

My hand brushes across the rough bark, as I run my fingers through the indentations within the tree, I feel free. I turn and gaze across the green landscape taking it in, savoring it. For once I have no responsibilities, It's just me and my mind. Me and my bestfriend Izel did this every Saturday before he was forced to join the force 4 years ago. "Lea!" Paul calls. I snap out of my thoughts and turn my attention to My father "I'm Coming!" I shout back as I sprint towards the direction of the small town where he awaits me.

On the way I decide to check my near by snares, fortunately I now have 2 wild long haired rabbits, Unfortunately, My father is screaming my name now. I try shouting a reply to him but before I can get the words out I have a hand over my mouth and I'm against a tree. I get a sudden fear powered adrenaline rush and try kicking the threat but get a knife held up to my neck in return. "Listen here. I'll remove my hand but you can't scream or alert anyone or anything. Ya hear me?" Says the man and I nod obediently. I can tell it's a man by his voice and appearance, its certainly not from here though other wise I'd have recognized it. "What do you want" I ask. There was a hesitation before I got a reply. "That's none of your business but I do need you to come with me." He says but I shake my head. I feel his knife coming closer to my neck, I panic and agree to go with him - which is probably the most stupidest thing I've ever done - and the next thing I know I'm waking up in a small cave by a fire. " Where did you take me?" I drowsily say while prodding the bruise on my head most likely from what he knocked out me with. I get no answer. I look up to see him pacing the cave. "Wh..what are you doing..? I ask. He ignores my question and moves on, he seems frightened by something. "Sorry about your head I couldn't have you making a commotion" he says. "I'll have you know I'm the best hun-" I get cut off by a

sudden shout followed by a roar out of the cave, the man must have heard it to because his face went pale and he stops pacing. "Come follow me quickly" he says as he jumps down from the cave, I follow skeptical knowing that whatever's out here isn't far. We break out into a sprint towards a lake and dive in. "Who was that?!" I ask highly frightened. " It's no one, my name's Izel by the way." Izel? I swear I've heard that from somewhere before.. Can he? No. He can't be Izel. He doesn't sound like him... he does resemble his looks from my memories with him now that I think of it though. "Iz- Izel waters?" I stutter. He looks at me and gives an apologetic look as he gives a small nod." I give him a long hug before we get out of the water. "What the heck are you doing here Izel?!" I ask in confusion and surprise. He surveys the area with fright returning back to his face "I can't tell you here. I need to get you to somewhere safe" And we begin jogging towards a tree that offers shelter and a hiding place. We climb up and he looks around again which concerns me. "What is it?" I ask. "I ran away from the force". Izel says, I'm so shocked I almost fell out of the tree - Running away from the force is punishable by death- "Izell, What have you done?!" He looks down, "Im sorry its just horrible there." he says. I can understand that. My mother went there - she tried running away too.. and we never saw her again. "I came to get you so I wouldn't be alone.. it's stupid I know I now realize I'd just put you in danger too" he says.

I can't leave my father, We are all each other has. "Izel you know I can't leave my father" I say. "I know." My father! I forgot all about him! He doesn't even know where I am or if I'm okay! "Izel I need to go back.. You can come too! We can dye your hair a blonde color and change your name." I say. I look at his brown hair how it's covered in mud. "Yeah okay but how are we going to change my name?" he asks. Well you've been gone for years people aren't going remember exactly how you look." "O-Okay he says lets go then." he says and we head back to

the cave from there he leads the way. Within 3 hours we get back to the woods by town. It's dark now so I can quickly get the dye and dye Izels hair without anyone noticing. Soon enough We are by a small creek and I finish his hair. It's now a fluffy blonde and we look at his reflection in the water. The dye has changed a lot of his facial features, It's like i'm staring at a whole new person, I hope this works.

Glass Shard

Chapter 1

The steps to the basement are cold even with my socks on. Why? Why do we have to take cover when a citizen comes within 20 meters of the base? My little brother is in front of me and laughing at the rock in his hand. I smile at him because he's only 3. My mom is behind me pushing me to go faster.

“Mom, it's just a precaution. We can take our time.” I say calmly. She smiles at me but still hustles.

We get in the corner right under the small window so no one can see us. I put my brother on my lap and smile at the silly face he painted on the rock. That's when the first blast comes about 2 blocks away. It shakes our house. My brother starts to cry.

“It's ok Taylor. Mom I thought it was just a precaution!” I yell over the blasts.

“I know honey. It was better not to tell you though,” she says in my ear. I turn to her and she's crying. She grabs my brother and turns up the rug that hides our trap door that goes into a shallow root cellar. Another blast comes and it showers us in glass shards. She sets Taylor in there and turns to me. I lower myself down and look up at my Mom. But she has closed the door and and put the rug over it.

“Mom!” I scream. Then there is a crash like a door hitting the ground. I hear more blasts and a shower of bullet shells hit the roof of the cellar.

The bullets remind me of being at the gun rage earlier today with Jake. I start to panic. Jake! Where is he, is he fighting? When the warning went over the speakers, he drove me home.

Tears are streaming over my face. Taylor's screams are muffled by the sound of the system's guns. I grab him and start to scrape the dirt away to show a tunnel. I push him in front of me and the dirt is digging into my jeans. He crawls forward still crying.

We finally get to the end and I push up on the roof hatch. It doesn't budge! Someone must be standing on it! I start to freak out because I'm claustrophobic. I scream for them to get off and try again, this time it opens.

I get out and grab my brother. I carry him the rest of the way. We are just a few meters away when a blast sends me off my feet. My brother lands quite a ways away from me and he is face down in the dirt. I know immediately that something is not right. I get up and only then do I realise that my right arm is stinging. I run over to Taylor trying to keep my arm still. I turn him over and he is out cold.

I gather him and run the last 10 meters. I get to the underground base for the Rebels. I put my hand on the scanner and can barely hear the sound of the beep over the commotion.

"Who is this?" the nice secretary, whose name I can never remember, questions.

"Tell Mike that I'm going to strangle him!" I said through my teeth into the speaker.

"Come on in Rowan."

The steel doors open and I rush in. A nurse comes up to me and I give her my brother. I run off, turn the corner and I run straight into Mike. Once I gather myself I scream at him.

“What is wrong with you?! Your one job is to protect us and you failed miserably!” I feel the anger bubbling up inside of me. I dig my fingernails in my palms bringing a whole new wave of pain in my right hand. I suck in a shallow breath.

“Move Rowan.” Mike calmly says to me. My face gets really hot.

“I hate you! You don’t even care. My Mom is dead and possibly my brother and you don’t care!” I scream at him. I take a swing with my good hand and hit him square in the jaw. He takes a step back and grunts in pain. I go to take another swing but my world goes black.

-Someone Special-
Kassidy Kallusky
Grade: 7
Arthur Stevenson Elementary

I don't know where to start, I know I made a mistake. This was not easy for me to do right now, I should have waited longer. I should have listened to my sister Catherine and my mother. This shouldn't be the way people are reacting to this lifestyle I chose. I can't let this get to me and hold me back.

"Oh, hi there, I'm Jonas. I'm sure you know already I'm transgender and to top that off I'm gay. Wait, you better not be laughing at me too. Coming out is way harder than anyone could imagine because you never know people's reactions. All the gossip and rumours running along all the walls are more hurtful than anything.

It's the first day back from spring break and everyone still remembers everything I had said about me being these things. As I walk down the hall all the students are staring at me as if I'm prey and they are predators. I end up approaching my locker, their eyes still staring into my soul. I slowly turn the knob around for my code. My door swings open and hits the locker beside mine with a thud. The last thing I saw before I blacked out was something red approaching my face.

-Someone Special-
Kassidy Kallusky
Grade: 7
Arthur Stevenson Elementary

I woke up in the nurse's office and was send home for 2-3 days. Those days went by fast, Catherine and I took pictures of ourselves and posted on her social media and watched scary movies. I thought the social media would be a good thing until all these hate comments appeared towards Catherine and I, because she was with me skipping school and because I was transgender. She told me not to care about all these comments, but I did anyways, secretly keeping everything hidden. This soon led to the point where I started self harming myself. I don't know where this will lead to next.

After those three days of being at home having scary movie marathons, I felt the need to back at school due to the fact I would have A LOT of homework. Oh no! Catherine just told me that my math class is getting a new student. Great to know that my math teacher likes to give me some information. Ugh, now my tangled mess or thoughts were even more tangled than ever. My head was pounding and my anxiety was acting up. I got through the first few classes of the day, than math class crept up on me. I walk into math class and the teacher announces that me of all the students has to show the new girl around.

-Someone Special-
Kassidy Kallusky
Grade: 7
Arthur Stevenson Elementary

I start off the tour with a little history of our school, than I showed her all the classrooms and the gym. I tried to make small talk with her as we walked by each classroom, but it always turned out awkward. At the very end we warmed up to each other a little bit. I was actually sad it ended so soon. By the looks of it, I think she won't be like the rest of those bullies.

Cara and I eventually became better friends, which made me feel happy to actually have a friend who would support me. Cara had made other friends at that school, but they are people like me, who only get the bad kind of attention. Cara was the only one so far who knew about my self harming issues. It broke her heart every time I self harmed myself.

She wanted to do something to help, so we used her social media apps, including Youtube, and made videos explaining our issues. We made many different videos and not all of them explained all we wanted to say or the videos kept deleting. We kept making videos until we got one good take and posted it to every social media app she owned. Our video went viral and many people wanted to ask us questions or meet us. Some people even wanted me to get some social media apps like instagram, musically, youtube, etc. So I got these apps and my account got more than 15 thousand followers and likes per video or picture. I was so grateful to have so many more supporters than just Cara.

-Someone Special-
Kassidy Kallusky
Grade: 7
Arthur Stevenson Elementary

Now the world believed in me and Cara, but I didn't think the school believed it yet. I hadn't been to school in bit since we made this video so I decided it was time to face it all and see if everything was alright with them. Cara was sick the next day and unavailable to talk for bit so I had to go on my own. I wanted her there with me to help if the reaction wasn't good, but everything was fine.

School wasn't hell anymore, but filled with people cheering when they saw you or crowding you in the halls and in the cafeteria. Some of those mean classmates who never liked me still didn't, but hid in the shadows and making faces at me for stealing their friends or apparently their lives. Cara showed up the next day and I felt twenty times better than before. My self harming soon ended and I lived my life to the fullest.

Minimum
Sarah Kwak
Grade 7
McGowan Park Elementary School

He checks the clock, spinning in its cosmic proportions and phantasms, so odd and so strangely alone, the red light ablaze with faded colour, and with remorseful soul. The boy fantasies that if perhaps the figment of time had never existed, then he wouldn't have to take those nasty pills that seemed to claw their way down his throat, still had friends to live the 'teenage dream' with, and if he didn't have to stammer *that* stammer every single time he talked to the teachers, that made them all look at him like he had a spreading disease and glanced with a fictionalized smile, "hey, you okay there, buddy?"

He didn't like this at all- he couldn't understand what other people had that made them look so precious and perfect, so loved and appreciated, that somehow they were all motorized with a special mind, but for him, they only built in a uselessly sensitive heart.

