

OZ KIDS IN PRINT

*A great tool to
improve literacy
in schools!*

*Cover design by
Marc McBride*

May 2011
www.ozkids.com.au

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FREE ENTRY

**TO STUDENTS IN PRIMARY OR
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Proudly supported by the Australian Government

COMPUTER ART



DRAWING



PHOTOGRAPHY



PAINTING



2011

On the Young Australian Art Awards website you can browse the entries from all over Australia, and consider entering artwork yourself. It's free.

All entrants must be no older than 18 years of age or attending either a primary or secondary college. There are four categories: painting, drawing, photography or computer art. To enter, check out our website www.youngatart.com.au and request an entry form, then submit a digital copy of your artwork online. If you do not have access to digital imaging you may send your artwork to ACLB Ltd., P.O. Box 267 Lara, Victoria 3212. Further information available online.

Young Australian ART awards



www.YoungAtArt.com.au

OZ KIDS IN PRINT

Contents

About Us	4
Lions Victoria	4, 9
Mole Hunt: Interview with Paul Collins	6
Interview with Author Michael Salmon ...	28

AWARDS FOR POETRY

Grandfather	7
By Jennafer Milne, Eynesbury Senior College, Adelaide, SA	
I want to be me	7
By Hailey Graham, Graceville State School, Graceville, Qld.	
Summer in the Bush	7
By Josie Woods, Bemboka, NSW	
Understanding	8
By Ena Nam, Strathfield Sth. Public School, Strathfield Sth., NSW	
Kokoda	12
By Sasha Borges, Cerdon College, Merrylands, NSW	
Australia Day	12
By Sowmya Padki, Hurlstone Agricultural HS, Glenfield, NSW	
She Fights	13
By Saira Gugnani, Cheltenham Girls' High School, Beecroft, NSW	
The Loggers	13
By Sowmya Padki, Hurlstone Agricultural HS, Glenfield, NSW	
How Clouds Work	15
By Annice Savill, Pymble Ladies' College, Pymble, NSW	
Coffee	15
By Brian Gardiner, Eynesbury Senior College, Adelaide, SA	
The River and The Rain	18
By Meg Allen, Newman, WA	
Searching the Stars	21
By Annice Savill, Pymble Ladies' College, Pymble, NSW	
The Aurora	21
By Grace Wong, Ravenswood School for Girls, Gordon, NSW	
Island Sunset	23
By Talia Walker, Cerdon College, Merrylands, NSW	
Through the Ages	23
By Brian Gardiner, Eynesbury Senior College, Adelaide, SA	
The Break of Dawn	25
By Adrian Harper-Gomm, Kambrya College, Berwick, Vic.	

Eureka Stockade	29
By Grace Barelier, Huntingtower School, Mt Waverley, Vic.	
The War	32
By Annice Savill, Pymble Ladies' College, Pymble, NSW	
Which is more precious? Family or Gold? 34	
By Henrietta Chui, Ravenswood School for Girls, Gordon, NSW	

AWARDS FOR SHORT STORIES

The Brown Bag Boy	8
By Trinity Ross, Lauriston Girls' School, Armadale, Vic.	
Olare's Story	10
By Grace Rose Lees, Bligh Park Public School, Bligh Park, NSW	
All Eyes on Cara	14
By Zali Million, Eynesbury Senior College, Adelaide, SA	
The Red Tent	15
By Tammi Tang, Camberwell Girls' Grammar School, Canterbury, Vic.	
Pressure and Dreams	16
By Brian Gardiner, Eynesbury Senior College, Adelaide, SA	
The Chase	17
By Bhuwan Tandon, Eynesbury Senior College, Adelaide, SA	
Flight for Freedom	18
By Eva Wang, Somerville House, South Brisbane, Qld.	
Air Guitar Hero	20
By Sandra Thomson, Wilkins Primary School, Marrickville, NSW	
Supermarket Music	22
By Ashleigh Maihi, Castle Hill High School, Castle Hill, NSW	
Life	23
By Emily Byrnes-Muchow, Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School, Warranwood, Vic.	
Always	24
By Asha Bartlett, Meridan State College, Meridan Plains, Qld.	
Dog Fight	25
By Katy Newell, Western Heights College, Herne Hill, Vic.	
Fire	26
By Lilli Allan-Moon, Vistara Primary School, Richmond Hill via Lismore, NSW	
Magic Quest	26
By Luke Harrison, Marymount PS, Burleigh Waters, Qld.	

Thin Hands	27
By Elkin Meleng, Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School, Gelorup, WA	
The Mystery of the Missing Jewels	30
By Hannah Sutton, St. Mary's College, Hobart, Tas.	
The Heroic Super Computer!	33
By Luke Kenny, St. Therese's Catholic College, Essendon, Vic.	
Adoni	34
By Jason Da Costa Cunha, Good Samaritan Primary School, Roxburgh Park, Vic.	
The Red Door	35
By John Zhu, Melbourne Grammar School, South Yarra, Vic.	
The Unwilling Journey	36
By Gemma Randall, Caulfield Grammar School, Wheelers Hill, Vic.	
The Wolf	38
By Syke Lavelle, Essington School, Nightcliff, NT	
The Escape	39
By Genevieve Geronimo, Eynesbury Senior College, Adelaide, SA	
Today, Tomorrow and Forever	40
By Natasha Bui, Penleigh Essendon Grammar School, Moonee Ponds, Vic.	
Bianco	41
By Emma Hartley, Abbotsleigh School, Wahroonga, NSW	
Glass Wings	43
By Belinda Chen, The Mac.Robertson Girls' High School, Melbourne, Vic.	
My Story	44
By Bonnie Doyle, Saint Paul's Primary School, Mildura, Vic.	
Marked for Death	46
By Glenn Mulders, Eynesbury Senior College, Adelaide, SA	

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About Us

Children's Charity Network is a Victorian based not-for-profit organisation, which acts as an umbrella for different programs/initiatives. Its main aim is to build, foster and nurture confidence and self-esteem in all children.

Oz Kids in Print is a magazine which we distribute on a national basis to schools, public libraries, etc., and publish online through our website. Its purpose is to:

- Promote and support children's literary talent on a national basis;
- Provide a vehicle for children to appreciate and develop their literary skills;
- Encourage children to continue in the art of writing, especially when they see their work published in our magazine and online at www.ozkids.com.au.

School visits by children's authors can be arranged through CCN. These provide an opportunity for children to participate in literary workshops with our patrons, including renowned authors Hazel Edwards, Paul Collins, Anna Ciddor, Libby Hathorn and Lorraine Wilson.

Each year our national literary awards acknowledge young writers across Australia. Since 1999, the *Young Australian Writers' Awards* has become a high-profile event that the nation can be proud of.

Some children's forté might lie elsewhere such as painting or photography, hence our new Art Awards under our *Young at Art* initiative. Recognising children's different talents, acknowledging the fact that each child is unique and fostering in all children self-esteem and confidence is and will remain always our number one priority.

At the same time, we consider ourselves as advocates for the 'unrepresented' children, the ones who have no voice, the ones whose condition have not been acknowledged publicly by the community. We ensure that their condition is given more visibility through our programs in a positive light such as the *Bright Kids* initiative.

We like to provide a platform for all children to be represented equally and where they are treated with the respect they deserve in order to restore in many of them confidence and self-esteem crucial for their survival and success.

Oz Kids in Print

LIONS AUSTRALIA

Proudly supports the Children's Charity Network Books For Kids Project



The **Lions Club of Australia** have come on board to help collect books for our Book Bin distribution.

As an example of the wonderful work **Lions Australia** are doing, the **Lions Club Geelong Breakfast** provided around 200 books which were presented at school assemblies in 2010. They have also organised events to raise funds which they have used to purchase books for the Books for Kids program.

Children's Charity Network thanks you for your support.

There are many ways to volunteer with *Books for Kids*:

- Host your own Book Drive
- Write a book review
- Sign up to be a Story Time Volunteer
- Recruit restaurants for Dish Up Literacy
- Donate

Or look at the link: <http://www.booksforkids.org.au/view.php?id=15>

Books for Kids operates on one simple and astounding fact: being read to as a youngster is the foremost predictor of academic success in childhood. If a child can read at grade level by third grade, he or she will continue to read at grade level throughout their academic career.

A child who succeeds in school will remain there, earning a chance at a better job and a better life in the years ahead. A child who lacks early exposure to reading often suffers from low self-esteem, struggles academically, and is at higher risk for substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and delinquency.

Succeeding begins with reading.

Children with literacy problems typically come from low-income families, have no books at home, and have caregivers who are not aware of the importance of reading to their children. Yet studies have proven, beyond dispute, that access to age-appropriate books and reading aloud to children are essential to developing language and reading skills.

Books for Kids will place new books into the hands of at-risk children through collaborations with schools, social

service agencies, preschools, and early childhood centres.

Mission Statement

Guided by the fact that literacy is essential to lifelong success, *Books for Kids* provides new books and develops reading activities that empower at-risk children.

Our Goals – Who we work with

Serving children from primarily low-income families, *Books for Kids* collaborates with primary schools, tutoring programs, and other preschool programs, libraries, migrant centres, homeless shelters, and teen parenting programs to improve the reading and language skills of at-risk children.

What we have achieved to date

Thanks to the many schools and companies who have run book drives, and through our Book Bins in bookshops, *Books For Kids* has collected over 26,000 new books, which have been distributed nationally to over 12,000 children, we have also run over 120 motivational reading events along with numerous literary workshops conducted by leading Australian children's authors.



Find us on:
facebook®

**CHILDREN'S CHARITY NETWORK
SUPPORTS CHARITIES AND
ORGANISATIONS WHO SUPPORT US!**

Interview with Marc McBride – our cover artist

Who is your favourite author?

I love *The Hobbit*, which I read at primary school, and *Lord of the Rings* by JR Tolkien, which I read in high school and again and again after that! But my favourite author is Douglas Adams who wrote *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. It's funny and gives advice like 'Don't Panic!'. It also makes you think – It has the Ultimate Answer to the 'Ultimate Question of Life, The Universe, and Everything.' It's 42 by the way.

Is there an author that you would like to illustrate for? If there is, who?

I really like Paul Jennings stories. They always give me ideas for pictures.

Do you only illustrate for the Deltora Quest books?

I've illustrated one hundred and fifty odd books. I think that's enough as book covers can sometimes be hard, especially when an author is strict about how the cover should look. However I am doing a new series with one of my favourite authors – I'm not allowed to say who it is but it's a new series with someone I've worked with before! My favourite covers are *The Deltora Quest* covers, *Quentaris Chronicles*, *SpinOuts* and *Choose your Own Adventure*.

How many authors do you illustrate for?

I've illustrated picture books for Gary Crew, Isobelle Carmody and of course Emily Rodda and have done many covers for Paul Collins.

Who was the first author you illustrated for?

The first was a series by Duncan Ball called *The Ghost and the Goggle Box*. I did the later version of the covers.

How did you start illustrating for Emily Rodda?

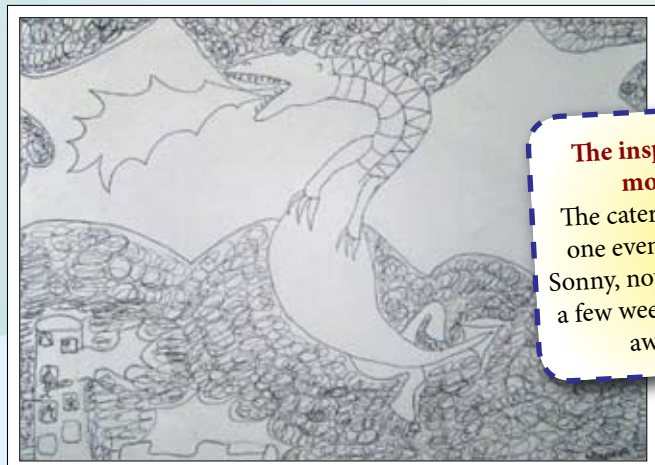
I simply took some drawings with me and visited Scholastic in Sydney. I was lucky because they were looking for an illustrator who liked to draw fantasy. I was in the right place at the right time because Emily Rodda liked my work and was looking for a cover artist.

How long have you been illustrating Deltora Quest books?

The first book was back in 1999. I've just finished a new one called *The Land of Dragons*. It will be given away for free for Get Reading month.

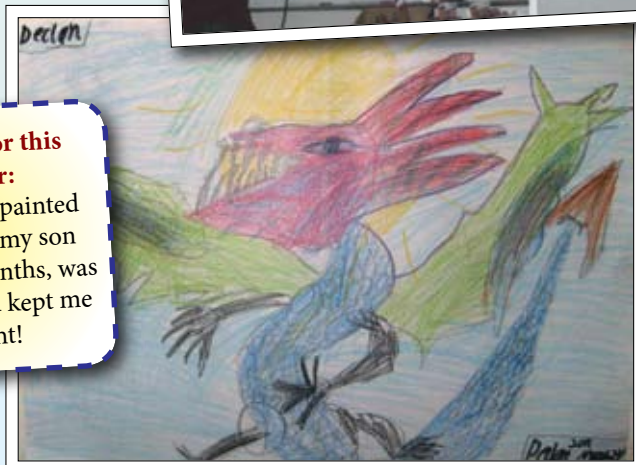
What should we do to become an illustrator?

You definitely need to draw a lot. Keep your best drawings in a neat folio to show people. A folio is like a thin case that has plastic sleeves to keep your drawings safe. You should also look around a lot. There are patterns and colours all around us that make great inspiration for drawings. But sometimes we miss them because we are too busy thinking "Did I leave the oven on?" or "What excuse can I make to get out of the cross country run on Tuesday?"



The inspiration for this month's cover:

The caterpillar was painted one evening when my son Sonny, now nine months, was a few weeks old and kept me awake at night!



MOLE HUNT

Interview with author Paul Collins

WRITERS have various methods as to how they put pen to paper – or fingers to the keyboard. Some write by longhand and transcribe to computer; some write chapter-by-chapter synopses and then write their novels; others start at A and work their way through to Z without really knowing where their story will end; while some writers think of the ending first and work their way toward it.

We at *Oz Kids in Print* wondered how Paul Collins wrote his latest science fiction thriller, *Mole Hunt*. Especially since it's just book one of a trilogy called *The Maximus Black Files*.

Why did you write a trilogy?

Several reasons, really. One is that the general plot of the series would be too long for one book. All up I suspect there could be almost 200,000 words, and for the target audience, that is, 14 year-olds plus, I suspect that'd be too hefty a tome. Also, authors need books coming out at least once a year, or at a stretch, one every two years. I can't see me finishing a 200,000 novel for another couple of years. So it's good to get one book out there to give me a breather before starting the next one. So it's also for practical and financial reasons, I guess.

Do you wait for a flash of inspiration before starting a book?

Generally, yes. Of course, ideas for contemporary stories are all around us. But not so for science fiction. I initially thought that I'd like to write about a character who's an anti-hero. I mean, I'm fed up with nice guys winning all the time. Because the possibilities are limitless in outer space, I figured SF would give me broader horizons in which my character would develop.

We read a review of Mole Hunt in Bookseller + Publisher. To quote, they thought it was "Bitingly clever and imaginative, it's like a cross between The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, Total Recall and Dexter". How correct was the reviewer in matching other

works to yours? Is there an influence to your writing, especially Mole Hunt?

Certainly. I used to read Marvel Comics when I was a kid. I loved *The Hulk*, *Captain America* and *Daredevil*. Many others, too. So much of my writing is often described as "filmic" and action-packed. So I think readers will see this in *The Maximus Black Files*. Too, I love Eoin Colfer's *Artemus Fowl* books. I think of Max as Artemis's evil twin. Other favourite books of mine are Philip Reeves's *Mortal Engine* series and Phillip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series. Going back over many years I used to love Fritz Leiber's *Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser* books and Robert E Howard's work, like the *Conan the Barbarian* series. I haven't read the *Dragon Tattoo* book, but I do love *Dexter* and I've seen *Total Recall*. Mind you, I'd like to think that what I've written is wholly original. Jumble up all the above reading material and you might see a resemblance in Maximus.

How did you get started writing science fiction?

I used to publish a science fiction magazine called *Void*. At that time it was Australia's only SF magazine. I met some wonderful Australian authors like Wynne Whiteford, Frank Bryning, Jack Wodhams and Sean McMullen. They all mentored me. I still brainstorm ideas with Sean.

What's the worst thing about working from home?

I can't think of too many things I don't like. It must be lonely for some authors, I think, but my partner also works at home writing, and we have two fantastic dogs, a heeler and a kelpie, that are always there to distract me if I show any signs of getting bored or lonely.

And the best?

That list could be long! I don't have to travel to work; the computer is always here for when I want to work; I save money on



petrol, food, etc.; I can work my own hours; I have no one looking over my shoulder. Stacks of pluses!

Do you experience writer's block – if so, how do you get around it?

I don't really get writer's block. If I did, I'd simply start another story. You usually find a solution somewhere down the track to any problem. And if you can't, you can always brainstorm with someone. Two minds are always better than one. Sometimes I might be discussing a problem with a friend, and just by talking about it the solution with present itself.


What are you working on at the moment?

Book #2 in *The Maximus Black Files*. I already have the first draft. So now it's time to fix all those niggling problems that I'm discovering.

Last but not least, do you write? Rough drafts first, sentence by sentence and not moving on till everything is perfect? How did you approach writing Mole Hunt?

I vary my approach. Sometimes I start off not knowing where my characters are going to wind up – this was the case with *The Slightly Skewed Life of Toby Chrysler*. Other times, I need a draft. Because the Maximus trilogy is so long and complex, I really needed to know where that was headed. So I actually have a first draft for book #3, too.

GRANDFATHER



He was so old, fragile and delicate
I took his hands to feel his pulse
It was as faint as a small child
walking barefoot
And yet he was smiling at me
I could see his fading eyes
Fading with his breath
He squeezed my hands
and I knew at that moment
Staring into my eyes
That he drifted away.

By Jennafer Milne
Year 10
Eynesbury Senior College
ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

I want to be me

I'd like to be a ghost
But all I'd do is boast
So I'll be me

Not a goat
Not a boat
Or know how to float
Cause all I want to be
Is me


When I'm an adult
I'll just be a bit smarter
And know more data
But I'll still be me

I'm going to be me all through my life

After I'm an adult I'm soon going to die
but I'm going to be me
Still
So all I have to be
Is me

By Hailey Graham
Age 8, Graceville State School
GRACEVILLE – QLD.

Summer in the Bush



The gum leaves crackle under my feet
as I walk through the hot sunshine

I see some majestic kangaroos
bound desperately into the scrub,
searching for shade

Cockatoos scream
as they launch gracefully into the air,
flying from tree to tree

The hot red earth burns the emus' feet
as they search for food

Wombats retreat,
into their cool shady homes,
for a sleep

Summer in the bush has begun

By Josie Woods
Age 11
BEMBOKA – NSW

The Brown Bag Boy



SAMUEL Sprout loved food, in fact he brought lots of it to school. He brought food of all different colours, different smells and different tastes. The only problem with Samuel, was that he was always trading lunches. Plus, he was mean and had issues with kids, almost every day. I don't get why people always hang around him when he's so mean to them. Once our teacher, Mrs. Flemming, was in a disagreement with him, and he called her fat. Anyway, I think someone should stand up to that guy and give him a taste of his own medicine. RRRT! we hauled to a stop, right outside the gate.

"Love you honey", mum said while leaning out the window.

"Yeah, love you too" I murmured. I raced to the playground where everyone sat. And, of course, Samuel was there.

"Hey! Here the freak show comes", Samuel teased. I felt so embarrassed. I quickly ran past the group, just managing to not look at

them. They all huddled back and kept asking Samuel questions.

"Sam, bro, can I sit next to you in class?" a kid asked him.

"Dunno, dumbbo", he shrugged.

Ring, Ring, Ring! All the kids rushed to class. Mrs. Flemming was writing equations on the board, and I was sitting being the teachers' pet. While the rest of the class were talking, texting on their phones, flying paper airplanes and even eating chewing gum from the bottom of the table. Yuck!

