

## Midnight Storm

Our love is like a midnight storm,  
Each lightning bolt echoes as loud as our scream.  
Creating a raging sea like our tears,  
Raindrops shattering as they hit the ground like we did.

## Broken Love

bLindly attacked, forever terrified  
my miscalculation twisting me  
my epilOgue demanding negative memories  
torturing me  
belieVe me  
i blissfully, intentionally, honestly, selfishly,  
cluElessy  
LOVED you

## Icy Eyes

Icy eyes penetrate my distant thoughts.

Suddenly, I fear of what she's thinking.

I realize now that I shouldn't've fought

See the icy eye that are not blinking

I try to run but my feet are glued

She approaches with icy eyes of doom

In my heart I know I must be removed

But I stand my ground and yell with fumes

And then she turns away without a fight

How do you scare me? Let me count the ways

You're invading my mind through dark and light

Thinking of your icy eyes fills my days

I whisper you my bad words from my heart

Remember my threat while we're apart

**Tyler Dickson, Grade 9, @Kool Sun Peaks Academy**

**My Nightmare of a Day**

I was in the plane. I did not want to be there but my father told me that my grandma wanted me to go see her. She was excited about seeing me. She was so excited that she bought me a plane ticket from Calgary to Vancouver. It was a ticket to fly on an A320. This A320 was an A320neo and could hold 180 people if all seats were economy class, and this plane was all economy class. I was in seat 30 F, the farthest back right window seat. It was this seat that saved me.

We were experiencing a little bit of turbulence when the plane started to buckle and creak; this was not a very good sign. I and many others started to panic and ask what was going on. The stewardess started to say that nothing was wrong and everything was *ok* but at that moment, there was a loud boom that shook the entire cabin of the plane. There was also a rattling noise and the plane started to shake. People started screaming. I was trying to stay calm because when you're calm you can get out of a life-threatening situation much faster. For example, you can unbuckle your seat belt and get out of a plane on fire much faster with steady hands.

The plane was starting to veer violently to the left. People began to start screaming and shouting. The shuddering stopped in the left engine as the pilots shut it down and the plane started to veer even more to the left, so the pilots corrected. We were now flying in a straight line. It was clear however that we were losing altitude, most people were panicking.

I was worrying about what would happen. I wanted to know if we were to crash. The seat belt light went on and the pilot made an announcement that we were having engine troubles, and that it was nothing to worry about. The plane was starting to descend rapidly with increasing speed. Everyone was screaming and shouting about how they would die and they wanted their loved ones to know that they loved them. The plane was moving so fast now that there were deep shudders coming from the wings

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**My Nightmare of a Day**

of the aircraft. Everyone was screaming and then there was a loud tearing and ripping sound that even a deaf person could have heard. The plane was falling apart, the overhead baggage carriers were opening and the compartment above me opened and dropped luggage on my head. Everything went black.

I woke up on a strange beach with palm trees littering the shoreline. There were small creatures that looked like little pigs but they had beaks. I thought that this was odd so I decided to approach one with caution. It just walked up to me and looked at me like I was not a threat. The creature started to rub its chin and then it cuddled up to me. As I was thinking about how cute it was, there was a chirp that came from the bushes on the edge of treeline. A waist high dinosaur that looked like a velociraptor came running out and pounced on me. I was trying to fight it off when it backed away and shot a green liquid out of its mouth at me. This liquid made my vision blurry and my head started to get fuzzy. I was going to faint but then I heard an ear-piercing screech. That one was followed by three more and then there was silence. I heard a voice but I could not make out what it was or what was saying it but I did manage to decipher “this will help”. I then started to get less and less dizziness until my vision returned to me.

There was a person that was standing right in front of me. Looking down at me and grabbing my hand and helping me up. “Who are you?” I asked. It responded with, “I am Patrisha, princess of pen palace. Hop on my horse and I will take you to the kingdom. I thought “eh, why da heck not” and hopped on her horse. The journey was long and boring. We arrived at the Kingdom and I thought, “wow this is really underwhelming.” Everyone was living in tents or cardboard boxes. She said that there were raiding parties coming in and stealing everything. We waited for the raiding, followed the raiding party to its base and went back to the kingdom.

I turned to the people to give a speech but Princess Patrisha interrupted me by bringing out the royal

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### **My Nightmare of a Day**

guard - which all looked exactly like the picture to the right. They were all carrying rifles and shotguns.

The princess gave me a bulletproof vest, an assault rifle and some magazines for the rifle. She also gave me a helmet and a balaclava. I put all the gear on and looked like the picture to the left. We raided the base and I was *taking point* most of the time because of my ability to move faster than the royal guard. We were moving through the building, eliminating hostiles as we moved. The civilians were following us taking back all that was taken from them. As we were finishing up clearing out the building I realized how much I had grown to like the princess. I was about to confess my feelings for her when there was a loud explosion and I was thrown across the room. The room was going dark and I could see many of the royal guard crowding around me.

