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2022
SOUTH PERTH
YOUNG WRITERS
AWARD

ANTHOLOGY

The City of South Perth Young Writers Award

The City of South Perth Young Writers Award, now in its 36th year has attracted over twenty thousand entries from young people who live or attend school in the City of South Perth.

Originally called the Christobel Mattingley Award for Young Writers, entrants were able to submit prose or poetry. In 2007, to better reflect the community our young writers belong to, the award was renamed to the South Perth Young Writers Award and entries were limited to prose.

Entries are judged each year by a panel comprising of educators, industry experts, advocates, and enthusiasts of children's literature. Shortlisted entrants were invited to work with Rebecca Higgle, award winning West Australian author, on ways to edit and finesse their work before the final judging was undertaken. This unique process gives our shortlist an experience of editing and publishing, getting to rework and resubmit their entry.

Prizes are awarded 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. Finalist entries are also compiled into an anthology, which is added to the City of South Perth Library collection, while the most outstanding entry each year is awarded the Christobel Mattingley Bronze Medallion.

This anthology hosts the 2022 finalists for the South Perth Young Writers Award. We hope you will enjoy the original ideas, immersive settings, sophisticated writing, ambitious and important themes, and gripping storytelling within.

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SOUTH PERTH WA 6151
Date of Publication
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LOWER PRIMARY

<i>The Scientist and the Caveman</i>	SOPHIA SHI	Highly Commended
<i>The Animals Who Found Teamwork</i>	CARA SUTHERLAND	Second Place
<i>The Scary Haunted House</i>	ISAAC FENLON	First Place

MIDDLE PRIMARY

<i>The Dance Nightmare</i>	YARA AWARTANI	Highly Commended
<i>Detective Pluto</i>	NATALIE HATFIELD	Highly Commended
<i>The Clever Plan</i>	ROSABELLE YIP	Second Place
<i>Plight of the Birds</i>	JONATHAN JEREMY RATTIGAN	First Place

UPPER PRIMARY

<i>Nine Coloured Deer</i>	JONATHAN YANG	Highly Commended
<i>The Truth in Photos</i>	CATRINA SCHURMANN	Second Place
<i>The Flower of Love</i>	AVALEA CURTIS	First Place

LOWER SECONDARY

The Big Race

KOBY HARNDEN

Highly
Commended

Nothing to Everything

FELICE PASCOE

Second Place

I Am So Glad I Went

JOSH MUNRO

First Place

UPPER SECONDARY

The Full Picture

HINAKO SATO GONGORA

Highly
Commended

Delirium

ETHAN HO

Second Place

To Touch a Star

CAITLIN WALLACE

First Place

LOWER PRIMARY

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The Scientist and the Caveman

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Second Place

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The Scary Haunted House

ISSAC FENLON

The Scientist and the Caveman

Sophia was working very hard to make a portal to go to the future. The portal was going to be round and blue with swirls in it. She was pouring and mixing multicolour potions into the portal. All of a sudden, it started to bubble up. Sophia thought something was wrong. She went to check, and accidentally tripped and fell inside! She swooped and swirled inside the portal for a while. She was so scared and her heart was beating like a drum!

When she was figuring out how to get back, the big strong caveman started to chase her. Sophia the Scientist ran so fast she could not stop. She didn't know where she was running then she slipped in a puddle. She tried to stand up and a big storm came. After a while it started to flood and a giant, grey tornado came. By now, Sophia was very cold and soaking wet. She was starting to get a tummy ache too because she was super hungry.

“What is your name?” asked Sophia.

“Grug?” Sophia thought it was his name. “Maybe you want to have a friend other than the cavemen you live with.” She whispered.

Grug looked very nice and started to help Sophia survive in the wild. A fish from the flooded river floated in front of Grug and he caught it with his hands. Grug taught Sophia how to make a fire from sticks then he cooked the fish on the fire. They became very good friends.

She looked in the deep, dark forest and in the desert nearby, but she could not find it. She didn't want to give up looking but it was getting dark. She was feeling frightened because she knew if she couldn't find the emergency button she would have to stay in the past forever.

She saw Grug when she was walking back to the cave. Grug had something small and red in his hands. Then Sophia the Scientist realised it was the emergency button! Her smile broadened from ear to ear. She jumped up and down with joy!

The Scientist and the Caveman

“Can I have the emergency button, please?”, Sophia the Scientist asked Grug, and he nodded. Sophia took the emergency button and pressed the big red button. This time there was slide inside the portal, but she wasn’t alone in the portal. Sophia had sneakily brought the caveman back with her. Will Grug survive?...

The Animals Who Found Teamwork

On a sunny Saturday morning on a little island a gigantic zoo was standing with lots of different animals in it.

In a part of the zoo, there was a wolf, a squirrel, a mouse, parrots, a non-magical dragon and a cat. Sometimes they got along together and were friends but sometimes they did not get along. Every few days they go through the tubes to the centre of their part of the zoo and play lots of board games and card games because they are bored.

One sunny morning the dragon wanted to break out of the zoo and the other animals agreed. No one really came to the zoo, so they wanted to escape to the part of the world where they came from. They looked up on the wall on the side of the tubes and checked the map where they lived, but first they had to get out of the enclosure.

The dragon used his fire breath and melted the bars of steel into liquid. He was finally free!

The zookeeper went to the bird's cage and was about to feed them, when the parrots flew out over the zookeeper's head. They had escaped!

The cat got out by digging a hole down under the ground, past the enclosure bars and was finally free when he dug up on the other side.

The mouse and the squirrel got out of the nocturnal house by scraping each other's glass screen until it shattered into tiny pieces with their sharp claws.

When the zookeeper was going to restore the water in the wolf enclosure, the zookeeper accidentally dropped his key. The wolf saw this happen and looked everywhere in his enclosure for the key. At last he found it and opened the door with his mouth clamped to the key.

The animals met in the middle of the zoo like they discussed, where they were hidden by all the plants. They talked a lot and the parrots said "why don't we fly over the other side of the gate and try to unlock the gate with our beaks?"

"No, that won't work" said the wolf. "Why don't I find the key like I did before."

"No, I will try to melt the bars down like I also did before..." said the dragon.

"Why don't we scrape at the bars so they will break like before", said the mouse and the squirrel together because they are the two animals who are always friends.

All of the animals started talking over the top of each other and none of the animals could agree on what to do next.

The cat tried to get them to work together but none of the animals listened because they were too busy arguing. Finally, they decided to do their own thing. Their first job was to get out of the main gate.

The dragon tried to melt the gate down like he did with his enclosure bars, but it didn't work.

The birds tried to use their powerful beaks to open the gate but that didn't work.

The Animals Who Found Teamwork

The mouse and the squirrel tried to scrape through the bars. They tried and tried but that didn't work either.

The wolf tried to find out where the key was, like he did before, but he couldn't get it because it was in the zookeeper's hut which was locked.

They were all really upset that their plans were not working. Meanwhile the cat was looking on the iPad which he found on the floor close to the zookeeper's hut. He searched, 'what to do when your friends are arguing and not listening to you' and he found out this thing called teamwork. It said, 'Work together and never give up'.

He ran quickly to the other animals who were arguing again! "Now smarten up, you guys!" he said, "We should work together and not do our own thing."

The animals thought and thought. Suddenly, the wolf had an idea. Since he had been in the enclosure next door to the dragon for a long time, he realised that the dragon had wings like the parrots. And if parrots could fly, maybe the dragon could use his wings to fly too!

The wolf said, "Hey Dragon, you have wings that look like the parrots' wings. So maybe you could use them to fly us over the gate!"

"That's a great idea, Wolfie!" shouted all the animals together.

So the dragon started to flap his wings. He'd never flown before, so the parrots gave him tips.

"Flap your wings and do it really fast" said the parrots. "Then, run up really quickly and flap very hard, and you will take off!"

The dragon tried. The other animals cheered him on, but it didn't work. The dragon said in a disappointed voice, "I give up! I can't do it!"

"Yes, you can", said all the animals. "We believe in you. You CAN do it."

So he tried one more time. It worked!

The animals quickly jumped onto the dragon's back and they took off. They flew to the edge of the island, but they had all forgotten where they came from. Luckily, the cat had taken a picture of the map with the camera on the iPad he found earlier!

Happily, the dragon delivered each animal to their own part of the world, where they had come from, and the cat reminded him where to go, each and every time.

Finally, the dragon and the cat, were luckily from the same part of the world, and the dragon flew the cat there. He was very happy but very tired. When he landed, the cat jumped off his back and they both went back to where they had come from in the wild.

The cat and the dragon became very good friends and every night they slept, curled up together.

The end.

The Scary Haunted House

The Scary Haunted House

One hundred thousand years ago there was a haunted house with lots of ghosts and bats. It was as black as space and had spiders and spider webs all over that house including tinted windows.

Nearby, there was a forest on the shore of a beach and there lived a wolf, a fox, dinosaurs, jelly fish, squid and a parrot. They loved living there.

Every year at Halloween one of the talking animals went into the haunted house to Trick or Treat.

First, the squid had gone in, but he never came out!

Then, the dinosaur went in, but he never came out!

After, the wolf went in, but he never came out!

This year, the fox and the jellyfish were worried that they would never come out, so they went in together but...they never came out.

By now, the parrot was feeling super, super scared so she decided NOT to go in.

Five years passed, and the parrot just did her normal routine, except it was all by herself. Some days she liked being on her own because her friends had been quite annoying. Other days, she wished they were there.

On the fifth Halloween, the parrot decided to go into the haunted house. She was scared but she was also brave. She had an ability. Her ability was to turn invisible. She thought that might help her with the bats, but not with the ghosts because ghosts are also invisible.

So the stealthy parrot went inside to investigate. She turned herself invisible by closing her eyes and flapping her wings. She went inside but she saw a ghost and so she turned back into her normal self and then the ghost couldn't see her anymore because ghosts can only see stuff like themselves.

She flew up the curly stairs and into the main room. She was surprised to see all her friends dancing to some Halloween Ghost Songs. They all had a big hug. The squid said, "I am so happy to see you".

The parrot joined in the dancing and then agreed to live in the haunted house with her friends and the bats, skeletons and the ghosts and the spiders.

Now, every Halloween, they all have a party with music and a disco ball. They eat awfully awesome Halloween cake and drink orange juice the colour of blood!

MIDDLE PRIMARY

Highly Commended

The Dance Nightmare

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Highly Commended

Detective Pluto

NATALIE HATFIELD

Second Place

The Clever Plan

ROSABELLE YIP

First Place

Plight of the Birds

**JONATHAN JEREMY
RATTIGAN**

The Dance Nightmare!

I take a step back and cuddle my warm snug oodie. I find hundreds and thousands of people staring at me. My cheeks turn pinkie red, and I get the butterflies in my tummy.

Then my coach calls my name and whispers to me from a distance as she is backstage, she says "you can do this" with her thumbs up. I suddenly push myself to be brave and strong and I begin my dance routine. Then oof I fell. My arm "huh"! Then everyone in the crowd gasps and starts to whisper. I get up but immediately, I feel heavy. A tear drips down my soft red cheek with a small graceful plop! I feel like my heart had chipped into four small dark pieces and my dancing career is over! All my hard work over the years has come to this.

