

Memories

Margo:

To be honest, I don't know what happened. All of it just- I'm not sure, happened to fast I guess. I don't have any memory about the people around me, all I remember is that night, and how I saw the light at the end of the tunnel fade away as we collided.

Everyone's telling me these stories, about what I did, who they are and how I need to remember them, or they aren't going to be complete. Have they ever thought to wonder that I'm not complete? Do they think that i'm choosing not to remember? Because if they believe that, its garbage. If I could, i'd remember everything in an instant, make life simpler for everyone including me; "Oh I just hope that Margo remembers this, I hope that Margo remembers that" I'm already sick of being treated as if everything is new to me. I lost my core memories, I didn't forget every damn thing about the world. I just woke up from a coma, i've been in one for a week. They tell me my names Margo, I pretend I already knew that.

They think i'm delirious. "Poor girl, can't even remember her own name" I heard someone say. I shout back at them, "My names Margo." I only remember one thing, and that's the night that ruined it all for me, and you're going to be the only one to know how I experienced it.

The car seat was perched back the slightest bit, and that cost me. Everything after the adjusting of my seat happened in what felt like slow motion. Nobody saw the car, at least until it came swerving in our direction. It came, blindsiding us. The impact of this, was much worse then what happened to the car.

Memories

The glass came raining down, glistening as the blazing sun came shining through what used to be the windshield, reflecting off the glass and making me squint, creating one final memory without all the bandages. The shards of glass slowly embed into my skin as I scream, although no words seem to be coming out. My throat raw. My eyesight starts to blur as the blood started to seep out of the fresh wounds on my face. My seat. I tried grasping for the belt, but my hand couldn't grip it, it was too far back. My body numb from loss of blood. My consciousness starts to drift elsewhere. My head starts to pound, had I hit it on something? I couldn't remember.

Throughout the periods of my consciousness I hear an ambulance, the sirens striking the silence that was presented moments ago. I flinch at the thought of people seeing me in this state. My once rich olive skin, was now cracked with multiple disassembled pieces of glass, arranged in such a way they looked as if they had been selected and placed into my skin. The ambulance approaches, and I start to fade. My memories, my eyesight, and my hope for re-awakening.

When I awoke a week later, I was still mesmerized as I didn't know who used to sit in the driver's seat.

My short light brown hair had been french braided. My eyes once the brightest blue eyes you'd ever seen, now started to fade into a light green. They'd always done that when I got frightened

Memories

3

or jealous. I hated it, it showed that sense of envy, it never allowed me to hide my emotions like everyone else. People thought it was unique and beautiful, some would say it was the thing that made me. Little did they know that the reason my eyes changed colour was a defect- more like a condition. I was born with a rare type of cancer, It made my eyes change not only along with the seasons but when my emotions changed. Wait, How did I remember that?

I woke up gasping for breath, pushing the red emergency call button until someone came to assist me. My mom came to visit me that day, so I confronted her about my memory coming back, I told her about what I remembered from my dream and asked her if it was true, her eyes started to sparkle and light up, and that's how I knew that it was all true. That night I had a dream, I was in the crash again, but I didn't wake to see another day. Again I awoke to the red alert button being pushed, and a nurse arriving to see what happened to me. Countless nights this process repeated, Most nights restless. Traumatizing me, making me feel helpless, the memories never leaving, haunting me as I tried to live. Finally one night I woke up to see my mother hovering over me stroking my hair and telling me it's going to be alright. "MOM, mom" I screamed, "I remember you!" I said through sobs. I felt a pang in my head, and I took my last breathe- "I love you mo-

And the cardiac monitor fell flat, symbolizing that I was no more, leaving behind just memories.

WWIII

I will never forget the moment I got that jolting call. The sensation of the my stomach dropping fifty stories as I realized death was lingering closer to me. I had been sitting languorously on our plush suede couch with my loving wife Carol and our two girls, Amy and Rory. I got up as the phone rang, spilling a few popcorn kernels on the floor. I picked up the phone as Carol paused the movie we had been watching. "Hello, Jacob speaking", I had spoken into the phone.

The voice of my sergeant spoke back. "Hey Walker we need you out here stat, we think we're going to be attacked". I had stood there frozen as my crackled voice said that I would be there on the next flight. Carol's blue eyes looked up at me with great concern.

"I have to go, they need me". I had said with worry woven into my voice. Her blonde bun seemed to sag just a little lower, and my kids eyes lost just a little of their usual shine. I turned and went to go pack my heavy bags.

As I was rolling the last suitcase to the truck, Carol leaned in and gave me a kiss, her pink lip gloss sticky as we pulled apart. I could tell she was battling back tears. We wobbled as Amy and Rory grabbed hold of our legs in a last meager protest for me to stay. I planted a kiss on each of their heads and told Carol I would phone as soon as I got to camp.

WWIII

Time flew by as all of us soldiers were transported by helicopter to the enemy's ground. That day went by in a flash, fire, guns, grenades, and death all around were all you could see, and before I knew it the United States of America and North Korea were at war with one another.

Days passed of endless bombings rifles shooting, and lives being lost. Days turned into months as I witnessed countless people die, for some I was to blame. We had come into this war as a mighty, strong army of 1.2 million, that was now a megar nine hundred thousand; all hope was lost of winning this war.

But everything changed on August 11th 2024 when a USA missile hit a part of the North Korea wall. Thousands rushed out into South Korea pleading to stay. North Korea had responded with a vengeance by dropping five nuclear missiles over the USA, killing hundreds of thousands and poisoning the air; it had then spread to the point when Canada evacuated five hundred miles up from the border to go upland to escape the fumes. That was when we all knew the war still had months to go.

The war raged on for years to come, until March 23rd 2028. That was the day that I, Jacob Walker, celebrated with my surviving brothers the ending of the war. We had won. We won when we gathered all of our soldiers and moved forward in a killing line sweeping away the enemy soldiers. We killed and killed until they surrendered. That

Kendra Balogh
Grade 8
Brocklehurst Middle School

WWIII

was the day that North Korea, my Country, my home defeated the U.S.A., and burned the White House down with the president inside. That was the day America had fallen.

She Forgot to Remember

I have this problem where I have a photographic memory. That means I remember everything. I don't know what it's like to forget things, and I never will. At least I thought I never would. My name is Elise Jones, nice to meet you.

By the end of this story, you'll probably forget me. You'll forget that my long brown hair is streaked with light brown highlights. How my tanned face is splattered with freckles, or kisses from the sun as my mom says. You won't remember my thick eyebrows that sit on top of my black glasses, and you won't remember the hazel brown eyes that lay underneath them. You definitely won't remember that there is a boy, and surprisingly, he made me forget, and I won't either.

