

# OZ KIDS IN PRINT

*A great tool  
to improve  
literacy  
in schools!*

**February 2014**

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Print Post Approved  
P.P. 334553/00001

Cover design by  
Georgie Demir  
(ASG Art Award Winner 2013)

**FREE ENTRY**

**TO STUDENTS IN PRIMARY OR  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

*Proudly supported by the Australian Government*

present

# Keeping Books Alive

## FRIDAY, 30 MAY 2014

A professional development seminar designed to inform and inspire primary and secondary school teachers and librarians, municipal librarians, literacy support professionals and those interested in promoting literacy.

**Venue: City of Greater Dandenong Civic Centre and Library  
225 Lonsdale Street, Dandenong, Victoria**

### SCHEDULE

8:00 – 8:45	Registration, tea and coffee on arrival
8:45 – 9:00	Welcome and introduction by Kevin Burgemeestre, MC
9:00 – 9:45	Gary Crew (Keynote address): The Author, The Book and the Teacher: A question of relevance
9:45 – 10:00	Launch of Gary Crew and Naomi Turvey's <i>The Cuckoo</i>
10:00 – 10:30	Morning tea
10:30 – 11:15	Meredith Costain: Keeping it Real – Narrative non-fiction writing workshop
11:15 – 12:00	Tom Danby: eBooks for Children – What publishers are doing and how it might impact your library and school
12:00 – 12:45	Lunch break
12.45 – 1.30	Leigh Hobbs: Creating characters – from Old Tom to Mr Chicken
1:30 – 2:15	Tristan Bancs: iCreate – Engaging students and unleashing creativity with digital tools
2.15 – 2.45	Afternoon tea
2:45 – 3:30	Deborah Abela: Writing Activities Your Kids Will Love!
3:30 – 4.00	Wrap up and delegate prize presentation, sales and signing

*OPTIONAL – You will be invited as our guest to join us for:*

Dinner and Presentation of the Young Australian Art & Writers Awards where your table will be hosted by a leading children's author/illustrator.

[Date and venue TBA]

### Features of the day include:

- Handouts • Specialist bookstall • Participation in lively discussion and debate • All catering provided • Lucky door prizes • Networking opportunities with like-minded colleagues • Great ideas to implement at your workplace • Latest news and availability for author visits • PD certificate of attendance • Delegates will receive a 10% discount voucher valid for all of 2014 from INT BOOKS.

Books will be available for sale and signing through a specialist bookstall featuring a selection of titles from our presenters.

### TAX INVOICE AND REGISTRATION FORM ABN 58 109 336 245

Numbers are limited: early registration is recommended. Registration fee is \$198 incl. GST per delegate. Keep a copy for your records.

Please indicate payment method (tick):	
<input type="checkbox"/>	CHEQUE
Post a copy of this form with cheque made payable to Australian Children's Literary Board to: ACLB, PO Box 267, Lara Vic. 3212	
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Please direct all enquiries to Rob Leonard  
Ph: 03 5282 8950 • Fax: 03 4206 7811 • Email: rob@ozkids.com.au

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Front cover image by  
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### Published by:

**Australian Children's Literary Board**  
(an initiative of the Children's Charity Network)  
ABN 58 109 336 245  
Phone: (03) 5282 8950  
Fax: (03) 5282 8950  
170 Forest Road, Lara, Victoria 3212  
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PO Box 267, Lara, Victoria 3212

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Layout/Pre-press:.....Desktop Dynamics, Geelong  
Website Production:.....The Media Warehouse  
[www.mediawarehouse.com.au](http://www.mediawarehouse.com.au)

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The 2013 Awards were absolutely fantastic. Each year they get better and better!

We have had a great start to 2014. Over 500 entries received for the Literary Awards so far. It is my job to go through and pick out the best. Don't be disheartened if your first entry doesn't get published. Keep entering new ones. Also, don't wait until September to submit them. There are four publications though the year and entry is open from the December of the previous year to the September of the current year. If you wait until September then you could miss out because of the volume of entries received then.

We are looking for stories and poems with meaning. It must contain more than four lines (for poems) or paragraphs. Please make sure punctuation is correct. It must be entered as you would hand it in to your teacher – not a whole lot of text cut and pasted. These are literary awards and your work is judged as such.

A reminder that **all work must be your own** (or a combined effort).

We cannot stress enough that the work **MUST BE YOURS** and not off the internet or by other means. Plagiarism is an offence. It is illegal to send in work and from another author and put your name on it.

**ENTER ON-LINE at**  
[www.ozkids.com.au](http://www.ozkids.com.au)



**KEEP ON WRITING (TYPING)!**

*Carol Dick*  
Managing Editor

# THE SURVIVOR

**T**HE SHIP... the ship. It's gone. Quickly focusing on what matters, I looked eagerly for any other sign of life. I was alone, stranded, in the middle of the ocean without any knowledge of what could happen to me. It was freezing, the water was so cold. I could feel my temperature dropping by the second as I continued my desperate search for someone else... then I heard it. I heard someone screaming, screaming as the ship sank into the water. It was a piercing scream and it was my sign of hope. It lingered for a few seconds, perhaps a minute, and then it drowned down as the ship plunged into the depths of the sea.

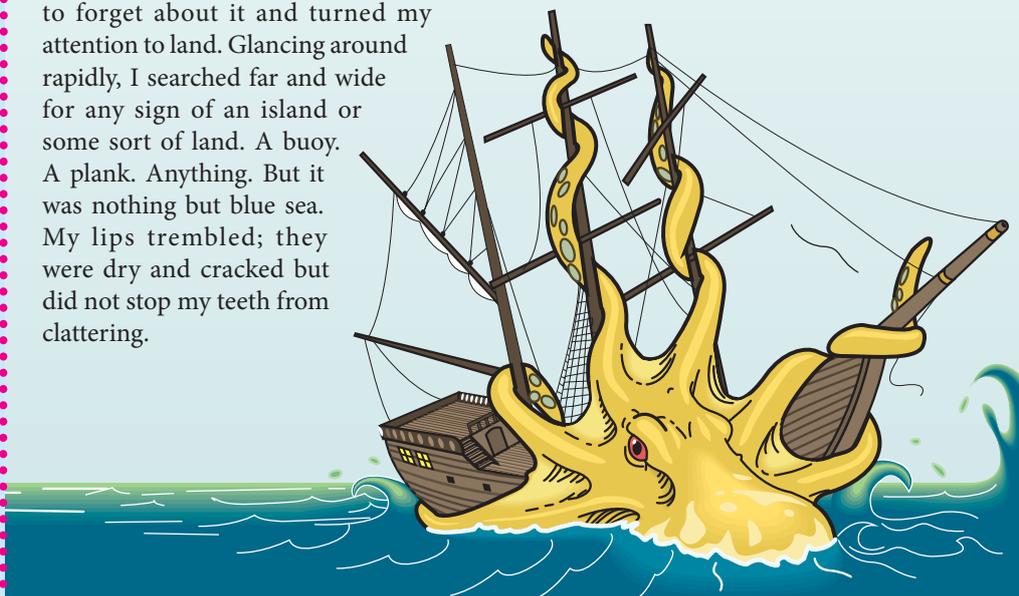
I watched in horror as it sank slowly into the water. I couldn't believe what was happening, to the ship, to me. Thoughts raced through my mind, so many thoughts. I began to get a headache. I shut my eyes for a moment and tried to lose the painful ache in my head. The soft breeze helped with that, whispering past my ears and gave a comforting touch to my skin. Relaxed, I opened my eyes just to renew the shocking experience. At last the ship was overthrown by the ocean and disappeared from my sight. I wanted to cry, oh how I wanted to cry.

I began to sob and sniffle in depression but I was interrupted. I felt a scaly flank slide at the edge of my foot and my heart skipped a beat. I looked down and searched for the source of the touch but it was gone. Vanished. I tried to forget about it and turned my attention to land. Glancing around rapidly, I searched far and wide for any sign of an island or some sort of land. A buoy. A plank. Anything. But it was nothing but blue sea. My lips trembled; they were dry and cracked but did not stop my teeth from clattering.

I tried to stay calm, confident and forget what happened. Positive thoughts. I had to stay positive. Maybe if I swam for a few minutes I could reach land? It's possible and I do love to swim. Looks like my third place ribbon for swimming might come in handy after all. I was getting ready to start my long swim when it swiped again. The rush of slippery scales brushed over my ankle but this time it felt different. There was more pressure when it came in contact and felt somewhat like it was trying to rub something onto me. This time I kept more alert, but when I saw it, I wish I didn't. A long tail waved through the ocean water in a horizontal motion. I had to get out of here. Then I saw it. The first thing that made this all worthwhile – Land.

I swam towards it, shaping my hands into cups and using them to speed it up. As I drew closer to it, I began to think how it got there. It wasn't there before so how did it just... appear there? Perhaps my imagination is running wild. It's like what you would feel when you find an oasis in the desert. The relief. I dragged myself onto the shore, crawling like a half dead animal, desperate to feel the land beneath me. I just stayed there collapsed and motionless on the sand. The tall palm trees gave the location of the island away, so for now, I'll lay and wait for my rescue.

By **Emmaleigh Rosano**  
Year 3, Ingleburn High  
INGLEBURN – NSW



# An Exhibition

**W**ATCHED her, writhing in discontent. Fine brush strokes formed her fair face, and hands like doves ran through and pulled at mahogany hair. She clutched at bright jonquils, picked at daisies, ripped viridian grass from its roots and separated each blade. She stared straight, straight into my eyes and I stared back into the pools of umber, russet, sienna.

She called for me; her plump, gentle mouth whispered “Richard”, her eyes frowned. I wanted her to reach out, to touch me. But she was trapped within the canvas that I stared at behind a velvet rope.

The tour guide spoke softly of the painting of Ophelia and moved us along to the next artwork. This was my eleventh tour of the John Waterhouse exhibition. My new obsession had consumed me; the lust for women painted years ago, the need to feel them, be with them.

I wandered through the gallery, eyes locked with each painted nymph, shuffling and stumbling along the pale marble floors. Each wing of the exhibit was like a confectionery aisle at a supermarket filled with beautiful women and I had to choose the most delicious painting to visually devour. Greedily, I would choose them all. Their beauty annihilated me from the inside, slowly eroding my reality. These transient lovers blurred the lines between my dreams and my consciousness.

In my left arm I clutched a grey leather-bound scrapbook, around my neck a small Polaroid camera. The smell of oil paints and the staleness of the art gallery air filled me with familiar heady joy. Mainly women surrounded me, and as I looked around I saw their dull faces dumbfounded, their mouths uniformly shaped like small round “O”s in wonder of the techniques of the artists of old.

The tour guide mumbled about Waterhouse’s Pre-Raphaelite style, her voice like white noise. I straightened up my tie and adjusted my glasses. My lunchbreak would be over soon. The midday sun burst through the opaque stained glass sky window; the bright refracted colours were swallowed by my black suit and its structure cast grey shadows over my skin.

As I clutched my camera to snap a Polaroid picture of the perfect painting of Pandora, my scrapbook fumbled out of my suited arm. The sound of its spine snapping on the floor resonated throughout the gallery as hundreds of small photographs slipped across the marble. I scrambled to scoop them all up without making a scene, without drawing attention to myself. It was as though my scrapbook had vomited up the very depths of my heart for all to see, my secret shame on display for a judgemental audience. I thought I could hear whispers, feel them staring.

A man asked me if I was all right and helped me pick up my pictures. I said I’m fine, I’m fine, I’m in a rush, somewhere to be. He frowned, looked at a few Polaroids, frowned again. He asked if I was alone. I said that my wife never liked art galleries, too stuffy, I was at work, on my break, best be getting back. Galleries were too stuffy for her. He asked again if I was alone, if I was lonely. I put my head in my hands,

overwhelmed by the conversation and the pictures and the women and the art.

Once more he asked, and I looked into his face to try and understand what he meant. His translucent grey skin drooped, dark greasy hair fell limp over his sickly face. It was like I could see straight through him. He had no colour. I watched his mouth as all of his words ran into one and became static, like a dead television station.

I picked up my scrapbook and left, startled. That afternoon I left my grey work and my grey colleagues, drove home in my grey car to my grey house. I ignored my grey family and fell asleep in my grey bed to dream of beautiful colourful women in vibrant forests and fields, whose voices were melodies and words were medicine to heal my grey heart.

By **Amelia Kinsman**

Year 12, Eynesbury Senior College  
ADELAIDE – SA



# His Sadness

He lay upon the cold, hard bed  
The pounding sadness thumped in his head  
His thoughts turned toward dread  
And he wondered this night, would he be better off dead?

Life had changed and sent its hardships  
Gone were the days of swings and slippery dips  
He was now facing adult issues  
He looked around and realised he really did have a lot to lose

Silently he lay, thoughts swirling through his mind  
He couldn't take his life, that's something he would not want his mum to find  
Besides they, the experts, said he had much to live for  
But right now, in the darkness, streams of tears just pour

He lies back in bed listening to the rhythm of his own fear  
On his warm cheek rolls a solitary tear  
There is a storm pounding his chest  
He knows tonight there'll be no rest

He spends his life walking round in some kind of shock  
Like he's waiting for a ship that would not dock  
Forever looking over his shoulder  
His fears growing deeper and older

He goes about his days, mostly as if nothing has happened  
Straining for normalcy, feigning interest in the latest trend  
But everything is different, even to yesterday  
He now struggles to get through each day

He finds it hard to explain  
Finding the words, the emotion, it's all a drain  
Colours have no discernible hue and food tastes different  
As if the eyes he bears he has somehow been lent

The air he breathes now is so thick  
Full of emotions and making him sick  
His dreams stir up images of evil and greed  
Escape from the situation is what he would need

He watches on in sadness as he looks at his Mum  
Her beautiful smile, now so glum  
These people wreak havoc, ruin our lives  
Our straight, proud backs now covered in knives

Who can help us? How can we be free?  
To lie in the yard, gaze at the sky under a tree  
Carefree days, full of love and fun  
Not living as though you are looking down the barrel of a gun

By **Dylan Peisley**  
Year 8, Prince Alfred College  
KENT TOWN – SA



I have painted my poems,  
my words,  
on paper you'll never see.  
I have voiced my story,  
but I am unheard.  
I have voiced my message,  
and spoken the truth,  
but you're never around.

Why not,  
listen.  
You don't have to agree.

Why not,  
walk–  
(with me).

Why not,  
stand together–  
on the same side.  
Why are you on the opposing side?

I know it seems crazy,  
to change your side.  
Oh please,  
Oh please,  
Just do it for me.  
Consider the benefits–  
No 'Y's – (why's).

Or maybe,  
Just one more 'Y'  
Why don't you fly the peace flag,  
proudly towards me?  
Stand by me,  
Don't lead me.  
'Stand for Difference'

By **Miranda Plowman**  
Year 4, Ivanhoe Grammar School  
IVANHOE – VIC.

## The inspiration behind *Burning The Bails: The Story of the Ashes*

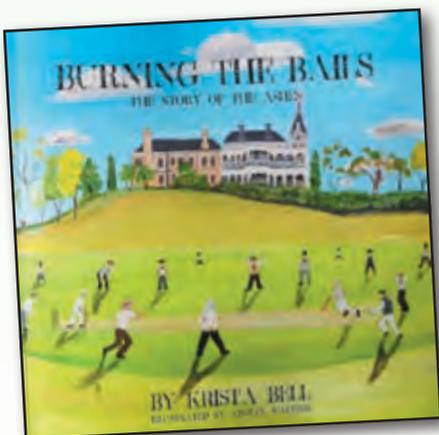
by Krista Bell [www.kristabell.com](http://www.kristabell.com)

**B**ack in the last century, when I was in both primary and high school, I thought History belonged to the Horror Story genre. It was all dates and battles and invasions and wars and places on the other side of the world that I thought I would probably never see. Nothing that interested me one little bit.

Surprisingly I did study History for my last two years at school because for me it was way better than Maths, at which I was and still am useless, but it was language and literature that bewitched me. I loved them with a passion. I only passed my History exam because I had a persistent and patient teacher who went the extra distance to make sure I got decent marks. She was a heroine.

In the last few years I have been lucky enough to travel to Europe, Asia and the United Kingdom and I have come to understand that History is the story of individual people as well as countries and that it deserves my attention. I think the problem when I was at school was that the curriculum was dry and boring because it did not tell the stories of real people the way does today.

So, after my trip to China in 2007, I wrote *Warriors* (Windy Hollow Books) which tells the stories of the making of the terracotta warriors some 2,000 years ago, the emperor for whom they were made and the story of how they were found in 1974 by pure fluke when a farmer was digging a water well. These were such interesting stories about really fascinating people that they deserved to be written down and illustrated with my photos. I was hooked. History was no longer boring!



But how did I come to write *Burning The Bails: The story of the Ashes*? This is my latest book and it is based not on world history but cricket history. Okay, I have never played cricket, I admit that, but I do love watching it, especially Test Cricket, and I have always wondered why, when the Aussies win the so-called 'Ashes' Series that the little urn of ashes does not return to Australia. I had never found anyone who knew the answer to that question until several years ago!

Let me go back in history. Thirty years ago I met Louise who is a friend of a friend and has since become my friend as well. When I met Louise people would say: 'She's a Clarke, you know!' I had no idea what that meant because I grew up in Sydney and the Clarks are a famous Victorian family. People mentioned they were somehow connected to cricket, maybe even the Ashes.

Well, usually I am such a sticky beak (I'm an author remember!) and I ask lots of questions that often result in my being told some very interesting stories, but for some reason I can't fathom, I waited twenty five years until I actually got around to asking Louise ('she's a Clarke, you know', but she's not related to the current Aussie captain Michael Clarke!), about whether her family was actually connected to cricket and the Ashes. Bingo!

Are you ready for this? This is the real story of what inspired me to write *Burning The Bails*.

Louise's father Michael Clarke (no not the Aussie captain) was born in 1915 in 'Rupertwood' a 16-bedroom mansion at that time owned by the Clarke family in Sunbury, in country Victoria, about one hour's drive past where Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport stands today.

Michael's father's name was Russell Clarke and, when Russell had been only six, his mother had burnt the wooden bails after a social cricket match on Christmas Eve in 1882 on the family's oval at 'Rupertwood'. Janet Lady Clarke then put the ashes of the bails into a porcelain perfume bottle. She made this 'trophy' as a joke to present to the England captain that night at dinner at the Clarks' home because his team had won the social game of cricket that afternoon. Russell, who grew up to be my friend Louise's grandfather, was with his mother when she burnt the bails and, as an adult, he loved to tell the story.

