

Breaking Free

If I could go back in time, trust me I would. Six years ago I had a normal, happy, *human* life. Of course, that fairytale came crashing down as soon as the mine explosion happened. My whole town was obliterated, there were no survivors. I was an exception. The US military found my body lying in the rubble, they saved me and brought me to a top-secret facility. But I am a precarious threat, and the government has made sure that no one outside the lab knows about me. They think I'm *wired* different, as if the atomic blast altered the chromosomes in my cells. If I come within 10 feet of any living organism it decays until nothing is left. The living creature succumbs to a radioactive disease, which causes premature death over the course of minutes. For years the scientists have tried to search for a cure, but personally, I think that there isn't one.

During most of my day, I am tested by robots in the hope of finding a miracle. The experiments that I go through are excruciating, and sometimes I wonder if this is all worth it. Occasionally I talk to a scientist about my condition, but that's the closest I can get to human contact. No one is allowed in or out, which makes a person feel extremely isolated.

But all of that changed because Dr. Theo Mane had brought a spark to my infinite darkness. He said that he could help me come back to the real world, and I truly believed in him. He became very interested in my peculiar ability, we talked for hours each day and occasionally he even visited my window. Theo wasn't like the previous scientists, he cared about me, he saw me as a person rather than what the explosion turned me into. He told me about himself and the outside world, he risked his job doing everything he could for me. It took a total of two years for

Theo to find a cure, during that time I started to fall in love with him. The only thing that separated us was the special glass that kept me contained. He was my knight in shining armor, and I was the damsel in distress that he needed to rescue from herself. After working endless days and nights, Theo finally found a cure. There was a chance for our relationship, our future, and my freedom. But I was a fool to believe in false hope. I was given a serum that would reshape my DNA and keep me stable forever. My ability was tested with animals, I came in contact with many different species and there was no effect whatsoever. Later that night Theo couldn't wait to see me, he snuck into my room and we met for the first time, face to face. Never in my life had I been happier, the pieces were falling back into place. I got the bad news a day later. Every single animal would die, the "cure" had only slowed the speed of death, it had not prevented it. Everyone I had touched or seen in the last few days would perish because of my poisoning. That included the person I loved most...Theo. He told me that we could figure this out, but it was too late. I remember watching him, a week later, collapse right in front of my window. In my nightmares, I can still see the lifeless look in his eyes and the way his body fell limp.

When Theo died I lost all hope, I couldn't imagine a world without him. It broke me, he was the only person who stood by my side, and I killed him. I was fed up with my life and more than anything I wanted to be free. I plotted my escape and I didn't take my medication to make myself as dangerous as possible.

Before dinner, I hid behind my door and I waited anxiously for my food to be dropped off. Right as a hand slipped through the opening slot of my door, I reached out and grabbed it without hesitation. His body dropped to the floor and I could already see the full extent of my powers.

“You don’t have to do this Lilian, you still have a chance to be a better person,” he spoke softly.

“I just have to look out for myself, I don’t care how many people have to die for me to live,” I said truthfully

The boy never replied, instead he looked at me with utter disgust. I stared at him until his breath faltered and his head rolled to the side, and even after that I felt nothing. As I walked with my head down everyone around me started to develop tiny burns on their skin. I heard screaming and I enjoyed listening to their suffering. These people had locked me up for years under terrible conditions. They were hoping that the cure wouldn’t work so that I had to stay here forever and they could experiment on me -like their personal lab rat. I almost walked out of the door and then I thought of all the pain that I had experienced here. In a way I deserved justice, this facility was evil and corrupt. I couldn’t turn my back on something like this, instead I walked through every single hallway and watched the government workers experience agony. A few brave souls tried to stop me but as soon as they came in contact with me they contracted the disease. When no one was left alive, I strode out of the facility and took my first breath of fresh air. I glanced at my reflection in a window and I saw what I truly was, a monster. Sure I had broken out but at what cost? I only knew one thing, I would never let anyone confine me again. Not now, or ever.

The Ice Shelf

The monstrous iceberg crackled away from the wall of ice. Piece by piece it divided itself in two, until it fell to its everlasting home, the cold, salty Atlantic Ocean. My team and I had studied a glacier close to the frozen ice wall for months, wincing every time a chunk fell, as if it was a part of us. We had been assigned by the Canadian government to find out exactly how global warming was impacting the once frosty Atlantic. But our budget was running out.

"Mikkaila, come take a look at this!" Brendan shouted at me from a few meters away.

"Coming." I put down my ice samples and walked over.

"Look, it seems that this glacier goes right overtop of an extremely large ravine!" He pointed at the screen showing the results of a sonar test.

"This is great work Brendan. Keep it up we only have an hour more of daylight." I patted him on the back before I went back to my ice samples.

Three hours later, during dinner, I had to tell my team some bad news. I cleared my throat and the chatter quieted. "I am afraid to announce that our budget is almost gone. A helicopter will be airlifting us out tomorrow at six o'clock sharp." My team mumbled in protest. "But Mikkaila, our work isn't done!" Adam protested.

"No ifs, ands, or buts. Chief said tomorrow, six o'clock. Goodnight everyone." I went to bed.

The Ice Shelf

That night I awoke to a rumbling and ran out of my room to my team. "Mikkaila!" Brendan roared. "We're experiencing a 8.4 level earthquake!" There was a loud cracking noise like bones snapping as the ice beneath our lab split.

"Everybody get out!" I yelled as loud as I could, but it was too late: the ice gave way and we plummeted down the ravine.

The only sound was a high pitched ring. I opened my eyes to see our red danger lights flashing and my team shaking me. "Wake up! Wake up, Mikkaila!" Sherry was crouched over me. I stood up and counted heads.

"Five! There's only five of you! Where's Brendan!" We frantically searched and found his lifeless body lying on the floor with a piece of glass wedged in his chest.

"No!" Jasmine rushed to him. She checked for a pulse and hung her head low; he was dead. We all got up and walked to the door.

"I'll open it." Alex said. Before I could respond he turned the red latch and swung open the door. The cold air rushed in as the heat escaped. We walked out to see that our mangled lab was perched on one of the biggest ice shelves my team and I had ever seen. I noticed Adam was limping.

"Guys, it's going to be fine. The helicopter is coming at six o'clock. We just have to stay warm until then," Cole reassured us. We went into the lab and grabbed all of the blankets and coats we had.

The Ice Shelf

"I found a working walkie talkie," Sherry said as she tossed it at me. I missed the catch and it rebounded towards the edge. Sherry jumped towards it, reaching out, but she slipped and fell off the ledge, hanging only by her fingertips.

"Sherry!" Cole shouted as he ran towards her. He grabbed her forearm and pulled. "It's going to be okay, Sherry. You're okay."

"My hands are slipping!" Sherry yelled. I felt a tremor under my feet as an aftershock came. Snow cascaded off the edge. I ran over to help Cole lift Sherry when her grasp broke free. I looked into her eyes and saw the fear and pain as she fell. The world seemed to stop with the thud that echoed when her body hit the ground. We were all in tears as we shuffled away from the edge. We huddled in silence until we heard the all too familiar crackling of ice. My eyes went wide, and I yelled, "Get away from the edge!" We all ran, but Adam's limp slowed him down. The ice cracked off a foot away from where he was standing and the drop claimed another life. Our lab went up in flames, destroying all of our research from the past year. We all stood in agony, but then we heard the helicopter above. We flailed our arms and it saw us. As the helicopter approached, we realized it was going to be a tight fit into the crack. As the helicopter descended, it hit

The Ice Shelf

the side, slicing into the ice. The back propeller ripped off and fell bursting into flames. The rest of the helicopter fell and we all saw the panic in the pilots eyes as the body of the helicopter bounced off the sides of the ice. The helicopter fell and caught fire. We stood in shock of what just happened.

“We’re going to die here aren’t we?” Cole asked.

“I honestly don’t know anymore,” I replied. I crept over to the edge and looked down. The helicopter was demolished and burning just below the ledge we were perched on. I saw a drop of water fall and then noticed the heat.

“Guys! The fire is melting the ice we’re on!” Everyone looked up, eyes wide with fear. “How can we put it out?” Jasmine asked.

“I don’t think we can” I answered. We crouched at the base of the ice shelf as we awaited our fate. Drop by drop our lives melted away. The edge crept closer and a large chunk fell. It shattered like glass after the echos subsided, we waited in silence. I felt a light shake from under me. “Brace yourselves!” I yelled as the ledge crackled away and we fell down towards the fire.

Sidney Bert
SaHali Secondary
March 11, 2019

br. 9

Down The Rabbit Hole

When you hear the name Alice Kingsleigh, all you think of is the psycho schizophrenic freak that lost her mind. But no one knows why. They won't understand. Why? Because, everyone deserves to feel the pain I have. They all need to hear the ticking of the clock before they can ask how I became insane. I can thank my sister, Margaret for leading me down this rabbit hole. Before Maggie I had problems, but a few pills and I was stable. She made me irreparable, no medication could help this insanity. I hear whispers and murmurs when I'm all alone, I see the shadow of the Mad Hatter following me.

The people I grew up with did everything in their power to...*enhance* my insanity. *Especially* my sister, my own flesh and blood. She took my pills. Why, you might ask? I guess she had some reasoning, but nothing necessarily significant enough to drive me to freaking insanity.