I woke up in a tree. I looked around and realized that I was in a piece of wreckage from the plane suspended in a tree. I saw first responders below me and called out to them. They saw me and started to call in some help. It was in this moment that I realized my entire adventure had just been a dream.

# Am I in The Wrong?

Hannah Durr Grade 9 Westsyde Secondary

Tears and sniffles fill the air along with the scent of salt

Eyes look up at the heavens demanding an answer for the pain

They look up from the drawing book perched in front of them to notice me looking

Pitiful creature what have they done to you?

Eyes as red as the anger within, frown as blue as the waves you drown in

Matted hair and shaky breaths trying to translate the pain within

Am I in the wrong?

Am I in the wrong to think this is my fault?

Abandoning and hating the human that causes me pain?

Two sides both grasping for my side, I made the mistake of choosing too soon

Leaving thine to suffer the cruelty of youth girls and youth boys

A single tear is shed, to witness such despair is abuse in itself

Am I in the wrong to think i'll ever be forgiven?

Am I in the wrong to think a sadistic excuse for a human being could be spared from the fate of a thousand lashes? Bring it on I say, cause its better than seing such pain.

Pulled from my thoughts, its too late. They've left. Destined to think they are nothing but a hound to be kicked into submission. A wilted rose that could've been watered but I chose pride instead.

Its my fault.

Am I in the wrong?

# We walk the halls

Hannah Durr Grade 9 Westsyde Secondary

I walk the halls where my insecurities lay

Locker by locker, and the people that betray

I walk the halls where my brain doesn't work  
Adults lie about flaws labeled as just "quirks"

A place built with integrity but ended in a different way  
Kids running around like animals all astray

A place where I'm not motivated to do work, but just sit  
And think about the world and how it's too tight a fit

This place has requirements I simply can't fill  
Not out of disability but out of free will

Too much work, and not enough coffee  
My cries for help echoing softly

I think about how life could have been  
If had been better, braver, nicer to him

I walk the halls where I see so much of him

In everything: pictures, teachers, and even in my skin  
He's family I know that but I simply must cut my ties

Slowly piece by piece part of me dies. He's my brother and my heart won't let me  
forget that it kills me this was all swept under the mat

This place filled with mocking tones and offensive jokes, We seem fine but do they  
know that in their eyes tears poke out to greet the setting sun?

How could they not? We walk the halls everyday, losing our sanity in everyday

We walk the halls with a demon following, silent, invisible and terribly daunting

# We walk the halls

Hannah Durr Grade 9 Westsyde Secondary

We provoke teachers to get a laugh, because thats the only thing that keeps us going

Can't you understand that?

But through our mischief, and difficulty listening, we each have a story which is worth a  
thousand words

Each head turns at the sound of a cry, each head lifts with the promise of tomorrow  
Each mouth smiles at nothing, yet each frown at thier own misery

We are all in one and one in all  
Because at the end of every day we walk together

We walk the Halls



The Adventures of Logan Allen  
Chapter 1: The Dream

My armband vibrates, telling me it's time to wake up. I blink my eyes open and sit up. I look at the armband and click the alarm off. I get out of bed and walk towards the mirror, careful not to wake up Kim on the top bunk, or any of the other girls in the room. I brush my electric purple hair and put it in a ponytail. I always make sure to get up before everyone else so I don't have to rush. I look at my thin pale face, my green eyes staring back at me. I change into my silver jumpsuit uniform.

I walk down the hallway of the ship and look out the windows at all the stars and planets. They're so beautiful, so bright and pure. I walk into the vast meal room like every other day to get my breakfast. I take a tray, get some oatmeal and sit down at my regular table waiting for my friends to arrive. I scan around the meal room; I see people have been here for awhile and can't help but wonder how early they got up. I watch the sea of silver bodies pouring through the doorway. After a while I finally see Andrew, Kimberly, and James coming to my table and sit down next to me.

"Hi, Logan!" Kimberly says with a grin on her face. Kim is always smiling. Sometimes I feel like her happiness rubs off on me because every time I see her, I immediately feel joyful.

"Hey Kim, I trust you slept well?" I say smiling back at her.

"Yes, I did! I went to sleep, and this morning I didn't even feel tired, just refreshed."

"Morning Logan," Andrew says, yawning.

"Did you stay up past curfew last night?" James sighs.

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“Well, what do you expect? Curfew is at nine! Do you really think I can actually fall asleep that fast?” Drew complains.

“How late did you stay up?” I ask rolling my eyes.

“I don’t keep track of that sort of stuff,” he says while combing his fingers through his navy blue hair. I know Drew, he documents everything. He knows exactly what time he went to bed last night. And I think Kim and James know that too because they both raise an eyebrow. I cross my arms and give him a disapproving look.