He forgot about how beautiful everyone could be, their smiles poised, their eyes bright, their lips curving in voices but for him, only a beating heart every single time he saw a human being, the sounds around him rushed, and the tears clenching too hard on his throat. *Beast.*

He wished that at least someone in this crowded world could understand what he could be feeling- that he didn't want to feel pressured all the time, that he didn't want his stammer to get in the way of action, that he wasn't too scared to stand in front of the school and perform, it was

Minimum
Sarah Kwak
Grade 7
McGowan Park Elementary School

because he thought he would actually die, his heartbeat blasting too fast, too fast. Like it always was.

He wanted people to see how much he was trying, and that his pain was based on the fact of that it wasn't because he didn't want to, it was because he couldn't. He was a fool, but his mind was always racing with thoughts. Everything a chore, everything a checklist that he couldn't manage to keep. He was trying, but the world didn't seem to understand. That everyday was a struggle, and that whatever he did it felt like a failure.

He prayed that someone could understand that feeling. On every star, he wished. He stopped sleeping, he discontinued other trains of thoughts running through his mind. He told himself that if someone actually was like him, he could finally just be satisfied because perhaps that person would be willing to be his friend, and they could understand each other and support each other, and actually be something, be someone. Be like the other kids, not to create their own reality, but to just fit in with the rest.

Just like the rest of the world. That was what he wanted to be.

Selfish
Sarah Kwak
Grade 7
McGowan Park Elementary School

The boy recognizes his faults more easier than he does his strengths. People say that all the boy does is regret about everything, and he does- he is a fool who believes that if he feels remorse for long enough, the sorrow will cleanse away his memories, and his mistakes. The blood on the blade looks at him and turns away. The boy blinks back unforgiving tears. *Beast.*

He wanted to be a hero when he was younger, yet now he is an under antagonized villain- to himself. His head is racing with thoughts like cars on a highway, thoughts jeering back and forth: the boy wants them to stop. They never do. The boy doesn't blame them. He would shout at the top of his lungs if there was a weird boy walking down the streets, muttering to himself about 'regrets'. He would do anything if he wasn't himself. So instead of being someone else, he thinks.

He thinks that the clothes manufacturers should pay closer attention to the sweaters that they create, the long jeans that they sew. It conceals the scars, but it seems not his foolishness. Everyday, he doesn't feel anything but anger, anger that he did this to himself, anger that he cannot stop, anger that what he needs to do is go to 'rehab', but he can't find the entrance. He is lost, and he cannot be found. It seems like his fury demolished all the maps.

He goes to school, and manages to survive another day of 'teasing' like his father said with a grunt, the hurt and the tears he blinked away, frozen and forgotten. Why couldn't people understand that what he wanted was not for this life to be over, but that he just didn't want to live

Selfish
Sarah Kwak
Grade 7
McGowan Park Elementary School

life as himself? The boy was curious, but he didn't know that curiosity came with a price. The boy didn't know a lot of things. He just thought that if he wished for long enough he could change his past and his future, and transform into a hero. The boy was a thinker. But he did not act.

So his bullies called him 'selfish', because they all didn't know anything about him- for they knew his outside but not his inside, because they were all somehow better than him, and on a higher level, because he was the 'loser', and the 'hated', so of course. Of course, they didn't care. If he was the bottom on the social ladder, then why would they bother to know his name, his reality, his insanity. They were right- he was wrong.

He would have to remember that this was what people were like nowadays- so he did. His funeral was the day after. And the people managed to remember the gravestones' date, but not their words.

His name was selfish boy. And there was lots he regretted.

Time Twisters:
The Prophecy

As the car moved forward, 16-year-old Zinnia sat in the passenger seat, staring out the window of her dad's dark blue convertible. It was her second six-hour day on the road. Only three days to go until they got to their new home in Maryland. Even as they passed beautiful mountains and clear blue rivers, she couldn't help but wish she could be home in California. She stared at a farm as they passed, remembering how the one she used to live at shone in the morning light.

"How are you feeling, Flower Bud?" asked Matt, her father.

Zinnia winced at the nickname, hating it even still. She had been called that since she was a baby, since she was named after a flower. Yet she never told her father in fear of hurting him...and it was her mom's idea. Zinnia's mother, diagnosed with cancer after giving birth to her, died when Zinnia was only six months old. Matt remarried two years later. But Steph, her step-mom, stayed behind to take care of the farm until they could sell it.

Zinnia sighed, leaving her father's question dangling in the air, too sad to say anything.

After a few more turns, Zinnia's father pulled into the small town of Bluff, Utah.

Zinnia noticed there were cowboys *everywhere*, although the most interesting two were in the midst of a nerf gun battle on horses. It appeared as though they were fighting over who got to save the poor bartender who was outside getting yelled at by three drunk men.

Zinnia and her father parked in the hotel parking lot, took their bags from the car, and walked into the hotel.

As soon as they got into their room, Zinnia threw herself on the nearest bed and curled up under the covers. When her head touched the pillow, she drifted off into a deep sleep.

* * *

By the time she awoke, the sun was at its peak, shining through the curtains. She sat up slowly, looking around the room. Her father was nowhere to be seen. She stood and found a note.

Went to get breakfast. Be right back.

DON'T OPEN THE DOOR FOR ANYBODY, NO MATTER WHO THEY SAY THEY ARE.

She stared blankly at the door, wondering who he thought would be coming. After all, why would he say not to let them in "No matter who they say they are"? Who was he expecting?

Zinnia heard a quiet noise by the window. She gasped and flung herself around... but there was no one there.

Must have been a bird, she thought to herself.

Suddenly, she crumpled on the ground, almost unconscious. Stunned and confused, Zinnia heard someone talking quietly behind her.

"One down, one more to go," said a man with a deep voice as Zinnia drifted off into blackness.

* * *

It didn't take long for Zinnia to figure out that she wasn't in her hotel anymore. She was in a dark room with dim yellow lights and an empty chair across from her. She took in a raspy breath, having a hard time breathing in such a small space. She moved to rub her eyes, but realized her hands were bound behind her. She screamed, using all of her energy to project her voice. She cried for her dad, Steph, anyone, to come and help her. But no one could hear her. She was alone.

After about a half hour of sobbing, a heavily built man and small a girl entered the room. He was bald, wearing a leather jacket and pants, covered head to toe with spikes, while she was handcuffed with a bag on her head and appeared to be wearing a unicorn onesie.

Zinnia assumed that she, too, had been kidnapped by this man, or whoever he worked for.

The other girl was forced into a chair beside Zinnia.

The man started to walk away, but then, remembering he needed to take the bag off the girl's head, turned around and snatched the burlap sack.

The other girl's dark hair cascaded over her face, a gorgeous auburn colour. "Thank you," she said.

Zinnia knew that voice.

The girl flipped her hair so Zinnia could see her face.

Zinnia knew that face, too.

It was her own.

"Hi, my name is Rose," said the other girl, turning to face Zinnia. When she saw Zinnia, Rose's mouth dropped open, matching Zinnia's.

"As you guys have probably noticed," began the bald man, "you're twins."

"How-" Zinnia started.

"We don't have time for those minor details," growled the man, rubbing his forehead.

"All you need to know right now is that the fate of our world is in one of your hands. Or, more accurately, in your heads. You are Time Twisters."

Rose's jaw dropped so far that Zinnia thought it would hit the ground.

"What are Time Twisters?" Zinnia asked, utterly confused.

"Time Twisters are people who control the past, present, and future," Rose said, like it was the most obvious thing in the world. "What *I* don't get is why it has to be us,"

"Because that is what the Wizard of Wagzin predicted," said Egghead, the nickname for the bald man that Zinnia came up with.

"He's a Time Twister, too," Rose said. "So, he knows it has to be us? What exactly did he say?"

"In the Year 2022,
2 Time Twisters will be born,
With a crucial task for them to do.
Apart for years they will be torn.

Reunited at last,
Their roles are cast,
One chosen to heal,
One chosen to jeopardize.
One must kill the Other
Or the world must suffer demise.
Fate in their hands they hold,
Whether the world lives or whether it dies."

"So, one of us is dark...the other is light...and one of us must die."

The Arc of the Reborn

The bullet departed from its source, with a sound kind of like a deafening blow, instinctively the urge of protecting her came over me. I could have pushed her out of the way and we could have both escaped it, but no, instead I decided to go full on superman, but I remembered that I wasn't indestructible a good five seconds after it had pierced through my heart. As I fell backwards, the blood coming out of me had been forming pools around me. Talk about slow reactions. "Please no, don't leave me!" her tears mingling with my blood "is there anything I can do? You're the only friend I've ever known, please..." she said. Her tears making their way down to her chin. Wow this kid. In case she hadn't realized: one, we were presently in a hospital, two, she has her masters in medicine. Then she starts to shake me back and forth shouting "Please, no, no!". At this rate, I didn't know if she was actually trying to kill me or trying to help me at the time. "I can't believe you'd do this...." she said turning towards the lanky figure in the corner with a shotgun. Yay I might actually have a chance of living now she's stopped shaking me. "You know it didn't have to be like this. You guys were so close you couldn't be separated, you were the best of friends..." her eyes fueled with anger, sucks to be him right now "jealousy really can take it's toll."

I know right? You think you know a guy I said sitting on the bed, already departed from my body. "I- I'm sorry I didn't-"

"You didn't what?!" she said screaming, "You mean to tell me that you didn't 'think' the bullet could kill?!" then she slapped him so hard it echoed throughout the room. Dang home girl's getting fiesty, I smiled. Just a year ago my little sister was like a

shadow, you couldn't hear her breath, come into the room, nothing. In fact she was the 'living ghost' of our family, at least that's what I called her, then I looked at my hands, near transparent. Ironic isn't it? Suddenly it's like time fast forwarded to my burial. A collection of black attire surrounded me on the coffin, the priest's face expressionless, my family nearly broken into tears, they

didn't want to see me go. I didn't want to see me go either. Darkness and rain followed, the whole shebang, typical universe, so cliché sometimes. Alas Death, claiming another soul for his own, at least that's what I think Shakespeare said at a point in his life. Ha! I smiled triumphantly, I was listening in grammar class. But then a wave of despair came over me," not that it would matter anymore". Almost as sudden as I got there I quickly left to another location, this one less dreary but a tad bright. No that's an understatement it's like glitter and rainbows had a baby. Ya like that but brighter, than around me, a bunch of voices trying to talk over each other "It's rather torn up" the voice said poking me with a rod. "I think it's good not completely" the voice gesturing towards me "is sanitary enough". Um hel-lo I'm dead, not deaf! "I don't think it's wise to do so, it's not pure enough." Wow thanks bud, such a sweet talker aren't you. "And it's a talkative not to mention it has a sharp tongue". Says you, where am I?"

"It's not where you are, you should be worried about, it's where you would be..."

"Um thanks for enlightening me?" "But since you asked so nicely you're in the midst of the Original Seven Aka the Arch Angels". The way she just said 'A.K.A' oh

"Oh I get it, I'm being judged". "Oh I'm being judged" i whispered.

