

Kaia Bullock
Beattie School of the Arts
Grade 9
Wicked Nights

Chapter Three

Past

As Bethany opened her eyes, she felt the pain. It spread through her body quickly and she winced at it. The room that she was in was dark, and damp. It had that musty smell of mold that makes you gag. Bethany scrunched her nose and groaned at the pain in her head, then rolled onto her stomach. She tried to pull herself up but her limbs were too weak. Then it hit her! Rebecca! She squinted her eyes and looked around the room trying to find her, but it was too dark in the room for her to tell.

“Rebecca?!” Bethany’s yell turned into a raspy screech. “Becca?! BECKS!?” She waited but there was no reply, then suddenly without any warning the lights shot on. For a moment the extreme bright light blinded her. As she began to open her eyes, she felt her heavy body being lifted up. She blinked rapidly, as she felt cold metal wrap around her wrists before whoever was holding her up had let her go. Her legs gave out and her body began to fall until her arms were high above her head, and she hung by her wrists. Her shoulders pulled up and pain spread through her arms and down her back. “Who are you? What do you want?” Laughter filled the room and she lifted her head, her vision finally clearing. Five buff men were in the room, one was sitting down, lounging. He smirked at her.

“I’m Isaac, sweetheart. And you are my new toy. I’m gonna have lots of fun with you, but first you have to decide which one of you two lives...” His smile broadened. “Also these four men are my brothers, Edric, Ajax, Gael, and Haines. You’re gonna be part of our family now...” Without another word, they all got up

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and left, except for Isaac, who grabbed a syringe and some sort of drug. Bethany began to struggle against the binds that held her.

“NO!” Bethany screamed as she flailed. Isaac frowned.

“Feisty, strong-willed... you, my dear, are going to be fun to break. I hope you survive this.” She spat at him and kicked some more, before he undid the pulley at the top of the chains, that held Bethany up, and she dropped to the ground with a thud. Bethany struggled to get away, but before she could get anywhere she was on her back with Isaac on top. His knees held down her lower body, while his muscular left arm pushed down on her throat. “You move and I’ll kill your friend.” She stopped struggling and took in deep breaths to calm herself. “Compassionate.” And that was the last thing she heard from him before the world began to spin and sank into blackness.

Bethany awoke to loud agonizing screams. She looked up to see Rebecca, dangling like she had been before. Her front was facing the wall with her back towards Bethany. A few feet away in the dim light was Ajax. In his hand was a long, barb wire whip. Bethany struggled against the chair that she was bound to and screamed into the gag. Ajax looked over for less than a second before he brought the whip back and snapped it towards Becca’s back. The skin of her back snapped away from the whip and crackled. Blood trickled down her back and dripped onto the floor. Becca cried loudly and begged him to stop. Struggling more Bethany managed to tip her chair over backwards. However when she fell, she hit her head on the cement. Black spots filled her vision and she felt a gooey substance pour from the back of her head. In an effort to clear her vision she clenched her eyes shut, hoping for the wave of pain and dizziness to surpass.

“Mother!” Ajax roared. “Isaac! Come down here. Make your pet learn her place!” Footsteps sounded above and Bethany began to squirm. Soon she felt herself being tilted upwards and so she opened her eyes only to look straight into Isaac’s. She sucked all the saliva in her mouth and brought it to the forward. Isaac

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smiled, she frowned even more before aggressively spitting on his face. Isaac flinched back and growled, before bringing his hand back and slapping her hard across the face. He then proceeded to grab a fist full of her hair and tilted her head back so that she had to look into his ugly grey eyes.

“Do that again and you’ll wish you were dead.” He snarled before throwing her head down with disgust. With that he turned towards Rebecca. “Now you two still have to choose which of you gets to live... Have fun girls.” He then turned towards Ajax and told him to let Becca down and untie Bethany before he left. After Ajax was done, he climbed the stairs and left. Bethany quickly got up and stumbled towards Rebecca, who laid on the floor tears streaking her face. Bethany wandered around in the basement below the five brothers in search for a cloth and water.

