

OZ KIDS IN PRINT

Issue 4, 2022

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

We have completed the final edition of our magazine for 2022. We hope you enjoy the contents. Check out the book reviews, written by students for students. Also, there are book releases from our authors and illustrators. Maybe there's a new title you would like to read.

OzKids provides a platform for you to enter your work and have it assessed by a panel of experts.

All approved entries are published on the website ozkids.com.au. Some are selected for publication in our OzKids Magazine and at the end of the year, the winners are announced.

We wish students well in their exams.

- Carol

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**KEEP ON WRITING
(TYPING)!**

Carol Dick
Managing Editor

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Author & Illustrator Workshops

Kalgoorlie schools - Western Australia

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North Kalgoorlie Primary School



East Kalgoorlie Primary School

Marjorie and Anne with the Year 1 children at East Kalgoorlie Primary



Boulder Primary School



Hannans Primary School



Menzies Creek Primary School

Light of Nature

*The kookaburras laughed gleefully in the dawn, breaking the silence of yawn.
The magpies fiercely protected their territory, swooping and pecking.
The worms hid beneath the rich earth, squirming and wriggling.*

*It has been paused...
The air turned smoky and bloody,
as the animals began to stir.
A raging fire unleashed,
the tongue of flame soared to the sky.
The animals scared, screamed...and squawked.
The land burned, scorched...and injured.*

*It has been a while...
A tiny green fern pokes out of the ground, begging for dew.
Till rain drops.
Animals mosey around, breathing and hooting.*

*The kookaburra trills, the magpie swings, and the worm creeps.
A human sits on a mossy stump, sipping on water.
He ponders, then pours the water onto the soil covered with sprouts.
A glimmer of light falls.*



By Kaitlyn Chen
Grade Category: Middle
St Mary's Anglican Girls' School
Perth, WA

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& ILLUSTRATORS
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**Pictured: Marjory Gardner, Meredith Costain, Phil Kettle,
Marc McBride, Paul Collins and George Ivanoff.**

**BOOK
Release**

Tarni's Chance

Miniatures and photography by Jules Ober. Story by Paul Collins.
Published by FORD Street Publishing

When Tarni's mum says goodbye, all the colour and joy of life seem to go with her. Tarni retreats into her bubble. But then Chance steps in . . .

A 32 page picture book published by Ford Street Publishing, Melbourne, Australia.

A moving story about loneliness and loss, and the life-changing power of friendship and empathy. Beautifully illustrated with evocative, handmade miniatures and photography by internationally award-winning artist Jules Ober. A sensitive exploration of social themes such as family breakdown, self-doubt, anxiety and resilience. Striking design featuring a changing palette reflecting the main character's journey from darkness to light.

Reviews

As much as the text in this narrative of family breakdown, self-doubt and anxiety echoes the feelings of loss and loneliness that so many readers will have felt, it is the illustrations that make it so special. Beginning in deep shades of grey as her parents argue, with the only colour being Tarni and her guitar, her bubble of music, a monochromatic scheme that continues as Tarni comes to grip with her loss, finding solace only in solo activities like drawing and reading, gradually being consumed by the grey of her grief. Using handmade miniatures set against black and white photography, the reader is drawn deeper into Tarni's world, but then Tarni spots a stray, ragged dog, seemingly as lost as she is, and there is a ray of hope. Brief though it is, it shows both the reader and Tarni that there is still a glimmer of colour in the world, and when the dog returns the grey gradually disappears.

While this is not the first book to use colour to depict mood and emotion in this way, and the use of miniatures and photography was a feature of the 2020 CBCA shortlisted *The Good Son*, nevertheless it is a powerful representation that those who have passed through the grey of grief will relate to, and those who are still in it will be buoyed by the prospect that colour still exists and step by step they will find it.

Barbara Braxton
Teacher Librarian
M.Ed.(TL), M.App.Sci.(TL), M.I.S. (Children's Services)
Dromkeen Librarian's Award 2003



"Paul Collins and Jules Ober have created a picture book brimming with poignancy and emotion, the text and illustration simultaneous captivating its audience and tugging tightly at the heartstrings until the very last page".

"... Ober's unique method of 'illustrating' through photographs of miniatures, and her brilliant technique of colour splashes slowly seeping into the black and white pictures as protagonist Tarni's life becomes more hopeful, not only enhance the text but creates a concurrent story of its own".

"Collins has woven a story of sparse words, yet mountains of subtext, and the poignancy of the subtle text rings loud and true. 'Tarni's Chance' begins as heartbreaking yet the protagonist's hopes soar as the story goes on, and so does the reader's".

Magpies Magazine



Jules created and photographed the miniature sets on a table by her window during lockdown in Melbourne, winter 2020.



Breathe

*4 seconds in, 4 seconds out
they tell me I'll be okay
they tell me it'll stop soon
they tell me to breathe*

*4 seconds in, 4 seconds out
but how can I breathe when my mind is
in a rush
too many things to think about
too many feelings to feel*

*4 seconds in, 4 seconds out
my chest is so tight
and my eyes squint red cries
tears flow down my cheeks
why is it me my heart chooses to bully*

*4 seconds in, 4 seconds out
what is the point of anything
it all hurts the same
the same heartache*

*4 seconds in, 4 seconds out
oh the pain to be alive
the pain to see with two eyes
people say the world is beautiful
so why does it seem to be hiding in
disguise*

*4 seconds in, 4 seconds out
my mind has so many questions
so many what ifs
so many whys*

*4 seconds in, 4 seconds out
they tell me ill be okay
they tell me it'll stop soon
they tell me to breathe.*

By **Laura Peters**
Grade Category: Senior
St Brigid's Catholic College,
Manning Park, NSW

THE RACE AGAINST TIME

*The bustling crowd pushed me back and forth
as I struggled to find my way to school.
The smell of old tobacco lingered in the air
as I passed sewer street,
I held my breath and sprinted past.
My bare feet hard on the cobblestone,
my breath sharp as I slowed down,
my throat sore from the running,
the smell of dung and urine loitering around me.*

*As I strode on my chest rising and falling,
a breath of crisp morning air filled my lungs.
I could hear the shouting of the children up ahead,
and I raced on, brushing past pedestrians.
I could hear disdainful grunts, as I pushed past running on.
Gasps of air filled my ears, as pain ripped my body.
I collapsed.*

*As I looked around the buildings, down to the murky water,
A constant sting brandished my leg.
Glancing down, I saw a sharp rock wedged into my shin.*

*Dark red blood dripped down my calf.
I winced as I lifted my leg into the light for a better look.
I could see a deep gash in my skin
and my shin had turned a pale white.
I began to feel queasy inside,
but I had to carry on.
There were shapes I was unable to make out,
colourful splotches lined the pavement
crowding around me.*

*My vision blurred as one approached me.
I could barely make out a rough face
with dark blue eyes and scruffy hair.
I stared up at them, attempting to stand up,
but lost balance and fell into their soft arms.
I tried one last time, but they held me down,
I struggled to say I had to reach the school
but darkness enveloped my vision.
I had to reach The Ragged School on time.*

By **Miraya Winoto**
Grade Category: Middle
Ravenswood School for Girls
Gordon, NSW



The Eldest Child

We all know
the eldest is someone of the greatest age,
and to juxtapose,
a child is someone of the youngest.

So, to call someone the eldest child is
to create contradiction,
but we are tricked into thinking that
being older is better;
we have more control
and less restrictions.

But really, it's just leaving a kid
unequipped to hold the responsibilities of
someone much older

The eldest child.

Putting those words together are
problematic, that's all.
They are incompatible
and it's simply impractical to have 3
parents in one household.

The eldest child,
the oldest of them all.

I have known unfairness and
overwhelming responsibility
since cursed with that title.

The test subject,
the key blueprint for your future projects,
except

your expectations are far too big.

I am nothing more than your glorified
guinea pig.

I am your experimental child
who is only relevant for a while
until I have undergone all your tests ...
so that you can get it perfect for the next.

The eldest child
means cutting your favourite chocolate
bar in half to share with your sibling
and going half hungry
because there is always a second person
to share with
and care for.

And their worries soon become your own
because you have a duty to protect them
even when they don't expect you to.

It means to be there even when they
think you don't care and...
the eldest child is like the second parent.

The eldest child
is like being stuck on an island with
hundreds of people
and being expected to bring them all
home safely...

by yourself, it's all on you.
Being of the eldest age
is like being on a stage and expected to

give the performance of your life
to a song you never learned the lyrics to.
It is to have higher expectations than
anyone else
and to do it all by yourself
so that you set an example for your family.

The eldest child
is to be called the 'trouble-causing' and
'problem child'.

It is to have your life run by double
standards.

Having the responsibilities of an adult but
still treated like a child.

My brother and I ...

We both make mistakes,
but mine receive far more punishment.

We both do alright in school,
but he gets more praise and
encouragement.

We both make mistakes,
but mine are harder to learn from.

We both disappoint you,
but my disappointment is worth more.

He gets the same privileges,
but at a much younger age.

And I'm sorry I didn't realise that being on
the PlayStation 4 all day
is more worthy of your praise.

The eldest child
has to not only take care of her siblings
but of the house too.
Especially because I'm a girl and that's my
role in the world.

To still be cleaning up after lunch or tea
while everyone is just watching tv
and relaxing.

I guess that's another double standard,
when my parents always tell me
that 'under my roof my rules'
but hey now, the house is yours too,

cause' they realise there are chores to do.
It's always "did you clean your room"
Before "how are you" ...
And any kind of rebellion only causes an
argument ...
Or a lecture.

The eldest child
is a role model for her siblings.
Being told "you're older you should know
better"

thinking that endless pressure won't
upset her.
Having to accept imperfection but then
expected to be anything but ...
then blaming it on the phone and asking
why her door is always shut.

Being the eldest means to present
and look presentable,
expecting me to be a slave to my flaws,
but just because I'm the oldest doesn't
mean I should have to conform.

The eldest child.
Sometimes I wonder how much my birth
order shaped me ...
if it became too big a part of my
personality.

I know I can't undo it and change the past,
but I always wondered what it would be
like to be born last maybe there would be
fewer expectations,
more freedom and ease and probably
less pressure by a mile.

But guess I'll never know
because I'll always be the eldest child.

By **Tahlia Monteleone**
Grade Category: Senior
St Dominic's Priory College
North Adelaide, SA



Refugee

Glowing eerily, the ivory moon glared down onto the boat packed with terrified people. Inky black waves smashed relentlessly into it. The vicious gusts of wind quaked the small, vulnerable boat, spraying icy droplets of water pelting down onto her, soaking through her patchwork coat, sending shivers up her spine. Hands trembling, she clutched her tiny shivering puppy who was curled tightly in her arms.

Crowded by trembling, petrified refugees, she breathed deeply and wished for nothing more than to escape her harsh reality.

Closing her eyes, she could almost feel the radiating sun beaming down on her. Almost

smell the mouth-watering wafts of her grandmother's cooking. Almost see her parents' warm, comforting smiles. Almost.

The sorrowful whine of her chestnut puppy broke her from her reminiscent trance, the tiny dog's fragile, pencil-thin body wriggling tirelessly. She half-heartedly tried to soothe the frail puppy, stroking his head the same way her mother used to, before the bombs, before the fear, before everyone she loved was snatched from this earth.

Yet the puppy was relentless, continuing to fight her weak grasp, trying so hard to escape her protective barrier. Suddenly, the puppy's energetic determination overpowered her and he slipped out of her arms.

"NO!" she croaked.

Tears pooling in her eyes, she watched helplessly as the ball of chestnut fur fell flailing overboard,

toppling into the brewing, inky darkness. The crashing waves engulfed the puppy.

Without thinking, she launched into the waves. The icy chill hit her immediately, like a shark sinking its jagged teeth into her exposed flesh, freezing her veins and clouding her brain. Yet she pushed through, pure desperation driving her forward as she blindly searched through the numbing darkness.

Then as her lungs screamed for air and her eyelids began drooping as if they weighed ten tonnes, a flash of soaked, straggly, matted fur caught her eye. The puppy's limp body was sinking lower and lower, falling closer toward the seabed. Limbs numb and head pounding, she used all the strength she had left to propel herself through the murky waters. As her chest was on the verge of exploding and her lungs were screaming for air, death clamped its cruel, chilling hand around her.

Tears of pain and desperation welled in her eyes as she forced herself to go on. That playful

puppy was all she had left, and she was certain she couldn't survive in a foreign country completely alone. Struggling, she had at last made it to her puppy. Grasping his soft, limp body, she cradled him against her chest, a final burst of happiness flaring inside her.

Ever since she boarded that overloaded, patchwork boat, she could sense the pain creeping forever nearer. But now she could finally accept it, because now she was with what she loved most in this world. The last thing she saw was her precious puppy, curled peacefully in her arms, when the darkness swallowed her whole.

By **Alannah Kelley**

Grade Category: Middle
Moonee Ponds West Primary
Moonee Ponds, Vic.



