

2020
SOUTH PERTH

YOUNG WRITERS
AWARD
ANTHOLOGY

The City of South Perth Young Writers Award

The City of South Perth Young Writers Award is now in its 34th year. It has attracted over twenty thousand entries from young people who live or attend school in the City of South Perth.

The inaugural award was launched by popular children's author Christobel Mattingley who, over her long successful career, championed the importance of children's literature. In 2007, the Christobel Mattingley Award for Young Writers evolved into the South Perth Young Writers Award. Christobel's significant contributions to the award and across Australia are commemorated by awarding the Christobel Mattingley Bronze Medallion to the year's most outstanding entry.

Prizes are awarded for prose in five age categories across primary and secondary school. The awarding of prizes and highly commended certificates encourages young writers to challenge themselves and extend their writing prowess.

Every year the entries are judged by a panel comprising of teachers, writers and enthusiasts of children's literature. Our judges were amazed this year by all the entries received. In our finalists' collection, we've been privileged to witness unique characterisation, social themes, gripping storytelling, and writing beyond the ages of those who created them.

The work created by our finalists for 2020 are showcased in this anthology.

*This Anthology is published by the City of South Perth
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LOWER PRIMARY

<i>The Wish</i>	SIMONA COSTINE	Highly Commended
<i>Things I Did When I was in Quarantine</i>	JOHNATHAN JEREMY RATTIGAN	Second Place
<i>Camelia & Pixie</i>	FARIDA IBRAHIM	First Place

MIDDLE PRIMARY

<i>The Perfect Wave</i>	THOMAS RICHARDSON	Highly Commended
<i>The Magical Food</i>	LUCIA FRASER	First Place (Tied)
<i>The Hypnotist</i>	AMELIE DAWSON	First Place (Tied)

UPPER PRIMARY

<i>Just a Man</i>	FRANCESCA PACE	Highly Commended
<i>Escape from Humanity</i>	ISABEL EAU	Second Place
<i>My Happy Ending</i>	SONIA DURYEA	First Place

LOWER SECONDARY

<i>The Diary of Quarantine</i>	JAMES RICHARDSON	Highly Commended
<i>I am a Beautiful Rose</i>	ALEXIA FLYNN	First Place (Tied)
<i>The Growing Midnight</i>	CAMERON LEGGATT	First Place (Tied)

UPPER SECONDARY

<i>The Beyond</i>	ARIELLE WATTS	Second Place
<i>The Stars He Left</i>	HELEN ZOLJARGAL	First Place (Tied)
<i>Enough</i>	ISABELLE WILSON	First Place (Tied)

LOWER PRIMARY

Highly Commended

The Wish

SIMONA COSTINE

Second Place

*Things I did when I was in
Quarantine*

**JONATHAN JEREMY
RATTIGAN**

First Place

Camelia & Pixie

FARIDA IBRAHIM

The Wish by Simona Costine

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The Wish

Once upon a time in the outback of Australia there lived a mother kangaroo. She was happy but she wanted a baby of her own. "Mmmmmmm" she thought. Maybe if I could find a group of birds that could tell me who is the wisest animal in the whole of the desert kingdom." Then she had a great idea! She ran to her book shelf and found a book that had all the kinds of birds that pass by the desert kingdom in it. Then she scampered outside and sat down on the sunny porch. Then she looked up in to the sky and there in the distance she saw a big group of birds. She quickly flicked through her bird book and soon found that they were called magpies. So she called after them. "Hey magpies" she called. All of them ignored her but the tiniest one that was flying but was at the very back of the group. He stopped and turned around. He stared at her and then he said "what do you want"? He flew down to her not knowing that his group were behind him and staring at him in surprise. She told him that she wanted to know who is the wisest animal in the whole of the desert kingdom. One really big bird pushed through the squaking crowd and said "why are you asking us?" "Because you have flown all over the desert kingdom" said mother kangaroo. "Well" said the big magpie "we will tell you who".

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Who is it? said mother kangaroo excitedly. "Well a few hops away from your den there is a cave and in that cave there lives the wise, old echidna and his echidna family."

So that my friend is the animal that is the wisest animal in the whole of the desert kingdom." Mother kangaroo nodded weakly and the magpie gave her a map that would show her the way to the wise, old echidna's den. With that the magpies flew off leaving mother kangaroo alone once again. She looked down on to the map and saw that she could get to the wise, old echidna's den and back just before dark. Since the wise, old echidna was the wisest animal in the whole of the desert kingdom maybe he could tell her how to get a baby joey of her own. So she set off with not a minute to lose! She rolled up the map and then hopped in to the dust outback. Soon she saw a dark cave a few metres ~~in~~ front of her. So of she went until she came to the entrance to the dark cave. She looked around her nervously and then did a quick knock on the front door. A few minutes later the wise, old echidna came out of the darkness. He was the wisest and the oldest of them all. His snout was very long and his spikes shot out behind him as he emerged from the darkness of the den.

Mother kangaroo asked the wise, old echidna if he could help her find a baby joey of her own. Hearing this the wise, old echidna smiled and in his deepest voice he said "I will help you and this is how: go to the middle of the desert and sit on the very top of the magical rock. Then you must wish to have a baby joey of your own." When the wise, old echidna stopped talking mother kangaroo said "I will make my way there tomorrow". "But beware as there are lots of things you could encounter on your way," said the wise, old echidna. With that the wise, old echidna disappeared in to the darkness of the den. Mother kangaroo followed the map back to her den. Her den was made out of seven sticks, holding up the leaves which were the roof. Inside she had some moss as a pillow and some ferns as a blanket. So she settled down in to her cosy, warm bed. That night mother kangaroo dreamt of having a baby of her own. In her dream the baby was light brown with a white spot on his head. Then, when she woke up she rushed outside without planning anything. She thought that the magical rock was not that far away. But once she had been walking for a while she remembered what the wise old echidna had told her.

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She remembered the part where he told her that the magical rock was in the middle of the desert. So ~~on~~ she went until she came to a dead tree. But in that tree there was a nest of sad looking sparrows. Mother kangaroo asked ~~them~~ why they were looking so sad. They tweeted and peeped their problem to her. They said this: "Well a few minutes ago one of our newborn baby sparrows fell to the ground and we tried to save him but a dust storm came and blew him away to the dried up lake in the distance but it is only dry on the top because the water is still under the dried up surface". Mother kangaroo really wanted to help the sparrows but she did not know how. Then she had an idea! So she said "you stay here and I will go and rescue your little baby sparrow for you" Thank you so much! said one of the sparrows. Mother kangaroo smiled, seeing the sparrows happy again made her feel happy too! So off she hopped as quickly as she could because she really wanted to see how a baby sparrow looked like! Soon she came to the dried up lake the sparrow family were talking about. There in the middle of the lake was a tiny sparrow with brown and grey feathers and white stripes that covered both its tiny wings!

Now that mother kangaroo was actually there she felt more nervous than before. But she carefully and steadily stepped on to the dried up lake and she stepped again and again but when she was about to reach out her paw to grab the baby sparrow when she lost her footing and slipped and there was a sudden 'splash!' and she fell in to the cold water. She tried to swim to the other side but it was not working so mother kangaroo grabbed the baby sparrow and put it in her pouch. Then she started to call for help. "Help, help! Please someone help me!" she called. A few moments later the numbat family arrived. They had heard her calling for help when they were playing hide and seek. The whole of the numbat family pulled at mother kangaroo's paws until..... pop! Mother kangaroo climbed out of the lake with the baby sparrow hidden safely in her pouch. She asked the numbat family if they needed any things for her to do in return for rescuing her. "Why yes we do" said mother numbat. She gave mother kangaroo a big washing basket with wet clothes in it that needed to be hung up in the sun to dry. So mother kangaroo grabbed the basket and started to hang all the wet shorts, T-shirts and pants.

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After a while mother kangaroo was finally finished. She gave mother numbat the empty washing basket and she thanked them all for rescuing her and then she set off! Soon she came to the dead tree where the sparrow family were delighted to see their baby safe and sound. They gave mother kangaroo a little sack of blueberries so that she would not be hungry. Mother kangaroo saw a tiny speck in the distance which looked like her destination so she farewelled the sparrow family and thanked them for the blueberries and off she went! With each step she took the little dot in the distance got bigger and bigger and bigger! Soon she decided to go to sleep since it was getting dark and the twilight was coming in to the sky. When she woke up she did not know where to go or what to do. Mother kangaroo wandered around until she came to the ground. Soon she stood up tall and looked around for the red speck but she could not see it anywhere. It was hopeless. She really did not know where to go or what to do. So she decided to go in the direction of the sun. She kept hopping along until she came to a group of eucalyptus trees. Up there sitting in hammocks was the koala family!


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They were all asleep so mother kangaroo tip-toed past them. When she got to the other side she heard someone calling for help. She rushed around following the sound until she came to ten spiky things. Soon the ten spiky thing looked up and asked mother kangaroo to untangle their thorns. Mother kangaroo remembered how the rabbit family had helped her so she decided to help the ten spiky things which turned out to be lizards not spiky things at all! She started untangling until the spiky lizards were free! In return of her help the spiky lizards gave mother kangaroo a diamond on a string so that it could be worn as a necklace. They also said that it would bring her good luck on her travels. Mother kangaroo was delighted! She thanked the spiky lizards for their beautiful present and then she set off again to continue her journey! She hopped on and on and on then she looked around for the magical rock. Then was the time when she saw the magical rock just a few hops away. This made her feel very energetic. So she hopped and hopped and hopped until she was right in front of the magical rock. Mother kangaroo did a circle around the magical rock to see if there was a way she could get up.

Finally mother kangaroo found a dust, red staircase. With an outline of red and orange rocks that looked like boulders that could fall down any minute. She decided to find out what was up there. She climbed and climbed and climbed until she was at the very top of the magical rock! Then she remembered what the wise, old echidna had told her. So she sat down and closed her eyes and wished to have a baby of her very own. Then after a few moments of silence mother kangaroo opened her eyes. But nothing had happened. Mother kangaroo thought and thought and thought and then after all that thinking she finally had an idea. Mother kangaroo remembered the diamond necklace that the lizard family had given to her. So she sat down, closed her eyes with the diamond glittering and twinkling in the sunshine. Then a magical swirling avalanche swirled around mother kangaroo with lots of bright colours making her fly through the air. When she came back down to the magical rock with a big 'thump!' She saw the thing she had been waiting for all of her life. Directly in front of her was a baby joey that had sparkling eyes and they goggled up at mother kangaroo like a pair of fish eyes.

But the weird thing was that there was a bird next to the little kangaroo's feet and more started appearing. She suddenly realised it was the sparrow family she had helped earlier on. She had just one problem now and it was how to get home. Then one of the sparrows told mother kangaroo that they were there to take her home. Mother kangaroo grabbed her baby and slipped the diamond around his little head. Soon enough mother kangaroo and her baby were flying through the air being lifted by all the sparrows in the family! When the sparrows had lifted them up from their landing because they had stumbled a bit where they got to the ground. Mother kangaroo picked up her baby who she decided to call Dusty after the red, hot and dusty Australia outback. Mother kangaroo thanked the sparrows and they waved to them as they flew off. Then mother kangaroo invited Dusty into his new home. She showed him all the pictures on the walls and where he would be sleeping but when she turned around Dusty was nowhere to be seen! Mother kangaroo rushed around but she could not find him anywhere! When she looked under the blanket she saw two little brown ears peeping out from under the blanket.

