



*Secondary School
Entries*

Wall of Emotions

It was dark. She couldn't see and her entire body ached. She didn't know where she was but she felt as if someone was watching her. Then Mikayla realized she was lost. She got up off of the cold stone ground and tried to walk. She fell back down, feeling her legs collapsed beneath her. She lay on the cold dark floor in all of the silence, a tear rolled down her cheek and splattered to the ground with a large thud. At that moment it was deathly quiet, her tears hitting the ground sounded like gunshots amidst all the darkness. Then, everything light up in the blink of an eye.

She was in a large room, the walls were painted a slate grey and the floor was rough cobblestone. The room was completely empty with no furniture. It was an extremely odd room and Mik didn't know how she got here. She got to her feet using all of her strength. Soon her legs no longer felt weak and it was only her head that ached. She walked to the wall and stared intensely at it. She slowly raised her hand and, as her slim fingers met the the warm wall, she felt different. She felt an energy surging through her.

Mik placed her entire hand lightly on the wall and walked, doing circles of the room, letting her hand trail on the wall. Each wall felt different, changing Mik's emotions at each sharp corner. As she continued to walk the walls, they changed. The color went from grey, to bright blue, then hot pink in a blink of an eye. Was she dreaming? Was she dead? Mikayla planted her bare feet into the ground. She slowly took her palm off of

someone was listening. She would do what they wanted. A few seconds after, the wall behind her slid open revealing another room.

Mik walked in and studied her new surroundings. In the room, clothes were all laid out and a note was on a table. Mik took the clothes and put them on. Then she shakingly grabbed the letter. As her fingers met the rough envelope, the wall slammed shut behind her. She dropped the letter and ran, trying to escape. Mik struggled helplessly, trying to open the wall. Finally she gave up. She walked back to the letter and gave it a death glare. As the minutes passed, she picked up the letter. She carefully broke the big wax stamp. She read through the letter. She finally understood; she had been kidnapped and was now being forced to spy on someone.

She never had an interest in spying. She didn't have a choice. She wanted to live; Mik was way too young to die. Although her life not was anything she wanted to go back to; it actually sucked. She was, for a long time, called popular but lately she just was bullied. Her past didn't matter though, because if that photo was leaked by the person watching her, her life really would be over. She stuffed the note in her pocket and sat on the floor waiting for something to happen. The wall finally slid back and revealed a dimly lit alley. Mik stepped out and let the cool air hit her face.

The Mysteries Murders
The Cry Of The Family

Journal entry #1

July 14, 2001

Three days till my birthday. I am so excited I can't wait another beat! I was tossing all around my bed. I was having the most bizarre dreams. I was getting reckless laying there. I got up to get a warm cup of milk to help me go back to bed. When I looked at the clock it was twelve o'clock. I didn't really care because it was the weekend. I continued into the kitchen. I opened the fridge for the milk.

All of the sudden, there was thumping coming from upstairs that echoed through the whole house. It slowly got quieter. I dropped the milk with a smash. I didn't flinch as the milk soaked my bare feet. It felt like I was possessed as I stood there waiting. Then, there was high pitched scream coming from my mother and a lower pitched scream from my father. I jumped! More thumping came from my parent's room. I was more nervous than I ever have been listening to the sounds all around me.

I slowly splashed through the milk. I walked up the stairs ever so quietly to listen. I reached the top of the stairs and I started to shuffle toward my parents room with my back touching the wall. I was at the corner of the entry to their room. I slowly went around the corner.

My parents were lying there, white as ghosts, with their eyes wide. I stood there, petrified, knowing they were most likely dead. I slowly circled around searching their bodies. As I circled I didn't want to get too close. All of the sudden, my mother's arm shot up straight in the air. I didn't know what to do or to think. All of the sudden she said, in a cheerful voice, "Aveo, Aveo? Come here please. I have something to tell you!"

I slowly walked over and said, "Yes Mother, what would you like to tell me?"

She took a deep breath and said, "I want you to run away as fast as you can.

Never come back here, Go to your Aunt Domquime now!" Her voice was not the same.

