

# OZ KIDS IN PRINT

**Issue 3, 2020**

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*A great tool to  
improve literacy  
in schools!*

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(2019 Sandfire Resources Indigenous Art Award)

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### 'The Frog on the Lily pad'

Front cover image by

**Taya Parfitt**

2019 Sandfire Resources Indigenous Art Award

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Students have been home schooling, on and off now, for over six months. It has been a different and somewhat difficult year for so many. Which reminds us, that we can only do what we can, and we are going through this. The World is going through this challenge together. I see friends in Texas home schooling their children, with one who has just started High School this month.

While I have heard that some students are loving the quiet and somewhat uninterrupted work time, others need more guidance. Friends need to support each other even more. Art entries have come from some schools that have never sent in entries before. The home school life, has meant that some students have taken to art as an escape, and some wonderful work has been sent in. Whatever you are completing, is better than not trying.

I say CAN'T is a CAN with a (k)not(t) in it. So untie that (k)not(t) and give it your best.

Keep being the best you can be,

— Carol

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**KEEP ON WRITING (TYPING)!**

*Carol Dick*  
Managing Editor

Find us on 

# BUSH BALLAD

I heard a movement down the track bellow,  
Jumped on my horse to get my share of gold.  
The stagecoach stands so charming in the snow,  
With treasures inside I doubt I can hold.

As I moved closer to get a better view,  
I kept myself hidden in the quiet bush.  
Inside sat a young lady dressed in blue,  
With such beauty I doubt even I can ambush.

Her hair blond, like gold shining in the sun,  
Eyes glistening, like water in the wind.  
She was laughing with a boy, having fun,  
A sense of bitterness went through my mind.

So out I went, stepping into the open,  
With guns in hand, I can't push the trigger.  
Soon the coach stopped, filled with fear unspoken,  
The girl screams and the light inside flickers.

Out in there I stood, not daring to shoot,  
For fear to hurt my angel, love at first sight.  
I seek a way out, way to start pursuit,  
I think of a way, so I can take flight.

But I see the boy with whom she held hands,  
His eyes filled with anger, stands up to fight.  
I know now is the time to make my plans,  
To kill for the gold or go out of sight.

I took a last glance at my love, my beauty,  
Turned away, leading my horse into a run.  
I can't risk hurting her for some jewellery,  
For she, my angel is the only one.

I went back to camp thinking of her eyes,  
As blue as the sky, as bright as the star.  
Maybe one day, my own chance will arise,  
When my chance comes, I will take her away far.

**By Cecilia Kuang**

Year 9, Glen Waverley Secondary College

GLEN WAVERLEY – VIC.

Teacher: Ronald Schlosser





# My Granny is a Super Hero!!

**"B**YE MAYA!" cried Summer, my school friend. I smiled and waved my hand, then immediately returned to reading *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* by J.K. Rowling. This was the eighth time I was reading it, and I don't think I would ever get bored of it, honestly. "Maya", said a soft voice. I immediately looked up. It was granny. She smiled at me then gestured me to come over to her. I nodded my head then ran straight towards her, then hugged her tightly. She smelt like fresh roses like always. "Oof Maya, are you trying to suffocate me?", she joked. I grinned. Granny pulled off my bag, but I stopped her. "Granny, I'm in year six and I think I can carry my own bag", I mentioned, looking up from my book. "Well, you've got dozens of books dumped in there, it's too much burden on your shoulders", she replied kindly. "Well, if I give you my bag, it'll be too much burden on your shoulders", I replied seriously. Granny hesitated for a moment. I knew she wanted to say something but knew there was no point in arguing. Looks like I had won the argument.

The afternoon sky seemed different. Shades of orange pink and pastel blue all blended in like an acrylic painting. The sun had hidden behind the clouds, creating a silver lining around the edges of the clouds. It reminded me of the saying, "Every cloud has a silver lining" – meaning that there's always good in a bad situation.

I was telling granny about a precept Mrs. Lake had taught us in our English class. After I had finished telling her, I waited for her response, but she was silent. I looked around, then behind me. Nothing, but a young man with an adorable

white and grey puppy, with a collar that read "Daisy". That's when I started to panic. My chest felt heavy and tight. Fear started rising up my chest and my cheeks turned tomato red. Immediately after her disappearance, helicopters started whirling above the city. Children blocked their ears, while babies started crying hysterically because of the ear bleeding noise. I noticed some speedy black taxis turning from every direction. My heart was pounding fiercely. I closed my eyes tightly hoping it was all a dream, then opened them, but there was no difference. I was still in the same city chaos. I started glancing around, hoping to spot granny. It felt impossible to do such a thing with all this running and screaming going on around me. I had no idea what was going on. That's when I spotted her, standing on top of a tall building in the city. At least I thought it was her. I shook my head and sighed. "Granny, how on earth did you get there?" That's when I realised that she was wearing a mask around her eyes, a granny superhero and had made a stylish bun in her greyish white hair. I chuckled. The mask looked like it was made from an old scarf. "Granny!" I yelled, but she couldn't hear me. I crossed my fingers, hoping she could see me through her mask. About six men in black suits and dress pants gathered around granny. From the look on her face, I could tell she was nervous, even though I was fifteen metres below from where she was standing. Granny pulled out a wooden stick, from behind her. A walking stick. I was confused. Granny never used a walking stick. She started spinning it in the air like she was professional in martial arts or something. Maybe she is, after all she is a superhero. A superhero that I never knew about.

Suddenly I had the urge to help her. I started searching my bag for weapons or... objects. "A book!" I yelled, as I snatched the *Chamber of Secrets* out of my bag. By then, granny was helping little children get to their mummies and daddies safely. I ran towards the building, but some men stopped me. "Hang on 'ere young lady", said a man in sunglasses. I wondered if he was wearing them as a disguise. I used the book in my hand and threw it right at him. He fell straight to the concrete below him. I snickered. "Well that was easy", I thought to myself. Meanwhile, granny had already knocked down all six of the men and they were all lying flat on top of the building. Granny smacked the remaining men in black suits with her wooden stick, as he scurried towards me. "Young lady, you should get to your granny I suppose", said the old lady in the scarf mask with a wink. I looked at her puzzled. "But you are my granny", I replied. Granny stared at me, puzzled. "How could you tell?" she whispered, hoping no one could hear her. I chuckled. "With a disguise as obvious as that, I'm sure the whole world could tell that it was you under the mask", I giggled.

She smiled at me. There was a pause of silence. "Geez granny, what was that all about?" I asked quizzically. "Well sweet pea, let's just say that those were some of my enemies back then", she replied, looking around for any more men in black suits. "Will the police get us in trouble?" I questioned. "Um, no. But those men would get in trouble instead, I can tell you that", she replied. Suddenly, all the people around us started cheering and clapping. Even the babies! The parents and children chanted "Super Granny." People also came rushing out of the buildings after they had realised that the danger was over, holding up signs that said stuff like "You are AWESOME!" or "Yay, you did it!". Granny tinted a smile and waved, like she was a celebrity. Who knew that one day I would have a completely ordinary granny and the next day my granny's a total superhero!!

By **Aleena Junaid**  
Year 6, Islamic College of  
Brisbane  
KARAWATHA – QLD.  
Teachers: Miss Surraya Girach  
/Miss Lynda Rifai

# ‘What Doesn’t Kill You Makes You Stronger’



**H**E WAS an animal. He was not a human being. Elle grimaced at the man as he scavenged like a vulture through the bin. Where there should have been a delicate breath of fog in the crisp winter air, a heavy plume of smoke slithered its way into both the air and the lungs. He trudged, barefoot, to the park bench across the street with his pathetic accomplishment of a dirt-covered chip. Wrapping himself in a blanket, which he probably stole, he hugged his knees to his chest.

Obviously the street cleaners hadn’t done their job very thoroughly, for there was rubbish still clinging to the city’s park benches. It is what it is.

Elle shuddered, letting her poor eyes rejuvenate back inside the café. As she sipped on her coffee (which was a bit lacklustre), she waited for her interviewee. Her mushroom bruschetta became the subject of scrutiny under the pendant lights that hung from the sculptural, timber ceiling, illuminating the café with a harsh white light that competed against the sunlight that flooded through the tall, glass windows.

A woman strutted past her table. Elle could have sworn that she smirked at her as she pulled out her wallet from her leather

bag, exposing the two interlinked ‘C’s that spelled out her pride. Did she just raise her eyebrow at Elle’s deceptively simple outfit? Doesn’t she know that money can’t buy happiness? Elle instinctively stretched and flicked her hair, uncovering her fake Cartier necklace.

Elle’s gaze wandered back outside, where the homeless man’s grimy toes poked out from under the blanket. He obviously needed a job, but instead he was lazing around on the bench hiding under his ripped hoodie. What he probably didn’t understand was that nothing will work unless you do. Begging is not work, not that he was doing it. Elle was the perfect product of hard work; people didn’t understand how difficult it was to go through years of schooling (pre-school and primary school and high school) so that she could finally take over her father’s diner.

Outside, the homeless man seemed to be ranting to himself. Then, he pointed at the air in front of him and exploded into hysterical laughter, which then evolved into a coughing fit. So, he was a junkie. What goes around comes around.

Suddenly, he began walking towards the café. Elle had never feared for her life more as he continued to trudge through

the door. That is, until he introduced himself as her interviewee and offered her his soiled hand. His bipolar emotions now seemed to materialise into a polite smile, conveniently, but it could not hide his ripped, faded hoodie and his overgrown beard.

“So”, Elle recoiled at his hand and sat down, crossing her arms, “Tell me about your experience”.

“I was employed for a few years at the bistro down the street, with a range of responsibilities as both a waiter and —”

“I meant your life experience.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“Parents kick you out? You run away?”

He calmly explained that he was a war veteran; he must have been extremely skilled in the art of lying.

“Much of this job entails—I mean, calls for—you to be writing down the orders of customers.

“I am very much aware of what this job... entails.”

Elle glared at him, waiting for him



to respond to her question, but his incompetent mind did not register her expectations of him and they sat in silence. His eyes darted around the café, unable to focus on Elle.

"So can you write?"

He paused before replying with a robotic "yes", his expression remaining blank. Until his mouth broke into a wide smile. His laughter was uncontrollable as Elle watched him in horror, feeling the gaze of everyone in the café on her. He clasped his hand over his mouth.

"I am so sorry."

"Excuse me, there is absolutely nothing funny about this job position! How dare you laugh at the woman you wish to call your employer. Is it because I am a woman? How dare you!"

"My apologies, I didn't mean to laugh ma'am. It's not something within my control, but I assure you that it won't affect my work."



**H**AVE you heard your friends or relatives babbling on and on about ghosts and monsters? Well, I didn't really think this stuff was real until the day I turned ten, I was thinking maybe they were right. It was a foggy October night and I was sleeping in my bed after a long, tiring afternoon. I couldn't get a blink of sleep that night and I was staring into pure darkness. The grandfather clock chimed. I counted the chimes. DONG! DONG! DONG! DONG! DONG! DONG! DONG! DONG! DONG! DONG! 12 chimes. It was midnight.

"What are you on?" Elle suspiciously looked at him.

The homeless man looked at her with confusion.

"Do you mean to inquire what I am being treated with?" he asked. "Largactil... for my schizophrenia", he reluctantly added.

Elle cleared her throat, straightening up.

"We are out of time. I will contact you when I reach my final decision." She paused. "How will I contact you?"

"My phone number is on the contact sheet."

Phone?

Elle breathed a sigh of relief as he left the café. Through the window, she could see him wander aimlessly around outside before returning to his bench, kneeling down with his upturned hat. She scoffed. Why was it that homeless men could have money dropped into their hands while

Elle, who had suffered the emotional turmoil of education, had to endure the arduous task of climbing the ladder of schooling to assume her father's position at the diner? As her life coach would say, "If you get knocked down, then get back up. It's that simple".

There are certain universal truths in life:

What the mind can conceive, it can achieve.

The homeless man fiddled with the twenty cent coin in his upturned hat.

Do or do not, there is no try.

He just needed to find another job.

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

He laughed.

**By Antoinette Luu**

*Year 11, Sefton High School*

*SEFTON – NSW*

*Teacher: Ms Um*

I sat up in my bed and peered across the gloomy room. Then something caught my eye. A light shadow ran across my cupboard wall and then disappeared, as something fell on my face. It was a piece of paper and as I turned on my lamp I saw it was a poem. I was just about to read it when the light turned off. I tried to flick it on but it was turned off by the switch.

I looked down. Under me was my sister, Poppy sleeping at the bottom of our bunk bed. 'Sophie' whispered a ghostly voice. A chill ran up my spine.

All of a sudden, my eyes flashed and I could see in the dark! The poem didn't say much information exempt for a few random squiggly words that made no sense to me. This is what it said:

*Woosh!*

*Long ago, in the olden times we ghosts used to lurk around,*

*But when more of us formed, we tried to run but were found.*

*But one day, a human, with the darkest brown hair,*

*Will find us, unlike the other ones to spare!*

*Nowadays, we follow her, in the darkest hours of night.*

*She might get scared or stay awake in fright, But that's no use, because soon she'll find out that she's unlike other sights.*

*For when we're around she can see like a owl's eyes!*

*So look out, for we want your power.*

*We'll follow you 'til we drain your light!*

"So it looks like bunch of ghosts are looking for me and want to take my 'power' of seeing in the dark but don't ghosts already have that power? And they take it by... draining my light?"

"What does that mean?" I thought. I looked down. "Poppy? Poppy! Are you awake?" I whispered. But then, there was no use asking, because well, she was gone. Then something caught my arm. Something cold and icy. I looked up. I thought I never would see one, since they were invisible, but to my disappointment, they were there. Right in front of me. Ghosts.

**By Zaina Fahim**

*Year 5, Cambridge Primary*

*HOPPERS CROSSING – VIC.*

*Teacher: Miss McDonald*

# BLAZE FIRE

**S**URROUNDED by the desert sand Thomas lay under the dead tree helplessly sprawled on the dry, hard sand. He wearily sat up to take in his surroundings: a few dead trees and crumbling buildings. Pulling himself up, Thomas scanned the horizon for any signs of rain. Phew! If there had been any rain at all then he would have to seek shelter in the buildings and most dead-gone buildings would be cramped with stalkers and infected, dozens of them. The only thing keeping them away from the outside was the blistering, hot sun. Thomas slowly trudged over to his supply bag. Maybe he had enough food to keep him fed for three days or so.

It was approaching nightfall when Thomas heard an inhumane scream pierce the air. He was startled, confused and scared. The infected never came out in the desert, even when it was night time. He scrambled over to his supply bag and grabbed his pistol. 'Locked and loaded', he whispered. From the top of the tree Thomas could see everything around him and with over a hundred bullets he could take down quite a few infected.

A dark figure appeared in his sight. Running like an animal... an infected. He took aim and pulled the trigger. A loud bang rang out across the desert and the body slumped lifelessly to the ground. 'Damn it!', Thomas cursed. He hadn't put on silence mode which was really bad because then all the infected in the area would hone in on one location, his.

Everywhere, the infected lumbered and stumbled around eager for the taste of blood. Switching the silence button on, Thomas continued to fire rounds and rounds of ammo – in the cracks of windows and towards trees and logs. "92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100!" Thomas exclaimed as the gun clicked uselessly out of ammo. Now he was in trouble!

As soon as the firing stopped the stalker-things, more powerful

and intelligent than the normal infected would come out – biological weapons of assassination and war, used by the evil organisation PHOENIX, but the organisation was not smart enough to hold these weapons in captivity, and so they escaped. There was mass murder and slaughter and to make things worse sun flares were acting up and soon they struck Meridian and the planet. Society fell apart while everything turned into

anarchy. The government was forced to take drastic action but PHOENIX had arrived first and developed a virus for population control, a flu that they would target towards "unimportant" places, except it went wrong. The virus mutated and took over the whole world leaving only a few places that remained safe.

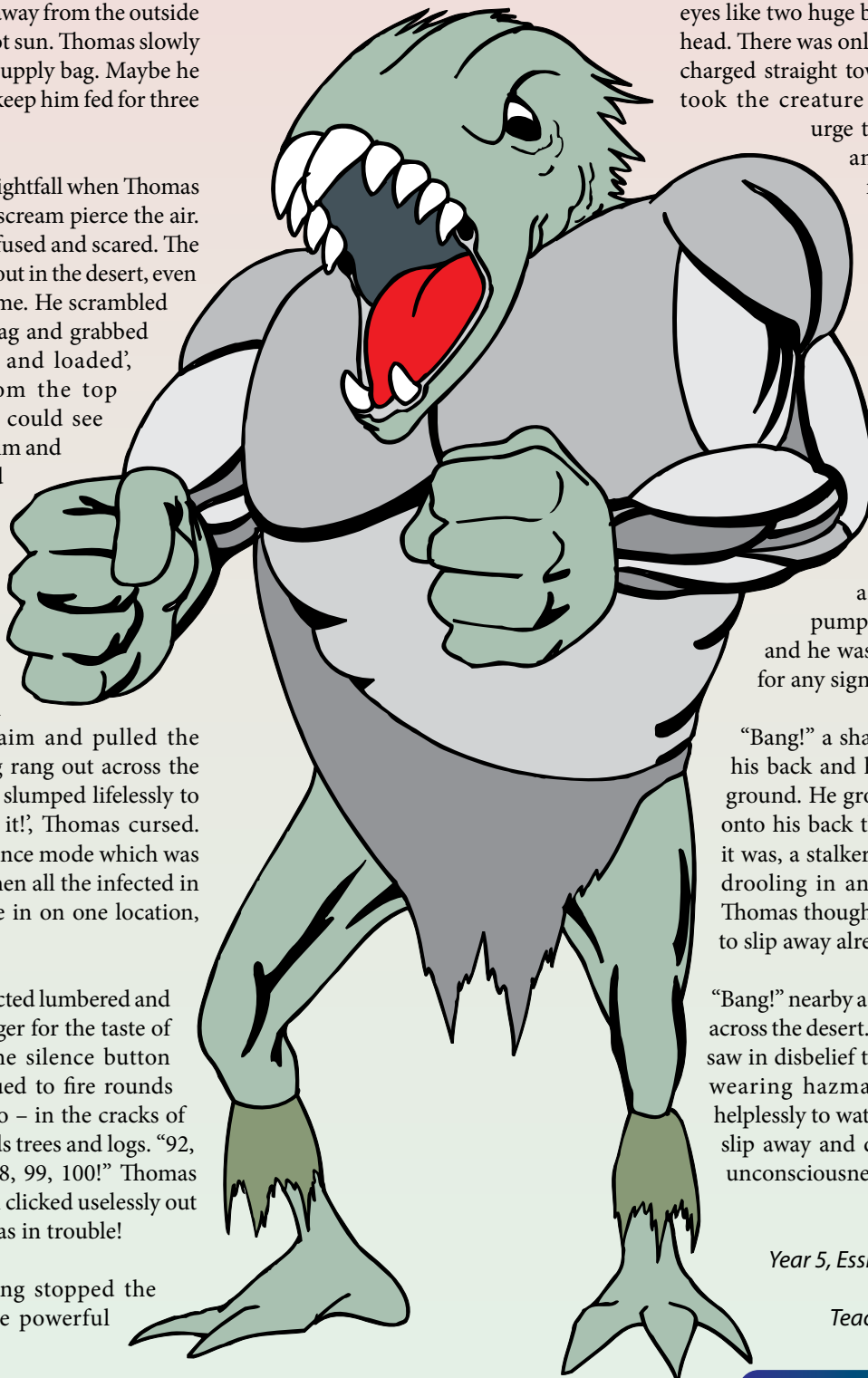
Now one of those same creatures that started this whole mess was heading straight towards Thomas, fangs bared and eyes like two huge bulbs on the side of its head. There was only one option. Thomas charged straight toward the stalker. This took the creature by surprise, but its urge to kill soon took over and it launched itself right toward Thomas.