When she found her way back to Rebecca she poured water into one bowl and a little cleansing alcohol into the other. She dabbed the cloth into the second bowl before saying,

“This is gonna sting a little, babe. I’m sorry.” Then she began to clean the wounds on Rebecca’s back. Rebecca sobbed quietly and Bethany whispered that she was sorry many times as she cleaned Rebecca’s open flesh. The whip had done quite a bit of damage to her beautiful cream-coloured skin. Instead seeing her usual clear, smooth skin you would have seen raw, red gashes arbitrarily scattered across her back. Strips of the flesh torn from her back trickled with crimson blood. Surrounding the beaten and battered flesh was bright purplish bruises. Seeing Rebecca like this made vile bile rise up in Bethany’s throat. She tried to swallow the warm thick acid that rose into her mouth. Instead she gagged and quickly turned around as a violent contraction congealed the contents of her mostly empty

stomach, as nothing was digested since the evening before. Bethany wiped at her mouth, acidic debris forming a tiny patch on her torn dress sleeve. She retreated onto the damp concrete.

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Isaac's rough tongue licked at Bethany's soft neck. His stubby coarse fingers curled around her wrists, holding her down. Bethany closed her eyes trying to avoid his. Isaac snarled,

“Open them!” He bashed her head backward onto the concrete. She didn't want to, so she closed them again and again; anything was better than watching his ghastly face light up with lust. Soon he became angry, his forcefulness became less controlled, until finally crimson blood pooled onto the soaked concrete and her head rolled to the side. Isaac was finished anyway. He snorted and whispered close to her ear, “Come on babe, you die and I'll have to use your little friend there instead...” And left without a backward glance. The next thing that came from Bethany's mouth was more than a cry, it was the kind of miserable weeping that comes from a person bled of all hope. She curled herself into a tiny ball, her knees pushed against her warm chest. She could feel herself unraveling, every fiber of happiness she once felt; all but a clutter of broken threads scattered about her shaking frame.

Flame

By, Grace Clemont
Gr. 9, Westside Sec.

His eyes were cold.

His entire form screamed darkness. Every instinct in my body screamed *run*, when he glanced up, our eyes locked and the air was stolen from my lungs. I stumbled over my own feet as I started to back away, but I knew it was hopeless.

He turned his head only slightly, raising his eyebrow in almost confusion. In most cases I would trust him, run back to the boy I once called my friend. But I knew he was gone, whatever was left of him had been killed.

Andrew Falcon was dead. What was left of him was terrifying. A boy? Or beast? That stalked towards me with a predatory grace, I was merrily a mouse standing up to a cougar. I could feel panic sweep my body as my vision blurred in the chaos that my emotions were.

"An-Andrew?" I whispered, my voice was frail, broken, desperate to find the boy I once knew. His eyes flickered for a second and I felt the small bit of hope swell inside me; but he soon smirked, shaking his head before cracking his knuckles.

"No Andrew here, sweetie." He hisses, a cruel glare split across his face as he lunges for the first time. Power crackled around him when I screamed, scrambling from his grasp. I knew no one would hear my scream, the world was quiet now.

Darkness swallowed everything.

A soft glow was all I once was. I stood tall in a world of complete darkness, Andrew once stood next to me; and together we thought we could save the world. Because you only need one light to light up darkness. And it sure as hell takes a lot to burn out that light.

I had watched the darkness burn out every single thing that has light. The sun doesn't bother to rise, the stars didn't shine at night. I had watched the life leave everyone I loved, they crawled into their own doom. Leaving me, a small girl to stand against a world of evil alone.

Running into Andrew had been a blessing, his eyes glowed with being alive, a sane human that still walked the earth. He broke the silence that I was used to, and I loved him for that, for giving me back the hope that had began to dwindle.

Now I had lost him too.

It started off slowly, he stopped making jokes, his sarcasm started to fade. And then I had seen it, the light in his eyes were burning out, he swayed to the dark and soon the flame was smothered. The light flicked off and so did the humanity in Andrew; joining the rest of the human

race.

Leaving me alone.

Standing here, staring at him. Desperation gnawed at my bones, fear lingered in the gut and my hope shattered. My mouth was dry when Andrew soon started stalking around me, his eyes studying me up and down.