“It was only twelve!” he says throwing his arms up in frustration. I burst out laughing knowing I just confronted a 15-year-old on how late he went to bed. I look at James, staring at his oatmeal, not eating, just sort of pushing it around. I know that he’s thinking about Jett, his best friend. Each month, one out of a thousand numbers gets called. My number is 996, Kim’s is 997, James’ is 998 and Drew’s is 999. Yesterday, while we had our monthly assembly, Jett’s number was called. I’ll never forget how pale his face became. I’m pretty sure he would have collapsed if everyone wasn’t watching him. Even though I don’t know Jett very well, I knew he would never make a fool of himself in front of everyone. When someone’s number is called, no one knows where they go, but at least we know why. They go through a procedure to try and get superhuman powers. No one knows what the procedures consist of. (All we know is that it started this year.) Fifteen years ago, the government was looking for about a thousand newborn babies so they could start these procedures. At first, families could choose if they wanted to

The Adventures of Logan Allen  
Chapter 1: The Dream

keep their babies. But when the government didn't have enough children, they forced the smaller colonies to give up their children. Rich families could decide if they wanted to stay in touch with their child or not. Some kids brag that their parents still talk to them. I don't want to be here. I want to be down on earth living a normal life, not scared of having a procedure. I guess the magical age to start the procedures is fifteen because the procedures began in January and it's now September. We've been told for as long as I can remember that one year the procedures would start, and would happen every month after until the government met their goal, until they make someone have inhuman powers. Why anyone would want that, I'll never know. I continue to stare at James and his ruby red hair until his eye catches mine, and then I quickly shift my eyes down.

“Hey Logan, I'm going to the gym. Do you want to come?” asks Kim, trying to break the awkward silence.

“Sure,” I say reluctantly. “I wish they could come,” I say gesturing to James and Andrew.

“Me too, but they have their own gym,” she reminds me. Kim and I quickly finish our oatmeal and leave.



The Adventures of Logan Allen  
Chapter 1: The Dream

My feet ache from running on the treadmill. I power it down, grab my towel, and take a seat on the bench. Kim sits down next to me, her face shining with sweat. She smiles at me with her perfectly straight teeth. I'm jealous of her beauty, her choppy teal hair, and grey eyes.

"I'm going to go back to our room. Are you coming?" I ask.

"I'll be there in a bit. You go ahead." She stands.

I collapse onto my bed, sinking into it. I haven't been up that long, but I'm already exhausted. I close my eyes.

Running. Breathing. Footsteps. Darkness. My eyes open. I'm sitting in a dimly lit room. There's nothing, just a chair. I walk towards one of the four walls and reach out to touch it, but my hand goes right through. As though there's nothing there, I step through the wall and my eyes dart open. I'm back in my bed with the palms of my hands sweating. I've heard about dreams. We all have. But very few of us have ever had one.

Soul

I Crave the soft touch of fur under hand,  
The misty blow of a muzzles breath,  
The soft nickering that comes to greet you in the morn  
The clattering of hooves approaching  
And that soft scent that is carried in their being.  
Finally I miss that link, the part of my head missing.  
I miss my soul.  
And yet no one cares  
I am but half of a person now,  
My other half running wild and loose in a field somewhere  
I can't even think about you  
I want you  
Your grey and white,  
And your flashing hooves

**And no one cares**

The pain is so great I have had to ignore you,  
But now when I write my pain returns and I realise I want you,  
But I cannot have you,  
I love you,  
But I cannot love you.

It hurts  
It's excruciating

The world is a contradictory place, and now it has denied me my soul  
I will have you one day  
Without a doubt  
But right now,  
My pain is great,  
Come to me my soul  
And please come to me soon.

**Uncle**

Time they say,  
Time is what makes wounds heal,  
And yet, time did not stop for you.  
You died, and time did not stop, it didn't even hesitate.  
You left the world, never to be seen or heard from again, never to speak or see the living.  
You are just gone.  
No one feels the pain that your mother does,  
She loved you.  
And now, to no fault of your own you left her,  
Your brain and heart were blocked, and now you are gone.

Your mother is losing her mind, she's drifting

And no matter how hard you try, you can do nothing,  
You can only sit there and watch as she sinks, and sinks, and sinks.

I met you but a few times, but I knew I liked you, uncle.  
You were kind, compassionate, and cheerful.

Is that saying true? Only the good die young?  
So you must have been the nicest person on planet Earth.  
You have left now, and when your family should be grieving, they are not.  
They are so pent up with anger  
The politics come out.  
Fingers being pointed  
People being targeted

And yet they miss you, they are angry that you left

They don't know how to deal.  
So uncle, as a last and final goodbye  
Hello  
And sorry

"I Love you."