They started chattering for about a while. Whatever they were talking about is still unknown to me. I assume that something bad must have occurred before I ended up

in this, this... void. Not just a void, but a living entity. Lacking a soul yet still alive. Trapped here for centuries, milleniums, not that it would matter, for time, is not my greatest concern at the moment . But then suddenly out of nowhere there was a tune, then a full on song. Needless to say, this unmistakable melody was the sweet marinade of life. And with every drop of light, the darkness disappeared, and it finally landed on me, like I had been chosen. Then it started to growing until it eventually engulfed my being. In the blink of an eye, I was in a different place, obviously not where I had being before, for a moment got blinded by the burst of colour I haven't seen in a long time. My first sensation, was the morning dew, on the slick, long grass around me. Next came the sweet earthy smell that no one ever has a word for after it's rained lastly, the morning sun bathing my very being. The whole scenery itself was calming and nothing short of outstanding. From the near glowing algae, below the shimmering edge of the lake. The feeling of bliss quickly disappeared as I collapsed face first onto ground. Then a person picked me up and the person with white robes. A person with right robes? But this particular one was a sight for sore eyes. " T-thank you Sir," he nodded. "Do you know where we are, well of course you know, because I met you here, but there is a possibility that-" I caught myself in mid sentence and noticed I was blabbering more than usual. His eyes flickering with amusement. "Welcome child to the Arc of the Reborn, your new home, your domain, your future."

"My story after death is clearly beginning."

January's Chill

White diamond coated trees, sparkle in the midnight sun,
A frosty blanket overtop the frozen meadow.
Spring at arm's length, winter has just begun,
Prepare for winter's grey, misty shadow.

Creatures burrowed in their tepid escapes,
Awaiting the warmth and welcome of spring.
Glittering snowflakes fall of all different shapes,
Birds distant, no songs do they sing.

January's Chill.

April's Song

The song of beautiful lovebirds still rings in the air,
As flowers blossom and take a breath of spring.
In April, there is no despair,
Butterflies joyfully parade their vibrant wings.

The sun is shining in the sapphire blue heaven,
No ivory, wispy clouds in sight.
Nature, making a great impression,
Oh April, such an amazing delight!

April's Song.

Faith Maddison
Juniper Ridge (JRES)
Grade 7

Forest Cats

This is the story of a runaway girl, who lives in the trees of a world that isn't quite like our own...

PROLOGUE

I'm running, fast. Tears showering down my face. I can never go back. Never.

Tripping, I land flat on my face,

"Ow." I mumble.

I pull myself up and gawk when I notice the enormous trees all around me. I walk over to one and attempt to measure the trunk with my arms. But my arms span doesn't even go a quarter of the way around.

"The trunk must be at least 15 meters around, and the tree probably, hm, 400 meters tall. Wow tall trees," I think to myself.

Then I get an idea, and start to climb up the tree. Once I'm about 8 meters up I notice a scoop in the branches, which form a small room.

"This is my new home," I say, "And this scoop, is my bed."

CHAPTER 1

I watch as a small stream of rain sends little droplets of water off the edge of the leaf. But the beauty of the raindrop is nothing compared to the infinite night around me. Normally, I would be scared right now, all alone in this darkness, but no, something about the stars is making me feel safe, feel happy. I'm sitting in an enormous tree, cold, far from home, the pain of what I did flowing through my body. I ran away from home, so far that I can never go back. But, it was the right thing to do. I sigh, then get up and climb into my bed.

I wake up realizing how lonely I truly am.

"I need a friend," I say to myself.

With hope in my eyes I climb down the tremendous tree. As I walk around the forest, I see animal, plants, and many trees towering meters above me. But something is off. Nothing seems quite the way it should. It's too quiet. I can't hear the wind, or the crickets. I see a small fox walk past the tree beside me, but I can't hear his feet in the leaves. I see a black and red woodpecker pecking at a tree nearby. I walk over, but again I can't hear him pecking.

"Weird..." I mumble not thinking too much of it.

I'm looking up as I walk, not the best idea, but staring in wonder I can't resist looking at the trees. Then suddenly, I slip and fall down a small hill into some shallow water. A river. Its rushing quickly down past me, but, I can't hear it.

"Ok," I say to myself, "There's definitely something weird going on around here."

Then right out of the blue, I notice something colourful floating down the river. I grab it right before it passes me. It's a blanket! Perfect, I've been so cold the past two days. I head back to my tree and hang the blanket on a branch to dry.

CHAPTER 2

CRACK-KABOOM! Lightning fills the night sky, thunder deafening me. The rain pooling at the bottom of the trees is getting deep. This insane downpour has made it so I haven't been out of my tree for three days. Luckily, the many branches above me cover my bed and my sitting branch. Yawning, I settle down into my bed, and pull my new blanket over myself.

"I was cold, now I'm warm. Wow. Lucky me," I say sarcastically.

Life in the forest hasn't been treating me very well, and it's begun affecting my attitude.

"Wouldn't it just be wonderful if we could get out of here and go home?" I sigh, speaking to the bird on a nearby branch, "But we both know I can't do that. Mama doesn't want me back, because Mama doesn't love me anymore."

Once the rain finally stopped, I climbed down the tree. When I step down water comes up from the soggy dirt forming a small pool around my feet.

"Today is the day. Today I will find a friend," I announced to the world.

Continuing on I pass a clover patch, at least a dozen dandelions, and something that looks like poison ivy. I see another fox, but it runs scared away from me. I spot two small white bunnies, but when I walk over they hide under a rose bush.

A small stream of tears run down my face, "No friends for me," I whisper through my sobbing.

After walking for about an hour more I decide to head back. But where is back?

Starting to panic, I run around, unable to figure out which way I came from.

"No, no, no!" I scream, "This is bad! Very bad!"

I crumble into a heap on the ground, all feelings of hope lost.

CHAPTER 3

I jerk my head up when I hear leaves crumple behind me. I swing around and shout, "Hello?" No answer. "Hello?" I shout even louder.

"Hello," says a confident sounding voice behind me.

I swing around. Nothing there.

"What do you want from me?" I shout into the forest.

"I know where your home is," says the voice.

"You know where my tree is?" I question the voice.

"Yes. Follow me," it replies.

"But I can't see you," I say.

"My voice. Follow my voice."

I get up and follow the voice as it rambles on about something I don't understand.

Eventually, we reach an area I recognize. Excited, I run ahead of the voice and stop at the bottom of my tree.

"Thank you! Thank you so much!" I say gratefully.

"Any day," the voice says.

"What can I ever do to repay you?" I ask.

The voice sighs, "Just remember me."

"I will. I promise," I say, then let out an enormous yawn.

"Get some sleep. It's time for me to go now," the voice says.

I nod and begin to climb up my tree. I stop on the first branch and look back to see a small orange blur leaping from tree to tree.

"Goodbye my mysterious friend," I whisper then continue up the tree.

Once I reach my spot I notice something in my bed. I climb over to see an indescribably beautiful kitten sleeping on my blanket. Carefully, making sure not to wake the delicate blessing, I curl myself around it.

"Hope," I name the kitten.

I snuggle closer to my new friend. The whole world disappears around me as I fall asleep. My new future looking beautiful.

To be continued...

Explode a Moment

As I perch here, under this immense, ancient fir tree, I begin to sense that I am the sole human at McQueen Lake. The birds are engaged in singing their afternoon melody, their fall song hovers through the paralyzed trees. With zero movements beyond me, my breath is unleashed from my worn-out lungs, the shapeless cloud of white floats up to the gray sky that blankets the horizon. As I draw a breath, I savour the crisp aroma of delicate leaves and drizzling dewdrops, scarcely plunging from the heavens above. With no visual of sunlight, I feel sorrowful but somewhat still serene as the brown slinking ribbons of squirrel and chipmunk glide gracefully one branch to another, high above my head. They gossip to one another, their conversations drawing age and time to the gentle giants that loom far above the soil turf. Mushrooms and clovers raise their heads amongst the dead pine needles and the broken logs of wood that carpet the green and brown kingdom of life. The face of the lake, slowly moving with spirals and shapes, peeks through the reeds that hug the shoreline. With the swaying lichen suspended by the branches of the green canopy, I start to feel as if I will lie here forever, slowly disintegrating with the tall stacks of wood and small bushes of green. I never want to leave.

The last time I saw him...he was short, He had liquid chocolate eyes, wearing dark wide rimmed glasses, greasy slick black hair and with speckled acne shaped like the big dipper. I am sure he only showered when his mom told him to, typical behaviour of a 12 year old boy. My mom said to be nice and so I obeyed. I walked over to him with a friendly smile and said, "Hi my name is Kate".

awkwardly shaking my hand he replied shyly, " My name is Ty." I thought to myself, what a cute name, but he is still a little odd.

Meanwhile my family squished inside the front hall of the entrance of their house, right with all of Ty's family. His parents offered that we take a seat in their living room. The reason why we were even in their house is because my oldest sister met Ty's older brother on Facebook. While she looks lovey dovey with Mr. Perfect I am still standing beside Ty until finally we walk into the living room. We all sit down and talk which felt like a lifetime of awkward at the beginning, then I started warming up to Ty and his family. We left late at night as they had school in the morning. I never thought I would have to see this kind of cute nerd again because we lived in different countries and had 1000 miles between us. Thinking to myself, I can not believe I called him a nerd!

Fast forward five years, my sister who met the perfect guy years ago on Facebook was now announcing her engagement to him. Oh my gosh, the first thought that came into my mind was I will get to visit Ty again. Let alone, my sister is engaged. I had a real issue to focus on! I haven't seen him for all these years so obviously I was excited to drive to the United States for my sister's wedding. We planned the wedding in three fast paced stressful months, loaded up our

small car and headed to the states with a 1000 mile drive ahead of us. As we drive I think of what I would say to the kind of cute nerd. But mostly nerd.

As we arrive at their house, somebody opened the door and I paid no attention to it just looking for Ty but then he said, "Kate nice to see you again," I realized it was those same liquid chocolate eyes. This tall person greeting us was Ty. Tall isn't the only thing he had going for him to say the least. His acne was gone, his baby face was thinner, and his hair actually looked like the best hairstyle I've ever seen.

I forgot I hadn't said anything yet, "Oh yes helloooooo." Yes. That's the best I could come up with. Talk about nerd.

Casually and very smooth of course, I went in head first into the door after tripping on the welcome mat. Alright, I see karma had come for me. He pretended not to notice, but I know he did sonny face blushed. This time we all sat in the living room again. But things were different. I didn't notice the amount of random family members I was squished on the couch with. I didn't notice the weird smell of a shower less little boy. All I could notice was the heat of my burning red face and dry throat as I stared at this "nerd."

I wish I could say, 'fast forward another 5 years and we are announcing our engagement,' but that is not where the story is headed. Fast forward 5 days from then when I see him at my sister's wedding. Sure my sister is beautiful and it's the happiest day of her life and all that... but this guy! This guy had it going on. Dressed in a suit, and ready to flirt with me I hoped. Okay I tried to remember the Pinterest tips on flirting, and I hoped the Instagram tutorial on flirty makeup

made me look perfect for this moment. I walk up in my nude high heels and say, "Hi my name is Kate."