This was such an amazing true story, my friend Louise's family's story. So with Lou's permission I wrote the story and it is not just a fictionalised version in picture book format with wonderful naive illustrations by fine artist Ainsley Walters but it has pages and pages of historical detail at the back as well as some very precious Clarke family photos.

So, if you want to solve the mystery of why the historic urn of Ashes does not come back from England to Australia when we win the Ashes Series, you must read *Burning The Bails* (One Day Hill).



# Promises

*We all make promises. Sometimes we break them; others are kept until the end of our days. Some we forget about; some we remember better than our names. We all make promises, but the decision of keeping them or not all depends on you.*

**D**ARKNESS; that was all the girl could see. Her long black hair was tied back in a braid. She looked around, no-one else could be seen, but then, she heard a voice from behind. The young female turned around, dagger in hand. "Astrid! It's me, and don't you dare stab me!" the voice hissed.

Astrid put her dagger away and gave a slight smile. "God, Dante, I thought you were from another tribe. You know what a moonless night is like in other territories", she whispered.

Dante looked away, knowing exactly what she meant. His tribe, Earth, was on full alert at times like this. Fire thought it was a blessing with no moon, although water was so angry they would go along breaking all the rules set seasons ago. Air and earth didn't care much, but were always on high alert at this time. "Dante?" asked Astrid, interrupting his thoughts.

"Yes?"

"Sit down; you're shaking the whole branch."

Dante sat down next to her, pushing the brown fringe out of his eyes. They could see everything from this height; from the blazing fires in the north, to Air's territory in the east. Astrid gave a quick look around, searching for enemies. Not noticing anything, she spoke, her voice quiet, and much calmer than the last time she spoke. "You know, for some reason, a no moon has always been my favourite time."

Dante nodded, unsure of what to say. Suddenly, an arrow shot past, just missing Astrid's shoulder. The girl stood up, heart racing. She let out a high pitched scream. A warning shot for the attacker; and a sign for her tribe. They were under attack.

Dante and Astrid swiftly climbed down the tree. Dante looked at the young female "Go back to the tribe. Find Destanee and tell her what's happening."

Astrid stood there in silence. It may have only been a moment but it felt like an eternity. "No, I can't let you go alone. I'm the scout, and you're just a hunter, you go."

Dante walked up to her, grabbing her hands tightly. "Listen to me, being a scout you're faster than me. I don't know how many there are, and for all we know it could be half a tribe."

Astrid pulled away. She bit her lip and gave a small nod to show she understood. "Just tell me you will be OK", the girl whispered, tears in her eyes.

"I can't guarantee anything, but I'll try", Dante told her.

Astrid blinked, a single tear rolling down her cheek before she ran off into the forest.

Dante turned around. He could see the flickering tongues of a flame. Undoubtedly, it was a torch. The boy looked around for somewhere he could see the enemy, but not be seen. This may have sounded like an easy task, being in a forest and all, but to find somewhere you can see without being seen was quite a challenge. Dante soon decided it was best to hide behind one of the larger oak trees.

He could see the faces of the attackers well now. The Tribe of Fire, or at least that's what it looked like as Cyra, their captain in charge of the attackers, was standing at the front giving orders.

Dante looked around. He didn't have any weapons he could use on him, and there was nothing to use around him as a weapon. He would just have to wait for Destanee, Astrid and the rest of the tribe. Unless... Branches and stones lay all around Dante's feet and there were 14 people there at the most. If he could distract the rest of them, he could get to Cyra and take her out. Not kill her... just maybe... knock her out. Yes, it might work, if he was lucky. Dante picked up a rather large speckled stone and threw it to his left. Two of the members from the group ran over and looked around quickly. "Nothing here!" a young female called.

Dante looked at the ground, and ended up picking up a rather thick stick. The boy threw it to his right this time. The same female from before went over to check it out, while Dante picked up another rock. He threw this one further away, in the same direction as before. This time, two younger boys ran over to check it out. Incidentally, one of the boys tripped in a thorn bush, so the other had to help him out, which cost them a good five minutes and a slight amount of dignity.

After a while of repeating the process, Dante decided, it was no use trying the tactic any more. It was clearly not working; and anyway, he could hear footsteps which no doubt belonged to the other members of his Tribe. The footsteps stopped, and a deep breath was taken. "Spying doesn't always work you know..." a girl stated from behind.



He turned around to see a blonde haired girl with a devious look on her face, smiling what he knew to be her signature smile. An evil smile; a devil's smile; a vampire smile. Alice, The Tribe of Fire's second in command, was standing right behind him, looking like she was about to kill him in cold blooded murder. "Don't... Don't, please... No..." Dante begged.

Alice laughed. "You don't want to know what torture I'll put you through if you live though", she said, no sign of mercy in her voice. "Cyra! We've got ourselves a spy over here."

Cyra walked over, careful not to step on the thorn bush in front of her. "Oh, him. I thought I saw you in the tree with the raven haired one", the girl sneered.

Alice pulled Dante off the muddy ground. Cyra grabbed his arms while Alice had a dagger in one hand, and held the boy's face in her other. She turned his head left and right a few times before letting out a laugh. "Where's your friend, boy? Where has that little rat gone?" Alice hissed, now holding the dagger to his throat.

"I-I don't know... Sh-she ran off."

"Of course she did boy. Now tell me where she is before I slit your throat open."

"She... she..." Dante began. He couldn't tell her. He couldn't, and help would be there any minute, right?

"Spit it out, or lights out. Understand?" Alice told him, pushing the dagger harder against his neck.

"S... he... we... went... t... to... ca... mp", the boy gasped, most certainly struggling to breathe.

As he said this, he swore he saw the annoyed face of Astrid up in the tree. But then again, he probably wasn't getting oxygen to his mind.

Astrid looked down at her friend, annoyed that he had let this happen to himself, but also smirking because of how funny the situation was. Looking back up, she gazed over at Destanee who was holding a bow with the string drawn back, ready to fire. The girl looked back at Astrid, giving her a small nod. Astrid grabbed a throwing knife out of the pack she had, and aimed at the tree just above Dante's head. She threw.

Dante saw a knife flying straight towards him. On instinct he began to thrash about, causing Cyra to let go of his arms. As soon as his arms were free he pulled out of Alice's grip and got out of the knife's path. It would have hit him right between the eyes if he hadn't moved. The knife had just missed the back of Alice's head by a few inches. Dante looked around, eyes wide. He had seen Astrid earlier, and she had thrown the knife at him! Alice turned around quickly; quick enough to still see Astrid. "Oh so there's your little friend", the blonde hissed.

Astrid's face went pale as she saw Alice's piercing blue eyes staring straight at her. "Oh no. Not good. Not good indeed", she thought to herself, regretting not moving out of sight as soon as she threw. Astrid bit her lip and waved at Dante before screaming "DANTE, RUN!".

★ ★ ★

**D**ANTE had been rushed back to camp as fast as they could get him there, and then taken to Althea's 'home'. If you followed one of the small passageways from the cave that Earth slept in, you would have shown up in a medium sized cavern that smelt like flowers, herbs and other scents that would be found around the forest. In one corner there were herbs and plants sorted out, and in another there was a large pile of moss and other soft plants. That was where Dante was laying. Althea could feel the subtle airflow coming through the caves cracks on her face. The girl walked over to Dante, his side still bleeding and his eyes closed. "I don't know if you can hear me, but it's going to be OK. We don't have anything to stop the bleeding, but I'm trying my best to find some marigold", she whispered, her voice calm, like how you would calm a scared child.

Althea looked up at the cave roof, as if this might help the situation, but obviously, all this did was waste time. The girl let out a long sigh, before walking over to the other side of the cavern. Althea began to search through the pile of plants. To most humans it would look like a bunch of random dried out plants, but to the Tribe's healer, Althea, it was much, much more than that. To her it was a pile of plants that could fight colds, stop infections and save lives. The girl searched through the pile. She couldn't see marigold anywhere. They still had some in stock, right? Yes, she had collected some

yesterday. So where was it? Althea looked through the pile a few more times before deciding there was none whatsoever. What was she to do? Althea walked over to Dante, and sat down. The boy's breath was shallow, and almost impossible to hear. Althea had taken off his shirt to see the wound better when he had been brought to her, but looking at the wound again made her realise just how important it was that she acted fast. Althea closed her eyes letting her mind wander, hoping that this would somehow spark a memory of where the marigold was. Then, it hit her. The marigold was outside! Althea opened her eyes and ran out of her 'den'.

Astrid saw Althea running out of her part of the cave. What was that girl up to? She wondered to herself. She ran up to Althea. "What are you doing?! In case you haven't noticed, Dante's dying!"

Althea didn't even bother to glance at Astrid. "OK then, why don't you go and keep your dying boyfriend company?", she hissed.

"What! He's not—" Astrid sighed, stopping herself.

She began to walk back to Althea's den, wondering what the girl was doing.

Althea ran out the entrance of the cave, and looked behind the bush to the left of the entrance. It was here! The marigold was here! It hadn't completely dried out, but it was better than nothing. She picked up the large leaf the plant was on, and carried it back to her den. She barely noticed Astrid sitting next to Dante, whispering things impossible to make out. Althea walked over to her corner, put down the marigold and picked up a large stone. She mashed up the petals until they were no more than, well, tiny little dried up petal pieces. Althea picked up the leaf that the marigold was on and walked over to Dante. "Astrid! Go get me something to use as a bandage!", the girl instructed.

Astrid got out of Althea's way and blinked. "What am I supposed to get?"

"I don't know; something! Get me some cloth!"

Astrid looked at Althea. Where am I supposed to get cloth from?! "God, she just thinks I can magically make stuff appear",

*Continued on page 10*

Continued from page 9

Astrid thought to herself. The girl looked around the cavern to see if there was anything there. Why couldn't Althea just get the cloth? Astrid sighed. She walked over to where Dante's shirt was and threw it at Althea. "There's your stupid cloth!"

Althea looked over at the shirt that had landed next to her. The grey top was covered in blood but it would have to do. The girl ripped off a long strip of material, made sure that she had enough marigold on the wound, and wrapped the piece of material around the male's body.

★ ★ ★

IT HAD been three days since Dante had been shot; and the boy's eyes were still

closed. Astrid had been sitting with him in every spare moment of her time, but the boy didn't seem to be showing any signs of improvement. She could hear the sound of Destanee giving the afternoon's orders. Astrid stood up, and began to walk out of the cavern when she heard a quiet voice. Was that...? No. It couldn't be. Then she heard the voice again. It was. That voice was Dante's! Astrid turned around and ran back to the boy. His eyes fluttered open and he spoke again, "Astrid..." His voice was weak, and almost impossible to make out, but Astrid managed.

"Dante... I... I thought that you..." Astrid smiled, tears flowing down her cheeks like waterfalls. Astrid wiped her eyes and continued speaking, "I thought you'd... I thought... you were... were... dead".

"I wouldn't give up, Astrid; I'm still fighting, fighting for my life, fighting, for you", he breathed; his voice soft, and sweeter than honey.

Astrid buried her face into her hands. Besides the sound of Astrid crying, the cavern was silent. Dante sat up slowly, and looked at Astrid. "It's OK now, I'm not planning on leaving you any time soon", he whispered.

Astrid leaned on Dante's shoulder, wiping the tears from her eyes. The girl looked at him, eyes wide. "You promise you won't do that again?"

"I promise."

By **Chelsea Barnes**  
Year 5

St. Bernadette's Primary School  
THE BASIN – VIC.

Lilly and Amy were the best of friends  
Because they both liked the same things  
Horses and ponies were the things that would blend  
And both of them liked a bit of bling  
They rode out on their horses,  
To the long-time dark forest,  
Only to find some forces,  
Within the twiggly blorrest

Bunny and Etching were trotting quite fine,  
Until Lilly and Amy disappeared into the vines,  
They twisted and tumbled, down the dirty hill side,  
And found themselves confuzzled,  
About the new found Billibi,  
So Lilly and Amy said "It's time to explore"  
But Bunny and Etching weren't there any more.

Lilly and Amy were lost beyond thought,  
So to fill themselves up,  
They had things that they had bought,  
There were: apples and sapples, strawberries and raspberries,  
Lilly liked the nappels,  
And Amy liked the blueberries,  
So the two of them ate but felt like horses,  
And then they realised what was wrong,  
They were eating the forces!

The force of the horses,  
Led the horses on a trail of courses,  
The courses were for them to see,  
The horses they owned – Bunny and Etching,  
But soon they found them,  
Waiting by a tree,  
And they said "ahem",  
And so it would be.

By **Rachael Beckwith**  
Year 4, Methodist Ladies College, KEW – VIC.

# The Adventure of the Horses



# Showing Great Courage

**T**HEY woke up to unfamiliar voices and noises that were coming from the window. As they walked towards the window to see what all the noises were, to their horror they were shocked to see that the Germans had invaded their country. It was then that they knew that their lives were going to change and it wasn't going to be for the better. It was then that my great-grandparents looked at each other and realised that they had to leave their country. Not only for them but for their children and unborn child that was due in January.

The gunfire and bombs could be heard in the distance and were only coming closer with every man and boy being sent to war. My great-grandparents knew it was time to leave their home so they gathered the children and told them to only take what they could carry and the clothes on their backs. They waited for nightfall to arrive and then the older kids carrying the younger ones on their backs slowly and carefully made their way into the thick bushes without being seen one by one. Their hearts were beating so fast with fear that it sounded like drums echoing through their bodies.

Hiding by day and travelling at night with every noise they looked at each other with a fear that engulfed them all, knowing what would happen if they were captured. They were tired, hungry and cold but had to keep going, only stopping at night to rest and eat the little food that they had.

My great-grandparents and their young children were walking down the rocky path when they heard a noise that seemed

to be a truck. The noise seemed to be coming closer and then it suddenly slowed down and without warning stopped. They quickly and quietly hid in the thick bushes only to see the truck stop and two soldiers in their German uniforms get out of the dusty covered truck. They lit a cigarette each, blowing the smoke into the clear blue sky. Then my great-uncle accidentally stumbled back into the dry branch and the soldiers heard the noise and started to walk towards them. This was when my great-grandmother looked at my great-grandfather giving him a smile and started walking towards the soldier knowing this was the only way to keep her family safe.

The soldiers asked her where her husband and family were. My great-grandmother replied that her husband was dead and did not have any other family except the baby she was carrying. One soldier grabbed her and pushed her in the back of the truck. When she pulled herself up from the hard floor she was shocked to see that she was not alone. There were a few older people that were sitting down against the end of the truck. One of the older men with a scar on his eye spoke in a gentle voice, "You have to escape when you get a chance or you and your unborn child will die".

The soldiers got into the truck and started to drive away. My great-grandfather and the children were shocked and upset by what had happened but knew that his wife showed courage and love for her family giving up her and her unborn child's life for them.

As the truck drove down the rocky dusty road it seemed to take forever. My

great-grandmother knew she had to do something to save her life and her unborn child or die trying. The truck started to slow down and on the left side of the truck she could see there was a steep hill. She felt a cold hand on her shoulder and she knew it was time. The soldiers were talking, not looking through the mirror. This was her chance to escape, she took a final breath, gave one last look at the people that were in the truck and jumped out of the truck holding her arms around her belly trying to protect her unborn child as they rolled endlessly down the steep hill. Slowly and shaken she managed to get to her feet and made her way into the thick tall green bushes, waiting for hours until it started to get dark, making sure that it was safe before returning to find her family.

She walked for hours, hiding and listening to all the noises in the distances until she returned to the same place where she last saw her family. My great-grandmother could not see her family. Sadness seemed to fill her heart and a tear started to roll down her light, hot face. She sat down on the cool ground, tired and sore from the long walk back, not knowing what she was going to do next to find her family. She was frightened by a noise that was coming from in between the thick trees She quietly walked towards the noise to see a pair of blue eyes staring at her through the branch. As she was about to say a word, as she turned around there was her family one by one running towards her, hugging and crying and holding each other.

By **Matthew Gigliotti**

Age 14

CORDEAUX HEIGHTS – NSW



# JACK FROST

## Winter

Winter is...  
Early mornings in the dark I rise  
Before the stars have left the skies  
Icy cold every day  
Never going outside to play.  
Snow is falling on the grass  
Frost sticking to the glass.

Winter is...  
Freezing cold  
Snow has taken hold  
Peering out my front door  
Looks like it's going to snow some more.  
Sweet, hot chocolate I slurp up  
Soon nothing left in the cup.  
Close by the fire I sit  
To warm my frozen butt a bit!

By **Morgan Millett**  
Year 5, Crescent Head Public School  
CRESCENT HEAD – NSW

What makes the icicles hang off rooftops?  
What makes the snowflakes fall?  
What makes the frost patterns on windows?  
What makes the wind call?  
What makes the night so chilly?  
What makes the pond glassy all over?  
What makes humans freeze like poor little Billy?  
What makes the flowers go to sleep?  
What makes snow cover up grass?  
What makes the cold ruin things so that they never keep?  
Everyone knows it is Jack Frost!

Jack Frost  
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What makes the snowflakes fall?  
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Everyone knows it is Jack Frost!

By **Cleo McCabe**  
Year 5, Methodist Ladies' College  
KEW – VIC.

## The Hidden Kingdom of Amber

**D**EEP underground in a dirty tunnel, Flake the dragon knew he wouldn't be seeing his friends on the surface until midday... At least that's what he thought.

As he dug deeper underground in his drilling machine he realised that there were chunks of fiery amber in the walls. Then suddenly he drilled through into an open space. His drilling machine landed with a crash but luckily Flake managed to grip some stone with his powerful icy diamond tipped tail which immediately froze the rock. Beneath Flake was a river scattered with amber. He dropped into it and was immediately struck by the passing orange coloured rock, but it didn't hurt, thanks to his thick obsidian scales.

When he got out of the river Flake found himself standing in front of a magnificent kingdom. The kingdom was made out of the same fiery material Flake had seen

earlier. Inside was an incredible golden throne. Further through the lost kingdom Flake found an awesome old blacksmith's forge.

Eventually Flake decided he should head back to the surface and let the king know of his discovery. Giving it a moment of thought, an idea struck him like a punch to the head. 'Of course, the river must lead to the surface!' thought Flake aloud. And with that he lunged into the water.