"Give in, Ari." He hissed, and I shuttered at his tone. The harshness of it was chilling to the bone but was expected. "There's nothing to be afraid of, it's actually peaceful." He whispers, his voice shaking.

"Andrew, you promised." I whimpered, making sure to keep my distance from him; in case he lunges again.

I watch him as a smirk flicks up on his lips, "Ari, stop dancing in the light. A flame can't last forever, but *we* can."

I stared at him, and at that moment everything shattered, my grip on my emotions I had been holding onto broke. And I snapped, "You *promised*, you *swore* you wouldn't leave me." I screamed, the effort ripped my voice raw. Lunging blindly forward, I reached out to attack him but he easily side stepped me as I crashed to the hard ground. My feet, knees and face were scraped from the pavement below, but I still forced myself up. Spitting out the blood and locked eyes with him.

"You're a *coward*, you gave in. I feel it every single day-calling me, beckoning me to join but I still never did it. You were weak." I spat but Andrew didn't seem too bothered, he turned, slowly, gracefully and faced me before holding his hand out.

"Your burning out and you know it. Join me, join *everyone*. Don't suffer anymore." He hummed, his voice was soft and his eyes were kind again. Inviting.

My heart slammed against my chest as I felt the ember I had kept clinging to, die down more. The world was nothing but fading to darkness. The soft glow I was emitting was nothing, compared to this dead world.

I took his hand.

And just like that, the world fell to complete, utter, darkness. The human race became nothing as silence overwhelmed everything. Not even the soft sound of one's footsteps could be heard.

Just like that, the last flame was smothered to nothing but ash.

A very long time ago, when the Earth was considered flat and maidens found trouble, but had knights to save them, two goddesses roamed the skies. The first goddess, Aluna, was the Princess of Earth. The second, Tovi, controlled the wind and clouds. There was another dweller though, and his name was Asmund, he was the Protector of the Sky. Both girls secretly pined away for him. Then one day, Asmund choose Tovi to be his wife. Aluna became so enraged that in order to protect Tovi, Asmund exiled her to Earth for 1000 years. On her Earth, Aluna made herself the most beautiful woman. Every man to come across her fell madly in love and asked for her hand, but every time she refused. Then one day, everything changed.

It was early morning, and Aluna had gone to pick black berries for her master's breakfast. She did not notice the sharp thorns on a nearby rose-bush and scraped the length of her hand along a single thorn. Aluna cried in pain, and fainted in realization of herself bleeding. For goddesses did not bleed, so seeing blood was a rare occurrence. Nearby, a lone hunter had just sent his arrow mistaking Aluna for the runaway stag. Hearing the cry of the girl he raced forward and saw his arrow gone though her basket with the tip unseen under Aluna. Mistaking he killed her (he only wounded her side) he set his hat down and wept. Aluna awoke from her unconsciousness to find the hunter crying above her, and in an attempt to move away, the pain from the arrow stopped her. The hunter saw the movement and looked at Aluna, seeing she was alive he exclaimed. Then moments later, Aluna had returned home and was being mended by the women of the house. Everyday, the hunter who was named Peter, came to see Aluna. One afternoon when Peter came, he asked for her hand. Aluna who had slowly grown to love Peter, said yes.

Aluna's life with Peter was wonderful, better than one she could've had with Asmund. They had six children Richard, Cecilia, Elric, Henry, Emeline, and Alice. Her life was filled with happiness from her husband and children. So happy in fact, that she almost forgot about Tovi and Asmund. Sadly, all good things come to an end, so while Aluna's children grew up and Peter grew old, Aluna stayed the same. A goddess could only die through incident. After Peter died, her children followed. With being part god, they lasted for an extra 100 years or so but in the end, they all perished. Aluna had 200 years left in exile, so every day she waited and waited for revenge on Tovi, her anger burned brighter than before. Then her time was up.

