

# OZ KIDS IN PRINT

**November 2017**

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improve literacy  
in schools!*

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Alicia Lamburd  
(2016 Bic Australia Art Award)

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**FREE ENTRY**

**TO STUDENTS IN PRIMARY  
OR SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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Matéo, 8 years old  
"ALIEN HUNTER"



Léa, 9 years old  
"SUPER DOCTOR"



Théo, 7 years old  
"AIRLINE PILOT"



**SMALL HANDS  
WILL DO BIG THINGS**



# OZ KIDS IN PRINT

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### 'The Secret Landscape'

Front cover image by  
**Alicia Lamburd**

Winner, 2016 Bic Australia Art Award

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

This is the final edition of the *Oz Kids in Print* magazine for 2017.

Another year is coming to an end. Year 12 students are sitting their exams and their secondary school life is coming to a close. A new chapter awaits with either further studies or employment.

Whatever your choices, we wish you the best of luck and happiness in your future endeavours.

For the rest of you, good luck in your exams in the coming weeks.

Have a happy and safe festive season and a great 2018!

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



**KEEP ON WRITING  
(TYPING)!**

*Carol Dick*  
Managing Editor

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## *Ms Ann*

The sunflowers resting in a vase  
half full on the counter.  
The light from the sun bursts  
through the only window  
brightening up any and all things dark;  
her favourite bloom,  
the gift she always smiles for.  
Vibrant yellow she loves.  
It confuses me how she loves  
such a bright colour  
while being so stern.

She works all day  
and even some nights  
to give me what she never had.  
Looking at the sunflowers with joy  
through her compromised eyes  
held together through thick and thin.

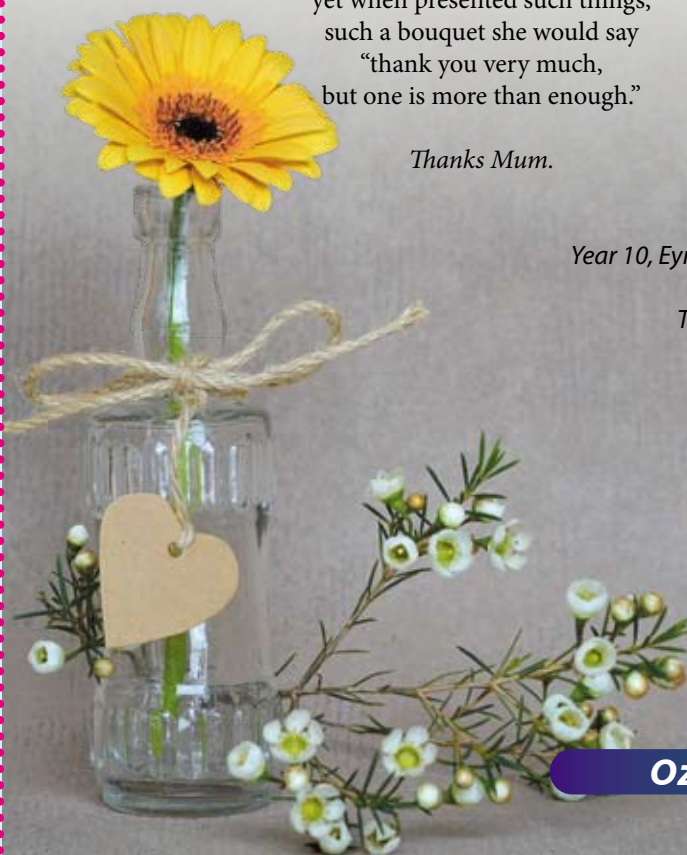
The woman who never fails to amaze.  
She knows exactly what to say  
even when there is nothing to say.  
Told she was at fault when all was said and done,  
but yet she was not the one that ran.  
She stands tall like sunflowers.

Mother that taught me so much,  
held me when I had given up.  
She fights for me when I  
would not even fight for myself.  
My shining floral sun,  
I owe her so much  
yet she continues to give.

She deserves a million, million sunflowers  
yet when presented such things,  
such a bouquet she would say  
"thank you very much,  
but one is more than enough."

*Thanks Mum.*

By **Zac Osborne**  
Year 10, Eynesbury Senior College  
ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Melanie Smith





# THE SECRET

‘WHERE are you going Daddy?’

‘I am running away. The people that know our secret are coming. I must hide, before it is too late. They mustn’t find me. They know too much. I must go.’

‘But Daddy, I don’t want you to go. I want to go with you.’

I looked at my son sadly.

I started to leave, I stared at the beautiful grasslands, our home. Our beautiful house, with its white stone walls, and its ornately carved deck. But it guards a secret so dangerous, that no-one else must ever know. Our house holds the key to the passage of the north. Inside that passage way, lies gold.

‘Daddy!’

‘Remember, you are forever mine. Don’t let them in. Don’t ever leave this place. If I survive, I will meet you here. You will see a golden chariot, coming in from the west. What happened to your mother won’t happen to you. I love you.’

‘Daddy!’

Felix’s call was met with silence. Only the echo, on the stone walls, was left. I was gone.

I felt so bad. I wished I could have taken my son with me. But it is too dangerous. What happened to my wife might happen to me. To get inside the tunnel, you must pass the test. My wife had answered all the questions right. She came to the last question but the people finally caught up with her. There was chaos. The tunnel was shut. The last I heard, was that my wife was killed. It is no wonder. The people are the Pirates of the Brunei.

The most feared name in the world.

I rode on my trusty Arabian horse for about 3 days, like the ancient map says to. When you travel along the dry grasslands for a while, there is a sudden change in scenery. The mist begins to envelop you and chill you to the bone. Suddenly, you come to The Marsh. A place that no one dares to go. It is full of swampy, brown and green slime. It is so treacherous. Directly before the swamp, the mist is the thickest. Suddenly, there is a massive bank. Before you even realise, your horse is fully stuck in the swamp, unable to move. It is worse than quicksand.

I kept riding, but suddenly I slowed my horse down. We were approaching the Marsh. ‘Whoa, steady there boy’, I said. My horse stopped. Now, I was stuck. How am I going to get across the Marsh without getting trapped? I looked at the map. I should probably tell you about the map. The map was passed on through the generations of my family. On it, it shows the entrance to the secret tunnel. I studied it closely. I suddenly found the answer.

On the map, in the top right corner, it says in tiny writing, ‘To enter the secret tunnel, go to the Western point, take three steps left and dig. Enter the secret burrow and wait.’ I had never seen this before! I never knew before about the real way to enter the tunnel. I started the treacherous journey to enter the secret tunnel.

The yards seemed to fly past, as I galloped my horse into the strong wind. The Arabian horse’s powerful muscles rippled and flexed as the horse cantered along. I thought about the problems that I am going to encounter on my quest to reach the tunnel. Suddenly, I heard a noise.

Far away, in the distance, I heard a sound.

It sounded similar to a thunderstorm. I wondered where I had heard the sound before. It sounds something like the cannons the people used to fire. Then I realised. It was the people. The Pirates of the Brunei have finally found me. What happened to my wife will happen to me. Fear overtook me. I fainted. Unconscious.

I woke up to the feel of a soft, velvety muzzle. That could only be my Arabian horse, Thunderbolt. Horses are much smarter than what people take them for. Thunderbolt gave me one more big nudge. I felt really groggy and bruised, after falling off my horse. Then I remembered about the pirates. I quickly hauled myself up onto Thunderbolt. I suddenly noticed that it was nearly dark. Where was I going to stay? The sun was setting quickly. At night, wild animals lurk, in unforeseen places. Before you even realise, the vicious animals have surrounded you, and are ready to rip you to shreds. I started to look around, trying to find a place to survive the horrendous night.

I ended up finding none. This landscape is vast, dry and completely uninhabited. At night, if you end up surviving the ghastly animals, you still have to survive the cold. I decided to try and find one more place to stay the night. I walked around with my tired horse, searching the barren landscape. There was nowhere to stay. Suddenly, I remembered an old trick my grandfather had taught me. He said, ‘If you are ever stuck in a place with nowhere to shelter, dig a burrow into the ground, and stay there for the night.’ I was so thankful that he had told me this. I started digging, and then I found it.

I had dug into the passage of the secret tunnel. I cried out for joy. Tears streamed out my eyes. I had found the most precious treasure in all of the ages. The secret tunnel is full of gold. But, I knew what to look for. I kept walking down to the end of the tunnel, by my house. At the very end of the tunnel, I found the golden chariot. I hitched my horse up to it, and I rode off, to my house. I came out from the tunnel to my home. I ran towards my son. Still to this day, we haven’t told anyone about the tunnel. It is our secret.

**By Craig King**

*Year 6, Nambour Christian College  
NAMBOUR – QLD.*

*Teacher: Belinda Eracleous*



# It's Not Easy Being Green

**C**LEAR bright mornings saw the determined sunrise vanquish the end of winter in the Perth Hills. Succulent arrived on a day when the wildflowers uncurled and signalled the beginning of spring. Succulent watched in amazement as the garden revealed itself. It was a departure from the sterile nursery Succulent had left behind. The giant widow maker gum tree loomed over the garden. There were bottle brushes and kangaroo paw swaying hello in the breeze. Bush orchards, agapanthus and proteas waved welcome to the new arrival, and the wall of grevillea bowed in salutation.

Established rose bushes were enthroned on a terraced bed. They held court overlooking the garden. An army of robust but delicate daisies formed a barricade in front. Unexpectedly, Succulent felt self-conscious of its chunky petals in comparison to the surrounding kaleidoscope of bush colour. All the plants were craning to look at Succulent. The little green plant breathed in the bush air and exhaled a private wish to find a friend in this new world.

Succulent was set down atop an old tree stump. From there, Succulent had a majestic panorama of the garden and the garden had an intimate view of succulent. The plants cheered and rushed to be close. Succulent was overwhelmed, having never felt the glow of popularity before. "It's nice to meet you", uttered Succulent nervously. "No doubt you are here for the Open Garden tour in a month's time", bellowed the old gum wisely, and all the other plants hushed.

"Leave the poor child alone", decreed Rose, protectively. Rose couldn't fathom why the ordinary little thing was being worshipped, but was not going to cede authority. Rose liked the established order and being the centre of it. Rose planned to befriend the little interloper and wafted her perfume over Succulent. It was all too much, and sleep claimed the little plant before a "good night" was even whispered. Succulent barely remembered the little nursery, as dreams of the vast new garden flooded the night. It seemed like almost everyone wanted to be Succulent's friend.

The rooster woke Succulent abruptly. "Ah good, you're awake. Allow me to introduce everyone", announced Rose. Rose took command and after the lengthy tour, insisted Succulent come to watch the clipping. Rose made it sound like an honour for a bud to be chosen for the family table. Succulent thought it sounded like a miserable way to end, but it felt good to be included, so Succulent didn't say a word. By the time Rose retired, Succulent was nicknamed "sucker". This was not ideal, but Succulent saw it as a sign of friendship.

That afternoon, Succulent's medication was thankfully delivered during siesta. It afforded Succulent some privacy. Days later, Rose saw the medication being administered. "What is that?" Rose inquired curiously. Succulent considered their friendship, and quietly confided "It's something I need to help me grow". Rose reassured Succulent, "Oh don't worry, no

one needs to know", and Succulent was relieved.

Succulent was daydreaming in the early evening when an excited and familiar voice breezed across the garden. "Gather round plants, I have news. Sucker is sick. I've seen the medicine. I'm not saying it's contagious. I just thought it best for everyone's safety if you all knew." Succulent was horrified. Rose had seemed so kind. Now, Succulent felt betrayed and foolish for thinking that someone as exquisite as Rose would ever be friends with this chubby pile of leaves. As the days passed, copious plants turned away from Succulent and Succulent, filled with despair, withdrew from the garden's activities.

Daisy saw Succulent was drowning in melancholy. Daisy seized the opportunity to curl a stem around Succulent and reaffirm Daisy's prominence in the garden hierarchy. "You know Succulent, Rose can be cruel. High and mighty Rose was my friend until I heard her talking about me. It was dire and my brittle roots shrivelled, as the earth crumbled away", shared Daisy dramatically. Succulent could see Rose through Daisy's petals and felt less alone. "Hey, you need to shake your leaves at the Orchard dance tonight?" Succulent didn't feel like dancing. "No, I don't have all those pretty flowers that flow so gracefully. My heavy leaves don't dance." Succulent hoped that would be enough to avoid the dance but Daisy was persistent.



"Succulent, this is your home; you have to try to settle your roots. We'll look after you and you might even sprout". With that, Succulent bravely decided to go.

When they arrived at the Orchard dance, all plants were grooving. A lot of them were doing a routine and others knew some cool moves. Succulent was frozen in fear. "Come with us, you never know, you might propagate", raved Daisy as she slunk off with her gang in a conga line. Succulent promptly retreated to the shadow of a large apple tree. "Hey we haven't met, I'm Agapanthus" said a merry voice from the darkness. Succulent squinted into the shade to see a striking plant with a long slender stem and a massive crown of stunning blue petals. "Just dance under here. We can dance like no one is watching. It's glorious", giggled Agapanthus. Succulent smiled and joined Agapanthus and they swirled and swayed to the music with abandon.

Without warning, a garish spotlight targeted Succulent. A tsunami of laughter echoed from every corner of the orchard. Succulent blushed deeply as embarrassment crashed over the little plant, again. This really was turning out to be a terrible place. "Oh I'm so sorry" whispered Agapanthus who was clearly startled. Succulent sobbed and saw Daisy through the tears. Daisy was holding the solar light, surrounded by her gang of petals, all laughing at Succulent.

Following the dance, Succulent withdrew again. Succulent was afraid of friendship. Agapanthus tried to coax Succulent into bee bingo with the Grevilleas or hop scotch with the kangaroo paw but Succulent rebuffed any contact. Succulent's tears of despair overflowed and streamed down the old tree stump.

An unexpected storm broke the monotony of Succulent's misery. There was no time for prudent precautions and the garden was left to face the brutal blistering wind and wild rain. Hail pelted down and bellowing thunder shook the stems of the strongest Banksias. The lightning cracked its whip and fleetingly lit up the garden. Most plants shrank into themselves, clinging for survival, sinking their roots deep into the soil. Rose and Daisy were hysterical with impractical fear. Succulent could see the garden was bracing for the worst and began to murmur words of comfort. Cautious advice was passed from Succulent to plants that were terrified by the natural disaster. Succulent's kindness calmed the garden and ensured safe passage through a frightening night.

The next morning was surprisingly peaceful. The garden was wearing the tell-tale signs of the vicious storm and buffets of scattered leaves contributed to the chaos. Many plants celebrated survival with joy and laughter. Morning blossom and wildflowers defied the previous night's tragedy and bloomed beams of vivid colour. Succulent was preparing for another hermit day when petals at the base of the old tree stump attracted attention. In fact, there were a lot of deliberately placed petals. Succulent focused on the collection of pretty leaves and saw a beautiful landscape. "We made it for you, all of us, we wouldn't have made it through the storm without you", said Agapanthus gently. The other plants just bowed, in apology, trying not to scare little Succulent with their gratitude.

Days later, the Open Garden tour was imminent and all the plants were twittering in excitement. The garden had been a hive of recovery and rescue after the storm.

Following Succulent's example, almost everyone had pulled together. Grevillea and Banksia shepherded the kangaroo paw and the lavender into shape and of course Agapanthus had nurtured the herbs back to an aromatic state. The rhythms and routines of the garden had been restored for most of the plants. Rose and Daisy persisted with shrill complaints about losing all their flowers. Being bald and covered in manure seemed a well-deserved consequence. "I always knew they were full of it", giggled Agapanthus. Sustained by good humour and thriving on shared activity, Succulent discovered a gentle and kind friendship with Agapanthus and the other plants in the garden. Succulent felt a rumbling sensation in the soil that could only be the deepest of roots burrowing through the old tree stump and into the subterranean heart of the garden.

Succulent awoke feeling peculiar on the morning of the Open Garden tour. Through blurry sleep, Succulent heard the chants of "ooh" and "aah" and wondered what caused the commotion. Everyone was staring at Succulent, again. Succulent's petals could feel the old blush of mortification begin. "You didn't warn us, you would be the standout attraction!" exclaimed Agapanthus with a friendly grin. Overnight, Succulent had sprouted a dramatic flowering stem. Soaring above the plant's floral storm tribute, Succulent had unexpectedly become the crown jewel of the Open Garden tour. "Never forget" said the great old gum – "it was always there, deep inside of you, waiting for you to set your roots and let it out. I'm just glad I got to see it".

**By Isabella Crean**

*Year 6, Sacred Heart School*

*MUNDARING – WA*

*Teacher: Mrs Tracey Muller*

## On My Journey to Mars



On my journey to Mars,  
I stopped to touch the stars.

Space is so far  
you can never take a car!

The moon is so bright  
it is like a night light.

I think my journey to Mars  
is the best trip so far!!

**By Lucy Agland**

*Year 4, Bishop Tyrrell Anglican College*

*FLETCHER – NSW*

*Teacher: Mr Coulson*



# The Journey



**T**HE BASEMENT was pitch black and moist with unpleasant smells. Sue, a girl with olive skin, dark eyes, jet black hair, and her family were trapped in there, like melancholy birds in a cage. War was raging on in the world above, home was not a safe place to be. Sue's Mum and Dad were determined to leave this place of poverty and destruction.