Mother Nature

*The wind whistles through the trees,
The flies make noise like bees.
The leaves are crispy,
The air smells misty.*

*The dirt crumbles through your toes,
they hide from the foe.
Predators are wrong,
even though fish lay in the pond.*

*The prey is among,
whilst the birds sing a song.
The plant sprouts from the earth,
as the world gives birth.*

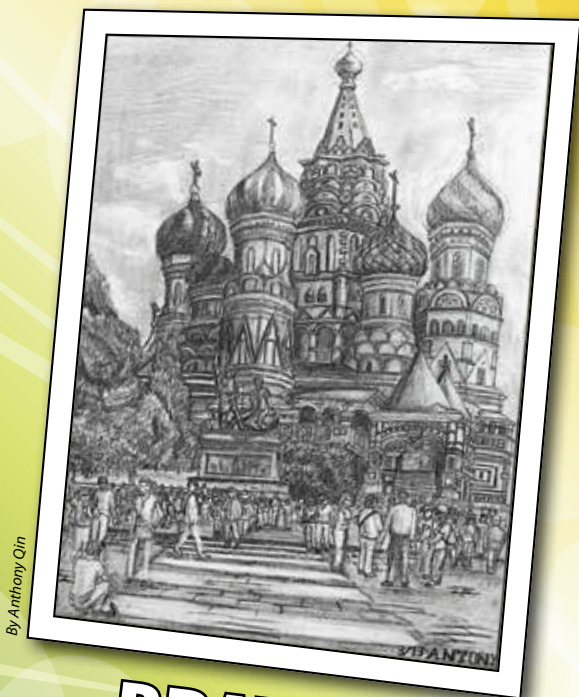
*You may think it come to an end,
but then the cycle starts again.
Oh Mother Nature,
you are my dearest friend.*

By **Danielle Sleiman**
Grade Category: Middle
Cerdon College
Merrylands, NSW



2022

YOUNG AUSTRALIAN ART AWARDS



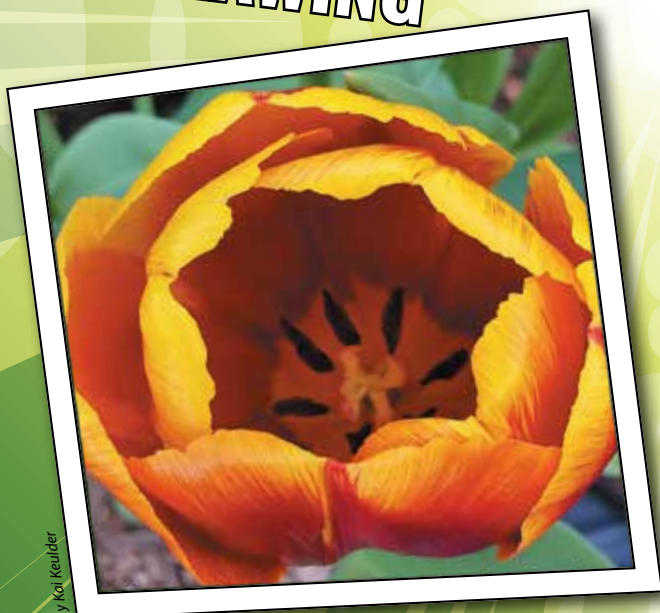
By Anthony Qin

DRAWING



By Nanna Tsuchiya

COMPUTER ART



By Kai Keulder

PHOTOGRAPHY



By Matthew Ropeyarn

PAINTING

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The YoungAtArt website and the Young Australian Art Awards are an initiative of the Children's Charity Network. All entrants must be no older than 18 years of age or attending either a primary or secondary college. There are 4 categories: Painting, Drawing, Photography, Computer Art. There are three age groups: Junior (Prep to Grade 4), Middle (Grade 5 to Year 8), Senior (Year 9 to Year 12).

To enter your Artwork you will need to obtain a digital image of your piece of work and submit this image online through our website at www.ozkids.com.au.

To do this you will be required to sign up in order for you to have the access to submit artwork. If you or your school do not have access to digital imaging, you may send a copy of your artwork to Young at Art, PO Box 267, Lara, Victoria 3212. Further information is available online.

THE OUTRAGE TRAIN

*All aboard the outrage train,
This is your final call!
Approach the platform carefully,
Just one slip and you will fall.
You won't be heard above the clatter,
Your aspirations of fame will no longer matter.
Embrace the beams of rose-coloured light,
Don't fight your fate.
Pledge allegiance to circular trends and perpetual defences,
Your final destination the graveyard of fame, where your trial commences.
Mind the gap!
Scan carefully for a seat as you wander down the aisle, finding an appropriate one might take a while.
Cancel out your options based on assumptions,
Join the public pile on if you choose wrong.
That seat might look safe,
Until you settle in and a nasty spring stabs you in the spine.
Oh! You want to change your mind?
The wheels are already in motion, I think you'll find.
Attention all passengers!
Those who torment gay people because they're not real people.
Those who comment trans women aren't real women.
Refrain from peering into your neighbour's carriage, they didn't ask for your opinion
To the ones who blame women for their own rape,
To the ones who take choice from women,
a choice they will never even have to make.
Ignorance is truly bliss,
but you will find those comments just don't fly in the social media sky.
Your final stop is approaching!
We urge you to peer out the window, take in the scenery
We will soon hurtle past fields of expectations, oversharing and excessive honesty.
Feel free to share your comments on everything you see,
Anything and everything is welcome!
Oh! But only if you are a man,
Opinionated women do not follow social policy.
Please excuse this interruption we have arrived at cancel station!
Freedom of speech is a powerful privilege but sealed your descension into a grave of ostracization.
Appalling allegations derail you from common decency,
There is no secrecy in this technological age, charged with cyber-crime,
You've reached the end of the line.*



By **Anneliese Kretschmer**
Grade Category: Senior
St Dominic's Priory College
North Adelaide, SA

The Rise of the Crows

The magpies in Daltonia have felt defeated after their failed assassination attempt of Nibble Fangs. The good news is Snoop (one of the magpie spies) overheard The Crazy Cat Lady telling her husband, The Grumpy Old Hooman and her daughter, Little Hooman, that Nibble Fangs had been grounded for ten years. Thus, the Daltonia avian community should be safe from Nibble Fangs' vicious claws and sharp fangs for a while.

The current ruler on the Daltonian throne is Queen Maggie of the magpies. She is wise beyond her young age and the most beautiful of all in the queendom. She has a regal long black robe with white spots. Her husband Bond is resourceful and smashingly handsome. He has a sleek black tailcoat, white collared shirt covering his muscular wings. They have three equally beautiful children named Wattle, Grevillea and Floofy.

A group of crows are secretly dissatisfied with being ruled by the magpies. They held a secret meeting on the grey roof. Brutus stirred them up saying, "Why should we be bossed around by the chick magpie?" Black Hawk stood up, spread his wings, puffed his chest and said, "We must rise to power, we are the stronger birds of Daltonia, we should be the ones to rule!" "Hear! Hear!" echoed the other crows. However, none of the crows were smart enough to come up with a plan that would work.

One fine day, Queen Maggie's sister, Betty took the three chicks on a gathering expedition to the Garden of the Chickens. Coincidentally a flock of the big crows were there scavenging on the chicken feeds. Floofy ventured away from Aunt Betty to have a closer look at a bush turkey. Brutus and Black Hawk and a few other crows were getting annoyed by the noisy chicks.

Black Hawk nudged Brutus, "Hey! Look at this one, he looks like an easy target." Brutus asked, "What are we going to do with him?!" Black Hawk shook his head and explained, "This ball of fluff is the queen's youngest chick. We can kidnap him and blackmail

her!" Brutus and the others suddenly grew extremely interested. "You're a genius Boss!" So, Brutus, Hulk and Rocky surrounded Floofy and held him by his wings, Black Hawk picked Floofy up with his big claws and flew off to the crows' stronghold.

"Disaster! Maggie! Disaster! The big bad crows took Floofy!" Aunt Betty was in a flap. "What happened?" Bond enquired. Aunt Betty and the two remaining chicks, Wattle and Grevillea recounted what had happened between sobs. Just then, Snoop burst into the treehouse with another urgent report. "Your Majesty, I think the crows are plotting a mutiny." "Aarghh! Why do the crows want power when they can have peace and joy?" squawked Queen Maggie. She was upset and worried about Floofy's welfare. Bond was trying to console her and the other chicks.



"We must get him back!" cried Aunt Betty. "We should summon a council meeting!"

"Council! Council! Assemble!" Queen Maggie cawed. "There is an uprising of the crows! They have kidnapped my youngest son and blackmailed me to give up my throne. We must stop them!" The magpies started murmuring amongst themselves, but it caused more panic than improved the situation. Finally, Bond was the one who came up with a plan to rescue Floofy. The magpies needed to set up a decoy to distract the crows, while another flock swoops in to rescue Floofy.

The first group worked on collecting dog kibble from Luna Hound's bowl. When they had enough, Bond set a date for the rescue. They scattered the dog kibble along the outer perimeter of the crows' stronghold. Bond and the second group waited patiently on the side closest to

where Floofy was held hostage. The crows wandered out one by one to feast on the dog kibble, leaving Rocky to guard Floofy. However Rocky could not resist the temptation of free food so he followed the rest out too. Bond and his gang promptly sprang into action. They untied Floofy and bundled him off to safety.

Queen Maggie called another council meeting. This time all the birds from Daltonia were in attendance, there were magpies, kookaburras, lorikeets, noisy miners, galahs, butcher birds and a couple of storm birds, and the crows. Queen Maggie looked very peeved. She announced, "Someone kidnapped my son to blackmail me to give up my throne. What should the council's reaction be to this uprising? Am I not the elected Queen of Daltonia?"

There was a sea of gasps and whispers among the council members and the audience. Rainbow, the lorikeet representative chirped, "Long live Queen Maggie!" The audience chimed in, "Long live Queen Maggie!" Bond stood up and shushed the crowd. Pointing at the crows who were cowering behind the crowd, "They are not fit to live in our domain! We must banish them from Daltonia!" "Hear! Hear!" The rest of the council members agreed.

"It is settled then." Queen Maggie declared. "This group of uprisers will be banished from Daltonia and will never be allowed to enter this domain again. The crows not involved in this rebellion are still welcomed to remain in our queendom."

Black Hawk, Brutus, Hulk, Rocky, and a couple of others were exiled immediately. As they were leaving, Brutus asked, "What are we going to do now Boss?" Black Hawk growled, "We shall get her one day!"

By **Aloise Van Der Klauw**
Grade Category: Middle
Calvary Christian College
Springwood, Qld.

BOOK REVIEWS

**Meet our book reviewers:
Taylor, Florence, Katie, Daisy, Sophie and Ella from
Years 5 and 6
at Mornington Primary School, in Victoria.**

**Reviews Coordinators:
Paul Saunders and Meredith Costain**

Exit Through the Gift Shop

by Maryam Master (Pan Macmillan)

As if her parents going through a divorce isn't bad enough, Anahita Rosalind Ghorban-Galaszczuk (yes, that really is her name!) has been diagnosed with cancer at the age of twelve and a half. She has been given just one year to live! As well as having that constant reminder that death is just around the corner, Ana has to deal with her nemesis Alyssa's insults. Luckily, she has her friend Al, her parents, and her stepsiblings to support her. Who knows, they might even discover a few secrets along the way!

The main characters in this book are Anahita (#TheDyingGirl), ALYSSA ANDERSON (the big bully), her FOUR parents (Mum, Dad, Plastic Pat and Wanda), a lot – and when I say a lot, I mean A LOT! – of stepsiblings, and her best friend Al.

I loved all the twists, turns, and plot changes in this book. It made me laugh out loud so hard I nearly cried. It would be great for people who enjoy comedy/sad books, and for readers anywhere from 8–13.

Rating: 1000 out of 10!

Taylor STB, Year 5



Seven Wherewithal Way

by Samantha Ellen Bound (Affirm Press)

If you enjoy adventure and mystery, this book is for you.

Celeste's parents have gone away on an adventure, and she is stuck at her Gran's house with her annoying little sister, Esme. There are strict instructions to be responsible! Or as Esme says, boring! It all changes when their magical cousin Fred crashes his flying bus into their front yard. At Fred's house there is a huge number of mythical creatures. His house is in danger!!!!

Full of suspense, this is a fun book that is exciting to read. Suitable for readers aged 9+.

Rating: 7.5/10

Florence Perez, Year 6



Tarni's Chance

by Paul Collins, illustrated by Jules Ober (Ford Street Publishing)

When Tarni's mother leaves, her life loses all its colour – until she meets a dog who changes everything.

This book perfectly shows the emotions Tarni experiences through its use of colour and heavily detailed photographic illustrations. It's only a short book but I think it's better that way. Naming the dog Chance was the perfect way to show that although life can be difficult at times, all you need is a chance or hope.

People who may be going through something similar or just depression in general would like this book and it will maybe make them have a brighter day! For readers from 12-17.

Rating: 9/10

Katie Rick, Year 6





The Golden Swift

by Lev Grossman (Bloomsbury)

A mix of fantasy and real-life problems, if you love animals, adventure and saving the world . . . this book is for you!

Join Kate, Tom and the Silver Arrow – a magical train – returning creatures to their homes. When the Golden Swift appears, messing everything up, they find themselves on a journey to discover the world of animals.

No matter how hard you try to save the world, there are always pros and cons. We try to do something right, but in reality, problems don't always have one solution.

Are we heroes or villains?

I liked this book because it tells the story of a girl and how she has so much determination, even when times are tough. I recommend this book for kids aged 9+.

Rating: 9/10

Daisy La Nauze, Year 6



Treasure in the Lake

written and illustrated by Jason Pamment (Allen & Unwin)

This is the story of best friends Iris and Sam, who always played together in the forest as kids. But now they are older, Iris has grown up and is leaving Sam behind. He's just too childish. Sam doesn't understand why Iris is acting so grown up, it's not his fault he still wants to play like they used to. But when they find an abandoned town while adventuring in the forest, their friendship will be tested.

I liked how relatable the storyline was, and the graphic novel format. However, I was a bit let down by the ending. I recommend this book for readers aged 8+.

Rating: 6/10

Sophia van Zanten, Year 6



Rock Pooling with Pup

by Kevin Brophy and Jules Ober, illustrated by Jules Ober (Ford Street)

Rock Pooling with Pup is a new and different story, a mix of showing kindness to strangers and adventure. It's the journey of a young girl, Mia, and her dog, Pup, exploring the rock pools and the weird and wonderful creatures that can be found there.

Jules Ober illustrated this book using small plastic figurines of Mia and Pup, placed around coastal rock pools, then photographed. Information on each animal featured in the book is displayed at the back, along with ways you can help the rock pools. It also includes the Aboriginal names of the land used in the photos. Colourful, engaging, and easy to understand, this is a truly unique story, with a great ending. Recommended for children from 0–5, but a book that can be enjoyed by everyone!

Rating: 9/10

Ella Pleiter-Singleton, Year 6



The [Mis] adventures of Dave and Jeff

Prologue

Everyone looked up as the last Space X rocket launched into the sky. One of the world's richest people, Elon Musk, has gone bankrupt. He had gone on a huge spending spree, buying all the companies he could. He had all of the power in the world still, but nothing to back it up. Two boys, Jeff and Dave, were watching at home on their TV.

They one day too wanted to go on a rocket to the moon, they had since they were kids. They had never even been on one of the orbiting space hotels, like lots of the other kids had. There had even been a school trip to one once, but their parents could never afford it.

Chapter 1

A cold breeze swept through South Florida as Dave and Jeff watched the sun set. The blinding colours filled the sky. The reds, the oranges, the yellows and the pinks. Pink was Jeff and Dave's favourite colour. Whilst they sat on the cold grass both Jeff and Dave thought about their failed dream.