Aluna turned to fury. She rose up from the Earth and headed straight for Asmund's palace to Tovi's dwelling house. Rupturing through the door Aluna screamed, blaming Tovi for everything that went wrong in her life. Tovi's children ran away from behind her as she stood there terrified, unable to move. At once, Aluna held out one arm to her old enemy and shrieking a command, all the animals of the Earth exploded from her palm, trampling and killing Tovi. Moments after her death, Tovi's children came and fell on their mother sobbing. Aluna then flew out of the dwelling house, and soared out of palace. The sky was black, itching with static, and crackling with lightning. The once innocent, loving Aluna was replaced by this dark, evil being. She returned to her palace and sat on her throne, no longer Princess Aluna of Earth but Destructor Lunatis of Moon.

When Asmund heard of his wife, he became infuriated. He sent for guards to retrieve Lunatis and bring her to him. When she arrived, he banished her to the dark clouds, a place from which she could never return. Lunatis could not break the rules of Asmund, his words were an unbreakable seal. She is still on her dark clouds, sitting on the misery she created. Every now and then she will remember her past and weep over her ailment, her children, Peter, and even Tovi.

Lachlan Crawford
2016/03/20
Grade 9

Why The Storms Come

@KOOL School

When she does, Asmund gusts his wife's wind in a sad remembrance of her. After Lunatis stops her crying, Tovi's children (whose powers are of the light and seasons) make a beautiful rainbow, to show that they remember not only the sadness but the happiness that their mother brought and was. This is Aluna and Tovi's story, and that is why the storms come.

The Monster

Haley Critch
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Grade 9

Five year old haley had awoke from her sleep. As usual her parents were fighting. She rolled over and squished her head between two pillows, something her mother did every morning although she never understood why. Unable to sleep the due to the fact there were two screaming banshees in her kitchen the young girl lugged her sleepy body out of bed towards her bedroom door and slowly turned the golden yellow knob and steadily opened the door careful not to make any sounds. She cautiously crawled towards the stairs and planted her bottom on the first step and cradled her teddy in her chubby arms and tunned into her parents screaming match.

"Melissa I can't do this anymore! I'm so sick and tired of being held down! I can't do any of the stuff I used to do before Haley happened!"

" OH MY GOD! How the hell are you being tied down! All you do is drink and smoke pot! You never adjusted for the sake of our daughter! You think you're being tied down! I drive Haley to and from school every day and work a full time job while you sit on your ass at home drinking and smoking joints!"

The young girl waited for her father to yell something back, but nothing happened.

SMACK!

Haley jumped out of her skin. Filled with terror in what had happened she crawled down the next step to investigate. To her dismay her mother was on the floor cradling her face and heavily sobbing into her hands, her father was nowhere to be seen.

She crawled down to the next step and her father zoomed past towards the front door, tore it open and left. To Haley's surprise the door was still on its hinges. As she waited for her father's return she fiddled with the ladybug necklace her mother passed down to her on her birthday. Relieved her father had not returned Haley sprinted for the front door and slammed it shut and locked it. She waited for her mother to get up, but she didn't. The terror filled toddler walked over to her mother, grasped her hand, kissed her on the forehead and said in her strongest voice

"It's ok mommy, the monster is gone now."

BUZZ! BUZZ! BUZZ!

Eight years later and she still dreamt of the night her father turned into the monster.

Just Another Windy Day

Julia Fabbro-Smith

South Kamloops Secondary School

Grade Nine

Underneath a barren tree, he rests: a small person in a gigantic world. He is a wise owl, sitting there pensively. The branches above him swoosh in the slight wind. Above him, the dark, fluffy clouds loom, threatening to spill over with rain. His gaze does not move; it rests on the endless ocean and the rough, choppy waves that wash upon the empty beach. It smells strongly of the sea, but the man does not budge; clearly he is no longer bothered by the stench. The dark, sticky sand clings to the man's clothes, but he does not appear to notice. He seems lost in another world, a happier time. The memories wash over him as the black waves would wash over a stone. He is clearly familiar with the landscape, as the harsh weather does not make him move. Perhaps it is just another windy day.

Run

I'm running away from here.

My soul consuming my mind I run faster than time.

I need escape.

Lights drag past in streaks leaving memories behind.

Eyes blurred with unspoken words, I run.

I watch stars fade and suns rise.

Time an endless loop of blank canvas.

Horror struck by the idea that someone behind can run faster.

Selfishly I run towards a better life, fearful the world will leave me to rot in this one.

I run.