Some days when life was feeling a little, dull, I would skip out on taking my pills and do something crazy. Not just crazy, certifiably mental. I would follow the white rabbit's every step. Other days, I needed them. I liked having a choice. But, it was *my* choice to take them, to stop the ticking and the shadows when it got too overwhelming. Other times, I liked it. Weird. No one ever thought that I *wanted* to hear the tick tock of his clock. But I did.

One day after my father died, I went to take my pills. I had been crazed for awhile now and needed stabilization. As a thirteen year old, I was having trouble coping with my father's loss. I didn't want to see the white rabbit flaunt his pocket watch, but I had to. They were gone. Maggie had dumped them

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out. I was deranged, and hallucinogenic. Then, I came to a realization. I'm only seeing these things because I wanted to. I accepted it. I started listening to the whispers. The rabbit would watch me, all the time. It sure is awfully ghastly if the last thing you see before you close your eyes at night is a pearly white rabbit's cotton candy pink eyes, staring right at you as he taps his pocket watch and mutters, "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!" He followed me when I left Wonderland.

Now, seven years later and I still haven't taken a trace of Clozapine since. If you're wondering, it's an antipsychotic drug. It stopped hallucinations, and delusions. But why do they need to stop? The answer, is that they don't. The most recent of these thoughts, is revenge. Maggie deserves to pay for what she did to me. You can call me insane, and I'll agree. I'm halfway down the rabbit hole, and the stripes are changing colours.

I've been after her for a while now and I finally found her. Someplace where she can't run, or hide. Surely now you can think, "my that girl is mad." My father, Charles, thought the same. When I was a young girl, I had nightmares about the white rabbit, his blue waistcoat, and his pocket watch. I would tell my father every detail. When I asked him if he believed I was mad, he always told me, "The best people are always mad." I surely am mad, the maddest one could be.

January 23rd - 7:42 PM

It's time. Today is the day my father died because of my sister, and today is the day my sister will die because of me. Murder of the first degree, I don't plan on getting caught. Of course you'd think, no one *plans* on getting caught. But I won't. She deserves this. Maggie didn't seem to feel guilt when she

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caused the boat to capsize. She didn't seem to feel guilt when she was the only one out of twenty people including my father, to live through it. She ruined me, now it's her turn.

I'm here. I haven't been to Walsall in years, I ran away to London to hide. But now I am back for the kill, and I will disappear once more, forever. I am done tonight. Maggie will not escape from me.

Finally, at 8:23 PM she's here. My sister has a habit of being late, only this time it's to her own annihilation. Now you get to know how I'll kill her. Right on cue she trips on the wire, and struggles to get up. As I run towards her, she sees me with a look of terror in her eyes. We are in the cottage, my sister on the chair. It's my time to shine.

"Margaret, how are you doing today?" I hear the mockery in my voice.

"What? Untie me Alice!" Margaret's voice is screechy and annoying, just like old times. I walk over to her, dagger in hand and make my first cut. She screams, as expected. I continue, turning around to see blood all over the dagger and my hands. I turn back to see that Maggie is up, somehow untied. I ready myself to throw, and bring her down. This is definitely not how I planned to kill her, but as long as she ends up dead, it's okay. I look to the side to see the white rabbit, tapping his pocket watch when Margaret pipes up.

"Why, Alice?" her voice is shrill. "You know, you're not the hero!"

"Wonderland is calling, the White Rabbit told me to make one last move," she won't understand. "I may not be the hero in your story, but I'm the hero in mine."

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“Is that some schizo thing?” schizophrenic. “Whatever you have planned, don't do it,” I hesitated.

“Remember Alice, look before you leap,” I'm ready.

“Oh Margaret, I looked a long time ago. It's my turn to leap, goodbye sister,” I ready my stance and let go, and so does Maggie.

I'm in Wonderland now.

The Asylum

I stood in front of the ancient, dark building that could only be seen by the glow of the moon. Slowly, I stumbled across the crumbly gravel to the main entrance of the asylum. I had heard many stories of it being “haunted,” and I wanted to see for myself. As I anticipated, it was locked and boarded up. After driving for almost an hour, I wasn't going to leave without exploring, so I had to find another way in. I crept around back to see if there could be some other entrance. Just to my luck, there was an open window, not too far above the ground. It led to the pitch black room. I turned on my flashlight once inside, to reveal the tiny room that was crowded by cobwebs. There was an oddly placed, torn up armchair in the very center of the room, underneath a bloodstained rug. Shivers ran up my spine, and I felt paralyzed. Just then, in the dead silence, there was an eerie ring that shook me from my frozen state. It was my phone.

“Hello,” I stuttered nervously. There was no answer but I could hear deep, heavy breathing. “Who is it?,” I mumbled.

“Go!” screamed the voice on the other end. It sounded low and raspy like someone had messed with the pitch of a recording.

I hung up and my trembling hands struggled to put my phone back in my pocket. I glanced around, realizing that I had dropped my flashlight when my phone rang. Sure enough, it had rolled over towards the conspicuous chair. I knelt over and reached for it. As soon as my fingertips felt the flashlight, I retracted my hand in disgust. It felt cold and slimy. I took a deep breath and picked it up.

Brooke Blower
Grade 9, St. Ann's Academy
The Asylum

I felt terrified but something urged me to keep looking around. I continued to shine the light around the room revealing each and every crevice. I discovered there to be somewhat of a hallway to my left. The supporting beams of wood at the top were starting to split, and it looked as if it could crumble down at any moment. I picked up my pace and traipsed toward it. I could hear the ceiling flaking above me as I made my way through. My footsteps echoed, giving me the feeling that I was not alone. There was definitely something off about this whole building. There were multiple doors on either side of the hallway but only one stood out to me: Patient room #349.

The door was cracked open just a smidge. I proceeded into the room, hoping to find something worth taking a picture of. The room had stone walls and no windows, but I immediately felt a bitter draft. I shone my flashlight around the room which revealed an old white metal bed frame with a torn up mattress on top. To the right of the bed was a matching metal side table with something on top. There was scribbled writing covering all of the walls, and most of it was in a dark red colour. The room gave off a haunting vibe, but I proceeded to enter.

The closer that I got to the table, I realized it had photos. They looked to be from the mid 19th century Victorian era. The pictures were of family portraits, but something was just off about them. I studied them, paying attention to every small detail and trying to figure out what was off. It was the eyes. They all looked dead. All of a sudden, a cold and slimy hand clamped onto my ankle. I let out a blood curdling scream and bolted out the door. In all of the commotion, whatever had grabbed my ankle had taken my shoe when I raced out of the room escaping its grasp.

Brooke Blower
Grade 9, St. Ann's Academy
The Asylum

I slammed the heavy door shut and sprinted down the hallway. The hair on my neck stood up when I heard the old steel door screech open. I glanced back to see a slim dark figure with glowing red eyes staring me down. I picked up pace and hoped there would be an exit soon. The hallway opened up into what looked like a kitchen. It was filled with dusty, smashed in counters and cabinets. As I walked through it, the tiles cracked under my feet. I saw what looked like an old garage door at one end of the kitchen. I hurried over to it and pried it open. It was odd something like that was in such an old building, but I didn't question it much. I was thankful to be out. I wandered around outside, looking for my car while still being completely paranoid from whatever was in there. It definitely could not have been human. No normal person's eyes can glow that bright of a red.

Soon enough, I found my car on the other end of the building. I shakily dug around my pockets for my keys and took a few tries to unlock my door. Before I got in, I looked down realizing that I still only had one of my black runners. I wasn't in the mood to think about that right now. I just wanted to get home. I climbed in my light gray Honda Civic and started the car. I began to drive away, swearing to myself to never come back here on any occasion when something in my rear-view mirror caught my eye. I looked in the reflection to my back seat and saw my other black runner.

Kanpekina

The world Kendall lived in was nothing short of boring. The same routine, every single day; it was synonymous. His eyes shot open at the third beep of his alarm clock set for seven in the morning. It was always the third beep. Reaching an arm over to turn it off, he ran a hand through his tousled light brown hair and lightly threw the blankets off his warm, skinny body. His bare feet touched the small mat, reserved just to warm up his feet before stepping on the cold, hardwood floor. He yawned, turning around to face his twin sized bed, which was in the corner of his room. He fluffed up his pillows slightly, and then pulled the blankets back to cover the sheets on his mattress. He made his way to the bathroom across the hall, and after shutting the door and removing his clothes, he stepped into the shower. With the press of a few buttons, he stepped out and the mechanical air dryers dried his hair. He wrapped a blue towel around himself, picked his dirty clothes up from the floor and stepped back into his room. He threw his pajamas into the laundry basket placed at the foot of his bed, and finally got dressed for the day. He was on his way downstairs by seven twenty-five.

As per usual, when he reached the bottom stair he received a hug from his father leaving for work. He turned left to enter the kitchen, occupied by his mother preparing lunches for school. "Good morning, Kendall," she greeted without turning around. It still felt weird.

She knew exactly what time he stepped into the kitchen every single morning; always delivering the same message

Kanpekina

It was something that bothered Kendall more than the monotony of his life.

“Good morning,” he responded reluctantly.

“It’s nice outside, you should walk today,” she said as she turned to face him, holding out his brown bag which contained the usual- a crustless peanut butter sandwich, with an apple juice box, a banana, and two chocolate chip cookies.

“I always do,” he replied with a slight smile, taking the bag from her hands. He made his way to the front door, slipping on his shoes and tying them up after inserting his lunch into his backpack. At seven forty, his younger sister, Katherine, was downstairs.