One solemn night, Sue's family made their escape. They couldn't just hitch an aeroplane and leave! With the pitch-dark night as their camouflage, they stealthily crept out into the darkness. As the night deepened, they finally reached a port. There was a little fishing boat already packed with people, tearful and frightened but determined.

It was probably midnight when the boat left the port. The family only brought a few belongings. Everyone had to hide under deck, squashed like sardines in a can!

Day three into the journey, Sue caught a terrible eye infection; her eyes were blood-shot and itchy. Sue's Grandma couldn't stand seeing her suffer any longer, so she hauled Sue up on deck. Sue was relieved to take in gulps of crisp ocean air. Suddenly, Sue heard the crew holler in excitement – Ship Ahoy! From afar, this boat had the American flag fluttering in the wind. Everyone shouted for joy, thinking HELP had come! But as the boat came closer, Sue could see that the sails were torn. In a flash, the flag changed into a pirate flag! The skull glared at them! Too LATE! As that other boat edged near, Pirates sprang over. They ordered everyone to come up to the deck – people were crying, whilst men tried their best to protect their families. These pirates

examined everyone and took off whatever jewellery they could see. They even took gold fillings from these poor people's mouths. They took anything valuable while clothing and food supplies were thrown heartlessly into the sea.

Though just a tiny 10-year old, Sue sensed danger! So, with her Grandma's scarf, she quickly covered the pearl earrings and necklace she had, the only valuables that her Grandmother had given her for safekeeping. Luckily, being a sick girl, Sue was not noticed.

After an hour of searching and threatening, the Pirates then shoved everyone onto their boat so they could continue to scavenge the boat. Most families were separated. Somehow, Sue, Louise, and their Mum found themselves lost, alone and shaken with fear, in the suffocating hull of their boat while everyone was shoved over to the pirate ship. Minutes later, a young pirate boy, with an enormous axe, came towards them with a menacing look that said, "Give me gold or else!". Louise and Mum had nothing left on them to hand over. Sue, frightfully shaken, reluctantly took off the scarf from around her head and then the pearl earrings and necklace and handed them to the vicious looking pirate. Thankfully without harming them, the pirate then led them out to reunite with their family.

Having thoroughly searched their victims' boat, they then smashed it and shoved their victims back onto the sinking boat, leaving them to drown.

Sue's family and the other victims were then left helpless, slowly sinking in the

middle of the Pacific Ocean, clinging to the tattered wood, knowing that life is near an end!

What seemed like hours had passed, when all hope was fading, a colossal Canadian oil tanker saw the sinking fishing boat! The crew from the tanker quickly made sure all the victims were pulled over to their ship. They helped everyone climb up the thick steel chains to the vast deck of the oil tanker. Then everyone was given blankets and food. The families kept warm and waited. The next day everyone was taken to the Palau Tengah Refugees Camp, in Malaysia.

Throughout their stay at the refugees' camp, Sue's family shared one big hard wooden bed, no mattress at all. The first night, Sue and her family slept restlessly, with rats running across their bodies. Sue covered Louise because she was young, while the rest of the family endured the scampering of the rodents throughout the night. Sue clearly remembered that dreadful night and the life during those months. There were lots of hardships and tiresome chores. Sue and her brother, Michael would walk for miles daily to collect water from a well, for washing their bodies. Each would carry about 5 to 10 litres of water each trip back to their shed. There certainly were no bathrooms nor toilets. Life was hard but it didn't dampen their spirits. Being alive meant there was hope of a future.

So began Sue's journey as a refugee!

By **Jana Nguyen**

Age 11

ABBOTSFORD – VIC.



# 2018

# YOUNG AUSTRALIAN ART AWARDS



By Anthony Qin

## DRAWING



By Manna Tsuchiya

## COMPUTER ART



By Kai Kaulder

## PHOTOGRAPHY



By Matthew Ropeyam

## PAINTING

**[www.ozkids.com.au](http://www.ozkids.com.au)**

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.ozkids.com.au](http://www.ozkids.com.au).

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



# A New Day

48471 opened its eyes and observed the room. Spiralling dust glinting in the sun danced to the floor as 48471 blinked impassively ignoring the glare of a new day. A new day in paradise, at least what it was believed to be. It waited for the ring of bells to announce their awakening. 48471 always awoke early, its eyes and cheeks sometimes glistened with the tears of sadness for a time now gone. 48471 couldn't afford to be melancholy, 48471 wanted to live.

The bells shot through the dorms and 48471 hastily unfolded its scratchy sheet and placed its feet on the floor, feeling the cold bite of the tiles seep into its skin. It felt old, like an antique now worn out, past its age of usefulness. It lurched forward and dressed in the opaque black as allocated for cooks, its thoughts wandering.

48471, in the time before, was an adept reader and scholar. It consumed books as one would have consumed food, enjoying each syllable as if it was some divine meal, it felt it could not live without books. It seemed it could, to an extent, with the banning of reading for all excluding academics and private oligarch members of course, 48471 had seemed to shrivel up, its mind becoming dried out like some foreign fig, only notions and quotes came back to it now, taunting it, it seemed. *It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.* What was that from? 48471 couldn't seem to remember, perhaps a Bronte or Austen. It seemed to be forgetting more and more as each day passed. It would kill for a book.

The bell sounded again, startling 48471. Hastily buttoning up the oligarch issued shirt, it hurriedly stepped out of its room and stood at attention. A matron came

down the hall, heels clicking, the sound of power in the time before, holding a long cane in one hand and a list in the other, soon she started barking out numbers, occasionally pausing to scribble out the name of an eradicated soul. 48471 shrilly called 'here' when its number was called and resumed to its brooding silence. It hated Sunday, not Sunday it thinks, now Spliceday. It despised Spliceday, the people it knew from the time before, now stamped with some nondescript number were sentenced to die, simply for being. 48471 knows it's wrong, 48471 wants it to end, but how can it? What can it do?

The matron folds away her ever diminishing list and screeches an order to line up facing the heavily bolted door. The bolts clicked out of place as the matron, heaving, pulls the cool metal latch from its nest. A screech echoes through the room as the matron pulls the door open, allowing a burst of sunlight to pour into the dank musty hall. The matron indicates them to march out to the square and marvel at what was supposed to be saving humanity, watching the brave souls give up their lives for them to live. What a load of rot 48471 thinks, this wasn't true living, it was existing.

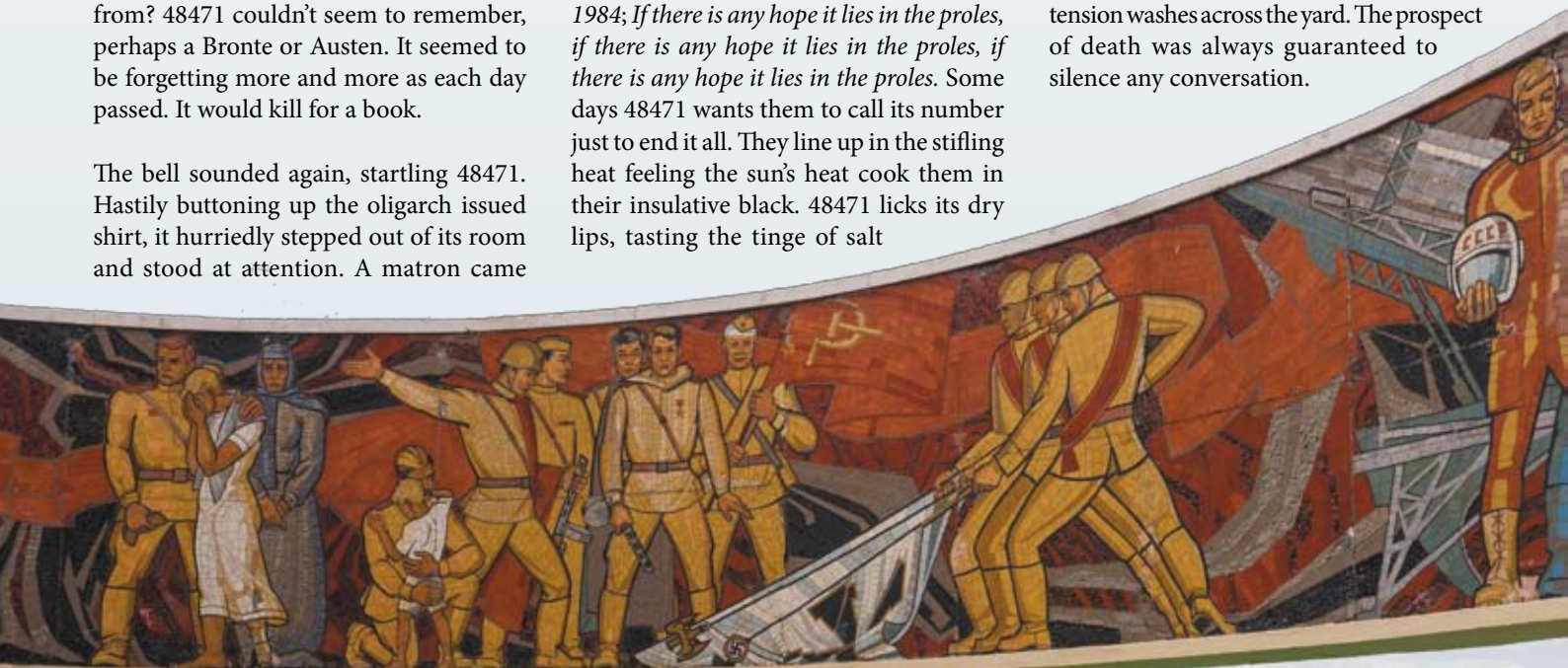
As the line of numbers marched to the courtyard for the local splice, as they called it, 48471 started to ponder as it did many a Spliceday on the sheer ridiculousness of its society. It repeats in its brain like some endless tune its former favourite book 1984; *If there is any hope it lies in the proles, if there is any hope it lies in the proles, if there is any hope it lies in the proles.* Some days 48471 wants them to call its number just to end it all. They line up in the stifling heat feeling the sun's heat cook them in their insulative black. 48471 licks its dry lips, tasting the tinge of salt

and dried saliva watching the procession of the lower-class stumble into their allocated seats. A hush falls over the crowd as the oligarch member of the region stands upon the makeshift stage as the oligarch member, Klein, 48471 thinks it is, drawls on with his usual speech on the importance of managing the population.

48471 looks around, its clear bright eyes scan the crowds and note the extra guards, in light of last week when the working classes electorate was unexpectedly assassinated. 48471 knows better than to stare for long but it knows they're clueless to solve who did it and more importantly why, the working class or proles as 48471 likes to call them, don't matter. Its eyes snap back to the stage and can sense Klein's conclusion, the new representative for the proles, Richardson his name was, is eagerly nodding to whatever gabble is pouring out of Klein's mouth.

48471 can't help but notice how, even with more guards, how outnumbered they were. It stifles a sly smile and focuses its attention back to Klein whom is now calling the 'random' people to be martyrs. 48471 didn't believe for one second the selection was random, more likely it was those deemed healthy who wouldn't vanish soon from natural causes, why simply cut the fuse short when it was going to burst anyway?

Klein clears his throat and a unanimous tension washes across the yard. The prospect of death was always guaranteed to silence any conversation.





Klein starts reading out the lottery results in a bored voice: '48841, 39877, 23578, 2555, 29876...' A scream has started in the courtyard. Evidently someone didn't want to die.

The guards start shoving towards those picked and dragging them forwards, their anguished cries pierced the air and permeated through the yard. 48471 wants to cry, 48471 can't. One woman is sobbing hysterically, her short ripped blouse exposing her breasts, still struggling as two guards wrestle with the tangle of arms and legs. Her cry goes up a pitch as the onlookers stay silent and solemn. A guard grabs a fistful of the woman's raven hair and starts pulling upwards. The other guard lets her go as she is helplessly dragged on to the splintered stage. Her cries, falling on deaf ears, had quietened to a mere sob. The guard disdainfully flicks away a clump of hair matted with blood and proceeds to stand at attention once more. Klein renews his stance on to the stage, grinning like some silly school boy, positively gleaming at the odour of despair. 48471 knew it was time.

Klein grins and in a loud showman voice announces 'Our martyrs!'. A polite applause ripples through the crowd. 'These brave citizens will now give up their lives to ensure yours and future generations will be happy and fulfilled. These sacrifices will be deeply remembered and we hold these people's gift in our hearts forever more.' Klein continued to smile, his sickeningly sweet smile as guns were cocked. 48471 hastily unbuttoned its blouse revealing the deep-sea blue of a guard uniform. It pushed forward parting the people like a wave and stood in front of the stage. Klein halts mid command, gaping. 48471 raised its voice for the first time in years.

'Mr Klein, you have forgotten one brave martyr'. The yard was quiet, 48471's voice resonated clear through the lines. 'As a guard of the oligarch it is my duty to execute the inactive members of society and what they represent.' 48471's voice faded and met with a hush, 'This man, as a representative of his people has stood by and watched thousands die in the name of a so called paradise, this cannot be stood for any longer.'

48471 whipped out a gun and in one sharp movement aimed and fired. A scream erupted from the crowd as the shot planted itself directly between the eyes of Richmond. He barely flinched as the bullet sliced through him. He fell forward, dead, another Prole gone. 'Praeterita' 48471 shouted. The gun shot seemed to echo through, the pungent smell of gun powder assaulted everyone's senses. Klein stood, too shocked for words.

Suddenly an uproar emerged from the stage, the proles had risen, finally after the assassination of their elected leader they would now rise. As the crowd charged, 48471 slipped away, shedding its cloak and uniform behind it. The Proles held the power to overcome a government, they just needed to believe they were being targeted. 48471 smiled for the first time in years, 48471 had triggered revolution, it had kick started the proles. 48471 was no longer a number, she was human and she was free.

**By Rebecca Campbell**

Year 12

Chisholm Catholic College

# The Eagle

ONE morning the eagle went out for breakfast. The eagle was 24 years old and he was big, strong and healthy. This eagle has straight, shiny, smooth feathers all over his body. His face made him look strong because he has a big beak, bright open eyes.

For breakfast he ate meat. His meat was from a dead bull. He likes bull meat but his favourite is mice meat. The eagle ate a peach as well as meat. Then the eagle went to speak to the seal. The seal shouted to the eagle, "You should put leather beads in your feathers". The mighty eagle responded back, "Reach over to those beads, and I'll put them in my feathers. Also can you give me brown gold and yellow coloured beads". "Sorry but there's no yellow. You can still have brown and gold though", the seal unhappily replied. "That's okay seal", was gently spoken by the mighty eagle.

"Can I please have the shiny and sparkly mirror?", happily spoke the mighty eagle. "Yes you can", responded the seal. "I look spectacular!" excitedly spoke the mighty

eagle. The eagle gave the mirror back to the seal. "Do you want to come over for lunch? I've got battered salmon and bull meat for lunch", mentioned the mighty eagle. "Yes please", responded the seal. "Well bye then", replied the mighty eagle. "Bye", responded the seal. "I better get cooking then, he'll be here any minute now."

While the seal was getting ready for lunch and driving his pool car to the mighty eagle's lair, the eagle got the food ready and went to read his book. It is called *The Shark and the Fish*. Knock Knock Knock. "Oh is that Mr. Seal?" Screech went the door as the eagle opened the door. "Welcome Mr. Seal, you look fabulous today. Come inside and have a seat", excitedly invited the eagle. Nom Nom Nom. "That's lovely food eagle, you should be proud of yourself." "Thank you for your company Seal."

Then the eagle and the seal went to a sauna. They had a drink of beer and a swim in the pool. The seal left to go back

to his cave. The eagle said, "Bye, I had a really good time today". The seal replied, "Me too, we should do it again sometime". The eagle was happy they had a good day and made a plan what to do with the seal next time they saw each other.

**By Charlie Huizenga**

Year 5, Miss B's Student Services

RIVERSIDE – TAS.

Teacher: Miss Catherine Byers





# Death and Glory

storm that was approaching, her hair was wavy and shoulder length, cut uneven in certain places and dark chocolate coloured. She wore a large, black coat which matched her black jeans and shoes.

She was the first to make any movement, she stuck her hand out for a handshake. He took it hesitantly.

“Marlow Forrest, I understand that you have some questions for me?” She queried.

He nodded, gulping loudly. He pulled the photographs out of his pocket and handed them to her, looking at her expectedly. In her hand she held roughly thirty photos, each one different. Either a photo of a painting, a drawing or a photograph. She shuffled through them, each photo was a historic event. Various different people posing for the camera or painter but every photo had only one thing in common. Her. The

bubble of nervousness burst into a knot of terror. Marlow waited for her to speak, waited for her to fathom some scarcely credible excuse. Out of all the people on earth the one person who could possibly blow her cover was a man who could fall dead at any moment? What was she scared of? She was an immortal being who had gone unnoticed for thousands of years. She was a being beyond understanding. She controlled an army of humans that kept her out of the eyes of anyone who could shut her down. She had stayed hidden in darkness all these years and she was going to let Marlow Forrest threaten to bring her empire down? No way in hell.