They would never be able to go to the moon through Space X, the entire company was gone. Once the boys had finished contemplating their grief they headed back inside. Jeff was a sporty person with a lithe frame, though Dave was a muscular bookworm. Both of the boys were seventeen years of age and two minutes apart.

They both longed for the moon and going to space since they were little but it seemed as though it wasn't meant to be. Both of the boys had a special bond; they could always tell where the other was. As they were walking to the kitchen to start dinner with the rest of their family something on the tv caught their eye.

A reporter was speaking about the companies that had the most money and one that was shooting up the standings was Space P. The company was seemingly a different version of Space X.

After the family dinner was finished the reporter began to move to another report. Jeff and Dave listened intently as this was

a report that would change them. The reporter announced that Space P was sending a rocket up.

"Mum, Dad please let us go to uncle's lab to tell him!" Both boys pleaded in unison. "Alright," Their mum relented " Though be back by 10:00." The boys were filled with joy as Dave drove them to Their Uncle's.

Screech! The boys had arrived at the place where their uncle worked.

Chapter 2: Uncle George's Lab

Dave and Jeff put on their lab coats as they walked through the doors into their uncle's lab. They had always visited it as kids, and had been fascinated by all of the exciting experiments and confusing calculations. There was an inaccessible room to the left that their uncle couldn't get into.

It was the radiation experimentation room. They used lots of radiation to see the effects on different creatures. As they walked up to their uncle's desk, he said to them "Hi boys, what brings you here?"

Excited, they told him all about the news of Space P. "And we need your help to get in", Dave finished, running out of breath. "So you need my help to get into a multi-billion dollar space corporation site, and sneak onto one of their rockets, which normally costs thousands of dollars to go on, because our family isn't rich enough to go onto the moon?" their uncle asked, trying to tell the boys how ridiculous their plan was. "Pretty much," Jeff replied.

"And you do know that all of this is highly illegal?" Uncle George continued. "Yeah, but I don't think they have a moon court yet," Dave said, trying to make their uncle listen to them. "The crimes are still being committed on Earth-" George started "Fine, I'll take you," he sighed, realising he couldn't beat the boys and their twisted logic.

Chapter 3: To the moon

Their Uncle George revved the engine while they were stuck at red lights. Both of the boys, Dave and Jeff were bursting from their seats. They were so impatient to get to SpaceP's launch site. Even though

what they were doing was illegal the two of them were thrilled. They were about to attempt a crime that no-one had ever dreamed of doing.

When the car screeched to a stop the three of them Dave, Jeff and their uncle George all put on stealth suits. Before moving a step forward Dave and Jeff scanned the building for any sign of security. There did not seem to be any security guards, however there were some cameras. Luckily uncle George had remembered to bring flash bangs.

"What is that?" Dave asked as uncle George pulled a pin out of a ball and threw it. "That was a flash bang. A special type of grenade that will release light instead of exploding to bring the cameras and cover us at the same time." Uncle George explained while throwing another.

With the cameras out of commission the three of them made their way into the faculty. Even though the cameras could not see them, they could still hear them.

While being as quiet as they could Dave and Jeff met up around the corner from the rocket. Pop! A gigantic muskrat appeared in front of Jeff. "What's that?" Dave asked, confused about the animal that appeared in front of them. "How am I supposed to know?" Jeff immediately responded, also startled about the giant mammal that had just appeared.

Their uncle now realised that something wasn't right, so he had to get out of here. "Well, sorry boys, but you're on your own now. I have to go back to the lab now. This, uhh, 'Spirit animal' might be able to help you, I guess." "But Uncle!" The two boys exclaimed, needing his guidance. This triggered the alarms as everyone heard the loud noise.

"Well, I'd better be going, good luck!" Uncle George yelled to them as he began sprinting back down the halls. Panicking, the boys ran into an air vent and hid. They watched as the security guards came to where they had heard the noise, and became utterly baffled as they wondered how a giant mammal had gotten into a high-security space facility.

Trying not to make any more noise, the boys snuck through the vents when they peered out and saw what they were looking for. The launch room.

By **Luke, Josh, Mathers & Doak**
Grade Category: Middle
Pedare Christian College
Golden Grove, SA



The Manor

Everything changed when it appeared. Its empty eye-sockets peered into his darkened soul as the child was placed into its crib, a shadow enveloping the blankets as a despondent swamp of gloom spread contagiously onto the once-bright landscape. The remorseless night sky was polluted with darkness as thunderous rain pounded on the window panes in endless, merciless assaults.

Every crack of lightning and rumble of thunder reminded Andrew Whitlock of his messed-up reality. His own child was the start of a plague, which soon contaminated Andrew Whitlock's spirit alike. It was more than abhorrence, or shame. It was the utter terror he felt when he first looked into its face. The child studied its father with its non-existent orbs of vision - hollow pits; dark voids of foreboding.

He had no choice but to take it into his household. If he didn't, his overwhelming perturbation would've killed him, if not the demon. Occasionally, madness from the sheer horror rising in his chest overcame him and Andrew Whitlock, a usually docile, harmless man, stood over the child's crib and lifted an axe over his head. But every time he swung the weapon down onto the surface, it went adrift, the blade of the axe slamming onto the wooden edge of the crib instead of the child's heart, where it intended.

Mrs Whitlock often questioned him about the uneven split in one of the edges of the crib. He could not conjure up a response to that question. Before he knew it, it wasn't just anxiety that tormented Andrew

Whitlock's polluted being. Physical pain tore at his body. Every part of him ached and excruciating agony sometimes did not allow him to walk, let alone stand. 'It must be that demon. It must be.' He groaned as he grappled the carpet on four limbs, turning towards the crib in the corner of the room.

The ends of the child's lips were tilted upwards. On its face was a smile. A sinister, evil, wicked sneer. An absolutely horrid, the most grotesque smirk. Am I going mad? It was elated to see him suffer. Soon, his wife also suffered from the illness, the darkness of the manor spreading to her heart also. It was impossible to watch his spouse undergo the exact same pain he did, nor for him to endure it himself for any longer. 'I must cleanse my body and hers of this wretched disease or Death will do so instead.'

Andrew Whitlock adjudicated, taking out a dusty bottle from an unused wooden drawer. A part of his mind ached at the thought of using his last supply of medicine, but it wasn't worth postponing treating the sheer agony he was in. Andrew Whitlock held a cup of the liquid against his wife's mouth, bringing the other to his.

He peered into the glass as he tilted it further, the cool liquid caressing his parched lips. 'The colour's a bit odd ...' Darkness

blinded the manor's guests as they stepped foot into the residence. They had sensed an abnormality from the first step they took through the front door, seeing the series of switched-off lights, but their confusions dissipated as they opened the door to the main bedroom. An empty bottle of pesticide rolled across the wooden floor, stopping at the detectives' feet.

A man and a woman lay on the bed, lifeless, dried froth from days ago covering their mouths. "It appears to have been a murder-suicide." One of the sleuths grimaced at the horrible scene despite his experience in dealing with such cases, turning towards a wooden crib in the corner of the dark room. A grime-covered, blind child was sprawled out in the cradle, the only symptom of life a slight, minute undulation of its chest. A pitiful, innocent child abandoned by its deceased, supposed guardians.

By **Yoonjin Lee**
Grade Category: Middle
Blacktown Girls High School
Blacktown, NSW



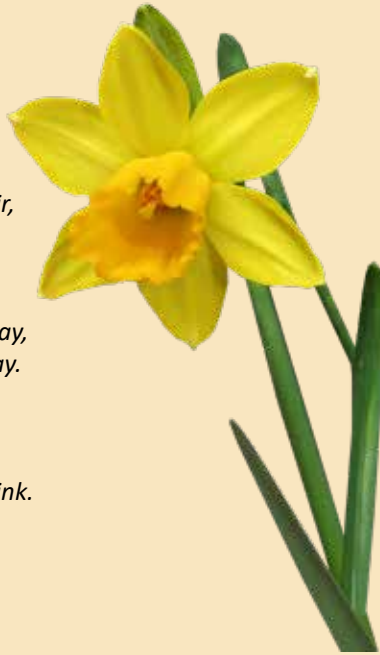
The Daffodils

*The Daffodils scare me.
With their veils of beauty;
And hearts of darkness.*

*Giggling giddily
They scuttle along, light as air,
Eye to eye they stare.*

*And don't look back.
Their minds wandering far away,
No shame, no thought will stay.*

*A stain as their presence
Writes itself in red ink,
Laughing still laughing as I shrink.*



*Though Wind seizes their jest
And Rain washes it away,
Yellow are the daffodils.*

Little do I sway.

By Monika Falkowska
Grade Category: Junior
Sacre Coeur
Glen Iris, Vic.

Cicatrix

*What is happening?
Why is your fate sealed?
Why does the world keep on spinning?
When the raft has sunk*

*And the mirrors have been broken
And the burdens have been released
Is death just freedom from this cruel
world?
A world that you loved*

*The people that you loved
Do you feel me?
Do you hear my call?
As I pleaded for time to turn back*

*As my sky turns crimson in wrath
And my stars lose their light
You said you'd be there for me*

*Can you feel the rain?
As it pelts onto the corrugated soil
Petrichor fills the air*

*My smile flipped the other way
It felt as if the world did too
It started off as a perfect day
But ended in vague shades of blue*

*The truth, an unacceptable event
I am in constant denial
Together, the truth and lies lament
Life is a never-ending trial*

*Reminiscence; painful yet warm
Joy washed away by tears
Clouds of despair; a brewing storm
For life is full of fears*

*For hours on end, I sit alone
The rhythmic ticking of the clock
My spirit crumbles into stone
My feelings blanketed by shock*

*Miles apart, distant by sea
Memories I cherish everyday
Our hearts linked, wild and free
My heart shatters; your soul drifts away*

By Farha Mohamed Fahim
Grade Category: Senior
Werribee Secondary College
Werribee, Vic.



Ambassadors



➤ **Paul Collins** has written many books for younger readers. He is best known for his fantasy and science fiction titles: The Jelindel Chronicles (*Dragonlinks*, *Dragonfang*, *Dragonsight* and *Wardragon*), and The Quentaris Chronicles – co-edited with Michael Pryor – (*Swords of Quentaris*, *Slaves of Quentaris*, *Dragonlords of Quentaris*, *Princess of Shadows*, *The Forgotten Prince*, *Vampires of Quentaris* and *The Spell of Undoing*). His trade books published in America are *The Earthborn*, *The Skyborn* and *The Hiveborn*.

Paul has edited many anthologies which include *Trust Me!*, *Rich & Rare* and Australia's first fantasy anthology, *Dream Weavers*. He also edited *The MUP Encyclopaedia of Australian SF&F*.

His last fantasy series was *The Warlock's Child*, written in collaboration with Sean McMullen. His book, *Slaves of Quentaris*, was listed in *1001 Children's Books You Must Read Before You Die* (UK, 2009). His latest books are *James Gong – The Chinese Dragon* and *Tarni's Chance* illustrated by Jules Ober.

Paul has been short-listed for many awards and has won the Inaugural Peter McNamara A Bertram Chandler, Aurealis and William Atheling awards. In 2022 he was awarded the CBCA's Leila St John Award for services to Victorian children.

Other than his writing, Paul is the publisher at Ford Street Publishing, a children's specialist publishing everything from picture books through to young adult literature. Two books, *Pool*, by Justin D'Ath and *Crossing the Line*, by Dianne Bates, were short-listed for the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards and the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. A third, Shane Thamm's *My Private Pectus*, was short-listed in the Territory Read Award. Ford Street won Picture Book of the Year with Chris McKimmie's *I NEED a Parrot*.

Paul spends much of his time travelling around Australia giving writing workshops to students from grade four to Year 12.

Paul's websites are: www.paulcollins.com.au, www.fordstreetpublishing.com and www.creativenetspeakers.com.

➤ **Anna Ciddor** says she can't imagine a better job than being an author and illustrator. She gets to spend all day sitting around daydreaming, sketching, making up stories, and indulging her obsession for research and history – except when her smart watch tells her get up and run around, or her grandchildren need looking after! While indulging her passion, she has created nearly 60 books on all sorts of topics that have taken her fancy, and won many accolades, including the Nance Donkin Award for Children's Literature, a grant from the Australia Council, three Notable Book awards from the Children's Book Council of Australia and shortlistings for numerous other awards.

Anna's latest novels, *The Boy Who Stepped Through Time* (Allen and Unwin 2021) and *A Message Through Time* (Allen and Unwin April 2023 release) are time-slip adventures that carry the main characters (and the readers) back to Roman times. You can find out more about Anna Ciddor and her books, and get some tips for your own writing and illustrating, at www.annaciddor.com. If you would like Anna to visit your school you can book her through www.creativenetspeakers.com



➤ **Meredith Costain** is a versatile writer whose work ranges from picture books through to poetry, series fiction and narrative non-fiction. Her latest books include the quirky *Ella Diaries* – which has been shortlisted many times in the YABBA and KOALA children's choice awards – and its sister series, *Olivia's Secret Scribbles*. Other titles include CBCA Honour Book *Doodledum Dancing*, *Musical Harriet*, nature series *My Life in the Wild*, and novelisations of the TV shows *Dance Academy* and *The PM's Daughter*. She was recently honoured to receive the KOALA Legend Award.

Meredith lives in inner-city Melbourne with a menagerie of pets, who frequently wrangle their way into her stories and poems. She enjoys presenting writing workshops for children and adults around Australia and overseas, and loves helping writers to create stories based on their own experiences. To find out more about her books, pets and early writing years, visit www.meredithcostain.com

The Briefcase

The window slides open. He was in. He saw the steaming briefcase with fog seeping out of it. He clicked it open and saw four tubes with fog leaking from them. He twisted the top left one and pulled it out.

"Hotchkins. He's my best friend why would he want to ruin my life? I don't know but I do know it was him," Jake blared across the police meeting room.

"How do you know it was him?" one of the police men questioned.

"Because we caught it on my CCTV footage," he responded.

Everyone gasped. He played the footage on the TV. A man crawled through the window and stole something out of his brief case. All the police got up and left going to their stations so that they could arrest Hotchkins.

"WE HAVE YOUR HOUSE SURROUNDED. COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS UP!" a police man blared through a mega-phone.

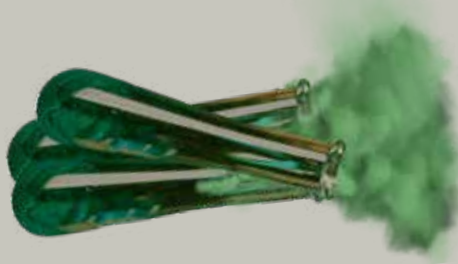
Hotchkins slowly walked out and was pulled into a car and driven to the station. An hour or so later, he was in a room ready for questioning.