"Enough", she screamed, the room fell silent, she took a deep breath and straightened her dress. "Now, get out your books and turn to page 56." Everybody obeyed.

When I arrived home, my mum greeted me happily with a warm smile. "Hi mum" I chirped.

"How was your day?" she asked.

"Fine", I replied, then I ran to my room and flopped onto my bed, I had to come up with a plan to get back at Samuel. And then, it struck me, it was probably the best idea in history!

★ ★ ★

I walked through the gate with the adrenaline pumping, my hands were sweaty and my head was spinning. What if I got caught by the teachers? Or worse, Samuel. "Hey shortie! What's going on down there?" I kept on walking, "Ohh, somebody's scared!", Samuel taunted. Everyone laughed, including him. I just hope this plan works.

So, just before lunch I sneaked out of the classroom, and I went over to Samuel's bag, then I pulled out my brown bag that looked the exact same. My sandwich was filled with dirt, water, my dog's slobber, worms, tree leaves and anything else you could think of. And when Samuel traded lunches, no one traded them with him ever again.

By Trinity Ross

Year 5, Lauriston Girls' School

ARMADALE – VIC.

Teacher: Peter Campitelli

★ ★ ★

Understanding

No one understands the heavy feeling of loneliness.

But most people understand the feeling of looking great on the outside, but not being great on the inside.

No one understands that everyone is different, and is special no matter what.

But everyone seems to think that the uglier ones aren't special, and the beautiful ones are.

No one understands the meaning of knowing and caring for each other.

But we all understand the meaning of not caring about anyone else but ourselves.

There may be scary monsters that seem mean and nasty...

But nothing can be as mean and nasty as the people who do not understand...

That we need much, much more love in this world of misunderstanding.

By Ena Nam

Year 4, Strathfield South Public School, STRATHFIELD SOUTH – NSW





Lions Australia



Rob Eyton, Project Chairman,
and Council Chairman Bob Gilchrist

Supporting School Visits & Author Workshops

School visits by children's authors can be arranged by the schools through the Children's Charity Network. This provides an opportunity for children to participate in literary workshops with our patrons, including renowned children's book authors Hazel Edwards, Paul Collins, Anna Ciddor, Libby Hathorn and Lorraine Wilson. These workshops provide a wonderful experience for children.

LIONS AUSTRALIA helps by providing funds to enable School Visits and Author Workshops

Below: Meredith Costain and Paul Collins at the Ararat Workshop



Ararat 800 Primary School



Ararat West



Ararat West



Ararat North



Lake Bolac P-8



St. Mary's



OLARE'S STORY

SHE stampeded down the dirt track, lifting her trunk in delight. She happily drank the milk that was provided for her in her little den. Olare is a baby elephant that was rescued by the David Sheldrick wildlife orphanage.

This is Olare's story.

Olare and her mother were enjoying some juicy thorn bush trees. Some poachers caught sight of the pair and wanted the mother's tusks. They crouched behind a thorn bush and aimed their gun at the mother. The mother sensed the hunters and began to charge. They shot her. The bullet shot out and into the mother's leg. The mother fell to the ground.

Just as the poachers were about to cut off the mother's tusks they heard a truck. The David Sheldrick Wildlife Rescue had arrived. The poachers fled, leaving no clues behind. The David Sheldrick Wildlife Rescue team took the baby elephant. They looked at the mother and decided to 'put her down' as she would never recover.

On a recent trip to Africa we decided to adopt Olare so we could help her live.

There were other elephants at the elephant orphanage where we discovered Olare, but we touched Olare and she felt beautiful. She was spiky and hairy too, but she would stick her trunk through the bars of her den and try to pull our hands in. We knew we wanted her to be ours.

Most people think of elephants as dangerous creatures that will charge and trample you, but we saw a soft and playful side in Olare. Wild elephants just want to be left alone to enjoy their time in the wild. They will leave people alone if we don't come too close and annoy them.

Olare and her mother were victims of poachers. Poachers are cruel people that kill animals for a living. But the worst thing is, in Africa they cut off the tusks of the elephants and leave the remains to waste in the Savannah. Sometimes they don't die straight away like Olare's mother.

Olare will now remain without her mother and in the care of the David Sheldrick Wildlife care. She will soon be released back into the wild to join a new family and regain her wild side again.

Ivory is beautiful but most beautiful on elephants not necklaces or as a table. Not as a vase or statue but on elephants. Ivory is the tusk of the elephant which is cut off and sold.

If you ever get the chance to see real elephants in the wild make sure that it stays in your heart forever because it may never happen again.

So help us put an end to poaching by not buying products related to poaching and going against it. By doing this you might be saving one elephant and that elephant may become a parent the next day. So by helping one elephant we are helping the species.

Help put an end to poaching and save the species. Elephants are beautiful creatures and we don't want to lose them.

By Grace Rose Lees

Year 5, Age 9

Bligh Park Public School

BLIGH PARK – NSW

Teacher: Ms Taylor



Bright Kids is about helping parents and teachers empower children with learning difficulties

At Bright Kids, our focus is on those Aussie children who have been left behind for two or more years at school. We understand the hardships faced by these Bright Kids and their well-being is our primary concern. We know that unless their specific educational needs are addressed, they inevitably slip through the cracks and this can affect them for their entire lives. We also know that it doesn't have to be this way. Bright Kids offers hope to those caught up in this all-too-common scenario.

The Inaugural 2010 Bright Kids Teachers Award

The Inaugural 2010 Bright Kids Teachers Award was created for those teachers who recognised a child has significant learning difficulties and did something about it. They made that extra effort and opened the door of learning for that special child. Too often, they are unsung heroes. We don't believe they should be. We congratulate:

**Mr. Matt Green,
St. Bede's College,
Mentone, VIC**

As the Winner of the Inaugural 2010 Bright Kids Teachers Award

Our mission is to reduce the number of children with learning delays

Effective solutions to learning difficulties need to be implemented. We will provide objective, reliable information and connections to valuable educational resources.

We want to help them unlock their unlimited potential

The children we deal with all have normal or above normal intelligence. To that end, we are developing a bank of literacy and numeracy resources to access via the web. We're also establishing a network of parents and teachers who are willing to share their positive experiences, inspiring and empowering other parents and teachers to do the same.

We invite you to visit our website and become a member

If you're the parent or teacher of a child in need of our help, are interested in more information about us, or becoming a Bright Kids member, we invite you to visit our website: www.brightkids.org.au

KOKODA



The year was 1942 and we were in serious combat,
Not the easiest place to survive that's for sure,
Who knew whether we were coming back.

The hills stretched down for miles,
Made it impossible to see the end
Although we knew Kokoda was tough,
We would fight, never give in.

They say they lived around the track,
Coming out of nowhere to carry us back.
The 'fuzzy-wuzzy angels' they were called,
Brave hearted heroes among us all.

As high as the mountain tops reached,
And as low as the valleys sunk,
We fought with all our heart and soul
Hoping we would make it home.

They appeared from every nook and corner
We were never safe, on that track.
My mates and I stuck out there though,
Determined to push them back.

At first it seemed impossible,
We were tremendously outnumbered
But at home people were counting on us,
We just had to push them back.

And so we did, my mates and I
We sent them back from where they came,
Harry and Johnno died that night,
Over six hundred more I couldn't name.

The year was 1942,
What's more left to say?
Although Death lurked close by,
We stayed strong the whole way.

We knew it would be tough
But we had to make it back,
Some saw the end of their lives
On that very treacherous track.

By **Sasha Borges**

Year 11, Cerdon College, MERRYLANDS – NSW

Australia Day

All of us here,
For a special occasion,
The country unites,
All celebrating,
Today is Australia Day.

January 26,
Kids in blue and green and gold,
A flurry of Australians,
Proud to be here

The cheering is starting,
"Australia Day!"
The national anthem is begun,
Beaming faces shout and sing.

The children buy showbags,
With Australia flags on them,
Their faces are painted,
They're happy – today, EVERYONE is united.

All races and religions,
colours and beliefs
come together and rejoice
Today is Australia Day
The fireworks start in burst of colour
and everyone's in a festive mood,

Mouths agape, staring at the flashes of bright colour,
Triumph, Happiness, Friendship and Unity,
All symbolise Australia Day.

By **Sowmya Padki**

Year 8, Age 13

Hurlstone Agricultural High School

GLENFIELD – NSW





She Fights

She fights in her own way,
Uniquely, alone.
In ways those men won't understand,
At least not now, not today.

She can fight without the weapons
The guns, the bombs, the shields.
She is a martyr in her own style,
Though not in the war fields.

Her heart yearns for the love
The love she has lost
The love she lost when she sent her
Sons and men to the cold and frost.

Her hands are gnarled
With calluses hard and rough
From knitting all day and cooking all night
Life is now tough.

Stealth, secrecy,
Sneakily her men must fight.
The enemy may be approaching
Why, life is just not right.

The men fight valiantly
With courage, valour and bravery
Some face death and injury
Others face slavery.

They fight against the enemy
She fights against her own mind,
Against her soul, against her heart
A war of its own kind.

She gave up all she had, all for the battle
A better symbol of sacrifice one could never find,
One can only learn from what she went through
Let us now leave the battle behind.

By **Saira Gugnani**
Year 9, Age 13
Cheltenham Girls' High School
BEECROFT – NSW

THE LOGGERS

The trees and plants whisper overhead,
Their leaves whistle in between,
The kids come into the garden and tread,
And find a nice place to lean.

The small tree shrivels at the weight,
And those careless kids leave it to its fate,
Next comes the people who pollute,
Just to get rid of their unwanted loot.

The remaining plants grow fast,
They look like they're going to reach the moon,
But the loggers won't let them last,
The loggers will be here soon.

Those loggers pile into their trucks,
All the way bragging 'bout their luck,
'cause they've heard 'bout those trees out there,
And they're all expecting a very good share.

They arrive with axes and saws,
They all choose to ignore the laws,
Soon most of these trees are cut down,
And the loggers will smuggle them into town.

Still the trees and plants whisper,
And their leaves whistle,
Yet they know the loggers are near,
But these trees won't show any fear.

They arrive with axes and saws,
Soon most of the trees are cut down,
Those men chose to ignore the laws,
Now only bare roots can be found.

By **Sowmya Padki**

Year 8, Age 13

Hurlstone Agricultural High School
GLENFIELD – NSW



UNWARE of her pain, they kept pushing. With negativity flowing through her body she stood in the darkness, knowing that at any second it could all be over. The darkness was where she felt most comfortable as it complemented the emptiness in her heart. Her friends kept their distance, as they could not help the struggling dancer. She felt that she was unable to stop, as she didn't want to be a failure. Other girls she danced with would always give up over the smallest of problems, and everyone knew they weren't dedicated. Cara did not want to be known as one of those girls. She lived to dance and it

was all she had. In Cara's eyes, sitting down and admitting to the pain would be the end. She asked herself, once she stopped, could she find the strength to start again?

Cara could sense that she was being watched, and for a performer this was usually a good thing, but she could feel the judgemental eyes following her every move, and reading her emotions. Others' opinions often worried Cara, and her insecurities fuelled the negativity and uncertainty about the future. Friendly faces smiled awkwardly at her. Cara noticed that the teachers kept their distance, almost as if they were making an effort to not make eye contact.

"All I ever do is my best, and they don't even look at me. Do they even know I'm here at all?" Cara said to herself, wondering if her constant battle with pain had finally won over her.

She stood in the darkness as she watched the light liven up the bodies of the dancers on stage. Their eyes glistened like sunshine on snowflakes as they moved intricately around the stage. They looked joyous as they showed off their phenomenal athletic abilities. Watching the dancers gave Cara mixed emotions. She loved watching them and hearing how the crowd enjoyed their performance. At the same time she envied the fact that they could dance, pain free, with no restrictions. She longed for the time when she could once again leap across the stage and inspire the audience. With each second that passed, her nerves seemed to double. She couldn't cope with the uncertainty, not knowing whether she would be able to finish the concert, not knowing if pushing through the pain would only make it worse, and it was the unknown that made Cara feel sick.

"Cara to side stage, Cara to side stage!" announced the stage manager over the loudspeaker system in the dressing rooms. There was one more item until it was her turn and that meant, one more item till it was all over. All the suffering, stress and uncertainty

would finally come to an end. It was her final test for the year before her well deserved break.

Cara waited side stage as she watched the dancer before her. The first moment he walked onto the stage you could hear the audience gasp with excitement. His eyes sparkled with joy as the stage lights poured over his muscles creating shadows on his body. As the drum beat started to rumble you could hear his breath. His dancing was fluid and effortless. The detail that he was showing in the dance was like nothing Cara had ever seen before. He knew what his body had to do, right down to each fingertip. While Cara watched the inspiring performer, she couldn't help but be envious of his technique and pain free performance. There was nothing holding him back. He could try his hardest and know that his body could handle it.

For a moment Cara went blank with no emotion and no recollection of what she was doing. When her thoughts came back, she realised she was on stage. There were no more chances to second-guess her abilities, and nothing she could do to prevent the worst from happening; she just had to give it her best. As the darkness left the stage, so did her negative thoughts. As her body started its first movement, she felt relieved. Cara knew that she was being watched, but this time it only fuelled her energetic performance. She hadn't danced without pain for so long and now it was her moment to shine.

Cara could feel the lights beaming down on her, as the eyes of the audience looked up. Each movement increased her energy levels and it was impossible for her not to smile. Stopping was not an option, as the thought did not even cross her mind. Out of the corner of her eye she could see her friends and teachers smiling.

Cara knew she was not a failure any more. All the struggling and pain was worth it. All the uncertainty that she once felt had disappeared. She knew she still had a long way to go before she would be pain free, but after her concert she experienced the freedom of dancing without restrictions. This was a feeling that she knew she just could not live without.

By **Zali Million**

Year 12, Eynesbury Senior College

ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Shelda Rathman

All Eyes on Cara

How Clouds Work

'Tis quite odd to think,
A cloud's full of rain,
That over our heads,
Is a liquid terrain.

No matter the logic,
We get taught at school,
It never will make sense,
That a cloud is a pool.

How can it be,
That floating above,
Is a river or lake,
Of fluffy white stuff.

Oceans are mighty,
They don't spend their days,
Dressed up as fairy floss,
Cruising away.

It's simply unthinkable,
That up in the sky,
Water can dance,
And flutter and fly.

I can't comprehend,
Such a marvellous treat,
If only I too,
Could pull off such a feat.

By **Annice Savill**

Year 8, Pymble Ladies' College
PYMBLE – NSW

THE RED TENT

IN A busy camping ground caravans are parked. Tents have been raised. A man runs to the beach with a surfboard in his hands. A skinny teenager in a yellow singlet looks at his paper and screams like a girl. A young boy on his bike bangs into a tree and boom... he falls off, his face landing flat on the sand. His glasses are about a metre away from him. A child has a surfboard under his feet, surfing on the sand balancing with his hands out. A camper van's back doors open with a little click. Pillows are thrown out. Inside a red tent sits a couch but no one is occupying it.

It looks like everyone is having a brilliant time but something doesn't seem right. The skinny teenager in the yellow singlet has just pushed the young boy into the tree. That incident happened just before the people in the red tent disappeared. The problem is that they never reappeared.

By **Tammi Tang**

Year 5, Camberwell Girls' Grammar School
CANTERBURY – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Cooper



Coffee,
from that first sip in the morning,
to that last drizzle in the evening,
when we bring that cup to our lips,
warmth, comfort, enjoyment,
and the aroma of coffee beans,
they overwhelm us all quite rapidly,
without hands,
all this,
a figment of our imaginations.

By **Brian Gardiner**

Year 10, Eynesbury Senior College
ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann



Pressure and Dreams

MILLIE was preparing for her final exam as a Medical Student at New York University and as such she was at home frantically reading through her countless medical textbooks trying to make as many useful notes as possible. She wished that she had spent more time revising over the previous months instead of leaving a whole six years worth of work until the night before. Her head was bubbling full of thoughts so she decided that she would take a brief walk around the block before calling it a night.

With only a few hours before the exam was due to start Millie sat down, coffee in hand, in the University library. She was desperately trying to get that last bit of vital revision in. Reading over and re-writing notes was a painful task but Millie persisted telling herself that it would all be worth it in the long run. Millie had dreamed of what life as an emergency room registrar, and even sometimes as the director of one, would be like for years but now it was actually happening, well almost. All she had to do was pass the exam.

With only a short amount of time before the start of the exam Millie had decided to leave the library and head off to the exam room. But just as she stood up Millie heard this loud thud. Millie jumped up and rushed to where she believed the noise had come from. When she arrived she

found one of the Deans of the University unconscious on the ground. Adrenaline rushing through her body, Millie instantly knew what to do, remembering that these first few minutes were the most critical. She quickly knelt down next to the Dean and once she discovered that he was no longer breathing immediately commenced Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation. The feelings that Millie was experiencing were extremely intense, but she knew exactly what she had to do, as if it was second nature to her. The time before someone else arrived seemed like forever when in reality it was merely minutes.

Once the Ambulance had departed the shocking truth of what had just occurred suddenly hit Millie and almost brought her to tears. She then realised that she had missed her final exam and was devastated, believing that she would now have to wait another entire year before she could live out her dream. With this Millie headed home, eyes bloodshot and crying most of the way.

Millie lay awake in bed most of that night, unable to get to sleep, unsure whether or not the Dean had lived.

The next morning Millie heard the phone ring and rather dreadingly got up and answered it. It was a doctor from Mercy General Hospital, one of New York's finest,

calling to let her know that Peter, the Dean, was alive and well apart from a bit of tiredness which was expected following two consecutive heart attacks. The doctor also advised her that it was her actions and quick thinking that had directly saved the Dean's life.

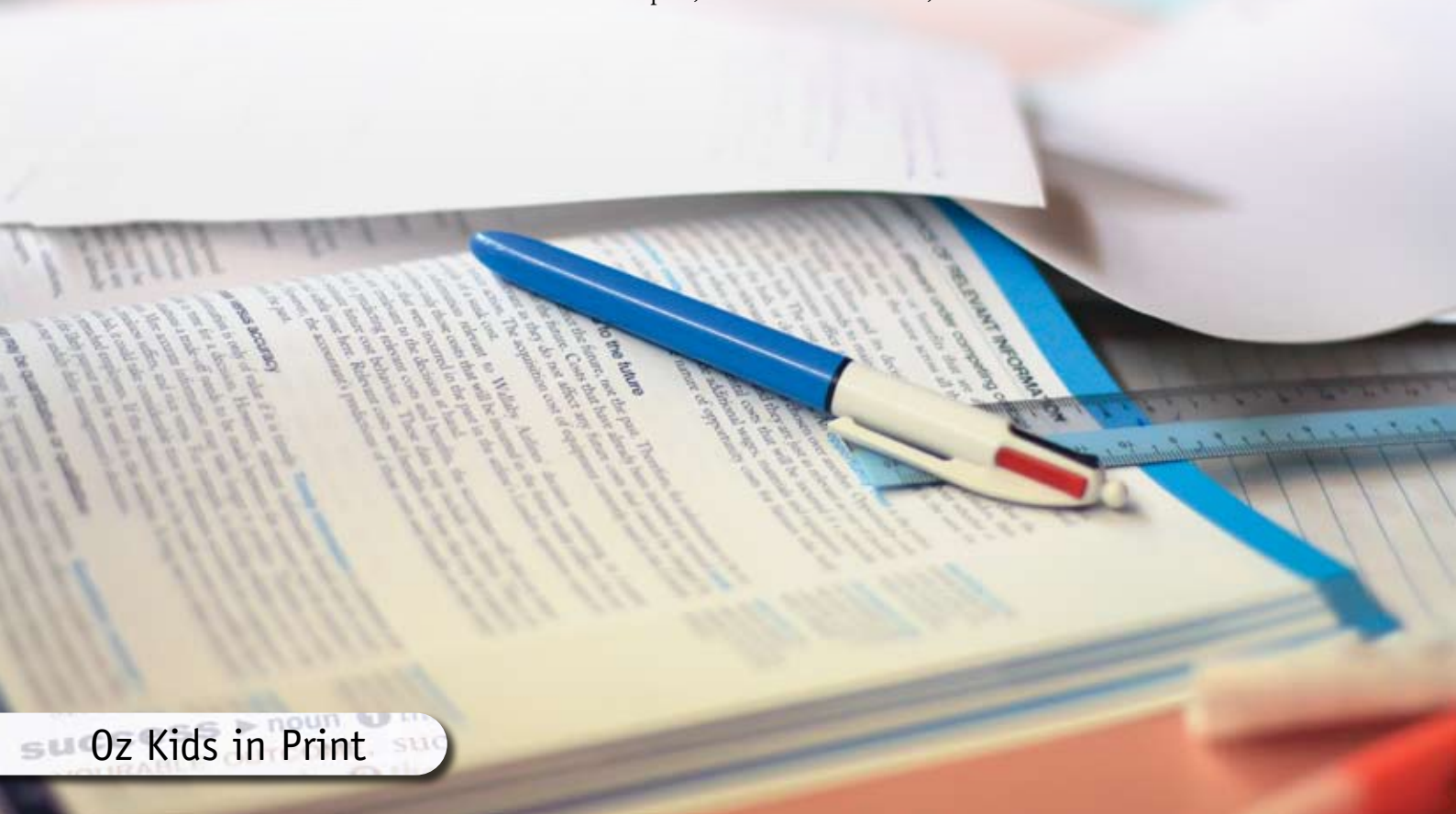
A few hours later, Millie received a call from the Dean himself thanking her and also telling her that he would do everything in his power to allow her to sit the exam sometime within the next week. Millie was so thankful and glad that she had been given the possible opportunity to sit the exam at a later date.

