

SHORT STORIES  
BY  
SHORT PEOPLE



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*Ninety-five Stories by  
Sixth-grade Students of  
Berkshire Middle School*

Daniel Fisher, Editor

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Mr. Fisher compliments and thanks each contributing author for your enthusiasm and perseverance during this project. This book stands as evidence of the heights you can reach in school and beyond. Today, sixth grade; tomorrow, the world!



# ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME



# ALLISON

*Some people dream of becoming royalty. In ALLISON by Lizzy Malone, such a situation is just one of many unexpected occurrences in an eventful life.*

One day, a girl nearly five named Allison was riding in the car with her mother and father, when all of a sudden a small boy wandered into the street to get his ball. Her father swerved to the right to avoid the boy.

It was about two and half-hours before Allison became conscious again. She found herself in the hospital. She was okay, but her parents hadn't made it through the accident. Allison was transferred to the state orphanage.

Many weeks passed and Allison was doing fine. One warm day in the middle of July, the owner of the orphanage called for Allison and told her the good news: She had a new family. What really surprised her was that she would become a princess. She would be living in a mansion with a king, queen, and prince.

The next day her family picked her up in a limo. She was no longer an orphan. When she arrived at her "mansion," she was very surprised by her welcome from her new family. There were banners, presents, and loud music playing. She was given a delicious meal and a tour of the house. She had a bedroom the size of her old house, a computer, and a big screen TV. She had lots of Barbie things and her own personal candy machine. Best of all, she had a new family.

She talked with the prince, Eric, and he sure was charming. He was great at first, but as the years passed, Eric got Allison in a lot of trouble. One time he took all the queen's money and said it

was Allison who took it. Another time he cheated on a test and claimed it was Allison who cheated.

One day, Allison and Eric were nowhere to be seen. Police searched the whole country but they couldn't find them. Eric had kidnapped Allison. Eric was planning to keep her as hostage and receive 500,000 dollars. If they were to get caught, Eric would claim that Allison kidnapped him, and held him as hostage.

Eric wrote a ransom note, and soon enough he got his money. In spite of getting his money, he still held Allison as hostage. The money would supply them food and clothes. Although Allison knew she was doing okay, there were many times she tried to escape, but she couldn't. Eric knew all the tricks. Allison wondered when all this monkey business would end.

Seven years passed by and Allison was turning twelve in two weeks. Eric had been very nice to Allison and they still had a lot of money. She wished she were living in a nice warm house, though, and not in a tent with blowup beds and sleeping bags. They had lots of clothes and plenty of food, but life was still really boring. They couldn't just walk around in public like normal people because people could recognize them. They always had to wear disguises.

Two weeks later, they were celebrating Allison's twelfth birthday. Allison was really sad because she wanted to be with her original parents on her birthday. The prince was watching her feel sad and almost started to feel the same way she was. He put himself in her position. She already lost her original parents and now she had lost her new parents. He told her that he was going to turn himself in right then. He felt really ashamed of what he had done over the past years.

Eric was told to do 540 hours of community service before he could return home. The money went to charity. Eric and Allison lived pretty well together, for the most part.



## ASHLEY'S SURPRISE

*When a girl finds herself on her dream vacation, it should be the experience of a lifetime. But not everything goes as planned in ASHLEY'S SURPRISE, by Betsy Van Loo.*

"Hi, my name is Allison Noses. I'm here with the stars who are going to be on the new TV show *Super Stars*," a woman on TV says.

"I'm here with . . ." the woman continues but one viewer's attention is interrupted.

"Ashley, honey, I want you to go get the mail," her mom calls.

"Okay, as soon as this show is over," Ashley calls back.

". . . Celine Dion, Justin Timberlake, Britney Spears, and Vitamin C. Also Samantha Mumba and Lance Bass; oh, and two very special guests who entered the contest to go see the stars."

"Mom, I entered this contest," Ashley yelled to her mom.

"And the winners are . . . Rose Dalama, and Ashley Yellownats!" the woman on TV says.

Ashley ran to her mom, singing, "I won! I won! I won!" and called all her friends and packed her stuff. Forgetting about the mail, she sang and danced all night.

The next day was the day before she was supposed to leave for the trip. That night she couldn't sleep at all. Finally she got through the night and was up and ready to go.

As her plane took off she saw Lance Bass and Justin Timberlake! She ran up to them and said, "Hi, I'm Ashley. I won the trip with you guys!"

"Oh, hi!" they said, "nsync" of course!

“Can I sit here?” she asked.

“Sure,” they replied.

And as soon as you know it the captain came on and said, “We will be making our final descent into Waikiki in one minute. Please fasten your seat belts.”

They landed, unpacked, and went to the pool, only to find Britney Spears and Samantha Mumba already there.

“Hi, guys,” they said.

“Oh my gosh,” Ashley said. “I never thought I would really meet Britney Spears before,” she exclaimed, thinking aloud.

“Hi, everyone, I’m Rose Dalama,” a girl called out.

“Oh, hi, I’m Ashley,” Ashley said.

All of a sudden, Celine Dion and Vitamin C came out of their changing rooms.

“Hi, everyone,” they said.

They played a few games of water polo and changed into dry clothes.

Ashley took her time in choosing her outfit. She wanted to look her best for dinner. They went to Waikiki Grill. Rose didn’t say much to anyone, and went back to the hut early.

Later they had a campfire and went to bed. Ashley thought all night about how lucky she was to win.

The next morning was day two. They got up and went to breakfast. They discussed the plans for the rest of the day. Justin wrote them down on a napkin. First they went to play sand volleyball.

While they were swimming, Lance saw something thin, black, and frightening in the water.

“Hey, guys, are there supposed to be sharks in the water?” he asked.

They ran out, screaming, “NO, GET OUT OF THE WATER! HURRY!” The bodyguards heard the screaming and rushed to help. They discovered it was a toy and calmed everyone down.

Everyone was shocked. They decided to go back to the hut and canceled the activities for the day. Rose didn’t come back to

the hut with them. They had a meeting and developed a plan to catch the mastermind.

The next day they went to the docks early and saw Rose drawing on the surfboards. Samantha asked her, "What are you doing? Those are expensive."

Rose was surprised to see them. She had wanted more attention and press coverage for herself. "I was supposed to find the shark fin and be the hero. But Lance found it first so I had to think of something else that would get attention," she said.

She was sent off the island for being so selfish and rude. The vacation was cut short so they had to return home the next day.

That night they packed and went to sleep.

When she got home, Ashley yelled to her mom, "I got to meet Britney Spears . . . ."

"Wait a second, I can't understand you," said her mom. "You need to slow down."

"Well, I'm just happy to see you," Ashley said.

"I'm happy to see you too. I missed you," her mom said.

Later, Ashley was watching the Allison Show and heard, "Hi, I'm Allison Noses and I'm sorry to report the show *Super Stars* has been canceled."

"Oh, no," Ashley cried. "I really wanted to be on TV. Well, at least I got to be with the stars, and that memory will never fade."

# THE BABYSITTING TROUBLES

*Growing up means learning responsibility. THE BABYSITTING TROUBLES, by Renee Nowak, tells of one girl's eye-opening evening.*

Friday is known to all as “Mall Day”! Alex and Sammi love going to Somerset Mall and shopping at Bebe for new styles. Upon arriving, they were amazed by all the new spring clothes. There was one outfit that caught Sammi’s eye. It was a pink sweater with gold glitter. After seeing it, she knew she just had to have it. However, the price tag had her in sticker shock. The store wanted \$100 for the sweater and Sammi only had a measly Abraham Lincoln. Alex and Sammi left the store, bagless.

That night when they arrived home, Sammi just had to ask her mom about the sweater. Her mom said, “How much is it, Sweetie?”

Sammi said, “You don’t really want to know, but since you asked I will tell you. It’s, it’s, it’s . . .”

Alex jumped into the conversation and said, “It’s 100 dollars.”

Their mom stalled for a moment and said, “I’ll let you buy it if you can get a job and pay for it.”

Sammi thought for a moment about all the jobs she could do. She called Alex over, and asked, “What kind of job do you think I could get at my age?”

Alex said, “You could be a babysitter or work at McDonald’s.”

Sammi pictured herself flipping burgers and asking customers if they would like to super-size their meals. She decided that being a babysitter would be the most fun. With babysitting in mind, Sammi made flyers and posters to advertise around her town.

One night at 8:01, Sammi received a phone call from Mrs. Beatermier. She asked if Sammi was available to babysit for her sons, Billy and Bobby. Sammi gratefully accepted the job. She hung up the telephone and dashed into the kitchen so she could tell her mom the great news.

Sammi's mom said, "That's great, honey. You will do just fine!"

Sammi dashed up the stairs and went into Alex's room and said, "Alex, guess what? I got my first job for the Beatermier's on State Street."

Alex said, "That's great. You will do well."

Saturday came and it was time for Sammi to go babysit for Billy and Bobby. Sammi went to the Beatermier's. After Sammi rang the doorbell, an old lady answered and replied, "The Beatermier residence."

Sammi asked, "Is Mrs. Beatermier home?"

The old lady replied, "No, Billy broke his arm so she had to take him to the emergency room to get an x-ray and a cast. But you can still take care of Bobby. The dinner is in the fridge; microwave it for 30 seconds. I have to go do some errands so I'll be home around sixish."

Sammi walked in and closed the door. Little Bobby came running down the stairs and winked at Sammi and said, "This will be a job you will never forget." Then little Bobby ran upstairs. Sammi followed him as he raced up the steps at 100 miles per hour and darted into the bathroom and locked the door behind him.

Sammi knocked and asked him to come out. Little Bobby replied, "I am addressing the call of nature. But I need help."

Sammi entered the bathroom and looked around. Little Bobby was nowhere to be found. Then all of a sudden something hard and wet socked her in her back. She turned around and realized her shirt was wet. A little giggle came from behind the shower curtain. Then another water grenade was pitched at her belly.

From the tip of her ponytail to the end of her toenail, Sammi was soaked with ice water. Little Bobby had a bucket of freezing

ice water and dumped it all over her new jeans. Sammi screamed so loud that the neighbor came over and asked little Bobby what was going on.

Bobby said, "Nothing, we are just playing."

The neighbor left.

Bobby ran to the laundry room. Sammi tried and tried to find Bobby but she couldn't. She called his name, but he didn't respond.

Sammi heard a sneeze. "Ahhhhh-choooo!" It came from the dryer. She opened it and out came Bobby. Then Bobby said, "I want food," and dashed into the kitchen to grab a bowl of ice cream. He started to spoon as much out as he pleased.

Sammi made him stop. He started to throw a hissy fit. Sammi put him in time out. He got mad, and started to cry. He did his time out.

Sammi and Bobby decided to color. Bobby decided he did not want to draw on paper anymore. He started to draw on the wall with a crayon. Sammi thought, "I am dead!" Sammi started to scrub the wall with wall cleaner. It worked. She was *so* happy. She stayed home with Bobby for ten hours and earned \$101.00.

Sammi decided to save her money and told the Beatermiers that she could sit any time! And so they had her sit again. Her experience was much better and Bobby began to like her, so he didn't play any jokes on her!

# BOB VENTURA: THE GOLDEN PAJAMAS DETECTIVE

*Not every crime story has to be serious!* **BOB VENTURA: THE GOLDEN PAJAMAS DETECTIVE**, by *Andrew Lipsitt*, is the cross-country odyssey of a simple sleuth and the warped criminal he is chasing.

It all started in 1954. It took place on one of those mushy Frank Sinatra movie sets. Frank was tired, cranky and in need of a nap. He decided he was going to do just that in his trailer. First, however, he needed to get settled into his golden pajamas. After he walked into the trailer, there was a powerful, musical, operatic scream.

“Who took my golden pajamas?” Frank bellowed. Frank was jumping up and down like a maniac.

His agent, who was a tall New Yorker in a suit and sunglasses, shook Frank and screamed, “Frank, settle down! The pajamas couldn’t have gotten up and walked away, could they?”

“It must be Sniffles; Mr. Sniffles, he is that guy that is always sending you hate mail. He has been trying to get back at you ever since he lost that part to you in your last movie,” said the agent, with reason.

“OK, you must be right. However, isn’t it laundry day today? You know who does the laundry, don’t you?”

“Bob!” the agent yelled.

Bob was in his toll-booth sized trailer wondering why  $2 + 2 = 4$  and why the grass was green, when he heard the noise. Like a servant,

Bob went running towards where he was called. He screamed in the agent's face, "Yes sir?"

"Say it, don't spray it," the agent muttered.

"Bob," Frank sighed, "have you washed the golden pajamas?"

"Frank, last time I touched the golden pajamas, you made the director hit me over the head with that thing you use to stop a scene and say cut. No, I did not touch the golden pajamas."

Suddenly, the director said, "You mind if I ask one quick question? Why are these pajamas so important?"

"Well," Frank started calmly, "they are made out of golden silk. They were given to me by Charlie Chaplin himself," he started to yell, "and if you question my authority one more time, I'll leave this movie set and then where will you be? Nowhere! That's what I thought!"

Silently, the director nodded his head and walked away.

"Frank," Bob said, "I think I found something."

"Let me see that," said the agent.

It was a plane ticket. It said, "Mr. Sniffles/Destination: Disney."

The rest of the ticket was cut off.

"This is an airplane ticket!" screamed the agent.

By then, Frank had already been thinking of a plan. "We are going to need to send someone who doesn't know Sniffles or someone who Sniffles won't recognize."

Bob got down on his hands and knees and started to army crawl away from the set. He knew his capability and knew he was not a genius. This action was misinterpreted by Frank.

"Bob! Buddy, old pal. Thanks for volunteering," said the agent with an evil grin on his face.

"This could be a dangerous mission. So we are going to send you with the most high tech gadgets that we can come up with, for a man of your capabilities," the agent went on.

Bob fainted. "Look," Frank said, "he is so anxious he wants to get a good night's sleep so he can get a head start!"

The next day, Bob gathered his things. He got a taxi to the airport. If he hadn't been so absent-minded, he would have realized



that the man in the identification picture in the cab was Sniffles. The picture caught Bob's attention. The name just read Sniffles. Bob knew better. He knew the name of the person he was looking for was *Mr.* Sniffles, not just Sniffles. Bob was concerned why the cab driver kept on sneezing. He didn't want to get sick for his journey.

Bob later arrived at the airport ready to jump on his plane. As Bob got out of the cab, he picked up the backpack that the agent had given him. The cab driver stuck his foot out and Bob tripped. The cab driver helped him up and was nice enough to tell him he had dropped his ticket. Bob, who didn't know that it was really Sniffles, believed it and said thanks. Unaware, he took the second ticket from the cab driver. It said, "Bob Ventura/Destination: Disney World, Orlando, Florida.

On the flight, Bob looked into his backpack of his so-called "high-tech" gadgets. There was a note that read, "Dear Bob, this is all you are capable of using. These are the most high tech gadgets for a person such as yourself. Signed, Frank Sinatra's Agent.

"P.S. I hate you!"

Bob didn't like the fact that he was hated. Nor did he like the fact that he was thought of as capable of doing nothing. All the agent had packed was a slingshot, a water gun, and a jump rope.

Bob got off the plane and asked the nearest gate agent, "What is the fastest way I can get to Disneyland?"

The gate agent replied, "A four-hour flight to California, sir."

"What are you talking about? I thought Disneyland was right here in Orlando, Florida," Bob said.

"Once again, sir, you are mistaken. That is our new project, Disney World. That will be up and running in a few years," the agent added.

"OK, so when is the next flight out to California?" asked Bob.

The agent replied, "Four o'clock."

Bob finally made it to California. He had rented a car to check out Disneyland. He was pretty mad and had figured out the sneaky cab driver had been Mr. Sniffles.

Bob's first stop at Disneyland was a diner. He did not see Sniffles there. Next, Bob went to the picture-taking booth. He found no one resembling Sniffles there, either. From there Bob just had to see if Sniffles might be on the rides. He went on It's a Small, Small World. No Sniffles to be found.

All of a sudden he saw the Cinderella Castle. It was painted gold. It looked as if a really bad designer designed it. It was gaudy. He decided to check it out.

As he walked into the house, a giant Mickey Mouse sprang out in front of him. Bob reacted quickly with a quick draw of the water gun. Mickey was short-circuited and out of commission. Bob was proud of himself and blew on the tip of the gun as he put it back into his holster. John Wayne would have been proud, too!

Bob continued through the doors and went downstairs, as he heard singing and whistling coming from there. He saw the Seven Dwarfs. As soon as they saw him, they started preparing their bows and arrows. Bob reacted as if this were all in a day's work. He took out his jump rope and snapped the ends of their arrows, breaking all of them in half. The Seven Dwarfs had surprise written all over their faces and ran the other way.

Bob still didn't spot Sniffles, but did hear noises coming from a television. He sneaked upstairs. Bob heard the noise coming from a room down the hall. Bob tiptoed down the hall. He kicked in the door! There was Sniffles, with a box of Kleenex sitting on his lap, wearing the golden pajamas. Bob, acting like a dork, said, "Ah-ha! I have you now!!"

"Oh, really?" Sniffles said. "By the way, how was your trip to Florida? Was the weather nice?"

"Yes, but never mind that...." Bob exclaimed. "Give me back the golden pajamas so I won't have to use my deadly weapon on you!" Bob took out his slingshot.

Sniffles just laughed and cracked, "Great, a pea-brain with a slingshot as a lethal weapon. Thanks, I haven't laughed so hard in years."

"OK, fiend! Feel the wrath of Bob Ventura!!!!"

Sniffles jumped up, laughing hysterically and started running.

Bob took a marble out of his pouch, which was one of his forms of entertainment on his four hour plane ride to California. He shot it at Sniffles' ankle. Sniffles fell over and out the window. He was hanging on to the balcony with one hand. The pajama bottoms had fallen off. Sniffles, obviously, was not as well built as Frank Sinatra. The only clothing left on Sniffles were his Minnie Mouse underwear. "Darn, I've been outwitted by someone who thinks my first name is Mister.

"Bob? Could you come here for a second and help me up?"

"Why should I? You've called me a pea-brain and stolen my boss's pajamas. If you could think of one good reason why I should help you, I will."

"OK, here it goes. I'm the bad guy, you're the good guy. You are supposed to help me and I'm supposed to corner you and win. Oops, I didn't mean to say that. I mean because it's the right thing to do."

"OK, I'm convinced," said Bob. "You are still going to serve time in jail, and I'm making you take back the pajamas and I'm making you apologize to Frank." Bob started to pull him up, when all of a sudden he caught a look in Sniffles's eyes.

Sniffles said, "You are the dumbest person I've ever met. I can't believe you fell for this."

Bob, not liking to be insulted, said, "Listen here, at least I'm not an influ-something-infected fool in Minnie Mouse underwear. By the way, your fly is unzipped."

"Oh, really?" Sniffles accidentally let go of the rope. Down he fell! He is still in a mental home to this day.

Bob, on the other hand, lives in Beverly Hills, California. He is living the good life. He has been touring the country and motivating the children of today. He is currently taking time off from touring to write his book called *You Don't Have to Be Einstein to Be Successful*.

## BOYS' DAY OUT

*Which rules would you bend—or break—for the sake of a good time? In **BOYS' DAY OUT** by Jay M. Katz, some fun-seekers take a chance, and get more than they bargained for.*

It was the middle of spring and my friends and I couldn't wait for school to end. We had been working so hard this year. The weather had finally turned nice and a new roller coaster—the Lotus—was opening at Wacky Wonderland Theme Park at the end of the week. It was unanimous: we deserved a day off and Friday would be skip day. It couldn't get here soon enough.

We made a whole plan of how to skip school and not get caught. Early that morning we would meet at the corner pay phone, our pockets loaded with change. One by one we would call school, disguise our voices as our dads' and excuse our sons due to bad illness. We decided to use our allowance money to get into the park. The plan seemed perfect and on Friday the five of us would be some of the first to ride the Lotus. We could already feel the excitement building!

It was a cool breezy morning when we all met with our bikes at the entrance of the park. I have never seen smiles so big! My friends and I were so eager to get to the park. We pooled our money to pay for five all-day passes and began to plot our day. Part of the group wanted to start at the Lotus; after all, it was the main reason we came to Wacky Wonderland. The other part of the group needed to gain some courage before venturing to the high speed, upside down, ultimate, loop-the-loop roller coaster. Since I was the deciding vote and a little apprehensive myself, I decided we would begin at River Wild and work our way over to the Lotus.

This ride was an extremely intense water ride and hopefully would help to prepare us for what was to come.

We waited ten minutes in line and then boarded the big yellow tube. We were all able to fit on one raft. Away we went through a dark spooky cave, our hearts pounding through our chests. Some of us were more nervous than others, then suddenly—out of nowhere—we dropped ten feet into the wild rapids. The raft started spinning out of control and water splashed onto our already drenched clothes. As quickly as the raft screamed into action, it slowed down. As the raft slowed down, a ferocious flesh-eating bear popped up out of the water. It roared loudly and we went down yet another drop. We went through some really cool rapids and got soaked from the ice-cold water—again. The ride came to an end and we looked like a pack of drowned rats . . . a perfect way to start our day!

We spent the next three hours working our way through the park, riding everything in sight and heading towards the main attraction. Our stomachs were empty so we decided to duck into Burger Invasion before the grand finale. By the time our waitress finally took our order we were starving. Triple cheeseburgers loaded with pickles, onions, tomatoes, bacon and lettuce under one bun. We ate quickly so we could get over to the next ride. I was beginning to get nervous and wondered if eating was such a good idea. After all, don't people get sick from eating and then turning upside down in midair? I was about to find out.

Our next stop was the entire reason we came here. We were about to ride The Gigantic Lotus. It's the newest and most incredible ride in the world. It has six inversions and a rocket launch from zero to sixty miles per hour in less than three seconds. There are huge drops and sudden turns. The biggest drop is an amazing 264 feet. This coaster reaches brain-bursting speeds of up to 100 miles per hour. Also, there is a video camera in front of your seat which videotapes your whole amazing experience on the ride. The seats rumble and shake while you are going down enormous drops and twisting turns. There are things that blow out heat in the back of your seat and fans in the front that blow refreshing wind in your

face. The ride vehicle is shaped like a lotus bug with an eye-blinding red exterior and yellow leather seats. There's a speedometer in front of your seat, which tells you how fast you are going. I was prepared and determined to ride The Gigantic Lotus, even though I was a little scared.

As we were waiting in line, I felt my heart pounding like a drum. I was really nervous and felt as if there were millions and billions of butterflies fluttering around in my stomach. It was finally our turn and we boarded the vehicle. I sat down and took a deep breath. I then heard a voice counting down, "5, 4, 3, 2, 1: blast off!" We launched from zero to sixty miles per hour and straight into some loops. We dropped 264 feet and went into another loop. Then the seat started to shake and wind blew in my face. The heat started coming out and I was having an awesome time. We went upside down three more times, dropped about 1000 feet in total and turned suddenly from side to side over 20 times. I could taste my lunch in my throat. The ride started to slow down and it finally came to an end. When we got off the ride I screamed, "That was the best ride I have ever been on!" Everyone agreed with me and decided that we should go on it again!

We got back in line for The Lotus and waited a long 30 minutes. Then we got in our seats and blasted off again. We went through the first two loops and down the 264 foot drop. On the third loop the ride suddenly stopped at the top, upside down!

I started to panic and scream. We were all yelling for help. A big crowd of people came to see what was going on. I then heard the sound of a siren on a fire truck. The firefighters came to the rescue. One of them got their ladder and climbed up to rescue us. We all cheered for joy.

The firefighter was halfway up when the ladder just stopped. We all froze with fear. He yelled, "I'm stuck, I'm not going to make it." I suddenly got really worried.

We were stuck for over an hour. The newscaster from Channel 4 News came to do a report for the nightly news. Suddenly, the firefighter's ladder started working. On his loudspeaker he told us

not to panic and to follow his instructions. One by one we got down safely. I was relieved that we made it in one piece. When our feet touched the ground we were surrounded by newscasters. The reporters asked us how we felt and what it was like being stuck at the top of a loop. We told them about the terror and then went out the exit of the park back home; after all, school was about to end.

When I got home my parents were sitting on the couch watching TV. I sat down next to them and saw that they were watching Channel 4 News. One of the newscasters was talking about a group of kids getting stuck on the Lotus. My jaw dropped as my own face appeared on the television. I couldn't believe it. We had been caught. My mom stared at me with a disappointed look on her face. She explained to me that what I did was wrong. Then my dad talked about what my punishment would be. He said, "Grounded for two weeks and I'm taking away your computer." I tried to say I was sorry and begged for my favorite ultra-fast computer. They just shook their heads and pointed to my room. I decided that it didn't really matter and I would just go to bed. My perfect day had been shattered to pieces.

The next day we all met at the bus stop. Everyone told about how their parents had punished them. Some of my friends had to do extra chores in addition to being grounded. After we talked for a couple of minutes we got on the school bus. The bus stopped and we went walking into school. All the kids were pointing and chuckling, knowing that we were going to get in trouble because of the newscast the day before. We strolled into school with our eyes down, worried about what would happen to us. We went into the room and saw the teacher there with a weird look on her face. She told us that she saw us on the news and was very disappointed in us. She also gave us detention after school for the rest of the year.

We all realized that it was wrong of us to go to the amusement park and we definitely regretted it. I also learned that you should always be willing to pay the consequences if you do something bad. I think we all learned a valuable lesson and will always remember that one cool breezy Friday.

# COLETTE AND MONTGOMERY

*For many people, the family vacation includes the family pet. COLETTE AND MONTGOMERY, by Molly Noyes, tells about one girl's vacation with her dog that she will never forget.*

“Finally, we’re here,” my dad said. We were in the Swiss Alps for vacation. We got out of our car in the sub-zero temperatures. All of a sudden, I was frozen. The small pellets of snow felt like tiny needles pounding at my face. Where I live, in Zurich, Switzerland, it’s never been this cold.

My name is Colette and I am eight years old. I was on vacation with my parents, brother Ben, and my dog Montgomery. We were on a skiing vacation in the Swiss Alps. I hoped it would be fun.

We checked into our hotel. The view in our room of the huge mountains was amazing. They were so tall, it seemed like the tops were in space! At 8:45 P.M., it was time for bed, because we wanted to be out by 7:00 A.M. the next day.

I woke up at 6:00 the next morning. After putting on about six layers of clothing, I felt like I was about to faint in the hotel, but at least I wouldn’t be cold when we got out. “We’re all ready; let’s go,” my mom said. We all set off, including Montgomery.

He had to go to a dog class to learn how to work in the Alps. My mom thought it would be good since he was bred to do these things. He is a Swiss mountain dog. For his class, he needed all these things like boots, a coat, a dog backpack, and lots of other things. “He will be warmer than us,” I said.



“I bet he will never need them again,” Ben said. Then we set off for the walk.

Starting out, it wasn't that cold. The snowflakes were flying everywhere, and the wind was making a whistling sound as it swirled. Even though the mountains were just a few blocks away, you could barely see them because of the weather conditions.

“Montgomery, come.” He was running away! Without even thinking, I ran after him. I got him, but I didn't know where my family was. “Mom, Dad, Ben, where are you?” I screamed. There was no answer. “Help, I'm lost!” I yelled till my throat was so dried out that I could barely whisper. I was lost!

At camp, they taught us survival skills. They said you always need food, shelter, warmth (if necessary), and you should try to find a way back. So I started with building a shelter. There was a big pile of snow that I dug a hole in, then I poured water over it, and it was an igloo. It was better than nothing.

When I woke up the next morning, I tried to get some food by ice fishing. I found a stick and put a piece of bread on it for bait. It wouldn't work. The bread just dissolved. Finally after a few times, I caught one. “Food!” I yelled to Montgomery.

In science, they taught us how to start a fire, because we were learning about friction. Finding dry wood was not easy, but after looking for probably two hours, I found some. That night, we had fish. It was all burnt and I would never have eaten it if I were at home. At least I got some food.

Even though the weather was getting worse and worse, I had to look for a plan so I could be found. The hill in the distance had a lot of things on it and looked like it might be a ski hill. I decided that each day I would walk as much as I could towards it. Each day I would be going through rivers and lots of mountain terrain. I thought if I didn't, I might not survive.

The next day, we went as far as we could, sticking to the plan. As far as the weather, it just got colder. I was freezing because my clothes were getting wet. We still kept going in spite of everything.

The next day we went over some pretty tough stuff. The hardest were the mountains. Even though we were only going over the bottoms and valleys, it was really hard. I couldn't have done it without Montgomery.

We were almost there, but then I fell through the ice! I thought it was thick enough like the other streams, but it wasn't. Montgomery didn't fall in because he jumped over it. "Help!" I said. Then Montgomery pulled me out by my coat. My heart was pounding like a hammer, and my clothes were soaked.

In two days, we got to a little ski lodge. We walked in the lodge. "You are the girl who was lost with her dog that I saw on the news," one lady said. After that, people began to crowd around me, asking me questions. We got ahold of my parents. I was crying from being so happy, and so were they.

The next day, I met them at the airport. We were so happy. There were news anchors and journalists there. I felt like a celebrity!

## CURIOUS FROGS

*There are communities of animals that we never even notice. What would we see if we paid more attention? CURIOUS FROGS, by Meagan R. Thompson, uncovers a group of adventurous amphibians.*

There were four frogs sitting on their pads, seeing who could catch the most bugs, while Hopsville village was napping.

After a while they got bored. They decided to take a swim. As they were thinking, Spotty shouted out, "Let's take a trip." They thought about it and decided to leave.

Now Floppy was the smart one and always knew what he was doing. Sloppy was the careless type, the totally opposite of Floppy. Spotty loved to eat. Forever coming up with new fly follies, Dotty was the only girl who liked adventure, and not the type to play with lily dolls like other girl frogs.

That night the town woke up to find the four frogs were gone. That was a happy moment and lots of joy came to the faces of the frogs in the town, for the four frogs were not all that liked in the town. Mischievous little frogs they were, stirring up trouble. But to the four, they were never really doing anything bad on purpose. Still, the town had a celebration in honor of their leaving.

Off they went, deeper and deeper into the forest. One morning, they were taking a wash-up (not aware of the dangers around them). A fox was near, watching their every move. Soon Floppy eyed the fox watching them. The four slowly tried to get away, with sweaty tears and hearts pounding from fear and nervousness. As they started to leave, the fox walked slowly along, stalking them. They made a run for it.

Spotty tripped over a wood block. The fox was right behind him. Spotty dove into a hole. The fox tried to get him out, and got tired of it. Not far away were Spotty's friends. Once the fox left, they headed for home. That night they slept in a hole up a tree for safety.

The next day on a walk, they didn't realize how far from home they were. After their dinner they had a rest. All of a sudden, glitter fell over them out of nowhere. When they looked up, there appeared a fairy.

At first they couldn't believe it. The fairy said that the frogs had entered the magical part of the woods. So Floppy, Dotty, Sloppy, and Spotty got one wish for them all. They thought extremely hard. They said to each other that they wanted to be able to fly.

In an instant, they had wings. Now they could fly home!

When they got home, the town was just in shock. Everyone in town had wished the four would not come back. But for the young froglings, this was great, because they love story time!

# GIRLS BOARD OVER BOYS

*When eight lifelong friends set off for college, they stick together. Such loyalty is important in **GIRLS BOARD OVER BOYS**, by Tara Roberts, when a friendly bet becomes a matter of life and death.*

In the year 2000, on December 16, there were four boys and four girls. They all loved to snow board and any chance they could, they would. The girls' names were Marlee, Terri, Julie, and Katie. Then there were the boys, the girls' best friends for 13 years. Their names were Jordan, Dawson, Brian, and Erin. They all used to live in London, England and they all wanted to live in Colorado, but their parents wouldn't let them. So when they were old enough they went to college in the United States and lived in Aspen. After almost one year of begging their parents, Marlee, Terri, Katie, Julie, Jordan, Dawson, Brian and Erin were allowed to move to Aspen, Colorado. They told their parents they were going to be back in five years.

As soon as they got to Aspen, they all bought a beautiful condo that had a spectacular view of the gigantic mountain. It was the biggest condo they have ever seen, so they all could fit in one condo instead of paying for two.

Then Dawson thought that he, Jordan, Erin, and Brian could have a competition against the girls. The girls agreed and they decided to have the competition on January 16, 2001. They made a bet that whoever lost the race had to wait hand and foot on the other team for the same amount of time as the competition was.

In Aspen, Colorado on Aspen Mountain was the very exciting snow board competition. Little did Marlee, Terri, Katie, Julie, Jordan, Dawson, Brian and Erin know that they were going to

have a long, cold competition. They started the competition by going down every run on Aspen Mountain. After that, they went to the far back of the mountain and that's where they got lost.

The chair lift that was supposed to take them to the top of the mountain to go to the lodge stopped. They started to walk up the mountain, but they got lost on the way. They decided to make this part—going up and down the mountains—part of the competition. They raced down the mountain, and the girls won. The boys got down the mountain five minutes later.

Erin, the “smart” one, said, “I think we should get out of the mountains as quickly as possible. We have to go through mountains and valleys full of wolves and dangerous animals. There also might be avalanches, snow storms, and dangerous ice walls that we can't see.” They started back up around the mountains. The girls won getting up the mountain. The girls had won every competition so far.

Then suddenly Erin said, “According to the weather predictions on my Palm-lllc, for the next two weeks it will be sunny and then turn into snowy and freezing temperatures for another week.” Then everyone moaned.

They had been gone almost a week. Everyone was getting a little worried except the boys, who were acting brave and calm, but on the inside, they were just like everyone else: cold and worried. They still had many supplies left. But the further they went the more lost they got. They had gone through a couple of snow storms, fallen down a couple of snow and ice walls, and gone through two snow blizzards in the last four days.

“I think we should rest for a day,” said Julie. All the girls agreed, but the boys didn't.

“Like Erin said, we need to get out of here as quickly as possible,” said Dawson.

He was overruled. They stayed put for one day so they all could get their energy back. By now it had been 12 days and Erin

said he had a feeling they were about two days away from civilization.

Everyone had been saying it was sort of fun to be lost (if you were prepared) because you get to go on adventures and be out in the wild.

Erin was right, they were two days away. They finally got back to civilization and called their parents right away. They told their parents the whole story. The boys decided that the girls won because they got up the mountain faster, down the mountain faster, and were just plain better.

After a week of relaxing and hanging around in their condo, they decided to have one more race down Bull Run Pass on Snowmass Mountain. The girls won again. They all had bet in the beginning that the losers had to wait on the winners hand and foot for however long the competition was, which was two weeks and nine hours.

After a week of freedom, the boys paid the bet and actually enjoyed it. The reason they enjoyed the bet was because they had a sneaky plan while waiting on the girls. One of the plans was: When they were supposed to fill the bath tub for Terri with nice warm water, they filled it up with snow that melted into freezing water. They also enjoyed it because they thought the girls deserved it. So after the girls' humongous victory of winning the competition on the toughest mountains in Aspen, the boys had a victory in certain ways, so they were even.

# THE GOGEEKAS

*It may be everyone's nightmare: the unknown beast, lurking in the dark. THE GOGEEKAS, by Lua Clark, shows what can happen when the worlds of people and nature collide.*

In the woods they build cover out of sticks and leaves. They come out on full moon nights and feed on the people who camp out. They are called "Gogeekas." One full moon night the name was born. A Boy Scout Troop of five boys was camping out and it started to rain. The boys went in their tent. The counselor told the boys about the legend of the gogeekas. He said that the gogeekas were a type of overgrown wolf-like dog. The counselor was making up the story. At least he thought he was.

When the boys were asleep, a baby gogeeka walked around the tent ten times. The boys and the counselor woke up. Then the gogeeka started to rip holes in the tent. The boys ran out first and then the counselor ran out, but he stopped dead in his tracks. The counselor looked at the ground and saw that one of the boys was being ripped apart by another gogeeka. The gogeeka that scared them out of the tent jumped on the counselor's back and ripped him to shreds.

Three of the boys got away and went to the police. The boys' moms were called and the police went to the scene of the crime. There they found enough evidence to tell that the boys had not killed the dead counselor and the other boys. The evidence indicated that an animal was likely responsible for the killings.

One night soon after then, a SWAT team member named Greg got a little curious about the story he had heard about the incident. Greg went to the woods to camp out overnight. He set up his tent



and built a fire and ate his dehydrated dinner. After dinner, he put out the fire and went to bed. Around midnight the baby gogeeka started to hunt, but this time he was alone.

Greg woke up. The baby gogeeka scared him out of his tent, screaming, and he tripped over a branch. The baby gogeeka bit Greg on the arm, but Greg got his knife and started to stab the gogeeka and killed it.

Then Greg went to the police and gave them the gogeeka. The police were then sure that this was the animal that had killed the scouts. It turned out that the boys were right. Later, conservation officers captured the rest of the gogeekas and put them into a National Preserve where they could live naturally without being a threat to campers.

# THE GRAND ADVENTURE

*A girl and boy with unusually perceptive personalities have always known this time would come. THE GRAND ADVENTURE, by Al Pal, takes two friends into a mysterious world that only makes itself known at night.*

“Becca Leanne Winston, there are no such things as ghosts or monsters or strange creatures in this wonderful world,” my mother always tells me. “You are twelve going on thirteen, you should know this by now.”

I don’t exactly believe in ghosts or monsters, but I strongly believe that there are strange creatures out there that no one knows about. I’ve heard their cries many times, especially when lying in my bed at night. Sometimes, thinking about the strange creatures gives me the shivers up my spine.

There is no use in calling my mother or father when I’m scared because they never believe me, of course. All they say are things like: “There are no strange creatures making noises, Becca. It’s just your runaway imagination.” Or, “We can have your ears checked next week.” I don’t need my ears checked! I know that there are strange creatures out there and they need my help.

The only person who believes me is my best friend, Jeremy Royes. We made a promise to each other that one night we’d go out into Blackwood Forest and help the strange creatures!

As I lay in bed that night, I heard a loud, mournful cry: “Eker-eker-ee, eker-eker-ee!” I jolted upright, my eyes as wide as saucers. I could feel my heart pounding like a booming drum . . . *thumpity-thump, thumpity-thump*. The cry became louder and louder until I

suddenly leapt out of bed, scared and excited at the same time. I was ready to help those creatures. The time had finally come.

I threw on an old pair of jeans and a black sweatshirt. I didn't have time to stand in my closet and try on a million outfits until I found one I liked (which I do almost every day). I put on my best hiking boots, grabbed my mini backpack, and threw in a flashlight, extra batteries, and a couple of Band-Aids. Hey, I never like to be unprepared on exciting adventures!

Next was the hard part—going down the stairs. If our stairs could receive an award, they would definitely get one for the creakiest in the world. Unfortunately, I have a mother who can hear as well as a dog (or probably even better), and has eyes like a hawk, which makes everything worse. I tiptoed as quietly as possible, letting out a few minuscule squeaks here and there. My heart began to pound like crazy again. The last step is the loudest and squeakiest of them all. I just had to get past it, I had to! “Creeaak!” went the step as I dashed into the kitchen and scampered out the door as fast as my legs could carry me. I ran and ran and ran until I couldn't run anymore, and stopped to sit on my favorite rock next to Jeremy's house.

A few minutes later I spotted a tall, thin silhouette heading towards me. It was Jeremy. “Jer!” I whispered excitedly.

He stopped cautiously and asked, “Becca, is that you?”

“Yes, it's me! Oh, am I glad to see you—but what are you doing out here so late?” I asked.

“I know tonight is the night that we made a promise about,” Jeremy said.

“How?”

“I could feel it, Becca; I don't know how, but I did feel something.”

“Really, Jer?”

“Yeah, it was really weird. I was almost asleep when I thought I heard this loud noise—and this little voice in my head kept telling me that you needed me to help you save the lives of others!” Jeremy explained.

Jeremy and I walked for awhile and told each other our feelings about this adventure as we strolled across the dark ground; leaves scattered this way and that. The stars twinkled above us as a full, golden moon shimmered with an unbelievable light. It looked almost like a shiny gold pendant that belonged on a necklace.

“We’re almost there!” I said excitedly, as my braids bobbed up and down. Jeremy and I weren’t tired yet—we had a long night ahead of us.

We stopped suddenly in front of Blackwood Forest. Nobody ever went in there at night . . . people thought it was haunted. Jeremy and I didn’t know what to expect in the forest, but we were sure that it wasn’t ordinary.

During the day, it was a beautiful sight. Flowers were perched daintily on their little stems, their petals swaying happily in the wind. The leaves on the trees were healthy, and were sprinkled like little pieces of fairy dust onto the forest floor. But at night, it was a whole different world. The branches were like the arms of gruesome monsters out to grab you, and the sound of owls hooting made you shudder.

Jeremy bit his bottom lip. “Y-you ready Becca?” he asked.

“Yes,” I said confidently. I was nervous, but ready.

“Do you think we really should do this?” Jeremy asked.

“Yes . . . we have to; we *can* do it!” I said.

Jeremy looked like he was a champion runner—alert, ready, and confident to accomplish his goal.

“I’m ready,” Jeremy said with a determined look in his dazzling blue eyes.

We grabbed hands. “One, two, three!” we said together as we stepped into the dark forest. I pulled out my flashlight and waved it around.

Jeremy looked around cautiously. He just barely spotted something that was behind me and gave me a warning . . . but it was too late. Suddenly a tiny figure shot out of the bushes behind me.

“Ahhhhhhhh!” cried Jeremy, the creature, and I at the exact same time.

The little creature started to scamper off. “Wait!” I called to it.

The little creature stopped dead in its tracks and turned around cautiously. His round, tennis ball eyes showed fear and anxiety.

He wore a hat made of maple leaves and an outfit made out of mosses and other plants. He was a very petite and cute little fellow.

“We’re sorry we scared you off like that, little guy,” Jeremy said to him. The creature nodded as his floppy ears swayed in the wind.

“We won’t hurt you, we just need your help,” I said gently. The creature looked unsure for a moment, and then noticed me motioning my hand. He hesitated, then slowly crept over to Jeremy and I. The creature held out a shaky hand for us to shake.

“Nice to meet you!” Jeremy and I said. We then introduced ourselves.

“My name is Peke, and it’s a p-pleasure to meet you both.”

“We are so glad you’re here, Peke!” I said cheerfully.

“Why is that?” Peke asked surprisingly. “Humans never come into Blackwood Forest at night.”

“Peke, it’s because we need your help.”

“Well, wouldn’t it be simply ludicrous if we were both in need of the same thing?” Peke said, sounding more relaxed.

“Yes, and I believe that is the case here, Peke,” Jeremy said.

“But if not, we’d like you to tell us what you need first, and we’ll see if we are in need of the same,” I suggested.

“Splendid idea, Betsy!” Peke said.

“It’s Becca!” I said laughing.

Peke’s face turned as red as a bright, cherry tomato. “Terribly sorry, Becca.”

“It’s okay, Peke. Now tell us what you need help with.”

“Tis a dark, evil, story,” Peke said, lowering his voice.

“Oh, please tell us!” Jeremy and I pleaded.

Peke’s story went like this: “Up in the Castle of Regala, there lived an evil King Regala, ruler of the Blackwood Forest at night.

He had done many evil things to us creatures, but he wanted to do something worse than ever! His plan was to capture all of the creatures in this forest and lock them all up in his secret dungeon, which is located miles and miles beneath the castle. Since creatures like me carry a powerful substance that King Regala's species doesn't, the King wanted to have it. But the only problem was that you could only get the substance when we creatures die, because it is an immortal substance. King Regala has been sending out his troops to capture us creatures here at night and lock us up in the dungeon. He gives them nothing—no food, water, anything. When the creatures eventually die, King Regala will suck the immortal power into his body.”

What a horrible thing for King Regala to do! How could someone be so cruel and greedy? Poor Peke—I'm sure he was very upset about the imprisonment.

Moments later, I could see Peke's eyes filling up with tears.

“Are you okay, Peke?” I asked.

It was painful for me to just think about the imprisonment.

“My mother and father have been captured by King Regala,” Peke sobbed. A huge tear rolled slowly down his left cheek.

“That must be horrible—the imprisonment for one thing is awful, but the fact that King Regala captured your parents is even worse!” I said to him, trying to make him feel a little better. Jeremy and I comforted Peke some more and tried to cheer him up.

“I'm okay now, children, thank you,” Peke said, wiping his eyes.

“Peke, that was one amazing story!” Jeremy said.

“Thank you!” Peke said blushing. “Well, what do you children need me to help you with?” the little creature asked.

“The very same thing, my friend,” Jeremy said.

“What?” Peke squeaked in astonishment. “You mean that you came into this forest to help us creatures?”

“Yes, Peke. Becca and I knew deep down inside that you needed our help . . . we heard the creatures' loud cries during the night,” Jeremy explained.

“I am so overjoyed right now!” Peke said, almost as if he was going to let out a salty waterfall.. except that it would be full of happiness.

“Are you guys ready?” I asked, sounding pumped up and ready to go.

Jeremy was the only one who responded excitedly.

“Do you know how dangerous this will be?” Peke asked.

“Peke, we will save your people no matter what!” I said.

Peke didn’t look very convinced. “Come on Peke, we need ya, pal!” Jeremy said, thumping him on the back.

“Oh, all right, but you two really don’t know what you’re getting into,” Peke said, sighing.

My two friends and I headed west through the forest, coming closer and closer to the castle. Along the way, we ran into Peke’s best friend, J. J.

He looked almost identical to Peke except that he had a shiny, golden earring dangling from his right ear. Peke was disgusted by his earring, but still enjoyed his company, along with Jeremy and I. J. J. also knew a lot about plants. He told us which berries were poisonous and which were okay to eat, and he showed us plants that help cure sicknesses from fevers to pneumonia.

J. J. also showed us certain plants and vines that had magical powers! Some could make people dance, become unconscious, become deaf or blind, and there was even one that could make you laugh for five days nonstop! When nobody was looking, I crept quietly away from my friends and grabbed some of the magical vines and plants, just in case. I had a feeling that one of them might save all of the imprisoned creatures.

Jeremy, Peke, J. J., and I stopped dead in our tracks as we walked to the front of the castle. We had finally made it!

“What do we do now?” J. J. asked.

“Just go in, I guess,” Jeremy replied.

“What about the guards?” Peke pointed out as he looked toward the front of the castle.

“Maybe there’s a secret passageway or a back door!” I suggested.

"I'll bet you're right, Becca," J. J. said.

We searched the back of the castle where there were fortunately no guards around. We also discovered a back door full of cobwebs and filth. Jeremy, J. J., Peke and I all had a feeling that there was a secret passageway somewhere.

Suddenly J. J. cried out, "I found it, I found the secret passageway!"

"Way to go, J. J.!" we all said as he smiled with a look of triumph. We stepped through the tiny passageway into bone-chilling, pitch black darkness.

"Where are we?" I asked. My voice echoed clearly through the room that we were in.

"Is everybody here?" Peke asked. Everyone replied with a shaky yes.

I could hear the sound of dripping water that filled the room.