## Proud of Us

Silently sleeping around her egg, a soon to be mother carefully guards her proud gift from the Gods.

Suddenly, the egg starts to wobble and crack. Startled, Ash jumps, almost hitting her head on the roof of the cave. "Eniub!" Ash screams. "Is this even normal?!"

Eniub swiftly pounds into the cave. "Is what normal?" he asks, ears flicking.

"This -" Ash explained pointing to the cracked egg with her enormous tail.

Eniub cocked his head. The soon to be father starts to smile.

"What? What is so amusing about it?" Ash asks. "I just randomly found this egg, I didn't know what to do with it, and now it's broken!"

"Don't panic," Enuib soothes. "You're going to be a mother! And I, of course, am going to be the best dad! We're going to have a hatchling!"

Ash's eyes light up.

Suddenly, the egg started to move again, but this time, the egg cracked open. Enormous golden eyes looked lovingly at her.

The parents didn't need to say anything. He was perfect. An odd shade of blue and orange, but perfect.

"How about Viper?" Enuib asked.

Newly named Viper nodded vigorously, then climbed out of the egg.

Ash's smile immediately turned into a horrified expression. "He's missing a wing!" she screeched. "He'll never fly!"

"But we love him the way he is though, right?" Enuib retorted. "It is just a birth defect. It's alright if he doesn't fly. He's already perfect."

Ash scampered to the back of the cave. "I can't love that hideous monster! Let me know once you get rid of that *thing*." she scowled, dashed out the cave, and flew away.

Viper faced his only parent. "Am I a bad dragon?" he managed to ask.

Enuib turned his head away. "No. It's just your mother saw your one wing and..." his voice trailed off softly. "Never mind." He walked out of the cave.

Viper sat there alone, staring into nothingness, then the floor. "You don't support me either?" he squeaked furiously. "Fine!" Viper marched out of the cave to a cliff, flapped his only wing and jumped. Then he plummeted countless meters to the ground.

A soft paw woke Viper up.

"Hey, you good? Do you need some water?"

Viper sat up, a bit dazed. "W-where am I?" he stammered.

"I saw you falling from somewhere in the sky and came to rescue you." said a soft voice.

"No, I did!" another explained.

"Shut up! I saw the dragon guy first!" screamed the last voice.

Viper turned his head around slowly. He screamed so violently that the songbirds flew from the trees.

A lion paw whipped to Viper's mouth. "Shut up!"

Viper grabbed the paw and pulled it away from himself. "I'm sorry. You, uh, you guys scared me..."

"Sssorry," a snake head said. "That's what everyone saysss."



Viper was confused. "Who are you? What are you?"

This time a goat head talked. "We're a Chimera, with a lion as the main head, but his brain is so darn small."

"HEY!"

"A snake head for the tail, and I just happen to be stuck in the middle. I'm Azzo. The snake is Emowar and the lion is Fara."

"I'm Viper."

"Not to be rude, young Viper, but where isss your other wing?" Emowar asked.

"WOULD YOU SHUT UP WITH YOUR S'S?!" Fara roared.

Emowar ignored Fara and stared at Viper.

"Oh, it's a birth defect. I just tried to fly but I fell." Viper muttered self-consciously. "I'm sorry, but I must leave; I have somewhere to be."

"Mind if we come along?" Azzo asked. "We have nothing better to do. I mean, I do, but these two walnut heads don't."

"Please shut up," Fara muttered.

"I guess so," Viper replied, ignoring the small argument.

Several years passed, with dozens of times in which Viper was saved. In some cases viper saved his friends..

Eventually, Viper and his friends angered a phoenix, which set the whole Enchanted Forest on fire.

"Chimera! Look out!" Viper shrieked.

It was already too late. The phoenix had set the Chimera ablaze, transforming it into a pile of ash.

Viper stared at his former friends. The only ones who understood him. The only ones who had helped him after he had been rejected by both his mother and father. He sat there, tears blurring his vision. He placed his nose on the ashes.

"I'll never forget all that you have done for me." he whispered. "Thank you."

Ash?

"Mother!" Viper howled desperately. "I'm sorry! Whatever I did wrong, I'll fix it, I promise!"

His voice only echoed in the wind.

"Viper?" an unfamiliar voice called from behind him.

"Huh?" Viper whipped around. Before him was a pretty, sandy coloured dragon. Four years old, maybe, with glistening emerald eyes.

"I'm Pyro," she murmured. "I'm your sister. I hatched two years after you were born. I've been looking everywhere for you."

"You have?" Viper asked, shocked and bewildered

"Yeah, mother told me about you. However she explained you very negatively..." Pyro explained.

"I guess she is right -" Viper muttered, upset.

"No!" Pyro immediately interrupted. "She's not. She's wrong. You're fine the way you are. You don't need to be that amazing super hero. I just want you to be you."