"What? Steal his tech. What on earth are you on about?" Hotchkins asked. After about 30 minutes of questioning Hotchkins was cleared and wasn't found of doing it. "Why did you let him go, I need my tech

TOMMOROW!" Jake yelled.

"It wasn't him he had three alibies, he was at a party," the police man responded. After 10 or so minutes, Jake gave up arguing, defeated and went home. He climbed into his bed without thinking of what had happened he still had three copies it wasn't so bad. The next day he woke up at breakfast, got into a taxi and drove to the event.

"It's not so bad. I'll be fine," Jake said to himself whist walking up the stairs to the event with the briefcase handcuffed to his wrist.



He got a call, "We found fingerprints on your briefcase it was the security guard. We have arrested him and sent a car with the tech to you," the call said.

"Thank you so much," he responded grinning from ear to ear. A couple minutes later, the car arrived and go went into the event prouder than ever. A couple people went before him but nothing to interesting.

"Jake," the speakers bombed. He walked up to the stage and took his containers

out of the briefcase and began his speech. "Nanotechnology. We have seen it in movies but nothing ever real. But today I present to you real nanotechnology," he started presenting and everyone was amazed.

BOOM! An Iron-Man-like person burst through the wall. It was Hotchkins! But how? Jake thought.

"I'm going to kill you." They began fighting and throwing punches. Eventually the Iron-Man got the final blow. Jake went crashing to the ground.

"Why?" Jake whispered.

"Why? Because when we were kids I was left in the dust and tossed aside like a broken toy. I MEANT NOTHING. All because you wanted to pursue your prototype!" he said. "Now I used your own prototype to kill you." His eyes went white with no pupils. His voice was distorted and deepened. A giant gun came out. Jake's nanotech was now Hotchkins'.

"How?" Jake asked.

"I gave you fake nanotech. I have been spying on you this whole time; it wasn't a security guard, it was me. I used fake fingerprints and deep-faked the camera footage. Plus that last tech tube you got was from me and it worked, so now you will DIE!"

"LAPD ON THE GROUND!" The police barged in and began firing a couple bullets landing on his checks spraying blood. The man flew of breaking through the window and into the sunshine.

"Are you hurt?"

"No, I'm fine. But he will be back."



By **Lucas Gronberg**
Grade Category: Middle
Greenslopes State School
Greenslopes Qld.

Dog on a Mission

"Oh my gosh!" I squeal. This will be such a special day! Like, every day is a special day but this one will be extra super special! This will be the bestest day because today is "My Burday!"*

I just know that Mummy will give me lots of presents. So like a good boy, I sit in bed. "Oh whatever, I'll just take a sneak peek. Mummy won't mind," I murmur to myself. I race down the stairs tumbling and falling; but I land on my four feet! I am getting bigger and stronger every day, and I am a big boy now because today is "My Burday!".

Wait, Mummy is not here. I know, she must be in the living room. Good one Mummy, but not clever enough for me. I skid to the living room. I shout, "Mummy, Mummy!" She's not there. Silly me, she's obviously getting ready for the party. Haha! She's in her bedroom! Back upstairs again. I swing the door open.

This must be a mistake! Mummy's not there. I start to panic. "Mummy, Mummy!" But Mummy is not there either. I scan backyard, front yard, neighbour's yard. Mummy is nowhere.

Then I realise. Aliens! I saw them on the TV last night, with lots of eyes and arms and legs. Aliens took Mummy away with them and that's where she is. I have to

save Mummy. I pack my backpack with my chewy bone, Mr Squeaky, my leash, and my potty bag.

"I AM A DOG ON A MISSION!"

I will first go to the market. Mummy always goes to the market. They must have taken her there. I see lots of kids smiling and patting me and scratching my tummy. The mission can wait a bit...can't it? So I stay



and score a few more belly rubs. Oh! That feels so good Mmm mmm.

"Focus!" I snap back to reality.

"I AM A DOG ON A MISSION!"

I resume my hunt. Mummy is not at the supermarket. Duh! They took her to the park. I run to the park, but it's already dark. What are those sparkling cute blobs? "Oh no, no, no, no, no!" Mummy told me scary bedtime stories about them. I should probably turn around. But the mission ...

"I AM A DOG ON A MISSION A VERY SCARY MISSION!"

Like a brave boy that I am, I march forward to save my Mummy. I hear a growl from the front and hiss from the rear raising my hackles. NEVER MIND! I sprint home; those miaows will never catch me.

I arrive home only to see my Mummy! And daddy and lots of presents and my favourite fish cake. "...2...1... HAPPY BURDAY!"

I knew it, today is the bestest day ever!

Notes:

*Burday is the puppy language for birthday

** Miaow is the puppy language for street cats

By **Anahita Singh**

Grade Category: Middle

Our Lady of the Rosary School

Kenmore, Qld.

Don't speak like a Bogan

When you go to school,
You are taught to speak correct English,
So you come across proper and refined
and very, very distinguished.

However, creeping in in Australia
Are some terrifying terms,
From the bogans of our country
That makes well-spoken Australians
squirm.

It's 'em bludgers that wagged school
Who's to blame for all this fussin'
A worse-er-a state of speakin'
We could not be discussin'

Now you may be wondering
How did it get so bad?
How did we fall so far from posh
To a language no one understands?

Was it the esky or the thongs?
That got their knickers is a twist?
Is it here amongst these words
Bogan slang started to exist?

Was it the arvo or the avo?
Or the barbie or the ciggy?
'ave you's got lost in all me words
Is it gettin' too tricky?

Was it the flannie or the footy?
Was it the daks or the dunny?
Was it a phrase ya heard at maccas?
It really isn't funny!

Let's face it – English is cactus!
It's in a pretty crook state!
We gotta do something to fix it,
I'm being fair dinkum mate!

Round your vowels, annunciate,
Use correct diction please!
Don't speak like a Bogan
That's my expertise.

By **Paige Duncan-Rainbird**

Grade Category: Middle

Miss B's Student Services

Riverside, Tas.



Deception, deceit, fraud, regardless of the word, they still lied.

Deception, deceit, fraud, regardless of the word, they still lied. It is the end of autumn when I am awoken by the sound of dirt and stones scrapping on the cobblestone. As I open my eyes, I am met with two figures, illuminated by the yellowish glow of the streetlight beside me.

“Этом, мы возьмем этом (this one, we’re going to take this one),” a deep voice calls out and I am lifted and carried into a metal box. Once more a slim figure approaches me, however this time they are pointing at me with an object, a sharp looking object, one I have seen a few times in my home, deep within the alley of surrounding buildings.

Closer and closer the object creeps until it pierces my skin. I whimper as a liquid is injected into my blood and my eyes begin to droop closed. Days after arriving to ‘объект’ (the facility), I finally see life. My master Vladimir Yazdovsky has introduced me to others of my kind, others who were taken from their homes.

Compared to what I used to eat this food is fit for a king, although the stomachs of many others rumble before they vanish into the shadows, our masters say that they are preparing us for our divine purpose and that those who disappear were unwilling to comply, unwilling to see the light.

Each day we complete the regulated training, wherein we are removed from the kennels and forced into a small little box than thrown around and spun for hours, or until we fall asleep, the other dogs that fell asleep haven’t woken up yet, I kind of miss them. Although on some nights it is like I can hear their growls, their whimpers and the crack of a rope in the air calling out to me.

I am forbidden to run, I have tried, they tied me up to a wall and left me there barking, howling until my voice became hoarse. There are only two of us left, myself and Albina, my friend, her fluffy white coat is the reason why I am chosen to complete the mission. Many think it’s because she is prettier and pretty things should never be damaged but my master says that I was chosen because I am better than her, I am

stronger, kinder.

I was once called Kudryavka due to my soft curly fur however I enjoy barking at the scientists in my lab, and so my master changed my name to Laika. He is my favourite of all of the men here, he promised he would take me to see his own puppies, or more like the ‘human’ version of a puppy, a mini human, I think their ‘humans’.

I am surrounded by mini masters, two small people lay beside me covered in a thick object, giggling as my fur tickles the small amount of skin shown on their rosy cheeks.

Vladimir Yazdovsky has granted me permission to meet his son and daughter; their smiles are infectious and soon I am not thinking about my training or my old home, I am just living. I am breathing in the bitter cold air, feeling the icy snow under my paws and basking in the feeling that I am the cause of their happiness.

However, soon our time together must come to an end, and I am once again returned to the four blank walls I have grown to call home, this home is worse than the other, this one has no way of escaping. I turned three years old today and one of the physicians at the laboratory have come to visit me, overcome with joy I begin barking at her arrival however I stop once I realise the panicked look that slowly spreads across her features.

“тссс, ты, должно быть, совсем Луака. (Shhh, you must be quiet Laika). Мы не должны будить остальных, последствия будут тяжелыми. (We must not wake the others, the consequences will be dire).”

She plants a kiss on my forehead as it lowers, running her fingers through my shedding coat. I thought that I could not lose more weight but each day I spend here the smaller and smaller my stature grows. I am abruptly drawn out of my thoughts when a crash sounds from behind us, the woman swiftly drops a package in front of me before turning and running in the opposite direction.

I hear distant sounds coming from behind the door she exited, hushed voices travel father away from me but I pay it no mind, I have a present. Inside the box in front of me is a plate of sausages, looking at the food small whimpers fall from my mouth when I realise that she did this for me, she remembered my birthday.

It is a week later when I am strapped into a new box, my eyes burn with each flash of light from the various cameras pointed in my face. “Прощай, Лайка, надеюсь, будущее стоит твоей жертвы. (Goodbye Laika, I hope the future is worth your sacrifice. I’m sorry),” my master says, as I lick a single tear falling from his face. “До свидания, (goodbye)”.

He looks up at me and runs his fingers through my fur one last time before moving to shut the door, I try to get up and run back into his arms, but the door is shut in my face. The mechanical click of a lock resonates throughout the small contraption and I return to my spot.

Shortly after the box begins to move and I am forced to watch my master grow smaller with the distance. Many minutes pass after the box began to shake and jerk, my heart rate accelerates, and my ears begin to ring. Fire erupts beneath me as I am lifted into the sky, mustering up the courage to glance outside of the window; I expect to be met with the bright orange hues I have seen many times before but instead all I see is black, black with little white circles.

This is what they told me about, I believe they call it Space. I spent many nights looking at these white lights wondering if they could see me, but now I can see them. As the box glides through the abyss a giant blue and green ball enters my sight, it is beautiful, it is huge.

My admiring session is cut short when an alarm goes off yet again, it starts with one, then two, then three until my senses are overwhelmed with noise, and heat. This was not how my mission was supposed to go, I was supposed to go back home, they promised me I would go back home. I scratch at my soft coat in attempts to cool down from the searing pain covering

*my small body. My breaths come in short,
quick gasps, as I reach to fill my lungs,
cursing at the being who put me here.*

*No, it is not his fault, my master tried to
warn me, I should have listened. Lights
flicker and burn out around me; deafening
me, screaming at me to calm down, to
savour each breath though it may be my
last, but I can't. It gets harder and harder
to keep myself awake as the world begins
to spin, I glance at the earth, at my home,
one last time before my air runs dry and
the darkness consumes me.*

By **Emily Tricarico**
Grade Category: Senior
Marymede Catholic College
South Morang, Vic.



Retelling of 'The Highway Man' by the landlord

*Horse pounding from the distance,
The Highway Man comes with persistence,
Worrisome landlord in the inn,
Attempts to ignore this Highway Man's sin,*

*For he knows that Bess, his young black-eyed daughter,
Years for this man who has such turned to slaughter,
And when he hears the Highway Man leave,
He might as well begin to grieve,*

*As danger marches towards his door,
Harsh cold wind screeching a roar,
Ominous footsteps approaching nearer,
Silhouettes becoming clearer,*

*And now they come spilling spilling spilling,
Red Coats trotting and milling,
Rapping sharply on his door,
Presented by the vast purple moor,*

*Whispers watching withered wishes,
As the ragged curtain swishes,
Soldiers carelessly clatter past,
Opening the closest wine bottles fast,*

*Not a care for the landlord's living,
The rum he could sell wasted on giving,
Wine for the soldiers who killed,
So much blood they had spilled,*

*They flood up the flights of stairs,
Up there where Bess despairs,
Restraining the landlord from pursuing,
His constant question of what they were doing,*

*And there he hears the familiar pace,
Coming as if it were a race,
Over the hills his horse pounds,
Echoing through the air were the sounds,*

*Of the Highway Man riding riding,
Bess' cries still chiming,
And then suddenly with a bang,
Bess' body fell with a clang,*

*And when the landlord heard,
Grief forever and without a word,
He froze still with shock,
Stuck there as if he were a rock,*

*And forever the ghostly sound haunted,
Throughout the halls he was taunted,
By Bess, his young black-eyed daughter,
Whose death was followed by slaughter.*

By **Elsie Liem**
Grade Category: Middle
Ravenswood School for Girls
Gordon, NSW



A 3 Day Love Story

Ava Rose:

I walked casually along the muddy path. My long blue dress and dark heavy backpack weighed me down. I yawned my math questions still stuck in my brain. I saw someone walking ahead. He had dark curly hair that framed his face perfectly and bright blue eyes. I sighed and smiled gently as he walked past me, slipping me a crumpled up piece of paper.

I opened it ... 'Meet me under the oak tree after school.' I held the note to my chest and smiled, wondering why he slipped ME the note, why he chose ME and most of all, what would happen after school.

My head felt like it was caving in and a million thoughts ran through it. I sat in the back of my geography classroom waiting for the bell to ring ...

'Ava Rose, are you listening?'

I pinched myself. "Yes, Miss Smith," I gently replied telling myself to focus click, clack ... I watched the clock waiting for DING, DING, DING. I rushed out of the classroom right towards the oak tree. There he was ... Once again, I saw his dark hair and bright blue eyes which glimmered like the midnight moon. He adjusted the picnic blanket and I walked over.

Harrison:

There she was, walking towards me. I felt my heart beating in my chest and knew that I had to make this moment perfect. I walked behind the tree so she couldn't see me and scruffed up my hair.

"There you are!" she said, her short, straight, light hair just drifting over her shoulders. As she looked down at her school shoes.