Blood runs.

Time runs.

Nothing slows.

Nothing waits.

It all runs,

towards something,

it all runs.

I'll Think of You

We will rise in a hail of bullets.

I will grip your hand until the end.

Hold me tight like a weapon, abuse my power.

My crumpling sense of sanity, please don't let go of me.

For every shot to the heart dozens hit my mentality.

Did you love me?

I held your hand until it became a weapon.

I'll think of you before I pull the trigger.

We will go down in a hail of bullets.

Raeuber ran like the wind. He glanced around wildly. His face was a mask of panic, fear and desperation. Angry voices drifted down the alley toward him. He swore colourfully in German and dove through the closest window. Glass shattered. Raeuber moaned quietly. Blood dripped to the floor from the shallow cuts on his left hand. A grimace flashed across his face, but only for a moment, then it vanished as he beheld his surroundings. A grin grew in its place.

The moonlight streamed in from the broken window, illuminating the interior of the chamber. Baskets full of priceless jewels sat on the counter.

"The jewel maker's actual house," he breathed. His face was alight with excitement. He scrambled hastily up the stairs to the upper living quarters. "Holy cow," he said, "Jackpot." And it was. The foyer was richly decorated; nick-knacks lined the walls. The carpet was a luxurious red velvet.

"So the rumors are true. She is rich," he stopped, "No, he's rich."

Footsteps sounded somewhere in the house, and they were coming toward him. Quickly, he ducked behind an oak chest.

“Don’t forget to get your father to check the fire when he comes home. I’ll be back around midnight,” the jewel maker said, striding into the room. She was a tall, elegant lady with rich chocolate coloured hair. She wore a gown of fine indigo silk.

Raeuber clamped his hand over his mouth, his gold eyes impossibly wide.

“Of course, Mother,” a short scrawny girl replied. Her red hair was in perfect curls. A crown of ruby jewels, nestled together on top.

Raeuber sagged into the wall as the jewel maker left the house. The red haired girl took three steps forward and stopped right in front of him. Raeuber cringed.

She turned her dainty head toward him and Raeuber lunged. He wrestled her to the ground. She screamed only once before Raeuber’s hand clamped down on her mouth.

He grinned down at her, her ice blue eyes flashed angrily and she bit his hand.

He screamed and grabbed his knife. He placed it on her neck. “Scream or move and I’ll slit your throat. Understood?”

“Yes,” she said.

“Good. Where am I, and who are you?” he asked.

“You’re on Main Street, house number 1160. I’m Annabelle,” she said cringing into the floor.

Raeuber's face turned as white as a sheet as the blood left it.

The princess smiled. "I thought so. Now this is getting much more interesting. Follow me. I can get you out of here," she said, motioning him to follow.

He did.

The princess led him through countless rooms all richly decorated. They came to a stop in front of a carpet in the center of one room. She pulled it aside. A trap door gazed up at them. "If you take the passage on your right you'll come up in an abandoned shack on the edge of town. It's where my mother meets her clients. I'll deal with the officers. Just remember what I told you. Everyone has a choice. Good luck," she said, as Raeuber slipped into the small underground chamber. He took the passage on his right. He did not wait to see if the princess did indeed lie to the officers.

He walked out of the old shack fifteen minutes later. "I'll never steal again," he swore, looking up at the moon, "and I hope I never meet that princess again, because if I do, I might just..." Raeuber shook his head. "She was very beautiful and very familiar... as if I've met her before."

Amity

"Dorian?"

I startle at the sound of my lover's son's watery voice, looking up from my book to see his thin, quivering body in the doorway. He has wet streaks down his cheeks, and I sigh softly as I shut my book to give the pre-adolescent my full attention.

"What's wrong, Jeremiah?" Typically, the young one goes to his father for any and all troubles; the last and only time he came to me for help was to ask about his stuffed alligator, Rita, who'd gone missing.

He hesitates for a moment before walking forward to crawl onto Julian's side of the bed, and I raise a brow at how he snuggles up to the pillow next to me.

"What are you reading?" he asks faintly. I can now see the puffy red of his eyes: a clear sign he's been crying for a while. I swallow thickly, the sight of his messy face making my throat tighten.