He quickly side stepped the creature and it slid on the hard, dry sand bashing right onto the log. The stalker looked up but Thomas was already on top of the crumbling building, his eyes stinging with pain from all the sand and dust. Adrenaline pumped through his veins and he was fully alert and ready for any sign of danger.

"Bang!" a sharp pain shot through his back and he was thrown to the ground. He groaned and rolled over onto his back then looked up. There it was, a stalker leaning over his face drooling in anticipation. This is it, Thomas thought and his mind began to slip away already accepting defeat.

"Bang!" nearby a loud gunshot rang out across the desert. Thomas squinted and saw in disbelief that there were people wearing hazmat suits. As he tried helplessly to watch, his mind began to slip away and darkness took him to unconsciousness.

By **Gabrie Goldrick**  
Year 5, Essington School Darwin  
NIGHTCLIFF – NT  
Teacher: Selena O'Connor





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



# Inside the Fortune Teller's Hut

**C**ORA lived in an abandoned basement of one of the oldest hotels in France. She was just over twelve years old and she lived with her mother. Together they were hardly surviving with only having a single piece of bread for their week's rations. Just after Cora was born her father abandoned her mother, leaving nothing but a small cloth bag. The bag was now Cora's only possession and she carried it everywhere she went. Today, as Cora came back from the bakery, she passed a small fortune telling hut. Cora often wondered about her father and who he was and when she saw the hut, she felt as though the answers she longed for could be inside waiting for her. So, with the little money Cora had, she entered the hut.

Inside, she found an old woman sitting on a stool playing a flute. The lady paused, turned around and smiled. "Welcome, take a seat." She gestured to a stool beside her. Cora silently took a seat and took a small coin out of her pocket, but the lady stopped her and softly said, "Keep it – you need it more than I do." Then she went on, "What is it you were after?"

Cora shifted in her seat. "I would like to see my father."

Cora expected the woman to fetch her crystal ball, but instead, she told Cora to close her eyes while she played the flute. After that, the world faded, and Cora fell into a deep slumber...

Cora stood up and introduced herself. "I'm Cora."

The man nodded and walked off. Cora adjusted her cloth bag on her shoulder and followed him, bewildered by his actions.

Cora fell through the sky at an alarming pace. Massive, gleaming snow-capped mountains stood before her eyes. Bright blue sky spread above her and white, fluffy clouds floated in the distance. Cora spotted glistening crystals on the snowy mountains and thought of all the riches she could make some day. But before she could end that thought, she landed hard on the ground, bruising her backside, and regaining her senses. An icy wind chilled Cora to her bones. She looked frantically around for somewhere warm but found herself walking in circles. Knowing nothing about her surroundings, Cora sat down on the powdery fresh snow and gazed up at the peaceful, snowy scene around her. Soon enough, she found her eyes closing and her body collapsing into the thick, wet snow.

What seemed to be hours later, a hand softly tugged at Cora's shoulder. She opened her eyes and turned her tangled body to face the man above her. The first thing she knew just by looking at him was that he was a hunter. A quiver was slung over his shoulder and he held a bow and arrow in his hands.

"You should not be out here all alone, it is very dangerous", the man said seriously.

After a while, the man turned back and asked Cora to stay very close to him from now on. Cora noticed the fear in his voice and warily eyed her surroundings, checking for any possible danger. A dense forest stood before them, sending a shiver down her spine. As they wandered closer, Cora noticed a stone path leading inwards. Large trees stood before them, covered in vines and moss. The forest floor sparkled with frost and a thick layer of mist prevented Cora from seeing what lay beyond.

Cautiously, Cora followed the man as he stepped onto the path. They trudged through fog for minutes, the stones crunching beneath their feet. Suddenly, the man stopped. Reaching to grasp Cora's arm, he whirled around and began to hurry back down the path. Confused, Cora looked behind her. Her eyes widened, and her mouth dropped. Just a few metres behind them was a single white tiger staring at them from within the bushes.

Cora shrieked and the man strung his bow. Just as he aimed his arrow, the tiger lunged at them. Unable to put up any kind of defence, they bolted.



“Keep running!” the man yelled.

Cora didn't need to be told twice, she raced on, ignoring the scratches and bruises she was receiving. The more they ran, the bigger and thicker the trees got.

Suddenly the man shouted, “MOVE!”

But it was too late, the ground under Cora's feet became soft and she sank through the ground.

A bright light surrounded Cora as she floated through the air – somehow, she had gone through the ground and entered some sort of maze. With a bump, Cora was lowered to the ground. Utterly confused and frightened, she glanced around her, seeing nothing but hedges and gloom. The hairs on her arms and legs rose, the eerie silence making her shiver.

Then a growl came from behind her and a bright shield of light blazed before her eyes. Cora gasped as she recognised the tiger from the jungle, who was currently being lowered to the ground in a ball of light. Cora realised this was how she had travelled from the forest to the hedge maze.

When the tiger hit the ground, Cora quickly got up. She ran into the maze with the tiger at her heels. Cora twisted and turned through the maze. When she came across dead ends, she had no choice but to make her way through the hedge wall, and soon enough, she was covered in nasty scratches.

After she had been running for a while, Cora looked back and, to her relief, she had lost the tiger somewhere in the maze. She walked on, allowing the maze to guide her through its walls. When she could go no further, Cora realised she had reached the very centre of the maze. Noticing a small tunnel in the ground, Cora decided that it was best if she got away from this place, aware that the tiger was still roaming within the hedge walls. She crawled down the tunnel into darkness, smelling hints of smoke and ash. Shadows crept on the walls but Cora held her chin high and kept crawling, not turning back.

Soon Cora came to an underground chamber. Polished pine wood covered the walls, which were engraved with flowers and musical notes. Hovering in the air was a flute. Suddenly a massive urge to touch it flowed through Cora's body. A growl came

from behind her and she looked straight ahead. Cora ran forward and touched the flute just as the tiger pounced...

Cora woke to the sound of a flute. Her eyes flickered open as she took in her surroundings. She was back inside the Fortune Tellers Hut. The old woman was softly playing the flute.

“What happened?” asked Cora, still completely stunned.

“You, my dear, just met your father”, the lady replied, receiving a gasp from Cora. “That was him, just before he tragically was killed by the tiger.”

Cora was speechless – she was saddened but also confused. She still had so many questions left unanswered, and yet, she had found out who her father was and wasn't that what she had always wanted?

“Come back tomorrow”, the lady said, her eyes twinkling.

**By Amelia Swift**

*Year 7, Prince of Peace Lutheran College*

*EVERTON HILLS – QLD.*

*Teacher: Elizabeth Edwards*

## Un-Australian Corona-crime

One fine summer morning when I came to school,  
I saw that a crime's been committed  
I dropped all my books and I charged for the door  
To see if it has been repeated

Confirmed. The offence had spread well through the school  
Through shops, chemists, restaurants and malls  
The crime that I witnessed was not very cool  
Some Wierdos had stolen the rolls.

Not those with bacon or cheese. Not at all!  
Not curlers, that boil in a pot  
The rolls that had vanished from schools and from malls  
Were... toilet rolls... believe it or not!

They later discussed this worldwide on the News  
“The virus attacked us! Get set for the worst!”  
I wonder to date, what they do with the rolls  
When stricken by hunger or thirst?

**By Elizaveta Fedotova**

*Year 6, Perth College*

*Mount Lawley – WA*

*Teacher: Ms Karalis*

# BOOK REVIEWS

Lockdown is a great time  
to catch up on reading!

Reviews Coordinator:  
Meredith Costain

## **Scribbly Gum Secrets**

by Dannika Patterson and Megan Forward  
(Ford Street Publishing)

Cooper, Max, Layla and Charlie go on a bushwalk with their mum. Charlie, the youngest, is very curious about the scribbles he finds on the gum trees. Where have they come from?

*Scribbly Gum Secrets* is a great book which shows all the amazing things you can find when you're out on a bushwalk. We really enjoyed the rhyming throughout the book. It also has fantastic illustrations and a lovely ending. This book is suitable for 6–10 year olds and will be enjoyed by readers who love nature and rhyme. It's a very nice, calming book for snuggling up in bed with.

Rating: ★★★★★★★ [8/10]

— Tia Dong and Inez Johnson, Year 4,  
Fairfield Primary School, Vic.



## **The Phoenix Files: Contact**

by Chris Morpew (Hardie Grant Egmont)

In *Contact*, the second book of the thriller sci-fi series *The Phoenix Files*, three teenagers continue to find clues to uncover the mysteries of their town, Phoenix.

In the first book, *Arrival*, Luke, Jordan and Peter find out a shocking secret. They hear Noah Shackleton, the most powerful man in Phoenix and the reason they arrived there in the first place, discussing a deadly plan to wipe out the 'human plague', with only Phoenix surviving.

Their main goal in this book is to find a way to contact the outside world for help, as there are no phones in the town — that we know of. Meanwhile Peter has a huge crush on Jordan, but Luke also has feelings for her, and they start fighting over her...

I recommend this series for ages 11–14. I loved it as I always felt like I was right there, in the middle of the action. In the tense moments I was biting my nails, in the moments of success I was chanting 'Yes!'.

Rating: ★★★★★★★ [9/10]

— Zac Kurzbock, Year 6,  
Clifton Hill Primary School, Vic.



## **Puppy Diary #3: The Pupstars**

by Yvette Poshoglian, illustrated by Phil Judd (Scholastic)

One morning, Archie woke up to find his owner watching the news. They saw that Dion, the famous dog, was visiting their town. Archie was so excited he wanted to tell his doggy friends straight away, so he left home to go to doggy daycare with scruffy hair. Little did he know that Dion was going to Archie's doggy daycare to make a TV ad! Will they tease him about his scruffy hair?

I enjoyed the book because it was so cute with the puppy ad and the drama was in the right part of the story. I like how the author describes the feelings of Archie, but it would be good to read more about the emotions of other characters.

This book would be suitable for TV doggy lovers aged 6–9.

Rating: ★★★★★★★ [7/10]

— Tia Dong, Year 4,  
Fairfield Primary School, Vic.





## Game Day: Championship Collection

by Patty Mills and Jared Thomas, illustrated by Nahum Ziersh (Allen & Unwin)

Patty Mills plays footy for his school. After the game one day, he threw the footy into the ball bag like a basketball. His coach (who was actually a basketball coach who was substituting that day for his real coach) asked Patty if he wanted to try out for the basketball team. Patty didn't think he was any good at basketball, but he wanted to give it a try.

How does Patty go at the trials?

Will he make the cut?

Will he be the next big star?

Reading this book made me very happy. Patty Mills is my idol because he is the first Aboriginal to play NBA, and the third to play for Australia, and he shows great leadership. It is my dream to meet him one day.

Suitable for readers aged 10+ who love sport and inspirational stories.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★★★ [10/10]

— Jonty, Year 6, Tucker Road Bentleigh Primary School, Vic.

## The Book of Chance

by Sue Whiting (Walker)

Chance Callahan is absolutely no ordinary girl. When a fancy reality TV show starts



filming at her house, Chance uncovers a deadly truth — one that will change her life forever. Chance is now a nobody, lost in the pages of time itself, buried in lies. Nothing is true.

I loved this book. It is definitely one of my favourites, action-packed and full of adventure. Chance is a daredevil trying to find her place in her black and white world.

I recommend it for readers aged 10+ who

love action, adventure, mystery and crime.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★★★ [10/10]

— Isobel Heer, Year 4, Geelong Lutheran College, Vic.

## Coco: Big City Kitty

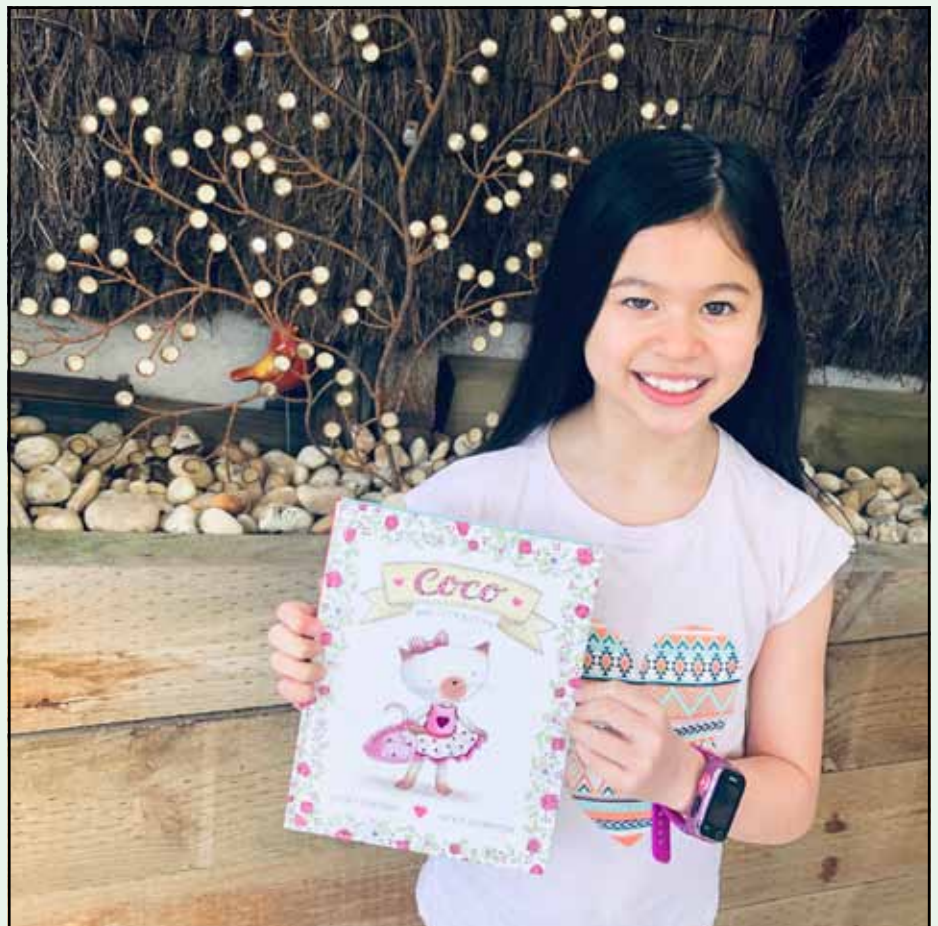
by Laura Bunting, illustrated by Nicky Johnston (Scholastic)

I love this book! It has wonderful language features and it's a magnificent and very cute story! It's about a sweet, lovely kitty called Coco, who loves her life. Coco is very grateful for everything!

There's a thing you should know about Coco — she hates bugs. So when her parents say they are moving to the country, she is not happy. But of course Coco is grateful for everything, so when she sees the house she feels better. This is a nice friendly book. It can also give you some good ideas of what to do if you're bored. Suitable for young readers up to age 7.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★★★ [9/10]

— Mia Jorgensen, Year 4, Fairfield Primary School, Vic.



# The Beauty of Friendship

**T**HAT DAY. That day had finally come. Starting primary school. Most may think it's an easy and straightforward transition, but not for little old me who was shaking in her freshly polished Clark velcro shoes. I felt like I was being chased by a pack of wolves. My heart was racing, my thoughts in a panic. I expected to be eaten alive by these unknown children. I wanted to escape the eerie environment I was about to face.

As mum fastened me into the car she kept reassuring me that "it'll be fine", but deep down I knew she was just humouring me. I was trembling like a crisp winter's leaf. Her sympathetic words went in one ear out the other, and she simply didn't understand my fear.

As we arrived, I was preparing myself for defeat. The tall metal fence, the long dark halls, the ghost town-like playground. It was as if I was about to enter a prison. The moment I had been dreading had come – the time to say goodbye to mum. She cupped my cheek with her warm, smooth hands. She tucked my hair behind my ear, and softly pecked my forehead. That touch, that warm mother's touch. The touch that comforted me, made me feel at ease. That was the soothing bond I did not want to leave. Once again, she uttered those same words in a reassuring manner, "It'll be fine". It was like separating a nesting bird from its mother, punishing and cold-hearted.

Shortly after what felt like the hardest and most heartbreaking moment in my life, I was chauffeured to my classroom by my new teacher, Ms Lang. Ms Lang had a beastly look to her with her straw-like, lifeless hair, her skin as cold and white as a winter's moon, her thick black eyeliner tattooed across her waterline. If I am being honest, she resembled a witch. She told me to sit next to another new girl, Lilly. She exclaimed that I should stay by her side for the day and to look after her. Being the considerate leader I was, I took the initiative to plonk myself right by her side. Personal space and common courtesy out the window, I practically sat on top of her. Her dimpled and delicate

face turned to me where I was hit with a confused look.

"Hi I'm Eve", I bravely said.

"I'm Lilly", she shyly replied.

That was it. An awkward introduction which forced her to get up and leave. This was what I had been fearing. Being judged, not being accepted.

I felt stunned, in a way cheated. I was so tense it felt like my bones could pierce through my skin. I had to be strong. I had to do what Ms Lang told me. So, after Lilly got up and left to sit somewhere else on the miserly rag carpet, like a little creep, I followed her everywhere resembling a tiger cornering their prey. I wasn't leaving her side. Wherever she went, I followed. This ignominious cycle continued into the late morning up until recess time. Unfortunately, at this point Lilly practically had no choice but to play with me.

As the bell chimed, children stormed to the playground as if there was no tomorrow. Lilly and I reservedly walked over together to the swing set, beginning conversation. Something special I noticed about Lilly was that our personalities aligned. We shared similar interests. We just clicked. As Lilly and I were rhythmically swinging, I felt warm and happy. I finally felt like I belonged. The glorious golden sun radiated its warm haze.

The fluffy, white pillows of clouds gently waltzed over us. These feelings were foreign to me. The cool breeze ruffling our hair, our laughter filling the spring air. At this special moment we had no cares in the world.

Looking back, I truly made a fool of myself. What was I thinking, following her around at ALL TIMES just because the teacher said to stay by her side. But guess what, I wouldn't change my peculiar character for the world: mum was right, it was fine.

Fast forward twelve years later and the rest is history. I have learnt that throughout life you will meet an individual whom resembles no other. You could converse with this person from dusk 'till dawn and never get bored. You could tell this person anything and everything and they will never under any circumstance judge you. This person your kindred spirit. Your soulmate. Your shadow in the darkness. They are someone who can be pensive with you in a snapshot of gloom. Somebody who can remain with you in an hour of anguish and deprivation. Someone who loves you unconditionally and grows with you. That is a best friend. That is Lilly.

**By Elena Piantadosi**  
Year 11, St Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann





# The Flood

**I**F IT rained much longer, the ducks would drown. It had been raining for a week and half. School had got cancelled when the weather forecast predicted more rain already. My homework was overdue. But that didn't matter. It was like an extra holiday.

Every afternoon, I would kayak to Ben's house. Sometimes, he would come kayaking to my house. We would make paper boats and race them. After some time, the rain would batter them and allow them to sink.

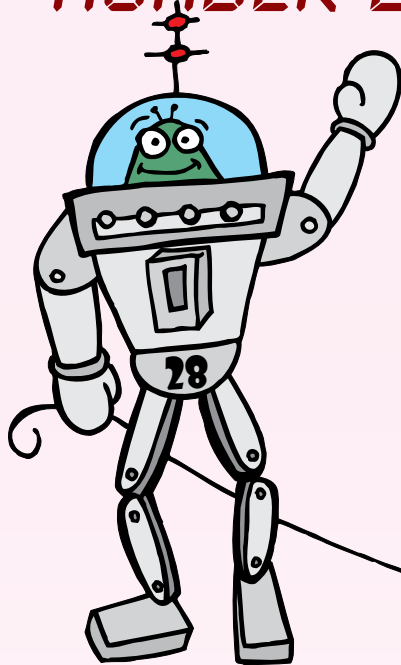
This Wednesday, the rain had stopped but water level was still the same. Me and Ben paddled to the flooded street. Just as we were about to race our boats, we heard screaming and the sound of the cars crashing. We turned our heads. A huge wave was heading our way. Suddenly, my small box radio turned on, "Dam has collapsed, please stay indoors".