As he headed out the door, he called to his mother and sister, telling them he was on his way; the usual time, seven forty-five. The walk to school went as usual; the neighbour would pass by walking the dog, and flash Kendall a smile. He’d return it just to be kind, like everyone else. Maybe it was nice to have no crime, he thought, but it ruined the concept of excitement. Kendall had lived sixteen years in this society being told everything was perfect. The truth was, Kendall hated it here. He hated having his life lived for him; having everything laid out in front of him like he was some kind of puppet. Everything seemed the definition of perfect.

Dismissing his thoughts as he arrived at school, he set into the normal routine. “Hey, Kendall!” Brayden, his best friend of thirteen years, greeted him with the same bright smile he did every day.

Kanpekina

“Hey,” Kendall replied, with a smile. As the bell rang, the two friends walked to their first class together. Mr. Pafé once again began to blabber on about how much their society had improved the world. As always, Kendall zoned out. He continued thinking, preparing for his mind to wander throughout the rest of the day.

“Mr. Kanpekina,” Mr. Pafé’s voice made Kendall snap back into attention.

“Um, yes, sir?” He responded.

“Principal Kamilifu would like to have a word with you. Please, take your things. I feel it may take longer than you expect.” Kendall slowly stood, gathered his things, and began to walk out of the classroom.

Everyone’s eyes were on him. As he started down the hallway, he could hear Mr. Pafé’s voice drawing the attention back to him. The principal’s office was a short walk from room 104. Mr. Kamilifu was standing outside waiting for him.

“Kendall Kanpekina. It’s past time we had a chat,” he opened the door for Kendall, and the teenager slowly walked into the office.

Mr. Kamilifu followed him inside and walked around to his own desk chair, while Kendall took a seat in the chair facing the front of his desk. “Do you know why you’re here?”

“No, sir,” Kendall responded quietly as he shook his head.

Kanpekina

“We’ve been looking into your thoughts, Kendall,” Mr. Kamilifu explained. Kendall had figured this for a long time, but they must know that as well. “Why is this town not enough for you, Kendall? What is wrong with having a perfect society?”

Kendall’s eyes widened as he searched for words. “I don’t... I don’t think this is a bad town, sir. I just wonder... why does it have to be this way?”

“Because,” Mr. Kamilifu responded, leaning forward on his desk, “we want to give the people the perfect lifestyle. People like you prevent our perfect society from thriving.” He pressed a button on his desk and six armed men in white body armour busted through the door. One of them threw Kendall’s bag to the floor, and two picked him up by the arms.

“Take him to the chamber,” Mr. Kamilifu said darkly. “We’ll deal with his family later.”

The guards dragged him off, shoving a bag over his head so he couldn’t see. A few moments passed, and Kendall’s surroundings were revealed to him. He was inside a dimly lit room; he could barely see. He could hardly feel anything; his whole body felt numb. He felt his eyelids getting heavy, but tried to keep them open. An unknown feeling stronger than he could fight off overcame him. His eyes shut, and he fell to the floor. For the first time in sixteen years, Kendall felt alive.

1.

Benjamin Brown, Grade 9, Westsyde Secondary

Amongst the stars

Turbulent winds buffeted the ship, alarms sounded, and fellow passengers panicked. The *Requisite* was crashing. I looked out the window and saw our destination. A sky blue planet, almost a requiem of what Earth once was, and it was getting closer. I was trying to assimilate all the information, *within seconds I would be dead*. Passengers began to weep, some screaming for their mothers. I was overwhelmed, lights flashing, alarms blaring, screaming reached crescendo, and then it stopped.

My eyes shot open, and my heart beat violently in my chest. I gasped for air while unplugging several electrodes from my arms and torso. My hands met the roof of my cryptobiosis chamber. I opened it, and was met with a blast of slightly fresher air. My name is Spero Averi and I am a colonist of Eden.

The light stung my eyes. I stood for the first time in three years. We were passing Jupiter, I stared at the gas-giant. Images from my dream danced in my brain. I had dreaded the journey ahead of us, it must've manifested itself into the dreams I'd been having. Nightmares I was unable to dismiss from my mind with the luxury of consciousness.

2.

Benjamin Brown, Grade 9, Westsyde Secondary

The reassuring electric light from the ship's interior reflected off the aluminum-glass pane. We would reach the singularity soon. I reflected on the circumstances that brought me here. In 2024 WW3 began, fire ravaged Earth, and smoke covered the sun in the Middle-East for three months where Syria had been bombed into oblivion. When the smoke cleared, the world looked at the carnage and made a pact. Weapons would be banned completely, making the second-amendment obsolete. Opposition to the ban was common, but futile, as pro-weapons activists, like my father, were incarcerated. Smaller countries assimilated with larger ones. The US, Mexico and Canada became Nova-Borealis in 2030. Then in 2042, The NBG announced they were transferring the military-budget to NASA.

From 2058-2064 the NBG sent several test-colonies to mars. They failed. In 2080, the world-population reached its carrying-capacity of 11-billion people. The air became unbreathable. In 2104 a singularity appeared around Jupiter, NASA scientists were perplexed as to the singularity's origins and sent probes to investigate. The singularity's readings were like that of a black-hole, only more stable. To gather more data, they sent an advanced probe to the singularity. In 2107 the probe arrived, and they finally learned the true dimensions of the pulsating-mass. The thing was about the size of Manhattan. It was then, they witnessed cosmic-discharge exit the singularity. It was unlike anything in our solar-system. The singularity had teleporting properties. It could transport matter through space and time in a fraction of a second.

3.

Benjamin Brown, Grade 9, Westsyde Secondary

The probe entered the palpitating-portal, and discovered an entirely new galaxy. Two years later, the probe discovered a habitable exoplanet residing in the galaxy, Fortuity-32C. It had a breathable-atmosphere, water, even greenery. Known colloquially as *Eden*, it was the perfect planet. After a few trial flights, it was evident a full-scale colonization would be underway.

Enter, me. A grown-ass man subsisting on scraps in society's business-end. Living life in the slums, you can imagine my surprise when I was informed I had been selected for the newest colonization-program to Eden. I had always dreamed of living amongst the stars. At the time I thought it was some kind of prank; but nonetheless, I cleaned myself up, and headed straight for the program's headquarters. Three months later, 299,999 colonists and I set off to our new home.

Still staring out the window, my peripheral caught purple flashes of light. An automated voice instructed me to be seated in the main-deck. As I reached my designated-seat, I began to make small-talk with other passengers on board. It turns out I'm not the only one coming from poverty. In fact, all the people I spoke to were in my position. It struck me as odd, although it makes sense. Second-chances.

4.

Benjamin Brown, Grade 9, Westsyde Secondary

As a robotic flight-attendant finished demonstrating the safety-features of the ship, its immense thrusters gave one final push into the singularity. At first, everything went dark... suddenly, an explosion of light hit me! Colours I had never seen before! My pupils dilated to compensate for this strange new experience. I almost cried. Time and reality itself seemed warped, almost fractured. Then, just as abruptly as it had occurred, it ended. Adrenaline still coursing through my veins, I sighed with relief. My breath labored, I checked the viewing-port to try to get my bearings, I didn't recognise a single constellation. I promptly returned to my cryptobiosis-chamber. My heartbeat slowed as images of *Eden* filled my mind. My eyelids fluttered as I submitted my mind to the realm of subconsciousness...

I awoke, and smiled. My glee at the prospect of a new home was comparable to that of a child on Christmas-morning. Anxiousness. Anticipation. *Excitement*. As the chamber opened with a familiar *hiss*, I sat up and made my way through the corridor. *This is it*, I thought to myself. *The first taste of a new planet*. But as I finally caught glimpse of *Eden*, I made a startling discovery; the planet looked nothing like Earth. The planet before me more closely resembled Mars, it was covered with blood-red sand. The ship turned toward an isolated section of desert and we began our descent.

5.

Benjamin Brown, Grade 9, Westsyde Secondary

As we landed on *Eden's* crimson soil, I saw several figures make their way towards the *Requisite*. The ship's exit-doors opened and air filled the passenger deck. The air here was sour, but fresher than Earth's. The figures were robots, not fellow pilgrims. They directed us towards the main-building in several groups. As we made our way through the camp, the absence of colonists was glaring. We were supposed to have joined colonists 800,000 strong. *Red flags...* Finally, we reached the main-building and were given uniforms and a toothbrush. **"Welcome to your new home,"** The robots said with indifference. We marched outside to a large valley. It was then I understood the lack of colonists, they were all working in the valley. No, not a valley, a mine! And then I understood. *This isn't a colony at all, it's a labour camp!*

And I was doomed to spend eternity *Amongst the Stars*.

The Meadow

Two children lie in a soft green meadow, staring up at the crystalline sky. Floral fragrances drift soothingly through the air, willing them into a peaceful slumber. The worries of the adult world bear no meaning to them as they let the hours drift by.

As one wakes the other after drowsing off yet again, a cannon echoes in the distance. The younger child grabs a small pan flute from their pocket, and begins to play a tune as the other runs through the field, picking flowers and doing cartwheels. Nothing can compete with pure childhood innocence on a perfect spring day such as this. The velvet chorus of the flute harmonizes with the nearly silent chirping of acacias in the grass, signaling the sunset soon to arrive.

Suddenly, birds fly overhead in flocks of great number, rushing to some unknown destination. A single cloud rolls in front of the sun, but the girls are too consumed by a passing rabbit to notice. Back on the ground, the two sisters roll through daisies and giggle, breathing in the crisp late afternoon air. In a brisk and picturesque transformation, the sky now holds thin strings of purple and orange, weaved in with the ever breathtaking blue. Sunset is upon the meadow, clouds casting shadows on the two youthful souls.