"Wow..." I whispered under my breath.

"Excuse me? ..." Oh no, she heard me "Just kidding!" She added.

PHEW! I scratched the back of my head and laughed.

A while later, we laid down looking at the stars. I looked over at Ava Rose, she looked over at me. "What?" She said with a smirk on her face.

"You're beautiful," I blurted out.

She went a sort of reddish-pinkish colour before looking back up at the sky.

Ava Rose:

I twisted the key and walked inside my house, "NO, YOU'RE WRONG! 'TRUST ME, YOU'RE THE WRONG ONE HERE!" "Mum, Dad stop arguing!" I screamed from the front door. I was used to their bickering by now. I got to my room and shut the door so I couldn't hear whatever was going on outside. All of a sudden, all I could think about was Harrison.

"He thinks I'm beautiful?" I thought to myself.

RING, RING! I picked up my phone off the dark wooden bedside table.

"Hello?" I said into the speaker.

"Ava Rose? It's Harrison"

"But ... how did you get my number?" I stuttered. "Let's just say I know a lot of people," he said. It was at that moment I knew I was in love. "AVA ROSE!" screamed Dad from the other side of the house. "Who is the boy?!" My heart was beating faster than a plane's engine when it fails.

Harrison:

"Ava? Ava, are you there? What's going on?"

I hung up the phone and prayed that everything was ok. I walked into the kitchen, grabbed out rice and leftover chicken from last night and heated it in the microwave. My parents always used to make me rice and chicken. I miss them. The way they used to dance together and the smiles on their faces even during the toughest times.

I picked up the excursion slip on the bench and faked my grandmother's signature. Everyone thinks I live with my grandparents but they are dead too. The truth is ... I live alone.

I woke up to the sound of my phone ringing and picked it up.

"Hello?"

"Harrison! This is Milly, Ava Rose's best friend. Her mum is in the hospital."

"WHAT!"

"She is in room 541 in Westmead."

I dropped the phone

and, in an instant, ran outside. I jumped into my father's minivan and sped straight to the hospital.

Ava Rose:

"M-Mum!" Dad placed his arm around me and directed me toward the chair. I sat down rethinking everything. The moment she fell, the 'bang' noise replayed in my head over and over and over again. I couldn't get it out of my head. The smell of hand sanitizer filled my nose and a tear fell from my eyes.

Someone knocked on the door and dad answered it. My heart stopped. Could it be him? I anticipated the opening of the door, It was the nurse. Of course, it was the nurse. Who in their right mind would think that their teenage crush would come to the hospital to see me.

"Mr Jones, your wife has a severe case of skin cancer. It is too late, we can't do anything." At that moment, my heart felt like it was in my throat. Why wouldn't she tell me?

Harrison:

I slammed on the brakes, got out of the car and rushed through the hospital doors. I jumped into the lift up to level five. My heart was beating at a million beats per minute, she wasn't ok. I raced through level 5 to get to room 541. I looked through the tiny hospital window on the door and saw Ava Rose. she looked different, she looked sad.

This time she had her head in her hands and Mascara dripping down her face. I contemplated my decisions. Should I knock? Or do I just go in? I closed my eyes, sighed and imagined that my Dad was in my position and My mum in Ava's.



I knocked on the door. No answer. That's it! I barged through the door nearly ripping it off the hinges, I looked around the room and stood there for a few seconds. "You must be the Boy!" Said a middle aged man, instantly, I knew he was Ava's father.

Ava Rose:

I looked up, Harrison was here? "Harrison? What are you doing here?" I said out of shock.

"Ava, who is this boy?" Dad uttered with a furious look on his face. I stood up trying to hold my balance and walked in front of Harrison. "Dad, this is Harrison, My boyfriend." The whole room went silent. I became dizzy. All of a sudden, the world was spinning around me.

Harrison:

She fell into my arms, her soft blonde hair hanging over my forearm as her ocean eyes looked deep into mine.

Ava Rose:

"Young man, YOU ARE FORBIDDEN TO EVER SEE MY DAUGHTER AGAIN! IS THAT

CLEAR?" Dad screamed more than I have ever heard him scream.

"Dad! Stop! You are not his boss, You can't tell him what to do! I love him!" I budded in.

Harrison:

She loves me? But why?

She's a private all-girls school person, I'm a public school boy.

She's smart,

I'm in special classes.

Shes beautiful,

I'm an ugly duckling that never got its glow-up.

She's a lady,

I am just a boy.

"Mr Jones, I understand and I promise I will stay away from your daughter. It's what's best for her."

Ava Rose:

"Harrison! No! DON'T LEAVE!"

How could he leave? Not now! Not when I need him most! Not when my mother is dying and I am about to actually get a boyfriend.

I watched as he walked out of the room.

His warn-out 2011 Nikes led him towards

the exit.

My weak wobbly legs pushed me up. I ran, I ran as fast as I could, I ran out and kissed him.

"Listen Ava Rose, I love you but I'm not good enough for you." he whispered into my delicate ear quickly before turning around and walking away. I stood there, feeling hopeless wondering if I would ever see him again.

Harrison:

I got into the van. My eyes filled with water, I cried. I looked up and could slightly see Ava in the window of room 541. As I drove away, I waved and prayed to myself that one day, I will see her again and that on that day, she would remember me and would talk to me just like we used to. I always thought a perfect relationship would last forever. I guess it only lasts 3 days.

By **Bella Simms**

Grade Category: Middle

Cerdon College

Merrylands, NSW

Autumn

Brightly coloured leaves fall to the ground.
Everyone is harvesting the pumpkins around.

Children are jumping in the leafy piles.
Children are jumping from miles and miles.

Everyone is preparing their beds
for the cold dark winter that lies ahead.

The smell of roasted chestnuts whiff through the door.
Everyone is eating chestnuts galore.

Red, yellow and orange flash before my eyes.
When it comes to Autumn it is always an Easter surprise!

By **Valentina Palazzolo**

Grade Category: Junior

MLC school

Burwood, NSW



Washed Away

Running into the blue
Water hugging the shore.
Clear through and through
As I've seen before.

The spirits' stories,
Lingers in the sand.
Knowing all its glory
Seen firsthand.

The roar of the waves
Untameable, unstoppable.
Whispering in the wind
Worries washed away.

By **Waverley Alternetti**

Grade Category: Senior

St Dominic's Priory College

North Adelaide, SA

Cher Ami: Heroine of men

How do I begin to describe my short, but fulfilled, life as a homing pigeon? I was one of 600 Army Signal Corps pigeons dispatched to France to aid in battlefield communication. After rescuing 194 war survivors, I was given the appellation Cher Ami, which means "dear friend", and I was presented by the French government with the Croix de Guerre for courage on the battlefield, one of the many accolades I received, after surviving my final and most recognised mission.

After being wounded through the breast, blinded in one eye, and only being left with one leg hanging on by a tendon, I died prematurely and wore the scars of the war, symbolising my heroic sacrifice, which was recognised when I returned home. Out of the 554 soldiers caught in the battle, 107 had been killed, 63 were missing, and 190 were wounded; only 194 were unhurt physically.

My home nest was near Argonne, at the American army headquarters. Argonne was a lovely woodland with towering trees in peacetime, before the war unfolded which killed and wounded millions of human beings and animals. However, the Great War had converted France's woodlands into battlegrounds. Whittlesey, a United States Army Medal of Honor recipient, conducted an attack on the Germans in Argonne in the fall of 1918.

Whittlesey's soldiers confronted a formidable German force deep in the woods on October 3. The Americans were quickly surrounded and attacked. The men attempted to retaliate but they were short on supplies and exhausted. The food supply had run out, and it was difficult to obtain water and other supplies crucial to survival. More soldiers and innocent people were killed or wounded every hour, and Whittlesey dispatched and entrusted pigeons like me, with messages for assistance, but the pigeons I was trained alongside were often shot, or disappeared one by one, making it only a matter of time until we would perish or eventually succumb to injuries caused by disease, the harsh conditions or combat.

As carrier pigeons we have been treated as invaluable, especially as a form of communication. I remember when my life purpose was chosen for me, being one of almost 600 carrier pigeons employed by the US Army Signal Corps, sent to France to assist with communication on the battlefield. We were trained to be a reliable source between the soldiers, especially on the battle front, to send messages as an alternate form of communication through the radio, which I have witnessed between the humans.



Before us, radios were often used to communicate and receive important messages but were often unreliable because radios are bound by delicate wires, which can often be extremely dangerous to replace and is a time-consuming process. The average that a homing pigeon can fly is approximately fifty miles per hour, making us a quick method of communication, but still, we are always a target to enemy gunfire, despite our speed and endurance.

Additionally, we are always a risky form of communication and way to communicate, because if we are shot down, our messages we are entrusted to carry can be easily intercepted by enemy forces and pay the price of defending our country and its brave soldiers, by facing death.

I have always wanted to make my trainer Captain John L. Carney proud. Carney has not always been a pigeon breeder; he delivers newspapers in his spare time and is a war veteran of Pittsburgh. I am proud to be from America and sacrifice my life to save the lives of American soldiers stuck in battle and stranded at war; a small price to pay for my country. As carrier pigeons we

are not always recognised for our valiant efforts; especially when our fellow pigeons are dropping dead and being killed one by one by soldiers.

I am a veteran, with twelve previous missions at Verdun, meaning I am no stranger to enemy fire. It is early October; American soldiers have come from the 77th division and become trapped in the Argonne Forest behind German lines on the slopes of a hill. Reports have been issued by the humans that this has cut around 550 men that are from the 306th, 307th and 308th regiments under Major Charles Whittlesey from accessing reinforcements and critical supplies for several days, keeping them out of radio range, making communication difficult.

The skies are just as dangerous as the ground; there is a barrage of machine guns and rain. The last pair of birds have been released and I have seen them both fall from the skies, their tiny bodies torn apart by German fire. Major Whittlesey whispered to

me in desperation telling me that he needs to send me, and I am his only hope. I look into his loving eyes, I am scared, but I know what I must do, all help is lost for all of us if I do not make it.

I make my flight but soon after take-off I am hit, a bullet straight in my chest. It stings so badly; I am bleeding, and I flutter helplessly to the ground. I peer up out of one eye, as the bullet has blinded me and I see the soldiers' faces, they are looking at me in horror. Against all odds I wobble up and I take flight again, I am airborne, charging head on into a wave of bullets.

I fly as fast as I can and I cover 25 miles to the command post and arrive at the base heavily wounded, my left leg is hanging off attached only by a thin tendon, the messenger canister is still attached. Army medics work on me and as I am going in and out of consciousness, I hear them say, she has just saved 194 men, she has just saved The Lost Battalion.

I feel proud as I think of the men, my friends. It feels like it has been weeks, but they tell me it has been a few hours since

they operated on me. I look down to see bandages wrapped around my chest, from under the bandages I catch a glimpse of a little wooden leg a soldier has carved especially for me. "She's awake," calls a nurse. She runs her fingers ever so softly about my brow, stroking my ruffled feathers. "Good girl, you have done your country proud."

It takes me back to when I was a fledgling, and my mother would tussle my fluffy

immature feathers across my face. She picks up a bowl of maple peas, wheat, unpolished rice, and linseed and begins to feed me slowly. "Eat up my darling, tomorrow you make your journey back home, Captain John Carney is waiting for you."

By Laura Edwards
Grade Category: Senior
Marymede Catholic College
South Morang, Vic.



Lies for Reputation

Though truth relieves responsibility, sometimes, just sometimes, it is best uncovered.

Another sunrise. Another canary-yellow bus swerves its way through the fading red and yellow hues. I can feel thin straps slide down my back as twenty pairs of eyes fix themselves on me. A listless sigh makes its way out of my mouth as I find a pole to hang onto.

The driver is smoking cigars when I am the last one left in the bus. Once my lungs are finally free, I hear a voice. "Ivan!" I turn, only to see the newest and most foreign student. In return, I wave.

"So how did you get to school? I walked, since it's good for the environment and everything!" he says matter-of-factly.

"Oh, I drove one of those electric cars my father left me," I say.

Obviously, I took an adult-stuffed bus, but Jin is not to know that, nor does anyone else that recognises me as Ivan Patterson the Second's grandson.

As I walk into the Academy Hall, most heads turn, due to my resemblance to my grandfather, one of the founders of this school. I cannot help smiling, a sly smile, puffing out my array of badges (some of my last valuables after my father's passing). Along the way to class, many try to stop me for a chat, but I excuse myself as being late in an almost formal manner.

When I arrive at the classroom I am the first student. I'd rather be later, but doing so would ruin my reputation. When my pupils arrive and stuff the classroom with chatter, I pretend to study a law book I had read three times. As a suave professor enters the room, I put down the book, but the conversations around me continue.

A tap on the board silences everyone. "Ahem! Students, this level of noise is not appropriate! You must be ashamed of yourselves, well, except for our star student," our teacher announces and nods at me.

A mixture of hatred and admiration is thrown at me (Jin gives me a thumbs up), but I remain focused. However, today we did not get a candid lecture on law. Instead, a plump, grey haired man wearing a suit strolls into the classroom. As if the sight pulled a trigger on a gun, we all stand and say: "Good morning Vice Minister Morison" in unison.

I am on the bus again this time, sitting and pondering over the task the Vice gave to us. Like a film, I replay his words in my head: "The government has decided upon constructing a statue in Saint Allen's Academy. It would be munificent of this law class to provide a strategy to produce money for this project." Just as I stop off the bus and nearly put a foot into a shaggy apartment, I retreat the step as Jin runs up to me.

"Ivan! Where is your car? Oh, of course, you are saving the environment! Nice job, friend!" Jin babbles.

The boy using 'friend' slips off me like slime. I change the subject to the assignment and Jin unsurprisingly responds with fundraisers.

"Well, I will leave you to walk back to your mansion!" he says excitedly and runs away.

I shake my head as I take the elevator up into my real home, a rented flat. Seeing my Aunt 'talking' at the electricity bills, I melt away upstairs. As I enter my bedroom, I look at a picture of my father and I in front of our old manor. Another sunrise.

But there is no time to waste. I arrive at school and as if I was the most important person, I walk into the great hall where a crowd is gathered around a huge screen. Of course, the government has decided which method had been decided upon. But my entry is not on the screen, not even Jin's fundraiser. Instead, the government decided to increase taxes by fifty percent.