"I think we're in the dungeon," Peke said. Everyone nodded in agreement. It felt as if an icy, bony finger was creeping up my back. I shivered slightly, then turned on my flashlight. Up ahead I spotted a long, dark hallway.

"This way, you guys!" I called, motioning to my three friends. Peke, Jeremy, and J. J. crept closely behind me, with the frightening feeling that danger could be lurking around any corner. We walked for what seemed like forever, until we saw an eerie glow of light up ahead. As we made it to the very end of the hallway, I couldn't believe what I saw.

It was the dungeon. About a million creatures that looked exactly like Peke and J. J. were slumped in corners miserably behind bars—their arms and legs chained firmly. I looked around at all of the creatures. I especially noticed their eyes—they were swollen from crying, and they were full of an indescribable sadness. I had a feeling that some had lost hope already. The creatures' faces were chalky-white, and they almost looked as if they were bony skeletons.

"Mother, Father!" Peke cried as he dashed over to his parents. J. J. found his family as well. Then a great hush fell over the whole dungeon. All of the little creatures' eyes fell upon Jeremy and I.



“We’re here to save you all!” I announced.

“Hooray!” all of the creatures yelled at once. A gleam of hope shone in their glittering, glossy eyes. The creatures began to chatter amongst themselves, but a nervous silence hushed them quickly—this time something was wrong, I could feel it. I could see a dark, giant figure lurking around the corner.

“It’s him,” Peke whispered to me. He gave my hand a squeeze.

The King stepped into the dungeon swiftly, his dark cape sweeping behind him. The King had different features than the creatures in the dungeon. His gruesome face was hidden behind his dark hood, and all you could see was blackness.

If you were close to the King, and you looked into his eyes, it was like swirling down a black hole. All of the creatures lowered their heads, bowing ungratefully to the King. It was the law.

“What’s going on? Do we have some visitors today?” the King asked, his booming voice making everyone shudder. He took a step towards me. “Why are you here, child?”

“T-to stop this hatred and cruelty!” I said, my voice shaking with fear and anger.

“And how are you going to possibly do that, little girl?” the King said, sneering.

“Watch,” I said.

I knew that I had to work fast! I hustled over to my backpack and took out a bunch of plants and vines of all shapes, sizes, and colors.

“Becca, what are you doing?” Jeremy shouted. There was no time for me to answer Jeremy. I tossed them all at the King, but nothing happened. The King stood with his arms folded, and an evil smile spread across his dark face. He then strode towards me.

“NO!” Peke cried as he, J. J., and Jeremy tried to block the King from getting to me. Meanwhile, I was still hurling plants and vines at the King, but still, nothing was working.

With a snap of the King’s fingers, the faint light in the dungeon dimmed. He casually kicked Peke, J. J., and Jeremy as they all flew into a corner of the dungeon—their heads knocking against the

wall with a *BANG!* The King was moving closer and closer to me as I frantically dug through my backpack, searching for the vine that would save everyone.

The King suddenly grabbed me by my shirt and threw me onto the cold, wet dungeon floor and held me pinned to the ground tightly with his huge fist. I struggled to get up . . . but the King's grip on me was way too tight. I had a feeling it was all over. The King had me now—he was way too powerful compared to me. How could I possibly save all of these creatures now? I was able to turn my head to the left, and saw Peke, J. J., and Jeremy lying there motionless.

“Do you know who I am?” the King asked.

“Yes,” I said softly.

I squirmed, but the King's grip was still very firm and strong. I then tried to reach for my backpack, but my arm couldn't stretch far enough.

“You can't escape now, Becca, because you're mine!” the King said as he let out a wicked laugh. The King reached into his cloak and took out a long, black vine, which was the color of the dungeon's darkness. “Do you know what this is Becca?” he asked, holding up the vine. “This, is the vine of death!” The vine glowed with an eerie light as the King held it in his hand. I still kept trying to reach for my backpack, but it still wasn't close enough.

The King suddenly lost his grip on me for a moment. I jumped up and dashed towards my backpack. Then, everything turned into slow motion. The high-pitched squeals of the creatures behind bars were drained out of my ears, as the wide, bloodshot eyes of the King faded into blackness. The vivid picture of my unconscious friends in the corner became blurry. I could feel my heart pounding madly as I ran towards my backpack and pulled out the vine. It was a light blue vine and it had a cheery glow. The vine almost seemed to be grinning at me. It made me let out the first weak smile that I had made since I had been in the dungeon. My small bit of happiness quickly faded as the King spun around and hit me to the ground with his strong fist once more.

“That little blue vine is no match for this,” the King said, getting ready to strike me with the vine of death. He was just about to release it onto me when suddenly . . . whoooooosh! I hurled the light blue vine at the King with all of my might and strength. The King stood there dazed, letting go of me.

To everyone’s surprise, King Regala began to shrink! All of the creatures watched in awe as the King became smaller and smaller and smaller until he simply vanished into thin air!

All of the creatures cheered and thanked me gratefully for saving their lives as I unlatched their chains and set them all free. Peke, J. J., and Jeremy then revived from their unconscious state. All of the creatures stampeded toward me and lifted me up in the air (with the help of Jeremy, J. J., and Peke, of course)!

“You’re our hero, Becca!” everyone shouted.

It was very hard for me to say goodbye to everyone. I hugged all of the creatures that I had saved, then turned to Peke and J. J. I never liked to cry in public! I clenched my teeth firmly, trying to hold back the tears, but they suddenly spilled down my cheeks like a warm waterfall.

“J. J, I could have never done this without you—you were the real hero. If I didn’t know that certain plants and vines had magical powers, I would never had been able to save everyone,” I said through tears as I wrapped my arms around him.

“Don’t cry, Becca. You are the real hero—the only magical power that you had to use was your heart,” J. J. said, pointing at my heart.

“I’ll never forget you,” I said as I hugged J. J. for the last time.

Then, Peke shyly stepped toward me, his lip wavering. “I-I’m going to m-miss you Becca,” he said.

“Oh, I’m going to miss you, too, Peke,” I said as I held him tightly. “Goodbye, Peke, I will always think of you,” I called after him.

Jeremy said his sorrowful good-byes as well. Then we two heroes walked hand in hand, through the moonlight, and safely back home.

# JULIE'S ADVENTURE

*It's not easy to change, especially when it means putting your complete trust in another. One girl confronts this situation in JULIE'S ADVENTURE, by Olive Smith.*

Sixteen-year-old Julie strolled along the pathway home, intensely clasping an old leash tied to a German collie with mud brown spots and blinding white fur. This gorgeous dog's name was Murphy. Murphy was trained to protect Julie from any harm.

As Murphy trotted along with his tail between his legs, Julie was surprised by the fact that she had to use a "useless dog" instead of a wonderful red-tipped cane. Julie gave a nasty glance at Murphy in disappointment. Julie thought of how unpredictable the dog could be. She was uncertain if she could trust her new partner despite what the trainer had said.

"I would trust this dog with my life" had said an old man with a throaty voice.

Julie had mixed feelings. She felt like she was the luckiest person on earth, yet she felt like it was going to be the worst day of her life. The good news was she was taking a trip to the highest and the coldest part of Maine on a bus that was especially designed for blind people and their seeing-eye dogs. The bad news was why she was going there: she was in the Blind School Academy and was taking the "finding a shelter in the wilderness" test. Julie felt that the Blind School Academy was just wasting their time by giving a quiz instead of mountain climbing or bike riding. Julie inhaled her breath with disgust. Julie walked the rest of the way home thinking about the trip to the tip of Maine.

Julie and Murphy arrived back home just in time to leave for the bus. Julie skipped inside with an “I’m the luckiest girl in the world” impression. Her mother came up to her and gave Julie a tight squeeze.

“My sweet, it’s time to go,” she said softly.

When they arrived at the Blind Star bus, her mother dropped her off and waved goodbye. Julie slowly walked over to where everybody was crowding around the instructor.

“I will give a short quiz, as you all know, on how to find a shelter in the wilderness. This test will take place at the tip of Maine. It will only take us one hour to get there.” She paused and smiled cheerfully at the five waiting students. “You needn’t worry because there will be a guide behind you due to circumstances of safety,” reassured the instructor. “The quiz is only five miles long.” Julie heard the loud large steps of the instructor walk up a few stairs of the bus. “Your first task is to find the stairs and have a seat on the bus,” bellowed the instructor with a “mystical magician” laugh.

Julie boarded the bus with the other five grunting students, and settled in a soft, feathery, comfy cushion. The bus began to move with the low sound of the engine, and the gentle tug of the bus. In a minute, the bus roared with incredible power into the open road, swinging this way and that as if an elephant had been doing the “YMCA” with the Blind Star bus. Eventually the bus was going in a slow and gentle pace that made a soothing lullaby in Julie’s ears. Julie soon fell into a deep slumber.

When Julie awoke she heard Murphy’s loud snoring and the soft thumping of his smooth, delicate tail. The open window pushed with force an icy, frigid breeze into Julie’s blank face. A chill ran down her throat like water being shoved into her mouth with full force. Julie was trembling in her shoes, and her face was all uptight.

The bus suddenly came to a stop. “We’re here!” cried out the instructor with an eerie clown voice. Julie imagined the instructor as a red-nosed clown with big floppy shoes and polka-dotted

clothes. Julie giggled softly to herself, finding the clown idea hilarious.

The instructor generously gave the nervous students a pack of food before they left the Blind Star bus.

The Blind School Academy students were just about to begin the quiz. As soon as the instructor said, "You may begin," Murphy went like a race car zooming through the trail, pulling Julie's trembling feet with ease.

All was fine until what sounded like a fire-breathing dragon snarled as loud as a screeching siren. Murphy's ears were pointing as straight as a needle's sharp point.

Julie commanded "Fight" without thinking, which caused the leash to slip out of her hand. Murphy went forward as fast as a speeding bullet. Murphy growled louder and more terrifyingly than the large-sounding snarl ahead. Julie stepped back silently, leaving Murphy and the mysterious creature alone.

Eventually Murphy's growling could not be heard anymore. Julie crawled on hands and knees, sadly thinking of where Murphy could be. Julie mournfully hollered out Murphy's name and, sure enough, after a few minutes, the sound of Murphy's trotting on the hard, solid ground put a great sign of happiness on Julie's face. Murphy returned gleefully to Julie's side.

Murphy went along as a guide dog again peacefully until Julie heard a low rumble. The sound was as piercing as a swarm of vivacious killer bees. Julie thought her eardrum would blow any minute if the noise didn't cease. Julie felt dizzy and started saying things that made no sense whatsoever. Murphy was pushing Julie inch by inch, until Murphy led Julie into a stone-built house with an odd looking chimney on top.

Julie heard the instructor cry out, "She succeeded." After Julie heard the good news, she sat on the floor and hugged Murphy to sleep.

# THE KIDNAPPING

*When two people's lives are turned upside down by a gang of criminals, it is up to one to save the other. THE KIDNAPPING, by Pike Waters, pits good against evil amid deadly circumstances.*

One day, Jan was in the kitchen and John was at work, when there was a crash. Five men had just kicked down the patio door. As they began chasing Jan, she grabbed the phone to call 911. The phone was out of order. The guys chased her through the house, knocking the couch and chairs over, smashing vases, and even throwing a chair at Jan, which missed and hit the computer monitor. They caught Jan just before she reached the front door. They covered her up and put her in a sack, and ran out of the house with her. Then Pike, the leader of the group, put her in a car trunk and drove away.

When John got home at about 8:00 P.M., four hours after the kidnapping, he was stunned by all the damage. John panicked and frantically started screaming for Jan. After she didn't answer, he was shaking with fear, realizing something bad had happened to her. That's when John found a note on the half-wrecked coffee table, which said, "Dear John, we have your wife and we won't hurt her if you give us \$50,000 by noon tomorrow! NO COPS! If we even suspect you involved the police we will KILL your wife! Meet my friend Mike at the park down the street at 12:00 P.M. with the money. Be wearing a blue ball cap and red shirt. Your worst nightmare, Pike."

So before John went to look for her he went to the bank. He found the bank already closed. John decided to head home and wait for the bank to open in the morning.

He went into the bank when it opened to see if he had enough money in his account. He did not have enough, so he asked the banker what he had left on his credit cards.

While John waited, he went to the restroom to see if there was something to use to help get his wife back. He found a toilet plunger. John took the black rubber end off and put the remaining wooden handle up his sleeve, and walked out of the restroom.

To John's surprise, the banker wasn't back from doing the credit card check. So John stole an envelope opener from the banker's desk, and some money sacks.

John found the banker and told him to forget the rest of the credit card check, and left. When John came out he hopped in his red Jeep, and was off to the park.

John got to the park and waited, half upset, half scared, on a bench. Then a car pulled up and a man shoved John into the car. "You have the money?" the man asked. John, fearing for Jan's safety, told him yes and gave him the money sacks. The sack contained newspaper John had cut up and placed in the money sacks. The man put the bag on the back seat.

The guy duct-taped John to the front seat and put tape across his mouth, legs, and arms. The guy had black hair, blue eyes, and a scar near his left eye.

While the car was on a bumpy dirt road, John, knowing he had to do something, slipped down and slowly got the envelope opener out of his shoe. Quickly, John cut himself loose. John took out the wooden handle from his sleeve, and hit the man in the head.

The man lost control of the car, and hit a telephone pole. John threw the man out of the car. John got out. Like a madman, he pinned Mike down and made him tell him where Pike was. Pike was at a rest stop about 40 miles away.

To John's surprise, the car still worked after hitting the telephone pole so hard. John drove off, leaving Mike duct-taped to a tree off the road a few hundred feet.



When John had gone about 20 miles he heard a siren and a police car was right behind him. John, trying to make back time that he lost fighting with Mike, had been speeding. John looked down and saw he was going 85 miles an hour on a 55 miles an hour road. He then pulled over.

Remembering what Pike said in the note, he kept quiet about Jan. The officer said he was going way too fast. All the time John was hoping no one saw him and Mike fight. John got a speeding ticket for \$95.00. Then the police officer said, "Good day," and drove away. John drove the remaining 20 miles to the rest stop where Mike had told him to go, hoping it wasn't too late!

When John got to the rest stop he saw a couple of men talking and overheard the men say "Pike." Then John heard where they were going. But from where he was hiding he couldn't make out faces. He heard which semi Pike would be driving.

Crawling on his hands and knees from truck to truck, John found Pike's semi. He looked in the semi's driver and passenger seats for something that could help. He found nothing that could help, so he checked the glove compartment. There, buried beneath the owner manual and old candy wrappers, John found a pistol.

Hearing someone coming, he quickly scurried to the back of the semi trailer. To his luck the door was open, so he climbed in and dove under some suitcases. Before he knew it they had shut the door and started the semi.

Each hour that passed seemed longer than the one before it. It was about four hours later when the semi eased to a stop. They had put the semi in a barn and began to take out the first part of the suitcases and other things, such as crates and boxes. While the men stacked the suitcases and other things on the side of the barn, John leaped out and hid behind some crates. John still had the gun.

John watched as the men pulled something out from the under-storage. John held his breath, hoping it was Jan. John was very thankful and relieved to see Jan, still unharmed. Then they pulled up a mat on the floor and opened a secret door. Pike put Jan in a

secret room below. He came back up and put a lock on the door, and put the mat back on top. Pike said it was time to eat, so they headed for the farmhouse.

John came out of his hiding spot and tried to get the door open to the room below, but the lock wouldn't give. John knocked on the door to get Jan's attention. He told her to be calm and that everything would be all right. Then he decided he was going to have to go inside the house and look for the keys.

He snuck into the house. He didn't see or hear anyone. He kept going through the house, but couldn't find the keys. He decided to go back to the barn and try to shoot the lock off. When he got to the barn he checked the pistol for shells. There were only two rounds in the gun. He told Jan to get away from the door. She said, "Okay," and moved.

John, taking careful aim, fired a shot and missed. With sweat streaming down his face he again aimed the gun on the lock. His bullet found its mark and the lock blew to pieces.

He reached down and pulled his wife out. She said she was fine and extremely glad to see him! But they still had to find a way out.

They cracked the front barn door. John, knowing Pike and his men would have heard the shots, was not surprised when he saw them leaving the house and heading for the barn. John and Jan barricaded the barn door. John and Jan noticed a window, so they climbed up the stacked suitcases and looked out. They saw the men getting into their cars and Pike getting into his pickup. They were surrounding the barn.

John went to the semi and saw that Pike had left the keys in the ignition. John yelled to Jan, "Let's get out of here," and she climbed into the semi as John started the engine. He put the semi in gear and drove right through the back barn wall, hitting a car on the way out. The rest of the cars started to chase after them.

The first one tried to cut off the semi: bad idea. The semi drove right over the car. The second one got run off the road. The last one, which Pike was driving, was right behind them. Pike took

out a gun and started shooting the semi's tires until they were all flat.

The semi came to a stop as it hit a side rail on the bridge. The side rail broke as Pike pushed the semi with his pickup truck. The semi was now hanging half off the bridge, resting against some small trees and bushes.

John told Jan to stay in the semi. John said, "Try to sit very still. I'll be back for you."

John got out of the driver's window, climbed up the side of the semi and across the top of the trailer. John jumped down and snuck up on Pike and pushed him out of the truck he was driving.

The semi started to slip as the trees and bushes started to crack under the weight. John and Pike fought furiously on the bridge. Meanwhile, the semi continued to slip. Pike knocked John against the guardrail. As Pike leaped at John, John ducked, causing Pike to go sailing over the rail and down into the river below.

John screamed to Jan, "I'm coming for you!" as he climbed to the cab. John pulled Jan through the window. They climbed up the side of the semi and onto the bridge just before the semi fell crashing into the water.

Jan was crying and hugging John as she told him about her relationship with Pike. Pike had been an old boyfriend who never got over her dumping him. Pike swore that someday he would get even with her. But Jan never believed it, until today.

## LIFEGUARD ON DUTY

*Summer camp offers the chance to bond with friends through shared activities. LIFEGUARD ON DUTY, by Marissa K, relates how one girl's camp experience has even more far-reaching results.*

You never know when a just-for-fun experience may come in handy sometime in your life. For me, participating in a fun activity at camp made me a life saving heroine. Who would've guessed?

This is how it all began. I, Lizzie Cameron, sat cross-legged on my top bunk in cabin #6 jotting down a letter to my older sister, Sammi, back at home. I had been at camp for two weeks already and was still homesick. I really missed my mom and dad, little brother Joe, and Sammi. I had two more weeks to go until the session ended.

"Okay, you lazy campers, rest time is over in five. Get ready for choice hour," my counselor Rachel informed the 12 fifth-grade girls in my cabin. "Lizzie and Erica, remember to slip on your bathing suits. You two are going to Kinneret for lifesaving lessons." Erica was my best friend in the whole world, whom I came to camp with. Initially, I didn't particularly want to do Kinneret, but Erica did and I really wanted to do something with her, so I compromised. I think horseback riding would have been a bit more exciting, but Kinneret was really working out. Oh, and the best part of all was (at the end) we got to jump off the blob tower. You know, the blob, the enormous, pillow-shaped float that you jump onto and fly into the water? Well, they take away the blob and just leave the tower and we spring off of it.

Camp started to go by pretty quickly and Erica, Lynn, and I (Lynn was our new friend from lifesaving) were getting to be skilled

lifesavers. By then I proudly knew all about hypothermia, and how to do a unique lifesaving straddle jump, which was my favorite skill to do. We swam a few laps in our clothes, and tried to make a life jacket out of our pants. It was so cool, “cool” meaning chilly and meaning exciting! By then, camp was primarily over. That evening we got to jump off the tower.

It was a nippy, shivery, dismal evening. I watched Erica and Lynn climb the tower ahead of me. I was last only because I was the fraidy cat of the three of us! “I made it this far,” I thought. I was looking forward to this moment for so long. Why was I all of a sudden so frightened?

I pushed myself up the ladder with my heart beating as fast as ever. I was at the top of the ladder, which was shaking back and forth, back and forth—or maybe it was my nauseated self. What if I get stuck in that gross seaweed? What if I go down too deep? Why hadn’t I thought of this before? Erica and Lynn were up the ladder and up for action.

“One, two, three,” Erica jumped down. She gracefully hit the water and was back up in five seconds.

“Hey, that wasn’t bad,” I admitted out loud and cheered for her. Splash! Lynn hit the water perfectly. Then it was my turn. I crossed my arms and plugged my nose like I had learned to do.

“Ready?” the instructor asked confidently.

“Yeah,” I answered, really meaning the opposite. “Go for it,” I kept telling myself. And I went for it. Before I knew it, I was back on the surface of the lake swimming to the side. Everyone cheered for me. I was so proud of myself. I did it.

I went home from camp the next day. Before my story continues, a whole year must go by. So press fast forward, please.

The next summer I was in Rome, Italy. I decided—well, make that “my parents chose”—that that summer I’d be going to Europe on a family trip. It sounded great, but there was a catch: I had to miss camp that summer. Well, anyway, I was there; my brother Joe, mom, dad, and sis Sammi, were all there, too, at the Aurora

Hotel pool. Oh, and my brother's best bud, Danny, was there; he came with us, which was really nice of my parents to allow.

I rubbed sun screen on my arms. I finally got to wear my hot pink tankini bathing suit. I read a sign by the uncrowded octagon shaped pool—NO LIFEGUARD ON DUTY. SWIM AT YOUR OWN RISK. Hey, I'm a lifeguard. A junior one, at least. I had made up my mind not to go to the pool yet, but to read my Teen magazine (printed in Italian), when I heard a scream.

"Oh, Joe and Danny, stop joking around," I thought, extremely annoyed, but they wouldn't stop. I put my magazine down to say, "Shut up already," when I realized that they weren't joking, they were serious. Danny was literally drowning. My frightened brother was screaming for help.

I straddle-jumped in the water wearing my sunglasses and all. I swam faster and faster until I reached the hopeless-looking Danny. I dragged him to the pool side, being sure not to let him take me under like I learned last summer. My frantic parents picked Danny up out of the water and were screaming, "Danny, are you all right? Say something!" Then Danny coughed up like a gallon of water and opened his confused eyes.

"What's going on?" he mumbled. The kid was okay.

That's when it hit me: I was a real lifesaver! I was a hero; well, a heroine. My lifeguarding skills really paid off in the end.

# LOST

*In an instant, everything can change. LOST, by C. J. Time, is a boy's tale of grappling with the elements for his very life.*

It was going to be another trip out to the Boy Scout Jamboree. I was a part of Troop 968. We all lived in the bottom right corner of Colorado. The city was Dove Creek, which was right on the raging Colorado River. During our meetings on Thursday night we were talking about sending our highest-ranked scouts to the jamboree. I was one of the scouts that was chosen to go to it. I was an Eagle Scout then. An Eagle Scout is the highest kind of scout that there is. I couldn't wait to go. It sounded like a very tough adventure. There were five of us going on the trip. We were going to take a big bus to the Painted Desert, and it would drive us back.

The date was set for April 12. I was ready for anything. I had packed my waterproof watch to know the time in eight different states. I had packed my waterproof pants and jacket. I had a zero degree sleeping bag just in case it got cold. The interior of the bag was wonderful. It was down with a great felt inside while the outside was nylon so if it rained, I would still be dry. The color was a cool blue on the outside while the inside was a nasty gray. I had three water bottles just in case other people needed some or I lost one. I had eight pairs of socks and three of these were wool. I had two pairs of hiking boots, and both were waterproof. I had eight shirts, four pants and two hats, three pairs of gloves and two neck warmers with thick velvet lining. I had two pairs of snow pants and one pair of snow boots. I had a tent. It was about six feet tall, and it was ten feet wide. The thing could fit about six people in it if you pushed.

The next day I was standing outside of my high school. I was waiting for the bus. I couldn't believe it. The bus was about 80 feet long. I thought to myself that this couldn't be true because my parents only paid 50 dollars for the trip. I thought that the inside must look like the inside of a trash can. I was totally wrong. The inside had wonderful fluffy purple chairs, and it looked like it was brand new because it was sparkling. It had a TV for every row. I threw my stuff in the back. I sat down in the 12<sup>th</sup> row and started drifting away and eventually fell asleep until we got there.

It was about 5:00 P.M. when we got there so we really didn't do much. Four other guys and I set up the tent, and we played card games in it until they said lights out at ten. We went to bed with hopes for a good day of climbing.

The Cascades were magnificent. The sunrise was coming over the eastern part of the valley. The Cascades had heaps of brown in them; the brown was a deep dark kind of brown that was soothing to look at. The mountains had little hints of green that were splinter-spattered all over them. The green was so light and sharp it looked like knives going into somebody's back. There wasn't a hint of a cloud in the sky, just the blue yonder. We were going to hike nine miles the first day, nine miles the second day, and five miles the third day.

We started off hiking around six in the morning. It wasn't very harsh in the beginning, but it sure got harder later in the day. The mountains got steeper with every step you took. It was so dry that when you took a step and lifted your foot up you had made a mini avalanche.

One time one of my friends fell. It didn't look that bad, but then he started rolling. Soon he was going so fast that he left huge dust clouds behind him. When he rolled, he would bounce some because of all of the rocks in the way. His face was dripping in sweat, and his eyes were shut. His leg was getting bigger by the second. This was because it was swelling. I dropped my backpack and started running towards him. I ran with a limp that looked like I was missing a leg. My laces were loose, but I didn't care. All



I knew was that my friend was about to fall off the edge of a mountain. He was about to fall off and plunge 400 feet to his death. So I did the last thing I could think of doing: diving. I crouched down and sprung up with all of my force. I grabbed onto him with all of my might. We were about to fall off, but I grabbed onto a rock, and we slid to a stop right before we plunged. When I was able to see him, he had passed out, but was still breathing. We gave him some water, and he was taken out of the place by a helicopter.

The rest of the day was pretty effortless. The second day was a little different. On the second day we were hiking around a waterfall in a different valley. When the water came down, it hit the rocks and sent a smooth powder of water onto our faces. The clouds were gloomy overhead, and the humidity was horrible. Sweat was dripping from our faces, and all we wanted to do was let our aching bones take a rest before they gave in on us. It didn't look like great conditions to be hiking.

Then the rain started to pour on us. We put on our rain stuff and kept hiking. The silvery rain kept falling, and when it fell on you, it made your back chill because it was so bitter. We hiked about five more miles, and then we had to stop because three people were worn out. We found a shelter where we set up camp and made a fire.

The shelter was dark and scary with spider webs all over the place. They had spider webs in the corners of the shelter and on the walls. You couldn't help getting your face into one. When you did, it felt like plastic melting on your face, and you most likely swallowed the web. When you stepped on the wooden boards, they cracked and made an eerie sound. I didn't like the place, and I was really restless, and I wanted to go out on my own for a little and explore. It was still raining, but I didn't care. I had my flare just in case I got in a bad situation, and I had all of my gear.

I started hiking down into the valley. It was a little slippery because of the mud, but I was fine. I was coming down to a really sharp slope, and then I needed to make a left turn or I would fall

off of the cliff. My boots were wet, and I was sliding all over the place, but I wanted to go on. I was walking down to the slope fine until I hit a rock and, boom: I was sliding face first off the cliff.

The mud was splashing into my face so I couldn't see anything at all. To make things worse, when I fell, I hit a rock on the side of my jaw, and it seemed to be broken because I couldn't move it. I was getting water down my chest. I was starting to get cold and shaking. I then found a rock, and I thought I had grabbed onto it, but the mud and the force took my grip away from me. I fell.

I saw my life flash before my eyes because it was almost impossible for me to survive a fall of 200 feet into granite rock. As I was about to hit the ground, I nicked a tree. I started to do flips, and all of my stuff came out of my bag.

I landed in a 10-foot deep pond. The pond water was dirty and brown. When I hit the water, I swallowed a big gulp of water, and it made my stomach feel sick. My legs were shaking and my arms were weak so I was shaking all over. As I was getting out, I realized that nobody knew where I was. So I pulled myself up and went into a cave. I started to cry. I was so scared that I would die out here. I was cold, I was weak, and I was hungry. My mental state of mind was shut down with little to no hope of opening the doors up again. Then I threw up because of the water. Again I started to cry.

In the cave I was raving for food and warmth. I had to take everything in my pack out and let it dry because it was soaking wet. I also tried to see if I still had my flare, and I did. I looked in my pack to see if my mom had packed anything that I didn't know about. No, there was nothing at all. So for the rest of the time I just slept.

The next morning was even worse. It was raining even harder, and the river was rising. I could tell that the people were looking for me because I could hear them shouting. The only problem was that there was an overhang, and the only thing that you could see from the top was that river. I tried to shout back, but I had broken my jaw in the fall. I had to think of a way to let them know I was

alive, but I was too hungry to think clearly. I decided to look around for food. I was very lucky that there were berries around the corner, and I feasted on them.

I was moving so slowly that the time had passed, and it was now about three in the afternoon. The rain had finally stopped, and I went outside. It was now dry enough to use the flare so I loaded it. I was so intense when I pulled the trigger, and it didn't work. I cried, but then I realized that I didn't take the safety off. I shot it and prayed that the people saw it.

The next day the river had risen. It was coming into my cave. I was getting worried that they would never come. Maybe they didn't see the flare after all. My food supply had run out. It was ten degrees, and all of my stuff was still wet. Actually all of my stuff had frost in it because it got so cold that night. I just bundled up in the corner until I was pretty warm.

I had some rope and some pitons to climb with so I tried to do that. I started out on the flattest part of the overhang because I was astonishingly weak. When I got to about 30 feet, my legs were trembling, and my arms were starting to shake. I couldn't make it. I was sick to my stomach and was going to throw up. After about 40 feet of climbing I had to quit. Those 40 feet took me three hours. It took me so long because I was puny. By the time I got down, it was seven, and I had to go to bed.

The next morning when I woke up, I had a terrible crick in my neck. I heard a loud noise. Bits and pieces of debris were flying into my face, and I saw this thing hovering over the river. It was the helicopter! It had come to get me. The only problem was that the river was overflowing, and the water was six feet high and growing. The copter sent down a trained professional to get me. I was relieved at the sight of the person. The only problem was that he was caught in the current and was stuck to a rock. I now had only one choice to make, and so I decided to climb the rock to get to the height of the helicopter and jump onto it. This was very risky, but it was the only thing I was able to do.

I lashed the rope to the mountain, and tied myself to the other end. I tried with all my might to get a good grip on the loose clay rock. I climbed and climbed and finally made it 40 feet high. I cut the rope so I could throw it to the helicopter, and then hopefully they would be able to pull me in. My fingers were slipping and my stomach was hurting and churning because I hadn't had anything to eat in two days.

The first time the rope didn't make it to the helicopter. The second time I tied the rope to a rock, I threw it with all of my might, and as I threw it, I lost my balance and fell.

I thought that I was in heaven because when I opened my eyes there were shiny lights right on me. Really I was in the Colorado State Hospital. I had a punctured lung and some broken ribs. I also had a broken jaw, but I was alive. Then the nurse let me take a shower. Oh boy, it felt so good to be steamed and get my hair in nice hot water. Then I went back to the bed and went to sleep.

In the end I made it, but barely. I was really lucky. So now I know, and you know, that you never want to hike alone.

# LOST IN THE AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK

*In a typical day, a person makes countless choices which don't seem to have much of an impact on his or her life. LOST IN THE AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK, by Sam Molnar, relates a series of decisions which have important consequences for a young man's existence.*

“Wait up!” Aaron screamed to Bob, Joey and Mike as he rapidly threw on his Jewish star necklace. It was so early in the morning that the sky looked like peaches, and neither the birds nor the crickets were awake.

His friends and he were hiking the treacherous Australian Outback. At noon they decided to take a break and eat lunch. As Bob and Joey cooked lunch over a propane stove, Mike and Aaron went out to explore a little bit more.

As they were walking around the top of a cliff, Aaron and Mike roughhoused for some fun. But Aaron stumbled over a rock by the edge and fell right off the cliff!

About 17 hours later, Aaron awoke disoriented and confused. Then suddenly he recognized his surroundings and remembered his fall. He quickly thanked god that he landed in bushes and was only bruised and scratched. He quickly looked down at his watch; it was 8:00 in the morning. He realized that his friends were gone. **THEY THOUGHT HE WAS DEAD!** He knew that to survive he needed his pack. He looked up and started to climb . . . without ropes.

After almost slipping what seemed like countless times, he finally made it to the top and looked down at how far he had

fallen. "No wonder they didn't try to come down and get me," he muttered under his breath. He saw his pack and screamed out loud, "Yes, they left it! He quickly grabbed his pack and thought, "All I need is shelter, food, and water." He found a soft spot in the ground, pulled out his sleeping bag, and soon he was sleeping like a baby.

He awoke to a strange sound almost like an out-of-control blender, then he realized it was a helicopter. He scrambled out of his sleeping bag and screamed, "Help! Help me!" He waved his arms rapidly and jumped up and down, but it didn't land, and he knew it wasn't coming back.

He had just set up camp and decided to see if there were any shellfish in the river by his campsite. He quickly leaped into the water and opened his eyes, and what he saw made his whole mind shut down . . .

It was an alligator! Instantly the alligator jolted at him and Aaron was forced to wrestle the alligator. He had been fighting for what seemed like hours. Then suddenly he thought to himself, "The Jewish star." He grabbed it and instinctively stabbed the alligator between his eyes. The alligator slowly sank to the bottom, and Aaron was able to get his shellfish. Just as he was throwing the shellfish in his small fire he saw them: the weird people with rings in their noses, the people who . . . are they people? "AHHHHH!" he screamed . . .

It was three years later. "A-rain, A-rain, A-rain. Someone is here for you. Quickly come to the trading post." He heard the sounds of a helicopter. He sleepily dragged himself outside, to what he thought it was, a helicopter . . .

"Aaron Rosenbaum?"

"Yes, that's me," he said, confused. He realized that they had found him, and in shock he fainted. He woke up in the medicine house and saw the man.

"Are you ready to leave?" the man asked.

"Can I think about it?" Aaron said with a straight face.

"Yes," he replied.

"Can I have some time to think about it?"

The man thought for a second and said, "Yes, of course."

"Over a month," Aaron said pleadingly

"All right," the man said, exasperated. "I'll be back in a month," said the man as he left the medicine house.

Soon the time had come to make his decision. "A-rain, A-rain, A-rain, they're back. Oh please, don't go," exclaimed his new Aborigine friend Jabar.

"Don't worry," Aaron said sleepily, "don't worry."

This time it was a different person in the helicopter: a woman in a long skirt. "Okay, hop on the chopper!" the woman said excitedly.

"Okay." He wasn't very excited.

As they were flying in the air something came over Aaron like never before. "I DON T WANT TO GO BACK!" he screamed wildly.

"You must," said the lady.

The captain calmed her down and said, "Are you sure you don't want to go back?"

"Yes, I'm positive."

"But people have been looking so long and hard for you. And—"

"I'm not going back whether you like it or not," Aaron interrupted.

"But you don't underst—"

"I don't care what you think," exclaimed Aaron. "I m going back there, to Jabar and all my other Aborigine friends."

"All right, fine," sighed the man. "We'll go back," and then he said to Aaron, "We're going back and landing this chopper."

As the helicopter landed Aaron talked to the captain. "Tell my parents I was gone when you landed here," Aaron said as he walked back towards his house. "I don't want them to think that I love these people more than them."

"All right," said the captain as he hopped on the helicopter and flew into the same orange sky there had been the morning before Aaron got *lost in the Australian Outback*.

# A NIGHTMARE AT SEA

*Add one unanticipated event to an otherwise normal day, and the consequences can be severe. A NIGHTMARE AT SEA, by Jonathan Koshewitz, turns a perfect day into a perfect catastrophe.*

I had just turned thirteen years old. My dad and I were going on a fishing trip for my birthday. I thought we were going to have so much fun. I was so excited. But little did I know what was in store for me.

We got on the boat. I thought about all the fish we were going to catch. I love fishing. It's so nice and relaxing.

I was so anxious to get to the fishing spot. It seemed like two hours instead of only ten minutes. We let out our lines and set them in the rod holder. It always takes a while to catch a fish, but I don't mind. I just sit back, relax, maybe have a soda and wait for a fish to bite.

I had just gotten a new fishing rod for my birthday and was so happy to try it out. We were using small pieces of fish for bait. That usually works best.

My dad and I started talking about how many presents I'd gotten for my birthday. Then, all of a sudden, we had a bite. A huge bite! It was on my pole so I picked up my rod out of the holder. This had to be the biggest fish I'd ever caught in my life. The pole bent all the way down to the water. I was sure that it was a halibut because they usually give up the biggest fights. Boy, was I wrong.

It was almost twenty minutes before it came to the surface so that we could see it. First, we saw the dark, gray fin. It was like an



Arabian sword sticking out of the water. Then we saw its big, fiery eyes. It only took us that long to know that it was a shark!

It felt like my stomach came up through my throat and out my mouth and into the water. I was so happy. I got it about three feet away from the boat. We were about to let it go when he leaped up out of the water like an airplane and snapped the line. I sat back down all out of breath.

I went to go get a soda. I was about to reach into the cooler when I saw it. It was huge, about eighty feet high. It was light blue. It was like a giant's mouth coming to gobble us up. I hid in the bathroom at the bottom of the boat. Then it hit us.

It was like two drag racers crashing head on at 250 miles per hour. The boat started twisting, turning, and rolling over under the giant wave. Then, we stopped. It was like falling out of a ten-story building and falling on your face onto the pavement below.

I heard nothing but the chirping of birds. I got out of the boat and saw that the boat had washed up on an island. I was so scared. I started searching for my dad. He was nowhere to be found. Realizing I was all alone, I decided to take the ax and tool set out of the boat.

I found a tall, old oak tree that had good branches to make a shelter. Taking the ax, I decided to chop down some wood out of some maple trees that were out by the shoreline. I hauled the lumber on some palm branches lying by the water. This was a good sign, because now I knew that I had plenty of coconuts to eat. With the tools from the tool box, I built a tree house. It took me about six hours to make it, but it was well worth it after the rewarding shade cooled me down.

As I was lying there, I started to think about all the good times I had with my dad. We played baseball, basketball, football, and even went fishing every once in a while. Now all these good times were shattered, like throwing a brick into a glass window.

I ran into a new surprise every day. One day I was gathering coconuts when I ran into a tiger. It's a good thing I was on the

track team at school. I scampered back up the tree house before he could catch me.

With the ax, I cut down about seven more trees for a signal fire. Then I heard something. At first I thought it was another tiger. No, wait. It's a plane! I'm finally rescued!

They sent down a rope ladder. I started climbing up, but then it snapped! I was falling and falling, closer and closer to the waves below.

Then something really weird happened. I was in my bedroom.

I went into my parents' bedroom. My parents were both sound asleep. I was relieved. It was all a nightmare, "a nightmare at sea."

# THE RACE

*Can something as unique as a dogsled race ever be predictable? THE RACE, by Erica Fogelman, makes its way through the wilds of Alaska with a team of dogs that is unusual from the start.*

This is a story of a special group of dogs. They're on a race. It's a two week race in Alaska. The dogs were from all over the world, and there were five teams with three dogs on each team. One team was unusually strange because it had no leader.

The dogs' colors were black and white, and one had a black ring around its tail. All the rest looked exactly the same.

The dogs are pretty strange with a stranger. Their temperament is pretty harsh, and they start biting. But if they are with a person they know, they are very good.

They raced about one week over snow mountains and thin ice. At the checkpoint line, they were hungry because they had not eaten in one week. They found some burnt food on the ground somebody had thrown away, so they started eating.

After the checkpoint, they followed the trail and it led to somebody's backyard. They smelled food and they went onto the deck and started scratching at the door of the house. Somebody looked outside and said, "Hey, those are the dogs that are on the dog sled race." Imogene said to his wife Rosa, "Looks like they need a leader. I guess they found the right person. I'll be their master. And I'll put my five Siberian huskies on also: Little Dipper, Domino, Wizer, Spotty, and Kirby."

They all joined the team. They were happy so they started to run again, but then they ran on thin ice and slipped and slid.

Wizer got his paws frozen from slipping and sliding, but he still continued on the ice.

Soon he got ice bricks on his paws and couldn't run anymore. The dog ambulance came. They took a bucket of hot water and poured it over Wizer's paws. The bricks of ice melted and Wizer could run again.

The dogs ran for 30 minutes. Then they found a dog with a broken paw that got left from the other team. So they put him on the sled and carried him with them. Finally his paw got better, so they kept him. His name is Dipstick.

The master said, "Let's keep running and not stop." So they kept on the trail. They raced and raced for one other week. They got to the checkpoint, and never stopped. They finally got to the finish line. They came in first place.

# RACHEL'S DIARY

*Start with a sleepover. Add an unexpected guest. Continue with a game of Truth or Dare. In RACHEL'S DIARY, by Rachel Piliawsky, the result is two friends' unanticipated journey into strange circumstances..*

**Saturday, March 17, 2001:** Boy, did I have a weird party last night. It all started when my best friend Michelle and I were having a sleepover. Somehow, my next door neighbor's mom had to work, so her daughter had to sleep over, too. I'd rather eat broccoli than have Jessica sleep over. I was *so* mad when my mom told me that I stormed off to my room. It was only supposed to be Michelle and I, not Jessica. She would ruin it.

First we had a snack, soda and chips. Then we played ping pong . I won! After a while, Jessica said we should play Truth or Dare. We played for about half an hour until my friend got picked. Jessica dared Michelle to go to the haunted house. Of course, Michelle *did* as she was told. She went. This was the beginning of Not Good! I told her not to go, but knowing Michelle, she did as she got dared.

I walked up the porch stairs of this old house with her. I saw an ugly welcome mat in front of the door. All Michelle had to do was ring the bell and run, but before she could ring the bell, we both fell through the mat and down a chute. It was not that far a fall, but it was far enough for me. I had had it with Jessica's stupid tricks. It was amazing how she pulled off this one.

Michelle and I had fallen into a long tunnel. We walked for about an hour. Luckily, I had my four-digit watch on. It read 8:00. We were supposed to be home by 9:00 or my mom would

have a hissy fit. I thought to myself, what would I do for a flashlight or a cell phone right that second! Jessica's plan had finally worked!

We walked for ages. By now it was way past my bedtime and Michelle's. You would think that Jessica would tell somebody that we were there. I mean, we had been there for ages. By now my mom should have checked my room to see what we were doing. Wouldn't she send out a search party when she found out we were gone? I kept expecting *somebody* to come and find us, but we were still alone. We stopped walking and sat down. You could tell it was getting late, because Michelle was snoring and I kept falling a..s..l..e..e..p . . . .

The next thing I knew, I woke up. I checked my watch. It was Saturday morning. I had been there all night. So had Michelle. We decided to try to get out. It got colder and colder and darker and darker. I wasn't so sure that Jessica did this after all. We walked and walked. Michelle and I discovered that we were in a cave. Michelle and I were the only ones down there. I thought I saw something. It was a light. I walked toward it yelling to Michelle to hurry up. She walked toward me crouching like a monkey because she was so tired. Then a tube sucked us up and we landed in my room.

Suddenly I heard Michelle's voice. "Rachel, wake up," she said. "You keep talking in your sleep." Michelle was lying in the bed next to mine. Jessica was asleep across the room, wrapped up in her sleeping bag. I had kicked off my blankets. I was really cold.

"But Michelle," I said, "what about the haunted house?"

"What haunted house?" she asked.

It had all been a dream after all. Or had it?

# STRANDED

*It should be the perfect Spring Break getaway. But STRANDED, by Ashley Hutchins, throws a group of privileged teens into a world of peril.*

Ah, I broke a nail! The competition just ended and I broke my nail. Now I have to go from my busy schedule, and get it fixed. I don't have time for any of this. Oh yeah, my name is Cary. I'm seventeen, and head of the dance team. My friends and I are about to fly out for Hawaii for Spring Break. School just ended, and we're leaving tomorrow morning. I still have to go shopping, and there's so much to do!

It's going to be so much fun! Three of my girlfriends are going, and my boyfriend and three of his guy friends are going. Oh yeah, my boyfriend's name is Tyler. He's quarterback of Saint High's football team. My buds are Jenna, Casey, and Amy. And they are the three at the top of the dance team. Well, I'm on my way home and off to bed, so excited for the morning.

"Get up, get up." That's how I wake up every morning. Lucy, our head maid, wakes me up like that in the morning. I rolled out of bed. It was three hours before we had to leave. So, I went on the computer, found what I was going to wear, and finished up all the packing, and was finally ready to go.

Later, the limo went to pick everyone up, and we were off to Daddy's private plane. Then we arrived, loaded all the bags, and boarded. We were all in our seats, and it started to take off. I was kind of nervous, like it felt like something was going to happen. I was sitting next to all my friends. I was too embarrassed to tell them that I was nervous. They probably felt the same way, but

you know that always happens to everyone. As I looked out the window, I got really nervous. And it didn't help at all that we were in the middle of nowhere flying over a lot of water and small islands here and there.

I was just talking to my friends, and all of a sudden we started hearing these noises and before we knew it we were heading straight down. Everyone was screaming. And you know what? That was probably one of the scariest moments of my life.

As all the blood rushed to my head, all I could think about were my friends, my family, and I was even questioning my life. I was thinking of what my friends had on their minds. I felt so awful. Luckily, when we were a couple of yards from the ground, we started going straight again. With a big thump, we landed.

When we landed, I ran as fast as I could from the plane. We were all stranded outside, screaming, "Captain, Captain." As we saw him walking out the plane, it blew up. And unbelievably, he died. That was one of the most horrible, gross, and saddest things I have ever seen. Oh yeah, with blood everywhere. Then, the feeling I had was almost like the one I had when we were crashing. And, the feeling of being alone was horrible.

Yeah, I did have all my friends, but I realized it was time for me to take charge and do things for myself. 'Cause, guarantee, we were the only ones on this island. And, we probably would not find much here, either. Everything was left on the plane and was blown up.

We were all so traumatized that we didn't know what to do next or where to go. We were completely in the middle of nowhere. I thought I was going to cry! The first thing that came to our minds was screaming and yelling "help" as loud as we possibly could. But over an hour of that didn't do much good.

Tyler had a watch on and it had been about three or four hours since we crashed. We needed to find some place to go for the night. Who knew what time it would get dark here? We all headed out in different directions to find, you know, pretty much anything.



As we walked around, the only thing in sight were lots of trees, tall and short. It was weird: on some of the trees there were vines connecting some trees. Also there were bushes everywhere, some with berries, black and red. The ground was full of dirt, but there were some patches with grass. There were no flowers or birds to be found. We didn't know what we were possibly going to do. We didn't find anything.

We needed somewhere to sleep, and the boys remembered a camping trip they went on when they were younger, and remembered when they had to make shelter only out of natural things that they could find. So they tried to show us, but we had never been in that kind of situation before. I tried as hard as I could to help them but I just couldn't get it. We just left it up to them. They broke up the branches, laid them against each other and made a teepee thing. Then they laid more twigs and leaves on the top of it. It looked big enough for us four girls, and the guys made another one for them. Inside they put some other leaves and stuff. Finally we were done with our shelter house that we could sleep in, and we were off to find more stuff that we would need.