"It's a novel of an American man in Paris who is battling between his desire for a French woman and an Italian man. It's quite an interesting read." He hums weakly, head dropping to rest on my shoulder. I pause for a moment before raising a hand to his skull, thumb gently rubbing the center of his forehead: a thing I've seen Julian do time and time again.

"Can you read to me?" His voice is barely above a whisper, and when he moves to look up at me his eyes are gleaming with moisture. I offer what I hope is a comforting smile, then turn back to the book in my lap and open to the first page.

Amity

After several minutes he sniffs wetly, and I look down to see that he has his face buried in the pillow. I shut the book again and slide it onto my bedside table with a tired sigh. Gingerly, I place my hand over his unkempt mop of hair, scratching lightly at his scalp.

"He'll be back before you know it, Jerem," I try, but he only hiccups quietly. He snivels again, curling into the mound in his arms.

"Oh, Jeremiah, it's alright," I shift to gently pull the pillow away and replace it with myself, and he wastes no time in burying his face in my tunic. His breath is ragged as I stroke his back. "You'll be alright. He's back tomorrow, yes? That's not very long."

"I know..." He sounds so small and young, and I have to take a moment to remember that this child has spent his entire life attached to his father at the hip - and for good reason. With Julian's ex having dragged the two of them through countless custody battles, it's more than understandable that he's developed separation anxiety. "It's just - " His throat cuts him off, and his fingers tighten further against my ribs. "I don't like being away from Papa."

"I know," I tell him earnestly, resting my cheek against his crown. "I know. It'll be okay. I promise, everything will be alright." When he sniffles once more with a meek nod, all I can think is, *God help anyone who messes with this boy.*

Under The Bed

By : Delphine Langevin

It was a Friday night and a huge party was going on... while I was stuck babysitting a little boy of a rich family. They were family friends and they had a son my age but he was eighteen years old and he thought babysitting his brother was a waste of his precious life. They had some kind of plans and they offered me a lot of money and I'm kind of broke right now, so I asked my mom to drive me to their house and told her to pick me up in the morning since the parents were going to be away for the whole night. I was going to babysit a little boy named Alex who was only six years of age. I'd babysat him before and he always was a very calm kid who loved to play board games!

Their house had always been a little creepy with its rusty roof and the creaky floors. As you walk along the path leading to the house, moss grows out of the cracks. I could hear crows screeching in the evening trying to scavenge any bread crumbs that might have been left on the ground beside park benches. The house itself was huge but it needed a fresh coat of painting like a monkey needed a banana. Around here, kids had named it the haunted house of the block! I was there a few minutes early so the parents told me the usual stuff of what to do in emergencies and their phone numbers. They left in a hurry leaving me in a too quiet house.

I found Alex sitting at the computer playing chess online with probably a 70-year-old man who was wondering how such a young kid could beat him so easily... But tonight he seemed tense and on edge as his knuckles were white as he gripped the keyboard. His eyes followed closely what was happening I closed the

door leading to the entrance and I went to read a book on the couch. Alex and I have always shared a joke about the house and how it seems that we closed more doors than we opened...

Tonight, the wind was blowing hard and we could hear what you could believe as a horrible screech come from the trees. It sounded like an ear piercing scream as it echoed off of the windows and back where it came from. Around 8pm, I told Alex that he had to go get ready for bed. I helped him into his pajamas and helped him brush his teeth then tucked him into bed. After I made sure he was asleep, I watched a "Doctor Who" episode then went into my own room to go get some sleep myself.

As I closed the light, I was sure I saw a shadow but I quickly brushed it off as a figment of my imagination. I slowly turned around to go back to bed but the cat had suddenly gotten on my bed. I'd always thought the cat had a staring problem because it seemed to always look behind me. My body shook involuntarily as I felt a hand on my back, slowly creeping closer... I screamed and ran into the hallway not looking back and went into Alex's room to make sure he was ok, but he was already awake looking at me with scared wide eyes.