Not even two months later Millie was working as an Intern in the Emergency Department of Mercy General Hospital, one of the best in New York. She had scored fantastically on her exam, which she had been able to sit for. In actual fact she scored 99.5%, a near perfect. At this stage she had enjoyed and loved every last minute of her new job. This was just another step for Millie in obtaining her life long dream.

Thus as one chapter in life closes another one begins and Millie's life long dreams had just begun to come true.

By Brian Gardiner

Year 11, Eynesbury Senior College
ADELAIDE – SA



THE CHASE



step he repeated in his head. One more step.

Jamal shifted his shoulder back slightly, before ploughing straight into his target. He took a deep breath, greedily sucking in as much oxygen as he could, relieving his lungs of agonising pain. Before the man stumbled forward, Jamal's trained and

nimble fingers worked quickly, removing an item from his victim's pocket without him noticing. Or so Jamal thought.

"What the he-", the man began, but was cut off by Jamal's indifferent voice.

"Get out of the way!" The man was shocked at Jamal's uncaring attitude and the way he continued walking without stopping to help. Dusting himself off, he felt embarrassed but the feeling was short lived, as he realised something was missing from his pocket. His wallet.

Jamal's heart was beating out of his chest. The adrenalin was still pumping through his veins, as he continued, walking towards the exit. He was a few metres from the exit when he saw his victim from the corner of his eye. His heart stopped, as the man squinted at him.

"Hey you, STOP!" he roared, but Jamal ignored it and kept walking. He saw the green t-shirt man quicken his pace, the map still bouncing floppily in his hand. Jamal walked faster but his victim followed. He was only a few metres from the exit when two police officers began to come his way. Sensing the danger, Jamal broke into a sprint for the exit, like a caged animal finally freed. The larger of the two officers fell, as he clutched for the back of Jamal's shirt. A quick swerve from Jamal allowed him to get away, as the smaller officer stopped to help the larger one off the ground. Jamal continued running until he was out of sight and only then did he dare turn around. He wasn't followed.

As Jamal caught his breath, he observed the organised chaos that was taking place around him. He could hear the mingling of hawkers as they tried to persuade

unsuspecting people to buy their goods. He could almost taste the thick smog that shrouded the area, smothering the bright sky and replacing it with a hostile grey dome. Jamal's stomach grumbled as the scent of fresh jalebi lingered in the air, following him, almost teasing him. He hadn't eaten in two days and had just gathered enough money last time to feed his family. This would hopefully change tonight and he confirmed to himself that they would eat a decent meal, something they hadn't done for weeks. Deep in thought, he was brought back to reality by the blaring noise of a yellow topped auto rickshaw, as it whizzed past. Cautiously crossing the road, Jamal decided to move to a safer place.

Jamal stepped on the last step of the ghat, as he began to think about the wallet. Carefully, he pulled it out of his pocket and ran his hands over the wrinkled covering. It felt like leather. Golden letters were embossed on the bottom right corner and Jamal ran his fingers over them, immediately recognising the wallet as an imitation brand. He slowly undid the silvery latch, pried open the outer flap and doubtfully peered inside. He found a measly ten rupees and a large variety of coloured plastic cards inserted carefully into every sleeve of the wallet. He clenched his fists and pumped the air, why didn't I check before? he thought, despising himself. Angrily, he hurled the worthless wallet, excluding the ten rupees, into the water and quickly turned around. So many questions were popping up in his head that he didn't hear the wallet slam the water. It sank, just like Jamal's heart.

Staring thoughtfully at the ground, Jamal took a sip from his glass. His eyes travelled upwards as he heard a train approach. Scanning the crowd again, he found a sea of white shirts, except for one. A man in a red shirt, walking arrogantly against the tired, slumped workers. Immediately, Jamal gulped his chai and lifted himself up. Checking again to confirm his target, he began to walk. The chase was on, again.

By Bhuwan Tandon

Year 12, Eynesbury Senior College

ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

- Chai is an Indian tea
- Jalebi is a fried Indian sweet
- Ghat is a stairway in India leading down to a body of water

Flight for Freedom



"CRACK!" The attentive sound of a whip rang through the air.

"Get ya' selves movin'!" shouted the angry guards.

Ali quickened up his pace, which wasn't easy with the iron chains joining him up with the other Jews. The Nazis here were among the worst. Blood spluttered into the air as a sandy haired boy stumbled and collapsed on the ground.

"People are dropping like dead flies here", thought Ali.

The sun was setting. It created a beautiful, radiant sky, alive with dancing colours. Yet no one was in a mood to marvel splendour. For Ali, it brought back painful memories of his past; when he used to huddle happily with his parents on the wild grass by the hillside, admiring the sunset as the sky turned shades of red and purple, laughing and chattering together. He blinked back the tears and tried to ebb the flow of memories coming back. But, those days were long gone, along with the rest of his family. His mind flashed back to the day the Nazis came, the day where his world turned upside down, the day where the deafening gunshots created the fresh blood of his parents as they lay still and motionless on the ground, their love and care for him taken forever with them, just because they were JEWS.

Ali remembered when the soldiers had taken him to this torturous camp. Their cold, eyes full of hatred and the rasping voice with no sympathy for those like Ali were burned at the back of his head like an unforgettable memory. Their hearts were empty as if they had no soul and they treated the Jews worse than an animal. Those painful thoughts brought shivers down his spine. He ambled back to his dormitory which he shared with twenty-eight other Jews. Behind the bars of doom, Ali peered. The sky was blinding. But without hesitation, he grasped the bars

to get a better look at Mother Nature's wonders.

Silhouetted across the evening sky was a dark, shadow waltzing across the horizon. Ali had a closer observation, the shadow seemed to split into miniature masses which flew gracefully across like ballerinas; the birds of paradise. They captured Ali's concentration. He closed his eyes and pictured himself up there, the wind rushing through his arms, the warmth of the sun beating on his back and the belief that these birds would lead him to a better day. He never wanted to leave, to return to reality.

Ali blinked, and just as the coldness and darkness of the dorm overwhelmed him again, there was a flash in the air and a sharp sound. Then something weird happened, he wasn't too sure but he felt his body weight leave him as he floated high, he rubbed his eyes and for some reason he was really up there in the vibrant sky with the birds. Flying towards glory, flying to heaven, flying for freedom. He sensed his old heavy heart become light like a feather. Ali was soaring up to the clouds, free of the massive burden that had suppressed him for so long. "I am free!" Ali whispered to himself excitedly, and this time, he knew he was.

By **Eva Wang**

Age 12, Somerville House
SOUTH BRISBANE – QLD.

An effortless maze
Plain to see from a-high
Yet when seen,
Just a place where water once tread

Sand and rumble – not a trace of life,
Yet darkness filled the sky.
A clap of thunder
Down poured the rain,
and in a moment the land sprung to life,
the frogs chirped along,
Rain brought about another world.

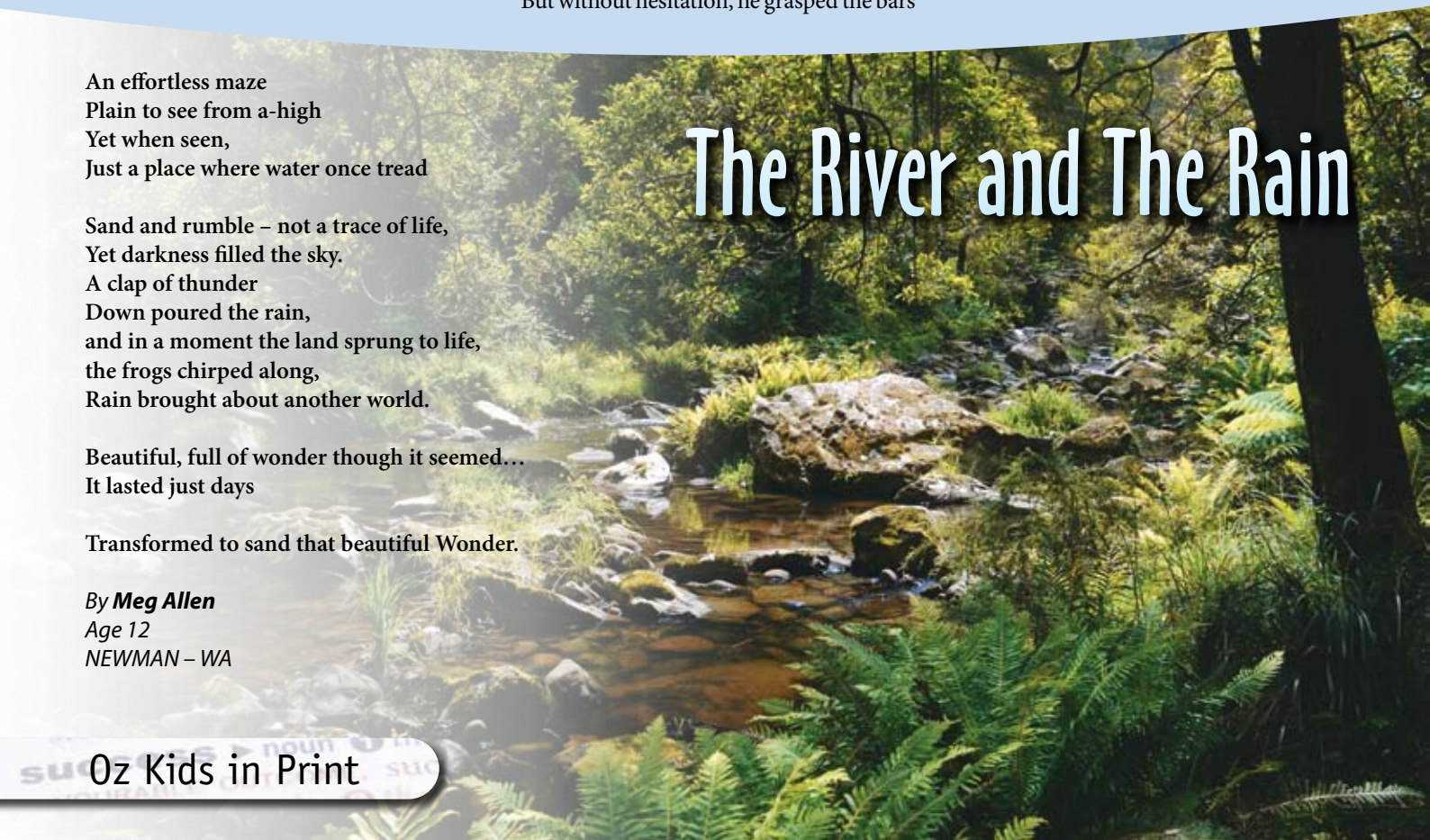
Beautiful, full of wonder though it seemed...
It lasted just days

Transformed to sand that beautiful Wonder.

By **Meg Allen**

Age 12
NEWMAN – WA

The River and The Rain



Ambassadors



📍 **Krista Bell** is an award-winning author of twenty-one books for young readers. Krista has been professionally involved in children's literature for over thirty years, as well as being the mother of three sons, all of whom are good readers and writers! Krista's middle son, Damien, is the illustrator of her junior novels. Having grown up in Sydney, Krista had her own bookshop, was a publicist for a publishing company, then a book reviewer on ABC Radio for fifteen years, and during that time moved to Melbourne with her family.

It was in Melbourne that her first book, *JEZZA*, a picture book illustrated by Kym Lardner, was published in 1991. Krista calls the way she writes FIBTION, because she takes real life experiences, embroiders them with fibs and turns them into stories.

Krista lives with her sons and transport planner husband next to a railway line so she can quickly catch a train to the MCG to watch a football match, or go to the theatre, a concert or the National Gallery in town, or visit South Bank or Federation Square where she can be a professional "stickybeak", collecting story ideas. Visit www.kristabell.com.

Paul Collins was born in England, raised in New Zealand and moved to Australia in 1972. In 1975 he launched *Void*, the first professional science fiction magazine Australia had seen since the demise of the joint Australian and British production *Vision of Tomorrow*. His first fantasy novel for younger readers was *The Wizard's Torment*. Paul then edited the young adult anthology *Dream Weavers*, Australia's first heroic fantasy anthology ever. This was followed by *Fantastic Worlds*, and *Tales from the Wasteland*. Paul's recent works include the highly successful fantasy series (co-edited with Michael Pryor), *The Quentaris Chronicles*, to which Paul also contributes titles (*Swords of Quentaris*, *Slaves of Quentaris*, *Princess of Shadows* and *Dragonlords of Quentaris*); *The Jelindel Chronicles*, in which *Dragonlinks* was the first title, and *The Earthborn Wars* trilogy, of which *The Earthborn* was the first title. Visit www.paulcollins.com.au for more. ➡



📍 **Anna Ciddor** has always been fascinated by the question, 'What if I lived in another time or place?'. She changed career from maths teacher to author so she'd have the excuse to spend lots of time doing research. She has written and illustrated over fifty books, including the highly popular and exciting Viking Magic trilogy: *Runestone*, *Wolfspell* and *Stormriders*. Bravery, friendship, and a dash of magic are the keys to these adventure stories, which are based on real Viking history. *Runestone* was chosen as a Children's Book Council Notable Book in 2003 and has been shortlisted for many awards. You can find out more about Anna and her books at www.annaciddor.com.

Anna keeps in touch with her readers through school visits and her website, but she is also keen to encourage the writing efforts of budding young authors through the Young Australian Writers' Awards.

Meredith Costain lives in Melbourne with a menagerie of pets: five chooks, a cat, a kelpie and a red heeler, which often feature in her stories. Her work ranges from picture books through to popular fiction and non-fiction for older readers, and she is the literary editor of national children's magazines *Challenge*, *Explore* and *Comet*. Meredith's books include the series *A Year in Girl Hell*, *Dog Squad*, *Bed Tails* and *Musical Harriet*, which was adapted for television by the ABC. Her picture book *Doodledum Dancing*, illustrated by Pamela Allen, was an Honour Book in the 2007 Children's Book Council of Australia awards.

Meredith regularly presents writing workshops for kids and adults in libraries and schools, and enjoys helping writers create stories based on their own experiences. To find out more about her books, pets and early writing years, visit www.meredithcostain.com. ➡



📍 **Jeni Mawter** (J.A. Mawter) is the best-selling children's author of the hilarious 'So' series: *So Gross!*, *So Feral!*, *So Sick!*, *So Festy!*, *So Grotty!* and *So Stinky!* (HarperCollins) as well as the Freewheelers adventure series: *Unleashed!*, *Launched!* and *Extreme!* (HarperCollins). Jeni's picture book *There's a Sun Fairy in Our Garden* was based on her family life with her three children. She has also published fiction, non-fiction, poetry and verse narrative for the education market.

Jeni's enthusiasm for words and books is infectious. She inspires both children and adults. With a Master of Arts in Children's Literature Jeni has taught creative writing at Macquarie University, the NSW Writer's Centre and the Sydney Writers Centre. She presents at numerous other schools, conferences and festivals and is a speaker for the Lateral Learning, Show & Tell and Speaker's Ink speaker's agencies.

If you'd like to find about Jeni's books or to get some hot writing tips please visit www.jenimawter.com

Air Guitar Hero

RAVEN ran out from behind a back lane. Her eyes looked from side to side watchfully. She glanced behind her with caution. Nothing. There it was! That familiar tune she was listening for.

"My Spider sense is tingling", she said to herself, "It's one street away". Raven ran and jumped over countless obstacles then stopped in front of a van.

"Not so fast Mr. Freeze", Raven said dramatically. She was talking to a man in an ice-cream van.

"Nice to see you too Raven, and it's Mr. Whippy not Mr. Freeze" said the man in the ice-cream van.

"You know what I want", said Raven, holding out \$3.

"A peanut butter and marshmallow sundae was set aside for you already", said Mr. Whippy.

"You are not talking, so I must go to Penguin for information on Joker's new hideout", Raven said, grabbing the sundae from the counter.

Later in the evening when Raven was watching T.V. an ad for a competition came on... "Do you think you are random and wild? If you are 15 and over, come and show off your air guitar moves and become the next Air Guitar Hero! Just call 1900..."

Raven was already at the phone. "Hello I was wondering if I could audition for Air Guitar Hero."

Your appointment is at 3:00 on Saturday if that's OK with you?" asked the lady on the phone,

"Yeah it's OK with me", said Raven. "Good luck!"

Raven practiced jumping, splits, back flips and sliding on her knees. She practised until it was time for the audition. She walked to the audition and when she got there it was already her turn.

"Hello Raven", said the judge, "What is your favourite superhero?"

Raven answered, "Iron Man".

"What is your weakness?" "T.V."

"Very well, what song would you like to do?" "Batman theme song."

"If I like you a lot you will go through to the finals", said the judge. "Then the public will decide the winner with the video we will take of your audition, 1,2,3 GO!" Raven jumped, flipped and slid to the front of the stage and ended the song by bashing the guitar against the ground.

"You, Raven, are going to the finals", said the judge while clapping. "That was the best Air Guitar moves I've ever seen!" "Thanks", said Raven.

"Tomorrow are the finals and they will be on T.V. and people will vote afterward."

"See you later!" said Raven.

"Hey Raven! The audience has just finished voting and you have to come to the big sum up now!" said the judge over the phone.

"OK" said Raven. "I will be the next Air Guitar Hero!... hopefully", Raven said after putting down the phone.

She went outside and yelled, "Taxi! Taxi!" Then hopped into a taxi. "Where do you want to go?"

"To Infinity and Beyond, I mean Air Guitar stadium."

"OK." It took only a few minutes to get there. Raven walked quickly up the stairs to join the other finalists.

"Are you ready for the sum up?" asked the judge.

"Yes", replied the eager contestants.

"The next Air Guitar Hero is... Raven!" "Your prize is a brand new... Tricycle!" "Yeah, a Tricycle! What! Wait!"

By **Sandra Thomson**
Year 6, Wilkins Primary School
MARRICKVILLE – NSW
Teacher: Ms. Palatis



Searching the Stars

A billion stars,
A billion hopes,
With or without,
A telescope.
Inky blackness,
Lights appear,
The lonely dancers,
Of the spheres.
But when you turn,
Your eyes so wet,
You know the star,
Will soon forget.
So left in space,
The given dream,
Is dumped for something,
The star has also seen.
Another wish,
From a tear stained eye?
Tossed to the stars,
Attempting to fly?
But never we learn,
We continue to throw,
Dream after dream,
Till our teardrops are snow.