Excuse me. What. He knew that already! Say something else before he does. "And I love how my sister is getting married, we should try it sometime."

Alright... forward, but flirty.

He didn't giggle or say "Yes in fact I have a ring!" He just stared with wild owl eyes. This lasted for longer than I want to admit. Indeed karma had bit me in the butt. I had become the nerd. To make it even more awkward, I slowly backed away. Still facing him. Still hating my life. Still facing him 15 feet away. His eyes still stared like a wild owl at me. I only turned around when I hit the stairs of where my sister would finish her walk down the aisle. To make it even worse, I fell right AS she was finishing walking down the aisle. She tripped and threw the bouquet and it landed right in Ty's face that gave him a bloody face and friendly paramedics taking the flower stems from his face. Not only did the video of my sister's entrance go viral, it was titled "The Last Thing A Nerd Wants Is To Crash A Wedding."

So the point is, we've all been nerds at some point in our lives. But the truth is, we all still ARE nerds. Some just do a better job at covering that up, unlike me. Did Ty The Unnerd ever talk to me again? Maybe one day. But right now, I'm going to go enjoy my sister's wedding cake.

Sometimes Things Work Out

My life used to be the best. I had a best friend named William McKay, and a family who cared for me very much. In just four years later, EVERYTHING had changed. Let me bring you back to the summer of 1999 when it all started...

"Come on William, we're going to be late for school!" I said as I was reaching the top of the stairs. William was never into school, he enjoyed skateboarding much better. I agree with William, although it's not like we don't like it, we just don't care much for it. As we both got to the top of the stairs, the bell rang. We were in no hurry to go.

"Want to do something fun after school with me?" William said with a grin.

"Sure!!!" I said, a little confused. "Like what?"

"It's a surprise! Just meet me here after school, as long we aren't already in detention."

We laughed, then headed inside.

My first class was English, with Mr. Rank. I walked into room 210. The class had already started, and as I walked in, everybody stared at me. I took a seat beside a girl

named Alice. She had short black hair and a couple of freckles. She wore a purple top with some jeans.

As we both turned towards the class, my phone started to vibrate. "Ehh" I said in a whisper, as vibrated again. Everyone looked at me. I looked down at my phone and read 'Catalina Island Hospital'. I was confused and concerned. I didn't know what to think.

"I-iii, I'm sorry, I need to go." I said with a stutter and ran outside.

"Hello?"

"Hi sweetie, it's mom. I'm phoning from the hospital... I'm ok although you should get down here as soon as you can."

"Are you ok? What's going on mom?"

"I'm fine sweetie, I just need you to come down, and I'll explain everything when you get here." She sounded scared. At that moment, I knew I had to get down there and fast. I

Maya Neufeld
Grade 7, Lloyd George Elementary

Sometimes Things Work Out

quickly got my stuff and ran out the main doors.

I walked up to the doors of the hospital and worried about my mom—that made me go even faster. I walked up to the front desk where a lady was talking on the phone.

"What can I help you with?" the lady said with a smile.

"I am looking for Elizabeth Main, I'm her daughter."

"Oh, yes, follow me." She guided me into room 405 where I saw my mom. She had all different wires around her. I suspected they were monitoring her condition.

"Mom?" I said in a whisper.

"Hi, Avery! How glad I am to see you." As I walked closer to her bed her eyes got teary.

"Sweetie, I'm ok, although the doctors took some tests and... I have Melanoma Cancer..." I looked in shock.

"Is it curable?"

Maya Neufeld
Grade 7, Lloyd George Elementary

Sometimes Things Work Out

“I’m afraid it’s too late to cure... Although they’re doing the best they can for now. Go home and get some rest, I’ll phone and say goodnight, I’ll probably be here for a couple more days.”

“Ok, mom, I’ll see you later...”

Later that night, I was in my bed thinking. Thinking about myself, thinking about my mom, thinking about life.

“OH NO”. I said in a panic, William!!! I forgot to tell him everything that happened... Now on top of everything, William is going to be mad...

The next day as I was walking to school, I tried to find him. He was nowhere in sight. The bell had rung and I hurried into class thinking he could be in there. He wasn’t.

“Hey Alice! Have you seen William lately?”

“Oh, um you haven’t heard the news? I thought you would have been the one he told first...”

“No Alice, he hasn’t told me anything. Where is he?”

"He moved to Long Beach. Yesterday was his last day, I guess. I'm sorry. At that moment, I knew everything was going to be miserable from then on..."

A few weeks passed. They had been boring and scary. When I asked my father if we could find William in Long Beach, he told me I was crazy. But I couldn't believe him. I had to see William and tell him about mom and tell him that I was sorry for forgetting him.

That evening I went to visit my mom at the hospital and discovered her cancer had spread and she only had about two months left to live. She told me to find William and that she would be waiting to hear all about it. She told me to go into her bag, and take out her wallet. Mom took out a debit card and some paper bills. She stuffed them in my pocket and told me to be safe and use the money wisely. I held her tightly.

"I'll tell your dad" she said with a whisper.

The next day, I had all my stuff packed and was ready to go. I was going to catch the 7:00 am ferry, but I had to hurry. As I got to the ferry they were already boarding people on to the ship. I had to go quickly. I ran up to a man who appeared to be the captain of

Maya Neufeld
Grade 7, Lloyd George Elementary

Sometimes Things Work Out

the ship. He was wearing a very sharp navy blue vest and some dark blue jeans. As I was boarding the ship I saw something. I saw something I didn't believe, that I couldn't believe.

"William!" I yelled at the top of my lungs. We ran to each other and I started to cry. "I have to tell you something" I said. My mom has cancer William. She only has two months left... that's why I didn't meet you after school. I'm so sorry!

"Oh Avery, I'm so sorry. It's fine, I was going to tell you... I heard, that's actually why I was here... I was coming to find you, to tell you about everything."

"How are we going to stay in touch?"

"Didn't everyone tell you?"

"Tell me what?"

"I'm only going for a couple of months with my dad while he catches up on work. I'll be back before summer break."

Maya Neufeld
Grade 7, Lloyd George Elementary

Sometimes Things Work Out

And at that moment I knew, my life wasn't so bad after all. It turned out my mom's cancer got better and she was going to be fine. How much better could it get!

The End

All Change
Eilidh Nicol
Grade Seven
Kamloops School of the Arts

Talullah Roque opened her eyes, but all she could see was darkness. She opened her parched lips to scream, but no sound came out. Talullah didn't try to move. She could feel a thick rope binding her to something cold and hard. The deafening silence hung around her like a thick fog, only disturbed by the sound of her shallow breaths. The girl was frantic. She had no idea where she was or how she got there. Then the memories flooded back to her. The past three days flashed through her mind. She remembered the moment everything changed, the moment her life turned around. Talullah shuddered at the thought of the eerie voice telling her that she could change everything. Her thoughts were cut off by the sound of a lock clicking open. She sat completely still, hardly daring to breath. Suddenly, her blindfold was ripped from her eyes and Talullah felt a sharp pain in her neck. The dim light felt bright as her eyes began to adjust.

“You're awake.”

The deep voice startled Talullah, and she jerked her head towards the source of the sound. A tall boy with deep brown hair and sharp blue eyes leaned on the wall of what Talullah assumed was her cell, her blindfold dangling lazily from his fingers. She looked at him with wild eyes.

“If I undo your gag, will you scream?” he asked, his voice terrifyingly calm.

Talullah locked eyes with him, and shook her head. The boy moved forward and gently began to untie the complicated knot that bound her gag. As soon as it was gone, Talullah began to cough violently. She looked up at him and saw such pity in his eyes she wondered how he could have done this to her.

“Who are you?” she asked, her voice hoarse.

“That doesn’t matter right now,” the boy replied. “All you need to know is that I’m not the one doing this to you.”

He moved behind her and undid the rope binding Talullah to what she could now see was a chair. The boy placed a strong hand on her back and pushed her into a standing position. Her legs felt weak and it was a struggle to stay standing with her hands still bound.

“Come on,” the boy said, grabbing her shoulder and pulling her towards the exit.

“Caoimhe wants to see you.”

The boy started walking, but Talullah stayed still.

“Who are you?” she repeated to his retreating back.

The boy sighed and looked at her. “Toirdhealbhadh, son of Íomhar,” he said. “Come on.”

Reluctant and unsatisfied, Talullah followed. Her head was bursting with questions, but she doubted Toirdhealbhadh would answer them. He led her through a series of tight, winding, stone tunnels with circular wooden doors every few paces. The duo walked for what seemed like an eternity. Toirdhealbhadh’s pace never slowed as he marched on and on, leaving Talullah running to catch up. Suddenly, Toirdhealbhadh stopped and flung open the door in front of him. Talullah cautiously peeked inside, apprehensive of what she might find. She tried to hide her shock as she gazed upon the beautiful woman she saw instead. The woman’s skin was pale, cheeks dotted with tiny freckles. Her shoulder length hair was flaming red and perfectly framed her face. Toirdhealbhadh grabbed Talullah’s wrist and pulled her into the room.

“Toirdhealbhadh!” the woman exclaimed. “You’re back! I never thought you would come!”

“It’s your own fault. You’re the one that decided to put her in the other side of the compound.” he grumbled under his breath.

The woman laughed. "Oh, don't be silly," she said, standing up. "Besides, we have more important matters to discuss."

The woman was obviously madly in love with Toirdhealbhadh, and he clearly did not return her feelings. In fact, it seemed quite clear that he simply despised her. The woman walked up to Talullah and held out her hand.

"Hello," she said. "I'm Caoimhe."

As Talullah reached out to return the gesture, she thought she heard Toirdhealbhadh mutter something suspiciously like 'And I'm here to ruin your life.' Frowning, she introduced herself.

"Talullah," she said.

"I'd love to stay and get to know you better," Caoimhe said, glancing up at the ceiling. "But I just received a message from Fearghal, he wants to see me."

She gestured at the wall, as if it was proof.

Talullah looked, and sure enough there was a message reading: 'Caoimhe, see me now in 447 -Fearghal.'

"I think Toirdhealbhadh can explain this," Caoimhe sighed, moving to leave. "Bye for now."

When Caoimhe left, she seemed to take all the tension from the room.

"I guess I'll have to explain everything, won't I?" Toirdhealbhadh sighed, his deep voice echoing. "Caoimhe and Fearghal run this place, and all I really know is that they are against the king, for reasons they haven't explained to me. They randomly select people like you and me to join their order, and they won't exactly give you a choice. Before I continue, do you want to join them?"

“Join them?” Talullah asked

“Do you support the king or Caoimhe?”

“The king,” she replied, not even pausing for breath.

“In that case, will you help me stop this rebellion?”

“Of course,” she said, “but how?”

Toirdhealbhadh grinned wildly. “I suppose we’ll just have to figure that out as we go along.”