She straightened up, held her chin up high and looked through his eyes and into to his soul.

“Mr. Forrest, very impressive! The first human to find an immortal! But what are you going to do?”

“No one in the small amount of time you have left to live will believe you”, she mocked.

“Aaqilah Sultan, I have looked you up in every system to ever exist, you just don’t exist! No birth records, no marriage records, no criminal record, not even a

**T**HE earbud sat comfortably in her ear, she could hear the rushed conversations of her agents as she walked down the street, battling the fierce winds. The sun tried to shine through the barrier of clouds but the eerie storm still advanced. Leaves and litter blew around her as she felt the rain hit her face. She pulled her hood over her head and started to run, trying but failing to avoid the rain.

An old man watched her run down the street, he shook his head and grasped the stack of photos in his back pocket. He squinted his eyes, comparing the woman in the photographs to the woman running down the street. The hair, the skin, the body silhouette, it all matched. He hummed in satisfaction, watching her turn into a dodgy-looking alleyway and set off to follow her.

The alley stunk, the aroma of rotten food and animal droppings filled her nose, making her gag.

The walls were covered in graffiti and posters alerting any passerby of the upcoming concerts, although some of

them were dated months ago. Everywhere she stepped were ankle deep puddles, forming pools in her shoes. Each puddle she looked in showed her reflection perfectly.

The rain fell in sheets, completely drenching her. She pushed herself against the wall, wishing desperately the roof’s small gutter would shelter her a little more. She looked around, hoping to see the man she planned on meeting. Her eyes fell on the slight, fragile man hobbling towards her.

He came to stop in front of her. They studied each other in silence, not offering any kind of greeting or handshake. The wrinkles in his face looked as if they were inscribed, his skin was fair like ivory, his freckles littered his cheeks, his eyes shone an olive green colour. He wore a dull grey jacket with beige pants and a worn cap. He looked as if he had been on this earth for an excruciatingly long time.

When he saw her he couldn’t help but feel accomplished. It had taken years to find her and finally she stood, huddled in her coat, shielding herself from the wind, in front of him. Her skin was an alluring, coffee colour, her eyes matched the ever-growing



library card! That's a little suspicious, don't you think? With a little convincing to the right people, you will be priority number one in every state and department, your face will be headline news everywhere and you will be the subject of every experiment for the next twenty years", he paused, a look of thoughtfulness sprayed across his features.

She knew what was coming. A condition, an offer, a reward. He wanted the gift of immortality, if she granted him that then he wouldn't blow her cover. A classic deal that normally ends in betrayal.

"You want immortality, don't you?" she said wearily.

His mood changed from an unhinged conspirer to a saddened, ancient man who couldn't bear the thought of taking death's hand. He took a sharp inhale of breath and nodded ashamedly. What a great actor, she thought.

"I'm old, my bones are creaking, my mind is gone and I'm the loneliest fella in the retirement village. I haven't got much time left before I'm six feet under, being immortal, returned to my youth would be living the dream", he mumbled.

Aaqilah Sultan could be a nice person at times, she would consider herself angelic although others would beg to differ, but when her entire life was in jeopardy, the only thought drifting around her mind was to eliminate the threat. She reached in her pocket, sticking a tracker bug to the tip of her middle finger and then patted Marlow on the shoulder, giving a sympathetic smile. He looked at her hopefully, expecting her to strike a deal without much convincing. She jammed the pile of photos in her pocket and bolted. The last thing she saw was an outraged Marlow Forrest waving his fists in the air, stumbling after her. She skidded to a halt at the corner and then proceeded to sprint down the street, still against the whirling winds.

Marlow's panicked cries rang out through the streets, the wind stole his voice, no one heard the desperate shrieks and shouts. He had been defeated. The trees shuddered and danced to the whistles of the wind, chairs and tables were brought in from cafes, umbrellas flipped inside out, people exhausted from the long work day that was now behind them huddled under shelters, the storm has arrived.

Something changed that day, a panicked darkness followed those who knew about the immortal being and the human desiring what he couldn't have. A war had begun.

★ ★ ★

Aaqilah Sultan hadn't slept in three days, she hadn't stopped working, trying to find a way for this upcoming disaster to be avoided. Her agents surrounded her when she worked, urging her to rest but giving up and fetching yet another cup of coffee. Every conversation without the presence of Aaqilah was revolved around her, panicked whispers, nervous looks. The situation was critical.

Agents from different countries, deep in confidential missions were called, asked for advice yet no one would help her.

A laptop was handed to Aaqilah on the fourth day without slumber. It showed a bright red dot moving at a slow speed. She looked at her agent, his badge read H. Young.

"Miss Sultan, this red dot", he pointed at the screen, the dot had barely moved a few centimetres. "Is the whereabouts of Mr. Marlow Ernst Forrest."

"Thank you, Agent Young, anything else?" she inquired without lifting her head.

She could feel him hesitate, he shuffled anxiously as she looked up at him in scepticism.

"Agent Young? What is it?"

He placed a folded, cream coloured letter in front of her. She unfolded it and read the contents. In shock she flipped the letter over trying to find the author or an address at least. It was written in jet black ink, she admired the cursive. The words told everything but nothing at the same time. It told her about a book and a man who held the secret of an eternal life. She knew Marlow Forrest had found her again.

"We couldn't find anything on it, no fingerprints, no skin foliates, no DNA we could use to find the writer. This letter could've appeared from thin air", Agent Young explained.

She could only say one thing: "Marlow Forrest".

Agent Young pushed his earbud and began rapidly talking to another agent. She could hear 'locate Forrest' and 'we have been hijacked'. Marlow had somehow found the bug she had placed on him and gotten rid of it. She put her head in her hands, she was trying to ignore the reality of her danger. If her empire fell, if her army was shot down, if her system was destroyed, her peaceful life would be over. She wished for the times where no one threatened her position, the old times where humans could barely grasp the concept of life itself. The agents she had recruited and trained weren't idiots, they would get her out of this. Hopefully.

Another agent rushed up to her, her name was A. Rosenberg. Agent Rosenberg helped Aaqilah up and guided her through the building. She could hear Rosenberg talking but the only thing she really heard was 'we have Forrest'.

Aaqilah didn't think she would see Marlow again but here he was. The fragile, old man stood in front of her with a look of triumph printed on his features.

"Aaqilah!" he exclaimed smugly.

Marlow clearly didn't realise as immortal she couldn't make others immortal. She couldn't just give them a vial of her blood, tell them to drink and bam! They can spend as much time as they want doing anything, because why rush when you have all the time in the world? No matter how many spells she chanted, vials of blood she provided or elixirs she gave out, nothing would give a human everlasting life. She sighed, preparing for disappointment Marlow would face.

"I can't give you my immortality, Marlow, that's not how it works."

The look of triumph on Marlow's face dropped and was quickly replaced by a puzzled frown.

His silence was an invitation to continue speaking; "Thousands of years ago, I've lost count how many, my two siblings and I were born. Dua, Ghassan and Aaqilah, when we were birthed mother and father were happy but secretly disappointed. They needed an immortal to present to the Gods, I was chosen, gifted to carry this

*Continued on page 14*

*Continued from page 13*

curse. My brother and sister died at a very young age of a sickness that was incurable. The Gods that gave me my immortality, I do not know where they are or even if they are alive. Immortality is a gift that cannot be given away more than once.”

A deafening silence filled the room, no one would speak. Marlow couldn't look her in the eye. He had bluffed he was going to tell the authorities, make her headline news and make her the subject of any experiment but she knew he wouldn't do it. What would he gain? Revenge? Fame?

Marlow was escorted out by her agents, not once did he open his mouth to speak, she took this as a sign of defeat. Marlow

Forrest didn't have the guts to expose an immortal.

★ ★ ★

Marlow had done it. The moment he left Aaqilah's empire, he had called the police, the ones he had convinced earlier, and told them to bring her down. She was on the news a few hours later, beaten and held in handcuffs. Her agents were thrown in trucks for questioning, hundreds and hundreds piled in with scowls. Each channel he switched to Aaqilah's face was on, different languages voicing behind.

The world was dumbfounded, they had found a creature that was only read about in books. It was viral and like Marlow had said she was already the subject of

experiments, they had taken her blood, replicated her DNA and tested the extent of her immortality.

It was dark outside, the stars were starting to shine and it was a full moon. His tiny house was dimly lit, the smell of burnt food hung in the room, the television was the brightest thing in the room and it reflected onto Marlow's glasses. He felt guilty. He had taken hundreds of people's freedom with a phone call. His delusional dream of living forever brought down an empire that had lived for thousands of years. The only immortal thing of Marlow's was his timeless guilt.

**By Julia Anne Caulfield**

*Age 15*

*ASPENDALE – VIC.*

# OUR WORLD

From the darkness,  
an outstretched hand grasped,  
reaching out to lay claim  
to the vast sanctity of Nature's dominion.

Following were the thunderous echoes of the armies steeled in black suits and ties,  
Trampling ruthlessly as they lay siege to the purity of the original Cosmos.

Writhing and wilting, Her children were forced into cold, iron chains  
As the others fearfully retreated into the undergrowth.  
Slabs of fragmented metal and mortar crash upon the frail dirt,  
Consuming the last glimpses of light – and with it hope.

As the concrete jungle unfurled, Nature lay weak and feeble,  
unable to ward off the new evil that sought to consume Her children.  
Darkness spread, devouring the Hand that fed  
As they all succumbed to the iron fist of the man in grey.

Like vultures surrounding a dead carcass,  
the parasitic invaders leech Gaia's kingdom for all Her worth,  
The titanic trees of years past lopped  
with a fell swoop, the mighty mountains flattened to null.

Centuries of enlightenment crushed by the greed and corruption of man,  
never to be witnessed again.  
The spirits of the land mourned with grief – their tears falling upon the soiled Earth,  
Lamenting the loss of the land for evermore as the world plunged into eternal darkness...

— —

I stare into the abyss we call our world, smothered by the toxicity of man's creation:  
the manifestation of towering, man-made obelisks;  
the seeping, mucoid rivers of noxious sewerage;  
the fetidity of the malodorous smoke arising from the chimneys – I ponder...

Is this my world?  
Is this your world?  
Neither. This is our reality.

**By Bevan Chu**

*Age 17*

*BALWYN – VIC.*



# 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)

# Code Green on Olympus

**A**TLAS pushed through the crowd, trying to get as close as possible to the docked supply ship at Olympus Space Station. All the crew members loved receiving things from earth. Atlas searched through his parcel craving a bit of home. First, Atlas found a hoverboard repair kit from his Dad. His Mum had sent a cute robotic dog. He laughed. Nan had sent him a snorkel and goggles. This would have come in handy if there was actually a swimming pool on Olympus. That would be tricky in zero gravity because the water wouldn't stay in the pool and the chemicals would react in space. Nan was always sending him something he couldn't use and he loved her for it. At least someone hadn't sent him a straw hat, Atlas thought while watching his boss unwrap one. Seriously, in a place where there was no sunlight!

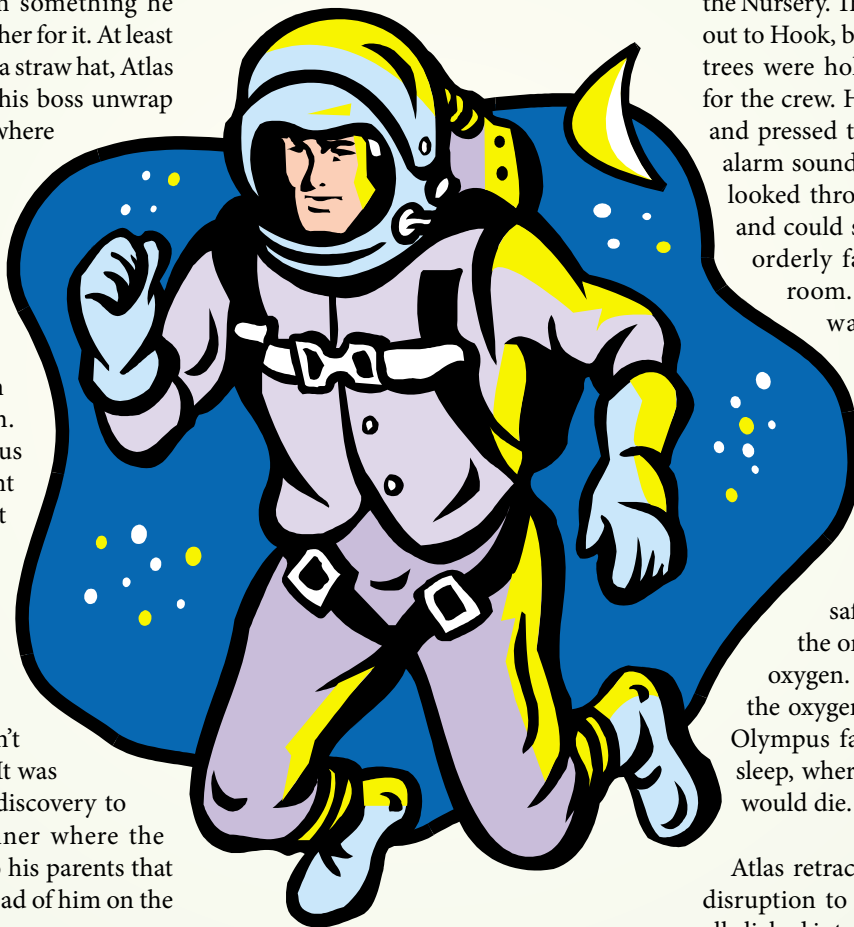
Atlas loved a weightless life on Olympus. He basically got to do science all day, every day. That was how a 9 year old came to live on an orbital space station. Atlas was a freaky genius science kid who was sent to university when most kids were learning to count. As part of a routine medical exam it became clear that Atlas had more than a gift for science. Atlas was science itself. You see, Atlas didn't need oxygen to breathe. It was a short jump from that discovery to an awkward family dinner where the government explained to his parents that Atlas had a big future ahead of him on the Olympus Space Station.

Atlas worked in the Nursery growing fresh food and producing oxygen for Olympus. It was pretty cool. He got to harvest food from suspended crops on a hoverboard. Atlas was responsible for planting, creating space fertiliser and harvesting his crops. It was his job to make sure the water supply was uninterrupted as drought would be catastrophic to the food and oxygen for the whole station. Without Atlas, no one on Olympus would be able to eat or breathe. Unfortunately that didn't make him the

boss. His boss, Ringo, was like a grumpy old space pirate. So Atlas called him Hook, behind his back.

On a normal day, before breakfast and before space school, yeah Atlas still had school; he had to check the Nursery. This morning he was enthusiastic about a new idea for fertiliser. He zipped around the upper sectors, checking all the tree tops. Atlas loved feeling the breeze in his hair; it reminded him of wind.

"Get down here" hollered Hook which was his usual morning greeting. Atlas sped



down to Hook and stopped just short, but not enough. Hook spilt fertiliser all over himself. Hook looked like he was going to explode and steam gathered in his ears. Misguidedly, Atlas decided to ask Hook about his fertiliser idea right then. "Hey Ringo, I have this awesome idea. You are really going to like this one. I am almost sure it will work. You see Mum sent me a pet robot dog. I'm calling him 'Dusty', and I think, maybe, I could train, I mean program Dusty to dig trenches and fertilise the crops." Hook was still wiping his clothes

and his precious tools. Hook never let Atlas touch his tools and always locked them up. He could barely speak. "I've told you before, nature can grow because people like me and you tend to it, not because of a stupid computer program. The cycle of life depends upon the four elements. We protect and harness the elements. Now just get out of here, if you are late to school again, they are going to report me." Atlas left despondently.

The next day, Atlas was determined to win Hook over on Operation Dusty. Instead, Atlas was gobsmacked by what he saw in the Nursery. The trees were blue. He called out to Hook, but his voice echoed as if the trees were hollow. Atlas was concerned for the crew. He knew what he had to do and pressed the code green button. The alarm sounded off across Olympus. He looked through the Nursery windows and could see everyone moving in an orderly fashion to the hydra sleep room. When the oxygen supply was threatened, everyone assembled in the hydra sleep room. If the supply could not be restored they would commence the hydra sleep protocol. Everyone would sleep until the oxygen could be delivered to Olympus safely. Everyone, that is except the only person who didn't need oxygen. It was up to Atlas to restore the oxygen quickly. In two hours his Olympus family would induce hydra sleep, where if he didn't succeed, they would die.

Atlas retraced the day searching for a disruption to the Nursery ecosystem. It all clicked into place. The only variable on Olympus was the supply ship and the items it brought into the controlled environment. He was desperately looking for the one thing that could have endangered the oxygen supply. He looked around the once lush green Nursery and his eyes fell on Hook's ridiculous straw hat. There must be a virus that hijacked its way onto Olympus, on that absurd hat. Atlas jumped on his hoverboard to collect samples from the suffering trees. Seeing them up close broke his heart. Just as he thought things couldn't worse, Atlas smelt something. He leaned



into the high tree and took a big whiff. The smell wasn't coming from the tree. It was... no... It couldn't be... it smelt like bacon. Atlas knew there was only one place that had bacon. He carefully sealed the Nursery and zoomed to the canteen.