When I was little saw things that people didn't want me to see, and heard things they didn't want me to hear. I was like a spy, and the things I saw, I never stopped seeing. I saw my parents fighting, and shortly after I found divorce papers. I heard my mom talking to the doctor when Lily was in the hospital, cancer. She never told me anything, because she knew I already knew. My mom homeschooled me and my sister Lily. I basically never left the house other than for soccer, and hospital visits. Until this year, my mom's teaching license expired in September, so me and Lily had to go to school. Luckily Lily was getting better, and after a year of cancer, she almost escaped it.

As soon as Lily and I walked inside I saw him, and my mind went blank for the first time ever. It's like my brain forgot to remember. My palms were sweaty, and my face turned bright red. I had to meet him, so I dragged myself over and introduced myself to him, wiping my hands on my blue hoodie in the process. His name was Blair Austin. He had short curly black hair, eyes as blue as the ocean, and a smile bigger than the sun. I fumbled to get my phone out of my bag when he asked for my number, and his hand brushed against mine. Lily just rolled her eyes and walked away. Great, my only friend is already gone. He was talking, but I

↳
Sidney Bert
Sa-hali Secondary
Gr. 8

She Forgot to Remember

had no clue what he was saying. It's like my head was in a bubble that was blocking the sound coming in. The bubble popped. His voice was smooth and deep, and you could tell he was kind. I felt a connection as soon as we spoke, but realized we had to stop. I said goodbye and walked away as I remembered my only two priorities were my sister, and school. I looked back to see his whirlpool eyes staring at me, and ran around the corner to escape him.

To my surprise Lily was there. She sat on the ground, looking as defeated as ever. Her normally tanned face was a pale white, and something wasn't right. Lily breathed heavily as her long brown hair draped in front of her face and her brown eyes filled with tears. I reached around for my phone, noticing that I had left it with Blair. I ran back to him and got out the words as fast as I could before the lump in my throat created tears. He handed it to me, looking confused and worried, but I didn't care. My sister was as close to dying as she was six months ago. She needed to get to the hospital, so my shaky hands dialed the only number that came to mind, mom. I told her everything, how she was sick again, and that we needed to go to the hospital. Lily was getting worse by the minute. The first day of school and already back to the hospital. We waited for awhile until my mom pulled up, and Blair ran to catch up. He was the kind of person that really cares. I was in shock so the only words that came out of my mouth were: Lily, she's sick, cancer, the hospital. He reached out to me as we ran through the doors. I knew that someday he would be important to me, but today wasn't that day.

After two days in the hospital Blair texted me asking if I was okay. I wasn't but I replied with yes anyways. He knew I wasn't okay, after that he didn't respond. Twenty minutes later I saw him standing in the doorway to the waiting room. He grabbed my hand and didn't say a word until we were outside. Blair looked at me, his face concerned. He gripped my hands tight, and I knew he felt the connection too. He was studying my face, taking in every inch while I did the same. I spoke a few words but no reply came out of him until he told

و
Sidney Bert
Sa-hali Secondary
Gr. 8

She Forgot to Remember

me I was different than everyone else. I never thought of it like that, but I was more interesting than others. He looked deep into my eyes and slowly leaned in to kiss me. I shivered as his lips touched mine and my mind was empty. Clear, and open. I didn't think I was going to forget this. But I did. I stared at him for a minute until I snapped back to reality and concluded the idea that I just kissed a boy. We spoke for however long it was until my phone buzzed, I scanned the message seeing Lily, still sick, and no better. I got up, my grey sweats dusty from the ground and began to walk away to hide my tears from Blair when he yelled for me. He told me how he felt about our instant connection, and that he wanted to fall in love with me. My mind was clear, slowly forgetting our conversation. Somehow I knew he was going to be important. He made me forget to remember.

Brooke Blower

Grade 8

St. Ann's Academy

My Biggest Regret

1

When it happened, I hadn't planned it. I was angry and I wanted her to feel the pain for once. It may not have been the same type of pain, physical and not emotional, but it was still pain. If you understood what she put me and everyone around her through, you would understand why I pushed her so hard. I thought she would get up and retaliate by spreading more lies on social media. I stood there watching her and waiting for her to get up, but she didn't move. As I watched the life drain from her eyes, I realized what I had actually done.

Days later, when the police came to question me if I knew where my classmate might have gone, I denied seeing her that day. I told them that we had been close friends in elementary school but that we had drifted apart once we started high school. That part was the truth. The more she insulted and humiliated others, the more popular she became. Her most loyal friends were, in fact, the people who feared her most. The day it happened, I had decided to stand up against her. I never imagined dragging her body into the river.

A year later, the guilt of what I had done haunted me. No one knew where she was or what had happened to her except me and one other person. This anonymous person kept my secret as long as I continued to make the payments. People noticed that I had become more of an introvert which seemed understandable for someone in mourning. It was the fear of being exposed that

Brooke Blower

Grade 8

St. Ann's Academy

My Biggest Regret

2

actually kept me isolated. The stress of keeping this horrible secret began to seem worse than facing the consequences of my actions.

At the memorial of her disappearance, I decided to confess. The guilt had gotten to me and I just couldn't handle it anymore. I stood at the front of the room until I had everyone's attention. After I revealed what happened to her body, the following events happened so quickly. The next moment I remembered clearly was when I was sitting in a jail cell waiting to see what would happen to me. The first person I saw was my mother, but I couldn't bear to look her in the eyes knowing that she knew what I had done. She insisted I wasn't in my right mind and that I needed help. That's when I saw them. The doctors in white coats were coming towards me with needles. Then I blacked out.

I was sitting on the cold hard bed all alone with my thoughts. At least it was over or so I thought. I heard footsteps coming towards me. My feelings of relief quickly turned to fear as she appeared in my doorway. She was just standing there smiling at me, proving to me that she was still superior. Was it the medication messing with my brain or was she really alive?

What do you envision me as? Your friend? Maybe you assume I'm a random individual.

You perceive me as a toy, just an object.

Did you ever consider my feelings?

I doubt so.

Did you ever consider you were the individual who broke me into tiny pieces.

I doubt so.

Maybe I wasn't the delirious one, you were.

You were the one who did this to me.

You should take fault for the toll you put me through, but

Look at some of the things you taught me.

You helped shape me in the slightest.

But you were the one who hurt me.

Now you are gone and left me in the dark.

I just need to heal.

“Don’t look back,” are the words that circled in my mind.

I promised myself I wouldn’t, I promised.