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So she rolled the blanket down a little bit more to reveal ~~so~~ tiny, sleeping and ver tired Dusty! So she lied down next to him knowing that Dusty would be her best friend forever. So here, in the outback of Australia a mother kangaroo hugs her baby close who loves her just the same as she loves him. The End 

Things I Did When I Was In Quarantine

by Johnathan Jeremy Rattigan

Intro:

My sisters, my parents and I usually fly to Shanghai to visit our grandparents at Chinese New Year. The weather is very different to Australia in January. When we left Perth, we were wearing T-shirts, but when we arrived in Shanghai we had to put big jackets on to keep us warm. It usually snows around Chinese New Year, but it didn't this time. I was a little bit disappointed. Because I couldn't make a snowman and have snowball fights with my sisters and friends.

Things felt very different this year. There weren't any fireworks. And it was a lot quieter on the road than usual. We were not allowed to visit our relatives and friends and we were told to stay indoors as much as possible. But we still had our New Year tradition which is to hang the lanterns and red decorations on the door which indicate good fortune and harmony. I like New Year's red. It brings warmth in the winter.

Instead of having family meals together, we had our WeChat meetings with relatives and friends. We stayed for three weeks then had to change our flight to come back a week earlier to Perth at midnight on 2nd February, I was tired. When I first heard I need to stay at home for two weeks, I felt happy that I could have a longer holiday. But then I felt a bit upset because I didn't get to go to my Australian grandparents' house or school.

Chapter 1:

I had my birthday at home when we were in quarantine. My mum made the best New York cheese cake I ever tasted in my whole life. My grandparents came over, but we only said "Hi" over the fence. They brought me a card, gifts and a small cake. I was really happy. But I was also sad that they couldn't celebrate with me.

I wished for a lego set for my birthday present, and it came true. We chatted a lot with family in China that night, and they all sang the birthday song for me.

Chapter 2:

I made a hand line on a stick as a fishing rod. I love fishing a lot. I couldn't wait to use it. I went fishing recently with it and caught a bream and my sister caught a puffer fish. I was glad that I didn't catch a poisonous fish.

We often go to Mandurah for fishing when my Shanghai grandparents come and visit once a year on one of the school holidays. It's a long way to drive from our house, but I enjoyed it a lot. We often go in the late afternoon. We use chicken carcass as bait along with several drop nets for the crabbing.

I saw some people use scoop net by the river, but where we go crabbing is in the middle of the river under a big bridge. We are not allowed to catch the pregnant crabs and they need to be big enough. We often catch the blue swimmers.

I needed help with setting the fishing rod ready to cast. The most exciting thing is when we pull up the net and when the fishing rod is moving. I got lucky when I caught a yellow tail, but it wasn't big enough, so we let it go.

Chapter 3:

One day, I saw two spiders and their gigantic web on the window in our dining room and another one in the kitchen. Both had lots of spiderlings and they were scurrying in all directions. I liked to watch how they catch flies. We kept them like pets.

Spiders are arachnids. They have eight legs. I wondered if the spiders we kept were venomous. Then I looked them up in the spider book. They are black house spiders. They are venomous only when they are defending themselves.

Chapter 4:

We were planning to have some chickens and Dad was starting to build a chicken coop. I was so excited. I even had names planned for them. I want to call them fluffy, cutie and pumpkin.

I did lots of zoom meetings with my best friend. I went kindy, preprimary and year one with him. Unfortunately, he had to move school this year. I was really sad. He has some chickens in his house too. He shared some information about chickens with me.

I played cricket with my Dad and sisters in our backyard and did lots of running. I got very tired from running. I know that my sisters can be a little trouble but we can be a great team when we play sports together.

Chapter 5:

I did lots of drawing and played in the cubby house. My favorite thing of all is building lego in the lego room. That's my special room. My sisters are usually not allowed in unless I let them, especially my three-year old sister. She is a bit of a handful.

We made a tent in our backyard. It was so much fun to play in there. We often pack a lunchbox and have a pretend picnic in our backyard and if it is raining, we have indoor picnics. So much fun.

Chapter 6:

I did a Food Technology course with my Mum. We made Italian pizza, Chinese dumplings, Turkish spinach gozleme, British scones and so much more. I love cooking with her. My job is to gather all the ingredients and help measure them.

We have our own veggie patch in our back yard, we have got tomatoes, beetroot, bok choy, broccoli, cauliflower, capsicums and lots of herbs like chill, chives, basil, so we can use fresh ingredients without needing to go to the shop.

Ending

I had lots of fun in quarantine, but I missed my friends and teachers. I couldn't wait to go back to school. I really wanted to go back for swimming, fishing, hiking, bike riding, going to the beach and playdates with friends.

Camelia and Pixie

By Farida Ibrahim



Camelia was a pleasant girl who lived in Equsteria. Equsteria was a peaceful village, where everyone lived happily except...Camelia. Polly and Camelia lived in an old tower. Some parts were broken, but Camelia did not mind. Camelia was not always able to buy food for Polly, her little parrot.



One bright sunny day, Camelia was at the marketplace with Polly. Camelia only had a penny or two to buy a packet of crackers for Polly and herself. The packet only had ten crackers, so Polly and Camelia had to share five each.



After they finished eating, Camelia decided to play with Polly in the desert sand, which was right next to her house. When they dug a hole in the sand, they found an ancient book!



Camelia opened the book, and then a shimmering, shining, glimmering Fairy flew out. Camelia thought it was a dream, but it wasn't. Camelia was very shocked. "I may grant you three wishes," said the Fairy.



"Wh- wh - who are you?" murmured Camelia as she took a step back.

"Oh? Me? I'm Pixie," said the Fairy kindly. "What's your name?" asked Pixie.

"I'm Camelia," replied Camelia.

"So! You can grant me three wishes, right?" asked Camelia.

"Correct" answered Pixie.



"Pixie, can you grant me my first wish now?" asked Camelia anxiously.

"Of course! What do you wish for?" said Pixie.

"Hmmm... let me think...OH! I know! I wish for a hundred dollars!" thought Camelia.

"OK! A hundred dollars for you!" shouted Pixie.



"AHHHHHHHHHH!" screamed Camelia. The money was dripping from the sides of the tower! Camelia was very worried if all the robbers would attack the tower and break it or steal the money.

"TAKE IT AWAY!" yelled Camelia.

"Okay." said Pixie quietly.



“Ok. Let’s try something else...Oh! I’ve got one!” Camelia said to herself. “Pixie I wish for all the crackers in the shop to be for free!”

“Okay,” said Pixie.

Camelia was so excited to get the free crackers.

They started walking to the market place but Pixie seemed a little bit worried.

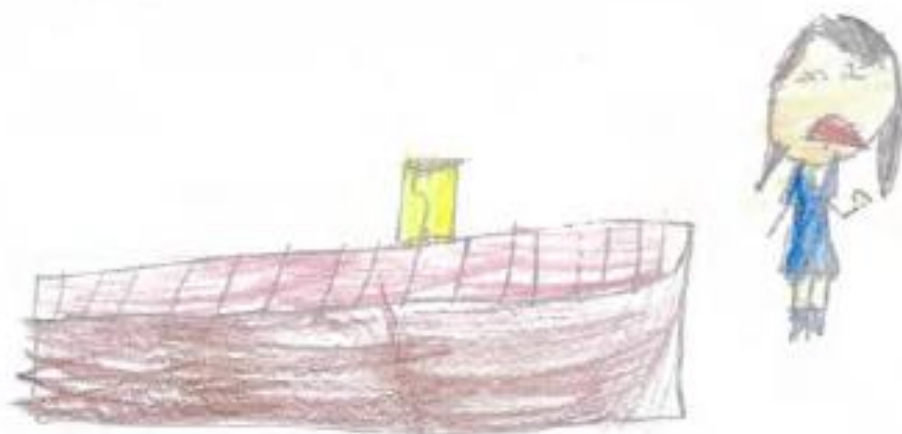


As Pixie and Camelia reached the market place, Camelia was ASTONISHED. Everyone was pushing and shoving because instead of just the crackers being free, everything was free. The owner of the shop was crying and sobbing because nobody paid for anything! "MAKE IT STOP!" cried Camelia.

"Okay, okay", said Pixie



"One last try," said Camelia. Camelia just loooooooved crackers... she kept thinking about what she wanted, until she got an amazing idea. "Pixie, I wish that I am the owner of the cracker factory," said Camelia. In that way Camelia will get an endless number of cracker packets. In a puff of smoke Camelia's wish came true! Everything seemed fine, but Camelia knew something wasn't right. When Camelia got hungry, she tasted a cracker and it was AWFUL!! "UGH!" shouted Camelia.



“Okay! I’ve had enough!”, shouted Camelia angrily. “Pixie did you go to university?” asked Camelia suspiciously. “Uhh...no actually, Why?” asked Pixie. “I didn’t finish university”.



"Then we have to go to Fairy Land, and you can learn magic in fairy university," suggested Camelia. When they reached Fairyland, Camelia saw the most wonderful thing, The Fairy Garden. It was sparkling, shining, lush, vibrant! The Fairy Garden had lovely green trees and some rainbow thingies on it.

"What are the thingies on the trees?" asked Camelia.

"Oh! Those. They're rainbow fairy fruits," answered Pixie.

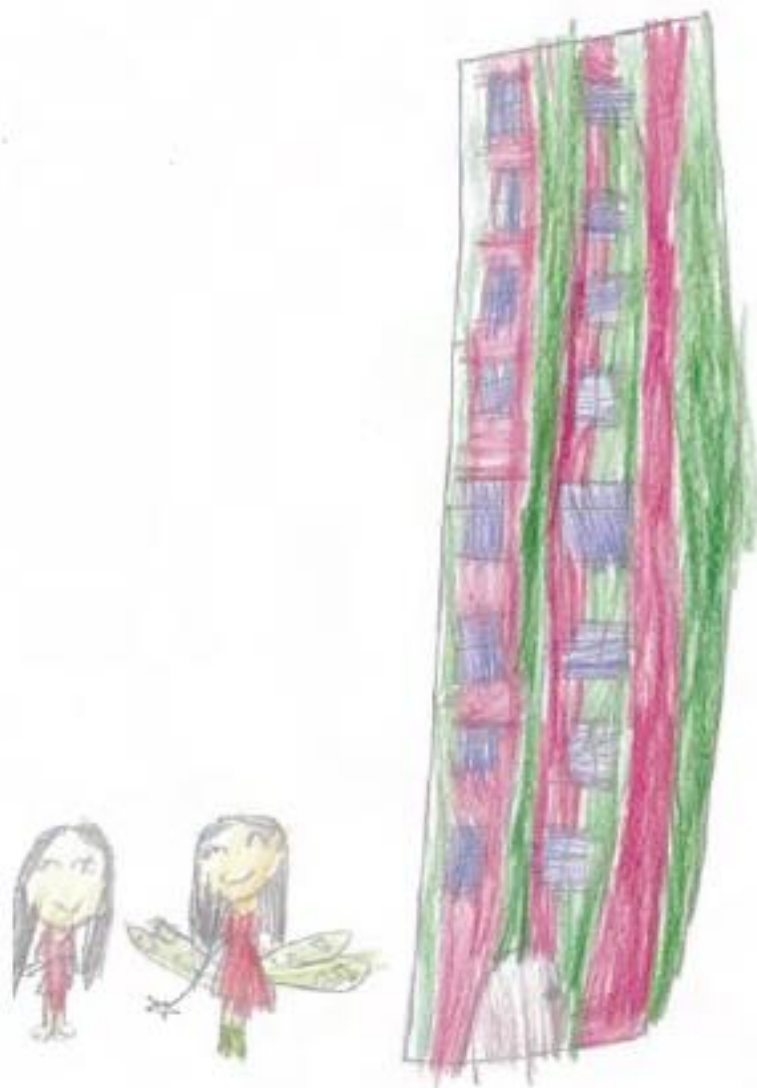


When they arrived at fairy university, it was a very tall building.