Time seemed to slow down as the wave came towering towards us. I quickly shouted Ben and noticed the danger. He gave me a quick nod. The wave was only metres away from us.

We both push off our boats and started kayaking rapidly. Ben had just made it but still I had metres to go. The wave was just about to hit me. I quickly jumped up and clanged on to the balcony. Water from the wave splashed on my feet as it rushed away, dragging my kayak. My friend was staring at me wide-eyed. I gave him a thump up, but I couldn't hold myself up with one hand. Before I knew it, I was gone with a splash!

By **Oneth Sugathadasa**  
Year 5, Eagle Junction State School  
CLAYFIELD – QLD.

## NUMBER 28



**C**RASH, crash! Aah! Bang! Eeeh! Professor Spic's celebrated robot 'Number 28', who was supposed to help the village, was instead doing the opposite. People who were outside to see Number 28 were now rushing inside houses, nervous old ladies hiding under the covers of quilts and causing Professor Spic a lot of complaints and trouble.

There was no point in listening to the radios or watching the television because the wires were damaged. "There's no way anyone can control Number 28", I mumbled. I knew my uncle Spic was busy, and so was my father who was a news reporter.

"I am going to fix Number 28", I announced.

"I'm coming too!" my younger sister Maisy cried.

"I don't know, Maisy... okay", I sighed.

I grabbed Maisy and we looked for a rope.

Once we found the rope, I ran with Maisy. We ran closer to Number 28. I boosted Maisy onto his foot. She helped me up. If I could somehow get up to his tummy and open the door to get to the batteries it would be great!

"I know!" Maisy cried, "Give me that rope."

I gave Maisy the rope. She made a small loop the size of the handle on the battery-room door and then, holding the opposite side of the rope, she threw the loop like a pirate to the handle. It fit perfectly. Maisy

tugged the rope. Her force made the door to the batteries open gradually. We climbed up the rope. I loved how much attention we were getting, with people cheering. We made it to the room where the batteries were stored. Both of us pushed past the batteries and the wires. Maisy brought the rope with her. We untied the loop from the rope and made a new one tightly around the wires.

Finally Number 28 stopped moving. He had enough strength to stand up though. We shoved back past the batteries and Maisy lassoed the handle of the open door again. We slithered down the rope like we were at the park going down the pole. Then we slid down Number 28's foot. There was loud applause. We had saved the village!

As for my uncle, Professor Spic, he showed he was sorry by fixing the electric wires! After that, my father let me and Maisy talk on the radio and on the television about how we did it and how it felt.

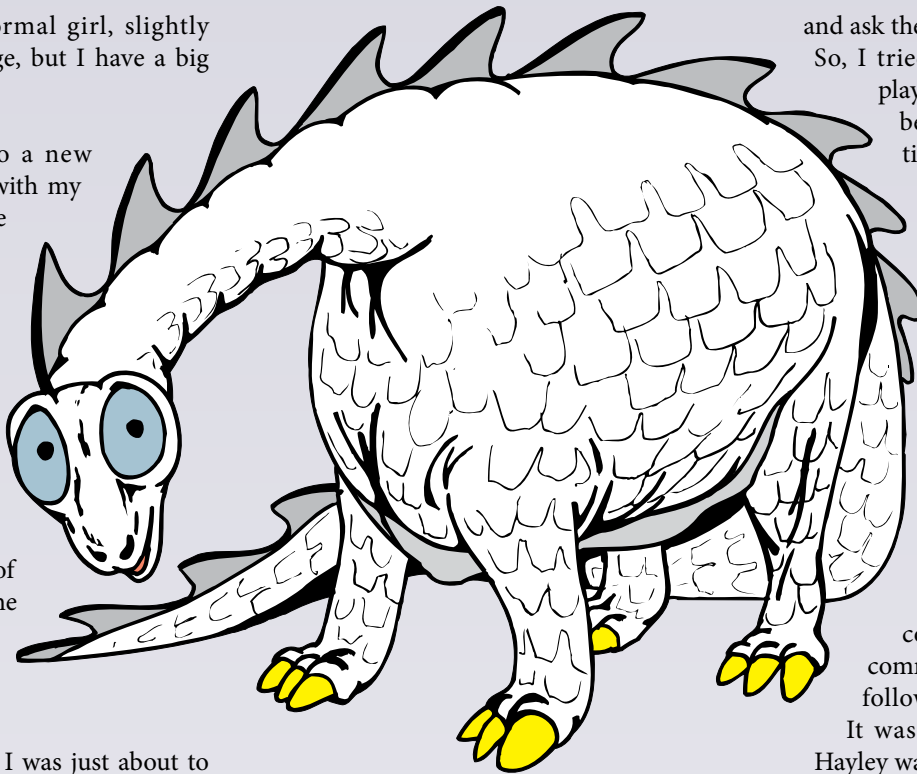
And we became heroes.

By **Nethya Wijesekera**  
Year 3, Gordon East Public School  
GORDON – NSW

# Secret

**I** MIGHT be a normal girl, slightly shorter for my age, but I have a big secret.

I recently moved to a new school 2 weeks ago with my parents, since they've just changed jobs. I was a bit shy and not a brave person. I couldn't make friends by myself. I could see people having so much fun in the class and at the playground, which made me feel bad. At recess, I spent most of the time drawing on the dirt. It's hard making friends, and it was my dream.



But one night, when I was just about to go to sleep, the curtains flew open. A gust of freezing wind blew open my door. And at that millisecond, the coolest dragon flew into my room. The dragon had misty ice around him. He was white, and spiky with long daggers at the side of his mouth. Hey, didn't I draw that dragon at school? Anyway, I knew about dragons, and it was a male, because of the sensors at the back of his neck. He was about the size of two horses, with big wings and shiny claws.

There was the most awkward silence, until the dragon said in his deep, growly voice: "I have seen that you are lonely. I have come here to help you. And during this time, I will give you some magic, well, powers. I hope this will assist you."

Wow! I always hoped dragons were real. And there was a real one standing in front of me now? I was so surprised and speechless. But I had to answer: "Uh... hello! And, did you just s...say magic? What type of magic? Did you pick me because I need help with friends? How did you come here without being seen?" I stammered.

The dragon nodded and said he had an invisibility spell. "By the way, my name is Talon. Nobody can hear and see me except you. But they can touch me. Yes, I picked you because you were in need."

I gulped. "So, what exactly do you mean by magic? Charms?" repeated the inquisitive me. The dragon nodded again. "Okay", he said seriously, "tomorrow we start progress and making friends at school. During recess and sports class, I will give you a signal when you get the magic power."

The next day at school, I was acting as normal. I felt relaxed a lot, when he said about invisibility and nobody hearing anything. Talon had to stay in the cupboard during the class, not in the back of the room, because someone was there, and not outside, because it's dangerous.

Deet! Deet! Deet! It was time for sports class! Today we were learning high jump. I'm always bad at it. When it was my turn, Talon winked at me. That was the signal for the charm. I ran up, jumped, and twisted. I repeated the method. As I jumped, I felt as my legs were springs! I did a triple flip, somersault and landed firmly.

Everybody stared at me and everybody's jaw literally scattered across the gym. My score was 12 out of 10!

"Hmm, impressing the class, it's a good start", I thought. I could see smiles on their faces when they looked at me. Now all I had to do was to gather my courage

and ask them to play a bit with me.

So, I tried, and a group of girls played with me. I ended up being the bad guy in the tiggly game. It was not the expected role, better than nothing, though. They played with me at all the lunch and break time. I thanked Talon a lot.

Everything went smoothly for 3 days until I heard people shout Fight! Fight! Fight!

I went around the corridor to see what the commotion was about. Talon followed me quietly beside. It was Harpreet and Hayley.

Hayley was a girl who played with me sometimes, and Harpreet was known as an annoying boy and always bullied other people. He called me shortie the other day.

"What did Hayley do?" I asked the other girl, Sienna.

"Nothing, Hayley did nothing. But Harpreet called Hayley a pest!" Sienna said.

Harpreet was a big boy, and I know Hayley wouldn't win. I gathered all my courage and walked up in front of him. "You can fight me instead!" I exclaimed.

"Oh really? Do you think that someone as weak as you can fight me, Shortie?", Harpreet said confidently.

"Don't be so sure..." I muttered.

"Are you going to give me a charm this time?" I whispered to Talon. "You'll see!" Talon replied.

Harpreet attacked, and I felt a tingle down my spine. The charm. I was warming up, and suddenly flames shot out of my palms! But nobody saw the flames except Harpreet. As I walked towards him, he ran away, looking scared. Hayley and the other kids cheered.



After that, everybody wanted to be friends with me. And Hayley and I were true and best friends now.

One night when it was my second sleepover with Hayley, Talon was on the window sill. "It is time for me to go. My job is done. But I hope to see you again soon," he explained.

"Already? You've only been here for some time like minutes. I couldn't have done it without you! Well, thanks so much for your

help!" I said in a disappointed way. He flew off into the night sky in a whirl.

I guess nothing lasts forever. But hey, I have work to do, going to school. Everything has to go back to normal. I will always remember Talon.

Hmm? A dragon scale badge and a small pair of dragon wings on the windowsill? It was from Talon.

Hayley was calling for me. I placed the things under my bed.

BLING! It was an icy firework in the night sky. With mixed feelings, I turned and closed my eyes. A dream come true with a secret only I knew.

*By Iris Hu*

*Year 4, Box Hill North Primary School  
BOX HILL NORTH – VIC.*

**O**PHELIA'S nose and eyes scrunched together, like an enraged lion, as the warning siren shrieked in her ears. Her dirty foot stepped on a half-eaten ice cream.

"Eugh, Yuck!" she said, as her blonde hair blew against her brown freckles. She limped over to a sewer, trying not to get any sticks or leaves stuck to her. She picked up an empty chip bag and scooped up some water to clean her foot.

Ophelia was picking up litter because her heart cried for this town and all the pollution that had overcome it from snobby people's upturned noses. Suddenly a siren erupted, blaring in everyone's ears. Screams and cries filled the air, like cigarette smoke. Ophelia had been here ever since she was born, she hated having it turn into somewhat of a madhouse. Paint on ancient houses peeled, as stray dogs roamed the streets.

Ophelia was frightened. I need to find Mama! she thought, as tension rolled down her spine. She darted home. Knocked on the door. No one answered. Ophelia sprinted to the garage to see it open! No car. No movement. Just silence. Did Mama leave me? Why would she do that? as Ophelia wandered down Stanley Parks Street – Stanley's Dad is really rich, rich enough to own his own street and park – she started to sob.

"Why so sad?" Ophelia suddenly stopped.

"Be a dear and help me out of this slimy, rodent-filled sewer", Ophelia couldn't blink. "Who's there?"

"I wouldn't advise you to ask again!" he

shouted indomitably. Ophelia felt a rush of confidence take over.

Suddenly, a deafening sound filled her ears, a sound so terrible, a sound like a dying lawnmower. The figure in the sewer was cutting the bars! "AAHH!" she shrieked.

"Do you like my chainsaw?" Blood was painted on his butcher's apron, whilst intestines were leaping out of his pockets.

He vaulted out of the depressed sewer. The butcher was wearing joggers roofed by shower caps with the end of his oversized pant legs scrunched up at the bottom, covering his shoes. His plastic apron protected his ripped dark blue shirt, like a vigilant parent who of which she didn't have. He was also wearing pilot goggles that were planted in his red hair.

Ophelia was sprinting down Jerybmyks Lane, hoping not to get caught, whilst holding on for dear life. The butcher chased after her, chainsaw in one hand, the other hand wearing a blue surgeon's glove, trying to reach for her dress.

"MAMA! MAMA!" she screamed. "HELP ME!" She knew there was no escape from

this lunatic. She needed a plan. Ophelia ran into the woods hiding from the madness.

Suddenly, she heard the faint crunching of leaves." AAHH!" Ophelia screamed, as the yellow collar of her dress was being pulled, causing her to choke. "Help me! Help me!" Her face started turning blue then purple.

"I'm sorry, I didn't know!" the butcher said.

Wait a minute, she thought to herself. Ophelia had heard that voice before. Her face had gone back to her usual shade of peach. She couldn't put her finger on whose voice it was though.

She turned to look at the man. He had taken off his mask. "Oh my god", she whispered.


Her eyes couldn't hold back the tears as they curved around her pink cheeks, dropped further down than her luscious hair, to the dirt that laid below. She knew then she did have a protective parent.

"Papa!" she called. "Is that really you?" The butcher was her father! "B-b-b-but I thought you were... you know..." she hesitated. "Dead I know", he said. "I couldn't do it. I couldn't take the pressure! I was so embarrassed to tell you or your mother, so I just vanished." He took a deep breath in and sighed. "Did mum call you?... Better question did you ever call mum?" Ophelia asked. "Let's not get into that." "All right Dad." Ophelia gave him a hug, as her dad laid a kiss upon her cheek.

*By Djuna Glasson Green*

*Year 6, Greenslopes State School  
GREENSLOPES – QLD.  
Teacher: Mr Papamanolis*





# The Tomb School Canteen

**S**HING! Metal spikes protruded from the ground like crocodile teeth dripping with blood. A white skull miserably perched behind the first challenge. Silence was deafening as the children stood there, stunned and as pale as sheets of paper. Their brains were whizzing with wondrous ideas. Slowly they crouched down and reclined, wriggling like snakes, being careful with every move, every step. Before this commotion arose, three children by the name of Michael, Lucas and Leo frolicked out to play. They had slid down a slide that was under construction; Lucas whizzed down the slide first, the one full of doom and danger...

Suddenly, a zephyr wafted into the tomb and sent chills up their spines.

"Do not give up", Michael encouraged. Michael's words echoed in Lucas's mind. Darkness loomed over them like a storm clouds, and that was their next challenge. They braced for the worst, creeping through at a snail's pace. Michael's encouraging spirit lifted the team like feathers, his words a net for their sanity. Desperately, Leo's hazel eyes squinted into the blackness, hoping the worst was yet to come.

Without warning, the room illuminated, revealing an abyss the size of a six storey building. Torrents of water rushed in like a swarm of locusts, swiftly filling up the pit. But the situation wasn't yet at its peak. Piranhas were natives to these waters, so the team was trapped, stranded in this world of unknown dangers.

Suddenly, a piranha leapt out with so much force that it zoomed up right next to Leo's foot.

"AAAAARGGH!" Leo shrieked. "I want my mummy!"

Just above them, a towering tree peered down at the terrified kids. Days and nights passed and eventually, a piranha lost patience and leapt out creating a dent in the tree! Like lightning, an idea flashed into Michael's mind. He yanked the man-eating fish out from the tree, leaving a crack where the piranha's teeth had pierced.

Rapidly, Michael carved out a boat from the tree trunk and used the remaining wood for oars. Like a tribal drum, Leo's heart pounded but Lucas was going to burst. Slowly, Michael supported Leo into the boat and started paddling to the other side of the obsidian pool.

The tomb's brick walls were grey and dark, with algae growing between the gaps. When their boat hit the shore, the trio scurried away like mice, the brown, musty, cracking roof collapsed behind them. Zig-zagging here, scampering there, wherever they scrambled the roof kept on crashing down. Clouds of dust exploded into the air and particles of the ancient ruin filled their throats like suffocating heat.

Exhausted, Michael leant onto a rock puffing, "I can't take it any longer".

Then by some miracle, the wondrous wall gave way and into a secret chamber...

Colossal Venus flytraps rose up from the ground, framing the fearsome dragon in the distance. Behind the terror lay a scintillating medallion, beckoning the three children. The traps' green mouths hung open, ready to devour the delectable dinner. An athlete, Lucas was used to running like a cheetah and bolted past a trap. The perilous plant lunged at Lucas, but it didn't see another flytrap lunge from the other side. The monsters bit into one another and instead began fighting each other.

The ruthless dragon's dark blue and beady eyes were like a nightmare. Exhaling an angry inferno at Leo, Michael pushed him away just in time. He booted the dragon, disturbing it so Lucas could sneak by and grab the medallion. Leo was so mortified he was running into the tomb's walls and eventually fainted. Carrying Leo, Michael and Lucas sprinted towards the entrance.

Arriving back at the collapsing tomb, luckily, a giant rock fell on top of the malicious dragon. The medallion led the children to a ladder. Suddenly, a strong scent ticked their nostrils. FOOD! It was the canteen but, the ladder had led them into a cupboard.

"How are we meant to get out?", Lucas pondered.

"Does it matter? At least we've got ice-cream", Leo replied.

*By Isaac Huang*

*Year 5, Sydney Grammar St Ives*

*ST. IVES – NSW*

*Teacher: Mr Audas*



**1** 932, Bendigo Australia. The whole household was deathly silent, except for a single leak in the roof. Everyone was sleeping and had been for hours. Footsteps slowly started to echo through the rejected house. The moon reached its peak for half a second glowing through the corridor creating a silhouette of a small child. As the moon fell back down the little child's face was shown, she had short black hair that whipped her face. She wore a dirty white nightgown that fell to her ankles and she was extremely thin. The squeaky door drifts open as the little girl walks into the dead night. She strolled through the damp grass with only her slippers on. Then she came across a miniature cliff.

Hours upon hours she stood in that same position watching over the damaged land until the sun had risen. The girl rushed down the hill to the closest food bank and slid into the long spiralling line. Around 20 long minutes later she was at the front of the line. The man out the front of the shop handed her one loaf of bread and slightly smiled, however the girl did not smile back. Stumbling through the small town she came across a large house. There were many people standing at the gate whispering to each other. The petite girl pushed her way through the eager crowd to see what all the commotion was about. Once she was at the front, she was stunned to see what was in front of her. There were two children her age having the time of their lives while playing tennis. It felt as if that was the sun and the rest of the grey village was orbiting around it. A tall lady popped out of the glowing house, called

the children in and gave the people a foul look. Everyone sighed and left as if they had a chance to live. However the girl stood there for a few more seconds processing how happy those kids were. But soon enough she went on her way back home.

Once she got back to the rejected house she knocked on the small door at the end of the corridor. A muffled voice came from the other side of the door, the voice asked if it was Margret. "Yes it is, I have the bread", Margret answered as she slowly creaked open the door. The room was dark and

# It's 1932



miserable, in the middle there was a single bed with a woman lying in it.

"Mother, are you okay?", the little girl said in a worried voice.

Her mother assured her that she was going to be fine. But Margret could tell that she had lied.

**By Charli Pearson**

*Year 5, St Anne's Catholic Primary School  
PARK ORCHARDS – VIC.*

*Teacher: Mr Mooney*



I do usually wonder if I could eat a rainbow for once  
Then I could eat one for my lunch  
After I finish, I would come home out west  
And I could tell everyone it was the best

Then, I could go back  
Carrying a sack  
To get some treasure  
And that would be a pleasure.

But if everyone did that rainbows will be gone  
And I will then be back to catching corn  
Rainbows are a beauty and dazzling sight  
So why not instead try to fly.

**By Isal Sugathadasa**

*Year 4, Eagle Junction State School  
CLAYFIELD – QLD.*



# *Sustain the Depths of the Ocean*

With soothing ripples  
And calming waves  
A navy blue colour  
With a tide that behaves.

Dive deep inside  
And swim across the ocean  
Watching the creatures glide  
Gracefully in slow motion.

From clown fish and star fish  
To huge sharks and whales  
Rainbow corals like to swish  
Under the creatures' tails.

There are various bright colours  
Out in the sea  
Just looking deep down there  
Will make you feel free.

Our oceans are unique  
Our oceans are special  
Just keep that rubbish to ourselves  
Would be highly beneficial.

Next time you think of throwing that litter  
Think of that thought as being bitter  
We want to keep our oceans neat  
Maybe that I thought would be a little more sweet.

