk with some Oreo cookies please?" I asked in reply. "Of course", she responded.

After eating cookies and playing with my brother, a beeping sound came out of one of the machines. "We need some help!", my dad cried out the door. Paramedics came running into the room. My dad motioned to me to get Ryan out of the room. I grabbed my brother and his bag with toys and milk then ran out of the room where we waited for my dad. Once my dad came out of the room, we waited patiently outside the door. After about twenty minutes, the paramedics came out of the room. The leader of the paramedics

looked at the three of us in the hallway. He looked down at the floor and said, "I'm so sorry". What was that suppose to mean?

"She's gone" my dad said as he looked me in the eyes. I started to cry with my little brother. I can't believe she's gone. Where is she? was my only question now. I couldn't sleep or eat for the rest of the day. That was the day my mom would never come back.

Katie: I guess u heard

Selene: Heard ?

Claire: ?

Grace: ditto

Katie: My mom just went

Claire: Where

Katie: She died

Selene: LMAO she didn't die

Claire: No way! \$20 she died

Katie: Come to my house in 30 min

Grace: Sure I m on my way

"Your mom didn't die", Claire said to me when I opened the door to the front of house. "Oh yeah?", I said. "Ask my dad, you all don't care, I'll be in my room, but you probably won't care at all". I ran straight to my room and slammed the door behind me. My cell phone started buzzing. It was my friends apologizing.

Selene: Srry

Claire: plz 4give us

Grace: We r outside ur door

I opened my door and my friends were right there hugging me trying to let me stop crying. "It's ok Niña", Selene said without her speech impediment. "You'll be ok", Grace said a soft voice.

The ceremony at the funeral home was three days after the horrible incident. My dad told me to invite all my friends.

Unfortunately, Grace called my crush, Josh Derek. Now when he sees me there crying he will never like me. Everyone I invited knew my mom from fundraisers, parties, and other occasions. I invited Nina, Maegan, Tressa Mae, Gail, Morgann, Ryan, Preston, Ethan, Brent, Bryan, and Benedict.

After we cleaned up at the funeral home after the ceremony, my dad told me he'd take me to the mall. At the mall we went to the apple store, where my dad got me an I-phone for \$548.88 and an I-pod for \$137.76. We also went to Forever 21 where I bought a new wallet. The last place we went to was Nordstrom where I got Uggs \$150.54. Why was my dad giving me all these things? Well, I found out the next day.

When I was looking in the basement for some laundry I accidentally knocked over a huge pile of papers. When I was picking them up I glanced at one of the papers. The paper said "David Humble gets \$2,000,000 from Nancy Humble's account." That's why he's been buying me all these things. All because he has \$2,000,000. Well I'm taking advantage of that money. For the first time in my life I get whatever I want. All the time I got teased for wearing the same clothes since fourth grade. I'm sick of all of that. I'm really mad my mom is gone, but I can cheer up fast. I'm probably going to get \$5,000 allowances per month!

I feel like a million bucks. My dad just took me to all these places to get a new wardrobe. When I show back up to school I am going to look even better than Brittany. It's a good thing that my best friends and I are the same size because they need a new set of clothes. I need a wardrobe for my mom's funeral in two days too. I want to find a black mini dress with matching black heels. I need to look good for Josh. Maybe I should get a COACH hand bag with it too. You know

to carry my makeup in. I know what you're thinking. Why? Well, I'm a girl, its clothes and shoes do the math.

It's the funeral day. I am so excited. Not about the whole story about how my mom is about to be dropped into the ground. I mean Josh and I were talking. "So, are you okay", Josh said. "You know about the whole your mom is dead thing". "Totally" I said. "Everyone dies anyway, and check this out", I said pulling something out of my hand bag. "With all the money my dad got from my mom, he got me a credit card". "That's awesome", Josh said. "Hey, there's this party on Friday night and I was wo-" "Of course I'll go out with you", I yelled and kissed him. "Just kidding, there is no party on Friday, I'll pick you up at seven tonight", he said walking right over to Brittany. Brittany! I never invited her. But I think I know who did. Brittany is a snob. She is the richest person in town. All the guys like her, and she is sooo popular. She has met J lo, JT, and a bunch of celebrities. I HATE her!