"Uhhh... Pixie is it okay if I join university, too?", asked Camelia. "We can help each other and study together,"

"Yes! You can!" answered Pixie.

"Let's go now," said Camelia excitedly.



They found their way to the front desk, where a tiny dwarf sat on a long chair .

“Excuse me? Can we join Rainbow Magic University?” asked Pixie politely.

“Yes! Of-course you can. Do you want to take a tour?” said the tiny dwarf.

“No thank you,” answered Pixie.



Camelia and Pixie spent 4 years studying in the magic university. As soon Pixie and Camelia finished learning all the spells, something fascinating happened ... CAMELIA TURNED INTO A FAIRY!! She was the most talented fairy ever. Camelia did every spell she knew. She even turned Polly into a uni-parrot!



MIDDLE PRIMARY

Highly Commended

The Perfect Wave

THOMAS

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First Place (Tied)

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First Place (Tied)

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AMELIE DAWSON

THE PERFECT WAVE

By Thomas Richardson

CRASH! "Geez." I said. These waves are crazy, I need practise for the surfing tournament which is only two weeks away. I feel really scared to do the tournament. My board is a fantastic fibreglass Elnino fluid but I haven't even caught a wave yet at this beach. Finally, I catch a beautiful wave but it was the last wave for the day.

TWO WEEKS LATER ON TOURNAMENT DAY

"I think it's time" I said to my best friend Cooper who is a legend at surfing.

It seems like it is going to be a rainy day. I hope it doesn't come down until after we finish. Only one hour until we are out there. I see someone familiar and then it hits me. Oh no it's my biggest enemy from school. It's Jack who gets called Jacko. He has been the top dog at surfing. Cooper isn't a big fan of him either. I start to shiver as walk down the stairs to the beach. Jack is waiting to welcome everyone, but I walk straight past him, but he still runs up to me. I ignore him because he's REALLY REALLY annoying. He is a showoff and a bit mean but he's been on TV and won the surfing championship before. I need to get in the top five of this tournament to make it to the championship.

Soon as I was out there, I searched for a rip and then I noticed I was in one because I was slowly drifting out to sea. I was still staring at the sea looking for a fantastic wave and looking at the beautiful ocean. I see a beautiful wave and another one behind it. I go for the huge wave behind it because its way bigger than the other. I make up my mind and go for it. As I paddle for the wave, I start getting shivers up my spine. I can't turn back now this is the final moment. It seems scary but I have to be brave. I start paddling like WILD. If I miss this, I will be out of the challenge for sure. I peer behind me and I see that I need to slow down a little to get this perfect. I want to make it through to the next round. My friend Cooper waves and starts to cheer for me. I look at him, but I remember I need to concentrate. I focus on the wave. It's about to crash when I notice I am starting to nose dive so I pull up, up and up and... YES I did it. Now I am on the wave surfing like a superstar. I do a turn and I flip and land it!

"Yee hah!" I shout. I do a front flip off the surfboard into the water and everyone cheers! I had done it! Now it was time to get back onto the sand. As I walk on the sand bank to get the results, I am kind of nervous. There are a lot of great surfers and I shouldn't get my

hopes up. There are still two surfers out there and they both get a really good wave. That makes me even more nervous.

It is time for the results. "In fifth place is Josh Alexander." He's my friend from school. "In fourth place with a fabulous, spectacular wave is.... JOE SPEEDY!" That's me! I am in the top five. That means I made it to the championship!

The next day I head to Sydney to train with Cooper. As soon as we arrive, we quickly unpack and head straight for the beach. We go to the amazing, awesome Bondi beach. We catch some amazing waves before going home exhausted. It was a huge day. In the morning I get up and wake up Cooper. It's another day of surfing I shout, and he gets so surprised he falls out of his bed (like always). At 7:30 am I head to the beach to get some waves but for such a famous beach the waves are not that good. I head back to the resort and have the last sleep at Sydney. On the ride back I get really nervous, fuzzy and well... HAPPY!!!! We are heading to my favourite beach on planet EARTH, Ocean Beach, Denmark, AUSTRALIA!!!!!! It is home to the Surfing Championships. Ocean beach is amazing because of its nice big cruising waves that crash and still hold on to you and you can also swim is there because the clear and shiny water is see through and you can see the beautiful ocean life.

FINALLY, I am here at Ocean Beach in Denmark. I am going wild today and have millions of shivers going up my spine and there's also about a million people in the crowd who are very keen to watch the championship. Today is the big day. I need to do this. I say it over and over again in my head. At the shore I think maybe I can do this. When the siren blows it means the competition has started. I'm out first and getting out the past the breakers. I see a wave and I think if I surf perfectly then I will be famous. I imagine myself on the podium standing in first place. I will have SO MUCH MONEY and a GOLD TROPHY!!!!!! I nearly punch myself in the face to make me focus. FOCUS I scream in my head. I start paddling like WILD WILD WILD! As soon as I see the wave about to crash behind me, I stand up and the wave thrusts me forward and I nose dive. I hear a BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO from the shore!!!!!!!!!!

Then I get kind of angry (I think you should maybe stand back because well..... you know). I get back on my board and go out and see another huge wave (It's even bigger than the other one just for the heads up). I start paddling like a psychopath and I think I might have ACED THE TIMING BABY! I'm doing it! I stand up and the cheering goes up and it crashes, and I stay on and do a flip and land it. I do another AND another AND ANOTHER! I do a double backflip off the board I hear screams, shouts and splashing and I take a wave into the shore and everyone runs up. There is a crowd and even better there are news reporters. This is going to be the best day of my life!

When everyone comes in, I go to my friend Josh. He says he was watching me and says I went so well. I said he went even better but he doesn't agree. When the last person comes in the judge heads for the podium. He has the microphone and starts reading out the votes, he said in 3rd place with 382 points is JOHN SMITH! He got rewarded with \$150,000 and a bronze medal. In 2nd place with 458 points is JOSH ALEXANDER!!! I said "Go get em mate". He runs up and is rewarded with \$500,000 and a silver trophy. I wonder what 1st place would be like. Now my mate was up on second place and there were 2 other people so I couldn't imagine pulling this off. It would be amazing. The judge says and IN 1st PLACE WITH A HUGE SCORE OF 570 POINTS IS..... JOOOOOOOOOOE SPEEDY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I did it I came first! I couldn't believe my ears! I had done it. I ran up with my arms up, I am going to be on TV and now am going to be FAMOUS! I jump on the podium and was awarded with 1 million dollars!!!! I got a huge trophy that was COVERED IN PURE GOLD!! "Woo hoo!!!" I shout. "*The perfect wave*" that's the one that won me the championship and gave me so much things in my life. That wave was the best wave I have ever surfed. Now I'm heading for big wave surfing....

The Magical Food

By Lucia Fraser

One hot bright sunny day a 65 year-old wise woman named Rosa was preparing a big tasty feast for Christmas. Rosa lived in a small town in the bottom of Italy called Calabria. Rosa hosted Christmas every year and her friends loved it. This year she was going to make three meals. Spaghetti Bolognese; fish and chips; and a humongous pizza. Her friends all lived in Rome, so Rosa would have lots of time to cook before they arrived.

Before Rosa started cooking, she always went out for a walk in the woods in Calabria. On this day she went to a new special area, near a running stream where she went to collect some wild Oregano. She thought that this special herb would make her food taste even better. She took 5 leaves and walked back home.

First, she made the spaghetti Bolognese by boiling the water and putting the pasta in. Next she made the sauce and the meat balls and eventually she added the oregano. Next she moved onto the fish and chips. First she had to coat the fish in breadcrumbs, then she deep fried the fish and chips then added the oregano. Finally, she started making the pizza dough. Then she added the sauce, cheese, basil and pepperoni and added the oregano.

Like a flash of lightning, she sprinted downstairs and ran out the door with her invites to the Christmas dinner to put them in the post box. She had to put them in today, otherwise her friends wouldn't receive them in time. In about 5 minutes she arrived at the post office and waited in the queue. After a long wait, she posted the invites and was on her way home.

But in a strange twist, whilst she was running back, the food she made started talking. "Hello," said pizza. "Who said that?" asked the fish and chips. "It's me" said the pizza.

"I never knew I could talk," said the spaghetti.

"How are we speaking anyway?" asked the fish and chips.

“Any way we will have to pretend we can’t talk so Rosa doesn’t know we can speak”, announced the pizza.

“Sure,” agreed the spaghetti and the fish and chips.

The herbs that Rosa picked were special herbs, that made the food speak!

Immediately the door flung open and in came Rosa. She ran straight into the kitchen and started making the Italian dessert called tiramisu. First she dipped the sponge biscuits into coffee. Secondly she put layers of them in a glass. Finally, she topped it off with mascarpone and whipped cream.

Suddenly she realised she still had an invite left in her pocket. She quickly walked to the post office.

Meanwhile back at her house, Daniela, the friendly but lonely neighbour, was smelling the beautiful food Rosa had prepared. She knew this was the food for Rosa’s Christmas dinner. Secretly Daniela was jealous and had always wanted to go to the dinner. The problem was she didn’t know how to ask and was pretty desperate to have friends at Christmas. Since she didn’t know how to ask and thought it was being rude, she decided the only way to have the dinner was to bring it to her. She decided she would sneak into Rosa’s house and take one of Rosa’s dishes.

Since Rosa was gone she decided this was the perfect opportunity. She had lived next to Rosa for 30 years now so she knew that she always keeps an extra key in her pot plant. She grabbed the key and slowly turned the lock. Daniela crept inside and saw an amazing spaghetti Bolognese. She took the food and meanwhile the talking foods were nearly about to burst and scream at Daniela for taking their friend. She ran out of the house, locked the door, put the keys back and ran back to her house just in time because Rosa had just turned down the street.

When Rosa got inside she noticed the Bolognese was missing. She looked everywhere for it and couldn’t find it. Finally, the foods couldn’t take it anymore. They opened their mouths and started explaining to Rosa what had just happened. “It was outrageous,” the pizza said. “I can’t believe someone just did that,” stated the fish and chips.

Rosa was in shock. She couldn’t believe that her food was talking to her.

She then started thinking. “What made these meals so different to every other meal I make?” she asked herself.

She then remembered.

She had picked the wild oregano, that she has never used before. Getting quickly used to the idea of the talking food, she then thought she would ask the food who took the Bolognese.

“You won’t believe this; it was your neighbour,” said the pizza.

She looked out her window and saw Daniela looking at the spaghetti. So, she walked to her house and confronted her.

“Why did you steal my food?”, said Rosa.

Daniela looked sad, and said “because I am lonely and don’t have any friends to have Christmas dinner with”.

Rosa felt sorry for Daniela, and made a deal that if Daniela gave back Rosa’s food, then Daniela would be invited to the Christmas dinner every year.

Daniela returned the spaghetti to Rosa. The pizza and fish and chips were excited to see their friend back.

Overnight, Rosa also started to think about her talking food, and realising that she didn’t want to eat them. The food were such good friends with each other, and were also very helpful. The next morning Rosa decided to cook some different food and asked Daniela to help her cook the food.

