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August 2014

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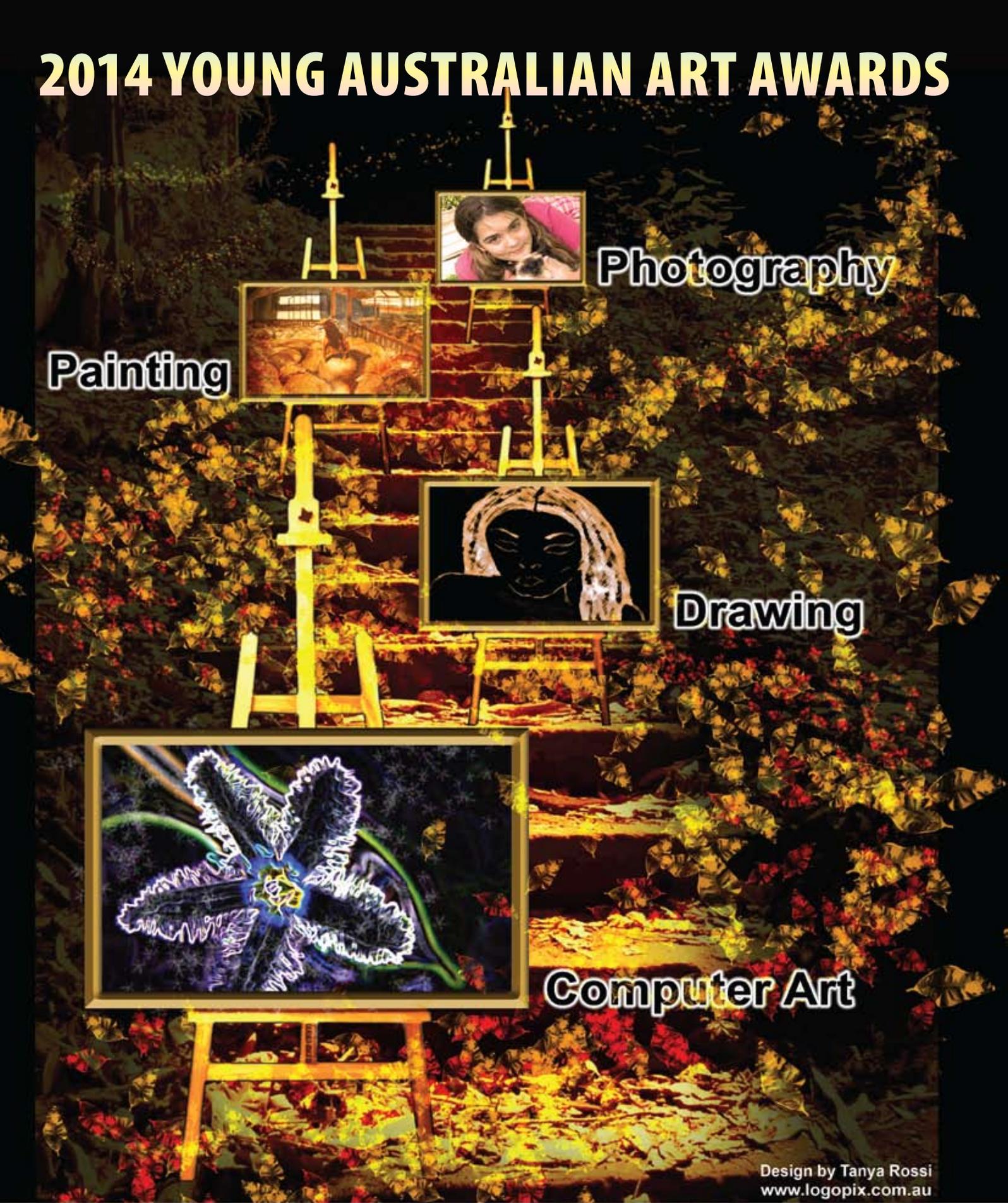
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2014 YOUNG AUSTRALIAN ART AWARDS



Painting

Photography

Drawing

Computer Art

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

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

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

OZ KIDS IN PRINT

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

This is the second last edition of *Oz Kids in Print* before the 2014 Young Australian Writers' Awards, which means you need to get your entries in quickly to be eligible.

Entries **MUST** be in before **3rd October, 2014**. If you are a Year 12 student you must enter before this date. If you are a Year 6 student it will be advisable for you to do the same, unless you are continuing at the same school.

Any entries received after this date will be eligible for the 2015 Awards.

All work must be original and your own – **plagiarism is not tolerated.**

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**KEEP ON WRITING
(TYPING)!**

Carol Dick
Managing Editor

**CHILDREN'S CHARITY NETWORK
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Arabella

"NO. I am never going to Trelums' Finishing School. Ever!", Arabella Parrell, a girl of thirteen years, said bluntly, her anger clearly being restrained.

"You never really wanted me, did you, Aunt Emerald? Neither did you, Uncle Errol. You don't love me. Aunt Emerald, you loved my mother, your only sibling-but not even my father. And now you just want to ship me off to a boarding school? You've never told me about my parents and how they died, either. I have a right to know." Arabella paused, as if the following words caused her so much pain she couldn't get them out of her lips. "I know they didn't die in a car accident, you know", she whispered. Two tears rolled gently down her pale-pink cheeks. Talking about her parents always made her upset. Her dead parents. That was why she'd had to live with Aunt Emerald Roule and Uncle Errol Roule, why she'd had to cope for ten years with Serephina, their spoilt daughter, why she had never received the love every child should receive. Emerald glanced at Errol, then locked eyes with her niece. And she began her story.

"Arabella, your mother, Amethyst Parrell, and your father, Charlie Parrell, were magic. They had the gift, the power and – after six years of education at the Delecoura School of Magic – the skill. They had extraordinary talent; always top of the class, Amethyst was.

"When they finished school they went off, married and for a few years, they fought. They fought the most wicked wizard the magic world has ever known. His name is Severin, and he vanquished many people by using Eviles, a branch of magic that not many wizards dare to explore, as it can have disastrous effects. 'So many people, Emerald, so many!' That's what Amethyst always said. Severin stopped fighting back, though, suddenly. Everyone thought they were safe. And that's when you were born.

"No-one knew what Severin had planned. It was thought that he was gone, never to return. Amethyst told me that wizards everywhere were finally enjoying peace."

Emerald paused to dab at her eyes with a handkerchief. She refused to meet Arabella's eyes. "Only three, you were. And then... he just appeared. Right in front of your parents. He pointed that stick of wood at your parents, and whispered something. They just collapsed, all life sucked out of them. But you. You were different. You seemed to repel him. Couldn't get near you. And we found you, curled up between your parents, the next day."

Arabella was shocked. Why had they never told her? "Aunt Emerald, how do you know all of this?"

"One of your parents' magical neighbours told us when your uncle and I arrived there for a pre-arranged lunch", Emerald replied. Tears still stung at the corners of her eyes.

"Wait. There's one thing I still don't understand: why did you only just tell me this?"

Errol replied, "Arabella, you are a witch, just like your parents. We can send you to Delecoura School of Magic".

Arabella smiled, anger and shock left behind. "How do I get to Delecoura?"

By **Sidney Hoei**
Age 11
GEELONG – VIC.



This is the Night of the Werewolf...

Night of the Werewolf
Morning is nigh
As the moon begins to set.
I am happy to leave
The wolf I have met.
I am afraid.
But I wouldn't mind staying
Just a little longer
As I gaze at the sights
On my night wander.
Back home.
As the moon disappears
I feel my human looking for me.
There is no need to rush, for
The Sun will set me free.



By **Morgaine Delahoy**
Year 7,
Casterton Secondary College
CASTERTON – VIC.

The wind is scooping up the dust
Bearing down upon the city
Through the town in one big gust
Leaving homes all grim and gritty

All the lights once big and bright
Now smothered by the grey
As the day now turns to night
It won't matter either way

Now we all live in a grey bleak land
All our safety is a must
We all must join hand in hand
Against the massive cloud of dust...

By **Nykita Ivanoff**
Year 5, Beaumaris North Primary School
BEAUMARIS – VIC.



THE SPOOK

WHEN James was walking back from school he found everything was covered in leaves, when suddenly he heard some noises coming from in front of him. He looked up and down in front of him, then saw a creepy looking mansion just a metre in front of him.

“That is where my house should be. Well... this is going to be fun. Tomorrow I'm going to scare my friends. WWHHOO! Now maybe this might be one of the so called spooky houses everyone's been talking about.”

James looked around everywhere and saw a lot of lights around him. When he saw the lights, he thought he could see some Jack o'lanterns with bright yellow beady eyes looking straight at him. It really looked

scary because it was night time right now, and it was especially scary because of the really bright big yellow mouth that shone everywhere because it was so bright.

“EEKK!” It was five flashing lights, two really close together but the rest were about a metre away from each other. “SWOOP!” James fell backwards. “It's only bats”, he said.

James started walking into the house when “BOO!” It was his house that was there all along. The lights he had seen were just his family dressed up as ghosts with torches. It was only Halloween. “How did I forget about it?”

By **Samuel Aroney**
Year 3, Pennant Hills Public School
PENNANT HILLS – NSW



Completing the Gamers Trilogy

By George Ivanoff

HAVE a trilogy! Let me tell you about it.

Writing the *Gamers* trilogy has been an interesting and often surprising experience. Not the least because I never intended it to be a trilogy when I started.

I wrote *Gamers' Quest* as a stand-alone novel. It's about two teenagers, Tark and Zyra, who are characters inside a computer game. The thing is, they don't know they are in a game. They think their game world is actually real. So, while they are battling villains and dragons and giant robotic spiders, they are also on a journey of discovery about themselves and their world.

Although the entire novel is set inside the computer game, I did a lot of background work in creating the world outside the game. This game is no ordinary game, and in order for me to understand how it all worked and what the rules were and what the boundaries were, I needed to understand the world outside the game — who created it and why. So there was a lot of world building that never actually made it into *Gamers' Quest*.

I chose to end *Gamers' Quest* in an ambiguous way — not because I was planning any further books, but simply because I like a story that

leaves a little up to the reader's imagination. Individual readers can interpret the ending in different ways and put their own spin on things. I like doing that as a reader... so I often leave room for it as a writer. Having said that, I knew exactly what happened to Tark and Zyra after the events of that first book.

Once the book was published I assumed that was the end of it and that I would move on to other projects. It was a bit of a surprise when I got a call from the publisher a year later, asking me if I'd like to write a sequel. Apparently the book had sold quite well and the publisher felt there was a market for a second.

So I got to work on *Gamers' Challenge*, in which Tark and Zyra come face to face with a malevolent computer virus. In addition to this threat, they also have to deal with the knowledge that they are in a game... and that they are, therefore, not real. They do this by trying to find a way out of the Game.

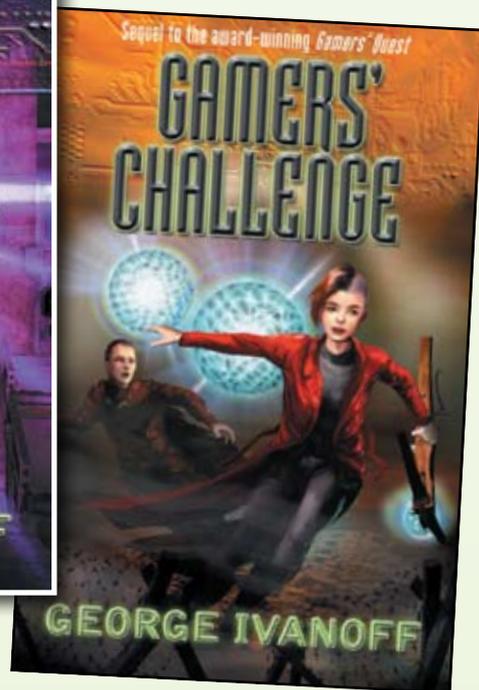
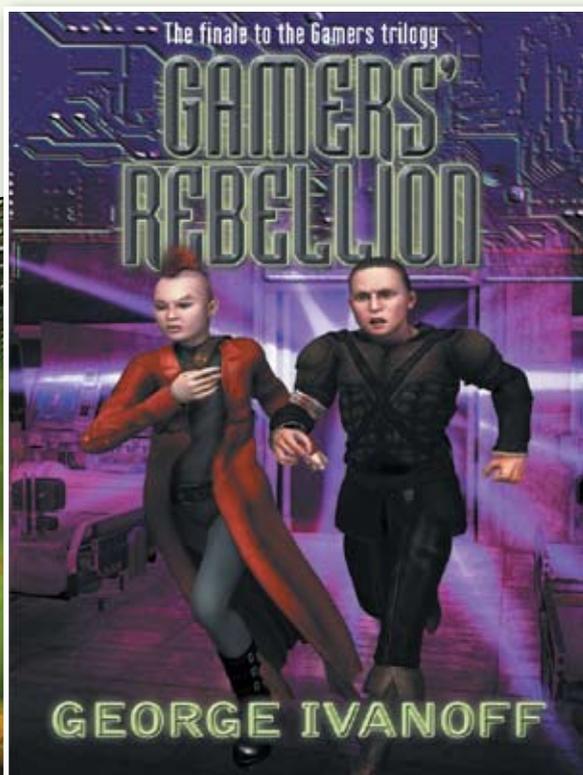
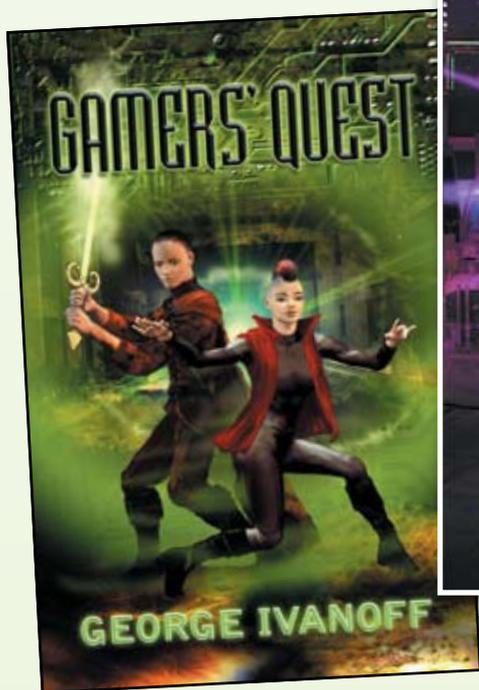
The writing of this book was perhaps a little easier than the first, simply because

I had already done all the background world building. But, as with *Gamers' Quest*, *Gamers' Challenge* is entirely set within the game — albeit within multiple game environments. While I got to use a little more of my background in this book, there was still plenty that never made it in.

Being the second book, with readers now familiar with the setting and characters, I felt I had the opportunity to make the story and concepts more complex. Although *Gamers' Quest* included themes of identity and reality, the story itself was a straightforward quest with a twist in the end. With *Gamers' Challenge* I developed those themes and also added the concept of freedom. What is freedom? And what do you do with it once you have it? Are you the sum total of what you have been taught, trained or programmed to be? Or can you choose to become who you want to be? Is reality anything more than what you perceive it to be?

The other big difference about writing *Gamers' Challenge* was that I started to think of things in terms of a trilogy. It occurred to me that, if book 1 was about

Tark and Zyra discovering that they are in a game and book 2 is about them trying to get out, then there really should be a book 3 in which they do get out. So as I was writing this book, I was thinking about the



plotline for book 3, and seeding things for later development in that potential third book. Mind you, I still didn't have a contract for book 3 — that would be dependent on the sales of book 2.

Thankfully, *Gamers' Challenge* sold well enough for the publisher to want the third book. As soon as I got the go ahead, I got stuck into it.

In *Gamers' Rebellion*, Tark and Zyra exit the game — their thoughts, experiences and personalities are downloaded into cloned bodies. But the real world is not quite what they expected, as they find themselves amidst mad scientists, megalomaniacs and rebels. And even in the real world, they can't fully escape the game and the sinister purpose behind it.

Writing this book was an incredibly exciting experience. It was a book of revelations. Finally I got to use all that

background world building and reveal what the game actually was, why it was created, how it was created and for what purpose. Throughout the first two books, the characters within the game worship the mythical Designers, the creators of the game. Finally, in book 3 I was able to reveal who the Designers really were.

With the third book I was again able to up the complexity of plot, characters and concepts. I was able to add even more layers to the themes of reality, identity and freedom, examining how people are able to escape from reality, from who they are and from what they had done. At its core, *Gamers' Rebellion* is the story of unreal people becoming real, and then making themselves unreal in order to maintain the reality of an unreal world. How's that for complex?

Process aside, there is also the thrill of having written a trilogy — to hold the final book in my hands; to see all three

books together on a shelf; to know that readers are following the adventures of characters that I created over the course of three books; to know that I have finally achieved that summit that so many writers strive for... TRILOGY STATUS!