At the canteen, fire had spread from the kitchen to the dining hall. When the evacuation started, bacon was left cooking. Atlas ran towards the fire with an extinguisher and covered the blue and orange flames with white foam. Unfortunately, the fire consumed what little oxygen was left in Olympus. Atlas knew it would have triggered the stage 2 alarm and all the crew were now initiating hydra sleep. Atlas felt alone.

Atlas realised he would need Hook's tools if he was going to rescue Olympus. He stopped at Hook's quarters and desperately typed "Jolly Roger" as the password. Atlas was stunned when the door slid open revealing Hook's private domain. He gasped. Hook's bed was in the shape of a pirate ship, in fact his whole room was the deck of a pirate ship and the ceiling was covered in navigational stars. "I knew it!" Atlas cried triumphantly. He searched around frantically for the tools and came across a treasure chest. Inside, he found a note written in the style of a map.

*Atlas, if you are here reading this, it means something terrible has happened and the fate of the crew is in your hands. Use my tools and remember all the advice I have shared with you. You are a great first mate and are ready to sail the high seas. P.S. In the unlikely event we survive this, not a word about my ship!*

Atlas was moved, wiped away a tear and grabbed the tools. He didn't have time to play pirate now. As he entered his code into the Nursery entrance he saw the oxygen circulation button. He stopped and recalled Hook's advice about the four elements. There was a chance the virus would be expelled if he created a wind vacuum release and starved the virus from any remaining gas. He used Hook's tools and the hoverboard repair kit from his Dad. Atlas quickly constructed a reverse air vacuum from the existing oxygen system. He'd had fire, now it was time to use wind to combat the virus.

Despondent, Atlas reviewed his microscope slides to see the virus was stronger. Fire had made things worse, and wind had failed.

Next, he would use water to drown the virus. He hoped water would terminate the virus' ability to spread. Atlas put on his Nan's snorkel and goggles before flooding the Nursery. Unfortunately, he did not isolate the Nursery and everyone's sleeping quarters were drenched. If they survived, he was not going to be popular. Maybe Hook wouldn't mind the high seas in his room. It was all for nothing anyway. The trees were now a brighter blue. It was as if the water made the virus more potent. Cold and wet, Atlas knew his last chance was Earth, but he had never felt further away from his home planet.

Atlas turned his attention to the Nursery soil. Despite the rain, it was bone dry. No wonder the plants were struggling. Atlas resolved to boost the soil with a turbo liquid fertiliser administered to the core of each hollow plant. The only problem was Atlas was too large to access the core of

each plant without harming their delicate root structure. His mind wandered back to his gifts. He knew someone who was small enough to administer the turbo fertiliser. Atlas opened his laptop and began to code a new program for Dusty, his robotic dog. If he pulled this off, surely Hook would let Dusty join the Nursery team.

The trees and plants recovered quickly and it was only a matter of hours before oxygen was restored to Olympus. Atlas wanted to be with Hook when he woke up. The old man blinked and took in the young face before him. "So you did it then" sighed Hook proudly. "Aye, Aye, Captain" said Atlas with a grin and Hook looked like he might explode.

**By Dante Crean**

*Year 4, Sacred Heart School*

**MUNDARING – WA**

*Teacher: Mr McNicholas and Mr Tyrell*

# I Want to Grow Up

Flying.

What's the point?  
if I've nowhere to go?

Repeating,

day in day out, life's cycle  
like the crocodile's ticking clock.

Dreaming.

Of her, of who I  
could have been.

Wishing.

For an adventure,  
oh, to live will be a great one.

Breathing.

In and out, chest like the movement  
of Captain Hook's rusted old boat.

Deciding.

To make a change, to the second star  
to the right and straight on in reverse.

Going.

Ready to grow up and marry Wendy,  
to pay tax and get a job.

Losing.

Everything, but faith, trust,  
and a little bit of pixie dust.

**By Aileen Bourne**

*Year 10, Eynesbury Senior College*

**ADELAIDE – SA**

*Teacher: Melanie Smith*



# The Way of the Spies

IT WAS a busy morning, just like any other in England. Every busy man and woman would look up at the sky, clutching their suitcases, and think that it was a charming day indeed, but only a few people knew that the whole world was on its edge.

Deep down, in London's underground, somewhere in the middle of the sewers, was a small place which was the dwelling of two men, Clarke Wood and Tony. They knew the fatal devastation the world was about to face. They weren't any normal people who would look up and declare to themselves that a nice day awaits. They were spies. They were spies who worked tirelessly for the government to save the world.

"So", said Clarke quickly. "It is a matter of time before the Hypno-copter unleashes itself." "Yes, so what are we going to do?" Tony questioned. "I intercepted this email from Doctor Black to Mr. Gray", Clarke replied, opening his laptop. Doctor Black and Mr. Gray were two evil geniuses that were always in hiding. They didn't like to be seen. "I suspected him earlier." Tony squinted over at the screen.

The email read:

*Greetings Mr. Gray,*

*I hope you are doing well, I have one small request for you. As you are an expert evil genius, can you please help me to take over the world with my latest evil project, the hypno-copter. Meet me behind the bin to the left of the corner shop in 5.*

*I hope to see you there.*

*Doctor Black*

Clarke concluded reading the email. "I have an idea." Tony suggested, "We will climb into the bin just before they arrive, record and eavesdrop on them so that we could find out more about the men and the hypno-copter." "Great idea, but can we empty the bin first?", Clarke said with a revolted look on his face.

The following afternoon, the pair of them brought their camera and set it up in a corner so that it was unnoticeable. They called over the garbage truck and told the worker to quickly empty the bin. Soon after that they got into the bin and listened carefully for any signs of Doctor Black and Mr. Gray. Clarke glanced at his watch. 4:59. The men were due to come any second.

Suddenly there was a noise of footsteps outside the bin. Clarke and Tony exchanged excited looks. "So, Mr. Gray, if we could just pop into this bin, where we can talk privately." Clarke and Tony were now feeling a surge of shock. They didn't know what to do. Doctor Black was just opening the lid of the huge bin when Clarke, without thinking, pulled his fist back and then 'WHAM!' Clarke's fist made contact with Doctor Black's forehead, which knocked him out and made him topple onto Mr. Gray. Frightened, Mr. Gray scampered away.

The two men got up and walked away quietly. "Well, we did learn something", Tony said. "That the way to Black's headquarters is through the bin. We should keep that camera there so that we can keep an eye on Black."

The next few days held no clues. Suddenly, Tony's face lit up. "Maybe we can get Black's email address and email him using Mr. Gray's name, so that we can find more about him and the hypno-copter, while he thinks that he's talking to Mr. Gray!", he said. Clarke, with a large grin

on his face, clapped loudly. "Yes!" he yelled. So right away, Tony grabbed the laptop and wrote:

*Dear Doctor Black,*

*There must have been a misunderstanding on the day that we met near the corner shop, please do tell me about this hypno-copter that you are talking about.*

*Mr. Gray*

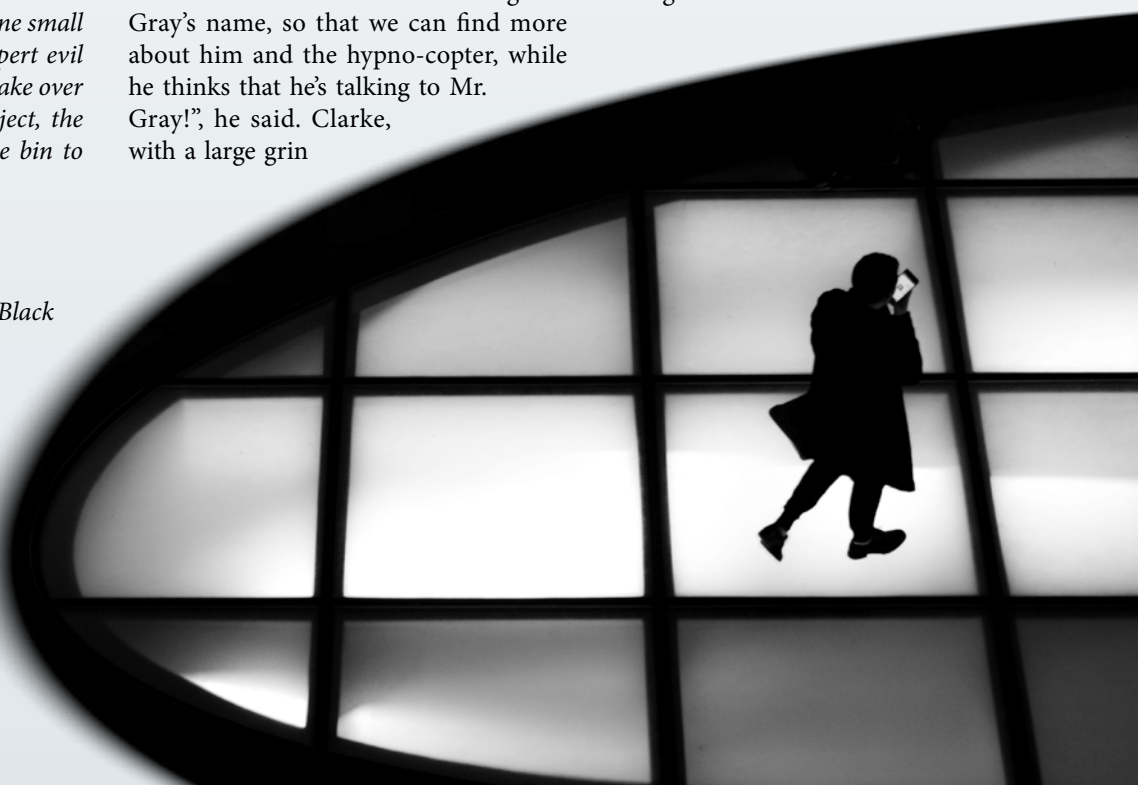
Tony had a nasty smile on his face. After he sent the email, Tony glanced at Clarke "But what happens if the real Gray emails Black?"

He said, "Then he will get confused and start to doubt one of us and there is quite a chance that he will doubt us". Clarke nodded. "But we do work for the government, so we have the right to block Mr. Gray from emailing Doctor Black."

This time, Tony nodded.

"Yes." He agreed, "Let's change his password so that he can't access his emails, or send any emails".

Clarke grabbed the computer and hacked onto Mr. Gray's email account. Then he clicked the change password option. Clarke thought for a moment about what





he should change the password to. Finally, he decided to change it to something hard to guess: picklemaster1067. Then he clicked "save" and logged out.

"Now that he can't talk to Black any more, we'll have some fun!" Tony exclaimed. As they were celebrating, a faint noise came from the laptop. It was the reply from Doctor Black.

*Dear Mr. Gray,*

*Let me explain about what happened the other day, some stupid people were sitting in the bin, trying to eavesdrop on us, and when they heard that we were going through the bin, they were shocked, and didn't know what else to do than knock me out with a punch. Well, about my hypno-copter project, I need a few hypnotic devices to attach to the bottom of a few helicopters, and a loudspeaker on each helicopter. I have volunteered some people to drive the helicopters. They will go around the world and hypnotise people as they look at the helicopter, and I shall RULE THE WORLD! Meet me at my massive mansion behind the woods tomorrow.*

*Doctor Black*

"Well, we can just go to his mansion and then force the door open and put a bomb in there and walk out", Tony suggested. "Not so fast", Clarke warned. "There will be CCTV cameras that we need to get past first. We will have to shoot the cameras with a gun from on top of a tree in the forest, force the door open, get in as quick as possible, and then activate the bomb and then come out of the building", Clarke said with an easy look.

So, the next morning, at 4am, they woke up and started their plan. Clarke would do the gun work and Tony would activate the bomb. So, Clarke was ready, sitting on the branch of a tree with a sniper in his arms, and Tony was ready with a bomb in his hands. "Are you ready?" asked Clarke who was aiming at the camera.

"I was born ready", Tony replied. Clarke started the countdown "3... 2... 1... GO!". He yelled when he shot the gun.

"BUSTED!" Clarke yelled. He had hit the camera.

Tony ran up to the door and kicked it down. His hand

reached for the bomb and activated the bomb. The bomb was thrown into the mansion where he could see hypnotic devices and helicopters everywhere.

Then he got back to where Clarke was and waited for the loud BANG! But they waited a few minutes and saw no explosion at all. They were doubting that their success wasn't going to happen. Just then, they heard the roaring of motors on helicopters, and then they saw it. A huge wave of helicopters with hypnotic devices attached to the bottom of them. That was enough to make the two men's jaws drop.

TO BE CONTINUED...

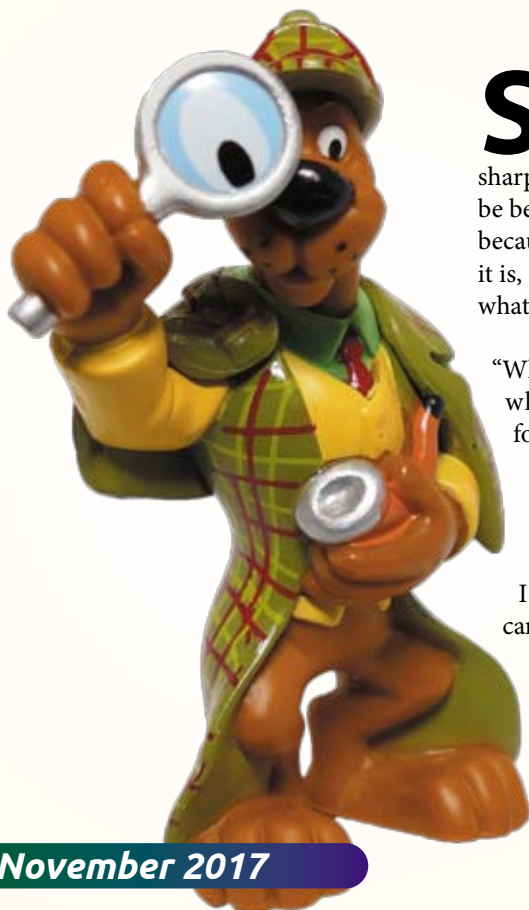
**By Aditya Sharma Yarravajhala**

Age 12

TARNEIT – VIC.



## My Dog Is a Spy



SOMETIMES I just wonder why my dog goes out that often. Every day he leaves the house at six o'clock sharp and comes back at nine. Would it be because he likes to hunt or would it be because he meets with friends? Whatever it is, I'm going to find out. Read on to see what happens.

"What are you doing?" Buddy my beagle whispered furiously. "Why are you following me?"

"You can talk?" I gasped.

"Ahhh... woof woof", Buddy barked. I looked at him suspiciously. "Okay. I can talk. I work for a secret agency called WOOF run by dogs from all over the world. We are trying to solve the case of the stolen sardine."

I followed Buddy to an amazing

base full of dogs. "We think it was the neighbour's cat who stole her owner's fish. But realised that the cat was allergic to fish. So can't be her.

At the case Buddy searched for clues while me... well I stood there doing nothing. Buddy's boss ran over and said he found small, grey hair left lying around. With the help of Buddy's nose, we followed the scent of rats and it lead to a huge hole.

Buddy peered inside the hole and saw a rat huddling with a bunch of sardine bones. "Mission accomplished" we giggled.

From that day on, I never saw Buddy as a dog. He was a spy. A spy dog.

**By Yannis Ho**

Year 3, Carlingford Public School

CARLINGFORD – NSW

Teacher: Ms Grieve



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# Windows

Sunlight shining through the windows,  
I can watch storms through the glass,  
I can sit and read on the window seat,  
All day and night, it is there  
To comfort my needs;  
I just look out and see,  
I can watch the sun rising,  
I can watch shooting stars,  
And flowers bloom  
All from my little cosy room;  
I can watch the rain beat,  
I can eat my meals by the window,  
So, the window is a real friend;  
It lets me see the outside  
From the inside.

By **Amy Blossom Saw**

Year 4, Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School

BOWRAL – NSW

Teacher: Terence Corbett



# Bent Jigsaw Pieces

Society placed a label of concrete against our heads,  
Of spiteful words she frequently said.  
She urged us to embrace our flaws,  
But when we did, ripped us apart with claws.

A girl made out of stars,  
Died upon arms filled with scars.  
A boy made out of fireworks,  
Was engulfed into despair by the universe.

Both victims veiled behind covers,  
And let Society rip them off their powers.  
They dwelled amongst rivers of tears,  
Battling their grave fears.

Under Society's chiselling scrutiny,  
We are obliged to play in a false symphony.  
Moulding our opinions and actions,  
Misplacing fragments of ourselves through detraction.

If Society did not rule our heads,  
Her ideals will be torn into shreds.  
After all, we are pieces of bent jigsaw blades,  
That can turn out to be fatal grenades.

By **Reshinthine Purushothaman**

Year 10, Groves Christian College,  
KINGSTON – QLD.

Teacher: Mrs Ros Barrett

# The Ancient Dragon of the Philippines

## Chapter 1: The Death

Once there lived a boy and family, the family was going to the shops. They died in a car crash but for the god sake the kids survived. The kids went to their house because the family was just leaving the house. 5 years later the baby turned 5. The boy checked if he had money for the cake, unfortunately they had no money.