Daniela was excited about the day, and Daniela and Rosa cooked new dishes; lasagne, roast chicken and garlic bread. Rosa then started cleaning, firstly she swept and mopped the floor. Secondly she put all of her stuff away and finally she set the table.

Rosa’s friends arrived, and she introduced them to her new friend Daniela and the talking food. Rosa’s friends were surprised at first about seeing talking food but all found it very funny. They all had a great day and a Christmas to remember.

And from that day on, this is how Rosa celebrated her Christmas, with her old friends, her new friend Daniela and the talking meals.

The talking food became her life-long friends and occasionally she went to the woods to gather some more oregano so the meals had new friends.

And her home became the noisiest house on the street!

The Hypnotist

By Amelie Dawson

He was a hypnotist. He had the power to control them. He walked through the alley-way made of flying books. As he walked, it was like a row of royal soldiers dressed in red velvet, bowing down at him. It was like the books were loyal to him, and he had somehow served them in some mysterious way. He continued to walk along the passage of floating, mysterious books, with a determined look on his face. He suddenly came to a halt at the end of the curious passage. The puzzling man then took a sharp left and disappeared.

Little did the man know that his secret had been discovered by two inquisitive girls. The girls, named Emily and May, had stumbled upon a hole in a wall and, after stepping hastily through it, found themselves in the corner of a cobblestoned alley-way they had never seen before. The girls hid behind a rubbish bin, holding onto each other, trembling with fear. Had they really just seen that? The girls, always so curious, wanted to find out more despite the fear that gripped them.

Emily and May finally let go of each other tumbling to the ground. Emily swiped up her bright pink notebook that had fallen from her hand, and May grabbed her pastel purple pen. They were always ready for detective work. As they watched the man disappear around the corner, they crept out to follow him. They tiptoed along as silent as a still night until Emily, who was always a little clumsy, managed to trip over her own feet and land with a thud. Terror shot down their spines as the man's hypnotic eyes locked on the girls.

Emily and May let out a blood-curdling scream. May yanked Emily's arm, pulling her up as fast as she could. "We have to get out of here!", whispered May. They started to run. They could hear footsteps behind them and they knew the creepy man was following. Emily and May could feel the hot sticky sweat on the back of their neck. They could hear their heart beating in their ears as they ran. CRASH, BASH, BANG! "OUCH", shrieked Emily as she tumbled again. Emily held her wrist, clutching it close to her chest. May looked up to see the hypnotic man standing over them. His eyes were as wide as saucers.

"We're in big trouble now", muttered Emily. The man looked enormous as he stood over the frightened girls. "Well, well, well, who do we have here?", the man said in a sinister voice. The girls shuddered, and the hairs on their arms stood on end. The man fixed his menacing eyes on the terrified girls and, using his hypnotic power, lifted them straight up into the air. The girls frantically waved their legs and arms around, trying to get down to the ground. "Leave us alone!", pleaded the girls. "Why were you following me?" questioned the man. "Tell me, was it the King of Azam that sent you to spy on me? I will not release you until you tell me!", threatened the man.

"No, no honestly, no one sent us. We saw a strange wall with a hole in it, and we went through it. We saw some books flying in the air, and we wanted to know how that was possible", stammered Emily. "How do I know you are telling the truth?", snapped the man. "Please, just believe us and let us go. We won't tell anyone what we saw, and we will go and never come back", begged May. The man hesitated. Were the girls telling the truth? Could he really believe them? Ever since word had got out that he had hypnotic powers, the King of Azam wanted to capture him and use his powers to control the kingdom.

The man decided the only way he could really find out if the girls were telling the truth was to use his powers to bore inside the girls' heads to see their memories. This was a risk because if the girls were spies, they could see deep inside his mind too and find the secrets to his powers. He contemplated the situation and decided to proceed despite the risk. He put the girls under a trance and used his eyes to look inside their minds. First, he looked inside Emily's and then May's. He saw flashes of two little ones playing in their front yard, squealing with delight as they danced between sprinklers. He saw a Mum hugging her daughters tightly and telling them she loved them more than all the stars in the galaxy. He saw a Dad lifting up his little girls and spinning them around while the girls squealed and shrieked with delight, "More, more Daddy."

Tears welled in the hypnotist's eyes as he remembered his own memories from his childhood. He had forgotten how it felt to be loved so much. He lowered his gaze and gently brought the girls safely to the ground. The girls, too shocked and scared to speak, stood like statues. The man said quietly, "Please go home to your family. I am not a danger. The powers you saw are not going to hurt a soul. When I was a child, I too was inquisitive. That led me to a mysterious warlock who bestowed upon me these powers but for doing works of good, not evil. Others have heard of these great powers and want them for themselves to use for evil."

The girls, still shocked but now relieved, looked at the man and saw kindness in his eyes. They saw memories of a little boy playing ball with his dog and being told that he was loved. The man was filled with a sense of hope and joy. Maybe things would be okay. Before anything else could happen, the girls spun around and took off, their feet beating like drums on the cobblestone path. Down the path, through the hole and back to safety. The girls leaned against the big gum tree outside their house. They decided they had encountered enough adventures to last them a lifetime, but then they saw....

UPPER PRIMARY

Highly Commended

Just a Man

FRANCESCA PACE

Second Place

Escape from Humanity

ISABEL EAU

First Place

My Happy Ending

SONIA DURYEA

Just a Man

By Francesca Pace

The dawn gently sweeps across the distinct London Bridge, for all early birds to acknowledge the remarkable sight of the crammed avenues and swift aromas of the re-opened bistro, Café De Bonjour. For all ordinary humans, it had a nostalgia of young fellows roaming in with essentials and out with delicacies, unlike the pristine women and fine gentlemen who would state it had 'not too much of a flare for my liking', or in simpler terms it was a shabby area with no modern taste. The vicious war between Germany and Britain had been on going and startled the young children, whose father had committed to fight. Morte'z gradually hauled back her amber hair, leaving a thin streak out of her slick ponytail that had been held back by an antique cream ribbon that her mother would always wear. She felt her silvered chain around her neck, which was an inheritance from her great grandmother Clarice.

"Why is Father mighty but couldn't survive the war?" Benjiman thought curiously out loud. Considering the streets were packed with people and one casement had been unlatched, it was as if his voice was just another part of the orchestra. It was unexpectedly surprising that she could even hear his question, and hid a small wince. "Oh Benji," Morte'z explained being the older sister, "London is new to us, but we have to let go of what happened." He quietly shrugged. "Who's my little caped crusader?" Morte'z cheekily asked. Benji stared blank. "Batman you mean?" The girl rolled her soulful almond eyes and playfully gave him an unbearable tickle until he burst out laughing, and then crying. Morte'z knew how much Father meant to him, as he would write letters everyday even though Father hadn't been in touch for years. A slender women wearing a dawn tinted raiment with frilly laces covering the front, barged into the discarded apartment. "It's time to meet your Grandfather who will officially be taking care of you two." Her outdated badge said 'Tarissa'. "I guess you could say your Grandfather is a man with many... unique characteristics." That was the last thing told to the children before they actually met him. Before they knew what the outcome was going to be.

Morte'z swiftly rearranged the 5 year old boy's hair with a skinny wooden comb and responsibly slid on her mirror glazed ebony sneakers that matched with her own dress. They were taken into a tinted turquoise room surrounded by antique paintings of Grandfather's ancestors. Then there he was. Sitting in a scarlet chair, with absolute silence. The siblings were perplexed and a little offended with the 'welcome' they weren't receiving. Slowly he turned around and flinched an eyebrow, still lodged tightly to his recliner. "I see you are the Tusciana kids." Morte'z promptly came around and invited herself a seat on the flocculent mat. "Yes that is correct. I am 10 years old turning 11 in September. My name is Morte'z and this is my little brother, Benjiman, although please do call him Benji or Batman as those are his preferred names." He let out a rusted chuckle and nodded. "Very well. You two shall call me Grandfather and-" Benji unexpectedly interrupted, "Is that your friend? You know, the chair you are attached to. Can it talk?" Morte'z visibly glared at him as his imagination ran wild. If looks could kill. The conversation was paused to mute. In fact, the man looked slightly embarrassed. He then gracefully replied, "Yes." That was the last word spoken during their discussion.

Dinner was served at 7 and lights were out at 9pm. That appeared to be the schedule. Benji had finished his drawing for Father, and was dreaming about possibly renaming himself Superman. A

blinding lamp had been switched on for a while, which signalled that someone was still awake. Time sprinted, and it landed on the witching hour. You could recognise the scratched timber clock piece, chiming as it ricocheted off the peeling walls, through the narrow corridors and entering the living space. That had been the final straw for the little girl as it has always frightened her. The oversized bed spread felt different to hers. Everything was somehow unusual and frightening. She finally realized the problem... it wasn't home.

Overwhelmed, Morte'z shot up like a deer in the headlights and began to cry. She scampered down the spiral stairs in search for anyone that was attentive. Uncoincidentally, Grandfather was in his scarlet chair, re-arranging a couple of letters. Morte'z scurried over and, overcome with despair, gave him a giant bear hug. She missed Father's silly jokes and telling him how their day went. His last words to the children were 'wait for me to come home'. Grandfather understood her discomfort and decided it was time to tell her one of his experiences as a child. "I was always interested in catching live insects and studying them, which isn't a very common thing for boys to do. My father would constantly remind me to 'become a man'. Outside was where I lived. Nonsense playing and bug catching out in the park or streets was an obvious location to spot me." The child didn't comprehend how this fantastic childhood story was supposed to help. But she listened, and he continued.

"My mother had a protective personality, so when she told me to be careful since there had been cases of bombs lying around, I just shrugged. The next day came and I followed my everyday routine. In the afternoon, I was running with my friends in the asphalt street, not far from here." The girl anxiously fiddled the knots out of her tresses. "There was a misshapen object hidden over by the odd couple of leaves. I assumed it was just a clump of stone or a lump in the cement... but unfortunately it wasn't. Everything went quiet, followed by a deafening noise. I smashed into the gravel. It was glary, and I had deep cuts in my knee with blood strewn across my body. I had stepped on a bomb. Crowds of people gathered around, some calling the ambulance, and others cringing at the injuries." He sighed. "What I didn't know was that along with the scars and irreversible damage to my body, I was never going to walk again... I had lost both my legs." Morte'z gasped. "But how come I never noticed?" She then realised an opaque cloth covering where his legs would be. "I am so sorry." The man looked up and said nothing. He just smiled in his scarlet chair.

Tarissa having casual visits, meant tea with vanilla cream Swiss roll cakes whilst checking in on the children. It had been an everyday routine for them. Grandfather caught up with the new fad of calling Benji 'Superman', as instructed to. He continued receiving envelopes, but curiously wouldn't permit the children to see them. Months rolled into June and the beauty of summer awoke in September, ready for Morte'z 11th birthday. There were plastered trinkets around the delicate shelves for her, and of course, she woke to a delicacy of a jam and cream scone. That was nothing compared to the buttercream layered Victoria sponge cake Benji and Grandfather had carefully made. October, the floating dream coloured leaves would often cling onto the wheel of Grandfathers' chair, which led to January. Supposedly it is the 'mystical time of the year' but for the kids, that was a different story. It was the year Grandfather fell ill.