The one who said they loved me,

Which we both know is a lie.

I try and try not to turn back but

Guilt is building up in me,

But I know if I turn back I will go through

Hell again. The abuse, the lonely nights that

All blend together, and the tears will return.

The last words I heard as I walked out that door were

“I hate you, I wish I never gave birth to you!”

Moments before I heard the sound of my parents voices

Murmuring in the next room, the voices got louder

And turned to yells. Little did I know my life was leading up to this moment.

The Mask
Promise Dirkson,
KSA, Grade 8

Hello there, I'm social.
I'm happy, I'm confident too.
Yes, laugh at my joke and I'll laugh too.
Yes I have it all figured out.
Yes I'm witty, we smile and laugh.

I Frown
Behind the mask

Hello there, I'm beautiful.
You notice my looks, I look good.
I flirt and smile and wink.
I giggle and blush.
You reciprocate.

I'm Ugly
Behind the mask

Hello there, I'm smart.
I state random facts.
I debate and challenge and think.
We go back and forth.
Growing together

I'm Stupid
Behind the mask

Hello there, I'm your old friend.
You've noticed the cracks and I'm scared.
I don't need my true self showing.
You continue to notice though.
I push you away before it's too late.

I'm Lonely
Behind the mask

Hello there, I'm me.
You've pushed and prodded.
You've glimpsed through the cracks.
You've noticed my insecurities.
I'm glad but I hate you for it.

I'm Despairing
Behind the mask

Hello there, leave me be.
You won't leave and you stay.
You're seeing the true me.
You don't mind for some reason.
I don't know why you stay.

I'm Scared
Behind the mask

Hello there, is this me?
You've reached out and touched the mask
Your fingers grab the edges and pull.
I've been preparing for this moment.
I breathe deeply and the mask is removed.

Hello there, this is my new mask.

Pain
Promise Dirkson,
Grade 8, KSA

Sometimes you must
Cry in order to see
Die in order to be
Hurt in order to know
Fall in order to grow
Lose in order to gain

Because life's greatest lessons
Are learned through
Pain

Charlotte Ford, Grade 8, Westsyde Secondary School

Dreams of Fear

Lane hadn't had a day in her life without bruises to cover up. Her dad, a struggling alcoholic acted as if he were from a horror movie. He beat her and cut her making wounds appear and vanish all her life. Her mother had left when she was twelve but she forgot one thing; she forgot to bring Lane.

They didn't have a phone line, so child protective services couldn't be called. That was the best part; her dad must have known what he was doing. He had chosen a small town in the middle of nowhere and bought a farm. That way the neighbors were too far away to hear. The screams and sorrow that racked her mind at night keeping her wounded body from sleeping. Broken ribs were only just a start, she still had flashbacks to the night when it went too far. That night she got her worst scar. A mess of pink angry skin that wrapped her torso. That was the same night her mother left.

'Lane'. That was all her mother had left her with, a simple name. One that showed people's emotions by the way it was said. It could be cold blood dripping from a knife or beautiful, innocent and pearly white. Her mom could always make it sound perfect; a nice thing in their hard world. Her mom used to take half the abuse but now with her gone, it was all left to Lane. Lane's mom was the perfect getaway, she had a car and could take her as far a Lane wanted. Her mom was the light. She was the way out, but she was gone now.

Charlotte Ford, Grade 8, Westsyde Secondary School

She became good at hiding it. She couldn't go out on weekends, for that was when the bruises would reach too far up her body and someone might see. All the turtleneck sweaters in the world couldn't cover up some scars. Long pants and hoodies in summer were known as Lane's fashion. At least she lived in Canada where three quarters of the year were so cold that it was acceptable. Bandages wrapped her underneath her clothes. Lane had learned how to fake a smile by age fourteen. She thought herself a pretty good actor by now. Lane must have been wrong.

She was sitting in her twelfth-grade history class when a lifelong dream and fear became reality. "Lane Clarke, please come to the office." The intercom blared the words of the school's sweet secretary to strained for it to be normal. Her feet slapped the tile floor at a quarter of the speed her heart was racing. Out of the window, she saw a police car. Her ears were underwater. She turned the corner to see the entirety of her town's police station inside her school's small office. As she pushed open the swinging glass door her vision started to blur and go black as she fell to the ground. She was gone.

Name Change

Every year, on the same day I was born, my name changes. The change that happens does not have an official name, but many people call it NC: an abbreviation for name change. It's always a big change and can take a month or so to get used to. Right now, as my age is sixteen, my name is Terra. Last year my name was Tina. My parents always started my name off with a T. They always start my younger brothers name with an, M. In about a week my name is going to change again and we will have to go through all the paperwork again, as we are legally changing it. I was listening in on my parents as they were talking about my new name. They are stuck between Tia and Terry. I hope for Tia because Terry is too much like my name right now.

Not every kid gets the privilege of getting a new name every year. Only the best kids get the NC. Poor kids only ever get one name that their parents have to choose on the day they are born. I pity them as they do not get to choose the name that best fits their personality. When I turn eighteen I will get to choose my favourite name that will be my permanent name. I will go through all the legalities, signing with my new name. I am very much excited, but also nervous that I won't pick the right name for myself.

There are many kids who do change their name and regret it, not ever being able to change it again. A lot of people who do choose the wrong name don't realize it until years later. Some even go into hiding because they are so embarrassed. They can get people to call them by a different name, but on any legal paper they must sign with their legal name. My great aunt chose the wrong name. Her legal name was Anne, but she got us to call her Aunty Quinn. Quinn was always a much better name for her and

everyone could see it. It fit with her personality so much better. She always gets very upset when anybody calls her Anne. Many of my friends only ever had one name. They liked it though and let their name define them.

The name that I am soon getting will be the last one I ever get to try. I think that I will go to name therapy so that they can make me less anxious about choosing my new name. I don't think that I will be able to live with myself if I chose the wrong name.

Signing off - T

Audrey Ladd
Grade 8
KSA
"The Only Way Out"

The Only Way Out

It wasn't supposed to happen like this. I should have never survived. Why me? Why not innocent little Rosie? My life just goes in circles, death, pain, death. I'm trapped in a maze with no exit, just dead ends and empty darkness.

I think I remember happiness. It was like taking a deep breath after you've suffocated, or finding the end of the dark tunnel you've been crawling through. I have felt happy before, like when I first met Rosie. She was the sweetest thing with a smile that lit up the whole world. Rosie's entire family died when she was a baby, yet she still found reasons to smile. Her laughter was contagious, and I couldn't help but be happy.