And lost in the desert,
The sand dunes of space,
Wishes are rusting,
Dust covers their face.
Though trusting a star,
May not always prevail,
Not every wish,
Nor star chooses to fail.
So when every hope's lost,
And your tears run as rivers,
When your face feels like falling,
And thought gives you shivers.
Throw your soul to the sky,
Tear stars down with the weight,
Of every last wish,
That covers your plate.
For though one wish is feeble,
A thousand can soar,

Up, up to the heavens,
Till they can travel no more.
Then catching the moonlight,
Silver and sweet,
Your wishes take wing,
To the star they must meet.
Every star is not perfect,
Every dream won't come true,
But when the sky holds your soul,
Something will slip through.

By **Annice Savill**

Year 8

Pymble Ladies' College

PYMBLE – NSW

The Aurora

By **Grace Wong**

Year 7, Ravenswood School for Girls

GORDON – NSW

Teacher: Sharon Shapiro

Silken black billows in the night sky.
Silver diamonds glitter,
Stars like glittering droplets,
Iridescence glinting,
Discarded by a negligent child;
Cold beauty of Lady Night,
Warmed by flickering tapestries
Shimmering, leaping sashes of colour,
Fragile, fleeting blue, gossamer green, rosy pink,
The Aurora dances in the sky,
Draped across sinuous shadows,
Gracing the deep, ancient black,
Unearthly beauty dapples the night,
Nature's breath-taking waltz across the sky.

Supermarket Music

I WALK through the automatic glass doors and am immediately enveloped in unnecessary sub-zero air-conditioning. It's as if they are afraid the Norwegian lettuce will suffer from heatstroke if it's not kept in its natural climate. I shiver and push open the thick grey door of the cloakroom.

Gary, the supervisor, is already in there, making a superb effort at his, as usual, by 'supervising' the SportsBet section of the newspaper and drinking infinite mugs of hot, brown sludge dispensed from the coffee machine. He doesn't look up as I enter; he simply pauses mid-slurp to inform me that I will be on check-outs tonight. I nod, even though he can't see me, and sigh. "What an exemplary night this should pan out to be..." I think to myself.

I drop my bag with a clunk on one of the steel benches and fasten my "Hi! My name is Leni!" badge onto my off-white blouse.

I catch a glimpse of myself as I walk past the small square mirror on the wall. My dark black hair is lank, strands of it falling onto my pale face despite my best efforts to manipulate it into a short ponytail on top of my head. My green eyes look tired and my blouse buttons are pulled to the brink of combustion. This dilemma is mainly due to the fact that I have worked here for six years, throughout all my awkward teenage pubescence, and they refuse to give me the next size up.

I comb my hair back with my fingers and push my way through the door into the fruit and veg section. The first few bars of ABBA's 'Dancing Queen' ring out as I approach check-out number five. I've become somewhat immune to the ridiculous supermarket music choices they make us endure for hours on end. I flick on my light, illuminating the number five with a loud ding.

"Hi Leni!" I hear from behind. It's Mitch, the overenthusiastic 30-something-year-old who whistles and pays slightly too much attention

to good customer service. He once gave a lady her five cents change by softly placing it in her hand and folding her fingers over it, all the while muttering, "Here's your change. It has been a pleasure serving you today".

"How's it going, Mitch?" I reply half-heartedly.

"Yeah, not too bad. Yourself?" he responds with a toothy grin.

I clench my teeth. I'm twenty, I have no money, I have been working the same stupid job since I was fourteen and, while the rest of my friends are out starting a life, I live with my parents who believe in an 'honest job', not tertiary education.

"Fine." I say and turn to serve my first customer.

A pimply-faced sixteen-year-old stands before me, rapping his fingers annoyingly on the counter.

"Hi, how are you today?" I ask mechanically.

He nods and his eyes dart from side to side apprehensively.

I begin to scan his items. A bouquet of multicoloured gerberas, a ten dollar box of 'fancy' chocolates and, hidden beneath them, a box of PleasureMax condoms. I try to stifle a laugh by disguising it as a cough. He looks up at me, red-faced, shifting uncomfortably from one foot to the other. I hand him his carry bag. He takes it, nods and marches briskly towards the exit.

"Now, you have a great evening, won't you?" I call after him, chuckling quietly to myself.

Endless painfully slow elderly women and frantic mothers trying to calm ratty children, hours later, it's 11.30pm and half an hour until the

end of my shift. Mitch has gone home to his family and Gary had surfaced from his highly caffeinated grotto. He is pacing from one end of the store to another – his attempt at late night security.

There are no customers now except for the odd cigarette run. This is the time of night I hate the most. I'm forced to reflect on my life and realise how much of a waste it is.

I liked school. I was good at it! Throughout my scholastic life, I dreamed of becoming an astronomer. I wanted to go to university! I wanted to travel and see the Northern Lights! But my parents told me I "wasn't the right fit for university" and "no-one in this family has ever been to university and we've turned out all right".

So here I am, working every second night shift at fifteen dollars an hour and then going home to Seinfeld re-runs and Dr Phil. To make matters worse, the only boyfriend I've ever had went around telling all the other fourth graders that "Len likes men!"; as if it were the wittiest comeback ever known to man.

I check my watch. There is fifteen minutes to go. I hear a noise, a familiar gasp. I close my eyes and take a deep breath, holding it in as I hear a groan, closely followed by a sickening splash.

I'm already on my way to the cleaning cupboard as I hear Gary's monotonous voice drone over the PA system, "Clean up on aisle four, clean up on aisle four".

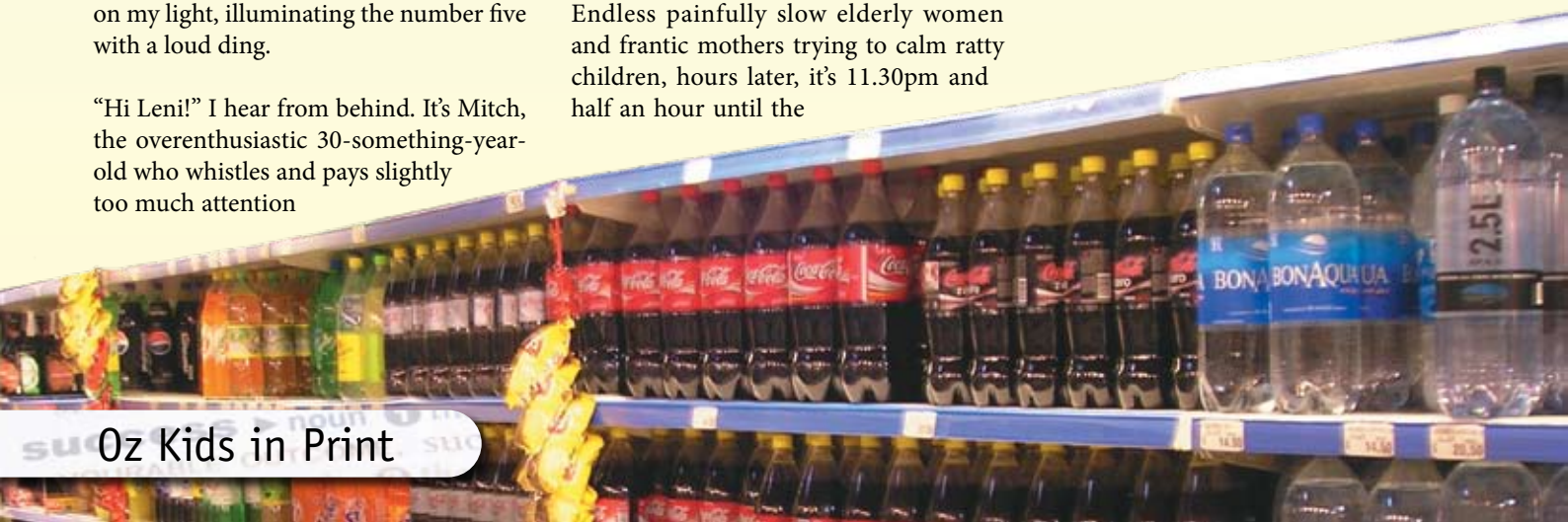
Gee, I hope it's not the lettuce.

By Ashleigh Maihi

Year 12

Castle Hill High School

CASTLE HILL – NSW



Island Sunset

Peach and salmon
Streaked across baby blue;
All kinds of citrus;
Gold and silver too.

Short-lasting purple
Of countless hues,
Slowly sweeping 'cross the sky,
As if on cue.

This is the island sunset
That leads me home to you.

By **Talia Walker**
Year 11
Cerdon College
MERRYLANDS – NSW

THROUGH *the* Ages

Jazz twenties,
swinging thirties,
big band forties,
rock and roll fifties,
psychedelic sixties,
disco seventies,
synthesised eighties,
pop nineties,
eclectic beats
pulsate
into the new millennium.

By **Brian Gardiner**
Year 10
Eynesbury Senior College
ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann



Life

I WANT to start off with telling you a little about myself.

When I was young like you or a bit younger, I lived the life of a child, not caring, not worrying, just living. But I always knew that one day I would do something, either for the world, for the people or for someone close to me. I knew that if I strived for what I wanted, if I worked and

believed for that one thing then nothing could stop me from achieving it.

Any of you here can succeed and you all will, in your own way. You will rise up, your heart full, knowing that you've reached your ultimate goal.

Some of you might have no desire, no ultimate goal and that's perfectly fine, you'll still live your life the way you wanted to and that's the most important thing.

Question: "But what if we don't want to live at all?"

Answer: "Well again that's your choice but can't you see that even you, someone who doesn't wish to be here can make a difference?"

Imagine standing in a rainforest, clear water is falling down the sunlit rocks into the whirling pool below. Fish play on the

surface of the tumultuous water and reeds grow up the sides of the slippery granite. Swinging lianas wind themselves around the huge trees as the sun shines through the canopy, sprinkling light over the undergrowth. You breathe in the fresh air... and are you not glad to be alive?

Imagine standing on the highest point in the world and looking at the incredible view, knowing that all this is yours, all this land, all this life, all this love...

Imagine all the children waiting to be conceived, they don't yet know what a beautiful world you are about to leave. Do you think it's fair for them? To know that you'd rather die, to throw away the life that you have not yet lived? They wait and wait wishing to enter this world, wanting to be part of this eternity.

*Dedicated to Dylan Little
and Daniel Ford-Learner*

By **Emily Byrnes-Muchow**
Year 9, Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School
WARRANWOOD – VIC.

Always

THE cool breeze feels good against my feverish skin; the sand between my toes feels itchy. The wind picks up and I shiver. Soon I would not feel the itch of the sand or the bite of the cold. Soon, soon... I dip my feet in the warm water and watch as it washes over my ankle. I go deeper and deeper until it's lapping at my chest. I lose my footing and slide into the black depths. The water closes over my head, leaving no trace. I smile, I'm not worried, it's all going perfectly to plan. There is a pain in my chest, I can feel my stomach tightening and little bubbles start floating up to the surface. The pain is unbearable now but I must endure. It will all be over soon.

And then it is.

I slowly open my eyes, the daydream still vivid in my mind. I sigh, if only it were real. I don't have a death wish but when you collapse because of a deadly disease and death is slowly creeping up on you, that's when you wish it could end.

It never occurred to me what was going to happen. I guess when my parents died; I thought that lightning never struck in the same place twice. I made friends instantly in the orphanage; at least I thought they were friends. While the disease was maturing within me I started getting the symptoms of chronic leukaemia, I wish I had known then. I would get tired very fast, sometimes staying in my bed all day. I had fevers for weeks and then a week before I collapsed I bruised my feet just by walking. The weight I lost was amazing, when I got to the hospital I had gone from 45kg to 36kg; I am 13 so was already skinny.

My carer knew I was sick but not THAT sick, she took off when she saw the cost. Luckily, I was taken in and paid for by a charity for Kids without a Cure. I was heartbroken when the doctors said I had chronic leukaemia. My bad luck continued as there is presently no cure and only two in a hundred kids get it. I could live if I wanted to, if there was something worth

fighting for, to live for. But there's not, and I won't. The doctors know it. I know it.

I'm going to die.

Colin was in a world of pain; his body was wracked with spasms. He was coughing up blood and he wished someone was there with him, holding his hand. But there was no-one, there never had been. Mercifully, darkness overwhelmed him and he slowly sank into unconsciousness. Colin had been shot. Just below the heart, it had ripped straight through him, puncturing no bone and just grazing a lung. He had fainted from shock and was rushed to hospital by a neighbour. The operation he had just awakened from would be the decider if he lived or died. The doctor and two nurses strode calmly in. "Colin, the operation was a success! You're going to live! But you will need more surgery and will have to stay for at least five more weeks. You are free to walk around the hospital tomorrow, today rest." And with that he walked out. For the whole day Colin stayed in bed, gathering his strength for tomorrow. He closed his eyes and slept, he dreamt of a girl, in a hospital bed staring with grey, soulless eyes at death's hooded form. She did not even cry out as her soul was sucked from her into the open mouth. Colin gasped but could do nothing...

I woke and smothered a scream. I'd had the dream again, the one where I was paralysed while death leached my soul away from me. I tried to calm my fluttering heart, but it was no use, I was so scared. I kept having those dreams, when would they stop? I sat up and waited for my head to stop spinning. I wanted company, anyone, so I told myself that the next person who passed I would talk to. Was it coincidence that Colin happened to walk past? Was it coincidence that he was friendly and talkative? I don't think so, when Colin walked in there was something in his eyes. A sort of, flicker of recognition and then he asked if I had dreams. I don't know why he asked but I'm glad he did, I needed someone to open up to, to confess to.

Colin was surprised when the girl called to him from her bed. He had walked in and looked at her; he had known instantly that it was the girl he had dreamt of. He had an urge to protect her from the dreams so talked with her for awhile. Colin came to me every day, we talked and laughed and joked. Everyday I felt stronger and never had I wanted to live more. I recovered from my disease, not fully but it did not grow any more. I waited expectantly even impatiently for Colin's visits but one day he didn't come. At first I thought he was late but the day wore on and he did not appear. I was close to despair and already in tears. I reasoned with myself that he was probably not feeling well; I mean he WAS shot. Two days went by and Colin was not there, I felt my strength fail and I grew worse and worse without the need to live. A week went by but I sat, still hoping he would through that door but he didn't and I grew tired and closed my eyes. I never woke up.

Colin rushed into the girl's room but an old man was lying in the bed instead. He had had the surgery and was told not to get out of the bed for a week. He was so worried for the girl's life was in his hands; he was the thing keeping her alive. He ran over to a nurse, "Excuse me? Where is the girl who was in this room, the one with leukaemia?" The nurse looked at him with sad eyes and his heart sank. "I'm sorry, she died yesterday. She just gave up; it's a shame to be a nurse. I think I'll quit, see too many things happen that shouldn't have happened." She wandered off, Colin walked out of the room. He was the reason she had died; the girl, Askari, she had the nicest smile. Did, he thought sadly.

A month later, a child went missing, a boy of 14. Apparently his name was Colin. The boy **had** dug a grave, scratched into it was this: Askari, a girl who should have lived, someone who should have been loved. A friend, a companion and daughter. She will ALWAYS be remembered, ALWAYS her memory will make me smile and ALWAYS her death will make me cry. Not now or forever, but ALWAYS.

The End

By **Asha Bartlett**
Year 6,
Meridan State College
MERIDAN PLAINS – QLD.

The break of dawn paints a soft, pale blue sky
 The stars twinkle out in the blink of an eye,
 The flowers open up with a welcome embrace
 Honeyeaters flutter and dance with such beautiful grace.

The sun reaches its zenith, beating down on a parched landscape
 The heat rises in waves resembling ripples through a flowing silk drape,
 A geyser froths and gurgles barely containing its furor
 With a burst of surging water it blasts an almighty roar.

The afternoon sun casts shadows over rolling sand dunes
 Rolling and clearing our minds like sweet, pleasant tunes,
 A gentle zephyr whispers through a lush vibrant forest
 As the day becomes calm, unsuspecting and modest.

Dusk brings with it dark, dull grey skies
 "The calm before the storm" an old sea dog cries,
 As beads of raindrops tumble from the heavens up high
 The sky opens up with an extraordinary cry.

Thunder reverberates through the wild, thrashing sea
 Rumbles through the leaves of an ancient oak tree,
 It rocks in a gale, swaying to and fro
 As the lightning arouses with a spectacular light show.

Then all too soon the storm comes to a halt
 The wind is replaced with a waft of sea salt,
 The clouds have parted to reveal the stars so bright
 With a dimly lit moon on a gelid winter's night.

The break of dawn paints a soft, pale blue sky
 The stars twinkle out in the blink of an eye,
 Our ever changing planet continues on its way
 To create a world of wonder from the break of dawn each day.

The Break of Dawn

By **Adrian Harper-Gomm**
 Year 8, Kambrya College
 BERWICK – VIC.
 Teacher: Mrs Odile Oliver

POISED to strike, his eyes full of fear,
 pleading. To turn a friend as kind
 and as faithful as this is the worst of
 all crimes and to do it as a means of food.
 He attacks as I do and for split second we
 are airborne before teeth sink in to fur and
 a stream of blood trickles to the ground.
 Wounded now, he has only to strike one
 fatal blow and he will have won. No, he is
 backing down. He does not wish to fight. I
 lunge. Eyes, once full of expression, lifeless
 as a fallen leaf. I have won, but only because
 I was too proud and too scared for my
 life to stop. I have killed a friend. Broken
 inside, my heart has shattered, only he can
 mend it, but he is gone.

And the grass rustles and the trees whisper
 the words:

Gone, gone, gone.

By **Katy Newell**
 Year 7, Western Heights College
 HERNE HILL – VIC.

DOG FIGHT

the human mind we observe
 much greater than the

May 2011

FIRE



THE morning bird sings a sorrowful song, and wakes the abandoned kitten resting in the snow from a pillaged sleep the night before.

The kitten will grow accustomed to this order of dawn and dusk as it grows into a strong and handsome tom cat.

This cat will be rough from growing on the streets and may never be loved, the tom knows this.

But one night it will stumble upon a kind young girl who will give it milk and warmth by the fire she sat at.

Thus making the old tom's heart spark and glow like the soft warm glow of the embers in the little girl's fire.

By Lilli Allan-Moon

Year 6, Vistara Primary School

RICHMOND HILL VIA LISMORE – NSW

Teacher: Tara MacPhail and Leah Bryce

Magic Quest

WOW, what an adventure! I went to another universe where I was the chosen one and had to save them all. Here's what happened to me from ordinary child, to magical powered wizard.

I got grabbed into the other universe and was in an office, no ordinary one, a magical office with glowing skeletons; see through future balls, levitating objects and an old man wearing robes. I asked the old man where I was and he just replied by showing me to a lobby of some sort? So I sat down and he told me that I was the Wizard City's last hope! So he showed me to the schools of fire, ice, storm, myth, life and death. He asked me which would best suit me and I thought I would work with

storm, then I found out my teacher was a frog! So he taught three spells that are called thunder snake, lightning bats and even storm shark!

The old man told me his name was headmaster Ambrose and that I had to defeat the six beasts of Wizard City! They were Rattle Bones the Doom Skeleton, General Achilles, the Giant Cyclops, Kruk the Storm Kraken, Lady Oriel the evil Seraph, Prince Kook the fire elf and Freeze the Ice Colossus. I didn't know where to start! Then he said to attack Prince Kook the fire elf, I packed some food went on my way. Then I looked in my bag and found a magic map that showed me the way so I left on the right track. Look out beasts, I'm going to find and destroy you!

The map said to go to the palace in Fire Cat Alley and then the throne room, easy!

Then I saw why nobody had ever made it to the palace, there were so many magma men and evil fire elves! Well I had to save Wizard City, so I snuck between the alleys of houses then

I got into a battle with a magma man! His turn was first, he used the fire bat's spell. WOP, ow! Now it's my turn so I take out my storm shark card, throw it on the ground, and POW!!! The shark wopped him right in the face! Next to the palace!

By Luke Harrison

Year 6, Marymount Primary School

BURLEIGH WATERS – QLD.

Teacher: Mrs Una Deem



"LEUKAEMIA, Juliet, leukaemia. That's why I've been avoiding you, avoiding everyone, actually. You happy now?"

I let Tyler's words slap me round the face and punch me in the gut while I came up with an answer.