You could say dreams are real. Or maybe the only way to escape reality. Most would say it gives off hope or a sense of courage. Morte'z and Benji were dreaming, but none of that happened. The siblings were disturbed as the bright lamp closest to Benji was turned on. "Kids, Morte'z, Benji, I need you to wake up!" Tarissa repeated it twice, to give them a chance to fully process the orders. "Did someone scratch his chair?" Morte'z exchanged Benji a death stare and returned to her instructions. Grandfather's chair was his vehicle for being. It gave him back his legs to live his only life. She noticed Tarissa had stains down her cheek, from what seemed to be tears. Both clambered

down the spiral stairs and searched for Grandfather. An obvious figure was shone by the torch. He was in his chair with a frail look and exhaled shakily. Morte'z collapsed into his arms. Tears fell as he drifted away. Benji stood there with nothing to say except a soft "I'll miss you." The girl knew what that meant, and expected Grandfather to be sorrowful. She clasped onto the sterling locket attached to the necklace, a gift from him in September. "I am so sorry." The man looked up and just smiled. The front door opened with a grinding echo, which sent Benji off to investigate. However, a familiar phrase was heard sending chills up everyone's spine. "So, did you wait for me to come home?"

Escape From Humanity

By Isabel Eau

I've been used for many missions, like to escort the King himself. Then, after I have done my job and I am still alive, whoever I have protected is safe, I would be rewarded greatly. Normally, I would just walk around the passage hall whenever I am off duty and so I would play with the little Prince. He would always try to catch me but failed of course. I don't blame him, he was just a little toddler and I was a grown wolf. No one would be able to catch up with me not even the stable horses. Everything changed when a man with a blue beanie threw a rope around me. Normally everyone around would treat me with great respect and wouldn't dare to hurt me, so I let the man lead me and I started to walk with him. As he yanked the rope I had fell on the ground. Never in my whole life have I been treated like this. As I leapt into the air and aimed directly at the man, he got out a wooden bat and smashed me back to the ground, blood was on my face. I got up again, ready to strike but he was too fast and knocked me back onto the ground. There was blood everywhere on my body. I growled at him. I was furious about what he had done to me. No one would be able to recognize me now as blood was dribbling down my body every part of my bones hurt. I couldn't move anymore, I couldn't leap up in the air no more so I just laid there.

As the mysterious man dragged me across the field I thought about what was going to happen to me next. Thinking about it I let out a blood curdling howl. As I did that the man kicked me and said "Shut up, next time it wouldn't be just a kick". Holding the wooden bat up high. I stared at it. I didn't know what to do, all I could think of was about the little Prince and how he would be so lonely without me. Then the king, who would not be able to replace me so easy, as I thought about it tears dribbled down on my face. My coat of fur was no longer clean and shiny. Instead it was disgusting and the blood had made it worse. Sad and desperate for help, I let fate decide whether I lived or died. If my life was going to be chained up and locked up and men beating me up, I see no way of survival.

The man started to drag me along the ground. I began to think of all the happy memories I had. It was such a nice feeling. He stopped; in front was a train. He told me to get up, so I did as I was asked. I quickly sprinted inside the train, scared I might fall back down which I did. When I was in the train it wasn't so inviting, it was so lonely and scary. Immediately I lay down on the brown, oak wood floor. The man shut the door; it made it worse since there was no light coming in the train. Then I saw some water and meat. Forgetting about all the pain, I dashed to the food and began to tear the meat and bite it. It was so juicy and delicious, next I went to the water, and it tasted like soap so I didn't want to drink more of it. After that I just laid down and just fell asleep, hoping this was all just a dream.

I was wrong; when I woke up I was still where I was. There was blood on my coat of fur. As if things couldn't make it worse a man came in, he was a little larger than the other man who had made me suffer like this and was also holding the wooden bat. A few other men got out a cage and the man who was holding the wooden bat told me to go inside the cage. Knowing if I disobeyed his order I would get another beat of the bat. If I let the man hit me one more time I would not be able to walk nor defend myself from prey. So I did as he asked. I slowly walked into the cage, and when I was in the cage immediately the man shut me in. Then he had left. I've never felt so lonely in my whole life. It was a doleful feeling I will never forget.

After what felt like an hour and a half I was loaded off the train. When I got out it was freezing. As the snow fell down before me I imagined what it would be like if I was as delicate as a snowflake. The snowflake drifted downwards swishing left and right. It was so beautiful, it was so free. I for one have so many things to fear and accomplish. Right now I have everything to fear. Surely I won't be stuck here forever and one day I'll get my revenge. For now though I have to do as I am asked.

After a night of sleeping in the cold, I began to ponder as I walked around the cage. Then water sprayed on me. The man that came looked different he was larger and had a coat on. As with every man I had seen he was holding the wooden bat. He let me out of the cage and threw the rope on me. He started to walk so I did as well. When he finally stopped I tilted my head up and what I saw were these weird looking carriages. They were all being pulled by wolves. It was shocking that they would use wolves instead of horses. Obviously, you would use horses to pull carriages its common sense. Then I had an idea. I dropped on the floor and pretended to play dead. As the man saw me he looked astounded and didn't know what to do or say. "Get him outta here we don't wanna have dead wolves everywhere" shouted a man. I couldn't believe my luck. Then I saw the other wolves look horrified and depressed. I couldn't escape yet.

After I was loose I immediately sprang up and dashed to the other wolves, and ripped of the ropes from them. All the men started to shout "GET THOSE WOLVES!" I had freed all of the wolves and was so proud of my courage. As each and every one of the wolves began to knock out all those weird looking carriages, I just sat there looking at what they had created (A mess) then after they were done, they had spotted houses. As expected they dashed to the tiny wooden huts and started to make a huge mess. "NOOOOOO!!!" Cried all man. It was hilarious, I had gotten my revenge so did the other wolves. Then, I felt a rope threw over me and it yanked hard. Knocking out of all the air inside of me. 'Oh, YOU'RE GOING TO PAY FOR THIS!' "Nope" I said. Realizing that they weren't very smart enough to think that if they pull the rope, and then I straighten my head I would be able to break free from their clutches. As he yanked the rope again I straightened my head and easily slipped through the rope. I sprinted as fast as I can into the woods where no one could find me. I wandered further into the deep woods. In front of me was a mountain. So I walked up the mountain to see the damage I had cause to those men. Carriages and wagons were all destroyed and their houses were all smashed into wooden bits. I guess this was my home now, not being a protector nor a slave. I was free. I was the Alpha now. No one will ever make me suffer again.

My Happy Ending

By Sonia Duryea

I open my eyes to the inside of the furry enclosure that I call home. My body kept comfortable, even though my mother might have suffered the elements. I was protected by her pouch, where I had spent my previous months. My mother was the most beautiful wallaby I had ever known. I tried waiting for her to wake up, but as I am sure you already know, I'm very impatient, and waiting isn't my calling.

So, I squirmed and squirmed and squirmed, hoping my mother would let me out of her pouch as she snored, taking each effortless breath like the waves on the sea. At last, with much more groaning than necessary, she rolled over, allowing me to scramble out. I tried not to wake anyone else up except Ashley and Marcus, who were already too big to sleep in their mother's pouches. However, they just pretended not to miss the warmth, as even though it was summer, it grew surprisingly cold when it was nearing dusk.

To me, we were family. Marcus was like my big brother, protector even, and Ashley was the adoring older sister I always wished I had. After I had roused them both, and they had rubbed the sleep out of their eyes or tried to in Ashley's case as she had poked herself in the eyeball, seemingly forgetting she had claws, we wandered off into the bush to try and find something to eat. After all, we hadn't eaten for three whole hours. We were starving, me in particular. Even though I was the smallest, I had the biggest appetite.

After nearly two hours of foraging in the dark and finding practically nothing, we decided to head back to our mob. We ended up racing, but I must have taken a wrong turn because I somehow got separated from both of them. But I wasn't worried. A flock of birds screeched at something in the distance, then flew away as one giant arc. I thought nothing of it at the time, but soon realised why they were off in such a hurry.

Just as I started to near home, I heard thumping and hissing, which I knew meant danger. I started hopping towards the noise. Barely twenty metres from me stood a solid wall of fire, but worse still I could see grotesque figures of loved ones going up in flames. It was Marcus, Ashley, my mother. My family!

Then, I saw a wide opening in the ground only a few metres away. Seconds before the flames engulfed me, I dived into the burrow, which was stuffed with little animals like me. The aroma of the tunnel was not a good one as it was one of fear, horror, sadness, and blood. I shivered even though it was bound to be over 120 degrees Celsius outside and with that, I passed out.

I woke to warmth, but it was not the comforting kind; it was hard and stale and lonely. When I realised that my refuge was overcrowded, I left, poking my head out of the burrow to find nothing but ashes. I stumbled out into the real world or what it had become. I turned in all directions, but there were no survivors, not that I thought there would be. I just hoped

that somehow someone would be there waiting for me so that I wouldn't be so alone in this black, black world.

Feeling heartbroken at what I was leaving behind in the burning ashes, my heart itself on fire with the pain of losing everything that I'd ever known, I kept pushing forward. I knew I had to get as far away from this place as possible if I wanted to survive.

So, I kept moving slowly away from all those bad memories, apart from the pain that I knew would come if it hadn't already. After a while, the heat started to get to me. It stung at my face and body, intent on making me suffer. My throat and mouth grew dry, and the pads on my feet were in agony. Most of all, my stomach was like an empty abyss. Then as if on call it started to rain but it didn't feel like regular raindrops, more like pellets. I tried to find cover, but there wasn't any, and there needn't be because as quick and surprising as it started it stopped. When I realised I wasn't wet, I looked around only to see that nothing was. Instead of water, the ground was flooded with carrots and potatoes. With my hunger aided, I was able to push forward.

After a few more hours of hopping to nowhere I found a singular tree just standing there as if it was waiting for me and in my dazed mindset, I obeyed my instincts and forgot all my worries as I drifted off into a deep sleep beneath the branches. However, happiness can't and won't last forever because when I woke, it was not to the sound of bird song but the cries of nine hungry dingoes fighting over who was going to bite me first. Unfortunately, one of them noticed that I was awake, and the pack went deathly silent. Then all at once, they pounced, each of them trying to get a bit of me into their mouths.

Only moments later what seemed to be their leader saw something behind me, howled, then with its tail between its legs, scampered away. Soon the others followed suit, and I was left to drown in a puddle of my own blood. My heart stopped when I saw the flames. The once black world was red. It was like someone had got a red crayon and scribbled all over a clean blackboard, but there was something different this time. There were humans and lots of them. The humans all had what looked like flexible pipes that squirted water. There seemed to be a dance between the two elements, but the flames were still winning.

Suddenly firm but gentle hands picked me up and pulled me towards the owner's chest. The man uttered soothing noises into my ears. "Shhhhh" the stranger whispered, "you're safe with me." I couldn't understand what he was saying, but I stayed still as he proceeded to carry me towards a sort of big yellow bird, with three wings on the top of its head and dust flying out beneath its feet. Typically, I would have lashed out if a random human came, picked me up and took me towards something I had never seen before, but somehow, I knew I was safe in the man's arms. Safe enough to sleep, I thought drowsily, as he bandaged up my wounds.

When I woke, the first thing I saw was a smiling face staring down at me from behind thin glasses that had dropped so far down her nose that they could fall off at any minute. She said something that I couldn't comprehend. Seconds later, a little girl appeared holding something that resembled a pink pouch. I was glad when the woman gently picked me up,

slowly unravelled the blanket from underneath me and placed me in the pouch. She smiled, and that made me feel safe, as though I wasn't so alone in the world.