So it's time to sustain  
To let our water remain  
We all love our oceans  
The creatures and the sea

We will all use our water "RESPECTFULLY"

**By Aleena Junaid**

*Year 6, Islamic College of Brisbane*

*KARAWATHA – QLD.*

*Teachers: Mrs Suraiya Girach / Mrs Lynda Rafai / Mrs Ashraf*

## **PLEASE STAY**

I couldn't wait to see him  
In arrival bay  
I can't wait to get there  
I'd been waiting all day

I Impatiently waiting  
Ready to see the one I miss  
When the huge doors open  
I can't see the one I really want to hug and kiss

I'm as sad as a lonely seal alone at sea  
As I'm waiting in dismay  
Then I look up where is he I wonder  
I wish I'd just waste away

Then I see a man with short blond hair  
I have been dying to see  
He's carrying a big guitar  
And is smiling at me

Dad's come home from the army  
From one long year away  
It felt like forever  
And I've missed him every day

Dear Dad, I really love you  
Can you please stay  
I really don't want you to go  
Please don't go away

**By Chloe Petley**

*Year 6e, Central Coast Adventist School*

*ERINA – NSW*

*Teacher: Mr Cooper*





# The Last Concerto

My fingers nimbly picking,  
each plain black and white key,  
the unfilled notes,  
the scrunched-up music sheet,  
titled "My Heart Will Go On"  
the mess of incomplete love song lyrics.

There is a sad symphony in the air  
Which I just want to play  
The sky is just grey,  
Like every single day.  
She is now in paradise,  
where God wanted Her to be.  
But it is not where I wanted her to be.  
She was here,  
but just a moment  
like a night time shooting star.  
She touched my heart,  
like only Angels can.  
I would've held her every minute  
If I'd only known God's plan.  
And here I find,  
Teardrops flowing right from my cheeks  
While trying to play some unknown harmonies.

Come pushing in between,  
My notes seem to sigh,  
The lights to burn pale  
My world disappears  
My surroundings fade  
Until there is nothing,  
but Her.

Her scent lingers  
Like her enchanting smile  
Never close enough to touch  
But just near enough to breathe in  
She is here with me.

I start to play,  
to the beat of my heart  
The music flow through my blood,  
through every vein in my body  
Making me feel alive.  
Until every inch of my body,  
overflowed with vivid rhythms,  
She turned my pain,  
into a masterpiece  
Like nothing else can.

The heart-racing, swirling melodies engulfs my world  
Note after note,  
Measure by measure  
Piece by piece  
There's spirit,  
in the magic that pours out of my fingertips  
sink lightly with grace  
into the plain black and white keys.

I play,  
Because She calls me  
Though She was apart from me  
Now,  
She is closer to me than She ever was  
The romantic symphony flows through my vein,  
And we become one.  
With some broken keys here and there  
That produces the perfect imperfect sound  
With every key hit and a piano string pulled,  
My heartstrings get played in angelic harmony  
lulling my single soul.

The vague chorus  
die softly outside the bright door frame  
Now  
the keys are dead, used by unknowns.  
Now  
She carried away with her,  
the substance of the piano,  
the masterpiece,  
the love of her life.

By **Vivian Nguyen**

Year 11, St Dominic's Priory College

SALISBURY DOWNS – SA

Teacher: Ms. Rathmann





**T**HE UNIQUE sound reverberates through the dark, musty corridor of a gramophone. As I grasp the perfectly polished handle, I hear a faint childish giggle coming from inside. As I look within, I am hit with a blast of natural light coming from the window. In the corner of the room, I see Georgina jiving to the beat. With her feet tapping and her hips swaying slightly, she is in her own world. As she looks out the window in the clear blue sky, it brings her back to her dancing days. Her electric blue eyes have a gleam and her wizened face is beaming. She is in her happy place. She sways back and forth, the beat echoing in her bones; her brain; her heart. As she closes her eyes, she imagines herself holding hands with her husband. When he was there, she was never unhappy. He was everything to her. Her dance partner, her mentor, her husband, her true love. She imagines him tracing her hand, comforting her and reading to her. I see a tear trickle down her weathered skin.

As the music stops, I greet her with a round of applause and she stiffly curtsays. As I walk forward, I stumble into a pink armchair next to a table with a vase of fresh

flowers. Everything has its place; there is nothing without a home. A bookshelf lines the far wall filled with trophies, medals and certificates. 'That was when we danced at Las Vegas.' She pointed to a bejewelled cup. 'And that was when we danced in the Australian outback,' she stated proudly as she drew attention to a golden medal.

I pull a book from the shelf and help her to sit down on the velvet armchair. I study the front cover. The words 'Jane Eyre' intertwine into the curling vines that are pictured on the cover. Georgina's favourite book. "There was no possibility for taking a walk that day, we had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery..."

My voice drones off as Georgina slowly falls asleep.

**By Amelia Robinson**  
Year 6, Ravenswood  
School for Girls  
GORDON – NSW  
Teacher: Sharon Shapiro

## Memories



## The Horse Race



**T**HE HORSE pawed at the ground, a beast waiting for his victory in his race. I knew it was going to crash through all the horses. The jockey looked as fierce as the horse. All of the horses were scared of the fierce racer. I had been training nearly every day just to win this race however, I knew no one would cheer for me.

A rocket was fired, and horses stamped, and it sounded like there was a thunderstorm. The crowd was cheering as loud as they could, and I soon started moving through the field and there I was coming second, and I could see the fierce jockey far away in front of me. A few horses are catching up to me now. I need to hurry! I thought to myself panicking.

I sped up next to the fierce jockey. This is my chance I thought to myself. Suddenly, I was smashed into the fence. The savage creature got back to in the lead. I knew he's determined to win the race, but I wasn't going to let him win easily. I raced up but couldn't reach.

**By Isal Sugathadasa**  
Year 4, Eagle Junction State School  
CLAYFIELD – QLD.



# THE WOODS



**T**HUMP, thump, thump. My heart was beating rapidly. I reached my trembling hand to test the temperature of my forehead, only to find that it was burning on fire. I wiped above my dry, peeling lips to break the sweat pods forming. All I could think about was my precious Lilly. How could I live without her?

I gradually sat up. My bones were rusty and they creaked and ached with each movement. As I looked around me, I could make out the colossal trees standing up tall, surrounding my weak, bony body. They stared down on me like soldiers. The crickets screamed in my ears almost every second, but other than that, complete silence. There was a thick layer of Autumn leaves concealing the moist grass beneath my feet. I could smell the damp wood from the trees here, in the middle of the woods. My legs attempted to raise me but I stumbled as they were as skinny and as weak as twigs.

Unexpectedly, I heard an ear-piercing scream fill the air. It sounded like a child's voice! The only thought that came to mind was my Lilly. I couldn't bear to hear her suffer. I had to save her from whatever pain she was facing. I ran as fast as I could (considering my legs were weak and felt like they were going to snap with each step) like there was a time bomb about to explode if I didn't reach Lilly in time. My hands were empty. No weapon to defend myself. Nothing.

After what was forever, I arrived at an opening. I could see the tiny dots in the sky that appear every night. The crow sky was so black that it looked like it was going to swallow the world whole. In the centre of the small opening, an orange creature lay

on top of the fern coloured leaves. It had a thick coat of fire fur. It also had a small, pointy nose of leather and its mouth was closed tightly. On its abdomen, there was a large patch of snow fur. It was a fox.

Then I noticed it. The thing on its back. It sent a shiver up my spine and I froze still as if every inch of my body was trapped in an underground coffin, unable to escape. There was one massive wound on its back, exposing milk white bone beneath. The animal's hind leg had long, thick claw marks and blood was running down its leg fast. There was thick, maroon liquid rapidly gushing out of its back wound, creating a small pool.

All this made vomit erupt from my mouth and onto the ground below me. Although all this was too much for me, I couldn't just leave this poor creature to die in misery. My hands shook as I reached for a large rock at my feet. As soon as I felt its sharp, rugged edges, I knew it would be perfect for the job. As I slowly stepped closer like the fox was about to pounce at me like a cat, our eyes met. Its eyes told me how scared it was and I lowered the stone. It continued to cry in agony so I decided that I would try again. I raised the stone above my head and counted down from ten. 10, 9, 8. The fox's blood pool reached my feet. 7, 6, 5. I thought of what Lilly could be doing now and didn't know whether she'd be proud of me. 4, 3, 2. The innocent fox lay before me and I felt guilty. 1! My hand quivered slightly before I hit the fox with force on its head with the stone. I saw its eyes widen in shock and pain, before they closed and its head dropped.

What could have caused the wound? How large were the predator's teeth? Suddenly, I caught a glimpse of new, beady eyes

watching me from behind a nearby tree. Its shadow was large and frightening and it looked hungry. Ready to strike.

The creature lunged at me and my only instinct was to run. Run away. Run home to Lilly. I was trying to save a life I'd already lost when I made the stupid decision to go on holidays to a place that was currently fighting in war. I've lost everything. My daughter, home, friends. I have no life. All the people who were on the plane with me are probably dead. In this moment of probable death, I forgot all prayers of joining Lilly. But I was almost certain that I was going to join my dearest wife in heaven.

I desperately clutched onto my life but the beast chased me into a charcoal black cave, making it impossible to run. I couldn't see much but I could only just make out icicle-shaped rocks hanging from the ceiling of the cave. As the beast followed me into the cave, I could hear bats' wings fluttering, desperate to evacuate the cave. I could smell a terrific stench coming from the monster's mouth.

As I walked backwards slowly, trying to get as far away from the creature as I could, my back hit the end of the cave and I could feel the sharp rock dig into my flesh. The creature's claw instantly made an enormous gash across my chest. It was too deep to live. It took my life away from me. Now I will watch over the woods for years to come, praying that my Lilly will stay safe and happy without me in her life.

**By Freya McAndrew**  
Year 6, Greenslopes State School  
GREENSLOPES – QLD.  
Teacher: Mr Papamanolis



# Long Exposure

**T**HE FULCRUM of their droll lives fruitlessly lay at the train station, where they escaped their immutable domestic lives to earn a living. Fuel. Every day. The trains were certainly alluring; they were the epitome of ‘the journey’. An inert and lethargic journey.

The spot next to the metal bench on the right side of the platform was Eleanor’s. She sat there, watching the stringless puppets every day until their fatalistic return to the opposite platform.

Today, Eleanor sat next to the far right bench on platform four instead of three, just to live life on the edge. Her glasses sat on her nightstand at home as she watched the blurry faces of people go by. Each person was nothing more than a smudge in a picture book and Eleanor was the reader who could see, with perfect clarity, the predetermined lives of each character. The trains passively trudged on and the smudges raced to and from work. The presence of their false hopes, ambitions, desires, and schemes wafted in the air like sickening second-hand smoke, and Eleanor suffocated in the midst of it all.

“...assessment of core competency and...”

*Bombastic bastard.*

“You lift, bro?”

*Only the crushing weight of existence.*

“That’s a really good idea, boss!”

*Parasitic sycophant.*

The train horn blared. Eleanor jumped, her breathing becoming shallow. She remembered the awful droning of the truck’s horn swiftly crescendoing into a deafening screech. The tyres shrieked in vain warning. Her bones screamed in response. Bits of glass. Mangled metal.

Suddenly, a dull ache arose in Eleanor’s back. She shifted restlessly in her wheelchair. With the quiver of an empty chip packet and dried leaves, the train zipped past the platform, leaving only Eleanor, the deliriously jubilant janitor, and the ringing in her ears. Eleanor sat on her wheelchair, as useless as wrapping paper tied off with a silk bow.

That’s probably what they thought of her at the office anyway: a useless decoration in the way of the gifts. The taxes remained unfilled while a pathetic nuisance was being helped to the toilet. She did them a favour by getting out of their way. Now they wouldn’t have to silently curse every time they made a terse apology for tripping over this monstrosity of metal.

Eleanor’s gaze meandered to a new flurry of smudges flooding out of a carriage.

“Scuse me miss, would you happen to have the time?” a man asked as he emerged from the train.

Time? Time is a duplicitous, sadistic creature that lures you into the promise of tomorrow, dangling a future in front of you, tempting you to chase that future until one day, you chase it straight down to

hell. Look at these idiots, chasing, chasing, chasing...

“Yep.” Eleanor plastered on a rictus grin, pointing her finger. “Just on that giant board up there.”

The man’s eyes widened as he registered the time and she watched him blend into the crowd of smudges scampering up the stairs. Their haste reminded Eleanor of when time was a fleeting hummingbird whose beauty she could only catch for a transient moment. Now, time was the leech that came with the flood.

The flurry of rats had left the station. Eleanor watched, with a subdued intrigue, the leaves twitch ever so slightly in the weak breeze. The stray pigeon feather may as well have been photographed in place. If there were so much as a fly, Eleanor would have revered its beauty. She counted the loose gravel. Her senses were heightened as she sat in the fixed painting that was the station. Eleanor wrapped her arms around herself, slumping further into her wheelchair—until she heard a faint rumbling.

The clock read 15:29:00. At the sight of the train coming around the corner, the harsh cracks that etched the scowl on Eleanor’s face softened into a hint of a smile. She unlocked her brakes and wheeled herself to the end of the platform. The train carried with it a bracing breeze that tousled her hair and animated the rogue chip packets and bird feathers. From the furthest carriage capered a small girl who disappeared into her backpack.

There is so much that Eleanor didn’t know about the hug. Was it a ‘guess-what-happened-at-school-today’ hug or was it an ‘I-needed-to see-your-face-today’ hug? Or was it a hug ‘just because’? All she knew was that the hug was not like the one-armed, forced hug in which her former employees trapped her during an unfortunate run-in on the weekend. Hugging her was not like two puzzle pieces neatly slotting together; it was actually quite awkward for a small girl to hug her wheelchair-bound mother. But her hug was always a perfect fit—even though her arms couldn’t reach behind Eleanor’s back.

By **Antoinette Luu**  
Year 11, Sefton High School  
SEFTON – NSW  
Teacher: Ms Um



# A Second Chance

SOMETIMES life offers you second chances because maybe the first time you just weren't ready. I always believed not to hold back in life because you may never get another chance...or so I thought.

A small gymnastics club meet happened over the weekend early last year with some of the strongest rivalries across Adelaide. As my team walked into the arena, the smell of sweat and freshly polished wood filled our noses. Moving into the stands, I felt the eyes of the Tigers burning a hole in the back of my head. I felt weak, like I couldn't breathe, like my heart was about to stop beating even though I could feel the blood pulsing through my veins. I started preparing myself, taking off my tracksuit revealing a sparkling leotard that glistened under the competition lights. When I turned, I saw each team huddled in an intimidating circle, each gymnast glancing up at me then returning to their tight force-field of bodies.

My coach could see I was scared, saw the fear in my face, the goosebumps growing down my arms and legs, the tears welling in my eyes. He called me over and said, "You are one of my most talented gymnasts, the bravest, most driven person I have ever coached. If anyone can do this it's you". For a brief moment I felt relieved. I had trained tirelessly for this, but as his hands left my shoulders it all came flooding back and my gut dropped into a never-ending hole as I caught a glimpse of what I had been dreading the whole journey. The vault. The long, crisp red running track with a pure white spring board sitting perfectly at the end. Towering over it with a sleek wooden frame was the vault, covered in chalk hand prints from previous gymnasts who had conquered the beast. I told myself to take deep breaths, in and out. I could do this

I thought, but my gut said otherwise. I turned away to face the uneven bars, where I was most confident. The urge to burst into tears was exhilarating and merely thinking about it made my stomach lurch. The earsplitting siren sounded and the fight had begun. Each team sent their first member to battle against the other teams with pride in their step. I watched and waited, painted a happy face over my terrified eyes and ghost white complexion.

I shuddered at being tapped on the shoulder and a shiver ran up my spine as the sound of the announcer filled my ears, "Could all Women's Vault athletes please make your move immediately." For a moment I forgot how to walk, to breathe, to blink and like a statue, I stood terrified to move on. The whispers of luck from everyone were drowned out by the deafening silence that filled my ears. I could only hear my heartbeats like a thousand drums all playing in harmony. My competitors fell into a dead straight line in front of me, and one by one, took to the red floor with determined faces and perfectly stuck landings giving them the prize of perfect scores. I saw my name come up in bright yellow letters across the dead black screen.

I moved to the chalk bowl dipping my hands in, watching the sweat beads get absorbed by the feeling of the dry chalk on my hands and feet. I clapped my hands leaving a white cloud behind me as I waited on the runway in silence, my eyes fixed and focused. The judge gave me the nod and I was off. Each step had spring to it as I approached the sleeping monster. I jumped, plunged my hands towards the surface and spun. I twisted my body over and around as I held my breath. Something felt wrong. I knew I wasn't going to make it over, and snap. I felt it go. I heard the loud crack in my ear as the pain shot up my spine. My body unravelled in the air and fell limp onto the awaiting mat underneath me. I couldn't hear anything and my vision went blurry.

Darkness.

My eyelids were heavy and I woke to the sound of automatic beeps pounding my head. I was in pain, I couldn't feel my legs, I couldn't move. I flicked my eyes down to find myself covered in chalk, my leotard still wrapped tightly around my body. Warm tears flowed down my ice-cold cheeks, and the worst thoughts swarmed my head... I would never be able to walk or run again. My mother's words were mumbled but I could just make them out, "You will be fine", she said. "The doctor said it was a close call."

I will forever be haunted by the unmistakable crack of bones, locked inside my head being a constant reminder of the sheer terror I was engulfed in that day. Despite everything, the feeling of soaring through thin air was so exhilarating I knew this would never stop me. I refused to let this take the life from my heart and the breath from my lungs, I was alive.

I never had a doubt, only belief that I was given a second chance.

**By Grace Willmore**  
Year 4, St Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann



# A Spell for Yellow Butterflies

**H**EAD tilted back, torso curving backwards, he stood and stared at his childhood. Within the ornate gold frame of the oil-painting, figures in their likeness of twelve years ago stood and stared back; himself, candy-coloured jacket the only mark of colour in the graphite landscape, eyes cocked towards his brother in hopeful gesture. His brother, staring forward with powerful perfunctoriness, looking a thousand-years-older in his uniform. His father, malignance undimmed, sable robes swallowing all the light and making even his own red coat appear translucent.

The air felt weighted, dense with all his past selves, gathering here at various instants over the years. Clearest in his mind was the memory furthest back; his much-younger self, not long after the painting was made.

★ ★ ★

Even then the air was heavy, though the weight came from the noise of the Experimentation permeating from the Factory. He could hear – almost distinctly – the galvanic shock of the machines and the purling of the bottled-poisons. Even more distinct was the begging of the commoners being experimented on as power was sucked from them; beseeching amplified by his swallowing pity.

A familiar sound in the corridor made him start. ‘Father!’

Visions of his father’s contemptuous words and the incandescent glare in his glacial eyes barrelled through his mind. Muffling his panic into his hand, he stumbled away from the painting.

His terror of his father propelled him up the writhing, tumbledown staircases, and the fading daffodil butterfly painted on his bedroom-door was a beacon of relief.

★ ★ ★

Glancing at the forbidding figure of his father in the painting, he realised why he was so frightened; even then, though the panic had never established itself in words, he understood that his father held no place for kindness.

★ ★ ★

He lay gasping on the bed, accelerated breath distorting back to normal.

Then the door grated open, and a silhouette obtruded the shadowed corridor.

Mirroring him across the doorway stood his older brother, fully-dressed; his uniform the same slate-colour of the City sky, pearl-coloured buttons almost-fluorescent in the darkness. He looked momentarily lost, and started to back out of the room.

“Wait!” cried the younger boy, springing up from the bed. “Where are you going?”

His brother avoided his gaze, hesitated, then turned back. “I’m going out”, he answered finally.

“Why?”

“I’m going to kill Monsters.”

Wide-eyed with bewilderment and callowness, he paused, sinking down before rising again in panic. “You can’t! It’s late! It’s night!” His rapidly-gesticulating hands settled against the sleeve of his brother’s uniform, faster than the agitated yellow butterflies caged on his bedstand.

He shook them off distastefully. “I have to do this. It’s not right to let the people Father hurts suffer.”

He gazed pathetically up at his brother, anguished, and evoked a final, fervent answer. “I’m being kind.”