It was like she was angry for some reason. I did as I was told and I packed a small bag

with clothes, my blackberry and my laptop and started to run to my Aunt Domquime's

house. My Aunt lived outside of the town on a huge farm. I was upset and I was trying to

remember what my mom had said. As the wind blew through my hair, I started to run

faster and faster.

I got to my Aunt's and I started pounding on the door, my face covered in sweat. I

heard a voice coming from out back So I decided to go around back. I scared myself as

I swung over the fence with too much power. "Aunt Domquime is that you?," When she

stood up, she saw the tears running down my cheeks and started to run toward me with

her arms wide open. She asked me what happened. I started to explain as I cried and

told her the whole story. She was upset as well.

"Well I am going to go inside and put my stuff away and do something." I said.

"Okay! Don't feel shy with Nico he's here to help around the house and what not. I am

going to ask him to show you a couple things around the farm." As I walked through the

door I got a wonderful smell of sweets that filled the house. I walked toward the kitchen

to see who was cooking. It was Nico. I was surprised that he could cook so well. He

started to turn around, and I quickly ducked behind the corner of wall.

He said "Domquime is that you?"

I took a deep breath and replied, "Hi no this is Aveo." "Hi Aveo. I am Nico, I help your Aunt as a job. I help all the time. Would you like a blackberry muffin. They are fresh and hot right out of the oven."

"No thanks, I am allergic to blackberries but thanks for the offer." "I have strawberry, raspberry, cherry and apple instead if you would like one?"

"Sure." I said. He stopped and stared at me for a minute. I grabbed a cherry muffin and thanked him. I knew it was time to walked upstairs and turned to the guest room. I carefully set down my bag down while I nibbled on my muffin and opened my bag. I pulled my stuff out and fired up my laptop. I unlocked my phone to see the time. I read six o'clock so I decided to put my laptop on the side table and take a nap to regain some energy. I woke up thinking about what I could do to get my mind off of my parents. So I went outside to find Nico to talk to someone.

As I stepped out the door a small pack of red robins fluttered past me. I had a huge smile on my face as they passed, because they reminded me of my pet bird Tito. was still at home. I started to search for Nico. I was going to start calling his name but then I heard humming come from inside the barn. I started to make my way inside. As I turned the corner he started to sing a song I had never heard before, I stopped and stared as he sang the most beautiful song. I started to clap without thinking and his head snapped up. I stopped as he got up and was coming towards me getting super close. I looked up into his chestnut brown eyes as he looked straight back at me. I swear it was love at first sight as I stood there not wanting to move.

By Haley Bonner Age 14 Grade 8

Kaia Bullock
When I find you...
Grade 8
Beattie School of
the Arts Secondary

Prologue

The soft tipper-tapper of rain beat down on the roof of young Bethany's house. Sweet little Beth sat on her bed quietly waiting for her Daddy to tuck her in. Daddy wasn't coming. She needed her Daddy to check under her bed and in her closet for monsters, and tell her stories about Mommy. Slowly, Bethany flipped off the covers and swung her bunny slipper covered feet to the ground. The floor creaked in protest as the young girl hesitantly walked through the long dark corridor. Soon, the dimly lit kitchen appeared in front of her. The light radiated from the computer that Daddy sat in front of as he replied to emails.

"Daddy? Are you still coming to tuck me in?" She whispered, just loud enough for him to hear her, as she knew her father didn't like to be interrupted. He looked up and smiled at her ever so slightly, nodded and looked back down. Slowly afterwards, Bethany turned toward the dark hallway again and began towards her bedroom. Just as she was about to climb into bed, she heard her father yell to her.

"Bethany! Bethany, I love you! Now please run. Run as fast as you can, through the woods to Mr. Griffin's house. Run!" The young child's green eyes widened with fear, as

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she ran out the back door of the house. Her light brown hair stuck out all over her head like the quills of a porcupine. As she passed the front yard, she saw a big black van in the front, but she didn't stop to look as she was far too frightened. Soon, she had arrived at her neighbors house. Banging on the door, she pleaded for help. As the rain grew stronger her voice became raspy until it was almost non-existent. Suddenly, the young child remembered that he had left the day before for a business trip. The continued to beat down upon her body, and she began to cry harder. She crawled through the large doggy door and into the warm house, where she then hid under the kitchen table and waited. The world seemed so dark to the slightly undersized five year old.