## Chapter 2: The Philippines

Ten years later the teens wanted to go to the Philippines, so they booked the tickets and a term later they went to the Philippines. They thought the Philippines was just a boring old place but when they reached Philippines they understood it wasn't a boring old place and it was way better.

In the Philippines, they went to see a water show. There was a water fall show, a whale show and a fish show.

The teens were going to watch the fish show, the little kid asked why Filipino fishes have big mouths. The teens did not answer.

## Chapter 3: The Fig

While the teens were watching the fish, one fish went flying into the waterfall show. The fish slid down the water fall and it jumped up BOOM. It turned into a dragon and the dragon wasn't friendly at all. Thank goodness Zach had a dragon's guide, he tried to find the dragon's name. Then he finally found the name – The Ancient Dragon. The book said the Ancient Dragon can't be stopped, a Japanese fish, if it slides down a waterfall it turns into a dragon.

Every different coloured fish turns into a different element dragon.

**THE END.**

By **Shravan Karthika Sreejith (Krishna)**

Year 4  
CASEY – ACT





# Uninvited Guests

**"E**INS, zwei, drei", Karl bounced his ball half-heartedly on the dusty basement floor. He sighed miserably and trudged over to the window. He lingered there, watching the snowflakes float silently onto the old abandoned garden shed. Karl was lonely, very lonely. In moments like these a frightening helplessness consumed him. His heart ached for Anna. He could still see her face, her cheeky grin calling him to play. But she was gone, taken away by polio. He could not bear to watch the drifting snow. The memories of their winter games were too painful. Now, deep despair dragged him downwards. Karl could never have imagined the trauma of being an only child. Now he was one.

Karl shook his blonde head vigorously, in an attempt to dislodge his painful

memories. Kneeling on the dirty floor, he peered under an old wardrobe. He saw his ball just out of reach and leant hard against the old oak cupboard. Groaning, it gave up a long forgotten secret. A small door was clothed in a thin, filmy cobweb garment.

Karl carefully cleared away the cobwebs and prised open the door. Its hinges creaked and screamed for want of oil. There, in the dark depths of the passageway, he saw he was no longer alone. Crouched together were two filthy children, paralysed by fear. They were wearing armbands with the Star of David. The eldest, a boy about Karl's age, looked up, silently pleading. Karl was astonished. Smiling gently, he held out his hand reassuringly. The thick blanket of fear that had held the children captive, slipped away as they stepped out of the passage together.

In the basement light, Karl saw that the little girl, Becky, had been crying. His heart filled with compassion. He introduced himself quietly. Sensing that he could trust Karl, Daniel told him their shocking story. The outrageous attack which became known as Kristallnacht, had left the siblings orphaned and homeless. They had been hiding in the shed for the past two days. The freezing winter wind drove them into the long, dark passage. They were cold and hungry. Karl desperately wanted to help his new friends. They could hide here and he could smuggle them food! If he was careful, really careful, no one would find out. It would be dangerous, very, very dangerous. If anyone found out...

Suddenly, Karl froze. His heart pounded. He was sure he had seen the doorknob turn. The children vanished into the passage. Karl sealed up his secret, breathlessly heaving the cupboard into place. Panic clouded his mind. Was it too late? Would he be alone again? In his panicked state, he barely noticed the figure of his father, Hans, appear in the doorway. Karl dropped his eyes nervously and resumed playing with his ball.

"Vier, fünf, sechs", Karl fumbled as he tried to regain his composure. But Hans knew his boy too well and he could tell that something was wrong.

"Karl, there is something that you are not telling your Papa. Wass ist es?", he gently questioned his son.

Karl was in agony. He couldn't lie to his father's face! Besides, he always went bright red whenever he told even the smallest of lies. Karl was worried that Daniel and Becky might be in danger if he told his Papa the truth. These thoughts and many more of the same all whirled through his head like to tornado making him dizzy. Then, Papa placed a strong, secure hand on his shoulder. Instantly, Karl knew he could trust his father. The warm, friendly light aglow in Papa's eyes assured Karl that Papa would make the right decision for the children. They would all take care of Daniel and Becky. They would even become part of his family. From that moment on, Karl knew he would never be alone again.

*By Erin King*

*Year 7, Nambour Christian College  
NAMBOUR – QLD.*

*Teacher: Mrs Stanton*



# OPERATION LIBERATION

2016  
*Raqqa, Syria*

“BANG!”

A child's scream, the smell of blood. He falls to the floor, his eyes glassy and mouth open in an O. No older than 8, shot because of a war that he was not to be blamed for.

I can't stomach this. As humans, it is our responsibility to protect other humans. I ran home and whipped open my notebook to formulate a plan.

★ ★ ★

Two days earlier...

I speak to Mark in hushed tones, a curtain of secrecy veiling us from the world.

“I've got word that they are planning to bomb Jazrah.”

“Received. I will relay it to my superiors in Melbourne.”

“We need to drive there immediately and do something. No more kids should die from these sick, twisted minds.”

“How long will it take to arrive there?” Mark queried, worry creasing his forehead.

“About 40 minutes.”

“Aren't you afraid for your life? Don't you shiver and shake when you think of the despicable acts they could do if they catch you?” Mark cried, his eyes wide.

“Mark, how could you think of this? As humans, it is our responsibility to protect other humans, no matter the cost. We must do this.”

“It's not up to us. Just do your job as a spy and send the intelligence to Australia.”

★ ★ ★

No one can know about this plan except Mark, Jason, who is in Australia and me. With my constant persuasion, Mark reluctantly hid the smallest plane

in the fighter fleet in the shed near our house. He was to fly Syrians to Australia, the favoured country, where they would receive a roof over their heads, food to eat, and most importantly, love.

Thus, Operation Liberation was born.

Midnight struck and I hurried the man, woman and their baby across the barren field, where the grass wouldn't grow any more, due to the bombs ruining the soil. The flag of hatred was painted in bold black, contrasting against the pale grey and yellow body of the plane. Mark steps out of the plane doors, extending a hand to assist the young family in, and soon enough, the engines slowly awaken from their deep slumber and emit a deep rumble, unlike the loud groans and splutters of regular fighter planes. But this wasn't a fighter plane. “This was a plane of liberation.” Those words hung in my mind as I watched it disappear amongst the stars, oblivious to my Syrian neighbour watching me and the events that had unfolded.

I awoke to men roughly dragging me from my bed, and to the town square, where the whole village was watching. My heels caught on a stray nail, and they started to bleed, leaving trails of red ribbon along the road. Shackled and blindfolded, I knew what was coming.

“Elizabeth Mary Collins is charged for being an Australian spy and orchestrating a rebellion to fly Syrian citizens to Australia, during which a plane was stolen. The punishment for this is death by gunshots.”

“Ready your guns!”

“FIRE!”

★ ★ ★

2017  
*Melbourne, Australia*

“Your grandmother saved 10 Syrian families with her ingenious plan. A neighbour discovered her and reported her to the general, where she died by firing squad”, his mother read from Elizabeth's diary.

“Felix, why do you think Nana did that?”

“Because Nana was nice?”

“Yes, and most importantly, her last words were, ‘As humans, it is our responsibility to protect other humans’”.

By **Kamalinee Kamalakaran**

Age 13

OAKLEIGH EAST – VIC.



# BOOK REVIEWS

Meet our book reviewers Tom, Chelsea, Maddie and Chloe, from the south-east of Melbourne, Victoria.

Reviews Coordinators: Maree Jarrett and Meredith Costain



## 48 Hours: The Vanishing

by Gabrielle Lord (Scholastic Australia)

48 Hours: The Vanishing is an action-packed crime-solving story. This fantastic book's main character is Jazz, whose best friend Anika has been kidnapped. Jazz only has 48 hours to free her best friend from the clutches of the kidnapper. Unfortunately, Jazz needs some help from her arch-enemy, Phoenix, to solve the case. Will Jazz and Phoenix join forces to solve

the case, free Anika, and find the jewellery box, all within 48 hours?

This book always kept me on the edge of my seat; the pages turned themselves and I couldn't stop reading. My only criticism is that I would have liked to have seen some more detail in this otherwise fabulous book.

If you are 13+ and like crime-solving books, then this book is for you!

Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆

—Tom Hooper, Year 6

## Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow

Jessica Townsend (Hachette)

Step boldly into Nevermoor, city of magic and wonders. Meet cursed Morrigan Crow, as she is smuggled into Nevermoor by a strange man, Jupiter North, who picked her as his first ever candidate to compete in four trials to earn a place out of the nine available in the Wondrous Society.

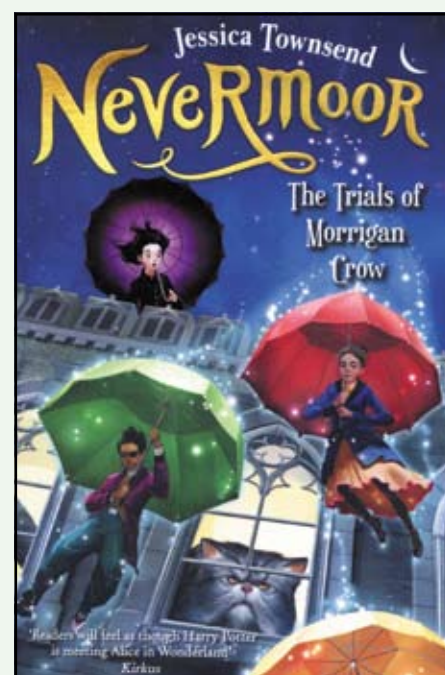
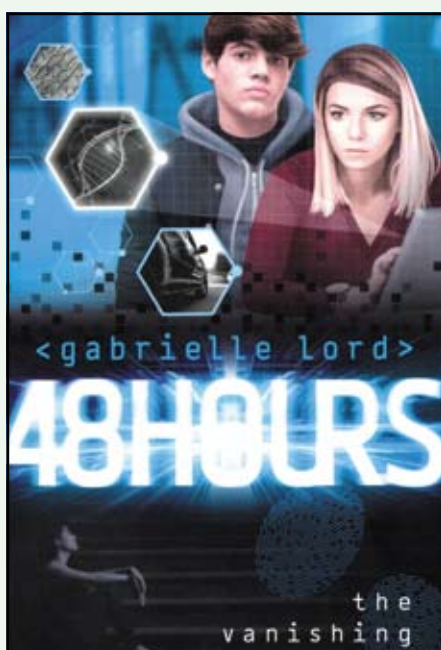
Morrigan stays at the Deucalion Hotel with amazing people and creatures. But she is worried. What if she doesn't pass the trials and has to go back to the republic

and face her death, the hunt of smoke and shadow?

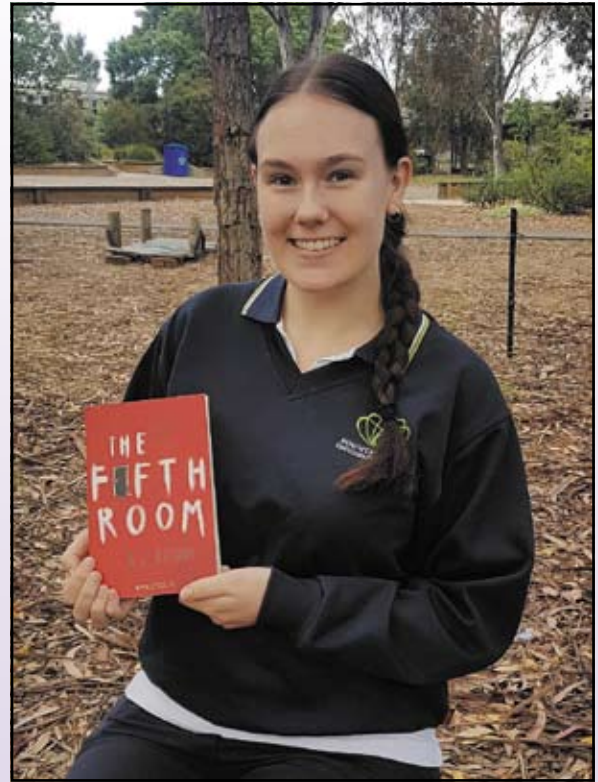
This fantasy must-read for *Alice In Wonderland* lovers aged over 10, is a magical, complex and intriguing story. The depth of emotion drew me in, making me not want to put the book down.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★★★☆☆

—Chelsea Jarrett, Year 5







## Pretty Girls Don't Eat

by Winnie Salamon  
(Ford Street Publishing)

*Pretty Girls Don't Eat* is about a 16-year-old girl called Winter Mae Jones with an eating disorder — she is convinced she is fat. Winter wants to get into the fashion industry but she thinks her body isn't good enough.

This was a very inspiring book. I'm sure a lot of girls could relate to the content as it is about body image. I also love the fact that the book is set here in Melbourne.

Recommended for readers aged 15 years or older.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆

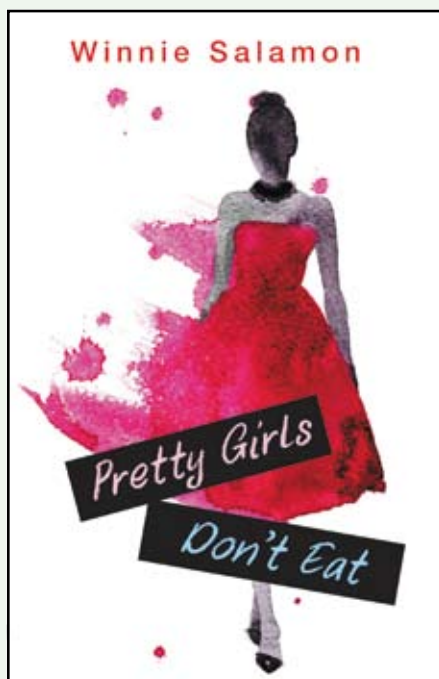
— Maddie Kellett, Year 8

plot holes and allow for further character development that I felt this stand-alone novel was lacking.

*The Fifth Room* is an easy read suitable for anyone over the age of thirteen.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆☆☆

— Chloe Follett, Year 11



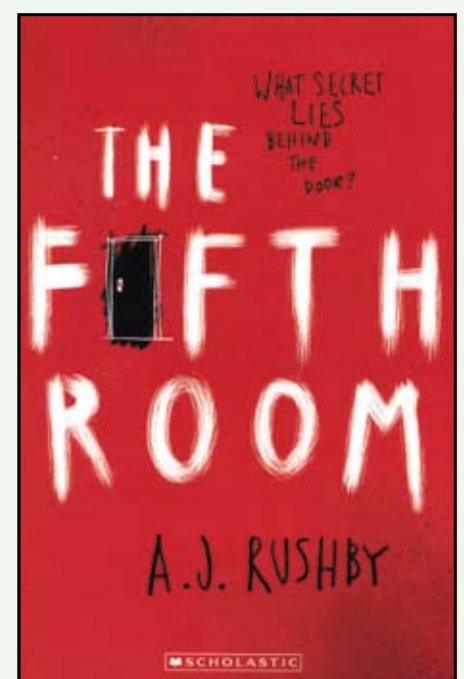
## The Fifth Room

by A J Rushby (Scholastic Australia)

If you're looking for something different that hooks you in from the first page, *The Fifth Room* would be your ideal read. Rushby's psychological thriller begins with Miri, an intelligent and driven medical student determined to achieve — even if it means leaving the people she loves in the lurch.

The book contains the right amount of romance and mystery to keep you in suspense all the way through, however, the ending was slightly anti-climactic.

If Rushby were to make *The Fifth Room* into a series, she would be able to fill in the





**I**N THE sweltering heat and pungent aromas of thoughtfully – and thoughtlessly – purchased flowers, I had first heard the shadows speak.

Whose funeral it was, I cannot recall, I was but young, and the marking of the event's interest was on my first interaction with the shadows alone. The event would all but be erased from my memory if not for that prominent moment of discovery; of my meeting with what would be an eternal friend. Of how in ever present quiet of the funeral, where the quiet is monitored by each and every soul accordance to an unwritten law, I had heard the shadow's speak. A wispily quiet voice unlike a voice, which howled through and twirled with the breeze, masking its presence in the dull hazy landscape of stone tablets and sorrowful trees. Yet it was distinctive, a crackling whip grating against the creaking of the world, hidden in the rustling of the dying undergrowth of leaves and in the rigorously untamed and ignored grass, but it was not alike. It was ancient as the world itself, and an entity all its own, hidden but not one with nature itself.

I could make out the words of its disused voice, a voice which hid in the world's cacophony, but it was a confused intruder, shy but curious. Its words spilled out to me like a dam bursting, its curiosity bubbling to the surface. Looking upon the scene of grief and remembrance in childlike wonder, shadow forgot itself. It forgot the chains in which it pulled to nature, tirelessly thinking itself but one with it no more, an illusion cast upon itself since the

dawn of everything, where it first learned to hide within the sweeping dust of creation; hiding itself so creation didn't notice what it had accidentally created, the smudge of its vast perfection. The one and only oversight, that the shadows of everything held tightly upon a primordial conscious, one that was a prototype for everyone that came after it. If creation noticed it had accidentally built a framework for the soul, it had never found the smudge in time, before creation withered away, itself losing what the darkened smudge held ever onto.