"Like sorry bout your mom, um, Katie", Brittany said. "You have to like say thanks to your awesome friends for like letting me come". "Okay, um, sure", I said with my voice shaking. "Isn't Josh like the best boyfriend evha", Brittany said. I wanted to cry. I had the feeling that Brittany stabbed me in the heart. "I will never will be your boyfriend Brittany", Josh said taking her hand off his waist. "I'm already going out with Katie". "UGH!" Brittany screeched and stomped away. Her heels were getting stuck in the dirt path as she stomped her way back to her limo. I finally won over Brittany! Wait till I tell the girls. "Hey Brittany", I yelled. She turned around and looked me straight in the eye. I responded, "Like, get a life". That was my best imitation of Brittany's voice I've ever made. I started laughing. I know I was suppose to

be nice and all because it was my mom's funeral, but I finally felt confident.

I was crying so hard when my mom was dropped into the ground. I hung onto Josh the whole time with one hand and carried Ryan with the other. My dad took me to the mall after the funeral and reception. My dad gave me a \$500 budget. So I went to all these stores looking for the perfect dress for the big date tonight. I finally decided to buy a Candies dress and red hot heeled sandals. Then I went to a little cart next to Hollister and bought a real diamond tennis bracelet and a diamond necklace.

I see Josh walk to the front door from my window. I was just about to get my shoes on. Oh, crap. I never told my dad I was going out tonight. I need to text him before he comes in.

Katie: Don't go inside

Josh: Why

Katie: My dad dsnt know we r goin out  
2night

Josh: Ur bedroom is on d second floor  
how r u goin to get down

Katie: Member d assembly bout  
cheerleading last year?

Josh: Yea so ?

Katie: I m goin to cradle down! Do u  
remember how to catch me?

Josh: Yea flash a light to d grass to let  
me know where ur room is

Katie: I m doin it rite now

I shined the light down on the grass and saw him run right to the spot where I shined the light. "Dad I am going to sleep now I don't feel well", I yelled through my door. "Don't come in here I will be sleeping". "Okay Katie, I won't go in there", Dad said. He'll be in here in the middle of the morning.

I opened my window. "Okay", Josh said. "Go down on my count". "I'm ready", I

responded with a shaky voice. "Alright", Josh said. "CRADLE 1 2 DOWN UP". I jumped out of my window falling like a feather 30 feet until I fell into Josh's arms. "Wow!", Josh said. "It actually worked!"

"So where are we going?", I finally asked Josh when we got into his Mom's car. "We are going to Flemings", Josh said grabbing my hand. "I know it's an expensive restaurant but I got all my allowance out of the bank to afford the restaurant, so order all you want!". "Are you sure?", I asked. I didn't want to spend all his money. "Totally", Josh said with a sweet voice and smile. When we finally arrived at Flemings Josh and I went inside and took a seat. He already made reservations! I decided to take out my cell phone and text my friends while we waited for our server.

Katie: Heyyy I m on my date wid Josh

Claire: Did ur daddy let you, by d way  
thnx 4 d clothes

Selene: I can't believe he did, yea thnx 2

Grace: Yea my dad said I can't date till I  
m 16, luv d new clothes

Katie: I snuck out. Don't tell anyone

Selene: Katie Humble you r soooo ready  
for middle school

Grace: LMAO u r soo bad LOL

Claire: I never knew you had the guts

Katie: Oh g2g waiter is here

Grace: Have fun

Claire: Ditto

Selene: Doi Ditto

"I'll have the California cut, medium rare", Josh said. "Did you want to have the soup or salad sir?", our server asked. "I'll have the salad with thousand island dressing on the side please", Josh replied. "And for you miss", the server asked. "Um, I'll have the same but well done", I replied. "Oh, and I'd like the soup instead of salad, do you have clam chowder?" I asked. "Not

today, madam, all we have is cream of broccoli, chicken noodle, and sweet and spicy soup”, the server said. I think he was getting tired of standing there and waiting for us to decide on what we want. “I’ll have the cream of broccoli please”, I said. All he did was turn on his heel and walk away.

“So Brittany has been torturing you since kindergarten?” Josh asked. “One minute we were best friends, inseparable, never able to let go of each other, the next minute she abandons me”, I said. “I have a confession”, Josh said. “I always liked you since the third grade”. “Really?”, I said surprisingly. “I always liked you too”. “How’s your food?”, Josh asked. “It’s delicious”, I said. I wasn’t lying. The food here is amazing. I am so hungry; I didn’t eat anything before I came here. I was busy at the mall. “Look Josh, I’m not gonna lie to you”, I said. “I never ate anything before I came here, I was too busy shopping for tonight and I’m sooo hungry. You must think I’m a pig”. I felt like such a loser. “Really?”, Josh said then laughed. “I did the same thing you did!”. We both laughed.