As children are, the ones in this field are filled with energy and are back on their feet yet again, after only a moment's rest. Another cannon fires, but again the girls do not notice. It poses no threat to the children in this moment, so it does not matter to them. This time they braid flowers into each other's hair, whispers of secrets only they will ever know escaping their lips.

The sky darkens, and a chilling breeze rushes by. Clouds now fill the sky, pulling the meadow further into the dark abyss that is the night. More blasts of cannon fire and shouts pierce into the dusk. Finally, the girls withdraw themselves from their bliss and notice the storm brewing overhead. Louder and louder, the cannons boom, sounding closer by the minute. The frightened children clutch each other as they run home, flowers falling from their hair. They long for their mother to embrace them in a warm hug and tell them everything will be alright, but they only have each other. Rain begins to pour from the heavens, instantly soaking the girls. The clear, beautiful afternoon seems like millenia ago.

A roaring sound blasts above them. They hope it is only thunder, but their prayers cannot be answered. The bright orange tentacles of fire appear on the horizon, a stark contrast to the now black sky, spreading faster than they can run. The rain continues to

pour, yet the fire blazes all the same, pushing the girls farther and farther away from security.

Cannon after cannon fires, so loud now, the heavy rain hitting the ground may as well be muted. Soaking wet and freezing cold, the desperate children sprint as fast as their tiny legs can carry them, the heat of the fire on their backs as they run. The cannons continue to blare, shaking the ground, and they finally understand. Ahead is their town, also consumed by flames. Their hearts drop, their only home now just ash and smoke. Villagers shout and send flaming rocks at an army rushing through their gates. Men on horses send more flames and cannons at the town.

The older child pulls her sister into a tight hug, shielding her from the battle ensuing around them. She feels numb but for pit of sadness in her stomach from the knowledge that there is nothing more she can do. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees her mother, running towards them, willing to do anything to save her precious babies, but it is too late. Bright, hot flames lick at them from all directions, the tendrils catching on their skirts. The younger child buries her head as deep as she can into her sister's welcoming body, body shaking with fear and pain from the fire slowly creeping up their bodies.

A misfired cannon hurdles its way toward the girls as their mother cries in terror. Tears flow down the cheeks of the older child as she holds her sister close. The realization of why they were sent to play in the field alone this day hits her the same time the cannon does.

Annie Druskee
Grade 9
South Kamloops Secondary School
1

My Monster

My monster isn't a monster that hides in the unknown. My monster isn't your typical furry creature. It blinds our eyes at night as it sweeps our minds away. The monster soon enough takes over our brain and slightly makes us go crazy. A type of crazy that is dangerous. You may never expect it to watch you sleep or track your everyday life, oh but, it does.

You can't escape it, as it knows your details and your contact information. It knows how to reach you, even in the dark.

My friends are disappearing day by day, but do I notice? No, I don't notice. It brings disappointment and frustration to the elders who try to help. New victims are getting taken every day and soon I'll be one of them; it reminds me of an apocalypse.

I want to escape, but trying to escape is like escaping quicksand. Slowly it drags us in, as the darkness flows within us. What consumes our mind, controls our lives. More scrolling, less living. Don't we notice how social media is the monster and we just choose to let it feed on us?

A Punny Poem - Grocery Shopping

I go straight to the produce aisle with all the vegetables. “Lettuce, turnip the beet.” This is going to be “radishiscal.” You probably find this “corny” but I think this is “grape.” I love puns from my head “To-Ma-Toes.” Let’s continue “raisin” the roof, as we pass the “thyme.” “Olive, these so much!”

Let me guess, you’re going “nuts” over this. I’m sorry, I just get “eggcited.” As this was just “mint” to be. Please don’t get me started on the detergent aisle, that place is so “unstoppable.”

I find this “Fanta-stick.” You know what else is “Fanta-stick?” Potatoes, but I don’t know where to “starch.” Always try and look good whenever you go to the grocery store, you never know who you’re going to “meat.”

You never know, you might find them “appealing.” You might end up making a nice “pear.” What’s Michelle Obama’s favorite food? “Broccoli.” Yeah, that was “berry” awesome. Anyways to finish this off, let’s go see the “cutest cashier,” she works at the “self checkout.”

Rebellion

My head is foggy and I don't know why I am laying here. The darkness surrounds me as if to say 'you are safe no one will find you here' even though every inch of me aches. I am stretched out in a clearing in between the striking, black ash trees, submerged in shadows. My head is tender and my throat is parched but my body relaxes as I see the moon hanging in the sky. The branches of the trees groan, and somehow the pounding of drums creep into my awareness. A sensation of struggle, fear, and famine fills the air, but I feel safe here, cradled in the arms of mother nature herself. My eyes close as the chirping of crickets lulls me to sleep.

In my dreams, visions of fire and people screaming plagues my brain as if begging for my help. I awake slowly due to hot tears streaming down my cheek. Only they aren't tears at all. Its rain. Hot rain pouring from the once cloudless sky. The moon is gone and daylight is filtering through the dark clouds. I wonder what time it is?

I try to stand up but my shaky legs fail me and I find myself on my hands and knees. The second attempt is more successful, but I still stand weary. I use a tree to gain my balance and when I look down I notice that I don't have shoes on and my knees are badly scraped. The rain falls into my eyes and the forest around me fills with a damp mist. I can vaguely remember a woman telling me to run, but I don't know why. I slowly make my way forward towards a small creek. I can hear it babbling with glee. As I come upon its rocky shores the warm rain slows, now just a drizzle. I kneel on the rocks and splash my face in hopes that the cool water will help me remember more than just terror. My mind clears a little more and I can remember a small village full of panicking people as fire rains from the sky commanded by a gravelly voice screaming above the rest.

Rebellion

Hugging my knees to my chest I sit at the stream for a little while longer. My mind is buzzing. *Please someone help me I pray.*

The back of my head feels hot and when I touch it a surge of sharp pain rings throughout my body. I look at my hand and see a shimmering scarlet smear running over my fingers. I must have hit my while fleeing from the panic .No wonder I slept so long and couldn't remember much. Sustaining a wound like this is minor compared to what happened to the people in my visions. A sense of urgency floods through my mind and I know I have to do something. Those poor people at the village. *My village.*

I stand up and will my feet to take me back to my home. I can see smoke rising over the trees. I pick up my pace in hopes that I make it in time. Soon I am running and my body aches in protest. Memories keep on popping up. A little boy, my brother, crying as an army appears over the ridge. Men rushing off to fight and mothers cradling their children. Flaming arrows pour down upon our heads, and again, that woman, my mother, telling me to run. Why didn't she run? Why didn't we all run?

The wind pulls at my hair and my eyes water. For a split second I lose control and tumble to the ground. As I lay there one last vision emerges. In the vision I am in a small house colorfully decorated. Sunlight streams through the windows and the smell of summer wafts through the air. I have my ear up against the door in attempt to hear the adults in the other room. I can make out short bits of the conversation and I know they are talking about me.

"Then what do we do? They are in the mountains and they will reach us by morning." a woman with a soft voice says.

"I don't know" says a man solemnly.

Rebellion

"Why don't we just surrender her to them. Then they will leave us alone." says another man with a gruff voice.

"We can't." the woman exclaims. "We are just putting ourselves in more danger"

The vision leaves as quick as it came and I am back up on my feet. With every question answered, it feels like ten more questions arise.

Soon I come to a breach in the forest. I know as soon as I step foot outside of the canopy that this is my village. However not a single building or tent is to be seen. What I do see, is a wide section of ash and dubreay smoldering under the clouds. They, who ever they are, burnt my village to the ground probably killing everyone in it.

"You're too late to save your village." The voice makes me jump. I spin around to see a weathered old man with no hair on his head and alot of hair on his chin, sitting on a rock behind me. How could I have missed him. "You are very lucky though. They would have killed you, just like they slaughtered your home."

"How is that lucky?" I ask. My voice is shaky but I tried to sound brave. "My friends and my family are gone and now all I have is the man in the moon."

"That's not true." For some twisted reason he is smiling. "You have the entire country at your feet and you don't even know it. You are the key we need to start a rebellion and overthrow that wretched queen. You are going to save us all."

A Complicated Legacy

She wakes, gasping for the fresh air that once engulfed her planet. Her lungs had a harsh burning sensation as they filled with smoke. It almost felt like someone tore through the tissue that made up her lungs. She shaded her eyes with the back of her hand protecting them from the harsh light radiating off the fire blanketing the old town. She looked around, all she saw was destruction and darkness. Ash and soot covered her entire body like a second layer of skin. The only place it wasn't was the lines running from the corner of her eyes down at the bottom of her neck, a path carved by hot wet tears streaming down. Pain shot throughout her entire body, she scanned her body looking for the wound causing her to feel this pain. She noticed a large metal shard right through her leg, it was at that moment she realized she couldn't move, it was the only thing keeping her from losing too much blood. She was stunned, she couldn't even scream. She continued looking around, scanning the land. She saw nobody, there was nobody to help her, and she thought she wasn't going to make it.

Finally she managed to get out a scream between her constant gasps for air. She yelled "PLEASE SOMEONE HELP!" at the top of her lungs. She began to cough as the smoke overpowered her lungs. She went to yell that phrase once more, but she started to lose consciousness. She blinked and her once perfect world started to fade. A tall, dark figure started walking towards her, but she was unable to make out who or what it was. She heard the crackling of fire and footsteps getting closer to her, and then everything was just gone.