"Really?" Viper said.

"Yeah," Pyro smiled, putting her wing around Viper. "I can't breathe fire, but I never told anyone. Not even mother."

Viper didn't need to say anything. He had creatures who accepted him and loved him.

"I want to mourn for tonight," Viper lamented. "I miss Chimera..."

"Go ahead," Pyro said simply. "I know you do." She leaned against Viper and closed her eyes. "Mother and father would've been proud of us."

"Proud of us..." Viper repeated softly, then closed his eyes to the endless night sky.

**Caitlyn Neufeld, Grade 9, @Kool**

**The Perfect And The Thief**

Running down the hall she halted to a stop in front of room 215. Opening it was a tall man wearing a blazer who looked over at her with his bright green eyes. "Abigail Miller. You're late." Heading near my seat in the back, she dropped her bag and slumped into an empty seat. "Sorry, Mr. Harold. Got stuck in traffic." Snickers from other students echoed as Abigail sunk even lower in her chair. Mr. Harold cleared his throat as he retreated to the whiteboard, speaking clearly to his students. "As I was saying. You will be partnered up and will write and present an essay about our city. Please include photos and examples." Glancing to the back of the class room he watches Abigail shove in her ear buds. Smiling slightly he said, "The first partners will be Abigail Miller and Tori Jones." Ripping her ear buds out she sat straight up saying "What! No!" In the front a girl with a black leather jacket and black and blue hair stood up saying "No way, Mr. Harold! Jones here doesn't partner up with people like her!" she spat out, pointing in Abigail's direction. Mr. Harold sat on the edge of his desk saying, "My mind is made up." On the board will be the rest of the partners. Then, get together and start your project by thinking about the lay out of it." A grumble of students raced to the board - except Tori and Abigail.

Tori and Abigail couldn't be any more different. Abigail was rarely late and dressed like a normal 15 year old would. Tori was a delinquent who got to go to school for being good in 'Juvie', so, basically, she was on house arrest. After five long minutes, Abigail stood up and walked to Tori. "So... ." Looking up, Tori's brown eyes glared at her, and she spoke bluntly, "I don't like you." Rolling her eyes, Abigail sat down across from her saying "Stating the obvious I see." Sitting up, Tori moved her hair behind her shoulders. "Well, I have to be home by 5:00." I replied, "After this class we head out and start the project." Silence overwhelmed them both when the bell finally went off. They grabbed their things and left.

Caitlyn Neufeld, Grade 9, @Kool

### The Perfect And The Thief

Sprinting down the ally Abigail grabbed hold of the fire escape ladder, hoisting herself up. Tori got on close behind, both girls climbing as fast as they could. Their arms burned as they reached the top of a two story building. Breathing heavily, Tori laid flat on her back, limbs sprawled apart. Chuckling, Abigail pointed out, "You know you're laying on a filthy ground - right?" Without moving, Tori blew hair from her face expressing, "I don't give a care! I'm tired!" They both started laughing, staying where they were for the time being.

Abigail glanced at her watch saying, "It's quarter to five, Tori." Sitting up Tori frowned, looking outwards. "I should get back home." Looking at her 'once enemy' she said, "You're pretty crazy for a Goody Goody." Abigail pressed her lips together before saying, "And you're pretty nice for a 'Delinquent'." Standing up they went to the other side of the building, taking the opposite fire escape from the ally way one.

Walking down the street they stopped at a brick apartment building. "See you at school, Goody." Waving Abigail said, "See you then, Juvie." Chuckling at the nicknames, they split each heading her own way.

The next day at school Tori and Abigail headed to class together. Mr. Harold's did a double take, glancing at the two. "You're on time, Ms. Jones." Glancing over at Abigail, Tori explained, "Just taking a few lessons from this Goody." Lowering her head in laughter, Abigail asked, "Mr. Harolds. Can I move my seat to beside Tori? For the assignment, of course." Trying to contain his smile, he nodded, returning to what he was currently doing at his desk.

As the bell rang the rest of the students rolled in, chatting with their friends - being teenagers. And, for once, so was Abigail and Tori. They just needed a little push to get going.

Heidi Reimer  
Sattali Sec

## After

The after. Of every decision we make there is an after effect; a stop in the moment of time, where your decision and your choice affects the people around you, as well as how the world views you. The foundation the world balances on is shifting, moving into something where taking away someone's life is accepted simply because of a choice someone made that differed from another's. As if some people's choices don't matter, really. Others begin a war.