As we walked more in the middle of the island, we found a great big coconut tree. So we picked some. All we had to do was crack them open, and we could drink from them. I wasn't really a big fan of coconut, but it would have to do for a while. The guys tried it first to make sure that it was okay. It tasted pretty good so we just went on and drank it. That's the only thing we found to drink. We still didn't find anything to eat yet, and we were all so very hungry. We didn't know what to do.

It was getting kind of cold. We weren't exactly wearing enough clothes to stay warm enough. So the guys tried to start a fire. It took three hours, then it finally started. By that time it was getting pretty dark. On the beach, we were all sitting together drinking coconut juice and talking. The beach was beautiful, and the sand was unbelievably shiny and clean. As the sun was setting, the sky turned all the beautiful colors of pink, orange, and a little of purplish blue. It was one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen.

As we were talking, I was thinking, “Are we going to die? Is anyone ever going to find us?” It was getting late, and we were all really tired, so we walked over to our tepees, and lay down to go to sleep. Boy, I can tell you that is the most uncomfortable thing I had ever lain in. But at least we had some place to lie down, and a hot fire outside beneath our feet to keep us nice and warm! So we all said good night and, being really scared, finally fell asleep.

In the morning we woke up and tried to find some water or something. If I drank any more coconut juice, I thought I was going to throw up. As we started walking we saw that the ground was getting wet. We kept following it, and found a stream. We looked at it. It seemed okay to us. There was this log we had to cross if we wanted to keep going. Just my luck, I was wearing very high platform shoes. Everyone crossed the log. It took about a half an hour. But I still needed to cross it. I took a few steps, and in about the middle of the log I fell in the stream.

It wasn't too deep, just a little above my knees. I screamed really loud, but all they did was stand there and laugh at me. Then finally Tyler jumped in, too. Before I knew it, everyone was jumping in. I thought it was so gross, but after awhile I guess it was kind of fun. Gross, but fun. When we were all done and ready to get out, we did find out that it was fresh (I didn't know how fresh it was after we were swimming in it though). We went back to shelter and dried off. We really didn't have anything to dry off with, so we just ran up and down the beach. We did find a fruit tree further in the woods, so we had that and some water for dinner.

I had never really just lain on the beach and watched the sunset at night, but I can tell you it was beautiful! After awhile we all got tired and went to bed. In the morning we all decided that it was time for us to find a way to get back home. We were all thinking of something we could do so someone could see a message from high up. Like what anyone would think, we carved “HELP” in the sand really big. We left it there for most of the day, but eventually the waves washed it away.

We needed more clothes and our little hut we built was getting pretty old and worn out. It had already been four days, and we didn't know how much longer we could survive! Even though the plane had blown up, we still managed to find some parts of it to use. As we were looking around the plane, I saw something that looked like luggage. I went over to see what it was. And it was my bag! How did we miss it? I guess we were so scared that we started running and didn't think of going back. I don't know how it got out. I think when everyone was running, it just got knocked out. I looked in it, and you can't believe what I found! It just happened to be my cell phone.

I was like, "Oh my god, how stupid was I?" Before I called Daddy, I thought about everything that happened, thought about how selfish I was being. So I decided to change.

I ran to everyone and told them what I had found. I called Daddy, and it just happened to get through. I talked to him. He was so worried. He said he had sent everyone out to find me. I didn't know how exactly to explain to him where I was, but he said he would contact everyone immediately and not to worry, but to make a fire, so it would be easier for them to find us. We figured it would take awhile and it was getting kind of late, so we figured we would just go to bed and they would come in the morning.

In the morning they were there to rescue us. We were all crying in happiness that we were found and alive. This was the scariest thing that had ever happened to me. Not the Spring Break that I had in mind. When they came to get us, I felt so bad that my dad and my friends had to worry like that! I know that was definitely not what they had in mind, either! My daddy even noticed how much I had changed. But overall I think I did learn a few things from that, like responsibility and to do more things for other people and myself. And that the world doesn't revolve around me. Bummer!

# THIEF

*When every character in a story is either bad or worse, who comes out on top? THIEF, by Jon Prysok, enters a culture where the criminal becomes the victim.*

There once was a retired car thief named Jack. One day his brother Nick went to do a job. Then the phone rang. Nick picked it up. It was his boss. He said, "I got a job for you. There is a new BMW dealer on 32<sup>nd</sup> Street. You go there and steal the best car they got and *don't mess it up!* Take Dennis with you." He hung the phone up.

"Dennis, let's roll."

"Okay," Dennis said.

They got to the dealer. "I'll get my tools," Nick said. He got a brick out of the trunk. He threw it at the window of the dealership. Glass shattered everywhere. They picked the lock and took off down the road with Nick driving. They took the BMW 740II. They were going 90 miles per hour. Then Nick stopped at a red light. The guy next to him wanted to race. They both took off down the road and the light was still red. Then the guy Nick was racing got pulled over but not him.

He went back to his hideout. They got the car covered, then they heard the cop cars. Everyone got in a car and left. When the cops got there they searched for clues but found nothing.

The next day the boss called Nick's brother and said that his brother blew it. "If you steal 50 cars in 72 hours, he lives. If not, he dies." Jack flew to New York to help. He and his brother met up at a restaurant.

“Nick, you threw a *brick at the window*? That’s like telling the cops, ‘Hey, I’m stealing a car!’ We have to steal 50 cars in 72 hours or you die. So get all your friends to help. We will meet at your garage at 11:50 p.m.”

At the garage, Jack said, “Okay, we have to be back at 1:10. Here are the cars. Nick, you get the Escalade, Lamborghini Countach, and the Lotus. Joe, you get the Boss 302 Charger and the Ferrari. Dennis, you get the Viper, Camaros, and the Mach 1. I will get the GT500 and the rest. Bob, you stay here and X off the cars we get. Let’s get rolling.”

Later: “Okay,” Jack said, “we only need one more car to get and it is 1:05 p.m. I could not get the GT500. I will get it tomorrow.”

“No!” Nick shouted. “You will get it now! I have three hours to live! You get it now!”

Nick’s brother said, “All you guys get these cars to the harbor now. I will get the car.”

A short time later: “Nick, I’m at the car,” Jack said over the phone. “I will be there soon.” Jack got in the car and left for the boat at the bridge. There was road construction blocking his way. Jack saw a tow truck with its ramp up. He went for it. He hit the ramp and got some major air. He hit the ground hard but kept going. He got to the ship where the cars were being loaded.

“You are late!” said the boss.

“You have your cars. So is this thing with my brother over?”

“Sure,” said the boss, then he hit Jack. Nick hit his boss, and Jack kicked him into the water.

“Are you okay, Jack?” Nick asked.

“Yeah, let’s go home.”

# A TRIP ON A CONCORDE

*It should still seem amazing that a heavier-than-air machine can travel through the sky at a speed that is faster than sound. A TRIP ON A CONCORDE, by Patrick Namou, reveals one person's quest to make his dream of flying in such a jet come true.*

When I was a little kid I really liked airplanes. My favorite airplane was the Concorde. I liked Concorde because I liked airplanes that fly at very high speeds. When I was little I dreamed to go on a Concorde. But now I am old enough to travel alone so I am going to France on a Concorde. I am going to France because Concorde only fly to and from France.

It is two days later. Now I am going to find a travel agent to get some tickets to go to France. The travel agent told me the directions to France. First I have to take a 747 jumbo jet to New York. Then at New York I have to take a Concorde all the way to France. That's the fun part! Now since I have my tickets I should get my luggage ready. My plane leaves at 2:30 P.M. Friday.

It is another two days later. Now I am driving to the airport. I am there. They are taking my luggage. While they are doing that, I should get my tickets ready. I am in the airplane now and it's taking off. Finally, I am in a Concorde! The pilots let me see the cockpit. It was interesting. Well, I am going to France. BYE!

# THE UNDERWATER WORLD

*Maybe there is no such thing as a routine trip on a submarine. But a family of adventurers dives unexpectedly into danger in THE UNDERWATER WORLD, by Cory Bones.*

“Greg! Greg!”

“Hold on, Mom!” Hi, I’m Greg. I have a mom and a dad. They’re both scientists who study oceans and seas.

“Greg! Get over here.”

“Coming, Mom.”

“What did you say, young man?” As if I’d said something hideous.

“I said I’m coming.”

“Your dad and I have something to tell you.”

“What is it?”

“We just got a submarine.” My mom sounded so happy. “Would you like to go on our expedition?”

“Oh! Would I ever. I’ll get some food and you guys pack the rest of the stuff we’ll need.”

Before we knew it, we were in the submarine and ready to go.

“Everyone ready?” my dad said.

“Yes,” said mother.

“Then let’s go.”

“All right,” Mom and I agreed.

After ten minutes of looking at the most beautiful fish in the world, we found a cave. “Let’s go in,” I said.

After five minutes in the pitch black cave, we saw an underwater raptor. He was bright green with razor sharp teeth and he swam as fast as a sea serpent. “Let’s take a picture,” I said, “but don’t turn

on the flash. It might scare him.” By accident, Mom turned on the flash and took a picture. The raptor ran us right into a rock. The explosion was huge.

“OOHHH, NOOO! They’re dead!” I was the only one left.

The steering wheel, the air supply meter, and the engine were the only things still working. *I have to get to the surface and find a doctor.* I looked at the air supply meter. Ten minutes left, it read.

“I have to get out,” I muttered. I tried to retrace my steps by looking all around. After five minutes I found my way out.

I turned the engine to full speed, but I only got about three-quarters of the way to the surface before I ran out of gas. I located the air tanks we had packed, and connected them to my family and me. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. I turned on the tanks, but they were out of air. I grabbed for my mom and dad and opened up the safety exit.

I could not swim fast enough to get to the surface and everything went pitch black.



# ANOTHER TIME AND PLACE



# DRAGON FLIGHT

*Why are dragons a part of people's imaginations if such beasts are not real? DRAGON FLIGHT, by Dragon Lady, reveals a world where dragons exist apart from people because humans have forgotten about them.*

A young thief boy snuck up from behind the fence of a wealthy farmer's pasture. The thief boy had been dared to steal a horse from the best breeder in the village and here it was, his chance to prove himself a real thief. (Every real thief had to steal something valuable so that the thief lord might make him a full-fledged thief.) He opened the latch to the gate, as silently as any thief, and slowly walked amongst the herd of horses. He grabbed the halter of the finest looking horse he could see. He jumped on and rode—no time now for silence, the King's men were nearby. Even on a horse he might not escape them. He galloped down an alley, only to be cut off by a large black wall. The wall seemed to balk and shift. Then he realized it was not totally black, but had small planet-like dots that could almost be scales. Then there was a sudden movement, and the thief was looking into a large emerald, cat-like eye. The eye belonged to a large black dragon. The thief thought he heard something, not with his ears, but in his mind. You may wish to call it telepathy.

“Could ye repeat that?” he asked through his mind.

Much louder this time the dragon asked, “What is thy name?”

The boy answered, “LockPick.”

“Thy real name, boy.”

“It's kind'a embarrass'n, but . . . it's Tye,” the boy replied, “but thou better not tell the thief lord or he'll giv'eth me a fate

worse than death. Okay, I don't know exactly what it is . . . but I've heard about it. The legend goes that no one has escaped the thief lord's wrath."

"I won't tell, but My Ancestor SkyWing wishes to see you."

"Why?"

"I don't know, he never tells anyone why. Now hurry. We haven't all day, thy should know."

"Wait, what am I supposed to do? What's thy name since you know mine?"

"Ugh," sighed the great black dragon, "I am NightWing, daughter of NightClaw, and your escort to the Dragonlands. And you are to climb upon my back so I can transport thee to the Dragonlands."

"But why?"

"All I know is that the mortals pushed us out of these realms and now the goddess of chaos is trying to take the Dragonlands."

"Oh," said Tye, as if that answered his question. Tye looked at NightWing's back and hoped he wouldn't fall off.

"We shall be using a spell to transport us instead of flying there. I must saveth my strength and so must thee, so rest whilst I take thee there."

"But what about my horse? I will need a mount once I get back, won't I?" Tye asked frantically, not wanting all of his hard work to be for nothing.

"I will carry it and once we get there my mother will take care of it and make sure no one harms it," replied NightWing. "Now will you hurry up? It's not wise to keep our ancestor waiting." Tye mounted on NightWing's back.

NightWing flew up into the clouds and soon Tye could hear the spell NightWing was chanting.

*"Dragonlands we come to thee / Permit us so that thy ancestor may see / the one he wishes is with Me."*

That was all Tye caught but he was sure it was at least half of the spell. They came out of the clouds. Not that Tye doubted NightWing's ability to do magic, but he expected to see farms.

What he saw was much more impressive: rolling hills and all different types of dragons you would never believe. For there are more types of dragons than you may think. There are some with manes, and some like NightWing with horns; some with crests, and some more serpent-like so as to look more like a sea serpent than a dragon. Tye noticed but barely a large 90-foot dragon so sky blue you could barely see him.

“That be ancestor SkyWing,” NightWing said, noticing the direction in which he looked.

“Are you sure he’s the one that wanted to see me?” Tye questioned, wondering why for all the gods this pale blue old dragon wanted to see him. NightWing landed close to the old dragon.

“NightWing, you have done well by bringing him to me, your kin, and I thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Now I must talk to the boy alone.”

“Okay, if thy must. Bye, Tye.”

“I must, and you know that very well.”

“Bye.”

Then Tye heard NightWing yell, “I’ll race ye, Rosethorn!” He saw NightWing fly after a large green and red dragon with thorns all over her back. Then Tye noticed that NightWing was still carrying his mount. Even with his horse he saw that NightWing caught up to the other dragon very quickly and she might win the race even with the horse burdening her.

“You’ll see her again, don’t worry,” said Ancestor SkyWing, noticing his worried look, “but for now I must tell you of our history. However, most of it is in this chant, and I myself never understood it clearly.”

“Will I understand it?” asked Tye a little worried.

“Certainly. Now,” replied SkyWing, “*With dragon flame and dragon power | Dragons were feared amongst mortals | The mortals, though they have little | Forced us from the realms | The gods, they have no will for us | but let us make our own | a land of dragons free and*

*mighty / where all can prosper in this light / with rolling hills and mighty trees*

*our land is free / free from the mortals / free from the gods / free from all who slay us / But one day we were notified that / the goddess of chaos would eat our realms / and all of us will be gone."*

"So now you see why you were chosen."

"No," said Tye.

"Ugh, we need your help to be permitted once again to the mortal realms, before the goddess of chaos eats the realms and all the dragons with it," sighed SkyWing.

"But why do you need my help? Why not just come back?" Tye asked.

"Because the mortals must believe in us or we will perish once we enter the realms. And you see how that could hurt us," replied the dragon.

"Oh, but wait. Why didn't NightWing perish?" said Tye.

"Because NightWing's father knows a spell to keep her safe."

Then a large herd of dragons came towards them. Tye could see NightWing in the middle of it. Then one by one the dragons descended to the ground and landed. Tye stopped the flow of questions that were coming to his mind.

Then NightWing introduced them all to Tye, saying, "Here are some of my friends so you know more than just me and the ancestor. Here is Rosethorn, Moonjewel, Wingstar, Skysong, and SilverStar." As NightWing introduced Skysong, the young dragon stopped chasing the tail of one of the larger dragons NightWing had introduced as Moonjewel. All of the dragons started to talk. Skysong resumed chasing Moonjewel's tail until she got Moonjewel back with a nice hard slash.

"Thanks, NightWing," replied Tye. Not one of them was bigger than NightWing except for Wingstar. Even Skysong, who he noticed was not even a century old, was as tall as he was. (A dragon's age could be determined by how large its wings were. He didn't know quite how he knew that. But it seemed that Ancestor SkyWing had passed more than just their history.) He noticed that Skysong's

wings where too small to carry her in flight and that NightWing had carried her.

“You must leave now so that you may save us all,” said SkyWing.

“May I take another dragon with me?” asked NightWing.

“Not unless your father is willing to put another spell on one of your friends. Your father is the only one who knows such a spell,” replied SkyWing.

“Oh,” sighed NightWing, knowing her father would never do that again. He had said that putting the spell on her had been a risk and that if he tried to put the spell on all the dragons that some of the young might not be able to come because they were too young to hold the complicated spell. Also, he would not be strong enough to hold the spell for long enough.

“Well, let’s go, Tye,” said his escort.

“OK,” said Tye, climbing upon NightWing’s massive back. NightWing’s wings beat hard. Her friends had decided to come with her to the barrier that separated the dragon realms from the mortal realms. While Tye could barely make out the conversation as the dragons conferred mind to mind, he could, however, see that Skysong was getting bored. When they reached the barrier the others said good-bye and flew off. NightWing said a spell to get them out of here. Although Tye didn’t catch it, he knew that it was similar to the spell that she had used to get them here. Once again, Tye was surprised to see what he did. Although they were in the mortal realms, they were not in his village. Even though they were not in his village, Tye felt like he knew this place.

NightWing landed. She let Tye climb up her long neck and perch on her head. She said a quick spell to amplify his voice and then Tye spoke.

“People of this town, I have been sent to you by Ancestor SkyWing. The goddess of chaos is destroying the dragon realms. You must believe in them so that once again the dragons may live and prosper in this land. Otherwise, they will perish, whether from the chaos goddess or from reaching this realm or perishing from non-belief. Please help me in my quest to reunite the dragons

and the mortals.” They obviously didn’t believe him even though he was standing on top of a dragon as he spoke.

“We must leave now,” commented NightWing. They took off, letting the draft of NightWing’s wings push the people of the town back on their heels. NightWing positioned one of her paws as if she was going to throw a ball. In fact she did. She threw a ball of fire at the village but then she brought it up as if it were a yo-yo. Tye laughed as all the villagers screamed and ran.

They flew for a while, for they had to cross over a forest: The forest of peril.

“Wait!” said Tye. “There’s someone down there.” NightWing nodded her head in agreement, and descended gracefully to the ground. What the two saw stunned them. A maiden was practicing archery, and so far it looked like most of her arrows had pierced the center of the target.

“Yikes!” screamed the maiden as she turned and shot the arrow that had been loaded into the bow. With all of his quick thinking and years of practice being a thief, Tye caught the arrow in his hand.

“Woo there. You mean you’ve never seen a real dragon before?” teased Tye as he played with the arrow.

“No,” replied the maiden tartly.

“Though I suppose you wouldn’t believe me . . . us . . . either,” said Tye.

“What do you mean believe you?” she replied.

“Well . . . The dragons need to enter the mortal realms but the mortals must believe in the dragon to be able to enter the mortal realms without perishing.” Tye blurted out, maybe just a little too fast.

“Woo, will you say that a little slower?” the maiden asked. “But first, my name is Leisiae. I’ll be of no help to you even if I could understand you.” Before she let him say anything she continued. “No one in my town will listen to me even though I’m as smart as any of the boys.”



“Well, I’ll call you M’lady, okay? Now as for what I said. The dragons need to enter the mortal realms because the goddess of chaos is eating the dragon realms and they need to come back here. But first the mortals must believe me . . . us. So will you join us?”

“Join us?” The dragon asked, “I can’t carry her, too.”

“Well, sure, I guess. But no one thinks I’m proper as it is. And no one will listen to me, as I’ve said before.”

“Oh, well,” said Tye. The maiden mounted, and as Tye had, hoped she wouldn’t fall off. NightWing hurled herself off the ground and into the air. They flew over an island called the Emerald Isle. Tye had wondered why it was called so, but now his question was answered. It was called so because of the rich green trees and shrubbery. There was a legend that great mages came to a university here. But the legend was so old that Tye wasn’t sure that if anyone had ever been there that they were still there now.

“Maybe there are some mages who have heard the old legends and will believe us. At least some are bound to know it. Or at least the head of the mage council,” said the dragon quite unsure.

“Well, maybe you’re right,” said Tye.

“Yeah, some of them are bound to know it,” said the maiden.

“Okay,” replied NightWing. The dragon lightly descended, trying not to unseat her passengers. They had landed on the beach so as not to disturb the locals who might live near the university.

“Tye, you must go with M’lady. I can’t go with you because some of those mages will do anything to get their hands on a dragon. Even though a dragon is much more powerful than a mage, I can’t fight all of them,” the dragon mindspoke.

“Okay,” replied Tye.

The two started off on a small trail. The trail seemed as if it had not been used in many years, but those with sharp eyes would have been able to see the magical blanket protecting the road from wear and tear. After about a mile’s walk, the two saw a university. Even they could see the protection spells on this work of art.

The large columns protecting the doors were solid gold. The doors themselves were made of black wood, with magical symbols carved on the surface. A mage (recognizable by his clothing) ran from behind the columns. Chasing him was a large potbellied man in the over-robe of a master.

The two of them heard the potbellied man yell, "I'll get you, David!" The mage ran and kept on running until he ran right into the two.

"Oops, sorry about that, you two," he said as if he knew them. "Wait, why are you here? The master usually doesn't let anyone here."

"We were sent by a dragon. Do you by any chance know the myths about why the dragons aren't here anymore?" asked M'lady.

"Why certainly I do, and I believe 'em, too, but those fools in there don't believe me. That's why you probably saw me just runnin' with a master on my tail," the mage replied.

"Yes, we did," replied M'lady.

Soon without being asked to, the mage joined the group, walking with them to the beach. When they reached the spot, NightWing appeared, cloaked in magic. They didn't need to ask; they knew NightWing had cloaked herself so that the mages couldn't find her.

"Tye, I can't carry him, too. As it is, I have enough weight," whispered NightWing.

"That's okay," said the mage, having overheard their conversation even with NightWing whispering. "I'll form wings and fly myself." Tye looked at him wide-eyed. Only very powerful mages could form anything and be able to use it. The mage did his magic very quickly, seeing that they were in a hurry.

The two that could fly took off—NightWing with Tye and M'lady, and the mage by himself.

"Uh-oh," NightWing cried.

"What is it?" asked Tye.

"The goddess of chaos is attacking the realms," replied the dragon. "Nooooo, they're coming and they will all perish."

“I can put up a shield if you will bear me, for I can’t hold these wings and protect the dragons at the same time,” replied the mage quickly, as if in panic.

“I will bear you and I will help you, too, for they are my people,” replied the dragon frantically. “They’re coming from right there!” screamed NightWing.

The mage dropped, letting go of the wings and landing on the dragon’s back. The two concentrated very hard, as Tye and M’lady could tell by the sweat on their faces. The two could barely hear the spell, but this is what they heard: *“Dragons come and Dragons go / their might is naught but pure / Gods help us save these mighty creatures / And help us with belief / The mortals make them perish / O’ save them with our will.”*

All four of them could see the wall that went up as the dragons came through the wall encircling them. The dragons had been saved and now that the mortals could see this they thought that the dragons were laying siege on them. And it took a might of persuasion to make them believe otherwise. But they finally did it and the mortals found peace with the dragons like they had never had before.

As for Tye and M’lady, both of them were greatly rewarded. However, the mage had been far overconfident and had died during the passage of the dragons. But he is back now, for the great gods thought he should also be rewarded and gave him life once again. Although to make sure the mortals didn’t think that all could get away with this, the gods made sure that they sent him somewhere where no one knew him. Nonetheless, the others who had known him well knew he was back.

# THE DRAGON SLAYERS

*Ordinary people are sometimes called upon to do extraordinary things. In THE DRAGON SLAYERS by Bryan Rupe, three young friends take on the challenge of defending their village against a deadly enemy.*

Once there was a peaceful village. The water was clean, there was plenty to eat, and everyone got along with each other, until the dragon came . . . .

“Run for your life!” shouted Jake, a fourteen-year-old, tall, brown-haired-boy who was an amazing warrior. It was a huge, black-and-red striped dragon with black teeth. He was called Blacktooth because of his black teeth.

As he emerged from his mountain lair he thought to himself: “Lunchtime! Which person looks the tastiest? AH-HA! There’s one!” The dragon spotted a civilian struggling to safety. The monstrous dragon dove for his prey like a comet! The civilian would have been devoured if Andy hadn’t fired an arrow into the dragon’s tail.

Andy was a short blond-haired thirteen-year-old archer with the best aim in the city.

As the arrow sank into Blacktooth’s tail like a hot knife through butter, Blacktooth let out a roar in pain and decided lunch could wait. The furious dragon flew back to his lair.

“That was close,” said Matthew. “Someone almost got hurt.”

Matthew was a black-haired fourteen-year-old warrior.

“We need a plan to destroy this dragon,” said Jake. “But what?” The three friends thought and thought.

“I know!” said Andy. “We can climb the mountain, sneak up on him, and kill him! I can get some rope to help us climb the mountain.”

“Great plan,” said Matthew.

“Let’s do it!” said Jake.

The next morning the three friends walked to the base of the mountain. The mountain was so high it looked like the top touched the clouds.

Andy tied a rope to an arrow and shot it to the top of the mountain and the three friends began climbing, using it for support. Dodging rocks and plants, the friends climbed slowly but surely up the mountain. After ten hours of intense climbing they made it to the top.

Fwoosh! A fireball came shooting towards them like a huge fire-covered bird! The friends moved just in time. Blacktooth jumped out of his cave and slashed at Andy but missed. Then Blacktooth shot a fireball at Jake and hit his leg, spraining it. Enraged at his leg wound, Jake hurled his spear at the ugly dragon, hitting Blacktooth’s chest. Blacktooth let out a roar of pain that sounded like thunder.

Jake, unable to defend himself with a leg wound, took cover behind a large boulder.

Matthew jumped at Blacktooth and started slashing his sword so fast that Jake and Andy could not follow each sword swipe.

Blacktooth started slashing back with his razor sharp claws.

“Oh, no!” said Andy. “Matt needs my help!” Andy shot several arrows at Blacktooth.

Blacktooth stopped slashing Matthew momentarily to remove the arrows and Matthew slashed like crazy until Blacktooth fell to Matthews’s blade.

“You are the best, Matthew!” said Jake.

“You nailed that dragon!” said Andy.

“I couldn’t have done it without you guys,” said Matthew.

The next day, the village threw a great party for the three heroes. Everyone was there except for a tiny creature crawling from an egg in Blacktooth’s lair . . . .

# ONE'S PRIDE IS ONE'S COURAGE

*After Kary's boring weekend is interrupted by a strange visitor, nothing will ever be the same. ONE'S PRIDE IS ONE'S COURAGE, by Michelle Valdez, ventures into the realm of peaceful dragons who rely on an ordinary girl for help.*

The large, ugly dragon glided through the sky. It landed furiously and pounded the ground, causing buildings to crash to the ground. People screamed and began to run as fast as their legs could carry them. Suddenly, a clawed, green hand grabbed his prey. But before the dragon could eat the citizens for a tiny morsel, a voice sounded . . . .

"Man, there's nothing on television!" said Kary while clicking off the TV.

"Hey, that was my favorite show, *Wally the Dragon!*" screamed David while kicking the couch.

"Well, that dragon was sure a pretty sight," Kary said sarcastically.

It was another normal weekend (or maybe that's what Kary thought) when you get to enjoy the two days of no school, but Kary surely wasn't enjoying it. Chores, no good TV shows, little screaming brothers. It was a weekend she would love to forget.

As David tattled on her, she simply went upstairs and collapsed on her bed. The tiger-patterned sheets on the oval-shaped bed with the matching wallpaper and the glowing, green lava lamp all decorated Kary's room, making it have a unique fashion.

“My life is more miserable than an orphan living in a box, eating bird droppings,” she sighed.

Suddenly, a hoarse whisper ran through the room. “*You are the one, Kary . . .*”

“Who’s there? Hello? Wh-h-who’s there? Answer!” she yelled while cautiously eyeing the room. But no one replied to Kary’s question until the next morning.

Kary had just woken up, acting as though the voice had never occurred and it was just a regular morning. The smell of fresh pancakes swarmed through the room. Kary looked into the mirror and stroked a brush through her blue-shining hair, when a pearly white ghost appeared and whispered in a wispy, echoing voice, “*You are the one, and must lead them to safety . . . I will be back.*” The ghost faded into thin air and Katy was left sweating and trembling with fear.

“I’m just delirious, I know! There’s no way I saw that. He . . . he . . . hee . . . IT’S NOT REAL, KARY! You know there’s no such thing as ghosts!” Kary’s thoughts burst out loud. By now she was as red as fresh-cooked lobster. Kary dropped her brush and burst into the bathroom. As the water lightened her face, David opened the door, grinning from ear to ear.

“And what are you so happy about, Airhead?” Kary grunted.

“The question is, why are you so pink? But I’ll tell you: I just saw this picture of a man with a weird hairdo and thought I would make a scarier hairdo than his!” he exclaimed, the gaps in his teeth showing.

“Oh, I’m so happy. Now out of my way!” she snarled. Pushing David out of the way, Kary raced down the spiral staircase.

“Honey, you haven’t changed out of your pajamas,” Kary’s mother said while flipping a pancake at the same time. Kary just sat down in the kitchen booth and didn’t reply. Her mother gave her a don’t-ignore-me-when-I-talk-to-you look and laid a plate of fluffy, stacked pancakes before her. Kary picked up the syrup jug and poured the thick, oozing liquid on her steaming pancakes.

She began to cut her pancakes when David ran in with the scariest hairstyle you could ever imagine.

“So what do you think, Kary?” he said smugly. His hair was filled with mayonnaise, ketchup, and mustard. He had gelled his hair into spikes and had different dyed colors and bobby pins jutting out of his head.

“Aaaaahhhh! Get away! Get away! That is so gross, David! Yuck . . . yuck . . . YUCK!” Kary panicked.

“Don’t yell at your little brother,” her mother said calmly. Then Kary’s mother turned around, and she was as panicked as Kary. Her mother abruptly stopped and firmly pointed to the bathroom.

“Oh, Mom, do I have to?” David whined.

“Yes!” she said, raging with crossness.

“But it took me ten minutes to do this!” he said, whining more annoyingly than ever.

“Now!” Kary’s mom yelled angrily. David squeaked and shuffled away quickly to the bathroom.

Kary resumed eating, dazedly thinking about the voice. Could it be real? Or was she just delirious? And why does it only show when she’s alone? Whatever the case was, she had to find out.

The day passed quickly and the weekend was over and the prospect of school had risen again. Morning struck and Kary was up and awake.

“I’ve got to find the ghost!” she said, searching the room.

“Honey, get ready for school!” her mother yelled.

“Why didn’t I search earlier?” Kary groaned. Grabbing her hairpins, she darted for the bathroom.

Suddenly, the ghost appeared and looked around the room impatiently. “*Where is that girl when I need her?*” The ghost listened carefully and heard a gurgling sound. She went through the wall and gently tapped Kary’s shoulder. Kary turned around and screamed, although the foam coating her mouth muffled her scream. She slowly picked up her cup and gurgled while staring at the ghost cautiously.



*“You must not have fear of me or your mission shall be incomplete.”*

“First of all, what mission? Second of all, why are you bothering me now?” Kary said while foam dribbled down her cheek.

*“Well, your mission is . . . .”*

“HONEY, COME DOWN NOW!”

“So, what’s the mission?” Kary urged.

*“No, you are expected by someone. Go.”*

Kary stomped off in a rage for not knowing the mission.

School sped by quickly and felt shorter than usual. Kary positioned herself for the bell and the race out the door so she could discover her deed. Minutes which felt like hours passed and suddenly, the bell roared. She flew out the door and to her locker. As she ran home with her backpack weighing her down, she was determined to get home fast. Finally, she reached her house and shoved the key into the lock, twisted it, turned the handle, and entered the house. Immediately the ghost appeared, floating with her legs crossed.

*“First of all, I’ll introduce myself for I’ve been so rude.”* She disappeared and reappeared next to Kary. *“My name is Lakay. I am 2001 years old. Now I assume you are eager to know your mission.”* She immediately turned human and landed on her two slender feet. Her large floor-length robes were beautifully designed, her eyes were twilight blue, and her hair was dark in a Chinese-style bun. She also had a strange jewel on her forehead.

She broke into a smile. Her voice was bright and clear, like a night on the sea under the stars.

“It has been long since I have done this, and I expect you find me more normal like this? Well, your mission is to save the dragons before they become extinct, for their population is low.”

“WHAT!” Kary said, outraged.

“Look, when humans were young and dragons already old, one taught me and raised me, teaching the right ways of life. He died, and I don’t want to lose another friend. The only one who can save them is you. Please, help them.”

“Okay,” Kary grunted.

“Good luck,” Lakay cried, while blinding lights flashed, obscuring her face.

The flash faded, and Kary found light armor was strapped to her body and a sword was strapped to her back. A foggy mountain scene showed.

“Meow!” cried a creature nearby. It popped out of a bush and proved to be a cute, fuzzy, bunny-like creature. It was brown with long, hanging ears.

For some reason, Kary knew its name and said, “Oh, Gaku, I was looking for you!”

“Meow!”

Strangely, Gaku had a jewel on her forehead just like Lakay. Gaku sat down, making her unbearably cute face.

“Come on, let’s go!” Kary began to run while Gaku hopped behind. Suddenly, large shadows passed above them. Each had large wings waving with the wind beneath them. They were dragons that weren’t at all like those on the TV shows Kary had seen. Their webbed ears and horns and manes were all an amazing sight.

“Wow,” Kary gasped with her mouth hanging open.

They set off walking across the rocky lands until voices sounded in the land. An old dragon sat on a rock sewing up bundles of yarn. Another small dragon tangled itself in the yarn and squealed. A second dragon came and asked, “Icefall, how did you get so tangled?”

“Oh, shut up, Skysong!” Icefall snapped.

“When can I fly, Wingstar?” Skysong asked.

Still the old dragon sewed and replied, “In ten centuries.”

“WHAT?”

“Ha, ha, ha!” a silver dragon laughed.

“Stop it, Moon Jewel! Go get a therapist!” Skysong squealed.

“Oh, you want flight?” Moon Jewel said oddly. She punted Skysong so high into the air another dragon caught her.

The dark-colored dragon who made the catch smiled and asked, “Skysong, how did you get so high?”

“Well, Nightwing, Moon Jewel kicked me,” Skysong sniffed and burst into tears.

Another dragon grabbed Skysong and said, “Please don’t cry, little baby, please don’t. You’ll get us in trouble, Skysong. Shut up. Ouch!”

“What’s wrong, Rosethorn? Rosethorn?” Nightwing yelled.

Rosethorn had Skysong hanging at the end of her finger and she was swinging around, but the little dragon still clung to her finger with her teeth. “Skysong’s bitten me, Bonehead!” Rosethorn yelled angrily.

As Nightwing tried to pry Skysong off, suddenly arrows shot through the valley and loud chants rang through the land.

Oh, no, the killers!” Kary whispered. She slid out her sword and stumbled with the sword’s weight.

“Meow, meow, meow.” Gaku shook her head in disapproval. As Kary stood up, she saw that silver stained the grass. Cries rang across the field. Weapons struck dragons, opening wounds.

“Don’t depend on the sword; believe in the power of yourself,” she thought.

A transparent bubble guarded her suddenly. She used her sword with ease, as if she had trained for many years. Hours swept by and all the men were killed. Blood streamed down her lip. Enjoying the victory and pride of winning, she said firmly, “Leave to a hidden place where you are not seen. Go.”

One by one, the dragons flew away. A tear trickled down her cheek. She would always remember them. Somehow, she knew they would come back and live with humans in peace and love. A weak smile formed. “Goodbye,” she whispered.

# THE QUEST

*Is courage enough to defeat a powerful foe? THE QUEST, by Sam Brugman, follows the brave band of warriors that is determined to find out.*

It was a dark, gloomy night when two old friends stumbled into each other. It took them awhile to figure out who they were, but one of the men eventually said “Fitz.” The other man looked dazed.

Finally after looking at the other speaker, he said, “Habben, what are you doing here?”

“It’s a long story. I will tell you later.”

Habben took Fitz to his house and gave him some food and new clothes, since his were blood-soaked from war. “So what happened?”

“My men were frightened by the dragons and they all ran away, into the woods.” Habben had to take deep breaths as he recalled the confusion. “The dragons nearly surrounded us. So I ran as fast as I could and then I stumbled into you,” Habben said.

“Well, we are going to have to wake up early in the morning.”

“What’s in the morning?” Habben said.

“We are going to get Thras and Len, and we are going to revolt against the dragons.”

The next day they got up early to get Len and Thras. Thras lived in a tree right outside the woods. “I’ll teleport up there with my magic,” Fitz said. With a few words he was up in the tree and then back on the ground with Thras. Thras had his bow and his one-hand sword. Thras was known as a great archer among the elves.

Next was Len who lived on ground in the town Leran. It took the three friends about 30 minutes to get to his house. Len must come because he had supplies like maps and weapons. Habben went into the house and in about 15 minutes came out with Len and his bags of supplies.

They sat in the middle of town talking about what they were going to do. "We are going to revolt against the dragons because if we don't, the world will perish," said Fitz.

"Why will we perish?" asked Len.

"Because if we don't, the dragons will take over Earth and they will destroy every one of us."

"Do we know how many dragons there are?" asked Thras.

"N-" Fitz began to say but was interrupted by Habben who said, "Around 20."

"Len, we are going to need all your supplies."

"My supplies are all yours," Len said. "We meet here tomorrow in the middle of town early in the morning."

The next day came all too fast for the warriors, but still they all met in the middle of town and then set off for their quest to save mankind. They walked about three miles until they came before their first challenge. This challenge was by the Neaches. Neaches are small but very smart, so they are hard to fight because of that. They were related to the dragons, which made them strong. Neaches were leathery with wings so they could fly, but they hardly did because they were very clumsy.

The fight started out when one of the Neaches leapt into the air. As he did, Habben leapt into the air and swung his sword. He missed by an inch or two.

"All get behind me or die from my magic!" exclaimed Fitz. "AKBAK-DARV-AK," Fitz said.

Suddenly, bolts of lightning came out of the sky and hit the Neaches. Within seconds, they were dead.

Soon, they came to the dragons. There were four dragons and four warriors. "A perfect match," said Thras. There were only four dragons because the war had continued.

The four fighters hid in the bushes and then ran out, attacking with all their might. They fought and they fought until there was one dragon and one man left. "So it ends here!" the man said.

"Oh yes it does," remarked the dragon.

The man jumped into the air and stabbed the dragon in the foot. He pulled his sword out of the dragon's foot, which he found out was a big mistake, because the dragon flew into the air and dove back down towards the man. He leapt out of the way, making the dragon and him fall into the sewer. The dragon flew off down the sewer because this is where he lived. The man had good hearing so he could hear his way to where the dragon was. He was in his lair that was full of gold.

The dragon was in the middle of the room. The dragon charged at the man, knocking him down. As the dragon flew over him, he stabbed the dragon in the heart. The dragon could only fly a few more feet and then fell down, never to get up again. Habben just stood there and said, "What a mess," and left.

After that life went on as usual. Habben went on with his life, although the people considered him a god. Because he was a god he made a city, named F. L. T. The name stood for Fitz, Len, and Thras.

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND





## ANYWHERE BUT HERE

*It is now a famous sentiment that if we do not learn from history, we will inevitably repeat its mistakes. With this in mind, ANYWHERE BUT HERE, by Abigail Rubin, recalls the horrors of the Holocaust.*

**November 23, 1937:** Hi, my name is Rachel Shipt. I am 12 years old and I live in Austria. I go to Montessori School and am in the sixth grade. I like to cook, play tennis and have tea parties. This is my first diary. I will call you "Polly." My mom and dad are great and I have two older brothers. My dad is a successful banker and my mother is a teacher. My brothers are in high school and like to play sports.

**November 24, 1937:** Today was a horrible, scary day. The Nazi armies put their flags up at every house. These armies came from Germany and they want to take our country under control. They have big black tanks and guns and the soldiers shouted: "Heil Hitler." I am not sure who Hitler is, but I hear rumors that he is an evil man who is the ruler of Germany. He wants to take over the world.

I think the Nazis are very cruel to try and take what does not belong to them. It frightens me to think how our lives may change with them in command.

Mother is making dinner. She seems very worried. I hope everything will be all right.

**November 25, 1937:** Hi Polly. Another frightening day. My mother and father have lost their jobs. My father's bank has been taken over by the Nazis. What will we do for money?

Now the Nazis have unfair rules that they insist we follow. For instance, Jewish children have to go to special schools for Jewish children only. Jewish people can only shop in stores from 3-5:00 P.M.

All Jewish people must wear a yellow star. If you break any of these rules, you will go to jail.

Daddy is talking about having me live with some of our friends who are Irish (the Culligans). He thinks it may be dangerous to be a Jew here now and that I will be safer disguised as an Irish child.

Bye for now.

**November 26, 1937:** Daddy has decided that I will go live with the Culligans in four days. I am very upset at the thought of leaving my family. What will happen to my brothers? Will the Nazis hurt them or my parents? I feel that I will never be safe again. If only we could go back to our old life. I never appreciated how great it was to be free and safe.

Maybe I will be safer and have more freedom if the Nazis think I am a Culligan and not a Jew. Bye.

**November 30, 1937:** The Nazis have come to our house! My whole family was taken by train to a special type of prison camp now. I am very frightened. I was able to sneak you in with me. It comforts me to be able to talk to you about how scared I am.

**December 1, 1937:** They hardly feed us here. I am so weak and cold and hungry. I can barely write or think straight. Where are my parents and my brother? I am so lonely. I work all day and I am so tired.

**December 5, 1937:** I have heard we are going to the gas chambers next week! The Nazis say it is a shower, but I hear rumors that they kill people there with poison gas. Someone told me my Daddy died in the gas chambers last week. I don't know if it is true. I pray that it isn't. I am so afraid. I miss my mother.

**December 14, 1937:** I am very tired. That is why I have not been writing much. I feel so sick and tired. Someone told me that my brother was shot and killed trying to escape. I wish could figure out a way to get out of this place or I will have no hope. If only I could turn back time and be safe at home with my family again and not be scared and cold and tired and hungry every day.

**December 15, 1937:** I got away! The Nazis didn't catch me. I ran with a group of people who were escaping. They felt sorry for

me and took me with them because I was so small. I am hiding in a hut with two men. Someone is supposed to say my name at roll call so that the Nazis do not suspect I am gone. I think the Nazis are looking for me! It was so scary running. We had to be very quiet and hide in the dark and not move while the guards were around. I thought we were spotted many times and held my breath waiting to be shot. But we made it! I cannot believe it.

**December 18, 1937:** The men are making me work hard doing chores. We have to be very careful not to be seen by anyone and do our work mostly at night in the dark. I am thankful that the men took me with them. Their names are Frederick and Paul. I have to go do chores. I barely have time to write, but I try to make the time because I am so lonely. I feel like you are my only friend and I will go crazy if I don't have someone to talk to. Maybe someone in my family will find you, Polly, if I don't make it, and have something to remember me by. Bye.

**December 21, 1937:** Finally, I have made time for myself. I feel like I am still in the camp, but at least I have more food. I heard that Mother is all right. I was talking to Frederick and he said he hid in the mountains so that he did not have to live in a Nazi neighborhood.

**December 28, 1937:** I ran away from the hut. It turns out that Frederick and Paul turn in Jews to the Nazis for rewards. They were keeping me as a worker and waiting to turn me in for a reward. They thought I might know of other plots in the camp to escape so that they could turn in more Jews for a reward. That is why they were asking me so many questions. I am so scared they will find me. It seems like I have been running and scared and alone forever! If only someone would help me!

*THE NAZIS FOUND RACHEL ON DECEMBER 30, 1937. SHE WAS SHOT AND KILLED. HER MOTHER WAS THE ONLY SURVIVOR OF THE SHIPT FAMILY. SHE FOUND THIS DIARY AT THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN WHERE RACHEL HID AFTER HER ESCAPE.*

# BE ALL YOU CAN BE

*War causes devastation in many ways and on many fronts. In **BE ALL YOU CAN BE** by *Spencer Smith*, one man tries to rebuild his life after losing too much to war.*

“Be all you can be.” That’s the army’s motto. Now I use it every day. I was drafted into the terrible World War II madness when I was 25 years old. I worked for a successful printing company and had plenty of money for my wife and me, but I was tasting what I could never have. Now I know, life’s not that easy.

I was terrified of the war. I hated killing, but the army wanted me, and my life, to become victims of the vile war in Europe.

When I was on the boat headed to attack the beach at Normandy, it seemed as if I was the only one on the boat that wasn’t looking forward to this awful slaughterhouse. People with their minds corroded with war were saying things like, “I’ll shoot ‘em and kill ‘em, then shoot ‘em again just for fun,” followed by a big cheer by everyone, except for me. I just wanted to get up and punch them all in the face. Why would they like killing? It’s horrible, and there is no good side, so why do it? The ugly truth was for our country.

When we finally landed on the dreadful beach, it was an atrocious sight that I’ve tried to force out of my memory, but still comes back to haunt me. With all of the bullets flying at us, we managed to take over the beach with a great loss of men on both sides.

But I put all of that behind me when I heard the news from the general in charge of me and the remains of my troop. He spoke in a tough, low voice: “Boys, you did a great job at Normandy. It’s

time to go home.” We were all so happy to go home after a long year at war. I knew it was the best moment of my life, or so I thought.

When I got off the bus, finally home, there was nobody waiting for me. In the crowds of families waiting for their loved ones to return home, I didn’t know one person. I couldn’t believe my family, dad, mom, brother, and my beautiful wife didn’t care enough about me to pick me up after a dreadful year at war.

The day I thought would be the best day in my life quickly had changed into the worst. How am I supposed to get home? I hadn’t the slightest clue where I was, but I knew I was somewhere around Detroit, Michigan (my home city, but Detroit is a horrendously large city) because the captain mentioned that before we left. I assumed that somebody had told someone in my family where to pick me up, but assuming is far from knowing.

I stopped at a gas station to ask where I was and the guy claimed: “Bloomfield Hills, Inkster Rd.” That’s where I lived when I was a kid! This place looks nothing at all like Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, but it has been a pretty long time since I’ve been here; I was 18 when I moved away to my so-called “freedom.” I didn’t even bother going to college.

I walked down the street to the street I grew up on, and turned the corner. My house was gone. All new houses, looked like they weren’t even a year old. Where are my mom and dad? There was a crew of construction men working at a house down the street. I asked them why they tore down the house and put new ones in. He said, “Haven’t ya heard? Those awful Germans dropped a bomb on this place and ripped us up like toys!”

“Noooo!” I replied, “This isn’t happening to me!”

I ran away like a bullet out of a gun, not even looking back. My dad, mom, brother, wife, all gone. My money, stuff, family, future, life, all gone. I had to start over, with nothing to start with, nothing at all.

The next morning, after sleeping under a tree, I decided to go to Market Square just around the corner and see if I could get a

job. I walked a few hundred feet to the entrance and saw a big, orange sign. It was my lucky day. The sign read: "Now Hiring." I walked into the store and asked the person at the desk if I could get a job there. She said to ask the manager, who was standing a few feet away from her. I asked him and he replied, "Do you have any background?" I said no, that I had just returned from the war...