As I lay there in the girl's arms, I remembered what had happened to my friends, I remembered what had happened to my family, and I realised how lucky I was to have my happy ending.

LOWER SECONDARY

Highly Commended

The Diary of Quarantine

JAMES

RICHARDSON

First Place (Tied)

I am a Beautiful Rose

ALEXIA FLYNN

First Place (Tied)

The Growing Midnight

CAMERON LEGGATT

The Diary of Quarantine

By James Richardson

Day 1

Yay, the 14 days of quarantine has started.

Yes, that's right I am about to start the worst 14 days of my life, great right.

I don't know how I will put up with this, the torture, the pain, the no Macca's.

I was thinking how I was going to get through these 14 days of torture and that's why I have this diary.

It gives me something to think about other than the pain of no Macca's.

These couple of weeks aren't just going to be bad because of no Macca's, I also have to be stuck at home with my family!

I will tell you about them to show how tremendously bad they are.

First off, my sister. She is 13, yep a teenager! Her name is Milly, but I call her Silly. Well she isn't that silly it's just when my friend's brother comes over for dinner, she gets super silly and I still can't figure out why. If I had to name my sister in a few words I would say this, well the opposite of this. Kind, sporty, helpful, playful, friendly and last but not least, normal.

Next, my brother. His name is Max and yes, I do have a nick name for him and it's bomb (you'll find out why in a second). He is a crazy child. Every microsecond he wants to have a good old fight. It gets annoying because when I finally get some time to myself, he just comes and jumps on me over and over again until I get so annoyed that I start jumping on him (it usually ends with me getting told off as he starts flooding the room with tears).

My Dad. His name is Matt. He is really good at sport and loves playing cricket, footy, soccer, rock climbing and hockey. He hates golf (I mean who could like it). He is so fun to play with but there is one thing bad about him (I know it's crazy that a person like this could have something wrong with them), and that is he's always telling other people about me and never can keep a secret.

Next up, my mum. Her name is Kate and she is probably the weirdest person ever. Sometimes she is super nice then other times she is the meanest person on the world. Remember when I said my dad couldn't keep a secret and tells everyone about me, well my mum is worst. If I get a bad mark in one test, in a millisecond the whole world knows about it! but when I get a good mark she just says the negatives about it like "Why did you get this question wrong, it's the easiest!" or "Why did Jake get 50 out of 50 and you 'only' got 49/50!"

Day 2

Today I did nothing except sitting on the couch for about 16 hours and look at the most boring picture in the world (me and my family). I also counted how many flies smashed into the window. I counted 153 (it's got to be a new world record)! And now I am finally going to sleep at 11pm (best day ever, yay...).

Day 3

Today was worse than yesterday (I don't know how). Instead of lying on the couch all day I had to do a marathon. Well not really, I actually just ran around the block, which now (after these few days of no exercise) feels like running around the whole city!

Day 4

Today wasn't so bad, actually that is the understatement of the year, it was the best (until I found out what we were actually doing)! You won't believe it, I got to go out (please don't go out into the streets and start screaming that I broke my quarantine rules, because I didn't, I had permission)! I was driving around the city in the car and looking at all the buildings. We even listened to a busker playing a guitar (in the car). When I thought the day couldn't get any better, we arrived at our stop. And you won't believe what it was! A testing clinic. We had to get tested for the stupid pandemic that's ruining my life (not my sisters, hers has turned amazing because of her phone and favouritism).

Day 5

I am giving today an A plus in being bad. Today was worse than the day when I ran around the city (I know right, crazy). Today I had to clean the house! You know what's more annoying; my sister got to sit in her room for the whole day playing on her phone, so unfair. My duty was to clean the toilets, wash the kitchen, vacuum the whole entire house and (yes, there's more) clean the whole entire backyard. Guess what my brother had to do? Yep you guessed it, nothing.

Day 6

Today was ok. We did get to go out but only to get the flu vaccine, then we were straight back inside sitting on the couch, looking at the ugly picture and counting stupid flies that fly into the window.

Day 7

Halfway done! We celebrated today by doing our own little MasterChef. My parents were the judges and me, my brother and my sister were the cooks. My brother made the entree which was gyoza (he's only 8 years old), I made the main which was paella and my sister made the dessert, which was churro's, with homemade melted chocolate sauce (amazing). It was pretty even but my sister took out the win. Her reward was to choose the movie, which turned into a big argument between my sister and brother, because my brother loves to choose free movies (he is a mothers pet) and my sister (maybe more me) only chooses iTunes, which you have to pay for. In the end Max got his way but then after all that time he changed to iTunes, so we watched Spies in disguise (it was so good).

Day 8

I was so tired from last night, that I practically slept the whole day like I had just got home from U.S.A (a whole different timeline). But when night came, I got up to some mischief. I decided to set up the best prank ever! Once everyone was asleep, I ran into the kitchen fridge and grabbed a bottle of mayonnaise. I poured all of it into a bucket and then poured water into to it. I then decided to get some custard power and put all of that in then I stirred until it was a weird yellowy, whitey, watery, grey. I then got a piece of rope and attached that to bucket. I then used the other half of the rope to use as a trip rope at his door, so when Max got up, he would walk right into the rope and then, SPLASH, the crazy weird grey is all over him. I went to sleep with a laugh.

Day 9

I pulled the prank off so well! You should've seen Max's face (well you couldn't, his face was all under the weird grey stuff). Yeah, I might have been grounded for the rest of the day (not being able to go out of my room for 24 hours), but it was worth it!

Day 10

I have reached number ten, so close to the most amazing day of my life, day 14! But there is something else I need to tell you about.

You won't believe it, my mum said we had to get tested for the crazy pandemic that got us into this way in the first place, but instead we ended up at a cargo port in Fremantle (don't ask me why)?! We kept asking my mum, "What's going on?" but she just said, "You wait and see." So, we waited and waited and WAITED until finally we saw someone holding a crate with my dream inside, a dog. It was a golden retriever and was only 8 weeks (so cute). We figured out a name for it, which was Monty. But even better I was allowed to be the first one to pat him. He was so happy to see us, jumping up and down and licking us like mad. So, the worst day ever had just turned into the best!

Day 11

Now that my life has turned good again because Monty, I now can do what I want which includes pranking and cuddling my new little puppy, Monty! I cuddled him for almost all of the day until my sister and brother started wanting to pat him as well.

My sister got to have him on her bed at night (so unfair)! So, I walked into her room and called Monty to come into my room, he came almost instantly, and I decided to leave a little surprise on the way out (yep you guessed it, the weird slimy grey stuff).

Day 12

I think I am going to have a pranking career at the rate I'm going; my sister walked straight into the rope (my siblings are not very smart). I decided to stop, or I was going to get grounded for the rest of the week (but I would have Monty with me so I would be fine). Surprisingly, I didn't get grounded?! My mum probably wanted me to spend the last few days with the family. I was happy about that but mainly happy that I could cuddle Monty!

Day 13

Today was a mix between boringness and happiness (Monty) and funniness (I pulled off another prank, in the daytime)!

Day 14

Congratulations myself! I have survived the 14 days of quarantine and now I get to run around and have fun with my friends! Goodbye this diary, have a great time never seeing me again. And hello McDonalds, I need your food again!

Day 15

I got tested again to make sure and just found out I tested positive, another 14 days of quarantine!

I am a Beautiful Rose

by Alexia Flynn

A girl blinks. Her eyes are wide, disbelieving. Her skin pulls tautly across her cheekbones, barely stretching over the bone. All her bones jut out like jagged rocks on a grassy hill, revealing a body that has only just begun to heal. Despite all that, her hair flows lusciously down her body, her cheeks are rosy and her eyes sparkle.

She is. . .*beautiful*.

But she's me, and I'm not beautiful. Not now, not ever.

And yet, this girl blinks back at me through the mirror beside my bed. I raise my hand to the glass and the girl copies—no, *I* copy. *Me. It's me.*

My head floods with voices, loud and fighting for my attention. My mum's, my brother's and Mia's. Despite their different ways of saying it, they are all saying the same thing — "You are beautiful. Don't doubt that."

They must be wrong. I've seen myself. There's no way I'm beautiful. I'm not like the other girls—that's what Leah told me. The memories come flooding back. . .

Leah leans over her desk, her palms resting on my workbook. She's so close, her face only two centimetres from my own, that I can smell her perfume—it makes me feel sick.

"Your skirt looks tighter, Rose. What happened there? Sneaky Christmas eating?" Leah laughs lightly at her own words, as though it's just a joke.

I swallow and look away. Where's Mia? Where's my best friend when I need her?

Leah smirks slightly and pulls back, her eyes running up and down my body. Her friends start to do the same and I feel heat touch my cheeks. I pick up my workbook and slide it closer to my body, shrinking smaller.

"Don't worry, Rose. I'm sure if you're more careful you'll be back to looking like us." Leah smiles at me, looking surprisingly genuine. She's getting better at acting.

Mia walks into the classroom holding her flute. All it takes is one glance at the girls surrounding my desk and she speeds up her walk, heading over to my desk.

"Get lost, Leah."

At Mia's snapped command, Leah and her monkeys shrug and sashay away, but I feel like they took a part of me with them. Am I fat? Do I need to lose weight? Is there something wrong with me?

I don't know what my expression is but whatever it is, it's enough for Mia to frown.

"What did they say?" She asks.

I want to lie but there's no point. She knows me too well. So, I tell her.

She swears when I finish, "Those girls. Just, just. . .unbelievable!"

I just nod and look down. She notices and suddenly her voice becomes fierce, "Hey, they don't know what they're talking about. There is NOTHING wrong with you."

I shake my head, "You just have to say that because it's basically a best friend requirement."

"I'm not just saying it because of that. It's the truth." She's looking at me seriously, with big wide eyes.

She won't give up until I agree. So, I do. Not because I believe her but because I want her to stop talking about it. Leah's words hurt and I just want to forget them. Tonight, I'll look into dieting. There must be a way I can fix this.

Knock. Knock.

I'm pulled back into the present by the sound of my mother at my bedroom door. She pokes her head in, "Hey, Rose. We have to go—." She smiles softly, "You look so beautiful."

I smile back because I'm starting to believe that now. So many people tried to tell me this for months and now here I am, finally starting to believe it.

It all unravelled so fast, first with diets, next was the skipped meals and obsessive exercise. Eventually I was fasting to the point where my body was at risk of shutting down.

Meal times were a nightmare, especially when my mum invited the extended family. The longer it went on for, the harder it was to keep toying with my food. Keeping it secret became everything, nothing was enjoyable anymore and going out of the house was excruciating. The longer I stayed away, the worse I felt.

Was I even worth anything?

I hadn't wanted to accept that I wasn't in control anymore, even when the school chaplain pointed it out.

The school chaplain, Rachel, smiles at Mum and I, "Hello, Mrs. McCarthy," she says to Mum. To me she just nods.

Mum greets her back, but her expression is curious, "What am I here for, Rachel?"

Rachel's smile fades, "I asked you in because I'm worried about Rose. In particular about her eating habits."

"What about them?" I jut in, defensive.

Rachel turns to me, "A concerned friend came to talk to me about you. She said that a few months ago you were teased about your weight and now you hardly eat in front of her. She also mentioned that you've been losing a lot of weight recently and not in a good way."

Mia. I can't believe she would rat me out like that. She's my best friend. How could she? I feel betrayed.

Turning back to Mum, Rachel says, "After hearing this, I looked out for Rose myself and I have to agree. I'm no doctor so I can't judge this properly but I think Rose may have an eating disorder—she needs professional help."