Three months ago, my house burned down. Everyone tells me that I'm lucky to have survived. My parents, my sister, my brother died in that fire. I don't think that's lucky. I lost everything. I had to live on the streets, cold, alone, where I couldn't hurt anyone, and no one could hurt me. It was better that way. Occasionally, a family would try to take me in, but every house I went to had some sort of terrible accident. After my latest disaster, the people who had taken me in placed me in the orphanage.

I had to run. People think I'm cursed, because of my great-great grandfather. He escaped death for years, living to be hundreds of years old. They say that, now,

Audrey Ladd
Grade 8
KSA
"The Only Way Out"

everyone in my family must die early to make up for the time he stole. Disasters couldn't catch me. But Death himself did.

When I ran away from the orphanage, he found me. I left in the middle of the night, worried I would find a someone I cared about, then I would lose them. That's always how it works. Life is merciless. So is Death. He cornered me in a dark alleyway. I could feel the life being sucked out of me as he quietly approached. He was draining all of my energy, like he was taking away my soul. I tried to scream, but couldn't make a sound. It was like an invisible hand was squeezing my neck, slowly choking me. Suddenly, Death was upon me. I felt his ice cold breath against me. It was like the cold was eating me from the inside out. He was taking away any motivation I might have had to still live.

He whispered to me, "I will spare you just this once. There are worse things than death in store for you."

Suddenly, he was gone.

I somehow managed to stumble my way back to the orphanage, where I stayed, hiding from not only Death, but the fate that I knew would soon be mine. I was trying to hide from myself.

For a while, I almost forgot his warning. I met Rosie, and I remembered how to smile. I was happy. We didn't have much, but at least everyone was still alive.

Then the storyteller came.

Audrey Ladd
Grade 8
KSA
"The Only Way Out"

He arrived at the orphanage and told tales of love, and light, and happiness. But his last story took a dark and ominous turn. He talked about an orphanage very similar to ours, which collapsed. He claimed that all but one person died, and the souls of the dead haunted her until she were driven to madness. I never thought he was talking about me.

No one else knows how it happened. I do. I watched as everything I know and love was snatched away from me once more. I stood on the streets, watching the building collapse. I watched Death cave in the ceiling and break down the walls. I listened as children screamed, as Rosie called my name, begging me to help her, but I couldn't. It was too late. I knew it was my fault. I should have left while I could. But I didn't, and now everyone is dead. I can't live with that guilt.

I had only been out by accident. I should have died. But I didn't. Death had been right; so had the storyteller. The dead spirits of my friends tell me of their pain, begging me to save them. But I can't. Suddenly, they turned violent. There is nothing I can do for them. Now they are trying to kill me. If they can't live, then I can't either.

I tried to find the storyteller. I was convinced that he knew how to get rid of all the spirits. I found him inside a grubby house at the edge of the forest. It was dark, despite all of the light coming through the windows. Along the the walls were viles full of blood, bones, tongues, and other strange things. When I took a step closer to the man,

Audrey Ladd
Grade 8
KSA
"The Only Way Out"

everything went black. Then faint green glow started in the corner, gradually rising.

Through the smoke came a dark, raspy voice:

"There is no escape."

In the dark, I saw the storyteller. His eyes glowed a pale green and his body was suspended in mid air. He continued muttering, again and again, "There is no escape, *there is no escape, there is no escape.*" I didn't know what else to do; I ran to the lake.

"There is no escape."

But I have to prove him wrong. I don't care if there is no escape, I will *make* an escape.

I have a plan to prove the storyteller wrong, and, if it works, I'll be saying goodbye to the spirits forever. I will get rid of them if it is the last thing I do.

Christine Lionel-Imuh

Grade 8

St-Anns Academy

My Kind of Catastrophe

My Kind of Catastrophe

A school of thought says that when the heart and mind collide, catastrophic events are inevitable and will occur. There is no painting this concept, black or white. They say that your mind causes you to go against the moral codes that your heart lives by. On the other hand, they also say that, the heart clouds the vision of your path to success. Maybe, this time, just this once. A catastrophe is the right way to go.

This is the catastrophe of the Mind, Heart and Soul.

Into the forest of undiscovered creation. A flurry of raw passion and colour, teeming with emotion that flows prominently through our thoughts. Come and explore the organized mess that is our mind, heart and soul. These instruments of ours are always ready to unleash different waves of unique intuition never seen before.

Now look over here in the domain that is our soul. Look at how inspiration erupts and spews from one corner to the next. Pictures are rapidly generating in another corner, forming some sort of story, that no one but yourself is able to see. "Welcome, to a labyrinth of my own creation, this is my mind."

Creativity is bright, shining and untouchable. Some might even say a glorious sight to behold. It refuses to be dimmed by the 'perfect' and 'in-line' boundaries of society.

Once we finally find the courage to harness our gifts, society claims,

Christine Lionel-Imuh

Grade 8

St-Anns Academy

My Kind of Catastrophe

I look around to see mounds of papers and scripts lining up around the walls of my room which always has the fresh smell of ink lingering in the air. My desk is another story. Supplies lying there at the same spot which I should probably pick up at some point in my lifetime.

A sudden thought struck me today. I had never discovered my catastrophe.

My catastrophe is my way with words. The art of writing.

What is your catastrophe?

Smile

One day, there was a boy named Gabriel, who lived in Kansas, wanting to do something fun. So, he gathered up some friends to figure out what to do. They all decided to head into the old forest out beside Gabriel's friend, Jenn's, house. They all walked up to Jenn's house and met at the edge of the forest. There was a weird mist coming from the forest. "Ok, so we will all get a walkie-talkie to communicate. We have the whole forest to hide from each other. If you are in the same place as someone else, you're out. If you get out, head right here at the edge of the forest. Ok, everybody go hide!" Gabriel proclaimed to his friends. Gabriel's friend, Sarah, said quietly to herself, "I don't know about this." They all dispersed into the forest, finding places to hide.

Gabriel's Perspective:

I ran as far away as I thought I could from Jenn's house. I found a big tree that you could hide inside, so that's exactly what I did. I was sitting there for an hour, but I got bored. So, I thought it would be fun to find a new place closer to the house with the chance of running into someone. I was running a bit further back to the house, when suddenly, I had no clue where I was. I really started panicking because I didn't have a compass and I am not good with directions. I thought the best thing to do in that situation was to just stay put. So I did. I had been waiting and waiting until I heard something in the bushes. I got so excited it was one of my friends. Suddenly, I noticed whatever it was, I was being circled. Then, I blacked out.