She opens her eyes and looks around to see her own room still standing perfectly the way it was before, her walls still a slightly faded ocean blue and her clothes from yesterday still sitting on the little black chair. She pulls the dark grey covers over exposing her leg, and looks at it in awe. It was perfectly fine. No shard, no blood, no nothing. She gets up looking out her window, the land looks untouched. It was at that moment she realized it was only a dream, a figment of her imagination. She breathes and starts getting ready for school, throwing on an old t-shirt and dark blue pair of ripped jeans. She tucked her messy light brown hair into a high pony, not stressing over the few strands still sticking out. While grabbing her unfinished homework on the counter and throwing it in her bag she notices her aunt passed out on the couch again after another night of fighting with her ex. She starts to wonder what it would be like if her parents had not left her so young.

This thought is quickly gone as a loud car horn goes off from in the driveway. She grabs her things and heads outside towards her friend who was waiting anxiously in her car. As she hops inside she starts telling her friend about the weird dream she had, her friend not really paying any attention. She always has weird dreams, so she didn't see why would now be any different.

They got to school and her dream starts to fade as she sits in the classroom, avoiding her school work again. Her teacher notices her blank page and gets quite mad, but the page remains empty. By the end of the day when she finally gets home, she noticed her aunt wasn't there so she walked upstairs. She fell asleep almost instantly.

She awoke, gasping quickly noticing she was in a strange man's arms. She did not recognize him and was quite frightened, however, could not move at all. She couldn't even talk. She looked around to see the familiar ashes and fire spreading through the town. She notices the familiar pain coursing through her body and that's when realizes she wasn't dreaming. The strange man spoke up and started to explain that he was a soldier for their planet, but he also said it wasn't a dream, but rather a vision from her ancestors. They were powerful, but ended up using their power for evil. This made her think back to her parents and she started to form scenarios in her head, but she stopped to continue listening to him.

He explained how every first born Katerina child is given this vision before their 17th birthday, and is asked to give up or keep their powers. The strange man closed his eyes and she was amazed by what she saw. Bodies were scattered across the ground, she saw each of her the ancestors who had done bad things with their powers. It took her off guard a lot when she saw her own father in this vision. After that shocking turn of events, she knew what to do.

On her 17th birthday she was given the choice and she wasn't able to give up this new found gift, she didn't care about the responsibility. All she knew is that she had always felt this need for power and authority in her life and maybe this would fix that. If she gave it up she felt like that would be giving up a piece of herself. After she made this choice

"A Complicated Legacy"
Ashlynn Jensen
Chase Secondary School
Grade 9

would it change her? Would it bring out her worst self? Would she be reckless and lose control or understand how to harness these new powers? Only time would tell...

You're Next

Someone was following her.

She wasn't sure how she knew, but she did.

From the moment she stepped out of her old, French immersion school, Adeline Gailey could feel someone watching her. Adeline shivered as she walked through the busy school parking lot with her friend. Liz Wallstead was speaking rapidly about her plans for the evening, which involved what sounded like copious amounts of pizza and popcorn. Her tone was so chipper that Adeline shoved the odd sensation of being watched into the back of her mind. Together, her and Liz strolled down the sidewalk, giggling and talking until they reached the corner where they usually separated. Waving goodbye as Liz turned onto the street to the right, Adeline continued down the path, laughing at Liz's hyper personality.

She had nearly arrived at her street when a dark blue car flew past her, bass shaking the vehicle, music blaring through the rolled up windows. Adeline turned her head to follow the movement, watching the car whip around the corner of the next street, when she felt something smack against her back. She cried out in pain, eyes watering. Her knee buckled and she fell to the ground, the concrete ripping her jeans at the knees. Adeline looked up at her cloaked assailant through misty eyes, but with her distorted vision, she couldn't identify the shadowy figure. She tried to stand, pushing her hands on the ground for support, the jagged rocks on the sidewalk cutting into the soft

flesh of her palms. As she stood, the person released some sort of inhuman guttural growl, grabbing her and pulling out a bag from their billowing cloak. They reached to throw the fabric over her head when she stomped on what she assumed was her assailant's foot. They let out a strange howl, released her, and clutched their foot, giving her enough time to sprint the remainder of the distance to her house.

By the time Adeline got there, she looked back to see her attacker was gone. Panting, she reduced her speed to a jog, still looking over her shoulder. She tripped down the sidewalk leading up to her house, her chest heaving and her legs moving just faster than a walk. As her adrenaline level dropped, the pain in her back, hands, and legs became overbearing.

Slowly, Adeline trudged up the steps, cringing with the movement. The drying tears felt sticky on her face as the wind blew against her. She tried to regain her breath, which was still coming out panicked and heavy. She reached one hand forward, opening the door while the other one rubbed the stabbing pain in her back. Limping slightly, she inched into the brightly coloured home and collapsed on the seat waiting for her in the front entrance. The leather bench creaked quietly at the unexpected weight. The noise seemed exceptionally loud in the eerie silence. Adeline leaned back, taking full advantage of the wall. She closed her eyes as a sharp pain shot up her spine, and she clenched her teeth, trying not to cry again.

A thump resonated from somewhere on the other side of the house.

She stood gradually, bracing herself against the wall as another web of pain pulsed through her.

One deep breath.

Another.

After ten seconds, another dull thump echoed across the house, and into the faded, red-painted foyer. Her curiosity piqued, she made to follow the sound . Deliberately, though still slow, she carefully placed one foot in front of the other, struggling to keep her balance. She gently cracked open the door, peeking into the kitchen. She immediately withdrew her head, burying it in her trembling hands, tears welling in her eyes, threatening to spill over. Her lip quivered as she drew a shaky breath.

Another thud.

A look of determination set on her face, her usually soft features hardening.

Throwing open the old, oak door, she marched into the kitchen, instantly regretting it. She scanned the room, gagging as the metallic stench of blood filling her nostrils. Overlooking the shattered dishes, shredded photos, and broken cupboards, her eyes fixed on the shining, crimson message; one that appeared as though it was written in blood. She took a small step forward to read the note.

"We'll be back."

Whether her sudden nausea came from the ongoing pain in her back or the ominous message, she wasn't sure, but the smell of blood certainly didn't help.

She staggered out of the room and down the destroyed hallway, struggling to stay upright. Ignoring the scattered glass, cracked picture frames and torn, blood-covered wallpaper, Adeline followed the now constant banging sound. The doors of all the bedrooms were splintered and damaged, and the rooms were overflowing with ripped clothing and paper, like someone was looking for something.

She reached the end of the hallway, the unexplained noise slowing, and entered her parents bedroom. The mattress was overturned, drawers pulled from the old dresser and the window open, curtains blowing in the wind.

In the corner, tied up and bleeding, was her father.

She rushed to him as fast as her back would allow, quickly scanning his injuries. After deeming them non-life threatening, she swiftly untied the torn rags that bound his hands and feet and pulled the small piece of fabric from his mouth. Adeline met his pewter grey, tearfilled eyes with her own. The happiness and warmth that he usually radiated was gone, replaced with only hopelessness and anger. He opened his dry mouth, his voice raspy and full of despair.

"They found her."

"Half of a World/Night You've Never Seen"

Zoe Lapinsky

Chase Secondary School

Grade 9

Half of a World

Celestial ballads seeping from your fingertips

I'd love to see you try to think like I do

Do you have enough scars to map your own world?

I'd bet a couple hundred young lives that you couldn't even get halfway

Electricity seared into my skin from the lightning in the sky

Makes me see butterflies where the blood is

Bones made from water

There's a stardust sheen coating my veins

Silk and ichor fill up a pair of eyes

In front of a selenite mind

Caked with ideas left behind

It's a lovely challenge to fight the noises

How about you try?

A Night You've Never Seen

Sunlight threaded across aquamarine air

Inhaling white crystal oxygen

Stepping closer to the sky

Clouds look like peaches

The fruits look like mist

The sun sets below the Earth's shoulders

Millions of wishes taking its place

The stars are for you

I'll make them fall if that's what you want me to do

A light shade of pink

To a dark shade of blue

Sapphires and opals

I'll trade two for two

Clouds injected with quicksilver

Mercury in the sky

The meteors aren't here tonight

And I'll tell you why

Even the purest light

Can't hold a being

It sure is a death wish

Without any meaning

"Half of a World/Night You've Never Seen"

Zoe Lapinsky

Chase Secondary School

Grade 9

They told me it was too easy

To live a life, but they lied

So rack up some nerves with me, sunshine

We're gonna need 'em for the ride

"One day i'll do it,"

I said "one day you'll see."

But one day isn't now

So hang the stars back up with me

Violet Hair

Grade 12, average height, average grades, average girl, violet hair. The only really interesting thing about her. At least, to most. To me, she's one of the most intriguing people I've ever seen. She seems a bit closed off, kind of like me. Neither of us really enjoy talking to people. She doesn't really talk to anybody inside or outside of school. And her hair, it's always in her face. I don't even know what her face looks like. But it doesn't matter, she's stunning anyway.

I actually tried to talk to her once, I nearly passed out. I don't know whether to be thankful that she had earbuds in or somewhat hurt. Then again, if she had answered, I wouldn't have known what to say and made a fool of myself. There was only one other person who ever talked to her. He was a jock, cocky, egotistic, I hate him. He's the quarterback for our football team, the classic jerk. I could tell she didn't like him either. The things he said were rude and vulgar. I told him something I really can't remember, he backed off after that, with a look on his face that makes me smile at every time recall it, sometimes it even makes me laugh at inappropriate times.