Soon it was morning, and it was no longer dark outside, yet the world still seemed gloomy. Slowly, Bethany began to walk back home, hoping her father was alright. As she approached her home, she saw two heavy looking figures laying on the ground. The closer she got the clearer they became, until she recognized the heaps on the ground. One was her father. Her father, who was surrounded by his own dry blood, looked up at the sky emotionlessly with his dull green eyes. His black hair looked greasy and flat and his body lay in the most uncomfortable position. While Mr. Phillips, the other crumpled figure, looked to the side, with

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fear still in his eyes. His own crushed bones stuck out of his chest and his hair was messy and wet from the blood that soaked his entire body. Not understanding what had happened, Bethany sunk down to her knees and shook her father. His hand was curled tightly in a fist. Uncurling it, Bethany discovered a thin silver with two rings attached. It looked familiar, but she couldn't place where it came from, so she carefully nestled it into her slipper and continued to shake her father's lifeless body.

"DADDY! Daddy...? Daddy? Why aren't you helping Mr. Philips? Are you okay? Daddy?" Not understanding why her father was ignoring her, she curled up beside his cold limp body, and cried herself to sleep...

The Prince's bride

Meisya Bevan, Beattie school of arts (JP Campus), words: 807

The sun was shining warmly against her skin, with a gentle breeze to keep the air cool. It was a kind of warmth that Amaryllis wished her own parents gave to her. Her parents were always busy, a fact that she knew since she was little; but Amaryllis wished that they at *least* sat at the dining table and enjoyed a meal together, like any family should.

The sound of peoples' calls snapped Amaryllis back into reality. Her eyes flickered behind her, and sighed in disappointment. Behind her stood her nanny, holding a delicate looking dress, who was putting on a cheerful demeanor. "Mistress!" Beatrice, the nanny, sang out, "I brought your dress for your dress for your wedding with Prince Charles today!" The delicate dress was definitely worthy for a royal wedding. The dress was a lacy Empire gown with long sleeves and a frilly bottom. The train was ten-feet long, and the whole thing was pale than snowflakes itself. "Mistress!" Beatrice scolded when she saw the disgust on Amaryllis' face, "marriage is one of the biggest honours! A prince, soon to be king, no less!" Amaryllis closed her eyes before the tears manage to escape it. Of course Beatrice wouldn't understand, just like Amaryllis' mother, and almost everyone else in the manor. Prince Charles... Amaryllis only met him once, and marrying a man that she only met once was quite disturbing and odd in her opinion.

Technically, Amaryllis did not want to marry at fourteen years old, not at all. But her mother and nanny insisted that she must marry the twenty-five year old

The Prince's bride

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prince, in order to pay the debt that her father owed to the former king. Amaryllis sighed in frustration when suddenly all the maids in the manor entered her room, quite rudely too. She put her arms out for the bustling maids, and watched through the mirror as her ragged appearance from sleeping, into a fanciful bride. Her gold-red hair framed her gold-brown eyes, matching perfectly with her porcelain skin and the lacy dress. Everyone told Amaryllis that she was beautiful, probably more so than an angel, but she did not want to be known for beauty, she wanted to be known for her courage.

A knock came from Amaryllis' door once the maids were done with her fitting. Beatrice hurriedly opened the door, revealing Amaryllis' brother (and her only friend.) Gerald stood at the door, with a frown on her face. "Ral," Amaryllis gasped in surprise, her eyes lighting up with happiness. Ral's eyes soften when he saw his younger sister, a gentle smile replaced his frown. "Amaryllis," Ral murmured softly, "you look utterly stunning." He straightened up, and said to Beatrice, "may I talk to my sister?" Beatrice and the rest of the maids nodded furiously, and stumbled out of the room quickly. Ral calmly walked to Amaryllis, taking her hands into his own once he reach her. "Are you well?" Ral asked, concern filled his eyes. "I do not want to marry," Amaryllis answered quietly. "I understand," Ral murmured, "but you know that there is little we can do." Amaryllis nodded mutely, putting her head down. Of course she knew the consequences if she does not marry Prince Charles. Her parents would disown her,

The Prince's bride

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and the royal family would either forget about her and find a new bride for Charles; or hunt her down. The two former did not bother Amaryllis at all, but the latter was quite worrisome. Amaryllis thinned her lips thinking about her options. Suddenly an idea popped up in her mind.