Jack's Perspective:

I didn't care where the heck I went, I wanted to win this game. I made sure no one was looking and quickly bolted way off trail to the right. I didn't think anyone would

Smile

follow me and no one would know where in the forest I was. It wasn't until about 30 minutes of running and jogging that I realized I had no idea where I was. I tried to find my way out, but I think that I just went deeper into the forest. I found a stump and thought I would just stay there and fight off any wolf or bear or something. At one point this figure with a mask with a happy face on it walked toward me. He didn't say a word until he said, "Goodnight!" and knocked me out cold.

Simon's Perspective:

I didn't feel too good about the idea of going into a foggy forest alone, but if my friends could do it, I could. When I started walking into the forest, I was the last person to enter, and was considering bailing, but I didn't. I didn't want to go too far into the forest, so I went a bit off track to the left. A few minutes after I started walking, I found a place where I could almost see the road, but not quite. It felt like I had been sitting beside that tree for hours, but in reality, it had only been thirty minutes. A very tall man with a smiley face mask who I thought was Jenn's dad playing a trick on us, started to approach me, who I thought was Jenn's dad playing a trick on us. I realized that it was no trick when the man took a baseball bat out and was about to swing at me.

Jenn's Perspective:

I thought, just for safety, I would let Sarah tag along because she seemed pretty scared. We didn't want to wander too far in case we got lost and we always made sure to stay on all trails. The fog started to creep me out and was getting fairly thick, but I wanted to play the game. At one point, Sarah ran back to the house to go to the bathroom. I thought she would never come back. While I was waiting, I read a book that

Smile

I had brought along to pass the time. I heard someone walking towards me and knew that Sarah had finally come back. When I saw it was a very tall figure with a mask on, I knew right away it wasn't Sarah. Sarah is a short person, definitely not tall. When the figure approached, I said, "Hello. What do you want?" The figure stood there until finally saying in a deep voice, "I want you and your friends out of these woods!" Right there, the guy knocked me straight in the head with what looked like a baseball bat. "That'll do," he said.

Sarah's Perspective: I got back from the bathroom to see Jenn's book on a tree stump and a little note. The note read, "If you want your friends back, follow the trail of fire." I looked up to see a trail of fire-lit torches leading the way to a cave. I really wished I hadn't agreed to play this game in a creepy forest; now I had to save my friends from who knows what. I slowly and carefully followed the torches to a cave. Suddenly, torches lit up the hallway of the cave. I then had a gut feeling that this was going to be hard to get my friends back. When I reached the end of the hallway, I saw a door and went through it. That's where I saw all of my friends tied up to a bench. I was still holding Jenn's book and flipped through it, looking for something to show the best way to untie knots, while flipping through, I saw something about a haunted forest inside of Kansas and that there are two guys who kill demons and ghosts named Sam and Dean. Then, from the darkness, those same boys approach. They tell us to leave the forest forever and never come back. We never went back to that forest.

Happy Days

I'm an outsider. I don't really fit in

To the social media trend, whatever that is.

It isn't appealing and makes me feel drowned.

Because I don't want it, now I'm in the background?

I see all the reports, the charts, and graphs filled.

Social media causes depression; it can even kill.

So why are you still posting? You're obviously not blind.

You've spent half an hour making your picture look fine!

You tell me and yourself you're not addicted - you're "on fleek."

But I see you crying in the hallway after losing your streaks.

Puppy dogs, bumblebees, it's all just so dumb.

You do realize you could *talk* to your friends for fun.

We are all made of molecules, but you're just pixelated.

And as soon as your photo is taken, your face is deflated.

Does the filter really matter, if it's not your own skin and bones?

Do you even hear me speaking over your headphones?

And it's true, I won't know what I'm missing until I try it.

But I'd rather not download it if I'm already biased.

Seeing is believing, and I've seen some kids fall apart.

So I decided that I'd actually rather not take part.

So now you know, I really don't care.

Wow, a kid without social media, that's pretty rare.

But, hey, maybe you'll decide to change your remote-controlled ways.

There might just be happy days then, my friend, happy days!

The Passage

Unfurling cocoons
Gossamer webs trapping rain

Fierce tiger lilies

Blazing sunsets glow
Campfires in the forest night

Fiery golden sky

Chilly northern breeze
Once bushy trees release leaves

A whimsical sight

Huddle and cuddle
Dripping icicles, wet snow
Clean scent of pine trees

Dainty butterflies
Fluttering iridescence
Flourishing rebirth

Footprints stamp the beach

Floppy hats, broad sunglasses

Pursuing the sun

Nutmeg, cinnamon

Distinct kitchen aromas

Good ol' corn maze dayz

Quaint, fleeting snowflakes

Tucked in with a cup of tea

Putting school aside

Cyclical seasons

Rolling right before your eyes

Up until the end

Remember

BANG! I startle awake, a hiss rising in my chest. I try to stand, but my paws won't budge. Trapped. Fear envelops me, stretching my eyes wide, and causing my limbs to tremble.

BANG! It sounds one more time, and then silence. If I previously had a concept of time, it was long lost now.

Slowly my paws still, muscles starting to relax. Instinctive panic settles at the edge of my mind, but I know better than to grant it control once again. Instead I clear my mind. *Think*, I tell myself, *how did I get here?* I can feel them, memories, just sitting at the edge of my mind. Like a drowning bird grasping for air, I reach out for them but fall short. I growl in frustration.

Suddenly, a metallic scraping sound fills the air, echoing through whatever tomb I am held in. Then something beautiful, but blinding, appears in front of me. Light. It hurts my eyes, yet lifts my soul.

I may not have access to my memories, but I know I haven't seen light for quite a while. And with light comes freedom!

Voices fill the air. I know I should be scared, but the thought of freedom pushes out any common sense. My eyes still struggling to adjust, I turn my gaze to whatever is holding my paws captive. Wait. Those aren't my paws!

Blinking, I squint my eyes at the pink meaty flesh that shouldn't be there. COULDN'T be there. I concentrate and the not-paws start to bend into fists. But this isn't me!

A figure approaches, slowly, as if trying for invisibility. Hissing sounds escape my mouth. Confusion flashes across its features, closely followed by fear. I attempt to enter a hunting crouch, but the creature just pulls a long stick from behind him.

Remember

PING! A stinging pain runs down my forepaw. Shocked, all I can do is stare as the figure moves closer, concern washing over its face. Weird, why would it care, they hurt me after all... Blink. The world starts to spin. Blink. Stars start to invade my vision. Blink. Darkness falls. Blink. Blink. Blink...

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. Murmurs. Voices I can almost hear but can't. My eyelids flutter, not quite ready for reality. Feeling starts to return to my limbs.