George Ivanoff is a Melbourne author and stay-at-home dad. He has written over 70 books for kids and teens, including novels, chapter books, school readers, non-fiction books and even a short story collection. *Gamers' Rebellion* was published in 2013, completing his Gamers trilogy (Ford Street Publishing). In 2014 his new series, *You Choose* (Random House Australia), hit the stores. Check out his website: georgeivanoff.com.au

Gamers' Quest, *Gamers' Challenge* and *Gamers' Rebellion* are published by Ford Street Publishing (www.fordstreetpublishing.com). Check out the official Gamers website: www.gamersquestbook.com

I Miss You So

My heart's beating, but I'm not living.
I breathe, I feel. But I don't care.
I feel clogged, I feel unused...
Escaping is pointless, I am drowning.
I try to rise up, but I'm dragged down
Giving up is not an option.
It never is. But, the darkness
Pulls me out of the light. I run,
My feet flying over puddles left
From the storm in my heart.
Images fly by, shredding my flesh
From the bone and it rips my heart
Out and I feel pain
Blossoming through my chest as the
Red rose unfurls its petals and
Instantly falls off
Leaving me numb and void.
You left me, I'm all alone right now
While you live in your world of white.
I hope you enjoy your serenity...
I feel tortured, I feel torn.
But these feelings cannot compare
To reality where loneliness hovers like
A dark rainy cloud over me.
You have left me, that's all I know.
I shall join you when the time comes, but till then
I miss you so.

By **Kithma Kaluwitharana**
Year 11, St. Peter's College
DANDENONG – VIC.

War Photographer

I AM paid to record suffering. It is my trade. I feed on it; I thrive on it; I am fuelled by it. I am the vulture perched on a rock behind you, waiting to consume the scraps of your suffering.

I stand alone in the darkroom, bathed in the dim red glow, hanging my wet photographs on the line, waiting for them to develop. My negatives of suffering are set out before me in ordered rows, and I have grown to like the pungent smell of chemicals that pervades this room. The dim red light emitted from the bulb above my head flickers, and I close my eyes.

I open them, and blazing red fire erupts, as a South-Vietnamese aeroplane dives down on Trang Bang village, wreaking destruction with napalm and white petroleum jelly. The ground explodes in a nightmare of heat and light, turning the world into a living hell. I grab the camera hanging around my neck and capture the raging inferno.

Out of the fire and smoke, people come running from the direction of the Caodai temple, like cockroaches in a darkened room, scattering once the light has been turned on. They are South Vietnamese civilians caught in the crossfire of a war they do not understand. A blood-spattered mother runs toward us, carrying her baby in her arms. The baby is horribly burnt all

over, his blackened skin hanging off his flesh in strips. I know that all the doctors in the world would not be able to save him now. I keep taking photographs. It is my job.

It is the summer of 1972, and I am travelling through Vietnam, a photojournalist recording the horrors of war. I record suffering in bite-sized portions, small enough for people to digest comfortably, which are then sold to newspapers and published. Out of the hundreds of photos I produce, my editor picks out five or six for Sunday's supplement. The reader's eyes prick with tears between bath and afternoon tea.

But is it enough to simply record?

Children are running towards us, their mouths open, crying the agony-filled cries of a world corrupted by war. A young girl runs along the path beside her wailing brother, naked, her clothes consumed by the insatiable napalm. Her arms are stretched out, her mouth too is open, screaming, crying. I hastily take photographs as she runs barefoot towards me.

I know before they are developed that these photographs will shock people from their apathy towards this misbegotten war. My editor, no doubt, will be pleased in a

manner befitting a cat that has caught a canary.

As she runs past me, her back turns towards me. Only now do I see the full extent of her injuries. Her skin, like the baby's, hangs off in shreds, burnt by the heartlessness of a cruel world. I stop taking photographs.

She screams, "Nóng quá! Nóng quá!"

Her yelps of pain crash against me, protesting the intensity of the heat that has melted both her skin and what was left of her innocence. I grab the water flask that hangs at my waist, and hand it to her begging mouth. She drinks ravenously for a moment. I pour the rest of my water over her burns.

A voice in my head tells me, "Nick, this is not your job. You are merely a photographer. Your job is only to record". I clench my fists and shut my eyes to block out these unwanted thoughts.

Later, I open my eyes to the bloodied gauze that has been wrapped around the girl like a red-and-white cocoon. In the Barsey hospital in Saigon, I sit by the girl's side, wincing at her moans of pain. The hospital, like many in Vietnam, is running low on their precious morphine supplies. I am startled to realise that one can still cry



"TrangBang" by Huynh Cong Ut (also known as Nick Ut)

despite being unconscious, as tears roll down the girl's dirty face, forming streaks. Her mother is crying too, thanking me with bows, clutching my hands.

"You are our saviour. We cannot thank you enough."

A wave of guilt washes over me; I am not at all what she tells me I am. I have seen too much, recorded too much, to believe that. I could have as easily ignored the girl; I could have let her run past me, as so many others had done. My hands are stained with the blood of my subjects. No, not blood. Blood comes clean; it washes off. You cannot wash off the suffering that is ingrained in my photographs. I could not have saved them all.

At night I lie awake in bed, yearning for sleep, my only respite. But sleep has

become a dream on the cusp of memory, hovering just out of reach. All I see is faces, strangers' features that faintly twist before my eyes, half-formed ghosts. Suffering is the commodity in which I am the prime dealer. I collect it and I sell it. My job is to inform people through my photographs, to let them know of the horrors of war, of the suffering. The dead babies with peeling skin and their blood-splattered mothers. The children with missing limbs that lie on the side of dirty roads, with no home to go to any more, no parents to comfort them. But what's the use when suffering has become as commonplace as parking tickets, broken-up into easily-digestible chunks, wedged between pages of a newspaper?

My readers, sitting in their homes of blissful naïveté lit by the dim evening glow

of sentry streetlights that they convince themselves are symbols of their safety, glance at my black-and-white agonies in the Sunday paper, in between perusing the weekly sports and fashion editorials. They feel sorry for the naked girls, the mothers and their dead babies, appalled at the war fought ten thousand miles away in another world. The next day, all is forgotten.

A homeless man outside mutters to himself, before eventually drifting off into a nightmare-filled slumber from which he has not awoken in over twenty years, yesterday's newspapers wrapped around him so tight that the cries of foreign children are finally drowned out.

By Jennifer Chen

*Year 12, St. George Girls' High School
KOGARAH – NSW*

THE RAINDROPS' JOURNEY

ON A thundery night in a small town, a man slept in his grave. An indifferent divorcee of thirty-eight bawled her eyes out in the kitchen. And an eight-year-old boy shivered in bed – not from cold but from confusion.