“Do you want some dessert?” Josh said with a smile. “Totally”, I said. “But do you have enough money?”. I didn’t want him to think I just dated him because his family is rich. “Yeah, the folks gave me three hundred dollars to spend”, he said. “Are you sure? We just had two steaks and a slab of ribs with fries each”, I said. Even though we ordered allot of things I was still hungry. I wanted my first kiss to happen tonight. The more I wanted the kiss the hungrier I got. I think Josh wanted the same thing to happen. I can just tell. Josh ordered a banana split for both of us to share. I didn’t know how long we were going to be here. Dad always checks on me at 11:03 pm in the summer. It was only 7:30. Josh also said we were going to a movie after dinner. The theater was right next to Fleming’s so we

could just walk over there. Josh’s mom said she’d pick us up at eleven. Oh no I’m dead. I took out my cell phone to text my dad. We couldn’t possibly get to my house in 3 minutes from downtown.

Katie: Dad I lied to u sry

Dad: Lied to me bout ?

Katie: I’m not in my room right now

Dad: Where r u?

Katie: I m on a date wid Josh Derek

Dad: That’s good that ur liking boys now

Katie: So ur not mad

Dad: Your curve view is 11:30 Bye

I love my dad, he so understands. Until.....

“Hullo.....Oh, hi dad”.

“Katie, you have been slacking off”.

“What do you mean?”.

“I mean you don’t bother to do your chores or spend time with your brother and me”.

“God, dad, I’m on a date. Can we talk about this at home?”.

“Katie, all I’m asking is a little more respect from you, okay?”.

“Okay dad, I love you”.

“Bye sweetie”.

I can’t believe he fell for that crap.

Thank god for desert. It ate my anger up. The banana split was huge. They gave you half of an ice cream tub of strawberry, chocolate, and vanilla ice cream. The banana split took us only thirty minutes to eat all of it. I loved it, so creamy and delicious. After we finished we went to the movies. We watched “13 going on 30”, it was sooo funny. Josh did a move in the middle of the movie. He did the yawning move and put his arm around me. He bought me popcorn, candy, an ICEE, and flowers. I know what you’re thinking. Flowers, at a movie. It just so happened he

had a staff from the theater deliver flowers to me. After the movie he asked, “Katie do you miss your mom?”. “Of course I do”, I said as I tried to hold back my tears. I could just tell I was going to cry.

“Doesn’t seem like, usually, people always bring the person they lost up, you don’t”.

“I don’t like to bring the situation up, it’s uncomfortable”.

“I am not trying to offend you, I’m trying to be here for you”.

“I’m sorry sometimes I can be a freak”.

Buzz, buzz. Josh’s phone was vibrating.

“My mom is outside to pick us up, let’s go”.

“That was fun and fast”.

“You know what they say, time flies by when you’re having fun”.

I guess I blew the first kiss. Well, I didn’t, he did. If he didn’t bring up my mom we wouldn’t be mad at each other. Was that even a fight? I can’t tell. I just hope he isn’t mad at me. When we got to my house Josh walked me to my door. “Katie I really like you, and I had a really great time”. That’s all? That’s all he has to say. Should I get mad? No. Play it cool. “Me too, we should do this again, Thanks”. All I did was give him a little peck on the cheek then I was about to go inside, before he stopped me. Well, I was about to find out that wasn’t all he had in store. All of a sudden he grabbed my waist pulled me closer and gave me a 13 second kiss. SCORE! “Good Night Katie”. “Night”. If only my mom was here to talk about my first kiss.

When I went inside after the date my dad and Ryan were already asleep. But I heard a noise in the living room. I was so scared. This person or thing could’ve broken into my house. What if it was a murderer, or worse, maybe even a bear. I grabbed my baseball bat from last year. I

hated the sport, but the team was about to be worth it. “Who is there?”, I said. My voice was shaking. Not just my voice but my whole body. I put my hand in my pocket where my new phone was ready to call Josh. I slowly walked into the living room and found a young lady sitting on the couch. Did my dad start dating again? Ohmygosh! There are clothes all over the floor. OMG! The clothes are for women. “DAD!”, I yelled. Before I could scream, the lady covered my mouth. My dad couldn’t hear me from his room.