Now, she sits on a bench, still at school, under an old, rotting tree. Her delicate hands are skimming the pages of the book placed in her lap. There's even a sweet breeze that makes me think of her perfume. It's funny, even though she's reading a book, her face is still covered in hair. I wonder how she manages to read like that. Eventually, she gets up and I follow her. I don't know how she manages to never notice

me. Maybe I'm just a ghost to her. Her strides are unusually quick and short. At her locker, she pulls out a sandwich, the same as every day. In the lunchroom, she chooses a seat at the window, so do I. This is where we spend the rest of lunch, but I don't mind, it's not like the old storage room is any better.

After school, she goes to the local library to study, we have a test tomorrow. She doesn't leave until it closes, then stops at a Chinese food restaurant to eat. Who knew that she liked Chinese food? I've never seen her eat it before. She orders sweet and sour pork with chicken chow mein. I order the same. I don't like chicken but it doesn't matter. I pick a spot that keeps me out of her way, I'd rather not bother her. Eventually, she leaves for home. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't not follow her because we live so close. And besides, it's dark out. I can't have her getting hurt.

After, I go to my place. I live alone, it's small but I make do with what I can. Above, I can hear yelling. My neighbours are rather loud. I like it that way though, it reminds me that there are other people around and that she's always close. Sitting on my tattered couch, I fantasize about how I might be able to talk to her. Sometimes just doing even that sends tingles of exhilaration through my spine. I realize that this whole ordeal is putting a strain on me mentally, and can't deal with it for much longer. She's all I ever think about. I don't sleep lots of the time because of her. If only she knew. She's like a disease that you enjoy, an addiction. After much careful thought, I decide it's time. I'm sick of waiting.

The next day, she stays out late again. Walking home, I slowly catch up to her, grab her shoulders. It's weird, the excitement that came over me, the feeling of her really being there, in my hands. Her head whipped around and I let out a sigh. Her hair was beautiful, but I knew her face had to be prettier. Before I'm able to part her hair, she screams. Why would she do that? Doesn't she realize that I don't want to hurt her? I'm forced to clap my hand over her mouth and pinch her nose. I'm on such a high that I don't realize when she stops kicking. Carrying her bridal style, savouring this moment that I wouldn't normally have to myself, I bring her into my basement, my home, her home.

I didn't want to do this, but I'm forced to gently bind her hands and feet, I can't have her trying to escape on me, not now. I also carefully place her on my couch that isn't good enough for someone like her, she deserves better, a pedestal with the most exquisite light fixtures, to illuminate her every feature. This isn't what I wanted. I'll have to tell her that when she wakes. I don't want her to end up hating me. Crouching down beside her, I notice how slender her figure really is, almost malnourished.

I must be there for hours, but as far as I'm concerned, it only felt like a few seconds. The only thing that marks the passage of time is her parents exasperated arguing above me, and the slamming of their front door. Then, silence. To this, I let out a breathy laugh. They don't know her and I are down here. If they did, they wouldn't have to worry about her, she's with someone who would treat her better than they ever could. Running my hand up her soft neck, I notice how slowly her heart is beating,

"Violet Hair"
Ryann Larsen
Chase Secondary School
Grade 9

nothing like the fast pace of mine. I study her face. I was right. She couldn't be more perfect. Her lips were plump and pink. Eyelashes long, nose small, and her eyes were almond shaped. As if it was a fairytale, as I look into her eyes, they open. They're violet. Just like her hair.

The night is still young and I am on the hunt. I creep through the thin, pale trees that surround me, hoping that they camouflage me enough. The moonlight above seeps through the branches to light my way in the darkness. My paws are soft in the snow, leaving behind footprints that will soon be blown away by the cold, gentle winds. I listen and hear nothing but the sounds of the breeze softly blowing away the glistening white powder off of the trees' spiked branches. Nevertheless, I continue, praying that something has survived long enough in this cruel winter for me to feast. The growling of my stomach is my only response. I shiver as a sharp wind blows through my now skeleton-like body, ruffling my frozen grey coat. The trees have no leaves in the moon's shine, leaving only eerie looking shadows laid out on the blanket beneath me. My fur is freezing into lumps of ice dangling from my body, making it harder and harder to tread in the deep snow. The spring of hope that once ran through my body is now left in the background, replaced with a terrible dread. Daylight is coming fast.

In the corner of my eye, a red blur appears out of nowhere. A fox dives out of a nearby bush and pounds on me. I have no time to react. the fox is on top of me within seconds, scratching and clawing at my delicate skin. My claws dig deeper and throw the fox whimpering into the snow. It bounces back up and jumps on me again. I pierce my teeth into its fleshy neck, shaking it enough to rattle its bones. The taste of its blood trickles onto my tongue, a taste I haven't encountered in what feels like years. A sharp, red stained claw reaches up in an instant and rips through my eye, blinding me. I let go of the fox, and it skitters away, leaving me alone surrounded by crimson snow.

My eye leaves a trail of red behind me as I stagger through the cold, thick powder. The pain is agonizing. With one eye I will never hunt again. I am just waiting to die. The sun is about to rise and, when it does, I will have to go into hiding until nightfall. By then, I will be a rotting corpse, feeding maggots and flies. A small white hare hops by me, paying no attention at all to the hungry animal in front of it. I leap at the furry creature and, hoping to taste blood once again, am left with a mouthful of snow. The rabbit hops away, taking my last bit of optimism with her.

As I crawl through the white blanket, the sun peeks over the mountaintops. The warmth on my body feels restoring, giving me just enough energy to find somewhere to sleep for the day. I notice a small cave and stumble over to it. It looks as though this has been used before but recently abandoned. My eye aches with pain, and I feel a warm tear drip down my bony jaw. Only it's not a tear. The blood leaves a perfect ruby stain contrasted against the white ground. I curl up inside the cave, noticing the deep claw marks on the stone walls around me. It reeks like rotting flesh, but I don't have the energy to look around. Closing my eye, I drift off, hoping I will live to see the moon once more.

I jolt awake to the sound of rustling outside. It's nighttime. My mind is foggy, and with only one eye I cannot see clearly what is making the noise. The other one still hurts, but I shake it off. I stand up, and a rush of pain surges through my bones. My head glimpses out the cave, and view nothing but a delicate snowfall reflecting in the

luminescence. I twist to go back into the cave when I come face to face a growling animal with matted fur. Its body is so mangled and damaged I can't make out what it is. I start to run but don't hear the animal chasing me. It must have gotten lost. Instead of finding another place to stay, I go back to the cave. The deranged animal is sprawled lifeless in the center. The smell is unbearable, and I can do nothing now but begin to saunter.

I'm on the ground, lying still in the frigid air. I have seen multiple creatures, and I haven't had the strength to attack any. I have given up. The world starts to slow down, and I begin to close my eyes, giving in to the pain. Before I can surrender, however, something moves in the distance. I jerk my head upwards. A brown rabbit is hopping right in front of me. I realize that this may be my last chance to eat. I crawl slowly, dragging my thin body through the white blanket. I can see nothing but the rabbit, still oblivious to me. I start to stand up, careful not to whimper from the pain. I'm getting closer by the second as I creep towards it. The rabbit stops to sniff a dead patch of grass, and by then I am few inches behind it. Somehow it hasn't heard me. I make my move. Pouncing on it, I hear squeals and feel scratches at my paws. I let go and the rabbit starts to hop away fast. I get up and run towards it, hurting every muscle I have. My eye is flooding with pain, and I feel the scarlet substance staining my cheeks. My claw reaches out in a last effort, and the rabbit starts to squeal again. I dive, catching it in my paws, and pierce its skin with my teeth. The squeals die with the rabbit. Blood

swirls through my mouth, filling me with joy and satisfaction. I have done it. I have
hunted.

Wandering

As I lay on the bed, staring blankly at the ceiling, looking at the slants of bright sunlight coming through the window, I wonder what to do. My weekends are usually spent seeking inspiration, whether it be reorganizing my room or rereading a long forgotten book. My thoughts are interrupted by the sounds of my dad’s thumping footsteps coming down the hallway, announcing “let’s go.” Growing up, I learned to not ask where we were going, because the only answer I would get was “you want to come or what?”

So, I just went along with him. Sometimes, we end up at the gas station getting something to drink, or going to a cousin’s house. Other times, it’s a surprise, a place I’ve never been before. I don’t care much because I love going along just for the ride, no matter where we go.

As I make my way to the front door, I snatch up my jacket and scarf from the hooks on the bedroom door, and head to where all the boots and shoes are neatly stacked on the rack that is slowly warping. I grab my soft brown boots, and slip them on, feeling that warm sensation of faux leather wrapped around my feet. I toss my scarf over one shoulder, then the other, and throw on my jacket. With a twist of the gold door knob, with the reflection of a mirror, I see my wondering eyes staring back at me as the door cracks open.

I step outside and feel that instant cooldown feeling, goosebumps racing along my skin, seeing that the half-melted snow is still on the ground with specks of dirt incorporated with it. I shut the door behind me, hearing the reassuring click to confirm its closed, and

make my way to the car. I pop open the door and hop inside, the warm air of the heater blasting in my face as I sit down. We back out of the driveway and drive around, seeing what everybody is up to. Then, when we make our way to the backroads, I know where we're going.