★ ★ ★

Was he being kind? Perhaps. He smoothed his bulky white gloves over the crimson coat of his own uniform. ‘But I saw those people afterwards. I see them every day. Their lives have only pain. When my brother kills Monsters, he removes the pain. Then they have nothing. Nothing is worse than anything.’

★ ★ ★

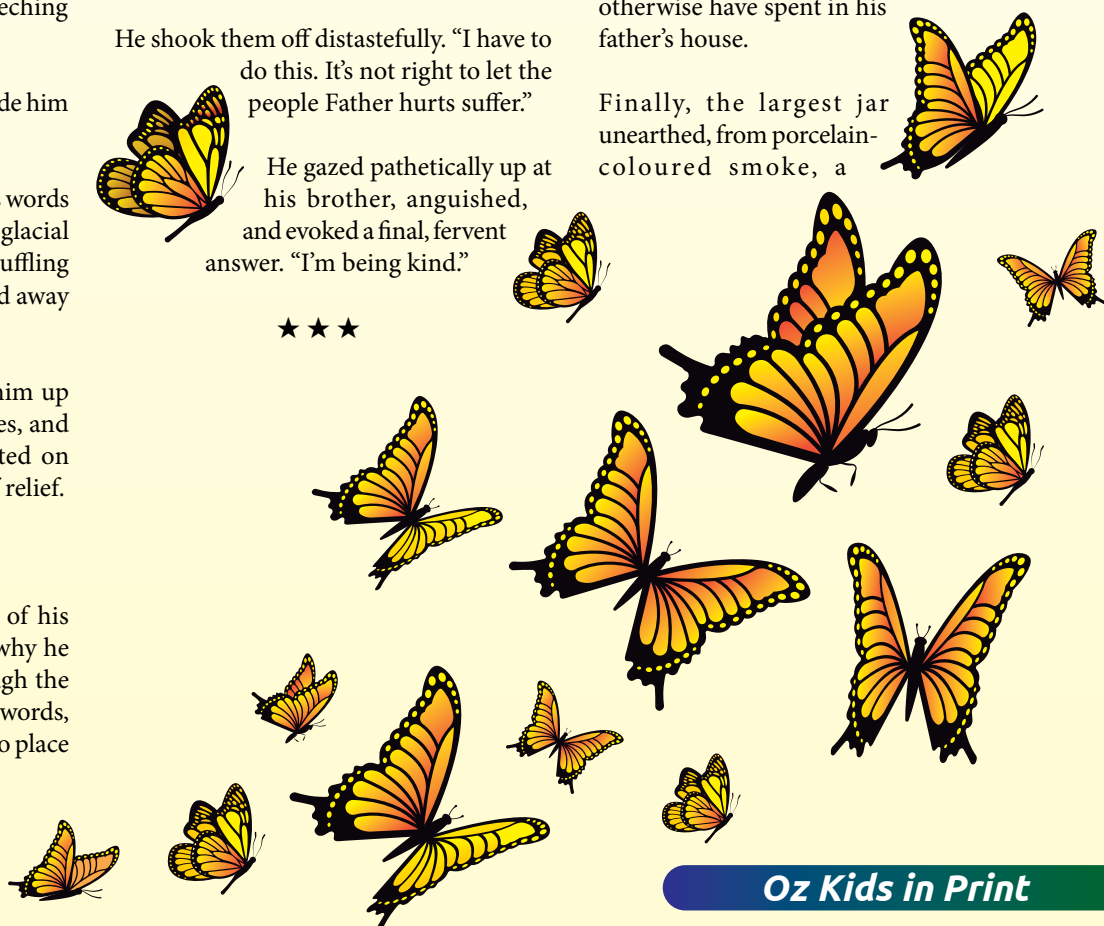
He watched the minute figure of his black-cloaked-brother heading through the City, after Monsters that worked for his father’s exploiting schemes.

The slums stood out; shabby street a muddy smudge. He remembered being there, only a few hours before, to practise his magic.

The spell was simple; a spell for yellow butterflies. He had walked down the slums with his jars and liquids, noting shrewdly several children; very young, clothes tattered, skin caked-with-mud, eyes downcast and ribs protruding.

Stopping in an open space, he had set up his equipment. The spell was uncomplicated, but he finished leisurely, letting each simple action consume minutes he might otherwise have spent in his father’s house.

Finally, the largest jar unearthed, from porcelain-coloured smoke, a





butterfly; canary-coloured, unembellished, wings oscillating unhurriedly. Five more followed it.

The six streamed into the air and back up the street. As they disappeared behind the strata of dirt on the walls, sudden youthful laughter burgeoned, making him start and then smile in amazement. The mirth of the children who had been before so miserable was marvellous, and he could barely believe it. "This is kindness," he had thought.

Even now, the memory brought a tingling smile to his face. "That was real kindness," he told himself. "I was making them happy. And that showed them how to stay happy."

With these memories lucid, he focused again on the painting. "Kindness is necessary," he told the portrait of his father.

"But you cannot just lift off people's burdens. That won't help them in the future," he added to his brother. "You have to ease their burdens... show them that

life is worth living, and that it can be lived, even here."

Satisfied, he turned away from the artwork and paced outside.

There was kindness to give, and yellow butterflies to make.

**By Damya Wijesekera**

*Year 11, Hornsby Girls High School  
WAHROONGA – NSW*

★ ★ ★

# The Anime Illusionist

**I**N THE movie theatre I sit in the darkness alone with my friend Kate, the movie starts to play. We put on the glasses then everything pops its way out. Anime people are gathering around this big market taking place. Flies and bugs swarm the platter of food. As soon as the flies are ganging toward us, I swat them away out of habit and accidentally fling the glasses off.

Suddenly, I realise the flies are still swarming us. "Take off your glasses!", I yell. I look at Kate, she looks different than before. She was anime. I leap out of my seat and shout, "TAKE THEM OFF!!!". As she does, she screeches "Amine... YOU".

We hear a whimper from a crying child. We look down where the movie took place, and notice it wasn't a movie at all. It had plastic over the stage, it was a play. Kate starts to freak out, screaming her head off which causes the child to cry even more. I tell Kate to calm down, we need to work out what's wrong with the child. We jump straight to the stage, where the kid was held. "What's wrong?" we ask in an anxious tone. He tells us this was his fault. His father held this awful play, he trapped us here because of my idea.

"Come, follow me", he whispers. We walk nervously though this dark, curvy tunnel and reach a house. The boy leads us inside. We see the smooth walls which looked so fake upon the house. Then he leads us to this sweet young lady and explains it is his mother. She says in response "Hi". We frantically ask, "How did this happen?", "Where does this take place". Slowly, she

answers the questions. "My husband found a way to make illusions that made people in anime. You're still in the same building you walked into." She also explains her husband isn't anime and there are chips to control the people upon the show. There is an exit to this treacherous place. "I have always wanted to escape but I can't because I feel like my son will stay as an anime character. He was born here."

Then Kate said "THE PLAN BEGINS" she explains to the mother the boy will be fine because the anime is just an illusion. Then she said, "What is the boy's name?" and she replies "Totoro". Kate says "Cool, you can hide Totoro in my bag then we can make a distraction. After that we will be free then set everyone else free by getting your husband arrested".

"Quick hide him in here!" "Stop squirming" said Kate trying to fit him in the bag. "It is so swishy in here". The mother grabs the bag and runs out the door, we follow. We run past the market, some buildings, then the train stations, followed by the bus station, it is all anime. We finally stopped at a tower. Up the stairs there were billions of guards. We must climb up the outside rocks of the tower to avoid them. We tell the mother "Climb up first, we'll be right behind you". As she climbs halfway up, we began. When we are halfway, she stops in despair. We race up quickly up to see why. There was a platform on top of us.

We realise Totoro's dad, the director, is sitting on the platform. We decide to dangle along the edge of the platform and edge along. We reach the end and swing ourselves up. The platform creaks under our weight and this strict looking man turns around. Totoro jumps out of the bag and pulls Kate straight towards the exit, then the man leaps like fire towards his wife and grabs her away. Then I tug and tug and eventually I pull her, and we sprint towards the exit. We get through and ran straight out of the theatre and called the police. After half hour, the police arrive, and we take them straight towards the tower. We explain how we all turned into anime characters. Finally, he is arrested, and everyone is set free. It turns out to be some of our family was there.

THE END!!!

**By Kaitlyn Blake**

*Year 4, Mitcham Primary School  
MITCHAM – VIC.  
Teacher: Miss Johnston*



**D**OWNSTAIRS was banned. Full stop. The rule which Oliver had to follow since he was young was this: Downstairs was banned. His parents had been clear about that. Homework done on time, a curfew and technology use could take a back seat. First rule: Downstairs was banned. This probably seemed odd to certain parents, who would stress other rules before barring their kid from a basement. But don't worry! Oliver's parents still ran a tight ship in all the other rules. Play with the other kids? Nope. Stay in the town area after school? Forget it. Do any sport? Don't even think about it.

Oliver and his parents, William and Emily, stayed apart from the folks of this small town.

Their house was quite extravagant. How this rich family were living in a town like this was anyone's guess. The standard of living for the other members of the town was quite low by comparison. There was only one inn-type place in the town, old Danny McKenzie's, The Green Gate. The Green Gate served as the needs for the entire town. After a long day working in their fields, people enjoyed nothing more than to have a hot meal or perhaps a refreshing drink at the Green Gate. Almost everyone was found there during the evenings. Almost.

The British couple wanted nothing to do with the common folk since Emily had married and moved to the ancestral home. When Oliver had grown up, after Rule No. 1 had been solidified, there came Rule No. 2: The town was banned. And so, Oliver's fate with his schoolmates had been sealed. Before he had even a chance, friends his own age were taken away from him. Oliver grew up staying in his room, stuck with his books as his only company. It wasn't knowledge he desired. He wanted to escape this world, escape reality, into fiction. He wanted to see the world. And see the world he did. Right from his small room in a small rural town. He travelled to the future with Suzanne Collins and he travelled to the past with William Shakespeare. He travelled to Britain with J.K. Rowling, to India with Rudyard Kipling and to the high seas with Herman Melville. But

throughout his travels, he always looked longingly out the window to the town, his thoughts coming back to reality.

When kids become teenagers, they begin to extinguish past rules. Perhaps new ones are created, perhaps. But most parents begin to relax a little bit, trusting their kids more and more. When Oliver reached high school, it was the opposite. They introduced new rules, oh yes, but they didn't relinquish the old ones. In fact, they seemed to think that Oliver may become more rebellious and enforced his previous restrictions harder. They cut his free time by more than before. Tuitions, revision, tests, homework. What small time he had for reading, was cut even shorter. While this may seem unfair and undeserved, William and Emily had been partially correct. His age had definitely made him more rebellious. But the reinforcement only confirmed the fact that Oliver had begun resisting an endless surge of rules.

It was unclear when Oliver decided enough was enough. But he did. The first step he took was a subtle passive resistance. No longer did Oliver do his homework days in advance. No longer was the extra credit completed on any of his assignments.

Next came the lies, he simply told his parents that everything was completed as usual. While his parents were tough and unmoving, they didn't actually require

evidence that Oliver had done everything. Before, he had known the expectations his parents had for him and that they expected them to be met. But now he simply provided the illusion of completion. Oliver was hesitant to do this in the first place, as he wasn't naturally mendacious. Only after a few failed attempts did Oliver fib. To lie after spending years abiding by his parent's rules, it was difficult for Oliver to gather the courage to do this. It was like a trying to extract a caterpillar out of a cocoon, before its metamorphosis. But lie he did.

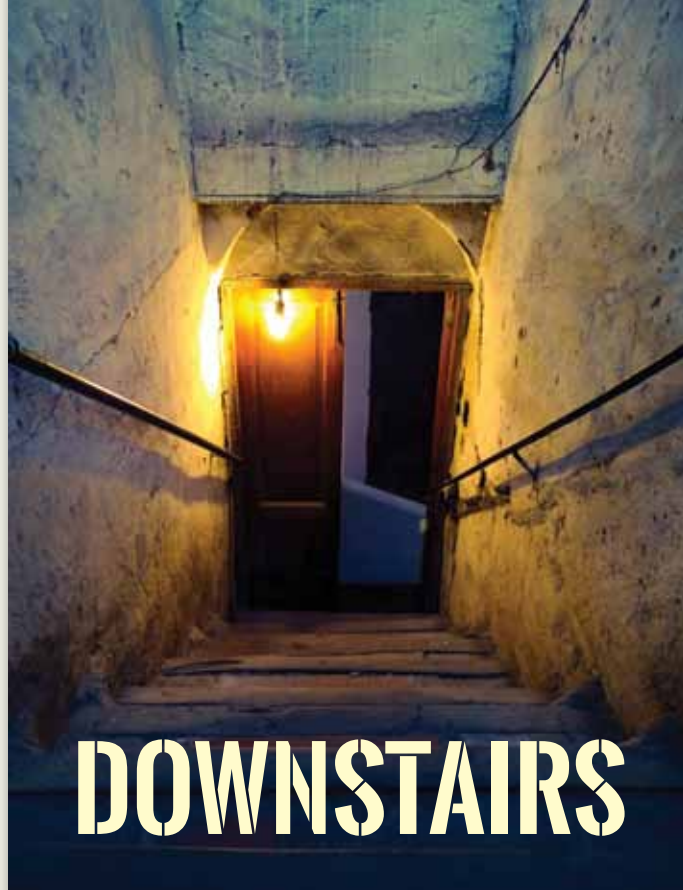
The expected feeling of guilt never came. Instead, Oliver felt as if a small load on his chest had been taken off.

After a few months he became more bold. Sneaking out during tuition times and classes. Instead of spending lunchtimes bunched up in the library he spent them on the ovals, under a tree, reading. His marks were never affected, so William and Emily didn't become suspicious in the slightest.

After almost a year of this charade, the weight on his chest had reduced. But his rebellion hadn't been expelled. There was one thing he still had to do. Downstairs. And so that day, he waited. He waited and waited. He waited for his parents to stop interrogating him about school. He waited for dinner to be over then he waited for William and Emily to fall asleep.

Then finally, the moment came. As the moon and the stars arrived in the night sky, Oliver pulled off his blanket and wiped the sweat from his arms as he made his way to the back staircase that began on the middle floor and led downstairs. Oliver had only observed this staircase his entire life but had never actually used it. Careful not to make noise, Oliver tip-toed towards the staircase, and descended.

Behind the door, he found an office. A simple office. Oliver's eyes darted around the room, but it was only a simple office. A desk. A chair. Some files. Papers. Pens. An all-round big mess. After years and years of wonder and curiosity, this is what he had found. A plain office. Oliver stepped



# DOWNSTAIRS



forward and placed his hands on the desk, continuing to view the office, looking for any sign of something unusual. But nothing. Suddenly, a huge thump filled the room and Oliver saw, his eyes widening, a large textbook Oliver had accidentally knocked off. He needed no indication. Oliver simply ran. All pretext of keeping

quiet had gone out the window as Oliver sprinted to his room. He could hear his parents and the light turning on in their room. Taking a right, he sped into his room and pulled the covers over his face. It was a few minutes before Oliver took a breath. Then it hit him. He hadn't been caught. And as the lovely thought filled

him, he laughed. And once he started it, he couldn't stop. The invisible load had left. He was free.

**By Dev Sheth**

*Year 11, Hale School*

*WEMBLEY DOWNS – WA*

*Teacher: C. Liggings*



**T**HEY used to say “learn from your mistakes!” but what if you never made any?

Because Nathan surely couldn't recall a single time he had. Perhaps that was for the best! Although, as he sipped his pleasantly warm coffee, with the pleasantly warm sunlight, streaming past a bulky building labelled “Mental Well-being Maintenance Clinic”, and onto the dashboard before him, he also found it hard to remember the last time life had thrown anything interesting at him.

Someone was tapping furiously on the car's back window. The first client of the day! As per routine, Nathan uttered a soft “come in”, and the door lifted in response with a hiss. The Device on his arm emitted a little warning bleep, but now wasn't the time, there was a passenger to service!

“Oh, tell that thing to shut up! 52 Beecher Street. Fast.”

Nathan let his foot down gently, easing the vehicle into motion, eyes drifting occasionally towards the rear mirror.

Today's client was an elderly man sporting quite a hideous-looking hospital gown, its left sleeve almost pasted to his wrist by an oozing sanguine fluid that gave a horrible metallic stench. The old man's attitude had been a bit presumptuous, but it was the disconcertingly undeniable absence of The

Device from a bloody pit in the old man's arm that made Nathan gag. Several faint bleeps agreed with him, as it would have been a good time to turn The Knob, and forget he ever saw that, but passenger safety always came first!

“Turn right! I need the shortcut. Got no time for you happy-chappy young people. Bloody useless.”

Though Nathan was known for exceptional customer service, he also prided himself on being a law-abiding citizen. Had the man not seen the sign flashing “right turns prohibited”? Maybe since he'd been too busy muttering things under his breath. Stupid device. Corrupting the minds of these already brainless brats. Lost causes.

“Didn't ya hear me?”

The old man didn't wait for a response and had clambered between the front seats, battling Nathan's arms out of the way to grab at the steering wheel. The car veered violently to the right. The headlights of a 22-tonne freight truck speeding down the highway towards them blazed like a pair

of threatening eyes. Through squinted eyes, Nathan's hands grasped the wheel, regaining control, and in a single reactive motion he hurled it to the left. The sudden swerve made the two bodies jolt to one side. The car stopped. The truck's horn responded with an angry blare as it zoomed past a rattled Nathan.

His pupils were frozen, but Nathan's mind was ticking furiously. He thought of his wife. She was probably out walking the dog they'd adopted together as teenagers. She would've just sent their daughter skipping off to her first day of fifth grade, after scoffing down a plate of her favourite blueberry pancakes. He could've just lost it all. Everything that had ever made life worth living, everything he should've paid more attention to.

“Guessing you're gonna turn The Knob right about now, huh?” The old man was still in the car, still muttering away, as if there hadn't just been a near-death experience.

Almost instinctively, Nathan's hand hovered over The Device — now would have been a good time to turn The Knob, and forget this ever happened. But he paused. He looked over at the pit in the old man's arm. Suddenly it made sense why the man had felt it necessary to remove The Device. Picking up this odd client had certainly been a mistake, but an important one. One he needed to remember. Nathan returned his hands to the steering wheel.

The Device emitted several warning bleeps. Nathan glanced down, and to his absolute disbelief, The Knob had begun to turn.

**By Susan Wen**

*Year 11, Baulkham Hills High School*

*BAULKHAM HILLS – NSW*

*Teacher: Ms Srnic*



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Over and over, I repeated this joyful chant to myself. The monster is gone. I opened my eyes and frowned in puzzlement. The light had disappeared. Feeling goose bumps rise to my skin, I snuck a glance into the thick woods, now grey in the shadows of the night. For once, the moon had been covered by a thick black cloud and the stars were nowhere to be seen. The only sound I could hear was the leaves of my plants rustling in the wind that had found its way into my room. But there was no wind.

## Sleep Paralysis

**T**HE GOLDEN, bright sun filled the room with gentle, dancing light. My cosy home, a small wooden cottage, deep in the forest green woods was now witnessing dawn, a blend of vibrant orange and the coming blue of the day. I looked around my little room, overgrown with the vines and trees that I had planted, and grinned. The monster was gone.

Slipping into my fluffy snow-white slippers, I threw my head out the window and breathed in the crisp morning air, closing my eyes with satisfaction and joy.

Slowly, infinitely slowly, I turned around as my heartbeat thumped loudly in my ears. There. A small black shape was quickly materialising, growing more humanoid and taller by every terrifying millisecond. Steeling myself for what I was about to see, for what I did see, every night, I released a slow, pent up breath and gulped. Then I screamed. The creature in front of me was the nightmare that I had become familiar to, but taller and more mind-numbingly

terrifying. Its long-disfigured arms trailed behind it as it made its way towards me, and its bright red eyes were like torch lights, fixed on me, creating my own personal blood-red spotlight. Its bony body and sunken face came closer, and a stench of rotten cheese and slowly decaying flesh hit me like a sledgehammer to the face. Screaming again, I opened my eyes.