I told him my story and he agreed to give me a chance to work at the register for 50 cents an hour, but I still had nowhere to sleep, no food, and no shelter. I started right away.

I was about to get ready to leave when the man next to me, also working at the register, said he had overheard my situation while talking to the manager and would be more than happy to let me stay at his house.

I took a car ride home with my buddy Mark to his house. It was a comfortable, two bedroom, basic old house with a white door and brown shutters that were flapping in the wind like a ghost was trying to scare us away. He was the only person living there but had a dog to keep him company. I slept in what seemed to be the guest room, but it looked like someone else was living there. I asked him if I was alone and he said, "Yup, you're alone. My son lives with me, but he's off at war."

I told him about me and my terrible luck with war. He could only say, "I feel for ya."

The next morning I got up, had breakfast, and hopped into his old, rundown, 1940 Chevrolet for him to drive me to work. I couldn't thank him enough for doing this grateful deed for me because I could really use a fresh start.

Work was very slow that day so I read the paper for a majority of the time. I read about how Ford, Chevrolet, GM, and all of the other car companies were doing pretty well. I wanted to go to one of those factories and ask for a job, but I didn't want to inconvenience Mark any more than I already had. I took a dollar from the cash register. When I was dismissed at the end of the day,

I took the dollar, jumped on the bus, and headed towards the GM plant.

I got a job! I took the bus back to the market and said to the manager that I had to leave town. The plant wasn't really far from Mark's house so I planned on taking the bus to work every morning.

The next morning after a tough but useful day at work on the assembly line at GM, I had a dollar and 25 cents to spend, but I saved to get an apartment.

Five years later, I am now living a very successful life as a businessman, and still working for GM. I have made a fortune of about a million dollars and I'm happily married with two children. I live in Florida and I love my life. What I truly think saved my life from poverty was the saying "be all you can be," and always try to look at the bright side, even if there is none.





LET THE GAMES  
BEGIN



# THE ROAD TO THE CHAMPIONSHIP

*Many teams are left by the wayside on the long journey toward the finals. In THE ROAD TO THE CHAMPIONSHIP by Matt Finn, an underdog hockey team tries to beat the odds.*

“I know we aren’t the best team in the league, but if you try hard you can win this game. You can beat this team ten to nothing,” the Vikings’ coach said, trying to get his team excited about the game.

The Vikings were not having a good season and this game was their ticket to the playoffs. No matter how hard they tried, they just kept losing. Their record was 3-13-3. You see, their star player, Pablo, was out with a broken rib. “What’s the point in playing,” said Charlie, “when we’ll never win?”

“Don’t say that,” said their coach. “We’ll never win with that attitude.”

Suddenly, the door to the locker room opened. A hooded boy walked in. He slowly walked to an open spot on the bench of the locker room, far away from everyone else. Suddenly, the boy whipped off his hood. It was Pablo. Everyone in the locker room stood there in awe. They thought Pablo was out for the season, but now he was back. Everyone was pumped and congratulated Pablo on his return. The Vikings excitedly filed out of the locker room and took the ice. Having Pablo back made them think they had a chance. They knew the only way they could get to the playoffs was to win this game and for the first time in a long time, it looked like it would happen.

The opening face-off was about to start. But Pablo was still getting dressed. The coach had Charley Madison take it. The Bears' center checked Charlie just as the ref dropped the puck. The Bears had control and passed the puck around, searching frantically for a hole. Their right defenseman passed it to the right winger. He took it up the ice, maneuvering around the Vikings' defensemen. It was just he and the goalie. He faked right, brought the puck to his left and fired between the goalies' legs. The buzzer sounded. It was a goal. "I thought we actually had a chance with Pablo back," said Charlie, "but I guess we're just losers." The Vikings tried desperately to get that goal back, firing at the net every chance they had. But at the end of the first period, they were still trailing by one.

The second period started. This time, Pablo was taking the face-off. He took the puck up along the boards. Suddenly, he stopped and fired it from the hash marks into the top left corner. It was a goal! No one could believe it. The Vikings had scored their first goal. Everyone on the bench cheered wildly as they pounded on the side of the bench.

The score was tied at the start of the third period. Pablo took the face-off and won it. He fired a fierce slap shot from the blue line. The goalie snapped his glove up and made a spectacular save. The goalie cleared it out of their zone. The Bears stole the puck and passed it from point to point. Their right winger fired the puck top left corner. The Vikings' goalie swatted it down with his stick and quickly covered it up.

Now, there were just ten seconds left. The face-off was in the Bears' zone. The Vikings pulled their goalie, desperately trying to break the tie and make it to the playoffs. Pablo won the face-off and passed it back to the defenseman, who fired a bullet from the blue line. It looked like the goalie would make an easy save, but Pablo came out of nowhere and deflected it top corner. It was a goal! The Vikings had made it to the playoffs! They jumped over the bench and dived on top of the goalie in a rush of adrenaline.

The playoffs were laid out so that a team had to win three games to make it to the championship round. The Vikings' first game was against the Jaguars.

The Vikings immediately took control of the puck, passing it back and forth. Charlie, their center, passed it to Pablo. Pablo took it up the ice along the boards. He passed it across the ice to Charlie, who one-timed a blistering slap shot into the top corner. They celebrated and quickly regrouped themselves for the next face-off.

Francis, the Vikings' fourth-line center, was taking the face-off, but he hadn't scored a goal all season. He put the puck through the Jaguars' center's legs, deked out a defenseman and wound up for a wrist shot. It bounced off the goalie's pads. Francis got the rebound and shot it through the goalie's legs. His hands flew up as he was piled on by a stampede of all his teammates. The Vikings stayed in control. The Jaguars had a couple of scoring chances but never could score. The Vikings won the game 2-0.

The next game was against the Giants. The Giants' center, Rob Lewis, won the face-off. The Giants moved the puck around beautifully. The Vikings could hardly even touch the puck. They were being outplayed in every way. It was amazing the score was tied at 0.

The first two periods went by very slowly for the Vikings. At the start of the third period, the Viking's center, Charlie, won the face-off. He immediately skated up center ice. He wound up, faked a slap shot and dropped it back for Pablo. Pablo wound up and shot. Charlie deflected it top corner.

"Nice shot," said Charlie.

"Hey, it was your goal, not mine," reminded Pablo.

The score was now 1-0. With only 27 seconds left in the period, there was a face-off in the Viking's zone. The Giants had pulled their goalie. The puck was dropped and the Giants took it and maneuvered the puck around. Rob Lewis of the Giants passed it to their star defenseman, Tommy Matthews. Tommy wound up and fired a slap shot. It bounced off of Rob and went in. The score was tied 1-1 and the clock ran out. They were going into overtime.

But something was not quite right. Instead of dropping the puck for OT, the refs were discussing something. The tallest ref slowly skated over to the Giants' bench. He said something and the Giants' coach went crazy and started yelling at him. Then the ref came to our bench. He told us that the puck went off Rob's foot and didn't count. The crowd stamped its feet on the metal benches and wildly rang cowbells. The players skated around the ice with their hands waving in the air, congratulating each other. The Vikings were going to the championship game!

It was finally time for the championship game—the Vikings against the Bloodhounds. The stands were full. As the Vikings took the ice, everything was silent. They took a good long look around the stands. Suddenly, a noise came from the stands. It grew louder every second. “Vikings! Vikings! Vikings!”

The ref got ready to drop the puck. Pablo won the face-off and passed it to Patrick, the left winger. Patrick skated up center ice and dropped it back to Charlie. He wound up but before he could shoot, Charlie was nailed by the Bloodhounds' defenseman. The coach cursed loudly at the ref but no call was made. The Bloodhounds passed it back and forth until time ran out in the first period.

After taking the face-off at the start of the second period, Francis passed the puck to Chuck. He tried to pass it back to Francis, but Scott of the Bloodhounds intercepted it. He deked out the goalie and scored top shelf. It was 1-0 and the Vikings were trailing. The second period ended and the Vikings were running out of time to score.

The Vikings gathered around the bench. “You guys made it to the playoffs when no one believed you could. You made it to the finals, when no one thought you could. And now, when know one thinks you can win, win!”

Pablo took the face-off and skated with it. He had a clear shot at the net but before he could shoot, he was checked off the puck. Patrick picked up the loose puck. He wound up and shot. The

puck hit the left post and went in. Time ran out without another score.

Overtime began and neither team was really able to take control. But with ten seconds left in OT, the Bloodhounds' Scott Mitchell skated up with the puck. He shot it and it went in. The Bloodhounds started celebrating. But there was no reason to celebrate. The ref announced that time ran out before the shot went in. The game had come down to a penalty shootout.

The first two shooters scored, as did the second two skaters. Charlie was next up for the Vikings. He skated up, faked left and lifted it to the right. The goalie made a great save. Next up for the Bloodhounds was Scott. Scott skated up the ice and faked a shot. The goalie went down and with a wide open net, Scott scored. The two fourth players both scored.

It was down to the last two. If Pablo missed, the game was all over.

The crowd was so silent you could hear a pin drop. He skated slowly around the puck, looking at the crowd. He kicked the puck with his skate and took it up. He faked right, then left, and then right. The goalie was deked out of his pads. Pablo shot it. The puck slowly went towards the wide open net. Clang! It hit the post.

Pablo couldn't believe it and neither could his teammates. Pablo took a knee as a tear rolled down his cheek. Pablo's teammates tried to cheer him up but they didn't help much. Pablo and his teammates were devastated.

In the locker room, no one said a word. They just slowly and sadly undressed. The Vikings' coach looked around at their sad faces. He knew how hard they had played and how much they had learned this season. "Next year," he said and then he left without another word.

# THE WAY THINGS GO

*Like life, hockey is a rough game. THE WAY THINGS GO, by Bobby Urso, tells the story of one player's efforts to succeed in both.*

I lay on the snow next to the tree I had slammed into. My body was barely able to move, and it ached everywhere. Joey Arnold stood over me with fear in his eyes. I moaned, "Get help, I'm hurt bad." Joey ran away as I went out cold.

I lay in the hospital bed. My body hurt badly. My parents stood over me.

"What happened?" I grunted.

"I think you hit a tree. Joey was too traumatized to give a good explanation of what happened," replied my mom.

As I sat up, my head suddenly throbbed with pain so I lay back down.

"Did I get a concussion?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm afraid so," said my mother.

I had once had a concussion when I got hit at center ice in a college hockey game. It wasn't as bad as this, though. I learned my nose was badly broken and my leg was almost completely numb. My mind was filled with "what if's." I didn't know if I'd play hockey again. I had been leading the team in goals, assists, and points. I was on pace to set a college record. I had racked up 15 goals in 16 games. But the most depressing thing of all was we were the top contenders in the race for the championship. Now it looked as if I would never play hockey again.

After three days on my back in the hospital, my parents and I had come to a decision. I would take as long as I needed for rehab, and would come back and play hockey at what I hoped would be



the same high level. The doctor said rehab would take about six months, but he also said I'd be lucky to be able to even play hockey again. Joey Arnold and I had planned to move into the NHL together, but I guess that wouldn't be so. Joey was a great player, too. He had been skiing with me when I crashed.

January 27, 2000 was my first day of rehab. The doctor said I would start easy, just working on moving my leg up and down. My goal was to be walking the next month.

The process was going slowly. Every day at 11:00 a.m., Ms. White would come to my hospital room.

"Hello, you must be Jeff," said Ms. White the first day.

I replied, "Yes, I am."

Ms. White then exclaimed, "We'll be in here for two more months doing leg exercises," trying to sound excited, when I knew she wasn't.

After the first month I was able to walk in baby steps for about one minute, then my legs would get tired. After two months I could walk for a while, and the doctor told me soon I could walk normally. He also said it helped that my legs had been so strong from hockey. After days of rehab, I was finally able to run, but it had taken ten months to recover. Getting back into hockey was another story. The next day I'd be on the ice again.

I stepped onto the rink for the first time in almost a year. It felt good to be back on the ice. I tried sprinting and stopping. I could do all of my old techniques, but the speed just wasn't there.

I'd decided to go into a training program where I'd lift weights with my legs and arms to get stronger, and possibly come back to hockey. "Oooh!" I grunted as I picked up weight after weight with my legs. That night my legs ached horribly. The process was grueling, but finally, after 24 months of training and aching bones, I was ready to play hockey again. Or was I? The question hung in my mind.

I entered the NHL draft, and was projected to be picked 100<sup>th</sup> overall in the fourth round. It was not what I expected. In September, the draft was held. The Florida Panthers would draft

me and I'd get a chance to play with NHL star Pavel Bure. I took an airplane to the draft in Montreal. By then I was really excited to go to the drafting ceremony.

I strode into the auditorium. The size of the room shocked me, and yet every seat was filled. I squeezed past a few people, and then sat down in a comfortable folding chair. Finally they got up and announced my name. "Now being drafted by the Florida Panthers, Jeff Tremont!" shouted the announcer. I strode up to the Panthers table and put on a Panthers jersey. I was officially drafted, and finally in the NHL!

My first game was in one month. I was starting in the first home game of the season for the Panthers. The coach and I agreed on a deal that if I looked good enough to play full time for the Panthers, I could play. Otherwise, he'd have to send me down to the minors. There I would work on getting stronger in my legs, and then be back in the NHL.

It was weird getting dressed in a locker room full of NHL players. I was next to Rob Svehla, the Panthers star defenseman. Pavel Bure, also known as "The Russian Rocket," was sitting across the room. I walked out of the dressing room to cheers. This was it. We'd find out if I was ready for the NHL.

I was out there for the opening face-off at left wing with Rob Neidermayer at center, and Bure at right wing. We were playing Dallas, who'd won the cup last year. The referee dropped the puck. Neidermayer plucked the puck out of the air as it bounced back up off the ice right to me. I flipped a pass across the ice to Bure who streaked down the ice, blowing by the Dallas defenseman with his incredible speed. As he raced in on goal, he faked left, then suddenly shifted the puck to the right, and flipped a backhand over Dallas's star goalie, Ed Belfour, into the open net. I had gotten my first point!

That's a bad example of how the game went. Dallas scored on two shots from the point, and star Mike Madano scored on a breakaway, giving Dallas a 3-1 lead and the win. The game wasn't a total loss, though; the coach had said I looked pretty good and

would be staying in the NHL. That was a major relief to get off my back.

The first eight games were all similar to that because we lost five of them. I got an assist on another Bure goal for my second point, but things weren't going well.

In the ninth game, we were playing the Atlanta Thrashers, which was the only team in the league without a win, and also the only team worse than us. The only goal of the first period came when Atlanta's Ray Ferraro tipped in a blast from the point. Atlanta was beating us! Then suddenly the tide changed. Lance Pitlick scored from the blueline. Lance doesn't score that much, so I think it kind of revved the team up. We had the puck for almost the whole period.

It was late in the third, both teams gunning for a victory. I was on the ice with Mellanby and Larionov. I found myself at center, circling, when suddenly Larionov flipped me a beautiful pass. The puck found my stick and I was gone! I raced in on goal with a clean breakaway. I pulled the puck and faked a backhand, and then at the last second I went back to my forehand and blasted the puck past the Thrasher's flailing goalie. Finally, my first NHL goal! I hoped that there would be many more. That ended up being the game-winning goal. The Thrashers remained winless.

I scored five more goals, all on deflections. My team could only manage seven more wins in 20 more games. We were still second to last in the league. As the season progressed, we ended up with a total of 16 wins, 27 losses, four ties, and one overtime loss in 48 games. We were at the All-Star break, the midpoint in the season, with 34 games left. We'd need one awesome second half.

"So Jeff, you've finally made it to the NHL. How do you like it?" asked my mom.

"I guess it's fun playing with Bure, but it's not the same way I used to play," I replied.

"And why is that, Jeff?" answered my mom. I left it at that, because I was sure she knew why.

We finished the season with only 28 wins, 43 losses, 11 ties and one overtime loss, for 67 points and tenth place out of 14 in our division. We didn't make the playoffs. We didn't the next year either, though we ended up finishing with five more wins. Each season, I scored 32 goals, which was not bad, but also not what I expected.

I decided I was going to take time off for rehab. My parents had agreed that if I needed time off I should take it. I had to go through the same grueling process as last time, aching legs day after day. But after nine grueling months I finally knew I was ready to be the player I was meant to be.

I stepped into the dressing room the night of my first game back. "The guys" welcomed me back. It felt great to be lacing up my skates again. I was out on the ice for the opening face-off. It was Neidermayer, Bure, and me on offense. After winning the face-off, Neidermayer immediately flipped me the puck. I brought the puck up the boards, and then passed it cross-ice to Bure. He one-timed it straight into the goalie's left pad. The puck rocketed right off his pad to me. All I had to do was flip the puck into the open net. Everyone congratulated me on my first goal of my comeback.

On my next shift, Neidermayer shot me a beautiful pass right between the defenseman's legs at center. I screamed in on goal all alone, faked a backhand, pulled back to my forehand, and blasted a forehand into the top right corner of the net. Two goals.

The Bruins came back, though, and scored 4 goals, making it 4-2 in their favor. Later in the second, Neidermayer won the draw and slapped the puck back to Svhela who blasted a shot at the net. I reached out with my stick and deflected the puck down onto the ice below the Bruins diving goalie. Hat trick, but I wasn't finished.

Later in the power play, I stormed toward the goalie from the blue line and faked the goalie out of his pants, ripping a shot into the bottom corner of the net. Four goals.

It was 4-4 in the last 30 seconds of the third. This time Bure made the beautiful pass to me. As I raced in, the defenseman tripped me, calling for a penalty shot. I flew in on goal, faked a shot on my

forehand, pulled the puck back to my skates, and then flipped the puck back up with my skates to my stick. Then I wristed a backhand under the sprawling goalie. Five goals. Most important though, we won the game, 5-4. What a game!

Game after game I scored and had accumulated 24 goals in just 21 games. The Panthers were hot, too. We had 27 wins in just 48 games at the All-Star break. Later in the season I was on pace to set an NHL record with 90 goals in 79 games. That was when “it” happened.

There were three minutes left in the third period. The score was Florida 2, Colorado 2. Bure flipped a pass to me at center ice. I had one of my now famous breakaways and a chance to break the record for most goals in a season. Johnny Smith trailed me. I was heading full speed for the net when Johnny tripped me. I crashed down onto my side and blew right into the net at full speed. I screamed in pain as my left knee slammed into the post. I knew right then my career was over.

The doctor said I’d never play hockey again. I had fractured my leg so bad they would have to immobilize it for the next six months, then I’d try to walk. I may not be able to.

Now when I look back, I wonder why I hurt my leg on the breakaway chance to break the record. Was it not meant to be? Why was it me who broke my leg and would never be able to play hockey again? Why? Some questions never get answered.



# THE PLOT THICKENS





# THE KIDNAP

*A loved one mysteriously disappears, and the police are stumped. In THE KIDNAP by Ally Newsom, a daughter never gives up hope.*

Anna jumped into the shallow puddle of water that was glistening from the sun. Lily, behind her, was whining as usual.

“Do you really have to jump in all of those puddles?” Lily questioned. “You’re only getting your uniform dirty.” Lily and Anna were best friends. They went to a private school in their town.

“I don’t care if I get dirty,” Anna continued. “Suzie is doing the laundry today.”

Suzie was their family maid. She had long brown hair and bright, beautiful green eyes. Her smile was very pretty also because it fit perfectly with her tan skin. Anna looked very much like Suzie, even though she had big, brown eyes. Lily was different. She had shorter, blond hair with tiny blue eyes.

Anna jumped in another puddle while they continued to walk. When they reached the corner, they saw Miss Zwiggle. She was Anna’s father’s old boss. That was before he got his new job at the town newspaper company. Anna never did like her. She had a big nose and a little body. Miss Zwiggle was also very rude to Anna’s family. When Anna’s father quit his job, Miss Zwiggle went crazy! She tried to make Anna’s father come back again.

Anna saw her get into her car. There was a big bag in the back seat that could fit almost two of her in it.

“I wonder what is in her car,” said Anna to Lily with curiosity in her voice.

“Probably nothing. Let’s just forget about it,” answered Lily.

They kept walking. When they reached Anna's house, they ran up her walkway.

Suzie greeted them and told Anna to change her clothes and that she would make them a snack.

Anna changed her clothes and went to the kitchen to eat her snack with Lily.

Suzie had just begun talking to the girls when the phone rang.

"Hello," she said. "Yes, she is here; one moment please." She set the phone down and called for Anna's mother. When her mother picked up the phone, Suzie hung up.

Lily went home when she finished eating. Anna went upstairs to say hello to her mother. She was walking down the hall when she heard a small and quiet cry. Her mother was sitting in the chair crying.

"What's wrong?" Anna questioned her mother.

"Your father," Anna's mother cried. "He is missing," she cried more. "That was the police on the phone."

Anna couldn't believe it. She couldn't move. She felt like her knees were locking her in place. She was waiting for her mother to wake her up, telling her it was all a bad dream. She couldn't think.

The next day Anna told Lily about her father, and they went searching for him. Anna also told Lily that she didn't think the police were going to do anything.

Every night Anna couldn't sleep. She sat in her warm bed thinking if her father was okay and if he had a nice place to sleep in also. She was about to fall asleep one night when a thought flashed into her head. She remembered Miss Zwiggle and the bag.

The next morning she woke up to the crisp smell of bacon. She ran to her mother's room and told her about Miss Zwiggle. Immediately, Anna's mother nearly leaped out of bed and called the police. Her dark brown hair slid into her face.

Anna raced down the hall to her room and got dressed. It was still dark out. Her mother and she met up on the stairs and they ran down together. Anna immediately forgot about the bacon.

They drove to Miss Zwiggle's house. The police had already arrived. Anna saw a big crowd of people. There were blinding flashlights and blaring sirens.

Out of the house came Miss Zwiggle with handcuffs. She had on a fuzzy pink robe and matching slippers. Her hair looked as if a tornado hit her in the middle of the night. Behind her was Anna's father. She sprinted to him and gave him a hug. He told her how happy he was to be out.

"She kept me in the basement," he said.

Away from her father were the police and Miss Zwiggle. Anna walked over and told the policeman about the bag in the back seat of Miss Zwiggle's car.

"Why did you kidnap that man?" the policeman asked.

"I wanted him to work for me again. I needed him. The business is doing horribly without him," she replied.

Anna, her mother, and father were going home when the police officer headed toward them again.

"We never would've found your father if it wasn't for you. Thank you so much for the help. We also caught Miss Zwiggle," thanked the policeman.

"You are welcome," said Anna.

"How did you know that he was missing?" asked Anna's mother.

The policeman answered in a smart way, "Just from people at his office and people saying that they hadn't seen him that morning. We then went on a search that afternoon. Of course we did not find any traces of him. We then knew that he was missing."

Anna now felt more complete, like a piece of her heart was torn away and now found. She knew that she was back to a normal life with her loving family. She would never take a family member or friend for granted.

# THE KILLER CLOWN

*With an escaped convict on the loose, citizens are urged to take precautions. What happens when two boys ignore the warnings? THE KILLER CLOWN, by Brenton Bitzer, explores this circumstance.*

Once upon a time, a clown worked at the circus. One day he got into a fight with the boss of the circus because he wasn't getting paid enough, so that night he killed the boss. The police tracked him down the next day and he was put in jail for the rest of his life.

Ten years later he escaped the jail, finding his own secret way out. He ran through the woods, sweat dripping down his face. The police were running after him with police dogs! He hid behind a bush, scared to death until the next morning. The police stayed up all night looking for him, not able to find him. The clown decided to rob a clothing store nearby to get some clothes to change out of his jail suit. He first retrieved a weapon, hidden away in his shack, and left to get some new clothes. After robbing the clothing store, now fully dressed and disguised, the clown threw his jail suit into the river.

The next day, Sam and Andrew were at Andrew's house watching the news, because they had heard that the killer clown had escaped out of jail. The lady on the news reported, "Killer clown on the loose! Stay inside and lock all doors for safety!"

Sam and Andrew didn't really care and went for a walk to the woods anyway.

When they got to the woods, they saw something floating down the river towards them. They could tell that it was something orange. Sam got a stick to scoop it out to see what it was. IT WAS

A JAIL SUIT! Both Sam and Andrew screamed, “LET’S GET OUT OF HERE!”

Right there was when they saw the Killer Clown himself! They ran as fast as they could back to Andrew’s house, fear haunting their faces. He was running after them with a knife! The clown kept getting closer and closer, as Andrew and Sam were forced to run faster and faster. As they got to Andrew’s house, they ran inside, locked all the doors, and then went to hide in Andrew’s bedroom closet, shaking with fear. They heard a shatter of glass coming from downstairs. Then they heard eerie walks coming up the stairs . . . bump . . . bump . . . bump . . . bump . . . Andrew heard his bedroom door creep open. The clown opened the closet door, seeing the shock in Sam’s and Andrew’s faces. The clown stabbed Andrew in the leg while Sam took off out of the house in search of help.

Sam found the police. The chief police officer sent two policemen to go check it out, while Sam stayed at the police department. The police officers returned two hours later, saying, “We found Andrew stabbed in the leg with no sign of the clown.”

The police officers then accused Sam of being the one to stab Andrew, using the clown excuse as a cover up. The two policemen went to report the story. Sam snuck out of the police department, then started running to his and Andrew’s tree fort in the woods.

Sam heard a big bang in the woods while sleeping that night. It got louder and louder and all of a sudden the door to the fort popped open as Sam looked eye to eye at the clown. The clown stabbed Sam in the arm. Sam was bleeding to death, crying. The clown pushed Sam off of the tree fort, and Sam fell to his death.

No one ever saw Sam or the clown ever again. Andrew, so scared from his stabbing, never talked about the incident again.

## A LONELY PLACE

*A mansion is the scene of a horrible crime. In A LONELY PLACE by Andrew Head, secrets concerning those involved are revealed. Will the culprit be discovered?*

Once upon a time on a lonely hill lay a mansion. In it lived two people, Alfred and his wife Barbara. Barbara was a blond-haired woman in her early forties who worked at a law firm. She was never appreciated at home so her job let her feel good about herself. Barbara met a man named John at work who really appreciated her. That is how the affair began.

Alfred, her husband, never paid any attention to his wife. He worked hard and kept late hours. One night when he came home she told him that she wanted a divorce. He asked her why and she admitted that she was having an affair. He got mad and stormed out the door. When he left he slammed the door so hard it broke.

Later that night, a neighbor came into the house bringing Jello to welcome the new couple. He saw Barbara on the floor with a knife in her back. He dropped the Jello and called 911 from the kitchen. The police came and the neighbor told the police that Alfred was usually at the bar.

The police left and went to the bar. Alfred saw the police and tried to hide his face by looking down and talking to the women next to him. The police officer started talking to Alfred, not knowing that he was Alfred.

Alfred was as drunk as a drunken sailor. In walked a beautiful lady who sat down next to Alfred. Alfred started up a conversation about how love hurts. She replied, "I know what you mean. My

husband just left me for another woman. I never suspected a thing and right now I feel like I could kill him.”

Alfred replied with slurred words, “I already killed uhm.”

She said, “You gotta be drunk if you mean my husband because I just left him.”

Alfred replied, “No, my wife.”

She responded with, “This isn’t even funny.” She got up and walked out of the bar.

The police overheard some of Alfred’s conversation and took Alfred to the station where he sat all night and sobered up. The chief of police asked Alfred, “Who was that woman you were talking to last night at the bar?”

Alfred asked, “What woman? I wasn’t talking to anybody.”

There was more investigating and it was decided that Alfred would be charged with his wife’s murder. He was confident they’d find him innocent.

A court date was set and a lawyer was picked for Alfred. The lawyer was John, the man that Barbara had been secretly seeing. John knew all about Alfred but Alfred knew nothing about John. John was certain that Alfred was innocent and worked hard to defend him, feeling guilty about his affair with his wife. John never thought Alfred would ever hurt his wife.

The case was just about to end and it looked like Alfred would win the case and be proven innocent. But there was one more witness that got called in at the last minute. It was Linda Stevens, the beautiful woman in the bar with Alfred the night of the murder. When Alfred saw her walk in, he was as cool as a cucumber, thinking, “What could she possibly know? I’ve never seen this woman before in my life. I don’t even recognize her.”

The lawyer began asking her questions and she said that Alfred seemed like he was joking about a murder when they were in the bar. After she went home that night she heard on the news about a murder very similar to what Alfred had described. She became suspicious and decided to call the police. Everyone was surprised to hear her say this, but doubted if she was really a truthful woman.

The lawyer asked her if she knew what the murder weapon was and what it looked like. She described every detail that Alfred had described to her the night in the bar. She knew exactly what the knife looked like. The court room was in shock. Alfred started screaming, "Who is this lady? She's a liar!"

It didn't take the jury very long to come back with a guilty verdict. Alfred almost got away with murder. Alfred finally confessed to having killed his wife in a fit of rage. John was shocked. He couldn't believe how he was fooled by Alfred. He was not the same man that Barbara had described. Maybe John's guilt prevented him from seeing the truth.

Alfred was sentenced to life in prison. What a lonely place.



# THE MURDER

*Danger lurks around every corner. A mysterious figure is at the center of it all. THE MURDER, by Matt Tyndall, is the story of an evil presence that stalks a community.*

“Bye!” Mary yelled. She walked down the curvy walkway to an area she had never seen before. She was confounded at where she was. As Mary turned to walk back to the restaurant she saw a Persian cat with one orange paw. She thought it was strange that the cat had an orange paw. She bent down to pet it and when she looked up she saw a knife glimmering in the moonlight in the hand of a figure who she could barely make out in the secrecy of the dark. She did see he had a mustache.

She ran to the nearest building. It happened to be a bar. She asked the bartender for a phone and she called the police. Ten minutes later the police came she told the sheriff about the cat with one orange paw and also about the mustache. He said that they would do everything they could to bring this person to justice.

On Travert Island in the Tavert house, Michael Tavert just came to see his mom. She was getting old and her helper was Helen. Mom wanted to go outside because she said there was a storm coming. As the three of them came down the stairs the doorbell rang. It was Michael’s brother Nick. He came to say hello to his mom, too.

They all went outside to the garden. They met the gardener. He had made a beautiful garden full of marigolds and daffodils. *Ding dong*—the doorbell rang. “Helen will you go get that?” Mom asked.

It was the sheriff. "I'm coming by to tell everyone a storm is coming." That second it started pouring rain.

"Come inside," Helen said. As the sheriff came in he told them all about the storm.

The storm got worse. The cook said, "We're probably going to be trapped on the island during the storm."

Then the sheriff told them about a previous murder and to keep a look out for this mystery murderer who was believed to have a cat with one orange paw. He met the gardener who had a mustache. All of a sudden the lights flickered and slowly died out.

The sheriff went looking for the generators. As he went down into the cellar he saw the generators were empty and the gas was gone from the cans. Suddenly he saw the cat with one orange paw and was clubbed from behind and fell to the ground.

After a while everyone started wondering where the Sheriff was. They started searching in groups. Helen went with Nick, and they went over by the cellar. Nick took the kitchen and Helen went down the cellar. As she walked down each steep carefully, she turned the corner and on the shelf was the dead body of the sheriff.

Helen ran up the stairs screaming. Then the murderer ran up the stairs with the sheriff's 9mm Beretta pistol. He shot Nick in the arm. He ran up the stairs after Helen. He started chasing Helen through the house. He chased her out onto the balcony.

Michael ran up the stairs behind him holding his mother's six shooter. They backed the murderer up against the ornate guardrail. Then he tripped and fell off the third story balcony.

The police couldn't come because of the storm and the next day a helicopter came to pick up hurt Nick. The police came to pick up the body of the murder. When they found his body he had a mustache and was the gardener. They still haven't found the cat with one orange paw.

# THE MURDER OF ANNIE

*The promise of a happy vacation suddenly disappears when tragedy strikes. In THE MURDER OF ANNIE by Chelsea Clark, perseverance helps solve a terrible crime.*

The day started off better than I had expected. As soon as we got off of the plane, I knew the day was going to be better.

As soon as we got to the hotel, my sister Annie and I both went up to our rooms. That night I heard a scream and I thought it was just my imagination.

When I got up in the morning, I knocked once on Annie's door. No one answered, so I knocked again. No one answered, so I walked in, thinking that she was still sleeping and that I would wake her up. But when I walked in, I found Annie lying on her bed, dead.

I called the ambulance and they rushed over and they tried to revive her but it didn't work. Then I realized that she was gone.

The next day I got a call from the police station and the police asked me to come down, but I said that there was nothing I could do because I was sleeping the whole time. We went in her room and they were dusting for fingerprints, so I just looked around her room and I found a video camera playing from the plane. I put the video into the VCR. After that we went back to the police station and I picked out two suspects that looked like the man in the video camera. Their names are Mark Newson and Marshall Nowings.

After that we went back into the room and we found a bag that said MN on it, but both of the men's names begin with MN so there was nothing we could do about that. We got all of the

things in the bag dusted for fingerprints and found that they matched with Mark Newson.

Life is going well, but I will never forget my dear sister Annie. I will also never forget the murder of Annie.

# STINKY SOCKS

*There is a mystery most foul in the school: foul-smelling, that is. STINKY SOCKS, by Andrew Clarke, tells how three motivated students follow their noses to uncover a big secret.*

Man, oh man; what's that smell? It's coming from the new kid's locker. The new kid was Rodney Heppler. He was as tall as a horse and as tough as a rampaging bull. His face was twitched so it made him look like a kid that gave knuckle sandwiches. When he came by you, your heart pounded as if he was about to shoot you. I just have to say, "Watch out"; this kid has big surprises in his knuckles.

It was our job to ask him what that smell was. We are Joey, John, and Jimmy. Our problem was how to ask him if we could see what was inside his locker.

Joey was the biggest of us three. So Jimmy and I made him ask him. Joey went up to him at his locker and said, "Can we see inside your locker? Not that anything is bad about it."

He said, "Um, okay. Make it fast." That was easier than I thought. I thought that I was going to get a knuckle sandwich.

There was nothing fishy about his locker. In his locker were about three or four textbooks, a brown paper sack lunch, a coat, and a backpack. He left us there because we guess he was bored watching us. We found a board in the back. Jimmy said, "Let's see what's behind it." Jimmy moved the board and there was . . . a big room that looked like a gym!

There were six steel basketball hoops. The floor was a pit of dust; there had to have been two inches of dust. It looked like it snowed in there. In the back were two locker rooms. One said "BOYS" and the other said "GIRLS" all in capital letters. I said,

“What’s up with the ‘GIRLS’ sign? It’s all nice and the boys’ is junky.” We were debating whether to go in there and find the smell or to have someone find it for us.

We decided to go in because we wanted to be known as the best sixth-grade detectives. I went in first and then Joey and then Jimmy. We walked right through the gym and then to the boys’ locker room because that was where the smell was coming from. We tracked the smell down to locker 67. But there was a lock on it. We had to pick it open with a paper clip, but then the paper clip got stuck in the lock, so we had to kick it. We were kicking it until the grey paint on it chipped off. Then finally Joey kicked it as hard as he could and it opened and there was . . . .

There were ashes in the shape of a sock. “Why are there ashes in the shape of a sock?” I asked.

Jimmy said, “They must have smelled so bad that they turned to ashes, or someone lit them on fire..”

Joey said, “If someone lit them on fire, then there would be burn marks on the locker. So that means they smelled so bad that they turned to ashes.” We all agreed with what Joey said.

Now, we are detectives. We found the smell from Rodney’s locker. Our principal knew that there was a gym there the whole time. He said, “Our school used to be the ghetto. We were so poor, and we couldn’t afford the maintenance, so we stopped using it. But now it’s open.”

Rodney said, “You thought that I smelled,” and then Joey ran and he chased him.

We didn’t get anything for discovering the gym, just twice the amount of gym time, because we have two gyms now.

# THE STOLEN RUBIES

*Patience and perseverance can be powerful weapons. In THE STOLEN RUBIES by Lizzie Putnam, three children put their heads together in an attempt to discover who keeps breaking into the jewelry store belonging to Jessica's father.*

Long ago in New York City there lived a girl named Jessica. She lived on Main Street right next to a jewelry store. Jessica's dad had owned the store for 18 years. Jessica walked there every day to see how things were going. She thought something was happening at her dad's store. Lately, he had been sad all the time.

One day she went to her dad's store to see what was going on. Her dad told her that a ruby had been stolen. She had to help. She went to her friends, Joe and Sammi, to figure this case out. Joe and Sammi are Jessica's best friends from school. Jessica told them to keep a look out for the robber.

That night she heard sirens drumming in her ear. It was the alarm from the jewelry store. Jessica was scared. She figured if her dad did not get up by now he did not hear it. So, she got up and went herself. By the time she got there it was too late: the robber had already stolen another ruby. She ran to the police to tell them there was just a robbery on Main Street at the jewelry store. "The robbery was just 10 minutes ago! They just came and stole the ruby. It was awful!" That night when she went to the police she found out that the robber had been gone for two years.

That day she told her friends that the robber's name was Robert and he had been missing for two whole years. They did research on Robert that whole day. That night, without telling their parents, they camped out in the backyard of the jewelry store to see who

the robber really was. In the middle of the night the sirens were pounding in Jessica's ear again. The alarm had gone off again. The three kids saw a man. This time he did not steal a ruby. He stole a diamond!

They did more research the next day on Robert. That night they camped out again. This time they did not catch him, but followed him home. They also found out that the robber had been hiding out in a broken down shack. Jessica, Joe and Sammi went to the police and told them the whole story. The police went over and he was caught. That shows that if you steal you will always get caught, so do not steal and you will be just fine.



# TOO HARD TO LIVE WITHOUT JULES

*In a house filled with people celebrating a birthday, something goes horribly wrong. TOO HARD TO LIVE WITHOUT JULES, by Alana B., explores how a family is thrown into turmoil by a terrible event.*

One fine day, Jules was lying in her den on her big, brown, comfy couch. She was as bored as a big bump on a log. That weekend was when everyone had left for spring break. Jules was very tired because she had nothing to do the whole day. Ever since she woke up that morning, she had nothing to do. Her family lived in a small house that hadn't had many interesting things in it.

Jules decided to go in her room and take a nap before the party that night. It was Grandpa Joe's birthday. She crept up the stairs and dragged herself to the top as she held on to the shaky, wobbly railing. She went to sleep and woke up to the delicious smell coming from the kitchen. Her mother, Lucy, was baking for the birthday coming up. Lucy always has baked great meals. Jules was suffering from the flow of clouds coming from the kitchen that smelled like hot soup. She rushed in to take a taste.

An hour passed and the doorbell rang. The party had come in and started to eat some appetizers. Mother called, "Dinner's ready." Everyone sat down in the kitchen and started eating.

Grandpa Joe complimented mother. "This food is delicious." It appeared Mother was surely happy to hear that by the happy smiling expression on her face. She smiled back and said, "Thanks."

“Mother, I hear very weird noises upstairs as if someone is rummaging around,” Jules said. “Also, it feels like someone’s drawers are being broken into because I hear banging sounds,” she exclaimed. No one listened to her and just ignored her. She didn’t know what to do. Should she go upstairs and check it out? After a while she forgot about it and her mother brought out the birthday cake. The cake had sixty-eight candles on it and one for good luck. The family sang “Happy Birthday” and cheered when Grandpa blew out the candles.

Father was at work all day and couldn’t make it to the dinner. He came at present time. Jules decided to go upstairs and read a book. Everyone clapped when Grandpa opened the lovely presents, and next was dessert.

“Jules, come down and eat some dessert,” shouted Mom. After a few minutes, Jules hadn’t come down. Mom and Dad went upstairs to get her. A window was cracked open and the hat Jules was wearing was sitting on the window sill.

“Where is she?” Mother said frantically.

Mom and Dad searched the house three times and called all of the neighbors and friends. Since there weren’t many people in town they didn’t have many people to call. They contacted the police when they were sure she was missing.

Mom and Dad put up signs saying: Jules Parker. Hair: brown. Eyes: brown. 4’11”. Contact us if found: 778 North Freezing Lane. Thanks, parents Lucy and Fred.

They woke up the next morning and searched town. To start the day off they would take hour drives around the city to find her. All they want to do is find her. Dad had taken time off work lately to get a head start for their nightly search drives. Since she is not with them right now, all they want to know is that she is feeling okay and is safe. They never thought about her running away because they are very nice to her and try to entertain her so much. They wouldn’t consider themselves bad parents so they don’t know why she would ever run away.

For the next week they searched around town nonstop. Before they went to bed, they would cry themselves to sleep.

“I miss her so much,” Lucy cried. Dad said the same thing. Since they are a very poor family, the only thing that makes them rich is when they are all together.

They both had no idea where Jules is because if someone took her there were no clues where. Did Jules leave to go on a walk and someone took her? Did she trip and fall out the window? Did someone kidnap her? So many possible conclusions and not one has enough clues. If she jumped out the window, they would’ve seen the body or at least blood on the sidewalk. If she went on a walk she would’ve gone out the front door and would’ve told them she was.

Years and years went by and still no sign of where Jules is. Until this day Mom and Dad don’t know where she is. They both agreed that it is too hard to live without Jules!

# THE WHITE HOUSE MYSTERY

*Even the best-guarded house in America isn't safe from crime. In THE WHITE HOUSE MYSTERY by Carly H. Gordon, a crime in the nation's capital seems to have everyone puzzled.*

It was a beautiful day at the White House. The president was waking up, ready for a new day. Is he sure he wants to wake up this morning? Did his wife know the press was rolling a wonderful story that was going to sell millions? The press secretary, Chloe, had been up for hours, thinking about good things to dig up about the President's wife Joan. Since Chloe had been yelled at so badly last night in front of her new boyfriend about redecorating her new office with the White House charge card, revenge was the only answer. She was told the three bubbling light fixtures with different-colored bulbs and leopard love seat had to go.

As President Henry and his wife, Joan, woke this fine morning, they read the newspaper. There was a piercing scream that sounded like a baby wailing for its mother that could be heard all over the White House. The biggest surprise was who wrote the article. This was Chloe's plan to get back at Joan. The lie was about Joan getting a divorce and stealing all of her ex-husband's money, and talking about her private life.

The press secretary knew what was going to happen. Chloe had already started packing her bags when the president and his wife came in. The president and his wife said in chorus, "You are fired. I hope to see you out of the White House by 7:00 A.M. tomorrow morning."

That night, Chloe was packing up her last things at about 1:00 A.M. when she heard a creeping noise. The White House was

dark and the only light was the moon shining outside her window. Everyone was asleep except the guards, so she suspected it was a guard, but she was wrong. She felt like someone was watching her every move like a hawk watches its prey. Someone was there breathing on her neck. Chloe struggled, but there was nothing she could do. The weapon pierced her heart and she fell to the ground.

As the sun rose above the president's room the next morning, Henry was ready to make the last good-byes with Chloe, but she was not in her office. She was lying on the floor in the hall, dead. She had been stabbed with a knife with a wooden handle that had gorgeous engravings and the initials "F. L." on it. The president knew those initials from somewhere, but he could not put his finger on it.

As the paramedics carried Chloe away, the president and his wife thought long and hard about who would have done such a thing. The president and his wife were going to do everything in their power to find out who did this. Was it a guard seeking revenge? There was a killer on the loose. Whoever did it was going to get caught. There was panic in the White House. The news media was everywhere! The entire country was on alert!

The most trained officer was put on duty. The White House was checked many times with high-tech devices, but no evidence was found. What were they going to do?

As the days passed, the president was losing more and more confidence in finding the killer. As they looked for a matching knife, nothing was found. The President knew someone who was in the White House that night had done it. They gathered up the crew of people there that night and checked their names and clothes, but nothing was found.

Lately, the president had noticed that his wife had been disappearing every now and then from the media scene. He was worried about her. She appeared to walk with fear in the halls of the White House. She constantly asked, "If I go to bed tonight, will someone get me before morning?" She talked in her sleep about mass murderers and knives. She even threatened to leave the

country until the killer was found, but the FBI wouldn't allow it. The president did not know what to do about her.

Finally, there was a huge breakthrough in the case. The FBI was holding a briefing in the president's bedroom when one of the officers reached in a drawer for a pen. At last, the missing piece of the puzzle had been found in the dresser drawer. There was the matching knife with the initials F.L. that stood for "First Lady," lying right next to a diary. The diary contained a journal entry that fit the crime. The president's wife had done this for revenge on Chloe for writing the article.

After all the evidence had been examined in a court of law, the President's wife was sent to jail for her crime.

# WHO WAS THAT PERSON BY THE WINDOW?

*A boy waits for his mother to return from a routine trip to the mall. What happens when she doesn't return as expected? In WHO WAS THAT PERSON BY THE WINDOW? by Stephanie, the boy must figure out what to do.*

Once upon a time there was a mom and her son. One day when Grant, the son, came home from school, his mom Lorilie told him that she was going to the mall for three hours.

“For what?” Grant asked.

“I don't know; just to look around and see what is good to buy.”

She left at 1:00. By 5:30, she wasn't back yet. When it was 6:00, Grant stared out the window, waiting and waiting.

At 8:30, Grant was still waiting for his mom. He asked his neighbor if he had seen his mom.

“No,” said Chris, his neighbor.

It was a Friday. Grant was still waiting for his mom to come home. Then he heard the phone ring. It was his neighbor. He said that someone had given him a phone call and knew where his mom was.

“Where?” Grant asked.

“He didn't say, but he left a number. He called me because it was my friend and he didn't know your phone number. Anyway, the phone number is 326-8763. He said call that number and your mom will pick up.”

Grant was so excited he started to cry and forgot to call his mom. He just went to sleep. Grant had thought his mom had died. He got so scared until that phone call.

Lorilie couldn't call Grant because she felt really sick and needed to lie down somewhere. She felt really dizzy because she works, cleans, and provides food for Grant.

Grant didn't call the police because he wanted to be a detective and do it himself.

But Grant just went to sleep. He was very tired of standing and waiting for his mom all day.

The next day he woke up at 7:25 A.M. to find his mom. He looked everywhere, and he asked everyone. He quit for the day and went to sleep.

The next day he woke up at 6:30 A.M. Right when he was about to leave he heard the phone ring. He rushed to get it. It was his mom.

"Mom, where are you?"

"If you be quiet, I will tell you where I am. I am at the Motel 8 because I felt really dizzy and I needed to lie down somewhere."



# THE REST OF THE STORY



# HOW SANTA BECAME JEWISH

*Hanukkah and Christmas each has its own stories. HOW SANTA BECAME JEWISH, by Greg Weingarden, is one story that revolves around both celebrations.*

“You better not think, you better not sigh. You better not sleep, I’m telling you why!” Santa Claus was humming his favorite Christmas song, with his own little twist. The North Pole was totally magnificent. Everywhere you looked, there was either a cheery, green elf happier than a cat in a room full of tasty smoked fish, or a great and wonderful view of numerous, gorgeous, light snowflakes falling gently to the snowy, white desert, as if in a dream.