She smiled at him, and he reached for her hand and pulled her toward the exit.

In that moment, locked hands with Toirdhealbhadh, Talullah realized that her life had changed a whole lot in the past couple of days. She didn’t know what Caoimhe and Fearghal were planning, but if she could trust Toirdhealbhadh, and she had the feeling she could, she knew that she would stop them.

Pronunciation Guide:

Roque – Roke

Toirdhealbhadh – Troi-ah-LOCK

Íomhar – IVE-ar

Caoimhe – CAVE-ah

Fearghal – FAIR-gal

Corrupted

I never asked for the fate of the world to be in my hands. I also never asked to be poor, but I guess we never ask for bad things to happen. This story began on a normal day, as most stories do, with me selling books in the market with my unicorn, Enchanted.

“Esta! Esta!” cried Aurora, my childhood friend.

I called back, “What? Did you find another elf boy to swoon over?”

“No, something much worse. Follow me,” she replied.

“Okay, okay. Just let me stable Enchanted.”

After Enchanted was stabled I followed Aurora in the direction of Fantasy Forest. Fantasy Forest is the biggest forest in all of Mythicaltopia. We walked for twenty minutes and stopped beside a gigantic black tree. It was gnarled and unusual.

“It's dead!” I gasped.

“It's corrupted,” whispered Aurora, “but that's not all.” I followed her around the huge trunk until we reached a small creek. Only instead of water, it was filled with a thick, black sludge.

“This stream leads right through Dwarf Camp!” I exclaimed. “Let's go!”

The scene at Dwarf Camp was disastrous. Pale and sick Dwarfs were lying weak on the ground. Dwarf healers were rushing around tending to the sick and wounded, but nothing can stop dark magic.

“We have to tell the queen about the corruption,” Aurora said. I nodded my head in agreement.

Corrupted

“So you're not going to do anything!” screamed Aurora.

“No ladies, unless we know where the corruption is coming from I can't do anything.” the queen said in an unusually calm voice.

“That's insane!” I said. I opened my mouth to say more, but a quick glare from the queen silenced me. “Let's go!” I said instead. With that we turned and walked out of the throne room.

□

“Knock. Knock. Knock.” It was early the next morning and when Aurora opened her front door she was still in her pajamas.

“Why are you here?” Aurora asked sleepily.

“Well, the queen's not doing anything. So we might as well.” I replied. Aurora's eyes suddenly sparkled with excitement and adventure.

“What are we waiting for? Let's go find Ethel and ask her about the corruption.”

It was just after breakfast when we reached the edge of Sea Serpent Bay. When we arrived the small crossing was covered with a thin layer of ice.

“At least we don't have to call sea serpents to help us across,” said Aurora sarcastically. She had lost her adventurous spirit over the past couple hours. With that sour note, we started along the bank of the frozen sea with our trusty unicorns. It was early winter, so the ice cracked with every step. Out in the open, the wind howled at our faces. It was like the cold was a living thing. It was biting at my skin through to the bone. It was patiently waiting for something to drop dead, so it could feast.

“Umm, Esta?” Aurora said from behind me.

“What?” I replied back, lost in thought.

Corrupted

“Look below you.” Then I saw it. Hands. They were below the ice, belonging to the evil mermaids that migrated from Shadow Lake to Sea Serpent Bay in the Winter because their twisted home was too frigid. There had been myths I was told as a child about people getting dragged under the water and ice by those wretched creatures. Enchanted and Thunder, Aurora’s unicorn, began to pace frantically.

“Just keep going,” I said, “but slowly.” When we got to the other side of the crossing we stopped at The Hub. The Hub is a small shop belonging to a cranky ogre named Ethel. When we entered the small shack Ethel was running around collecting things from shelves and muttering to herself. The shop was filled with all sorts of things: potion ingredients, weapons, and even some canned food.

“Hi Ethel,” said Aurora. Ethel dropped everything she was carrying, screamed, and sprinted behind the front counter.

“It’s just us, Aurora and Esta,” I said in a calming voice.

“Oh,” said Ethel peeking over the countertop. “It’s just you. Sorry for my outburst.”

“That’s okay,” Aurora replied, “but why are you acting strangely?”

“Corruption, dark magic, and death,” she whispered. “It’s coming.” Goosebumps were forming on my skin, and it wasn’t from the cold.

“You know about the corruption?” Aurora asked intrigued. Ethel nodded her head spastically. The elderly ogre was seen as crazy by most, but she knew a thing or two about sorcery.

“How can we stop it?” I asked.

“The only thing stronger than dark magic is darker magic,” Ethel whispered.

Corrupted

“And the only place to find that is on Dragon Island,” Aurora finished.

“Oh,” I said. We all sat in silence knowing how impossible this quest was.

“We will try to stop it,” Aurora said after silence that felt like eternity. I'm the only one who heard because Ethel was already running around again. Aurora and I both said our goodbyes to Ethel, then we headed back out into the dreaded cold.

“What are we going to do?” I questioned.

“We are going to Dragon Island!” Aurora said enthusiastically.

“I guess we can try,” I replied. I was surprised at how brave she was being. The sun was going down so it was even colder coming back along the crossing. The ice was also a lot thinner because the mid day sun had melted it slightly.

“Aurora,” I called from behind, “I don't think this is a good...,” I was cut off as Enchanted's hoof broke through the ice with a deafening crack.

“Esta!” Aurora screamed.

“Don't come closer!” I yelled back already knowing my fate. The ice kept breaking, and the dark mermaids icy fingers had already started to grab my ankles.

“Goodbye Aurora,” I said calmly right before I was submerged. As I sank I couldn't even feel the freezing water. I looked up at Aurora's tear stained face as pale hands dragged me deeper.

“Go save the world,” I whispered. Then my world went black.

Eric Osborne
Grade 7
Desert Sands
"Black Souls of the Dead"

A long time ago there was a blue comet that came down to the ground and destroyed all of the dinosaurs. After the dinosaurs became extinct it started to snow lots, and out of the ground came ice demons they were blue with blue eyes and they are called Landars, in a palace near Landarzia is called Orconzia.

The Lord of Orconzia is Lord Skellonal he has a son named Jeffron who was being picked on by a Landar kid, his name is Baven, his father's name was king Rothious.

"Stay away from my son!" Said Lord Skellonal, while two of the guards took Baven away to his father

"Your son is amazing with his abilities, but Jeffron can't control his strength." Said both a priest and Lord Skellonal .

A scream broke Jeffron from his dreams and drew his attention to his bedroom window. He stumbled out of bed and made his way to the window, with a swipe of his hands he brushed the curtains aside and saw Landars breaking in the kingdom's armoury stealing all weapons including swords, axes, halberds as well as daggers and shields. Jeffron saw what he thought was black breath coming out of an Orcona's mouth but it wasn't black breath at all- it was in fact - Black souls of the dead flying out of the Orcona's massive orifice.

" What's happening out there?"

"king Rotheuas is out there." Screamed Lord Skellonal."

"Lets kill these ice demons!!" the commander bellowed

The war began, women and children were being killed and being taken for slavery.

"I swore an oath to my family that I would not harm anyone unless it was in defence of the weak and the homeless; I defend my family." King Trallar spoke in a somber voice.

Terrified to be found Jeffron ran to a far corner in his room huddled in a ball, hands trembling and tears streaming down his face, his silent cries filled his head

"This war has just begun, you and your son will die while my son will be king, king of Landarzeia!! You will die of honour your son will die with *you*." King Rothious smirked as he let the last word hang just a little.

After king Rotheuas left with his men, Lord Skellonal was not feeling good he did not know why he was having migraines it's like he was facing a stronger version of himself. Jeffron was hearing his father yelling at himself, sometimes at night Jeffron would hear a screech in the sky.

"Dad that screech is back, and can you please tell me about your sickness." Well.... uh it's like I'm fighting off another stronger version of my self and I can't get him out of my head. "Replied his father

Jeffron went to bed and he realized that he would be the new commander of Orconzia. That morning, Jeffron could not find his father, Jeffron eventually finds his father, he was in an underground church and Lord Skellonal was praying to the Gods of the light.

15 years later Jeffron became the commander, he sensed something's coming.

"The Landar slaves keep on saying that the war has just begun and I do not know what that means but what I know is that king Trallar is going to put these Landars to their death. "Said Jeffron. Days were passing by and the nights were long with monsters eating monsters, Jeffron was getting ready for battle, King Trallar got into a fight with one of those Landar slaves, he punched the Landar's liver and took it out and fed it to the Orcoana Dragon, to the one that breaths black fire, the Dragon was green with silver horns the Dragon is 80 feet long and it's eyes were black with souls running through its veins.

Jeffron was starting a journey, he traveled far and wide, Jeffron went into a gigantic swamp filled with lots of trolls with unknown carvings in ancient caves. Jeffron made a friend but he had arguments with it, it was a triclops they are related to something from a different planet that's in a different kind of universe.

Jeffron came back to Orconzeia and everyone was gone, some were dead and some survived Jeffron spotted something in one of the corners to alley ways.

"Please I have gold I will give you anything you want, but please leave my family out of it," The villager pleaded

"Cut the crap, I'm planning on killing you anyways."

"Oh my god when did Baven became the king?" Jeffron exclaimed.

"Jeffron we've been looking for you, where have you been. Baven is here and we need to stop him." Whispered Jeffron.

"Why are you doing this?" Questioned the villager.

"The reason why I'm doing this is because I don't want your pathetic commander getting in my way!!!"

Jeffron sensed something coming it was big and nothing could stop it, it was a Landarzeian death Dragon, known as the ice demon Dragon he could breath ice but it had big slanted oval shaped eyes they had battled against the Dragon and the Orconas battled 719 Landars. A lot of Orconas died but not Jeffron and the king." The Orconas are dead now.....but if any evil comes to Earth I will them all.

One chilly winter's day, in a town called Wintergriffin, there lived a girl named Jenny. Here's the thing. Jenny is no ordinary girl. She is different because she can see spirits. Sometimes Jenny even starts up conversations with them. But not all spirits are nice.

That winter day, while playing in her front yard, Jenny saw something unusual across the lake. There were a bunch of spirits all circling around something. So Jenny, becoming more and more curious, grabbed her binoculars and tried to see what they were all looking at. Turns out, they weren't looking at something, they were eating it. The spirits were all eating a wintergriffin, the mysterious creatures that live in the town of Wintergriffin. They are harmless so that is probably why they targeted it.

While Jenny was becoming more and more frightened, one of the spirits glanced at her. All of the sudden, it was coming for her! Jenny thought that the spirit was trying to kill her. Jenny ran inside her house, only to remember that her mother was out buying groceries. Jenny went to the only place where they had a locked door, the bathroom. She hastily slammed the door and locked it. Then, the toilet water became disrupted and one of the bad spirits who was eating the wintergriffin popped out of the toilet. Jenny ran out of the bathroom, very frightened, and went to her neighbour's house.

Sadly for Jenny, they weren't home. Then Jenny remembered something. When her dad was alive, he taught her how to hijack a motorcycle. So using her skills, she hijacked the neighbour's motorcycle. She was still under-age to be driving, but she didn't care. Jenny started up the engine and headed towards town.