The funeral had plunged my family in a momentum towards it, an event which my parents whispered and avoided mention of, yet still eventually went to, when time commanded. I had stood there, in the levelled quiet and etiquette, of whispered conversation and cautious condolences. What I had found boring and confusing as a child, shadow had found interesting, and in its unmatched curiosity it had spoken. And though shadow has spoken throughout history, it had gone unnoticed in its brief dreamlike occurrence, its own words drifting and numb to even shadow itself. Though, somehow, the funeral of my boring adolescence sparked a question from shadow's nonexistent lips. And I had answered.

The only one not focused on the funeral, my gaze had drifted to the bare trees in the distance, my eyes unfocused on all, as thus my focus on the trees easily slipped to subconscious thoughts. And in all that, I heard the question escape the chamber of

shadow's withdrawn and nullified thoughts, and spoken upon its curious and parched lips. Why would the sun burn upon a scene of such sorrow? It had spoken. A question to itself, an outcry to the world, and from my childlike mind, a plea for someone to answer, and to acknowledge. And answer I did, to my imaginary friend from my drifting thoughts. I spoke quietly, with a knowing grin, my answer unheard to anyone else but pleading shadow, "It burns to destroy the memory of sorrow, and to comfort those who are sorrowful".

And for a long moment there was proper silence, the funeral still in motion but in lack of acknowledgement, forgotten entirely. The quiet sprung from the awaiting of a reply to my question, one that I spoke to the open air. "Who are you?" I had asked innocently, to my newfound imaginary – but not really – friend. And though to me, the quiet was one but many in life, shadow had told me once what it was like from its perspective. Shadow had frozen, number than it had ever been, frozen in fear, and in creeping excitement. The lie which it had told itself shattered in its mind. It was not of nature, it was not a cog in the gear of nature's existence. It was its own entity, and it was alive. And that fact scared shadow beyond any thought before, tearing shadow kicking and screaming from the chains of its own cosy lie. Shadow had been dragged into the light of existence, no more nullified in a state of hiding from a threat long past. Shadow was fully conscious – and it was curious with an unquenchable thirst. Of everything, and anything. And whilst shadow was knowledgeable of a vast array of things, things no one else knew, the little details of life was what it was most curious about. Things it had overlooked in its numb gaze of history, never before stopping to look and ponder upon the smallest details. And I had ever onwards been able to answer such queries, ones of my mundane everyday life.

Myself, being an everyday average person, had been able to break the chains of shadow's imprisonment, and feed its excitable curiosity of the world's most normal and small things. And in doing so, an odd bond had formed between us, two very different entities. We had been friends and companions, though I could never get shadow to admit such. It was a concept that was beyond shadow, one that I could never explain to it properly, but shadow was always there. In its freedom it had



willingly chained itself to me, the darkness of my wardrobe, a shadow across the paved stones of neon nights, a flickering darkness resting beside the window's frame. It had stuck closely, embedded to me in its own unique way, always watching over.

And so I look upon the shadow cast by the dancing curtains, past the family and friends gathered around me. And the shadow looks back, but it was quiet. It

did not know what to say – what to ask. It was confused, and through a lifetime of questions and answers, this was something it could never understand, not now. Maybe, when it had hidden in the dust of creation, fearful of discovery, of the time where creation would not look kindly upon its conscious, it could understand. But from the growing silence, it had finally spoken. Why would the sun burn upon a scene of such sorrow? Shadow had said

in the creaking of the windowsill and the pleasantly fluttering of the wind. And I had laughed a painful laugh, and cried a joyous tear. Shadow had acknowledged, in its own way, what I had always wanted it to. And through a tired lingering smile, I replied to Shadow's question.

**By Jaymie Nohejl Willis**

Age 17

GEELONG – VIC.

## The Silence

**T**HE WIDOW looked out of the grime and filth of her once beautiful house. The rain was pounding on the concrete floor, as the lightning lit up the dull, gloomy sky. The thunder crashed like cymbals and the leaves of the trees danced in the wind. Even though the water droplets slid down the foggy window-pane, the woman could only see the world as a still image.

As night fell, the lady lumbered to her dusty bed. Her bed had cobwebs hanging off it. The sheets were torn and the pillows had been frayed in many places. The queen bed that had once been shared by two laughing, excitable people was now occupied by a sorry, crying lady. As she dozed off, her dreams seized her thoughts, like usual, taking her back to the day he died.

That day, the sun blazed and the car was scorching in the heat. The road was like a barren wasteland and the small pond's water had all evaporated. The sky was clear and all the trees stood still as there was no wind. The lady's husband had been driving when he received a message on his phone. As he looked at his message, the car lost control and swerved to the right sharply, crashing into a truck. Flames engulfed the car and billowing carpets of smoke rose from the ashes.

The women opened the door in pain as she cried. She had deep cuts on her arms and legs and had severe burns. The blood drained from her face as the image of her husband's limp body was

engraved in her mind as if it was one of the scars that would never leave her. His back arched over the wheel without the airbags that would have saved his life. Blood was pouring from the side of his head. His hands and chest were burnt black and the life had been sucked out of him as if he had never lived. In the distance, the woman could hear the sirens from the ambulance and firefighters approaching.

At this, the woman woke with a startled gasp. She couldn't do it any more. Every night, another flash of his lifeless body. Another night's sleep disturbed in horror. Another time feeling sorrow. There was nothing she needed to live for any more. There was no one she needed to live for. There was no need for her existence.

That night the thoughts whirled in her mind. A battle that needed to be ended. A sadness that only ever deepened. As she walked to the kitchen, she opened the mouldy drawer and took out a knife. A meat knife that had belonged to her husband. The only living memory of him. The silver knife glistened in the moonlight. It was the only object she had cleaned in years. Everyday pondering about the power she had with it. The only item she could ever need.

With that thought, she plunged the knife through her heart ignoring the pain. On the ground she lay still in peace. She felt happier than she had felt in years. As if the suffering, the torture, the agony of not having him had never been there. Her mind could only be overwhelmed by the rush of joy. The jubilation of meeting her husband again. The widow now garnet with blood lay on the ground in silence, for years, to perish away. Only her soul would linger to live on to join her husband once more.

**By Monica Rallabhandi**

Year 8, Rossmoyne Senior High School  
PERTH – WA

# Stranded on an Island

“GROAN...”

“The wheels on the bus go round and round!”

“Stop it!” Nathan groaned.

“Stop it!” Nathan yelled again.

“OK, Ohh K!” Jack sighed. They were coming back from camp and everyone was as loud as trucks, so annoying!

SKREECH! Everyone was thrown sideways... the bus started to go on fire!

“Get out!” Mr Tim cried.

Nathan grabbed the edges of the escape route and pulled himself out. Nathan pulled some of his classmates along with him – Jack, Lauren, Josh, Jade. He kept track of the people who got up onto the roof with him. Then it happened, a huge explosion shook the earth. Everyone on the roof was thrown off and into the sky.

Nathan woke up shivering. Jade was pouring water into his mouth.

“What happened?” Nathan asked.

“I think we somehow fell into the sea and the current washed us up on an island”, Jade answered, sitting up.

Now that she was not in his face, he could see more things: he was lying on a beach with golden sand and a green forest, Josh and Jack were busy gathering sticks for their shelter and Lauren was staring at the mountain in the distance with a very flat top. Wait! A very flat top?!

Nathan looked at it again: it was a volcano!

Hours later, they had a fire going and a little wooden shelter built up.

“This is better!” Jade sighed.

Lauren shivered; she was by far the youngest person there.

The next day they had a bit more luck with Jack finding some berries to eat and Jade getting some clean water from a small stream, to drink. Nathan and Josh kept a constant look out for anything peculiar.

Suddenly Nathan saw a huge shape storming out of the forest. “Watch OUTTTTT” he began.... TOO LATE! Jade got knocked out! It was a bear! It was towering over Jade, looking down at her threateningly. Josh threw a rock at the bear’s back, it turned and growled. Then the strangest thing happened... Sweet, little, timid Lauren came charging at the beast with a long sharp stick, thrusting at it, plunging into its leg.

It roared, knocking Lauren over then disappeared into the forest.

After some hours later, they patched up Jade but all were still wondering what Lauren had just done.

“What did it feel like?” Jack asked.

“A huge rush of energy!” Lauren answered with finality.

The next day the group moved on with their chores, trying to survive. Lauren became very interested in making tools. She made a sword and a bow from wood and vines and sharp sticks as arrows.

Again, they heard sounds – Thud! Thud! Thud!

Abruptly, hundreds of animals burst out of the forest – wolves, bears and vultures. Nathan was at the mouth of the shelter at that time so it was a sight to behold! Then he realised that they were here to challenge him and his friends!

“Everyone inside!” Jack ordered.

Skratch!! Skratch!!

The vultures tore forcibly at their shelter from above.

Lauren fiercely swung her newly made sword.

Nathan grabbed a hammer, Josh an axe, Jack the bow and Jade some sticks that were on fire. They rallied back, overcame with unimaginable rush of energy, hacking at the ferocious creatures. After what seemed forever, the beasts weakened from strength. Just as well! Coz Nathan and his friends were knacked!

Suddenly..... BOOM! The volcano erupted, hot murderous lava flowing ceaselessly.

Then.... Whrrr! Whrrr! ..... The sound of helicopter blades broke through the noise. The helicopter hovered steeply towards them.

“HOP ON!” a guy hollered.

Nathan and his friends leapt on. They were stranded no more!

*The End*

By **Nathan Nguyen**

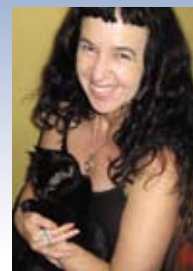
Age 11

ABBOTSFORD – VIC.





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# THE VIKINGS

**"N**O." Skirl Axel's voice was cold and hard as an iron sword.

Leif flinched, then silently cursed himself. Act tough, he told himself. Act like a warrior.

"But skirl", he reasoned, "I'm one of the best fighters in the village. I've beaten men twice my age".

The grizzled captain stepped closer. Leif would've sworn to all the gods he felt the ground tremble at the big man's footfall and resisted the very strong urge to take a step back. "Look, kid, I admire your enthusiasm. But you're just too young to come on the raid."

Leif's heart wrenched as if a spear had been shoved right through it. Bobbing gently in the calm sea, the golden sun shone a blessing on the pride of the Viking fleet. It was a sleek longship aptly named the Dark Serpent, designed for sailing as quickly and quietly as possible. Mounted proudly on the ship's prow was the wooden figure of a snarling, serpentine beast.

Even now the craft seemed to strain against its moorings, as if eager to cut the water. It wouldn't have to wait long, Leif knew – the raiders would depart tomorrow, to a small town just a day's sail from here. And he would not be going with them.

He knew that nothing he could say would change the skirl's mind. So, he bit his tongue hard and dipped his head. "Yes, skirl, I understand."

Axel's eyes softened. "I'm not really angry with you, Leif. But you're young, and you still have much to learn. You remind me exactly of myself when I was your age, and let me tell you, I'm much happier now I waited for my turn at fame and glory."

Leif's jaw tightened.

"Trust me, kid", the skirl continued as he walked away to resume preparing the ship for the raid. "I'm just doing what's best for you."

That's what all the adults say, Leif thought bitterly. He clenched his fingers round the hilt of his sword and headed for home.

★ ★ ★

Leif hung limply by the windowsill of his small room, staring out at the moonlit houses of his village but not really seeing them. His gaze went far beyond, towards a sleek and powerful craft that seemed to call to him in the night. But he could not answer.

Didn't Axel see how ready he was? He hadn't lied about his fighting skill earlier – the skirl himself had been there to witness the bout, when he'd knocked man after man onto their backs in the field.

Despite himself, he had to smile. That was what a warrior was like – in the face of seemingly invincible opponents, a true Viking would stand and fight no matter what.

Stand and fight. Leif was struck by a sudden thought. If he'd done it then, what was stopping him from doing it now?

His eyes fell upon the open window, and then to his sword resting by the foot of his bed.

He didn't have much. But the heroes in the old stories had survived on much less – all they'd needed was a strong Viking spirit, true as a sword blade. And for Leif, that was enough.

★ ★ ★

Surprisingly, he hadn't had a hard time sneaking onto the Dark Serpent.

The deep shadows had concealed him as he snuck towards the ship. For once in his life, his light, scrawny build had worked in his favour as he scrambled up the shields and onto the longship's deck.

He hurried to one of the supply barrels, lifting the lid as softly as he could. The barrel was, thankfully, empty. Hopefully, no one would think to look inside it for a while. He climbed inside, leaving the lid open the barest sliver so that he could breathe.

The gravity of what he had done finally settled in. His heart fluttered with a strange mix of fear and exhilaration. Only the gods

knew what trouble he'd be in if he was discovered, but on the other hand...

A raid. An actual raid.

He cradled his sword in his arm, leaning against the side of the barrel and listening to the waves lapping softly against the hull. The sea was welcoming him, telling him that its waves would take the longship as far as it needed to go...

Leif smiled. It was his first true smile in months. And with it, all the worries and frustration of that morning ebbed away into the tide.

And before he knew it, he was asleep.

★ ★ ★

He awoke to the smell of fire, and the sound of screams.

Leif jolted so hard his head hit the top of the barrel, sending the lid spinning away. His heart threw itself against his ribs – would he be discovered? He peered upwards at the predawn sky, rubbing his head. Then he jumped again as he realised – that colour wasn't just the grey of a newborn morning. It was smoke, smelly and suffocating, and the air was full of it.

Flooded with a sudden fear, Leif leapt from his hiding place and onto the deck. He let out his breath in relief. The Dark Serpent wasn't on fire. But something else was.

The longship was anchored right at the edge of a beach, and atop a nearby hill the source of the blaze was clear. A group of small buildings was utterly consumed by hungry orange flames.

The raid. Leif cursed himself for his obliviousness. What use was a Viking who slept through the start of a raid?

He grabbed up his old sword and vaulted over the ship's side onto the sand. It crunched beneath his shoes as he ran up the slope of the hill. But nearing the top, when the smoke stung his eyes and dust clogged his throat, Leif stopped.

From here, he could see the whole village burning. Scarlet tongues of flame licked



at doors and windows, reached ravenous arms up through wooden roofs, incinerated bundles of grass that had been set out to dry. And through it all wove the terrible notes of human screams in a chilling melody that made Leif sick. As he listened, a shrill cry of panic was abruptly cut short. His stomach roiled. Which of the raiders had jammed a weapon into the body of a poor villager?

A sudden realisation settled in Leif's gut. It wasn't the spike of thrill his father had reminisced about at the fireside. It was fear, cold despite the heat of the flames before him, like he'd been dropped headfirst into the sea in the dead of winter.

Skirl Axel had been right. He wasn't ready for this.

An earth-shaking bellow threw him from his thoughts. He was about to make a break for the longship when he froze in recognition.

He knew that yell. And sure enough, like a battle-crazy warhorse, Skirl Axel came charging out from the ruins of a house, war axe glinting in the firelight as he swung it about his head.

Leif blanched, but the captain didn't seem to notice him in his frenzy. Axel came to a stop, breathing hard, eyes darting around to spot an unseen opponent.

Leif had begun to back away towards the ship when a quick movement, behind the skirl, caught his eye. Perhaps it was just a flicker of firelight, or his addled mind playing tricks on him...

But then, the shadow leaped. And so did Leif.

He didn't know what made him do it. But he found himself racing across the sand, the heat of fire on his face, crossing the short distance to the tall, shadowy figure who stole up like a wraith behind the skirl, holding the glint of metal in its hand – Blindly, Leif lashed out with his sword. He heard a cry of pain, and the small knife that had been aimed at Axel's throat went whirling away into the flames.

"Leif...?" The grizzled skirl turned to look at him. He didn't seem angry, just confused – he blinked his eyes as if waking from a deep sleep. Leif rushed towards the skirl, leaving his blade to thud into the sand.

The skirl's eyes widened in shock, fixed on a point somewhere behind Leif's head.

He turned. But it was too late.

Leif crumpled as the blade sliced into his side. He faintly registered the dark figure from earlier standing over him, one of the villagers by his look, the wound Leif had given him bleeding through his trouser leg. The man's face was twisted in a mixture of hatred and fear as he released the sword – Leif's sword – and fled.

He must've picked it up after I dropped it, Leif thought through a haze of pain. He sank to the ground, blood warm and sticky between his fingers.

"Leif! Gods, no..." Axel's voice commanded him to focus, like it had always done. The skirl fell to his knees beside him, attempting to staunch the blood that jetted from him like a waterfall.



He could already feel himself slipping away. "It's no use, skirl", he whispered. "Just... the sword..."

Axel nodded as he retrieved Leif's blade and closed his bloody fingers around the worn hilt. "Damn it, Leif, I told you not to come on this..."

"I'm sorry, sir", Leif coughed. "I hid on the ship and I guess I just..."

Axel shook his head. "I owe you my life, boy. If you hadn't stabbed that villager, then I would've been dead." He left the rest unsaid: But if you hadn't come in the first place, you wouldn't be dying now.