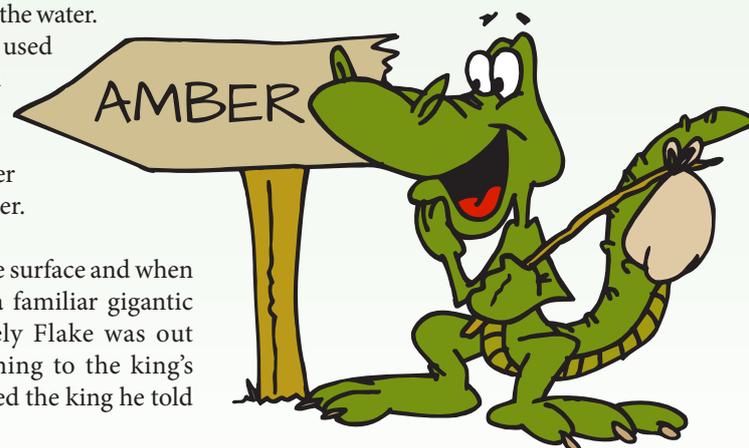
It was icy cold so Flake used his reluctance talon (the hardest substance in the universe which can become hot whenever chosen) to heat the water.

At last Flake came to the surface and when he looked up he saw a familiar gigantic mountain. Immediately Flake was out of the water and running to the king's palace. When he reached the king he told

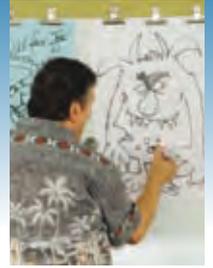
him all that had happened. Finding this tremendously exciting, the king dispatched a group of his finest knights to the Hidden Kingdom of Amber at once.

As for Flake he lived a peaceful life, until he went exploring again....

By **Jesse Quinell**  
Year 4, The Essington School  
NIGHTCLIFF – NT



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# The Game

I STOOD stiffly at the podium, staring at the coffin.

“Life is like a game.”

★ ★ ★

I knew as soon as I saw the flashing lights outside my house that something wasn't right. What happened next was the sort of thing you would see in movies and television shows; the menacing knock at the door, the solemn expression on the policeman's face as he told you the bad news, the uncomfortable look on their face as they tried to comfort you and slow your tears.

It was Mum. Mum had been hurt, but we didn't know how badly. Dad was distraught as he nudged me gently towards the car. An awkward silence ensued and a heavy sinking feeling inside made me hesitant to talk about the severity of Mum's condition.

As I watched the cars whiz past the car window, I reassured myself that Mum was brave and strong-minded. Nothing could get in her way – and that's what I admired about her.

Half an hour later, we'd arrived at the hospital and a nurse had led us to Mum's room. She looked sickly pale with cuts and bruises everywhere and casts on her arms, legs and head.

Dad and I stood outside the room, speechless as we peered in through the window. A rigid expression had consumed

my Dad's face and he almost seemed mad. “Mr Fulborne?” A young, short doctor approached us carefully.

“What happened?” asked Dad, tears now streaming down his face.

“Well, sir, I'm afraid she lost an unhealthy amount of blood and her condition is critical. Right now she's in a coma and her breathing is steady, but she's extremely weak and her lungs were damaged in the car accident—”

“Car accident?” Dad rudely interrupted.

“I'm very sorry, sir. Her lungs could give out at any minute and there's nothing we can do. They are too badly damaged.” He assured us that they would do anything they could to help us and Mum, then walked away briskly.

Dad and I entered Mum's room and sat down on two chairs. “Dad”, I choked, “Is Mum going to die?”. The only response I received was a miserable sigh.

We stayed there overnight, never leaving those two very chairs the whole night. Breakfast was cheap, runny eggs that weren't cooked properly, and toast. Every little sound I heard, my head would flick to Mum in a split second, but she didn't wake up.

Finally, Dad heaved himself off his chair with a pant and left to get lunch. I crossed my legs on my chair and stared emptily at the blank white walls. I felt so trapped and helpless.

The chair was unexpectedly heavy; moving it across the room next to mum was a chore. I reached for her hand and squeezed it tightly, hoping she could feel it and that she would wake up. “I love you Mum”, I sobbed. Wiping away my tears, I sat up straighter and neaten up my school dress.

A faint groan made me jump and I looked at Mum hopefully. Bending over her, I looked at her eyes. All of a sudden, two bright blue eyes stared back at mine. Grinning, I hugged her gently and relief flooded through me.

It finally felt like everything would be all right. “Hey, sweetie. What happened?” Mum croaked.

“You were in a car accident. But you're OK now, everything's going to go back to normal now. You're OK.”

“Baby, baby, I'm going to go back to sleep, OK?” she yawned.

“No, Mum, please don't,” I pleaded with her, but she closed her eyes and a serene look flushed across her face. I sighed and sat back down. I was sad she'd gone back to sleep, but I felt at peace. A loud, long beep interrupted my peacefulness and I immediately turned around.

★ ★ ★

“And my Mum lost.”

By **Madison Unicomb**  
Year 7, Turrumurra High School  
TURRAMURRA – NSW

# Door to a Dunny

“U H... I don't want to but I have to. I hate them, they're feral, but it's my only hope.” He slowly opened the creaky door, making sure there were no spiders. He sat down, but before he could even begin imagining the horrors beneath him he started to fall down slowly. Was this the end or just the beginning?

“Phew, what a drive”, Doctor Raymond Spilcas exclaimed just as he and his dog arrived up Mount Barney. He'd never been camping and although there was a hut the whole idea hadn't comforted him. “I'm going to find some toilets”, he said, and went to the back of the hut. There he saw an old wooden door. “Uh, an outhouse” he said. “Yuck”, he shuddered, “They must have some newer facilities around here”. But he looked and looked and there was

only the old outhouse, and by now he was desperate...

He slowly opened the creaky door, and there he saw a wooden box. “A box?!” he thought. “Who would make a toilet out of a box?” He slowly opened the lid, and a horrible smell drifted to his nose. “Uh, I don't want to, but I have to, it's my only hope.” As soon as he sat down, he felt himself fall, slowly down that stinky hole. And as he fell he wondered. Was this the end or just the beginning?

When he hit the bottom, he was greeted by a horrible stench. “It's worse down here then it is up there”, he said out loud. He then realised he had to get out, but it was so dark he couldn't see his own hands in front of him. With no way out he decided to sit down on the slushy ground beneath

him and think of a plan, and as he started to think of a plan, a dark figure emerged in front of him, and let out a deep terrifying roar. It was a monster...

He was so scared, he couldn't move, his mouth was dry. He went to scream but no sound came out. He tried to stand but his legs wouldn't move. It started throwing things at him. Realising he had to defend himself, he looked around for a weapon. “Surely someone must have dropped a knife or syringe down here?”, he thought, but no, only poo. “Poo! Of course”, he thought. It was a disturbing thought to him, but desperate times call for desperate measures.

Flinching a little, he started throwing poo at the monster but no matter how much he threw, the monster just seeped it in. He was a dunny monster he decided, a stinky smelly dunny monster.

Exhausted, covered in poo and his nose severely bruised from the stench, Doctor Raymond prepared himself to die, but there was something in his pocket. He reached into it and there it was, his prized pocket knife. He withdrew the blade and started to slice and hack at the monster with all the strength he could muster. It slowly crashed down into nothing more than a pile of poo. Feeling like a new man he began to walk straight ahead into the great unknown.

There was a sudden blinding light, and then all of a sudden he was on the floor with his pants down staring at his dog Max. “I'm back, I'm back!” he shouted. He must have been dreaming, yes he thought, no poo at all. “Yes!”, he cried, “it never happened!”.

He started running towards the horizon with his dog on his heels screaming and shouting as he went; it had been the happiest day for Doctor Raymond in a long time and he never ever had a problem with a toilet ever again.

The End

By **Rebecca Anne Campbell**  
Year 9, Age 14  
TANAH MERAH – QLD.



# B A N S H E E

**D**ANIELS prodded the figure cautiously, anxious for some sort of response. Disappointed at the lack of reaction, he circled slowly, musing from every angle. Oddly, the woman flickered so she faced him no matter which side he observed her from, almost like one of those lenticular cards you find in cereal boxes.

He tapped his pen on his temple nervously, tracing her blank stare to somewhere behind his desk. Her white hair was completely still yet splayed around her face as if it had frozen in a single gust of wind.

Avoiding her unsettling stare the officer left the room, bemused, closing the door behind him with a click. He walked to the telephone on the wall but hesitated, unsure of a number to call. The morgue?

The woman surely was not alive, yet she remained eerily upright. And the more

he thought the more helpless he became; who does a policeman call when he sees something unfathomable? He shook himself slightly and his hand rested on his handgun.

He opened the door again slightly, bracing himself to look into those cold blank eyes but the creature was gone, revealing only the horrid rug in the centre of the room. Daniels shut the door quietly and leant his head on it with a small thud; some brave police officer he was.

'I'll take another beer thanks, mate', Ethan told the bartender casually in his slight Irish accent.

The man nodded and approached the tap. Ethan rose from the stool and welcomed his brother to the faded stool beside him.

'Oh, look who it is', Ethan mocked. 'Shouldn't you be at work, Mister Family Man?'

The brother shook his head and slumped in the seat, causing it to squeak in protest, and accepted a beer from the man behind the counter.

'So what's going on with you?' Ethan asked, his normally cheery face suddenly serious, concern evident on his face. 'Why aren't you in Durham?'

Dylan downed his beer before answering, 'Just headaches.'

Ethan leaned forward, 'Everything's all right with Carly isn't it?'

'Yes, yes, of course', Dylan replied evasively.

Ethan rolled his eyes in disbelief and hauled himself to his feet.

'I'm going to the loo but when I get back you better be ready to talk about why goody-goody Dylan is in a pub in

Birmingham instead of where his family thinks he is’.

Ethan strolled away, making sure to give his brother a firm yet not entirely serious look before disappearing into the bathroom. It was obvious he was somewhat satisfied, as if it was about time that his brother’s blameless record was tainted. Dylan did not relax when Ethan left the room, in fact he visibly tensed, his shoulders drooped and his hands dangled uselessly beside him. He attempted to use his peripheral vision but it only made his head pound.

He woke up that morning and there she was, in the corner of his eye, always watching him. Sometimes he would jump around, prepared to catch her unaware but she never faltered, never looked away. Dylan had even reached the point where he suspected she was some deformation of his eye and was somehow etched on the side of his eyeball. But that was, of course, the alcohol speaking.

Dylan closed his eyes, seeking refuge from her barren eyes. He was jolted out of his state when Ethan returned from the bathroom, looking uncharacteristically pale. Dylan decided he would save mentioning this until later if the conversation was too intensely focused on himself.

Ethan nudged Dylan and signalled to the door. A young woman outside staggered comically, frantically regarding everything in the proximity. She then proceeded to examine the grimy door with wide, wild eyes. Dylan snorted and Ethan joined in as she straightened so quickly the two men could almost hear her back complain. Dylan felt his body relax slightly, thankful for the amusing change in atmosphere. The woman brushed her hair to the side, tucking it behind her ear and winked at them before opening the door with as much grace and dignity as she could muster.

Magy swung her long legs out of the car and lifted herself out with ease.

‘I’ll see you later’, she called to her brother as he drove away.

She reached into her pocket and produced a stack of envelopes, wrapped in a thin purple bow. She walked towards the pub, flicking through the envelopes checking and double-checking that she spelt all of the names correctly. She reached the

dreary, glass door with a faded ‘OPEN’ sign wedged in the door frame, checking her reflection in the glass as she grasped the door handle.

Magy let out a small gasp, seeing the reflection of the figure behind her right shoulder. The woman radiated like the moon. If the moon was cruel. If the moon had milky eyes, staring Magy down. However, most disturbing was her mouth, stretched into a silent scream. If she had teeth they were not visible, just a deep black space that kept Magy transfixed. But by the time she summoned the courage to turn and face the creature, it was as if she was never there.

Magy shook her head vigorously. Her brothers had always warned her that she has an overactive imagination and that one day it would get her in trouble. She returned to the door once more, anxiously monitoring the glass’ reflection.

Suddenly she became aware of how stupid she must look. She saw two young men sitting at the bar, sniggering at her. Magy mentally slapped herself and flashed a flirtatious smile in their general direction before entering the pub, trying to control the blush rising in her face, the door swinging closed behind her.

Ethan felt it first. A small tremble that could have been passed off for a grumble of the stomach. But what came next spread terror through his entire body.

An enormous force ripped through one of the booths near the entrance. A wave of heat hit him with the force of a train. The stool was knocked from underneath him. He caught a glimpse of the force pushing his brother into the counter. He watched as a strip of unrecognisable metal sliced through his brother’s torso.

Ethan had often wondered what his last thought would be before he died, although not expecting it to be so soon. He had always assumed it would be some inspirational sentiment or total contentment with what he had achieved in life. He did not expect his last thought to be of the terrifying, unearthly woman who had grabbed him in the bathroom. And he never imagined that it would be her painfully cold hands closing over his heart as his eyes rolled back, engulfing him in darkness, as if trying to enter his very skull.

Magy was propelled forward and she hit the floor, her nose testifying to the unbelievable force with a sickening crunch. Glass showered on top of her, stinging like 10,000 needles piercing her skin. Her hand relaxed. The invitations slipped out of her hand. Blood was smeared across the name at the top of the pile. And soon that was all Magy could see, the blood smeared across a cursive ‘J’, and she knew without a doubt that the glass in her back was the reflection from the glass, seeking its revenge.

Officer Daniels entered the pub where a wall should have been, the bricks from the building littered across the entire street. He stepped over the first body which was barely recognisable, a woman or possibly a young boy, he could not tell, not that he wanted to.

His two-way radio spluttered with static, ‘evacuation... police... bomb... New Street... bloody Irish’.

The officer lifted the radio to his mouth and spoke monotonously, ‘Daniels here, at the scene of the crime, evacuating all personnel from area’.

He slipped the radio into his pocket with uneasy hands. Other police officers wandered among the debris, hesitantly checking for any survivors. Daniels’ eyes rested on the torso of a young man on the floor, his detached legs still sitting on the stool with morbid irony. He waved off a younger officer who attempted to approach the torso. Daniels knew it was unnecessary and he didn’t want half the police force permanently traumatised.

He ran his hand through his receding hair and inexplicably thought of the sinister creature he had imagined that morning in his office. He barely had time to picture her lurid face. A second blast went off. Officer Daniels dropped like a puppet cut from its strings.

Her wail shook the town, her scream seemed to never end. Its shrillness sliced through the air with ease. Her screeches stopped pedestrians, pausing from their everyday lives to cover their ringing ears. Then the woman vanished. She disappeared from all sight with an odd shiver, leaving the street in vexatious silence.

*By Hayley Calman  
Year 11, St. Mary’s Senior High School  
ST. MARYS – NSW*

**A** COBALT curtain was draped across the cloudless sky as we cruised along the sapphire surface of the Pacific Ocean. The crisp, salty air sent my brunette locks billowing in every direction as I sat atop the roof of our charter boat. To this day I still remember how my entire body swayed in unison with the melodic movement of the vessel, while my seasick sister heaved and retched over the side. I was perched next to my father, who was trying to convince me that our expedition to the Great Barrier Reef was a good idea.

‘C’mon mate, you’ll love it’, he would say insistently, although I didn’t believe him. I never really appreciated the thrill of outdoor activities and would much rather have spent the day watching cartoons in our hotel room. However, when we finally arrived at our spot on the reef, I wanted to kick myself for even considering that alternative.

I remember feeling like I was in a different world. At this point, my blue surroundings had warped and changed; the sea was the same shade of cobalt as the sky, meshing the seascape into an azure aquatic haven. I recall thinking that if there was a heaven, I was already there. Seabirds pirouetted above me as they filled the fresh, briny air with their familiar, raspy squawks. Small fish frolicked below; their brightly coloured scales glistened under the ocean’s surface like stars on a sapphire sky. The urge to join them in the cool, saliferous shallows of the reef was overwhelming – my desire to explore this alien seascape had reached breaking point.

I had no time for the monotonous protocols of our charter boat and began to jitter with uncontrollable anticipation as we slowly moved off the vessel. We were anchored



at a pontoon in the middle of the Pacific Ocean; I remembered gawking at it in amazement, wondering how such a large building could stay afloat. My little sister had made the same realisation and began screaming in protest, claiming that we were going to sink and drown. However, I had managed to share some of my excitement with her by describing the various species of clams and turtle that she’d see later in the day.

After the necessary safety equipment had been acquired, we made our way to the water and I launched myself off the edge of the pontoon like an Olympic swimmer. The reaction was instantaneous – I had been transported into a different dimension. Thousands of species of fish clouded my vision in every colour I could imagine. Pangs of yellow and red would appear and disappear in seconds with the passing schools of smaller fish, while deep blues and silvers would flash by as larger creatures swam through the reef. Other

wildlife was plentiful; dotted stingrays glided across the surface of the ivory sand while multi-coloured eels and sea snakes twirled above.

I spent many hours snorkelling through the designated areas assigned by the pontoon managers. To keep myself occupied, I played games. In one moment, I was King Neptune of the lost city of Atlantis, dictating orders to my small army of clownfish that had accumulated in the shallows. The submerged landscape was my kingdom; the emerald sashes of seaweed, the snow-like mounds of bleached coral. It was all mine and no one could tell me otherwise. In the next moment I was a vicious shark, drifting along the surface of my watery domain in search of a small, unsuspecting creature to devour. No matter what situation my imagination would fabricate, I was always powerful and strong and no one could stop me.

As my family made our way back to the mainland, I remember feeling more tired than I ever have in my life. My body ached from treading water, my eyes were strained and my skin stung from the burning sun. Nevertheless, I was the happiest I had been in my entire life. I had experienced my first true escape from reality; an experience that I will continue to seek for many years later. The issues that I was dealing with at the time were carried away with the tide; I was submerged into a silent, colourful world that was free of the pressures of my life. As a result, snorkelling has become a favourite pastime of mine – when the world becomes too hard, you will find me drifting through the cerulean depths of my own.

By **Brad Scholl**

Year 12, Eynesbury Senior College  
ADELAIDE – SA

# Love

Love is in the air  
Love is over there  
Love may not know you’re there  
when you’re just sitting in a chair  
Love can hurt and make you cry,  
breaks into a million pieces and flies  
Love may not last forever but you know  
it’s still there  
stuck together

By **Marisa Djukanovic**

Age 10  
CUMBERLAND PARK – SA

# Twilight

I have a cat called Twilight,  
she is good at seeing in the night.  
She likes to play with a bundle of wool,  
but she doesn't like to go in the pool.

She never ever goes to town,  
as she is frightened of a funny clown.

She always likes to play a trick,  
and always tells me what to pick.  
She gets cold when she goes near fans,  
she always looks for food in big cans.

She always like to read my books,  
and likes to eat what our maid cooks.