While riding, she heard a loud boom behind her. So she looked back to see the spirits close behind her, knocking down anything in their way. Distracted, looking back at the spirits, she realized too late, she had taken a wrong turn. Suddenly, she didn't know where she was.

Jenny was at a dead end with trees all around her, stuck with no place to escape. The spirits cornered Jenny but then she had an idea. She quickly used her cell phone her mom gave to her for her 12th birthday to call her friend Fox. She gave Fox all the details of where she was and what was happening. Fox was willing to risk his life to save his best friend Jenny. So Fox quickly came riding his bike to see nothing but Jenny. No spirits around her, nothing. He was very confused until he saw footsteps in the mud coming his way. Then he remembered a secret Jenny told him in the 2nd grade. She could see spirits. So he began to make noises to distract the spirits from

Jenny. When the spirits heard Fox they all started to head towards him. Jenny jumped on the motorcycle and drove by Fox to pick him up. Fox ran for Jenny's hand and just barely grabbed it. He hopped on the motorcycle and Jenny drove towards town. While on the bike, Jenny said to Fox, "Thanks for saving me from those horrible spirits." Fox replied to her, "You are welcome. Just, try to keep your eyes on the road." They both laughed.

They were driving on the bike towards town but had to stop at the gas station because the bike ran out of gas. Then they realized they didn't have any money. Both of them jumped off the bike and went inside. While the cashier wasn't looking, Fox and Jenny stole some granola bars because they were starving. They quickly ran out of the gas station store and ran towards the nearest grocery store to find Jenny's mom.

Meanwhile, the spirits finally got to the gas station where they found the motorcycle. They knocked down every item on the shelves. When the cashier saw that happening, he was very frightened and ran out of the store screaming. The spirits looked everywhere including the bathrooms, but found no sign of Jenny and Fox other than the motorcycle outside.

Unable to find Jenny's mom, she thought in her head that she must have already left. Then, Fox had an ingenious idea. His idea was to use the good spirits to help fight against the bad spirits. Jenny thought it was an amazing idea. They went to the chief good spirit, Henya, and told her about their problem. She agreed to help them and called a meeting for the good spirits. During the meeting, they hatched a plan. After that, they were ready for battle.

All the good spirits ran out of the meeting spot to see all the bad spirits, including the leader, Scar, waiting for them. When they saw each other, they both grunted and then Henya said, "Charge!" That was when the battle began. For Fox, all the battle looked like was a bunch of dirt being stirred up from the wind. Eventually, the bad spirits gave up, and were locked up under the water of the lake near Jenny's house. Jenny thanked Fox and the good spirits and walked back home.

When Jenny got home, she saw her mom waiting at the door, looking very frightened. Jenny's mom said, "Where have you been?" Jenny replied to that question by saying, "Oh, I was just hanging out in town with some friends." But deep inside, Jenny knew where she was and so did Fox.

The End

The Fork in the Road
Sophia Pankratz
Lloyd George Elementary School grade 7

One day Fox Beaver and Squirrel were walking through the woods on a broad trail to find a hidden grove of fruit trees. It was a cool gusty day but the valley orchard promised shelter good weather and sweet fruits. Suddenly through some trees they came to a fork in the path. The way to the right was narrow and near to being overgrown with roots the trail on the left was wide and clear. "Ah" said Fox "we shall take the narrow road it is much faster and we shall reach the grove sooner". "But how shall I make it through all these bushes?" asked Beaver, "I don't know" replied Fox " I suppose you will have to turn back". Beaver looked quite downtrodden at this turn of events. "I shall travel with Beaver on the longer road" said Squirrel, "have it your way" replied Fox "but do not be surprised if I eat all the fruit before you arrive". With that he scampered down the small trail and Beaver and Squirrel went down the large wide pathway. A while later Beaver and Squirrel came to a large lake. Beaver hopped in and began swimming to the other side but Squirrel did not. "I cannot swim" Squirrel explained to the curious Beaver. Beaver seemed to think for a while then he said "I know, you may ride on my back". They agreed and Squirrel hopped on Beavers back so that together they could both cross the lake. They rejoined the pathway on the other side and continued talking happily. Soon they arrived at the beautiful orchard full of sweet fruits like Peaches and Pears. But Fox was nowhere to be seen. "Where has he gone?" asked Beaver "I thought he would have been here for a while now". "Ah well" said Squirrel "we shall have to eat without him". They ate their fill of the plentiful fruit and then lay down for a nap in a small meadow. When they awoke it was already late afternoon so they packed a few fruits for the way home and then began to walk back home using the same

The Fork in the Road
Sophia Pankratz
Lloyd George Elementary School grade 7

arrangement to cross the lake once more. When they came to the fork in the road once more they heard a strange noise a small voice calling their names. As they looked for the source they found Fox huddled in a tree trunk shivering and wet. "What has happened?" asked Squirrel concerned "what has happened?" asked Beaver equally worried. "I was trying to cross the lake" explained Fox "I tried to cross in all different places but it was not possible for me all that happened was I got tired and cold". It turned out Fox had gotten to the River first but could not cross alone. Squirrel and Beaver felt sorry for Fox and gave him some fruits from the orchard and helped to dry out his fur. They decided to always travel together from then on. So of the group of friends went back to the village talking merrily as they walked back towards home on the big side path.

Lolita Persad
Grade 7
St. Ann's Academy
What Happened to Charlotte?

What Happened to Charlotte?

This story is about a town that was forever shaken by the unfathomable disappearance of a teenage girl that went by the name of Charlotte Oakley. The town of Wellington was very small, but it seemed to be a close, friendly, and welcoming town. However, like every other town, there was always that one family that was rude, crude, and shrewd. This family happened to be Charlotte's family, the Oakley's. The family consisted of Annabelle Oakley (the mother), Harold Oakley (the father), and, of course, Charlotte Oakley - who had not been at all like her parents. There was quite often gossiping at the local café on how the townspeople would have much preferred that any other member of the Oakley family were taken instead of Charlotte.

One day, as the locals were quietly discussing this topic, no one seemed to hear the tinkling little bell behind them of the café door opening. And the person who walked through that door at 7:39 in the morning certainly never expected to see the one reason she cried herself to sleep. If you have ever been surprised or shocked, you can imagine how Annabelle Oakley felt when she walked through the café door and saw . . . Charlotte Oakley's likely kidnapper, sitting in a sunlit parlor.

Annabelle

After hearing all the gossip and rumours from the café about the disappearance of my darling daughter Charlotte, I decided to check it out to see if it was true. It certainly was. I peered through the window before I entered and, sure enough, I saw maybe seven heads rubbed together conferring over the disastrous circumstances of the horrid event. The pain shot back through me

Lolita Persad
Grade 7
St. Ann's Academy
What Happened to Charlotte?

just seeing them talk about what they thought were facts when really, it was all just rumours. As much as I couldn't bear the pain, I needed to avenge my daughter by finding her abductor. The best place to start was the café because that's where all the buzz is, and most importantly, the juicy information that might lead me to my daughter. Everyone hates me and my husband Harold, so whoever took Charlotte must not like me, Harold, or our family. That doesn't help us, as it only narrows it down to the whole town!

I realized I was stalling and decided to just walk right into the café. No one paid attention to the figure who strutted through the door. I was disguised because I knew that the gossipers would immediately disperse if they saw Annabelle Oakley walk through the bright parlor. I quickly glanced around the café. Suddenly there was a startling flashback from my childhood thirty years ago:

"Mom, what's going on?"

"Go, leave! The house is burning! Go Annie!"

"I'm scared Mommy. Help me! Please! I'm stuck!"

"Almost, Annie. Good, you're out! Now leave! Save yourself!"

"I love you Mom."

"I love you too, Annabelle."

Why am I remembering that? There must be something in that memory that I'm missing. Maybe something in the background or an action - or inaction? I tried to look back through my memory, but it was cloudy. Then, slowly but surely, the past regained its focus, but instead of looking at my mother, I was now directed to a single object on our old oak dining room table.

Lolita Persad
Grade 7
St. Ann's Academy
What Happened to Charlotte?

There was something bright white and, yes, as light as a feather. Aha! The letter! I remember now: The person who had started that fateful fire foolishly left that letter. With my mom's death, I had memorized its every word, trying to hold on to her.

I will forever hold a grudge against the Oakley family. No matter what.

Yours truly,

Simon Hastings I

Part of the letter (at the end) had burned away, but the rest of the message was still there. I had tucked it inside an old musical box of mine and forgotten about it for a while. I can guess right now that you're thinking: *Why did he sign his name?* You see, I believe Simon was positively sure the letter would burn in the fire. Simon had relied a great deal on chance, too much perhaps, because he did not think that six year old me would pick up that letter instead of helping my mother. I look back now and think, *I was too immature at six to really think about my actions and the consequences they had - like my whole life without my mom?* Anyway none of that matters now. I have almost undeniable proof that if Simon Hastings is still alive, he kidnapped my daughter, Charlotte. If he went far enough to light a house on fire that killed my mom, why wouldn't he have taken Charlotte? Even though everyone is innocent until proven guilty, this letter should be enough to arouse suspicion. At least it was a lead.

I continued my search around the café, and after twenty seconds, stopped. For there, in a sunny parlor, was an old man, probably sixty, talking to a waiter. That didn't matter. The tag on his shirt was sticking out and on it was four words, written in icy blue ink, cold as blood, the words that clearly stated, "Property of Simon Hastings." I fainted.

Lolita Persad
Grade 7
St. Ann's Academy
What Happened to Charlotte?

Simon Hastings II

I've been on the run for several decades now; trying to get away from my haunting past. Re-living it chills me to the bone but soothes me all the same. My father, Simon Hastings I, was a very proud man, sometimes too proud. He felt over-confident and lucky at certain points of his life. Whenever my mother and I tried to convince him of stopping his arrogant actions, he would just push us to the side. Then he pushed his luck across the line one night and paid the consequence: losing his family. There was a fire that killed an unfortunate woman, and *he* started it.

Now, on to the present. I stopped in the town of Wellington to grab a cup of coffee and some eggs and toast. I was there for about eighteen minutes before someone shrieked. Someone had fainted right at the café door and her eyes, though dull, were unmistakably staring at me, a look of terror on her face. How could I have known that she was Annabelle Oakley, the daughter of Nancy Oakley who was killed in a fire that was lit by my father, Simon Hastings I?

Annabelle

After I had regained consciousness, Simon Hastings II filled me in on who he really was. I apologized profusely on my behalf, for my uncalled behavior and the looks he got after the locals saw my eyes glaring his way. He told me his family was mixed up and that he never wanted to be his father's son. He also said that he wanted to change his name so that he wouldn't always carry the filthy, bloody name of his father. I forgave him because I pitied him and because

Lolita Persad
Grade 7
St. Ann's Academy
What Happened to Charlotte?

he couldn't take back what had happened thirty years ago. I was determined to move on - and that meant holding his father accountable for my daughter's disappearance.