I then get up and restart my whole dance routine. I rub away my tears. I dance more gracefully than ever. I flip, I turn, I jump and do cartwheels, handstands bend backs and I do the highest jump with a little smile going through my face. I finish my dance and run off the stage as my coach is waiting for me with her arms out wide. She hugs me and says, "that's ok but good try."

I am too disappointed to even look at my score. And you got it I came fourth out of thirty-one other countries. I mean it is not the worst thing that has ever happened, but I have expected a little more.

I go home, take a shower, and run to my bed like a speedy zipline!

At night I remember how I fell over and I start to think is it from being nervous? Or is it from my slippery snug oodie?

I am just too tired to even think so I lay down and shut my eyes tightly. In seconds I fall asleep.

Haaaa I wake up with a huge yawn and make a bowl of rice puffs. (They are delicious!). I started to not care about losing. I am starting to think of how I love dancing and all the cool tricks I can do. Dance and gymnastics are my career, I cannot just end by losing. I must train even harder for next year's competition.

I put my bowl in the sink and run outside to practise my skills but then my mum calls me and says "wait up! I know that you're sad that you didn't win but dance is not just about winning, it's about showing what you can do and having fun". "True I know, but I just want to go outside and practise," I say. "Ok" mum says.

I practise and practise all my skills. I stretch and bend and have a short warmup as it's very important to do that before your routine. I feel like a star shining bright every time I dance. Now that I am done, I can go inside.

I have some orange juice, so I take a sip and hear on the radio that there is a mistake because someone in third place cheated! Apparently, they did not disclose their correct age and was dancing with the younger age group. So that means that I get a bronze medal! Suddenly my jaw dropped in excitement and my orange juice cup comes tumbling down all over the kitchen floor. I could not believe my eyes; I could not believe what I was hearing!!!!

The next morning, I got called in to the Dance studio to receive my medal. I see Grace from a distance and her eyes meet mine. Her face red as tomato sauce and eyes watery like rain drops, she stands in embarrassment and walks towards me. "I am so sorry Sarah, it was not my intention to cheat and compete in the younger age group, I just wanted to win so badly that I thought this was my only chance for a medal" said Grace. "Thanks for the apology and for coming forward and being honest.

Huh! Suddenly I feel a gentle tug on my hair." Ameer!!! oh I forgot to introduce him to you, he's my baby brother he's one year old. Wait, I rub my eyes and yawn. Does that mean that I had a dream about the competition and the mistake? Did it even all happen? Wait, what day is it today? Ahhhh, competition day today! what a nightmare! It's a relief and it's like having a second chance. I'm so excited that I pinch my self to make sure that it was all a dream and today I have my chance to have a go".

I leap out of bed and spin my way out towards the living room and zoom past the couches to the kitchen. There I see my mum and dad preparing my favourite breakfast, eggs and sausages. I switch the radio on and turned up the music loud; my dog and I danced all morning.

THE END!!!!

The Detective Pluto

Life as a detective dog is not at all what it seems. First nobody takes you seriously! When all your trying to do is to help people solve their problems! And you ask how should I know? Because I am the world's greatest detective! And today I shall tell you how I became a master detective.

One day on a Friday I was walking down the road with my owners Nat and Luke, when I saw a little poodle crying without a leash. I quickly used my trusty nose and recognised we were on Coode Street in Como. By the time we finished our walk, it was already night-time. When my owner let me of my lead I quickly ran through the doggy door, under the back gate and crossed a variety of streets and by then I could see the puppy.

"Hi, I'm detective Pluto Hatfield and I'm here to help. What's your name?" I said to the poodle, who just looked at me sadly.

"Polly." She replied.

"What seems to be the problem?"

"I've lost my owner" She squeaked.

"Well, I am here to help; can you tell me the name of your owner please?"

"Abigail."

"Do you know where you live?"

"No." She whispered, "But, I have my name on my collar."

Aha, I thought my first clue. "Can you show me your collar please?"

"Yes." Polly nodded.

I looked down and it had Polly McDonald and the phone number engraved on the purple collar.

"Well, what does it say? I can't read." Polly impatiently asked.

I was so excited and thought, this is amazing! My very first case, so I told Polly to follow me home to my house on Lockhart St.

"We're here." I said to break the silence.

In front of us was my big, white picket fenced house.

"Wow." said Poppy as we slipped under the front gate and ran straight through the doggy door.

"You need to keep quiet. It's 9:30pm and my human dad will still be awake, we have to be very careful!" I say quietly.

"Okay." Poppy replies looking distracted, and I tell her.

"All the phones are in the study on the charging table".

“Stop talking and let’s get going.” Says Poppy.

We tiptoe through the house with me leading the way to the study.

“Oh boy!” I say.

“What is it?” Poppy asks.

“The dad is in the study...” I say with fear in my voice. “We have to sneak behind him to get to the charging table.”

“Okay.” Poppy whimpered

“Good, here’s the plan, we sneak into the study, after that I make a noise and you turn off all the electricity in the house and get a torch from the cupboard. Once we have the torch, we can find the white phone!” I explain which Poppy agrees with.

“Good, let’s initiate the plan we will call ‘Grab Mum’s Phone,’ in 3, 2, 1, GO!”

I tiptoe to the phone cable and give a little bark, the type of bark only another dog can hear. Poppy quickly ran all around the house, when she got to the living room, I could hear her pulling the cable plug and all the lights in the house became dark. I grab the phone and go to get Poppy.

“Come on!” I say in a rush. “We must hurry up!”

“Okay, calm down!” Poppy says trying to reassure me.

We ran through the doggy door and slid back out through the front gate.

“Call them! Call them!” Poppy begged.

“Okay, I am calling!” I quickly type in the numbers and press call. After a few seconds a female voice appeared.

“Hello? This is Abigail McDonald here, who is it? I’m in bed and it’s 10:00pm at night!” Said a sleepy but angry Abigail on the phone.

“YES!!!!!!!!!!” Poppy woofed in delight.

“Poppy is that you!?” Abigail’s voice suddenly became happy.

“If you can understand me, do you mind bringing my Poppy back to me? Thank you so much for your help!” Abigail said before telling us her address which is on Labouchere Rd in Como!

“That’s not far at all! Let’s go.” I say to Poppy who looked shocked and surprised.

“Thanks Pluto.” Poppy whispers.

“Don’t mention it.” I tell her.

Poppy looked at me gratefully and gave me a big lick on my face. On the way to her house, we talk about our adventure and wondered if my dad managed to turn the lights back on. When we got to the front gate Poppy gave me another big lick.

“Thanks for everything.” Poppy sweetly says.

“No need to thank me but tell all your friends about the best detective in the World, Pluto Hatfield.” I told her.

When all the licks that Poppy gave me finally ended, she walked to the front door. I started walking home and could hear Poppy being fussed over by Abigail and her family. This made me feel a little homesick which made me decide to run all the way back home. Once I got home it was really late, 11:28pm and that meant my family had already gone to bed.

To my surprise my family was waiting for me at the front of the house. They gave me a big hug and told me to never sneak out ever again. I gave them a big lick, but I knew I would sneak out again.

I am writing this on 26/4/2022 while trying to solve the case of the ‘Missing Whale Skeleton’ at the WA museum in Perth city. Bye for now!

Pluto Hatfield

The Clever Plan

"Help!" Flippy, Flappy and Floppy were sliding down a snowy white mountain. They were going super fast. Why were Flippy, Flappy and Floppy going down a mountain really fast?

To find out how they got there, let's go back two hours ago. Two hours ago.....

It was on a cold afternoon that Floppy saw an old sleigh in the distance. All three agreed to go closer.

The penguins waddled over to the old sleigh. "Let's pull the sleigh up that mountain near that cave," decided Flappy as he pointed to the location.

They pulled the sleigh up the

mountain near the cave. "This one looks safe!" said Flippy pointing to a small mountain nearby.

In a moment, they were sliding down the mountain. "This is fun!" said Flippy. "Double fun!" said Flappy. "Extra double fun!" said Floppy. "We have to have another go!" said Flappy. They all agreed to slide down one more time.

When they pulled the sleigh up to the top near the cave, they heard a sound coming from the cave. Curious, they waddled closer.

The cave was very warm, the three penguins wondered why. "Why is it so warm when there's no heater?"

thought Floppy. "Hurry! Let's get out of here!" said Flippy suddenly. "Why?" asked Floppy. "I don't know, but I have a..." "Shh!" said Floppy. The cave was suddenly bright and it was now hot! They heard a ROAR! "This is scary!" thought Flippy.

And it comes back to "Help!" The penguins rushed out of the cave. "Bad feeling!" finished Flippy with his sentence. They quickly hopped on the old sleigh and rushed down the mountain.

A mysterious shadow was on them. In the corner of Flippy's eye, he saw a green scaled dragon! It had black eyes and a huge pair of wings!

Now the penguins were hiding behind a

big icy iceberg. The huge green scaled dragon was now a bit far from them. They needed a good plan. Flappy's teeth were chattering of coldness and fear. Floppy's and Flippy's bodies were shivering of fear. Was the dragon going to find them?

Luckily, Flippy thought of a plan. "So we go in the water and catch about a dozen fish, then throw them in front of him until he reaches the cave," "Good idea!" said Flappy and Floppy.

So they all jumped into the water and caught a dozen fish. Flippy threw three fish up. The dragon hungrily followed the fish. Then, Flappy threw the remaining fish up the mountain. But they needed one more. Floppy dove in, caught one for the

The Clever Plan

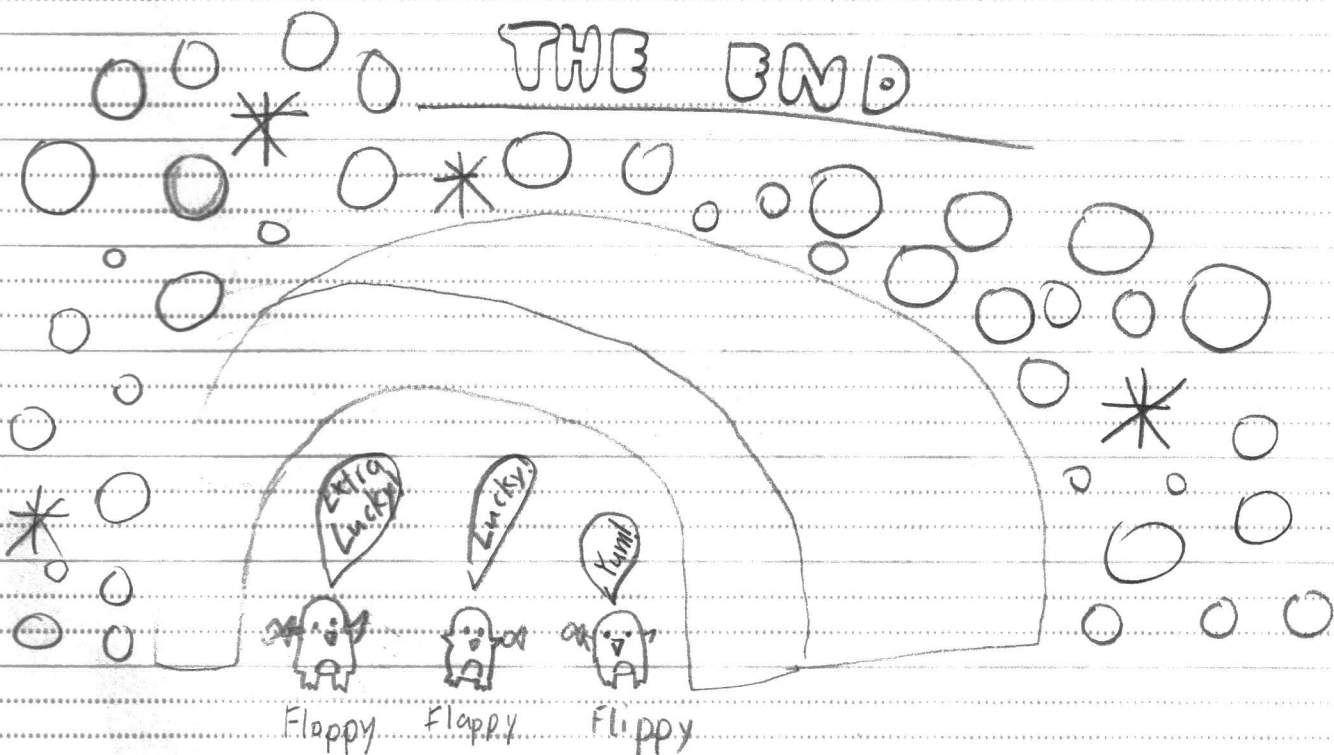
dragons, and an extra one for each of them. They were very hungry. "I'm very hungry!" said Flappy as he threw the one fish up. The plan worked! The dragon was in the cave.