She is the best cat to me  
and the cleverest cat that I can see.

By **Kym Eng**

Age 8, Macgregor State School  
MACGREGOR – QLD.



# Oh, I Wish I'd Looked After Me Cat

Oh, I wish I'd looked after me cat.  
But instead, I turned her into a brat.  
While I ran around all day  
And fetched us both some food and pay,  
She just stretched and yawned on her mat.

Some days I wished I could squish her flat,  
But that would make quite a splat.

So one fine day,  
I decided to give her away.  
And I guess that was that.

By **Kareena Kaur**

Age 11, Caddies Creek Public School  
GLENWOOD – NSW

# A Little Spark

Flying high;  
There is never anything quite like it,  
When you soar you're alive,  
Nothing can tear you down,  
You are unbeatable.

Falling hard;  
It is hard to make the journey back,  
You feel down forever like a wing-clipped duck,  
The quicksand of life anchors you down,  
Will you ever get to see the light shine again?

Your struggling will weaken you,  
It will never help you,  
It never does,  
Your luck feels lost,  
Your world has been tipped upside down.

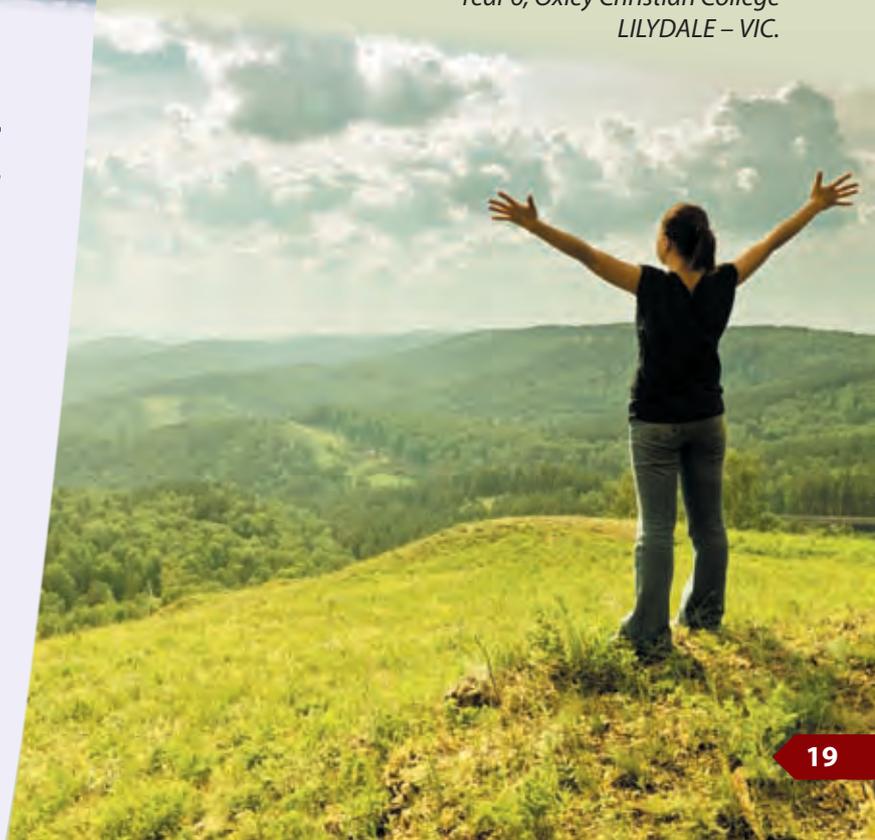
In life we all have a silent listener,  
It is always there when you're high,  
You just need to recognise it when you're low,  
It will be there if you look for it,  
It's there to help whenever you are in need.

Your listener has a flame that keeps it alive,  
That flame is destiny, hope, joy and love,  
It never fails,  
It will spark if you really want it.

Your little spark is yours to keep,  
Cherish it and be inspired from what grows,  
From your spark will grow your flame,  
And before you know it,  
You're on top of the world.

By **Hannah Schey**

Year 6, Oxley Christian College  
LILYDALE – VIC.



# The Woods of Moon Hill

**D**OWN deep into Moon Hill, where night time never stops, there are thick, dense woods where fairies live. The woods glow with an eerie light and the shadows and noises start as you step into the woods. My gran tells me about the mysterious woods, but warns me not to go there. She says that the fairies and elves will hide at my coming and the goblins and trolls will slowly step out but won't harm me, as they do to other humans.

That's because they know that the Goblin Kings and Queens were my ancestors.

My ancestors were the rulers and very sly ones too. Their ways of capturing the fairies and elves were very well-planned, even though their deeds were wrong. Gran says to me that in the middle of the woods, in a small clearing, there in a gold tree stump is a small circle where you place your hand. Then you say 'Huskarillijotia'. Don't ask, I have absolutely no idea what that means, but it's a passcode.



Next, you shrink so small that a bee would be the size of a baby to you. Because you are so small, you see the world like you are a fairy or goblin. Sounds so cool... That's it. I love reminding myself of gran's stories but I have to go there!

I cycle to the woods and drop my bike on the floor and follow the instructions from the stories. I go so small that I'm starting to regret this. Little wild mushroom houses (for goblins and trolls) come into view and flower houses (for elves and fairies) stand proudly on another section. A goblin with blond hair says 'Isn't that...' from his window then rushes to his birdseed phone.

Suddenly, I'm mobbed by goblins, shouting at me and asking me if I'm Zatario's descendant. 'Quiet! A gobmaster was made to ask questions!' yells an elderly man with a big green beard.

Then his tone softens as he asks me, 'Please will you take duty as our queen now?'

I want to badly, but I should live my normal life. I tell the elderly man this, and he says he understands. But I tell him I'll be back one day.

He tells me to take a dark blue stone and says it is to remind me of them.

I go back home and sleep. Was that a dream? I look once more at the stone and realise that I was there, at Moon Hill woods with my future. I'll be there, someday, and make the goblins proud.

By **Sreya VT**

Year 5, NORTH RYDE – NSW

## The Houses

I think a lot of us are like  
those little forgotten houses  
on little forgotten streets.  
Those ones you pass time and time  
and time again  
and never notice.  
They're there, but also are not  
they are the not-nots,  
the double negatives.  
Noticeable, but meaningless.

And one day you'll be walking  
and the light will seem different and  
(out of the corner of your eye)  
you'll glance from a different angle and see  
a quaint, gorgeous cottage with an  
abundant garden  
and long grass,  
and the windows will twinkle like we do when we peek out from  
under our lashes,  
and you'll wonder why you've never seen  
that beautiful house  
on that once familiar street.

By **Ellie Kaddatz**

Age 14, Mercy College  
SOUTH MACKAY – QLD.

# Ambassadors



🕒 **Krista Bell** is an award-winning author of twenty-six 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, started as a book reviewer on ABC Radio, and during that time moved to Melbourne with her family. She now reviews books regularly on ABC Radio in Queensland.

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 transport planner husband next to a railway line so she can quickly catch a train to the MCG to watch a football or cricket 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.jenimawter.com)

# World Building: the City of Monsters

By DC Green

**B**UILDING a world in fantasy or speculative fiction is a largely invisible 'off-page' creative process. It is also essential – and soooooo much fun!

World building might seem intimidating, but piece by piece, brick by brick, suburbs, towns and entire continents can be created – or, in the case of Tolkien, entire languages. Yet it all begins with a foundation stone: a single idea. Often, the more imaginative and outrageous the concept, the better – that is, as long as everything ties together and logically works. Changing just a single element of something that exists in the real world with a bold 'what if' can also lead to innumerable more changes that telescope into whole new paradigms, worlds or universes.

So it was with my latest children's novel, *Monster School*.

My basic change was taking a city – and filling it with every known monster type from every human culture. From that simple conceit, I constantly referred back to the real world for inspiration and guidance to assist my urban planning. For example, many cities are divided into ethnic mini-cities, having a Gypsy Town or a Chinese Quarter. I figured monsters of a feather would also likely flock together, so I roughly divided my city into quarters: one each for mythic creatures (giant spiders, ogres), dead citizens (vampires, mummies), goblins (they have their own quarter as their numbers are so great) and ex-humans (people and monsters that have been enhanced with bionics and cyborg parts, like the Terminator or Robocop, or genetically modified, like Frankenstein's monster).

I roughed these quarters onto a map and added a chain of mountains to help with the sub-dividing. The peak of the main central mountain, Castle Mount (the construct of now-extinct giant ants), became the home for the dwindling human population. The middle section of Castle Mount became the logical central location of the city administration, mostly run by the mafia goblin clans.

Many of my expansion ideas turned out to be unviable or dull. Some ideas worked or were interesting, but I was still happy to replace them if a superior idea strutted along. So my city map gradually darkened with details...

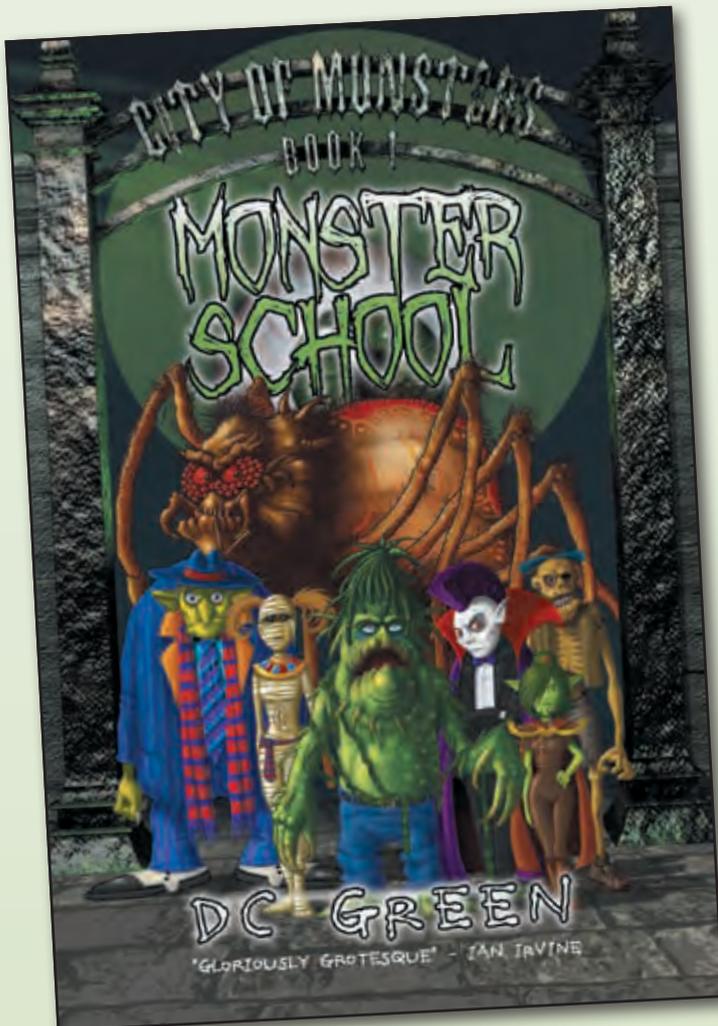
The richest real estate in Monstro City is Holly Hill,

the artificial mountain where celebrity monsters and the mega-rich live in gated luxury (such as Dracula, a now legless Godzilla and King Kong's descendants). The city's third major mountain houses but a single monster – the awesome dragon, Kalthazari!

Gradually zooming in, I wrote a fake census for all of Monstro City. I tried to allocate every monster type to a particular suburb or quarter, giving each:

- a population number (Ogres, 32,000, as an example);
- their own primary profession (Ogres are the most valued bodyguards in Monstro City);
- an HP (human points) rating – basically a measure of their strength (Ogres, 6);
- a list of their special powers, hopefully with a modern scientific(ish) explanation (To become bodyguards, ogres must first graduate from the Ogre Academy with skills in fighting, military strategy and multiple weapon use);
- their own history that also entwines with ancient, pre-flood history and Monstro City's 'modern' 600 year history. (Ogres moved into the bodyguard industry in the Twenty-third Century as goblins proved too puny and treacherous for the role);
- their own values, traditions, songs, languages, sayings, religions and leader (the Ogre Pope heads a conservative, militaristic, reticent and merit-based culture);

The primary profession question proved the most complicated (and, the most fun!). I knew if Monstro City was to become a functioning metropolis, it would require a wide range of workers and skills: farmers, doctors, teachers, bureaucrats, police officers, tax collectors, garbage collectors and more. Filling in the gaps was surprisingly easy. Planning ideas crept into my thoughts on long road trips, while showering and, of course, at 3 am. Every new idea and job allocation stirred fresh connections, possible conflicts and



story-lines. So my city rushed to its own completion.

All up, planning Monstro City took 18 months of my life, including 200 plus pages of background notes and a small shelf of monster research books. My backdrop ready, I felt confident – and brimful with zeal – to launch into my novel at last.

Yes, the vast majority of my city planning did not make it to the final printed pages of *Monster School*. I was fine with that; back-story is, after all, the handbrake of fiction. I knew my readers didn't need to know every city detail; as long as they felt confident I knew, that I hadn't taken any authorly short cuts or left any gaping plot

or logic holes. I hope I've earned such confidence and that readers enjoy the rich backdrop that is woven throughout the *City of Monsters*.

Now back to finishing book two!

*DC Green is an acclaimed children's author and award-winning surf journalist. His latest novel, Monster School, has won two pre-publication awards and been hailed by Ian Irvine as 'a wild, wise-cracking ride'. Featuring amazingly monstrous artwork by Danny Willis, Monster School is available in good bookstores or online at [www.fordstreetpublishing.com](http://www.fordstreetpublishing.com). For more DC stuff, check out [dkgreenyarns.blogspot.com](http://dkgreenyarns.blogspot.com) or the 'DC Green Author' Facebook page.*



**H**ILLS stretched before me, ascending and rolling in frozen waves across a great, green canvas. The day was clear but dark, no sun visible through the trembling clouds. Clouds that had bellies of a dark mahogany, the world around me taking on faded sepia tone. Yet colours still presented themselves, clear and lavish but dimly lit, a dirtied kaleidoscopic effect taking its toll on the panoramic scenery. I stood high, on one hill higher than the others, reaching for an emotion that would lighten up these dark skies.

Staring at my hands revealed the creases and cracks of the poisonous pain and suffering that had wreathed its malignant ink through my skin in spidery veins and up my arms. My fingers wavered, obliterating the seamless landscape behind them. I should have found solace in those hands but they could not cease to remind me of the missed opportunities and experiences that these spindly outlines of flesh had striven to achieve.

I slumped to the ground, the soil firm and soft on which I had trodden upon to get here. My eyes held those of the sky, though I found that mine were blinking more than usual. Hands reaching for my face, I didn't find it dry but instead cool and wet. It had begun to sprinkle, I realised, a simple excuse for my saturated face. I was here for a reason, but that didn't stop me from feeling as if I was drifting through an ocean where no land was in sight. I had no anchor here, as much as I had tried to

## Melancholy



find one. The newspaper had arrived back at home on the doorstep as usual, soggy and pitiful, its contents giving me small reason to excite. Still, a meteorite was always interesting; I was only surprised that there wasn't anyone else here to see it. I craned my neck around again, no-one. Only the rain, darkness, hills, trees and me, just me.

Larger droplets of rain began to fall, in quicker succession and with a stronger resolve. A small turn of my lips creased my face; rain had always superseded my unhappiness. Only I hadn't felt a smile on my lips for such a long time. My lips crookedly arose, a clumsy attempt at happiness. I fought for control and just as quickly as it had slipped on, my smile disappeared completely. Only my eyes were wild, they still retained the half-crazed look I had kept with me for so long. I felt the rain begin to get heavier, the world seemed farther away then, my physical body lighter. My attachment to this world was weakening, I knew that.

My body quivered as I lay down, stretching out my limbs to their full extent. Rain drops caught in my eyes, natural water mixing with salty. I blinked again and the sky broke apart in lightning in return, the world above ablaze with a blinding light. A struggle between light and dark ensued; lightning crackling with ferocious electricity and storm clouds raging with barbaric intent. Staring at the phenomenal clash of kings of the sky, I laughed without humour as I realised what this meant. My own soul written metaphorically across the heavens in every aspect to behold. Dark as the night and streaked with light, my entity; the epitome of the battle before me. I continued to watch, fearful, as it had my rapt attention. As insignificant as it seemed, I couldn't look away and I knew I was powerless to influence the outcome.

Lightning braved the storm once again, glinting glamorously in the decadent light it portrayed itself in. I clenched my fists, my head whirring; I could hardly feel my body to its numbness. Rain was beating my carcass bloody yet I couldn't feel it and nor did I want to. The lightning disappeared, but still I stared contently out into the gloom. Confidently, assuredly, stubbornly, doubtfully, out I stared, only realising too late it wasn't coming back. I was alone in the darkness once again, and no-one was coming to save me.