This is the story of the eight-year-old and of what happened that night.

~~~~~

As I observed the raindrops slide off my window and listened intently to Mum's sobbing, the door creaked open and Mum strode in. Attempting to take advantage of the situation, I asked, "Can you tell me a bedtime story?" despite knowing this was not the right time for anything besides quiet.

She thought for a minute's length but much to my surprise, ultimately sat down on the edge of the bed, facing the window and the rain outside. When she spoke, her voice was downright deliberate. "Tonight I'm going to tell you a story called 'The Raindrops' Journey'."

"Okay", I said, already intrigued and more importantly, deeply relieved that it wasn't *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* all over again.

"It's a story about Mama Raindrop, Papa Raindrop and Baby Raindrop", she continued and I immediately feared that this was yet another replica of the tale my life revolved around. Thankfully, I was wrong.

Momentarily distracted by my thoughts, I watched Mum trace three raindrops from inside the window with two index fingers and a thumb. "There they are", she said, "three individuals". My eyes never left the window and gradually, the three raindrops merged into one big raindrop that slid effortlessly off the window and onto the window sill beneath. Mum's long fingers progressively chased them all the way to the bottom. "Did you see that?" she asked suddenly. "A family."

I didn't respond. Mum leaned in closer and for the first time that night, I saw her red eyes swollen. "Umm..." I began formulating a valid response but she cut me to it.

"Don't you see? It's the journey of life. This is you, your dad, me", she said frantically, pointing towards three other raindrops. "We're interlinked – I'm the frozen water but even ice melts sometimes, you know. And you're the water, sliding from side-to-side, lost and confused and baffled

because it's not your fault, it's mine, and your dad..." she spoke gibberish until eventually, her voice trailed off.

"And what's Dad?" I asked, wanting to decipher this metaphor once and for all.

Mum shrewdly sidestepped the question by feigning a violent cough but somewhere in the midst of all the remorse and regret, I discerned a raw tear – a bleeding raindrop – escape her eye before it vanished into thin air. I remained resolute.

"What about Dad?" I pressed, determined.

Mum inhaled deeply, like there was a shortage of air in her lungs, then after several painfully long minutes, inaudibly whispered, "He's the water vapour".

It would take me ten years to discover exactly what Mum meant when she said that, but one thing was for sure – behind her icy shield, my mum was a watery woman.

**By Sarah Asif**

*Year 11,  
Beverly Hills Girls' High School  
BEVERLY HILLS – NSW*

# Harvester Ants



**Y**OU'RE a failure, Arlardo constantly thought to himself as he ambled home along the road adorned with autumn maple trees, scuffing his shoes on the footpath. Deep in thought, he didn't notice the jagged footpath until his water bottle leapt out of his hands and shattered his train of thought. His gaze averted to the trail of water that led to a mysterious bulge protruding from the ground. Fascinated, he came closer to examine the object.

Arlardo cautiously crouched and saw a stream of ants hastily leaving the ant hill and he wondered why. Loneliness deserted him for a while as he sat intrigued by the buzzing activity at the hill. Ants were going in, ants were coming out. The ones entering seemed to be carrying some kind of seed that was three times its size. Arlardo was amazed and imagined himself carrying a gorilla on his backside; he imagined being crushed. He also noticed that these ants were much larger and had a dirt red shell unlike the little black ants he saw at home; these must be the harvester ants.

His mind began to wonder about the ants and for a moment, the devil's voice that chimed tirelessly in his head decided to leave for a drink. That devil was responsible for the years of depression he had as a teenager and still has. It was hard to deal with depression when he always felt alone and isolated, like there was a mirrored-layer coating him. He was seen only as a reflection. Arlardo was not like anyone in his family and because of this, he felt shunned and neglected and he often wondered why he existed. He felt pathetic having the internet as his only friend but unusually, he found comfort when interacting online.

He gazed longingly at the ants, at their unity and sense of belonging. He had long lost the happiness in his life. As he watched the ants in silence, he realised he could learn a lot from them. Despite their size, they had a very strong work ethic paired with incredible physical abilities. He saw groups of ants come to collect the carcasses

of their fellow comrades from the tsunami his water bottle had caused. Arlardo couldn't help but wonder what they did with the corpses once they took them back to the nest; he hoped they didn't eat them. Curious, he pulled out his iPad and asked Google. 'Ants bury their dead all in one place, creating a sort of ant graveyard', the machine responded. That's interesting. Arlardo lowered his giant hand over some of the carcasses, expecting the collectors to retreat in fear of their own death, but their loyalty and respect gave him his first lesson. Showing respect to others is important, but self-respect is the key.

Feeling peckish, Arlardo pulled out his sunflower seeds and munched on a few. As one fell to the ground, an ant hurried over and a while later, a group of ants had gathered and began to carry the seed back to the nest. After further research, he learned that when an ant discovered an item that it could not carry by itself, it sent out a signal to neighbouring ants to come and help carry it back to the nest. This item was then shared and never eaten alone by a single ant. From this characteristic, Arlardo learned that help was always available if you asked because only opening up would allow the problem to be resolved. Similarly, the ant that sought help allowed all of the ants, including itself, to have a share of the meal.

He dropped another seed, but this time he wanted to see what the ants would do if he took that seed away. Immediately the ant sped away, but as he put the seed down again, the ant came back. Arlardo repeated this action a couple of times and every time, the ant kept on coming back. It was persistent and did not give up; it knew what it wanted and would not let anything get in its way. He too needed to adopt this quality of a firm mind. He had known what he wanted for a long time; he wanted to eliminate depression from his life and now he felt the power to do so.

Satisfied, Arlardo let out a sigh of relief. As he sat and watched the sunbeams

dancing and the leaves gently falling, he felt calmness overcome him. Arlardo had enjoyed watching and playing with the ants, so he scattered the rest of his sunflower seeds near the ant hole to thank them. Then he strode home, full of hope and ready to face anything.

By **Nina Nguyen**

Year 11, Eynesbury Senior College  
ADELAIDE – SA

## The Crow Who Wanted To Play Tennis

**O**NCE upon a time, there lived a crow. His name is Racket Ball. He loves to play tennis, but he has no one to play with. What can he do?

'I got an idea, I'll find someone.'

So Racket set off to town on his wings finding someone that can play with him. He asked his friends Pinky, Babblu and Kris. He couldn't find anyone, then a girl named Izzy said 'I'll play with you' and they started playing tennis.

*The End*

By **Parthiv Kurup**

Year 2, Scoresby Primary School  
SCORESBY – VIC.



**Oz Kids in Print**

FAMILIES milled around sanctuaries all day, with children staring in awe at the fascinating and peculiar creatures that they had never before seen. The most popular by far were the lions.

Infants waddled up close to the fence, sticking their fragile little fingers through the minuscule holes in the mesh fencing and gripping onto the wire with amazement running through their stout little bodies. Parents tried to restrain their children from getting too close to the fence, stopping them from trying to stroke the majestic though wild large cat. However, in the parents' favour, one lion would approach the fence and seldom a snarl would erupt, making the surrounding areas go dead silent with only toddlers' petrified screams to pierce the air. This would make the kids hastily step back from the lions shaking with shock and adrenalin and sobbing into their mother's leg as they clung to it for safety and only a tower of chocolate ice-cream crammed into an undersized cone oozing and dripping all over their chubby hands would sedate the child as they blubbered.

# THE ZOO



With stringy liquid chocolate dribbling down their chin and sticking to their teeth, forming unusual coloured strings of saliva they say, with certainty, that they will never go to the zoo again and that they hate lions.

Nevertheless, five minutes after eating their treat, they want to go see the giraffes and then after the visit to the zoo is over, they

nag and beg in the car on the way home to go back again the next day and when they get home, the child feels the right to boast about how brave he was and how the lion escaped its pen and attempted to eat him.

By **Chelsie Mott**  
Year 10, Age 16  
MURRAWEE – VIC.

## The Funeral

**C**RASH! My suitcase was bulging, I had to take absolutely everything granny gave me, even the impossibly gigantic books. I loved my gran, she played around with us kids, pretended to be knights in foreign castles and told us stories till the break of dawn. She was my best friend, I just can't believe that I've lost her.

She had suffered a heart attack. Mum told me we would be okay... But I won't.

"It's time to go!" Mum's bouncy voice echoed like soft drink bubbles through the halls of our now silent house. It's like she did not even know that her own mother had died! Maybe she is concealing the fact that she has so much more sorrow in her life than anyone else, so she does not want to make people feel bad for her, to pity her.

We were driving to the funeral and I couldn't help asking myself whether I was the only one in the family who cared about granny? I look around... my square-eyed brother playing on his iPad mini... A brainless mum rocking along to Justin B's new hit single, and Dad, looking as bored as ever driving along the never-ending

road. My heart sank to the bottom of the sea when I answered my own question, "Yes, I am the only one who cared about granny".

The service was dreadfully long but I did catch some words which puzzled me. "She was very kind", the man uttered. I imagined blurting out, "HEY YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW HER!". But I didn't feel like it in the end and the man called me up to say a few words. I thought about saying "You did not love Gran as much as I did", but instead, I muttered this verse:

*Wherever she may be  
She is in my heart  
Whatever burden be,  
Nothing can tear us apart.*

Mum said nothing on the way home and I knew how she truly felt.

I signed up for Girl Guides when I got home, so I can do good deeds for the elderly... I know granny would have liked that.

By **Molly Waters**  
Year 5, Robertson State School  
ROBERTSON – QLD.

# *It takes a brave person to shine a light*

They took my heart,  
they broke me down.  
There was nothing left of me in my own town.

People struggle to walk,  
they struggle to breathe,  
that compares to nothing of what I have grieved.

I stand here all alone,  
no family, no way to go,  
it feels as though I have no home.

How will I cope?  
My head is turned down,  
there's nothing left of me. Just a frown.

They took our country with no regret,  
deep down inside we felt under threat.

Years went by,  
life went on.  
Nothing changed,  
not a thing, not someone.

Later on we were called for a meeting,  
with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.  
It was very intriguing.

He apologised for the stolen generation.  
We are now united as one nation.

'Sorry Day' will always be remembered.  
Our people, our life,  
the appreciation of our generation.

By **Morgan Novatsis**

Year 6,  
BUNDOORA – VIC.

# *One Day*

One Day I sit, I listen and I ache,  
As I long for all you talk about,  
The happiness found only with another,  
The memories sparked by the littlest things,  
The smile it puts on your face as you remember,  
How nothing ever compares,  
To the time you spent together,  
Gazing the stars,  
Or going to the movies together,  
The way you prolonged your farewell,  
Even though you knew,  
You would see each other soon,  
The way you talk about it so casually,  
With that underlying grin,  
How even mentioning his name,  
Brings back that smile, and your eyes,  
They light up the way that only he can make them,  
Everybody comments on how cute you are,  
And I watch from the sidelines,  
Trying to live vicariously through you,  
Hiding what I truly feel,  
Vainly trying to blend in with the crowd,  
Struggling to find something, anything,  
To pull me out of this mire I've sunk into,  
Sinking deeper and deeper,  
As time passes slowly by,  
Convincing myself I'm doing the right thing,  
Listening to my friends' advice and experience,  
As an inner struggle,  
Between my heart and my brain rages on,  
Two halves of an equation,  
Which will never be equal,  
Contrasting opinions, match contrasting feelings,  
I feel like I'm lost without a map,  
Sailing the seas of uncertainty,  
My heart tells me to go one way,  
While my brain tells me no,  
Different days and different outlooks,  
Always leaving one on top,  
But this constant varying,  
Does nothing for confidence,  
Or peace of mind,  
My silent pleas for help,  
When ignored do nothing,  
But when answered mix the brain and the heart together,  
In a tangle of feelings and emotions,  
Maybe one day I'll understand,  
One day...

By **Chelsea Drinkald**

Year 9, Woodcroft College, MORPHETT VALE – SA



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# Old Man Wisdom

The old man's voice echoes in my ear  
He speaks in language I struggle to hear  
His words are strong, they come from a time afar  
His spirit now, just a twinkling star

I stop to listen, stand up straight  
He speaks of the future, he describes our fate  
Steady voice, strong words of warning  
The sun has risen a new day is dawning

He warns us now, he tells it here  
He says the words we all fear  
The world has changed, yet the earth still turns  
A traditional life mother earth yearns

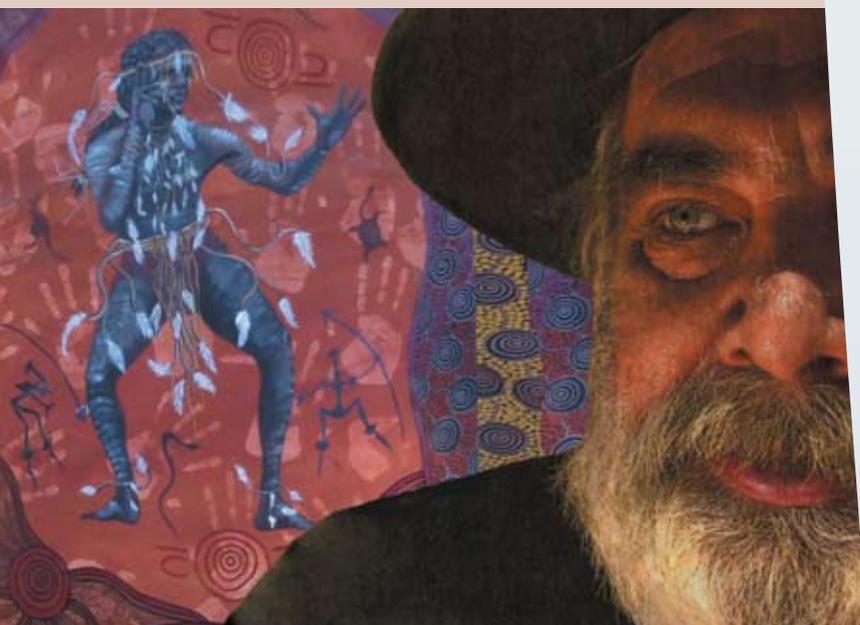
He says that while the grass still grows  
That what our ancestors know  
We must put one another's needs  
Way, way, way before our greed

We must show love and care,  
To our fellow man we must be fair  
And while the rivers still flow  
We must help the young ones to strongly grow

Stand firm, he says, I implore  
Hatred and bigotry do not ignore  
Stand strong like the mountain  
And flow like water to the fountain

Protect this wonderful mother earth  
Draw her near, toward your hearth  
Do right by the spiritual creator of this land  
And keep your feet firmly planted in the sand

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



# THE DAY



The chains grip my wrist,  
They cut into my skin and bleed,  
They have been there for ten days.

No talking, no sound is to be made,  
I have been lying on the bed all the time,  
No contact with the outside world,  
No sunlight has been seen.

Someone comes in, walking quietly,  
They flash their torch at me,  
Blinded by the light,  
I stand up, walking to the door, struggling.

I walk down the alley,  
Slowly to my eyes I see the sunlight,  
I squeal with surprise,  
The man shushes me and pushes me to the door.

I walk out, everyone stops talking,  
As I walk past them, their eyes bore into my back,  
They whisper behind my back,  
I want to go back and punch them.

I walk up the stairs and sit down,  
My mind is blank and my hand is numb,  
They start talking,  
Talking about the day.

They day when I lost my brother,  
He died, I was depressed,  
I killed the guy who killed him.  
Today is the day I am to be hanged.

*By **Jishita Sathyanarayanan**  
Year 8, Age 13  
Tara Anglican School for Girls  
PARRAMATTA – NSW*

# FROM A DISTANCE

**W**HEN I was seventeen, I had my first kiss. It was far from my idealistic fantasy of rain drizzling down as he pulled me close, our bodies radiating warmth as his soft lips grazed my own. No, it was tear track lines of running mascara whilst I pressed my lips to the love of my life, my best friend in his last, final moments....

When I was six, I saw a little boy swathed in the woollen blue jumper that cut off at his scrawny knees stumbling up the steps on his first day of prep. When he was welcomed into the class he had a dazzling smile on his face, white bright teeth, cerulean blue eyes that reflected the ocean and light feathery hair that was matted against his forehead. He looked like there was a world of opportunity at his feet and when he slid down next to me, smiling like he'd known me for years, I felt the corners of my lips twitching, smiling back.

At eight years old, we celebrated his birthday. It was a small gathering filled with unconditional love and happiness. I watched as the puppy we bought came bounding in and his smile seemed to stretch on endlessly as he murmured his thanks. I remember him holding me for what seemed like forever and how I never wanted him to let go. We stayed for hours, watching movies and playing with his new family member. Curled up on the couch, I recall falling asleep in his embrace, his hands shaking slightly as they smoothed over my hair and I recollect feeling so warm and so perfect, like I was home, like his arms were home. My mum was livid that she had to carry me back to the car and I should've been upset, but when I saw the glint of amusement in his eyes as he waved goodbye, the one that I had caused, I felt happier than the puppy that was curled at his feet.

I turned twelve in year six and the same little boy flopped lazily next to me on the school bus as we drove to the *South Worth* theatre for the annual junior school play. His head was nuzzled into my shoulder and little snores emitted themselves from his drawn mouth. His body was soft and warm, his little tummy protruding adorably, his jumper engulfing him. It was