My pillow was drenched in my sweat, and my throat was raw and hurting. Gentle sunlight still filled the room like it had in my dream and the forest-green woods were still swaying in the wind. And the face was still there. Closer and closer the bruised, sunken face came to mine as I tried to shout, tried to plead for help. Then suddenly, the monster vanished. I sat up and gasped, burying my face into my hands. Getting my light pink kitty notepad that seemed oddly out of place from the dream that I just had, I wrote down with trembling hands: Sleep Paralysis count – 44.

**By Xiaohan (Holly) Jiang**

*Year 6, Ravenswood School for Girls*

*GORDON – NSW*

*Teacher: Sharon Shapiro*

## Painting



**S**TEP onto the leaf-covered veranda, open the slender forest green door and step into the house. The reek of paint is unbearable. I immediately must cover my mouth with my crisp white shirt. I can tell that Isabel has just stumbled out of bed. Piles of thick manuscripts rest on the messy desk, along with a plate of uneaten jam toast. Her computer runs on screensaver mode on the unmade bed. An unfinished painting lies drying near an open window.

The doors stand wide open, creating a beautiful panoramic view of the wild backyard, covered in blossoming wildflowers. A gust of wind blows petals onto the mud-stained carpet. I walk into the garden and see that a rickety ladder lies against the brick wall, fresh paint dripping from the top rung. I climb up; holding a new paintbrush, my present for her intricately tied with lace, in-between my teeth.

I carefully walk on the roof. Isabel was lying on the roof, painting the rosy sunset, oblivious to the fact that I was waiting for her, paintbrush in hand. Her bedraggled hair is a deep brunette, and her clothes, like always, look like they were pulled from her cupboard in the dark. I shout "Hello!" and she looks up, her deep green eyes looking around and then finally fixing their gaze on me.

"Lilly!" she cries, beckoning me to come over. She embraces me and I inhale the scent of her new shampoo. She smells like lemongrass. She accepts my gift gratefully, "I have just finished writing my book. I was painting to give me more inspiration for a sequel". We chat for hours on the burning roof, until the sun rises, signifying noon and I must go. Back through the paint-smelling house and out the slender forest green door.

**By Charlotte Brown**

*Year 6, Ravenswood School for Girls*

*GORDON – NSW*

*Teacher: Sharon Shapiro*

# The Hut (Part 2)

**"N**EIGH!" The palomino horse reared its legs. Hanna could hear the gravel of the old road scrape against the horse's hooves. She felt dizzy. She found herself being reared off the saddle, her head tumbling backwards. Her black plaits jerked backwards, and everything went black.

Hanna had been travelling for a few days now. She had hugged her beloved father goodbye and silently given thanks to the mountains and river that surrounded her little hut. Many tears were shed, but she knew she had to leave. At the beginning, the terrain was rough and harsh, but soon the land became flat. Hanna knew this would and could not last. Now it seemed her horse had reached a bit of hard terrain.

When Hanna regained consciousness, she felt dizzy and light-headed. She stumbled up and looked around. At first glance, she couldn't see the palomino anywhere near. But then, she saw a silhouette galloping off into the distance, looking boundlessly happy. "Horse! Palomino! Come back!" she shouted, running after the leaping figure. It was no use, and she knew that, but she continued running, knowing she could not outrun a horse. Hanna had never been a fast runner, but she was now running blindly. So blindly that she did not notice the large, jutting rock in front of her. Her foot flipped backwards and hit her ankle.

Hanna fell forwards, tasting dirt on her teeth. Her dress was now in a shabby state, with rips on the hems and dirt at the front. She tried to stand. "Yowch!" She yelped and felt a

burning sensation in her ankle. This was not good. She could not stand. She hated this. She was helpless. Hanna heard a squeak, a high-pitched squeal. Realisation struck her. Mri-Mri! The purpose of this journey! The cute, yet soon to be fearsome beast leaped over to her and squeaked again. "I know, I know! We have to get going!" Hanna gritted her teeth. This was frustration more than she had ever felt before. Her journey was finishing already, before they had reached even their first stop!

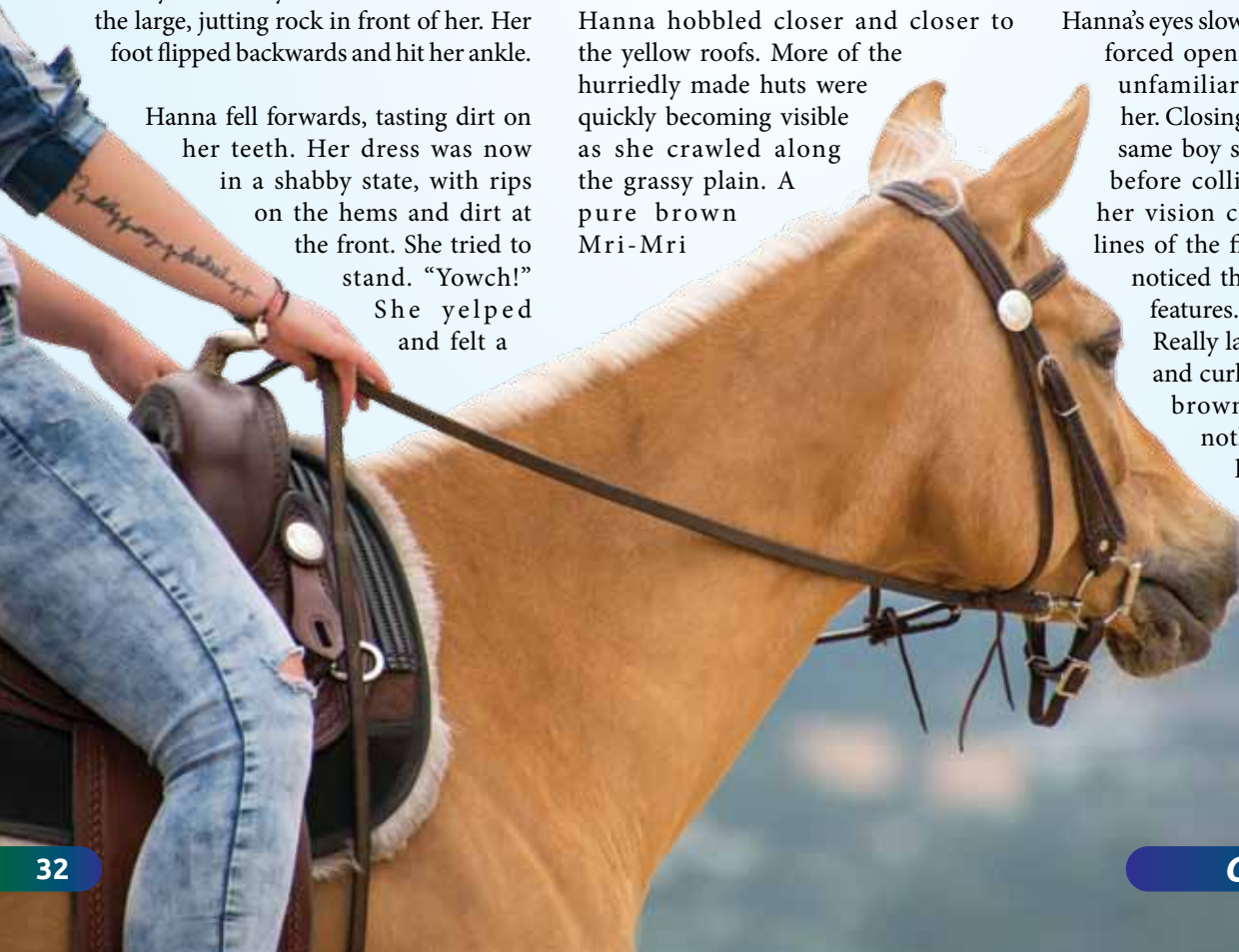
Mri-Mri seemed to be running into the distance, trying to signal something to the weeping girl. "Yes, I know, we should go!" The child's voice had an edge to it that surprised even herself as she replied to the beast's unworded call. But that was when she realised something, obscured in the screen of mist. A few wooden and thatched roofs peeking out of the beautiful haze. A town. A town! Hanna would run (if she could), leaping and shouting (if she could) to it. She realised that keeping a Karlmaetra in a small town would be virtual death, especially in this time of ignorance. She glanced around. A spot of wet, brown mud was lying nearby. It was nearly, in fact the exact same color as most of Mri-Mri.

Hanna hobbled closer and closer to the yellow roofs. More of the hurriedly made huts were quickly becoming visible as she crawled along the grassy plain. A pure brown Mri-Mri

("brilliantly" disguised as a common Muddenowl) hopped cheerfully along. The jumpy creature had both the appearance and disposition of the ordinary creek creature, thought Hanna. Maybe too cheerful, she proceeded to consider, as the animal made a sound almost like laughter. Oh well. The girl did look rather funny, in both senses, with her limp leg being dragged behind her and her hands caked with mud.

They were now in the confines of the village, near the tavern – the hub of trading and life that dominated the village. Summoning all her mental and physical strength, she stood, still limping. She leaned on the tavern door and pushed it open. The rough talking, shouting and hum of chatter ceased as the burly occupants of the building turned and saw the young and small girl enter, an almost non-existent aura of confidence around her. After a full five seconds of hush, a large and muscly woman spoke, in the rich and deep accent typical of the plains. "Who ar' ya, eh?" The sheer force of the voice caused Hanna to shrink and lose her effort of will, and so collapsing once again. The last thing she saw before her vision lapsed was a small boy striding up to her with the confidence of a grown person.

Hanna's eyes slowly, and with much effort, forced open. A circle of rough and unfamiliar faces peered down at her. Closing the rough circle was the same boy she had briefly glimpsed before collision with the wall. As her vision cleared, and the blurry lines of the figures straightened, she noticed the boy's most prominent features. Foremost, he was large. Really large. His hair was brown and curly, and his eyes wide and brown. In short, there was nothing unusual about his looks. The glint in his eyes were a different





matter. He had that unmistakable sense of confidence, even so for a plain's boy, where responsibility was thrust on them from a young age.

But something else brought Hanna's thoughts away from the self-assured boy. Her leg. Her broken ankle. It was now covered in a putrid, fish smelling mix of... Hanna had no idea. It looked simply like a black glop, with sticky golden patches throughout the rough mixture. "W-what is t-this?!" she enquired timidly. "Wot, the ward? Cure. For evil spirits in the ankle. Get all the nasties oot." Speaking this time was a burly woman with blonde, rough hair in rough and tangled buns. Her face and dress were covered with flour which contrasted harshly with her red, grim face.

Hanna fainted. Again.

This time, as soon as she woke, she felt a meaty hand slap against her white cheeks, vibrating stingingly. "Weak, are you?" The boy spoke. "Annda, do not slap our guest", he said again, referring to the angry-looking woman. He didn't say this cruelly, or even jeeringly. He just said as if it was a fact, in a curious way. "My name's Claemes, and I'm nearly 13. What about

you?" This he said kindly. "I'm Hanna. I'm 12. I'm going to the ca-". At this point, Hanna, emboldened, stopped abruptly. She mentally beat herself. She could not afford to give the purpose of her journey away. No, the country folk here were too suspicious.

"You'll be right. We gave you bread, butter and water. Tell us if ya need northing." An old, crooked and grumpy looking, though still muscly and large, man spoke now. The curious circle of villagers left, all except Annda and Claemes. "You forgot ya Muddenowl. Thought I'd gid it a bath, eh? Brought the basin ere? Good place a' any." Annda brought a thin, steel basin out, full of soapy water, and a struggling, squirming, Mri-Mri. Holding the fearsome beast between two chubby fingers, Annada attempted to place the mud-caked creature in the illuminating water. But not before Mri-Mri had stuck her razor-sharp teeth into Annda's huge thumb. "Yaehh! You-!" Mri-Mri fell, tumbling and curling. Hanna watched in slow motion as the water was impacted, the mud soaking off the tummy.

"Hah! I knew there was somein' wrong! You're a witch, with your baby beast of the devil! Witch! Witch!" Annada spoke

triumphantly, her voice rising with glee as she shouted every word. Hanna could hear the thumping, hollow footsteps of the villagers running up the stairs. It seemed her death would be inevitable. But she forgot that there was one more villager in the room. Her eyes met instantaneously with Claemens, and she (her leg healed) pushed her thin blanket off and leaped off, grabbing Mri-Mri.

Claemens and Hanna were now galloping down the stairs. When they reached the floor beneath them, the mob of villagers' yells, hubbub and footsteps getting louder, Claemens signalled to the open window and ran there. Hanna followed his every move. The pair climbed out of the window, leg after leg. They darted over to the village stables, their now bare feet thudding along the straw, and irritating their skin. They hopped on two gray and white horses, and galloped, away from that village one had called home.

To be continued...

*By Kaia Shepherd-Spacek*  
Year 5, Mount Samson State School  
MOUNT SAMSON – QLD.  
Teacher: Mrs Turnell

## Withered Away

The wind on the sea  
bore a strange melody  
of an island that sings  
out to the water.

Perched upon a headland,  
overlooking the waves,  
hidden under a blanket of cloud,  
sits ancient stone on new ground.

A ray of light pierces  
the shattered windows,  
with dust dancing wildly  
in and out of the shadows.

The raw, cold stone wears its past  
of courtyards grown quiet,  
silently weeping,  
drenched in loneliness.

Over majestic peaks,  
with rushing rivers, shimmering streams,  
forever embedded, this faded place,  
in earth's timely embrace.

Nature's masterpiece,  
swallows up the desolate walls,  
that once stood tall,  
now withered away.

Stories hidden beneath bare rock,  
as misty ocean spray,  
crashes over them,  
slowly washing them away.

As the days are chased by night,  
a perfect stillness,  
of sheer beauty,  
forever whispers her sweet song.

*By Grace Willmore*  
Year 11, St Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

# *It's the Small Things That Matter*

**T**HROUGHOUT the entirety of my life, I have heard older men and women complaining about their red, swollen, painful, and arthritis ridden joints. They would grumble about how they cannot now run in fields of luscious green grass or go for long walks along the beach to watch the sun dip below the horizon, blazing with fabulous colours. Never in my life would I have thought that I would be able to relate to the physical and mental anguish that comes with chronic pain and disability.

On early Monday morning, I woke instantly to the warm feeling of the sun creeping through the cracks of my curtains. Individual rays of sunlight shone onto my face as I laid with my eyes shut, desperately trying to fall back asleep. My eyes fluttered open as the sound of my ear-piercing alarm emerged from my phone. It played the same exasperating tune over and over. I was instantly wide-awake. Waves of nausea and anxiety flooded throughout my entire body as the thought of stepping out of bed entered my mind. Suddenly, my mum burst into my room and expressed in an agitated tone that I needed to get out of bed quickly or I would be late for a very significant appointment. With a sigh, I immediately sat up. I looked down at my swollen and red fingers and silently agreed.

Getting changed was difficult. I had lost a sense of independence. I could no longer

cut my food, effortlessly brush my teeth, do my hair, or even button up my shirt. I felt like a child. Incapable of completing the simplest of tasks without being a burden to others.

I opened the door to my mum's small grey Mazda and sank into my seat. The feeling of anxiety engulfed me entirely as anxious thoughts circulated around and around my head. I felt the car come alive as my mum turned the key and released the handbrake. I sat back ominously and observed the sight of high reaching and towering gum trees as they turned into the vision of busy streets and tall buildings. I watched lorikeets of all colours fly past my window effortlessly. Their array of red, blue, yellow, and green was astounding. The car slowly came to a stop. We silently sat in front of a small white building. I did not want to get out of the car. I did not want to hear what was to come. But I did not have a choice.

I watched the car's clock change from ten twenty-nine to ten-thirty. My body felt heavy as I stepped out of the car. It felt like all the weight of the world was crashing down on me. I could not breathe. I could not think. I could not move. Maybe it was because I knew what was coming. But I had to keep going. I had to reach that door and open it if it meant that I would achieve a better quality of life. I did just that. I opened a heavy white, wooden door and walked inside. The scent of cleaning products and disinfectants instantly hit me in the face like a brick wall. It made me want to vomit. I sat down in

the small waiting room on a rigid plastic chair. I sat uncomfortably until a short, awkward woman called my name and asked my mum and me to follow her to a consultation room.

In that room, the woman poked and prodded at my body. She bent and observed each section of my body as she assessed my swollen and irritated joints. It felt uncomfortable. With a sigh, she sat down on her floral cushioned chair. She looked me in the eyes and explained that my body was at war with itself. My immune system was fighting a battle where there was no war to win, and the only soldier left defeated was me. She diagnosed me with Juvenile Arthritis. Her words echoed and distorted as I felt as though I was underwater. It felt like the pressure of life itself was enough to make me explode. She suggested an aggressive treatment plan consisting of steroids, medications used in the treatment of cancer, and biologic medications. I looked over at my mum for comfort. Instead, I was met with her saddened eyes. I watched as tears spilled over and flowed down her face like a river escaping a dam. I felt lost, and worst of all, I felt hopeless.

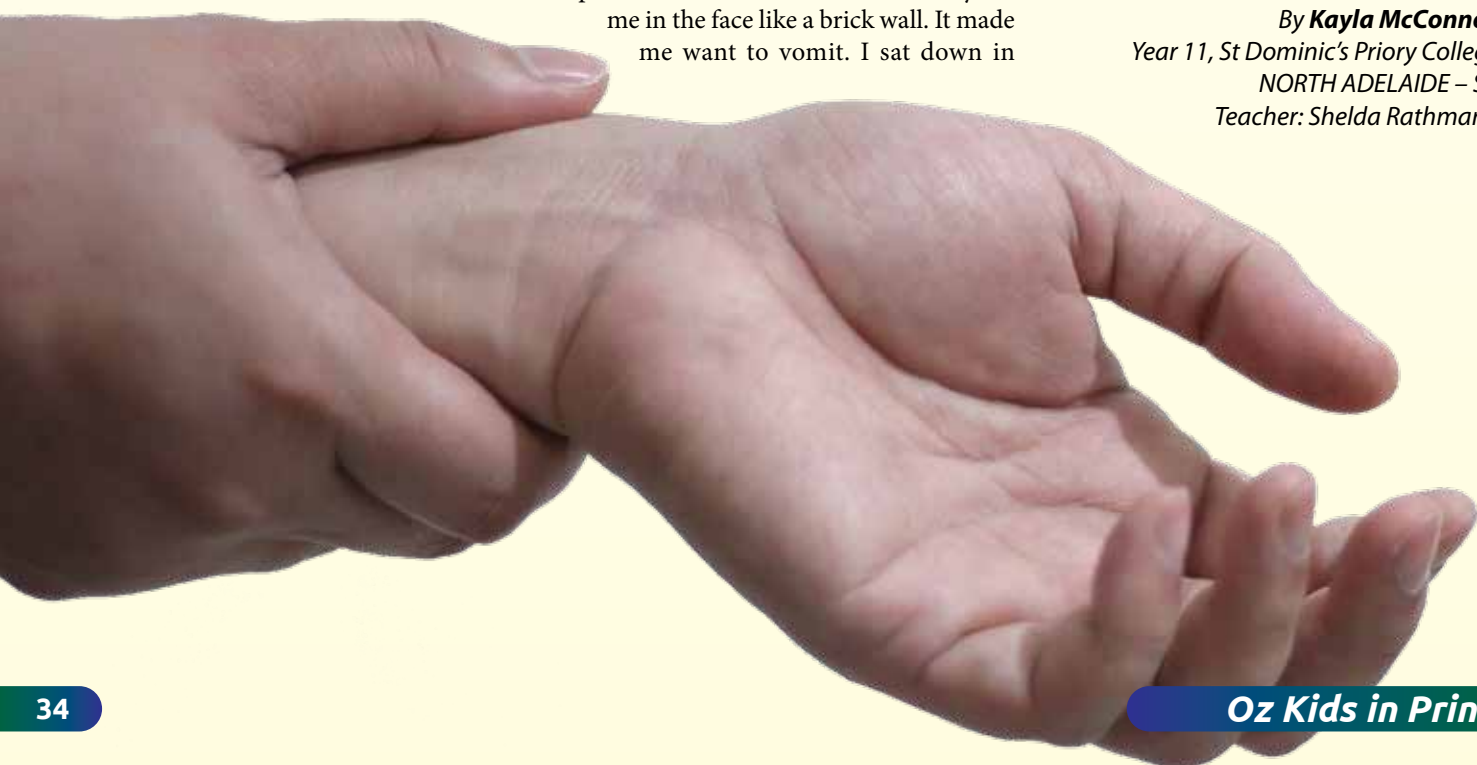
It was at that moment when I realised how much I took for granted. Before my arthritis, I never realised how precious the simplest of things were. Being able to write is a privilege. Being able to play sport is a privilege. It is the small things that matter.