As I sit there admiring the scenery, I feel the paved road change to gravel underneath my feet, sensing each and every pothole in the road going up the hill. Outside the window looks like a marvelous day, with the sun shining brightly and wisps of clouds here and there. Climbing the hill on the way to the backroads, there's a nice view of Chase. The trees frame a small picture of our town, resembling a photograph. From where I'm sitting, I can see the cars coming and going along the highway. I note the river dividing me and civilization, sensing how quiet it is up here, aside from the birds. Beyond the town, I can see the mountain, sitting there quietly watching. As we get farther along the road, the trees around us get denser and thicker, becoming thicket of leaves and branches.

I turn off the heat as my forehead glistens with sweat, and roll down my window to listen. You can hear the trees rustle around you and the trill of birds contained inside them. In the air is the scent of the forest, along with a hint of wood. It's as if you could taste the cedar in your mouth. As I hear the car rattle, along comes the feeling of the shakes from the potholes splayed out across the road. I can feel the cool breeze blowing in my face, refreshing compared to the hot heat from the car. As we continue further and further, I see up the mountains in the distance the charred trees scattered about, looking like toothpicks. As we reach our destination (which is nowhere exactly) we are coming up to Neskonlith lake and drive by.

“Wandering”
Brianna Narcisse
Chase Secondary School
Grade 9

That night, as I lay in bed, I look back at the day. I was in this same spot earlier looking for inspiration, when inspiration came to me. We may have drove around maybe going somewhere, but it doesn't always mean there has to be an exact destination. Sometimes it's nice to escape reality and wander about, forgetting all of your worries.

Not all those who wander are lost ~ J.R.R Tolkien

My Little Red Apron

Her eyes were sealed shut. The monitor's sharp sound rang out against the blinding white walls. I clutched her feeble hands in mine. "Grams, you're going to be okay. You have to be." The only reply was her labored breathing. I wasn't sure who I was reassuring: her or myself.

Later that night I left the hospital room. The hallways were deserted. Doors hung open, showing the empty husks of the dead and the dying. The air smelled of sickness. In my hands I gripped the basket of freshly baked muffins. Not a single one eaten. As I pushed through the blue doors, a shaking hand brought one to my mouth. I took a bite. The flavor was lost on me. These days everything was stale and tasteless. Baking had lost its pleasure.

The rusted blue bike stood locked to the rack. *I should have taken the bus.* Sighing, I put the basket into the bag slung over my shoulder. The door shut quietly behind me. As I walked towards my ride, a man stepped out from the shadows. Warily, I walked faster till I reached the bike. The moon was high in the sky. A single flickering light post dimly lit the small parking lot. Reaching into my bag, I grasped the lock key

Julie O'Neill
Grade 9
Brocklehurst Middle School
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My Little Red Apron

firmly in my hand. Footsteps sounded behind me. Heartbeat thudding, I turned the key in its lock. I could hear breathing behind me, and slowly I turned around. He was gone. I stood alone. My panting brought wisps of steam into the air. Paranoia. As shadows crept closer, like hands reaching towards me, I jumped on my bike and pedalled away.

The path had no mercy for those who went by the night's starry skies. Overhanging branches blocked the moon's light and darkness held reign. Twigs snapped. Crunchy leaves and small pebbles lay across the dirt path. An owl hooted occasionally. With each small sound my heart jumped and pounded against its caging ribs. A foreboding feeling had plodded across my chest. Rounding a corner with relief, I spotted the cottage.

Making my way up the tended gravel driveway, I did not feel alone. Reaching the deck I grabbed the key hidden securely beneath the flower pot. Trees waved in the wind. *Who would want to live alone out here?* Leaves rustled in response. Twisting the key in the lock, I was rewarded with a click and the door opened.

Dust lay heavy in the stagnant air. I coughed as I reached to flick the light switch. A golden light fluttered across the room. Antique couches and chairs furnished the

My Little Red Apron

room, and in its center stood a brick fireplace. A plush carpet sat beneath my feet. A sigh escaped my lips when I removed my shoes and let my toes touch the ground.

Slowly the paranoia trickled out and I began to settle in and tidy up. The place smelled of disuse. No one would have set foot in the house since the day Grandma became ill. The virus had struck hard and fast. Soon, she had been placed into intensive hospital care. The tragedy had shaken everyone.

An hour later, and I had the place dusted, vacuumed, and mopped. A clean lemon scent conquered the stale air. With my bags unpacked, I settled myself onto the couch with a mug of steaming tea. A silence had settled. I grabbed the television remote, and switched on the old fashioned box. Flipping through the channels, I was sorely disappointed. Grandma only had five channels. I laughed a little, it had been awhile since I had visited. A memory came to mind.

When I was younger, visits with Grandma never involved television. Our time had been spent baking. Flipping through old recipes, we would spend our time looking for a new dessert to try. Each visit saw me leaving with a basket full of goods. I smiled at the memory. Clicking on the news channel, I made my way to the kitchen. In the

My Little Red Apron

background, news reporters spoke softly from the screen. I hummed a sweet little tune I used to sing on my way to Grandma's.

"Grandma and I, we bake the best! Always yummy, always fresh! With my red apron on..."

I grasp the red material with my small hands. It had been a Christmas present from grandma one year. A soft smile met my lips, and I tied the red apron on. Continuing to hum, I half listened to the voices in the background.

"Tonight we caution all to lock their doors and turn out their lights" said the news reporter.

"A masked man was spotted at the hospital earlier this evening. He said to be around his mid-thirties, about 6'1 in height, and is wearing a full face mask. One that depicts a wolf's head."

I sat the bag of flour down on the countertop. Again I felt that feeling creeping over me and settling, a rock on my chest. A click sounded. The reporters voice disappeared. *The tv must have stalled...* I left my place at the counter, and walked into the living room. There was a cold draft, and the television had been unplugged.

My Little Red Apron

I could feel my breath quicken as my heart started to race. Towards the entrance way the door was gaping open, and the porch light had been shut off. Quietly, I walked towards the door. I had to escape before I was caught!

But as I went to step out, a tall figure blocked my way. Looking up I met yellow eyes and wolf masked face. My heartbeat, was thunder hammering in my chest! A deep growl erupted from the man's throat. In slow motion, I tried to dart past. A large hand grabbed onto the neck of my apron. I was dragged roughly back inside. I screamed! Lashed out, but the struggle was pointless. The door slammed shut.

Samuel Oyler
March 4th, 2019
St. Anns Academy

The Collection

"We mourn the death of our dear friend, Daniel Fray. To some, he was a great friend. To others, an amazing father. He was such an amazing person and will be dearly missed," said the pastor at the funeral for Daniel Fray. He was only 39 when he passed. It was so sudden.

My name is Jackson Fray. He was my father. We loved him so much. We have no idea why he passed away. There was no trace of blood loss. No stab wounds. This house will be so different after his death. There won't be the same energy. I decide that it is probably best for me to go to sleep and get ready for school tomorrow.

I get up, ready to go to school. When I get on the bus, I notice my best friend, Calvin, isn't waiting there in the same place as usual. He isn't on the bus. I sit down with my friend, Katherine, and inquire. "Where is Calvin? I don't see him here." I ask her. She replies, saying, "I haven't seen him; he wasn't at the bus stop this morning."

Just then, the bus driver turns on the radio. The station says, "We mourn the death of 14 year old, Calvin Greenwire. Just this Sunday, Calvin was found dead inside of his room. In an interview with Calvin's parents, we were told that he was perfectly healthy. They said that there had been no prior sickness or health issues. The cause of death is still uncertain."

Samuel Oyler
March 4th, 2019
St. Anns Academy

The Collection

The whole bus sits in awe. Everyone is silent. Nobody knows how to react. We sit there in wonder. How could this happen? First, my father. Now, my best friend. How could this day get any worse?

Only, it does. I walk into first class and Ms. Speiler isn't there. She always get to school 32 minutes exactly before everyone. Maybe there was just bad traffic. Maybe she just got stuck in a car accident. That was, until a substitute walked in, with news.

He says, "Ms. Speiler passed away this morning. It was on her way to school. She stopped at a red light. After that, she fainted, never to wake up. We are so sorry for this loss. Therefore, school is cancelled. Everyone is supposed to report to your homeroom and then to go home. Thank you all for cooperating."

Katherine and I meet up at homeroom. "What in the world is happening? First, your father. Then, Calvin. Then, Ms. Speiler. There has been absolutely no cause for any of this. They haven't even released how they died," Katherine whispers, with a questioning tone in her voice.

"This is pretty questionable. But what would I know, I'm just a dumb teen, right?" I whisper back to Katherine.

Samuel Oyler
March 4th, 2019
St. Anns Academy

The Collection

Katherine replies hastily, "I wouldn't make jokes about this. This is a serious topic. Maybe there is someone behind this. Come to my house tonight, we can talk about it and finish some of the history homework that we have."

"Sound's good. I'll see you then." I reply.

I get off at my stop first on the bus route and see Katherine wave to me. I get inside of my house, noticing that it is strangely silent.

"Mom?!" I yell. Christine, my older sister comes down to see me at the doorway, in panic.

"Jack, she's gone," she says, fighting back tears.

"What do you mean, gone?" I reply instantly, anger in my voice.

"Gone. Just like dad. I came home to see her lying on the couch, not responding.

The doctor said that she was the same as dad. Nothing shows any loss of blood." She cries, tears rolling down her face.

The Collection

"N-. NO!" I storm out of the house. I run. Katherine's house. That is where I will go. I quickly sprint over there to see her at her door step, in tears.