"No, Ty, of course I'm not happy, but..." but I found my knees sinking to the grass and Tyler's thin hands gripping my shoulders as he lowered himself down with me.

"I'm sorry Jules, I'm so sorry..." he comforted me.

I flicked the hair and tears out of my eyes and said "No Ty, please don't apologise".

I picked up his thin hands, his sick hands, in my own. Leukaemia. Abnormal blood cells. Does something to your bone marrow.

"Have you had a bone marrow transplant yet?" I asked, my curiosity getting the better of me. Tyler looked down at our hands.

"Yep."

"Does it hurt?" Tyler gave one sarcastic laugh through his nose.

"Like hell." I stood and pulled Tyler with me, then gave him a huge bear hug.

"You can tell me stuff, you know."

"I know."

"Good."

"Um, Jules? I'm going into hospital tomorrow."

"Ah." Of course.

"Can I ask you a favour?"

"Yeah, sure."

"Look after my mum."

"I'll look after your mum, Ty." I could tell he was stressing. Tyler and his mum, that's a relationship to reckon with.

Tyler squeezed my fingers in his thin hands, and then he was striding off across the park, with a little less spring in his step than I always remembered him.

THIN HANDS

I won't go into much detail of what happened in school from that day, because nothing really did. I walked to classes. I sat and ate during break. But after school the next day, instead of walking home, I took a bus to the hospital. I walked through to the reception desk and asked the lady where Tyler McMahon's room was.

When I walked in, Laurel, Tyler's mum, was cross-stitching, but her eyes were continually darting back and forward to Tyler. Tyler himself was lying in bed watching TV.

I went over and gave Laurel the obligatory hug, then planted myself in the chair by the bed. He put his thin hand on my knee. I lent down to give him a quick, gentle kiss.

"You know those little moments of romance where you know just what to say?" he asked. "I'm not having one. And that came out wrong."

I laughed. "I got it."

He glanced at my school bag. "So", he raised his eyebrows, "what thrilling, inspiring, enriching and generally educational activities have you got in there?"

"Ah, well..."

That is how the rest of the week continued: Tyler and I talking away quietly over my homework. There were even a couple of days where Tyler felt cheery enough to have a joke with the nurses. He even got a laugh out of a couple of the older ones.

Each day I would come back home to dinner with mum and dad, who never quite knew what to say, which was fine with me. I'm sure that if I had really spoken to anyone about the possibilities of the situation I would have had a psychotic episode. That is how on edge I was. Luckily, I didn't tip.

The next week, when I got to Tyler's room, Laurel, who had been sitting outside, stopped me from going in.

"Juliet. We've been given a choice." Oh, please, no.

We sat on the bench in the hall. "What... I mean..."

"He can either have three months without chemo or nine months with chemo." I could see her breaking inside.

"Oh my God, Laurel. I'm so sorry." I gave her a hug and let her cry on my shoulder.

Tyler chose quality instead of quantity, and came home. So I went to his house every day instead of the hospital. As well as homework, we read books, magazines, and newspapers, we watched movies and TV shows until Tyler fell asleep.

All this sounds quite happy, and really it was, but nothing we did could hide the huge, dark, ominous cloud hanging over and around all of us.

One Sunday morning, when I entered the McMahon house, I saw Laurel lying on her back in the middle of the lounge room. Pain etched into her face by tears. I knew what had happened, so I lay with her. Not crying, just holding. Holding the shaking body of a broken mother.

I looked up and saw the telephone on the coffee table and knew what I had to do. I lay there for an hour finding out who to call and making arrangements for the body to be picked up. The body. Tyler's body.

For the first time that day, I went to Tyler's room. I pushed open the door and saw Tyler's white hands, thin hands. I couldn't take much more, so as soon as Laurel's sister arrived, I left.

I got straight in the shower and sat there for an age, with the hot water pounding down my back and cried, good and hard until my eyes were so dry, they hurt. I managed to find my way to my bed and slept. I missed the funeral.

Sleep. I can't decide if I love it or hate it, because every time I close my eyes I see those thin hands.

By **Elkin Meleng**
Year 8,
Bunbury Cathedral
Grammar School
GELORUP - WA



Interview with Author Michael Salmon

Oz Kids

Your story is inspirational as one of the first Aussie picture-book author/artists to have a television series. Can you tell us how this came about?

Tell us about your journey to becoming a picture book author. What dips and glides did you have along the way? Tell us about the character Alexander Bunyip.

Michael

I started 'the career' at 18, the early days (1967/68) of vaguely making a living from drawing cartoons, painting, exhibiting art works. I then joined the famous 'Tintookies' Marionette Troupe (part of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, Sydney: a little sister company to the Aust Ballet, Aust Opera) as a trainee Stage Manager/Designer. Loved every moment of this immersion in children's theatre and decided that entertaining young people was for me!

In 1972 whilst living in Canberra, I decided to self-publish 'a book' (no thoughts of offering it to a Publisher). It was a very amateur, 'underground' attempt at a children's book with very obvious, unsubtle,

social comment undertones called *The Monster that ate Canberra*.

I wrote and illustrated it and had it printed locally.

Then I drove around to the ACT Bookshops and Newsagents, offering it for sale (to some very mixed receptions!).

The book featured a large, hungry bunyip named Alexander who was forced to move from his polluted billabong and find a new home. This new home happened to be Lake Burley Griffin. He saw the iconic buildings dotted around the foreshores as objects of food and started eating them ... much to the horror of the populace and Prime Minister!

The book title became an 'in-joke' around the Nation's Capital... 'The Monster' was indeed the Public Service in disguise!

The local ABC-TV 'pod' saw potential in the character and forwarded it to Sydney HQ for consideration. The rest 'is history'.

Alexander Bunyip became an afternoon institution on national television for a decade (1978-88) in various formats. The most successful one being Alexander Bunyip's Billabong. This featured little Aussie animal puppet characters based on the Golden Press books/Australian Women's Weekly half page that I was producing at the time.

Much merchandising ensued, lots of publicity and exposure.

In 2004 The National Capital Authority produced an official 'Government' version of the original book for visitors to Canberra (complete with our National Coat of Arms!) and in 2009 a bronze statue of 'The Bunyip' was commissioned



by the ACT Chief Minister & ACT Minister for Education. The statue was unveiled at Easter this year and stands outside the new 'state of the art' Public Library in Gungahlin, ACT. A tribute to the book's role in helping one and a half generations of Canberra kids to read over the past 39 years.

Oz Kids

How important were your live appearances and how important is it to continue to make them?

Michael

I've been visiting Aussie Schools since 1972 (professionally since 1975).

These school visits and author signings have become a major part of my business and take up most of each year.

Lots of travel and laughter, as I present what are basically hourly sessions of quick sketches, stand up comedy and gentle motivation... to fully mixed age groups of primary school audiences.

Oz Kids

Do you think things like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are the most important thing today to gain recognition?

Michael

Well they certainly help, that's for sure. They have become an essential part of modern day communication. Mind you, I observe (out there in IT land) that sometimes it's hard to draw the line between what may be considered interesting information and what is wholly, over-the-top, boring, unrealistic self-promotion.

Oz Kids

Did you have any control over the scripts on the TV show?



Did you have to do any screenwriting for it? If not, how was your screenwriter chosen?

Michael

I was involved here and there in the program ideas, but I was mostly busy doing other things apart from the TV Show (new books, theatre designing etc.). The ABC recreated the illustrations from my Bunyip books as the TV set.

Oz Kids

Can you give any tips on getting into TV animation today?

Michael

The Entertainment Industry is one of the hardest businesses to crack into. 'Contacts'

are about 95% of the game! But never give up!!

Oz Kids

What are the themes running through your work?

Michael

Fun, laughter, theatrical... bright, bold illustrations, silly plot situations!

Oz Kids

Tell us about your latest book, *Bobo my Superdog*.

Michael

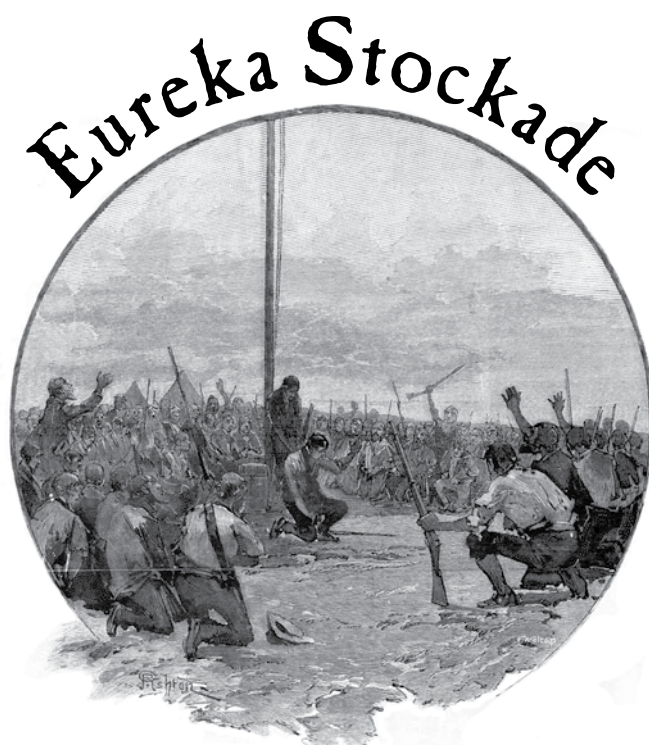
Bobo is my 162nd book. It features my very spoiled Shichon (Shih Tzu/Bichon Frise cross), an extremely pampered pooch...

so much so that I decided to write a book about him!

Bobo appears to be like any other annoying, yappy little white and fluffy lap-dog... but he indeed has another life: he is a dog with super powers: Super-Bo's kennel is in fact an Operations HQ with screens, monitors, and lots of buttons to press. (He wears a mask so that he won't be recognised and an old striped beach towel as a cape.)

Super-Bo is often called away to help when danger threatens... But... he's always back in time for dinner!

www.michaelsalmon.com.au



ADMINISTERING THE OATH, EUREKA STOCKADE, 1854.

Many people have been and gone,
That is from the place where gold was worn,
Quite a few struck it rich, and left a wealthy man,
But soon all of this changed
and the Eureka Stockade began.

The miners were all frustrated,
With the troopers they all hated,
They pestered them every day,
Looking to see if the rules were obeyed.

But the troopers went too far,
And soon burnt was Bentley's bar,
James Scobie's death had lead to this,
What a rough and brutal event to miss.

The day commenced on December the third,
Nothing was in sight, not even a single bird,
But on the other side of the small picket fence,
Stood the troopers staring, ready in defence.

The fight began, the time was here,
People were killed, it deafened the ear,
In the background stood the flag,
It flew around like an old dish rag.

The day did come to an end,
People stared in shock, they'd lost a friend.
Everyone was lying on the ground,
This all happened where gold was found.

As the days passed on by,
People were leaving with tears in their eyes.
Was this war needed to fix the situation?
Many thought not and left in devastation.

Now everything had finished and it was the end,
We look back and think there should've been a hand to lend,
But now it is too late and what's done is done,
Everything has happened, down goes the sun.

Things did change after this slight war,
Miners got their way, changed was the law,
Introduced were the miners' rights,
So out went the permits, no more fights.

And at the setting of the bright sun,
One said the fight was lost, but the battle was won.
Now freedom flowed in like a flood,
The dusty ground covered in blood.

By **Grace Barelier**
Year 6, Huntingtower School
MT WAVERLEY – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Margaret Jones

The Mystery of the Missing Jewels

CHAPTER ONE

"Hey look Sam", said Jordan, taking a seat on the train. "All of Queen Elizabeth's gold and all of her jewels have been stolen during the night. There was over twenty million dollars worth of valuables stolen."

"Really?" asked Sam and Anne together, looking up from their books.

"Yes", said Jordan. "It says here that they were stolen at about one o'clock this morning and there is not a trace of the robber."

"Ooh, this sounds exciting", said Sam.

Sam was eleven years old and had a very mischievous nature. He had played a number of successful tricks on his teachers at school, but this was easy, as he went to an all boys boarding school. Sam had dark brown hair and shining blue eyes. He had a great personality and was very enjoyable to be with.

Anne was Sam's sister and a very beautiful young girl, with blonde hair to her shoulders. Anne was ten years old and a very honest girl. She might be shy, but Anne was always helping people.

Now we come to Jack, well Jack was a son to be proud of. Aged thirteen, Jack was a very smart and good looking boy. He had blonde hair and twinkling blue eyes, just like his younger brother.

CHAPTER TWO

Jack, Sam and Anne were on their way to their cousin's house near the beach. Their cousin's name was Melisande. They had met her when she was a little girl, and they remembered her clearly as an obnoxious child with a wild nature and a fiery temper. She had long blonde hair, which hung halfway down her back, brown eyes, and very pale skin. She was now probably twelve years old, and still closed up and rude.

Jack was reading the paper and Sam and Anne were reading their books.

"Jack, it's almost lunchtime, can we have our lunch now?" asked Anne, putting her book down.

"All right, I'm getting a bit hungry myself, but I know that Aunt Linnie will have some delicious food for us when we get there, so why don't we wait a bit longer."

"I'm really hungry though. Come on, open up the basket", said Anne impatiently.

"All right", said Jack, opening the basket.

"Wow Anne, you sure packed a lot of food", said Sam, looking over Jack's shoulder, into the basket.

"Look at this; sandwiches, chocolate, strawberries, ginger beer, lemonade and even jacket potatoes with butter! This is absolutely smashing!" exclaimed Jack, and Anne glowed at this praise.

They ate hungrily and when they had finished, there was not one piece of food remaining.

"I feel like a sleep, goodnight you two", said Anne with a yawn.

"Anne, you can't go to sleep now", said Jack.

"Why not?" asked Anne, snuggling down in her seat and giving a yawn.

"Because we're nearly there!" said Sam.

"Oh, okay", said Anne, sitting up.

Just at that moment, the train bell sounded and startled the three children. They jumped up in fright and Sam said "Why do they make them so loud?"

"So everyone can hear them, silly!" said Anne.

"Still, they're too loud", said Sam obstinately.

"Well—" began Anne, but Jack interrupted them.

"Don't start quarrelling you two" he said. Then the driver called to them, "Hey, you kids, are you getting off here? If so, buck up".

"Sorry sir, getting off just now", said Jack politely. Anne looked around the train one last time, to make sure they hadn't left anything behind, when suddenly she received a very fierce look from the train driver and she jumped off the train quickly. They couldn't see Aunt Linnie yet, so Jack suggested they go into the Ice Cream shop near the ticket booth, and get a double scoop ice cream



for them all. The others thought this a fabulous idea, and followed Jack eagerly into the ice cream shop, where they came across Aunt Linnie and Melisande.

CHAPTER THREE

"Aunt Linnie, Melisande, what are you doing here?" asked Sam.

"I was just about to ask you the exact same thing", replied Aunt Linnie. "I thought your train came in at nine."

"It did, it is exactly nine o'clock now", said Anne.

"Oh, my watch must be slow", said Aunt Linnie, "Sorry I wasn't there to see you. How about I treat you all to a triple scoop ice cream; vanilla, chocolate and strawberry, what do you think of that?" All the children agreed heartily to this.

"That's not fair", said Melisande. "I only got a double."

"Well that's quite enough for you. These three have had a very long journey and need a good dose of ice cream", said Aunt Linnie cheerfully. Melisande just grunted.

After they had finished their ice cream, while Aunt Linnie was paying, the four children waited outside. The three who had come on the train, tried their best to make conversation with Melisande, but it was a very hard task, and eventually they gave up.

★ ★ ★

"Ow!" yelled Anne and Melisande. "Be more careful next time."

"I'll be as rough as I like, thank you missy", said a gruff voice. "And you two boys, shut up and stop talking, you'll attract attention to yourselves. And if you're not quiet—" The man was interrupted mid sentence by another man.

"Leave the fools alone", said the other man. "Now, if you kids play up any, I've got a great belt with a huge buckle, and if you don't behave yourselves, you'll be sorry."

"I demand food right now!" yelled Sam, angry that he was that foolish enough to be kidnapped by some villains.

"All you'll be gettin' is bread an' water, if you're lucky", said the man with the gruff voice.

"The girls will cook and clean well, and if you two boys will help us with some, uh, business. The boys will get two pieces o' bread and a glass a water each day, if your work is up to our standard, if not, nothing. As for the girls, one piece o' bread and half a glass o' water, if they keeps this place tidy."

"Wait, that's not fair!" shouted Melisande in protest. "We're just as equal as a boy."

"No way are ya, you're obviously complete idiots, and what these boys are gonna be doin' is not by far equal to what you'll be doin'."

"Come on now", said the other man. "We've gotta get goin'. Boys, you'll be needed in about half an hour. Girls, start now, I want this room looking spotless, or it's the belt buckle for you."

No one dared to speak. They just let the men walk out of the room, and then they had a group discussion.

What were they going to do?

CHAPTER FOUR

After their group discussion, Anne and Melisande set to work. They certainly made everything sparkle! By the time the two men came back, Anne and Melisande had finished.

"You're very lucky", said the first man.

"Now come on you boys, time for you to get to work", said the other man.

"Um, what sort of work will we, er, be doing?" asked Sam.

"Just some, ah, certain, stuff", said the second man. The men led the two boys out of the room, and down into the basement. When Jack and Sam entered, they were amazed. Queen Elizabeth's gold, and her jewels were down there. Sam and Jack had many questions to ask, but they kept quiet.

"Now, what we need to do 'ere, is to move all this stuff into—"

"STOP!" yelled the other man. "We need to make sure that they won't leak to the goody-goody Bobbies about us", said the second man to the first man, pointing to the boys.

"If you leak to the ol' Bobbies about us, look out!" said the first man.

"We would never do such a thing!" answered Jack with an innocent look on his pale face.

"Right, time to get on with things", the first man continued. "We need to move all these things down to a little hollow on the beach. Call the girls to keep watch, and tell 'em to keep their mouths shut, or who knows what'll happen", the man said, with a nasty glint in his eye.

★ ★ ★

"We need to find them", shouted Aunt Linnie frantically to Uncle David. "They weren't here one minute before I lost them. We need to ring the police!"

"It's all right darling, they'll turn up soon", Uncle David reassured Aunt Linnie. "They're probably just playing a silly game with us, there's no need to ring the police just yet."

"All right", said Aunt Linnie reluctantly.

CHAPTER FIVE

The two boys roused up the two girls, and while the men were having a private talk, the devised a plan to escape!

"Get down 'ere now, you lazy sods", called the first man menacingly.

"Coming", called Sam, trying his best to sound polite, so the men wouldn't fire up.

They all trooped down the stairs, scared and excited. They met the men at the bottom of the stairs, and they set off, down a secret passage at the back of the house. They came out at the very deserted and desolate part of the beach, where nobody ever dared to go, because of some certain rumours about collapsing sand.

"Now", said the second man, "All you 'ave

Continued on page 32

Continued from page 31

to do, is jump on this patch of sand here, and you will find yourself in a little stone room”.

The children jumped in, one-by-one.

“Er, we’ll be down in a sec”, said the first man. Then after a minute or two, the children heard footsteps! The men had run off, and had left them in the room with all the valuables.

“Just as I suspected”, said Anne, “they made a run for it”.

“Don’t worry”, said Melisande, “I brought the rope ladder with me”.

“Good”, said Sam and Jack.

“Now what we need to do, is fling the rope ladder up through the hole, and climb up, carrying some of these boxes and bags”, said Jack.

So they set to work, carrying, climbing and stacking. After about an hour, they had everything out, and they were ready to set off. They were going to take all the things to the police station, and then ring Aunt Linnie and Uncle David from there.

When they got to the police station, weighed down with boxes, crates and bags, who were waiting at the front desk, but Aunt Linnie and Uncle David!

“Children, where have you been? And, oh, what are you carrying, here, let me help you.” Aunt Jenni and Uncle David helped the children with the boxes they were carrying, then the children were questioned by the police. They told the police everything, from start to finish.

“Ebenezer and Neville are a bad lot”, said the inspector. “We’ve been trying to catch them for a while now”, he continued. “Do you have any idea where they might be?”

“No, they didn’t tell us anything”, replied Sam.