**By Kayla McConnell**

*Year 11, St Dominic's Priory College*

*NORTH ADELAIDE – SA*

*Teacher: Shelda Rathmann*





# Ambassadors



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

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

His recent fantasy series is *The Warlock's Child*, written in collaboration with Sean McMullen. His book, *Slaves of Quentaris*, was listed in *1001 Children's Books You Must Read Before You Die* (UK, 2009). His latest book is *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose*.

Paul has been short-listed for many awards and has won the Inaugural Peter McNamara A Bertram Chandler, Aurealis and William Atheling awards.

Other than his writing, Paul is the publisher at Ford Street Publishing, a children's specialist publishing everything from picture books through to young adult literature. Two books, *Pool*, by Justin D'Ath and *Crossing the Line*, by Dianne Bates, were short-listed for the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards and the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. A third, Shane Thamm's *My Private Pectus*, was short-listed in the Territory Read Award. Paul spends much of his time travelling around Australia giving writing workshops to students from grade four to Year 12.

Paul's websites are: [www.paulcollins.com.au](http://www.paulcollins.com.au); [www.fordstreetpublishing.com](http://www.fordstreetpublishing.com) and [www.creativenetspeakers.com](http://www.creativenetspeakers.com).

**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** is a versatile writer whose work ranges from picture books through to novels, poetry and narrative non-fiction. Her books include CBCA Honour Book *Doodledum Dancing*, *Disaster Chef!*, *Daddies Are Great!*, novelisations of ABC TV's *Dance Academy*, and tween series *A Year in Girl Hell*. Her best-selling series, the quirky *Ella Diaries*, was shortlisted for both the REAL and the WAYRBA children's choice awards, and has sold to 24 countries. Her latest series, *Olivia's Secret Scribbles*, features Ella's 'naughty little sister', Olivia.

Meredith lives in inner-city Melbourne with a menagerie of pets, who often wrangle their way into her stories. She regularly presents writing workshops for children and adults around Australia, 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).



# WORLD AT WAR

**"T**HE NIGHT I escaped from my town clouds my thoughts every single day. I don't remember too many things. I've tried to suppress these memories, but at the end of the day, you need to know what happened to the Tamil people of Sri Lanka. It's our truth that needs to be told. I'll tell you what I still remember from that morning..." Mum said as she sipped on her black tea crouching in her seat.

Sunlight shines under the door like the ghouls grin, yet gives the shutter a halo of golden rays. The morning at Palali, in 1983, was full of colour; especially green. Clatter of pots and pans can be heard, splutter of water from the bathroom faucet and the aroma of potato curry wafting from the kitchen all disturb my sleep. I pulled the blanket back and sat up from my bed. As I stepped out of my bed, I reached for my towel and ran to the well outside for a bath. There was no time to waste. Drying myself, I grabbed my uniform from the ironing board and ran into my room. I pulled out my collar from under my jumper and looked into the mirror for a second. In a rush, I made my way into the kitchen and gripped onto a plate; placing some potato curry onto the middle. I stole some bread from the dining table and briskly started to eat.

Washing my hands, I remembered I had a school project to make a model house due today. It was probably the best idea to go to school earlier to work on the house, I

thought to myself. Laying a hold onto both my sister's wrists, I ran out with a full backpack. Steadily pushing back the stand on my bike back, I stepped on and kissed my parents goodbye. My sisters and I made it onto the main road fast and all our friends slowly joined us as we went. The sound of tyres pressing onto the rocky road, a bunch of girls chatting and laughing and the people on the side of the road greeting each other filled everyone's ears. The dawn arrived as if it had overlooked the horizon and wanted nothing more than a dazzling gold to spice up the day.

We were finally coming closer to the school. All the chatter and laughter quietened down as our science teacher was walking towards us with an umbrella and a few books in her folded arms. She scarcely looked at us with her glasses on the tip of her nose, as we got off our bike to greet her, taking our hats off. As she disappeared into the distance behind us, we got back onto the bike and rode into the school to park it. As we saw another teacher approaching us, we stepped off our bike, but this time the ground was rumbling, as if a slow vehicle was moving towards us. Suddenly, there was a deafening noise.

There was a sudden thud in the air and within seconds everyone was running around and the thud continued. The teachers were panicking and told everyone to run into the bunkers on the school field. With trepidation, I looked around for my two little sisters. Having spotted

them, running around and crying, I ran to them, grabbing their arms, my sisters and I jumped into the bunkers. Trying to catch my breath, I tried to work out what on earth was happening. With curiosity, I peeked out of the bunker. The rocky ground was filled with blood and the air was filled with screams. In the distance, I saw my friend run with her little sister in her hand and abruptly... on the ground crying, with blood. Without giving anything a proper thought, I sprung out the bunker to my friend.

"POOJA!" I screamed as I ran towards her. There she was on the ground, without a single breath left to breath, with a bloody body. I couldn't believe my eyes and I didn't want to either. Her little sister was on the ground, trying to wake her sister up, but little did she know, she went into forever slumber.

Suddenly, there were no more air strikes. The environment was much more quiet, but the screams and cries filled the surrounding again. With despair, I ran to the bunker and pulled my sisters out of the bunker. Carrying them out, I thought going home, is the safest at the moment. All our bikes being demolished, we had to walk back. Walking back, the town over the way was still burning, the smoke filled air gave everyone a feel of a warm night. The crumbling stone lay ash-like on the ground, a cold dust over every blade of grass and leaf. Suddenly, I let loose one of my sister's wrists.



"Akka, I can't walk any more", the younger sister said, trying to catch her breath.

"Just a bit more, we're almost home", I said reaching my hand out.

"Akka, Akka! I'm hungry, do you have food?" asked the other one.

"No, no I don't but we're almost home, amma would definitely have something to eat, let's go", I said trying to convince them.

There, we walked in the middle of the silent road. Torn uniform, bed hair though we spent ten minutes combing it, a missing shoe and bloody hands.

As we were approaching our house, we felt a sense of hope... Relieved that I reached home safely with my sisters, I ran inside home with glee, to find an empty and ruined house. I looked around everywhere but nothing was to be seen but ashes and ruins. I took a moment to actually believe what was happening and as a tear dropped down my warm cheeks, I spotted

something laying under the ashes. It was a family picture we took 4 months ago when my baby brother was born. I wiped the tears that were racing down my face and got up. I walked up to my sisters who were standing outside the ruins and crying. With a bit more confidence that I had my two sisters, I wiped the tears off my sisters' face and walked out the house leaving all my memories and childhood behind.

I had no other choice but to go to my aunt's house in the neighbouring town, Urumpirai. Taking all the possible short cuts I knew, I made it to my aunt's town and looking around, I realised none of the houses were ruined. Without a lack of confidence, I walked up to my aunt's door to see everyone walking up and down the house with panic. I walked into the house and up to my aunt to tell her what had happened. My aunt and her family were actually moving out before their town got attacked. All my aunt knew was that my mother, father and baby brother had left the house to move somewhere else. She

did tell her to keep my sisters and I with herself the whole time until we're found.

There I was, a fifteen year old, with my two sisters and a slightly burnt photo to find the rest of my family. The journey to find my family began then...

As a tear dropped from my mother's face, she placed her mug on the table and gathered herself together. I stared into her eyes and thought to myself how lucky my siblings and I are to be in a safe environment. Thoughts raced through my mind as if the people at the store were racing towards the last toilet tissue pack. I closed my eyes tightly and thought I needed to know more about the war. I opened my eyes and snuck my hand into my mother's palm and smiled at her as silence filled the room.

*By Peirahkavei Taiyatesvarun*  
Year 9, Mill Park Secondary College  
WOLLERT – VIC.  
Teacher: Mrs Chahine



# Feel the Cool Winter Breeze

Feel the cool winter breeze ripple upon your skin  
Through the grey fluffy clouds  
The big, swollen sun slowly creeps in  
The cold morning dew in between your toes  
The crisp fresh air coursing through your nose  
Everything seems so perfect  
But this world trembles and shakes  
And is filled with tremendous hate  
When suddenly you plunge into a place so far away  
Falling so fast, you almost suffocate  
Your heart is racing  
And your head is spinning  
You land, feeling as though you've just been through a hurricane  
It's extremely loud,  
Howling with so much silence.  
It's just you.  
No people,  
No hate,  
No violence.  
You've finally escaped the chaotic perfection  
The hate,  
The violence,  
The misdirection.  
Your world that used to quake,  
Slowly disintegrates.

*By Gabi Voges*  
Year 11, Glen Eira College  
GLENHUNTLY – VIC.

# *Are You Happy My Friend?*

Are you happy my friend?  
Every day I see you hoping your suffering will come to an end  
Your fake smile obliterates mine  
You can't just pretend

I remember when your real smile faded  
I remember when you were left alone in this world  
Your life was torn apart like a piece of paper cut in half  
Scrunched up, cast out and thrown away

I remember!  
I remember!  
I remember my thoughts last night  
I have made up my mind  
For you, I'll be the friend I never had

When people's touch scares you, I'll be your blanket  
When people's eyes haunt you, I'll be your blindfold  
When people's words hurt you, I'll be your earphones, playing a  
sweet melody just for you

There are people who see you as a shattered piece of glass  
A rose constantly being plucked at  
Losing its ability to stand

A rose may perish, but I know you  
There is a bright light inside of you trying to burst out  
But I see you failing

I see perseverance is your specialty  
You've managed to trick everyone with your 'happy life'  
You've managed to alter your blatant lies into truths  
Aren't you annoyed with yourself?  
I can hear you shouting for help through the words "I'm fine"

I can hear it

Your "I'm fine" speech just doesn't work with me  
All I can hear are the words "Save me"

I know you really want someone to understand you  
And help you overcome the pain you're going through  
So I'll find the map that leads to the sad you  
I will search for the X which stops your happiness and tear it apart  
with such force where your eyes will open only to see fireworks of  
euphoria, never leaving your side until your frown reaches for the  
stars, stretching across your lips until your face hurts.

Your colourless world, I'll paint it orange and green  
After all, my palate was made for your appeal.  
And if you do want to tell me more  
I'll buy the primary shades of red, yellow and blue  
Then together we can make a new hue, a new life for you  
Then you can finally replace your sadness with me  
And I will show you what the colours of the rainbow mean

I'll be your rope  
clasping onto the top of the mountain so you can grab onto me  
when you can't climb any more  
Anytime you feel insecure, I'll be your filter to make you see the  
best of you!

So whenever your years are full of Winter,  
I'll cast a spell so you can experience Summer, Autumn  
and Spring.  
And if that doesn't work, I'll stay here beside you waiting for your  
cold beginnings to finally end.

Until the day comes when you smile without having to pretend  
I'll still be your wings so you can get back up and continue  
to fly again

High in the sky soaring through the wind  
And when you are confident enough to let go of my hand,  
I'll reply with a smile,  
"Are you happy now, my friend?"

**By Jiya Patel**

*Year 9, Blacktown Girls' High School  
WOODCROFT – NSW  
Teacher: Ms Angulo*



# Skeleton Stampede

**"COME ON, don't be a scaredy cat"** teased my big sister, Josephine as she let out a big sigh. "Oo..k" I said as I followed behind her, still shivering. She sighed, took my hand, and pulled me into the graveyard. "Are you sure this is a clever idea?"

I asked looking around nervously.

"Because what if a dead person just grabs us by the ankle. We'll be in big trouble."

"Of course, they won't, silly", she replied, turning on her torch and rolling her eyes, "They're dead."

As I followed close behind my sister who was curiously exploring the symmetry, I looked around seeing rotten figures lying on the bare floor. A cold shiver ran down my spine. I knew there would be trouble.

"Shouldn't we just go home? Besides, it is getting dark", I said, thinking of excuses for leaving the abandoned graveyard. But my sister didn't listen. She was too busy exploring.

"Ahem", I said narrowing my eyes so that my sister would hear my little voice but there was no reply. I thought there was no point in arguing so I continued following Josephine who was still looking for something interesting.

After looking for two hours we didn't even find a single thing that bought us interest. My sister sighed. "We should head home now", she said in a disappointed voice. As we turned to leave, I looked back at the figures on the floor. It looked as if they were staring back at me. A cool tingling sensation entered my body. Appearing in front of me was a skeleton. A skeleton with one eyeball which was rotting on its forgotten face.

"JOSEPHINE!!!" I screamed as the skeleton inched forward to grab me, but when I looked back at Josephine, she was gone.

Just then I heard a faded scream. It was Josephine. "No!" I cried, holding back my tears.

The skeleton smiled. Not a friendly smile, but an evil smile. Its long, skinny fingers reached for me. I pulled out my mirror and the streetlights' light reflected on the skeleton.

Closing my eyes, I hoped that somehow everything would turn back to normal and Josephine would come

back, but just as I did, I heard a screech. Slightly opening them, all I saw was a pile of ash on the floor.

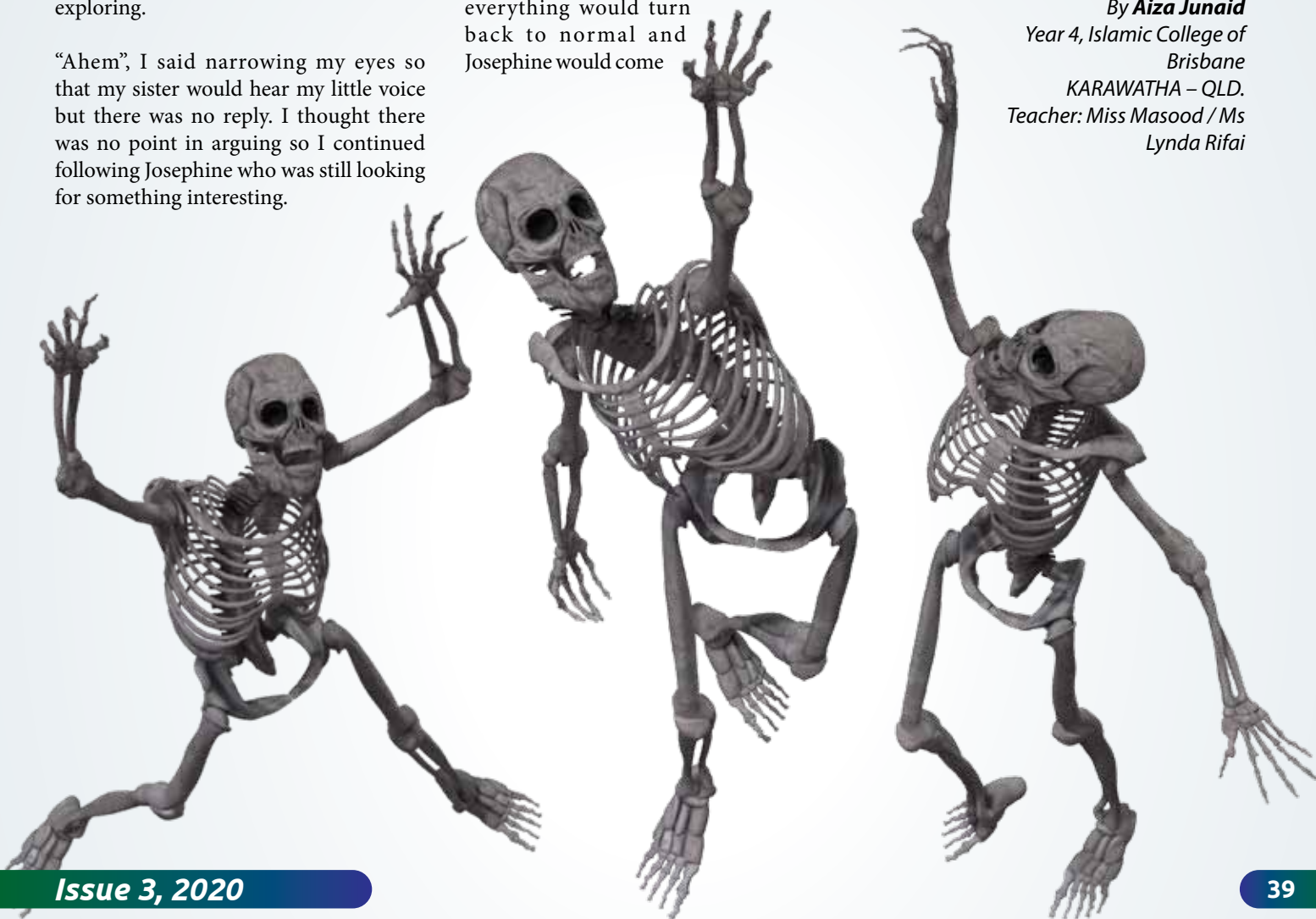
"It turned into ash because of light", I whispered to myself as I bent down to the ground. I carefully shoved the ash to the side and there, I found a trail of writing carved on to the rough surface. It read:

*Great job little sis. I didn't expect that from you (as you were the one who was being a scaredy cat). You have defeated the king and now you must defeat the other skeletons. And, don't worry about me. I know you can do this. Good luck,  
Love JOSEPHINE*

I traced my hands on the carved writing and gasped. Looking up, slowly, I saw an army of skeletons reaching for me. Pulling out my mirror, I smiled slightly.

Who knows? Maybe I could just be braver than my sister.

**By Aiza Junaid**  
Year 4, Islamic College of  
Brisbane  
KARAWATHA – QLD.  
Teacher: Miss Masood / Ms  
Lynda Rifai



# Windy Christmas

I was walking down the street with my scarf and my hat. When the wind went wild and took my sack.  
Presents flowed out and went down drains, while me and my hat rolled down Riddle Lane.  
The reindeer were gone, and my sleigh was in the sea. Me and my hat, where could we be?

Without the sleigh on this day, Christmas could only happen with delay.  
I picked myself up and steadied my legs put on my hat and started to dance.  
I smiled with huge joyful tears; I had found one of my precious reindeers.

Dasher was here by my side, with my sleigh, we can finally ride!

We stopped by homes and placed the presents.

I ate first and Dasher ate second.

We went for a hunt to find the reindeer, Donner and Dancer were first, I cheered!  
It's time to go home up in the snow, good night to summer and to all the black crows!

By **Amelia Swift**

Year 7, Prince of Peace Lutheran College  
CARSELDINE – QLD.

Teacher: Elizabeth Edwards



## ANXIETY

It invades my thoughts,  
A creature of terror twisting through my mind.  
Leaving seeds of worry and fear to grow like weeds,  
Strangling all my happiness, replacing it with doubt.

Am I good enough?

Am I doing enough?

Did I say the right thing?

It never goes away,

Never will.

I constantly worry,

Even when there is nothing to worry about.

My heart races, my breathing quickens.

I feel like I am suffocating,

Trapped.

Like I have been locked in a cage,  
the key thrown away.

Forever lost in my own head.