at that moment, as his hand found my own and he slipped his long fingers through my own that I understood what people mean when they say they're in love.

On my fifteenth birthday, the boy with the cerulean blue eyes had grown up. His eyes, still held the ocean, but were tinged with an unexplainable tiredness. His pretty hair was adorned with a fringe, complementing his sharp features, framing his face. His clothes were tight and his body toned as he pulled me tight against him with a *happy birthday love*, passing me a little box with a ribbon. I didn't want any gifts though, just for him to hold me against him like that for an eternity. In the photos, the light from the candles highlights our faces, captures the moment of happiness when everything seemed so surreal. And when he pressed his lips against my cheek, the camera click barely registered against the flow of *him, him, him*.

In year ten, we turned sixteen, but I barely saw him any more. He spent his days out the back with the year twelves; needle ready in his hands and a cigarette perched between his lips. The white powder was obvious, contrasting entirely against his black attire. His hair was swept upwards and his face subsequently gaunt as a result of his actions. His eyes were tired now, there was no ocean and as the rain drizzled down it reminded me of the friendship that dangled by a fraying thread. A forced smile or a swift embrace was the extent of our interaction. When I was sixteen, I was able to comprehend the feeling that seeing someone you loved in pain caused. I realised how difficult it was to sit back

and do nothing whilst someone I so cared for intentionally brought danger into his life. From a distance, I watched as my best friend fell into a vicious cycle that no words or pleas could halt.

When I was seventeen I had my first kiss. It was after the ambulance ride, the countless apologies and his cries for help. It was before the doctor's regretful speech but after the difficult struggle for his life. When I was seventeen, I let my best friend squeeze my hand until it was numb with defeat, as he came to terms with the inevitable

repercussions of his actions. I wiped the tears from his defeated eyes and let my own slide down my hot cheeks and fall upon our intertwined hands, long and nimble fingers tangled together. I remember asking why and that he could barely conjure a response save for a pitiful sob of *I'm sorry*. I think I told him it was OK, that everything would be fine but we both knew that he was fighting an undefeatable opposition. We were seventeen when we shared a bond so special as I fervently pressed my lips against his own, holding him tightly and whispering *I love you's* to each other. As he took his last few breaths I felt the guilt ink its way across my consciousness and have it consequently swept away with his simple look of *don't*. I was seventeen when my best friend admitted he loved me and similarly seventeen when I was told he was gone forever.

Now, I am eighteen and I still remember the noise, the last final, resounding beep as the fragmented green line remained, absolute, straight against its black background. I remember the small silence that followed, accompanied only by the unsteady beats of healthy hearts, drumming mournfully against chests. I remember the cry, the first broken sob that emitted itself from my trembling lips, the others that followed despondently and the way Patricia crumbled against her husband, defeated against his bedside. But mostly, I remember his hand, lifeless in my own, cold and pale. Dead...

By **Mercedes Poutakidis**

Year 11, *Carey Baptist Grammar School*  
KEW - VIC.

# The Lucky Country

**W**AS on my way to Australia, for the biggest adventure of my life. I was 11 years old and my name is Saida. I had grown up in Afghanistan and lived there my whole life. My family and I were aboard a small, wooden boat on our way to the safe and breathtaking shores of Australia.

All I ever wanted, since the war started in Afghanistan, was to get to Australia and be safe. At home it is not safe, there are bombs exploding everywhere. The law says I can't go to school and if I disobey I will be punished or put in prison. The government are falling apart.

I remember, it was 3:00am and my brother, Ashen, woke me up and pulled me out of bed to hide in between the walls so that we wouldn't get hit by bombs exploding. I also remember him telling me that we wouldn't get burnt because of the thick layer of plaster on either side of us.

Gush! Over came a wave of freezing salty water filling the boat about a quarter of the way.

"How long is it going to take?" I asked myself.

"Am I ever going to get to Australia?"

"Will I survive the trip?"

Every night, as everyone was sleeping, I would look up at the moon and remind myself of the Afghan government. Moons, ever since I was little, always looked

mean and full of hatred, and so were the government.

"Wake up, Saida", my mother announced.

I feasted my eyes on the beautiful Australian shores.

"How did we get here so quickly?", I asked her.

"A group of Australians picked us up and bring us to this place!", she spoke gently and quickly.

A man in a black suit, grey hair and glasses appeared in front of us. He was the Prime Minister!

"Good afternoon, you will not be staying here in Australia and will be permanently shifted to Papua New Guinea. You bloody boat people are not our responsibility!", he announced. My dreams were crushed, we were being sent away.

They put us on an aeroplane, which had a red kangaroo on the back and it said QANTAS. The flight took three long, boring hours. All I could think about was how much I wished I was in Australia and how much I hated the thought of living in Papua New Guinea.

When we arrived on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, we were sent to the M.I.D.C., the Manus Island Detention Centre, where we stayed there for 3 months in horrible conditions. The detention centre was dirty

and really hot. The food was unusual and I had no idea what I was eating. The Guards didn't treat us very well either. It wasn't really anything in particular though, it was mainly only the way that they looked and spoke towards us.

At least I got to stay with my family because another girl I met, who was my age, was taken away from her family and was transferred over the another centre all the way over on the other side of the island. I hope this isn't the place I'm going to spend the rest of my life.

## *15 years later*

Nowadays, I am 26 years old and I still live in Papua New Guinea. I have 3 children all over the age of 2 and a husband, Anoushirva. We are living in an apartment and my husband works at a farm 30 minutes out of town.

I still wish I was bought up in Australia because I would have had more opportunities in life but I am still grateful that we are in a safe country not experiencing war. I enjoy telling my story to the people here and explaining what my family and I went through to get here but I guess I could have done better with my life, with all that Australia has to offer.

*By Olyvia Munro  
Year 6, Overnewton Anglican  
Community College  
KEILOR – VIC.*

# The Mystery of the Missing Chickens

IT WAS a typical Tuesday morning in Golden Gully. The blinding sun was just beginning to rise against the innocently pale sky. The clock ticked over to 6:37. Jane stood at the kitchen sink, her half-conscious state aided purely by the cup of strong black espresso resting in her right hand. The dark liquid warmed her throat like an old radiator. Jaime, the gentle Italian greyhound, lay restfully on a bed of soft blankets as his head lifted to the sound of Jane's footsteps scattering around the kitchen. Upon the noise reaching his ever-alert ears, he picked himself up off his pile of blankets and stretched his paws out as far as he could. It was time for the real man of the house to get some breakfast.

After Jaime had eaten, Jane set off tending to her other animals. At this time of morning, you could hear a pin drop in Golden Gully. Aside from the far-reaching coos of the disease-carrying pigeons overhead, silence engulfed the entire area. However, in no way did this restrict any of Jane's animals. The cheeky budgies sang tunefully as the morning broke while the lazy cats, Millie and Sam, lay sleeping in the musty shed. The garden was filled with crimson chillies and plump tomatoes hanging off dark green vines along with the occasional visit from a possum found lurking in the peach tree. Jane walked towards the end of her backyard where her chicken coop was. She pulled the rickety wire fence open and walked down the concrete steps her brother had installed for her. It was once she had descended the last step that her worst nightmare fell upon her; the chickens were gone!

Jane's hand flew to her head and she raised her eyebrows in shock. She had four beautiful chickens named Tommy, Harry, Peter and Gerry. They meant the world to her since she had inherited the house from her late grandparents, both of whom were fond of the boys. But now where were they? She checked the boys' pens and all the nearby bushes. There was nothing to be seen. The bare Golden Gully creek bed only added to Jane's distress. Evil thoughts turned over in her mind, what if someone had taken them? She rushed inside, the faces of all her surrounding neighbours flashing through her head. There was Sue on her left who owned the Golden Gully Grocery Store, but it could

not be her because she had chickens of her own. The young family on the right didn't have any pets, but what would they need a brood of chickens for? Jane decided then and there that the first step in solving the mystery meant taking the frightening step of talking to the neighbours.

It was midday and the afternoon heat was on its way to becoming unbearable. Jane flew out of the house and hurried over in her pink dressing gown and fluffy slippers. She knocked on the young family's door with a series of heavy thuds. She felt her rage building with each consecutive knock. It was Sharon who opened the door.

"Oh, good morning Jane, how are y—"

Jane completely cut off her neighbour's polite greeting and demanded to know if she had taken her chickens.

"Where are my chickens? What have you done with them?"

"Jane, calm down. I have no idea what you're talking about, why would I take your chickens?" Sharon tried to say calmly, with just a slight hint of annoyance creeping up in her voice.

"They're gone, Sharon! I woke up this morning and all four had disappeared. What am I meant to do?" Jane covered her face with her hands and walked off with a feeling of grave disappointment building inside her.

Jane spent the day feeling blue. The words on the front cover of *Greyhounds Today* no longer seemed to leap off the page like they normally did. Even the usually-energising heat seemed bleak and tiring. It wasn't until the clock struck 20:21 and the sun was beginning to set that a genius idea popped into her mind. If she couldn't spot any clues during the day, the best alternative was to look at night.

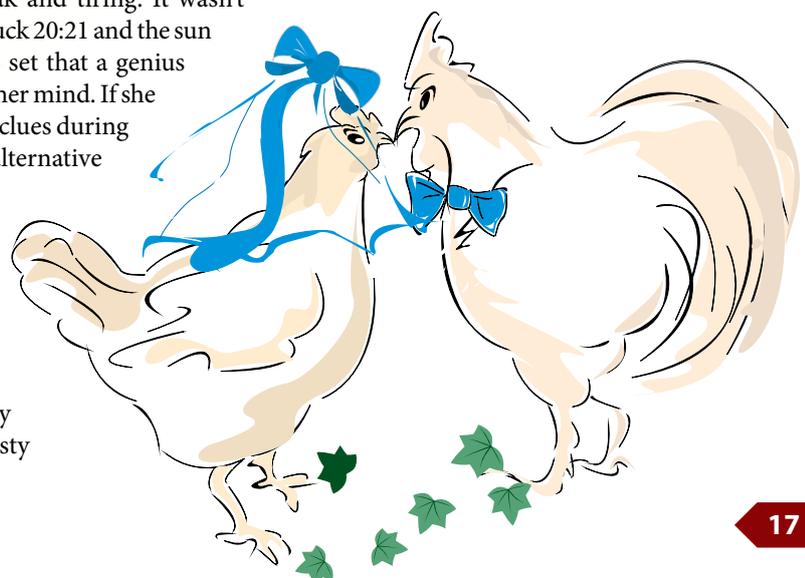
The front door clanged shut with a loud bang. Armed with a heavy-duty torch and her trusty

iPhone to snap pictures of any evidence, Jane quietly slid out to her backyard. She passed the peach trees, where she heard a faint rustling sound from above. It's those damn possums again. Past the rickety wire fence and down the family-installed concrete steps, Jane's eyes fell to a path of large paw-shaped tracks. The paws were too big to be Jaime's, but what would he be doing all the way down here, anyway?

Jane's head whipped around to the sound of a deep snarl. Beginning to feel frightened, she clutched her iPhone to her chest and hesitantly followed the direction the snarl was coming from. The wind howled like a stray dog as the darkness of the evening seemed to envelope her. This was the moment when her eyes widened as her heart began to race and her thoughts became cloudy. Her sight first settled on his beady eyes before her torch revealed his perky ears, deep orange fur and black nose. It was a red fox and in his mouth were Gerry's feathers.

Jane looked up to the sky in shock and gulped heavily. How could she not have considered this before? She knew urban foxes were less fearful than the rural variety and that they were not fazed by cats. Despite her sadness, there was nothing she could do to bring back Gerry, Peter, Harry or Tommy. Jane slowly walked up the concrete steps and across the backyard to her house. She made sure not to step in any chicken dung and reminded herself to wake up early and drive up to the animal market at dusty Kapunda.

By **Caroline Di Fava**  
Year 12, Eynesbury College  
ADELAIDE – SA



# An Eternal Song

**T**HE boy assumed his place in the left of two lines. Every night, it was always the same place, next to the window that cast an eerie moonlight into the unlit room. Every night, he followed that younger treble who could never quite process in line with the person in front of him. And every night, he counted the seconds until the service ended. The choir processed slowly up to the quire, their path memorised after countless travels along the same route.

The boy barely paid attention during the opening sentences. His mind wandered to the candle in front of him. For a year now, it had never been lit – the constant talk and worry and fighting nowadays had left people with no care for such a small, faltering light.

*O Lord, open thou our lips*

The priest's bass filled the cathedral, only to be replaced with the choir –

*And our mouths shall shew forth thy praise.*

The evensong had begun as usual, the precis and first hymn running smoothly,

despite the lack of a conductor. The choir's director had left suddenly, rumour was he got a white feather, but no-one was really sure.

A chord from the organ began the psalm. Despite his lack of love for the chant, the boy had spent hours practising this, so that the rhythm would be accurate and the change of chant would occur in the right verse. It was at this verse, where the music suddenly changed to a foreboding minor key, that another note cut through the choir's voices. The sound was only faint, but suddenly, the music stopped. The only sound inside the cathedral was that of the siren – an air raid had begun.

There was a pause. No-one was quite sure whether to run to the nearest shelter, or finish the service. After an eternity spent silent, and waiting, the organ sounded again. The choir's decision was made. The evensong continued.

It wasn't until the end of the first reading that the boy heard them – distant crashing noises, faint against the blare of the siren and voice of the priest. Somewhere far away, bombs were going off. The others in the choir mustn't have heard them yet;

unlike the boy, they had been listening intently to the reading. Only in the second reading, after the Magnificat, did the choristers hear the bombs. The treble next to the boy, a few years younger than him, gripped the quire stall, and turned to the boy. The child looked up to the boy, his eyes wide. He had not spoken, but the boy understood. Fear is a language that needs no words.

As the service dragged on, and the bombs grew louder, high notes grew tight, loud phrases were hushed, and all minds were turned not to the song, but to the rhythm of the drum-beats that was growing ever louder and more frantic. Even when the choir sang, "To be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel", the scene felt lacking in any sense of glory. The boy thought to himself, what glory can there be in terror?

The Apostle's Creed was almost a whisper, the collective voices shaky and uncertain. A few in the congregation forgot to stand and face the altar, and sat in the pews, paralysed. Out of the corner of his eye, the boy could see the Dean of the cathedral walk quietly to the votive candles. Although they were a symbol of



personal faith, none were lit. When they had finished the Apostle's Creed, the Dean called out to the choir, congregation, and parish alike:

*"Come! Each of you! Light a candle, so that the light of God may fill this building at last!"*

Slowly, hesitantly, each boy in the choir, every member of the congregation, and the entire parish came and lit a small candle. Despite the wax rations, there were enough for everyone in the cathedral. As they did so, the Dean lit the candles at the High Altar, and in the quire. Gradually, the cathedral was filled with a warm light. The boy was among the last to light a candle, being sceptical about the point of the light; yet as he held the tea-light to the larger candle, and placed it on the stand, he noticed that each of the young trebles had a hint of hope in their eyes; the pastors and vergers had gained a sense of purpose in their step – and even the air seemed to have been lifted out of terror, in having

been lifted out of darkness. Perhaps this was why these few people still came to evensong, even in winter, after dark, in the middle of war – to find some semblance of peace.

The choir returned, unceremoniously, to their stalls, and sang the Lord's Prayer. Now, their voices were filled with an unimaginable confidence. The harmony was rich, the tuning perfect – and the boy soared among the trebles with a voice clear as glass; yet this glass could surely never shatter. The choir and congregation were undaunted as the bombs grew deafening halfway through the anthem. They continued to sing.

The bombs grew closer, until the boy could glimpse a glow behind the stained-glass windows. The ground jolted and shook with each crash as the Grace was said. The chandeliers on the roof began to swing, the hymn book on the stall began to shake. Nevertheless, even halfway through the hymn when rubble began to fall around the cathedral entrance and the air was filled

with dust from the crumbling stonework, the only sound the boy noticed was the choir and congregation singing together;

*Holy Jesus every day,  
Keep us in the narrow way;  
And when earthly things are past,  
Bring our ransomed souls at last  
Where they need no star to guide,  
Where no clouds thy glory hide.*

Suddenly, their simple music was joined by millions of voices, more pure than any earthly singer; they had joined the choir of God, and sang in harmony forever:

*In the heav'nly country bright,  
need they no created light;  
Thou its Light, its Joy, its Crown,  
Thou its Sun which goes not down:  
There forever may we sing  