“That’s all right”, said the inspector. “We’ll get some police to help you unload the rest of it.”

CHAPTER SIX

Whilst they were unloading the rest of the valuables into a police car, Melisande spotted a torn bit of paper out of the corner of her eye.

“What’s this?” asked Melisande.

“Let me have a look”, said Anne, coming out of the hole, with a string of pearls round her neck! “Look, it reads 117 Hembercombe Rd, Westington.”

“I know where that is”, said the burly inspector. “That’s a likely meeting place for those two. I’m going there now, Peter, James and Mat, you three come with me, the rest of you can continue loading the things in.”

“Can we come?” chorused the children.

“I’m afraid not”, said the inspector, “this isn’t for young eyes to see”.

The children never knew what went on between the police and the men that day, but what they were told, was that the men are jailed for life, and they will never see them again. As for the valuables, they would be sent back to Queen Elizabeth.

“And as a reward”, the inspector told the children “the Queen has requested that you four are to stay with her for a few days, to show how grateful she is of you returning them to her”.

“Yoo-hoo!” shouted the children, dancing around in circles of happiness.

Two days later, the children were flown over to meet the Queen, and enjoy her luxuries for four nights. On arrival, the Queen informed them that they were allowed to have anything that they wished; pearls, sundaes, piles of macaroons and humbugs, rubies, diamonds, cards...

This had turned out to be the best holiday ever! Nobody at school would ever believe their tale!

THE END

By **Hannah Sutton**
Year 6, St. Mary’s College
HOBART – TAS.
Teacher: Mrs. Clark

THE WAR

A vicious howl,
And an angry roar,
The wind and the rain,
Are fighting a war.

Screaming, the wind,
Cuts through the rain,
Uprooting the trees,
Like that’s perfectly sane.

She rams into houses,
And tangles your hair,
She sprints through the lanes,
You’d forgotten were there.

She opens her mouth,
And howls to the moon,
An embarrassing array,
Of unpleasant tunes.

Then blasted from heaven,
Ferocious as ice,
The rain sends her army,
Without thinking twice.

Aimed for the wind,
That charges below,
She fires continuous,
Blow after blow.

Drowning the lawns,
And punching the leaves,
Soaking the washing,
Battering the eaves.

The bikes will be rusted,
The cats run away,
The dog whimpers loudly,
We shout as we pray.

“Please stop the wind,
She’s a merciless soul.
Please stop the rain,
’fore the world turns to mould.

“Send us some sunshine,
This war it must end,
Show us a rainbow,
And the damage will mend.”

By **Annic Savill**
Year 8, Pymble Ladies’ College
PYMBLE – NSW

THE HEROIC SUPER COMPUTER!

IT IS the year 3030 in Melbourne. Everybody relies on electronic devices to perform daily activities. Mr Blue uses a hovercraft to get to work. Mrs Green uses a robot to water her plants. Little Alfred reads his e-book every day at school. It is a device that stores every book ever written. As you can see, people have come to rely on technology in the year 3030 a lot!

There is just one big problem... Melbourne has been hit with the worst heatwave over the last ten days. The heatwave has caused all electronic devices to stop working. The power failure has caused widespread panic as people cannot communicate on their phones or by email. Lights in the city, including traffic lights, are not working and there are many other problems!

The people of Melbourne have relied on digital technology for the past 1500 years. There are not many activities that Melbournians do that don't involve technology. Therefore, this could be the end of the world as they know it!!!!!!

There is one small hope... This small hope lives amongst the clouds in a little power house. IT IS SUPER COMPUTER.

Long ago, Super Computer was a human. One very unfortunate day he was electrocuted by a computer, forever changing his head into a computer. Super Computer accidentally downloaded some super power data. As a result he can now fly and use his superhuman strength to pick up anything. Super Computer can do anything, but his only weakness is that he has a limited amount of power. If he doesn't charge regularly, he shuts down completely.

Super Computer is hatching a plan to restore power to the city of Melbourne. He knows he has got the strength to save the city, but he is scared that his own power supply will fail him. Super Computer's plan is a very dangerous mission. He plans to fly to Antarctica to collect ice crystals from the glaciers. He then plans to return to Melbourne and drop all the ice crystals into the main air-conditioning vents of the city.

Super Computer sets off on his journey, despite his fear of losing power. Along the way he realises that when he flies in

freezing weather he uses a lot more battery power than he expected. He sees the edge of Antarctica when his emergency light begins to flash showing that he is on his last bar of power. With great panic, he comes crashing down onto the freezing ice of Antarctica.

As Super Computer is about to crash, he has a brainwave. What if he can just reach the shining ice crystals sticking out of the crevasse in the glacier below to regain power? On impulse, he extends his arm to grab some ice crystals, puts them into his emergency hatch and immediately a bar of power is restored. The return of some power makes him glide safely away from the crevasse and onto some stable ice. He grabs some more ice crystals to regain full power so that he can successfully complete his mission. Super Computer then collects as many ice crystals as possible to take back to Melbourne.

This time, Super Computer has no complications on his trip back to Melbourne. As soon as he gets to Melbourne, he flies around all the main air-conditioning vents in the city. In each one, he drops one ice crystal. As quick as lightning, fresh cold air begins to circulate around Melbourne. The temperature drops from a sizzling 62.1 degrees to a perfect 23!

As a result things begin to work again. Mr Blue's hovercraft starts up to his delight. Mrs Green's robot starts to water her almost dead plants in her garden. Little Alfred's e-book turns itself on and flicks through many books before stopping at a book about Antarctica. Little Alfred is puzzled by the e-book's choice of books but happily starts to read. Little Alfred learnt one or two things about Antarctica that day.

The people of Melbourne publicly praised Super Computer for his heroic efforts to go all the way to Antarctica for ice crystals to save the world! Melbournians decided to build him a super computer

dog to keep him company up in his power house. They also decided to build him more battery power. From that day on, Melbourne had no more heat waves because of the ice crystals and because of Super Computer's heroism... Even though he could do it all over again if he had to!!

THE END

By **Luke Kenny**

Year 4, St. Therese's Catholic College
ESSENDON - VIC.

Teacher: Lisa Mancarella
(Private Tutor)





Adoni

ADONI was a strong little boy. Since the age of 6 he had wanted to go hunting with his father but the tribe agreed that he was too young to go. As an aboriginal boy he was only allowed to go hunting at the age of eleven. Adoni watched and learned from his father for five years. But finally it was his turn to have a go. While all the women went to go gather some bush food, Adoni went looking for kangaroos with his father and grandfather.

Adoni had been walking for hours until he caught a glimpse of a kangaroo. He called his father and told him he had seen a kangaroo. His father put his hand on Adoni's right shoulder and said "Good work Adoni". Adoni got low and crept up to the kangaroo. Adoni counted to three in his head. 1,2,3. "ARGHHHHHH!" he screamed. As he jumped up, he threw the spear with such force and he got the kangaroo. Adoni went home very proud. They cooked the kangaroo and celebrated.

Two days after he went hunting again. When he was walking a white man came out from behind the tree and took Adoni. There was nothing Adoni's father could do. The white man had been holding a gun. After the white man left, Adoni's father went back to the tribe. Adoni's mother had asked where he was, so his father told her. Adoni's mother dropped to her knees and began to cry "WHY WHY MUST THEY

TAKE OUR CHILDREN?" she screamed out loud.

While all of that was happening Adoni was living with a white man. They made him put on pants, t-shirts and shoes. Adoni was not used to wearing all these clothes. All he thought about was being with his mother and father again. But it never happened. At night he looked up at the stars and thought about how he used to go hunting with his father. He also thought about how his mother used to kiss him every night.

Back at the tribe, every time his father went hunting and every time he had seen a kangaroo, he closed his eyes and thought about Adoni and the time he had gotten the kangaroo. His mother also missed kissing him every night. All they thought about was being with Adoni again.

Eventually Adoni's parents had died of old age. But Adoni still lived on. He thought about his parents every day.

Adoni now lives with his wonderful wife and two kids. Adoni has forgotten the Aboriginal ways. The way he lives now is nothing like the way he used to live.

THE END

By **Jason Da Costa Cunha**

Year 6, Good Samaritan Primary School

ROXBURGH PARK – VIC.

Teacher: Caroline Molloy

Which is more precious? Family or Gold?

Gold shines, yearned for and wanted.
 Family exists, taken for granted.
 Pure gold cannot stand alone,
 One cannot stand without family
 Gold's value falls and rises, A possession to be treasured,
 Family creates your values, you are their treasure.
 Gold is shaped and characterised by hands alone.
 Family carves your life and your character with devotion,
 Gold hangs lifeless to one's body,
 You cling to your family for survival; you fill their lives.
 Gold glimmers, a beacon of riches but redundant wealth.
 Family glistens, symbols of affection, of hope and belonging,
 Though gold's value may drop tomorrow,
 Your family will always value you.

By **Henrietta Chui**

Year 7, Ravenswood School for Girls

GORDON – NSW

Teacher: Sharon Shapiro



'BE FAIRLY warned. The red door is not to be touched or disturbed unless it is an emergency.'

I absorbed this light-heartedly. All Mr Hingleman ever said was to stay away from the red door. Nobody ever went there anyway, so why bother?

The rest of the day went over quickly, with Mr Hingleman's warnings every now and then. When the bell went, it was as if the spell over the class left the room. Everyone was up and running to their bags.

The rest of the students all went home in groups. I was the only one walking home alone.

I was a loner.

Nobody paid much attention to me. Except for Grubs and his gang. His tough gang. Nobody stood in their way. I couldn't even tell my parents. They would probably just say I was really anti-social, which was probably true.

I trudged home sullenly, knowing Grubs would probably pop out behind a tree or bush with his gang to harass me again.

I was right.

'So what should we do to him today, guys?' sneered the menacing looking Grubs. The others tried pathetically to look as tough and strong as he was, but nobody could be as terrible as Grubs.

'How about stealing his bag and dumping it in the river?' suggested one of the team.

'No way! We did that yesterday. We need to do something different', Grubs tutted disgustedly.

'The red door', suggested another one of his gang.

Grins slowly spread across his gang. Nobody had ever gone there. I would be the first.

Even Grubs was smirking, which was not often. That was enough approval for the rest of the gang. They hauled me onto their shoulders and marched back to school; to the red door. I knew that if I made one move, it would be fatal. They would bash me until I was mush. Maybe even more.

They frog-marched me into the school, and pulled me in front of the red door. I absorbed every detail of the door. It was worn, and looked like it hadn't been painted for years. But there was no denying it, it was red. The door knob was battered. In the corner of the door was a small sign I couldn't see. It probably said 'poisonous' or 'toxic'.

I decided that I would much rather get poisoned to death, than to get tortured to death by Grubs and his gang.

I hesitated before I tried turning the knob. Somebody poked me. Everybody seemed to be holding their breath.

And then I turned it.

It was locked.

A collected sigh rippled through the gang. Grubs stomped forward, and spat, 'You either get the door open, or we'll make your life hell for as long as we live.'

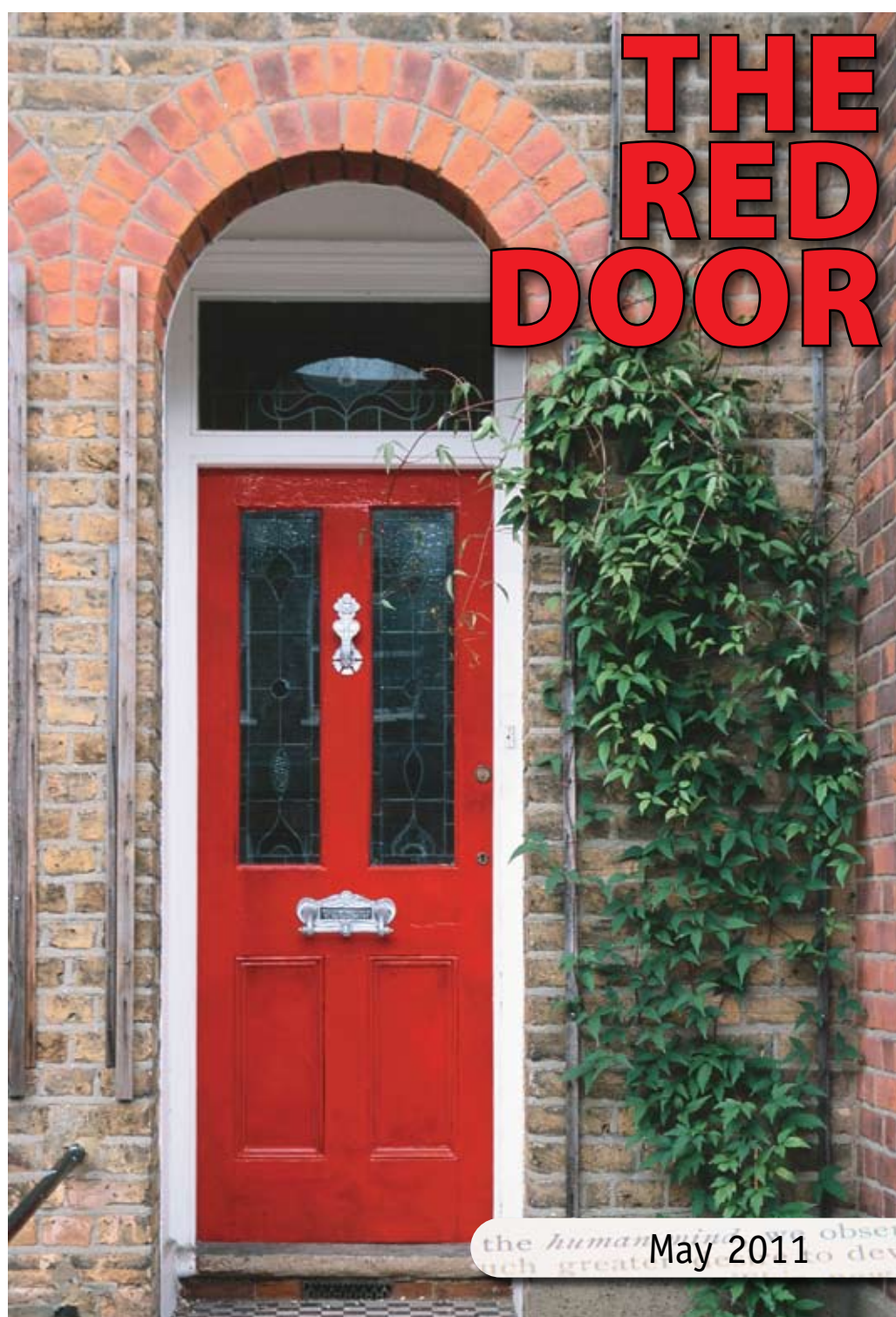
I nodded nervously. I tried turning again. It was still locked. Self-consciously, I knocked on the door. I don't know why, but I just did. It wouldn't help anyway.

The door turned.

It was Mr Hingleman's office.

By John Zhu

*Year 7, Melbourne Grammar School
SOUTH YARRA – VIC.*



THE UNWILLING JOURNEY

THE two boys crept through the forest near Catcott, a small English village.

"I-It's spooky here..." one whispered nervously.



"I heard that creepy monsters live here!" the other said, trying to sound brave.

Suddenly, laughter emanated from the dark trees.

"Who's there?" the boys cried in unison.

A small girl looked out from behind a tree.

"Who are you?" she asked, as something big, white, and feathery loomed up behind her.

"YAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!" the boys screamed, running away.

Angela blinked, then shrugged and continued picking blackberries, a few feathers drifting from her wings.

An hour later, Angela ran into her house, blackberries spilling from her basket.

"Watch the blackberries, they're spilling!" Ash warned from the couch, making fire dance on his fingers.

"Make sure you don't burn the house down", Angela replied sarcastically.

Angela put her basket on the kitchen bench, popping a few into her mouth.

"Nice work, Angela", Maddy called, walking into the kitchen, "We can eat those later".

Maddy walked over to the fruit bowl and fed some chunks of apple to her snakes.

Let me introduce you to the characters. Maddy, Angela, Catrina, Cody, Ash, and Lucas were what the rest of the world would call freaks, or mutants.

Maddy, like the Gorgon Medusa, had snakes for hair. Angela, who we have met, had large white wings, like a bird's, that she could fly on for about half an hour before landing. Catrina was a sort of Cat-Human hybrid, with cat ears, tail, claws and fur. Ash could create fire at will from his hands, without any help or flammables. Cody could understand any language in the world, even if it was made up. Lucas was a shape-shifter, by which if he saw an object and remembered it, he could transform into it any time he wanted later on.

The children had been part of a twisted experiment by a mad scientist, who used the DNA of human children and different animals to create mythical creatures. Then a few months before, they and some other mutants had managed to break out.

"Mmmmm, blackberries!" Lucas swooped over to the basket and plucked a few out. Catrina followed him in and did the same.

Slowly, the houses and fields turned to apartments and shops, and then to large buildings. The Hunter pulled in at the Kensington Zoo. A zookeeper was waiting there.

"We received your call, Mr. Thomson. Is what you say true?"

"Look in the back and see for yourself!" The Hunter said smugly.

The zookeeper looked through the bars of the cage.

"Don't eat too many, save some for later!" Maddy exclaimed.

"Oh, shush!" Lucas laughed.

One of Maddy's snakes hissed and swiped for Lucas's neck, who immediately turned into a Kookaburra and flew around the room, cackling.

"Could you keep it down a little? I'm trying to concentrate", Cody called from a corner, where he was looking a picture of the Rosetta Stone, trying to translate it. This sort of thing would happen every day with the six.

"Ugh, I'm going outside. It's much too noisy in here", Cody complained.

"We'll go too!" Catrina said, she and Lucas following Cody.

"That kind of defeats the purpose", Angela heard him grumble.

"Be back before it gets dark!" Maddy called.

James Thomson watched the three children emerge from the run-down old house. He was a hunter by trade, and had been watching the children for three days. But his wait was now over, and his prey was about to walk right into his trap.....



The house had only been quiet for a few minutes before Cody ran back inside, his eyes bugging out as if he had seen a ghost.

"Lucas and Catrina have been kidnapped!" he shouted.

They stood, horrified.

"What did you say?!?" Maddy shrieked.

"Cody, what exactly happened?" Ash asked, his skin pale.

"We were just outside, talking, and Catrina and Lucas were a little in front of me, then this huge cage dropped down from the trees and trapped them."

"Why didn't you get them out, you idiot?!" Maddy yelled at him.

"I couldn't! There was this crazy guy coming towards me, and the cage was too heavy to lift! Besides, Catrina and Lucas were yelling for me to get away."

Angela looked out the window.

"There's no guy there, but I can see the tracks of truck tyres on the ground."

Maddy clenched her fists.

"I'll be dead and buried before any of us live in a cage again!"

"But how would we be able to rescue them?" Ash asked, "It's four kids against who knows how many grow-ups."

"Yeah, and if he had a truck he could be anywhere by now. He could still be in Catcott or he could be as far as London. Or he might have taken the Eurostar and be in..."

"That's enough, Angela", Maddy said, "I don't think you could even have a huge cage in a train".

"We should follow the tracks, he can't have gone too far", Cody muttered, "And then if we see it I could recognise it".

"Then it's settled", Maddy declared, "We're going after Lucas and Catrina".

"Let me OUT OF HERE!" Lucas bellowed.

"Shut up, Lucas", Catrina muttered.

"Yeah, SHUT UP, Lucas", The Hunter sneered.

Suddenly Lucas went quiet, nudged Catrina and pointed out the back window of the truck.

Catrina's eyes widened as she saw the little white bird-like creature following them. Catrina then made a hand signal they had once worked out together that meant, "Where are the others?".

The Hunter saw her through the rear vision mirror and barked, "What do you think you're doing?!".

Angela must have seen the hand signal, though, because she replied with another signal.

"They're coming."

The Hunter covered up the back window.

"Good grief, it's true! That thing's like a hybrid or something! But what about this other one, the one you say is a shape-shifter?"

The zookeeper poked Lucas through the cage. Lucas transformed into a tiger and roared.