By **Lucy Wylie**

Year 8, Caringbah High School  
CARINGBAH – ACT

# Young Australian Art & Writers' Awards 2013

## The BIC Young Australian Writer of the Year Award



**ELLEN THOMAS**

*Eynesbury Senior College, Adelaide, SA*



### ◀ Fortescue Metals Literary Award

*Short Story – Secondary*

**ELLEN THOMAS**

*Eynesbury Senior College, SA*



### Lions Club Literary Award ▶

*Short Story – Primary*

**HAYLEI WHITEHEAD**

*The Essington School, NT*



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FOR BOOKLOVERS



### ◀ Dymocks Camberwell Literary Award

*Poetry – Secondary*

**TANISHA MATTHEWS-GUNN**

*Assumption College, Vic.*

### Commonwealth Bank Literary Award ▶

*Poetry – Primary*

**OLIVIA BLAKE**

*Crescent Head Public School, NSW*





◀ **ASG Short Story Award**

**LIAM TONEV**

*Padbury Catholic Primary School, WA*

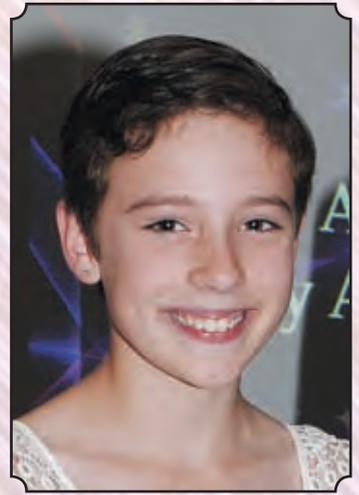


**Australian  
Scholarships  
Group**

**ASG Poetry Award ▶**

**SASCHA ZENARI**

*NSW*



◀ **Helen Handbury  
Achievement Award**

**SAMANTHA DOUTHWAITE**

*Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School, NSW*

**Helen Handbury ▶  
Literary Award**

**EVANGELINE YONG**

*The Mac.Robertson Girls' High School, Vic.*



*Marjory Gardner presents Jae Smith with the Avon Art Award.*



*(Above) The circus theme adopted for the 2013 Awards Night on 16 November 2013.*

*Photos Carol Dick & Frank Jones*



*Kelly Su, winner of the Bic Australia Art Award.*



**Sentinel Foundation Art Award  
Painting – Senior**  
**DOREEN GAN**  
*Baulkham Hills High School, NSW*

# Young 2013 Australian Art Awards



**Marc McBride Art Award  
Drawing – Senior**  
**SHAN SHAN QI**  
*St. George Girls' High School, NSW*

## The Lady Potter Art Award Young Australian Artist of the Year



**ALYCE WELBOURNE**  
*Mornington Secondary College, Vic.*



**Commonwealth Bank Art Award  
Painting – Middle**  
**HAYLEY THOMPSON**  
*Parkdale Primary School, Vic.*



**Bic Australia Art Award  
Drawing – Middle**  
**KELLY SU**  
*Carlingbah High School, NSW*



**ASG Art Award  
Painting – Primary**  
**GEORGIE DEMIR**  
*Ocean Grove PS, Vic.*



**Chinalco Yunnan Copper  
Resources Art Award**  
**KATELYN FURNISS**  
*St. Therese's Catholic PS, NSW*



**Brookfield Rail  
Regional Art Award**  
**BRYDEN WESTERN**  
*Kalgoorlie PS, WA*



**ASG Art Award  
Drawing – Primary**  
**KEELY SHEIDOW**  
*St. Francis Lockley's School*



**Avon Art Award  
Computer Art – Senior**  
**JAE SMITH**  
*St. John Fisher College, Qld.*



**Percy Baxter Trust Art Award  
Computer Art – Middle**  
**CAI HERPS**  
*Ballarat Clarendon College, Vic.*



**Crayola Art Award  
Computer Art – Primary**  
**ANGUS PRIMROSE**  
*Jerrabomberra Public School, NSW*



**Lions Club Art Award  
Photography – Senior  
AMBER HOLMES**

*Toormina High School, NSW*



**Lions Club Art Award  
Photography – Middle  
JASMYN BRUNATO**

*Bethany Catholic Primary School, Vic.*



**Lions Club Art Award  
Photography – Primary  
CHARLOTTE McFARLAND**

*Poynter Primary School, WA*



**Judge's Encouragement Award:  
Craig Smith  
CATHERINE HU**

*St. George Girls' High School, NSW*



**Judge's Encouragement Award:  
Marjory Gardner  
KENNY WANG**

*Hurstville Public School, NSW*



**Judge's Encouragement Award:  
Elise Hurst  
MILLIE NG**

*Brisbane Girls' Grammar School, Qld.*

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The New Force In Iron Ore



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- The Sentinel Foundation
- Unity Mining Ltd
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- William Angliss Charitable Fund



**Fortescue Metals  
Indigenous Art Award**  
LEROY DAVIS



**Mount Gibson Iron  
Indigenous Art Award**  
TYLER SILLERY-MAXWELL



**Brockman Resources  
Indigenous Art Award**  
DYLAN PEISLEY



**Lynas Corporation  
Indigenous Art Award**  
KATHY KICKETT



**Millennium Minerals  
Indigenous Art Award**  
SKYE TAYLOR

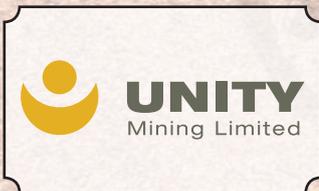


**Sandfire Resources  
Indigenous Art Award**  
EAMON PEISLEY



**ASG  
Indigenous Art Award**  
MALAKAI CUMMINS

# Indigenous Art Awards 2013



**Unity Mining  
Indigenous Art Award**  
SHANIA ALDRIDGE



**Iron Ore Holdings  
Indigenous Art Award**  
MALIQ JACKSON



**Energy Metals  
Indigenous Art Award**  
MITCHELL WATTS



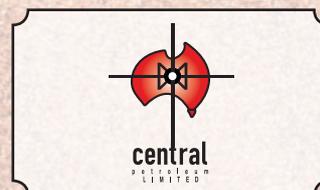
**Minemakers  
Indigenous Art Award**  
BILLY-ROY SANDY



**Silver Mines  
Indigenous Art Award**  
JOANNE SHARPE



**Whitehaven Coal  
Indigenous Art Award**  
BROOKE SADDLER



**Central Petroleum  
Indigenous Art Award**  
MICHAELA WATTS



**Beach Energy  
Indigenous Art Award**  
TAHMIA DUNCAN

**"YOU'RE late!",** yelled Mr Buckman from the other side of the classroom as Roby wandered in.

"I know", he said. Roby was a very unique young guy. His attitude cruised around the place. Some days I would hear him across the room and other days I wouldn't hear anything from him at all.

"Why are you are arriving to this class twenty minutes late?", he asked as he took his glasses off his head.

"I slept in", mumbled Roby, and pulled out his chair to sit down.

"Stay behind at the end of the lesson sir" Mr Buckman said, strictly.

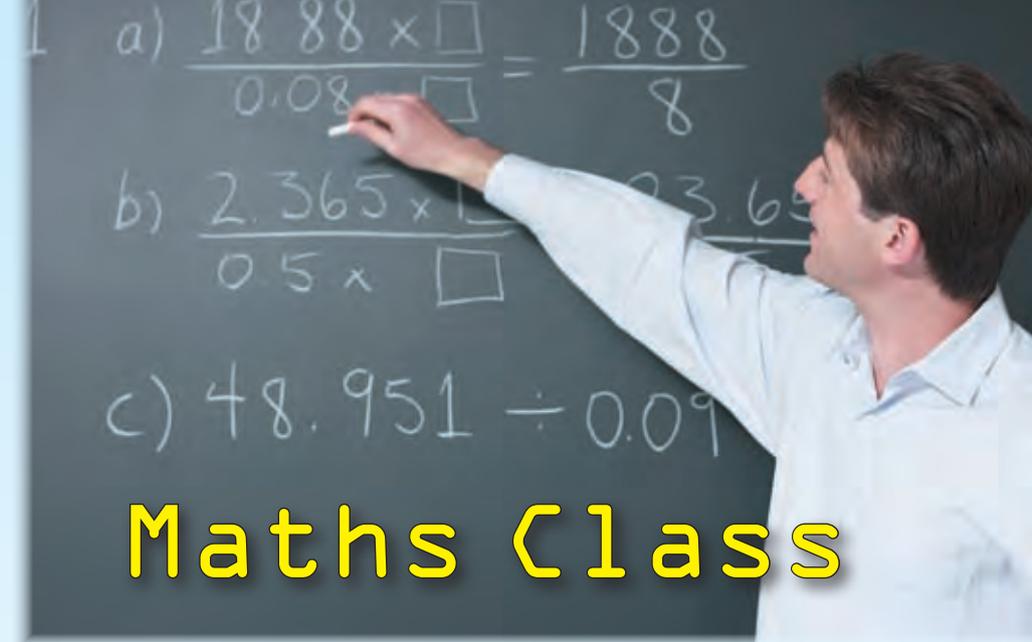
"Late again, Robes", Chloe teased. "You will never guess what happened to me this morning, Chloe!", Roby grasped.

"What? You forgot your face, so you had to go back home to get it?", joked Chloe.

"Um, no!", he replied and both he and Chloe burst out laughing. Mr Buckman heard their laugh. He stopped helping a student and stood up to face them, and gave them a stare with his murky fuming eyes.

"What?", Roby asked in a very rude manner.

"Why are you two laughing? You're meant to be doing your work! Not messing around and wasting time. I am deaf and I still heard you from all the way over here!



## Maths Class

This is your first warning, third and I will separate you too!" he yelled.

Roby and Chloe looked at each other and quietly giggled. "How many times is he going to threaten to move us?", Chloe whispered back amused.

"One more time if we are not careful", chuckled Robes. "Now, about my morning. When I stepped out of the shower, singing away to myself, I must have slipped in this small puddle of water on the floor, and that's all I can really remember. I must have hit my head on the edge of the toilet and fell face first into the toilet because when I regained consciousness I was drinking toilet water", he muttered so no one else heard.

"Are you serious!? That has made my day!", she giggled uncontrollably. "What does toilet water taste like, Robes?", Chloe said, amused. She laughed so hard that she

leant back a little bit too far on her chair and fell straight onto the ground, her chair knocked into the desk and made a loud noise.

Mr Buckman screamed, "Chloe! Outside now!"

"Cya later toilet boy, do not forget the toilet paper", she whispered, as she walked slowly out the door.

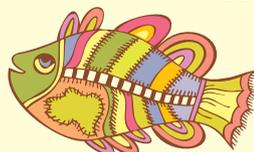
Roby looked down in embarrassment. However, he spotted something on the floor Chloe must have dropped. Now all Roby could do was laugh uncontrollably for Chloe had not realised when she fell, out fell a condom from her pocket, that now Mr Buckman could see.

*By Morgan Wright  
Year 11, Marist Regional College  
BURNIE - TAS.*

## The Octopus, The Crazy Crabs & the Cowfish

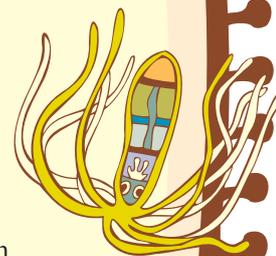
The octopus swims in the deep  
With all the other fishes  
And leaps on his prey,  
Hey watch out, I think dolphin wants you today.  
Off he swims and sprays his ink  
And off he speeds with a blinky blink blink.

Here comes dolphin  
All the fish hide except for octopus  
He didn't notice and just glides by  
Dolphin then turns around, snap snap  
And dolphin said "that octopus was a nice snack".



Crazy crabs nipping about  
Shades of red, shades of brown  
A speck of yellow too  
They are here for  
Me and You

The cowfish has kissy lips  
He will even kiss another fish  
I hope he doesn't land on my dish



*By Zoe Teasdale  
Age 8, West Greenwood Primary School  
GREENWOOD - WA*

# CANE TOAD FURY

“AAAHHHHHH”, screamed Mum.

“What is it, Mum?” said Harry.

“Th, th, there’s a cane toad!” stammered Mum.

“We’ll get it, won’t we Danielle”, replied Harry.

“OK”, I said. So we walked out the door and into our yard. There in front of us was the biggest cane toad we had ever seen. It was the size of a dog. Then we heard big thuds coming towards us. In the same street there was a cane toad the size of a CAR! We quickly rushed inside, told Mum to stay in her room, got Dad and off we went to our secret headquarters lab.

Just to tell you folks, that probably think “Why are you going to a secret headquarters lab?": Well, that’s because we are top secret spies. I know. Pretty cool, right! But anyway, we zoomed all the way to Journey Spy Protectors which is JSP.

When we arrived there was a boy named Jesse who led us to the secret doorway. Inside, Dad gazed and said “OK, where to start?”.

A boy named Ash said to us “Fourth hall to the left, around the bend”.

“All right”, I said, “Follow me”, but before Dad had even taken a step, we were out of sight. He ended up finding his way, luckily.

We arrived in front of our rooms. Harry was already in his but when I went in Dad looked very lonely so I let him in. His eyes opened wide. They turned into love hearts, but not because of me. All the stuff I had was awesome! For example, my walls are yellow and I have a clock made out of flakes of gold that I got from one of my missions.

The lights turned out and a big screen came on my wall. A man appeared on the screen. It was our boss. “Hello agents. I have a special mission for you”.

“I can tell already because they’re the biggest cane toads ever!” I exclaimed.

“And they’re taking over the world”, the boss stated.

“What do we have to do, sir?” Harry whispered anxiously.

“This is the plan. You have to go out to space and see if there’s life on Mars. If there is, you have to see if they will come and help us defeat the cane toads. Did you write that down, Danielle?”

“Yes sir.”

“Good”, the Boss exclaimed.

“We’re on our way to the spaceship now,” Harry stated.

Dad suddenly said “Don’t we need to discuss this or something?”.

The boss replied, “The world is at stake, sir. They’re the only ones to save it. We are counting on them”.

“OK. They can go”, Dad said sadly. He came up to us and whispered “Good luck champs”. We said, “Thanks, Dad”, and got our gear on.

While we were getting dressed Harry had a big sloppy booger come out of his nose. I screamed and he chased me around the room. I got Dad to make Harry stop.

I had a purple space suit with yellow flowers all over it and Harry had a black one with guitars all over his. We headed off to the rocket. It was shaped a bit like a soccer ball and it had green and blue stripes on it.

We said bye to Dad and went into the rocket. Before I got in, Dad gave me a gift and whispered “I wanted to give this to you when you were older but... please keep it safe and if you get in trouble, use it!”.

“OK Dad”, I said and in the rocket we went.

Inside looked AWESOME! It had a blue side and a yellow side. Harry sat on the blue seat and I sat on the yellow chair. The countdown started. We held onto our seats tightly.

10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 BLAST OFF!

The Rocket went higher and higher until it stopped and went quite slow. We let go of our seats. We were swirling in the air, floating along. It was truly amazing. Then we had to go back to our seats and we held them tightly again. (We had the fastest Rocket you could ever imagine so that’s why we could get to Mars really quickly). We arrived about an hour later and we settled on Mars.

I couldn’t believe my eyes when I stepped out of the red rocket. It was a mystery. A swamp as red as blood and as dark as the night. My brother Harry and I grabbed our torches and pocket knives and off we went.

It was really quite scary and spooky walking around in Mars. We didn’t know what could jump out of those enormous craters. We heard noises from behind. I quickly turned but saw nothing. I looked back in front of me. I couldn’t see my brother so I started to panic. He was nowhere in sight!!!!

I looked around because I could hear squeaking noises then I tripped over a stump and fell into a huge crater. It felt like it went on forever. I plopped in a big lot of green goo. It was gross! I heard little buzzing noises so I swam further down the goo. As soon as I heard big thuds on the goo I realised it was some type of poo. I raced back, out of the goo, to see my brother being held by humungous bugs!!!!

I quickly got out of the poo and dashed after my horrified brother. It was freaky seeing such big bugs and if you’re like me, sometimes they give you the creeps. Meanwhile my brother was being dragged to a cellar or something. They walked in a dark room so I hid behind a rock. They walked back out. I stayed as still as a dead dog, then rushed in to get my brother.

When I saw him I looked around for some keys. A vicious looking dog had them in his mouth but he was asleep. I went up to him and gently took them out of his mouth, careful not to wake him. I unlocked the cage.

Harry said "Let's get out of this creepy place".

"We still have to do something", I said.

"What?", Harry asked. "We came here to see if there was life and these bugs are it."

"Do you mean we have to ask these creepy things to help us?" Harry exclaimed.

"Yep", I whispered.

And off we went.

We didn't realise it but we walked into a big room full of the bugs. They all saw us and started to hold onto us but then I remembered the gift that Dad gave to us. I quickly grabbed it so it shone and all the bugs let go of us. I kept walking forwards to see the prettiest butterfly ever! She shouted in rage, "Fall on your knees", so we did.

"Why are you here?" I told her.

Then she stated "Us fellows hate cane toads, so to get them back would be lovely. We had to move here because of them".

"So you are in?", I asked.

"Yes" she replied.

We headed back to our rocket and headed back to sweet Earth. When we arrived back to sweet Earth. When we arrived houses were nearly falling down. We landed back at the secret headquarters. Everyone was amazed that we had found life on Mars.

We quickly got ready for the battle. We saw the bugs all fighting the big cane toads. My Dad quickly got us in the car and drove us to our house. When we arrived Mum was asleep on her bed. Dad came along with a big needle while Harry and I stared in horror. He injected it into Mum's arm. What was going to happen????

After a few minutes Mum woke up suddenly and shouted (for some reason) "Let's kick some butt". So off we went to

destroy those cane toads! Some of the bugs let us ride on their backs and others were squirting poison all over the cane toads. After some time, they were nearly all gone.

There was one cane toad left. One more until earth was safe again. We could do it! All the bugs gathered around while the cane toad begged for mercy. They all picked the cane toad up and flew high into the air so that we couldn't see them any more. One of the bugs came over and said "We will take him to Venus and cane toads will never disturb you again". And he flew off.

We took Mum home and she had a long sleep. Dad said, "As soon as your mother wakes up and anyone else in town does, they will forget everything that happened today".

The next day we had breakfast and Mum actually didn't remember a thing about the cane toads. We did our normal routine and left to go to school; and from then on those giant cane toads never bothered us again.

By **Danielle Dawson**  
Year 4, Essington School  
NIGHTCLIFF - NT



# The Ashes of Pompeii

IT WAS the year 79 AD and the morning sun glinted off Josh's golden hair, making it shine brilliantly as he walked out of his house and onto the crowded Pompeiian streets. He was heading over to the Temple of Jupiter for his weekly gathering to pray for their family's wellbeing and longevity.

He murmured his prayer to Jupiter as he knelt on the stone floor inside the Temple and burned an offering of lamb in the sacred fire below the altar. He prayed that there would be food for his family and that his father would fight bravely and honourably for Rome. Five years it had been, he thought, five years it had been since he watched his father walk out of the door and onto the battlefield. He waited until the lamb had been burnt down to ashes and left the temple through the large marble exit.

As he rushed home, he found himself in the middle of the preparation for his family's monthly outing to the far hilltop, which overlooked his hometown. His mother seemed stressed, but Josh knew that she would relax once they reached the hilltop. It was originally his mother's idea and had started out a way for them to clear their minds and ready themselves for the upcoming month. My mother seemed to think we would need it more than ever this month. 'Remember the apples and the bread,' she reminded us.

Josh's younger brother Marcus and his sister were packing food into a basket on their kitchen table, managing to find impossible places to cram in more food. When they had finished packing, the basket seemed ready to split open.

It took them an hour to reach the hilltop by foot, their mother carrying the basket of food. It would have taken less but his younger brother was easily distracted and they often had to stop and wait for him to catch up.

When they finally reached their destination it was midday and the sun was glaring down on them, making Josh sweat and long for a drink of cool water. His family found a patch of soft grass on the top of the hill and spread out the food. Marcus, who was transfixed by something in the

distance – probably a bird, thought Josh – didn't seem too interested in the picnic. 'Look!' his younger brother said. As Josh turned around, even with the sun's heat on his back, Marcus's next words were the words that every Pompeian dreaded, and they chilled Josh to the bone. 'Smoking Mountain?'