By Allison Deng
Grade Category: Middle
Oakhill Drive Public School
Castle Hill, NSW





*A splash of black
On a canvas of white
Lit with an effervescent grey.*

*A dot, no?
A trickle, inching down the page
Or a stream of unrelenting ink?*

*It drips into pools
Lying quiet at my feet.
Black of black wrapped in white of white.*

*When I stare
It lies a sodden wreck,
Defeated and quelled*

*But as soon as I turn
A limb claws its way out of the ditch
Grasping at my robes.*

*With fingers hooked and sharp
It lives
Guided by its own happiness and pain.*

*Whims and fiddles morphing into draconian law
Five, no, six heads,
A barbed tail*

*And a monstrous visage
To turn with a look to stone.
It lopes towards me,*

*Unightly gait
Thundering,
Racing*

*And yet I swear
When I look back there
The ink is back*

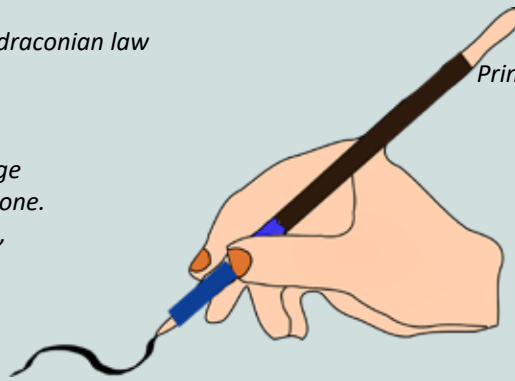
*In impeccable lines across the page.
Where it belongs
Away from the insanity of the world,*

*The horror and the discord
The white canvas
Lit in grey.*

*Black in white in grey
As the figure
Slinks away,*

*Back into the shadows.
Back into its faithful home
Of human imagination,*

*Of Ariel text
Printed across the page.*



By Harry Tong
Grade Category: Middle
Knox Grammar School
Sydney, NSW

Ol' Sydney Town

*Ol' Sydney Town
The loathsome scent of rotting seaweed
Fuming from the wild sea,
Tickling my nose.
Horses and carts lined against a wooden fence
Like soldiers ready for war.
Wood smoke wafting through the thick mid-day air.
My place.*

*Terrace houses stand crooked,
Covered in lengths of rich green vine.
A circular courtyard splayed with uneven rubble,
Breaking bridges and rocky pillars.
Exuberant children chasing each other,
Screaming with delight.
My district.*

*Hundreds of ships docked at the harbour,
Each standing tall with pride.
The rigging monkey climbs her mast
And raises her off-white sails,
Ready to embark on a long journey.
The rope is untied and she is finally set free.
My home.*

By Aanya Karunaratne
Grade Category: Middle
Ravenswood School for Girls
Gordon, NSW



Prologue

The Thunderwings started the Great Perrimfian War because their queen, Queen Electric, was killed. They accused the Mistwings of killing Queen Electric. Soon after, Princess Lightning ascended the throne and she would do anything to avenge her mother. Lots of blood was shed in the months to come.

Meanwhile in the Starwing Kingdom, there was a special event. A few of the dragonets from the Dragonet Academy were getting excited in the hours leading up to the celebration.

"Hey, Solar!" Meteorite said nervously. "Eep! You gave me a fright! I wasn't aware you were behind me." Solar replied.

What should I have said?! What should I have done? Why did I do this to myself?! Meteorite panicked. I wonder why Meteorite always looks so stressed when I'm around? Solar thought curiously.

"Err, I'm just checking if you're invited my mother's Hatching Day? Each guest gets to bring a date, soooo do you want to come with me???" Meteorite asked. "Umm, I guess." Solar replied hesitantly. "See you later then." Meteorite hurried off with blushed cheeks. Solar glided into to her house while Meteorite swooped down towards the palace. Someone was on his balcony. It was Milky Way, Meteorite's cousin.

"I've been waiting for you!" Milky Way called out expectantly. Later, as they were getting ready for the Queen's Hatching Day party: "Should I wear these earrings or those?" asked Meteorite. "Does it really matter?" asked Milky Way back instead of answering the question. Meteorite frowned at his cousin.

"It matters to me! Solar is coming!" Meteorite protested.

"Agh. Fine. The purple ones." Milky Way growled. At The Queen's Hatching Party

"Wow. You live in this?!" Solar gasped as she looked around the grand entrance of the Starwing palace.

"Yeah." Meteorite replied shyly.

"Hey. Do you know what's the current situation with the war?" asked Solar. Meteorite said "We should ask my father. He is the Great General after all."

They approached Queen Celeste and the Great General Galaxy. Meteorite introduced his date to his parents.

"This is Solar". Queen Celeste gave Solar a disapprovingly glance.

"Oh? Greetings to my loyal subject. Please enjoy the party. I have many other dragons to greet, please excuse me." As they were talking to General Galaxy about the war, they were disturbed by a loud crackle and a bright flash of light. Meteorite and Solar were stunned and paralyzed but General Galaxy immediately sprung into action. He barked out orders to the guards. "Thunderwings are attacking us! Protect the Queen and all dragonets."

The Attack of The Thunderwings

A flock of Thunderwings swamped the palace roof. The Starwing soldiers threw themselves at the attackers and were electrocuted by the Thunderwings' charged tails. They fell off the roof in droves onto the palace garden. Meteorite pulled Solar to safety.

He warned Solar "Don't touch the tips of their tails, they are full of electricity." At the very moment, General Galaxy charged into a Thunderwing and stabbed it's eyes out with his talons. Meteorite and Solar rushed to the other dragonets and shepherded them out of the palace through the side door.

Queen Celeste was covering their backs. However, a Thunderwing zoomed into Queen Celeste and bit her tail. She gave out a shriek in agony. Meteorite turned his head back and saw that his mother is in trouble but he couldn't stop to help as more Thunderwings were coming to get the dragonets and they must get them to safety as soon as possible.

General Galaxy leapt in just in time to free the tangle that the queen was in. He had already killed most of the attacking Thunderwings. He then recognise that he's now facing the infamous Queen Lightning. He made an unique whistle to summon the Planet Assassins, the best of all the soldiers in the Starwing kingdom. Neptune, Mars, Venus, Mercury, Jupiter, Pluto and Uranus pounced on all the remaining Thunderwings and their leader Queen Lightning.

They fought with great courage. The Thunderwings suffered a great loss but Queen Lightning and a few of her followers managed to retreat with severe injuries. After The Thunderwings Attack, as they were counting the injured and the ones who have sacrificed their lives for the war, Queen Celeste was regretting her decision to make an alliance with the Mistwings as that made them a prime target of the war hungry new Queen Lightning of the Thunderwings.

General Galaxy roared angrily, "Enough is enough! We need to fight back!" Meteorite apologised to Solar, "I'm sorry this was a terrible first date. Maybe we could go to the library together to study?"

To be continued

By **Aloise Van Der Klauw**
Grade Category: Middle
Calvary Christian College
Springwood, Qld.

The Great Perrimfian War

Rainbow

Scarlet

The warm sun reflecting off water
Mist slowly gathering above
Birds tweeting, colours flying
The beautiful colours of scarlet
Reminding me of warm summer days
Hot sand on my feet,
Water lapping over my toes

Amber

Juggling flames
Growing upwards
Orange, yellow and amber
All dancing in my eyes
Sparks flying,
With a crack
Wood turning black

Gold

The tang of citrus
Tiptoes in the wind
Sunflowers of spring
Petals glowing
Stalk twisting
No afraid to show their face

Emerald

Trees, tall and lean
Earth below me
The forest around me
A canopy above me
Sun barley seeping through
Rays of light,
Tickling my face

Azure

Cyan, sapphire, peacock, lapis
Swimming in the mirror
Swirling blues,
Creating colours
The sky bright,
No clouds to be seen

Amethyst

Rich, deep, royal
Monarch on throne
Soft velvet dresses,
Ballroom dances

Lilac

The scent of flowers
Grows bigger and bigger and
Creeps steadily into my nose
The colour calms me
As I fall into deep sleep

By **Isla Barker**

Grade Category: Middle
Presbyterian Ladies College
Perth, WA

Summer Sun

Shining brightly like a candle,
Is the fiery sun.
Whirling round and round each day,
It spun and spun and spun.

The day flies by, and birds fly fast,
The sun is burning hot,
Baking trees and plants on land
Like food inside a pot.

Giving light to all the world
A red-orange-yellow fire,
In a never-ending ocean
Floating higher, higher.

Evening comes, the sun goes down
To rest its scorching head.
Now the sun will go to sleep,
The soft clouds are its bed.

By **Annabelle Woo**

Grade Category: Junior
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Rockdale, NSW

The Waiting Room

These chairs haven't changed since the last time I was here, they still set me on edge. The old woman sits on rusted grey chairs welded together. She holds a pink teddy in anticipation, her fingers gently quiver as she rubs its soft fur. Soon, I can head to the nursery.

Irene wrings her hands. Her eyes dart from the clock to doors, back and forth. I cannot wait to swaddle this new little girl. She knits her bundles of wool that lie against her lap as she weaves the knitting needles between rose and cream wool, her smile bubbling inside her. The ladies at bingo will be so jealous. Just ahead, a woman wails. She was here when I arrived.

Her hair plopped atop her head messily, a dog leash still dangling from her coat pocket, the woman gasps, hunching over. Irene sympathises while somewhere, a baby cries its first breath competing with the overlapping of shrill beeping. A blur of scrubs rush down the hallway using codes and terminology. Should I go and check? Minutes pass and she settles herself when a doctor approaches. His demeanour is gentle, but his words churn her tender hopes, until they sound like static and blur her vision. Her chest feels like a weight, his hand resting on her shoulder.

The words "I'm sorry for your loss" tumble and clutter Irene's vision. This shouldn't have happened. Juddering and heavy she flusters with the wool and needles shoving them away, her face feeling warm, and eyes squeezed shut she pushes past the receptionist while the lights flicker. I'll never see my daughter again.

If only I had dropped him off. She shouldn't be here waiting on stiff rusted seats, cluelessly bouncing her leg. Cathy had been on her porch when she received the call, she was about to walk the dog. Why can't I see him yet? The waiting room fills of thick musty air. The doors whirl open to usher people through as a cold draft snakes across to nip at her ankles.

Cloying stiffness of antiseptic wafts the air dry. My boy, my boy. She adjusts her glasses as they fog, her soggy tissue shakes across her cheeks, catching slug trails of snot and tears at her jaw. Her

eyes sting and her chest heaves. He's all I have. A constant click raps in time with her jolting pulse. She turns to eye the older lady behind her knitting contently. Cathy changes her focus to pull on the loose threads in her cardigan.

Breathe she tries to remember, hold yourself together, but her insides push against her, raging to escape. She bursts into a new wail of help rocking in her hard chair. Her eyes move to the swing of the doors. A doctor. He checks his clipboard and squints approaching the row behind her. Cathy peers as the frail lady shudders through her emotions, her uncompleted knitting disregarded. The impending conversation hangs in the air. Flustered, Cathy knocks a stack of year-old magazines.

A light smile rests on his face, his words lighten her insides as relief floods her chest. She can't focus on anything but the



words "He's going to be okay". She gets the urge to nurture them as they clear away her worries. It might all be okay. The doctor clasps her hands and a weak smile passes her face, the receptionist comes through with a steaming tea, she shares a sympathetic smile as the white lights above hiss.

I get to see my son.

Just a fleeting moment on those chairs, just even a minute. The new fabric of dark polyester rustles while he trudges down the endless hallways. My third pair of scrubs this morning, a new record. Red speckles flake at his wrists and in the crevices of his fingers, previously sprayed down by someone's blood. Dr Yung lets his chest constrict before allowing his body weight to plummet. The metallic smells fumigate,

he can taste them.

More patients, more bad news, the eyes of expectancy bore into him. He will feel the repeated script flow so easily when delivering the news, he is accustomed to treating them with comfort that is genuine. The gentle slope of his eyebrows and the soft rub of their hands convey his concern among the words he's rehearsed too many times. He moves into the waiting room.

Take a deep breath, they need to fix these swinging doors. He scans the chamber, a quaint nanny knitting anxiously and a distraught woman reeling in her seat, his eyes flutter to the clipboard. Only a few hours left. His steps seem to echo, a gentle tight-lipped smile as he approaches, her eyes bug out. She knows. The words "I'm sorry for your loss" seem to vibrate out of him and they crumple her face. She is shaking in disbelief, he rests a hand on her shoulder to hold her from toppling over. This gets harder every time, he meets the eyes of Fern passing with a steaming tea, she smiles his way, and the fluorescent lights dim. The sight of grief horrifies me still.

The future is definitive. I will straighten the chairs after they leave. She smiles out of sympathy through the steam of her peppermint tea. Those flickering lights. Comfort rolls through her. This is exactly where I am supposed to be. Her auburn hair

frames her face gently whilst she bends to hold the lost booties knitted with love. She offers the tea to the weary doctor; she watches him dunk the tea bag waiting for flavour to infuse, his smile gentle.

Fern arranges the splayed pages of the magazines left behind from the women who had sat panicked moments before. Each glint from the winking neon light reminds her, no matter the struggle there is the flickering eye of God. Everything happens for a reason, she will go to work every day, knowing there is intention behind the death, delight, and anxiety of the waiting room.

By Ava Scroop

Grade Category: Senior
St Dominic's Priory College
North Adelaide, SA

Unforgettable

*A distant land,
Fading upon the horizon.
Endless roads;
Lined with ghostly, white
rock.
Each stone,
A story of its own
Like those told, of the spirits
known.*

*Lost and slowly forgotten,
Wiped away like tampered
tracks.
Howling winds that echo;
Like the cries once faded to
night.
Treasured trees that tremble;
As the flames no longer kept.
The memories buried deep,
Like those who lay to rest.*

*A land we call our home
Where it pulses in our veins.
Our history not forgotten, by
those who stole our names.
Each animal passing by,
A soul that came before.
Our culture carried on,
Through generations always
longed.*

*Perished and unwanted;
Like the land we danced
upon.
History always hidden,
But never once forgot.