Then our conversation turned to his mom, since he didn't want to talk about his father anymore. I couldn't blame him. I also suspect he wanted to prove that he still had a good parent and that she wasn't a bad person. In fact, from Simon's stories, she sounded amazing! Simon confided, "She is the smartest person I know and the kindest too. Once, on my fourth birthday, she dressed up as my favourite cartoon character and sang happy birth . . ."

"Aaah!" I screamed. Several heads turned. Then about twenty-five gasps followed.

Someone had just walked into the café, seven minutes past eight. Lifting her sunglasses, a teenage girl in a yellow t-shirt nonchalantly said, "Hey."

That person was none other than Charlotte Oakley.

The End

The pain; it's unbearable. Shrieks fill the air, a continuous song of bloodlust. "KILL kill KILL kill KILL!" They fill my head, drilling into my brain. My feet start forward, instinct taking over. Only blood will soothe this pain. Faster, faster, faster. Suddenly, the chorus explodes into earsplitting yelps of "NO NO NO!" I struggle for control, trying to slow the inevitable. But the PAIN! I feel a tingle as the cool venom pools on my tongue, announcing my prey is near. "NO NO NO!" The shrieks refocus me on the task at hand. I try to force myself to turn around; to no avail. The fight against myself is the only one I can't win. As the last of my control slips, I realize the screams are my own. My lips pull back, revealing my fangs for all to see...

"Mom" I groan. "I know, I know I promised" she apologizes, "but I have stay late again". "That's what you said last time" I grumble. "So sorr-" I hang up, annoyed with my mom's antics. Sighing, I grab my bag from my locker and start the trek home. "I guess work is more important than me", I whimper. I shove my earbuds in my ears, trying to think of something else. As per usual, it doesn't work. Angry, I kick a rock down the road. I can almost hear my dad, warning me to stay off the street. "Carina", he'd scold, "streets are for cars, not you"! He'd then scoop me up in his arms and tickle me till I screamed. I cringe at the memory, remembering where father is. "WHY DAD!" I yell, not caring who hears me. "WHY DID YOU HAVE TO BE LATE!" Three years ago, my dad had stayed late at work, finishing up on a project. On his way home, he fell victim to a shooting. A bullet had entered his brain, leaving him dependent on a life support machine. My mom refuses to take him off it, due to the miniscule chance of him

awakening, so he's not dead, but also not alive. Remembering where I am, I look around to see if anyone heard me. Seeing no one, I breath a sigh of relief and continue walking. And that's when my phone rings. Out of habit; I pick up without a second thought. "Hello?" I say. "Hi Carina", a male voice responds, "I'm waiting". "H-how do you know my name?" I stutter, unable to contain my fear. "Oh Carina", the voice chuckles, "I know much more than your name". And then he hangs up, leaving me in silence once again. I continue walking, trying to convince myself the call was a figment of my imagination. But as it starts to get dark, the fear becomes harder to control. Shivering, I start to walk faster. Suddenly, a shadow enters the corner of my vision. I turn my head and my scream catches in my throat. Because when I turn around there's nothing there. At this point, I start to jog, knowing I'm close to home. I count down the blocks until I reach home. *Two more blocks*, I think, *almost there*. Once I'm one block away, I break into a sprint. As I approach the doorstep, I know something is wrong. My brother should be home by now. All the light are off, adding to my distress. Taking a deep breath, I gather my wits and open the door. I start forward, knowing I must continue. I climb the stairs to our bedrooms and turn the corner, flicking light switches as I go. I walk straight to my brother's bedroom, and hesitate. For a minute I think, then turn and dump my backpack on my bed. But as I turn around, a hand grasps my shoulder. It's frigid grip startles me, but as my mouth opens to scream, one covers it too. I am trapped. My eyes widen in fear at the realization. "Oh Carina", my captor muses, "I told you I was coming, didn't I?" A wave of recognition hits me as he speaks. The phonecall! I try to

speak, but he interrupts me. “Are you ready?” “Ready for what?” I mumble, confused. The man chuckles, then the world goes black...

 “Mom?” My eyes flutter open, expecting to see my mom standing over me, smiling. But my mom isn’t shaking me into consciousness. Instead, I am held in a the cold grasp of a tall man as he runs through the streets. I flinch at the temperature of his skin, and look up into his eyes. I gasp and pinch my arm. I close my eyes and reopen them. *Not a dream.* I calm my breathing and again look into his eyes. “Where are you taking me?” I ask, in a voice stronger than I feel. “Well”, he replies, “that is something you don’t need to know.” And then he smiles, revealing a mouthful of sharp, glistening teeth. But those are nothing compared to the two pointed fangs peeking out from under his lip. “What are you?” I whisper. “Oh, I think you know” he responds. And I do. “Y-you’re a vampire!” I scream. He nods, then suddenly stops at the front of a large building. “Where are you taking me?” I repeat. “To your fate” he states vaguely . “What do you mean?” I ask, afraid. “You’re sick” he finally states. “I’m fine!” I yell. But really, I know he’s right. For the last few days, I had been feeling off. I had known something wasn’t right; I just never would have thought it was this. “So you mean I’m becoming one of you?” I reply, a nervous edge to my voice. “I’m afraid so” he agrees, actually sounding sorry for me. Then I faint...

 I awake alone, in an unfamiliar room. And the next thing I know, I’ve thrown up. I pick up my phone to check the time, but am stopped by my reflection. It can’t be...

The living room wall

the living room wall looks boring at first glance

but if you look at it long enough it becomes interesting.

The paint on the wall is light purple lilac with jade green trim

around the windows interesting things come by all the time

like that flock of eyes with wings that just passed the window

a few seconds ago

wait a minute that telephone pole was not there yesterday

there was this smell to the living room we had not noticed before

the smell of popcorn movies and caramel corn that got swallowed by the couch

i glanced at the couch it was covered in crumbs of past meals

since when was the wall bright orange and sky blue?

That mouse hole in the wall looked much bigger than before

i still dont know if it was me or the wall but i know for sure

that was no ordinary wall

Frustration

frustration is the colour of a bright red stop sign

it sounds like glasses breaking

it tastes like cinnamon mixed with jalapeno peppers

and smells like disgust

frustration looks like a crumbling castle

it makes me feel horrible

Aberdeen Elementary, Gr. 7
Ben s. March 15, 2017

Winter

When the crisp air comes and the green grass goes

When the soft snow falls and the lakes freeze over

I am happy

I enter the freedom of the mountains

I release my negative energy

And take in the positive

I express myself in the powder

And forgive the cold, evil, air

I wouldn't give it up for anything

Not even summer

The Deer

To build a snowman, it takes a lot

Soft but wet, heavy but light, cold but warm

You roll it up, into three large snowballs

And with time, strength, and effort

You are successful

After your hot chocolate break

1.

You bring with you, a couple sticks, some coal from the fire, and,

A carrot

With your facial features in hand, once again, you face the cold air

Later, after a piping hot supper of roast poultry and potatoes,

You check on your snowman

Everything looks normal, except the nose, all that's left of that is a orange stub in the

snow

And some mysterious footsteps...

2.

The Yukon Arctic Ultra

February fifth draws near. (As the dogs finish their race and the snowmobilers ZOOM across the trail, preparing for “the big race”). The Yukon Arctic Ultra (YAU) is a big international event. People from all over the world test their limits in the death defying 430 mile (688 km) race. The three most difficult aspects of competing in the YAU are the temperature, physical exertion, and the lack of sleep. One cold day in January 2017, an inspiring legend came to our classroom to talk to our class and answer questions. Her name is Jesse Thompson Gladish. She has completed the race more than once and shared some very interesting stories and things to keep in mind during the race.

The crushing fear of the cold is one of the hardest things to overcome during the YAU. The coldest temperature recorded during the YAU was -49°C with wind chill. People around Barriere are saying it is cold in just -20°C weather. Hypothermia is also a deadly condition that can happen if you're not warm enough. Hypothermia can occur when your body loses heat faster than it can make heat. One reason is that you can easily get frostbite. You can get a frostbite in any weather, but in -49°C a frostbite if not taken care of properly, it can lead to infection follow up to amputation! The crushing fear of the cold is a hard thing to withstand in the YAU. Another difficult aspect of the YAU is the sheer mental and physical stamina you must have. The YAU is mentally and physical challenging in every way. Jesse covers the whole 430 miles (688 Km) on her own two feet. She has to carry everything she needs in a sled that she pulls as she walks.

The Yukon Arctic Ultra

That means she pulls a sled that weighs about 27 Kg's for approximately 20 hours a day for twelve days. I'm pretty sure that most people wouldn't make it 5 kilometers. One of my classmates asked Jesse what was the hardest part was the last 10Km. She replied, "When you're in the YAU you have to worry if you're going too fast. If you go too fast you start to sweat. In -49°C degrees sweating causes you to get wet and cold and puts you in a dangerous situation. Participating in the Yukon Arctic Ultra is a courageous thing to do, especially when you're pulling 27 Kg's, walking for 20 hours for up to twelve days, and facing the hardest aspects of the race.

Most of the racers get between four to five hours of sleep per night during the twelve day race; that puts them in a critical sleep deficit. "After a long exhausting day on your feet", Jessie said, "you struggle to get yourself in your sleeping bag without getting too cold". Sleep experts say; on a regular basis, an adult should get nine hours of sleep every night. When you lack sleep, your mood goes "down" and your experience may become miserable. When you're tired your mind is not refreshed, your body temperature is lower, making it harder to stay warm, and you may not feel ready to take on the challenges of the day. It is difficult to stay alert and you risk making poor choices. For example you may not realize that you're becoming hypothermic and decide to take a nice rest in the fluffy snow. Or you may decide to take a shortcut over a pond without realizing that the ice is too thin and never be seen again! A sleep deficit is something to be aware and cautious about.

The Yukon Arctic Ultra

There is no doubt that the YAU is one of the most extreme challenges created. From twenty hours spent on your feet day after day to the sleep deprivation, to the perils of the cold and the trail itself. I guess some people are just tougher and more determined than the rest of us.

GO JESSIE!!!!

Crystal Heart

She was young when it happened, her father and sister past away in a horrible crash. She grew sad and silent every day after. She felt the weight of the world holding her down, it felt as if she were drowning but everyone around her was breathing. When she went to the bridge, she was not afraid. She saw the bubbling water below her and she almost did it; she almost jumped but something clicked in that sad mind of hers and she realized this would not stop the pain and hurt, it would only pass it on to others. She walked home to her mother. They held each other in their arms for a long time.

That day the young girl learned something about bravery: bravery is continuing even when you don't want to. As she grew, she was brave even in the moments she was shaken so hard her socks were about to fall off and she wanted to run and hide. She was helpful and brave even in the hardest of times. She would always think of others before herself. You may say she had a heart of gold but I say she had a heart made of crystal because crystals never truly break.