Alleluias to our King.*

**By Abigail Thomas**  
Year 11, St. Peter's Lutheran College  
INDOOROPILLY – QLD.

## FOUND

**P**UNELLA the green tree frog leapt from leaf to leaf, in search of a juicy snack. Attached to her back were twenty-three little frogs, clinging for dear life. If one fell off, it would make perfect prey for a green anaconda. That's why her babies and Punella hid up in the tree tops where they were camouflaged.

Each day Punella taught them something new: from eating the right foods to catching flies. Today she taught her little frogs how to avoid predators. First, frogs need to be aware of the jaguar. Frogs make a small meal but what the jaguar really prefers is a rodent, rabbit or even a small monkey of some sort. So the jaguar is not really a big eater of frogs. Next, frogs must beware of the green tree python, which feeds on small rats. But when it's a juvenile it mainly starts with frogs which is how it gets its green colour. The python is an animal that frogs definitely need to avoid.

"Okay little frogs, that should wrap it up."

On the way home after their lesson, one of the little frogs fell off. Punella quickly tried to pick the little frog up but it was too late.

A hungry eagle had taken the little frog. Frantically she followed the eagle.

After a few minutes Punella started running, out of breath. Punella's hope was gone. She lay there, just feeling sad. "I'll never find my little frog again", she thought.

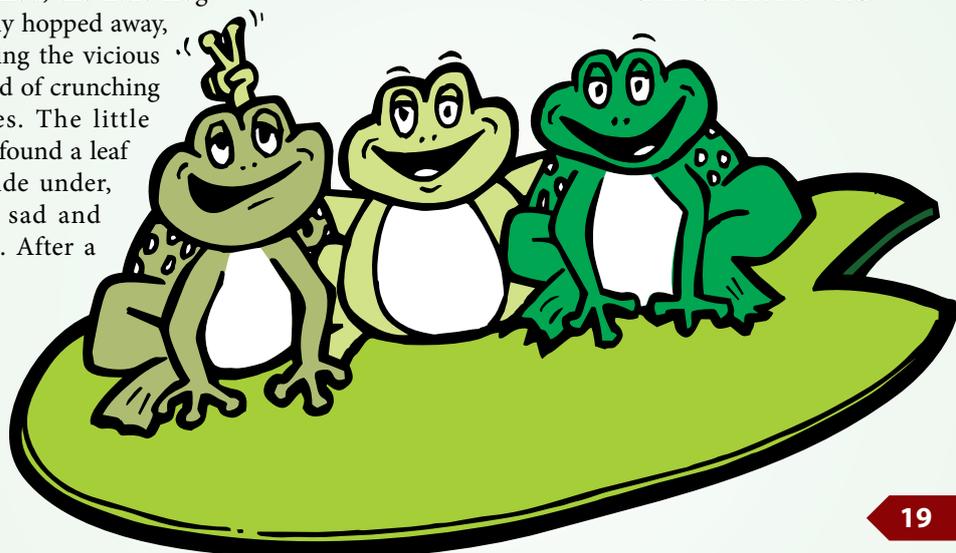
Up ahead the eagle had spotted a dead carcass. It was a rotting lemur. In a wave of joy, he swooped down, dropped the little frog and started devouring the carcass.

Terrified, the little frog slowly hopped away, hearing the vicious sound of crunching bones. The little frog found a leaf to hide under, very sad and tired. After a

while, he started to search for food. Suddenly he found right next to him was Punella! She opened her eyes with great delight. The little frog jumped up into the air and landed on the top of Punella's back with his brothers and sisters, warm and cosy.

And so from that day on, Punella and her 23 baby frogs always looked to see what was in their pathway.

**By Brittany Ayres**  
Year 3, Oxley Christian College  
CHIRNSIDE PARK – VIC.



# The Walker Children's Bullies



**M**ILLIE, Sophie, Ellie, and Brendan Walker sat around the old wooden table. “You kids are lucky that old thing survived in that ratty Lithgow moving truck,” grumbled Brenda the maid. As soon as she heard this, Millie burst into tears. Jenny, the younger maid, rushed over. “What’s the matter?” Jenny was cheerful, kind, young, and pretty, whereas Brenda was old, grouchy, wrinkly, and bad-tempered. The children preferred Jenny. Millie, Sophie, and Ellie had straw coloured braids and freckly faces. Brendan, unlike the rest of the family, had dark hair that even if you cut it, never seemed to get shorter.

“Come along, school tomorrow, up to bed, quickly now.” Jenny ushered them upstairs.

The next morning, Sophie, Ellie, and Brendan went off to school. Salty, the Walker children’s dog, tried to follow the bus, but did not succeed, thanks to Millie and Jenny, who accompanied him back to his kennel. Next Jenny helped Millie put on a clean frock, a pair of white stockings, and some nice shiny shoes. Jenny then braided Millie’s hair, and finished it off with some ribbons and a new straw hat. They were going to Gran’s place!

“Ladies!” Gran walked out of the house. “Gran!” cried Millie joyfully. “Hello Martha”, said Jenny quietly. Gran smiled.

“There’s some morning tea waiting for you inside”, Gran told her. “You can eat anything you want that’s on the table.”

Meanwhile, Sophie, Ellie, and Brendan were finding classwork easy. They liked their teacher, Mr Percival too. At lunchtime, Sophie and Ellie went off to play with a group of girls. Brendan was with some other boys, flexing his muscles. “Bye!” they shouted when they left for the bus stop.

The next morning, Jenny drove them all to school. Millie began to walk up some stairs, meaning to get to her classroom.

“NO—MILLIE DON’T WALK UP... those stairs,” yelled Ellie. But it was too late. Millie had walked up the bully’s stairs, and they had only just started the procedure of hitting, punching, kicking, pinching and satisfied with all the blood, pushed her down the stairs.

“Hello, midget. I’m Chloe”, said the girl bully.

“Ha ha Chloe. I’m Felix. Midget. So you’re in red group, huh? Chloe and I are the red group helpers. You’ve got a mean teacher, and we’re allowed to walk around, ruin your work, and hurt you.”

“Ha ha”, jeered Felix and Chloe. Emma stayed round to help Ellie, Sophie, and Brendan dab at Millie’s scratches. Will went to fetch a teacher...

“Hello dea—are you okay, sweetheart?” Miss Emendo looked shocked at the sight of Millie. Millie sobbed louder. Ellie couldn’t hold Emma back any longer. “It wasn’t her fault, she walked up the stairs that Chloe and Felix hang around.”

“Chloe and Felix did all that”, gasped Miss Emendo.

Chloe explained that Felix had threatened her and then she promised that she would never hurt anyone or anything again. Felix got expelled, and the mean teacher, who happened to be Felix’s mum was so mad that Felix had gotten expelled that she left to teach at Felix’s new school.

And they all lived happily ever after.

THE END

By **Georgia Morley**  
Year 3, Pennant Hills Public School  
PENNANT HILLS – NSW

## Memories

One of my earliest childhood memories is my aunty with her face so young and vibrant, the way her voice was so kind and gentle and the way her presence makes the whole room glow.

I also remember my best friend from when I was little.

She was so very lovely, she always used carry a piglet blanket with her everywhere she went.

I often remember her complaining because we didn’t make a cubby with her.

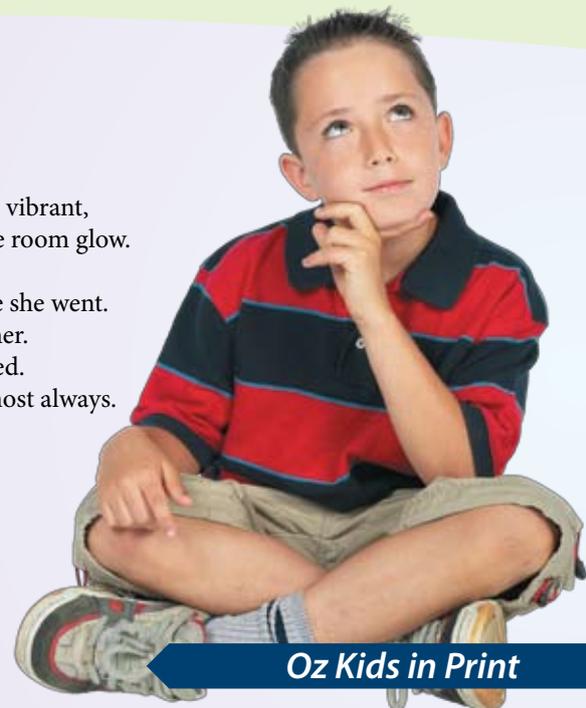
But what I remember the most is how sad she’d been when her cat had died.

When I was little, my grandparents had a big smoky BBQ that they cooked on almost always.

I will always remember my grandparents by that smell.

My memories are ones that I will treasure forever.

By **Morgan Fitzpatrick**  
Year 4, Pennant Hills Public School  
PENNANT HILLS – NSW



# Ambassadors

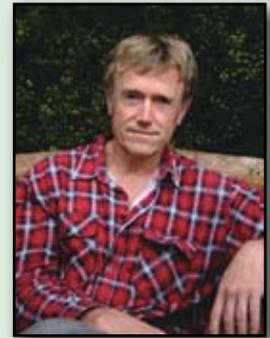


📍 **Krista Bell** is an award-winning author of twenty-six books for young readers. Krista has been professionally involved in children's literature for over thirty years, as well as being the mother of three sons, all of whom are good readers and writers! Krista's middle son, Damien, is the illustrator 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.

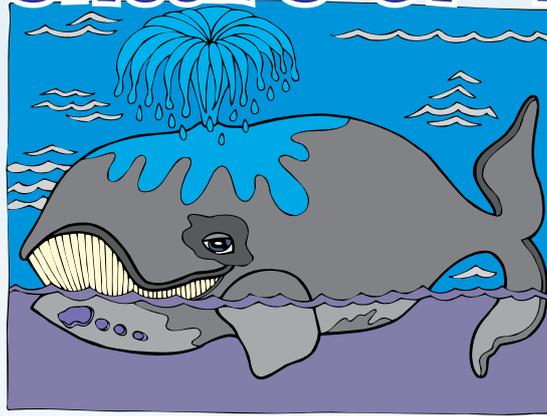
If you'd like to find about Jeni's books or to get some hot writing tips please visit [www.jenimawter.com](http://www.jenimawter.com)

# The Adventure of 'Big Blue'

**A**S BIG Blue started to climb up his hot volcano wall, he thought to himself, "I am so hungry. I'm going to get some food". So off he went splashing in to the sea. "Yummy", thought Big Blue, seeing a dark shape in the distance. "My favourite – seal."

Big Blue was a strange looking sea creature. He was dark blue and a bit like a whale except he lived in a volcano and he ate seals and fish. He spent most of his time swimming in the sea but slept in his volcano.

Big Blue sped towards the dark shape in the distance. As he zoomed closer and closer, he realised that seals do not have fins on their backs. "Oh no!" he bubbled to himself. "I don't think it's a seal. It's a... shark!" Big Blue turned around quickly



and raced back to the volcano, his heart pumping hard.

Big Blue looked behind him and he could see the shark racing towards him. Snap!!! He saw the shark's white sharp teeth coming towards him. Big Blue's heart started pumping faster and his tail swished through the water as fast as a racing car.

But the shark had the same idea. The shark was snapping his mouth trying to bite Big Blue's tail. Big Blue thought to himself, "I just need to get to my volcano!". Zooming even faster than before, Big Blue finally jumped into the air and landed into the front door of his volcano! Splash went lava everywhere.

"That was close. Luckily I wasn't the shark's dinner!" thought Big Blue to himself. "It's night so think I will go to sleep. Tomorrow I will get something to eat", said Big Blue snoring.

The next morning, as Big Blue started to climb up his hot volcano wall, he thought to himself, "I am so hungry. I'm going to get some food".

By **Mitchell Eisele**

Year 3, Oxley Christian College  
LILYDALE – VIC.

The gold rush started,  
In eighteen-fifty one,  
Where people had to work,  
In the hot, hot sun.

They worked really hard,  
So they could find some gold.  
They cleaned and weighed it first,  
So it could get sold.

Between alluvial and shaft,  
The choice was theirs,  
They had to buy a permit,  
To work in 3 foot squares.

In order to mine,  
They bought many different tools.  
While the adults worked,  
Most kids were sent to school.

They kept on mining,  
For three more years,  
Until the rebellion broke out,  
The police's worst fears.

The 3rd of December,  
Was the tragic day.  
Their loved ones cried  
And they sky turned grey.

## GOLD

## RUSH

## BALLAD

But before I tell the outcomes,  
Of this tragic fight,  
Let's talk about why,  
This battle took flight.

The miners thought  
The permit cost too many pounds.  
They were never ever treated fair,  
Just belted to the ground.

There were many other reasons,  
Why this war broke out,  
But the miners got their rights,  
Without a doubt.

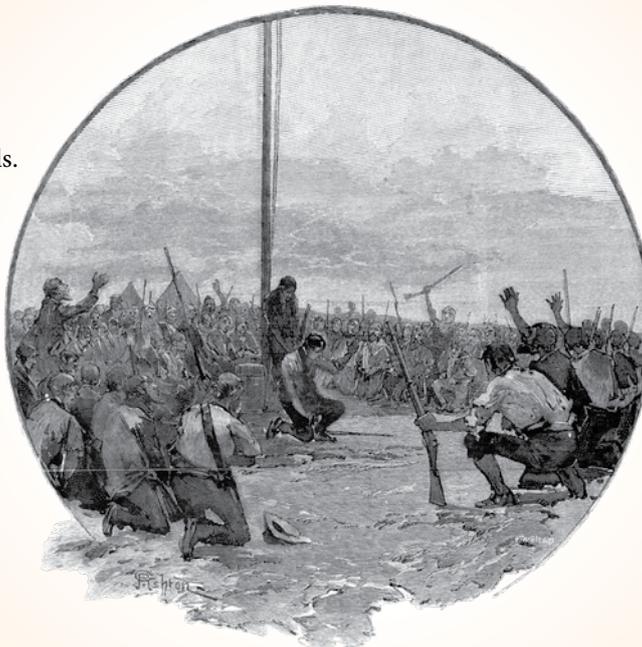
The great Eureka Flag,  
Symbolised the miners' unity.  
Each part of it resembled,  
Their small community.

The blue flag represents,  
The shirts the miners wore.  
The cross represents,  
Their unity in the war.

The stars on the flag,  
Are from the Southern Cross.  
The symbol of rebellion,  
That won't count as a loss.

By **Eleanor Bentley**

Year 6, The Huntington School  
MT WAVERLEY – VIC.



ADMINISTERING THE GATH, EUREKA STOCKADE, 1854.

# Without Feathers

**L**OOK down to my bare legs. They're glowing whiter than paper, and I'm not even exaggerating. It looks as if I've never seen a single ray of sunshine. I am standing on the small, derelict pier that looks onto the frosty lake ahead of me. I would usually come out to the lake to get my mind free from worry. The water is my distraction. It's the earlier hours of the morning, I'm just able to see the edge of the sun, creeping above the horizon. I'd given up on sleep what felt like forever ago, I felt the water calling for me. I lifted my plain, white t-shirt over my head, leaving me in just a tight pair of board shorts and a frilled bikini top. I knew the water would be arctic right now, but that invited me even more, it thrilled me at the thought of becoming completely numb, because to me, feeling numbed by the frozen water was the only way I could possibly get every feeling of anxiety literally 'numbed'.

I slowly stretched my leg out off the pier and down towards the water. The water nipped at the tips of my toes. Feeling somewhat similar to a lion gripping its teeth around the antelope it'd been chasing for the last few minutes. I didn't bother getting into the water slowly, because that would defeat the purpose of physically numbing myself. I looked up to the sky, a baby blue and not a cloud to be seen, then I stretched my arms above my head, lifted my thighs to my chin and became surrounded by the water. It felt as though every droplet of the water had formed together into an army, weighing me down like an anchor to a ship.

The water is crystal clear and I know this purely because I currently have my eyes open wide, whilst my head is under the water. Even through it's clear, it's still uneasy for me to see and everything looks like a blur. Except of course the black figure moving closer and closer towards me with every second. My head rapidly sprung out of the water, I had been in here yesterday and there hadn't been any exotic creatures. I looked around for the black figure whilst my head was poking out through the water, I couldn't see it. My lungs gathered in the surrounding oxygen and I sunk my head back down under the water.

I could see a mysterious boy holding his hand over his mouth, trying desperately

to hide his laughter. He was the black figure and he was right in front of my face. He wasn't struggling one bit to swim, in actual fact, he was floating in the water and gliding through it similar to a phantom haunting a lonely road. I watched his every move as he lined the water surrounding me. Every one of his moves in the water was even smoother than the last. It was as if he really were an apparition or a phantom, only he looked so real. His body swam around in the water as if he were painting a artificial contrivance, his body being the paintbrush and the water being his masterpiece.

The boy had a merriment smirk hinting at the corners of his lips. He was abstruse and cabalistic yet entirely intriguing. I found myself not only wanting, but needing to know more about this boy. He had me captivated and not only did I know that, but he did too. His left index finger moved in a quick curved motion towards himself, indicating for me to swim towards him. I couldn't resist from following his silent instructions and moved each one of my completely frozen limbs towards him. With his luscious, jet black hair draped over his face he took a step towards where I was standing, almost closing the space between us. He was taller than me and looked about my age, he also looked much stronger than me.

I hadn't notice until he got so close to me, that he was indeed rather attractive. His emerald eyes beamed with brilliance, they were infatuate and addicting. I couldn't

stop staring into them. I found myself beginning to feel lost in his charming eyes, they hinted at loss and despair. I was completely consumed by his presence. Just as my mind began to wonder I felt a cold, tingling sensation across my hand. I averted my eyes from his gaze to wear I had felt the cool sensation. That's when I noticed that my first assumption was in fact right. He was an apparition; a phantom; a ghost. The cold, tingling sensation was his hand going straight through mine. He had tried to hold my hand. I looked back up to where I found a frustrated look upon his face.

When he had noticed my staring again, something strange happened. His body, like before with the floating, smoothly swam up through the air. My lungs, by then, were dying to get a gasp of air. I shot up in the air at almost the same speed as the boy did. I looked up to the sky where I saw him floating. This was when I heard his voice for the first time. He hovered mere centimetres from my body and whispered in my ear. Leaving me with a shiver down my spine at the sound of his remarkably deep voice and his words; he vanished. Like a broken record his words replayed over and over in my mind: "There's a rhythm to my chaos and it's you... I am a boy without his feathers".

By **Eliza Howard**

Year 8, Diamond Valley College  
DIAMOND CREEK – VIC.



# The Power of Water Helps Beautiful Flowers



Lots of flowers,  
Sitting in the dirt.  
Surrounded by trees,  
Ready for dessert.

The flowers' dessert,  
Isn't a cake.  
It makes them grow,  
It fills up a lake!

Rain falls,  
Onto the flowers.  
The flowers drink it up,  
It gives them lots of powers!

For the flowers' dessert,  
Isn't cake.  
But it is...  
WATER!

And water is pretty,  
For when the sun shines.  
It reflects rainbows,  
Onto the vines.

It keeps us alive,  
And we need to drink it  
Because it helps us survive.  
It lets us stay alive.

It doesn't only give us life,  
It fills up nature.  
And one specific thing needs it...  
BEAUTIFUL BEAUTIFUL BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS!

By **Amy Zeng**  
Year 3, Balwyn Primary School, BALWYN – VIC.

## THE OPPOSITION'S CODE

Like a prisoner in war,  
All dressed in uniform –  
I'm hiding in a barrel,  
away from the gun shots,  
that everyone calls society.

I can hear the voices roar –  
all around,  
ganging up on me.  
But it's all a mutter of noise –  
That I don't understand.  
Like a secret code,  
that everyone gets, bar me.

I wait in my barrel,  
and try to crack the codes,  
like puzzles that have no answers,  
a maze with no exit.  
The equations don't add up,  
something must be wrong,  
I'll have to start again.

I wonder if I'm the only one,  
If there is someone else –  
Just like me!

By **Miranda Plowman**  
Year 5, Distance Education, THORNBURY – VIC.

# Shadows and Deeper Shadows



She stands cloaked in shadows, the absence of light, but not happiness,  
For there is life in her eyes and kindness in her soul.  
Her perception of herself is as dark as the shadows that surround her,  
But her perception doesn't matter because her mind is controlled by the words of others.  
Her dim profile pours from her like blood from a wound and flows about her ankles as she treks the path of light.  
A dedicated friend, a faithful lover and a life-long companion, the shadow never leaves her side.  
Her cloak gives her the strength to walk the trampled roads of life.  
And her heart is full of love and wisdom she wishes to share.  
They wander the misty mornings and dance with the stars at night.  
Together, inseparable and joined by a swirling force,  
It will follow her for eternity.  
For she is the pillar, holding up a sky of oppressors.  
If only they would listen.  
Their jeering mouths and abusive hands claw at the mist around her.  
Pulling pieces of the veil to reveal the distortion she holds below its gloom.  
They don't know her name, or her story.  
Only that she is hiding, with darkness on her side.  
She is different to them and they look at her cloak with anger.  
"We are not afraid of the dark", they say.  
But still their eyes turn to the light as she walks by.  
And as long as there is light, her shadow will be by her side.  
"Look down!" she cries. "For when you do you shall see that we are not that different."  
But still they tug at their shrouds of black, desperate to remove them.  
"We are one and the same!" their shadows cry to them.  
But still they tread on the darkness at their feet and turn their gaze to the sky.  
"We are not afraid of the dark", they say again.  
But still they don't turn out the light.  
But they don't know that when their world is illuminated there will always be shadows.  