By **Alessandra Pergoleto**
Grade Category: Middle
St Dominic's Priory College
North Adelaide, SA*

Reflecting

*The sound of misery.
The quiet pattering of the rain splashing
As it collides with the window.
A voice in your head screaming, but it isn't loud.
Sounds of misery.*

*The smell of the past.
Oil lamps burning while you grasp for warmth.
The scent of dripping candles slowly melting under its own
light
Sends you into a midst of mindfulness.
Smells of the past.*

*The feeling of home.
Warm cuddles and hearts shield you from the cold.
The soft, brooding voice of "It's alright."
That's all you needed to hear.
Feelings of home.*

*By **Abigail Maller**
Grade Category: Middle
Ravenswood School for Girls
Gordon, NSW*



The Dance of the Betrayed

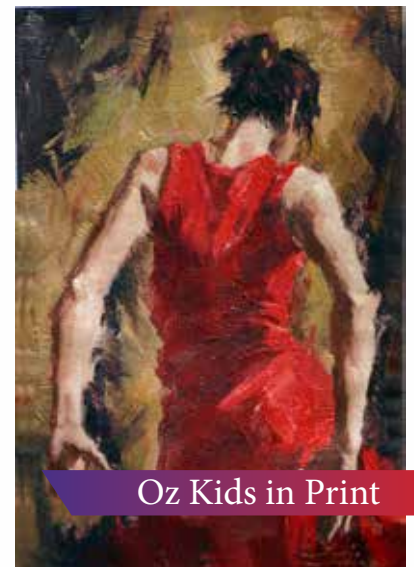
*You had no idea. The souls of the betrayed
had been through so much. Heartbreak,
murder, lies. They were all here with you,
every last one of them. Their moves were
hypnotic. You could watch for hours on end
and not get tired of them. It was beautiful.
They were beautiful.*

*With their gorgeous suits and dresses
and shoes to match. But their faces were
gone. And so were their hearts. Taken by
the one they loved. Trusted. And destroyed.
Cracked and broken like a dropped glass.
Heavy shadows were all that was left of
their faces. Blood, long ago dried, stained
the once-perfect material on their clothes,
right where the heart once was.*

*They were all doing the same, wondrous
dance. Their past but a mere memory of
who they once were. And you would be
joining. Your face would be stolen. Your
heart would be gone, broken. Even more
than it was. Because she had done it. She
had betrayed you. You placed your trust
in her and she threw it away as if it meant
nothing to her. And it didn't. Neither did
you.*

*You were simply a toy for her amusement.
And now you would join the poor souls,
stuck in their endless, meaningless dance.
Because you were now one of them.
And you would claim the title. You were
betrayed. And all that was left was for
you to dance.*

*By **Madelyn Rose**
Grade Category: Middle
Bunbury Senior High School
Bunbury, Qld.*





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The Cargo Truck

Liam Yarrow, a normal looking person, with a mullet and a suit on (you never saw him without a suit) and a sleeve of tattoos, strolled down the footpath, whistling. However, Liam Yarrow is not a normal person, not normal at all, you see, he is part of the ISA, short for International Spy Agency.

Now, the ISA is nearly impossible to join, you see, you have to go through back breaking training and pass seemingly impossible tests, just to get into the final assessment, and Liam happens to be one of the incredibly skilled 6% of the world in the agency. As a matter of fact, he is a top spy for the Agency.

He hoped there was a mission for him today, there had been nothing to do for three months straight, just sitting behind a desk, reading comics for 8 hours a day. Suddenly, he turned down a corner and entered a payphone box, he dialed the numbers 843 562

391, looked around carefully, saw there was no one around and then pressed the rusty "call" button, the phone box started sliding down, grinding and wheezing.

Soon Mr. Yarrow was in the headquarters of the Agency, all around him were people dressed handsomely, hurrying from one department to another. Liam strode through the crowd, over to his office, it was not what you would think a top spy's office would look like, paperwork everywhere and a collection of his rarest items, a base set, 1st edition holo shadowless Charizard Pokemon card, PSA 10, a copy of Wolverine's first appearance and a signed and framed jersey of Michael Jordan, his most prized possession.

He reached over to grab a comic to read, but then- "Liam!"

he spun around so fast he nearly fell off his wheelie chair. It was his boss, Julius Root a retired and renowned spy stood in the doorway, his aura was so powerful even Liam himself felt chills creep down his spine.

"We have found a mission for you," Liam could not hide the excitement, a smile exploded across his face.

"What's the case?" he asked, forcing a

serious voice and loosening his tie.

"We have got word of a plot to intercept a cargo truck, full of spy equipment and bombs that the Agency just saw off."

Liam knew this was not a time to crack jokes or be immature, this was a matter of life or death. Root beckoned him towards the gear room and Liam followed.

"A spy pack, straps of grenades, a pistol and a laser shooter." Root read off the piece of paper he was holding.

"Yep, that's it," he finished. All of a sudden Liam felt a wave of crushing nervousness,



this was his first mission in what seemed like an aeon.

"It's all right," he forced himself to believe.

"Okay, time to go," Liam said in his overflowed head as Root turned and walked toward the vehicle. He walked out of the room and over to the helicopter, he climbed inside, strapped on his seatbelt, anxiety and adrenaline mingled together. The vehicle lifted into the air, turned and sped off towards the road.

"Invisible!" Root commanded, the driver pushed the glowing green button and the helicopter disappeared from sight. Eventually, the truck came into view. Liam felt a tingly feeling run through his veins, enlightening his senses and filling him with confidence, he couldn't make out what it was though, excitement, maybe?

He looked over at Root, Root looked back, then he nodded. "It's time," Root added, Liam already knew that, he got up out of his seat and steadily walked over to get strapped up with the sturdy harness and rope. It could not break. However, he stood in the middle of the helicopter, face screwed up and green, no matter how many times he did this he would not get used to it.

"Okay, get ready," said Root, stone faced. Then he pushed a button, and the floor beneath Liam opened up, he shot down, half of him bracing for impact, the other half knowing impact would not happen. Suddenly he stopped suspended in the air. People gaped and goggled, their jaws threatening to touch ground. Liam winked, smiled and mouthed "Don't worry," then he pulled out his spy pack and grabbed the white-hot laser, he carved a circle into the trailer, then unfastened the rope and jumped in, Liam landed nimbly, and looked around.

Black. All black. Rough talking came from the front. Liam waited for his eyes to adjust to the eternal darkness. Then he started seeing again, he saw the bombs the weapons and the armour. Suddenly Liam's blood ran cold. Sitting on a rack, right in front of him was the info about the Agency Liam had supplied himself. If the enemy

got hold of this, Liam did not want to know. All of a sudden, he heard somebody cry "Kendrick what is this?!"

He knew that voice, it was Sigurd, a rookie spy. Then, the sound of a knife slashing a throat and a splatter of blood. "The greater good," a voice murmured. Liam was shocked. But this was no time to be shocked. Liam forced down the urge to go and break Kendrick's neck. He needed to recover the Agency's info first. Liam crept over to the clipboard. Quiet as a mouse, he darted out and took the wooden clipboard from its hiding spot. Then, Liam turned back to fight Kendrick. All of a sudden, a face appeared out of the dark. It was Kendrick, the man who had killed Sigurd.

A cold smile spread slowly across his face. Quick as a flash, Liam unstrapped his gun and fired a bullet. Kendrick shot his hand out and slapped it away. The bullet Liam had shot dented the roof then the gun slid away, smoking at the end. Liam watched in horror. He turned back to a punch. It wacked him in the side of the head and he staggered.

Liam groaned. Kendrick went in for another blow. But this time, Liam was ready, he

The Day the Alien Invited Me to a Disco

ducked the punch then jumped up and kicked Kendrick in the face. Blood spewed from his nose. Kendrick fixed a heartless gaze on Liam. Liam stared back, then stopped in confusion. Kendrick had started reaching to the side. Suddenly, Liam's heart sunk. Kendrick pulled out an AK-47. He then aimed and fired, bullets sped at Liam, merciless, ready to pierce anything in their way. But Liam had been taught well, he bent his back to an impossible level and the danger flew over his head.

Kendrick was speechless, his eyes were wide with disbelief, and a wave of shock washed over him. While Kendrick was distracted, Liam jumped at him and knocked him onto the ground. He turned him onto his stomach and clipped on some handcuffs. All of a sudden, Liam realised. Who was driving? He sprinted to the front of the van. He stopped when he saw that the auto-pilot button was glowing. Sigurd must have turned it on before his death. Liam smiled a sad smile. He would miss that kid. He heard a growl come from the trailer. Suddenly, he felt a fist full of sorrow punch him right in the gut, he couldn't stop feeling that it was his fault that Sigurd had died.

Then, he heard a voice in his head – "Stop moping around, you great buffoon, get on with it, feel happy for yourself, you just completed a mission." Sigurd was right, Liam had to stop moping around, he had to let the golden feeling of pride run through his skin. So, he did. 2 weeks later, after Mr. Yarrow's completed mission he was being awarded a medal of honor.

This medal was something that every spy wanted, but you had to practically break your back for it. Everybody clapped and cheered, Liam would also be inducted into the Agency's hall of fame for the mission he had completed, you see, it was his 500th completed. Liam surveyed the crowd, thousands of faces filled with joy, joy for him. He couldn't help it. Another smile exploded across his face, from ear to ear

By **Archer Lees**
Grade Category: Middle
Greenslopes State School
Greenslopes, Qld.

Crash! The window burst open and an alien zoomed into my bedroom and dropped an envelope on my bed. The envelope was a slimy green colour and the alien was called Blip Blue and was a slimy blue colour.

I opened the envelope and inside there was some deep black writing that said

YOU ARE INVITED TO AN ALIEN PARTY.

So I said "yes" and she flew off. That night the alien came with a magic wand and turned me (Mousey) into an alien! She brought me to a weird planet. The first thing I saw there was a sign and it said, Welcome to Bright Shadow.

The planet was a majestic pink, blue and purple and was shaped as an alien. All the buildings were in the shape of an oval and had star-shaped windows. In the middle of the city was a party.

Weird green balloons did not go up but went down. Feathery bunting bobbed from building to building. The food was a dirty green and made of slime. The alien had turned me into an alien that meant I liked the slime cupcakes. (But when I'm normal, they would taste disgusting.) The party smelled of strawberries.

Aliens were dancing, doing a chicken dance, with their arms under their underarms and flapping them up and down. They all had 6 arms and were all blue. Their eyes were rainbow-coloured and their ten ears looked like elephant

ears. I could hear alien music. It was very loud and it went like Bee Bot Boo Bot.

I was very happy until I realised it was afternoon in the human world and I had missed school! The alien transported me and I turned back into a human.

I gave the alien one of my party bags from



my birthday because it had invited me to the disco. But my mum scolded me for being so late. It was a delightful day and I never forgot it. THE END

By **Annabelle Woo**
Grade Category: Junior
St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Rockdale, NSW



Mother, why?

Mother, why?

*A ray of gold emanating from the perpetual sky, a blood-stained red tinged with a luminous canary yellow,
embracing each other with a warm hug as the sun begins to say goodbye.
I hold up my catch triumphantly to you, mother, as I bid goodnight to the rest of my fellows.
I run into your loving embrace, only your nostalgic scent of Kakadu plum remains nearby,
tickling the insides of my nose as I can hear your deep breaths and sighs against my ear.
A sweet proud grin, appears on your face, as the dark wrinkles around your eyes begin to crease,
tired breaths as all my deepest concerns and tangled thoughts slowly disappear,
a gust of wind surrounds us, joining in the serene, never-ending peace.*

Mother, why?

*These strangers whom I have never glanced upon are making their way through the land I call home,
with strange weapons that shoot out balls of blazing fire,
that swiftly shatters the hearts of those who once roamed,
and all that is heard from them is, "They're up in the trees! Aim higher!"
The blood of those who I once called friends leaves stains on my palms,
their screams are heard, desperate and anguished, as blood soon rains from the once bright sky.
My mother's once warm body was now drenched in her cold crimson blood whilst being embraced in desperation by my quivering arms,
as the only words that manage to come out of my mouth are "Please, don't die!"*

Mother, why?

*They who plundered our motherland like a ferocious dingo stealing the field where emus once wandered,
are now attaching us to leashes, as if we were dogs that were meant to lick their owners' feet.
Knowing all those who imposed these restraints on us get to smile freely, a feeling of hope is conquered.
My friends and family struggle in excruciating pain, not even being able to eat,
while they dine in luxury; I can now only imagine the Kakadu plum scent radiating off her.
As those whom I call brother and sister are shackled to the rough ground,
loud whips heard mixed with their desperate cries begging for help, all of it happening in a blur.
No hope, no justice, and only dread, desperation, and tears are found.*

Mother, why?

*"Smile, please!" they scream at us behind the camera, brandishing a whip against us in authority.
How dare they demand us to smile whilst we're chained to the ground without an ounce of freedom.
Eyes brimming with rage, lips forced to form a smile, only boosting their sense of superiority.
Silence is broken by a loud KA-CHICK, my right-hand trembling which I cannot bear to fathom,
reminding me of my homeland, which was once roaring with laughter, but now with a single gunshot,
there only remains a deafening silence.*

*The fields of lush and rich soil and fragrant trees which my mother once brought,
was now drowning in the loyal blood of my people because of the heinous violence.
Mother, why must we suffer in anguish by this injustice?*



By **Tran Lam**

Grade Category: Middle
St Dominic's Priory College
North Adelaide, SA



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The Pine Tree's Wishes

Scintillating rays of dappled sunlight filtered through the emerald canopy, creating a kaleidoscope of iridescent colours on the forest floor as the young, innocent pine tree deeply inhaled the sweet, tantalising odour of the jasmine flowers.

Colossal oak trees towered above the pine tree like soaring skyscrapers, shadowing it with a complex, intricate patchwork of satiny leaves.

"Oh, how wondrous it would be if I was as tall as a mighty oak tree. I would feel the sun's warm and embracing smile and cooling fresh rain trickling down my ochre trunk, but I am a mere, feeble runt among these other tremendous trees," it sighed despairingly, its voice bounding off the trunks of the other trees like a ping-pong ball.

As thick layers of frost blanketed the forest floor, the oak trees withered like roses without water. Icicles formed along their crooked, bowing branches, and soon, their branches drooped as low as the pine tree as if they were being weighed down with bags of bricks.

As strong as a lion, the pine tree firmly

planted its fragile, miniature roots into the moist soil, hoping the freezing snow wouldn't reach there.

"Wow! I can now see the turquoise sky and the balls of wishful, fluffy cotton the other trees have described vividly to me!" exclaimed the pine tree ecstatically like a child on Christmas day. Without hesitation, it gently moved its branches in the gentle zephyr sweeping through the forest, enjoying and admiring the open skies.

Eventually, the breeze became harsher and harsher, howling like a wolf at a full moon, until the turbulence of the malicious storm with the strength of Hercules overwhelmed the young and vulnerable tree, for it had never endured a tumultuous tempest without the protection of other trees.