It was especially busy that Christmas, and Santa was doing everything he possibly could to help things move along. He was watching all the tiny elves carrying toys to his sleigh outside, when he gazed up into the sky as the brilliant yellows and the bright oranges of the sunset came into view. He could sense the slight breeze of the wind, blowing past his face into the crisp, evening air. But an evil elf named Evil Elf was destroying the perfect scene. He was in Santa’s sleigh trying to dismantle Santa’s navigational system! Oh no! After successfully completing the job, Evil Elf dove out of the sleigh because he heard voices coming his way. But he landed in a mound of goo. He then stood up, tripped over a bucket, and landed in a crate of feathers. A hunter saw him, and shot him with his rifle because he looked like a chicken. Sadly, Evil Elf’s last words were: “Bawk, Bawk!” Evil Elf had no idea, but because of his accomplished mission, he had made that Christmas and every Christmas following it just a tiny bit unusual.

“Is there anything you need?” Mrs. Claus asked her husband.

“No, I’m fine, my dear,” Santa replied, as he snapped into his marvelous red suit.

“I hope you have a good time,” Mrs. Claus said as Santa gathered up his things. “I’ll be here, in case something happens,” she informed him. Santa came up to her, and gave his wife a small kiss on her cherry red cheeks. She blushed dark red, for all the elves had brought popcorn to watch Santa’s departure. He reminded his wife that he loved her, and started to stroll to his sleigh. He had some very important business to take care of, and he knew that there were children across the globe waiting for him. Santa hopped into his sleigh, and zoomed off into the night, like an eagle soaring into the air.

Now Santa’s navigational system always led him to the Christian households, but because of Evil Elf, it would now lead Santa Claus to all of the Jewish households.

Cancer, Glancer, Basher, Honor, Dixon, Glitzen, Vomit, Stupid, Santa, and an extremely heavy sack of toys arrived on the Smith family roof for their first stop. Old Saint Nick boosted himself out of the magic sleigh, and headed for the brick chimney. Santa started down the dusty chute, but he got stuck. It took him a while, but eventually Santa reached the bottom of the chimney. He crawled out and had a look around.

Everything was darker than woods in the middle of a black, stormy night. He noticed a small table in the back of the room with some healthy fruit placed on top of it, but that was it. No Christmas decorations, no special lights, no nothing. It did seem sort of strange to Santa, but he was unaware of the Christmas tree’s location, so he wandered into the kitchen. It was then and there where he first viewed the nine gleaming candles of the Menorah, each glowing with a touch of sparkle, silently in the dark room, as if the room had been illuminated with light from above.

Santa entered a very intense state of mind. He was completely mesmerized by the dazzling lights of the Menorah. It was as if he was hypnotized or something. He started repeating “The lights . . . the lights!” over and over again. After a few minutes of this, he

woke from the trance. “Wow,” he said, still bewildered. “That was incredible.” Santa then decided that because of these stupendous lights, he would become Jewish. He also decided that from that moment on, Christmas would be known as the Festival of Lights. There was also one more thing on Santa’s mind. He was hungry! He peeked into the refrigerator for some fatty foods. He discovered that there were two dozen chocolate, sprinkled donuts, and seven slices of rich, creamy strawberry shortcake.

After gobbling up the food like a pig, he hustled back up the chimney and slipped back in his sleigh. He called out all the reindeer names, and off they went. Because he was still hungry, he decided that every year, instead of Christian kids getting toys, he would eat all the fattening foods in Jewish homes, so they wouldn’t get too chubby.

After three years of this, Santa realized that he was getting very fat. Santa was getting about as fat as 50 cows stuffed inside of each other: so fat, that he couldn’t even fit in his sleigh anymore! He sent his elves out the next year, but when they returned, they were extremely ill. Santa knows deep down that he will find a solution someday; he just doesn’t know when.

Meanwhile, the Christian kids notice that Santa isn’t coming anymore to hand out presents. But they also notice one other thing. All the Jewish people seem so fit and healthy. It makes the Christian people think to themselves, “That’s Santa Claus, inside every single Jewish human being.”

# THE NS POLE

*Many children who celebrate Christmas would love to meet Santa Clause. In THE NS POLE by Chris Moussa, a group of three-year-olds takes a roundabout way toward this goal.*

It was a cold, winter night. The babies were watching a movie with their Uncle Mark. Mark and the babies were watching *The Christmas Carol*, which was the babies' favorite movie. The babies always wondered if Santa Claus was real or not because they have never seen him in real life.

The babies were drinking hot chocolate out of their bottles. There were three of them. First came Dave. He was the oldest and the bravest of the three. He loved going on adventures. Then there was Jan, the only girl and very polite. She was so polite she was even polite to a fly. Then came the youngest, Drew. He was scared of mostly everything; he was even scared of stuffed teddy bears. All the babies were three at the time.

That night, the parents didn't come home, and that was when Drew sensed something bad was going to happen. The parents were stuck at the babies' grandparents' house.

After the movie was over, Mark changed the TV channel to the weather channel. The man on the TV said, "There is a big snowstorm coming, as if the sky will be falling." When Drew heard that, he believed it, and that got him so scared and nervous his legs started wobbling and he ran and hid under the dinner table.

When it was bedtime, the babies went to bed quickly because they were so scared. The following morning Drew woke up and found something very special outside the window. Drew woke up the other babies and all of the babies didn't believe what they saw

outside of their bedroom window. They looked out the window and saw about one and a half feet of snow on the ground. The snow looked like cotton spread all over the ground. They actually believed the sky had fallen.

After breakfast, Mark let the babies go outside. The babies made snow angels and played hide-and-go-seek while Mark was inside taking a nap. During hide-and-go-seek, Jan was the seeker and Dave and Drew went to hide. Dave hid behind a huge pile of snow that was about nine feet tall. Before Jan finished counting, Dave called timeout and told the other babies to come over to where the huge pile of snow was, because he saw that it had a door and he had never seen it before. The babies looked at it and they brushed off the snow to actually find a door. They opened the door and went in.

Inside was a smaller door than the entrance and it was just big enough for all of them to fit through. They were curious to see what was behind the door, so they went in to find a huge snowstorm that was worse than the one they witnessed last night. They took a couple of steps, only to find a map to the North Pole. Drew tried to plead to the babies to make them not go on another adventure because he was scared of getting lost. But that was their chance to find Santa Claus, so they went.

They went walking for miles that felt like they walked in a million-mile marathon until they were too tired and too cold to go any further. Jan fell because she was so tired. So the babies sat for about five to ten minutes, curled up in their jackets.

They tried to scrape together some food but they didn't have much, only a half of a cookie which they split three ways. Dave and the babies got up after five to ten minutes and started walking again. After walking a little, the babies saw something in the distance. They were so happy to finally see something that they were as happy as a garbage man winning one million dollars.

They all started taking a light jog to where they saw something. After about seven minutes, they saw a house. They went to the

door and it read: Santa Claus's brother, Hank / 0002 South Pole, Antarctica.

While they read the door, at home Mark had just woken up and started making lunch without noticing the babies were gone. He was only asleep for a half an hour.

While Mark was preparing lunch, the babies figured that they must have taken a U-turn on their way there because they were in the South Pole. Then Jan said, "Wait a minute. If this is Santa Claus's brother's house and Santa Claus has a brother, then there is a Santa Claus."

The babies didn't know how to get home so they knocked on Hank's door and Hank answered. Hank asked what they needed and they said they needed to get back home. Hank said he could do something about that. He took the babies inside. Inside was a big screen TV and two couches. On the first couch was Hank's wife Judy and on the other couch were Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus. Hank asked Santa Claus if he could give them a ride back home. He said, "Sure." In the back of Hank's house were Santa's reindeer and his sleigh.

Santa delivered them back home on the sleigh. The sleigh ride was so peaceful and nice that Drew wasn't even scared of it. When he was leaving, Santa said, "I will remember you next Christmas."

When he dropped them off, they went back to playing games. Shortly after they arrived, Mark came outside to tell the babies food was ready and Mark complimented the babies for being so good all this time—he didn't even notice they were gone. So all in one day, they found out that Santa was real and that he had a brother, too.

So when someday someone says or doesn't know if Santa Claus is real or not, maybe they will find a secret door, too.



# THE TOOTH FAIRY

*Who knew that getting money from the Tooth Fairy could be so complicated? THE TOOTH FAIRY, by Danny Roberts, tells how Cindy encounters bigger problems than she could ever have imagined once she places her tooth underneath her pillow.*

Have you ever wondered what happens when you see the Tooth Fairy? Probably not, because you THINK there is no such thing. If you see the Tooth Fairy, she turns evil—very, very evil. Not only will you not find any money under your pillow, but mean things will occur if you glance upon the Tooth Fairy. Look what happened to Cindy.

Once upon a time there was girl who was very shy and quiet around everyone, even her own family. Her name was Cindy. She had beautiful brown eyes and thin, straight hair. She was shorter than everyone else her age. But Cindy was a hard-working student; she was in all the advanced classes and always did her homework.

Cindy didn't have very many friends because she always wanted to be alone. Cindy and her mother never talked much, either, because her mom was always busy working. Her dad was always playing sports with her brothers. The person she used to talk to the most was her grandmother. Her grandmother died two months ago. Before she died, she handmade a blanket for Cindy. This was Cindy's most treasured possession. In this story, Cindy overcame her shyness and did something that no one else would do.

It all began when Cindy was crunching on a big green apple when her tooth started bleeding and then came out. Cindy hated losing teeth, because it was scary looking at her own blood. She already was missing her front tooth and it really made her feel

ugly. It made her not want to smile at any of the kids. The only part she liked about losing teeth was the thought of the “Tooth Fairy” visiting and putting money under her pillow. She didn’t believe in the Tooth Fairy but she hoped her mom would give her some money, so she put the tooth under her pillow.

That night when Cindy was sleeping, the Tooth Fairy saw on the radar that Cindy had lost her tooth. The Tooth Fairy flew right to Cindy’s house. The Tooth Fairy forgot her special fairy dust, which opens windows. She was not having a very good day. She had to find another way to get into Cindy’s house. She couldn’t knock, because that would wake Cindy up. She thought she should pick the lock but she needed instructions. She took out her cell phone and started to call Heaven. She realized she only had one Earth dollar, which wasn’t enough, so she started to put her phone away. Then she remembered that if she calls collect “she can talk on the phone for 20 minutes for only \$0.99 and \$0.07 a minute after that.” So she called Heaven and asked how to pick a lock, and a few minutes later successfully picked the lock.

Finally in the house, the Tooth Fairy started to softly tiptoe to Cindy’s bed, but instead she tripped over a cord and fell with a loud thump to the floor. Immediately, Cindy woke up and stared at the Tooth Fairy lying on the floor next to her bed.

Looking at the Tooth Fairy was the biggest mistake Cindy ever made. At first the Tooth Fairy looked pretty and friendly, but then she quickly got up and things started to change. Cindy saw red and black lights swirling around the Tooth Fairy, instead of the pink and white ribbons and magic dust she had always imagined.

The Tooth Fairy wasn’t pretty at all. Her nose was warty and pointy. Her hair was gray and greasy. Then, all of a sudden, the Tooth Fairy picked up Cindy’s favorite blanket from her grandmother and started to run away. The Tooth Fairy dashed to the window and Cindy raced after her. She could hear her heart beat so fast. She didn’t feel shy at that moment at all; she just had to catch the Tooth Fairy. She just had to get that blanket back.

The Tooth Fairy ran much faster than Cindy. Cindy didn't stop. *How could the Tooth Fairy be so evil?* thought Cindy. Not only did she not leave any money but she also took her favorite possession, her blanket. While Cindy was chasing the Tooth Fairy, the Tooth Fairy threw a note that said, "Too bad you looked at me." The Tooth Fairy disappeared and Cindy could not catch her.

Cindy had a plan to get her blanket back. She was going to put the same tooth under her pillow and hopefully the Tooth Fairy would come. The next night Cindy put the tooth under the pillow and waited.

At 3:00 in the morning, the Tooth Fairy came with her new husband, THE DEVIL. The devil had sharp spiky horns like swords. Together they laughed with wicked laughs. They didn't know that Cindy was watching them and trembling under her covers, pretending to be sleeping. They took Cindy's CD player, several CD's, her origami collection, and her harmonica. Cindy had planned on pushing the Tooth Fairy into the closet but when she saw the devil she got too scared.

Cindy decided she should write her a letter. She was one of the best writers in her class so this was the time to put it to good use. She had to have her blanket. That was all she had left of her grandmother. In the letter she wrote, "Dear Tooth Fairy, could you please stop doing evil things? Please give me back my blanket. That blanket means so much to me. My grandma gave it to me just before she died. You can keep all my other things, just give me back my blanket. Thank you. Cindy."

Two days after she sent the letter, her mom in a shocked voice said, "Cindy, you got a letter from Hell." Cindy raced downstairs and read the letter. The letter said: "NO!"

Cindy decided to give up trying to get her blanket back. She didn't put any more teeth under her pillow and didn't even tell her parents about what happened with the Tooth Fairy.

Life wasn't the same. Cindy was losing interest in school and falling behind in her homework. She was slowly losing interest in

everything. She had trouble sleeping and was barely eating. She was talking less and was daydreaming more.

Two weeks later she got a letter and package from Hell. This time the letter said, "You got your way, I'm going to be out of your life. There will be no more Tooth Fairy. The Devil and I had a kid and have to retire. You can have your blanket back. We don't need it in Hell. It's hot enough! Mr. & Mrs. Devil."

In the package was the blanket that her grandmother gave her. Cindy's mom asked her why she got a package from Hell. Cindy decided to tell her Mom all about it. From that day on, Cindy and her Mom talked every day and had a much better relationship. Cindy never put a tooth under her pillow again. But every night Cindy happily cuddled up with her blanket and went to sleep.

# SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS



# ANARKI

*Mysterious forces are at work in the world. In ANARKI by Michael Grzybowski, the fate of the planet is at stake when an incredible beast unleashes its awesome power.*

It was a warm day in Scarlet City, and then all out of nowhere it came: a huge creature, with red eyes. The fog came first, then the beast. A strange beast from the bay, too fast to see it approaching, it attacked. All systems failed that night, but I remember clearly, through the haze, came a beast.

I still can't remember why, but the creature looked dead, like a huge dead carcass of a dog. And, then again, it was too vicious to be a dog; it might have been a wolf, though. Yes, a wolf the size of a skyscraper. It stood on the two back legs, with torn pants, huge pants that were tied together with a rope. It held a stick with a blade; I remember it being a stone blade, with a red gem on it. The blade and gem would flash a blue color and create fog. One last detail: it had a metal necklace with a tag on it. When it was sleeping, the military read the tag. It read, "Anarki 666 / Kakas ajajja ajjajk ajskii ajsak a."

An even stranger thing happened that night: little ghosts of Anarki's victims went on a killing spree. They weren't real ghosts, but some kind of plasma source. They were about our height, but partially invisible. Sending death to most of the city, that's when all power went out.

Not everyone died, just about two out of three didn't make it. I was lucky. The only safe place was a military facility on the northwest part of the city, camouflaged under water. That's where I was when I heard about the plan to send a deadly atom bomb

into the beast's heart. The bomb was sent all the way from Russia. But it didn't work. The bomb simply bounced off the fog and detonated. Nothing happened.

Our last chance was a very big robotic suit with weapons. It would be released at 11:30 and destroy Anarki, to his bitter end. When the suit was sent out, I remember people who were brought in from the ghosts attacks, either petrified or blind with fear. In a new area of the city, a gun was created to destroy the ghosts. It had worked so far.

I was 14 and allowed to join the military academy. I was also issued a gun and allowed to help the suit out of the underwater base, wearing a special suit of my own. I was watching the suit and destroying ghosts when Anarki came to life from a long three-hour nap. I don't know why but he was invisible when he was asleep; only his necklace was there. It was a cloudless sky with a full moon, and a beast and a suit battling each other. It reminded me about the necklace. We did not know what it meant.

The suit had an unusual look to it, like a shiny human without a face and, instead of ears, antennae, with a steel rod at the end and blue flames on each end placed on his back for quick access.

Anarki turned red from the force of the robotic suit; it held his throat so hard half of it came off. Clumps of fur plopped to the ground as he fell; his head became a skull and rolled. It burned and flew to his body. Coming back to life, he grabbed his scythe and swung it at the suit. Quickly dodging, the suit wrapped its fingers along the rod and thrust it toward Anarki's forehead. Missing by a few inches, it turned up the flame and torched the beast. The wolf let out a piercing howl. His head changed colors under the tremendous heat.

At the same time, an eight-foot cat with long teeth leaped at me, but at the same time the suit I was wearing sent out a long, sharp dagger with a laser blade. I caught it fast enough to block the drooling, pearly blade teeth and we wrestled. The robotic suit burned Anarki to its miserable doom.



It was so quiet as the cat and I wrestled, and I could see clearly that the cat wasn't a ghost but a white wolf. We fell in the Anarki's ashes and as we shifted our own weight I saw it had the same necklace as Anarki. It read, "Anarki 666 / Anarki will fall to be burned to death by a worthy opponent and from his ashes comes a second." It was just like the bigger Anarki.

Right then the white wolf sat on his haunches and sunk its teeth deep into my shoulder. It had no effect, but the moon had gone down.

# THE ADVENTURES OF THE O-L-S-S-A ALIEN

*There are aliens among us—at least one, anyway. But don't worry, he's a nice guy with a sense of humor. You can read all about him in THE ADVENTURES OF THE O-L-S-S-A ALIEN, by A. SeKay.*

Have you ever wondered what's up in space, if there is any intelligent life up there? Well, if you really want to find out, you can get a big telescope...or go up in a space suit to Mars. That's where you'll find the O-L-S-S-A Alien, a weird-looking creature with eyestalks, letters where his nose should be, and a third eye and leg. Then the O-L-S-S-A Alien will tell you his life story.

This is the O-L-S-S-A Alien's story, translated from alien language by G. Raffe:

“Well, this is how it happened: It all started down on Earth in 1901. I was born a human, but I became an alien later, because inside my body, next to the Mr. Fisher genes, which are next to the blue genes, which are next to the paisley genes, there was an alien gene. That gene would later cause me to become an alien. However, this alien gene was inactive and would remain inactive until I grew up.

“When I was born, I didn't form completely, so my rainbow genes didn't form. The job of the rainbow genes is to check each gene to see if it has the proper amount of power. Because my growth gene had too much power, I grew rapidly overnight. In fact, when I was a baby, I was as tall as an adult!

“When I was in school, people teased me a lot because I was bigger than them. They called me “the giant,” “too big for my

clothes,” and “too big for elementary school.” So, I dropped out of school (they could do that in 1901) and started a life of my own on the planet Mars. How did I get there? Well, there are very few airlines that take you to other planets. One of these is the Whatever-The-Four-Cardinal-Directions-Are-On-Mars-Western Airlines. I liked the flight, but I just wish the airline served better food and didn’t have any turbulence problems (thanks to the fact that the drivers were not concentrating on their flight). Because I was fully-grown (and the size of a giant), my alien gene became active once I was an adult. Because of this, I sprouted an extra leg, my fingers became pointed, I grew a third eye, and my eyes were raised on eyestalks. I was also pushed down to a very short size because my growth gene became inactive.

“My (very long) human nose started curling up in weird shapes, spelling out the letters O-L-S-S-A, and my skin turned green. I was officially an alien (the O-L-S-S-A Alien, to be exact, so I made my name the abbreviation for “Oh Let’s See Some Aliens”). But because I used to be a human, my friendliness gene didn’t change and my report card from alien school said ‘Very bad, is much too friendly for an alien.’

“So, I dropped out of school again (they hadn’t outlawed it yet) and, again, started a life of my own.

“Then, I decided to see some really suomaf stars, so I went to Doowylloh, Mars (via Northsouthern Atmospherelines) to see them in person. I had a great time there. I met some big stars like Mij Yerrac, Mot Esiurc, Nivek Nocab, and Assilem Noaj Trah at Marsiversal Studios. I also got to walk on the Klaw Fo Emaf, look at the Doowylloh Ngis, and see the Doowylloh Lwob. Later on, because I had been interested in directing movies, I got a job at Renraw Sorb. Productions in the movies *Honey*, *I Enlarged The Kids* and *My Favorite Human*.

“After making these movies I quit Renraw Sorb. because the bosses were really bossy (their names say it all), I had nothing to work with in the movies, and I didn’t get very big parts in these movies. I started to live in an efas inside a knob. I packed it with

lots of doof and I've lived here ever since because no one will bother me here.

“So, that’s my story. You can tell it to everyone who’s been wondering.” EHT DNE.

# THE EVIL KILLER CLOWNS!

*When evildoers strike with futuristic technology, it helps to have some of that technology yourself. In THE EVIL KILLER CLOWNS! by Daniel Sills, will the good guys overcome the bad guys and their gadgets?*

One day, there was a boy named Toast. But Toast wasn't an ordinary kid. He saved his world many times from evildoers. He was chatting on the Internet with his best friend, Pizza, when all of a sudden, Toast heard a loud BOOM that came from Pizza's house!

Toast immediately ran to Pizza's house and Toast saw Pizza on the ground. Toast wondered if Pizza was okay so he took out a stick to poke him with. Toast slowly and cautiously moved the stick closer to Pizza. As the stick was getting closer, Pizza started to disappear. Toast jumped away frightened as he watched his friend disappear.

Toast pulled away a tear from his eye and walked home. As he got to the door of his house a brilliant idea came to his head and Toast ran excitedly to his room and opened a drawer. "I almost forgot about my utility belt I got from Batman," Toast said to himself as he pulled out a golden belt. Toast pushed a green button on the belt and it rewound time before the boom. As he got there he ran to Pizza's house and the mystery of Pizza's disappearance was revealed. A clown and a mime were entering from the back door. The mime took out a gun and pointed it at Pizza. Before Toast could stop him, BLAM! Pizza had been shot.

The clown walked up to Pizza's body. He squeezed his own big red nose and the clown turned invisible. The clown took out a fork and knife and Toast put on anti-invisibility goggles so he could see the clown. Toast assumed he was going to eat Pizza. Toast didn't

want anything else bad to happen to Pizza so he punched the clown and tried to get the mime but he ran away.

Toast called the police and the clown was arrested. He warned the cops about the killer mime. Toast pushed the rewind button again but this time it broke!

“When I’m done with saving the world I’m gonna have a little *talk* with that cheapo, Batman!” said Toast angrily. Toast had no choice but to push the fast forward button until he found himself in a strange place Toast didn’t recognize.

He found out he was in his town, only it had been messed up by the Killer Mime. The only thing that wasn’t ransacked was Toast’s house. Toast went inside and the mime jumped out of a dark corner and pushed him into a hidden trapdoor where he fell into a dungeon with Pizza’s dead body in it. Then mime came in with the clown!

“Ah, great, he freed the clown!” mumbled Toast.

Toast spotted a bottle in the mime’s pocket. It was for bringing people back to life. Maybe the clown died and the mime brought him back.

“Hey, I could use it on Pizza!” thought Toast.

Toast pulled out a TV from his utility belt and turned it on. The mime and clown started watching it. As the clowns were distracted, Toast took the potion from the mime’s pocket and poured it on Pizza. Pizza ran to the phone and called 911 as Toast slammed handcuffs on the clowns.

Toast peeled off the clown’s fake rubber nose and put it in the socket where the rewind button was. After the police came they went home to the present time . . . and to the Bat cave.

# GOON & SQUEEGEE

*School bullies can be tough to deal with, especially when they have the means to take over the world. In GOON & SQUEEGEE by Ian J. Andersen, the little guy has to stand up to his tormentor before Earth is destroyed.*

The place is Brainainia, 3042 A.D. (off the coast of Antarctica). There is a boy named Squeegie. Squeegie is an ordinary boy, except for four things: Squeegie isn't much bigger than a pea, he only has one ear like a miniature Van Gogh, he's bald, and today he happened to save the world. During an ordinary day, he lives in a size two shoe, where he spends most of his day alone, staring out of the tiny air holes of the baby-sized Nikes, except for the short time he is in school. When Squeegie is at school, all of his peers make fun of his incredible small size when they're not accidentally stepping on him.

One day while in detention for disrupting his Language Arts class, Squeegie's archenemy, Goon, who was a big bully with the face of a gerbil, walked into the room. Goon said, "You have five minutes to do whatever you want, and after that I will be your new Master!"

Squeegie just said, "Buzz off, you overgrown toothpick!" as he looked up at Goon's size twelve shoes.

"Fine! Have it your way, but remember, at the end of that five minutes, I will be your new master!" Goon said. Goon was a very strange person and he had a plan to use a death ray on the planet. Squeegie didn't know it yet, but he was going to be part of that plan.

Squeegee started thinking about what Goon had said about being his new master because the five minutes were almost over. All of a sudden, there was a big bang that sent the minute Squeegee flying towards the wall. Stars danced before his small eyes until he finally blacked out.

When Squeegee finally woke (which took quite a while), he didn't know it yet, but he was now under Goon's control. Goon explained how his experience as a medical assistant had allowed him to plant a computer chip in the back of Squeegee's neck and that the massive explosion was just some vinegar and baking soda that had mixed up to knock him out. Now that Goon had planted the microchip in the back of Squeegee's neck, he was a cross between a remote-controlled car and a tiny Frankenstein. Squeegee still had memory of his past life and he was aware of what was going on, but he felt a little strange and scared. After the shock wore off, Squeegee bravely said, "Yeah right!" because he didn't believe what Goon had said.

Goon replied, "Have it your way!" Goon then pulled out a remote control, flipped the purple switch, and Squeegee was thrown into a hypnotic trance. He instantly understood Goon's evil plan that had been programmed into the microchip. The plan was to retrieve a diamond pen out of Queen Globber's stash of valuables in a large chest so that Goon could power his death ray that was orbiting the world. Queen Globber was the Queen of all Brainainia and she was the richest person in the land and she happened to have the one pen that Goon needed to power the death ray. Goon shut off the power on the remote, giving Squeegee consciousness.

Now that Squeegee was fully conscious, Goon told him that the reason he wanted the pen was because it had supernatural powers that Goon could transfer into electricity to power his death ray that was orbiting the earth and was able to destroy planet earth as we know it. All that mattered to Goon was that he could get that pen out of the Queen's stash of valuables. Now that Squeegee knew what the plan was (with all the details), Goon gave Squeegee the order to go and retrieve the pen. Goon explained to



Squeegee that the reason he chose him was the fact that he was the only person that could fit under the security cameras without being noticed. Squeegee knew that he didn't want to rob the Queen but he could feel Goon's control pulsing through his body.

Goon said, "If you retrieve the pen without being noticed, I will remove that microchip from your neck, and you will be independent once again!"

Squeegee was starting to fall asleep during Goon's long speech but he got up and said, "Fine, I'll get you your pen."

"Well, what are you waiting for, Shorty? Go and get it!" Goon said with a snicker.

By the time that Goon was done talking, Squeegee was all the way out the door. As Squeegee left Goon's laboratory, Goon mumbled to himself that the plan had better work!

When Squeegee reached Queen Globber's castle, he slipped underneath the gigantic wooden/metallic door and entered the HUGE castle. Squeegee wandered around the castle looking for the Queen's room so that he could take the jewels and leave as soon as possible. Squeegee's plan was then to take the pen and scurry away as fast as his little legs could carry him.

As Squeegee entered the Queen's room that was at the end of a long hallway, he spotted the yellowish-gold chest containing the Queen's valuables. He climbed up the giant wooden dresser to where the large chest was. Squeegee quietly opened the chest, looking for the diamond pen. Finally, after 15 minutes, Squeegee spotted the pen near the bottom of the chest. It was stuck under a priceless 14 carat gold necklace. He climbed into the chest and slithered his way through all of the Queen's priceless artifacts. When Squeegee finally reached the pen, he grabbed it with his small hands, and quickly scurried his way out of the gigantic castle, all the way back to Goon's laboratory. Goon was waiting for him there with an evil bone-chilling grin. Goon held out his hand, signaling for him to put the pen into his big filthy hand.

Squeegee obeyed Goon's command and put the pen into Goon's big mitt. Now that Squeegee had fulfilled his end of the bargain,

it was time for Goon to take the microchip out of the back of Squeegee's neck. Goon said, "Give me your neck." Squeegee did as he was told and leaned over towards Goon. Goon then removed the microchip from Squeegee's neck with a huge pair of pliers. Squeegee was now totally independent!

Now that Goon had the pen, he had the power to blow up planet earth. Squeegee was now free and he watched as Goon took the pen over to his computer. Goon now used the pen's supernatural powers by sticking it into the computer that then charged up the death ray orbiting the earth. Goon then took out another remote control and put a weird looking key into the keyhole. He then flipped the switch, and the death ray shot a gigantic beam towards earth. The beam entered earth's atmosphere with such force that it shook the entire planet.

Squeegee wanted to save earth but wasn't exactly sure how to do it. At the last second, Squeegee jumped in front of the beam just before it hit the earth. Instead of destroying Squeegee and the earth, the beam deflected off of his shiny head and it hit Goon with such force that it destroyed him with a deafening, ear-piercing zap. All that was left was a pile of smoking rubbish.

The earth was saved due to Squeegee's heroic effort. Mr. Flippersnapper, the world's leader, awarded Squeegee with the world's highest achievement medal and some cash. Squeegee moved into a size thirty-five shoe and lived happily ever after.

# MARS

*The planet Mars may be a nice place to visit, but would you want to live there? In MARS by Matthieu Vallin, you never know what will happen to you on the red planet.*

“Max, Max?” my dad shouted.

“What?”

“Your mother and I need to have a word with you.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Oh nothing, just come in the kitchen.”

I hurried down the stairs knowing that something was bothering my parents. My heart was beating really fast, like something big was going to happen. I opened the kitchen door, then my mom told me with excitement, “Max, we are moving to Mars!”

“What!” I shouted. “Wait a second, is this some kind of joke?”

“No, it isn’t. We’re serious about this, Max.”

I knew this had to be a nightmare. How could this be reality? Unfortunately, this was reality. In fact, the next morning, we were on our way to the airport to catch our shuttle to go to Mars. I couldn’t believe the mess I was in. This was a really strange experience. My family and I were very sad to leave our planet but we also were anxious to discover Mars. After a long and exhausting flight, we finally arrived at our final destination, the red planet.

The bright red shiny soil was extremely rocky. The planet seemed like it was a huge ball of fire. The sky was dark black and the sun looked like a yellow dots on a piece of black paper.

I finally entered the space station. It was like a big bubble and was cylinder shaped. I used the elevator to enter my apartment. It had really modern architecture. I visited the rest of the station. I

saw strange objects that looked cool but I didn't know what they were used for.

That night in my bed, I was really sad. I knew this was going to be fun but I was also going to miss all my friends and family. I got up. Tears were rolling down my cheeks, and I went to see my mom.

"Mom, how long are we going to stay up here?" I asked.

"No longer than three years, I think," she responded.

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah."

I went back to my room and a few minutes later, my eyes were closed; I fell asleep.

"Good morning, short man, time for school," my dad said, putting his tie on.

"School?" I shouted. "You mean up here?"

"Yeah, up here, Max."

I got dressed, thinking about school. I had forgotten about that part of Mars. We all had to wear these red uniforms, like the ones the fireman wore.

I was really nervous when I saw our school. Later, I entered my first class and I met all my new classmates. They all welcomed me like I was George Washington or something. At lunch, I met Jack, my new friend.

I had the best day until Mr. Starta announced terrifying news. "May I have your attention please: our station control system spotted a meteor shower heading our way. Each student please evacuate the cafeteria and put your space suits on. The shower might hit the oxygen tank."

The alarm went on, and everybody was screaming. It sounded like a carnival. All the kids were running like buffalo troops to their home. Jack and I were petrified. We didn't know what to do. Then we ran to our homes to put our space suits on.

The control system quickly called Earth for help: "Help! Help! A met . . ."

BOOM!

A meteor just struck our electricity and oxygen system. Nothing was working except our space suits that we had on. All the survivors hoped that Earth heard the word “Help.”

I couldn’t find my parents or Jack. It was a huge mess. I was in front of my apartment with people around me acting like kangaroos and screaming like monkeys. This was terrible. After a few moments, I found Jack, who was looking for me, too.

“What are we going to do??” I asked.

“Just try to stay calm,” he advised me.

“Stay calm? How do you stay calm in a situation like this?”

Many hours passed. People were still waiting for the Earth’s shuttle to appear. The space suits were running low on oxygen. A few minutes later, we heard familiar sounds; it was the shuttle. We all screamed for joy.

The space shuttle was large enough to carry all the survivors. I finally found my parents. We got back on Earth, and we lived in our old house that wasn’t sold yet.

One morning, my mom called me into the kitchen and said, “Max, I have to tell you something.”

“What is it?”

“We are moving to Saturn.”

“WHAT?”

“Haha, just kidding!”

# MISSION FROM MARS

*Is there life on Mars? There is according to MISSION FROM MARS by Kyle Coviak. But it won't be there long unless a brave earthling can help save its inhabitants.*

Dan was startled by a blast in the distance. He rushed toward where he had seen a bright flash and had heard a thunderous boom, thinking something exploded. When he got there, he saw a huge crater with a glowing blue ball on the bottom. The blue ball glowed and was blinking like Christmas lights. An alien stepped out and said, "Zutrvoicikz."

Dan was hypnotized by the sight of the green alien. Finally, Dan snapped out of it and said, "What?"

The alien opened his spacesuit and pressed a button. He said, "My name is Zugforganshin."

Dan was confused and, out of shock, asked if the alien just spoke English. Zugforganshin answered by saying, "I speak 2,813 languages and I am from Mars. Can you help me? My planet is under attack by other aliens that will take over Mars and then Earth!" He flipped on a *skreeherbong* (like an alien TV) and it showed these horrible aliens covered with slime, eating everything.

Dan thought for about a minute, and then said, "Okay. But only because they are going to come to Earth, too."

Dan stepped into the ship and heard the deafening roar as the engines came to life. Dan asked how fast it would go and Zugforganshin said, "Three thousand miles per hour!"

When they reached Mars, Zugforganshin landed on a flat piece of ground. Zugforganshin showed Dan what used to be his village. It was burnt to the ground and all that was left were the poles.

After that, Zugforganshin gave Dan a laser and showed the three levels of power: stun, kill, and destroy. He told Dan that only the ships had lasers. Zugforganshin climbed into the ship and told Dan that he would also destroy aliens, but from the air, and that the good guys were just like him.

Dan walked for a while and saw a group of the slime balls and snuck up behind them. He thought it would be easier to use the destroy level than picking them off one-by-one. He pulled the trigger and there was a huge explosion that knocked him off his feet. Luckily, he was wearing a super suit to keep him warm and safe, so he didn't get hurt. When he got up, he saw a humongous hole in the ground. He decided to only use "destroy" for large groups and ships.

He killed one with the kill level and saw how ugly they were. They had four rows of razor-sharp teeth and were covered with gel (not that Zugforganshin was handsome or anything).

By the time Dan was done, he had killed about 2,000 aliens and twelve ships. Zugforganshin hit about as much, but when he shot at the last ship, it shot at the same time. The laser hit the engine and Zugforganshin went down. Dan hurried to the ship and found Zugforganshin with his arm broken. Dan held the arm horizontal and all of a sudden, Zugforganshin's bone slid back into place. Dan couldn't believe it!

That night, all the village partied because of its hero, Dan. At the end, the leader of the village gave Dan a medal.

Dan had to choose whether to stay or go home. While he was sleeping, he was taken there by Zugforganshin.

In the morning when Dan woke up, he wondered, "Was it all a dream?" He reached under his pillow and found the medal. It was all REAL!

## THE NIGHT SKY

*Some people call Mars “the angry red planet” because of its color and its constant storms. THE NIGHT SKY, by Quentin de Metz, offers a different reason for this description.*

“Wow, another shooting star!” screamed Tom, a ten-year-old boy. He and his dad had been watching the sky for most of the evening. In all, they had seen ten shooting stars.

“I wonder what causes them,” replied his dad. Since the warm month of July, there had been a huge and unexpected number of shooting stars. The weathermen had been studying the sky now for more than four weeks, but had only figured out that the meteorites seemed to come from Mars. They thought that the Martians were bombing the Earth.

Two weeks earlier, NASA had launched a satellite, Apollo 20, to explore Mars’s surface. It never came back. All that came from it were photographs of fast-moving creatures with many arms and legs. The satellite had been destroyed by a circling comet that eventually crashed into it. It had also revealed that the same Martians were in the commonly-seen meteorites.

After the discovery, Americans set up invisible laser shooters (by means of magnetic suspension) to destroy the meteorites. After that, meteorites were never seen again . . . .



# SUPERDOG

*The unexpected side-effects of science are one theme in SUPERDOG, by Adam Pfaff. But don't take it too seriously; Henry, the talking dog, wouldn't.*

Once outside the city of Woofsville, there lived a mad scientist. One day he was fooling around with some dog bones. He accidentally flipped the electrical switch and the bones became alive. They started dancing, grabbed the doctor, and threw him into a vat of radioactive goo. The bones jumped in after him and created a chemical reaction in the vat. It exploded, sending the bones into the city.

One day a dog named Henry walked into his yard. To his surprise, lying on the ground was a walking, talking bone. Henry picked it up and swallowed it. The bone tasted funny in his mouth and rumbled in his stomach, but he paid no attention to it.

Meanwhile, the second bone flew through the air with such force it broke open a fire hydrant, sending water spewing all over the street. The bone was soaked with water when all of a sudden it started growing. It grew and grew until it was the size of a small elephant. It ran off into the distance, past the shocked onlookers.

The third bone hurtled into a swimming pool, and with a splash it started to grow. This bone grew to about the size of a house and burst through the small picket fence surrounding the yard. It began to search for its friends.

Henry was very tired after running around the yard for a good hour and decided it might be good if he came inside to take a drink. As he drank the ice cold water, something began to happen. He felt strange. What followed this feeling was a number of violent

jerks and out of his mouth popped the bone. The bone grew to the size of Henry and hopped through the doggie door. Then Henry started to feel strange and began to float. "What . . . I can fly, and . . . I can . . . talk!"

Henry felt it would be fun to test his new flying ability, so he flew out the door. After flying around for a few minutes he stared down at the ground and saw a big bone, a medium bone, and a small bone. "Uh oh," said Henry.

"That's him, that's the guy who ate me," said the little bone as Henry landed right in front of the bones.

"Did you eat our friend?" said the large bone.

"I don't know; I might have because, you see, I have a bad memory," said Henry.

"Are you sure you didn't eat him?" said the large bone.

"Actually, I did," said Henry.

It took the bones a minute to figure out what they had just been told, but when they did, they sure were mad. "Get him!" shouted one of the bones. Henry was flying gracefully through the air until he realized the bones were in hot pursuit.

"Wait!" shouted the small bone. "I can't hurt a dog."

"Fine, we'll get him ourselves," said the large bone. The large and the medium bone flew away.

The bones chased and chased until Henry grew weary and had to rest. The bones grabbed him and started to squeeze. Then out of the sky came the little bone. He hit the two other bones and sent them toppling to the ground.

"Run," screamed the little bone, "while you still can!"

Henry ran for all he was worth just as a green light exploded from the sky. Then from above came the little bone, the medium bone, and the large bone. They had all transformed back to normal bones from the explosion.

"Finally, I can eat in peace," said Henry.

# SUPER GOO

*Strange forces are at work in the universe. Earthly chemicals and alien visitors each play a part in the story of an out-of-control shoe as told in SUPER GOO, by Johnny Rocket.*

It seems that once in a million years something scary happens; something spine-tingling, hair-raising, or just plain spooky. For Mike, it was worse! He got tangled up with an evil genius!

It all started at Mike's 14th birthday party. He got shoes and smell goo (it takes away the stink). When the kids at the party started to horse around, it was terrible. The kids knocked the goo over and stomped on it. The goo squirted on one of Mike's new shoes. When Mike saw what happened to his shoe, he threw it down the sewer and walked back to his house.

Meanwhile, the shoe was tumbling down, down, down into an ooey, gooeey, green puddle. Once the shoe touched the puddle, the goo started to bubble and shake, until steam came from the top. The sewage must have been radioactive because all of a sudden the bottom of the shoe ripped and formed into a mouth. It grew eyes, ears, and hair. It bounced in circles until it tipped over into a stream of sewage and floated downstream. It floated for an hour or so until it came out a tube and went into the ocean. The shoe was about to drown when bright green flashes filled the sky and sucked the shoe up. The green flash left the sky with the shoe.

"Greetings, Object, we came to help," the alien said.

"Yes..." Alien 2 said. He was a big alien with eight stomachs. Just as Alien 1 was about to flip a switch to turn the shoe into a "man-eating shoe," Alien 2 turned around and one of his stomachs hit a different lever. The shoe was instead turned into a "shoe-

eating shoe.” The aliens gave the shoe “super powers” and a pink brain.

All of a sudden a huge asteroid hit the wall and broke a hole in the space ship. The suction sucked the shoe out. The shoe flew back to earth and started on a quest to eat. The shoe ate shoes. It tried to eat a sandal but choked on the buckle.

Meanwhile, Mike’s party was dying down because the food was getting low and the music was getting old. Everyone decided to go to bed. When Mike woke up the next morning he noticed that almost all of his shoes were gone. Mike thought he saw a mosquito and tried to spray it. Instead he sprayed the shoe! The spray blinded the shoe and it hit a wall and its pink brain popped out. The shoe lost its intelligence and hopped into the middle of the road at rush hour.

Nobody has ever seen that shoe again.

# T. REX

*Time travel has been a dream of people for ages. But as T. REX by Kyle McCormick shows, you'd better know what you're doing!*

Deep in the darkest part of the Amazon, there stood a weathered old laboratory. Far in the lab there was a light on. There was a crazy old scientist named Dr. Flapjack, who just invented a time machine that went back in time. This doctor went back in time and stole a *T. rex* and locked him up in his basement. The *T. rex* escaped and devoured Dr. Flapjack! But it wasn't satisfied.

A nearby sheepherder saw *T. rex* and called the authorities. The authorities tranquilized *T. rex* and called the U.S.A. special forces . . . Area 51! They flew over and air-lifted *T. rex* away.

Area 51 had been testing a new time travel laser that they thought would work on *T. rex*. They put *T. rex* in a glass chamber and shot the laser at him.

The scientist thought the *T. rex* was back in the past but . . . . After years of research, they discovered *T. rex* was sent into the future.

# THE TIME MACHINE

*If you could travel in time, would you go forward or backward? Would you participate in the flow of time, or merely observe? The characters in THE TIME MACHINE, by Jacob Daniels, know what they want to do.*

The trip started out okay until we actually got to our house. There the furniture was out on the lawn with the moving guys sitting on the couches and chairs as if they were waiting for us to come. As soon as they heard my father go, “Ahem,” they jumped up and started moving the furniture in. “Mick,” said my father, “Come help us move all the toys and books into Hallie’s room.” Hallie is my little sister who had only been born a few weeks before the move.

So I went inside and started moving. First there were my toys, then my books, then mom’s kitchen toys, and finally all of Hallie’s stuff.

The next day after all our furniture was unpacked and moved, I went outside to play with some kids who I’d seen out the window before. “Can I play?” I asked the kids.

They talked for a little, but then the biggest one turned to me and said, “Okay, you can be on my team, but first, what’s your name?”

“Thanks; it’s Mick,” I said. It turned out that the game was hide and seeks and newcomers were it. So I had to be it. I went up to the nearest tree and started counting. “1,2,3,4,5, ready or not here I come.”

I wandered out into the woods and kept walking ‘til I heard someone or something moving. I ran to the spot where I thought

I heard the noise come from and came to a small house. Inside I could see someone moving. I moved up to the house and found a stool next to a window. I got onto the stool for a closer look. I saw a man in the house with a hammer. Just then I fell off the stool and knocked over a metal bucket.

The man in there said, "Who's out there?" Then he came around to the side of the house where I was and he saw me.

I said, "I'm lost, can you help me?"

The man said, "How did you find me out here in the woods?" Then all of a sudden the machine inside his house made a noise and started to hum. "Be back in a minute," he said. So he went inside and fixed the machine.

When he came back I asked him, "What is that?"

"A time machine," he said.

"Can I try it?" I asked.

"Well, I don't know . . . ."

"Please," I said.

"Well . . . ."

"Please!"

"Oh, all right, sure," he said. But right at that second the kids I was playing with popped out of the trees and said, "Mick, where are you?"

I said, "I got lost and then I found this house and the man helped me."

"Oh, okay, we were worried about you," they said.

"You guys can go back home. I want to talk to Mr . . . ?"

"Svenson," the man said.

"Okay," they said as they turned back and headed home.

"Why are you making a time machine?" I asked.

"So I can see what will happen in the future."

"Wow! Have you tried it yet?"

"No, but if you want you can try it."

"Can I really?"

"No, because if you got lost in time I would get in trouble, but I can come with you."

“Cool! Can we try it now?”

“Sure, but just let me try to tighten this one knob and we’ll get started,” said Mr. Svenson.

“Okay.”

He tightened the knob and we pushed the buttons set for 2065, and away we went. It was so cool: time passing through my hands.

When we got to 2065 the town looked like a big rocket ship. Men and women in factory suits were walking around pushing carts of packages and boxes. We saw a door labeled “City Comm.” We knocked on the door and a voice said, “Come in.” We opened the door and there was a desk with a rocking chair’s back facing us. The chair was rocking back and forth.

We said, “City Commander?” (“Where are we?” I was thinking. “Why are we here?”) Then the chair turned and we saw a man. He said, “Who are you and what do you want? I’m a very busy man who has to settle all the things that happen in this town.”

“What do you actually do?” I asked.

“I, I, I basically do anything that I’m needed for,” said the commander.

“Like what?” I asked.

“Like when the pipes burst in the factory they called me to ask if they should evacuate the building or call the plumbers and fix it right away.”

“What are all these maps all over the place? Are they of the town?” I questioned.

“No. They are for the new factory that is going to spread all over town. People will be forced to move and find another place to live. It’s already set in motion and there’s nothing anyone can do about it,” said the commander.

“What! You’re going to make innocent people leave so you can build a factory?”

“Yes,” the commander said. “By the end of the month all the residents have to have found another place to live and move there.”

“Could anyone stop you?”



“Ha, Ha, Ha, no, no one can stop me!”

“Well, we’ll try to.”

The next day we gathered up all the townspeople, made signs and started marching around the streets shouting, “Stop the city and let us have our houses back.” Then we saw the police coming down the street towards us.

“There’s the police,” someone shouted.

“Well, finally,” said another.

“This is the police,” the captain said, “We want you all back in your houses and no one will get hurt.”

“What should we do, Mr. Svenson?” said Mickey.

“We’ll stay here and keep walking. They wouldn’t hurt a few innocent citizens.” So they stood there for an hour, the citizens yelling and the police holding them back from rampaging through the streets.

All the noise stopped when a gun went off in the air. A lot of limos and police cars came and surrounded us, leaving only a space big enough for people to walk through. A few seconds passed and a red carpet came rolling from the first limo to where we were standing. At the end of the carpet there was a crest that said “C. C.” on it.

“Oh, no,” a citizen said. “It’s the city commander.”

“Citizens of the soon-to-be Benny’s Fish Factory,” the city commander said.