"We are not afraid!"  
"We are children of the light and we are not afraid!"  
She wears her cloak of shadows as she wanders through the light.  
And they smirk and taunt and joke as she passes by.  
But her cloak keeps her safe from the hands that wish to harm.  
Little do they know, that when they are gone and have lost their light,  
The only thing that will remain by their side to mourn will be the darkness they have shunned their whole life.

By **Sophie Dye**  
Year 9, Silkwood High School  
MT NATHAN – QLD.

SOMETIMES, just sometimes I see strange things that I shouldn't. I can't explain what I see but it's not normal. It's been a couple of months since I started seeing things, I only see them in my house and I wonder why.

The first time I saw something strange was when I was doing my laundry downstairs. I felt a cold breeze and heard an odd whistling sound, almost as if someone was in my house. I'm twenty four years old and I've lived by myself for five years. My mum kicked me out because she thought I was going crazy. Maybe she was right.

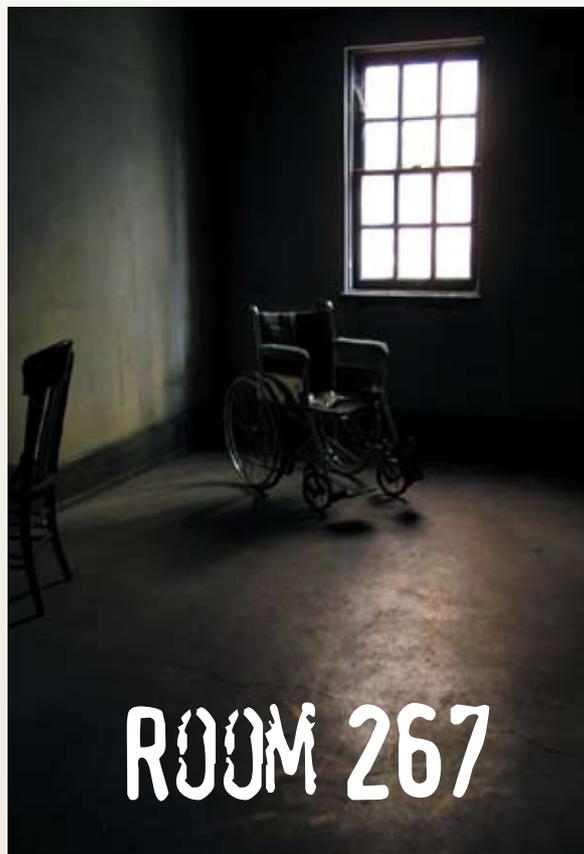
I can slightly recall seeing and hearing things from when I was a little kid but nothing too serious. I used to hear a little girl singing, that freaked me out the most but I kept my mouth shut just in case something extremely bad happened if I told anyone.

I remember going to bed and waiting for mum to come and tuck me in to say goodnight. She would sit on the end of my bed and sing me a special song which made me fall asleep. I used to get woken up in the middle of the night by a coolish breeze, although my windows and door were always closed. I never said anything about it to Mum or Dad because I didn't want them to think I had gone crazy at the age of seven.

That went on for years and it really started to creep me out when I was about fourteen years old. I remember on my 14th birthday something very scary happened to me, I don't like to talk about it though; all I can say is that it was the scariest thing that has ever happened to me.

As I got older things started to cool down and it stopped harassing me just before I turned 15. I thought I was going crazy but I couldn't have been, I mean seriously, I can't have imagined something every night for years and years. Maybe it was a sign, a sign that I'm 'different' than other people.

At the age I am now, 24, things have started to happen again, the exact same things that happened to me when I was younger. I assumed I was imagining things but boy was I wrong. It was no ordinary breeze I was feeling, it was no normal sound I was hearing, it was my worst fear.



## ROOM 267

I couldn't stay in my house any longer because I was too afraid so I decided to check myself into the Saarne institute in Germany. I caught the first flight I could to Germany and booked a room in the institute. The Saarne institute is for people who have gone crazy or have had strange things happen to them and they can't cope by themselves. There are some really mucked up people who can't even look at people or talk to anyone anymore, they just sit in their rooms facing the back wall.

I was in room 267 on the third floor, I had my own room. It was late at night when I checked in, I think about 11:30pm. There was one man working at the front desk but I could see no one else. I walked up to the man and asked for a room and he said that room 267 was free so I walked up to room 267 and settled in. I thought it was strange that he didn't ask me what my problem was but it didn't matter, I had a room and I was safe, or so I thought...

I woke up at 7:00am the next morning and walked downstairs to have breakfast. It was awfully quiet. As I was walking down the stairs I heard a painful scream that sounded like it came from a woman. I tried to block it out and keep walking but I couldn't, that scream didn't help the fact I was already terrified of what was going on.

The breakfast that was served up to me smelt rotten, it didn't taste much better either. It tasted like dog's food. The man who served me breakfast was the same man from the front desk, I thought that there would be one person for each job but yet again I was wrong. He was wearing the same old baggy grey shirt from yesterday (a bit disgusting I thought).

In the Saarne institute there's an old rusty playground that squeaks at night. The swings swing by themselves even if there's no wind at all. It annoys me but that's the least of my worries. Last night I heard someone outside my window, I got up and looked outside and the same old man from the front desk and cafeteria was outside digging a big hole, almost the size of a grave.... I was a bit confused as to why he was outside digging a hole at 1:00am but I just pretended I saw nothing; I wouldn't dare say anything to that man.

During the day at the institute there's not much to do, in fact I've only seen a few other people in the building. The only things I did during the day was take walks in the park and eat meals, pretty boring but I guess it was good for me. I've always been bad at doing nothing all day. When I was living at home I would be out in the garden a lot fixing it up but I can't do that here unfortunately. I don't even have a TV in my room, there's one in the whole building and that's in the common room. I try avoiding the common room for one reason and that reason is I walked past it one night and I saw something strange sitting in the chair in the corner. I couldn't quite make out what it was because it was wearing a hooded cloak but it sure freaked me out. For the rest of that day I slept in my room, I didn't even come out for dinner.

I lived happily and peacefully in the institute for 7 months until I started to see and hear things again. I didn't ignore it this time, I did something about it. I went up to the old man and asked him if any other patients had complained about seeing or hearing strange things, he said that no one had. I turned around to walk away then realised I needed to ask him something else but by the time I had turned back around he had gone.

That night when I went to bed I saw shadows and heard whispering. I got up

and stuck my head out the door, no one was there. I hopped back into bed and 5 minutes later I heard the exact same thing, yet again I got back up out of bed and stuck my head out the door but still no one was there. This time I walked down the hall and when I turned the corner I could swear I saw the old man just standing there holding a knife with blood dripping from it. I ran away screaming and he chased me. I sprinted around the corner and poked my head around to see if he was still chasing me but no one was there. Maybe I imagined it, I'm not too sure.

That night was my most reckless. After I saw what I thought I had I was terrified to be by myself. The next day I stayed in my room in bed because I needed a good sleep,

it was my best sleep I had so far. The next night I remember hearing things again, yes I did get up to check it out again stupidly but I felt stronger, like I could defeat whatever it was coming after me.

I walked slowly around the corridors trying not to make a sound, I turned one corner and I saw the same thing from the night before, it was the old man holding a knife with blood dripping from it. I didn't run away this time but I did walk up to it. As I was walking up to him I saw all these ghosts appear, they looked familiar. I had seen their pictures on the walls somewhere in the building. They were old residents of the institute, but what had happened to them while they were here...?

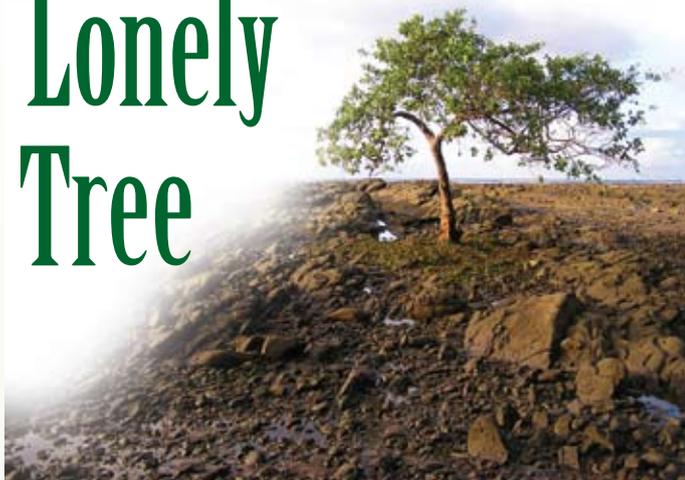
I put on a brave face and kept walking up to the man, on the wall written in blood was 'you're next'. I decided I was being stupid and realised I could get killed so I turned around, and the second I turned around the ghosts and old man surrounded me. I was trapped. The ghosts were chanting something but I couldn't understand them. The old man slowly walked up to me, I thought he was going to kill me. I closed my eyes tight and when I opened them I woke back up in my bed at MY house.

And that was the story of my worst dream.

By **Maddie Dixon**

Year 8, Korumburra Secondary College  
KORUMBURRA – VIC.

# Lonely Tree



The boy stands on the track in front of the tree,  
All alone on the windswept hill,  
The boy smiles and the tree smiles back,  
Though the tree doesn't move; completely still.  
He wraps his arms around the trunk,  
This time the leaves rustle and the branches creak,  
Perhaps it is the breeze; storm clouds are coming,  
Still the boy sits himself under the tree.  
Rain and hail begin to plummet,  
The tree offers shelter, keeping the boy dry,  
Then as the rain subsides the boy decides to leave,  
He glances back to see the tree cry.  
The next bright day, the boy returns,  
The tree seems to widen its branches in delight,  
The boy climbs the tree to the very top,  
There he sits, taking in the sights.  
The boy visits again and again,  
Maybe an entire summer, climbing the tree on the hill,  
The wind is strong most days,  
But the tree doesn't move; completely still.  
Soon the boy doesn't come alone,  
A girl shares his spot above the leaves,  
There they spend a lazy autumn,  
With each other, the tree and the autumn breeze.

But now the leaves begin to droop,  
The boy hasn't come back for a lifetime it seems,  
The lonely tree is all but forgotten,  
Except for the space in the little boy's dreams.  
This is not all, for there are trucks and cars,  
Rattling along the track in front of the tree,  
As suburbs and people are closing in,  
The tree on the hill is no longer free.  
And on a day when the houses are here,  
Surrounding the tree for miles to see,  
A truck comes rattling up the track,  
Three men unload a rusty machine.  
The machine putters into life,  
Shooting fumes into the air,  
The teeth at the top start munching and grinding,  
The branches sway and creak in despair.  
But then the machine stops, it can't go any further,  
For there is a man standing in front of the tree,  
No longer alone on the windswept hill,  
It's the man and the tree against the machine and three.  
They threaten to continue, and the machine putters again,  
So the man climbs the branches to the very top,  
A lifetime of memories keeps them together,  
The man won't move until the men decide to stop.  
They are stuck in a stalemate until the sun disappears,  
And the clouds decide to release their rain,  
But still the man will never move,  
He will never let the tree die in vain.  
The man opens his eyes, blinking in the sunlight,  
He shivers in the cold morning breeze,  
He must have slept the entire night,  
He looks to the ground to demand the men to cease,  
But they are nowhere to be seen,  
Just a hill and dusty track,  
The wind rustles the leaves and the branches sway,  
The tree smiles and the man smiles back.

By **Adrian Harper-Gomm**

Year 12, Kambrya College  
BERWICK – VIC.

# Nightmares

## Monique

I was standing there, up against a wall with my boyfriend pointing a gun at me. My heart was pounding, my head thumping, my eyes burning, my hands shaking, my whole world falling apart.

“Levi please. Please don’t do this”, I sobbed to him, dragging my back down the length of the wall. The gun followed my every move.

He closed his eyes, a fresh tear running down his face. “Moni, Baby, you know I love, but – I’m sorry”, he cries, and pulled the trigger.

A flash of bright light blinded me. Then I woke up.

My eyes shot open and I gasped for air. My long blue-black hair sticking to my face, my singlet up around my chest. I ran my hand through my hair and down my face. I sat up and looked at my clock flashing 7.33am in red.

I groaned as I ripped my blanket off.

I stood, slowly placing one foot in front of the other, staring at the dark purple nail polish on my toes, as a gush of wind came through the open window, tangling my hair even more.

I walked into my bathroom and shut the door, locking it behind me.

As I was taking my clothes off to get into the shower, I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror. I turned and faced my reflection, standing there in just my underwear, scanning my body with glassy blue eyes.

My ribs were clearly visible, visible enough to count, and my hip bones stuck out about an inch. I pushed down the band of my underwear with one finger, revealing a group of scars on my waist, stomach, and

the top of my thighs. A warm tear rolled down my cheek, splashing at my feet, as I turned my wrist around, showing faint scars all up my arm, and about 7 fresh slices in my skin from being best friends with a razor blade last night.

I turned away from the mirror, and sat down on the edge of the bath, holding my breath and clutching my stomach to keep myself quiet.

The hot water pelted down on my face, the steam rising around me, washing away all of my worries.

But one thing stuck in my mind. Why would Levi shoot me? Even in a dream, he wouldn’t hurt me. Ever. I decided then and there to let it go and swirl its way down the drain.

I got out of the shower, getting dressed in a grey hoodie, black skin-tight jeans, and ankle wedge boots. I dried my hair, pinning my fringe in place, sweeping it across my face, and spraying it. I applied the usual makeup; liquid and powder foundation, silvery-gold eye shadow, liquid and pencil eyeliner, and heavy black mascara. After finishing up my makeup, I trotted down stairs.

“Incoming!” I heard my Bogan of a brother, Jenson, yell as I got to the last few stairs.

A couple seconds later, a paper plane came around the corner and hit me in the middle of my forehead.

I picked it up and ripped it in half in front of him. It didn’t faze him. He was rolling around on the floor, in fits of laughter, as the little pieces of paper fluttered around him.

“Oh, yeah, Jenson, real mature for a 16 year old!” I said, smiling.

He could hardly breathe, “But it was, like, in the middle of your face. Admit it! It was a good shot”.

I smirked, “it wouldn’t be such a good shot if I told Summer that you still play with paper planes, huh?”

He stopped laughing, and frowned at

me, “Tell her, and I’ll kill you. And stop treating me like a 6 year old. I’m 17 in two weeks!”.

I laughed in his face, “Then act like it! Why is Summer even dating you?”. It wasn’t a question, but a statement.

“Shut up, Monique”, he scowled.

I flipped him the finger and started walking to the kitchen.

“Hey”, Jenson yelled after me with a horrified look on his face.

“Yeah?” I turned.

He looked up at my arm, sitting himself up straight, “What the hell is on your wrist?”.

I pulled my sleeve down, and looked at the floor. “Nothing”, I lied.

“Bullshit, it’s nothing. Mon, you promised me you wouldn’t do it again”, he said, his vision blurring with tears.

“Jenson, don’t worry, I’m fine. It was the first time I’d done it in about a month”, total lie, “and 16 year old guys don’t cry”, I said, smiling, wiping the tear away that had slid down his cheek.

He sniffed, “They do when their only sister cuts themselves, and doesn’t eat”.

I flinched, “Jenson, don’t worry. I’m fine. And quit it with the paper planes too. Every morning? Really? It’s getting old and I will tell Summer”, I smiled.

He returned the smile, “I will tell Levi and Tami”.

I stiffened. “They know”, I said after a while, only half lying. Levi knows. Tami doesn’t.

“Fine then. Dad”, he threatened.

“Ha! You won’t”, I messed up his gelled, mousy-brown hair, “I won’t”, and I walked to the kitchen again.

Jenson came up behind me, and jumped on my back, making us both topple to the ground in a heap.



“Idiot”, I laughed, and punched him in the arm.

### *Levi*

“Levi! Get up!” I heard Liz yelling from downstairs. I groaned and put my pillow over my face.

I heard footsteps approach my door, a little voice following the sound. “Levi, you lazy ass. Get the hell up.”

I pulled down the pillow and looked at my doorway. “Shut up, Lia. Go help Liz make breakfast.” “You go help Liz make breakfast, I’m not helping her, she’s very hormonal today.”

“Well, no shit. She’s pregnant!” I rolled my eyes, “Why can’t you just be happy about this baby like everyone else?”

Lia scoffed, “Uh because, if it’s a girl, I will no longer be ‘Daddy’s Little Girl’, and if it’s a boy, no doubt, it’s going to be like you; not human. That’s why”.

I smirked, lifted my blanket, and grabbed my grey trackies off the floor, pulling them up the length of my legs and letting them rest low on my hips. It wasn’t a cold morning so I didn’t worry about a shirt. As I walked out the door, past Lia, I shoved her softly into the door frame, “Bitch”, I mumbled quietly.

“I heard that!” she snarled, as she tried to push me over, before jumping on my back and making me take her downstairs to the kitchen.

When we finally got downstairs, she jumped off my back, “Aren’t you a bit old to be giving a 14 year old a piggy back?”

“I’m only 18, smart ass”, I smiled, as I walked up to Liz, rubbed her stomach and kissed her on the cheek.

“Morning Levi. How’d you sleep?” she grinned. She was making pancake mix, her hands sticky with flour and water. “Can you please pass me that wet towel?”

I got the towel and passed it to her, as I sat myself down on the kitchen stool, “I actually had the creepiest dream last night. It was super weird”.

Liz wiped her hands on the towel I had given her, “Really? Why’s that?”.

I thought back to the dream. Moni up against a brick wall. Me pointing a gun at her. Her crying and pleading. Me not being able to stop myself from pulling the trigger. A bright flash of light jolting me out of my sleep.

“I, um, hmm. I, uh. I shot Monique?” I proposed.

Liz stopped what she was doing and looked at me, “What?” she gazed at me with vast eyes.

“Yeah, I don’t know. I told you it was weird”, I looked around, “Where’s dad?”.

Liz got back to making her pancakes. “He’s still in bed”, she smiled.

I rolled my eyes, “Ugh. Of course he is”.

“Levi”, she claimed. “What is going on with you two? Seriously, it’s stressing me out and it’s not good for the baby.”

I thought about it for a minute, “I don’t know, Liz. I really don’t. But it should be fine, we’ll sort it out. We always do”. I smiled to reassure her, “One of those pancakes better be for me”.

“Yeah, sure. Just go kick your sister out of the bathroom and have a shower”, Liz smirked.

### *Monique*

“Hey, hey!” I heard Tami yell from down the other end of the hallway.

I shut my locker door, and turned to look at her.