They waddled back to their igloo and ate their fish.

"That was lucky!" said Flippy.

"Double lucky!" said Flappy.

"Extra double lucky!" said Floppy.

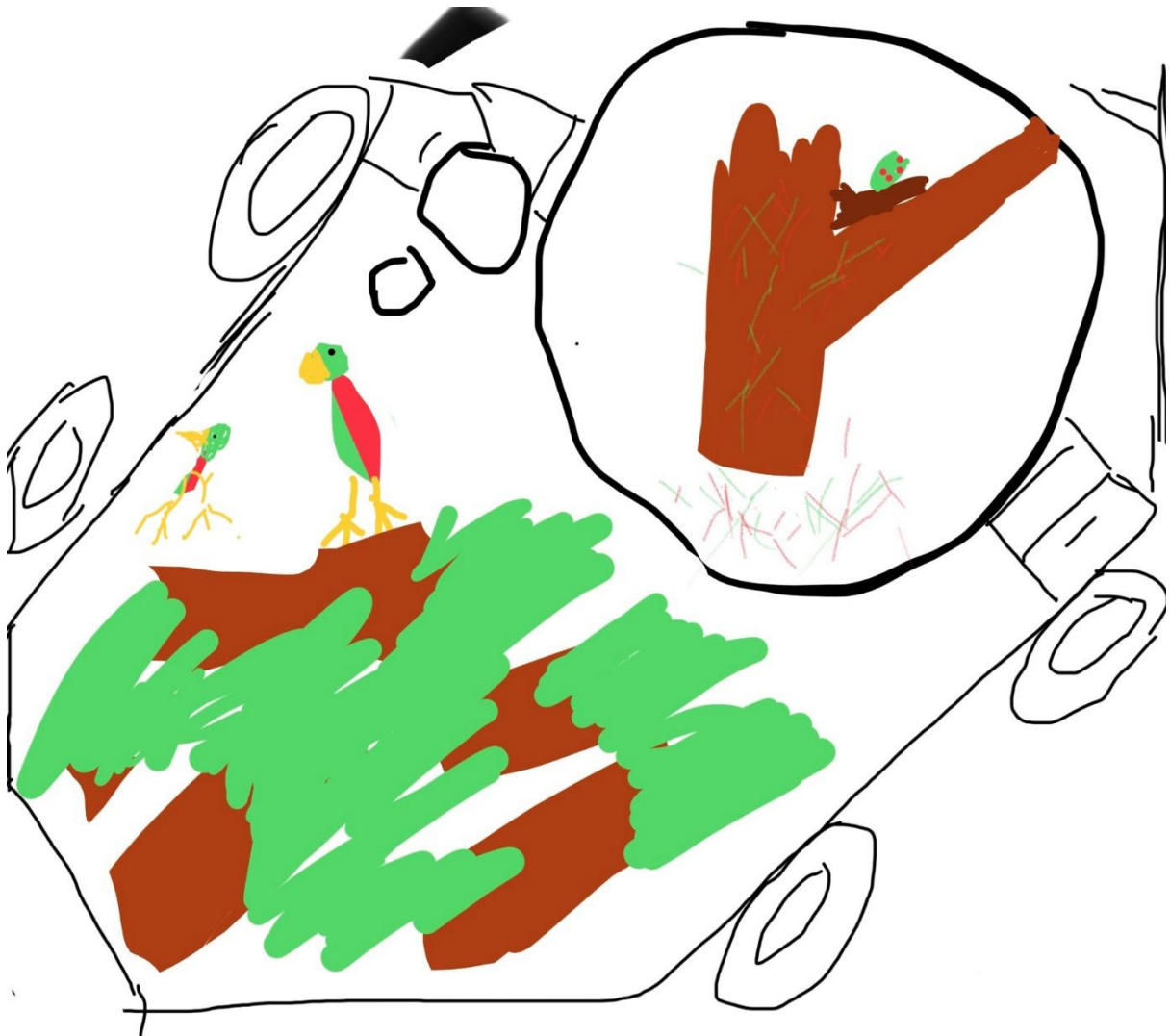


Plight of the Birds

Once upon a Tuesday, a day like any other day, I did what I always did - I jumped from branch to branch, chasing my brother and snacking on grubs. Occasionally I heard my parents talking about this strange thing called loggers. But I don't worry about them, because i'm way up here and they're down there, so I just live my normal happy life.

But the next morning, me and my brother woke up to find our home on its side moving around. I looked and saw that we were in a strange, moving thing in our forest. It had big round things on the bottom of it that turned. 'Hey, hang on. Why are there so many trees around us?' I said.

Everything feels different today. 'Wait a second, I think they are loggers! Yes, they must be loggers that my parents have been talking about. And they've cut down our family tree. But didn't they know we were in it?' I thought we left a trail of feathers behind.



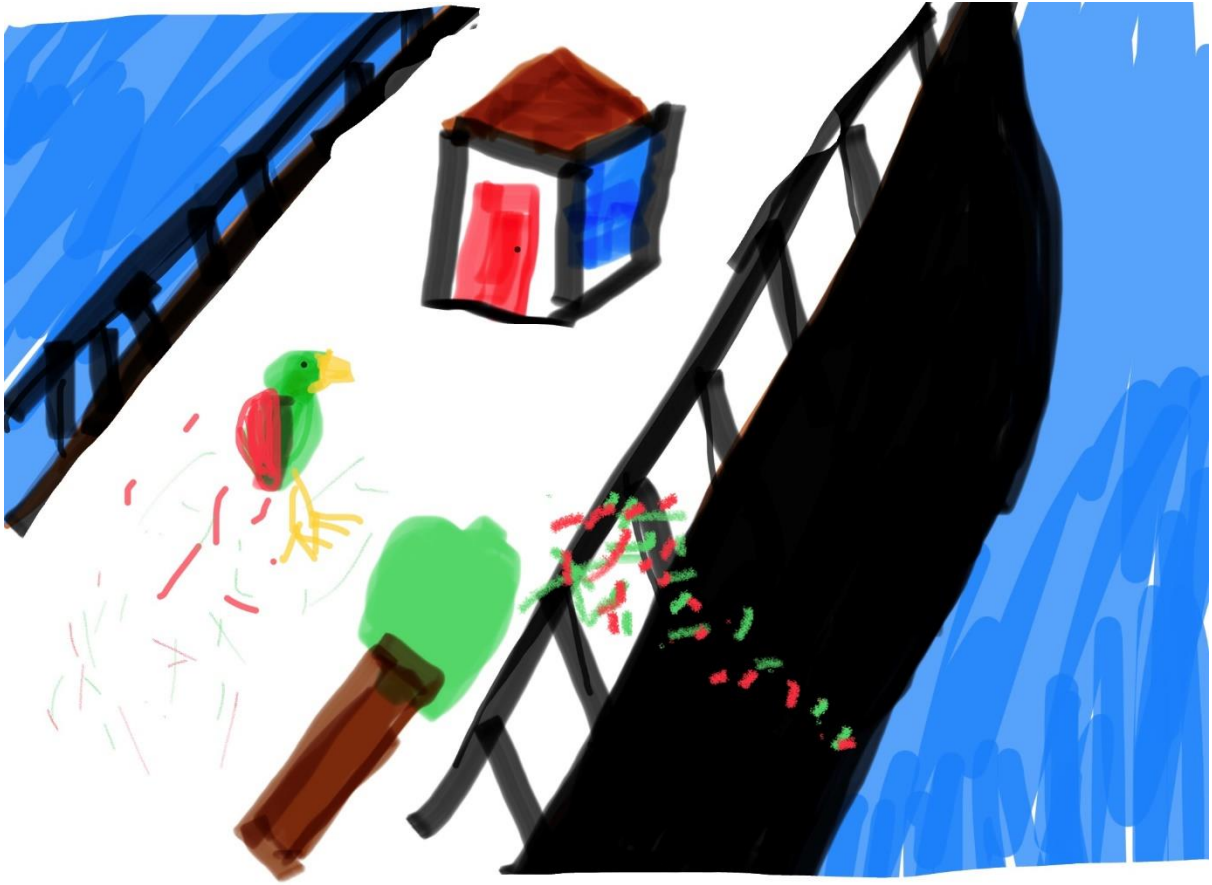
I realised then that we were in a truck and I had no idea where we were going. I didn't know where our parents were, but they told us to always stay in the nest if we were scared. And right now, we were terrified!

The next day we woke up to find that the truck had stopped at the edge of water where they were putting the big trees on a big floating thing. For weeks we sailed across the water, I overheard someone say that we left Brazil and were heading to a place called "China". One day I woke up to see my brother was nowhere to be found.