On the verge of wakefulness, my ears start to tune in to the world around me. Footsteps.

"She's waking up!"

Weird, I can understand them. My eyes finally open, and I wince at the sudden change of light. Scanning the room, I whimper when my eyes settle on the tubes in my strange body. Where am I?

"Hello?" Someone asks, the voice quiet and laced with curiosity.

I jump, whimpering at the sound.

"Lauren?"

I turn to the sound of the voice. Wait. I recognize that name. And that voice! I test my voice, slowly, unfamiliar with the strain.

"M-Mya?"

Tears stream down the face of the girl I know, from the life I knew. She takes a step, then I am enveloped in a warm hug from the girl I love.

Then suddenly I remember it all. I'm not a fox. I'm a girl, sixteen to be exact, at least last time I checked. I lived a pretty good life, until it was gone. Names called, wrists tied, mouth gagged. I had it all until I didn't. But now it's back; at least, what's left of it.

The Mirror Man

I was sitting at home drinking some amazing hot chocolate I made, scrolling through Instagram when I saw a post about an awesome haunted house. I shot out of my seat on the couch, put down my hot chocolate, and called my best friend Mikey. He absolutely loves exhilarating experiences; he would be the perfect person to bring! I called Mikey to ask him to join me at the haunted house.

"Hey Alex, what's up?" said Mikey as he answered the phone.

"Hey, so I found the best haunted house that is calling our names! What do you say?" I felt like I was buzzing with excitement.

"Yeah, of course! Where and when should I meet you?" I could feel his energy through the phone.

"Okay, so I'll send you the link and we will meet there at around 8pm?" Night would definitely be the best time for this place.

"Will do, see you there."

I hung up the phone and quickly got ready for the haunted experience. I threw on a loose black crop top, some camo pants, headed out the door and jumped into my car. I pulled up to the house and exited my car. I looked at my phone; Mikey was calling.

"Yallo?" I answered the phone.

"Hey, I'm here! Where are ya?" Mikey asked.

"Where are you. I'll meet you," I said but I was far from the entrance.

"Oh uh," his voice was starting to get coarse. "Meet me in the house."

“Okay see you the-” Mikey hung up the phone before I was done, something was off about this.

Cautiously, I started making my way into the house. From the moment I stepped in the door it almost felt as if gravity was trying to pull me down into the earth. I walked around the house, and came to the first flight of stairs. Nervously I stopped and looked around for Mikey; I turned my back to the stairs and felt someone tap my shoulder. Quickly I spun around, thinking it was someone who worked here going to tell me I couldn't go down here but I couldn't see anything. No one was around me.

“Mikey? Is that you?” I said calling into the dark.

“Alex,” the voice from the dark whispered.

“What the,” I ran down the stairs, and ducked into the first room on my left.

I looked around the room, it was huge. There were so many doors. *What kind of house is this?* I tried to leave from the door I came in from but when I opened it, there was just a wall of bricks. I stumbled backwards. Turning, I went to the far middle door and opened it.

“Alex! Is that you!?” I heard Mikey yell. His voice was stressed, scared.

“Mikey! Yes it's me! Where are you?!” I yelled back.

“Follow my voice!” He yelled at me; his voice was distant.

I ran through the door and came into a mirror maze. I saw a silhouette run past one of the mirrors. This was going way too far.

“Mikey, if that's you, this isn't funny; it never was,” my voice was shaking, a ball climbing up my throat.

"Don't cry" I whispered myself.

The silhouette circled around me. I ran through the maze, but I couldn't tell which way I was going.

"Mikey! Where are you!" I screamed and fell to the ground in defeat. My legs were on fire, my lungs dry and coarse, and the ball scratching at my throat wanting to release a tsunami of tears.

"Alex, hey, I'm here," I could feel the familiar hands wrap around me.

"Mikey!" I looked up at him and sunk my body against his.

"Hey, what's all this about?" he pulled me off of him so I could see his face. "I was calling for you in the main room at the entrance but you ran down the stairs."

"Mikey, you can stop acting now," I punched his shoulder.

"What do you mean?" He looked puzzled; Mikey isn't that good of an actor, he didn't do this.

"Wait, Mikey."

I felt chills run through my body, my spine shivered with fear. As I looked out of the corner of my eye I could see it standing in one of the mirrors. I took Mikey's hand and walked towards the exit with him. As we were about to leave this cursed house forever I turned to look at it once again. We got in the car and pulled out of the parking lot. As we were driving away, I looked out the rear view mirror and there it stood. *The Mirror Man.*

"So, what you're trying to say is, you're Asexual? You don't want to experience pleasure?" my closest friend asked as I just came out to her.

" Yes, I'm Asexual; I don't feel like pleasure is my main priority in life," I said, raising my voice.

"So my friend, Laurie, doesn't want to have beauty or pleasure and wants to have a boring life, not taking any chances?" my friend said as my heart started shattering into tiny pieces from the response.

"Yes, I don't feel like my body wants to do this, I don't feel like I want this. If you have a problem, that's fine. I'll find some other people to talk to that understand what I'm dealing with," I said as I became more furious

"You're such a mistake; people are supposed to feel amazing when it comes to pleasure, not have runts like you that don't want to." She scuffed her final words.

My best friend turned into my enemy so quickly. I won't be seeing her anytime soon. Besides, summer vacation is tomorrow and I have to move to a new town. I won't be missing this place anytime soon.

"Laurie, come on! You need to get ready for a brand new day of a new school!" yelled my mother. "*Well there goes my summer vacation..new school, new me! I hope..*" I thought as I built myself up to get out of bed and out of my house to take the bus.

"I love you sweetie! I can't wait to hear about your adventures today!" my mother said as she gave me a kiss and watched as I got onto the yellow bus. The bus ride was okay; people gave me glances from time to time but it got cut short when the bus made

it to a complete stop and the students scrambled out of the bus, like fish trying to get food.

I was then greeted by my new principal, Mr. Reynolds, outside. "Good Morning! You must be our new student, Mrs. Williams! It's so nice to meet you!" he said as he firmly shook my hand.

"Hi, you can just call me Laurie; my last name is a bit on the weird side. Where do I start?" I said letting go of his handshake.

"Ah! I have brought some students in to show you around! They will help you around the school as best as they can!" Mr. Reynolds said as I walked with him into the school.

"Great, just what I need, I bet you this place isn't that hard to get around!" I thought as we arrived at the Principal's office. There was only one person sitting in the chairs at the office. The principal cleared his throat, getting attention from the student.