“Who are you?”, I asked in a hushed tone. “I’m here to help you”, she said. “Please don’t scream again, my reputation will be ruined”. I asked my question again, “Look either say bye to my dad or don’t let the door hit you, where the good lord split you”. All she did was look at me confused. “Your dad? I’m not with your dad. I’m here for you”, she said. What was that suppose to mean? “I saw you when you went to the theater today, you had a look on your face, you looked sad”, she said. “How would you know? You weren’t even there, I never saw you around us”.

“Katie, I know this will sound weird to you”.

“How do you know my name?”.

“If you would just let me finish”.

“Let you finish, I don’t even know you. Don’t you think I have questions. All of a sudden you just come around here thinking you know me. Listen lady, get out of my house. How did you even get in here? Are you drunk or something?”

“Katie! If you would shut your mouth for one minute and let me finish without talking back, I can answer all your other questions”. I could’ve sworn I heard her say, “Stupid brat”, under her breath.

Oh no she didn’t. I felt like I just got punched in the stomach.

“Katie? Are you willing to listen to me?”

“Sure I’d love to hear your side of the story” Not!

“Okay, like I said, this might sound weird. Katie, the truth is that I stalked you. I ‘m a fairy. When I saw you crying it made me feel bad.”.

A fairy?

“Ha ha ha! A fairy, yeah right. Where are your wings? Oh, you also have to prove it.”

“Okay, I’ll prove to you that I’m a fairy.”

The so called fairy, started to tip toe in a circle. Her feet started to lift off the round. After a couple minutes, she gently landed on her feet back to the hardwood floor.

“I’ll grant you one wish. It’ll change your life forever”.

“Yeah, about that, can you just come back in the morning it’s late. I’ll think of a wish to tell you.”

“Okay, good night.”

I didn’t respond, I just ran up the staircase and in to my room.

I thought she would never shut up, I think she’s mentally challenged. Plus she thinks *I’m* stupid.

Okay, I thought of my wish. What if this was a scam artist? What if the wish didn’t come true? Okay I’ll tell her my wish. But if it doesn’t come true I’ll just feel humiliated. “I wish for my mom to come back”, I told the fairy. “I didn’t quite catch your name”. “My name is Wanda”, the fairy replied. “I can get your mom back. But how will you explain to your dad that your mom is alive, when he looks at her? Tell him she’s come back from the dead. That I made her come back alive.” I never thought about that. But I’ll take a huge risk. “Do it”, I commanded Wanda. “Do what?”, Wanda asked confused. “Get my mom back please”, I begged. “I hate seeing my dad like this I know he buys me allot of things, like nothings wrong, but when someone brings her up I see a horrible feeling inside of him”.

Ohmygawd! “Mom!”, I yelled running into her arms. “I’ll never leave you Katie”, Mom said looking into my eyes. “Katie..... Katie” I heard my dad yelling from inside looking for me. “Come on mom lets go inside”, I told her doing the “follow me” motion with my hand. We held hands as we walked inside the house. I took my cell phone out and texted my friends.

Katie: Guys I feel a whl lot bttr now.

Thnxs 4 sending me all d gr8 gifts.

Claire: Don’t worry bout it just glad ur hpy

Grace: Ditto

Selene:Doi Ditto 2

I am so glad my friends were here to support me through the short time my mom was gone. Now that she’s back I feel no pain at all. I always knew that she wasn’t going to be gone forever. I’m glad she’s not.

“Katie where have you ..... Katie look to your right, your mom’s ghost is next to you”, my dad said when I got into the house. “Dad, it’s not a ghost, it’s really mom” I told him. Ryan ran to her side and hugged her leg. She picked him up and cradled him in her arms. “But how? What? You’re? Katie how did this happen?”, my dad asked. “Dad, do you want the truth?”, I asked. He nodded. “I met this fairy, her name is Wanda. She saw me at theater on my date with Josh yesterday. She said ‘I will give you one wish, it will change your life forever’. So I made a wish.” My dad just stood there. Then he told me something. “Thank your friend Wanda Katie” dad told me as he hugged mom.

“Hey, my dad isn’t mad at me, I even told him the truth.”, I told Wanda when I saw her in the backyard. “What! You told



him the truth!", Wanda asked loudly. "You're not suppose to tell him the truth. Now that he knows that fairies still exist, he can tell everyone. Katie I'm so sorry, but, I have to take your mom back and put her back where she originally was". "Wanda no!", I yelled. "I have to Katie or else everyone will wish something from me", Wanda said sorrowfully. "Please Please Please Wanda!" I screamed. "Look deep into your heart! Imagine if you were me." "I have to Katie I'm sorry" Wanda said.