Mum breathes in sharply but all I can feel is red hot blood rushing through me. How dare she? She has no right to pass her opinions on my health.

I bolt up, out of my chair, "You don't know what you're talking about. I don't have. . . anything like that." Tears are running down my face as I turn to Mum, "She's lying." I say, desperately.

With that, I turn on my heel and run. I run, and I run, and I run.

I get as far as the school gate before I collapse, curling around my body like a dying animal.

Eating disorder. . . who does she think she is?

The words swirl around in my head. Eating disorder. I don't have that. I don't. I don't.

Disorder—that word means something's wrong with you, doesn't it? Nothing is wrong with me. Apart from the fact that I'm not beautiful. I'm not like those other girls.

My body is racked with sobs by the time Mum finds me. She drops down and pulls me into her chest.

"Shh," she breathes, "We'll figure this out. I'm here."

But all I can hear is the word pounding in my head.

“Rose?” Mum is still standing there, “You okay?”

I nod quickly, “Yeah, just thinking. I’ll be down in a sec.”

Mum nods and closes the door.

It took me so long to even think of myself as worthy again. Those girls had smashed some part of my being, but I was the one who didn’t listen to the people around me who told me I was beautiful. I was the one who broke me.

My mum swung into action pretty quickly after that. We got professional help. Anorexia was the diagnosis, but certainly not the cause of my problems.

It took months and months for any improvement and sometimes I relapse. Eating was hard, every time I did, I could hear Leah in my head and eventually myself—agreeing with her. It helped that Mum’s and Mia’s voice were quick to override that. Even my brother helped.

My older brother, Liam, stands behind me as we walk into the Christmas feast room where the whole family is gathered. The aunts. The uncles. The grandparents. Everyone knows, everyone watches.

Liam squeezes my shoulder reassuringly and says quietly, “You got this.”

I sit down next to Aunt Cathy and Liam passes me a plate with a small portion of mash potato, peas and some meat. As I reach over to take the plate, he smiles at me softly.

Later, once everyone has left, Liam and I sit down to play cards, a present he had opened this morning.

“I’m proud of you, Rose.” He says.

I don’t respond because Mum bursts in, sitting down to play, but I smile at him and I know he gets what I’m trying to say. Thank you.

Grabbing my purse, I take one more look in the mirror and clip an artificial rose to my hair. Mum’s words come back to me. *My Beautiful Rose.*

Every time I had an appointment, or I was feeling down she would whisper that in my ear and it would make me feel whole again. Worthy.

I smile.

It took me a while—months, nearly over a year actually.

I finally realised.

With help from Mia, my brother, my mum and so many therapists and doctors.

That I am beautiful. I am worthy. And no one can take that away from me.

I am a beautiful Rose.

The Growing Midnight
By Cameron Leggatt

I giggled. My hands flew down into the box, grasping at the fur I felt. My chubby fingers ran with excitement; my eyes were an explosion of colour. I slowly peeked inside to see a small snout, a tiny prune nose and little white hairs that were gentle to the touch. I cradled the startled creature, feeling the comforting rise and fall of its chest as I slowly stroked its back. He cocked his head towards me and I felt his long sticky splats of saliva tickle my face.

"Bentley!" I exclaimed, and he yapped in response.

I stirred; the silky fabric of the bedsheets tickled my chin as I slowly woke to the cherry taste of my lip balm. All was silent except for the moan of the wind and the gentle throb of Bentley's tail on wood. The wardrobe cast shadows onto the saddening wallpaper, its edges peeled hideously into a forced smile. Bentley lay low to the floor whimpering as my sister, Elanor came in. He let off a low growl as she passed, aware of her presence. Her usually benevolent eyes were now filled with unease and her stern expression told me one thing: move.

"It's here," Elanor glared threateningly. She shot me another look, this time of concern. We went down the stairs swiftly, my brown locks flailed behind me.

As I stepped outside, he greeted me. The sky battled with the growing midnight, but slowly he came. He slinked into the crevices, slithered into the corners and swept across the lawn like a plague.

He was hungry. The darkness followed.

"Hoses, where are the hoses? ... oh my god, oh my god!" I stammered, grasping at the front door frame for support. My legs felt limp and a ball of doubt condensed in my throat.

Slowly he dusted his hands and little black flakes fluttered past my eyes, taunting me. Soon I could hear the crack of the wind like a punch in the chest, and the pounding footsteps of the fleeing animals. He swarmed and grew, turning the trees to torches, and the little grasses to candles that popped and fizzed. My lungs burned, bathed in the choking stench of woodsmoke and as if out of nowhere, a growing wall of heat and light erupted. Fireflies were launched to the heavens as the ground singed in indignation.

I grasped the garden hose with two hands, shaking as I holstered it by my hip. Tears swelled in my eyes as the moisture was sucked from my throat.

Suddenly, he scuttled up the sides of the caravan. The metal let off a creak as it expanded; the paint bubbled. He feasted until its bare skeleton was beginning to show. He laughed.

Elanor's bulging eyes told me the flames were too big. She stood helplessly, unable to watch. He wavered for a moment, snickering at my desperation. He let off a hiss as the water rained down on him but then he rebelled, raged and rolled towards the gas bottles.

Silence followed for a brief moment. I was flung to the ground; the canisters shredding my eardrums as they detonated. I stood shaking, blinded by tears and winded. My insides churned. How was I still alive? I felt like a floodgate; any moment I would lose it all and just scream.

Then I realised. Where was Bentley?

I collapsed, the rough gravel slicing my knee. I didn't care. I let the warm blood trickle down my leg and felt the dirt wriggle deeper so I could feel as Bentley did: hopeless and alone. I imagined the poor dog's face, his fur charred and his paws salmon-raw.

Elanor looked to me, perplexed. She knew I would leave. She shook her head violently, pleading me to stay. I got up. As she tried to knock the sense into me, he slowly crawled around the property starting to edge closer to the door. He scurried up onto the support beams of the roof, feeding.

"No, no!" I mumbled, taking one last look at Elanor's wide eyes before I dashed towards the house. I pounded up the stairs. I crawled into the dining room and scampered under the table, my eyes darting. He had to be here. He would wait for me. I could feel my stomach tensing and contracting with each breath as I swallowed the need to vomit. With each spot I unturned, my heart sank deeper.

Elanor screwed her face, her cheeks tensed and her eyebrows frowned, as she ran in after me. "He should be here ... why is he not here?" I cried, shaking. She gestured to the road repeatedly and tried to pull on my shoulder in desperation as I ran off.

I scrambled into the living room with Elanor. No. He was there. But rather still. The smoke cleared for a wavering moment, revealing the black filth that stuck to the wall and the singes in the old carpet. I slowly approached but to my surprise, he wasn't alone. Standing above was another creature, this time more animated. The flames stared at it with a look of indifference; simply it was there, undisturbed. It was Bentley's apparition. He looked down on the smouldering remains of his carcass and let off a slow whimper. I looked at the burnt lump of flesh then to Bentley who sniffed his own head, curiously and darted. I didn't understand. But the flames did.

Elanor was horrified. Yet there was no denying what she saw. She began to leave, but then he erupted. He crawled near her, his little flames curling on the beams above to lick her face. He ripped off chunks of wood, creating an inferno that danced around her. Elanor reared back, yet the flames were a mere pinch on her skin. She looked at her hands in shock but inside she knew.

"You're useless to me," I thought I heard the flames mock.

The living room wall came down in a thud and he relaxed his grasp as she exited. I tried to follow. Instead, he smiled. His fingers engulfed me forcing me down. I was heaving in smoke, my nose just off the ground; the air strangled in my throat. I panicked. I cried. He worked his way towards my feet and I felt his bite tear through my lower leg.

Then I heard the crack of the front door, the house letting off a slow moan as the support beams warped. This was it. I looked through the haze for anything, anyone. Then suddenly the pain eased and I felt my back slump into a gentle curl beneath me. I was an early morning fog, one that hovers just off the earth. I could see her. Elanor was there. Her hand reached through the smoke and for the first time, I could feel it. I felt her cool skin against mine and I cried, but no tears came. I didn't know why she felt so real. But the flames did.

The house whispered a sigh of relief when the men and women in fluorescent vests arrived. I croaked out to them softly like I was drowning. They didn't answer. Puzzled, I stumbled up to one and looked him in the eyes yet he walked right through me. I stared at the flames which returned my gaze with a grin. What happened?

I heard the flames snicker, as I watched the family pictures on the wall slowly melt away.

UPPER SECONDARY

Second Place

The Beyond

ARIELLE WATTS

First Place (Tied)

The Stars He Left

HELEN ZOLJARGAL

First Place (Tied)

Enough

ISABELLE WILSON

The Beyond

by Arielle Watts

The sand is squishy and warm with the now fading heat of the day; sinking around her toes, and squeaking slightly with each step forward. She steps around the seaweed, the shells, the discarded cans and plastic bags, rustling in the lively breeze.

As she approaches the ocean, the texture of the sand changes, growing firmer, and cooler; damp with the ocean water that now rushes towards her feet and swirls around her ankles. The sand here is clean, having relinquished itself to the push and pull of the tide, the tug of the waves that follows the rhythm of her heartbeat, her very breath.

The beach is empty. The summer crowds are huddled in their homes, and in the early darkness she is alone. The noise of cars and the sound of distant chatter rises and swells, stuttering against the rhythmic thrum of the waves. She lets the shouts in her ears fade away and relinquishes herself to that soft intensity.

Here she stands at the edge of the continent, the world stretching out for miles and disappearing in a haze of blue and orange. Behind her is the sunbaked land, she can smell it on the same breeze that tussles her hair. That smell of heat and dust and smoke; the cloying scent of life, it catches on her shirt and mingles in her nostrils with the clean, clear scent of salt, seaweed and ocean waves.

The water is now up to her knees and she feels the sharp crunch of shells underneath her feet. Here, things lay trapped between beach and the beyond, the tide not strong enough to pull them away from the land. They oscillate, slowly drifting with each breath of the ocean, glistening beneath the foam. She stops here, another one of the lost things in the tide.

This is the mixing point. The place where melting sandcastles are the rapidly disappearing sign of human presence, as the ocean reclaims its own. The tide draws out cuttlefish skeletons and glass alike. Shells rest on the sand they will one day become. History is being made, a second at a time.

Over time, the ocean will break everything down, smoothing rough edges into the scenery of the beach. Nothing can compete against the pull of the tides and the force of the waves. And she watches, while she can.

The wind rises and falls, pushing her from behind, grabbing at her shoulders and arms but she shrugs it off. The drops of salt spray splatter on top of the scent of fingerprints and the bruises along her arms and she feels her body soften. Here she can let out her breath at last, instead of tensing around corners and jumping at every little noise. She can see every wave before it comes and measure its crash against the shore.

The sun has almost set, and she stares into that line, imagining what it would be like to go beyond, to follow that line of fire across the deep blue waves and further still, what would await her at the other edge of the horizon. She blinks, eyes stinging from the light and in that moment the sun has gone; a green flash burning on the back of her eyelids where it sat just a moment ago.

Suddenly, the air feels cold. But she stands still, waiting for a sign that will never come, until the last glow of orange has faded from the sky, and the pale white stars begin to glisten through the streaks of cloud.

She knows she should not be here. Under the neon glare of the streetlights the garage door will be grinding open and the house is left cold and waiting. Eventually she will have to leave, legs leaden

not just from the cold as the waves get left behind her. When she slips through the front door she will be greeted by a different sort of wave, a screaming crescendo that crashes upon her head and swirls around her feet on the worn grey carpet.