She had her hair down, dark brown layers framing her cheekbones perfectly, the waves falling half way down her back.

Comparing her outfit to mine was like comparing a beautiful rose to a pile of mud. I was the mud.

She strolled carelessly down the hallway, wearing a dark maroon leather jacket, over a faded orange tank top, and black leggings with rips down the side of them, completed by a pair of black ankle wedge boots, same as mine.

If a guy, even remotely attractive, walked past, or a girl that she classed as a “snotty nosed, little skank” looked at her, she’d



smirk, toss her hair over her shoulder, and stick her nose in the air.

She was a tease like that.

Just to top off the outfit she wore a glittering, silver owl necklace, a full face of makeup, and was holding a “real” Gucci handbag.

She got to me and held up the bag.

“You like?” she asked, curiously.

I studied the black and red patterns and the gold straps. “Me like?” I scoffed, “Ha! I love!”.

Tami giggled, lowering the bag and giving me a hug.

“Me also love what you’re wearing”, I said, as she opened her arms and spun in a circle, showing off her whole outfit.

“Thanks. It only took me, like, 2 hours to get ready this morning”, she laughed.

I gaped at her, “I don’t know how you do it”.

She giggled, flipping her hair over her shoulder, her light blue nose stud glistening in the light.

Strong, soft hands fell onto my hips, making me spin around to see who the perve was.

I turned, and looked up, up, up, coming face-to-face with a pair of cool black eyes.

Levi.

*Continued on page 30*

*Continued from page 29*

I smiled up at him, as he slid his arms around me and pulled me in for a kiss.

His silver lip ring cold on my mouth. His hands strong around my waist.

I pulled back, "I had a dream about you last night", I whispered, resting my forehead on his.

"Oh yeah?" he grinned, "and what happened in that dream?"

I looked him in the eye, finding it difficult as his deep, black hair was sweeping in front of them, "You, uh. You killed me. Shot me", I answered still whispering.

The bell started ringing, just as Levi's eyes widened, his breath catching. He let go of my waist, his hands sliding off, and started to walk backwards, leaving me alone.

"I, uh. I have Mr O'Connell. You, um. You know what he's like. Talk later!" He fumbled with his words, as he turned around fully, and ran his hand through his hair, stopping at his neck and holding the back of it. He walked around the corner, straight past his locker, and then I lost sight of him.

I stood there, baffled, as Tami came up beside me, licking cream off her fingers from the donut she was eating. "What was that about?"

I just stared down the hallway, "I have no idea", I blinked at Tami, and gave her an "Are you serious?" look.

She held her hands up, "What? Youse were being all cute and crap, plus, a girl needs her cream donut", she smiled, licking her fingers again.

"Whatever", I scoffed, and rolled my eyes, hooking my arm through hers as I started walking towards Biology.

Class went by in a blur. All I could think about was Levi and his reaction.

Why did he look so surprised?

Did he maybe have the same dream?

I was lost deep in thought, when Lili Iryne came up beside me.

"Monique?" she asked.

When I didn't reply, she gave me a little push, "Mon".

My attention snapped back into place, "Yeah, what?". I looked up at her, "Oh, hi", we shared a warm smile.

"Are you okay?" She actually looked concerned.

"Oh yeah, sorry, I was lost in thought", I gathered my books, putting them in a pile and sat them at the top of my desk, "Was there something that you needed?"

She was picking at the black nail polish on her fingers, "I was just wondering if you wanted to be partners for this?"

"Oh, I was going to be with Tami, but -", I stopped when I realised she was no longer sitting next to me.

I scanned the room looking for her, and found her in the second last row with Corie Young, the "senior football star".

She caught my eyes as soon as I looked at her.

I lifted up my arms, a silent, "Uh, what the hell?"

She grinned, and pointed at Corie, mouthing "Oh my God!" at me.

"Ugh", I rolled my eyes, and turned back to Lili. Looking up at her, I said, "Yes. Yeah, I'll be your partner".

She smiled, "Awesome", and she walked behind me and slumped herself down in the seat that Tami was sitting in before she ditched.

### ***Levi***

The bell rang, indicating that Trig, and school, was over. I took a deep breath and gathered my books, being as quick as I could. I had to leave the school grounds before I saw Monique. I weaved through the tables, nearly knocking over Elijah something in the process.

"Sorry", I grumbled, and kept walking. I walked out the door, and pushed my hand through my hair. I turned the corner, looking at my phone, and ran straight into a shorter girl, making her fall to the ground, her books scattered all over the ground.

"I'm so sorry", I apologise as I crouch down and help her with her books. When she looks up at me, my heart starts hammering.

Monique's bright blue eyes study my face. As she stands and gets her balance again, I pass her her things. She takes them without thanking me.

"Where have you been?" she asked. "I haven't seen you since the start of school."

"I, uh, hmm", I looked at my shoes.

"Why are you avoiding me?" she said, still studying me.

I had to think fast. Dad. Dad and I had a fight last night, "Dad and I had a fight last night", I said out loud, "I just needed time to myself". I looked up at her, her eyes relaxed a bit. Phew.

Monique sighed, "You couldn't just tell me that?". She paused, "What happened?"

I forced a smile and wrapped my arm around her waist, "Nothing. It's nothing. Don't worry about it". I kissed her on the cheek. "Let's get out of here."

Monique looked up at me, "Okay". Her smile was the mirror-reflection of mine.

"Your place or mine?"

"Yours. Summer is coming over for tea for Jenson, and I really don't feel like playing happy families tonight."

My forced smile turned real. "So you'd rather spend time with me, than your own family?"

She rolled her eyes at me, "Uh, of course".

I pulled her along the hallway, heading towards the exit. "Liz and Dad are working the night shifts, so they'll leave at 5.30, and Lia finishes work at 8.00, so she'll be home tonight."

That's okay. I actually like Lia. I can put up with her", she smiled.

"Ha. That makes one of us", I laughed as we walked out the door, greeted by a warm breeze, towards my black BMW. As Monique dropped into the passenger seat, I stood at my door a while, thinking

about the dream she had. Was it just a coincidence? Surely. How else would you explain that we had the same dream?

### **Monique**

“What are ya doing?” I heard Levi ask, as he dropped into the seat next to me.

Still looking at my phone, I answered, “Just texting Tami. She was supposed to give me a ride home, I’m telling her not to worry about it.” I pressed send, and put my phone back into the pocket of my jeans.

I looked at Levi, and smiled. He was so carefree, but still managed to look like a pristine bad boy. His deep, black hair was messy but presentable, his eyes, so dark, that you can hardly tell his pupils from the irises. His clothes were always dark, but today he wore a pair of black skinny jeans, sitting low on his hips, with a silver-studded belt holding them there, and a skin tight, V-necked, white t-shirt. The shirt was so thin and faded that it was almost see through. His silver lip ring sparkled in the sun, and you could only see a little bit of his spacers, because his hair covered his ears.

I was so busy studying Levi, that I didn’t realise that he’d already driven us all the way home, and we were now just sitting in the car, in front of his house.

“And, we’re here”, he smiled at me, as he flicked his head to the side, a quick jolt to move the hair from his eyes, revealing a piercing in his left eyebrow.

I grinned back.

“C’mon”, he nodded, and got out of the car. Jogging around the front, and stopping when he reached my door, he opened it, holding out his hand for mine.

We strolled hand-in-hand up to the entrance of his house. When he opened the door, I walked in, following Levi and immediately looked up. I’ve been here many times before but it’s hard not to; the soaring creamy-white ceiling with the colossal crystal chandelier in the centre is attention grabbing. I feel my eyes travel up the gorgeous grand staircase and across the balcony until they meet walls where I know, Levi, Lia and Mr and Mrs Hurst’s bedrooms are.

“I’m home!” Levi yells, as he shuts the door behind us.

“Levi?”, I hear a woman ask from somewhere to my left.

Two seconds later, Mrs Hurst wandered around the corner, wiping her hands on a pink tea towel. She was such a stunning, petite lady.

Her blonde, wavy hair fell just over her shoulders, with twists of hair pinned back by a beautiful flower. She wore a tight faded yellow singlet that showed off the little baby bump in her stomach, with a white skirt that flowed at her ankles. Her toe nails were painted a very light blue, while her finger nails were French tipped. The only makeup she had on was a sweep of mascara, and a dab of gloss on her lips. I could tell she’d been working hard, as little stray hairs had fell from the twists, curling around her face, a strand stuck in her lip gloss.

“Hey Liz”, Levi said, as his step-mother walked towards us.

She smiled at him, then looked at me. “Hey Mon. How you been?”, she asked, getting the hair away from her lips.

I returned the smile, “Hi Mrs Hurst. I’ve been good, thanks”.

“Oh please Monique! You know you can call me Liz”, she chuckled, looking back at Levi. “I’m baking a cake; it’ll be ready soon, just help yourselves.”

Levi looked at me, “We’ll probably be upstairs, but yeah, okay”.

As Liz headed back to the kitchen, she started humming the tune of a song I knew, but couldn’t quite figure out which.

Levi had hold of my hand, as he tugged me past the lounge room and into the very large sunroom. In the corner lay a massive, glossy red piano, with a black leather couch across from it.

“Do you like it?” Levi asked, smiling at the piano.

I was still amazed. I hadn’t known he’d gotten the piano or the couch for that matter. “Do I like it?”, I gasped, “I love it! It’s beautiful”.

He came up behind me, wrapping his arms around my waist, I could feel his breath warming the back of my neck, “I’ll play

for you later. Right now”, he said, picking me up around the waist and spinning me around, “we’re going upstairs”.

I giggled as he directed me up the stairs, to his bedroom.

### **Levi**

I closed my bedroom door, and turned around to find Monique standing in the middle of my room, with her hands in her back pockets. She was so beautiful. The sun came through the open blinds, showing the blue tinge in her hair.

I walked slowly up to her, and kissed her softly on the mouth. I pulled back and picked her up, only to lay her down on my bed a couple seconds later. I climbed on top of her, taking my top off before I dropped my head down and kissed her again. Her hands ran through my hair, before we rolled over, Monique now sitting on my naked torso. She lifted her arms; bringing her grey hoodie up and over her head, before tossing it aside. She sat there in silence, while I traced my fingers over the group of scars on the right side of her stomach. My eyes blurred with tears as my hand brushed over her ribs.

I rolled over again, pinning Monique’s hands above her head, her forearms completely visible. I ran the tips of my finger over the fresh slices on the inside of her wrist, making her flinch and make a soft weeping noise. A tear ran down my cheek, and wobbled on my chin, before falling and landing between her breasts.

I let go of her wrists and rolled off, beside her. She snuggled in against me, as I gathered her in my arms. She rested her head on my chest as another tear rolled down the side of my face.

“I love you”, I whispered.

Monique lifted her head, looking me in the eye. “I love you, too”, she smiled weakly, before she lifted her head, leaning on her elbows, and kissed me softly on the mouth.

*To Be Continued...*

**By Maddie Meharry**  
Year 8, Kerang Technical High School  
KERANG – VIC.

# Me Do Sit Where Me Sit and Me Do Sit Where Me Like!

**T**ODAY me do sit on the steps of our house. Me do write. Me write my name I write it like this AbBy and that Abby. I do like my name. Me write frontwards and backwards. I write it a lot. Today me do sit and write. Me write about lots of things. I do quite like our house, yes, yes me do.

Me do like dear Flash yes, yes me do. Me take her to walk up and down, up and down our street. Me watch her lellowish-goldish fur flapping in the breeze. She's tongue is pink and hangy-outey. Yes, oh yes, she is the perfect doggie for me.

Me do also like dear Plum Pudding. Her tummy is fat very fat. She is black like the scary spooky night. She does like our chats. She runs like the wind. She is very

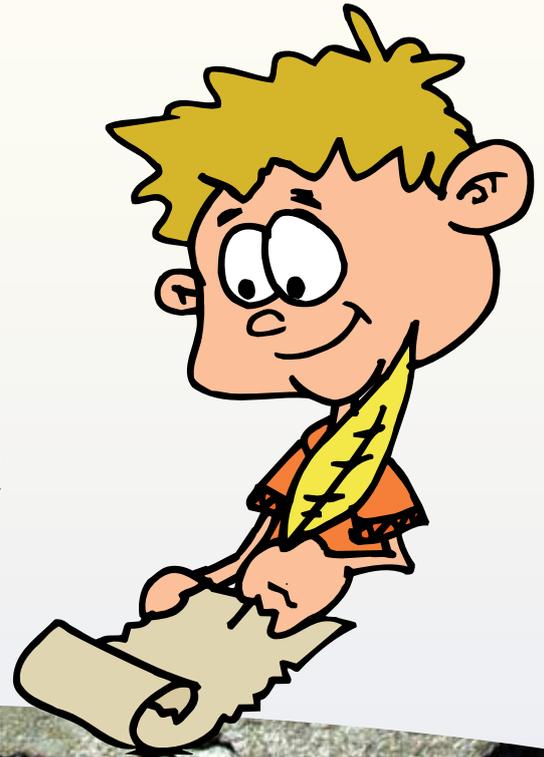
gentle, very gentle. I do talk to her. She very understands.

My tree also very nice. Yes, it is very very much. It's conversations are very understanderable. It is a very good, old tree. It's whipping bark is nice. Very, very soft. Me do like my tree, yes, yes I do!

Me sit where me sit and me do sit where me like.

By **Claire Walker**  
Year 3, Pennant Hills Public School  
PENNANT HILLS – NSW

*Note: the misspellings in this piece are deliberate due to the technique imitating a 3 and a half year old's vocabulary.*



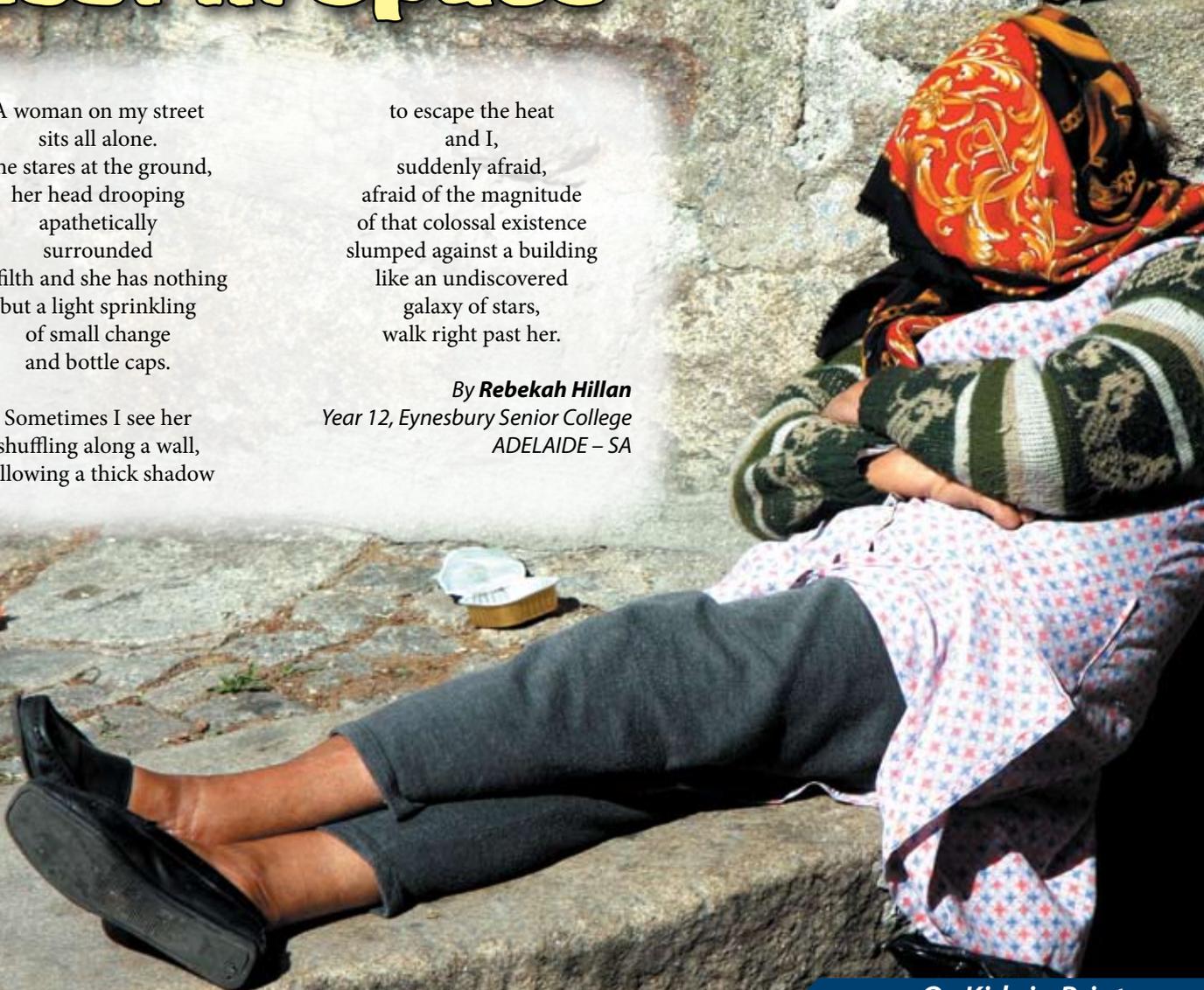
## Lost in Space

A woman on my street  
sits all alone.  
She stares at the ground,  
her head drooping  
apathetically  
surrounded  
by filth and she has nothing  
but a light sprinkling  
of small change  
and bottle caps.

Sometimes I see her  
shuffling along a wall,  
following a thick shadow

to escape the heat  
and I,  
suddenly afraid,  
afraid of the magnitude  
of that colossal existence  
slumped against a building  
like an undiscovered  
galaxy of stars,  
walk right past her.

By **Rebekah Hillan**  
Year 12, Eynesbury Senior College  
ADELAIDE – SA



# First Miracle

**I** STAND at the pinnacle of the rock-strewn hill, contemplating the qualities of the environment spread out before me. This is it. I skim over the faces of my followers, who have come with me to this place. It was a risky business to come, especially as the places we visited are not exactly comfortable and hospitable places. I thank them silently for this.

The reason for this choice of destinations is a special one. For decades now planet Earth has suffered from lack of water. Experts have tried to figure out solutions to the rapidly increasing shortage, all to no great avail. Now, my band and I are going to try and fill in the blank.

Fountain forming. The ability to raise a spurt of water out of a non-water-containing solid, like a rock or a computer. The actual doing is not the hard part. It's the planning. We have to choose areas, areas of land that most people won't visit. We have to keep it secret, or somebody might come along and decide to use our act of nothing but goodwill for their profit. We have to buy land, or people will call it trespassing. And even though I can perform miracles, making money out of nothing at all is not one of them.

So it was months and months of solid work, physically working during the day to earn money and mentally at night, trying to figure out which plot of land was less likely to gain the curiosity of random people than the other. It took ages and ages of planning and researching and awkward phone calls. This hasn't been easy.

But at last, we settled on a place. We found out about Gunter Mountain ages ago (it wasn't suitable at all, there being three villages on it), and this hill, next to it, is perfect for our task. Being a hazardous place, the villagers have not approached it, but I cleared away most of the avalanche-causing rocks. That minor miracle alone took a lot of planning to ensure secrecy. Then, at last, we mount the hill and stand, gazing out into the harsh, grey, windy distance.

Without saying a word, I place my hand upon a small boulder. The others place their hands on top of mine – not for some mystic strength-building ritual, but to keep it warm. That is crucial.

I close my eyes and feel the strength and warmth pour out of my hand into

the stone. The flow of the water courses through me as if it was a real and tangible thing. Eyes shut tight, I will the magic of the water to flow through the rock, imbuing it with liquid, spurting out in a jet. I raise my hand – the hands of the band scatter – once, twice, three times.

Then I hear the rushing of water and the cheers of my followers. I know I have succeeded.

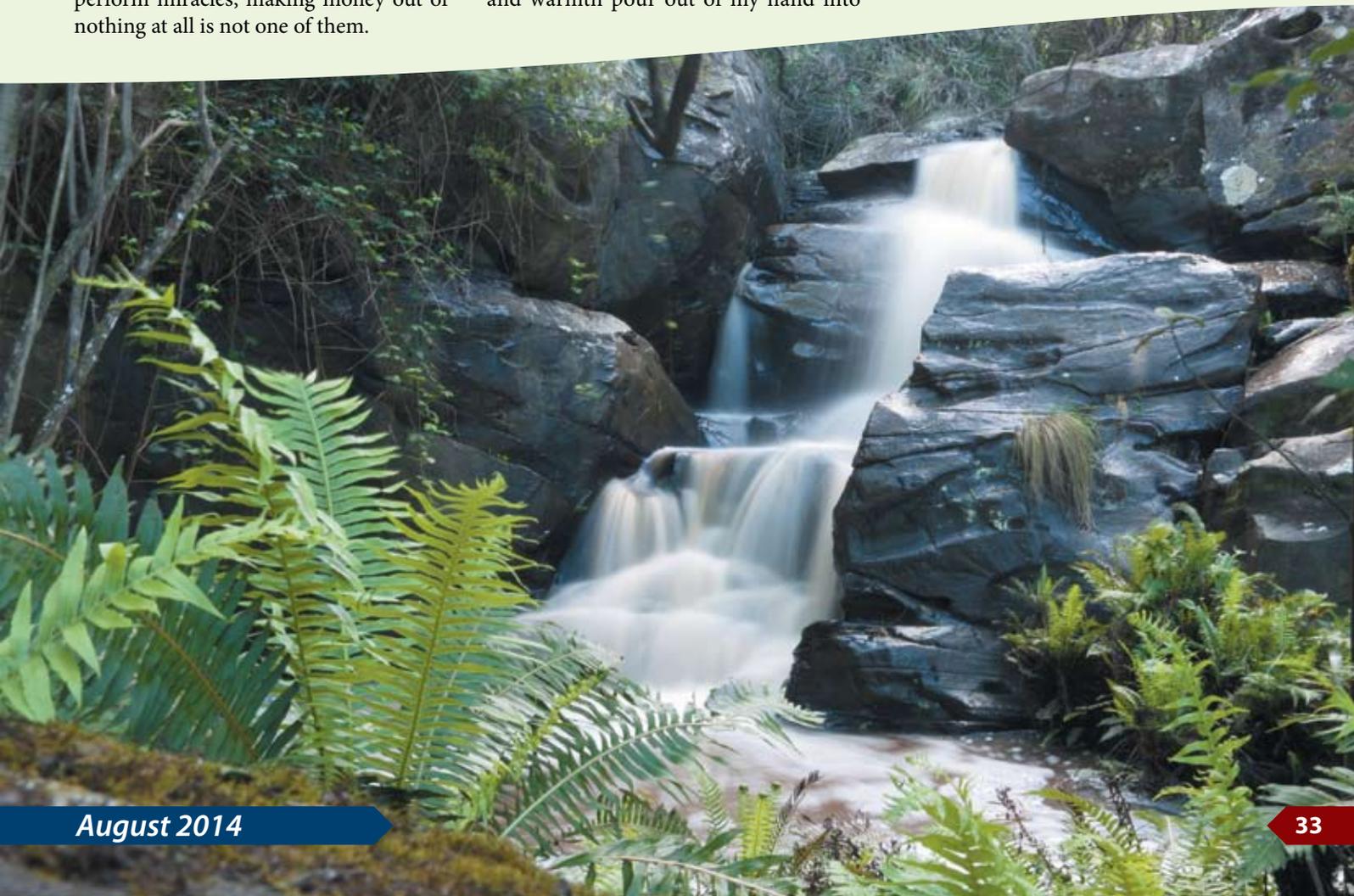
This is not all I will have to accomplish. I have to find a way to give this water freely to others who need it. I have to make more fountains and plant them in places that need them. I have to try to stay unknown for reasons I cannot explain. And above all, I have to spread it all around the world, to poor and wealthy places alike.

It will be dangerous. But as I skim again over the faces of my band, I know we are ready for it.

By **Ophilia Kong**

Year 7, SCEGGS

DARLINGHURST – NSW





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# Fireworks

LIGHTS of green and red illuminated the starry night sky as it signalled the awakening of fest and delight. In the freezing December midnight of New York City, there was an astonishing view of a disrupted anthill. Compact and immobile, a mob of million people swarmed around in unison as if searching for satisfaction and joy. The vociferous sounds of the rock band were clouded by the mesmerising shouts and screams from the crowd. The atmosphere was unsettling, chaotic and for some, disturbing but was expected within the greetings of the coming New Year. In the epicentre of ceremonies, people had gathered at the prospect of standing in Times Square and watching the big ball drop.

And soon enough, the countdown began...

An alleyway stood by on the outskirts of the city, hidden under the shadows of richness and prosperity. Surrounded by prison-like buildings towering above the narrow passage, it seemed completely deserted; uninviting and shameful. An antique lamppost was the only source of light as its weak white glow stared down the darkness coldheartedly. A creature seemed to be lurking around in it as if protecting a sinister entrance to mystic and fear. A complete antithesis of the image in the outside world, it resembled a shelter for the poor.