He stood up, like he just got up from a magic act and quietly said, "Hey, the names Leigh. My other 'friends' won't be attending. I hope its fine if it's just us." Leigh scratched the back of his head, as we got the attention of the principal, and he gave instructions on what Leigh needed to do and where to go. Then we were off.

"So, do you have a name or no?" Leigh asked as he scanned the paper, looking for my classrooms,

"The names Laurie. I had recently moved. My mother had to change jobs, so that meant moving," I said as I giggled at the end my sentence.

I took a deep breath before I spoke, "One of the main reasons I moved is because of me getting bullied about my sexuality; I'm actually Asexual, where I don't experience "pleasure" and so they figured out and they bullied me. So I left. My mom had to work at a different job anyways so it worked out. I'm sorry," I confessed.

"Laurie, I'm Asexual too, I've been hiding it from myself this whole time because I didn't think I would find anyone like me. Laurie you're my soulmate," Leigh said, looking at me with utter shock. I tackled Leigh with hug to seal it.

"I love you and If that doesn't mean feeling pain or pleasure, I'll still be happy," Leigh said

"I Love you too Leigh," Laurie said as they snuggled on the grass, loving every moment of it. *"I love you too."*

Page 1

Kenzie Sinclair

Grade 8

Sahali Secondary

The Battles They've Fought

The Battles They've Fought

They fought with each other before they could talk. It was a first language to them. As they grew up they learned to fight their own battles with the other kids in the orphanages or foster homes. They picked their fights wisely but they still got into trouble. That could have been part of the reason that they had moved nine times before the youngest was seven. Until Kathy came along they were reckless. When she adopted them she thought she thought she could change them and make them peaceful young girls. She succeeded for the first four years she had them, raising them in a suburban neighbourhood and going to church on sundays had an impact on them. Even so, no amount of church and special attention could save Kathy from their teenage years. To say the least they hadn't fully grown out of fighting.

The girls were all half sisters. They had the same mother who had died after giving birth to the youngest Kaleo. They were all taken into foster care. The oldest was Delphi she was sent to a group home and the two youngest Fera and Kaleo went to an orphanage on the north shore. Kaleo was the youngest. She had jet black hair and piercing blue eyes. Fera was the middle child.

Page 2

Kenzie Sinclair

Grade 8

Sahali Secondary

The Battles They've Fought

She had platinum blonde hair and deep set green eyes. The oldest was Delphi. She had fiery red hair. Delphi had always lived in her own little world, she wasn't usually involved in the conflicts like Kaleo and Fera were. Kaleo was the one who got into the most fights.

Kathy grew up in the same town as she lives in now. She grew up in a christian family. She learned she couldn't have children when she was 12 but she wanted to be a mother so badly. When she was 30 she decided to adopt three girls from an orphanage on the north shore. The first time she met them she fell in love. They were three girls who had a childhood where they didn't know where they were going to live in the next month. She knew she had to take care of them because their future was either her or another foster home. Kathy thought she could handle their violence. Raise them to be peaceful young ladies. That was not the case because 3 months after they were adopted they had their first big fight. One evening Kathy heard shouting coming from the girls room. She went to go in and she what was happening but she noticed cups flying off the counters and the house started trembling. Kathy went to the girls room but the door was locked. After the fight had fizzled out the door came unlocked. Later that night Kathy did some research from the bible. She found the story of the the Three Horsemen of the Apocalypse. She found

Page 3

Kenzie Sinclair

Grade 8

Sahali Secondary

The Battles They've Fought

some similarities in the characteristics between the horsemen and the girls. The horseman of death had black hair and blue eyes like Kaleo, The Horseman of famine had blonde hair and green eyes like Fera. The Horseman of death had fiery red hair like Delphi. Based on what had happened that day Kathy concluded that the girls were reincarnations of the three horsemen. Kathy knew she could not let the girls fight or it could be disastrous.

Try as she might, Kathy could not stop the girls from fighting over the one thing girls fought about since the beginning of time;Boys. Fera had a boyfriend named Kyle for 2 months. After Fera and Kyle's 2 month anniversary Kaleo and Kyle started hanging out. At first it didn't mean anything but then Kaleo started to like Kyle. Kaleo felt guilty about hanging out with Kyle but she knew that he liked her more than he like Fera. One day Kyle broke up with Fera. He told her that he loved Kaleo. In front of Kyle Fera pretended not to care. But when she got home Kaleo and Fera had a fight that would end all fights. Fera came home after Kyle had dumped her. She went straight to Kaleo and brought her into the room they started yelling at each other. Fera said Kaleo was a liar and Kaleo said that Kyle loved her more than he would ever love Fera. The screaming and yelling lasted for a long time. the girls were in their own world of fighting. But outside their room it was true chaos. Kathy was upstairs cooking when she heard

Page 4

Kenzie Sinclair

Grade 8

Sahali Secondary

The Battles They've Fought

the door slam and the shouting start. The house started trembling and the glasses started flying off the shelf again. Outside she could hear screams of others in the neighbourhood, the whole block was shaking. She knew if she didn't act fast and stop the fighting that the whole neighborhood could be ruined. She got to the door and it was locked. She banged on the door and yelled at them to open it. Delphi finally opened the door and Kathy barged into the room and walked in between Kaleo and Fera. She brought them into the kitchen and told them they have to be more than sisters they have to be friends. Kathy tells them about when they fight it causes harm to others around them. They realize they have fought their whole childhood and teenage years, they need to stick together if they are going to make it through their lives. No one besides their sisters will understand their checkered pasts. They all agreed to stop fighting, not only for the people around them, but for themselves. Their bond as sisters would prosper for years to come.

Jaida Tarlit
Grade 8
Westsyde Secondary
Dear Me

Dear myself,

You can beat this world,
you can rule every emotion,
and you can conquer every day like a boss.

Beat your fists into the stars,
like nobody is watching you.

Let your mind unravel into the dark speckled sky and
make a path to nowhere.

Maybe that's just what you need sometimes,
nothing to crowd your mind and tangle itself up.

Let your head clear
like the clouds trying to make
the darkness of the night
brighter.

You'll always hate to admit
you have a weak spot,
but you do.

Like everyone else.

It's behind your lungs
that are stripped of air every time

Jaida Tarlit
Grade 8
Westsyde Secondary
Dear Me

you see the true beauty of this wonderful world.

It's above your stomach that twists, turns, and fills with butterflies

everytime you hear someone who is breaking near you.

Your heart is the target, your weak spot.

It's always been the thing to brighten a room the most

and the thing to cast the darkest of shadows.

You know it.