In the distance, the volcano was spewing out an endless flow of lava and belching giant clouds of ash and smoke. The volcano, which had lain dormant for so long, was unleashing its fury and the fury was heading right for Josh and his family. 'Uh oh,' Josh said softly, turning and gaping at the imminent destruction of Pompeii.

An innocent looking curl of orange appeared at the lip of the volcano and started to pick up debris and speed. So far, only the houses and structures on the outskirts of town had been engulfed but Josh could see that the lava wasn't going to stop there. Soon it would overwhelm the town and few people other than himself and his family would live to tell this horrifying tale. He hated standing up here on the hill: overlooking the town, seeing its destruction, yet being unable to stop it. Already, there were great clouds of ash billowing out and over Pompeii, obscuring the sunlight and casting a shadow over the entire valley.

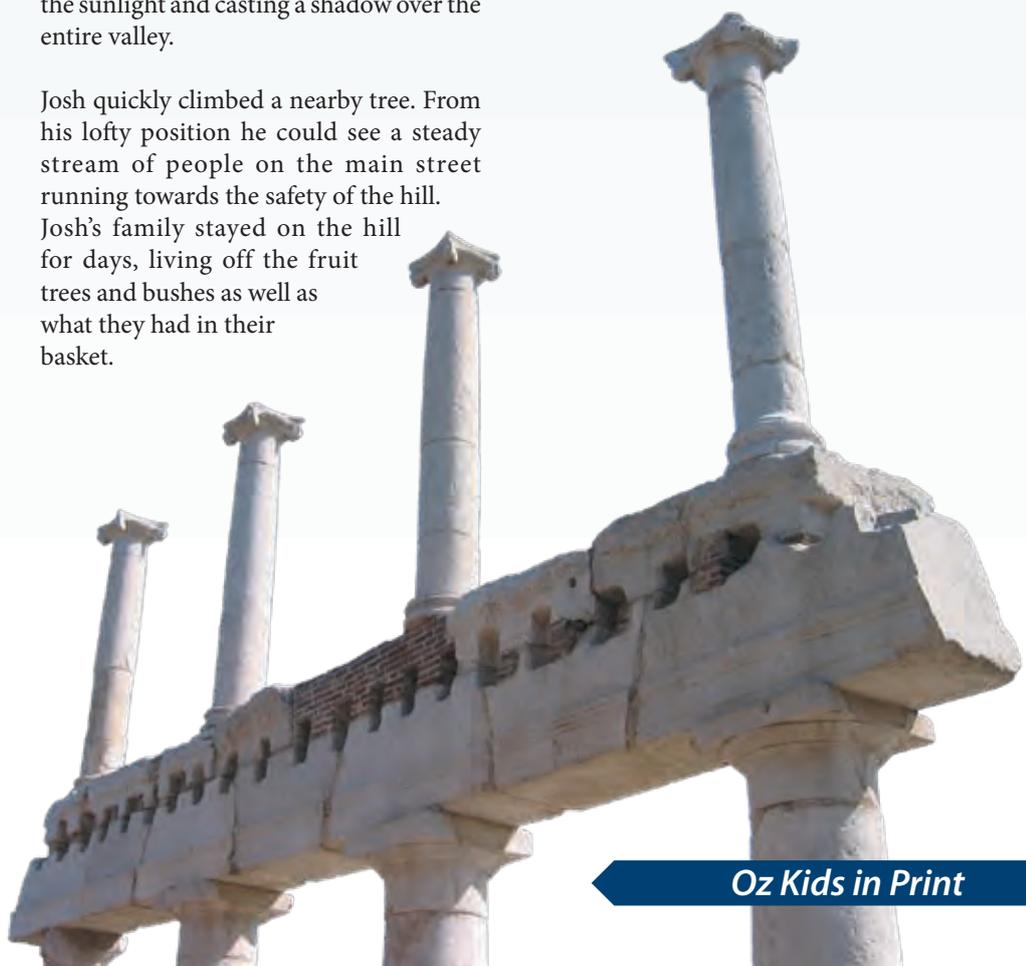
Josh quickly climbed a nearby tree. From his lofty position he could see a steady stream of people on the main street running towards the safety of the hill. Josh's family stayed on the hill for days, living off the fruit trees and bushes as well as what they had in their basket.

They watched as a blanket of ash settled over Pompeii, which suffocated anybody who was not with his family. Sadly, only a few of the people in the main street made it to the hill.

All who had reached the safety of the hilltop had returned to the city but once they did there would be another minor eruption and they would never be heard from again. They felt drawn to the city, hoping to find loved ones still yet to be saved.

Josh and his family had no one left to save. Pompeii slowly became a silent sea of black ash. A few of the tops of buildings remained, the temple being one of them and he could see its white chimney poking out of the surrounding black like a beacon of the gods. It was refusing to sink beneath the dark sea of death and chaos. To Josh, this was a sign that it was time to return to their home town and try to gauge the damage that the volcano had caused. Unsure, yet hopeful that there had been some other Pompeians who had survived.

*By Chris Sparks  
Year 7, Scotch College  
HAWTHORN – VIC.*



# Home to Country

Red, hot sand it burns our feet  
Hunting kangaroos, wombat, and munthries'd be a treat  
Collecting the berries, gutting the fish  
Hoping tonight will be a scrumptious dish

The old women sit by the fire all silent  
The kids fighting round, threatening to bring down the tent  
The old man he says "to stop it all now  
Tucker is done, it's time to chow down"

The women and old folk he serves first up that is right  
Children and men eat last this night  
So much tucker, plenty to go round  
We all eat up, and for a while there's no sound

I love to hang out, hunt and eat with my mob  
It's fun and exciting, and everyone has a job  
I feel for those whitefullas all city bound  
Coming home to country – my spirit is found

By **Dylan Peisley**  
Year 8, Prince Alfred College  
KENT TOWN – SA



## Escape of the Princess

my mum and dad on their thrones. They didn't look as bright as they usually are during the morning but they were probably awoken by the cackling crows again. As I walked down the stairs my mother looked at me as if she saw a ghost but I knew she was extremely angry at me because I wasn't wearing my pink, highly uncomfortable, dress.

I quickly walked down the stairs while my mum was rising from her seat. She walked towards me knowing I would be grounded. Just when she nearly grabbed my wrist I sprinted out the door. When I looked back for one more glance I could just see little tears roll down her depressed face. My heart started to rise with love but I didn't want to be a princess stuck in a castle for the rest of my life.

There was a nearby horse that had beautiful brown hair and lovely black skin so I ran towards it. I jumped on his back and out into the misty morning I rode. I was really quite scared to go out of the castle grounds because I have lived there all my life.

It turned night quite fast and the moon shone bright. I found a nice, shady tree and sat down. I looked back at the castle of my parents. There were a lot of screams and cries. There were a lot of lights.

Then, I remembered what my father said to me when I was little: 'When there is a light, there is a fright going through the castle.' I quickly got up and dashed towards the castle.

When I arrived I could see my mum in the distance. There was something big and hairy behind her. I grabbed a spear and I darted forwards with it in front of me. Thud! I hit the big, hairy animal that was a bear. Everyone cheered!

The next day I told my mum why I ran away. She looked at me and said 'Never be afraid to tell me your feelings.' I replied 'OK!' and walked outside...

By **Danielle Dawson**  
Year 4, Essington School  
NIGHTCLIFF – NT

**I**T WAS an average summer morning as I arose from bed.

I looked around my luscious bedroom where there was valuable stuff all around me. I got out of bed and went to my closet. Inside was a beautiful (but I thought ugly) pink dress. I screamed 'Maids, sew me some shorts and t-shirt', so they did straight away. I put on a yellow dressing gown, as yellow was my favourite colour. In about 15 minutes the maids came up with a nice yellow t-shirt and red pants. I put it on and it fit like a pair of jeans. I loved it so much!

I walked out of my bedroom, into the hallway and down the stairs. There were



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# A Christmas Trilogy

**T**HE HOUSE was old, made of stone and plaster, bordering a fenced asphalt yard green with moss. The air smelt faintly of charcoal and diesel. Inside was another story.

The furnishings were old, but they were warm, soft and inviting, laid with woollen carpet. A young boy of six lay on this carpet with three other children of his age, fiddling with a small model tractor in the shade of an enormous Christmas tree standing next to the fire place. Behind him in the kitchen, his parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles chatted loudly. That's where the Irish side of the family had greeted them after Nan led them through the door. The noise and crowding made it a bit too much for any of the children, who were allowed to play in the living room on their own among some old toys.

Tall enough for him to crawl under, and decorated with sparkling baubles, the tree covered a whole quarter of the living space. Dozens of brightly wrapped little packages surrounded the boy under the branches, shielding him from the monotone of adult conversation.

That was his first vivid memory of their December trip to Ireland from Australia. Everything had shrunk since his first Christmas here a decade ago. The front door, the hallway, even his grandparents had to bend backwards a touch to look him in the eye. The boy was now a teen in baggy pyjamas, strolling around the living room in the early hours of the morning.

He had initially been surprised to see the tree was still there. It now only barely crested his head, but was otherwise unchanged. It still occupied the same corner, a new pile of wrapped Christmas gifts lay underneath (two of which came from his parents). The decorations were not just any store bought glitz. Now that he was tall enough to see them clearly, he could tell they were actually lockets with small pictures of the family. Sepia-toned photos from the early 20th century. Faded colour shots of young boys playing in the yard, more recent stills of weddings and birthdays. One that had especially caught this eye was of twelve young men outside a large sandstone university. He'd searched for his father among them, thinking to

himself 'Please don't be the one with the neck beard'.

Of course it was.

Snatches of morning conversation drifted around him from the various corners of the house.

None of it interested him of course; most of the names mentioned were unfamiliar. He would always enter the kitchen and leave in one swift motion. He knew there was nothing meaningful he could add.

With a soft thump of feet on an old staircase, his mum came downstairs. Get dressed she told him, we're going to see your aunt Mara.

Who was Aunt Mara? The teen couldn't tell. He had been dragged along with his sister to meet extended family from all walks of life. Pub owners and cattle farmers. He expected a dank house, the smell of dirt and plenty of small chairs and tables.

But that was not where the car pulled up. Instead of a dilapidated farmhouse, they parked in front of a neat, white block of buildings with a red cross above the main doors.

Aunt Mara was at her last. Tubes ran from the side of her bed into her nose, and her face was pale and shrunken. Even as she sat up and greeted each of them in turn the teen found he couldn't conjure up any meaningful words. His own father's aunt was nearly wasted away, and he knew nothing about her.

Three years later, back in Australia in the months before they board another plane to Ireland over Christmas, news of Aunt Mara's death reached them by phone. His father offered his condolences on behalf of their side of the family. He never asked the teen, now a young man, if he wanted to personally send a message on the phone. Perhaps his father knew he had nothing to say.

It was on the plane that the shame of this struck him. He did not

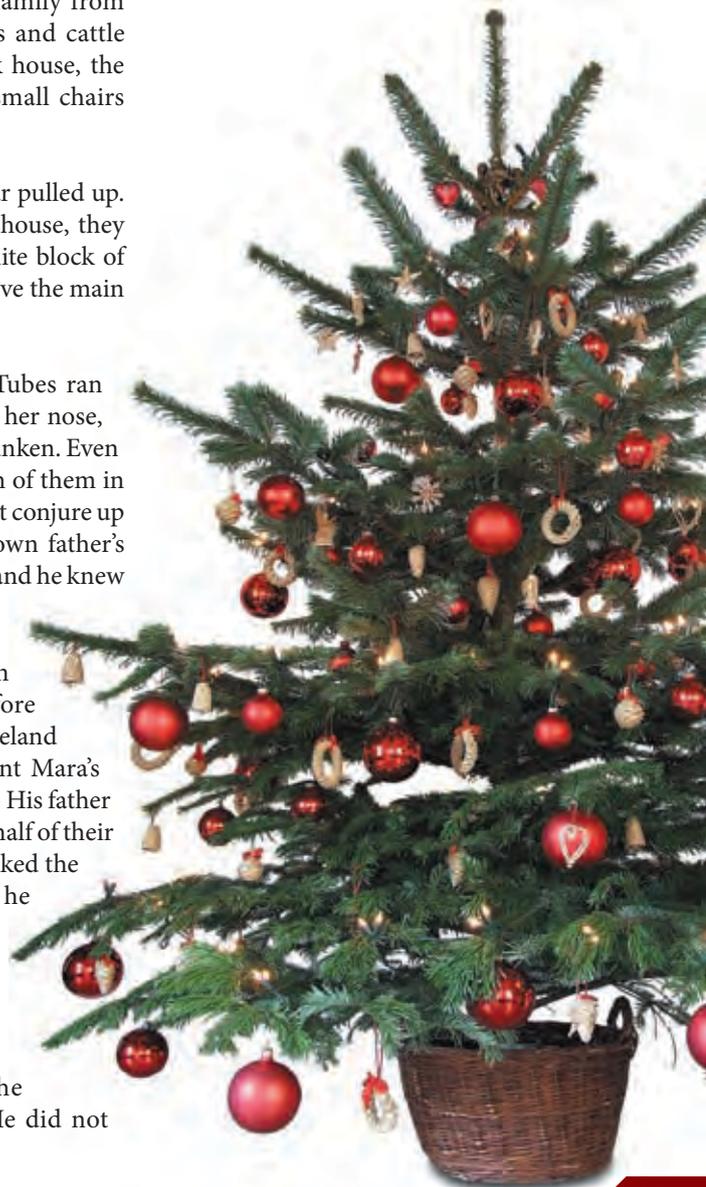
feel much grief when his great aunt died, but the disgrace that he did not more than compensated. He had turned his back on the going-ons of his family, and it had in turn pushed him out.

When his grandmother answered their knock on the door, she was found to her surprise and joy that the first one through was not her son but her grandson, holding a wrapped present.

Of course the tree was still there, in its corner of the living room. The young man placed the package with the rest of the pile before straightening up and walking into the kitchen to the greeting chorus of his family.

By **Oisín Lee**

Year 12, Manly Selective Campus  
CURL CURL – NSW



# BOOK REVIEWS

Meet our book reviewers

Kitty, Alexandra,  
Zac and Robert,  
from Gold Street  
Primary School

in Clifton Hill, Victoria.

Reviews Coordinators:  
Meredith Costain  
and Dana Corben



## **The Poppy**

Written and illustrated by Andrew Plant  
(Ford Street Publishing)

*The Poppy* is a lovely book about a town called Villers-Bretonneux and its relationship with Australia after World War 1. Two girls (one from France, one from Australia) are playing together when they see a petal from a poppy and follow it. It takes them past some memorials built for the soldiers. But then the petal floats away on the breeze and the two girls sit together, remembering the war.

Hundreds of Australian soldiers died trying to recapture the French village from the Germans. The Australian people helped rebuild the village after the war. I noticed that poppies were growing everywhere in the story.

I enjoyed this book and would recommend it for readers aged 6+.

— Kitty

## **The Red Poppy**

by David Hill, illustrated by Fifi Colston  
(Scholastic)

*The Red Poppy* is a fictional war story written about a young man named Jim

McLeod, a soldier fighting in World War 1. Jim is in the middle of a battle when his rifle is shot, smashing into him and injuring him badly. He stumbles into a ditch made by an exploding bomb. There he comes face to face with an enemy soldier.

*The Red Poppy* is a book I wasn't so sure about when I first picked it up but I actually really enjoyed it. It is very well written. The illustrations are good and clearly depict the story.

I would say this book would be for readers aged 10+. Though it's a brilliant book, because of its serious subject I wouldn't recommend it for younger children.

— Alexandra

## **Along the Road to Gundagai**

by Jack O'Hagan, illustrated by Andrew McLean

The text of this book is a well-known song, with lovely illustrations telling a story about a World War I soldier and his thoughts of home in Gundagai. I noticed that the illustrations were quite complicated and things popped out that you wouldn't expect. Some pages about

bad things happening made me feel sad but the pictures of the soldier's home in Gundagai made me feel happy. It reminded me of some movies about bad things that happen at war.

I enjoyed this book, which is suitable for readers aged 11+.

— Zac

## **The Loser List: Jinx of the Loser**

by H N Kowitt (Scholastic)

*The Loser List: Jinx of the Loser* is a well-written book about a boy called Danny Shine who attends Gerald Ford Middle School. The school participates in the All-City Baseball Championships and Danny loses the game by getting in the way of a catch. There are food fights, name-calling and more. On an excursion to a fun park, the roller coaster breaks and it is blamed on Danny. From then on, he is called a jinx. He gets the blame for everything. Will Danny stay a jinx forever, or will everything change...?

I enjoyed this book very much and would recommend it to boys aged 10+.

— Robert

# Molly's Fairy Trick

**M**OLLY is a 7 year old merry little girl who is willing to do anything to see her near and dear ones happy and friendly with each other. She has many friends and brings happiness everywhere she goes. She never can imagine being joyful when all her friends are not playing happily in school and in the neighbourhood. Everybody loves Molly for that reason and nobody can make a sad face when she is around.

As much as Molly loves her friends, she enjoys going to school every morning to see her teachers and friends. She always looks forward to spending wonderful as well as eventful time with teachers and friends at school. She loves tricking her friends just to bring laughter in their faces and lighten their hearts. Her morning at school starts by warmly greeting her teacher Mrs. Mason "Good morning". She hardly misses anyone to greet at school in the morning with her wonderful but mischievous smile. Never a day goes without the teacher saying "Great job, Molly" as she helps and befriends with almost everyone during playtime.

It was a fine and beautiful spring late morning; hence Molly and her friends were looking forward to recess. As soon as the bell rang, Molly got out of her classroom to join her friends in the playground. On her way to the playground, at the stairs, Jack asked "Hey Mol, we are playing Goblins and Fairies. Come and join us?". Molly nodded back in reply.

The game Goblins and Fairies is very popular amongst Molly and her friends as it involves hide and seek tricks and then chasing opponents around the whole school ground huffing and puffing until they are out of breath. The Goblins are the boys' team who are supposed to track down and catch the Fairies, the girls' team, by holding their arms, not by their clothes. Once they capture a fairy they have to take them to base which is the other side of the school ground near the afterschool care building. Both the teams need leaders and today it was Jack and Molly's turn. "It is now the time to get into your huddles and make your action plan", Jack announced. "Remember never

hide together. Distract the boys if they are really close to your hiding spot and hide somewhere else. Always be ready to run. Oh yeah, one more thing, if you see a boy catching one of us alone try to rescue her", Molly advised her fellow fairies. "Girls have you finished your Huddle? We were done minutes ago", shouted Sam, a Goblin from Jack's team. "We are just done, Sam", replied Monica. "OK girls, it is your ten second head start", Jack said. "10, 9, 8, 7, 6..." chorused the boys.