Amidst it, a dark figure emerged. In conjunction with a pool of deafening silence, his footsteps were rather swift and apprehensive. His presence was barely noticeable as his identity was tightly concealed beneath his hood and his body was camouflaged in the 'all-blacks' he wore. His existence was only given away from the steady ticking noise of his watch, providing a rhythmic tone to his movement. Everything about him seemed professional and with it, he carried a menacing aura around him. In no time, he reached the end of the alleyway.

"Target area reached." He muttered under his breath in calm, soothing manner and as he did, he reached for his earpiece. From it, croaked a surprisingly stern voice.

"Good. As you may be aware, our squad of

technicians picked a suspicious gathering there at noon. We might have detected a bomb on the roof of the apartment. The time of the explosion is unknown and we need to know of its details. You know your stuff. Anything moves, you kill. This is an urgent case. You have exactly ten minutes. Now get moving."

His orders were clear and sharp. And yet, it carried the scent of fear and death. Without further hesitations, the man jumped. Despite his tall and bulky physique, he swiftly tucked under the metal bases of the ladder. He crawled up on it like a spider on its majestic hall of delicacy. It led him to a miniature balcony and a shadowy door – its hinges seemingly rusted and fragile. With ease, he tore it apart and entered the doom of obscurity.

The darkness enraptured him into an everlasting fortress of doubt. He always forgot to bring a torch at a night shift like this and now, he had to purely rely on his animalistic instincts. His fingers became his eyes; navigating him along what seemed like a long windy hallway. Seconds ticked by as his feet picked up the pace – desperate, in search of a staircase that might lead him onto the roof of the building. His ears suddenly twitched like a cat's, however, stopping him amidst his exploration.

He had heard something.

The sound had been so miniscule as if someone was playing games in his head. 'What are you doing, you deluded fool?' he thought to himself. He snapped out his pistol, the motion drenched in experience and expertise. His consciousness leaped into action and he moved in towards the room on his left. His steps were cautious and vigilant. He alerted his minds and engaged his body into combat mode. This was no longer a boring old detective work but a life-threatening mission.

His heart pulsed rapidly, sensing movement beneath his waist. Sweat dripped off his face as the chilly breeze that touched by, felt like a hot steam. One mistake and his

much beloved career could end, let alone his life. Making up his mind, he slowly lowered his weapon and pointed it towards the person...

As he did so, a gleam of moonlight crept past through the window, its silver light reflecting past the wavering curtains. Momentarily, it illuminated the small bedroom and with a quick flash, it revealed who he was aiming at. The person had been a girl, fast asleep; her chest steadily rising and falling. She looked no older than five, the same age as her daughter. After all, not everyone was out on a New Year's Eve. Nausea exploded in his head, as he loosened the subtle concentration. He sighed in horror and shock of he could have done. Standing there numb and in disbelief, a long-forgotten ticking noise reminded him of something. He still had work to do and he was running out of time. There had been too much of a delay. A sniper searching for his target; an eagle for its prey, he observed the dim surroundings of the room carefully. A lustrous metal handle glinted as his radar caught the sign of a staircase.

The inclining path was obstructed with disbelief and suspicion. Unaware of what he might face on the roof, he felt lost and concerned. 'This is it, he reminded himself as he emerged himself to the scene of crime.

The roof stood wide and deserted, its dark edges met by the moonlight towering above it. In its darkest corners, he recognised four lanky men, silhouetted by a flickering of fire that had been ignited with their lighters. They were going to light something. In surprise, he leapt forward to prevent their actions. But it was too late; a long object they were holding had already been lit. He dropped to his knees in failure and closed his eyes, preparing himself for the last moments of his life...

In Times Square, noises filled the air as people cheered and whooped for the beginning of 2014. And small sparks of a firework went unnoticed as it enlightened the darkest alleyways of the city.

By **Gueyol Oh**

Year 12, Eynesbury Senior College  
ADELAIDE – SA

# Bold New Frontiers

13 September 2032  
Beijing, China

**W**ILLIAM Gonden sat outside the grand building of the Astronomical Hall of Fame and closed his eyes. He always felt at peace when he was near astronomical achievements. Will was of medium build, 25 years old, had chocolate brown eyes, and black hair.

When Will turned 18 in 2025 he had been selected to join the National Space Programme. He had been overwhelmed with joy when he got the Holomessage from the director of the NSP. He was sent to the Space HQ of the NSP and was trained as an astronaut. He knew everything from what to do if the self-destruct sequence was activated to all the planets in the known universe.

In 2030 Will was selected to go on a space launch... to MARS! Charlie was in Beijing to meet the other members of the shuttle launch. The other members of the launch were: Jasmin Park, an Australian astronaut/adventurer with long brown hair; Augustus Houston, an American man in charge of mission control in Beijing; and Hanyu Zhongwen, a Chinese man on the shuttle to represent the Chinese government on the trip.

Two days later, on the fifteenth of September, the space shuttle named Excelsior, launched on the three hour trip to the barren planet, Mars. Excelsior touched down and maintained contact with Houston. Will and Jasmin explored the rocky surface of Mars and found a lot of old broken down Mars rovers. There were: the ancient Curiosity rover, all the Apollo missions, and all the 2020–30 missions were still exploring.

One day Excelsior picked up an unknown signal from an unmanned spaceship on the other side of Mars. Will and Jasmin perked up in delight that there was something to actually do, rather than Gus Houston just doing examinations of pretty much everything on Mars. Will and Jasmin went in the Space-transporter and got to the unmanned spaceship in 10 minutes to find there was nothing there. "Wow", Jasmin commented, "That spaceship must've

disappeared quickly." Suddenly, a large space-field enclosed them and trapped the two adventuring astronauts inside!

Sometime later the stealth spaceship transporting the astronauts stopped near a strange ringed yellow planet which looked like Saturn. It went into a large asteroid somehow and came upon a large, very futuristic looking space station. It was all red and Charlie and Jasmin had a strange feeling that they were abducted.



When they landed a strange man came out to greet them. He had greyed hair and spoke with an American accent. "Welcome to my space lair! I am Benjamin Winter, but you can call me Ben. I am going to take you prisoner now. Mwahahahaha." Will and Jasmin were bewildered at this big-boned man. One minute he was happy as can be, the next he was as evil as Kim Jong Il was. Benjamin's cronies grabbed the adventurers and pulled them inside the gigantic space lair of Benjamin Winter...

Over the next few days Will and Jasmin developed a close bond while in captivity. They were fed poorly and were in an impenetrable cell. Benjamin came around one day and invited the two out of the cell. He warned them that if they tried to escape or talked they would be shot. In the main part of the fortress a massive laser was stationed and it was pulsing with dark energy. Jasmin widened her eyes in horror. She whispered to Will, "It's a super-death-laser which the NSP had planned for any disasters! It uses dark

matter to destroy anything! He must have a mole within the NSP to get those files!" Will gasped in horror and looked away. Benjamin suddenly looked at them with a murderous look in his eyes. He yelled "VAPORISE THE GIRL! SHE TALKED!". The super laser was suddenly trained onto Jasmin and beeped loudly. "BEEP. BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE—" Jasmin suddenly disappeared in a flash of dark light. Will yelled "NOOOOOOOO!" but it was too late. Jasmin was gone.

Will was shaking with sadness as he was herded back to his lonely cell. He wondered what the maniac would do next with that much power. From his lonely cell he could hear more screams, no doubt more people being destroyed by the dark matter ray. One day sometime considerably later, Benjamin came around and turned off the cell doors. The doors swung open and Will came rushing out and clamped his hands around Benjamin's neck. "You maniac", Will said. "Why did you destroy JASMIN?" Benjamin coolly replied, "I did give orders for her not to speak. It's only fair". Will angrily yelled "BUT WHY DID YOU HAVE TO TURN HER INTO DARK MATTER?". Benjamin didn't answer it. He was starting to turn red in the face from no air. He told Will "If you put me down, you will be able to get Jasmin back". Will hastily agreed and put Benjamin down. Benjamin dusted down his suit and told Charlie to follow him.

They went back to the super-death-laser and Benjamin went up to the top platform. He reversed the polarity of the laser and shot it. Jasmin instantly appeared. Will ran over and tried to hug her but it seemed that she wasn't there. Will turned over to look at Benjamin but he had disappeared. A door had been left open near the laser so Will ran over there because he knew that Benjamin had gone through that door.

Will went through the door and saw a horrifying sight. The whole room was filled with tonnes more super-death-lasers! Benjamin was standing on a platform and was just directing all the lasers to aim at... Earth! Will ran and tackled Benjamin just before he pressed the big red button which would wipe out earth entirely. Benjamin angrily cried out "GUARDS!!" and they

dragged the enraged Will off of Benjamin's back. Benjamin stood up but he was clutching his heart and fell onto the floor again. One of the guards said "I think boss is having a heart attack". The other guard replied "I think you are right. BOSS!". The guards ran and tried to resuscitate him but it was too late. Benjamin Winter was dead.

The enraged guards looked at Will, but he was already gone. The guards also noticed that the self-destruct sequence had been activated. The guards, technicians and everyone else in the room instantly began fleeing to the one place they could escape from: the escape pod room. As one last technician was leaving the observation

room, he saw 10 escape pods fly past. Only one of them were full.

It was William Gonden who was in that escape pod. 5 seconds later the space station blew up and Will was the only survivor, in his escape pod. He waited a few hours, and then he saw a large spaceship come behind him. He panicked for a moment but then he realised that it was the Excelsior, with Hanyu excitedly waving from the front. Hanyu picked him up and took him back to earth.

Will was revered as a hero on earth, for saving earth, and possibly the universe. He was knighted, and became President of the world. There was only one person who was

unhappy about the turn of these events. It was Oliver Winter, Benjamin Winter's only surviving descendant.

One day, a large meteorite came crashing down in Oregon, America. A small boy was exploring there and what he saw was fabulous. It was the super-death-laser that Will had supposedly destroyed. The little boy's face lit up with an evil smile. He could utilise this weapon for many means. The boy's name, was Oliver Winter...

TO BE CONTINUED...

By **Oscar Pollack**

Year 7, Anglican Church Grammar School  
EAST BRISBANE – QLD.

# Greenery

**T**ERROR is all-consuming, a ravenous beast that won't rest until its prey is caught. Terror was all that existed among this greenery, this jungle of nightmares and horrors. You never saw them, but they were there, always there. They would hide, somewhere in the high canopy, waiting, waiting. Community was comforting, but false. Once they wanted you, nothing could stop them. They were too powerful, too powerful for me, for anyone to combat.

One night, we were sitting down around a fire, as most nights are, and the Swoopers, as we called one breed of the beasts, came. There were only five or six as far as I could tell, but they could have killed all of us, our entire tribe, if they had pleased. They came down, swift but silent, and then snatched us back into the canopy.

Life was like that here. One second you were there, and the next you simply weren't.

★ ★ ★

I hated living in the forest. Constant terror ate away at you, until you weren't any better than an animal. Everything was what you were going to eat next, where you were going to sleep and if you were safe.

Unlike everyone else, though, I knew that we wouldn't ever be safe until we did something. That was why I created what

we called the Wings, a group of freedom fighters. Wings to represent freedom, a way to escape the bindings of Earth. Wings because they let you soar, away from your prisons and troubles. It sounded poetic, but we were completely serious about what we were doing.

We would win. We would win against them. There was no choice about it, because if we didn't, we died.

★ ★ ★

We constructed weapons. Weapons were not guns or bombs, but rather clumsy rock swords and unwieldy spears. We had tried to use these, but weren't very successful.

It was a while before we discovered their true weakness, or rather strength; the trees. The trees were where they lived, where they would hide. If we could cut down the trees, they wouldn't be able to get at us!

We began to use our weapons not for fighting, but rather for lumber. Lumberjacks became heroes in the village, what the little boys wanted to grow into. We were regarded as the most amazing, like celebrities. With the wood that we collected we expanded our tiny village into a town, then a city.

It was when our population had reached around a hundred thousand that we made a great discovery; metal.

Miners mined all day, made us stronger axes and tougher buildings. We were finally stronger than them.

★ ★ ★

It's been fifty years since we chopped down the last tree. We've been running out of metal, running out of wood, running out of everything. The land no longer yields its fruit to us, nor do animals give their flesh.

We are starving; we are shrinking in numbers.

Maybe it had been good for the Swoopers and Shriekers and Divers to eat us, for without them we are dying.

It had been my idea to make the Wings, and people are realising what I have done. I am an outcast, hunted by all. Our race will die, because of me. The Earth is bare, every other animal hunted to extinction. What have I done?

By **Zachary Dalton**

Year 9, Blackfriars Priory School  
PROSPECT – SA



# Flooding in the Village

*My name is Maisie. I'm twelve years old. The story that I'm going to tell you is not a happy one. It's about a big flood.*

**I**T HAD been raining for a week or two. My family and I had quite enough of this bad weather. Daddy and Mama thought it was horrid. I thought it was horrid too. I couldn't even go outside without getting totally drenched.

I looked out of the window. It was still raining! There were big, grey clouds hanging low in the sky and rain was splashing against the window panes. The streets looked dark and wet.

It did stop raining the next day. As I looked out of the window, it looked like the ocean was on our doorstep! The town was flooded.

Suddenly something cold and wet touched my bare feet. I looked down. Water was seeping in under the crack in our door. I jumped back, surprised. Then I called Mama and Daddy. Daddy was quite surprised and shocked as he saw what was happening. Mama told me to fetch some towels out of the bathroom closet. She looked rather pale. Without hesitation I did what I was told. I fetched a couple of towels and put them by the door, in order

to stop any more water from coming in. It didn't help! Water was still coming into our house!

Mama started to panic, but Daddy calmed her down. At first Mama had thought it was only a little bit of wet weather. We could all see she was totally wrong. It was flooding!

We all sat down for a while, not knowing what to do. Nobody said a word. We were just wondering what we should do. Finally Mama got up and said she'd go and cook lunch. Daddy and I cut up some vegetables, ready for lunch. My mind was not really on cutting vegetables, I was still thinking about the flood. Still, I tried not to panic.

Finally lunch was ready. We ate our lunch in silence. Mama was still a little shocked and Daddy didn't know what to say and I was deep in thought. After a while it started to rain again.

Daddy was the first to break the silence. He told us that we had to leave our home before the water got any higher. Mama agreed with him, like I did. We grabbed a few of our belongings and left the house.

We were in luck and caught a boat. Then we left our home behind. We were in the

boat for what seemed like a long time. Finally we arrived in a dry, sheltered area. We spent our time in the shelter.

The shelter was crowded. So I didn't feel relaxed in the shelter, as I would have done in my own home. But at least I felt safe. I was quite comfortable in the shelter and I got plenty to eat and drink. We stayed in the shelter for several weeks.

Finally, when all the water had gone, Mama, Daddy and I felt safe enough to go back home. A bus took us there.

As we got back, everything looked strange. There were fewer buildings, because some had been washed away. But luckily our house was still standing. I was so relieved that I could have hugged the world, if I had had half a chance.

I was home now, back in my own house. Mama and Daddy were still with me. The world had not come to an end, but that was a good thing.

The End

**By Amy Mengler**

*Year 5, Mount Barker Community College  
MOUNT BARKER – WA*





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