"You have a big, squishy heart,"

they always say

when you cry at the thought of a lost one

you have such a deep love for anyone who dares enter your life.

A knot forms in your throat when you say something mean to someone out of anger or

frustration

maybe they forget the vague words that escape your mouth, but you never forget.

Keep it that way.

Don't fight others with hate

but defend yourself with love.

Stop trying to hide yourself

Behind someone you know you're not,

Instead stand up for the person you want to be.

In a sea of typical names, I have always thought of my name to be one to give off a glow. I used to wish I could walk into a store and find a souvenir with my name conveniently printed on it, or I wished to not have a red line underneath my name every time I typed it on my old iPod touch. But as I've grown up, I've realized, what's the fun in buying something with your name already on it when you could be creative and do it yourself? Everytime that red underline popped up, it was there for my name to so neatly sit on top; to make it stand out from everything else.

As many names are, my name has a religious history. When my name appears in the bible, it is presented as a male name. Many, I assume, would hate to find that their names originate from a gender of which they are not. But like my name, I too am unique. I enjoy that my name has a significant meaning behind it because my name is me and I have, of course, always been introduced and identified as the name.

Coming from a family of quite common names, Allison, Evan, and Phil, I have always thought there has been more of a ring to my name. My father liked the name Jade, but the observant woman my mother is, which I have clearly inherited, did not want any misunderstandings when people heard "Jay Tarlit" rather than "Jade Tarlit." A simple fix to the predicament was to add a simple "a" to my name. From all that, both myself and the name Jaida were born.

Dig to China

By James Waterman

Mark adjusted his tie and ran his hands down his suit, pressing out all the wrinkles. It was opening day for possibly the biggest project of his life, and he wanted it to go perfect. Perfecter than perfect. More perfect than the day he got divorced. Whatever. Grabbing the mic and striding onto the podium, he waved his hands to the thousands of people and dozens of news people, reporters, all clapping loudly. Way too loudly.

“Okay, people. Yeah, hi. Shh, sh sh.” He waved. After the applause, he spoke again.

“Uh, I’m Mark, and I’d like to thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for being here today.” *Cough, cough.*

“Today is the beginning of, as you all know, our dig to China.” *Applause! Applause! Yaaaaaaaay! The crowd goes wild!*

“Ladies and gentlemen, this project is unfathomably...”

He searched for the right words. Unfathomably what?

“...Unfathomably awesome. It is... without fathom.”

You idiot. He took in a deep breath, and wrung his hands.

“We... are very enthusiastic about it. So many firsts! So many records broken! So many multi-million dollar

lawsuits! But, it's 2045 now, and we are prepared to ignore as many of our financial obligations as possible."

Cough, cough.

Then it was if a grenade had gone off in his brain... people screamed, asked questions and shouted praise or accusations. Reporters rushed forward and raised their microphones to him and they all asked questions all at once. It came through his brain all jumbled up and he couldn't make sense of what any of them were saying...

"Okay, just settle down here people, all your askings will be answered. HEY! Quiet down, guys!"

The crowd hushed. Well, almost.

"Any questions?"

All the reporters raised their hands.

"Yes, you, the bald one."

"Me?"

"Yeah, go on."

"Well, how are you going to pay for it?"

Mark hadn't thought of that. *Hey, where are my cue cards?*

"Uh, money. Taxpayer dollars."

Another explosion of voices. Another reporter raised his hand.

"Yes, you with the face."

"Sir, why are you doing this?"

"Because, my friend, our federal government is broke and can't afford anything more, or less. Communication

between nations! And, a giant hole in the middle of the planet. In other words, we're bored."

Questions, shouting. More reporters.

"More questions? Wow, open minds, haha. Yes, you with the wide eyebrows."

"Where will you be digging from?"

"Ooh, good question... nice and deep."

At least Mark knew the answer to this one.

"Well, I did my homework, and we will not be digging from here in the U.S. We are gonna dig in Argentina."

"Why Argentina?"

Mark smiled from ear to ear, displaying his pearly yellows.

"Because if we dug from here, we would end up in the Indian ocean. And then, the Indian ocean would come through the hole and flood the spot where we started digging. If we dig in Argentina, then we would end up somewhere in Chengdu Plains, China."

A reporter wearing a green jacket and a confused expression raised his hand.

"Yes, you in the green jacket and the confused expression."

"Where are you going to put the dirt and rubble?"

"Oh, the dirt and rubble. I assume it will be made into cement and then used in the construction."

He took a moment to pick some chicken from his teeth and wipe it on his lapel.

“Yes, you.”

“What imminent dangers do you expect to face along the way?”

“Mole men, Graboids, and ginormous maggots.”

Prior to that particular question Mark hadn't really considered the imminent dangers of mole men, Graboids and ginormous maggots.

“Ladies and gentlemen... I want - I mean have - to go now. I hope you enjoyed standing here and listening to me talk. I will see you in fifty or so years when digging has been completed.”

Mark strode offstage again, wondering when they were to begin.

END OF PART ONE

The hole had a diameter of three hundred meters, was nine hundred forty - two meters around, and one hundred fifty meters to the middle. Fifty years ago, it had started as just one meter in diameter, three feet around, and one and a half feet to the middle. Now, to the left of it, twenty thousand workers stood before a podium, hats off and waiting. A moment later, a wizened old man with graying hair and a blue tie emerged from behind the curtain.

“Hello, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for being here today. Uh, my name is Mark, and I’m pleasantly surprised we are all standing here today.” *Cough, cough.*

“Half a century ago, we began digging here, and today we know it was the start of humanity's greatest accomplishment. Well, apart from war and cat leashes.”

The crowd nodded in agreement. *Cat leashes! Wowee!*

The old man began again.

“We overcame many imminent dangers, such as billions of dollars in lawsuits, the gas pipes, and the snow filling up the hole every year. Oh, and that small incident with the mole men, Graboids and ginormous maggots.” *Cough.*

The old man, Mark, took a swig of water from a nearby glass and spat it into a little gold bucket.

“But, as we speak, our lawyers are in China settling a dispute over a massive hole in the Chengdu plain. We are finished... we broke through the crust, the mantle, and the core. Our digging machines dig not melt and neither did we.” *Cough cough, cough cough cough.* A deafening silence didn’t fill the air.

“We beat Mother Earth...”

Later that night, maybe around two O'clock in the morning, a dark shape moved through the night air in the Chengdu plains, China. It was a bottle. The bottle was attached to a man. The man staggered around, indeed quite drunk. Next to the man was a hole. Big, dark, endless... Yes, a very big hole. He peered into it. He teetered back and forth on the edge. Then he fell in.

END