“Benny’s Fish Factory?” the townspeople were saying. “Why a fish factory?” By this time the citizens had broken away from the police and were running toward the city commander.

“I got him,” one citizen said.

“Okay, okay,” the commander surrendered, afraid that the mob would kill him. “It’s not going to be a fish factory. It will be a town for all people and I will still run it, but the people will decide everything.”

“Yeah!” they said in cheers.

“Mr. Svenson, let’s go home, our work here is done,” Mickey said.

“I agree,” said Mr. Svenson.

We got back safely to Mr. Svenson’s house. It was already dinnertime so I said goodbye and promised we’d do more time travel over the weekend. We decided to go back in time, though. Maybe I could meet my great, great grandparent, who knows . . . we could change the course of history forever!

# THE WORLD WITH NO LAND

*The future of the earth could be a terrible one if mankind ever misuses its immense power of destruction on a worldwide scale. **THE WORLD WITH NO LAND**, by Charlyne Perdriau, gives a glimpse of the aftermath of such misuse, and how the people who are left must survive.*

A long time ago there was a civil war that had covered the earth's surface in water, because the Americans had an atomic bomb and they used it. The survivors lived on boats that they built with whatever materials they could find. The people were trading food and household goods, but mostly they were trying to get pure water because they were living in the sea.

Patric is one of the survivors. He is a good sailor. He has brown hair and is of average height.

Patric was in his boat and was trading with another boy. Suddenly, he heard a sound: a funny sound. He turned around to see what it was. It was "the motors." Everyone is scared of them because they are used by the bad guys who take the boat or goods of the survivors for themselves. Patric and the other trader immediately started their boats to run away. The motors were coming fast and they were shooting at them. Patric set his speed at maximum and ran away.

Patric was happy to get away. "Whew! I don't want to come back here again!"

Patric had traveled a great distance when he saw a small boat. "Let's see what they want," he thought. When he pulled alongside, he saw a lot of interesting objects on the deck of the other boat. He asked, "What do you have for me to trade?" Then Patric saw that the trader was a girl, who seemed young. Without waiting for an

answer to his first question, Patric asked, "What's your name? And how old are you?"

The girl said, "My name is Joe, and I'm 18 years old. What about you?"

Patric answered, "My name is Patric, and I'm 18 years old, too. What do you have to trade?"

They started trading and bargaining for a long time. Only then, Patric saw there was a younger girl on board. She was pretty, with brown hair and blue eyes. Her clothes were in poor shape. "This is Joanna," Joe said. "She is my sister. She is ten years old."

When they finished trading, Joe said, "Maybe you could stay a little bit to help me, for my boat is broken." Patric helped her. He stayed for dinner and also for the night.

In the morning, they heard a sound: a hard, fast, and loud sound. Slowly, Patric got up and turned around. It was the motors.

He thought he knew why they were coming. He remembered last night that Joe explained there was a tattoo in the middle of the back of her sister and that others were coming after them.

Patric woke the girls up and attached his boat to the girls' motor boat. Together, they started to run faster than the motors. They saw other boats and the told them, "Come with us; we're going to dry land."

They were sailing very fast, but they didn't see the land. For days, they traveled where Joanna's map said to go.

One night, Patric woke up when his boat cracked on something. He lit up some candles. Everyone else did, too, and they crashed on "dry land." Patric said, "At last, my friends, you are on dry land."

It was not like the sea. So he decided to live in the sea. Joe was in love with him, so she and Joanna said, "We're coming with you." They took food, a lot of water, and other things. They became a family and lived forever in the sea.

But they came back sometimes for food and lots of water, and brought other people for a new civilization. Joanna went back to a

house where she found that she had once lived with Joe and her parents. The map in the middle of her back was made by her parents. It was there in case Joan and Joanna were lost, but her parents didn't know that Joe could not read the map.



# STRANGER THAN TRUTH





# ADVENTURE

*When supernatural events occur, even the library isn't safe. In ADVENTURE by Lyndsie Kehoe, it is up to a librarian to learn the truth surrounding a rash of disappearing people.*

Hi, my name is Jon Wild. I live in a small town called Beverly Hills, California. I own my own library. A girl named Mary always came to my library, but she didn't come anymore. It had been one dreadful month since anyone had seen her. The last time I had seen her was March 31, 1990 when she stopped in and took out a book called *Adventure*. Since then, it had been an adventure trying to find her.

I never got that book back from her, so I went to her house and asked her mom and dad to give the book back. They said that she was reading the book and then she was gone. They gave me the book but it was a bit longer and I was wondering why it was longer than before. I started to read the book myself and while I was reading it, there were names on every page of people who checked out this book, including Mary's name. I did not know why all the names were in the book and I was surprised.

In the middle of the book there was a big blue dot that said "push me and then see." Then I closed the book, and felt like a lightning bolt had just hit me. I was too scared to touch that button. I remembered one boy who was nine years old who disappeared over a year ago. I kept wondering whether he had been reading *Adventure* also. This book is so weird.

When I went to bed that evening, I heard a lot of noise in the middle of the night coming from the book. Voices kept saying, "Help me, help me, get me out of here!" I opened the book to the

middle page to push the blue dot. But before I could push that dot, I needed the same book from a different library so I could read how the book ended.

I got the other book and read the ending which said that a person who came in the story must go out. That did not help me as I was uncertain how people did get out. It did not have a blue dot. It seems only one book in the world had a blue dot and that book was mine.

As the first book listed a number of people who had been missing for up to 10 years, I wasn't certain that pushing the blue dot was such a good idea. All of the people that were listed had mysteriously disappeared and I had known every one of them. They were all children, about 10 and 11 years old. People never believed in people going into books like *Adventure* and never coming back.

When I decided to push the blue dot, I realized I would go into the book where I might eventually die. I would never return as a person but only turn up as a pile of bones! I finally decided to push that button, for those kids are my friends and not my enemies.

It was a great surprise then when I pushed the button: they were all free at last. They all screamed, "Thank you, Mr. Wild! You have saved us from the book!" They all started to hug me as if I was their master.

I took the known copies of the book called *Adventure* and I threw them into a fire to burn them until there was nothing left but small pieces of ashes. After all of that, I finally realized why I did not go into the book! Whoever owned the book could not die.

## AMANDA'S LUCK!

*Amanda is a trusting little girl, until she sees something even she can't believe. Yet she can't deny her own eyesight, and uses what she learns to her advantage, as told in AMANDA'S LUCK! by Lauren Suzersak.*

There once was a little girl whose name was Amanda. She believed in everything that people told her and what she thought up herself.

One sunny summer day her mother told her to go to the bank to get some money so that she could go and buy some bread for dinner. As she was waiting in line for the money at the bank, out of the corner of her eye she saw a big green blob that was 99 percent flubber! As Amanda looked at it closer, she saw that it was a monster. After everything that she had heard in her life, that is one thing that she never believed in. This big green monster was making money. So Amanda got out of line to see this incredibly amazing monster. When Amanda went to lean on the glass to see the monster better, she left a face imprint of her skinny face.

Amanda was walking home, still thinking of the monster, when she realized that she did not get the bread or the money. She knew that the banks close at six o'clock and she knew that it was very close to six. So she was thinking of a way to get there in time, such as running, or calling her mom from the nearest pay phone. Just then, the bell to the church downtown rang—*ding-dong, ding-dong*. The clock rang every hour and Amanda had left her house at 5:00 to go to the bank and the store. Now she knew that the bank was closed. Then she suddenly got a brilliant idea. She was going to go to the monster's house and ask him for a favor.

So she went to the monster's house and rang the doorbell and waited for an answer. After she waited for five minutes, the door opened. It wasn't the big green monster. Then she thought that she might be at the wrong house. Therefore, she decided to ask if this was where the monster lived. The lady who answered the door replied with a yes.

The lady with a big waist and a small black skirt on invited her inside. She asked her if she would like to wait for the monster. She told her that he would be out of the bathtub pretty soon.

As she was waiting, the house was quiet. The only thing that she could hear was the monster splashing in the tub and the maid whistling as she dusted off the picture of his diploma from MMMU, which is also known as Money Making Monsters University!

After Amanda waited and waited and waited, he finally came out of the tub and was all wrinkled like a prune. He asked her what she wanted from him and she replied that she was wondering if she could make some money so that her mother could have some bread for dinner. He asked what he would get in return for this favor that he might do for Amanda.

Amanda never thought about that. Then she replied, "I will give you some of my mother's famous bread, whose recipe has been handed down from her great-grandmother." The monster really did like bread, so he agreed.

The monster took her into his lab where he makes the money. Amanda was amazed at all the stuff that he had to do before he could make it. After that she had the money in her hand and was off to the store to buy the bread.

Her mother was very proud of what she did just to buy her mother her bread. Later in the evening Amanda delivered the bread to the monster and he was very fascinated at how good the bread tasted. From that day forward, Amanda and the monster were very close friends.

## ANSIN MINNER

*Maybe you don't believe in ghosts. Are you sure about that? Others didn't, either, and look what happened to them in ANSIN MINNER, by Cassandra Shanbaum.*

If you look north from the docks at Camp Machar, you will see thick misty fog, and the occasional stray cow or sheep. When you look close enough you may see what looks like a person. This is an utterly crazy man who is always there, waiting for one night when he can get revenge.

One hundred, maybe even two hundred years before Camp Machar settled in Nova Scotia, there was a farm. And on that farm there was a poor farmer who lived with his wife and thirteen-year-old son. Rain had been scarce that season and so he couldn't grow as many crops as was needed. So Ansin did not have enough money to feed him, let alone his whole family. Every so often a messenger would come to Ansin and tell him his crop status. He always came with a smile and told Ansin the best news. The next day when he came he did not look very jolly. He just handed Ansin a letter. Ansin slowly opened the letter. It read, "Dear Ansin, we have just received news that your crops are not doing as well as they should be. If you do not send us the profit that your crops would have paid for, your land will be seized and you must leave your home. Sincerely, Nova Scotia Government."

Ansin knew that the only way to get the money would have been to not feed his family. That night, Ansin wrote in his journal (as he always did) about his plans and what he would do to solve his money problems.

On August 1, in the dead of the night, Ansin went into his son's room with his ax and chopped him to bits. Then he crept silently into his room and killed his wife. After seeing what he had just done he was so alarmed that he threw his ax in anger, accidentally cutting a humongous gash in his leg, and slowly ran into the forest with his cut leg trailing behind. Ansin didn't return to his house and did not pay the money, so his land was sold to Camp Machar. Meanwhile, Ansin's gash had caught gangrene, and he soon passed away, but returned as a ghost.

A full year had passed since he murdered his family, and when Ansin returned and found out that much of his forest had been cut down, he got very angry. He got out his journal and carefully designed a plan to get revenge on the camp. On the night of August 1, he went into every cabin and put a cut on every 13<sup>th</sup> bed (because his son was 13) and on every kid wearing green (because of his leg). Then, in a fury, he burned down the counselors' lounge. Then he fled back to the forest.

The next week at camp a few kids were hiking and found Ansin's journal that he had left, so now they knew the mysterious murderer.

A few years ago on August 1 (the only day Ansin Minner ever comes to visit the camp), now known as Ansin Minner day, two boys decided to visit Ansin Minner's old farm. They took a little canoe and paddled across the lake. They were about a half mile from the docks when suddenly they felt a little knock on their canoe. It was as if something was pushing the canoe from underwater. One of the boys looked cautiously into the deep blue water, only to see what looked like a face. It wasn't a human face, though. The face was pale green and ugly. It was covered in seaweed and had glowing yellow eyes, which were glaring up into his eyes. Tangled hair above his face looked as though it could strangle him. Suddenly the canoe tipped over, and by the time the rippling water smoothed over, the face was gone.

When the boys arrived at the farm, the fog was so thick they could barely make out their own shoelaces. When they finally made their way to the barn, they decided to stay the night.

One of the boys spotted a candy bar in green paper with the brand name rubbed off. They split the candy bar in half. One of the boys gobbled up the chocolate while the other carefully inspected it. Then all of a sudden the chocolate brown turned to a mushy green and got all mushy. The boy dropped the substance and as soon as it hit the floor it turned to a powder and disintegrated into the eaten-up wood. The boy who hadn't eaten the candy told of a story he had heard. It was about how Ansin would lure kids to his barn with poison that took the shape of things children liked, like candy, perhaps. Also, if they didn't get help right away, they could die.

A thought occurred to the boy who did eat the chocolate. *What if the other boy is just tricking me, but what if he's not? I could just leave and tell him I think he's tricking me so he wouldn't know I'm too chicken to stay.* So he grabbed a flashlight and told the other boy his excuse for having to leave.

Only one boy was left. He made a bed out of some haystacks and blankets he had found. He crept under a blanket and closed his eyes. Then he heard a voice coming from not far away: a strange, eerie voice saying, "Why are you running away? Come back."

His heart was pounding as hard as horse hooves against a cobblestone street. Every second seemed like a decade. His glands were producing adrenaline tens times faster than usual. He closed his eyes and tried to sleep through the echoes of everything around him.

In the morning, all he wanted to do was go back to camp. He packed up his things and ran back.

It turns out the boy who left early never made it back to camp. Some say he Ansin Minner thought he was his son, and when he found out he wasn't, Ansin killed him. Nobody really knows. The camp was forced to shut down. Camp directors thought Ansin left so they opened the camp up again, but no one knows if he's here or if he'll ever be back.

# DAD

*Here's a story in which a father comes home to his son. That sounds normal enough, but the circumstances are not what you might expect in DAD, by Kari Hay.*

"You're such a loser! Get a life!" Preston said.

"Stop! Stop picking on me," cried Cameron as he ran around screaming.

"Cameron, sit in your seat! And as for you, Preston, go into the hall until you can behave!" ordered Mrs. Zich.

After school, Cameron said, "Mom, I'm so glad to be home! Preston Waters is so mean!"

"Cameron, why do you have a black eye? Do you want to talk about it? Because I'm always going to be here and I don't want to see my baby getting hurt."

"Preston gave it to me because I wouldn't do his homework. I'm going upstairs because if I don't give him an A+ there will go my left eye. I don't want to talk to you about this. I want Dad back!" Cameron left to be alone.

*I'm never going to have any friends. I wish my Dad were here. He'd know what to do. Why did he have to die on Christmas? I wish, I wish he came back to life!*

*Whoa . . . . What's that light outside my window? Mom! DAD? Ahhhhh!*

"Hey, Cameron! I'm back!"

"Who are you? Dad?"

"Yup! How are you? I'm sorry I left you. How's Mom and Missy?"



“Dad, I’ve missed you so much! Let’s go downstairs! Race ya down there!”

“Cameron, you don’t understand. No one can see me, only you! It was your wish, not Mom’s or Missy’s.”

“But, Dad, don’t you want to see them?”

“Of course, but I can’t. I’m going back on Friday, so we only have one day.”

“That’s unfair.”

“Cameron, so what’s new with you?”

“Well, Dad, I’m getting picked on by this big bully named Preston. He punched me in the eye and the stomach! What would you do if you were me?”

“I don’t know, probably beat him up and show him who’s boss!”

“I can’t, I’m too weak! I have a good idea. Next time he tells me to do his homework, I’ll say no!”

“That’s perfect, Kid. I knew you could do it without me.”

The next morning after Cameron awoke, he said, “Aahooohh, boy am I tired! Dad, where are you? Dad!”

“Cameron, you know Dad’s not here! Go downstairs; it’s time for breakfast. You are such a weirdo, Cameron.”

“Missy, shut up! Dad, where are you? You’re freaking me out!”

At school, there was Preston. “Cameron, do my homework tonight! I better get an A+ or I’ll pound you! Where’s your dad? Oh, yeah, he died! Ha! Ha!”

“Shut up, Preston, and I would never do your homework for you! I have to go home. My dad’s here to pick me up.”

“Cameron, you’re stupid! No one’s there. Ow! Who are you? I want my mommy! Whaaaa!” Preston yelled as he ran home.

“Ha! Ha! Nice one, Dad!”

“Cameron, I have to go. I’ll miss you!” he said.

“Please don’t!”

“Bye . . . You know what? I’m staying. Who cares?”

“Hi, Mr. Wilson. I haven’t seen you in a while,” said Mrs. Zich.

“Dad, they can see you!”

# THE HAUNTED HOUSE

*When friends sit down to play checkers, no one expects horror and death to follow. THE HAUNTED HOUSE, by Sprinkle Paskalsky, may make you want to stick to playing solitaire.*

On a hot Saturday, John, Joey, Martha, Quincy, and Jenny came over to Matt's house. They were bored.

Quincy said, "Come on, guys, it's a beautiful Saturday and we're doing nothing by sitting down waiting for the time to go by."

John said, "How about we go to the forest at night?"

"Nah, too dull," Martha responded.

"Let's egg Old Man John's house," said Joey.

"No, too risky," said Jenny.

"I've got it. We'll play checkers and whoever loses will go to the haunted house," said Quincy. "I'll go right away; I'm brave."

The only person who lost was Jenny. They walked over mud, puddles, and wet sand. Jenny was mad because the other kids didn't want to come with them. When they got to the house, they saw 50-foot doors that were as tall as a five-story building. As they opened the doors, the doors creaked. The room was pitch black. Nothing could be seen but one old couch. Quincy sat first to check it out, then waved to Jenny that it was okay.

They heard strange noises like people laughing, people crying, and terrifying screams like people were dying. When their eyes were used to the dark, they saw tables with rifles on them, old-fashioned guns, and spheres that turned to fire when they hit something. Their eyes wandered up on the wall and they saw portraits on the walls, and the people's bodies nailed through their

necks hanging over their own portraits. They saw two empty portraits that both had Quincy and Jenny on them.

Quincy saw something black running through the hallway, wiggling its hands. Before Quincy and Jenny had the chance to stand up, they were in a deep trance. Jenny felt claws poking her leg. When she woke up, she saw the most hideous face: fire-like, with long black hair, burned skin, and a face that was half skull. The monster took a sphere out of his pocket and threw it at her face. She yelled for help. When Quincy woke up, she was nailed to the wall over her portrait. Quincy got spooked. He was walking backwards (being selfish) to get out of that mad house.

He hit something. It was the monster. Quincy couldn't believe his eyes. His mouth just spoke and said, "Why are you doing this?"

The monster responded, "In school, I was lazy. I hated kids who were smarter than me. I beat them up for it. I took sport to kill those kids and I will kill you for coming here."

The monster took out the sphere. Quincy took the rifle off the table, loaded it, and shot the monster. Though he was not dead, he let go of the sphere. It hit the ground by the monster's leg. He was hurt. Quincy knew that the sphere could kill him and ran to the other table to grab one. But the monster already reached for his pocket to grab another sphere. He was dragging his leg toward Quincy. Quincy ran toward the monster with another sphere. The monster picked up his throwing hand and threw the sphere at Quincy. Quincy ducked and still ran toward the monster and said, "Now it's my turn."

He threw the sphere at the monster's horrible face. The whole room was filled with fire. And all that was left was a star with 100 sharp angles. Quincy reasoned that one angle was for each person who the monster killed. So Quincy took the star and threw it outside. When it landed, it exploded and all the people who the monster killed lived once again, including Jenny.

Everyone thanked Quincy for rescuing them.

The one thing evil can't do is beat good.

# HOW WE GOT STUCK IN A COMIC BOOK

*How many times have you wished you could put yourself in the setting of a favorite story? HOW WE GOT STUCK IN A COMIC BOOK, by Marissa Lyn, tells what might happen if that wish came true.*

**Kelly:** My name is Kelly and this is my brother Robert.

**Robert:** We are going to tell you a story about our comic book vacation.

**Kelly:** It starts like this: My brother and I were in school, doing our work, waiting for the clock to strike three o'clock. Then Robert passed me a note very quickly as soon as the teacher turned her back. It said, "Meet at the comic book store after school."

**Robert:** When school was out, my sister met me at the comic book store just as I asked her to do. As my sister and I looked at the comic book shelf, very slowly looking for the right book, we both grabbed the same book called *The Land Of Wonders*, a book about when dreams come true and a place full of creatures to fulfill your dreams. As soon as we got home we got a letter from our parents saying they would be back home tomorrow afternoon. So after my sister and I finished our homework, we went downstairs on the couch to read the comic book. After we read the comic book, my sister said, "I wish we were in this kind of world." Then all of a sudden something happened. We were inside the comic book!

**Kelly:** My brother and I were really scared. Robert then said, "This is too good to be true," then I said, "Anything can happen." Then we both heard little weird, strange sounds like a mouse makes, but a little louder and bolder. We were both a little worried.

But from reading the comic book we remembered that those little noises were the creatures called mukas. As we saw little mukas come from behind a tree we got to learn about each other. We also remembered that we could make wishes. Robert wished for a lot of stuff such as candy and food. As for me, I wished for little stuff such as rings and earrings. We wished for lots of stuff as the night went by, but as we got homesick we wished to go back home. The mukas told us that they sure would miss us, but we had to go home so we told the mukas good-bye. Again, all of a sudden things looked different, but we were at home again at last.

# THE LEGEND OF MORPHEOUS!

*Halloween is a time for scaring each other with stories of monsters—but are they just stories?. In THE LEGEND OF MORPHEOUS! by Paul Brakeman, four friends have to face the ultimate bogey man: the devil himself!*

This is a story about a demon named Morpheous. Legend says that every year on Halloween he rises from Hell and eats kids that he challenges. On October 31, 2000 he rose at the first sign of dusk, and started stalking some kids. His victims' names were Nick, John, Paul (B), and Paul (W). As he soared closer he sensed lots of fear in them.

Every year the boys held a tradition. That tradition was to go to the beach's abandoned beach house. Morpheous followed them to the beach house. Soon he thought of a plan and returned to Hell. As soon as the boys got to the beach they saw something unbelievable.

A rock tower rose in the middle of the lake. Lightning flashed, thunder roared, and a bridge of fire connected the tower to shore. They crossed the bridge, but as soon as they entered, fire blazed and roared like an earthquake. With amazement they looked around. They felt another earthquake and it was long. They looked around again and they realized that they were in HELL.

A crack opened up in front of them and out come Morpheous. Morpheous said, "I will let you go if you can beat me at my own games."

Then Nick blurted out, "Why the heck are we in Hell?"

“Well, I am getting hungry and I invited you to dinner. It’s tradition.”

John said, “What kind of games are these?”

“Death Games. I have two lives.”

“Then we have two lives then!” said Paul (W).

“NO! It is four on one. If I die twice you win.”

“If we lose?” said Paul (B).

“Well, I’ll have a good dinner. I’ll meet you in the Death Chamber.”

“Where is the Death Chamber anyway?” said Paul (W).

Then a crack opened and smoke cleared. A sign read: THE DEATH CHAMBER.

“It was below Hell!” said John.

“I thought nothing was below Hell,” said Paul (W).

“Well, there is now!” Nick said frantically.

They all walked in and saw Morpheus standing there waiting. A door opened up and weapons appeared.

“Choose your weapons,” said Morpheus.

There were swords, tridents, spears, shields, scythes, axes, and maces. Nick chose a sword. John chose a trident. Paul (W) also chose a sword. Paul (B) chose a scythe. Last, Morpheus chose a mace. All of them received a shield except Morpheus.

Nick was up first. Morpheus swung his mace at Nick, but missed. When he pulled it back up, Nick chucked his sword at Morpheus’s chest. Nick won so he didn’t have to fight any more.

John was up next. John was short and fast, but no match for Morpheus. Morpheus swung his mace at John but he deflected it quickly. When Morpheus tripped John the battle was over for him.

Next up was Paul (W) with his sword. Paul was so scared that he charged at Morpheus. Morpheus jumped and threw his mace at Paul. Paul (W) was then paralyzed.

Last was Paul (B) with a scythe. Every time Morpheus swung his mace Paul blocked it with his scythe. Morpheus was so surprised

he froze. During that time Paul threw the scythe at Morpheous's head, then John and Paul came back to life.

All of a sudden they started floating back to Earth. But was Morpheous really dead? They don't know, but that's another story.

The End—"OR IS IT?"



# THE MISSION

*Some challenges are too inviting to pass up. In THE MISSION by Max Surnow, three friends set out to succeed where adults have been unable to prevail.*

Have you ever wondered if kids could make even the slightest difference? Well, I know a group of kids who can and are up for the job of saving the king's only son, Matt.

The first kid's name is Moey (who's a daredevil troublemaker, with red hair and green eyes).

Then there's Bob (who's a natural athlete who's big and strong, with a head of curly hair which is blond, and eyes of blue).

And finally we have cute little Carly (who's always got a question to ask; she has big blue eyes and short blond hair).

"C'mon, guys," says Carly, "I have to ask you something in the tree house!"

So Bob and Moey came trotting along, gasping for air, trying to keep up with speedy little Carly.

"So what's up that couldn't wait two seconds?" asked Bob.

"Guess what, guys?"

"I don't know. Now tell us before I get the hose and make you wish you never lived!"

"This morning at the breakfast table I saw my dad reading the paper and it said that the king's kid, Matt, was kidnapped last night and they don't know where he is."

"That's a shame," said Moey, snickering.

"I know, he must be so scared it's not even funny. Well, I feel bad. Let's help out. I mean, it's the least we could do," said Carly.

“All right, I’m up for it. I’ll go get my mom to make food, and we’ll drive down to the palace to ask for permission from King Charles to go out and search for Matt,” said Bob.

In about fifteen minutes, they were all in the car and ready to go.

All three of the nervous kids were sitting there in the car with their hearts pounding extra fast and their palms becoming sweatier and sweatier as they headed toward the palace.

Finally, they arrived at the humongous and super-sized king’s palace. That place looks like it must have taken two whole years just to build the front. Its blood-red brick with its extremely large wooden front door looked like it was seven times the size of the White House.

They all got out of the cheap car with dirty rust and mud all up the front and small, squashed bugs on the windshield. Then Bob kissed his mom good-bye.

The king looked ugly with his silky purple robe and his gold-diamond crown on top of his big, sweaty, bald head.

“It’s so nice of you to come and help, but you’re just a couple of kids. You can’t really do anything but just moan and whine,” said the King.

“What a jerk,” whispered Moey to the other two.

“If you really want to go you can, but...” said the king.

The kids jumped for joy in excitement. It was like they were happy as birds and excited as little puppies wanting out of their cage.

And off they were to save little Matt.

About forty minutes later they came across a little dog that came up to them and asked if they wanted a ride. The dog could talk and fly, and his name was Cleo.

All three hopped on Cleo and set off looking down at the ground when they were in the air.

Immediately, they saw a small little hut and they thought they heard someone scream.

They told Cleo to stop and head for ground and he did.

With a small little THUD, they hit the muddy ground and hopped off Cleo quietly.

“I know Matt’s in there, I just do,” said Carly with a short whimper.

“Okay guys, I’ve got a plan,” said Moey to Carly and Bob. “Carly will go up and ding-dong-ditch their little hut. They’ll all come out and Bob and I will tiptoe quietly in, untie Matt, and get out of there. Then we’ll all hop on Cleo before we get our butts kicked. Got it?”

“All right, but it’s going to be tough,” said Bob.

So in about three minutes Carly finally had the nerve to get up there and get this show on the road.

When she got up there she put her sweaty hand on the blue misshapen doorknob. (Actually it kind of looked like a deformed chipmunk.)

Then in a flash she was in the bushes, so scared she thought the world was going to end.

Out came this weird looking guy with orange skin and a HUGE Afro, who was singing the national anthem.

Then Bob and Moey snuck past that dude and into the hut. They untangled little Matt from a thick black rope. Matt looked so scared and he was cold, hungry, and all muddy.

“It’s going to be okay, Matt, I promise you,” said Carly.

On the way out, Bob picked up this large rock and smashed the weird guy’s head and about 20 minutes later he got up and sang, “Hey, kids, it’s me. I bet you thought that I was dead!” They all hopped on Cleo (Matt, Bob, Moey, and Carly), and arrived at the palace shortly.

The King thanked the kids and told them that he was sorry and wrong about what he had said earlier. Carly liked Cleo so much that she ended up keeping Cleo as a friend, and a pet.

I didn’t believe it at first but now I realize that kids really do make a difference. They saved little Matt and are welcome to go and visit the king whenever they want to. Do you think kids can make a difference?

# THE MYSTERY HOUSE

*Four friends just want to bring a little excitement to the Halloween season. How, then, does everything go so tragically wrong? THE MYSTERY HOUSE, by M. Marie, tells the story.*

It was two days before Halloween, and Mark, Michelle, Sean, and Rachel were planning on making a haunted house. The next day Mark called Michelle and said, "I found a haunted house we can use. You know the old house on Roman street?"

"You mean the house that Old Lady Cooper used to live in?" Michelle said.

The next day they all met at Mark's house. "Can we get something to eat before we go?" said Sean.

"Okay," said Mark.

Ten minutes later, everyone was finished eating and so they were on their way.

"How many more minutes till we get there?" said Michelle.

"About five more minutes. It's a mile walk, you know," said Mark.

"Finally, we're here," said Michelle. "It felt more like an hour walk. Open the door. Come on, we don't have all day, you know."

They walked in the house. "Let's check out the living room first. Hey, it looks cool in here," said Mark.

"You guys, I thought I heard something," said Sean. Then all of a sudden the lights went out.

AH, AH, AH, BOOM.

The lights went back on.

"SEAN! He's—he's dead!" said Michelle. "Let's put him on the couch over there, and I'll call the cops and see if they can get

an ambulance over here. The lines are dead! Someone must have cut the cord!”

They all moved on to the family room. “Hey, where is Mark?”  
CRACK.

“What was that?” said Michelle. She tried to open the front door but it was stuck.

“When I was looking in the drawer for a flashlight, I found a gun and I brought it with me in case something bad would happen again,” said Rachel.

“Okay.” Suddenly, Michelle heard something. “They’re opening the door, Rachel; come on, shoot! Pull the trigger!”

BANG, BANG, BANG.

“I did it, I shot ‘em!”

Then out of the closet fell Mark.

“Oh, no, you killed him,” said Michelle. “Come on, let’s get out of here.”

BOOM.

“Oh no, Rachel! Not again. Who is doing this? Why is everyone dying? I’m getting out of here. Ah! Who are you? Hey, wait, what are you doing? No, don’t kill me! No!”

RING, RING.

“Oh, it was just a dream.”

# A PHANTOM, OF THE PAST

*The violence of another time might seem unconnected to the here and now. But an evil history stretches through the years to touch the present in A PHANTOM, OF THE PAST, by Ray Reilly.*

“Howdy! A little lady like you shouldn’t be out on a night like this,” growled a grungy outlaw in a black overcoat. Those were the last words the fifteen-year-old heard. As quick as a flash he had shot and killed her.

The translucent figure quaked as she remembered being shot that dreadful night in 1874. Years passed . . . .

A young student, sixteen, was walking through the thick, dark woods with the canopy of leaves blocking all of the blue light given off by the full moon.

“Here boy!” called Peter Owens, searching the woodlands for his lost dog.

“Ruff, ruff!” was his dog’s answer.

Following the sound, Peter walked into a clearing which had foliage strewn everywhere, and trees which seemed to be in an informal scrum. An eerie old barn stood in front of him. It belonged to an 1870s ranch down the clearing, but it was not much more than a ramshackle hut in the late 1990s.

“Wasn’t my murder enough?” asked a girl’s voice that sounded chilling because of the infinite despair of the speaker.

Peter spun around to the cold voice. With a strange, hypnotizing light Peter was gone into what seemed like a deep sleep. His life would be changed forever....

Later that year: “This is a great buy for anyone who has all

that money,” explained the realtor, talking about the 400-acre property in the middle of rural Minnesota.

In Julie’s mind, the realtor just wanted to sell her family the creepy ranch where once a girl about her age had been murdered. To add to her bad thoughts, Julie’s friend Peter disappeared from the woods near here only a few months ago. Though she thought differently, Julie’s parents were keen on the idea; they planned to buy the property.

Late during their first night living on the ranch, a flash of green light awakened Julie. Like the wind, a hooded figure floated into her room. Raising her hand, the figure sent an energy wave through Julie, strangely knocking her out.

A few days later Julie woke up in her room. Her parents were gone from their room. Julie found tracks in the mud and couldn’t find them anywhere. She went to the police station to look for her missing parents.

The small town deputy could care less. “Check the hospital,” he mumbled as bagel crumbs rolled down his chin. She thought that this guy should be more helpful.

At the hospital in the stainless steel morgue, she was frightened and out of breath when a stretcher rolled right through her as she came to a sudden halt.

“They’re not here,” said a familiar voice. Julie spun around. It was Peter, her middle school crush who had disappeared in the woods a few months ago. He looked comical in his flip-flop sandals, Bermuda shorts and tie-dyed shirt.

He explained in grave detail how her parents were taken by the phantom, just as they were, and turned into ghosts. He told Julie how he had been secretly looking through county records looking for a death of a teenager maybe near the ranch.

“She is trying to guard her ranch,” he explained. Though hard for her to understand, Julie learned that she thinks up the Afterlife, and the rules of the living dimension don’t apply if she doesn’t let them.

Julie and Peter ran into the barn after hearing shouts from Julie's parents.

Julie's parents were tied to the tractor. Both of them were ghosts, too, captured because they were stunned into a greater state of unconsciousness to where they could be taken captive without waking, unlike the innocent teenager. Julie would have woken up and the phantom didn't want to risk an energy-consuming struggle. Once again the phantom raised her hands, sending green light beams with her long, bony fingers.

Eagerly, she blasted until she was very weak. With only one chance left she hesitated. Julie took advantage of this and charged. The phantom was fast. She had sent the last of her energy. Unable to get out of the beam's path, within a nanosecond of it hitting her, Julie flickered away. She reappeared behind the phantom, kicking her a hefty blow to the back. The phantom stumbled forward, hitting the old barn door hard. Falling forward into the sunlight she turned to dust, instantly leaving a pile of ashes on her own grave in front of the barn. Luckily it was harmless, although if she would have hit anyone with one of her beams they would be helpless, paralyzed in their own body, still living.

In that instant, Julie, her parents, and Peter turned back into living, breathing people with their lives ahead of them. From that point on, no one would have any recollection of what had happened to any of them.



# THE PLAYTHING'S REVENGE

*Do you remember your favorite stuffed animal from your younger days? Was it soft, and cuddly . . . and deadly? In THE PLAYTHING'S REVENGE by Alexander Shifman, one boy's prized possession has a will of its own.*

The horrible memories. I remember it like yesterday. Thank G-d I had my slingshot . . . .

"Mom! Please! It's on sale for twenty dollars. It is the newest, coolest, most bestest toy in the whole wide world. Come on!"

"No, I already bought you a slingshot. My salary isn't for teddy bears."

"Fine, but can I go over Mike's house?" I asked.

She said, "Sure, when we get home after my grocery shopping."

After we got home, I was just silent . . . . "Come on! Please! I deserve it, plus it can be for my birthday and Christmas, that's all I want." She said that she would consider it. Then she told me to go call Mike. I told her that I already did and that I would be picked up in thirty minutes.

"Hey," we said to each other. Then Mike said, "I want to show you something." It was the New Limited Edition Deluxe Teddy Bear named Rocky! "I may only be six years old, but I know when I see the most bestest toy ever!" I was sooo jealous!

It was Christmas Eve, and I was very excited. My mom had wakened me that morning. She told me that I was going to get a special surprise. I don't know why, maybe because it was almost Christmas, but I was thinking about my dad (who had died on my third Christmas from cancer). That night I quickly fell asleep.

“Ahhh!” I felt something at my legs! I was eye to eye with a fuzzy, curly, strange creature. I realized that it was the teddy bear that I wanted! I put him on my pillow. I was really excited because he was supposed to say five phrases. He started to talk. He told me that he was a serial killer, so I thought that he ate a lot of cereal. Since he was talking about cereal, we had Cheerios for breakfast.

I waited until next week to call my friends because they were all on vacation. When they came over they were being kind of rude.

Dan said, “It’s too small.”

Kevin said, “It’s lame.”

Eric said, “So.”

Scott said, “Ummm . . . okay.”

And then Mike said, “Mine can kick your teddy bear’s butt.” I felt horrible! I guess they were all jealous.

About two weeks later we all met at Kevin’s house. Everyone had the new toy. Now they were acting nice, like normal. After an hour I went home. I went to my room to get Rocky. He was gone!

It was early Monday morning. Mike called me and he said that he saw my teddy bear in the trash from his house across the street. I went outside and I saw Mike coming. Then Rocky jumped out of the trash can! BOOM! Rocky had taken the trash can lid and hit Mike over the head. I ran and hid behind a tree. I saw Rocky put Mike in the garbage can.

I ran yelling for help. A neighbor called 911 and when the police arrived they said that Mike was dead. Rocky was nowhere to be seen. Nobody believed me when I said that Rocky did it. The police just said, “Your teddy bear ain’t no killer.”

The next day I called all of my friends. None of them was home. Then I went to my tree house. “Ah!” I yelled after what I had seen. There on the floor were all of my friends except for Eric, who had just moved. I called the cops. When the police came they saw that my neighbors were also in the tree house. Then they said that they were all dead.

After the police left, my mom had a talk with me. “Listen, Zack, there is a crazy killer somewhere and I want you to be careful.”

Two days later, I went to go get some toast. “Mom! Cut me some bread, please.” She didn’t come. I found a knife. To my surprise it had strawberry jam already on it. I cut some bread and put it in the toaster and then I spread the jam. I decided to eat it in the main room. Nuts, I had dropped my toast. After it fell I went upstairs. My mom was in the middle of the staircase! “No! Mom, are you okay? Speak!” I didn’t know what to do. I called 911.

When the police arrived they said that my mom was dead and they took me to an orphanage. I couldn’t stop crying.

About a week later, the police took me back to my house. They told me to take whatever I needed. I ran and hid under the staircase in the basement so they wouldn’t be able to find me. After an hour of searching they left, because they thought that I had escaped outside.

After they left I went to my tree house. I had never been so scared in my life. Out of nowhere, I was hit hard on the head. I fell unconscious.

I woke up in what appeared to be a power plant. I was hanging upside down! My legs were tied to a pole by rope. Now I was really scared. I got a headache. A couple of minutes later I realized that there was a big tub of green, bubbling acid under me!

I saw Rocky at the top of the pole. He had a knife. He was going to cut me off! “It’s over,” I said to myself continuously. But then I realized that I had my slingshot in my back pocket! I had been carrying it ever since the tree house incident. “No stones!” With nothing to shoot and determination to live, I knocked out my some-what loose tooth. I was so scared that I didn’t feel any pain. I shot it and it hit his left leg. “Yes!” He fell off the pole! But as he was plummeting down, he grabbed my right arm. I was his only support. Out of desperation, I used my left arm to undo my belt. Whoopa! My belt whipped his head and he fell. I watched him burn.

I was found the next day. The police used a gigantic ladder to get me down. After I was rescued, they took me back to the orphanage. The orphanage wasn't that bad.

I haven't played with a teddy bear since my little incident twenty years ago.

# WHEN FOOD GOES BAD

*One bad day at a fast-food restaurant starts a chain of events that no one could have predicted. WHEN FOOD GOES BAD, by Joseph Ress, may make you think twice about pulling up to the drive-thru window.*

May 24, 3:45:63 A.M. It is a quiet day at the Burger King around the corner from Jerry's Bait shop. The workers are cooking, trying to beat the twelve o'clock rush. All of a sudden, "Ahahahah!" came from one of the workers.

A hamburger has been made upside down.

The boss charges in and says, "Dispose of that thing, and get back to work. No need to be alarmed. Just keep working."

Bad luck? I think not.

Within the next few minutes a shake was made with broccoli instead of strawberries and an order of fries was made with carrots instead of potatoes.

Later that day, the Burger King was shut down for health reasons. The trash was never taken out again.

It has been three years now and everything has been taken over by mold. The trash started talking and, believe it or not, it came to life.

Everything in the trash had a personality. Carrot Top Boy and Detective Spaloni (the hamburger who got his job from taking a correspondence class using trashed books from some kid who used to work there and wanted to become a detective but failed) seemed good. Broccoli Shake seemed evil.

The evil shake's life was made up of plan after plan, thinking

somehow to capture the Emperor of China and to take over the world (he was bent on global domination and world destruction).

Three years later, a breakthrough story came in. A man known as Chop Suey Boy (Shake's evil sidekick from a nearby sushi restaurant) and Broccoli Shake have captured the Emperor of China.

Carrot Top Boy exclaimed, "Detective Spaloni, that's Broccoli Shake!"

"Precisely!" the detective said. "We must go save that Emperor!"

"How are we going to get out of this trash at Burger King? And what if people see us?" said Carrot Top.

Detective Spaloni said, "We will get out of here just by being us. You saw the workers' reaction when they made us. People will literally be jumping out of our way."

"So how will we get out of here?" Carrot Top asked.

"The same way we got in: through that termite-infested hole in the wall," Spaloni said.

"That's not the way we got in here," said Carrot Top.

"Quiet, Carrot Top! I am on a roll," said Detective Spaloni.

Twenty-two days later, Carrot Top and Detective Spaloni arrive in China on their greasy little bun and end and just in the nick of time, too: right when the evil Broccoli Shake is asking for his demands. He wants sardines, chips, and salsa.

"What?" Carrot Top said in question.

"Now is our perfect time to move in," said Detective Spaloni.

When our heroes arrive inside the scummy, ugly, dirty shack where the emperor is being held hostage, they find that they are trapped. They are cornered and the villains have the advantage. This can't be good, people. Carrot Top is against Chop Suey Boy in a sidekick vs. sidekick battle (just like the shows), and Detective Spaloni faces the evil Broccoli Shake in the other corner. I wonder who will win or, better yet, who will come out alive? A quick Bam! Whack! and Crunch! and hero Carrot Top is gone from the evil choppers of Chop Suey Boy. Sniff, sniff.

Now it is up to Detective Spaloni to save China. Chop Suey Boy is gone from fear. (Okay, face it: would you want to eat an

upside down hamburger? I think not!) So, back to the fight between Detective Spaloni and the evil shake. The shake yells out, "I am your father."

"What?" said Detective Spaloni, thinking to himself, "This can't be good, we are rivals." Turning to Broccoli Shake the Detective says, "Really?"

"Yes," says the shake, "I had to pick a kid from that garbage and I picked you. The fries picked the onion rings and they died. You turned into a good guy and me, well, an evil one, so I thought leaving you would be for the best."

"Wow, Dad," Detective Spaloni says, "you just said a mouthful."

"Yes, but you never gave me the chance to tell you. You always thought I was evil. What was it about the broccoli that you didn't like?" asked the shake.

The Detective laughed and said, "Can we catch up on lost time?"

"Sure," said Shake. "How about we go get something to eat?"

"Do Chop Suey and Fries sound good to you?"

# THE WINGED BEAST

*It's bad enough to be hunted down by the most evil creature ever known to humans. It's almost unbearable when such a creature can fly, too. In THE WINGED BEAST by Branden Milsk, people face the ultimate threat to their existence.*

There once was a huge city with a huge population. The city has no name, but evil does. Evil has only one name. That name is the Winged Beast. The Winged Beast wanted to destroy the city. He sought revenge on this huge city because his ancestors were killed by the powerful orb. One man has the courage to take on this beast, but will he succeed?

The villagers are very happy right now, because they never have to work and get everything just by wishing for it. The main reason that they're happy is all thanks to an orb that the mayor found, and is said to be able to destroy all evil. The mayor dashed to the laboratory to clone the orb with all the technology in the year 3000. All of a sudden he felt a blast of wind and got knocked unconscious, but before his eyes closed, he saw that a powerful wing knocked him out. The wing was attached to a huge and evil creature, who smashed the orb and the cloning machine with his finger like it was nothing. The evil creature then went to the heart of the city not to kill people, but to put them into slavery with the help of his henchmen, who followed the evil Winged Beast.

After an hour, the mayor became conscious again and hurried to the research center for help. The researchers said that they would do whatever they could for their city. At the research center, the scientists found data on their computer and told him that the Winged Beast was from another planet where the beast drained



power, and that there was a special orb that drained evil power. With that, the mayor set out on a journey to another planet and blasted off in his spaceship to find a more powerful orb.

While the journey of the mayor was taking place, the Winged Beast had plans of his own. "Let's proceed with our plan to bring back our ancestors," said the Winged Beast.

"I forgot how we are going to do that," shouted one of the henchmen. The Winged Beast laughed and told his henchmen that they were going to use the slaves to create a machine that will give back his ancestors that they killed. So, the city folk were one by one being transported to a planet where they were being enslaved by the Winged Beast and his henchmen. The henchmen were ordered to make sure that the slaves didn't slack off and that they would call upon the Winged Beast to use his laser whip to get the slaves back to work. If the slaves really got out of hand, the henchmen would tell the Winged Beast and he'd kill them.

Anyway, during the mayor's journey he was climbing over a 90-foot boulder. He took a last breath when he got to the top. The mayor then took a quick rest and continued walking. He soon encountered 4,950 of the Winged Beast's 5,000 henchmen, but the mayor wasn't afraid at all, for he was an extremely strong man. In an instant, the mayor forced the henchmen to surrender and agree to join forces with the mayor, because the henchmen had nowhere else to go. Plus, the henchmen were afraid to see what would happen if they didn't surrender. The mayor was also a very kind man, or else why would he let some ruthless captors surrender?

Back at the slavery planet, hundreds of people were dying every day. The Winged Beast even trained his henchmen to show a higher level of discipline. Also, the Winged Beast set a self-destruct mechanism that the slaves made on the slavery planet, and laughed a very evil laugh. He slowly took his laser whip out and whipped a slave to show that he was serious. It was said that the destruction of the slavery planet could awaken ancestors.

Back at the mayor's journey, he took the henchmen along with him. The henchmen used their laser whips to crack boulders in

half which they needed to get around. This made the Winged Beast furious, so he sent his remaining 50 henchmen out to stop the mayor.

The mayor ran over prickly bushes, went through long and perilous alligator-filled swamps, and climbed over 1,000-foot trees. Then he saw it: the power orb. But the 50 henchmen were in his way. The 4,950 henchmen easily took out the 50 henchmen. Now there was only the Winged Beast. The battle wasn't really a battle, because the mayor and the beast kept on missing each other because of their quick agility.

Then the mayor remembered the orb. He grabbed it and quickly threw it at the Winged Beast and destroyed him. The mayor then raced for the self-destruct mechanism and before he knew it, there was a ten second countdown: 10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1! The mayor hit the abort button on the self-destruct mechanism with a half second left to save the people of his city.

So everything turned out great and the people could go back to living normal lives again, thanks to some henchmen and the mayor.

# THE WISH

*The feelings of Maggie will seem familiar to many of us. What would you do in her place? THE WISH, by Heather, takes Maggie on a journey of discovery.*

“Mom, I’ve got so much homework today!” I said. “I’m never going to school again.”

“Well, whether you’ve get a lot of homework or not, you still have to go to school, young lady!” Mother explained.

“Whatever!”

“Go to your room and get started now!” my mom hollered. So, I stomped up the stairs, then marched up to my room. ( I got in trouble for waking up my baby brother.)