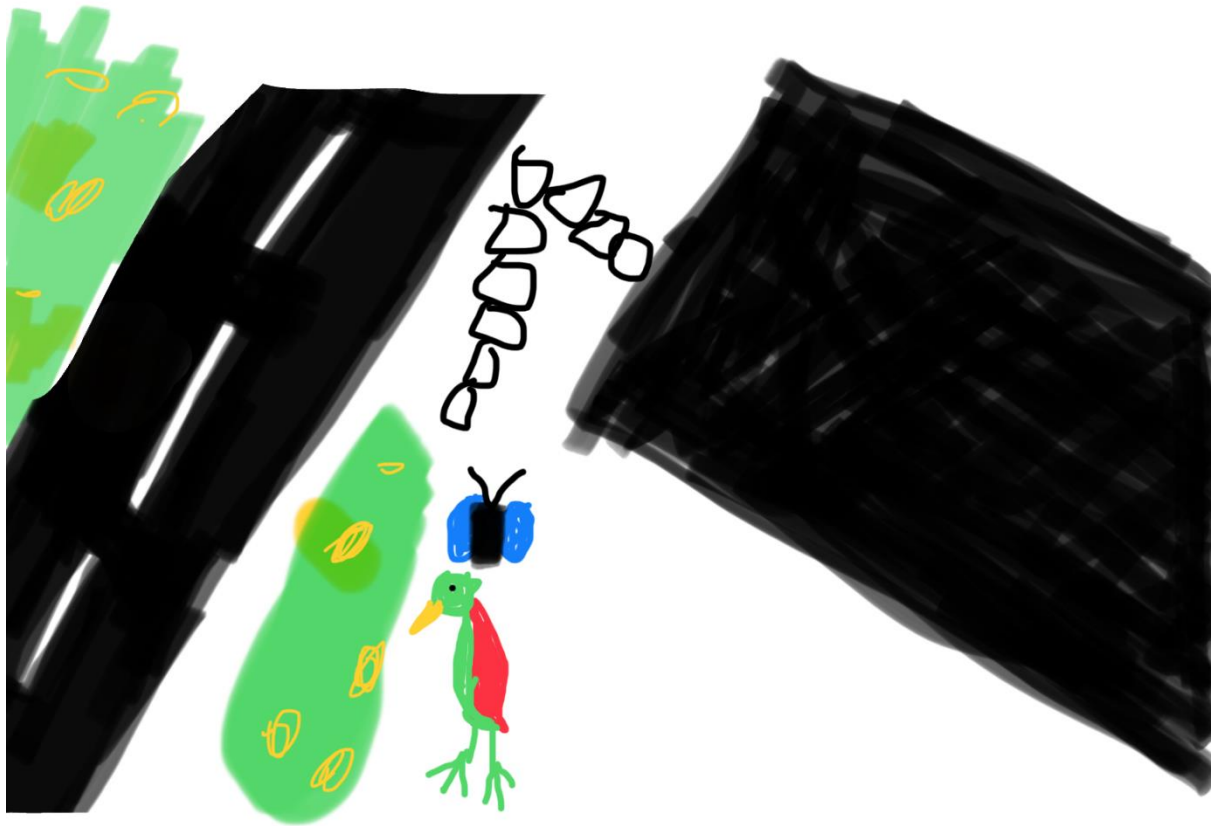
I frantically paced up and down the deck and I promised myself I would find him. I got some more energy by eating grubs that were still in the trees. 'Alright,' I said, 'I have to look for him before the ship approaches land.' I searched in every nook and cranny but had no luck.

'Little brother, where are you?' I nervously searched around. Then I saw a few little feathers on the edge of the deck. "Oh no, he must have fallen over board.' For days I searched but had no luck. I started to believe he had gone forever.



One evening, I finally saw land after months at sea. I hid in my log to stay safe. Our tree was moved from the ship and onto another truck and it arrived at a place called “Shanghai”. I couldn’t fall asleep because I heard too many strange loud noises, and I still was worrying about my brother.

The next morning the truck stopped and all the trees were dumped on the ground. Then I saw something beautiful, a little butterfly. I followed it into a bush then into a very dark alley way. The butterfly flew away. I then saw a chain. I was curious so I followed it around the corner. All of a sudden I heard a ‘bark bark bark’. I ran as fast as I could. Then the creature stopped. The chain had gone as far as it could. After what had happened I wanted to leave immediately.

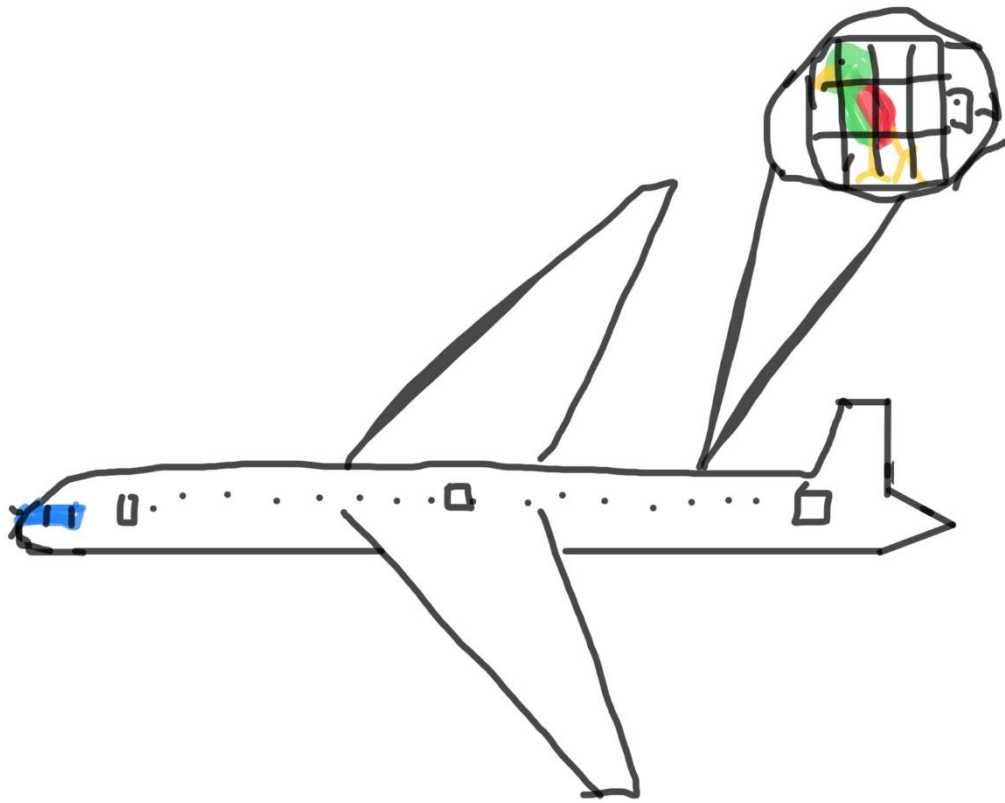


Two days of walking and I thought my legs were going to fall off. Then I heard a really loud noise. When I looked up, I saw an aeroplane flying. I knew what that was. Then I saw lots of them in groups. I've never learnt how to fly. It must be fun to be in the sky. I decided to go on one. I snuck through a security door and went in the plane loading zone where there were many other animals in cages.

'Hey kid, where's your cage?' a voice said.

'I am a wild bird, I don't have one', I said.

Then I spotted my little brother who got trapped in a cage. I was beyond excited. I started to hatch a cunning plan to get him out. Then it came to me, I could just unlock the latch. It worked, success, we were together again! We boarded the plane with other animals to go to back home to Brazil.



When it landed and we could escape, we went straight to where our home should be, but it was all gone. No branches, no leaves, no nothing! we were just about to give up when we heard a 'twit twit'. We curiously looked around to see who was making the noise. It was another bird, but i didn't recognise him.

'Hello', he said, 'my name is John, what are you doing here?' He asked.

'We used to live here, but it's all gone, and i lost my parents.'

'Well, i come from over the hill. A lot of birds came to live there when the trees got chopped down here. Maybe your parents are there now?'

'Can you show us the way?' I asked.

'Sure, so what do your parents look like?' John asked

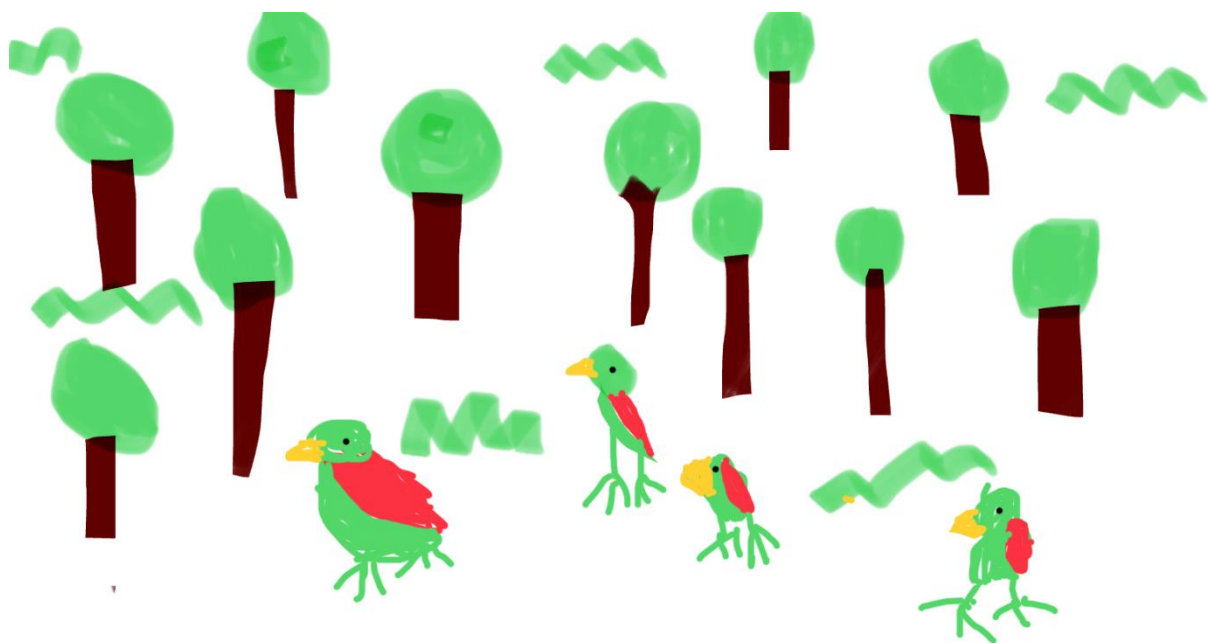
'Well they pretty much look like us except bigger I guess'.

Then we trekked to the new forest over the hill. 'My name is Chris by the way, and this is my brother Tom.'

By the time we got over the hill we saw thousands of birds all perching on branches and building nests. Lots of these birds I recognised, but they didn't recognise me, and I couldn't find my parents.

While I was looking, I saw a sign carved on a tree which read 'MISSING BIRDS' then a picture of us next to it. Me and my brother were super excited, we spent the rest of our day going from nest to nest and asking birds if they knew our parents, but they all shook their heads. It was getting dark when we got to the last nest and it was still empty. We decided to wait in the nest, because we were tired and hungry. We needed a rest, and this nest was so cozy, it reminded me of my old home. We huddled together to keep warm, and our eyes were closing as we settled in for the night. But just then, we heard a familiar sound. We looked up, and what do you know after all that, it was finally our parents, and they brought back loads of grubs. That night we rejoiced to be together again.

THE END



UPPER PRIMARY

Highly Commended

Nine Coloured Deer

JONATHAN YANG

Second Place

The Truth in Photos

CATRINA SCHURMANN

First Place

The Flower of Love

AVALEA CURTIS

Nine Coloured Deer

Once, there was a legendary deer called Jewsa. She had beautiful long legs and shining skin with nine colours. She had magical powers that she used to help those in need. She had a heart of gold and was very compassionate. When the bees were searching for nectar, she made all the flowers blossoms. When there was a thunderstorm, she provided shelter for little animals. When food was scarce, she helped the animals by magically growing all the plants back. She was loved by the whole animal community.

One day, a team of Persian merchants were on their way to royal palace. Suddenly, the sky darkened, wind blew, and sand dunes screeched as they rubbed against each other. Then, a huge sandstorm stirred up.

All the merchants screamed in horror, “What will we do! If the storm continues, we will all be dead!”

When all hope seemed lost, Jewsa showed up and stopped the sandstorm by stomping on the ground 5 times.

She asked, “Are you lost? Do you want me to help guide the way?”

“Yes, yes please!” said one of the merchantmen.

So, Jewsa stomped her legs 3 times to create a path to the royal palace by moving colossal mountains. The merchants were so grateful, and they called Jewsa “Divine Deer.”