I locked the door and hugged him tight as I could as we went to hide in the closet. I took the alarm clock with me so I could know what time it was. Alex fell fast asleep on my lap as I sang some lullaby my mom had sung to me when I was scared. The last thing I saw was the alarm flash 12:07am before I felt a hand on my mouth to muffle my screams as the other hand started choking me. I couldn't breathe. I struggled with all my efforts but I felt paralyzed and it seems that I couldn't do anything to shake my attacker off. My eyes opened as the realization that it was a dream hit me like a ton of bricks. I looked at the alarm clock and I saw that it was

12:06am as I heard the closet door open... I did not have the best reflexes but I grabbed Alex in my arms and ran back to my room while again locking the door. Alex whispered to tell me to stop breathing so heavily, but the breathing was not coming from me. Not wanting to scare him, I nodded, but my bedroom door opened as we both screamed.

In came Alex's brother while laughing so hard I wouldn't be surprised if he had peed in his pants. He told us that this had all been a joke and I glared at him while consoling Alex who had started crying. He promised to pay me a good sum of money if I didn't tell his parents but he had gone too far and I told him I'd call them as soon as I tucked Alex into bed. As I got ready to close the lamp, Alex asked me to check under the bed for any more monsters that might want to hurt him. I went along with it pretending to be an explorer and ducking my head down. I looked under the bed and I saw another Alex. He told me, "I think there's somebody on my bed..."

Misty McDonald
Grade 9
Desert Sands Community School

Whispering Secrets

I whisper my deepest secrets,
To the woods that have grown to know me.

It whispers back,
Echoing inside this mind of mine, helping me to realize that
Everything will come back to me within time.

The branches of the trees reach out to me,
Holding me in their grasp
Promising not to let go,

That is until they snap and reality clamps back onto me,
Slamming me back to earth where promises get broken
And your whispering secrets find a way out.

"The Sailor"
Liam Stenner
Grade 9
Sahali Secondary

The Sailor

She'd always hated the painting. It stared down from its regal gold frame on the hallway wall, vases of long-wilted flowers to either side. The subject was an older relative in their prime, a great-great-uncle perhaps. He was dressed in a dark blue, old-fashioned sailor's uniform, adorned with medals. He was handsome, in an sharp, regal way. His eyes were always what people noticed, though. Grey and cold. There was no reflection in them, just the stormy grey of a thundercloud. When she was little, the girl had wondered what he was looking at.

The artist, whoever they were, had left no signature on the painting. It was a wonderful piece of work, it had probably cost a lot of money to have commissioned. Yet the artist left no mark or signature.

She stared at it now, in the dark hallway. In the light, you could see every fine detail and brushstroke the artist made. Light and shadow, contrasting each other on his uniform. In the light, you could see everything. Here, in the dark with no lights, the details blurred together, and you could hardly see anything. But what you could see was terrifying, and that was why the girl hated the painting so much. The details blurred together and smoothed. The skin looked real. It didn't look like a painting, it looked like a picture. The man loomed above the hallway dominating it. His suit became black, the glint of his medals were barely visible. His dark hair, cleanly combed, became nearly indistinguishable from the outfit, and it looked like he was wearing a hood. But worst of all was his expression. His cold, calm expression changed in the dark. His eyes shifted in a little way that suggested dark, violent thoughts were going on behind his storm-grey eyes. His mouth became a hard, cold line. It looked like he was staring right at you. The girl had never left her room when it was dark, not until she had turned fourteen. Even then, she did it with her eyes closed and her fingers crossed, blindly crossing the hall to the washroom, expecting a heavy hand to land on her shoulder. *Thump*. The girl looked up. The painting stared back, unmoving. There was a noise downstairs. She walked down slowly. The stairs creaked with every step. *Creeeak. Creeeak. Creeeak*. She turned on the lights as she explored, looking for the source of the noise. She found nothing, and slept on the couch, not willing to face the painting again, not tonight.

In the morning, she walked up the creaking stairs. Sunlight streamed through the windows, falling on four wilting flowers and a yellow ceramic vase. The painting was in its usual place, grey eyes staring ahead, still in its dusty gold frame. Nothing had

"The Sailor"
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changed. The girl looked into her old room, filled with dust. All the stuff was still there, all the stuff she'd left when she moved out. She looked back out, and the painting stared back. Then she walked back downstairs for breakfast.