Or maybe the wave will not come, but the house will be flat and calm and still, a smile tickling her shoulders and laughter rushing from room to room. Until the door clicks shut behind her and she is locked into the musty corridor, she will not know.

But here, she knows. The ocean is dark, deep, shifting. It is cool, and clean. The waves move back and forth, washing away the sand, brushing away at the coast, at her presence. A relentless reminder that they were here first. And they will be here long after her footprints are gone, and her bones have turned to dust.

So she lets the water carry pieces of her away, out to sea. She imagines them drifting amongst coral and kelp, past the vacant eyes of fish and settling on the sea floor amongst the sand. She is too big, too tainted by oil and fire and words to join them, though she longs to. Longs to leave behind the constant race toward the next line for the crushing pressure of the deep blue.

It is truly dark now; the pale glow of the moon and stars tints the sand a pale grey. Her arms prickle with goose bumps, skin shivering in the cold of the encroaching night. The tide is going out, and each wave goes further from her than the last. Her feet rest in little wells as the ocean pulls away the sand around them.

She steps back, eyes affixed on the horizon. The dry sand clings to her wet bare feet eagerly. Her breath mists in the night air. She wants to step forward, follow the waves into the dark secrets of the undertow and out the other side. But she must remain content with what the ocean chooses to share. She has seen the shifting waves and listened to them pound against the sand, watched the sand trickle away and felt the breath of time on the east wind.

And she will be back. She is always back. The deep ocean lies at her doorstep and continues. It continues past the horizon into the dark, secret places that have never been touched. She is not a part of that world, and must be contented with the moment her feet dented the sand, when her soul lined up against the setting sun.

She steps back again, heel pressing on a rock, but she doesn't wince, doesn't shift her gaze. The waves carry on and on and on. They carry pieces of her with them.

She turns around, and makes her way back up the beach.

The stars he left
by Helen Zoljargal

I remember it being a particularly hot day when I first met him; the heavy humid air, the sweat rolling down my back, and it felt as if even the wind had faded away into the merciless heat of Florida summer. I was cycling my way through the park; it was after sunset, but the moon shone so bright it lit my path through the thick evening glow. I guess I would have liked to say that fate was the reason why we met. Indeed, if I hadn't stopped for a second to catch my breath, I would have completely missed him sitting on a bench not too far away. I remember the colour of his hair and how it melted into the moonlight. A raven black with a tinge of silvery grey. And how his eyes reflected mine, like a mirror. There were stars in his eyes, so bright and so luminous it felt as if I was staring at his constellation, digging into his thoughts, until I couldn't tell if they were his or mine.

He broke away first, the rosy heat slowly crawling up to his cheeks. It was just two of us in the night, blanketed under the suffocating heat and I stole one last glimpse of him before I made my way back. He looked as if he was waiting for someone, his head held high as if peering into the shadows of the trees. I pedalled the rest of the way with this strange boy on my mind. And even after the night had gone by, he refused to leave.

...

Living in Florida was like having the same meal every single day. It was exciting at first, everything was green and blue and beaches and pools and lemon trees. And then it quickly got boring because all there was, were green and blue and beaches and pools and lemon trees. I couldn't get used to my grandmother's stale bread, the too sour lemon pie and the smell of chlorine that clung to my skin. By the end of first week, I started to miss home.

The sun in Florida rose higher every morning like it wanted to swallow the sky. It had already settled in between the clouds when I woke up, a golden apple shrouded by mist. My grandmother liked to open the window every morning after the rain to let the air in and it smelled of wet grass and citrus from the fruit garden in the backyard. Every morning, it was the same regime. Get up, get dressed, marmalade and bread and then the pool until the sun dipped beneath the horizon like a child in a game of hide and seek. That day, it was the same. I dressed in the faded blue shirt and packed my one size small trunk under my arm and made my way to the community pool with the clouds drifting above me, like herds of sheep painted on clear blue canvas. I read Sappho and drank cool lemonade until the words melted with the ice in my drink, swimming away in my daydream, and then it was evening.

But I saw *him* that night. Him with an entire galaxy in his eyes, him with his ebony hair, him with his sweatshirt and jeans in the middle of summer and him sitting on the bench, his eyes constantly in search. Along my way home, I stopped my bike and offered him a water bottle.

"Here, you must be thirsty." He was surprised, his eyes wide and brilliant, lips slightly parted. But he accepted my offer.

"Thanks." And that was it.

The next evening, I saw him again. And then the next. And then even the day after that too. I started packing extra water bottles just for that moment where I stare at his eyes, and our hands brush, and he smiles, all straight white teeth and dimples.

He asked my name on the fourth day.

"Apollo." I answered.

"Apollo." The way he said my name was surreal. It felt as if he was tasting this rare delicacy on his lips, gently caressing it with his tongue and whispering it ever so softly like he was singing a lullaby.

"Like the god." I said. That's what everyone said. *Apollo like the sun god.*

"I love it." He said and laughed.

I love it.

"I'm Gabriel."

"Gabriel." I repeated. Even his name was all stars and galaxies and soft and pretty.

"Like the angel."

"I love it." I replied, my mouth tugging in a knowing grin, an inside joke kinda grin. We laughed and talked about angels and gods and drank the lemonade I brought over until I had to go home, and he was left again on the bench, still searching for someone.

...

Gabriel was there in the park every evening when I rode home. Some days, I would bring my Walkman and we would listen to The Smiths and he would hum along to his favourite part, one of his long, pale fingers tapping along with the beat. On other days, I would bring Kafka or Homer and we would read aloud to each other under the dim orange streetlight, his voice soft in the faint hush of the summer wind. Most days, we would just talk. I would talk about Chicago, of my parents, of my friends, of poetry and he would talk about his dad, his jazz collection, his dog and Tchaikovsky. His lips would call out my name; still so gentle and fragile as if he would break it if spoken too harsh. I would whisper his name on my way home; *Gabriel, Gabriel, Gabriel*, and he would come to my dreams at night, his face even brighter than the sky when he laughs.

Gabriel lived in one of the summer houses near the riverbank with his dad. They were the government issued ones, painted in a dull brown and built painfully close together as if they were glued side by side. I asked him if he had any neighbourhood friends there, but he just shook his head.

"The tenants change a lot." He looked a little sad when he said it, and I felt guilty.

He invited me to his house once, to return my copy of the *Odyssey*. I vaguely remember the smell of caramel and vanilla, the gentle smile on his dad's face when I greeted him and the perfectly salted

chocolate chip cookie fresh from the oven. Gabriel's dad was a baker during the summer and a construction worker the rest of the year. I thought it was an interesting job to have. He came home late most days, smelling of flour and browned butter, his eyes lined with wrinkles but the smile on his face always shone bright, like he was the happiest man on earth. Gabriel and I spent most of our days on the riverbank, where we were surrounded by the silence and the trees, stranded in our own little universe. Sometimes we went to the town center, his eyes twinkling like gems at the record shop. And in the evenings, we would lie down on the cool grass beneath, tracing our fingers along the stars, breathless with joy and childhood wonder. And perhaps I *did* love him, somewhere deep in my ribs, hotly and quietly, burning under the endless stretch of summer I shared with him.

...

It was a peculiarly cold day when he started not to come to the park, where we usually met. I sat there, on the old yellow bench, staring at the slow droplets of water dripping from the fountain, melting into the soft soil beneath. I sat there for a long time, listening to the quiet gush of the wind and the occasional chirps of the cicadas. I waited as the sun illuminated a pretty orange ochre until it went away, and it was only long after the moon rose up that I went home. There were no stars that night. The sky was a lull of misty navy, smooth and still like water. Gabriel didn't come. He never did. I often wondered why he never said goodbye to me before he left. But I guess a part of me always knew that he was sweet and short-lived, a fleeting memory in our stories, a shooting star. It was only later that I went to the summer houses only to face the tattered flyer on his door, spelt out in big and ugly red letters, this single word that stole him away; 'EVICTED'.

I went to the pool every day, read Sappho and drank lemonade. I rode by the bench every evening, my eyes constantly in search for his. Even after my grandmother passed away in our little house in Florida the last week of summer and I was sent back to Chicago, Gabriel's stars never left mine.

Enough

by Isabelle Wilson

“I’ll come help you in a moment,” the woman called over the clinking of dishes. Warm, soapy water sloshed around her hands as they worked, scrubbing away the traces of their breakfast. She glanced over her shoulder, to her son sitting at the bench, pencil in hand as he stared down at the worksheets laid out before him on the laminated benchtop.

“Pass me that glass?” Her son looked up, blinking as he processed. Then his gaze slipped down to the glass. His right hand dropped the pencil to grab it as he stood and moved around the bench, passing by their dishwasher on his way.

The dishwasher hadn’t worked since April. She had turned it on one afternoon and after a few minutes, it began making strange clunking sounds before going completely silent, having switched itself off. A man had been out to look at it, but she’d sighed when she’d seen the sheet of numbers he’d handed her afterwards. Jamie’s therapy was far more important.

He placed the glass carefully down beside the sink. The woman smiled at him as her soapy hand reached for it. It almost slipped from her hand as she moved it, the smooth surface providing no grip for her wet, wrinkled hand. Once clean, she lifted it from the sink and placed it into the rack where the rest of their dishes dried, chipped plates whose designs had long since faded.

She came around to where Jamie had reclaimed his place at the bench, saw the typed words and empty black lines he’d been staring at. She placed a hand on his shoulder, giving it a reassuring squeeze as she sat on the stool beside him.

“What are you struggling with?” She’d slipped into the soothing voice she’d used when calming the stressed animals, back when she’d worked at the vet clinic. It had been a lifetime ago, before Jamie was born.

“I don’t know what to do.” Jamie raised his hands, letting his face drop into them. The pencil dropped back down to the bench, rolling towards her. She picked it up, holding it out in front of him.

“Why don’t we start with writing our name?” There were two ways this could go. He was either going to drop his hands and get to work, or he could completely shut down, call his

homework a waste of time and refuse to speak to her for the rest of the day. Slowly, his hands fell away from his face and he took the pencil back. The woman let out a sigh, leaning back in the stool as he hunched over the worksheet.

“Jay... Em... Me... Jamie.” He sat back once the word was complete, turning expectantly to his mother.

“Well done. Now, can you see this picture? Why don’t you tell me what that is?” The work was simple, he merely had to write the word for the image on the line beside it. The woman considered it tedious work, something children at least five years younger than Jamie were capable of. But that was where he was at, and to even be at this stage was a miracle. Once, she’d believed he’d never be able to talk, let alone read or write. All the years of speech therapy and countless other programs had worked.

Yet, it could be better. Jamie had so much potential, but she hadn’t the resources to get him there. She might have had a chance to give it to him once, but any hopes of that vanished when her husband left her with nothing thirteen years ago. Just weeks after Jamie was born.

Once his homework was done, she sat in the armchair by the window, cup of coffee in hand. The golden afternoon light illuminated the playground she’d set up for him outside. He climbed the ladder and sat down, gripping the sides to hold himself there. She imagined another child behind him, gently pushing him down. But there was no one but the two of them. His face lit up as he let go, giggling all the way down. She smiled, raising the mug to her lips. Her eyes crinkled, pulling the dark circles around them out of shape.

She wished she could give him everything the world had to offer. But as long as he was happy, it was enough.

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ISABELLE WILSON

Enough