My name is Maggie. I’m a 13-year-old girl. That is, an overstressed 13-year-old girl. For once I’d like someone to listen to me, or not give me as much work around the house, such as cleaning the dishes, sweeping the floor plus vacuuming it, cleaning the stinky, smelly old rooms (and the brownish-looking toilets), and organizing the garage or the attic; I hate doing that. Just all the small thing make a huge extraordinary thing for me to do. I feel like I’m an imaginary person who is just floating around the house like a ghost. I’m being treated like I’m not a family member, although I’ve only been doing this for the past three day or so. Why the sudden change of my doing work around the house? Who figures parents anyway?

I started my homework at about four o’clock. I started within a second on my homework from Mr. Fish’s class, my language arts teacher. Then I did my math, science, Japanese, and health . . .

then all of a sudden my mom tells me to go clean out the attic. So of course I did (because I had to).

I started with the antiques and valuables. Then, I moved on to the junk pile. I saw this weird-looking lamp and, to my surprise, a magic elephant popped out! I was so surprised that I jumped up off the floor, then fainted for about two minutes. Then, I woke up and wondered what he wanted with me. Was he going to hurt me? Had I done something wrong? What does he want? I tried to run away but everywhere I went he appeared there, too. Then an extremely low voice came out of his mouth (even though elephants can't talk).

He said, "You, Maggie, are the first one in the history of all time to let me out."

"Now how on Earth did I do that?" I asked.

"You touched the lamp with two hands," he announced. "You get three wishes," he bellowed. "What will be your first wish?" he asked.

I answered, "My first wish will be to be noticed."

He said, "Granted!" then all of a sudden I was sitting in a throne in charge of a country. At least I feel noticed instead of ignored, I thought. I felt a tingly, most unusual feeling, yet I didn't know why. (Could it have been my lunch?)

The bad thing about being queen was having to take care of every single problem, whether it was a huge or tiny problem. It was always "Queen Maggie" this or "Queen Maggie" that. I felt the same way when I was at home slaving away in the dirty house.

Then I accidentally said, "I wish I was not so stressed all the time." Before my ears I heard a thunderous boom and saw a sparkly BAM before my eyes. I was in the most amazing place in the universe. It was the land of wonders where the word stress can NEVER be thought of at all. It was surrounded by the colors of the rainbow: rose-like red, outrageous orange, violet purple, pearly pink, grassy green . . . . It had animals that only fairy tales had in them. It had the most spectacular things! There were ice cream seas, lollipop trees, powdered-sugar snow, and big Cheerios.

Everything you could think of was in this magical place. It was a dream come true.

The most important thing in my life that I noticed before my very eyes (because of the two wishes I had made) was that it didn't have my family and friends. How could I have forgotten about them? They are my everything, my one and only, my life. I can't believe I forgot about the most valuable antique in my life. I wouldn't have anything without them, including my life. That is probably the most precious thing anyone could ever have. Then I purposely said, "I wish I had my family and friends."

"Granted," the elephant said. Then I was back to my home sweet home, all snug in my bed. I started to think how great a life I have right here. It is perfect: better than being queen or going to an incredible place of hopes and dreams. I like my life just the way it is. I learned my lesson, didn't I?

Then my mother cracked open the door to come kiss me goodnight. She asked me what was bothering me, because she was noticing my getting mad all the time. I asked, "How come you are making me do so much work around the house?"

She said, "Honey, didn't I tell you that my boss is coming over at 5:30 P.M. tomorrow?"

Then I yawned and said, "okay." Quietly, I fell asleep in an instant because I was so worn out.

*Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz!*

I woke up in fright, almost wetting my pants. I didn't finish my homework! Ahhhhhhhhhhh! What am I going to do?



THAT EXPLAINS  
IT





## RENO'S RAIN

*In RENO'S RAIN by Julieanne Touma, a stroke of luck puts the title character in a world so beautiful that he never even imagined such a place existed. But all is not perfect for him . . . .*

Many years ago during the beginning of time, a monster with a crooked face and a large deformed body, named Reno, existed. He lived on an island that was as dull as an alley in the night, and so small that it could not fit the population of Greenland. This island was called Hunchery. Reno was one of the many Hunchers living on that tiny, unknown piece of land. Each Huncher was given one pocket of poisonous gas that when released would kill all animals as fast as a cheetah chasing its prey. This was given for protection just in case any other animal would try intruding into their island.

All of the other Hunchers would always push Reno around, treating him like the odd one out. "Get me this" or "Get me that," they would always say. He wanted to get away from their cruel mistreatment, but didn't know how. The whole island was surrounded by water, which Reno feared; there was no way out!

Storms rarely occurred on the island but when they did their end results were devastating. Winds that would go up to 60 or 70 miles per hour roared like thunder on a rainy day. Waves shaped like sharks fins, crashing onto the sandy floors, would wash away everything in their path. The monsters had a hide out cave that would protect them from these dreadful storms. But one day an unexpected storm occurred with winds that would reach up to 70 miles per hour and waves that drenched the entire island. One wave swept out a dozen Hunchers, including Reno. He could hear

all the other monsters screaming and crying for help, but then it faded; all the other Hunchers had drowned.

The whole incident was a blur to him; it was like it didn't even happen. All he could remember was waking up and finding himself on a beautiful bed with maids running about fluffing his pillows and getting him new towels.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"You are at the palace of the god Ruzco," a beautiful maid replied.

"How did I get here?"

"One of our messengers saw you floating near shore and brought you here. We have been taking care of you ever since." Suddenly a gorgeous goddess walked in. She looked like a walking rose. Reno fell in love with her instantly.

"Who is that?" Reno asked.

"That's Dove, the goddess of all birds," the maid answered. "Don't bother talking to her. She hates being disturbed."

After one week of staying in the care of the maids, thinking about the gorgeous goddess he had seen, Reno left the castle and took a walk through the beautiful gardens. Seeing all the different types of pretty flowers amazed him. All the reds, yellows and pinks impressed him the most. Back at Hunchery, the only colors were black, brown and gray, maybe one or two greens. But the scent was refreshing, as though taking a bath in a waterfall. He then heard a beautiful voice singing a song. It was Dove. At first he was shy, but he later built the courage to go up and speak to her.

"Hi, I'm Reno. I came from a land called Hunchery." Reno could hear his heart beating as fast as ever. "What is your name?"

"Eww! Get away, you're so ugly!" replied Dove with a sharp tone in her voice. He was surprised at her actions; she had seemed like a kind person.

For days and days Reno tried as hard as he could to get Dove to like him. He followed her around, like a trained dog following its owner, but all she did was run away. Dove was getting annoyed of this. She tried to get the other gods and goddesses to help her

get rid of him, but no one ever paid any attention to her since she ignored them.

Reno was treated as if he were a god himself! He was invited to the gods' gatherings, dinners, and games. All the gods and goddesses except Dove were curious about where he came from, how he got here, and what it was like being a Huncher. He was having the time of his life not being bossed around the way he was in his old home. Back home no one cared for him, but here many people loved him.

One day on a cool evening, Dove was picking grapes for a special pie. She saw Reno heading her way.

"Oh no," she muttered. She thought about what she should do and decided to tell him face to face that she had no feelings for him. She walked up to him and simply said "Hi." Reno had a big blush on his face. Dove didn't get to tell him about her feelings because she was interrupted by the blow horn they used to call for meetings. After that, whenever Reno saw Dove, he acted as if she liked him. Now it was even worse; Reno would not stop. Dove got scared so she turned into a beautiful snowy white dove, which she had the ability to do considering she was the goddess of all birds, and flew away gracefully. All the days she was gone, he was miserable day and night, remembering his lost love.

One day he was walking in the forest and saw a white object on the forest floor. When he walked closer to it he saw that it was Dove. First he was shocked at what happened. His only love had died. Close by he saw a big cat walk away licking its bloody paws with its scratchy tongue.

Reno wanted to pay the beast back for what he had done. He then remembered his pocket of fumes which he was given. He was too angry to think about what he was doing so he let them out. He smelt a strong gas, like gasoline fumes, whip pass him. One by one each animal fell helplessly to the ground, dead like bowling pins after you've hit a strike. When Reno realized what he had done he ran looking for a place to hide, because he knew the gods would be enraged.

“Ruzco, your majesty,” a messenger yelled, gasping for air, “all the animals have been killed!”

“What? How could this be?” Ruzco asked, confused.

“A gardener saw Reno, the one we rescued, pull out his fumes and run away,” the messenger replied.

“We shall have to send a search party to go all over the island until they find him!” Ruzco yelled. Every single god and goddess on the island went out looking for him. The gods went out looking, like hounds sniffing to find the red fox. One of the gods found him where the scent of the poisonous gas was the strongest. They took Reno away to the dungeon and kept him there till they decided what to do with him. Reno was terrified in the cold, dark dungeon, all alone.

“I think we should send him back to Hunchery,” said one.

“How about we sentence him to death?” suggested another.

“NO!” Ruzco yelled, “He shall be sent to the underworld where he will live performing hard tasks and not have anything remind him of the love of his life, Dove.”

Reno was sent to the underworld on the first day of spring. Every time it rains, it's poor Reno crying for his beloved, Dove.

# THE SALTIES

*Maybe humans had a little help a few thousand years ago. In THE SALTIES by J. Carter, we find a world before recorded history that contains a few surprises.*

About 11,000 years ago, as the glaciers crossed the land in the early ice age, a strange but amazing thing happened. It was a beautiful day as the sun shined across the icy tundra. Humanity was just started when—for a reason never known—a crystal-shaped craft fell from the sky. The rock hit Earth's surface like a meteor, sending dirt and dust flying in all directions as the enormous craft came to a halt. It was about a hundred feet long. It made the people feel like ants next to Mount Everest. The red and black transparent cover over the craft cast an eerie glow over the people.

A side of the crystal opened with a purple light that shined brighter than ten suns combined. Out walked a creature made out of clear golf-ball sized crystals, with large red eyes, who stood an impressive ten feet tall.

“Do you come in peace?” yelled the town leader with a shaky voice. No answer.

“Do you come in peace?” he yelled again.

“Do you think they speak our language?” whispered the man next to the town leader.

“Yes, we do speak your language,” boomed a deep voice. Every person in the crowd stepped back in fear. “And yes, we do come in peace,” the voice continued in a friendlier tone.

The monsters that came were made out of salt (salties). Over

the next hundred years the very technologically advanced salties and the people formed a strong civilization.

One day, “meteors” fell from the sky. They hit the Earth with incredible power, sending soil, fire, and smoke flying everywhere. As people surrounded the craters that were made, the “meteors” began to open. The air turned very hot. Small, brown and tan colored “monkeys” walked out. You could see fire on them in some places.

“We are the Sun Monkeys. We are a race that lives only to conquer and destroy.” With that the air turned so hot the people and ice within five miles started to melt. People heard splashes in the distance. Then people heard a rumble and looked up. A tidal wave of melted ice was coming at them. The wave smashed against Earth with the force of a locomotive, immediately killing the sun monkeys and most of the surrounding people.

After the tons of water stopped pounding the Earth you could see green land for miles. It was the first time it had ever been seen in 1,000 years. There were even flowers and abandoned cabins that had been frozen. The people gave the people who died and even the sun monkeys a proper burial.

Unfortunately the people had become so dependent on the salties and their little spacecraft “instant dinners” they had to remember their old survival skills. Many people died because of the food shortage. The leader of the town ordered that everyone split up into groups and look for food and water.

A boy was looking for some water for his family, while every other person in his family was looking for either food or water. He found a small puddle with little crystals floating in it and was very hesitant to take a drink. But he did. It tasted salty.

“Mommy! Mommy!” the boy called.

Rushing to him, she said, “What is it, Honey?”

“The water tastes salty,” the boy said.

The mother took a sip and said, “It does.”

Later on in the day the mother gathered the town and announced that the salties dissolved in the water. People were sad

at the loss, and it took them several years to get over it. Even though most of the planet was (and still is) made out of mostly water, in a large air pocket on the bottom of the ocean, the surviving salties are thinking of a plan on how to get back up to the surface. And they've been working on it to this day.

# THE SUN AND STARS

*On a clear night, the view of a star-clustered sky can be breathtaking. In THE SUN AND STARS by Corey Haitaian, an extraordinary girl has a startling connection to the sight above us.*

A long time ago, when castles were where people lived, there was a princess. She was so breathtaking. She had long, luscious, blond, curly hair, and the baby-bluest eyes with a one-of-a-kind twinkle you find every one million years. The catch was no one could see the twinkle.

Where they lived, there was no sun. They had candles but you could not see things in detail. So no one ever saw Crystal's twinkle. No one even had their own to see.

The only person who knew she had the twinkle was a very tiny, wise, old woman named Felena. One day in the winter—in fact, on the last day—there was the most treacherous storm ever. It snowed, and then rained, and then there was a hurricane. Then there was a hail storm, then thunder, then a tornado. It really couldn't get much worse.

You wouldn't believe what came after that life-threatener. There was a strange light. It was hot, bright, and a yellowish-orange color. It was the sun!

No one could believe it. They didn't have to use candles anymore. Crystal was so excited. When she stepped outside, everyone else looked at her like they always did because she was royalty, but this time they looked differently.

Crystal didn't understand why they were all staring and gasping. Then someone walked up to her with a mirror and she looked into it and gasped herself. She had the most gorgeous baby



blues ever! They had an incredible twinkle! It looked like a little blue snowflake on her eyelash. Everyone complimented her twinkle.

That night, she went outside to see the new sky they now had. She was so overjoyed. That night, whenever she smiled, little sparkles appeared in the sky. They reminded her of her twinkle. She figured out how they got up there, and that they only formed at night, and only when she smiled. Other people in the village started to realize she made the stars and started to watch. It was amazing and spectacular to watch.

By the time Crystal died, the sky was beautifully filled with twinkled stars. She will be remembered there forever as the magical star princess.

# NEVER SCRATCH YOUR CHICKEN POX

*If you learn nothing else today, at least take the advice of NEVER SCRATCH YOUR CHICKEN POX, by Mara Schwinkleberg. Maybe the story isn't true . . . but are you prepared for the consequences if it is?*

Jackie Marie was an excellent student and was relatively normal. Normal, that is, compared to the others who have contracted the weird, the freaky, illness of . . . wait, I can't tell you yet! But if you read on, I will tell you what it is and how Jackie got it.

One day, Jackie forgot to finish her assignment on the industrial revolution because she was too preoccupied watching a special on monkeys and bananas. Jackie just adored monkeys, and her favorite food was bananas. Yet her darling mother wouldn't let her eat more than one a week because she abused the privilege of eating them. She dipped bananas in fudge, she ate them in splits, and loved them in pizza sauce. Her mother caught her eating and making messes so, since then, she could only eat one a week.

She knew she had to do her work, but this was just too interesting. It was so interesting, it interested her right to sleep. And before you knew it, "Jackie, sweetie, it's time for school," she heard her mother say with anxiousness in her voice.

Jackie knew her teacher would freak out if she didn't turn in her homework. So she did the first thing that came to mind. "Mommy, I don't feel good. I think I'm sick, acha, acha."

Her mother rushed into her room to take her temperature. Jackie quickly shoved a penny under her tongue to adjust the real

reading. “102. Oh, my, you are not going to school today.”

So far, her plan was going perfectly, except for one thing: she got the chicken pox. But wait, that is not the horrible disease I was telling you about; just wait, we’re getting there. So Jackie decided to take a bath with what she thought was calamine lotion. To her surprise, after the bath she realized she used monkey shampoo from when her aunt Erma has to peel off her foot crust, but that’s another story.

Suddenly a strange feeling crept up on her. She rushed through the house, picking up any banana product she could find: pudding, bread, and any other thing you could think of. She ran into the bathroom and started itching frantically. Her mother told her to stop scratching, but she just couldn’t. For every pock she scratched, she heard “Jump, Crackle, Pop,” like she was some sort of a Rice Crispy treat. Soon she scratched 335 pox.

The next morning, wherever she popped a pock, 20 hairs grew in its place! Her face looked like a huge ape. Once her mother caught a glimpse of her, the zoo was at her house within ten minutes. They brought the unique monkey girl to the zoo.

They booked gigs every day for two years. Her next gig was at a supermarket. Every person who was there in fact turned into a monkey. And that is where the world gets seventy-nine percent of the monkey population. Soon more and more people contracted the disease in local supermarkets, some worse than her, some with minor things like big ears. The great disease of *monkey poxxilla* still roams the world today, and here’s a word of advice: *If you’re in a supermarket, / And you have that twitch, / Remember not to scratch, / You have monkey itch!*

# HOW THE MINERAL MONSTER DISAPPEARED

*A most unusual creature is terrorizing innocent people. It seems unbeatable. HOW THE MINERAL MONSTER DISAPPEARED, by Gus Povirk, lets us in on the life-and-death adventure.*

“Watch out! The mineral monster is coming! Come on! Let’s get out of here!” The mineral monster doesn’t have a name because no one bothered to name him. So, the people just keep calling him the mineral monster. If the people took something that had anything to do with rocks and minerals, he would curse them with dirty words that cannot be printed and shoot them with his mercury spray gun and throw their remains to Mars.

Now, as you can imagine, the people got fed up with all of this. They just couldn’t put up with it anymore, so, the mayor of Denver called a city meeting on the night of March 23, 2001. Everyone had to go.

“Now, my good friends, we are gathered on this night on behalf of our worst enemy, mineral monster. And as you know, he has been causing havoc in our town for thousands of years. He must die.”

Then all of a sudden, THUMP, THUMP, THUMP!

“AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH, he’s coming!” the people shouted. “Run, run for your lives!”

All the alarms start sounded as the “THUMP, THUMP, THUMP” came nearer and nearer. Then all of a sudden a loud “CRACK” sounded and the building collapsed right after the last person left.

Now the fight was on. Guns sounded, lasers zoomed through the air, firecrackers burst, but the people were no match for the mineral monster. Soon they all had to surrender. The mayor still had his excellent plan, but the people would need to hear it first. But where?

They didn't need to look far. A deserted building stood nearby covered in ivy. The dumb mineral monster thought it was a garden and the mayor gave his plan to the people. But for the plan to work successfully, they would need help: help from machines. Only robots could withstand the power of the mineral monster.

The plan worked this way: 1) The robots would catch the monster off guard from behind and drag him into a huge cage; 2) This cage would fit perfectly into a rock-hard truck that GM had built specially for this; 3) The truck would take the mineral monster to California where he would be deposited into a volcano.

The robots sprang into action, pegging him with bullets in his soft surfaces. Then two of them snuck up from behind, caught him off guard, dragged him to a cage nearby and locked him up tight. Now, he was helpless. The robots pushed him into the rock-hard truck and off they went.

Now it was in the hands of the people and their one long specially-built crane that they had constructed. And before you knew it they were there.

Now the difficult part came. They loaded the struggling, helpless mineral monster into the crane. Down the chute he went into the hot, hot boiling magma and he was sizzled up like a sausage.

And of course there was a big party after, and the people were safe forever after. As for the mineral monster, no one ever saw him again. Well, I should say no one saw him alive again, that is. But you see him every day without even knowing it. For example, your silverware is him melted down. Yeah, this is only a little story, but never abuse others for no reason at all.



# TODAY'S LESSON





# A GOPHER STORY

*Most people don't usually dig with their hands or routinely travel through underground tunnels. Still, as revealed in **A GOPHER STORY** by Ed Ed, there's a lot people can learn from a gopher.*

Greg, the gopher, was convinced his parents did not like him. He was just sure that he was the only gopher boy who had to get braces. None of Greg's gopher friends had braces, but his parents made him get them anyway.

Every day his parents made him do his homework before he could go outside and play. All of his friends always were able to play as soon as they got off the bus.

Greg's parents made him eat broccoli, radishes, and Brussel sprouts. He always gagged whenever he even saw, much less when he had to eat, any of those things. All his friends got to eat grass pizza with a side of grass fries.

On weekends, Greg was forced to clean the bathroom, including the toilets. He also had to help his mother unload all the groceries. He never got any allowance for anything he did.

On top of all that, even though Greg was an excellent digger and never lost a digging contest, Greg's parents made him practice his digging every day of the week.

All these things made Greg certain his parents didn't care about him.

Now, it was a bright day for most of the animals and people in Los Angeles. Greg, on the other hand, felt horrible. He was also very mad. Once again, his parents were forcing him to enter a digging contest. Sure, he knew he could win, but he liked digging only of his own free will. Being forced to enter digging contests

made him feel terrible. For a long time, Greg had been trying to think of a way to show his parents that he had had enough. He wanted to dig only when he felt like digging, not every time his parents entered him in a contest.

As the race started Greg got an idea. Instead of stopping at the finish line, he would keep going until he got far enough away so no one could see him. Then he would dig to Ms. Magic, who lived in Las Vegas. Ms. Magic could talk to animals. She could also do magic; hence the name. Greg would get Ms. Magic to shrink him. Once he was small he could go spy on his parents. This way he would find out what his parents really thought of him. After he spied on them for a while he would show them that he was small, so small that he could never win another digging contest. He'd show them!

So off Greg dug to Las Vegas. Of course, he liked digging this far because it was of his own will.

Greg was trying to get to Las Vegas fast. This of course was no easy challenge. Even though he was the best digger around, it took awhile. When he finally got there, he popped up in the middle of a street. He almost got run over by a car. So, he decided he better go over to the sidewalk. Believe it or not this was a bad idea. On the sidewalk he was almost killed by some really (and I mean really) high heels. Greg figured they were hurting the lady who was wearing the things more than him. Because of this whole experience, Greg decided he should dig all the way to Ms. Magic's store. That wasn't going to be easy. Greg didn't know exactly where in Las Vegas Ms. Magic's store was. Greg would have to go building to building and look for Ms. Magic.

First he showed up in some place humans call a dressing room. Somebody screamed about something called a giant rat and a bunch of humans started trying to hit him with brooms. He got the idea to leave. Next he showed up in some place with a giant yellow M over it that smelled of grease. There was obviously nothing magic about this place, so he grabbed some fries and a burger and left. He dug through the next ten stores rather quickly. One smelled of

wet hair and hair spray. In another, people kept saying, "Come on sevens!" and "Buy momma a new pair of shoes!" One store smelled of coffee beans and another smelled of bagels.

Just as he started to lose hope, he popped up inside Ms. Magic's crystal ball. This scared the daylights out of Ms. Magic, who was giving a fortune to a human. It looked like it scared the human more because he ran out the door screaming his head off. Greg realized he was in the right place. He got out of the crystal ball and started talking to Ms. Magic.

"Hi, I'm Greg, the Gopher."

"I lose more customers that way," Ms. Magic said.

"I was wondering if you could make me smaller," Greg asked.

"Of course, I can. It's a question of whether I will or not," Ms. Magic bellowed. "What do you have to pay me?" she asked.

"Twenty-five human dollars," Greg said hopefully.

"What a coincidence. That's what it costs," Ms. Magic lied.

Greg gave Ms. Magic the money. Ms. Magic pulled out her wand and shrunk Greg to the size of a mouse. Greg couldn't believe how tiny he was. So tiny, that for a minute he wasn't so sure this was a good idea. Then he thought about how certain he was that his parents really didn't care about him and he got that "I'll show them" attitude back again.

He said "thank you" to Ms. Magic, hopped back into his hole and started to head home. Pretty soon, he was exhausted. Believe me you would be too, if you did all that he did in one day. He didn't realize how much more work it would be when he was smaller. Greg slept until noon the next day, but immediately started running again.

When Greg finally got back to his home he snuck into his parents' room.

"Where could he be?" Greg's mom said.

"I hope he's okay," Greg's dad worried.

"The police are looking for him," his mom cried.

"Do you think we were too hard on him?" his dad asked.

After hearing this Greg felt horrible. He hadn't thought his parents cared about him. He hadn't realized how much they would miss him. He really loved his parents. Now he knew his parents really loved him. He knew he that he must become bigger again. They would be so sad to see him this small. He realized that just as his parents wanted him to be something he didn't want to be, he had made himself into something he wasn't. He really was a great gopher digger and he was proud of it. He just wanted to dig for fun.

He decided he must return to Ms. Magic in Las Vegas quickly. He had to reverse this terrible thing he had done. He needed to become himself again.

He raced off to Las Vegas. He got there even faster than the first time even though he was smaller. This was because he was able to avoid busy streets, greasy restaurants, and coffee shops. He knew exactly where Ms. Magic was.

When he got to Ms. Magic's store he begged and begged for her to make him bigger.

"Okay, okay, I will," Ms. Magic, said. She took out her wand, said some magic words and "poof!" nothing happened. Greg panicked. "You've got to make me bigger. Hurry! Please!" he begged.

"Put a sock in it! I'm working for free here," Ms. Magic demanded.

"Sorry. Sorry. It's okay. I'm cool," Greg said, "just make me bigger." This time it worked. Greg returned to his normal size.

"I am already gone," said Greg and he was.

When he got home he apologized to his parents. "Mom, Dad, I'm home," Greg yelled.

"Honey, is that you?" his mom cried.

"Are you okay?" Greg's father yelled.

"Yes, I'm fine. And, I'm so sorry," Greg, said.

"We put too much pressure on you," Greg's dad said.

"We'll never make you enter a digging contest again," his mom said.

"I'll never run away again," Greg promised.

“Yeah!” Greg’s dad said.

The Gopher family lived in happiness for the rest of their lives. They had all learned a valuable lesson. Greg had learned that his parents loved him. He also learned that he shouldn’t try to be someone he wasn’t. Greg’s parents had learned that they shouldn’t expect Greg to be someone he wasn’t. We humans can learn a lot from Greg’s story. We should all be ourselves!

# THE ROYAL FAMILY

*A good leader looks out for the well-being of his or her followers. In THE ROYAL FAMILY by Hannah Surnow, a leader's failures have consequences that everyone must face up to.*

Once upon a time, there was a royal family that ruled a small town in England by the name of Shepherdsville. It was a very poor town that was extremely polluted. The streets were filled with garbage, the sewers had the most terrible stench coming from them, and the air was black, even though the town had very few people. The royal family was not concerned with its governing. The king of the town was King Charles. He was rude, inconsiderate, self-centered, selfish, mean, and had little concern about his town or its people. Some people say that he didn't have the desire to be a good king. He wife was Queen Kathryn. She was angular, raw, and self-sufficient. Their son wasn't as bad, but he was still mean and stuck-up. His name was Prince George. They also had a daughter. She was bratty and wanted everything for herself. Her name was Princess Elizabeth.

Solomon, a poor, old, generous, loving man, lived in the town Shepherdsville. He was the town's representative when they needed to talk to the Royal Family, which was every day about the pollution problem. Solomon did marvelous deeds for everyone in the town, even the royal family. He would visit people when they were sick, he would listen to people if they were depressed, and he would bring happiness into everyone's lives.

One day, the people of the town were fed up with King Charles. Every day Solomon would have to go to him and beg the king to do something about the pollution problem and have to come back

to the townspeople and tell them the terrible news. Solomon finally went to the king and stood up to him. He said, "I have come here today, King Charles, Queen Kathryn, Prince George, and Princess Elizabeth, to know why you have to put us, the townspeople, through misery? It's not fair. You get to live in royalty while we live in a polluted problem town! The least you and your family could do is try to get rid of our pollution problem. Just put a little effort into it. I'm sure that you and your family could do something about it, but the truth is I don't think that you want to."

"Oh, of course I do. We'll help you. But for now you have to go wait in the waiting room until my family is through with our meeting with our guest from another country," said King Charles.

As the guards took Solomon away, he said under his breath, "I know you're only doing this because you don't like me and don't want me to be happy and you only care about yourself!"

King Charles commanded the guards to let go of him and bring Solomon to him right then! Solomon knew he was in trouble now. King Charles at first didn't know how to react, then he knew why Solomon was doing this. He really wanted the pollution problem to be prevented from spreading to other towns.

The King said, "I know why you're doing this and I will do something about it right now."

The guards were surprised by his response. But they still obeyed the King's orders and went right to the town to try to get rid of the pollution problem. Things just got worse because the guards had no idea what they were doing. The stench from the sewers got worse, the streets were covered in garbage, and the air was as black as the night sky. Even the stray cats and dogs wouldn't go outside because the pollution problem was terrible.

Meanwhile, back at Shepherdsville with the townspeople, Mr. and Mrs. Band were running a meeting about how they were fed up with the royal family and how they thought that Solomon should become king. Mr. Band said, "Listen up, everybody! We are going to have a vote on who would like Solomon to be king. If

you want him to be king, stay here. If not, go home; we don't need you here anyway."

Nobody left and nobody wanted to leave. "Good choice," Mrs. Band said.

Everyone hated the royal family. They wanted to know how they could make Solomon king without hurting anybody. The group decided to read the law book about kings. It said, "You have the right to vote on a king. If you didn't like the current king, you may hold an election in your town and elect a successor king." They knew it right then that that was the perfect solution to their problem.

One day, after the election, the royal family was evicted from their house to make room for the new king. They didn't know what was happening! Solomon moved in their house. Everyone in the town was extremely thrilled.

A couple of years later, the town became overpopulated with people, so Solomon had to build more cities and more people came to that town so he built at least 20 other cities and none of them was overpopulated or polluted. Everyone adored Solomon as king because he would get the people what they wanted. No one would ever take advantage of his kindness, because all the people in the towns looked up to him and knew that he wouldn't do it if he had a great king like they had. Even though he was king, he would still visit people's houses when they were sick, go and talk to people when they were depressed, and even bring soup that he *made* himself to elderly people in a nursing home. Everyone who lived in another town wanted to be in his town. He became the best king and that was his legacy. Everyone lived happily ever after!



# THE SAD TALKING DUCK

*Respect is something everyone deserves. In THE SAD TALKING DUCK by Tarik Ray, it is clear how important it is to be fair (even when you're a fowl).*

“Quack, quack,” said the little duck named Jennifer.

All the animals in Animal Town loved her, except one. That duck's name was Berry. Berry hated Jennifer. “She's too cheery, she's too perfect, she's too happy, she's too everything.”

So, one day Berry decided to get her back. He decided to go to her house and break anything that he could.

That night, Berry went to Jennifer's house and trashed everything. He busted lamps and chairs; he ripped curtains and bed spreads; he broke lamp shades, cups, plates, bowls, and anything else that he could ruin!

The next morning Jennifer woke up and said, “AAAHH! What happened? I must have been robbed! But who would have done this? I thought everyone liked me.

“What should I do? I don't know what I should do. Well, I guess all I can do is forget about it, because there is nothing I can do.”

As the days went on, Jennifer watched everyone in Animal Town. The days went on, and no one knew about the robbery. But whenever she tried to talk to Berry, he would always run away.

On about the last day of that month, Berry couldn't stand the shame of trashing Jennifer's house. He went to Jennifer's house and apologized, and Jennifer accepted his apology.

As the days went on they became the best of friends and soon got married. They had children and still more to come, and they lived happily ever after.



# WHEN LIFE HAPPENS



# BIRTHDAY SURPRISE!

*Has Curtis's family really forgotten his birthday? In BIRTHDAY SURPRISE! by Ashley John, a boy understands what is really important as he turns 13 years old.*

“Curtis! Curtis!”

As I got up this morning, the only thing I heard was my mom calling my name for breakfast. And to tell me that I was 30 minutes late, as usual! It was always the same thing over and over again.

Once I was at school, I heard a roaring crash, then I heard a spray paint can! I assumed it was outside, but it was at my locker. My locker was empty and had dents in the door. It also had the letters “HBK.” I knew who did it. It was the Hairy Back Kids.

One of the kids' names was Jose. He was one of the tall ones. Another one's name was John. He was the toughest. And the leader was James. He was the shortest, but had the biggest mouth. And the worst part of all was that he lived right next to me. He wasn't mean to my brother Matt and my sister Amy, but he was mean to me because I told everyone at school one day his middle name was Eureka.

My mom gave me lots of advice about making friends with James, like inviting him to my birthday and parties, but every time I do, he never comes. So this year I just won't invite him. I just hope my family doesn't forget.

Finally, the big day has come. I'm 13 years old and I'm going to eat pop and chips with lots of my friends.

“Curtis! Curtis! Time for breakfast. Good morning,” says my mom. “So do you know what today is?”

“Yes! You remembered. Mom, you remembered what today is.”

“Sure I did. It’s your basketball game. And it’s time for you to go to school. Don’t worry, I’ll come to your game!”

School’s finally over, but I still don’t know why I’m upset. Is it the fact that I have to go to school tomorrow, or is it that my family and friends don’t remember that today is my birthday?

Huh! That’s odd, I thought. No one’s home. I’m glad I have my key so I can get in.

As I walked in, the lights were off and I wondered why. When I turned them on, everyone jumped out and said, “Happy Birthday!” I was so happy. They also told me who broke my locker. It was my non-thinking brother with some of his goofy friends. They took all my things and put dents in my locker to make me scared and worry who broke in my locker, instead of asking questions about my party. The letters “HBK” stood for “Happy Birthday Kid.”

But I was happy when I saw that James was there, because this time I was really hoping we could be friends again. In other words, I had a great birthday cake, James was there, and my family remembered.. I truly had a great and surprising birthday party.

## CABIN IN THE WOODS

*The hectic schedule of the contemporary family can keep people apart. Read what one boy does about it in CABIN IN THE WOODS, by Jake Forbes.*

I remember clearly the day my dad came home and said, “I’ve got something to tell you. I got offered a promotion today. If I take the job, we’ll have to move to Minnesota. The good news is I’ll be making more money.” He asked us if we were willing to move and Mom, Becky, and I all said, “Yes.” Dad said we would move in two weeks.

I was hoping that this promotion would mean he would not have to work so much. He already worked a lot as an executive for a “dot com” company. We hadn’t seen dad very much lately.

The next day my dad went to the realtor and put the house up for sale. The two weeks went by quickly. We were packed and ready to leave the morning that the two big trucks came to move our things. The movers said it would take one day to get from Michigan to Minnesota with our belongings.

On our plane ride I had a sick feeling in my stomach. It was like a rope being twisted further and further. I felt like this because I was moving to a new state, new city, new school, new house, and I would have to make friends. All I could think about was if I would fit in.

We moved into our new house. It had two levels and it was bigger than our old house. When we opened the door to our new house it was empty. It didn’t feel like home. It would take some getting used to. When I found my room I wanted to cry myself to

sleep because tomorrow would be my first day of school. I was really nervous.

As the weeks went by, it turned out my dad had to work even more. When my dad came home at night, he would always be in a bad mood from a long day at work. He would be tired and want to sleep. On the weekends, he had to work on Saturdays. On Sunday, all he wanted to do was relax. His mood got even worse as the weeks went by.

One day, my sister Becky and I went walking in the woods. We came to a clearing and saw a cabin. We went up to the window and looked inside. We saw nothing but dust and cobwebs. We found a door unlocked and we went inside.

It was a great cabin. There was a fireplace in the kitchen. The living and dining area was one big room. All the wide, tall windows had fabulous views into the woods. Trees surrounded the whole cabin. All the trees towered above the cabin. There were two bedrooms. They were not very big, though. There was no bathroom, only an outhouse.

We went to the cabin a lot during that week. We decided to clean the place up. It took a lot of energy but we got it done. During the following two weeks we explored around the cabin and found an old shed with a lot of spiders in it and an old rowboat that leaked. The best part was the lake that was only a short walk away. We swam in the lake on hot days. The fish would always swim around our feet when we stood still.

One sunny afternoon in July, a man and a woman were at the cabin. We approached them and asked, "Do you own this cabin?"

They said, "Yes."

We were all silent for a while. I broke the silence and said, "Would you want to sell the cabin?"

They said, "As a matter of fact, that's why we came back."

That night at home we asked our mom, behind Dad's back, if she would come with us to the cabin in the woods. She said she would love that.



The next morning when we got to the cabin there was a “For Sale” sign up. My mom really liked the cabin. She said it was peaceful and beautiful. The surroundings were so relaxing she just loved it.

That night when we got home, Mom talked to Dad about coming out to look at the cabin. She described it to him, telling him how beautiful and relaxing it was. Dad promised we would all go on Sunday morning. I could hardly wait for Sunday.

We packed a lunch to eat by the lake. The day was just beautiful. Dad was so relaxed, not in his usual bad mood. We stayed there all day. I could have stayed forever.

On Monday, Dad stopped off at the real estate office to see about buying the cabin. That afternoon he came home early and couldn't wait to tell us that he had just bought the cabin. He was so happy, and so were Becky and Mom. I felt like we were the luckiest family. Dad said there was some work to be done, like adding a room or two, but it wouldn't take long and we wouldn't need to change much.

The work took about three weeks. On the Saturday of the third week, we were ready to move some things in. We brought in furniture, bedding, and kitchen things. Becky and I worked so hard. We wanted everything to be perfect.

My dad loved being there whenever he could get away. When he was there his mood was so much better. He was still working a lot but he loved the time at the cabin. One day, Dad came home and said, “I've asked my boss if I could have Saturdays off and he said ‘Yes.’” I couldn't believe it. We hadn't spent a Saturday with Dad since the move and now we could spend every Saturday together.

During the rest of the summer we swam, fished, and relaxed. At night the weather was cooler and we knew that school would start soon. My dad said we would still go to the cabin on weekends during the school year. It made me feel better to hear that.

Fall came and school started. I was in the sixth grade and Becky was in the fourth. The one friend I particularly liked from the year

before was Laura. She was my first friend and she showed me around the year before. I had told her about the cabin. She liked the idea of having a private getaway. I couldn't wait for the weekends, just to go to the cabin and relax by the fire, collect leaves, or play games.

Winter was coming. In the mornings when I got up I saw frost on the ground. One night at the cabin it started snowing. The next morning, I woke up and looked out my window and saw a ton of white, glittering snow. That morning we went ice-skating. I was a little scared because it was my first time, but I only fell twice. After skating we built a snowman that was taller than my dad, and he is six feet four inches. We put charcoal on for his eyes, nose, and buttons. The charcoal made our mittens all black and dusty. We put on a large orange carrot for the nose. For a final touch we put on a black top hat and a knitted scarf my Grandma made. When we were done, we stood back and admired the snowman. The next day we made a huge snow fort and snow angels.

During the winter, at school and at work, we all looked forward to going to the cabin on the weekends. We became a family here. We did everything together and it was always fun. The cabin became our special place. We never had anyone else there, because that would have spoiled it.

# DANCIN' QUEEN

*The best thing about having a dream is making it come true. A dream takes one girl a long way in DANCIN' QUEEN, by Janey Gordon.*

“Five, six, seven, eight,” the dance teacher screamed as everyone in Dancetown Academy started the routine. That day as I watched my older sister dance, I knew that when I grew up I wanted to become a dancer.

That evening I told my mom that I wanted to dance. She told me that if I wanted to achieve my dream, I would have to start while I was young. So I did. Later that week my mom signed me up for a jazz class.

In the next week came the day I had been waiting for: the day I would start a new hobby. I went to my first day of dance class! My mom dropped me off at the two enormous, marble front doors. I slowly walked in. I couldn't help but smile as I walked into class. I looked around and couldn't believe my eyes. Sitting in the corner of the classroom was my very best friend, Alexia! Before I could say hello, she said hello first. We told each other how nervous we were, but after seeing each other here we had both overcome our fears. As we searched the crowd, we didn't see any familiar faces.

We walked around the room and looked at all the pictures hanging on the walls. They were all so beautiful. One was of a ballerina. She was wearing a fluffy pink tutu, and her hair was up in a perfect bun, with a bright pink ribbon tied tightly around it. She was in a deep *grande pli e*. It reminded me of my sister dancing.

All of a sudden, a mysterious black shadow struck the window of the door. Alexia and I gasped, the doorknob slowly turned, and a tall blond-haired lady walked up toward Alexia and I and said,

“Are you girls ready to dance?” Alexia and I looked at each other, gave each other a nod, then looked back up at the blond-haired lady and smiled.

The lady turned out to be our teacher. Her name was Ms. Jen. She reminded me of the ballerina in the picture, just like my sister. Ms. Jen then gave the class spots scattered around the room. I was in the front row! I stood between Alexia and this incredibly tall girl named Lauren. She was really good, but to me she was a little bit of a showoff. Ms. Jen walked over to the big black boom box and turned it on. It was my favorite song, “Dancing Queen.”

Ms. Jen then walked into the middle of the room and said “Five, six, seven, eight.” Um, that sounds familiar, I said to myself. And we started our routine. The routine consisted of leaps, twirls, bends, and whirls.

After dance, my mom picked me up. She asked me how dance was. Although I was sore and tired, I said, “It was spectacular!”

We went home and ate dinner. I never ate so much food in my life. The wonderful workout must have built up my appetite. As my family was eating this fabulous dinner, my sister was at her dance class. All of a sudden, the telephone rang. It was Dancetown Academy. The mood at the dinner table turned from happiness to sorrow. They told my mom that my sister was doing a difficult part of her dance and hurt her leg, really bad! My mom dropped the phone and we rushed to Dancetown Academy as fast as we could.

When we got there, there were the police and fire trucks right outside the door. My mom was extremely nervous. My sister had broken her leg! My mom and I both went in the ambulance with my sister to the hospital.

When we got there, they put my sister in a big room and wrapped her leg in a light purple cast. They told my sister that she would have to keep the cast on for two months. That meant she couldn’t dance for two months. Recitals were in three weeks, so that meant my sister couldn’t be in the recital. I felt bad for my

sister. Just as dance was getting better for me, things were getting worse for her.

That night I walked into my sister's room. On her desk were hundreds of trophies, medals, and ribbons. I told myself there and then, "I will become that good at dancing, too!"

That year of dance went by very fast! I remember waiting backstage at my recital in my bright pink costume, peeking out of the curtain, waving to my mom. I looked onstage and saw the members of the dance before mine leaving. That meant it was our class's turn to go onstage to perform.

I was very nervous, but confident. I peeked out into the audience one last time. I saw Ms. Jen quietly go, "Five, six, seven, eight," I skipped on stage with a great big smile on my face, and danced! Every second the crowd cheered and clapped its hands, which made me smile even more. The music then stopped. As I struck my final pose, I took a deep breath and did a perfect double pirouette and landed on both feet. For that split second the spotlight was on me, all me. I felt like I was on top of the world! Then I curtsied and slowly walked off stage.

I thought to myself what a good job I did. I thought for sure I would mess up, or trip, or fall, but, lo and behold, I didn't. And I had an incredible feeling inside of me.

Before I walked into the audience to sit with my family for the rest of the show, Ms. Jen stopped me and said, "You did a really good job out there!" Well, after hearing that coming from my teacher, I felt awesome!

After that, dance practically became my whole life. I took dance every Monday and Thursday with Alexia. Ms. Jen was still my teacher. I still took jazz, but I also took tap, ballet, and hip-hop, too. In my first year of competition, I won four trophies, six medals, and two ribbons! My sister's leg healed. Surprisingly, she decided dance was taking up most of her spare time. But not me. I was sure I would continue to dance for as long as I lived.

That night, my mom took me to see a ballet. As I watched the ballerinas dance on stage, one of them looked like the one in the

picture that I saw in dance class. And also one of them kind of looked like Ms. Jen, but I wasn't sure because I hadn't seen her all summer.

I am now fourteen years old. I still take dance but I cut down a few classes. I hate to admit it, but I kind of agree with my sister when she said that dance was taking up most of her spare time. Well, I agree with her just a little bit. But I still will follow through on my dream.

This year I tried out to go to the Juilliard School of Dance in New York City. The tryouts were held this afternoon. I drove to the middle of town where the tryouts were held. I was in a long hallway with hundreds of other girls. We were all stretching and getting ready for our interviews. Alexia and I both went to the tryouts together. A short old lady came up to Alexia and told her it was her turn for her interview. "Good luck!" I told her as she walked into a room with the old lady.

As I sat there I thought to myself, what if Alexia makes it and I don't? And what if I make it and Alexia does not? Well, Alexia and I have been friends for a really long time, and she wouldn't go without me. And same for me if I make it. The door slowly opened and Alexia came out. "How did you do?" I asked her.

"I made it!" she screamed. Oh great, now it was up to me to make it so Alexia and I could both go to Juilliard together.

Now when I tell you that I want to go to Juilliard, I mean that I really want to go. I can just picture myself in a Broadway play, singing and dancing, and having the time of my life. Hmmm, well maybe I should see if I get in before I get all excited.

Oh no, my hand is shaking. Okay, before I came here I told myself that I would not get nervous. Just pretend that you are performing in front of your mirror like always. Gee, I have been waiting here for a while now. The door next to me then opened. My heart was beating really fast. I felt that this moment was now all up to me. Stay calm and do your best and try your hardest and whatever happens, happens.

The old lady came back, but calling out my name. I looked at Alexia, smiled, and walked into the room. There was a stage and a bunch of seats. There were five people sitting in front with very stern looks on their faces. I was looking all around, until one of the men said, "Dance."

"What do you mean?" I said back.

"You heard me," the man said again. "Dance."

"Well, all right," I said in a quiet voice.

So I did what the man said. I danced. And I have to say, I did it pretty well, too.

Well, let's just say that finally, my dream came true.

## DANIELLE'S PRESENT

*Friendships can span great distances. DANIELLE'S PRESENT, by Emily N. Mohan, tells about two friends who are far away from each other.*

I jumped in my sleep to the enormous sound of my blasting alarm clock. Never do I get up this early on a Saturday morning, but today I had to go to the airport.

A week ago, I received a letter in the mail addressed to me. This is what it said: "Dear Emily, how are you? Danielle's birthday is coming up in a week, and we are having a party for her. We were wondering if you could come. We are enclosing one ticket to Portland and one ticket back. Hope you can make it. Thanks again. Mrs. Brighte."

After I read this, I sped into the attic and dusted off the old leather suitcase. Cobwebs and mothballs make themselves at home here, although I do love how the attic smells: dusty, old, and leathery. It reminds me of traveling to different places. I carefully walked down the ladder and packed my belongings.

Two days later, I was finally taking off from the airport. I was afraid I would miss my flight because I was saying goodbye to everyone so many times. I watched the city through my window go by fast. I was extremely nervous because I was not only going to the other side of America, but I was going all by myself.

There were many strange people on this airplane, and one of them was sitting right next to me. He smelled like tobacco and had a thick white mustache. He was reading the newspaper and his shiny bald head was shaking side to side as he read. There was also a little girl behind me who was very noisy. I turned around



and was not surprised to see coloring books, crayons, and candy wrappers scattered around her lap.

I leaned my head against the window and peered out. All I could see were big, puffy, cotton candy clouds. Then I drifted off into dreamland.

The next thing I knew, I heard the captain's little muffled voice over the intercom. "Please fasten your seat belts, we will be landing soon." I watched everything get bigger and bigger: The tall, snowy mountains, with their peaks swallowed in the clouds, the bustling city, the speeding cars, and the cute houses with little gardens. I was more nervous than ever. What if I can't find Danielle's mom? What if she was running a little late? Then what would I do? All of these questions were jumbled inside my head.