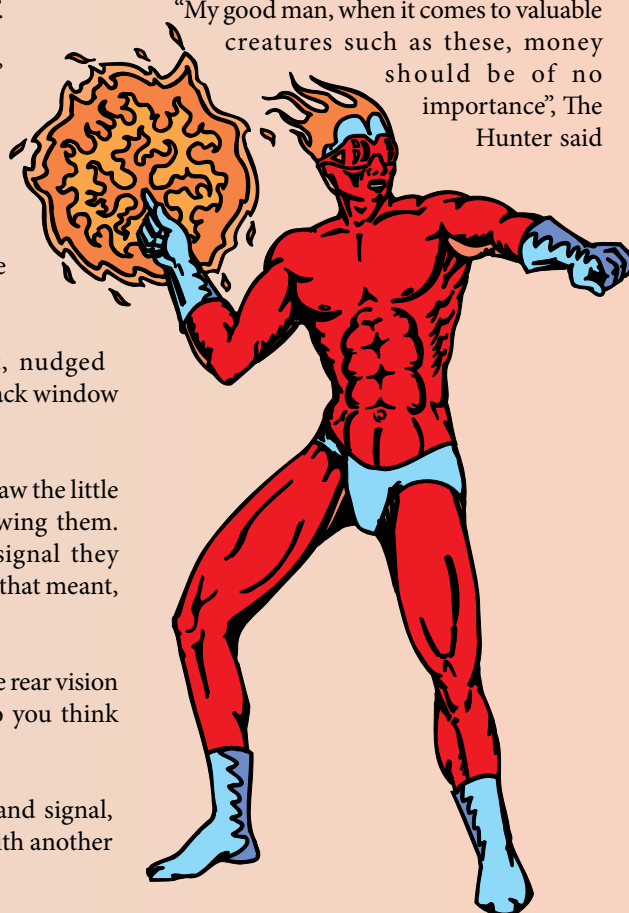
"Marvellous, simply marvellous!" the zookeeper cried, turning to The Hunter.

"I'm Xavier Smith; I'm the Manager of this zoo. We simply MUST have these two for our collection! How much do you want?"

"I was thinking... six thousand pounds."

"S-Six thousand?!" Smith yelled, "Don't you think that's a little over the top?"

"My good man, when it comes to valuable creatures such as these, money should be of no importance", The Hunter said



smoothly. "Of course, I'm sure another zoo will be more than happy to pay my price..."

"No, no, six thousand, I can do that, it's already yours!"

"Good choice."

As the cage was brought through the doors of the zoo, one of the guards couldn't help feel a little disgusted at his employer. The two "mutants" seemed to be able to speak, and obviously were not just dumb animals. But as much as he pitied them, he valued his job.

"Cody, you got the oil?" Maddy asked.

"One big tub of oil, check."

"Good. Ash, you ready to run in and lock the door once the guards run out?"

"Yup".



Continued on page 38

Continued from page 37

Maddy looked up at Angela, who was sitting in the tree above.

"And Angela, once Cody's yelled out 'Fire,' you fly him up to the roof—"

"—Where he picks the lock and I remain the eye in the sky", Angela finished.

"OK, let's go."

Cody spread the oil onto the concrete in front of the zoo. Once Cody was done, Ash lit a fire and took position near the door, where Maddy was already waiting.

Cody took a deep breath and yelled, "FIRE!!!"

The effect was instantaneous. Angela swooped down and plucked Cody from the ground as guards rushed from the building, fire extinguishers ablaze. The moment the guards were out, Maddy and Ash ran inside, closed the door and locked it. Cody was already on the roof, pulling the door open.

Lucas turned into a vampire bat and tried to squeeze through the cage, but wire mesh had been placed around it and he couldn't get through.

"You've been doing this for an hour, Lucas", Catrina sighed, leaning against the side of the cage, "You're wasting your time".

Lucas turned back into a human.

"They're taking way too long!" he complained.

Suddenly, very faintly, Catrina heard Cody yell, "Fire!". She sat up.

Guards rushed past, some pausing to goggle at the display.

"Looks like help's on the way", she said, grinning.

Maddy and Ash turned a corner, Maddy's snakes peeking around first.

"It's creepy in here", Ash muttered.

"Ssshh, I heard something!" Maddy whispered.

They heard it again: a slight rattling,

squeaks, and then creaking. They peered around the corner into a large room, and broke into smiles.

"Took you long enough!" Lucas smirked.

"Oh, don't worry, they're just in time!" said the Hunter, appearing from the shadows.

"You!" Maddy yelled.

The Hunter suddenly pulled something from his pocket and fired at Maddy, who leapt away just in time.

"He's got a gun!" Lucas called out.

"YEAH, THANKS, I kind of noticed!" Maddy yelled.

"I don't care if you're dead or alive", The Hunter snarled. "Whoever the buyer, they'll want you, even if you're just a dead carcass."

Suddenly, Lucas had an idea.

"Catrina, flick me out of this cage!" he said, turning into a tiny pebble.

Catrina did as he said, and as he was flying through the air as a pebble, he quickly turned into a large rock and slammed into The Hunter, who was sent flying into the wall.

Suddenly, a vent in the roof popped open to reveal Cody's head looking down at them.

"Mind helping me down?" he called.

Lucas turned into a grapple hook, and Maddy, taking the hint, threw it up to the vent. Cody quickly climbed down and then opened the cage for Catrina.

"You guys better hurry", Angela's voice floated down, "those guards have almost managed to open the door!"

Leaving the Hunter unconscious, the group climbed up till they were on the roof.

"There's a fire escape over here!" Angela pointed out.

Within a few minutes, they were on their way home. Lucas had turned into a three-seated bike, with Cody, Ash and Maddy riding, and Angela was flying, carrying Catrina.

Within an hour, they were flopped on the chairs of their house.

"That was kinda gross, having two guys and a girl riding me", Lucas commented.

"Oh, shush, you", yawned Maddy.

"I had to carry Catrina, remember", Angela mumbled.

Cody was already asleep.

"Well, it's good to be home", Catrina said, smiling.

The End.

By **Gemma Randall**
Year 8, Caulfield Grammar School
WHEELERS HILL – VIC.
Teacher: Mr Hartley

The Wolf

AS THE moonbeam spread its rays, darkness fell upon the city. A black, elegant, meat-eating wolf howled a high-pitched howl at the moon. Wide eyed the wolf looked me in the eyes, as if it wanted to be friends with me. I gradually reached out my bony, pale hand and carefully pat it on its soft, beautiful head. Amazingly, the wolf lay next to me. It felt like an oversized kitten. I hugged it and stared at the beautiful moon.

Woosh! A chilly cold air rushed past my face.

The wolf howled again, hopped up, nudged me and sadly ran off into the dark, stormy night.

By **Syke Lavelle**
Year 4, Essington School
NIGHTCLIFF – NT
Teacher: Selena O'Connor





The Escape

THE night mirrored the emptiness that filled me as very few stars glistened through the window. Scrunched programs occupied the vacant seats and the last notes of Liebestraum echoed through my head. People were leaving their seats for interval, where they would converse about their luxurious homes and grand businesses. My mother conformed and followed; she loved small talk and wouldn't miss the opportunity to brag about my acceptance into the prestigious Eastman School of Music. This was more precious to her than it was to me; it was her ticket to a new society once again. Normally my father and I would accompany her, but I couldn't handle putting on a façade of smug self-satisfaction. It became a burden upon me and I needed to free myself.

"Samantha, care to join me in the reception hall?" she asked. "I heard the headmaster of Eastman is going to be in there. You need to impress him darling, I don't want him thinking you're just one of those." Her piercing snake-like eyes pointed in the direction of Jane Newman—a middle class student my age who was also accepted into Eastman. She looked at her as if she was filth. I gave my mother a look of disgust. "No, I'm fine", I said sternly. "I'll come in soon." But I lied. I wasn't going back.

I glanced around the concert hall one last time. The dim lighting made me feel like I was in a dream, like all of this wasn't happening. Nostalgia flooded through me as I remembered the days my father and I used to play duets together. But now, there was no one else but me and the brilliant Steinway & Sons grand piano

that stood on the stage alone. I made my way towards the piano and as I got closer, the urge to play a piece rose in my heart. A cautious hand reached out in front of me and I gently ran my fingers along the ivory keys. Was I allowed to play just one more piece before I left? Before I disappeared? I could practically hear the piano whisper to me.

"Come and play me, Samantha. Just like your father was here with you", it whispered.

The black and white ivory keys were smooth to the touch. Every string was tuned to perfection and the pedals were cushions to my feet. I spread my fingers over the keys, closed my eyes and waited... waited for the sound of my father's part. And then it came. And then a melody flowed out of my fingertips; the duet that hadn't been heard for years was finally being played. Another pair of hands met mine and pranced along the keys; every move was flawless. Freedom swept right through me as I played each note. I didn't bother looking at the mysterious person who sat beside me as I was too absorbed in the piece of music. My troubles left me slowly and were replaced by feelings of comfort and peace—feelings that I had not felt in a long time. The melody resonated around the hall, penetrating through the walls of plaster. As I finished the last bar, I realised someone was next to me so my hands came to a halt.

"Lovely", the voice said. Startled, I looked up and found Jane Newman sitting next to me, her long, golden hair shimmering in the dim spotlight. "Um... thanks", I said

in confusion. "You were amazing. Better than anyone I've ever heard", I told her honestly. She truly deserved her place at Eastman's.

"Thanks, and I hope you don't mind me intruding. That's my favourite duet, and it seemed like you needed another pair of hands." An angelic smile crept onto her face as her large, brown eyes captivated me. "So why are you here and not with your mother? She seems very pleased that you got accepted", she asked softly.

"I just want to be alone I guess", I replied. I knew my mother had bragged to her family during the interval. It was so like her. There was never a function where I wouldn't hear how great the family business was going, or how majestic our holiday-homes were. Each time would be a repetition of the last. It was as if she rehearsed the topics in front of her bedroom mirror.

Jane and I continued to talk and then I confessed everything to her. I told her why I wasn't going to Eastman and that my life went downhill ever since my father died. I didn't even know her that well, but everything just seemed to flow out of my mouth like a waterfall. A worried look fell upon her face as I continued telling my story and it was like she could see right through me, as if I was a one-way mirror. For a moment, I thought she knew my plans for tonight, but it was impossible for I didn't mention that I was running away. As my confession ended, the chains that once bound my heart were unlocked and crashed to the floor. I felt free for the first time in years.

Feeling slightly confounded, I played the last few bars of music. The notes lingered in the air for a moment, then faded away. My make-believe world vanished from beneath my fingertips as I hesitantly lifted my hands up from the keys. "Thank you", I said. She smiled at me, and I walked away—away from the concert hall, away from the stage, away from the piano and away from my mother.

"Be careful", Jane looked at me with sad eyes. She knew. I made my way towards the door, past the reception hall and into the winter cold. I had finally escaped.

By **Genevieve Geronimo**
Year 12, Eynesbury Senior College
ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

Today, Tomorrow and Forever

"LOOK so much better than Maddie, don't you agree sis?"

"Well Stephanie, you look great, but let me tell you a story, that being the best doesn't always matter."

"What do you mean?" Stephanie said confused.

"I will tell you the story", her sister began.

Once in the depths of the ocean, there was a mermaid kingdom.

The kingdom was called Chelonia, named after the king's favorite animal, the green turtle. In that kingdom there lived two beautiful, but selfish princesses. Their names were Shelly Pearl and Lily Sea-lion. Shelly had orange hair with a touch of brown, that was nice and wavy, and her eyes were a pale brown. Lily had oak brown hair, her eyes were a dark hazel and she liked combing her hair. Shelly had a

sparkling emerald tail and Lily had a pink tail, decorated with Chelonia sea-weed. The two mermaids were always comparing themselves to each other.

"Your pearl bracelet looks horrible", Lily would say in disgust.

"Your hair looks as if you just got watercuted", Shelly would say, admiring her pink nails. But then one day while they were talking about MLV (Mermaid Louis Viton) and were busy showing off to each other. Vivien the sea witch floated past offering them an ancient pearl, but the sea witch turned the offer down and said "I bet you can't share the pearl though".

"Of course we can" shouted both mermaids.

"Well you're both in charge of the pearl then, but let me warn you both, if there is a single crack on this pearl both of you will be in great danger."

"We promise we will share the pearl" Lily said with an innocent face, but behind that face it was a selfish and a foolish face. The witch handed the pearl to Shelly and before you could even blink the sea witch disappeared into thin air.

"It's my pearl", said Lily. "You know why because I made the excuse for her to give it to us."

"No it's not your pearl because she gave it to me."

Before they knew it, the two mermaids were fighting in the most mer physical way you could think of. They were pulling each other's hair, kicking each other's tail, and I think you know what happened to the pearl.

It had the tiniest crack, which couldn't even be revealed by a human magnifying glass.

"That sea witch is so smart I don't even see a poison puffer fish in sight", remarked Lily as if she were smarter than Merstein (Einstein as mer).

"Lily?"

"Be quiet Shelly, I'm thinking."

"I mean it Lily! There's a shark behind you." Lily turned around and let out a terrified scream. "Quick, grab on my tail Lily" Shelly cried.

"I have a bad feeling about this."

"Hurry up, grab on! Or you'll be its dinner!"

So Lily grabbed on Shelly's tail, and both of them shot through the water at top speed. By about five minutes they were both kilometers away from the shark.

"Phew I'm glad we made it" said Lily in a thankful voice.

"What, WE made it? If it wasn't for me, you would be dinner."

"Thanky."

"You should be."

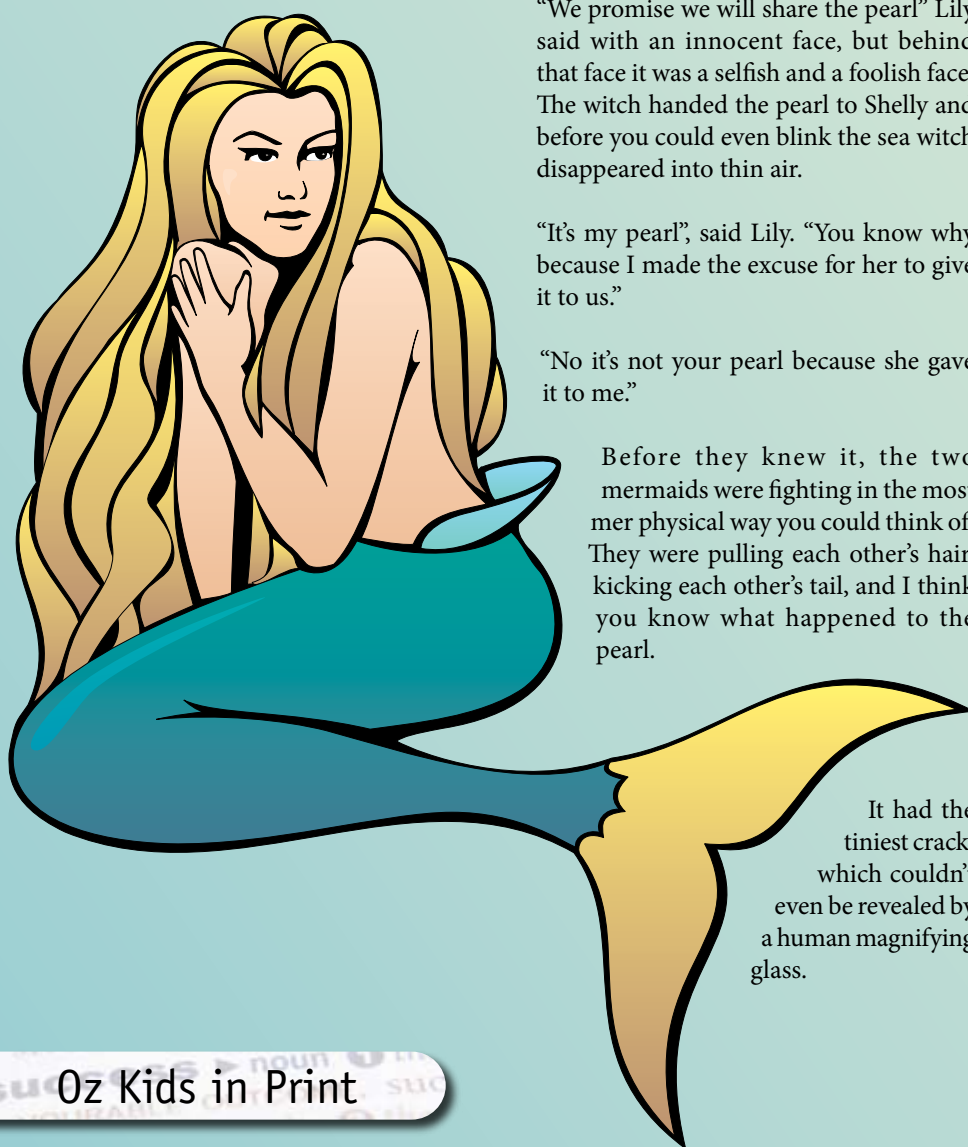
But before they could start arguing, a huge vampire fish appeared, with its mouth open ready to do some serious biting. It chased the mermaids around and around in endless circles. Lily spotted a hole that led to a cave. She grabbed Shelly's hand, and before Shelly had time to refuse going to the cave Lily swam as fast as she could towards it still grabbing on Shelly's hand.

When Lily and Shelly reached the cave, they both hadn't known an octopus was living there until they saw a tentacle fling out from the depths of the cave.

"Swim!" Lily called out in horror.

But Shelly was too late. The octopus's tentacle wrapped around Shelly.

As the tentacle dragged Shelly down, she felt feelings of despair and regretfulness. Why all her life she'd only worried to compete with other people and try to be



the best. Why hadn't she ever tried to make friends, and now look what she had done. She'd messed herself up into the worst situation that could possibly happen to her. She would probably die down here in a dark cave where by the time troops would come and save her she'd be gone.

While Lily was outside the cave with no injuries, she thought to herself, "Should I go back in that cave and risk myself getting eaten by that octopus? Or should I just go ask Chelonia's troops to come?"

"Maybe it's the thing I do to make a difference which counts", she thought. "Maybe it's not all about... Well, me."

So very slowly, Lily forced her tail to swim towards the dark cave.

Closer and closer she got to the bottom. She was very happy to discover that first, the octopus was sleeping and secondly, Shelly wasn't eaten yet. Lily quickly grabbed a big rock and threw it at the octopus's head. Its tentacles loosened and Shelly was free. They both swam as fast as they could and met outside the cave.

"I'm sorry for what I said after I saved you from the shark", Shelly said in a soft voice.

"I forgive you", Lily said.

"Friends then?" Shelly said with a smirk on her face.

"Yep", Lily said.

"TODAY, TOMORROW AND FOREVER", they both said simultaneously.

"So that's the story. Did you learn anything Stephanie?"

"I learnt that it's the heart that counts, not the fashion".

"You got it!!"

By **Natasha Bui**
Year 4

Penleigh Essendon Grammar School
MOONEE PONDS – VIC.

I lie down in the snow.

I feel the crunch beneath my back that sends a tingling sensation down my spine.

I spread my arms and legs out wide and wave them up and down in the snow.

After a few moments of listening to the rustling of my snow jacket moving with my arms, I stand up and admire my work and grin foolishly at the snow angel imprinted in the snow.

I am sixteen.

And this is the first time I've ever seen snow.

I'm already in love. The way I look out across the small hill at the blanket of white makes me feel at peace.

I drag my fluoro orange toboggan up to the top of the hill next to the tree I have been using as my marker.

I set it in position.

Clamber in so I sit comfortably on top.

And push.

Hard.

A shriek escapes my lips as my stomach lurches closely followed by a girlish giggle.

I close my mouth again and feel the adrenaline tingle through me as go whooshing down the slope.

Strands of my hair whip behind me and I clench the cord tight. The beautiful, crispy silence is only disturbed by the toboggan skimming over the snow, small stones and straggling plants.

I can't believe I live only three hours drive from here.

Three hours drive from the best place on Earth.

I slowly come to a halt at the bottom of the hill.

My mum calls out to me.

She says I have three minutes left to enjoy it.

Then we're going straight up North.

Where it never snows.

Where I'll never see this pristine whiteness.

Ever – Again.