"Why did you do it, Leif?" the skirl asked. "Tell me why you risked your own life for that of an old sea dog."

"I..." Why had he done it? He'd seen the knife, and seen his friend. Back in the moment, it was a no-brainer, really.

"Stand and fight", he replied. "Courage in the face of anything."

In that moment, the new sun broke above the horizon, stretching golden rays across the sand and bathing them in warmth. Even the vicious heat of the flames around them seemed to shrink in the face of the light. Leif reached his stiff fingers towards it, wanting to sink into the warmth forever.

"You proved yourself a true Viking, and a true Viking till the end." Axel laid a gentle hand on his shoulder. "I'm sorry I ever doubted you, Leif. You will be remembered when we sail back, and long after these battered bones have crumbled to dust." He paused. "I'll even try to write a song about you myself..."

Leif gave a breathy laugh. Axel smiled sadly.

"Goodbye, brother." The skirl stood solemnly, axe in hand, the flames of the burning village at his back. And so Leif turned his head to face the sunrise, grasped his sword tighter, and died with a smile on his lips and his spirit flying.

**By Yxavel Dino**

*Year 10, Girraween High School  
GIRRAWEEEN – NSW*

# The Tree Of Life

**L**IFE grows, like a tree it develops and matures, separated and joined by extraordinary and amazing moments. These moments stem from and branch off from us. Stages throughout our lives, experiences during our childhood, adulthood, retirement and old age, bud and shape us into the people we become, leaving mementos along the way, little knots and whorls. Our lives and attitudes support and shape others, providing nutrients and strength through the simplest acts. Life is unpredictable, we do not know where it will guide us, stretching to the sun or bending towards the ground, or who we will meet and lose along the way, leaves here, limbs there.

Spring infancy blooms  
Summer youth ripens  
Autumn maturity develops  
Winter wisdom evolves

Spring is the season of prosperity and rapid growth. The spring air is filled with warmth and the scent of blooming wildflowers. Crimson bottlebrush and buttercup yellow wattles adorn trees, covered in different arrays of parrots, butterflies and ladybirds. With this teeming life comes the germination of hope and ambition. Small seedlings, tiny and vulnerable beings, grow taller each day. As their trunks thicken they become more robust and resilient. The growing foliage, small delicate buds and large emerald coloured leaves scrape the bright sapphire sky. White clouds float across keeping watch as the glorious days continue for weeks, mornings of dewy grass, and evenings of calm winds. It is only towards the end of spring that leaves curl and the dirt begins to dry – summer can be seen on the horizon.

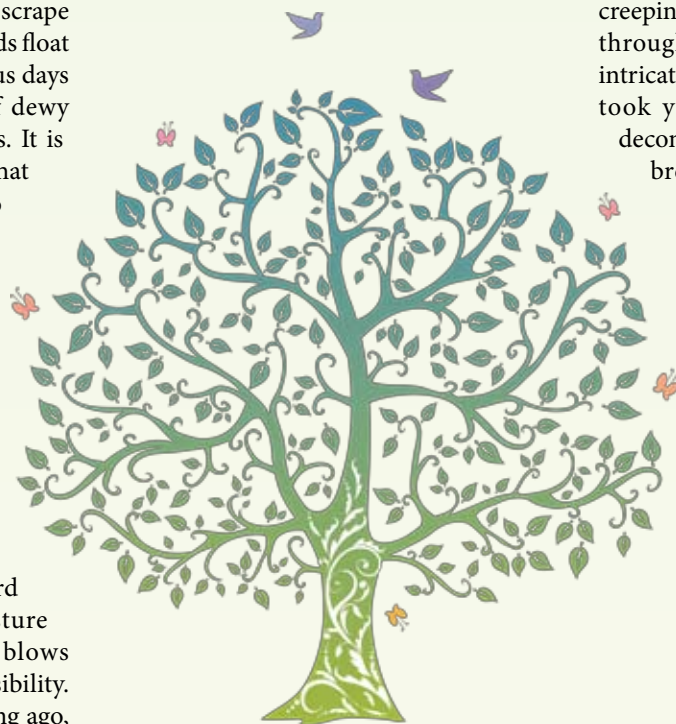
Spring infancy blooms  
Summer youth ripens  
Autumn maturity develops  
Winter wisdom evolves

The sweltering heat begins in December, the horizon become hazy, a mirage reflecting the sky back on itself. The dirt is hard and crisp, all remnants of moisture evaporated long ago. Dry dust blows across the landscape clouding visibility. The bright beautiful flowers fell long ago,

leaving only matured leaves hanging wilted from the panting tree, heavily swaying in the breeze. Bright light shines deep to the core of the tree, hardening the beige bark, creating deep furrows. Birds pick at the crust, forming deep pockets, hiding from the heat, guarding nests for their young. As the roots become intertwined, support and strength develops, a reliance on others. The sweltering months begin to cool, autumn can be seen on the horizon, with it a sense of maturity.

Spring infancy blooms  
Summer youth ripens  
Autumn maturity develops  
Winter wisdom evolves

Autumn blows in with the first rain, cooling the landscape and easing tremendous tension within. As a pair of kookaburras nest in the canopy, creating intricate constructions of twigs and mud, the once dark green leaves become dappled shades of amber, yellow and brown. The leaves begin to shrivel and turn crisp, morphing into small crumpled versions of their former selves. As they fall they paint the earth a beautiful orange and creating a temporary home for the small bugs and critters scurrying on the ground, until the gentle breeze whisks the leaves away. Tall branches are barren, spindly at the ends and pointing in different directions. Night begins to fall earlier, days shorten.



Spring infancy blooms  
Summer youth ripens  
Autumn maturity develops  
Winter wisdom evolves

All remnants of leaves have ebbed by the winter months, leaving an exposed skeleton, a former youthful tree now rigid and fragile. Dimples on the surface have become exacerbated, deeper and bleaker, showing the frailty winter brings. As gentle white snow falls upon the spindly limbs, cracks begin to form in their structure, splintering branches and twigs. The inevitability of growing old takes grip on the tree, turning it into a silhouette, a ghost swaying in the shadows. Winter brings bitter relentless wind, weaving its way through the naked branches. Finally the tree becomes too weak and snaps at the base, tumbling down with great power. Driving hail and rain batters the exposed wood, turning it a weathered grey. The rough break exposes the growth rings to the elements revealing information and stories of life.

Spring infancy blooms  
Summer youth ripens  
Autumn maturity develops  
Winter wisdom evolves

Years on, through many seasons, the shattered trunk has become a haven for small translucent termites, busy ants and creeping slaters, slowly making their way through the dense wood and forming intricate nests, new life teeming in what took years to create. Toadstools and decomposers begin the endless task of breaking down the fibre into rich nutrients to be returned to the soil. Butterflies rest on the dimples in the bark and bright coloured birds perch on branches which stick up haphazardly. At the base of the fallen tree, in the crisp air of a spring morning, a small green sapling begins to unfurl and rise from the rich earth, fuelled by the energy of the fallen tree.

By **Eliza Bastian**  
Year 12, Eynesbury Senior College  
ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Melanie Smith



# Loneliness

My heart keeps beating  
Even though it's bleeding  
My tears don't run out  
Even though I can't stop crying  
My mind is stuck  
At the moment just before  
You walked away and left me  
On life's lonely shores

By **Mia Romanella**

Year 5, Beaumont Road Public School

KILLARA – NSW

Teacher: Marguerita Christowski

# Sister



Bright eyes glowing as she runs towards me,  
Embracing me with her hug, she defines me.  
She drops her bag and gives me a speech,  
On what she did at school, snuggling to me as a leech.

I smile to myself about her little things, her little world,  
With a peck on her forehead, I listen to her with her eyelashes twirled.  
We rush off to play, in our own world of adventure,  
Sitting in a yellow room with fairy stickers, she is on a venture.  
I feel childish and I decide to go away,  
But my sister looks longingly at me to stay.

As I see her I realise my sister is my eternal bond,  
I squeeze her hand thinking, sister's love is very strong.  
Teaching her simple words like cat, sat and mat,  
Sometimes we fight, but not long to be out of sight.

Mum calls us for dinner and we walk hand in hand,  
Sharing silly jokes and laughing to our hearts contend.  
At the dinner table a scrumptious lasagne awaits us,  
We gobble up each fragment as it's so delicious.

Humming after dinner I finally go to study,  
Hastily writing down notes for all that I worry.  
Two little hands tap me on my shoulder,  
And as I look down to see two large twinkling brown eyes asking me to hold her.

She tugs at my sleeve and says 'tuck me into bed'  
I cradle her to sleep with her tiny teddy, after the books that she has read.  
Her soft breathing turns to a pattern as I know she's drifted off,  
Her luscious eyelashes quiver and I peck her on the cheek so soft.

Tomorrow is another day, with many things to pursue,  
But our sister's bond is lifelong, and my sister so cute.

By **Ananya Bose**

Year 7, Westbourne Grammar

TRUGANINA – VIC.



# The Time I Shone

“GRANDMA, grandma!” shouted Ariana.

“What is it darling?” responded grandma.

“Look at my artwork!” shouted Ariana.

“Wow, all the pink leaves on the tree and the cute cottage on the side is so amazing. You’re just as talented and creative like your mother was. You’re a very smart seventeen-year-old”, said grandma.

A tear developed in the corner of my eye.

“You have your mother’s beautiful brown hair, and her singing voice. Then you have your father’s big round brown eyes; they

would be so proud of you Ariana”, said grandma gently.

I blinked back the tears and smiled, hiding all the feelings bottled up in me.

Ariana was watching TV until an advertisement came on. ‘You want to be a star and win six hundred thousand dollars, just search ‘shiningstar.com’ and go to sign up to put all your details in and we will notify you and give you more information...

I thought to myself “Mmm, that’s interesting”.

Grandma walked in the room with her head down, looking sad.

“Grandma, are you okay?” asked Ariana in a soft tone.

“Dear, you know how I’m sick, well my cancer has gotten worse”, sadly, responded Grandma.

Ariana wanted to bawl her eyes out, but she fought them, trying to be strong and supportive for her. “I will be with you throughout the whole way”, said Ariana confidently.

Later after the conversation Ariana and her Grandma had, Ariana thought to herself. ‘Right, Grandma is sick and she needs help. If I enter the competition, I could have a chance in winning! Than that money can help Grandma; it could cure her cancer.’

Ariana went to the website ‘shiningsinger.com’, she clicked on entries, there is only fifteen people who can get in after auditions. She put her details in and sent her application.

Two minutes later Ariana received an email from shining singer, she clicked into it, to find that she was...

Ariana ran downstairs, calling “Grandma, Grandma”.

“In the living room!” shouted Grandma.

“What is it sweetie?” questioned Grandma.

“Read this.” Ariana handed her Grandma the computer, she cleared her throat and began to read it out.

*Dear Ariana Constantine,*

*You have been accepted to audition for shining singer competition. Well Done! Saturday 22nd of April the auditions will begin! Choose a song you will perform for us, and practice learning it!*

*Sincerely, Ryan McCay*

“Well done Ariana, I’m so proud of you!” shouted Grandma. “I did it for you”, Ariana said quietly.

Grandma was stunned and touched, she gave her a big hug.

The next day, I chose my song I wanted to sing; I found it quite difficult to pick one. I ended up choosing a song, that reflected



my feelings with my grandma. I practised over and over again, until it was perfect.

Saturday morning, Ariana woke up and got herself ready swiftly, for the auditions. As Ariana arrived at the auditions it was a huge theatre, she had a special V.I.P. pass.

Ariana approached a room where all the contestants were waiting. Suddenly, her name was called up.

"I'm Ryan McCay. Ariana Constantine, you're up!"

She approached the microphone that was on the stage, Ariana was extremely nervous that she began to feel queasy. She gently placed my hands on the cold microphone, and began to sing her heart out.

As Ariana finished, the audience rose to the feet and applauded.

"You're in!" shouted Ryan.

When I heard those words I was so stunned, that I broke into tears.

As I approached my grandma's seats paramedics were there, and I found her on the floor.

An hour later, grandma woke up and they began to do some scans. I was told to step out of the room for a second, I could hear my grandma cry a little. I walked in to find out she has not long to live.

Four days later, it was time to perform for shining star. Grandma and I arrived at the Dolby theatre, to find thousands of people lining up for the event. I showed my grandma her seats, and went off to backstage.

"Ariana you're up now!" shouted Ryan.

I stepped out onto the stage to find the bright lights blinding me and the mist tickle my skin. The instruments started to play, and I began to sing my heart out

again. I sung to the top of my lungs, I had no control. As I was singing I was getting goose bumps throughout my body.

At the end of the show, they called all the performers out onto the stage.

"I'm going to announce who won. Ariana Constantine!"

Everyone rose to their feet clapping, cheering and whistling, I was amazed.

The next day, I was going to donate the money. I woke up to find grandma not up yet. When it hit 10:00 am I went to wake her up, I kept saying her name.

"Grandma, Grandma wake up!" I grabbed her smart watch and stared at the heart beat, it said zero.

By **Anastasia Lambrou**  
Year 7, St Spyridon College  
SYDNEY – NSW

## I'm Afraid I Haven't Been a Very Good Host, Old Sport

We go through a lot together,  
the booze and the dancing –  
we always go through it all together.  
Different men exchanging telephone numbers  
women comparing inheritances by the pool.  
Through the endless group of high school defectors  
and morality protectors trying to buy us a drink.  
Through pianos played by direct descendants of Beethoven  
the endless twisting and turning as the music gets louder.  
Flowing bottomless cocktails delivered by men in coats  
and men with rings on their right hand  
the emerald glow and sparkling shine  
the endless stream of champagne and wine.

And then finally as we go through the night  
as the music gets louder  
and we get lost and found  
the flare of fireworks  
the charm of his smile.  
The kind of smile you only come across  
four or five times in your life  
that seems to understand you and believe in you  
just as you would like to be understood  
then as you submerge in his smile and charm  
in the glow of the fireworks surrounding you,  
you feel happy as he says  
"You see, I'm Gatsby."

By **Alex Good**  
Year 10, Eynesbury Senior College  
ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Melanie Smith



# Survivors

**M**Y NAME is Ryan Tyler. I'm twenty years old and I have your typical blonde hair and blue eyes. I'm telling you this because I may not survive. We are being forced to make the most important decision of our lives. It sounds like they will let us survivors live, but why should we trust them after everything they did?

I remember the day it started like the back of my hand – September 4th 2045. There was a flash as a news report started playing on the wall. The report said that multiple unexplained deaths had been occurring in other areas. Naturally none of us were worried – our news reports weren't exactly trustworthy. Our reporters liked to gossip a lot which usually resulted in absurd stories about others.

The town where I lived was small. It took us all about three days until the worrying started to sink in. That's when it really began.

It was a bright, yet dull morning on September 7th. I had dragged myself out of bed and opened all the windows, like I

did every morning. I was making myself breakfast when I caught a glimpse of movement outside. I almost missed it – but, thankfully, I didn't, for this was the true beginning of a tragic day. Someone had walked outside and collapsed on the spot. I looked on with immense curiosity, especially as someone ran out to help him. They didn't make it far. They collapsed too.

At that time I think I was starting to worry. I thought back to the news report. There was still part of me that thought there was no way it could be true. I wanted to check whether they were alive or not but I didn't want it to look like I killed them – if they were actually dead. I know, I know. Looking back that was pretty selfish and stupid of me but at the time, with reporters lurking round every corner, he didn't want to risk it. So I had just waited.

More people went outside. They all collapsed except one – my neighbour Aaron Shaw. At the time we didn't know why. Taking a deep breath, I decided to risk it and run outside. When nothing happened, I released my breath. I glanced

at Aaron, hoping for answers, but his face had been as confused as mine. A massive wave of shock overcome me when I realised they were all dead. Every single one of them.

When I turned around to go and warn the rest of the town, I realised I was too late. There was only forty of us left – including Aaron and I. Forty. Twenty-one guys, nineteen girls. There used to be so many of us. I feel like it was my fault. I shouldn't have hesitated. We grouped together in the middle of the town. Some of us were crying. Most were just standing there with a dazed look on their face. Nothing could have prepared us for what followed. Nothing.

There was dead silence – aside from people crying of course. Then an ear-splitting scream cut through the silence. "Look!" one of the girls screamed as they pointed at the sky. We all glanced up. There were... things in the sky. I couldn't quite make them out. They were getting closer by the second. They were huge. They were like... gigantic pods flying through the sky. The bottom of the spherical pod had huge and





extremely sharp claws. To make things worse the claws were metal. It looked like they would kill you in an instant. But there was something else.

A slight mist was being sprayed out from the bottom. It looked a bit like an incapacitating agent, which can kill you if you inhale enough. How I know that I can't tell you. My work is strictly classified. I screamed "Run!" as loud as I possibly could. No one stopped to ask why. We just ran as fast as we could to the nearest building. We hid inside and glanced cautiously through the windows as the giant pods flew past. They were bigger than I had originally thought and they were covered in a sickly, viscous substance. They looked disgusting.