When I got off of the plane I was very relieved to find Mrs. Brighte there waiting for me. I was extremely happy that she was not somewhere else in the airport.

When we got to Danielle's house, I was very excited. I glanced up, and everywhere I looked there were mountains. Their snowy peaks reached up into the atmosphere, stretching and stretching up into the sky. Everything appeared like a watercolor painting.

We went inside, and there were tremendous, glossy balloons everywhere. The presents were of all sizes and shapes. Everyone hid behind things, and Danielle strolled into the house.

"Surprise!" everyone cried out. Danielle's wide smile stretched across her whole face, while she jumped about a mile into the air.

"Emily!" Danielle exclaimed. "You made it! My mom said that you might be coming for my birthday, but I thought it was too good to be true."

Later, we talked about everything. We talked about school, friends, and even her new dog Nala.

That night after the house was still with silence, and everyone was fast asleep, I smiled to myself. This was the best thing that had ever happened in my whole life.

# ED THE TRUCKER

*Some people never forgive or forget. ED THE TRUCKER, by Tedo Chuckles, is the story of one man's journey through life, and the impact that another man's long memory has on him.*

In 1966, a boy named Ed was born in a small town in Ohio. All his life he knew he wanted to be a trucker just like his dad. He looked up to his dad and wanted to be just like him when he grew up. So when Ed was 18, he went to truck driving school. He loved going to truck driving school and he worked really hard.

Ed was popular in truck driving school, but he played a lot of tricks on the other students. One of these students was Bobby, who was like a nerd and had few friends. Everybody made fun of Bobby.

One day, Ed and his friends played a prank on Bobby that almost killed him. The prank was Ed's idea. Matt, one of Ed's friends, talked Bobby into going into an abandoned house. When they got there, Matt ran off, leaving Bobby in the house.

They only wanted to scare Bobby by leaving him alone in the old house. Unfortunately, as soon as Matt got out of the house it fell down with Bobby still in it, almost killing him! Even though he escaped from the house alive, Bobby's leg was hurt. It never healed and it made it hard for him to drive. This meant that he could only drive locally and not long distances where he could make the most money. Because of this Bobby was mad at Ed and promised to get revenge, since the prank was Ed's idea.

Ed knew the owner of a very big chewing gum factory in Indiana. After he graduated from truck driving school, Ed got a job at the chewing gum factory making deliveries around town.

He worked for the factory for about 11 years, until he had saved enough money to buy his own truck—a used Mack tractor. After that he started his own business back in Ohio called “Ed’s Furniture Delivery” and he delivered furniture across the country.

One day while making a delivery in Omaha, Nebraska, a little boy ran across the road in front of Ed’s truck while holding a sign that said, “I’m going to get you, Ed!” Ed was distracted by the sign and had to swerve to miss the boy. “Wow, if I had hit that boy I’d be finished! And what was that sign all about?” wondered Ed.

While he was thinking this, Ed wasn’t paying attention to his driving and he hit a stopped car while going 45 miles per hour. He broke his hand and one of his ribs, and he totaled his truck. Worst of all, Ed was sued by the driver of the car he hit and he lost the case and had to pay the driver \$35,000. This wiped Ed out, and since he could not afford to buy a new delivery truck, he closed his business and got a job with UPS making local deliveries.

In his second year with UPS, Ed had to deliver a package to a strange address, one he had never heard of before. The house at the address was a small rundown shack, with a rusty old pickup truck parked in the front yard. Ed said to himself, “This looks like a house where really mean people would live,” but he knocked on the door anyway since he had to do his job. When the door opened, Ed was greeted by a familiar face. It took Ed a few minutes, but he realized that this was Bobby!

Bobby said, “I’ve been waiting for you.”

Ed slowly handed Bobby the package. Bobby tore open the package and took out a pistol! He shot Ed in the leg, and he yelled, “Now you’ll have to live the life I’ve been living since you pulled that prank on me at truck driving school!” Then Bobby rushed to his rusty old pickup truck, jumped in and tore up grass as he drove away.

Ed screamed in pain, as the bullet had shattered a bone in his left leg. He crawled back to his truck very slowly, struggled to climb in, and painfully drove himself to the hospital where he was

treated in the Emergency Room. Because of the injury to his leg, Ed couldn't drive any more and he lost his job with UPS.

He moved back to his hometown in Ohio and got a quiet job at a small auto parts store. Ed moved in with his brother and got a dog to help him get around. He named his dog Sam after his father he admired so much. Even though Ed really missed driving a truck, he lived a nice life after that because he felt no more stress.

No one ever saw Bobby again.

# THE FAMOUS DANCER

*Disappointment is a part of life. In THE FAMOUS DANCER by Amélie Godron, can Marie overcome her setback and achieve her dream?*

The lights go on! The music starts! Marie comes! Everybody claps! She starts to sing! The dancers dance! After the first song, Marie says, “Thank you very much, I am going . . . .”

*Dring, dring, dring, dring*—the alarm clock. It was just a dream.

Marie was five years old and she lived in Angers, France. Her dream was to become a dancer. One day, she asked her mother if she could take dancing lessons. Her mother didn’t want her to. She thought that she was too young. But Marie begged and begged her mother so much that finally her mother said yes.

At her first dancing lesson, she was very excited. When her mother came back to pick her up, she ran through the hall and she told her mother 30 times how it was so great, and she wanted to do that every night. At her second dancing lesson, she enjoyed it more, and so on for five years.

After five years of dancing and five recitals, she knew how to dance very well. One day after school, she looked at the mail because the letters were arriving that day for the dance audition. If she got the audition, she could become a dancer for singers! She didn’t want to open it because she was scared of what it might say, so her mom opened it. Her mom gave her a smile. She would audition! Marie screamed, she was so happy. She went to her room and called all her friends. They were very happy for her, too!

When Marie came home from school the next day, her mom was sad. Marie asked her why. She said they were moving to Montpellier, France, one hour before her audition. Marie asked

her if they could go on the plane the day after but she couldn't because there wasn't any plane and their belongings were coming after they arrived. She went in her room and called all her friends. They were very sad, too.

Once she moved into her new home, she threw away all of her things and clothes that had to do with dance, except for her pictures.

One day, her new friend, Camille, asked her to see a dancing recital of hip-hop. She said yes.

After the recital, she realized that dancing was better than not dancing. So she and Camille took dancing lessons.

After two years of dancing, she was going to find out in a letter from a recording company if she was going to be a dancer or not!

After one week, the letter came. Her mother opened it. She pulled her head up with a very, very sad face. But the letter said: "Congratulations, you are a new dancer for Britney Spears!" When Marie looked up from the letter, her mother was smiling. Marie was very, very happy! Her dream had finally come true!

## FRIENDS TO THE END

*Three friends throw around some harsh words in FRIENDS TO THE END, by Briana Brittney Bryant. Can they patch things up, or will their friendship disintegrate?*

“Man, I’m so happy that school is out, but what should we do? You wanna go to the movies? Mall, maybe?” Briana said enthusiastically.

“Well, I would like to go to the movies, but every time we go, we always end up getting ditched by you for the cute guys we meet.. So let’s go to the mall instead!” Crysta said. “Oh, and might I add that I’m really getting sick of being ditched by my so-called best friend,” Crysta added.

“Me? What about you? You’re the big flirt who just has to wear all the designer clothes and who always makes the decisions,” Briana protested.

“Hey, hey. Hey. Hold up, wait a minute,” Brittney jumped in. “You can really talk about someone making the decisions. ‘Let’s go to the mall. I don’t care what you say, I wanna go to the mall,’” Brittney mimicked.

“You know what? I don’t really want to be you guys’ friends anymore. Maybe we should go our separate ways,” Crysta replied.

“Fine with *us*,” Briana replied.

“See, there you go again, making my decisions.”

The next day, Crysta called the gals to talk about what happened the day before. “Look, you all are my best friends and I don’t want to lose you all now. I will definitely change my ways and I will try

hard because I know that if I don't, then I could lose you all," Crysta stated.

"We totally agree!" the others said in unison.

"You guys, let's just remember that we're friends to the end."



# THE GIRL WHO LOST HER CAT!

*A special pet turns up missing in THE GIRL WHO LOST HER CAT! by Jeanine M. Bashi. Now Katie is afraid she may never see her cat again.*

Once there was a girl who lived with her mom, dad, and special cat, Fluffy. The reason Fluffy was so special is because it was her first pet ever. The girl's name was Katie. Katie was a very sweet and smart girl who was wonderful in everything she did. Her dad was a doctor at a hospital and her mom was a manager at a mall. This family lived at a corner of a street called Hersly Drive. Katie and her family lived in a big house.

Early one morning as Katie was getting up to go to school, she found something odd. Her cat was missing. She ran downstairs to tell her mom. Her mom said, "She's probably out getting some air. Don't worry, Fluffy will be here when you get home from school."

During school, all Katie could think about was Fluffy getting hurt. She couldn't focus on her work at all. At the end of the day, Katie couldn't wait to get home. When she got there, Fluffy was still missing. She asked her mom where Fluffy was. Her mom answered that she had not found her way home yet.

The next morning was Saturday and all she could think about was Fluffy. She tried really hard not to think about the situation, but she couldn't get it off her mind. It was a few days before Christmas and getting very cold outside and still no sign of Fluffy. The family was getting worried.

Christmas Day arrived and the family got up to open presents by the Christmas tree. When they were all done they heard a noise outside. They looked and saw . . . only a bird. The next day Katie was hoping Fluffy would come back home.

As the family members were sitting around the fire that night, they heard another noise. This time, guess who it was? Fluffy! Katie ran to the window and Fluffy was sitting on the windowsill, waiting to come in. Katie's face was lit with happiness. She told her cat that she would never let her out of her sight.

From that day on, she kept her in a large cage and in the morning they would let her run free. They lived happily ever after.

# HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

*There are big differences between a house and a home. HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS, by Kati E., is the story of a girl whose family is always on the go.*

Sometimes I feel like a coin being tossed from place to place. Hi, my name is Amanda and I am 15. Traveling around the world can be pretty hard, especially because my father works in the Navy. Dad says that he doesn't like transferring from place to place, but his exact words are, "If my boss needs me somewhere, I must go!"

It seems we've moved so much that we don't really have any roots. I guess there's a silver lining in every cloud, though. Even though we move a lot, each place we go to is a whole new experience for me and my family. Oh, when I say my family, I mean my cats, dog, Mom and my little brother Adam; he's 11.

I can think of at least five places that I have lived: Hawaii, Washington, China, California, and Australia.

Hawaii was a great experience. The purple orchids grew on every vine, and the tall palm trees dotted the sandy beaches. When the sun set on the clear turquoise ocean, the last flickering light danced upon the surface of the salty water, like a ballet dancer on a stage. I was able to meet a lot of new people and I could sun tan every day.

Surfing is now one of my biggest passions since I lived there. It's really hard to learn, but after a while, I totally got used to it. I loved the feel of the strong wind blowing on my face as I descended the wave. I felt my hair billowing on my face as the salty water

sprayed my feet. But I have to admit, I definitely got sick of those round, brown, fuzzy, coconuts.

Washington wasn't the best place to live, but it was a new place and a new experience. I'm most certainly not into all of that political stuff; I'd rather leave that stuff to the adults. ( Perhaps when I get older I will find an interest in being a lawyer or something, just like my mom is now.) The enormous historical monuments dominated the city of Washington. I found the Lincoln Memorial to be my favorite. But the White House was definitely the most exciting part of Washington.

China was far out and was the most extreme challenge for me. Learning a whole new culture and language was really difficult, especially when you have to order something to eat from a restaurant, and you don't know how to speak their language and they don't know how to speak yours. However, eating the food was not a problem. I was used to getting Chinese take-out all the time! Although I wasn't used to Chinese customs, my new Chinese friends showed me the ropes, and they befriended me.

California was so much fun! It was a movie-lover's dream, and of course I'm as star-struck as they come! There was so much to do. Of course the beaches were cool, and Hollywood was, as well. I looked up all my favorite actors' and actresses' footprints and hand prints in the cement squares on Hollywood Boulevard. I found Mann's Chinese Theatre to be awesome, and Rodeo Drive had the greatest fashion you will ever see! I also went to Universal Studios and got to see all the old television and movie sets. It was very exciting!

Australia was probably the BEST experience! I loved to see the water every morning when I woke up. I spoke with the accent while I was there. It was so easy to fall into that way of speaking. The surroundings were beautiful, from the ocean to the outback. I learned many survival techniques while camping in the outback with a bunch of friends from school. I really think Australia was a neat place and maybe I could end up there someday.

Now we are going to stay on the island of Bermuda. I have heard that Bermuda is a hot and humid place. But I like it that way. Bermuda is another place to sun tan every day. One good thing about moving to Bermuda is that my aunt, uncle, and some of my cousins live there. I'll have some relatives to visit and hang out with. Another good thing is that I can surf on the multicolored ocean whenever I want to.

Yes, I think my family and I are tossed to different places a lot, but it gives us a chance to learn special and unique things about each and every place we stay at. Each place is different, with different ways of doing things, different foods, and different people. I do enjoy learning new things and trying new foods.

I think that the hardest thing about moving is making new friends. It's not easy changing schools every so often. I'm leaving friends behind—but I'm gaining experience as I go.

I hope that maybe after Bermuda, we will make somewhere in the U.S. our home. Our permanent home. I think I'm lucky to have seen so much of this great big world, but then again I would like to stay in one tiny spot of this great big world long enough to call one place my HOME!

# JUNIOR HIGH

*Maybe you'll recognize yourself in this story, from one time or another. JUNIOR HIGH, by Jackie Lark, explains a girl's experiences in the interval between elementary and high schools.*

Walking through the halls of Kriss Cross Junior High, I see my four best friends, Naomi, Alexia, Nicky, and Kayla.

"Hey, chickas," I say, surprising them.

"Hey, Linz," replies my very best friend in the whole world, Naomi.

*Ring, ring* goes the bell as it blasts out our eardrums.

"See ya guys at lunch," says Naomi, sprinting down the hall.

"Oh, well, just late for home room," I say to myself.

"Linzy, you decided to join us for home room today?" says my home room teacher, Mr. Flagster.

"Well, I thought you would like to see my stupendous face today," I reply like a smart aleck.

"If you blessed us with your presence a little earlier, you wouldn't have a detention!" he says back like a smart aleck.

That's pretty much how the day goes: wake up, go to school, get nagged by a teacher; go home and have your parents nag you. What is a teen-aged girl to do?

Don't adults remember what it was like to be a teen-aged kid? Why couldn't I have a cool parent like Naomi's? Did my parents get brainwashed? Do you think yours did, too? What is so hard to understand about us? It's like we are so weird, when they are the ones who listen to all that old uncool music!

Then we have teachers. "Why are you late? Why didn't you get the homework right? Why is it so important to talk to your

friends during class?” I mean, come on, the teachers run from class to class asking other teachers stuff. Is it really that hard to understand?

Why don't we kids start a class for all adults to give them a taste of what 2001 is like for us? How to keep our attention in class. How to make life at home a whole lot easier. How to make their lectures not dull city.

They sure know how to ruin my life.

“Can I go to the movies?”

“No, you didn't do your chores!”

“Can I get off of detention? I have a doctor's appointment at lunch!”

“Well, you should have thought about that when you didn't bring your supplies!”

Come on, they are so rude! They can't lay off us just once in a while? Why do they do this to us? It's like their purpose in life is to annoy us! They won't lend us a few bucks for a totally cool shirt. They won't let us have a day late off our homework.

But then they thought of that awesome surprise party for you last year. They sponsor you for lip-synching competition. They have to put up with us. They take us on really cool vacations. They give us candy when we are good. They ground your brother or sister when he or she is being annoying.

So I guess I can give them a little credit. I mean, my mom has been a home to me since I lived in her stomach. My dad tries to see the woman in me. My teachers try to act cool. But we kids need to let them know who's boss when they try to be cool, or when they act weird in front of our friends, or when they make you take out the garbage!

But next time they make a joke, try to laugh, because you might need a ride to a movie, a friend's house, or the mall!

# THE MAPLE WOOD GANG!

*Have you attended school with people like this? In THE MAPLE WOOD GANG! by Molly Varon, a cast of characters shows just how frantic school life can be.*

At Maple Wood Middle School, Mrs. Glad's sixth-grade class was putting on a play called *Goldylox and the Five Beavers*. On Tuesday, November 8, everyone tried out for a part. Margie got the part of the mother beaver, Jimmy got the part of the father beaver, Jason got the part of the brother beaver, Izzy got the part of the sister beaver, and Cate got the part of the baby beaver. But the twins Anna and Jillie were fighting over the part of Goldylox. Anna said she should be Goldylox because she had blond curly hair, and Jillie said she should be Goldylox "because I am a better actress than you," she said.

After they were fighting for about five minutes, Mrs. Glad said, "Anna, you can be Goldylox, but Jillie, you get to be the most important person in the whole play. You get to be the manager!"

"But I don't want to be the manager," said Jillie.

"You get to pick out everybody's costume and do all of their make up!"

"I still don't want to do it," said Jillie.

"Will you do it if you get to help with the background?"

"Yeah , yeah, yeah, I will definitely do the job now," Jillie said.

Mrs. Glad was happy that their problems were solved and told everyone their first practice would be Friday, November 15 in the gym.



Everyone left for home, except for Anna. Anna wanted to talk to Mrs. Glad about the star role. She wanted to know if she had extra practices, which were fine with her.

On Friday at practice, they got to pick out their costumes. Once again, Jillie and Anna were fighting! Jillie wanted a costume, too.

Anna said, "You are the stage manager and you do get to wear a costume. You get to wear a black shirt and black pants."

"But I want a good costume like you," said Jillie.

Mrs. Glad said, "Jillie, your costume is the best costume of all. On your shirt in pink sparkly letters it says 'Stage Manager.'"

"Yeah, yeah, I really like that," said Jillie.

After that, Mrs. Glad told Anna she would like her to stay for a few minutes. Mrs. Glad told Anna she wanted her to stay after practice on Friday. Anna said she would be glad to stay.

Two days had passed and it was time for practice. That day at practice, everything went wrong! Jillie was yelling at everyone and they were all yelling back at her. And in the middle of all this Jason asked Cate to go out with him.

Cate said she would.

"Okay, how about Saturday night?"

Cate said she had plans with her best friend, Izzy.

"Your best friends is Izzy? That little creep!" said Jason.

"Hey, don't call my best friend a creep!" Cate said.

Jason wanted to know if Cate would still go out with him.

"I guess so, since you're the hottest guy at Maple Wood Middle School," Cate said.

Jason was happy and asked Cate to a movie on Sunday.

After they got the date stuff over with, Mrs. Glad said she thought they were wasting time.

"Jason, you don't even know your lines! You go home right now, young man, and I'm calling your mom and telling her you are on your way home to practice your lines!"

Jason was so mad that he didn't practice the whole week. And

when he did, he was so overwhelmed that he practiced the father's part instead of the brother's part!

On Sunday, Jason went to get Cate and take her to the theater. When they were in the movie theater, he was saying his lines through the whole movie because he practiced too much.

During the movie, Cate fell asleep, so Jason had to carry her all of the way home! He was so exhausted that when he got home he just wanted to go up to his room and watch some boxing and go to bed.

But the thing he didn't know was that Mrs. Glad had a house fire and moved in with Jason's family until her house was fixed. Mrs. Glad told Jason's mom (Mrs. Jacob) that she would listen to Jason practice every morning and every night. Mrs. Jacobs thought that was a great idea.

When Jason got home his mom said, "Look who's staying with us for the year until her house is fixed: Mrs. Glad!"

Jason could not believe it!

Mrs. Glad said hello to Jason and told him they would have lots of fun.

Jason was so tired that he just fell on the couch and went to sleep.

The next day it was time for practice. Everyone had to go up in the middle of the classroom and say all of his or her lines. First went Cate, then Jimmy, Margie, and finally Jason. When Jimmy was up, Jason ran to Mrs. Glad and told her Jimmy was doing his lines!

Mrs. Glad knew they were in big trouble, with the play only two weeks away. She told Jason to go home right now and practice the right lines. "You better have them memorized by the time I get to your house tonight!" said Mrs. Glad.

After everyone read their lines, Mrs. Glad told them they did well and she would see them tomorrow.

When Mrs. Glad got to Jason's house, he was upstairs in his room, practicing his lines. Mrs. Glad went upstairs and told Jason that he had practiced enough for one day. "Don't overwork

yourself,” she said, “I’m going to bed and I will see you at practice tomorrow morning.

The next day Jason arrived at practice really early so he could rehearse his lines. Cate and Izzy were there, too. They all agreed to walk home from practice together, even though Jason didn’t want to walk home with Izzy.

The practice went really well and Jason did very well. Jason, Cate and Izzy started to walk home and Jason saw a banana peel. Jason told Cate, “Watch out!”

Cate saw it and told Izzy to watch out.

Izzy screamed and ran as fast as she could to Jillie’s house. Izzy was running so fast that she ran right through the door without knocking. Jillie tried to calm her down so she could find out what was wrong. It didn’t work. Izzy just kept screaming and she was so scared that she jumped onto Jillie’s glass table and broke it!

Jillie yelled, “Izzy, you broke the table!” Izzy was so upset that she said she had a stomachache and left.

Izzy went right home to bed. She was lying on her bed when her mom told her that Cate was on the phone. Izzy picked up the phone.

“Hi,” said Cate. “What happened today?”

“NOTHING! It doesn’t matter,” said Izzy.

Cate then asked Izzy if she wanted to go bowling since they didn’t have practice tomorrow.

“I guess so,” said Izzy.

“I will pick you up at 12:36 tomorrow.”

When they reached the bowling alley the next day, Izzy and Cate got their bowling shoes on and picked out their bowling balls. Izzy picked a pink ball and named it Rolanda. Cate’s bowling ball was pink, green and black. She named it Bruna Star.

They got to lane 7 and then they realized that it was broken. The manager said they would have to wait for it to get fixed.

Cate’s mom ordered pizza while they were waiting. After the lane got fixed they played for two hours, then they went to get ice cream.

Can you guess who they saw there? They saw Mrs. Glad and Jason. Jason, Cate and Izzy ate their food together while Mrs. Glad and Cate's mom talked. After they finished eating Jason said, "Thank you for the ice cream, Mrs. Glad."

When they got home Jason forgot that he had to go pick up Cate and Izzy to go to the movie.

He rushed over to their house and got them. When they got in the car Jason and Cate sat together and Izzy sat alone.

"This car smells like Chinese food!" said Izzy. Everyone stayed quiet. They reached the movie theater and everyone got out. Jason's mom said that she would pick them up 9:30.

She left them with \$20 for tickets and snacks. They got their tickets and got in line for snacks. Jason got a Coke and a big bag of Doritos, Cate got two packs of Gummi Bears, and Izzy got two super-size bags of Cheetos.

They all went to find their seats. Izzy had already finished her two super-sized bags of Cheetos and begged for more. No one would go with her to get more because the movie had already started. So she went by herself and got another super-size bag.

Izzy got so hyper from eating those three bags of Cheetos that she was jumping up and down in her chair. She was jumping so much that she fell out of it.

Everyone started laughing at her.

Izzy was so hyper that she got kicked out of the movie theater. Izzy went outside and sat on the sidewalk until the movie was over. When Jason and Cate came out they were surprised to see Izzy still there. They were also surprised that she wasn't still jumping up and down.

"What are you still doing here?" asked Jason.

Izzy said, "Well, I wanted to wait for you guys."

"Do you want to come out to ice cream with us?"

"Cate, I thought we were going alone," screamed Jason.

"Well, I wanted to be nice so I invited her to come with us," answered Cate. "Well, Izzy," said Cate, "are you going to come?" So they all went.

When they got to the ice cream parlor at 9:00, they forgot that Jason's mom was going to pick them from the movie theater at 9:30.

They all enjoyed their ice cream, especially Izzy. But when Jason looked at his watch, it was 9:25. "Oh, no!" Jason screamed. They only had five minutes to get back to the theater. They ran back and just barely made it.

The next day at practice, Mrs. Glad told them their costumes were ready. With just two days before the play, Mrs. Glad was worried that not everyone would have their lines memorized, especially Jason.

Mrs. Glad told everyone there would be a dress rehearsal tomorrow. And she told them to be in costume with their makeup on. That day the practice went pretty well—just a few mess-ups. Everyone was exhausted from doing the play five times!

"Kids, remember to pick up your costumes," said Mrs. Glad.

The next day, everyone came in costume except Jason. He forgot. His face was not brown like it was supposed to be to look like a beaver. Luckily, it was only a dress rehearsal.

Everyone did great! In fact, it was the best they had ever done. Mrs. Glad was so happy that she let them out early.

The next day, everyone came ready and excited for the big performance.

"Let's go out there and show them who's boss," said Mrs. Glad to the kids.

Everything was going great until Izzy came out. She was about to say her lines when she saw a boy in the audience who was eating Ruffles.

"Ruffles?" said Izzy!

"No, no," said Mrs. Glad. "Those aren't the right lines!"

"I want Ruffles," said Izzy. She ran off the stage and grabbed the boy's Ruffles and ate them all. She then ran home and was never heard from again.

The play continued and the audience thought Izzy running off the stage was part of the play! Everyone laughed and clapped.

Since the audience enjoyed the play, no one was mad at Izzy.

After the play, everyone went for ice cream.

## A STRUGGLING LIFE

*Growing up is sometimes painful, and can be worst for the person who is unaccepted by others. Peer pressure and loneliness are examined in A STRUGGLING LIFE, by Katie Moore.*

“Beep, beep, beep, beep . . . .”

“Oh, no, not another day of school!” thought Meagan Lakes. “I hate school.”

It was a Friday morning, and just like every other day, Meagan did not want to go to school. You may think, “Well, I still go to school even though I hate it.” No, that’s not anywhere close to Meagan’s situation. Meagan is a 13-year-old, and is in the seventh grade at Sunshine Hill Middle School. She has absolutely no friends, and does not fit in at all. She doesn’t live in a well-brought-up family, and is not very intelligent. Here is the story from Meagan’s point of view:

As I walk out the door to hop onto my bus, some popular kids look at me and make sickening faces at me. Quickly, they hurry onto the bus, and the bus leaves without me. I figured they probably told the bus driver that I wasn’t taking the bus.

I decided to take the long way to school, because then I would be able to be alone for a while. I had to walk because my mom doesn’t own a car.

Soon I got to school, wondering what the snotty cheerleaders were gonna pull on me today. Last week they got somebody to throw my gym clothes into the pool, which got me into a lot of trouble.

Soon I was in science class, my first class of the day. I tried to act cool, but everybody still made fun of me because I wasn’t really good at reading.

“Ding, ding, ding.” The announcements came on. “Today after school from 7:00 to 9:00 P.M. is the football game. It’s the biggest game of the season. Hope to see you there!”

That’s it! A light bulb just went off in my head. If I showed up at the football game, people would think of me as cool.

I struggled through, trying to concentrate. Finally, the school day was over, and I was getting ready for the big game tonight.

When I got there, the game was about to start. I decided that I would get a snack, and then find a seat.

As I was walking to the concession stand, I passed two cheerleaders. Politely, I smiled, and strangely, they smiled back. All of a sudden I was falling, falling, falling, into the biggest mud puddle I have ever seen. I quickly tried to break my fall with my arms, but all that did was splatter mud on every part of my body that wasn’t already covered in mud. It was pretty obvious that the cheerleaders planned this. I was so angry that I ran home crying, never stopping on the way.

Over the weekend, I went to a bunch of cheap stores to buy new clothes. I wanted to become a totally new person. I didn’t have too much money, so I used it wisely.

On Monday when I went back to school, I really truly did feel like a new person. Everybody seemed to look at me from a different point of view. They didn’t look at me as this raggedy little scrawny girl who meant nothing to them, but as a girl who had confidence in herself, who became pretty, and would maybe even make a good friend. Even the guys were checking me out.

After I bought those new clothes, pretty much everything changed. I began to have lots of friends, and I even had enough confidence in myself to try out for the cheerleading squad.

You may want to be judged by what you look like, but I knew in my heart that I would much rather be known and noticed as just the old me. So as you have probably already predicted, I acted like myself again. I still had friends, and was confident.

Now I realized that I did many things wrong. First of all, I should have never changed myself. Second, I should have told

someone my troubles, worries, and feelings. If you ever end up in a situation like this, please take my advice and tell someone your every feeling. It will help for you to make the right decisions in life.



THE WORLD  
AS IT IS



# BIG GUY AND THE CAT

*What is it like to be the new pet in a house that already contains animals? Consider life from the point of view of the new dog in **BIG GUY AND THE CAT**, by *Jessica Epker*.*

Hi, I am Big Guy, one of the Epker dogs. And I am going to tell you how I get along with a cat named Kitty Kitty.

Well, it all started out about two years ago when Jackie Epker found me. I was standing in the middle of the road trying to commit suicide. But I was glad it was Jackie because she stopped to pick me up. It took her forever just to convince me that she was nice and that I should get into the car.

After I was in the car, Jackie took me to her mother's house. There I met Jessica, Jackie's daughter. She sat outside with me for an hour just to make me feel better.

After that, Jackie and her mother, who I call Grandma, went over to Jackie and Jessica's cottage. There I met Dale, Jackie's husband, and three dogs and a cat.

After about two days the other dogs started to accept me. They introduced me to all of the animals in the neighborhood, including Jessica's evil cat. She just hates me. Whenever I walk by her, she hisses and paws at me. At times she tries to jump on me, but Dale, Jessica, and Jackie always stop her and take her to another room.

One day, I woke up and found almost everything was gone. The dog cage was gone, almost all of the food was gone, and I couldn't find any of the other animals anywhere. Then Jackie took me outside and there was everything that was missing being loaded into the van that had brought me here. I was very confused. Then they tried to get me in there.

It took them a while, but I went. The only good thing about this trip was that I got to sleep on the back seat without wondering who these people were. But then I was wondering where we were going.

But it was okay. It was just a two hour drive to their house. It was even better than the cottage because it had more toys and a bigger yard, although there wasn't a lake. Then they called me in. "Come on, Big Guy! Time to come in."

I came running inside, got my treat, and found a very comfortable chair and lay in it. Then here came the cat, hissing and pawing at me. So here came Dale. He took her and set her down hard in the other room. The cat didn't come near me for about a week.

But then the cat finally came near me and lay on top of the chair with me. And that is how the cat and I finally got along.

# COOKING AND HOCKEY GEAR? A TRUE STORY

*Not every problem has a solution, yet some problems have more than one. Kalyn's brother David tries his best to solve the ones that come his way in COOKING AND HOCKEY GEAR? A TRUE STORY, by Kalyn Méchelle Danforth.*

A lot of people like bacon, right? My brother sure does. One day, David decided to make bacon on his own, with the help of my mother, of course. By that, I mean my mom didn't make it and bring it to him; he made it. Anyway, David wanted to make bacon, but he didn't know how. So my mom tried to teach him.

There are a lot of things you can teach a kid about bacon, such as the right utensils to use, the right temperature to cook the bacon at, and things like that. But one thing my mom forgot to tell him about was a grease fire!

The cooking and crackling and the science of making bacon began. An unexpected bathroom stop by Mom meant David was alone. David thought he could make bacon without Mom's help. Nope. Despite all the things the one-minute lesson taught, the talking and teaching . . . meant nothing. The one thing mom didn't tell Dave happened—a grease fire! Bits of grease jumped from the pan to David's arm like thirsty gnats!

David didn't know what to do. Mom was in the bathroom. He didn't want to call her. So he took the pan off the stove and put it in the water. The fire became bigger! Just then my mom walked into the room. David's eyes were huge. Mom put a top on the pot.

The fire died out. Then my mother asked him what he learned from the fire. He said, "Never cook without my hockey gear!"

The next time David cooked bacon, he put on his hockey gear. He looked ridiculous, with the torn up leg protectors, the dented chest protectors, the ripped glove and, to top it all, the dirty white goalie helmet. With time and practice at bacon, he eventually stopped wearing his gear.

David is fifteen now. Just a few days ago on our mid-winter vacation, he fixed my friend and I pancakes, eggs, and . . . BACON! It was great that he fixed it for us. Guess what he wants to be when he grows up? A chef!

# THE KID WHO OVERCAME IT ALL

*We often complain about our problems, without considering whether they are worth complaining about at all. THE KID WHO OVERCAME IT ALL, by Ethan Weisman, is the true story of a boy who constructively faces real adversity every day.*

This is a story about a boy who overcame a physical disability. When this boy was born the doctor told the boy's parents that the baby boy had a disability. The parents asked, "What does that mean?" The doctor explained that the boy had a disability that would make the boy weak on the right side of his body.

This very special boy started to grow up and couldn't tell that something was wrong with him. But when he grew older his right arm grew very weak, and when he walked his right leg would turn in. His parents made him do exercises that made his arm and leg stronger. The little boy worked hard at doing the exercises and trying to get his right side to work as well as his left side did. The parents weren't worried because they knew the boy would not mind working hard to overcome this disability and would do everything to overcome it. He was a very happy boy and didn't let this little thing bother him.

When the boy was six years old, he tried to learn how to ride a bicycle. When he started out he was having a lot of trouble keeping balance. The right-sided weakness to his body wouldn't let him balance.

After trying for months and months, the boy went over to his neighbors' house, and they said to him that before the day was

done they would have him riding. Hours and hours went by, with the boy trying and trying until he finally got up for five minutes. After the joy of his getting up on his bike for the first time in his life, he called his parents and told them.

His parents couldn't believe it, so they went outside to watch. But right after he started riding for his parents, he lost control and rode right over a big pile of rocks, and went into the ditch. Instead of the boy crying, he started laughing after he did his flip into the ditch! After that day the boy rode for hours and hours.

It was difficult to always have to try so hard to do things when these same things came so easily to all of the boy's friends. The boy was lucky that he had a personality that was very happy and optimistic and that didn't ever want to give up on trying. His parents had to be strong through all of this, too, because they always had to show the boy a smile when he tried so hard. It was sometimes very sad for the parents to watch their son trying to master something so easy for other children.

The boy also loved to golf. His disability did not make him unable to play golf because he played golf as a lefty. If you can believe it, he was born a lefty at everything, like writing and sports. But it was still very hard for him to get comfortable in his golf swing because of how his right arm was smaller than his left arm. Because of that he needed to tuck his arms in more and get closer to the ground. The boy practiced and practiced and he got really good. His dad and brother helped him a lot with the game.

At the country club where the boy belongs they always have a junior club championship at the end of the summer. When the boy heard about this he signed up, even though he didn't think he could win. He didn't mind the thought of losing. He knew he just wanted to compete.

The day finally arrived. He checked in and waited for his tee off time. When the time came, he got very scared for no reason because he knew he would do well. Finally he teed off and his shot was not too good, but he didn't care.



A couple of holes went by and he was in the lead. When he was coming up to the ninth hole he wasn't thinking of winning yet. His drive was great and he was in good play. His second shot went right off the green. He chipped that onto the green, five feet from the hole. Everyone else putted up, and then he sank his ball to win the tournament!

This was another example of the boy overcoming his disability again and again. He worked hard at all of the sports he tried and eventually did well in them. The boy showed all his family and friends that if he put his mind and determination to something, he could always accomplish his goals. This boy overcoming all of his disabilities should just tell other people who have problems: if they try and try again to overcome their problems, whatever they are, they will eventually succeed. This very special boy did and will continue to do so in his future.

## THE PERFECT SPOT

*It's great to be able to kick back and relax whenever you want. But it's not always that easy, as we see in THE PERFECT SPOT, by Brett Alpiner.*

It's 6:50 A.M. I know this time all too well. The ritual has begun. My mom climbs the steps of the ladder to my top bunk to “tickle” my feet: a tactile alarm clock. Oh, it's Thursday, not just any day of the week. It's the day when exhaustion and fatigue will rule me and my only salvation will be a special place, on the most comfortable sofa in the family room, where the angle of the television screen is just right and the pillows outline the shape of my body. I call this place THE SPOT.

I know this place, I have visited it many times, and I plan on visiting it tonight. However, I must first make it through a hectic day at Berkshire (especially Language Arts), rush over to Hebrew, probably sing my cords out at choir, and come home starving so that even my mother's cooking, dare I say, tastes good. But, to get and to obtain The Spot, I know I must defeat—no, I must outwit—the enemy that awaits me: Sean, Kallie, Brendan, and Kyra, my siblings (DA-DA-DA-DA-DA). They foolishly think it is their domain, that somehow they have the right to my Spot. I cannot let this happen, I *will* not let this happen. I must make certain that the plan I formulate this very Thursday morning at 6:55 a.m. is foolproof and flawless.

I have to think like a military general. From all my years of television watching I have learned that you must have a plan, and then carry it out. I will SET A TRAP AND trick the enemy into defeat. Kyra, at three years of age, will be the easiest to overcome.

A fruit roll-up will come in handy because she has to eat it in the kitchen (house rules). For Brendan, age six, a *Power Puff Girls* video in Mom and Dad's room should do the trick. Kallie, nine, is clever. She will need a good crossword puzzle to challenge her. As for Sean, my closest sibling, my comrade in so many ways: ah, the delight I will take as I dismiss him like a mosquito on my arm. For him, Nintendo should be the answer for his feeble mind. And now, the plan is complete.

As I zero in on the target and slowly lower my bottom toward The Spot, I relax, reach for the remote, and then I hear those words: "Oh, Honey, I'm so glad you're home. You can help me move the furniture now because tomorrow the carpets will be cleaned!"

## POLAR BEAR CAMPING

*It's not always what you do that makes life interesting as much as it is who you share the experience with. POLAR BEAR CAMPING, by Jon Cook, considers the value of friendship.*

It promised to be an exciting weekend: winter camping to earn my Polar Bear patch, and my initiation into another winter sport. A few weeks earlier I had been skiing for the first time and loved it. Kevin, Zack, and I, all members of the Eagle patrol, were signed up to attend. This would be the first time all three of us would be camping together. A new adventure experience with good friends, what a great combination. The countdown began and we hoped for tons of snow.

At our troop meeting we learned the science of keeping warm in extreme weather conditions. You don't have to be "tough," just well prepared. At home I had a dress rehearsal to check if my jacket would zip over three layers. Would my newly sharpened skates still fit over liner and double wool socks? Could I move wearing thermal underwear, turtleneck, hooded polar fleece shirt, and down-filled jacket? Would my arms stick out like the twig limbs of a snowman? It all fit and I could still move. However, I felt like a little kid, bundled up beyond recognition, before being allowed to play in the snow.

Finally the big day, and it was bitter cold. My aunt, who lives on Lake Michigan, reported that the wind chill was ten degrees below that afternoon and it was snowing. Frustrated, I knew I would need all those clothes. With disappointment I learned Zack wasn't going. He had decided to attend a school dance. I felt a little betrayed. I wondered if just Kevin and I could have sufficient

fun together. Maybe the weekend wasn't going to be that great. Maybe I should just stay home and play video games.

The ride to Muskegon was incredibly long. Dragging our gear into the cabin I felt numb, tired, and cold. All I wanted to do was to crawl deep into my sleeping bag and escape into dreamland. I desperately hoped that tomorrow would be better. I didn't think it could be any worse.

Morning came too soon, but the sun was shining and I was hopeful for a good day. We ate heartily, put on multiple layers, and ran out to embrace the snow. It was a wooded area, but determined to have fun, we tried to sled. Just as we began to pick up speed there would be a tree. With no accurate way to steer we would have to bail off the side. It was lots of laughter and fooling around but not real sledding.

As the other patrols were setting up their tents, I helped the older scouts build their quinzee. This shelter, invented by the Athabaskan tribe of the Far North, is a type of constructed snow cave. First, we assembled a pile of snow about six feet high and twelve feet in diameter. Then we cut blocks of compressed snow and built up the sides of the mound. More snow bricks were placed on the top until it resembled a dome. Loose snow was used to fill the cracks. Sticks, twelve inches in length, were arranged around the surface of the snow dome. The sticks would later be a guide to limit the excavation of the interior. The whole process is really hard work. When finished, the interior is usually five to ten degrees warmer than the outdoor temperature or inside a tent. Finally, the gauge sticks were stuck in the roof and it was time to let the dome settle, and for us to go lugging.

I had never been lugging before. At last, some excitement. First, we each had to be certified. On a mini track we learned how to control our sled. The sled's runners extended up and curved over the front of the sled. I laid on my back, holding onto the edges of the sled. The runners were positioned between my legs; I would have to steer with my ankles. To turn to the right, I had to push my left ankle against the left runner, while leaning my entire body

in that direction. After the curve is completed, I had to quickly center my body to prepare for the next turn. It took a couple of turns to get the rhythm. I was certified after my second try but it took some of our group five to seven attempts. Now it was off to the track.

The track looked like a huge water slide built of ancient wooden scaffolding. Instead of a plastic trough and running water, it was a bed of twisting, glistening ice. Now I could see that a sixty-foot run, after making a huge curve, merged into a forty foot run. Then the run made multiple turns before one final downward plunge. For a second it seemed miraculous that the track wasn't littered with broken bodies. Then I noticed radio operators were controlling the alternating descents.

I climbed the steep stairs to the lowest run and waited. I felt nauseous, and hoped no one could tell I was a little scared. Too soon it was my turn. There was no escape. I positioned myself on the sled. I fought panic while waiting for the operator to give me the "go" signal. Off I went with my heart skipping a few beats. The wind whipped against my face. It was great! I hit the wall of the first curve to the right, but centered myself in time for the left curve. I felt like a pro. I was almost to the bottom and finishing the last turn, when suddenly the sled flipped. I wound up finishing the run, wearing a sled on my back like a turtle's shell, and my face ground into the icy track. I got up, tried to act cool, and climbed to the top.

Over and over, all of us would climb the forty steep steps carrying the burden of our sleds. On a roller coaster there's that long, lazy, automated climb to the top as you listen to the clicking of the machinery. While climbing to the top of the run all we could hear was our own panting. Every run had the same results. A great "king of the mountaintop" ride until the last turn, then a sudden flip, and the too familiar icy face grind.

After lunch, Kevin and I decided to salvage our good looks and try skating. It was enjoyable but mainly it gave us a chance to talk. We have always enjoyed each other's company and have stuck

together since day one. Being true to friends is important to me. The day we met, Kevin was the lone boy joining the troop from his school, and I was the only one from mine. We banded together immediately but since then our friendship has grown by choice. In a short time Zack had joined our group, and we became part of the mighty Eagle patrol. We both wished Zack was with us, but admitted we were having fun.

By now my legs were really sore. Climbing those steep stairs was hard. Since I was in pain, I knew Kevin really had to be hurting. I'm at least ten inches taller than Kevin, and believe me, I have really long legs. I realized Kevin really had to work hard to climb each of those forty steps. He didn't complain, but I was beginning to appreciate what a tough little kid he was. Soon it was time to go back to the campsite.

While the rest of the troop was having snowball fights and being "snow moles," carving out and excavating snow from the quinzee, Kevin and I were stuck making dinner. Our assigned KP duty was not only "Cooks" but "Cleanup" too, because in our troop whoever cooks also cleans up.

As inky blackness approached, it was time to assemble our gear for the night. It was time to decide where I was going to sleep. To earn my Polar Bear patch I had to sleep outside. Should I sleep in the frigid tents with the other patrols? Should I sleep in the cabin with some other guys and my tough little friend? If I sleep in the cabin is it out of loyalty, or because I'm sore, tired, and enjoying the warmth? How much did I really care about a patch? Do I wait until next year when the three of us can earn it together?

Friendship or a piece of cloth: not much of a decision. I never slept better.

# SURVIVOR OF TET

*With time comes different perspectives on the war in Vietnam. In SURVIVOR OF TET, 1968 by Zach Conner Derrah, the service of an army captain stands as an example of the sacrifices made by members of the armed forces. THIS STORY IS DEDICATED TO ALL WHO SERVED AND DIED IN VIETNAM.*

*The First Tour.* In 1963, President Kennedy ordered troops to fight with the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) against the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and the Viet Cong (VC). As the years passed, the war escalated.

It is now January 31, 1968. This is Tet, the Chinese New Year. We called a cease-fire with the NVA and the VC. They broke it and attacked every American and ARVN base in South Vietnam.

A young army captain in the 11<sup>th</sup> ACR stationed in Bien Hoa was sleeping in his tank. BOOM, BOOM, BOOM. "We're under attack!" cried the young army captain, new to combat. As people scattered, some would drop as bullets whizzed by, recalled Donald Derrah.

Derrah shot the enemy with his M60. Flames scorched the night sky from the rocket-propelled grenades. As the fight continued, more blood would be shed upon the moist earth as the morning sun peeked through the smoky air.

Colonel Creighten ordered Derrah to move his tanks and troop carriers (ACAVs) deep into the city of Bien Hoa. As Captain Derrah rolled in, sniper bullets bounced off the tanks. He ordered his tank turret operator to concentrate on the buildings with snipers in them. He then also learned that the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division was there, so he decided to meet with them.



Captain Derrah did a “house-to-house” with the 101<sup>st</sup>. One man would kick in the door and the other would toss in an M79 grenade. When this happened, seven VC snuck out and started to drop the 101<sup>st</sup>. Derrah, with his M60, opened fire on them. They would never shoot an American again.

He had had enough. He ordered his tanks to pull up on a hill and bombard the town. On his way out, he ran into a small fire fight and a rocket-propelled grenade slammed into Derrah’s tank, throwing him from it. As he lay on the ground wounded, he gazed at the burning wreckage of his tank. Captain Derrah was medevaced to the nearest hospital.

*The Second Tour:* The year is 1970. The war has been a stalemate. Our troops were still trudging in thick jungles, with booby traps, ambushes, and insubordination. After two weeks in the hospital for shrapnel wounds, Captain Derrah was sent back into the bush. He was demoralized after his good friend James E. Reed was killed by a rocket-propelled grenade.

Captain Derrah was doing air reconnaissance when his troops were caught in a fire fight. He then ordered artillery to pound the area. Then he spotted a wounded man and ordered the pilot to land. Captain Derrah jumped off, ran through heavy fire, and retrieved his wounded comrade. He then ran back with the man on his shoulder, through the heavy fire, and got on the chopper.

On another mission, Captain Derrah and his troops were on patrol when they had to cross a bridge. The locals let them! Captain Derrah thought something was fishy. The VC came from behind. Derrah saw that the track commander was about to throw a grenade, but a hatch caught his sleeve and he dropped the grenade in his tank. The burning wreckage blocked their escape, so they had to fight off the VC. The fire fight ended with minimal losses.

When Captain Derrah returned to the fire base, he found that they were going home. Everyone would, but some would be in body bags. The Army song is true: “Over hill, over dale, as we hit the dusty trail, and the caissons go rolling along / In the storm, in

the night, action left or action right, see those caissons go rolling along.”

*My thoughts / today are in Washington, / and a tear is in my eye. / I stand in silence to honor, / those who went to die. / Who when needed / didn't falter / just answered their country's call. / And are enshrined forever, / on the surface of "The Wall." / I promise to remember you, / my prayers will never cease. / God bless you for your valor, / may you always rest in peace.—Author Unknown*