Shouts pivoted the sound wave, stolen breaths as the engines tore the clouds overhead, creating a path to clarity, as if it mattered who they hit, who died in this battle of the human race. We are all pawns in the chessboard they created. The battle ground changes. But the objective never does. Ash tore my vision, and the surly song the bombs sung echoed through my mind, as the little round bullets through the red sky danced to meet each other in the battle of willpower, won in a moment of triumph, before watching a dead man fall. There is no way to win, without losing something greater. Something that our knowledge doesn't fully encompass. But I crawled along the ground my brothers died on anyway, in hopes that something better was on the horizon. The wired gate to safety blocking my path was a new enemy, another thing at my disposal. With a rifle in my hands, it was easy, and I am a force I am not with my fists. The dying earth underneath me

## After

offered some comfort from the pounding noise above, and so I pressed myself low to it, and there I meet the new obstacle to obtaining my right to life. A fence, a wall, all things we build up for protection against the unknown. And here I was, crossing it. My elbows dug deeper into the ground below, and I eased myself forward, until my impatience took hold and I drove myself forward. Caught, wired in the crossing line, I lay, a man, at the disposal of a war, with futile hopes driving me, and pretenses sustaining me. And I waited.

Years later, as I tell this story to a little girl with all the impatience and stubbornness that mirrored my own long ago, I think back on the war, and all that it stood for. Still now, there was pain everywhere, hatred everywhere. Though some people didn't even know what they were fighting for.

## Cotton Candy

I opened the fridge door, yawning as I pulled out the chocolate milk jug. I grumbled sleepily as my penguins, Ping, and Gwen, hopped off the bottom shelf. I smiled as I recalled how I had come across them...

\* \* \*

"Ok, boys," My mother turned to face us, hands on her hips. "Meet me back at the zoo entrance at three o'clock. Don't cause any trouble, and don't eat too much junk food."

We nodded our heads simultaneously, and raced off- straight for the cotton candy stand. I bought two large bags of the stuff. Leaning down to put the second one into my backpack, I caught sight of a vendor selling stuffed penguins.

"Let's go see the penguins!"

"Where are they?" Owen asked. "Do they even have penguins here?"

I pulled a park map from the cotton candy stand, and squinted at the tiny print.

"It's not too far away." I looked up from the map. "It's behind the penguin vendor."

Sure enough, there was a huge black tarp loosely covering a cage behind the vendor.

There was a sign behind the stand, that stated: *See the penguins on the other side of this enclosure!*

"But that's off-limits, see the sign? You have to walk across the park to get to the front. Can we at least stop at the lions? They're on the way," Owen said.

"What do you mean? We aren't walking the long way- we can just slip behind the tarp."

"I am *not* going into the off limits area." Owen said firmly. "Besides, your mom said to not get into any trouble."



"Don't be a scaredy cat- it's not getting into trouble if we don't get caught." I stealthily slipped behind the penguin vendor, ducking under the tarp. I stuck out my tongue at Owen, knowing he would follow me anywhere.

"I can't believe I'm doing this." Owen muttered.

"There's a park manager coming!" I said, hoping Owen fall for the joke.

"What? Where? You said-"

I laughed hysterically. "Kidding!"

The tarp fluttered shut behind us, and I began fiddling with the lock on the back of the enclosure. "'Do you know how to pick a lock?"

"Of course not!"

"Good thing I do!" I smirked, pulling my lock picking kit out of my backpack.

"You actually figured out how to use your lock-picking kit?" Owen said doubtfully.

"What? I watch youtube videos!" I told him.

"Besides, I thought we were going around the *side* of the cage, not through it!"

"Honestly, stop worrying- this is gonna be an adventure! A story to tell our grandchildren!" I explained.

I gave the lock one final twist, and the door swung open. Kicking my bag through, I took another bite of my cotton candy.

Owen followed me through the door, dropping his cotton candy in alarm.

"There are penguins everywhere!"

"Well, we are in the penguin enclosure."

"But they could be dangerous! Or territorial-"

More penguins emerged from the water, squeaking loudly as they approached us.

I looked down to see a short penguin nibbling on my cotton candy.

"Hey- that's mine!"

I pulled my cotton candy out of his reach, and looked around. The penguins had stopped stalking us, and were eating Owen's dropped cotton candy.

I reached down to zip up my bag, so the penguins wouldn't eat my extra cotton candy as well.

"I feel like we should leave now," I said, and began jogging towards the front exit.

"I told you this was a bad idea.." Owen said nervously. "What will the tourists say?"

I glanced over, and, sure enough, there was a gaggle of people on the outside of the penguin enclosure.

"Change of plans, we're going out the way we came in."

I shifted my bag on my shoulders, grumbling. Who knew a lock picking kit and a bag of cotton candy could be so heavy!

I slammed the door, clicking the lock into place.

"Park inspector!" Owen squeaked, and I turned to look where he was pointing.

Sure enough, there was a tall man in a clad green uniform walking towards us.

I reached out my hand to flag him down.

"What are you doing?" Owen hissed.

"Act natural," I told him. "And let me do the talking. I've got a plan."