By **Emma Hartley**
Year 8

Abbotsleigh School
WAHROONGA – NSW

Bianco





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YOU open your eyes, to see darkness. Being swallowed whole, into a black abyss, you struggle to get free. Your mind bound down by their hatred and cruel remarks, you curl into a ball, shivering feverishly, whilst you will it all to go away. Of course, the taunts just rain down harder on you, inflicting more pain within your body, searing you, branding you with a label. Until you scream in agony from the cutting words, do they stop their jabs of jeering.

They watch you like a hawk, as you climb your way up the ladder, waiting for your downfall. The heavy weight becomes too much for you to bear. You sit down to catch your breath, your legs weary from the steep climb. But they swoop down on you, jabbing and jeering, prodding and poking at you, until you stand up again, to continue the painstaking vertical climb upwards. When you reach their expectations, instead of receiving you with open arms, they place higher goals, testing your strength. Your sighs of relief turn into gasps of breath, as they place cuffs around your neck, restraining your head from turning to side to side, avoiding any interference from others. This was the way life was going to be forever. A vertical climb, reaching for goals they set for you.

Their eyes. They pierce through your body like daggers, penetrating through all your thoughts of breaking free. Their expectations, reaching so high up into the clouds, you can't seem to reach them. But you must. Or at least try your hardest. And if your hardest isn't enough then you need to work for their trust, so that you

may be accepted into the family again. Bearing the family name, you climb up the steepest hill, inch by inch, reaching out for a helping hand. But instead of a hand, you received a pair of wings, setting you free, if only for a short time. For even birds have responsibilities they must return to. Unless you break free. Free from this never-ending torture.

Allister. He knew you better than your own family. He loved you as an equal. He helped you when you needed it, not asking for anything in return. He guided you to realise, who you really were. He gave you the strength you needed, to let your dreams fly. But everything came crashing down, when you made the choice to cower in fear at what your father had to offer, instead of stepping into unknown territory.

Being the first born male, the weight of the family was placed onto your shoulders. You were to inherit the assets, the best wife your father could find, the best of everything. It could have changed, but you made a choice. A choice that will keep you on the same road, forever.

"It's either him, or us. Everyone knows now. You are a disgrace to our family", he tells you, with his back turned away from you. Kneeling on the cold floor, head to the ground, your body stiffens. The choice you must make, will decide the rest of your life. Family over love. Or love over family. Biting your lower lip, you stand up softly, bowing as you back your way out of the room.

"Let me remind you. If you choose him, you will be disowned from this family. We don't need a faggot as a son." His words rang loud and clear, as you barely flinch from his remark, said so casually from his lips. The names were beginning to get old. Standing in the doorway, you made up your mind.

"I'll go pack my bags, sir", you answered boldly.

Silence rang throughout the room. In two long strides, he towered over you, his fury radiating from his core. With a quick lash of his hand you were on the floor, blood spurting from your nose.

"Don't. You. Dare." Turning away from you in disgust, he walks back to his chair and sat down, not giving you a backwards glance.

Creeping silently back to your room, past the statues and fountains, you sob, not knowing what to do. When the comfort of the moonlight changed to sunshine, you crept out of bed, to find your father and apologise for your mistake.

But just apologising was not enough. Father sat in his office, waiting, with your lover, Allister at his feet. Your eyes widen as you see the ordeal he had been through, cuts and bruises all over his face, splatters of blood over his servant clothes. Silent tears pour from your eyes, as you sought for comfort of any sort from your father. But all you were faced with were cold, empty eyes, gleaming with power, as he watches you squirm.

"Choose. This lowly servant, or your own family, who care for you." Father stares at me, searching my eyes for the obedience that was drilled into me since you were born. Allister began to cough violently, blood spilling from his bruised lips onto the cement floor. His pain caused you to wince, as he looked up with those eyes that you had begun to love and smiled weakly, as if to say he was all right. Heart crying, you tell your father the answer he wants to hear.

You see the triumph in your father's eyes, the gleam of power seeping through as you watch the guards drag the bloodied servant boy away from your father's feet. You know you made the wrong choice. With your lover, there was hope in your life. Happiness. But now, you had nothing left, but to follow orders, set by the man who took your hope away. Your own father took away the person who gave you wings to fly. Who encouraged you to be who you are. Instead, he exchanged them for a pair of sculpted wings, made of glass. Heavy weights to keep your two feet on the ground. More decorations for the world to see.

You became his puppet, pulled along by strings. He fed words into your mouth, whilst you repeated back the ones he wanted to hear. Obeying orders, climbing higher every day, you can never forget the day you made the choice. But over time, you know that you'll forget how to fly.

By **Belinda Chen**

Year 10

*The Mac.Robertson Girls' High School
MELBOURNE – VIC.*

Glass Wings

My Story

Chapter 1 – The waterslide

There I was. We were going to the pool and I was so excited!!!! It was my sister's birthday and we decided to go to the biggest waterslide in our town. OK so we got there but it took a while because the traffic was huge!!!! We went inside and there were people everywhere!!!! And when I say everywhere I mean everywhere. We eventually found a spot on the grass. Natasha (that was my sister's name) and I both looked at each other and ran straight for the waterslide. It took half an hour to get up to the top and when we did we argued over who went first. "Birthday girl first", I said. So Tash went first and as she went down I followed. I swayed from side to side and I imagined what she would be feeling, as it is her birthday. Then it came to an end. I didn't see her fall in and I looked out and she wasn't waiting for me. Then I fell into the deep water at the bottom. I couldn't see her. I felt something under me. I moved to the other end of the pool. Then I see her. I had fallen on top of her. I rushed over to her quickly as another kid was coming. I called for mum and dad quickly. They didn't come. I picked her up and carried her back to the grass



where mum was sunbaking. I woke her up and we called the ambulance immediately. She was rushed to hospital with mum. The rest of us followed in the car.

Chapter 2 – The hospital

We got to the hospital after the ambulance. We rushed inside but we couldn't see her.

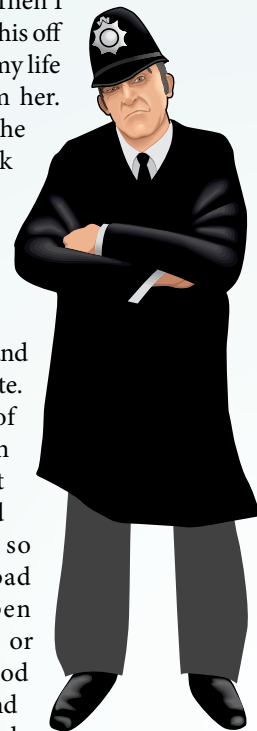
So we waited and after an hour a nurse came out and told us we could go in. Mum was sitting next to her and crying. Dad went over to her holding Maddy my little sister. He went over and comforted her. I went over to Tash and squeezed her hand. I sat on a chair next to her and whispered in her ear, "If you can hear me squeeze my hand". She didn't squeeze back. Tears rolled down my cheeks. Another hour passed and my head was saying it was all my fault and for once I actually believed it. I was so upset and the nurse told dad that he had to fill out some paperwork at home and he had to bring it back ASAP. Which meant I'd be back soon. We went home and as I was bumping around in the back seat I remembered all the good times we had. I was praying that it would not all be over. Because we didn't have many memories of her and her career life was all over and she was only 12 years old. My eyes were baling out. Like when you have an onion and you cut it up.

Chapter 3 – The phone call

I was sitting on the couch. Waiting, Waiting. But everyone thinks you sit on the couch to watch TV or read a book, not wait. But that was not what I was doing. I was waiting for the hospital to ring and say it was all just a misunderstanding and nothing had happened, she was faking it or something. Unfortunately none of that happened. The phone sat there and didn't move. Then it started to ring. I picked it up saying "Is she OK? What happened, what's going on?" "What are you talking about?" said the voice on the phone. Then I realised, it was my aunt Bessie. I called mum and she came. "It's Aunt Bessie" I said. Then I fell on the couch, feeling sorry for Natasha and I actually felt sorry for someone else apart from myself. I wish none of this happened, and even if Tash is alive her life will be haunted, as her 12th birthday will be the worst day of her life. I walked up the stairs and into my room. There was a picture of her on my bedside table. I sat it on my pillow and stared at it for ten minutes until I got bored. I was so bored that I fell asleep on my pillow. I couldn't get it out of my head. I was a MURDERER!!!!

Chapter 4 – The policemen

I woke up the next morning to a bird singing at my window. I got up and looked at the picture on my pillow. I stared at it for a couple of seconds. Then I thought I have to get this off my mind, otherwise my life will be haunted from her. Even if I just read the newspaper I will think the heading says "Murderer on the loose" or something like that. Then I smelt something really yummy. Bacon and eggs!!!! Tash's favourite. I can't get her out of my head!! I went down stairs to get breakfast and to take my mind off Natasha. I was so scared something bad was going to happen to her, like a curse or something. I said "Good morning" to mum and sat down to eat. I loved it. It was so juicy!!! Then I remembered Tash used to tease us that she got more than us. We played along. Then I heard a siren outside. I opened the curtains. Mum rushed outside asking what the problem was. "I am terribly sorry to say this, m'am, but your child Natasha is dead." I saw mum burst into tears. I ran outside and so did dad. I asked what the problem was and he said that Tash was dead. I was so upset. I had killed her.



Chapter 5 – The bad news

I ran to my room. I looked out the window as my sister's fate slowly drove away. As the car turned the corner I picked up her photo and threw it on the floor. It smashed into millions of tiny pieces. I jumped on my bed and cried, and cried, and cried. In fact I cried so much that eyes started to hurt. Then I heard the door open. I yelled at them not knowing who it was. "GET OUT!!!!" "Honey" I turned and faced her. It was my mum. "Everything is going to be OK" I gave her a hug. "We'll plan the funeral. Do you want to make a speech? Because that is up to you", Mum said. "OK,

but does it have to be long?" "No sweetie." "I killed her", I said. "I'm sure it was an accident." "Accidents aren't this serious", I said. Mum didn't respond. "Do you want a cup of hot chocolate?" "Yes please", I say. I follow her downstairs and as mum makes it, I think about all the good times I had with her. Mum serves it and put it right under my nose. I smell it and realised that hot chocolate was Natasha's favourite drink. She used to have it every morning. We sometimes had a race to see who could get up the earliest and have a hot chocolate before the other. Its was lots of fun, except when I lost.

Chapter 6 – The funeral

I finished my hot chocolate and then went into the study. I saw dad on his laptop and I asked him what he was doing. He said he was planning the funeral for Tash. Come here. "What flowers would Natasha like the best?" Dad says. "The blue ones" I say. "Look I know that it is hard for you to accept that Tash is dead but you are going to have to go back to school in a couple of weeks and then you'll have your friends to comfort you." I give dad a hug and then walk back up to my room. I go to the picture of her that I smashed. I pick up the tiny pieces. I put them back into the frame and then suddenly it feels cold in my room. I look outside. It's snowing. I wished Tash was here to see it. She loved snow. I ran to my wardrobe and open it. I grabbed my big coat and put on some tracksuit pants. I was going outside. I ran downstairs and asked mum where the toboggan was. "In the shed" she answered. I opened the back door and ran outside. I opened the shed and a rat ran out the door. I looked up and hanging from a hook was the toboggan. I reached for it and grabbed it. I pulled it down and then saw my friends nearby. I opened the back gate and ran outside. For the first time without my big sister Tash.

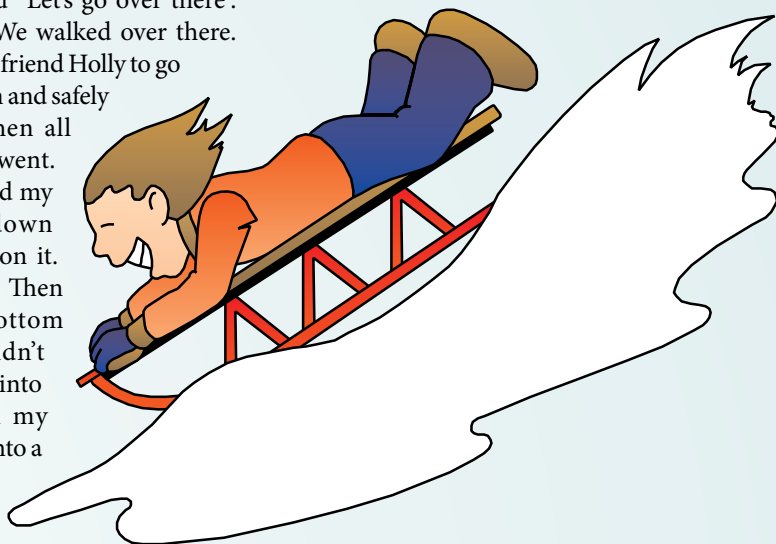
Chapter 7 – The old creaky house

I went down to where my friends were tobogganing. I went over and said hi. They let me join in and we raced down the hill. I didn't dare to speak about Tash because I had just got it out of my head. I just decided to have fun. Then I saw a bigger hill a bit further away. I said "Let's go over there". Everyone agreed. We walked over there. Everyone dared my friend Holly to go first. She went down and safely came back up. Then all my other friends went. I went last. I pushed my toboggan a bit down and then jumped on it. It went really fast. Then it came to the bottom of the hill. I couldn't stop. I went deep into the woods. Then my toboggan crashed into a big gum tree. I got off. I looked back but my friends weren't coming. I was so scared. I started to walk forward. Then I saw this house thing. I ran up to it. I WAS SAVED!!! But as it cleared up it ended up being an abandoned old shack. I walked up the steps onto the small porch. Then the floor broke. I fell straight into like a underground attic. I had twisted my ankle in the fall so I couldn't get up. Than it grew dark. I felt tired so I went to sleep.

Chapter 8 – The man

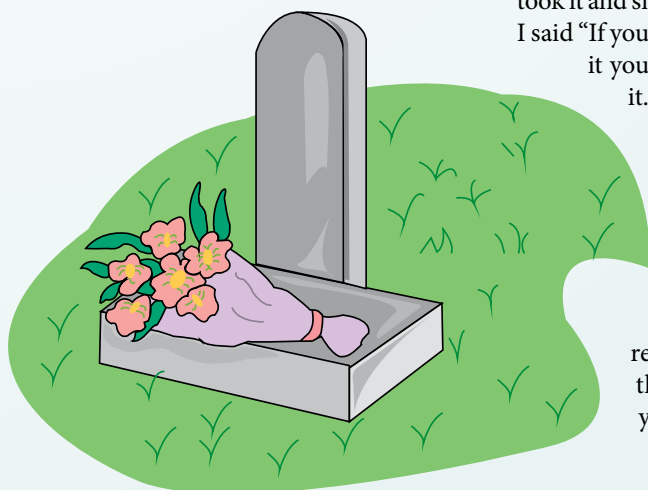
I awoke in a bed thing. It was really uncomfortable. I saw a man come out of the shadows. He was really scary. I thought he was going to murder me because I had murdered Natasha. The man came out of the shadows and gave me a drink kind of thing. I thought it was poison, to get me back for killing Natasha or something. I took it and smashed it on the ground. Then I said "If you are going to kill me than give it your best shot because I deserve it. I know I have been a bad girl and I deserve it. I wish I have never done it. Before my sister was gone I didn't really realise how much I love my sister and then when they are really gone you realise how much you really love them and you miss them". "I'm not going to kill you", the man said. "What?" "I

am a friend with your dad and I'm helping him plan the funeral." "I'm sorry about your sister." "Yeah well I, I...", before I could say anything else I stopped myself. "I was tobogganing. I am sorry I barged in like that. That's OK. It wasn't your fault, right", and he winked me in the eye.



Chapter 9 – The dream!!!

Someone was calling my name. I could hear it. I opened my eyes and realised that all that was just a dream. The person was really my sister Tash and she was jumping on the end of the bed. It was Christmas!!!! I got up and we ran into mum and dad's room and we both jumped on mum and dad. They awoke but unfortunately didn't get up. So Natasha and I went over to the Christmas and started opening the presents. I got a doll and it looked kind of like my sister, and my sister got a doll that kind of looked like me. We both named it after each other. I hugged my sister and she hugged me back. I was so glad that that was all a dream. As what would I do without her? The house was all gloomy and sad looking. "I love you big sis!!!!" I said and she answered "I love you too!!!!".



**The
End**

By **Bonnie Doyle**

Year 5

Saint Paul's Primary School

MILDURA – VIC.

Teacher: Mrs. Heeps and Mrs. Sutherland

DAVID burst from the alleyway in a sprint, his eyes fixed on a location in the distance. A strange glow cast by a low rising sun, gave the area a mysterious and unfriendly aura. Adrenalin blocked all sound from his mind except for that of his pursuing aggressors yelling and taunting not far behind. Every thought was concentrated on putting his next foot forward as quickly as possible. The neighbourhood was familiar to David, yet tonight home seemed more distant than ever. He thought he may never see his family again and the very thought chilled him to the bone. He came to a small wooden fence at the end of the road, swiftly vaulted it before continuing further down another street, and made a speedy diversion down a gloomy alleyway.

His freedom lay ahead of him, and after he had cleared the alleyway, it would be an easy run to safety. Hope reignited within him; perhaps he had made it. He saw the end of the alley drawing closer with every step. The feeling was short lived as a ferocious fist swung from the shadows and made firm contact with David's jaw sending him toppling over along the cold bitumen. Sprawled face first on the ground in agonizing pain, he watched as three hooded silhouettes closed in on him. He was trapped. A sturdy foot was wedged beneath his chest and raised until David was tossed onto his back, providing him with a view of the brightening violet sky. David tilted his head to the left to see who knocked him down, and from the shadows emerged a hefty man with a satisfied look on his face. His short black hair matched the colour of his hoodie leaving a strange pale outline of a face in what little light there was. David had never seen him before but knew exactly who he was. This was the bruiser, someone who is inducted into a gang for nothing more than sheer strength, power and the ability to inflict pain upon others.

A bloodcurdling laugh erupted from one of the figures drawing David's attention back to the situation at hand. Like a hyena, the scheming character began to inspect its prey, slowly prowling around the place where David had fallen, eyeing for signs of danger. He was taller than the bruiser, but much skinnier. He wore tacky old jeans and a thin, grey sleeveless shirt which drew far too much attention to his scrawny arms. Not far behind, the third figure slowly made his way towards the commotion. The two feet came to a stop in front of David,

still sprawled helplessly on his back like he was paralysed. He raised his pounding head upward to catch a glimpse of his third attacker and instantly recognised who he was. It was Angus, the leader of the pack; the only one David had ever met of the three, the one who was now after him. He strolled around David and stopped by his side. Angus reached down and took hold of David's long brown hair, aggressively pulling him up to a position where he was set on his knees before his predators.

David knew that in the seriousness of his situation he had two options, fight or die. Still on his knees he waited eagerly for his chance to strike. "You know Davo, I always liked you", Angus recounted, "so it's really a shame that it has to be this way, but a betrayal like this really can't go unpunished", he continued as he began slowly pacing in front. "You got close though, real close to getting away." As he turned back in the other direction, David saw his opportunity and quickly kicked his leg out, landing a powerful blow into the back of Angus' legs causing him to collapse onto the floor. David hastily arose and saw that both exits of the alley were guarded. At one end the bruiser waited attentively and at the other, the scrawny character watched, swaying slowly from side to side like a tree in the breeze. The decision was obvious to David, who did not want to take another blow from the bruiser. He turned and dashed towards the lanky attacker.

The sun was higher in the sky now and cast a heavenly light across the exit of the alleyway. The lean figure ahead of him was still engulfed in the mysterious shadow of the alley. The light from the rising sun was like a beacon to David and with every step he drew that little bit closer to open ground. He was violently torn from his vision of freedom, by two overwhelming hands clamped on his back, as he was flung backwards across the ground to the same position he had started his daring escape. This was the end. Furious with anger, Angus paced behind David and clasped a gloved hand firmly over his mouth. His other hand pulled out a large, silver blade from his back pocket which sinisterly glistened in the morning light. Angus took the knife and held it to David's throat, resting the bloodthirsty metal against his flesh.

By Glenn Mulders

Year 10, Eynesbury Senior College

ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

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