Synthetic Syndrome
Ember Simms-Godwin, grade 7
Raft River Elementary

I look down at the sheet of paper. There's nothing to say anymore. The information is irrefutable. Love, what everyone longs for and rarely gets, is nothing. A combination of chemicals. A chemical emotion. Just there to increase bonding between humans and further continue the species. I wish I could forget; but the truth must be revealed. Sad as it is, there is no such thing as an emotion. They are all synthetic compounds. False. The mirror on my wall reflects my apathetic face. *So this is disillusion.* It hurts, and yet, it does not. There is no need for words. I look at the other papers. Meaningless reports, jumbled numbers blurring and dripping off the page. 01010111 01101000 01111001 00111111 00100000 01010111 01101000 01111001 00100000 01101101 01100101 00111111... They don't mean a thing. What are the numbers trying to say? Is everything I ever thought a lie? A mirage? I can't make any sense of this. Maybe tomorrow the sun will rise, and everything will be the same again. With this hope in my head, I fall asleep.

I wake up. The sun shines brightly into my eyes. *A dream? A nightmare?* I get up and quickly dress. I walk out the door. The paper is still on my desk, its harsh truth glaring me in the face, but I ignore. Ignorance can indeed be bliss. *Maybe if I ignore it enough, it will fade into oblivion.* I continue onward to school, a bounce in my step like nothing happened. My friends greet me, and we laugh and play together, but I can't escape the truth. When I go home, it waits. I will *never* escape this monster. That's because it's true. Truth is the hardest to escape. Because no matter what you do, it stalks you down, follows you, doesn't let you sleep. I scream into my pillow,

Synthetic Syndrome

Ember Simms-Godwin, grade 7

Raft River Elementary

feeling like a child who has woken from one nightmare into another. Will it ever end? Will I be stuck like this forever? Chasing answers around and around, forever asking why? *Why? Why is it like this?* I double over as though punched in the gut. Nothing exists. It was all a lie. Nothing!

"Nothing is real!" I yell in frustration, punching my wall. All I do is bruise my fist. It hurts.

"Ouch..." I guess pain is real. And not much else. It feels like everything I ever knew and believed in is falling apart in front of me. And there is nothing I can do to stop it. I clutch my head as a shooting pain blinds me. I must have hit my head. When? No, seriously, when? I repeat this question, a mantra for sanity. For *my* sanity. Sanity... light is peeking under the blinds. Sanity... can't feel the pain or stress... Sanity... What is that? It's all insanity, complete and utter. I feel my head bang against the wall and everything starts to go black, then white-

I wake up. Staring at the blue ceiling on a bright, sunny day, I wonder what had happened. I feel my head. No wounds. I clench my fist. No pain. I sag against the wall in relief. I was so sure I was going to die, or already was dead. I stare at the clouds, and sigh. The paper is gone. Maybe I did die. I need to know. I exit my home, and wonder how I didn't notice how vibrant and alive everything is in this world. It has so much color, and vibrance and beauty, it glows. Inspired, I pull my sketchpad out of my bag. I sketch the flowers, the sky, everyone and everything. Then I color it, the sky blue, the crimson, vermilion, viridian, turquoise; all the colors of the spectrum. Did you

Synthetic Syndrome
Ember Simms-Godwin, grade 7
Raft River Elementary

know magenta isn't on the color spectrum? I use it regardless, for the girl's dress, the neon sign, so many bright things! Then it occurs to me; what if there are no colors? Am I seeing a lie? Off on the cycle I go. 'Round and 'round, in a circle of agony, until I can't tell up from down. And I wake up again, and wonder if it is all a never-ending nightmare. Do I have the courage to continue? The paper's not there; instead there's a needle, its silver tip glinting in the light, filled with a clear liquid. I know what it is, but could I possibly use it? I don't even know, but it glints temptingly. *You can free yourself from this nightmare*, it seems to say. I shake my head, and it's gone. I could never do that to my friends and loved ones. *Ah, ah*, a little voice reminds me, *love is a synthetic emotion, nothing but chemicals. Really, would you continue torturing yourself for something that doesn't even exist? Would you? That's not even true altruism. There's no reason to sacrifice.* It falls silent, and the needle's back. I back away.

"I refuse to die because I feel like this! I can and will continue!" I punch the wall, and this time it shatters into millions of tiny mirrored fragments, falling all around me. It all blends from white to grey, from grey to black. My eyes feel heavy, and I strain to open them. A familiar face stares down.

"You're awake!" I remember now. There had been an accident, a car crash, and I had been injured. I must've gone comatose.

"Mom," I gasp, "I feel so happy." Her smile stays with me as I drift into a light, dreamless sleep.

Kenzie Sinclair

Grade 7

Dufferin Elementary

I'm Comfortable Right Here

If you were a bird

And could fly to the four corners of the earth

Would you go?

Or would stay where you feel safe?

Is our comfort level

What ties us to our fate?

Is our home

The only place we truly feel safe?

Kenzie Sinclair
Grade 7
Dufferin Elementary

Self worth

Little do you know

You're worth more than anyone bargained for

Although you cannot see it yet

Neither can anyone else

Only you can find a way to see the things that

Make true friends enjoy your company

The things that make you different from everyone else

And the things that you are passionate about

What you love about yourself is the only thing that matters

Because you are as unique as a snowflake

Keep walking on the path

less traveled

To exceed your own limitations

You must break away from the crowd you are tethered to

To see what you can accomplish

Independently

Close your eyes for a minute, and picture an old lane. You decide to walk down and cross a gravel bridge, under which is a small stream happily trickling away. You arrive at a hidden junction and choose the left option. As you slowly walk down, you glance to your right and notice an old shed filled with musty-smelling hay. Surrounding the shed are wet ferns, bracken and trees of every shape and size. On your left, down a small bank, the stream still gurgles by. Suddenly the road veers to your right and opens up to a round mossy "parking lot" with a tall apple tree in the middle. Tucked into the trees on your right is a stable with no horses, its stalls filled with many other wonders and curiosities. A little faded blue car is parked slightly in front of, but still beside the stable. To your left, there's a rusted gate leading into large grassy paddocks. Straight ahead a white building appears with the paint chipped in certain areas. A large glass dome is attached and connected on the side of the house with couches and toys arranged neatly inside it; you realise the name that suits is, "Sunroom". A path leads round to the front on the left but you choose not to follow it. Instead, you stride straight ahead on a petit trail of pebbles. It goes past the back entrances and into another paddock. As you walk along the path you appreciate all the little flowers in pots sitting smiling up at you. Alongside you are beautiful, 10-foot tall bushes that you wish you knew the name of. In front of you is an eccentric older lady hanging out washing whilst softly whistling away. Not wanting to disturb her (or help) you skip the house and nip into the paddock (paying close attention to properly close the gate.) Once you're in you take a look around. All the way down the left side of the paddock is a well-worn but sturdy rock wall. In front of it is a shelter that has the musty hay smell again, along with a cute tin roof.

It seems almost cosy. With the air smelling so fresh you have an urge to jump, run, dance, laugh and sing. You know that this is somewhere where you can be whoever you wish to be.

Did you just feel that rush of beauty, simplicity and freedom? Well, that delightful place exists; it's my Granny and Grandpa's house.

Kasha Vitoratos

St. Ann's Academy

30 March 2017

Grade 7

Safe Haven

“ Josie I’m scared. I don’t know what to do, and I’m running out of time, out of options. And the worst of all, it’s getting worse. Everyday, everynight, that’s all I think about. She’s all I think about, and I can’t handle it anymore.” There was a brief silence in the room. Kind of like when you are out on a walk in the woods on a cold, wet day, and the tall trees leaning above you make no sound, and you realise you are alone. The wind doesn’t whisper to you anymore, and everything is very silent, very gray, very sad. Kind of like the forest is mourning. But the silence that meets your ears doesn’t make you feel good, in fact, there is a big stress. A stress that wasn’t there before, that you took on to yourself.

You can say a lot about a person through their actions. Good person, good actions. Bad person, bad actions. At least that is what they told me. It’s as simple as that, nothing to it. That was how it was here. That’s how it is. Simple, and not complicated. I would always ask my mother if there could be a good person, that did bad actions. It was a simple answer. No. You see, the people where I live aren’t understanding. They don’t

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Grade 7

understand people who are different, and would carelessly stop and ask. It was always simple. It was Safe Haven. At least that's what they called it.

My name is Daisy, and my best friend is Josie. Have been literally inseparable since birth. We live in a small city named "Safe Haven". It's a quaint town, not much action, known as the city of roses. That's because that's all we do here. Rose growers. There is seriously nothing else here than rose gardens. Not even a pool. There is one elementary school named Safe Haven Elementary school, and one high school, Safe Haven High School. The city is so perfect and simple, that there isn't even a police station. I asked my mom why, and her answer was simple. No need. Safe Haven is safe. The town always seemed so clean, so perfect, so simple. At least that's what I thought. At least that's what I was told.

You see, Josie and I are different. We just seem to be wired a different way. Not simple, but unique. Unique wasn't something to be proud of here, though. Not only did the elders not like it, the city grew to dislike us as well. We didn't care. We always thought, be an apple in a patch of oranges.

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March 30

Grade 7

Our town was like a boarding school. Lights out at 10:00pm, and lights up at 6:30am. Josie and I were troublemakers though, and couldn't wait to leave Safe Haven. So late, one gloomy dark night, Josie and I set our path to the most beautiful rose garden in town. The moon was out today, so everything lit up in our path. There was nothing to fear that night, at that time, for the night was still young. We had timed it perfectly, so that we arrived, at the garden, at exactly 10:03pm. During the day, this garden is patrolled by ferocious guard dogs, because it was the lifeblood of Safe Haven.

For some odd reason, that night gave me an uneasy feeling in my stomach. One of those feelings that starts out as a small seed, but then buries itself in the pit of your stomach, until it blooms into an ultimate stress tree. I think Josie had the same feeling, because just as we entered the metal gates of the garden, we gave each other a stare that is never really used in Safe Haven, considering it is very safe. I tried my best to shake it off, but for some reason, it was like a continuous reminder, punching me in the stomach each time. Like a message from the universe saying, "*Something's wrong!*"

Then, it happened. All I did was turn numb. Kind of like when you start getting that tingly feeling that starts in your arms, but somehow creeps it's way down your legs to your feet. At this point, you can't move anymore. "Um Josie," I whispered, "why is

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St. Ann's Academy

March 30

Grade 7

there dug up dirt over there? "Where? What are you talk-." What happened next is unspeakable. Unthinkable. Just not simple. That uneasy feeling I had, turned out to be a girl's body in the rose garden. A dead one. The universe *-was-* telling me something. It was telling me someone in the perfect simple town, a good person, did do something wrong. They murdered someone. It proved me right. It proves us right, Josie and me. Someone good, did do something wrong. Josie and I were going not going to tell anyone what happened. What we saw. The only question was, who did it?

Nevaeh Walker
Grade 7
Summit Elementary
Snowflakes

Snowflakes dancing all around
Drifting and turning to the ground,
Watch them shimmer,
Watch them glow,
Until they fall right into the snow.

Once they do,
Say goodbye,
And watch the others from the sky.

Drifting lightly without a sound,
They lightly float to the soft, cold ground.

Like silhouettes dancing,
Without fear,
Just because winter is here.