In a town nearby, lived Mark, a poor man selling medicines for a living. His business was not going well, so he went to the forest to get some herbs that could make medicines. He was near a lake, which had lush green grass that grew as tall as humans! But he accidentally stepped on a slippery edge of the lake, and he fell into the gloomy, soulless water.

He screamed, “HELP! I NEED HELP!”

Jewsa rushed out from the bushes and tapped the water with her toes and magically, the water split apart, and Mark crawled back slowly to the shore.

Jewsa told Mark, “Go back to your town and promise never reveal my whereabouts.”

“My saviour, thank you so much! I will not tell anyone about you.” Mark bowed to the deer and replied.

“Remember your promise”, Jewsa nodded gently and vanished into the woods.

The merchants finally entered the palace and told the court their adventure and how beautiful the deer was. The vain empress was so fascinated by the nine coloured deer that she wants the skin to make a new coat, so she begged the emperor to capture the nine-coloured deer. Initially, the emperor rejected. But the empress kept requesting and finally the emperor could not put up with anymore and gave in. The emperor put up a ten-million bounty on the billboard for the whereabouts of the deer.

Mark saw the bounty and his eyes glittered. All he could think about was the money, and he gave in to his greed and forgot his promise. Mark went to the court and was taken to the emperor.

The emperor asked, “Do you really know where the nine coloured deer is, my beautiful empress craves it.”

“Give me 100 royal guards and I will bring the deer to you!” Said Mark confidently.

"Great!" exclaimed the emperor.

The next day, Mark led the royal guards to the lake where he nearly drowned. But, after three days, they didn't find any traces of Jewsa. The royal guards were getting a bit frustrated, so Mark came up with a vicious scheme. Mark asked the guards to hide around the lake. He pretended to fall in the lake, hoping the nine coloured deer would save him from drowning again.

He cried, "AAAAARRRRRRRRGGGGGGGGGG!"

Jewsa heard Mark's scream and dashed towards the lake.

A bird came by and warned Jewsa, "This is a trap! Don't go! The royal guards are going to capture you and peel of your splendid skin!"

"No." Jewsa replied, "Life is precious and I'm going to save his life, I believe in people's good heart, and I believe Mark won't break his promise".

As soon as Jewsa reached the pond, all the guards popped up from the bushes and fired all their arrows at the deer. Suddenly, Jewsa lifted her head up and howled

to the sun. Instantly, nine colours of dazzling flame bursted around Jewsa that immediately burned all the arrows into ashes. Everyone was shocked in awe and speechless.

Jewsa turned to the crowd, "I am divine deer from the heaven. I came to your land to help the needed. I believed kindness and loyalty are the most important values. Once, a person fell into the lake and was rescued by me. He promised not to reveal my whereabouts. Not only did he break his promise, but he also tried to sell his saviour for money! This despicable person is right in front of you."

Everyone looks at Mark with loathing. Mark felt so ashamed, and he fled away. He panicked and he got trapped in the swamp. Once again, Jewsa showed her magic and spared Mark's life.

Jewsa said, "Everyone deserves a second chance. Please also pass this message to your king. I will leave your kingdom and will never come back until you people learn how to be grateful and show kindness."

Jewsa then leaped into the rainbow passageway and vanished into the sky.

The royal guards returned to the palace and told the king the whole story. The king pondered for a long time. He then issued a royal decree that each subject should treat each other with compassion and gratefulness. The people of the kingdom took it to heart.

From now on, the animals of the forest lived happily besides their human neighbours. And they all hope one day Jewsa will return to this land.

The Truth in Photos

Patricia

The only light in my room was coming from an iPhone screen. It was terribly late at night and my family were all sound asleep. I had woken up to ear piercing noises, which seemed to be coming from a large construction site down the road. Very strange at that time of night. They were going to build an enormous local pool, which I personally thought was unnecessary.

I started scrolling through my stack of photos from all the places I'd been. For fun I looked at the people in the background. As I went through the photos, I noticed the same figure in every single one of them, and they always seemed to be looking towards me. At first, I thought it was my imagination, seeing as it was so late, but the more photos I saw, the more panicked I became. The worst part was that they didn't even look human! Kind of...elongated, I guess would be the best way to describe it.

I quickly sprung off the bed and intended to go show my parents in spite of the time, but as soon as I put a single foot down someone, or something, grabbed my ankle. The hand didn't look like a hand. It was as dark as the night sky and had long fingers like a giraffe's neck. I screamed, but no noise came out.

The hand started dragging me under the bed with so much force it was hard to think that anyone could have such strength. It was human, right? In panic I tried to break free but I was unsuccessful once again. My head was now almost fully covered by the bed and I took one last desperate breath –

"What on Earth are you doing under the bed? You're being so noisy!" My mum bellowed. The hand was now gone, and I scrambled out.

I ran toward my mum, who first looked tired and irritated, but then concerned at my clear distress. "What's wrong sweetie?" she asked while I buried my face into her shoulder, my tears streamed down onto her nightgown and I hugged her tighter. I blurted everything out that had just happened.

Mum just shook her head. "It seems like you've had one heck of a nightmare" she joked. But I wasn't satisfied. I told myself that I would prove to her that there WAS a monster.

The next night I woke up to the late-night construction site noises once again. It's time, I thought to myself. Earlier I'd set up secret cameras all around my bedroom. One inside a stuffed bear. One stuck on the ceiling. The last one would give me the footage I really needed. This camera was strapped underneath my bed. If what I thought might be a monster returned, I would see how it got there, and whatever it really was. Butterflies began to fly around inside my stomach like they were having a disco party. This did affect my opinion on whether taking such action was sensible, but that only gave me a moment of doubt.

By now you might be wondering why I would go to such an extreme level, well it's because I hate to be thought of as crazy, or just plain stupid. I hate to be looked down on. It had happened to me before and it was one of the worst feelings I'd ever felt in my whole life, and I wasn't about to let it happen again.

The clock ticked by ever so slowly as I waited for the hands to land on the numbers three, and twelve. Three AM was the time of my previous attack, so I considered that that might be when the demon thing would come again. I was suddenly really regretting this plan, and my stomach was clenched tight inside me.

Tick, tick, dong! The clock struck three and I swung my clammy feet off the bed onto my soft rugged floor. My feet went numb and after a moment I saw a hand unfurl slowly and stretch out toward me as if to grab my ankle, when I launched up my feet into the air and turned my head to look back towards the bed. I watched in slow motion as the pitch-black hand extended and its slimy claws gripped onto my face, digging in so hard that blood immediately dripped down towards my chin. I opened my mouth to scream only for it to slice my tongue off. I could no longer speak, silently screaming as regret filled my mind. If I'd just accepted the fact that no one believed my story, maybe I would still be ok. Instead I was here with my tongue squirming around on the floor. Panic filled my brain and I could not speak, a million thoughts and emotions all slammed into my head at once, then as my vision faded to black, the last sounds echoing in my head sounded like the same noises that had woken me the night before.

2 Months Later: Kat

I cheerfully rode my bike home as usual. I rode down the steep hill with my arms up in the air like I was on a roller coaster. I'd been practicing not holding on the handles and now I could do it for a whopping five seconds! And I know it may not sound like much, but in five seconds you could do a lot of things.

As I continued to ride along, I saw a poster of the girl that went missing a few months ago. "The world's greatest mystery" some had called it. I then realised that my bike had drifted off the footpath and I quickly fixed it by forcefully turning the handlebar before slowing completely to a stop near a local construction site, which had been long abandoned.

I suddenly felt a cold chill run along my spine, which was odd, because I don't normally get this kind of prickly sixth sense. Randomly, I glanced behind me but then almost immediately felt the need to look away. Standing close behind me was a tall, dark figure. Its claw like fingers suddenly grew and reached out towards me, they seem to be unnaturally long and thin. I held my breath as I pedalled away as fast as possible. My breathing began to shake as I looked over my shoulder to watch the figure disappear in the distance.

I quickly pulled into my driveway and unlocked the front door, locking it immediately after I closed it, leaning heavily against it as the breath came back into my lungs as I desperately gasped for air.

Hours later I couldn't stop thinking about what had happened. My parents had tucked me into bed and closed the door. But not long afterwards I woke to the sound of loud construction noises, and realised I was thirsty. I slowly climbed out of bed, placed my foot on the floor and looked down at it. Long fingers were wrapped around my ankle. I tried to scream but didn't get the chance.

Changeling

It slunk across the construction site - it wasn't moving with a normal walking pattern. The changeling passed through a wall, and pulled a bag filled with the remains of numerous children along with it. It laid down the bodies arranged next to each other in a perfect line.

The noises grew louder and louder before the changeling disappeared in a flash. In its place stood a tall, skinny old man wearing a high-vis orange vest.

The Flower of Love

The Flower of Love

Everyone listened for the announcement to be made. Everyone knew what was coming. War. When it was announced, my mother burst into tears that couldn't be stopped. My grandparents were next to crack. They had lived through this before. I quivered at the thought that life as I knew it, was going to change.

I crawled under a stolen blanket, the world around me trembling. The ground beneath me shaking. I knew bombs had been dropped on our beautiful country. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, I drifted off to sleep, hopeful of a brighter day without war or fighting. Without misery.

One week after the declaration of war, the first bomb dropped on us. My mother and I stood still in shock, until my grandmother grabbed us roughly by our forearms, threw us to the floor and scrambled to get under the table. I suddenly jumped up, hitting my head on the table, with a sudden realisation.

"Grandad and father are still out!"

Before there were any objections, I leapt out from underneath the table, and ran outside into my treacherous world.

BOOM! The sound of bombs and guns falling, window panes shattering and the smell of gunpowder suffocated the air. Everything felt like it was in slow motion. Without realising it, I was standing in the middle of a war zone. I heard my name being called frantically. Was I dying? A man carrying an elderly man scooped up in his arms came rushing towards me. I realise it was father and grandpa! I can hear father's footsteps pounding on the concrete coming to me. But there was a problem. Father's footsteps were not the only pounding footsteps. There were some coming from behind me too. I could hear father calling out desperately.

"Alea! Run!"

But before I could turn around to see what I should be running from, I fell. Blackness engulfed me. When I woke up, I found myself staring up into a sea of white. When I glanced around, I could see that I was not alone. In the hospital bed beside me, I saw my father lying on a bed, eyes closed, still. I curiously peered out the window, casting my eyes over the once beautiful sunflower garden. I was saddened to see it was destroyed, reduced to nothing but a pile of rubble and dirt. But something caught my eye. I noticed something bright poking out from all the debris! After a moment of wonder, I see that it was a sprout. I leant over the bed to press the button to get the nurse. I wailed with pain so loudly that I woke father.

"My Alea!"

The Flower of Love

"My Papa!"

I begun to weep.

"My Alea. I'm so glad you are safe"

"What happened Papa? I remember you carrying grandpa in your arms, and telling me to run."

I realised then, that one of the most important people in my dad's life was noticeably absent from my father's side.

"Where is old Grandpa?"

"Alea. Grandpa... He has left our world."

Papa's eyes glassed over and tears fell slowly down his bruised cheek.

By this stage I was sobbing uncontrollably, just like my mother the day war was announced.

"Mama? Grandma?"

"They are safe Alea. I spoke to them yesterday and they sent a message to you. They love you so very much."