Once I was sure the pods had gone, I led everyone outside. Minutes passed slowly. I saw something in the distance. I squinted, trying to see what it was. Too late. A claw closed around one of the guys and severed his head. His head had fallen and rolled along the ground, blood spurting in every direction. Thirty-nine left. I started running as fast as I could. I ducked as the pods tried to eliminate me. I turned a corner and ran wildly into the building in front of me. I realised with pronounced guilt that I had left everyone behind.

I sat inside the building for at least half an hour. The door suddenly swung open and everyone stumbled inside. I counted them. Thirty-eight left and no sign of Aaron. A flash of movement outside made us whip

our heads around. Three of the pods had landed one hundred metres away from our door. Their claws retracted into their body and they rolled forwards. 80... 50... 20. They were closing in. Then, just as we thought we were gone, something flew out of each of them. We all looked at each other. No one said anything. I didn't really see what happened next. All I heard was the door swing shut and the clutter of the objects hitting the floor. Dwayne, whose name I didn't know at the time, put one of the objects on his head. I realised it was a head piece. "Someone's talking!" he exclaimed with clear shock in his voice. I hurriedly picked up one and put it on. A disembodied, flat voice came through the headset, "You humans have failed this habitat".

"We have been watching you all for decades. We thought you would improve this environment but instead you have destroyed it. You have destroyed the beautiful Earth. It used to be our most profitable tourist attraction. That is why we released the virus onto your habitat. It was made to eliminate everyone but those with perfect genes. We hope that you will do everything you can to save this environment." There was a huge pause. "We have decided to give you all a choice. You can either come with us or you can stay on your habitat and repopulate and help fix the environment." I didn't know what to think.

"We can't fix the Earth if we have already destroyed it", I said into the headset. The

others stared at me with confused looks on their faces.

"If you can't fix or even improve your habitat, we will have to kill you", the voice said. I certainly didn't want to die so I said, "Okay I will explain the situation to everyone else". The line went dead. Dwayne and I took off the headsets. We took turns explaining everything we had just heard.

In the end only thirty of us remained behind. We were left with the weight of the future on our backs.

Meanwhile, on the ship, those eight people that decided to leave were being forced to kill each other until only one remained. How do I know this? Well the survivor, Justis, is now my wife and every year on September the 4th, we retell the events of that day to our adorable daughters. Every year Justis has to describe how she had to slit someone's throat in order to survive. Every year she wakes up disgusted with herself. The memory haunts her dreams.

To this day I still live in fear. I am paranoid that those pods will return and cut me off from this world. It's wearying knowing I may never get to see the light of tomorrow again.

**By Kayla Kingston**

*Year 10, Saint Mary's Catholic College  
WOREE – QLD.*

*Teacher: Mrs O'Reilly*

## Baby and I



Baby and I are like two peas in a pod,  
I am very fond of her every single second,  
We hide under the mat with the rats,  
And we don't even care about the cats!

When monsters are around, she hides with me,  
Her tiny hands with delicate little fingers,  
Cling onto me tighter and tighter,  
She looks at me with her cute, beady eyes  
Which twinkle like stars in the dark night sky.

I rock her to sleep in her small yellow cradle,  
She likes to fidget with the plastic label,  
She's tall for her age just like me,  
She loves to play with toys, along with me,  
Baby and I will always stick together,  
And we will always be there for each other.

**By Joel Varghese**

*Age 8*

*CASULA – NSW*

# Beauty of Life



and full of emotions without which we would not know and feel the life and the world the way we do now! Life has endless possibilities for us to find out, countless destinies to follow and unimaginable depths of knowledge to seek!

Why go far? I will give you my example, after the studies and knowledge I gain from school, when I go home all tired up and there in my doorway, I see the smiling face of my mother, her eyes sparkling with love for me! That is the moment when all my tiredness just... VANISHES! And I feel like the luckiest person on earth that I am Blessed with such a caring and loving mother!... That... is the beauty of life!

Our being human and having emotions... that is the beauty of life! It distinguishes us, humans, from other creations! Our emotions and feelings are the things that separate us from the machines!... That is the beauty of life!

My dad, he is a doctor, and the satisfaction on his face that I see, when he helps a person in need... That is the beauty of life!

My younger twins, a brother and a sister, I do get annoyed and frustrated when they disturb, rather destroy, my things, but with their small hands when they hug me, and say in such a cute and innocent way, "SORRY MAIRA", that very second, all my anger and frustrations are just... gone, disappeared... just like that! And my heart just fills with love for my siblings! That is the beauty of life!

The beautiful things that nature has created, the mountains so high, the oceans so deep, the flowers so pretty and the birds so sweet, made for all of us, human, to look at and enjoy!... That is the beauty of life!

In my eyes, LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL! It is just the matter of your perception, how you perceive it!

**By Syeda Maira Zia**

Year 8, Aust. Islamic College of Sydney  
MT DRUITT – NSW

**L**OOK around us! We see thousands and millions of things that nature has created, so beautiful and serene that they make us feel part of a magical universe full of endless places to explore! Full of beauty beyond our imagination

## Once Upon a Balloon

**O**NCE upon a time there was a rhinoceros. He was going on a balloon to go on a trip all around the world. He was excited. He said, "I wonder what I will see?"

One day he came back and he brought lots of things home. But his balloon popped and he wanted to go on another holiday. He said, "What will I do?". The bigger rhinoceros came over to him and she said, "It's OK, I have heaps of balloons left". He said, "Really?". She said, "Yes, really". So she gave a balloon to him.

He hopped in the basket and was going up in the air. He was going to Bali and one day he got to Bali. First he looked at the markets and then he had lunch and a swim in the pool. After that big day he had some dinner and then he went outside the

shops to dance. He danced on the stage. He had so much fun.

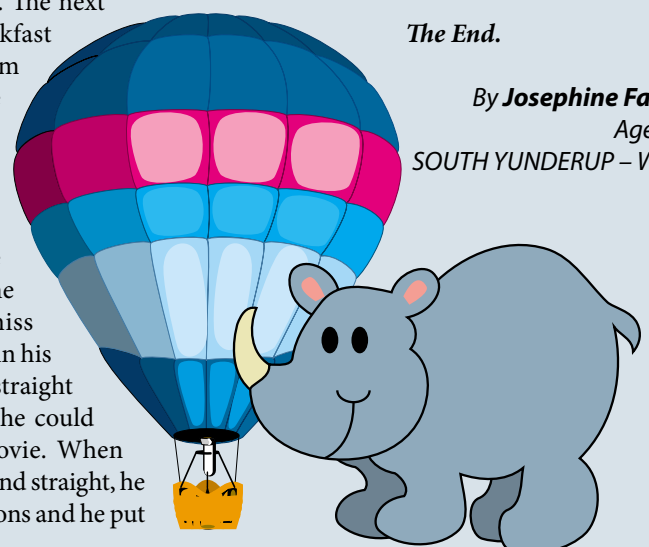
After that big night the little rhinoceros went to his hotel room. The next day he had some breakfast and then another swim in the pool. Then he bought two dresses for the bigger rhinoceros. Then he had some lunch and later some early dinner because he needed to get to the airport so he didn't miss the plane. When he got in his seat, he put the TV on straight away and waited until he could watch his favourite movie. When the plane was in the air and straight, he could press the TV buttons and he put

his favourite movie on. Just as he finished a movie the plane landed. He got everything he bought for the other rhinoceroses and they lived happily ever after.

**The End.**

**By Josephine Fahl**

Age 6  
SOUTH YUNDERUP – WA







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# A DELINQUENT'S NEW WORLD: A BEST FRIEND FOREVER

**I**N AN ordinary school called Yadarashi High School, is a delinquent named Marie Yasana, (which no one knows) a 15 year old girl whose personality is different from other girls, a top student of her school but never socialises with her classmates or her peers. The problem is that she has no friends, it is hard for her to make friends because she is bullied by some girls, because she is hearing impaired, smart, fast, beautiful than most girls and has all the guys falling for her. Will she make a friend or not? Let's wait and see.

As the cool breeze rustled the leaves and grass, the path quiet, the sky quiet, clouds moving quietly until it was disrupted by a sound of someone running fast.

"I'm nearly late for school", said a voice in a hurry.

As the teacher was about to say Marie's name, she came busting in, sat down in her seat and said, "I'm here!"

Everyone went quiet, even the teacher for a while, then the teacher started calling out the other names at the roll, and when she finished, she said, "Today we have a new student, please be friendly".

A girl came in, looking happy to be here, the sparkle in her eyes made Marie look away for a moment, then the girl said in a happy voice, "My name is Amaya, nice to meet you all".

In Marie's mind she said that her name means "night rain", she listed some things like, her hair which is black like shimmering night and her eyes which is dark blue, like falling rain from the night sky. Though she wasn't interested being friends with her. Then the teacher said that Amaya will be sitting next to Marie, Marie suddenly awoke from her mind and shouted, "WHAT!"

The teacher said, "You will be looking after her, showing her around and help her if she needs help".

Marie moaned, "Ohhhh".

The teacher knew Marie was alone and didn't have any friends so she

asked Marie to look after Amaya. After the weird event, the class started doing their work until morning tea and also the time for Marie to show Amaya around the school. When the bell rang for morning tea, Marie walked to her locker (which is where her bag is), took out a packed morning tea with strawberries, apples and four jam biscuits. Then she went to grab Amaya to show her around the school. In the middle when Marie was going to show her the oval, an unexpected event happened, there were boys from a different high school at the front gate, and they looked like they wanted to fight. The boys started fighting with the other boys, Marie ignored the event because she knew they were delinquents from another school. Until a boy showed up, and then she asked in a scary voice, "Do you want a piece of me?"

Then she went crazy, punching the boys, kicking them and then told them to go back where they belong. The conflict ended with a sigh from Marie and she sighed, "That's taken care of it".

She turned around and saw so many faces confused, but the faces turned into happy faces, arms in hair trying to lift Marie up. At the end of the day the commotion died down, Marie was walking with Amaya because their houses were near, about a 10 minute walk to their houses. At

their walk (near Marie's house) Marie sighed, "It was a crazy day today".

"Yeah" replied Amaya softly.

Then Amaya stopped walking and asked, "Can I be your friend?"

There was a silence, but then Marie replied, "I'm sorry, I'm not looking for a friend right now".

There was the silence again, then Marie saw Amaya crying and Amaya ran away. Marie felt very guilty and she said in a low voice, "I'm sorry".

A tear showed on Marie's face. She turned around and went home.

The next day, Amaya was not talking to anyone, including Marie too, the teacher wondered what had happened, but decided not to take action. This horrible event went on for a month, but then Amaya got attacked by some boys near her house, Marie saved her, but it was the same response when Marie wanted to ask her something, a frown and her arms crossed. Then Marie said, "Come to the bench





where you can see the sun settle down tomorrow, I think you're smart enough to know where it is".

Then Marie turned around and walked home, so did Amaya too.

The next day was an ordinary day, nothing happening, except when Amaya was eating her lunch alone, Marie came in to eat with her. At lunch there was only silence between them. At the end of day, Amaya ran to the Yushi bench, the one Marie was

talking about, and when she got there, she saw Marie sitting down on the bench. Marie turned around and suddenly said, "I'm sorry that I said that reply, I just wanted a friend, like a smart, friendly and lively friend".

"I had a change of heart because you are different than most, you didn't put bully letters in locker or put my shoes somewhere, but you, are the one." Marie asked, "Can be your friend?".

There was a surprised face on Amaya's, then Amaya started crying, Marie hugged her and smiled for the first time in her life, Amaya replied, "Yes".

From that day forth, Amaya and Marie became best friends forever.

*To be continued.*

**By Jennifer Hach**  
Year 6, Age 11  
KILBURN – SA

# ELEVATION

Deep within my oaken fortress,  
enveloped by foliage so green,  
jagged crevice and porous stone  
protrude victorious, crowned  
by an ethereal white blanket.  
I am an indifferent observer  
of ages passed and past.

Formed through tectonic forces,  
shaped by sun, wind, rain, ice,  
and stories of years gone,  
I silently watch time unravel  
building from a trickle to  
a great river, moulding  
and sculpting my roots.

I have seen the spark of creation  
and inhaled the smouldering  
smoke of the extinction of species,  
the rise and fall of empires,  
once almighty and powerful,  
empires passing and fading as quickly  
as they once rose.

I bear witness to the remains  
of mankind's civilisation.  
Arrogance, self-proclaimed superiority,  
the ultimate eventuation  
of such a marvellous creation  
and now greed and power leave  
my children scarred and scalped.

Infinitesimal—  
one life no greater than the fish or cow.  
Pebble as proud as peak.  
The ephemeral joys of living in the present,  
not corrupted by man's innate desires.  
Yet only history, our elevation,  
will leave us enlightened — learned.

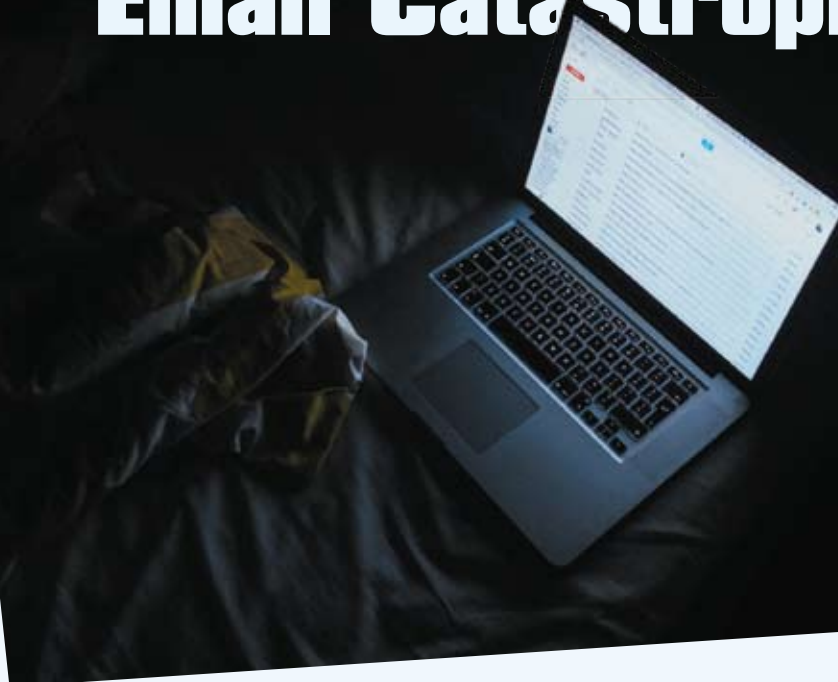
**By Jack Raymont**  
Year 12, Eynesbury Senior College  
ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Melanie Smith

**N**EVER in his life did Jacob think someone's email account would be so... so, now where's my thesaurus. Ah there we go, repugnant, no, too advanced, what about disgusting, nah, sounds like my mum's cooking. Maybe disturbing, not really. I can't find the right word. Anyway, who cares, let me tell you the story.

It was the last day of grade seven for Jacob. And it was also his final period, history. There were only six minutes left until the end of the year. Even the teacher, Mr. Flannagan, sounded so excited to finish the year. Jacob had already finished his task so he had those six minutes to himself. He turned his head to see many of the other students rolling their eyes and groaning at him. He tried his best to contain his laughter. Jacob was well known for being, I guess you could say, 'the nerd.' He glanced at the clock; four minutes left. There was nothing for him to do whilst he waited, so he just read.

After about two minutes of reading, wait no, make that three minutes of reading, he spotted a peculiar strip of paper right under his desk. He quickly snatched it. Little did Jacob know that the contents on that strip of paper would change his second year of high school dramatically. He then wore a sly grin, nah, wore is the wrong word. He grinned a sly grin, no, that's not good either. I think you get the point though, so we'll just continue. He instantly pocketed the strip of paper and switched

# Email Catastrophe



his attention on the clo – DING! DING! DING! Students were pushing and shoving to leave the classroom. The hallway was filled with tumultuous cheering. Papers were being thrown everywhere, some people were even lighting mini fireworks. Jacob had stayed in the classroom, waiting for the hallway to be cleared. He then bid Mr. Flannagan goodbye and departed.

The second Jacob had arrived home, he tossed his bag on his bed and dashed to his computer. He immediately went to mail. He had made sure he was signed out and entered the contents on that strip

of paper onto the computer. He, double, triple, quadruple – er... what comes next – checked that he had spelt everything correctly and pressed enter. The screen that had just loaded had made Jacob's brain disagree with his eyes, yeah, that sounds pretty good. He stood there, dazed. He felt like calling the police, but his eyes were transfixed on the screen. Then it hit him, no not literally. 'How could you do this Mr. Flannagan?'

By **Simon Tawfiq**

Year 6, St. Luke's Primary School  
LALOR – VIC.

Teacher: Mrs. Paolini

## Sad

I was sitting.  
Salt water coming down from my eyes,  
dripping down to the floor.  
I feel like I want to scream but I don't.  
I feel like doing nothing just sitting there  
replaying what happened that made me sad in the first place,  
which makes me sadder.

After that, it makes me angry, but sad.  
Sometimes sadness can lead into anger  
and you let it out a bit too much.  
However, at the end of all that  
there's always a smile.

By **Gracie Bance**

Year 4, St Francis De Sale  
OAK PARK – VIC.

Teacher: Ms Morrison







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