Molly was hiding behind the rubbish bins ready to run in case the boys found her. However, the Goblins found all the Fairies except Molly in five minutes and were frantically looking for Molly to have a straight win over the Fairies. "She must be here", Molly heard panting Jack say. Jack couldn't even finish saying what he was saying to all the Goblins, Sam found Molly and shouted out his heart for the boys to catch the Fairy leader. Boys could hardly catch her arms; Molly was strong enough to twist free and made her way to the base to free all her fellow Fairies.

While Molly was running towards the base, she noticed two of her friends Rosella and Sam fighting awfully. Molly couldn't bear to see them fighting while they were supposed to have fun together. At one hand, she needs to save her fellow Fairies; on the other, she needs to stop her friends fighting. "Oh God, what should I do? Should I stop and let my team lose or should I ignore my friends who are

fighting?", panting Molly kept thinking while running.

Molly fell down! Molly fainted!! Everything stopped for a few seconds before all her friends came near to her. But Rosella and Sam seemed not to notice it and kept on fighting. The yard-duty teachers were called and all the teachers who were inside the school building rushed out.

While all teachers were busy with Molly, Mrs. Mason spotted the two children fighting and gave them a scolding before sending them to fetch some water for Molly. In the meantime, Dr. Primrose, the school matron, made her entrance. Everybody watched the matron closely in awe but within seconds saw her grinning. "Is this young lady ticklish?" she asked. It took Molly's friends and teachers some time to comprehend.

Meanwhile, Rosella and Sam arrived with water and sloshed water over Molly's head. Then there came a giggle and Molly sat up. "Sorry everyone for causing this trouble", said Molly. "I saw Rosella and Sam fighting at the crucial moment of the game. I could neither lose the game nor ignore my dear friends fighting terribly with each other. So I decided to fall and fake that I fainted. Sorry guys." Molly continued saying with her mischievous smile, "Can I now have my two friends giving each other a tight hug and we all can then join in the group hug".

"See Rosella and Sam, when you fight you can get some of your most treasured friends into trouble", said Mrs. Mason. Embarrassed Rosella and Sam nodded their heads and hugged each other. Then Molly joined them with other friends screaming and roaring loudly with laughter. Teachers had to rush off to save their ears. But before going, Mrs. Mason winked at Molly and whispered into her ears, "Don't ever do this again you cheeky girl. You know the story of the Shepherd Boy and The Wolf, right?".

**By Ahelee Rahman**  
Year 2, Caulfield Primary School  
CAULFIELD – VIC.  
Teacher: Mrs. Suzy Mason



# Cycle

I am not alone. Surrounded and cushioned; part of one great mass. We were not hurried, but happily made our way down the land. Small creatures tickled our belly as we flowed over mossy rocks and sticks. We glided peacefully, our tendrils exploring cracks and crevices. We meandered through bends; slow and lazy, the wind ruffling our back. Birds dipped and played across our length, and ancient trees thrust their roots into the earth, entwining along our sides.

We were part of a greater whole and were respected, needed, loved. We swirled and bubbled and laughed with the birds. We were able to fly, leaping off an edge to tumble and froth together at the bottom, before continuing our journey.

But sometimes we got lost, separated, stolen. We were more sombre, fewer; but still content. We eased our way through, following the path taken by many before us.

I am falling. Pouring down together in sheets, wind flowed around us as we rushed through the air.

We twirled together, reaching out to touch the wind. But too often we found only hard, unfriendly metal, slippery plastic, restricting glass. They protruded out of our earth, like broken teeth, invading our sky. We were forced to slam against them, tumbling from the sky but never reaching the earth.

trapped in strange metal cages, far from what we knew. I am confused.

I am in the dark. Stuffed into small crevices in the ground, we twisted together, writhing. Unable to flow free, we were smothered and cramped between unyielding stone. We shifted slightly, and tried to escape our cage, but could not. Eventually we were still, stagnant, silent.

We no longer felt the wind on our back, and could not touch the trees or play with the birds. We were not respected or appreciated and instead were hoarded jealously. We no longer chuckled, babbled, laughed.

We waited, in the darkness and silence, for something to happen. We were pressed, prodded, pumped, out of the cage. Still trapped, but now moving. Staggering through pipes, we were ripped apart, separated from the mass. We surged down pipes, through taps and over strange objects, before falling again into the dark tunnels. Desperate, we did not understand.

We travelled again across the land, but now restrained and broken. We burst from the pipe battered and bruised. We fell and splashed, colliding with others. Joy rippled through us. We were together again. We greeted the birds, the wind, the sky. We crashed and roared together, rising high then tumbling upon the sand before racing back.

The rhythm of our movement filled us. I am free.

By **Rachael Robb**

Age 17, Pedare Christian College  
GOLDEN GROVE – SA

We splashed against dull concrete, slipped and slid down glassed windows, and were forced along gutters. We huddled together in depressions, unable to sink into the soil. Our surface was disturbed and shaken by the onslaught of hurried feet and aggressive car tyres. Frantic wipers shoved us out of the way, and vain hands warded us off. Scowls and sighs greeted us as we tried to dance among the wind. Greedy hands and cold machines snatched us from the sky, pushing and directing our movement. We were forced through pipes; stifled, squeezed, confined. We were

Then stopped. We tried to go further but couldn't. Frantic, scared, confused. We battered at the barrier, stumbling over each other as we tried to squeeze past. But there were no cracks. No gaps.

No holes. No way through. We pooled together, unable to continue, unable to go back. We were trapped. I am afraid.

# The Naughty Girl

**'D**ING! Ding!' the school bell rang. It was already recess. That's when a new girl came to school her name was, Juliet. The principal's decided to put her in year 5, because in year 5 everyone was kind. Except that day a girl in year 5, named Crystal, pranked Juliet because it was April Fool's Day. Because of her actions the year 5s were no longer the kindest class. On that day Juliet decided she wanted revenge on Crystal. So Juliet decided to become the naughtiest girl in school by pranking everyone. Now they call her 'the naughty girl'.

Much later she was pranking everyone she met, minute by minute, including the teachers. Everyone was afraid of her because she was 'the naughty girl', which meant she might decide to do a prank on you any time. The principal caught her doing it to the teachers during class time. She got really mad but got back to what she was doing in class, waiting for an opportunity to get revenge. When it was lunch she didn't spend her time playing around with friends, she spent her time pranking people, until it was class time.

The next day was the sports carnival, she had little time to do her hilarious and awful pranks, because she had to concentrate on the events she wanted to win. She felt torn having to compete in events. I guess

her life was just about pranking people. So when she had an opportunity, she set up traps everywhere, and watched as everyone fell into her prank traps. Now she calls the sports carnival the 'prank carnival'. At the very end of the sports carnival they awarded prizes, she thought she was going to get one but she didn't. Juliet really got angry and jealous, because she thought that she should have an award for the best prankster in school.

It was the end of the third term and it was a school holiday, after the sports carnival. Juliet didn't like school holidays because she couldn't do pranks on anyone any more. But the other students were happy because they had had enough of Juliet's pranks. She had no one else to prank on the holidays because she was going to be at home, not at school. Good try Juliet.

The 'naughty girl' was so bored at home, because she didn't have anyone to prank on the holidays. When the school holidays finally ended, and there was another new person at the school who was in year 5, her name was Sally, everyone gasped. The 'naughty girl' made a gift for Sally, but the gift was actually a prank. When Sally opened the gift, there was a big pie, it exploded and it smashed into Sally's face. Juliet laughed, 'Okay that was hilarious, but don't worry I'm tired of being the "naughty



girl'. From now on I will not do any more pranks to anyone.' Everyone cheered in happiness. Juliet was not naughty any more.

THE END

By **Jahus Syahkirah Mohd Jahis**  
Age 10, Christmas Island District HS  
CHRISTMAS ISLAND – WA

I used to be...  
Hiding away in my enemy's shadow  
Like a mouse threatened by a lion,  
Shivering, shaking, shuddering all over,  
Frightened of the new and undiscovered.

I look to my dog, my teddy, my Mum,  
They all give me assurance and love  
I build up confidence from God-given gifts,  
And feel the joy of adventurous laughter.

Now I...  
Use God's gifts to help my enemies,  
Speaking kindly to them,  
Smiling, stomping, adventuring new,  
Dreaming of what could be.

You can't stop me  
I am strong  
I have changed.

## CHANGED



By **Erin Weller**  
Year 5, Oxley Christian College  
LILYDALE – VIC.

# Turtle Troubles

**R**ING! Ring! “OK everyone! See you tomorrow”, said Mr Pluto. As always, there was a big rush out the classroom. But Willow waited until everyone was out.

Usually, outside in the yard she would play hide and seek till she could see her bus drive up around the corner. But not today. Willow was walking down the road to her favourite place in the world. Her dad’s work at the RSPCA.

When she arrived her dad came out to meet her. “Hey sweetie, come with me, I’ve got something to show you”, he said. As they walked through the loud and crowded corridor they came to a door. Inside the room, Willow saw big screens, little screens and middle sized screens all with the same pictures on them repeating over and over. They were pictures of green sea turtles, Willow’s favourite animal laying their eggs on the beach.

“Wow!” exclaimed Willow. “It’s amazing”, she said.

“I know”, agreed her father.

“Now Willow, these turtles are in danger”, he explained.

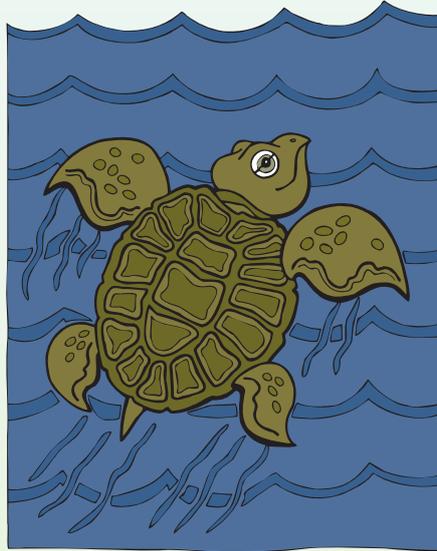
“That’s terrible”, Willow said in a nervous voice. “We need to save them. Why are they in danger?” she blurted out.

“Willow stop talking and I will tell you”, her dad said, raising his voice.

“Sorry”, whispered Willow.

“Some of the beaches where turtles come to lay their eggs are now becoming popular tourist destinations”, Willow’s father explained seriously.

“Let’s go to the beach”, Willow said confidently.



Soon they arrived at a beautiful beach, the ocean was bright blue and the sand looked like vanilla ice-cream. It was such a pretty picture. “Come on Willow, let’s get a milkshake and wait till the sun goes down”, her father said excitedly.

“Yes thanks”, said Willow wondering what flavour she would pick. “Sea turtles come out at night to lay their eggs”, she continued proudly. She sat quietly sipping her strawberry milkshake thinking about the turtles she was startled when she heard her dad slurping down the last of his milkshake.

“Oh no! I’m all out”, exclaimed her dad.

Willow laughed so hard she almost spat her milkshake out all over her father.

“Time to go back to the beach, it’s nearly dusk. That time went fast, didn’t it, Willow”. It was probably your fault, you enjoyed your milkshake too much.

At the beach Willow helped her dad get the video camera out the car. “Shhh! Dad”, Willow whispered as she pointed to the turtles coming up onto the bank. Before a blink of an eye there were tourists everywhere. There were foreign tourists getting photos of them with their foot on the turtle’s shell. “That’s cruel”, said Willow a little louder than she should have.

Later that night Willow had a brainwave. She was going to send a letter to their local Member of Parliament to say that the beach should be rezoned to be a protected area. Willow rode her bike to the letter box. “Please work”, she thought as she dropped it in.

*4 months later...*

“Dad, dad I have mail”, Willow said excitedly waving it in his face.

“Calm down, what is it? he asked her curiously. “Well”, began Willow, “the local Parliament have decided to make the beach where the turtles lay their eggs a protected area”. Willow’s dad was stunned and Willow’s heart was beaming with joy. She couldn’t stop smiling.

*By Jordi Wilksch*

*Year 4, Redeemer Lutheran School  
NURIOOTPA – SA*

## Darkness

The darkness is a shroud,  
A never ending nightmare,  
The hate that fuels everything.

But...

Deep within that darkness,  
There was a flicker,  
Like a spark.

Then like a pillar of light.

It was our hope,  
Our strength,  
For nothing is ever truly lost,  
It is simply hidden.

And it can always be found,  
Even in the darkest cave.  
For it is our humanity,  
It is what we must hold onto.....  
No matter what.

*By James Turnbull*

*Year 12, Marist Regional College  
BURNIE – TAS.*



# I will never forget...

**R**EMEMBER clearly because I can never forget...

The vets said it probably wasn't a big thing and he would be okay soon. I thought so too; but somewhere inside of me I was still scared.

He wouldn't eat. He was getting skinnier and lighter; it wasn't good.

I was at a Cubs sleepover in the Scout hall. Two nights and three days of fun... but

there was a call; my family would meet me at the vet. I didn't know what would happen: would we be smiling or crying when we left, was something wrong or was it all okay now? The ride was short. I barely got time to answer my questions.

When we got there we were seated in the waiting room. Shortly after, a vet came out. They told us to come into a room, where they showed us his x-rays. They weren't good; we could hardly see his bones. They were still there and fine but the vet told us that there was a large amount of fluid in him.

We went into another room to visit him. Rufus! He was so skinny. He had a small cast around one of his front legs, there was a tube running out of it. I didn't ask what it was for.

He reminds me of when we first got him. Small and cute. Although now he is bigger, he seems small and weak. I almost smile.

We are soon told that we (my parents) have two choices, we could pay for an extremely expensive operation, that may or may not help him... or to have him... put down...

My parents discuss for a moment; I think I know what their answer will be... we have to, have him... put down.

My parents say it is too expensive and they can't even be sure that it will work... it will be less painful for him if we... do it.

It was the first time I had seen my entire family cry (at the same time). In fact, it was the first time I had seen my older brothers cry.

We had a choice to be in the room with Rufus when they did it... I didn't want to see them put a needle in him, but Mum and Oscar stayed with him...

Afterwards I went in to say a final goodbye.

It turned out that they didn't put a needle in him because they could just change his drip to... anaesthetic.

Goodbye, I love you and will never forget you, Rufus.

By **Sabrina Harper**  
Age 12, Concordia College  
HIGHGATE - SA

**C**HARLES was looking forward for his violin competition at the school concert in a few days.

When he woke up the rain was pouring down. His back yard was covered and flooded by rain water.

His caring and loving mother asked him to wear his jumper and stay indoors but he did not listen. He liked the cold, pesky rain. His mum could not stop cheeky Charles from being outside in the rain.

That night Charles didn't feel that well. He kept coughing and sneezing and his temperature shot up to 100 degrees. His mother treated him at home but Charles was as hot as fire.

His mum booked an appointment with their family doctor, Dr. Paran. Charles was unhappy and annoyed, just because he had to go to the doctor. Then he started whinging like he always does. When the

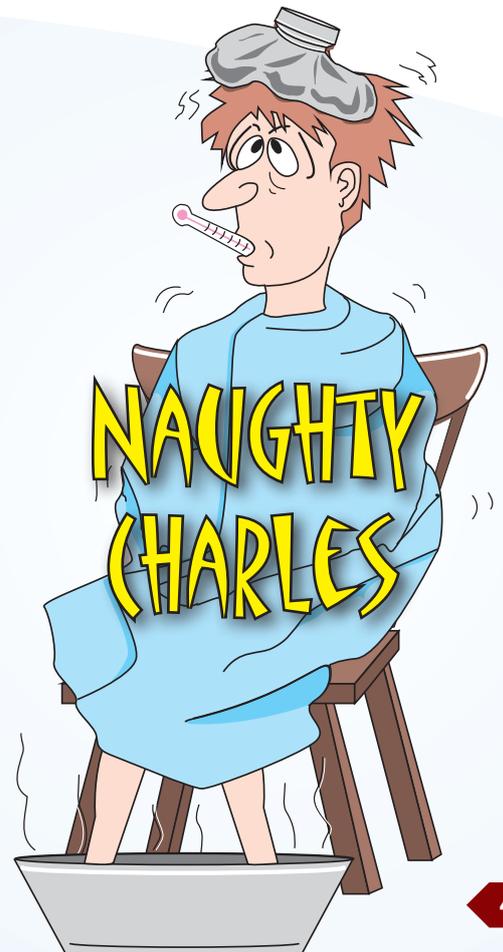
time came he calmed down as he really wanted to win the violin competition. When the doctor called Charles in his surname Edwards he went inside and the doctor offered him some lollies from the lolly bag.

The doctor laughed out some jokes, showed him few toys and prescribed him with antibiotics for his cold fever. When Charles took what was prescribed he got better. Charles had to take it for three days in order to fully recover.

After the third day Charles was feeling much better. He was able to take part in the violin competition at school. He played brilliantly and got first place. His parents were very proud of Charles.

Charles told himself that he will obey his parents thereafter.

By **Vishal Suresh**  
Age 7, BELLA VISTA - NSW



# Having Faith

**F**LOWERS swayed delicately beside my face. I could feel the warm summer atmosphere caressing my body as I lay on the luscious green grass. I reminisced of the days that I used to lay here in Tallow Meadow with ribbons in my hair and a smile on my face. Now it was a place of mourning, a place of misery. I could never feel happiness here again.

Strangely, I was fascinated by Tallow Meadow, with memories swinging from the branches of the trees and sorrow whispering in the wind. To any other, Tallow Meadow was just a pretty place; however I saw it as so much more. I remember the days when I frolicked about without a care in the world. I used to see the magic in the meadow.

Once upon a time, I had a friend. We were inseparable. But time went by like a bird in the sky and suddenly I found myself alone; she was nowhere to be seen.

Looking back, I could recall the day perfectly. It was a beautiful day, the faint clouds graciously lacing across the beautiful blue sky. We skipped away from the comfort of my home to Tallow Meadow. How senseless I was to not realise she was slowly growing pale, skinny, weak. I knew that she wasn't well, somewhere deep down I did. For years following



her death, I lived with guilt and sadness embracing me tighter and tighter as the days went by.

I made her chase me around, made her follow me like a sheep. She let me hurt her, only because she thought that to love meant to suffer. I ran after fairies and magic and she followed close behind. We never fought, not once. Maybe that's because I never let her speak.