Frightened as a mouse, it cowardly covered itself with its feeble, trembling branches, wishing that the tremendous, towering oak trees were shielding it from the storm which was as aggressive as a wild bull.

As the pine tree cautiously lifted its boughs, it suddenly realised the amazing, adorable animals had woken from their

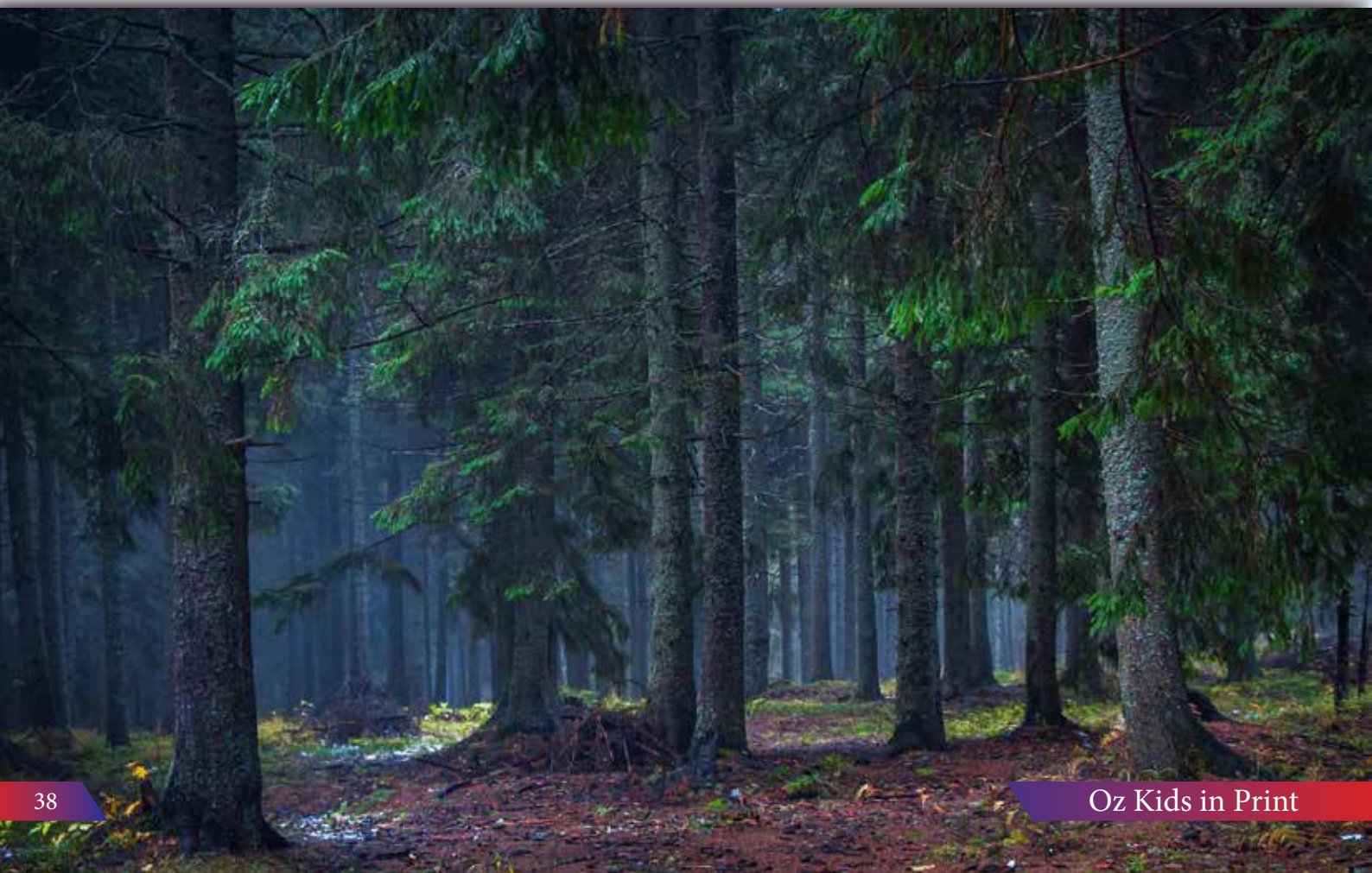
winters hibernation! Iridescent hues from blossoming and flourishing flowers brightened the misty and humid air. Once again, the oak trees stood tall and proud like giants of the forest, fluorescent, vibrant birds perched gleefully and jubilantly upon their branches.

Envious, the pine tree felt a pang of jealousy, desiring that all the animals would come to him. However, as soon as the first dainty, delicate dove landed on his brittle, ochre branches, a whole flock of ghastly gulls fought aggressively for a place to nest.

As heavy as a mountain, the animals were a hefty burden to carry on its weak limbs. "How my arms ache of pain!" the pine tree wailed like a spoilt child when told no. As glorious, glamorous patterns of vermilion, crimson, and chartreuse filled the air, the pine tree no longer stares with envy at other trees. Instead, it grinned, briefly at its own complexion, satisfied to just be a pine tree.

By Claire Ping

Grade Category: Junior
Pymble Public School
Pymble, NSW



The Three Sisters

Overlooking the valleys below, nestle three sisters of Jamison.

*Paralysed from a broken heart,
their grudge frozen through time.*

*Breathtaking views and praises,
will not heal their pain.*

*Alone and treasured like a deserted ship,
within deep ocean plains.*

*Sunlight reflects their outer beauty,
striking every town.*

*Green bushy trees patiently mourning,
those who were struck down.*

*The early birds chime euphonious stories,
to heal the sisters' heart,*

but eventually moonlight comes, and breaks it all apart.

*Deep down lies a dark secret,
lingering from a light-year ago.*

*Stories hidden but never forgotten,
thick and harsh like snow.*

*Loved ones stolen out of reach,
never to be seen again.*

*Hopes and dreams all locked up,
only regret remains.*

Reaching for each other's hands to hold and value dear.

*The battle, the terror, the attacks,
still make them shiver in fear,
and as they look into the forests,
they remember all their scars.*

*Poor sisters stand in silence,
wishing to the stars.*

*To this day, the legend remains,
unveiled and beyond price,
as the sisters suffered mistreatment,
forced upon sacrifice.*

*Our love can be a bandage,
to their unhealed wounds of the past.*

*We shall all pay our respect,
and deepest apologies at last.*

By Linh Duong

*Grade Category: Middle
St Dominics Priory College
North Adelaide, SA*

The Secret of the Gnomes

Bang! Jack had fainted, or that's what I had thought.. One of the garden gnomes moved out of Great Aunt's collection. Great Aunt Matilda's garden gnome held a capacity of forty-eight gnomes, which were all lined up, but one small gnome wasn't lined up. That garden was next to Jack with a pebble.

I knew what to do. I bolted to Great Aunt's restricted office. But little did I know, there was a silhouette. I flicked the lights on. It was Tiggy, the youngest of them all. She had a pebble too, but I dodged it. I got one on the sashes of the mysterious seeds that Aunt told me to use for certain reasons only.

I dashed back to the garden, Tiggy was following behind. "Aunt! I'm in the garden! Can I have a hand? Like, I mean NOW!?" I yelled out. Aunt came rushing out, but she really took a good minute. She helped me plant the seeds, and the hollyhock grew taller by the second. There was pixie dust falling out, unknown where it was coming from.

We tried CPR on Jack as the Hollyhock grew taller and taller. Jack had no pulse. Luckily,

Aunt Matilda used to be a doctor, so she was more than prepared. "Can you get me my first-aid kit Ana?" Great Aunt Matilda asked me. "No problem," I responded as I rushed to get her first-aid kit.

When I got back to the garden, Great Aunt pulled out her defibrillator. I really thought that it would wake him up, but it didn't. We didn't give up! The hollyhock was almost fully grown. Soon, something tiny popped out of the hollyhock, leaving a pixie dust trail. All of a sudden, Aunt talked to the pixie dust.

"Pippa! Long time no see!" At this moment, a fairy appeared. "We need help Pippa, Jack ... I-I don't even know what happened to him ... Just please! Help him!" "On to it!" Pippa said in a really squeaky voice.

Pippa said we needed to pick a flower for her. After a long minute of her mysterious spell chanting, Jack opened his eyes. We tried communicating, but he couldn't talk. But Pippa had an amazing idea! "Blink twice if you can hear us." Me and Aunt turned to Jack. It all went silent.

Jack blinked once, then blinked again. "This is a miracle!" me and Aunt cried. "Thank you so, so much Pippa! I don't know what we would have done without you!" Aunt said really excitedly.

Soon after, Jack woke up and Great Aunt realised that it was all the garden gnome's fault. Finally, Aunt called the rubbish removers. Within a day, every single gnome was gone. But when I went to put the enchanted hollyhock sash away, there was a gnome silhouette. Uh oh ...

By Harper Occhietti
Grade Category: Middle
Trinity Catholic Primary
Narre Warren South, Vic.



Glory To All Matters Of Simplicity

*I've come to appreciate moments tainted in modesty
the delightful ambience of emerald meadows,
of ruffling feathers amongst tender leaves,
of shadows that soothes.*

*Oh the sky is adorned with the blood of the cherry orchards,
shimmering, soothing, bowing to the lush ground beneath.
Comfort.*

*A deserted path intrigued at eager footsteps,
and journal the memorable treading of heels.
Many pairs often together, rambling rowdily with irrepressible
glee, though sometimes, there is just one wanderer, who
travels her days alone,
in patience and a solitary silence, she is solaced by the
chanting wind that tickles, the blossoms that charm,
the birds that amuse.*

*How the uncomplicated and ordinary so humble
yet extravagant, to reassure always;
'You are never without the company of knowing peace and being loved.'*

By **Kha Doanh (Vanessa) Phung**
Grade Category: Senior
St Dominics Priory College
North Adelaide, SA



Astounding

Long ago, there were monsters. Those monsters lived in a dark cave which was on a giant island. Many people also lived on the island, but no one ever entered the cave, because they thought it was dangerous. May was when the monsters would come out of the cave and grab people to eat.

Only George, a boy who wanted to explore the cave, was not scared. One night, George crept out of his house and into the cave. George brought a torch and a jumper with him. George shone his torch onto rocks and walls. He saw the monsters lying down on the rocks.

Then George remembered that tomorrow was the 1st of May and the monsters used to come out in May. He had to try and save the people on the island! But then, one of the monsters woke up and saw him. George tried to run, but the surface of the cave was too slippery. The monster grabbed him and put him inside four tall

walls. George could not climb his way out. He thought of another way out. He saw a shovel and had an idea.

George dug his way out and saw that it was morning time. All the monsters ran out of the cave to catch people to eat. Another monster got George in it's hand. George could see everyone running as fast as they could. His parents were holding spears and running towards the monster that had George. They threw their spears, but the monster broke them with both hands.

George was free. He ran towards a huge boulder and turned around it. The monster did not see the boulder and crashed into it. All the other monsters were distracted and ran to George, but they all crashed into the boulder. The boulder slid into the water making colourful sparks in the air. It was astounding. George still had a hurt arm, but he knew the monsters would not come back.

Nobody ever saw the monster again.

By **Jordi Nguyen**
Grade Category: Junior
Ruse Public School
Ruse NSW



A Trip to the Harbour

*A fearful smell of rotted fish covers the littered beaches.
Broken gear, rope and rusty iron half sunken into the sand.
Children and old women digging amongst the garbage for anything edible.
Young girls removing their shoes and stockings wading out into the water,
Ready to set sail.*

*Thousands of ships with rust-brown sails cover the harbour,
Busy river ferries travel with smoke whuffing from tall stacks.
Fishing boats and pleasure boats lying crookedly on beaches,
Their sails tied in neat parcels huddled in coves,
Ready to rest.*

*Drifting past countless coves with rich green mangrove swamps.
Waterbirds of all kinds fly up from brown terraces flooded with translucent water.
Faint chalk smudges of smoke drift into the crisp air.
The bronze-green headlands of the North Shore fade in the distance,
Ready to see more.*

*Dark patches of fog blend into the sky as this day fades.
Stars shine across the calm water leaving little light.
People depart their boats and return to the warmth of their families.
The waters' waves gently ripple whilst waiting for the sun's greeting,
Ready for a new day.*



By Sara Rezaeian
Grade Category: Middle
Ravenswood School for Girls
Gordon, NSW

FLOOD

One cloudy afternoon, James and his mum sat in the lounge room playing snakes and ladders. But James decided that it was getting quite boring so they slumped on the couch and turned on their old TV. The TV turned on with a disrupted "beep" and went straight to the news.

Suddenly a big wave of brown and dirty water gushed into the street destroying everything in its path. Finally the TV got sound. "Everyone stay in your houses!" said the news reporter. Ever since that day, it has been raining heavily and the wind has been getting stronger and stronger. Days turned into weeks and the weeks turned into months as the floodwaters

rose and rose.

Soon James and his mum were living on the roof. Finally the flood water crept back out of the small street. James' brown hair was soaked from all of the heavy rain and his shoes were lost in the floodwaters when he has climbed onto his cold tin roof. Barefoot, he climbed off the tin roof and touched the cold grass that had been soaked by the fearsome flood.

On the roof the only thing he could carry up was his old toy tractor he got from his grandma. Strangers spilled into the small street. They offered to help rebuild all the damage the flood had done to everyone's houses. James and his mum got fresh

food and water. Slowly everything became normal again and everyone became happy.

By Sophia Muir
Grade Category: Junior
St. Joseph's School
Bardon, QLD



Winter

*Snowflakes falling crisply and quietly on my face.
An icy beauty, long icicles like dangling leaves on a tall oak.
The sound of smooth ice, like a swan, gliding with grace.*

*The soft crackling of a fire, flashing, flaming, tendrils of smoke.
A layer of icy dew upon the emerald grass, long powerful branches bare.*

*The mist and fog heavy against my face, smooth puffs of air.
Animals burrowed, deep under the green growth.
A steady, solemn moment, I think of myself in warm, snuggling coats.
The snow dancing around me, a crisp and silver sight.
The night then falls upon me, and I stand in mounds of white stone.*

*I will defy those healers and their prophecy
As I weave the fairy tale of special me.
I am the princess who watched and the princess who saw
Whose tale will be told forever more.*

By Emma Wesseldine
Grade Category: Middle
Presbyterian Ladies College
Peppermint Grove, WA



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