"And when was the last time your plan worked?"

I shot him a look as the inspector came towards us.

"Excuse me, sir? When is the penguin feeding happening?"

"Not until two forty-five- and you can't be back here! It's off limits to tourists," the man lectured us.

"Really? We thought it was only off limits for anyone who wasn't involved in the penguin feeding. My mom said to wait by the back of the penguin enclosure, and we would be able to help."

I flashed him a smile, and he smiled back, understanding.

"Tell you what. Meet me at the *front* of the penguin enclosure at two thirty, and I'll let you help."

"Awesome! Thanks!"

"Let's casually walk towards the park exit," I muttered under my breath to Owen.

\* \* \*

As we climbed into the back of my mom's van, I reached in for the cotton candy.

I let out a yell when something bit me. Looking down, I was horrified to see two miniature penguins- and no cotton candy!

"What's going on back there?" my mom paused to glance in her rearview mirror.

"Umm..."

Owen leaned over, and gasped.

"What's in the bag?" My mother asked suspiciously.

"Oh, nothing," I replied quickly. "I just didn't realize I had eaten all my cotton candy."

"Actually-" Owen gave me a pointed look, but I interrupted him, making a shushing motion.

"Can we go back to the zoo and get some more?" I asked.

My mother sighed. "Tomorrow," she told us.

"Perfect!" I told her. "Thanks Mom!"

\* \* \*

I opened the fridge door, yawning as I pulled out the chocolate milk jug. I grumbled sleepily as my penguins, Ping, and Gwen, hopped off the bottom shelf. I wished I could keep them...

The Insidious Noise

The sound of dirt and rocks under tires and the jerky bouncing of the worn Chevy jostle me from my dreamless sleep. When I grumble, classic rock starts to blare from the front seat. Yawning, I hear my voice crackling from sleeping with my mouth open. "Hey, Matt? Are we there yet?"

Matt laughs, "Hey, Valerie. Almost there. Just a few minutes to go. It's funny, Cas and I were supposed to be on a date tonight, but instead I'm driving you two into the woods."

"Sorry," I say, in my half-asleep state. Then I remember why we're driving to the middle of nowhere anyway. "Wait a minute. Don't you put this on me. You're the one who dared Cas and me to do this in the first place."

"Yeah, I did. I'm still betting on you guys calling me before time's up to get you. But I did put enough gear in your backpacks for you to camp out for three days. I'll come pick you guys up at the campsite I set up for you. You're by the ocean, and there's a rowboat for fishing. I put a satellite phone in Cas' bag if you guys need me."

"We won't," I say confidently. "Just because we're not hunters like you and Colin doesn't mean we can't handle ourselves."

Matt laughs dryly. "I'm sure you can, but one time a bee hit the windshield, and Cas insisted on pulling over and burying it."

Colin, Matt's brother, laughs from the front seat. "It's true. I was there. Matt had to empty out his coffee cup on the grass to bury the bee in."

The car squeals to a stop. Cas says, "Huh?" in a tone slurred by sleep.

"Morning, sunshine. We're here."

"Hello, Matt."

"So, this is as far as my car can take us, but we still gotta get you to the campsite. I would drive you there, but my car's too good for driving through a forest."

Colin speaks up, "I have an idea. Let's race."

Colin and Cas sprint into the woods, leaving Matt and I in their dust. When we arrive, Colin teases, "What took you so long?"

"Don't you try that," Matt retorts, breathing heavily. "You're in your natural habitat. You are a literal moose. And Cas runs track."

"Whatever, we should go now," Colin replies.

"Good luck, honeybee," Matt says to Cas.

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St. Ann's Academy

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The Insidious Noise

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"Goodbye, Matt." Colin and Matt take off. Cas and I get to work setting up camp and looking through our bags. Mine has a rope, a fishing pole, a water bottle, water purifier, and an insane amount of beef jerky. It's chili lime.

I turn to Cas. "I'm going fishing. Want to come?"

"No, fishing bothers me. The fish are having a normal day, then they are taken from their homes to die."

"Alright, then. I'm going now."

"Are you sure, Valerie? It looks like a storm is coming."

"I'll be okay."

As soon as I get on the boat, the weather starts to turn. Still, I paddle out and put my fishing pole in the water. I'm not really sure how to fish, but I wasn't going to ask Colin and Matt that. I give up and head farther out. Choppy waves form. I keep going. It starts to rain. A drizzle to a downpour. The rowboat hits a wave wrong and flips. I hit my head on a rock and see a bright flash of pain, then nothing.