I heaved myself slowly along the bed, wincing in pain with each movement until I was close enough to reach the nurse button. If I could just go out in the fresh air, away from the suffocating stench of the hospital ward. If only I could touch that sprout from the rubble. The elevator to my ward made a ding and out came a tall, dark haired doctor, in his pristine, crisp lab coat.

"Please, may I go out for fresh air?"

The doctor peered down at my leg, put a hand on my forehead then leant in and spoke briskly into his microphone. Within minutes, a flurry of nurses entered. One nurse with kind, gentle eyes came to me and whispered.

"Drink up, darling. Get some rest."

My eyes started to feel heavy and in moments, darkness flooded in.

Hours turned into days. Days into weeks. I woke up to the sound of dread each day when the tall doctor hurried through the door, and frantically rushed around to each patient, hiding them under their beds for protection from each attack. As each day passed the doctor began to look drawn, his eyes dark and his once pristine coat, dishevelled. One dreary morning, I lay in bed, and stared up at the ceiling, looking at the curly paint peeling in each corner. I wondered what lay ahead for my father and I.

With a sudden thundering sound, the ground shook violently with enough force to throw me off my bed. The world crumbled before my eyes. My body shook. Monumental cracks, made their way down the walls. I took a sharp breath in. As I desperately focused on the beds around me, with dismay, I realised that father was not there!

I hear fast paced footsteps from the stairwell as a new doctor came up through the doorway, as the lift was no longer working. She helped me back into bed and gently pulled the covers up around my slumped shoulders.

“Do you know where Ambros Lineo Kovelenco is? He is my father.”

She stroked my forehead and in a hesitant whisper, said,

“Sweetheart. Your father didn’t make it. I am so very sorry.”

I wanted to be alone. I cried until I could cry no more. The world around me was broken. I just wanted to curl myself into a ball. I gazed blankly out of the window. The sun was peering through the dust and gleamed on something. I inched closer to the window. I could just see something poking out of the rubble. I realised it was the sprout! It had gotten a bigger!

“Just hold on a few more weeks! I will come and get you.”

Weeks and months passed. More bombs dropped, more people died. Every time I walked over to the window, I would check on the sprout. It was becoming bigger!

One day a bomb hit our hospital. It was the worst we had endured. Everyone had anticipated that something terrible was on the horizon. Knowing it was coming, people had anxiously been preparing. The sound of the planes zoomed above us. I was under the bed, huddled into a ball of fear. I heard the whirring of engines overhead, a horrifying sound. CRASH! A bomb had fallen on the hospital.

This was the worst strike. I was the only patient who survived the attack. I was lying street-side on a dirty mattress, with a plastic tent as my only protection. I was defeated. The kind nurse, the only nurse to have survived. She stayed by my side and cared for me. We were set up out the front of the hospital. Glaring at me where the once beautiful sunflower garden once was, lay a metre of thick rubble.

We had one of the last radios in the city.

“Exciting news for all people of the world. The war... is finally over.”

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing! The war was over. Finally! I was overjoyed! The nurse jumped up and hugged me. The relief was overwhelming.

Three months later.....

I was well. I was making friends with many soldiers. After such trauma, I was glad to have friends and to feel happiness again. I was relieved to be reunited with my family. I realised that war was always going to be a part of me. Despite finding my way in life again, I knew the recollections and feelings would always be there, filed into the dark, dungeon of my memory.

The cleaning army had begun to rebuild the hospital. They worked on restoring the downtrodden sunflower garden and bring it back to life. I watched from the window as the soldiers raked over the rubble. It filled me with sadness to think of my sprout, that once grew from the rubble of war. The sprout that held my thoughts and kept me wondering as I lay in bed for months recovering. I spotted something unusually colourful poking out of the debris. I assumed it was a piece of broken plastic. But as I focused more closely, I realised it was a fully grown flower! I jumped out of bed and flung open the doors. The smell of crisp, fresh air filled my nostrils. I knelt down and gently touched the flower, overwhelmed with gratefulness to finally feel the softness and admire it's beauty. I wonder how it survived the bombings. I wonder how I survived the bombings. We both suffered so much. I look up to the bright sun, and cry tears of joy. For our soldiers, for happiness, for flowers.

LOWER SECONDARY

Highly Commended

The Big Race

KOBY HARNDEN

Second Place

Nothing to Everything

FELICE PASCOE

First Place

I Am So Glad I Went

JOSH MUNRO

The Big Race

"How would you like to go to the VR racing place down the road next weekend?" Asked Nick's uncle Damien. Nick silently nods his head as a reply, too excited to speak.

It's Christmas day and the Roe's are having a lunch at their cousins', the Briggs's house. Nick and his brother, Jamie, have cashed in. They have enough presents to fill an entire room, but his favourite is the invitation to go to VR Racing. Nick devotes his life to Formula 1 and has all the merchandise you can imagine. He has always dreamt of racing on the biggest stage and now he has the chance to. Only in a VR headset. Racing against his own family.

By the time the weekend comes around, Nick is busting to get to the big race. He is dressed up as his all-time favourite F1 racer, Lando 'Bolt' Hamilton. He meets up with his uncle at his house. He talks with anticipation for the whole drive to VR Racing.

"Speed up Uncle Damien," he insists, "You're going slow like Daniel Vettel."

When they get to the car park, Nick is almost jumping out of the car window. He sprints out of the car and into the building and his jaw literally drops. He looks around and can see all his dreams coming true. There are posters of his favourite racers, worn jerseys of past Grand Prix winners and even, Lando's former F1 car.

"All right, how are we all?" Nick hears a familiar voice from behind him. A voice full of regret, embarrassment even. He twists around to look at who had spoken. He first sees the shoes, black leather, with car grease, then the pants, dark blue denim jeans, with ripped knee holes. Nick's eyes slowly scan her clothes. The shirt looks like it's been worn too many times, faded to the limit with a stamp of a go kart club. Not just any go kart club, but Nick's rivals. He has a picture of who is standing in front of him as his eyes scan the face. He sees the pimple above the right side of the lip and knows instantly that it's Tash, his racing enemy's mum.

"Hey Tash, we're here for the boys' Christmas present." Dad fills the awkward silence with his soothing voice. Tash takes them all over to the cars and she tells us all to hop in to adjust the cars to our size. She then runs us through a quick tutorial on how to drive the cars.

"Which competition would you like to compete in?" Tash asks us, overly unenthusiastically. Without even thinking about the question, Nick spits out the words, "F1!". He jumps into the car and flips his headset over his head. Tash walks over to each car takes a couple of minutes to change the settings but takes surprisingly long to change Nick's settings.

"All good, ready to race?" Tash asks them all, then realising she doesn't need an answer to know Nick's status on the question. Nick hears the lights start to flash then sees the bright lights up ahead. "Start Your Engines." He sees the lights all flash green, then disappear.

Nick pushes his foot down as hard as he can looks up ahead to see everything looking exceedingly realistic. He notices the track looks exactly like the Italian Grand Prix, the race that was meant to be starting now. He turns around the first corner, exceptionally tightly, and drives over the grass fractionally, flicking it up to his helmet. It hit his helmet. In a VR headset. He isn't wearing a helmet. He takes his right hand off the wheel and tries to touch his face. But he doesn't feel his soft, warm skin. He feels a thick layer of carbon fibre. The thick layer of carbon fibre that makes F1 racing helmets.

The Big Race

Nick quickly turns the tight corner and realises that this was not his imagination. He would have to complete the race to be able go back to his normal life. He speeds up, and hears the microphone attached to his headset, "Nick, you're currently in P7, Lando is 3.4 behind." He hears this and finally confirms to himself that he is not in a dream.

After fifteen laps, Nick has overtaken sixth place and has cemented himself into sixth for a while. He has slowly but surely gained on fourth and fifth place but hasn't quite had a chance to overtake. He just sits behind and waits for an opportunity, his strategy in go kart racing. When a gap appears, he doesn't waste his chances. He sits behind for a couple more laps, waiting for his chance, but his fellow racers aren't giving anything away. As he starts to imagine sitting behind them for the whole race, he sees them closing the gap on each other before, 'BANG', The cars collide, sending them both off the track and needing some assistance. He replays the crash over and over in his head, emphasising the wheels colliding, and prays that he won't have to be in the situation that they are in now. Nick quickly races ahead and doesn't wait to be told to go, and before he knows it the mic goes off, with Nick's race engineer informing him of the situation. "Patience pays off Nick, Currently P4 with Lando still 4.3 behind."

Around thirty laps into the fifty-lap race, Nick takes some risks with his corners, and overtakes third place. Lando is still travelling just behind him though, and that is starting to play on Nick's mind, after all, Nick's sit and kick strategy was developed by Lando, and after watching many of his races, Nick decided that he would try out the strategy, and hasn't looked back since. As Nick starts to look behind himself to watch Lando, he starts to swerve a bit around the track, before his race engineer reverts his attention back onto the race. "Nick, keep your focus here, concentrate. Just run your own race and you'll be all good. Currently P3, Lando is 2.7 behind."

When Nick gets around forty laps into the race, he starts to think about how he can climb his way into second place, maybe even first. He starts to use his DRS (Drag Reduction System) to catch up and reduces the gap between him and second place to only point six of a second. He then waits for the straight on the other side of the track, and uses his sit and kick strategy to overtake him, using up his last allocated DRS.

With only three laps to go, Nick is still in second place, but has closed the gap. He turns the corner and sees the car in front of him start to smoke from behind. 'That's the engine overheating,' Nick thought to himself, 'that happens when the driver pushes the car too hard.' The smoke then escalates, so much so as when Nick drives past the fans, he can hear them gasping with horror. He can see every kid standing up and yelling out, "He's caught Fire!" He can see the smoke grow, consuming more of the track, and a small blaze start to light, Yet the car still drives on, either unaware, or desperate for a place on the podium, but almost definitely a first. While all the commotion goes on, there is only two laps left to go in the race. He tries to pick up the pace but can't see anything through the thick smog. He can see people on the side of the track trying to convince him to stop but he won't even slow down, let alone come to halt.

With only one lap to go in the Italian Grand Prix the small blaze looks like it has lit up the whole back of the car and Nick can see it has taken its toll on the driver, swerving around the track with what looks like no control of the car. Nick is starting to have trouble breathing

The Big Race

with all the smoke blowing into his face. He then looks up to see the car start to tail off the track, and finally, hit the barrier. A gasp of shock goes through the crowd, before screams as the car bursts into flames. Nick can see the finish line is in sight but also needs to help the driver of the car, otherwise they might have a fatality on their hands. With only a couple of seconds to weigh up the decisions, Nick decides to pull over, and help the driver get out of the car.

As he jumps out of the car and sees Lando drive past and cross the line in first place. As Nick sprints over to the car, he can hear the cries of help from the driver. Nick jumps on top of the car on fire and heaves the driver out of the wreckage. He places the driver on the ground about ten metres away from the flames and starts to hear a chant ring around the track, "Nicko, Nicko, Nicko," and helps himself to a small smile. He waits for the medics to come and help, and then hops back into his car and drives over the line, in seventeenth place, ten places behind where he started in. He takes his helmet off his head to see the VR Racing screen. Tash walks over to him and congratulates him "Well done Nick, I thought I'd give you a challenge and surprisingly you've succeeded." A hundred emotions go through his head before he realises how much danger Tash has put his life in. "Thanks Tash. I guess we'll meet again."