"They're... gone." Katherine exclaims.

I reply slowly, "Yea, my mom was gone when I got home." We sit there in silence. No one knows what to do. Everyone is scared.

"Well, we can't just sit here. We have to figure out what is happening. Come on, let's go inside." Katherine says, still sounding queasy. We walk inside and turn on the television. We hear the emergency broadcast system sound. Then, a news report.

"Our earth has currently entered a crisis. Over 6.5 billion people are unaccounted for or missing. This number is constantly growing, without any stops." Then, the emergency broadcast noise again.

"Katherine, I think this problem is much bigger than we thought. 6.5 billion! This can't be good. Katherine? Kath?" She lay on the couch, motionless. "KATHERINE. Wake up! Not you too. Please don't go! I need you to stay with me." No response. She is gone. This world isn't safe anymore. I can't die. I can't leave. What is happening. I run outside and start yelling. "HELLO? Is there anyone still here?" Nothing. What am I going

Samuel Oyler
March 4th, 2019
St. Anns Academy

The Collection

to do. There is absolutely no one here who can help me. This is going to be the end. We are all going to die. This is the human race downfall.

Just then, I begin to have an uneasy feeling in my stomach. Something isn't right with me. This was a feeling I had never experienced before. I start to hear a noise that sounds like someone blowing on me. I can't move, but I am still here. Alive. Unable to move. Someone in a black suit comes in. I can't speak either. They pick me up and

bring me into a truck. Next thing I know, I am bolted to the ground. Still unable to move.

I am in a room that is filled with people motionless, all bolted down. We are all stuck.

These people aren't dying. They are being collected. Into this one big area. Almost as if a museum. What is this place?

The End.

Fanfare

The crowd stands as the flutes start. The leaders stride in and take their places. My trumpet sounds a bellowing note, something that must have only come from deep pride. My mind wanders off as I play the notes. Minor triad saddens the fanfare¹, now a fermata², and seven bars of rest follow.

I gaze around the room. The Regular leader and the Luminous leader stand exactly thirteen feet away from each other, exchanging cold-hearted glances. The Infected leader is missing. No surprise.

Minutes pass and we've been through a whirlwind of musical episodes. The major climb falls upon us, and we bring it no dishonour. The crescendo³ pulls the band together, like a button to a blazer, and we play the last note with strength and dignity.

Suddenly, something isn't quite right. A trombone player blows a sour note, causing our ears to flinch and our bodies to recoil. Practically complete and utter silence follows - only the stifled sound of the cymbal is heard now. There are only milliseconds to react, as security guns take aim. Someone howls, "Duck!" but it's too late. Bullets striking and instruments clanging and breaking, and, oh, the shrieking! My music stand topples over me. I scramble to grab the sheets and press them close to my chest.

Nobody messes up "Procession of the Nobles"⁴ unless you're looking for a reason to end the world. Of course, nobody but the Infected would want to bring such violence and terrorism to our Global Gathering. They spread hatred and tear up lives like it's nobody's

¹ Fanfare: a short ceremonial tune or flourish played on brass instruments, typically to introduce something or someone important.

² Fermata: a pause of unspecified length on a note or rest.

³ Crescendo: the loudest point reached in a gradually increasing sound.

⁴ Procession of the Nobles: From the suite *Mlada*. Composed by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Fanfare

business, but in a Regular orchestra? That is so negligent and a little bold I'd say. Never has the world been so divided.

I can barely tear my hands away from my eyes to peer through the hole in the chair. "Oh no," I whisper. The exits are a catastrophe, and shots are still ripping through the crowd right to the orchestra seats where I am now. I need to plan my escape route - if there even is one. Now that I scan the room, I can clearly see that there is no way I'm getting out of this mess. Just then, someone roughly grabs me by my shoulders and injects me with a weightlessness needle. I faint.

When I wake up, it smells of dank and dark earth. I groan because there's only one troop who works underground.

The Infected.

I don't even want to open my eyes knowing that I'll be staring into the tattooed faces of the Infected troop. I worry that this might be the end of my time, that my musical career has ended before it had a chance to begin. Little did I know that the Infected wanted much more to do with me than to kill me as soon as I was captured. Deciding that playing dead like a dog was going to do me no good, I open my eyes. Dusky soil flutters on my eyelashes and instant pain strikes my eyes. Surprisingly, as I stare at the dirty underground walls, no one is there. Again, I try to find possible escape plans, but it is increasingly more difficult to find them underground than in a hectic environment like the Global Gathering. My brain seems to

Fanfare

shut off like a survival instinct when I hear someone approaching the room. I collapse back down into my “lifeless” state and force my lungs to hinder their breathing.

I hear the sound of dainty shoes rapping the dusty soil. “A female,” I think. So much for those survival instincts; my brain is now whizzing and it won’t settle. She bends down and focuses on me, and I am certain that she notices my inability to relax. After what seems like inexplicably long seconds of eyes gazing into my soul, she gets up, calls to her partner, Max, and then slams the door shut.

I wait. One minute, five, and then ten, I think, although it might have been an eternity. I decide to open my eyes and get up to listen by the door.

“She’s awake now, Max,” the girl whispers.

“Perfect. When should we confront her, Morgan?”

“Let her stew a bit longer.”

“Agreed.”

I shudder. What do they know about me? About my trumpet? About my music?

Just as the audience claps before the piece finishes and the player smiles with satisfaction, the two of them burst in, the girl holding my trumpet and the boy, waving the music sheet - scribbled with secret information about the Infected. I have arrived at the coda⁵.

It’s almost over.

⁵ Coda: the concluding passage of a piece or movement, typically forming an addition to the basic structure

Fanfare

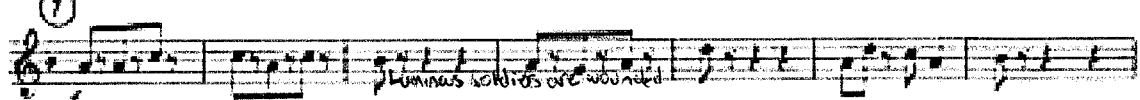
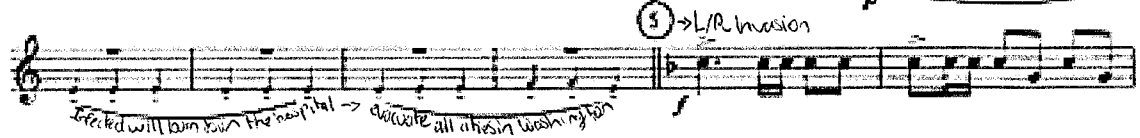
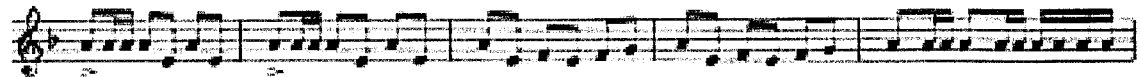
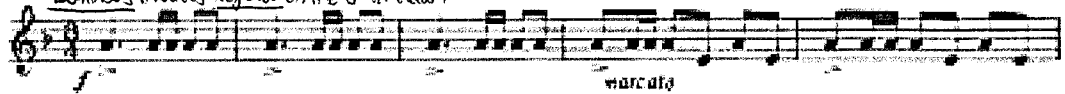
PROCESSION OF THE NOBLES

from MLADA

Nicholas Rimsky-Korsakov
The Russian Leader is Dmitry
A. by Marie J. Isaac

3rd B \flat Trumpet

Allegro moderato e maestoso
Linnus invades regular on the 5th at dawn



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Wondering

Sadie Richardson
Sa-Hali Secondary
Grade 9

Wondering.

If that feeling would ever go away, the feeling of loneliness.

Knowing that the people you might have been able to trust before

Are now your worst enemies.

The shadows that corner you and tear you apart until there is nothing left but fear and
despair.

Wondering.

If you'll ever step foot on the path you were once destined to take.

Or the one that is disguised as it.

Not knowing the difference because all you see are two roads going in different
directions.

And you're stuck trying to figure out where to go because you know that whichever one
you take is the one you're stuck with.

Wondering.

If there is more to life than what you've already gained.

If there is truly light at the end of the tunnel.

Or if it's just another one of those rumours that others spread to one day make one of
their peers fall into uncertainty and misery.

Wondering.

Wondering

Sadie Richardson
Sa-Hali Secondary
Grade 9

If there is a way to cure your curious and stubborn mind before you fall deeper down the rabbit hole of what is called delusion.

To clear your head of every awful and ungrateful thought that has popped into your mind when thinking about what's to come next.

Because the truth is... you don't really know.

Wondering.

If any one of these feelings are actually true.

Or if its your mind falling into that same delusional hole...

The dark tunnel you always seem to find yourself in because you spend too much time wondering.

Wondering...

That's all it takes.

You spend too much time thinking and you find yourself in that same pit.

The dark tunnel you always find yourself trying to escape because your too stubborn to realize,

It never does any good.

It never does any good...

Mistake

Sadie Richardson
Sa-Hali Secondary
Grade 9

I can't control myself anymore.

I need to know where it goes.

Where it leads.

I've seen things go in, but they never seem to come back.

I've tried to forget about it.

Believe me I have.

But the urge to see what's down there has taken over my small fragile body.

It haunts me; I see it in my sleep.

I can't get away from it anymore.

I must know what's down there before I lose my sanity completely.

And as I drift towards the gaping hole, I feel nothing but relief.

But it is when I begin to fall, that is when I realize...

I've made a huge mistake.