"Bubby!" I hear Ryan scream from inside. I run inside the house and find my mom lying in the ground. Before I can walk up to her body the body starts to fade away leaving a note in its place. The note read:

Dear Katie,

I'm sorry about your mom. But now that everyone knows that I'm a fairy, they can ask me anything they want. If I can't make all of them come true those people could kill me. PLEASE PLEASE forgive me. Again, I 'm so sorry. I really want to be friends again. Please Katie. I'm begging for your forgiveness.

Wanda

I can't believe it. Wanda is so selfish. If that happened to her I would have let her mother stay alive. It was 2:00 am and I was still mad at Wanda. I decided to pray. "God, if you're listening right now, can you please tell my mom that I really love her? Do you think that what Wanda did was right? I think she was just being a mean friend. I really thought that I could've been with my mom my whole life. I know that everyone dies but my mom was so young. She was only 36. I really hope that Wanda was wrong and that my mom should stay down here with my family. Actually, can

you tell my mom that I just thought of something else to add to what I wanted to tell her? Please tell her exactly this:

Mom I miss you a lot  
I really hope you're in a better place  
Please watch over our family  
I love you

Katie

"Thank you god. Good Night". I recited as I looked outside my window.

I ran all around town looking for Wanda. I finally found her in the park. I told her, "Wanda, I do forgive you. You were right. My mom's in a better place because of you. Thanks". "Thanks for forgiving me Katie", Wanda said giving me a hug. My phone started ringing. I got a new text. The text said:

God: She says she loves and misses you too.

I replied.

Katie: Thank you. See you on Sunday.

You can't abbreviate when you text God.

I ran all the way home to show dad the text. When I got home my dad was watching TV in his room with Ryan. He looked angry. What was he mad about?

"Dad, I know your mad at me for not trying to stop Wanda from taking mom away bu-" I was interrupted by dad. "Mad, YOU THINK I'M MAD! I'M FURIOUS KATIE. I LOVED YOUR MOTHER AND YOU, WELL YOU, NEVER CARED. ALL YOU CARED ABOUT WAS YOU. YOU. YOU AND ONLY YOU KATIE I HA-" Dad was interrupted by a nurse. A nurse? What was a nurse doing in our house? I opened my eyes I was in a hospital room.

"Katie you fainted when you heard the

news about your mom. We all know your sad because we are sad too”, Dad said. “What’s happening?”, I asked. “Weren’t you just yelling at me?”. “You were just having a nightmare from when you fainted. It’s normal”, Dad said. “Know that your mom is gone you need to help me with your little brother. OK”. “Sure dad. Anything. I love you.” I responded with a huge smile. If all of that was a dream how come I still got the things dad bought me with the 2,000,000?

The hospital room door flew open. It was my friends. “Hi Mr. Humble”, Grace said. “Sorry about the incident, is Katie getting out anytime soon?”. “We were just about to check out”, Dad said. “Why?”. “Well.....” Claire said. “We wanted to take her to the mall and buy her a couple things to make her feel better”. My dad glanced at me. I gave him the Dad-I’m-fine-can-I-go? look. “Sure you can take her out”, my dad told my friends. “But do you have enough money?” “Of course”, Selene responded. “We added aw of ourwa money together and we have \$147.86, and Katie can spend aw of it”. I gave my friends the I-totally-love-you look. “I am going to get dressed first”, I said as I got up to go get my clothes.

For the second time the hospital room flew open. It was Josh. Josh! Josh and his

three friends came into the room and gave me flowers and stuffed animals. How did he know I was here? I looked at my friends and they just grinned at me. They called him! “We heard about your mom Katie”, Josh told me. “We’re sorry; we were just going to grab some pizza want to come?” “Oh, I’d love too” I said. “But Selene, Claire, Grace, and I were about to go to the mall”. “Hey want to come?” My three friends asked at the same time. “Sure”, Josh replied. “Can my friends come to?” My three friends looked at each other nodded yes.

When we first got to the mall we went to the food court and ate pizza that Josh treated to. Then we hit Aeropostale where I tried on all these shirts and this a-dorable pair of Hailey jeans and I bought ever thing I tried on. I had sooo much fun. Then we went to Pac Sun where I bought a pair purple jeans with a matching belt. The last store we went to was Journey’s, my favorite shoe store. I bought two pairs of shoes. One pair was pink high tops. The other was board shoes that were black with pink camouflage. I am so glad that my best friends, Selene, Claire, and Selene, my family, dad and Ryan, and my crush Josh was there to support me when I crashed. They were all supportive when the incident happened.





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