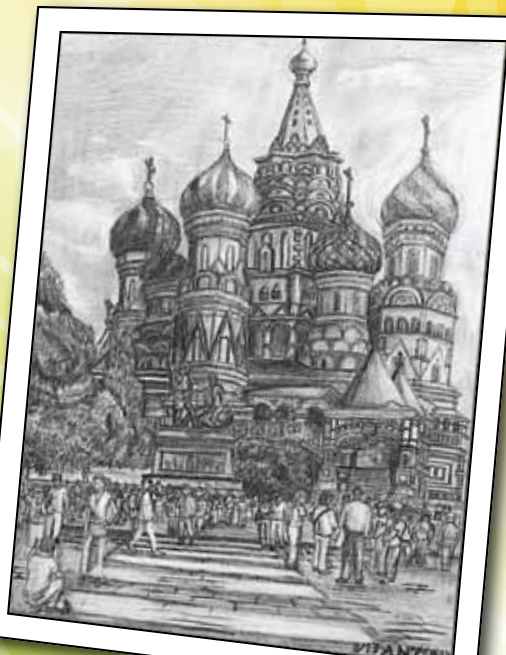
By **Olivia Clinckers**

Year 11, All Saints' College  
MOUNT PLEASANT – WA



# 2020

# 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.



# Chosen

A SEA of ominous clouds hung overhead, further darkening the evening as a red Corolla wound its way up the treacherous track towards the Babinda Boulders. The trees pressed inwards and grey gravel crunched under the car's heavy tyres, signalling the group's arrival.

Four teenage boys exited the car as severe shards of light filtered through the ancient rainforest's dark canopy. A stocky 17-year-old, Adam, scrolled on his phone absent-mindedly, Chris, overweight and near balding, gripped the ends of the towel that hung around his neck. Behind him strode Tom and Matt, walking with athleticism that jarred against Chris' awkward waddle. The twins were tall and lean with muscle so sophisticated as to strike jealousy into anyone, Brandon included. Brandon was gangly, shy, a startling disparity to the rest of the group, even Chris who was presently sent flying as he tripped over a protruding tree root.

Brandon took his keys from the car's ignition and watched the others race to a picnic bench. This was definitely not the way he had wanted to celebrate finishing high-school, but if he was going to take the next big step in becoming a boy then he had to make some male friends. He could no longer justify the safety net of only hanging out with girls.

He hid his keys in the front tyre's silver rim. As he crouched there, an unnerving feeling of being watched flooded his insides and sharp fingernails flew up the centre of his spine, playing each vertebrae like the cream keys of a piano. He gasped and spun around, pressing backwards into the car's red, glossy door, but only the rainforest's dense leaves and tree trunks stared back at him.

His friends called in the distance and Brandon jogged after them, glad that he no longer had to tape down his chest for the privilege of wearing a tee shirt. The

hormones may have played havoc with his emotions but he was finally starting to like who he saw in the mirror; that was the point of all this. But still, people treated him differently; the families, who raced back to their cars for the foreboding clouds above, stared confusedly as they passed him. He was finally happy with his appearance, it was society who was not, and that was why he had to change.

The group spent the next half hour wandering the picnic area, exploring the shallow green pools and becoming lost in the stories of the Babinda Boulders. Brandon stood behind Chris, who seemed invested in one of the boards' stories. He craned his neck to see what Chris was reading. Suddenly, Chris spun around, his green eyes wide.

"Holy! This Oolana chick is creepy as."

"Who?" Chris stepped away from the board and his chubby index finger shot out





in front of him, signalling for Brandon to read the story. 'Oolana' was a woman who lost her lover in the Boulders' waters; now, she searched for him, claiming the lives of many unsuspecting young men. Brandon turned to face Chris, his newly bushy eyebrows high on his forehead.

"I know, right", Chris elbowed Brandon in the ribs, "you're lucky she only takes dudes, hey. I'm not going anywhere near that water". And, with that, Chris left his words to wind their way through Brandon's gut. It was true, she only took 'dudes.' His fingernails pressed into his sweaty palms.

A grey carpet of foreboding clouds rolled overhead as the five began trekking along the bitumen path, blanketed in moss, past the jagged swords of wait-a-while and the soggy remnants of fallen trees. Brandon stumbled along, struggling to navigate the inclines and declines of the journey. As usual, Brandon stuck to the rear of the group. He didn't mind, he was used to it, used to being trapped in his own head. That was the punishment for shyness.

He gripped the straps of his backpack and gazed out at the trees and scrub beyond the winding path, steadying his eyes on his shoes each time a group of tourists passed on his right. He knew they were judging him, he did not need to watch them.

They turned a corner and the lapping water became instantly closer. Slowly, a high pitched whistling filled Brandon's ears. Originally it had blended seamlessly into the rainforest's cacophony but now it was becoming increasingly more noticeable. Brandon fought one foot in front of the other as his head spun and a headache set in. He gazed at his friends, squinting to determine if this piercing sound was torturing them too, but their joyous chatter and smiling faces told him that they did not.

He raised the heel of his right hand to his head, hitting himself between his hazel eyes, then clamped both palms over his ears, trying desperately to rid himself of this torment. He glared accusingly at the trees around him, searching for some animal to blame for his pain –

but there was nothing

no one.

He was alone.

Finally, the shrill cacophony left his ears as five pairs of rangy teenage legs took a right

along the dark path, meagre sunlight no longer piercing its leafy veil. They arrived at a concrete platform and surveyed the giant, curving boulders, each rushing with turquoise waves and white froth. Brandon gripped the fence and gazed out at the tantalising waves, the water tugging at his feet and his mind. It was gorgeous, she was gorgeous. The muscles of his right thigh contracted and his arms were ready and willing to pull himself over the bars which so rudely barred his path, when Matt broke Brandon's trance.

"Don't get too close mate" his head tilted towards a yellow and crimson sign on Brandon's left: 'CAUTION'.

He was right. The rocks were slippery and the water was strong and there must have been countless tunnels but it looked

...nice

...and he had felt

...calm...

No. It was nothing.

Oolana only took guys.

Despair filled his lungs and married with leaden oxygen as he banished tears from his eyes.

Brandon's right flip flop collided with the path and a cool breeze washed over him. It froze his sweaty arms and sent shivers stemming from deep inside him.

The group trekked on with Brandon lagging behind when the torturous noise returned. It was worse than before. It buzzed, wailed, inside of his ears, his head, stomach and bones. It called him back to the water that had granted him peace just minutes before. And he wanted to go, he wanted to follow the hibiscus flowers that were suspended, airborne, in front of him. Their sweet scent was intoxicating, it filled his nostrils and made his eyes glow fuschia.

Brandon was terribly alone when his weak body was ripped backwards. He pulled his knees to his chest as a thick humidity danced and clung to him with the weight of a second person. Her golden glow took Brandon and pulled him to his feet, her gentle eyes staring into his soul, and she guided him through the foliage. As he pushed nature's walls, the walls slashed back and spiked limbs pressed into him. His shoes came off and his shirt ripped,

exposing a tanned shoulder, now speckled with red.

His bare and bloodied feet dropped into shallow water. Only now did the torturing whistle cease to pierce his ears. All of the rainforest's racket was terminated: birds no longer squawked overhead and cicadas no longer clicked.

He waded deeper and deeper, the silver current holding him rather than tugging him downstream, and he was screaming his lover's name.

"Oolana!"

His torn fingertips gripped at the mountainous black rocks and he heaved himself up inside of its bowl; it welcomed him.

The stone beneath turned to lava and Brandon slowly sunk into it, weeping. Each molten handful rolled over him, enveloping him in an embrace, and tucked his body in to sleep under a warm and heavy doona. It was soothing and Brandon surrendered to it. His eyelids drooped closed over damp eyes and a rouge cloud seeped from behind his head. It mingled with the lapping water, performing twirling pirouettes, before it was stolen downstream.

Brandon's body floated in the Devil's Pool, his pale face and Roman nose pointed towards the inky sky, cluttered with an array of glistening gemstones. His hands lay open and too faced skywards, unharmed despite the shallow water around him thickening with blood. He was shrouded in a tropical bouquet which lapped at his sides and rolled with the red water that dressed Brandon's coarse hair with brightness. The line of his cheek silvered and his exposed shoulder became sculpted marble. On his face lay a contented smile, his dimples were plastered in the corners of his mouth and his eyes wrinkled happily closed.

It did not matter what anyone else had said or what anyone would ever say, for, in his final hours, Oolana had chosen him. He loved her and would forever be grateful.

By **Tara O'Reilly**

Year 12, St Mary's Catholic College

WOREE – QLD.

Teacher: Belinda O'Reilly

# The Pirate Airship

**B**OOM! Crack! The pirate airship's claw dug into the outer layer of another airship. As Lord Petey Bones looked on he told his servant, Larry the Stupid, to inform Lord Petey's loyal pirates to get the weapons and board the smaller airship.

The appearance of Lord Petey was not necessarily what you would think a pirate may look like. He wore a bionic leg from his horrific experience battling other airships crews, an eyepatch (though he did have an eye under it) and wore his hair in long locks. Following him everywhere was a Proboscis Monkey (a monkey with an extremely large nose) called Mr Snoot who was the pirate's best friend. The monkey was like him, cruel to anyone else but his master. As his name suggests he is extremely nosy and gets into everybody's business.

Lord Petey Bones watched the battle from the command deck of his airship.

The pirates swung their swords as they took over the smaller airship. In a matter of minutes the battle was over thanks to Mr. Snoot who dropped liquid nitrogen, creating a cloud of smoke that blinded the Royal Air Force so the pirates could capture them.

The pirates manhandled the prisoners (Air Force Captain, Oakley, Anton and Muhhummad) and brought them to Lord Petey. "Well, well, well, who do we 'ave 'ere", said Lord Petey.

"They are the Royal Air Force my Lord", said Servant Larry.

"I know that!" yelled Lord Petey.

Larry went quiet. Mr. Snoot began mocking Servant Larry and cackling at him.

"As I was saying, what were ye doing when we captured ye", said Lord Petey.

"We know who you are", said the Royal Air Force Captain. "And we won't speak a word to you or your fellow pirates."

"Well how unfortunate", said Lord Petey, "because if ye don't speak ye all shall die!"

"I will never speak!" said the Captain.

Lord Petey drew his sword and swiftly swiped at the Captain. The Captain fell to the floor, motionless.

"Well now you know the consequence of not speaking, but we can't afford to kill any more of ye or it will look suspicious to the

Air Police. So we are going to torture ye. Oh what fun, what fun indeed!"

Mr. Snoot cackled again, his giant nose bobbing up and down with every snort of his breath.

The Royal Air Force crew (or what was left of them) were now prisoners. They were marched to the lower deck and tied up by rope to barrels of rum.

"How are we gonna get out of this?" says Anton.

"I dunno!" said Muhhummad.

"Well we have to do something", says Oakley, "Or we are all going to die in this rotten, stink'n pirate ship."

"I-I-I think I can help", quivered a voice from the shadows. "I've been a prisoner for so long in fact that I know all the secret hatches in the pirate ship."

"Who are you?" questioned Anton.

"I am Elijah, old servant to Lord Petey Bones' great grandfather", he exclaimed. The old man was nothing but skin and bones, with a long, grimy beard full of bugs and crumbs.





“Lord Petey Bones’ grandfather locked me up for no reason whatsoever!” exclaimed Elijah.

“Well, can you help us?” asked Anton.

“Not yet. We have to wait until the exact right time. But while we wait I’ll tell you a story.”

“No, no thanks” said Oakley impatiently but Elijah had already begun.

“It was the year 2050, before you were born. The world had terrible, terrible pollution.”

“Hold on,” interrupted Muhhammad. “What is the World?”

Elijah sighed. “The world is a planet where we once roamed on the ground. There were buildings and houses and cars and there were lots of people everywhere. But then the pollution came and we had to take to the skies. Underneath us right now is the world but we can’t go down there below the clouds. The pollution has made the world toxic and it is unsafe to breathe the air. But the clouds act as a barrier against the toxic gas and that is why we are safe up here.”

Elijah paused to take a breath and then continued on with the story.

“I was once on that world, was born in the year 2015 and was 35 years old when we had to take to the sky. My family’s airship was captured by the pirates and I was made a servant to Lord Calico Jack. I served him until Lord Petey Bones’ grandfather murdered Lord Calico to take the pirate throne. I was sent down to this here place and this is where I have been all these years.”

Oakley, Anton and Muhhammad were speechless. Elijah had revealed so many things that they didn’t know.

Then suddenly, Lord Petey, Mr. Snoot and Servant Larry the Stupid appeared at the doorway.

Elijah scurried back to his hiding spot in between two barrels.

“Time for ye torture you lo’”, said Lord Petey Bones. He tossed Servant Barry the Stupid down to where the others were sitting.

“Servant Elijah the Scared, come ou’ now and be loyal to me!” yelled Lord Petey. Elijah came out of his hiding spot and crawled his way up to Lord Petey.

“Untie them and bring them to the top deck”, said Lord Petey to Elijah.

Lord Petey slammed the door. The time had come to escape.

Elijah quickly untied the Royal Air Force crew and showed them a secret hatch under the airship.

“Here, escape now”, said Elijah. He opened the hatch revealing a ladder that led all the way down to an escape airship that was there for emergencies. Muhhammad, Oakley and Anton all jumped down onto the airship.

“Are you coming with us Elijah?” said Anton.

“No”, said Elijah. “I’m blowing this ship up to bring an end to the pirates!”

“Don’t do it you’ll...”, shouted Anton, but it was too late as Elijah launched the emergency airship away.

All that was left to do now was for Elijah to plant a bomb.

The old man scurried up to deck knowing that the bomb was ticking below.

“Servant Elijah, where have you been?”

Just then the emergency airship came in front of the cockpit. It zoomed past the ship.

“Elijah, you betrayer!” yelled Lord Petey. “You know the consequence-.” But just at that moment the ship rocked as the bomb exploded, creating a chain reaction which sent it spiralling and Elijah, Lord Petey Bones and Larry the Stupid with it. BOOM!

Anton turned to see a ball of fire in the sky.

“Elijah succeeded!” cried Muhhammad.

Even though Elijah died, he blew up the pirate ship. So that is something to celebrate.

As Muhhammad, Anton and Oakley sailed away happily, they didn’t see the proboscis monkey climbing aboard the rear of their ship.

THE END

By **James McGowan**

Year 6, St. Anne’s Primary School

PARK ORCHARDS – VIC.

Teacher: Matthew Mooney



Victory is ours,  
We will fly back and forth to Mars,  
Victory is ours,  
We will eat a lot of chocolate bars,  
Just winning that race will turn up the pace,  
And then looking at their face,  
When we win first place,  
Victory is ours,  
Together we will touch the stars

By **Rehat Kaur Kohli**

Year 4, Settler Farm Primary School

PARALOWIE – SA

Teacher: Mrs Bianca Johnston

**W**ITHIN the summer of what seems like an eternity ago, the radio lights of a car beamed neon blue as the sky grew darker. Silhouettes of black contrasted between fine lines of orange luminance, with the quiet rumble of the radio and the growl of the engine. As the car slowed, the engine breathed out a sigh of relief. Elbow on the ledge of the window, I looked out to the world, looking but not noticing the buildings that blurred past. And in that moment, I felt the trickle of boredom settling in, bored with this monotonous city.

A stranger on the street.

★★★

I was simply tired back then – exhausted.

Throughout the day I was uninterested in being dragged along lifelessly, like a rag doll for photos and photos alone. Going to some place called D'arenberg first, with fancy red wines, clear transparent white wines and nothing that I could really do except bother my cousins, but even then, we'd be told to "quiet down", so we sat, arms tucked by our sides as the adults sipped and bantered. But these commands would only fuel my fire to wreak havoc and more than ever the urge to chase my cousins became prominent in my veins.

And so, the rest of the day was spent begrudgingly following the adults (and secretly pinching and flicking my cousins whenever I found the opportunity) eating whenever we needed to be fed and then returning to the car for another drive to some fancy place for more photos, as if they were lacking them already in the first place. (Trust me they weren't, but I doubt Grandma understood that). And each time we visited some other place, like a knife, the more jagged and rusted I got.

It was stupid really – if you thought about it that is. Admittedly I don't think my parents thought about it – dragging four kids to a winery, are we even supposed to be there? We were like thirteen, eleven, ten and eight. Yet here we were, trailing the

# 2014

invisible paths laid by the heat of my uncle's crisp black shoes. It felt like I was in prison. Cuffed to my fellow comrades as they trailed behind me, the tap of our footsteps became a steady rhythm. My parents and aunts were patrolling police officers, batons in hand with nasty condescending glares, with the flick of a wrist a booming speaker ready to shout. To discipline. And with our mugshots taken so often, as if we aged ten years



each passing minute. There was no end to it. It was basically absolute torture – to the highest degree – it was pure boredom. My mind could only imagine so much, to make-up games of simple things, to make tile lines lava lakes and to make doors indicators of our next adventure.

And at the end of it I was, bored.

With the sun an acting reminder of my hell, I found myself sitting in corners, back

pressed against hard walls, my imagination lacking.

★★★

As the sun began its slow descent the streets began to light. Artificial strings of orange and gold laced cracked roads, black shadows of contrast intertwined themselves with the strings, and as the radio turned on, so did the familiar hum of the engine. And I began to watch – the flow of the buildings, as fast as river streams, behind windows were families. Like the rocks of rivers all with stories to tell.

But somewhere along the way, as tired tyres tracked close to home, for a brief moment, for a brief second, the car reluctantly slowed its pace, and our eyes met in the midst of summer, 2014 under fluorescent orange lights and you waved, skipping along cement, a ridiculous hat atop your head.

And despite it being so simple, a small action like that, all of a sudden, I didn't mind. I didn't mind the clacking of my uncle's shoes, the bitter scent of wine, the mugshots every single second – all of a sudden, it didn't bother me.

And you smiled.

And I smiled back, a wave with dry hands, something so small – almost insignificant, and from this day I've questioned if you remembered me, like how I remember you. Blonde hair, with eyes I couldn't see, walking with your family. Within a few seconds of seeing you, I felt pure bliss I've never felt once again, as if I knew you once before, a click sharper than breaking glass. A memory etched into stone, a burst. When you waved it seemed as though everything was okay – but as quickly as it came it disappeared,

like the fizz of a Coke can, it simmered away.

And I can't help but wonder, making my way through the days...

If you've ever felt the same.

By **Luanne Huynh**

Year 10, St Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA





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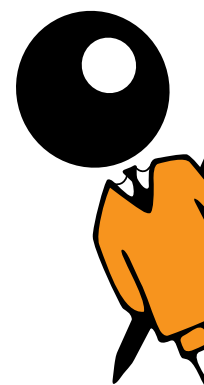
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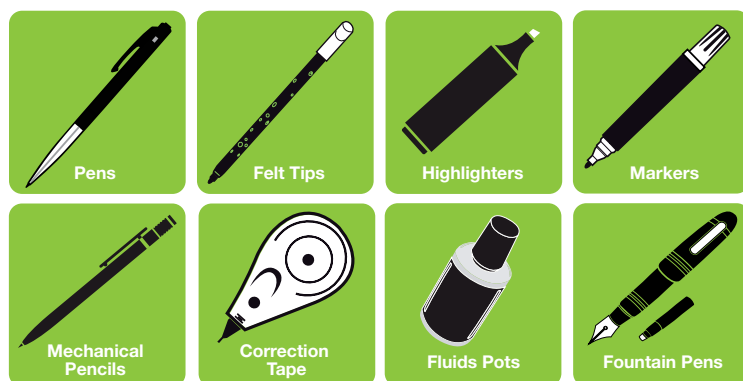
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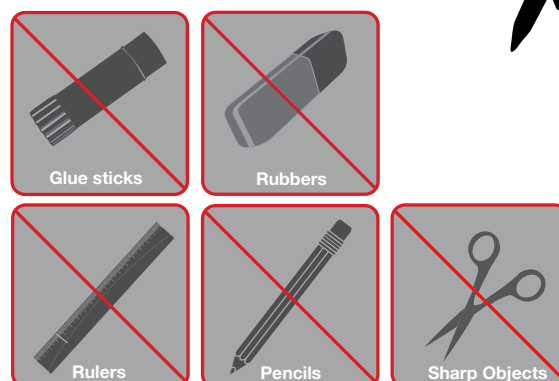
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