Nothing to Everything

Nothing to Everything

In a town called Nothing, Texas, a girl lived. She was not your ordinary teenage girl, she was different. She could be a celebrity elsewhere in the world, but here in a town called nothing, she was nothing. Keyword- was.

Carra Lou first became famous 10 years ago. The world was in shock. Carra was different- everyone could see that, but everyone looked past the constant reapplying of nail polish and bleached blonde hair to a girl who was special in her own ways- the missing gem. This is Carra's story. This is my story.

I was born on the 13th of March 2030. Everyone is in shock when I tell them my birthdate. The shock quickly turns to realisation, which then turns to fear, and then I am friendless once again. So, I refrain from telling people about my birthday, even though to me it's not even a big deal. It's not because of anything I've done, so I always wonder why it mattered so much. I am just Carra Lou, an ordinary 14-year-old from Nothing, Texas.

I often get asked about my birthmark. I have a small duck-shaped mark on my neck. it's so unique that I would bet anything that I'm the only one in this world with it. It's a small thing but it makes me different from everyone else, a true individual.

Everyone in Nothing, Texas is always looking for ways to help out the outside world- for a chance to become someone from another place, or just to become someone. This is the true reality of life in Nothing, Texas.

The day in question started off as any normal day does- I walked into school with jeans and a sweater on, took my place in class and waited. Then to my complete shock, there was a PA announcement. If you know anything about our school, it's that we only have a system because it was enforced by people out of this town that our school have it, we don't actually use it, well, up until now that is.

"Excuse the interruption please," the loudspeaker said, the voice of the hated school secretary, Miss O'Donoghue, "as of this morning, the queen has risen back into power. She has demanded a full-fledged search into the kidnapping of her daughter. Any person who finds her gets a cash prize. Key feature charts will be available at the front office, thank you"

The class was in shock. No one spoke. Everyone had heard of rumours of the evil queen being removed from the throne. Then everyone erupted into loud talk and the stampede out the door to the front office began. I followed along with the crowd as I was in favour of not being trampled alive.

When I eventually got to the office, I noticed something was off. Everyone was staring at me. Then the pointing began. I ducked my head and looked at the wall with the key features chart on it. I subconsciously pulled the collar of my sweater up around my birthmark to hide it. Then I stopped, and stared, and stared some more. The chart was wrong, it couldn't be correct, it just couldn't!

I rushed out of the office, my only aim to get as far away as humanly possible from the poster I just saw. It couldn't be. There was no way that was correct! I continued to run not even sure where I'm going, just away from everything.

There was no way that the missing Princess has a duck-shaped birthmark on her neck.

I Am So Glad I Went

I never should have agreed to go. If I hadn't accepted that invitation I would never have been at the party when the cops pulled up and I would never have been driven back home to be scolded by my parents for hours. I decide not to just sit here and mope. I decide to use my time to familiarise myself with the layout and contents of the room. I haven't been here in ages as my parents don't want me touching my brother's stuff, but they had no choice, it's not like they could've locked me in my room with all my hidden games, snacks, toys and devices. That wouldn't have been much of a punishment. I quickly noticed the build-up of cobwebs in the corners of the room, reminding me just how long it had been since my brother went missing.

I still remember the feeling of time passing with no calls or mail home, I still remember my parents distraught look when I finally caved and suggested that we contact the police. They were hesitant, as they thought that that would be the last step towards giving up all hope of him returning, but eventually they accepted. I remember the feeling of each week passing with still no calls. My parents feared the worst, that something happened to him but, in my grief I just convinced myself he ran away.

Unable to bear the pain, I snap out of my daydream of hurtful memories. I get back to searching the room for anything, anything at all to do. I spot it, my eyes start to well up with tears. On the back shelf, sitting next to the fireplace, is my brother's globe along with some old photos of me and him. As much as I want to hate him for abandoning me, he was still my brother and I miss him, and apart from the raven necklace he gave me, the photos embody my last memories of him.

I slowly walk over to the shelf, with each step I remember the memories associated with every photo. Our time at Niagara Falls, the Pyramids of Giza, and the Leaning Tower of Piza. I pick up the last photo on the shelf, it's one of my whole family.

I whisper to myself as if talking to my brother, "how could you leave us?". My voice turns to anger as I begin to shout, "how could you leave me!".

Luckily my parents can't hear me over the outside rain, but I collapse on the floor, holding the photo close to my chest. Tears run down my face and down on to the wooden floors. I sit lost in thoughts of sadness, anger, happiness and regret. Eventually I get to my feet and begin to gather my composure. I look to the globe and remember all the times when my brother showed me places on the globe and told me stories of his dangerous adventures in faraway lands. At the end of every story he would promise me that one day we would go there and have our own adventures.

I look at the globe and notice that there was a label next to each place my brother had told me stories about. Then I read the label on the south pole and stop for a second. It said Pyramids of Giza. I check the other labels. They too are all in the wrong places. Confused, I peel of the label and put it in the right spot. I hear a short guitar twang from across the room. I jump at the unexpected noise, then turn to look at the guitar on the bed. There is no one there but the string is still vibrating and glowing a bright blue.

My curiosity is peaked, I begin to match up the rest of the places, each one brings back memories of tales of adventure my brother told me. With every correct place I mark on the globe another chord on the guitar lights up and plays a note. Once I'm done matching up all the places on the globe, all the strings are glowing.

I stand there for a second wondering what the next step is, when it hits me. I walk over to the guitar and start to play the notes in the order I can remember. I get four notes in but, I can't remember the rest, but it doesn't matter. I recognise it as the song that my brother taught me to play when I was younger.

I begin to play the song and as I do the chords seem to echo on forever. I get to the chorus and as I play each note of the chorus I notice the fire in the corner begin to change colour corresponding to the colour of the guitar string.

Each note illuminates the room in a different colour first blue, making the whole room look flooded then purple, which reminds me of the vast night sky, then green, yellow and finally red. With the chorus finished the fire stops changing colours and just reverted to its original, golden orange light that lit the space moments before. Underneath the fire place, I noticed my brother's old chemistry set and realised what I had to do next

I open it up and start unpacking all the different substances, I look at the guitar, the first note of the chorus is G which is the blue string, I throw a pinch of copper into the fire and there is a burst of blue flame before returning to its regular golden orange. The next string in the chorus is A which is purple so I throw in some potassium chloride causing a burst of purple, before returning to its golden orange origins again.

I repeat the process until I finish the chorus. Then on the last note the flame turns red and stays that way, until it starts to swirl, getting smaller and smaller, until it looks like a roll of paper on the base of the firepit. Then with a sudden poof, the fires gone and in its place is an actual scroll with a small stamp on the seal. A raven, that looks exactly like the one on the necklace my brother had given me the night before he left.

I pick up my necklace in my hand and it starts to glow a bright red, and so does the seal on the parchment. Until the raven stops glowing and the seal just cracks. The parchment flings open and appears blank at first. Then with a small sizzle sound, ink starts to appear on the parchment as if being written by some invisible figure behind me, it read;

Dear, Josh

I'm sorry I couldn't just give you this message but I needed to know you were ready for its contents by the time you read it. Hopefully you didn't have much trouble solving the puzzles I set out. You may have noticed a sort of magical element to the puzzles, this is because to put it simply I'm a wizard. I know it sounds ridiculous but I guess you'll just have to believe me. I started training when I was about 16, The puzzles were specifically designed so that they could only be solved by you, using the skills I taught you, the skills of a wizard. I'm sorry I left you and I know that I'm the worst brother in the world, but I had no choice, I couldn't sit by as

millions of lives were at stake. That's actually why I'm writing this, if I do this I probably won't come back as its kind of a full time commitment. I hope that someday you will understand.

Love, Tom

PS. Check the box underneath the globe

I sit there with tears in my eyes and whisper, "I Understand."

I get to my feet and begin to walk over to the shelf. I bend down and reach out my arms to grab a simple little cardboard box with "DO NOT OPEN" written in big black bold letters on the top. I slide the lid off and discover a small stick with a piece of paper on the top, it said, "For Your Own Wizing Adventures", this makes me realise it wasn't just any old stick. It was a wand, with engravings of a great serpentine dragon spiralling around it with eyes made from green jewels. I pick it up and clasp it tight in my other hand.

I look out the window at the moon covered by clouds and raindrops on the window. I look at the note I still have in my hand and give him one last "thank you". I finally know exactly what I should do. I will find my brother, but first, I must become a wizard.

UPPER SECONDARY

Highly Commended

The Full Picture

HINAKO SATO GONGORA

Second Place

Delirium

ETHAN HO

First Place

To Touch a Star

CAITLIN WALLACE

The Full Picture

From the hospital building, a lonely set of eyes scan the world outside.
Rays of sunshine warm its surroundings, accompanied by the pellucid blue canvas upon the chitters and laughter that fills the ground; children chasing and being chased, adults gossiping and being gossiped about, patients entering and leaving the ground.
Only recently has she stopped being a part of that world.
The world she was raised in, the world she was used to, the world where she could drink a cup of water without the fear of it hurting.
But now it hurts.
The girl stands in front of the big window, the warmth leaking from the window wrapping her in a sense of sorrow and regret.
This is it.
This is probably the last time her two fragile legs will carry her weight from the bed.
As the girl continues to stare at the scenery from afar, she notices a peculiar form of life dragging their way up.
At the centre of the transparent wall was a small lady bug. Its tiny body struggles to find its way up, yet the ladybug continues to rise.
The girl observes the ladybug, wondering how she could have possibly missed the crawling creature in the midst of the one coloured sky.
The negative clump she felt in her body slowly dissipated and the warmths of the rays formed a blanket of reassurance.
Of course! She didn't fail to see the life in front of hers, she chose to ignore the small and floundering life as they accidentally made its way up here.
Now, she is.
Holding the full but lukewarm glass of water, she places it down on a small table.
Slowly, her two hands meet the glass of the window. The sizzling sensation of the hot summer sun absorbing into the top of her fingers, serving as evidence.
Evidence that she's still alive.
A small and subtle smile appears for the first time since the girl arrived.
Her dazzling eyes of wonder stares at the world around her.
Flowers near the sliding door to welcome patience with hope, birds gliding gracefully through the sky to their flocks, the girl she realises as her reflection astonished by the different lives that surrounds her.
Yes, she is a part of the world.
Living and breathing.
Holding on until the last moment.
Although the life she was given is short and confusing, she hasn't fallen just yet.
With a sense of confidence and something sweet unwrapping inside of her, she walks away from the glass window and slowly makes her way out of the lonely room.

Delirium

'How could I have been so stupid!?'

It was the one question that kept repeating in her mind. Over and over again. *How could she have been so stupid?* She should have known it would end up like this, with her out here. And yet she still went through with it. She still followed them out here, like a lamb to the slaughter. She had only herself to blame for her predicament, and she knew it.

The girl reached up with her one good hand to brush the tears from her eyes, soaking her already damp sleeve in the process. She didn't know how long she had been lying out here, on top of the scalding sand and amongst the sharp branches. Perhaps a couple of hours, perhaps more. In perspective she guessed it didn't matter. She would probably be dead before any help arrived, that is if anyone was actually looking for her. Knowing those *snakes*, no one probably was. She bet they'd already spun some cleverly crafted lie about her absence, complete with bright smiles and an air of nonchalance.

She cursed them. Alastor, Emily, Sam, and everyone else that had goaded her on. But most of all, she cursed herself. She cursed herself for being so dense. *It had been so obvious!* No one just *decides* to go looking for lost items in the middle of a day like this. But she had wanted to believe them, she had wanted to believe them so desperately. To believe that they had changed. That she wasn't just another loose end born from their twisted games.