I was so unaware, so naive. I watched her drown into an illness that no one could cure. I should have been there for her; I should have held her hand and told her to keep fighting until the end. But I didn't.

I missed the days where we sang to the fairies, we sang to the clouds and we sang to the world as a whole. We sang about what we thought love was, but looking back we really didn't have a clue.

All those years ago, I watched her buckle over in pain. I watched her die right before my eyes. We had all neglected her, oblivious to the sounds of her desperate cries for help.

As the ambulance took her away that day I felt a pain that I still feel to this day. A pain so terrible it has eaten me from the inside out. I remember screaming, strangers in pressed blue uniforms holding me back as I cried out her name.

Faith...

Faith...

Having Faith made me complete.

Now, all I feel is empty.

*By Jasmin Scriven*

*Age 14, Saint Aloysius College  
ADELAIDE – SA*

## Infinity

The grass is firm and steady tonight  
Cool and damp, like mist  
The ground goes on forever,  
Millions of miles deep  
For now, I have all the world  
The sky is still far  
Blue-black expanse  
A few silver airborne points shimmer, pulsate  
Quivering in their worlds  
Theirs, not mine  
Your eyes are stars

From out here  
The wind blows purple and silver across my face  
Like a metallophone's sweet, cold, rounded music  
It takes its shape in my ears  
From out here, I can hear you laughing  
Your hair is wind

Clear, cool sky  
Folds in my tunic are erased  
Currents of night air fade away thought  
My memory of you  
No longer needs morning

*By Ophelia Kong  
Year 7, SCEGGS  
DARLINGHURST – NSW*

# SANCTUARY

WITH a thoughtful look Albree reached out her newly scarred hands and ran it from his forehead back to the crown of his head. Simon watched her cautiously, shifting uncomfortably where he sat. The ancient chair squeaked in protest and the noise was amplified in the silence, jolting Albree out of her transfixed state.

‘You have brown hair’, she remarked.

Simon chuckled softly, ‘What were you expecting?’ he asked, now running his own hand over the few strands of hair on his formerly bald head.

‘I don’t know’, she admitted shyly. ‘I didn’t expect it to grow so fast.’

‘So fast?’ he repeated in disbelief. ‘Albree, it’s been weeks since the fire.’

‘No’, she insisted with a frown, ‘I only left the monastery a couple of days ago.’

Simon shook his head gravely.

‘It was my fault’, she said abruptly, her lip quivering dangerously.

‘Just figured that out, have you?’ Simon replied bitterly.

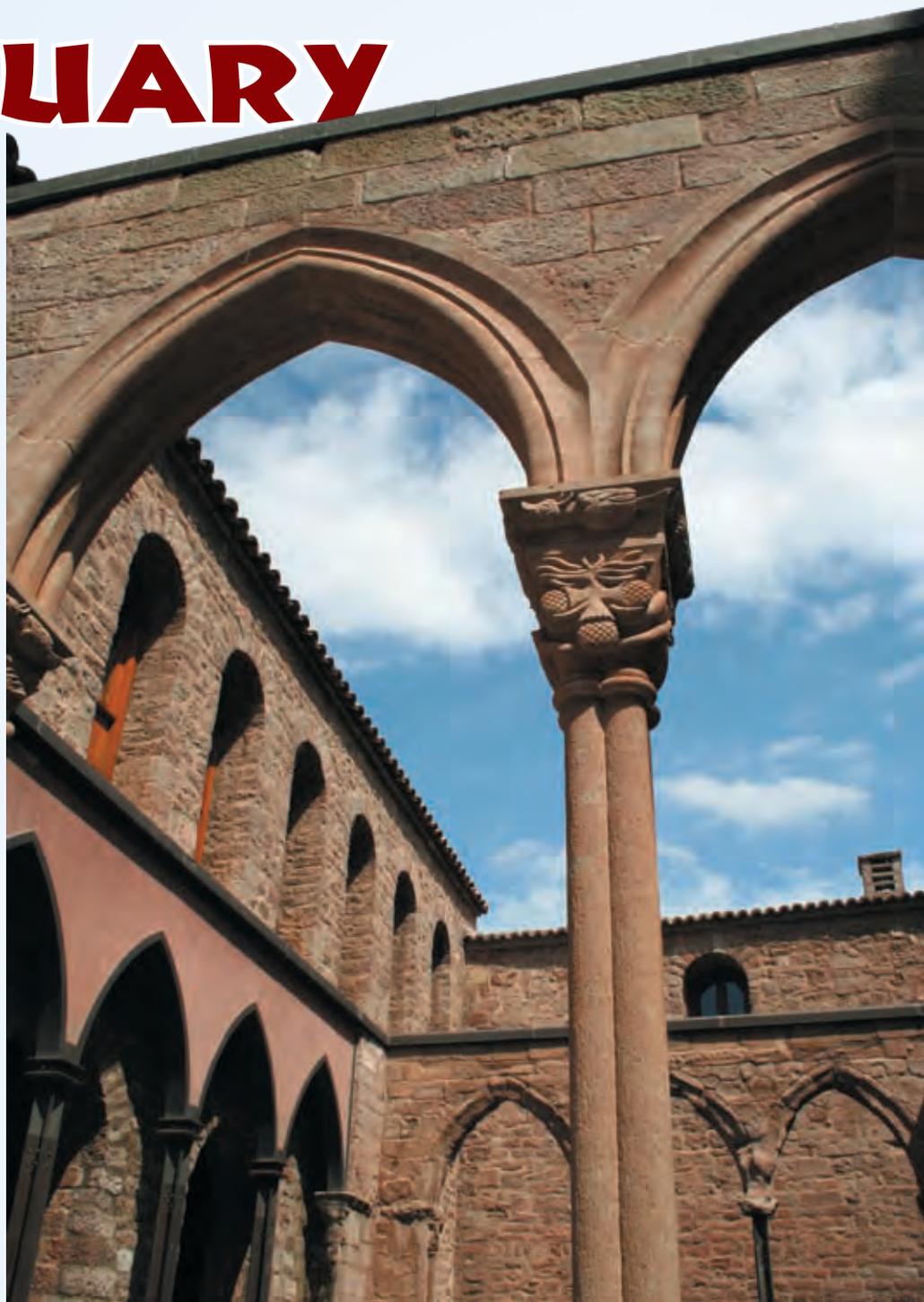
Albree lowered her eyes, a flicker of indignation followed by a look reminiscent of a wounded animal. This seemed to only ignite the monk’s anger even further.

‘What was I thinking helping you?’ he erupted finally, ‘You’re a criminal and yet all you had to do was bat your eyelashes and I did whatever you wanted! I thought I was on the right side; helping some poor, defenceless girl in need.’

She looked at him with wide eyes and then gestured helplessly.

‘No’, he snapped, ‘No more of your innocent act. You are much stronger and cleverer than you have led me to believe. You used me to get out of trouble and you don’t even notice the path of destruction you leave behind you wherever you go!’

The accusation poured out of his mouth before he had to time to think and with a



start he realised that he was centimetres from Albree’s face as he yelled down at her. The effect was instantaneous and her weak physicality changed immediately. Her face transformed into an ugly sneer, her right eyebrow rose so that she had a permanent smirk etched on her face. Her back straightened and the tears that had been welling in her eyes vanished in an instant. Shocked by the sudden transformation Simon took three hurried steps backwards.

‘Very good, monk’, the new Albree jeered. ‘Maybe there’s a brain behind all that romantic fluff you’ve stuffed your head with.’

Something told Simon he should run but his gut felt so heavy and his brain was whirring so furiously that his body couldn’t spare a thought for his legs.

He watched her sashay away and begin to gather her belongings, stuffing them into her small pouch which she tucked into her belt. Simon noticed a gleaming knife tied to the belt and wondered how he had not noticed it before. Yes, he thought as she plunged the ice-cold knife into his side, he definitely should have noticed that.

By **Hayley Calman**  
Year 11, St. Mary’s Senior High School  
ST. MARYS – NSW

# Tiny Ghost

SHE WAS a tiny ghost. No higher than my hips. Her hair, below her waist, was flying in an intangible breeze. She had slight limbs by her side, which were dangling as if they had no use. Her eyes were her most dominant feature; they were black tunnels, impaling anything that they came in contact with. She had the expression of complete mystery. I thought that she wanted a friend, but I never found out, because she never spoke.

When I first saw her, I was fetching kindling for my fire; she appeared in front of me. I was frozen to the spot; my breathing quickened. I don't know why I did it, maybe because I have been alone for so long. But I felt my hand moving, like she was towing it with an invisible wire. Before I knew, I was holding it out to her. When I tried to pull it back, my hand would not obey me, it had a new master now.

I was about to yell, and demand that I have my hand back. But I looked at the tiny ghost in front of me. I was intrigued by her. I turned off the frustration at not having control, and looked right into her eyes. I expected her to torture me, to take away my free will. But she just reached out and touched me. She only rested her smooth and cold fingers on my palm for a second; her hand quickly retreated back to her side.

A switch flicked inside my brain, and I could finally regain control of my body.

"Hello", I breathed.

At that, she flinched as if I had insulted her, and evaporated; leaving me kneeling foolishly on my porch.

★ ★ ★

The ghost visits me often. Each time, I get less frightened, and each time, her eyes lose some of their sting. She still disappears every time I utter a word. So I use gestures. I can tell that she understands me from her occasional drop of her head. I tell her how I lost my parents, and how I ended up here. She tells me nothing, but I think she is starting to open up.

At one point her lips move apart. I lean forward intently, in the hope that she will say actual words. I am disappointed when she freezes, realising what she is doing. Then she spins around so fast that I can feel the air that she unsettles, and leaves.

★ ★ ★

It has been three months since the girl left. It feel like I am moving backwards. By trying to connect with the girl, I thought that I was slowly plodding towards society again. Now I am shoved into a catapult, and thrown back again.

A quiet cry probes at my mind. It is the small cry of a child. Without even knowing

what she sounds like, I know it is the girl. Without thinking, I run outside to find her curled upon the ground, shaking as the powerful force of tears quakes through her. I kneel down next to her, placing my arm around her shoulders. I whisper softly into her ear. "It's okay, I'm here, and I can help you." She freezes, as if to comprehend what I have just said. Then she leans up and hugs me the way a daughter would a father, and I hug her back the way a father would a daughter.

*By Michaela Ryan  
Year 8, The Geelong College  
NEWTOWN – VIC.*

## Black

It looks like,  
darkness and hard times,  
burnt trees and ashes,

It feels like,  
fear and pain,  
rust and burning paper,

It smells like,  
fire and smoke,  
emptiness and danger,

It tastes like,  
bitterness and bile,  
time and age,

It sounds like,  
cries of pain,  
and signs of bravery,

Black is the colour of  
what everything ends as.

*By Florian Watters  
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# GASES OF THE GREEN

**M**Y FINGERS brush the rubbery surface of her gas mask, leaving sweaty imprints of my fingers. I find where the gas mask meets her skin and I look into her eyes. They're filled with fear and her eyelashes are damp with tears. I lean forward and whisper in her ear.

"It will be OK, I promise." She shivers against my touch and I can tell that she doesn't trust me, but she should. The gas masks are pointless now, the gases that polluted our atmosphere and made the air un-breathable have dissolved and we can live here again, but I am the only one who seems to know this. I don't wear my gas mask any more and I have to live in solitude because of it. Well, solitude is a strong word considering I'm not actually alone any more.

I came home late that night; all I wanted was to fall into bed. I bathed and walked into my room, when there was a knock on the door. I couldn't believe that my mum would visit tonight of all nights; she was the only one that ever came to see me. I trudge grudgingly up to the door and lift the latch, sliding the door open. I was half way through telling mum that it was a really bad time when I stopped and my eyes widened. This was definitely not my mum.

She had long auburn hair that reached to the back of her knees and she was slender, and amazingly tanned; also she was, well, gorgeous. From what I could see she had green eyes, but the gas mask covered the rest of her face so I couldn't see any of her other features.

"Can I help you?" I ask her.

Her eyes widen as she takes me in and I can tell she is surprised that I'm not wearing a gas mask. I smile at her, but her eyes don't return even a glimpse of happiness.

"No," she whispers, "I was just leaving". Her voice comes out raspy because of the mask. She turns around and starts to walk away.

"Wait", I call after her. She stops abruptly and I can tell she is waiting for an explanation before she comes back.

"Why are you leaving?", I call, "You only just got here."

"You're contaminated, I can't stay with you." Her voice wobbles and I can tell she was crying. I sigh inwardly, what was their problem; I am perfectly healthy. It was so frustrating.

"They say the gases don't kill you, just make you sick", she says seriously.

"I know we just met, but I need to trust me. You can stay if you want, but I don't have any drip food, so you will have to take off your mask." I tell her. She looks at me skeptically, unsure of what decision to make.

"Fine", she whispers after a while, "I'll stay".

It's been just over seven days and she is beginning to starve, I can't let that happen and I won't. In the seven days that she has been I have realised how much I have missed company, and I feel as if I can't live without it any longer. So that is why I am facing her fears for her; I am taking her mask off.

I look into her eyes once more and the fear in them nearly tears me apart, but I know that she will be OK; more than OK, she will thrive. I feel her fingers wrap tightly around my arm, so tightly that I think my circulation was cut off, but I ignore it.

Placing my fingers under the flap of the mask, I begin to pull it up over her face. Her bottom lip emerges and then her top, I keep lifting and a nose begins to appear, all the while her grip is getting tighter and tighter on my arm. I breathe deeply and pull the rest of the gas mask off her face; I drop it on the grass with a thump. She lets out a sigh and falls into my arms, at first I am shocked by her sudden closeness, but then I wrap my arms around her and begin to stroke her hair.

"Thank you", she whispers into my chest.

I lean in close and whisper in the ear. Her body begins to shake and I feel her tears wetting my shirt.

"Come on", I say soothingly, "Let's go inside and rest".

"Look", I say, "I'm not contaminated, the gases aren't around any more". I walk toward her, when I reach her; I place my hands on her shoulders and turn her around to face me. She flinches at my touch, but doesn't pull away.

"Ah-ha and pigs fly", she says sarcastically, "Seriously, why should trust you?"

"Because, well... I'm not dead am I?"



By **Caija Hogg-Wood**  
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# Of The Peace

THE MEDITERRANEAN sun beat down on Turkey's bustling Mecidiyeköy of Şişli, penetrating the canopy of trees that sheltered the town's centre. Tall, stone buildings with high ceilings and art nouveau wrought-iron balconies surrounded the narrow, winding streets of the town, separated by small, russet elevators on wobbly wires. The then-peaceful district was disturbed in a bitter feud of hate and prejudice between the discrepant groups of the Ottoman Empire during the 1915 Armenian genocide.

Amidst the storm stood Stepan Gevorgi. Stepan was an Armenian musicologist, and was committed into the first psychiatric hospital in Turkey, the Hôpital de la Paix. It was originally a Turkish military hospital run by French Nuns during the Crimean War, and was a standing testimony to Ottoman tolerance – wounded troops from the armies of the French, British and Ottoman Empires were all treated here by the 'Daughters of Charity', irrespective of race and religion. When the war ended, the French nuns were given the hospital as thanks for their efforts.

I was raised in the orphanage ward, and grew up in quiet corridors and dim halls, soaking in the tricks of the medicine trade. When I turned 21 in 1880, I swore an oath to God and began my life as a nun.

I was 56 years old when Stepan was committed to La Paix. On the night of his admission, I had gone to bring him dinner when I found his bruised, scrawny body sprawled out on the hospital bed.

Tired, heavy eyes fluttered wildly for

a moment as if to wake, but then settled, sleep triumphing in the struggle. I placed the tray on his bedside table and sank into the deep, leather loveseat to his right.

I wondered where he had come from, and how he escaped the genocide – all Armenians had been called upon by the Turkish government, rounded up into trucks and headed for the hills where, presumably, they were shot. They thought of it as a grand plan, but their prerogative, this notion of ethnic cleansing, would see their skin stretched across the fiery brimstones of Hell that do sit beneath us. With the flames lapping at our ankles so often, the relentless quest for domination up here became apparent – but did not call for the annihilation of an ethnic minority.

My heart ached for this stranger Stepan, and my heart beat in time to the rise and fall of his breathing chest as I was pulled into slumber. I woke to two almond-shaped auburn eyes peeping through a curtain of shaggy, dark curls. Startled and embarrassed, I tore my eyes from Stepan and began to mumble my apologies and collect myself, gesturing to the tray of cold food by his bedside.

Stepan's face pulled into a pout, and genuine confusion contorted his face. He stared at me for a moment, his lips slightly parting as they paled. Under a glistening sheen of sweat, he began to ramble in barely decipherable Turkish, "Agitated were our souls, and our minds racked with fear, as we moved through the bungalows of the outskirt hills. There were bandits behind every boulder; God was nowhere to be seen. Where has he gone, Sister?"

I looked down at my feet, curling my toes in the confines of my slippers. "God will never leave you, Stepan. God is eternal. Do not abandon your faith."

"What is it for? Education, work, death. To become a part of the Earth for a future species to never discover, and our

lives become meaningless... or else they always have been. One does not need God, or art, or music – but light and nature, that's all we need."

Stepan shut his eyes and began to hum a bewitchingly sophisticated folk melody, before lighting up in a furious rage and slamming himself into the wall. "I don't know you, go away! Get out! I must write my songs!" I hurriedly exited, and could feel bursts of adrenaline coursing through my veins.

In the months that followed, Stepan's state deteriorated. Paranoia gnawed at him from the inside out – every week that passed he felt sadness. He was even angry at the sun. He began to talk to himself, and refused food. He would cry out as though imaginary animals were attacking, cowering in dark corners, clawing at the walls trying to break free.

Three years after his admission, after the genocide was over, Stepan remained unwell. He was to be relocated to Hospital Vile Evare in Paris, where his treatment would continue.

On his last night in La Paix, his screams bent through the corridors and bounced off all the ceilings. I entered his room with a warm glass of milk in my hand and a syringe in my back pocket, only to have the shrill shrieks stop; Stepan lay curled on the ground, silently shaking. His eyes frantically searched the room in an attempt to find something, before locking with mine. "Sister... Hôpital de la Paix. I do not speak French. All this time... what does it mean?"

I stared at Stepan, brushing matted locks from his clammy forehead. "Of the peace."

He smiled for a moment before I plunged the lethal dose of pain relief into his neck. His eyes widened and lit up in such a way I had never seen before, his lips murmuring their last 'thank you' as his soul departed the shackles of his flesh and ascended, finally, into the gentle embrace of God.

By **Jessica Bakewell**  
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