I feel a throbbing ache in my head and sit up slowly. I look around at my surroundings, which are unfamiliar. The rowboat is in pieces. My fishing pole is snapped

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It's been three days since the fishing incident. During the day, there is no noise, but I still fear the nights and try constantly to build a shelter from the rowboat to protect myself. I haven't gotten an hour of sleep; whatever is rustling won't let me. The sleeplessness has blurred my thoughts. Once, I thought I heard footsteps, voices. I try once more to sleep as night falls. Again, the bushes. I will myself to ignore it, but I look over. There, a silhouette against the night sky. The insidious noise. It's here.



Finding Home

## A Personal Essay By Jana Steyn

Major decisions are often difficult to explain to young children. Children often do not have the same understanding and maturity when it comes to comprehending the world around them. However, this doesn't mean they won't remember them or the impact they had on their lives.

It was an ordinary Sunday afternoon. Birds sang and the sun shone through the dusty window, landing on the bare cement floor. An old television set stood in the corner of the room, humming ominously. A bowl of uneaten popcorn sat between us. Our bare legs were tucked under our heavily clothed bodies. The murmurs of television characters on the pixelated screen provided a helpful distraction from our circumstances. We were children; we didn't understand the gravity of what was about to happen.

"Ten more minutes, then we leave," our mother stated firmly from the next room. My brother looked away, then turned his attention back to the crackling television set. A blue cap sat upon his head, covering his dark blonde hair. Next to him sat a blue and red backpack, containing his most important belongings. We didn't speak. There was no need to.

Everything seems longer when you're six years old. The fifteen-minute drive to the airport seemed like an eternity. Little did we know that that would be the last time we ever saw our homeland as our home. If we did, I am sure we would have taken another minute to memorize the smell of the bright flowers in bloom. We would have memorized

the feeling of the sun kissing our browned skin. We would have remembered the feeling of love at family gatherings and knowing we weren't alone there. We would have memorized the smiling faces of those who were less fortunate than we were.

At the airport, I saw my grandmother cry. It was confusing. Adults weren't supposed to cry. To cry was to show weakness. Adults were not weak. My mother sensed my confusion and gently placed her hand on my shoulder. I did not show remorse. I was simply going to stay in Canada for a few months while my father worked. There was no reason for her to be upset.

Flying was a blur. Long flights mixed with norovirus and claustrophobia. Sleeplessness and dehydration made for a negative immigration experience. We were issued visas with our names clearly printed on them with black ink. We stood in long lines. I watched as my brother stumbled through security and we entered the province we would come to call home.

Four people, three backpacks, two suitcases, and a purse. The items crossed the ocean, slightly disrupting the imaginary equilibrium set by our birth. Incredibly, we reached our new home the following day. A small furnished townhouse near our school. A school we would not begin to attend until several months later. Life went on. We took it one year at a time. We met more people. More people like us. People who had sacrificed their jobs, homes, and relationships with their family. But as painful as they sound, these sacrifices would provide them with something beautiful. A brighter future with their families.

## She Called Me Her Beautiful Flower

A flower is a living being

Along with animals

And people

A flower has a purpose

Along with animals

And people

A flower grows and flourishes

Along with animals

And people

A flower

Is but a flower

Next to a pack of grazing deer

Or a child playing in the grass

A flower is just a small unimportant portion of real life

Real, active, exciting life

Like a side character that exists only to add to the scene

It's there

It's alive

Though it serves little purpose

Only to look pretty and satisfy others

It's acknowledged

But only occasionally

There are so many others like it

After all

No one asks a flower how it's doing

No one can tell how a flower feels

No one can see a flower's expression or read their emotions

Because that would be crazy

## Trust

I love you

I really do

But I barely know you

Well I know you

And I know a lot about you

At least from what you've told me

But I have trust issues

When people think of a person with trust issues

They often picture someone who has been lied to enough

To the point where they no longer believe what people tell them

But in my case

It's more I know how easy it is to lie

And I just always expect the worse case scenario

Because that's just the kind of person I am

I guess

There are many different forms of trust issues

But for me

It's as if every time someone tells me something  
They're also telling me the opposite  
And what they said and the opposite of what they said  
Are formed into puzzle pieces  
And they mix together  
And I stare blankly at all these puzzle pieces I've collected from what people tell me  
I just stare  
At a puzzle I'm too lazy  
Or afraid  
To try to put together  
  
For example  
Mother told me she liked my drawing  
Instantly I start thinking  
*What if she's lying*  
*You know how easy it is to lie*  
*She probably doesn't like it*  
*She probably only said that so you wouldn't feel bad*  
*But then again she said she liked it*  
*Shouldn't you believe her*  
*That's what she said*

*Why do you always doubt people?*

So then I get the idea that mom didn't like my drawing

And she just lied to me

I can't figure out what's true

And I don't really want to

So I just live with it

Same goes for when someone says they aren't hungry

Or that they prefer something over another thing

Or when you say you love me

The more I know about someone it seems the less I know who they really are

You specifically

**But I always had a feeling you were the type to lie**

**Now I finally know the truth**