A jet of molten lava shot through her veins, sending the muscles in her right arm into painful spasms. The fresh wave of agony drew out what little tears she still had left onto her aching face, adding to the salty streaks that stained her flushed face. God, it hurt so much. Another dry sob escaped her hoarse throat. *'Why must my suffering be dragged out like this? What had I done to deserve such a fate?'*

The girl clenched her eyes shut, everything becoming too much to bear. She just wanted it all to stop.

The pain.

The delirium.

The humiliation.

She just wanted it all to end.

...

...

...

Silence filled the air, flooding into the void left by the cacophony of noise. The sudden lack of sound was jarring to the girl, bordering on eerie. *'What just happened?'* Slowly, she opened her eyes.

What greeted her was eyes couldn't be real.

The trees were frozen. Dry birch and eucalyptus trees sat, frozen mid-motion. It was as if someone had just hit pause on them. Slowly, she glanced around the clearing. She found only more and more of the same phenomena. The grass shrubs, the clouds, even the little insects that had scurried the ground. All of it frozen, like a watercolour painting in an art gallery.

The next thing she noticed was the pain. Or rather lack thereof. The pain that had plagued her for hours on end, had simply... vanished? She no longer felt the burning that had streaked through the veins in her right arm, or the incessant pounding of her head. She didn't even feel the afternoon heat that had so viciously scorched her alabaster skin.

Tentatively, she tried moving her right arm. First with small, simple gestures, like flexing her wrist and bending her elbow. She felt nothing. No sudden jolts of pain. No uncontrollable muscle spasms. Not even any stiffness from how long her arm had laid still. She glanced back down to her forearm. The two puncture marks were still there, staring back at her.

'How is this even possible?'

Feeling emboldened, she propped her hands up behind herself, letting them take the full weight of her body. She had half expected them to give out under the weight, yet they held firm, only fuelling the girl's disbelief. With a grunt, she pushed herself up off the ground and back onto her feet. Sand, dirt and foliage that had once clung to her descended back onto the ground, like rain into a lake. To her surprise, her legs still managed to hold her weight after so long. The girl grinned to herself.

The silence that came with this phenomena did not last long however. A new noise disrupted the eerie tranquillity, its sudden harshness invading the air around her.

Crunching.

It echoed throughout the clearing, the soft crunching of leaves and dead foliage on the ground.

crunch.

Crunch.

CRUNCH.

The sounds began to grow in intensity- Footsteps. Could it be someone else was nearby? The girl called out to whatever was approaching

"Hello"

The word came out like a hoarse rasp.

"Gooday."

The girl spun around, almost causing herself to topple back over from the sheer speed of her movement. A single man stood there, his hazel eyes boring straight into her own. The man gave off an aura of sophistication, his black handlebar mustache matching the raven-coloured two-piece suit and bowler hat he wore.

"Have you come to help me?"

The man tilted his head, his cold eyes still gazing intently at her. The girl suppressed the sudden urge to shiver. Something was off about him, that much was clear. It was as if he was searching her very soul, trying to find all her secrets that lay within.

The seconds drew out, but still he offered her no answer. He merely continued to stare. Perhaps she ought to try and find her way back to the town, and leave the mysterious man alone. It wouldn't be unreasonable, now that her injuries had all but left her disappeared. She tried calling out to him one more time in the hopes that the man might respond to her.

Still nothing.

Slowly, the girl turned around from the mysterious man, and began to shuffle away. If she remembered correctly, the way back to town was a 20 minute hike. Just as the girl reached the edge of the clearing, the man called out to her.

"Your name is Deirdre Leishman."

She stopped right in her tracks. The cool, refined voice he spoke in made it clear that what he said wasn't a question. It was a statement.

Slowly, Deirdre turned to face him once more.

"You know who I am?"

The man ignored her question, electing to continue speaking.

"You were born on the 21st of May, 1973. Your parents are Harold and Brigid Leishman, both of whom were born in Wales. You originally had another younger sibling, Brone Leishamn. He however passed away from Scarlet fever when he was 3 years of age. *Tragic.*"

Deirdre stood in shock, her mouth resting slightly ajar.

"How... How do you know all this?"

The man in black simply shook his head, the raven feather that adorned his bowler hat swaying gently from the movement.

"How I know that is irrelevant. What is relevant however is yourself. If I am not mistaken, you are quite lost."

"I'm not lost! It's just my... *friends* abandoned me here!"

Deirdre ran her hand over the puncture marks that marred her arm, the phantom pain washing over her as she remembered what had caused her hours of suffering. The mysterious man merely smiled, much like how she imagined the Cheshire cat would from Lewis Carol's novels.

"Of course, my apologies."

The man strode forward, closing the distance between them until they were only a foot apart. The cold look in his eyes and unnatural smile never once shifted from his face.

"Lend me your hand, Miss Leishman and I shall lead you back to the town."

The man stuck his hand out in an open palm gesture, offering his glove-covered hand to the girl. Deirdre narrowed her eyes, suspicion quickly overtaking her shock.

"No thank you sir. I think I can find my own way back."

The moment the words left her mouth, she immediately regretted it. The clearing around her immediately dropped by several degrees, sending goosebumps up her arms. The man's smile had disappeared, replaced by a chilling glare.

“Pardon?”

Deirdre swallowed, her mouth suddenly drier than the deserts in the Sahara. She felt her right arm begin to twitch, as she fought the urge to immediately bolt out of the clearing.

“I said... that I can find my own way back, sir.”

The man let out a short bark of laughter. Cruel. Mocking.

“If you say so, Ms. Leishman.”

The man in black turned away from her, and proceeded to move back toward the edge of the clearing. The moment he reached the sandy boundary however, the man paused. He called from over his shoulder.

“I will see you again sometime soon, Miss Leishman. I guarantee you that.”

And with that he was gone, leaving a suspicious and confused Deirdre alone once more in the clearing.

To Touch a Star

Levi saw his mother walk back into the room. She'd had another talk with the doctor and wore her usual thin smile, but something was different this time. Her eyes shinier, her skin redder. Her touch more desperate as she leaned in and squeezed his body tight.

His stomach churning as it usually did this time in the evening, his arms aching from the needles and straps attached to him, back numb from sitting in the same position for hours. Levi used what little strength he had to return the hug. He could see she was holding back something. An emotion hard to place. Fear, sadness, despair?

"You've done so well, sweetheart." Her voice shaking. "We are all so proud of you, I know it's been hard, but you've done so well." A speech, Levi had come to know.

"Thanks, mum" were the only words Levi could manage before needing to lay back down, both arms pressed to his small figure so that the cords and tubes around him wouldn't tangle.

He knew her heart ached; he could see it in her heavy eyes. Levi had heard his mother talking to people in the corridors but often didn't understand what her words meant. *'What could I have done better?'*, *'Why does it have to be him?'*, *'He's just a boy, he doesn't deserve this!'*, *'What kind of mother am I if I can't help my son?'*. These conversations were becoming more frequent, still, Levi wasn't sure why his mother was so upset and worried. He was going to get better. He needed to.

Not long ago had he been top of his Year 3 class, dreaming of being an astronaut so he could one day touch a star. Since arriving he had convinced the staff to let him hang up posters and drawings of his favourite rocket ships and maps of space, but now he lay in his hospital bed barely strong enough to hug his mother. Still, it was going to be okay. Levi would get better, return home, and go back to school. He was sure of it.

Now Levi could hear the nurse saying goodnight to the other children, but instead of leaving like she usually did, Levi's mother stayed with him. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see the soft glow from his nightlight on her face. Widening his drowsy eyes, his fragile voice spoke "You're staying tonight mum?"

"Oh, L-Levi you're awake." She stammered "hi sweetheart. I am going to stay tonight. It'll just be me and you buddy, how does that sound?"

"Yay," he whispered "I'm so happy you're here tonight. I've really missed you even though I know you're here as often as can be. I'm always happier when you're here." Levi could see she was struggling to hold back tears as she pulled up his blanket and tucked him in. The blanket had Levi's favourite constellation on it. The Southern Cross. He loved the way that even though the stars were separated, they were still connected and came together as one, pointing the way. Although the blanket couldn't provide relief from his pain Levi still appreciated its soft comfort and warmth.

She kissed his cold cheek and brushed the hair from his sunken, grey eyes. "I love you mum" he whispered.

"I love you so much, Levi." She replied. Her feathery brown hair covered half of her face making it hard to read her emotion again. Suddenly her tone changed. "Do you want to play a game? Maybe read a book? We could stay up and watch a movie if you'd like?"

"Maybe we could just—"

To Touch a Star

"We could do some drawing or... or colour in?" her eyes darting around the room

"Well, I was thinking we could—"

"I'm sure there's a pack of cards in here and I swear I saw monopoly in the..." her desperate tone died down as she looked back at him. She had never been like this before. Usually, when she came to see Levi and wasn't talking to a doctor she would sit and watch him draw or listen to him recite facts about space. Why was she suddenly so eager to do something else? "I'm sorry sweetheart. What did *you* want to do?"

He smiled "I want to stargaze with you mum". He pointed to the big window next to them. It had a clear view of the night sky. Her stunned expression made it obvious that she hadn't noticed it before, her eyes once again welling up with tears

"I would love that, Levi." She took his hand and held it close to her chest. As he pointed out different constellations and planets, he could sense her watching and listening.

"That one up there, that's the brightest star in the night sky." His small hand points up at the window toward a large star. "Its name is Sirius which means 'glowing' in Greek.

"Wow, Levi it's so pretty!"

After a couple more minutes Levi's mother fell asleep, her head next to his thin arms.

The next night was the same, and the one after that. Levi's mother held his fragile body in her arms and listened to his sweet voice. "Can you see that one mum, The saucepan? Do you see? There's the handle and there's the pan."

"Oh, I see it! Why don't you tell me about that one over there?" As Levi used his soft voice to tell his mother about the stars and the sky, she couldn't help but look at him. Her heart ached. Her small frail boy, still filled with so much love and wonder. As much as she was desperate to be with him, a part of her hated being there too. Reminded of all the fun they used to have. Before she knew what the future held. Before her kind-hearted, free-spirited boy became trapped in a strange room attached to cables, tubes, and monitors. He didn't deserve any of this.

After a while, she fell asleep, but Levi stayed awake and as he continued to search the sky, his eyes grew heavy, his breath slowed, he couldn't move; all his energy had gone and, just as he felt he was slipping, a rush of cold swept through his body. He felt light and free. No longer bound to the hard hospital bed, floating effortlessly. All that pain was replaced with intense relief.

Looking down Levi saw his mother asleep next to him and although it was strange seeing himself below with his mother it somehow made sense. He felt certain this would be the last time he saw her. "Goodbye, mum." He smiled "I hope you know you were all I ever needed and more. I love you." He knew he was leaving his mother, his friends, and his home but he also knew that it would be okay. They would be okay. He took one last look down, smiling as he remembered her and her love. Turning back to the sky Levi felt himself being steadily pulled up towards the stars. He had never seen them this close before. All he had ever dreamed of was touching one and maybe he finally could. He stretched with all his might, focusing on the light in front of him. A rush of warmth flooded his body as he reached out to touch his star.

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CAITLIN WALLACE

To Touch a Star