"I will do it," Amaryllis stated in determination, startling Ral immensely, "I will marry Prince Charles and become a queen. I will be loving to my husband and to my people. I will not spend my money on riches that I do not need! I will shock people with my intelligence and my strength! I will not become a damsel in distress! I will become a powerful, successful and loving queen! Oh Ral! I will do it!" Ral stared at his sister in shock, it was quite rare for her to be determine in something she absolutely loathed. Ral grinned at her proudly, he really did like the change. "Well then," Ral said teasingly, putting his arm out, "may I have this honour to escort the upcoming queen to her wedding?" Amaryllis grinned and lift her head up, taking his arm, "you may." They walked out of the room, and to the wedding ceremony. Amaryllis' heart thumped rapidly and her breath hitched a couple of times as they drew closer and closer. Amaryllis closed her eyes once they stopped in front of the entrance to the ceremony. She *truly* hoped that she will not regret her decision in the future.

Caden

Grade 8/@KOOL

The Old Oak Tree

Teachings about what matters the most
come uncommonly.

The things you treasure the most
pass you by like the whispers of the wind or the screams of a distant past.
The things you hold onto the dearest
in the end pass you by like a grain of sand on a beach.

Days pass by too quickly, while I stand still in motionless time;
stuck in an endless limbo, in a place we both love and dread.
A place we take for granted, but hide in the darkest of our pasts.

The tree's dark widowed leaves fly by,
gone in the wind of past memories.
Life's dreams of a better world seem so close but still are so distant.
The tree's outstretched arms reach for the sky, feeling so close but yet so far from grasping onto what
we all should hold true to in the end.
Trying to find yourself amongst a giant open field, stretching miles and miles from your view.

Lost in hope, roots dug deep are stuck in the eternal plane.
Staring into the deep abyss, pondering and wondering.
The grooves etched deep into its skin.

Just an old oak tree, lost its beauty deep within.

Withered, tattered and battered, the leaves weave around the tree's charred body.
Like a lost cat in the rain, it is lost in a world so cruel and wonderful.

The mossy swamp in which its roots lay is littered with confetti of people,
grown old by this day.
The wonderful laughs and cries the tree once heard,
lost to the deep ambience that surrounds it now.
It is only pages in a broken book, binding frail and fragile, tattered and ripped, lettering smudged.

A tree so strong and durable,
but so vulnerable.

The tree's wrinkles wrangle down its face like windswept valleys.
An eternal maze etched deep in its complexity,
Mother Nature's matrix.

Dead and alive at the same time, floating and sinking.
Stuck to earth, yet lifted by spirit. Skin of iron, heart of gold.
Everlasting roots spread far and wide.

Rows of grace embrace the tree, an audience.

The wind violently bangs into the arms of the trees.
Violently churning, swinging the tree back and forth.
Breaking, snapping the arms.
Skin of iron gone, turned to rubble once hit the ground.

In the end, that is what the old tree would be, nothing but fallen branches etched forever by time.

Lachlan Crawford
Grade 8 Beattie School of the Arts Secondary

A Spring Day

The trees stood still,

Their branches reflexed.

The girl stood there,

Her face perplexed.

Wondering the sky so blue,

Buds so green,

With all its might, the wind blew?

The brook swiftly moved and rippled,

Down her face a tear trickled.

Winter was so long and weary.

It was hard,

Especially on nights that were dreary.

But spring had come,

How the sun shone.

It's beauty was like,

None that was ever known.

Lachlan Crawford
Grade 8 Beattie School of the Arts Secondary

Their Love

They lived,

They cried.

She had to say goodbye,

But he couldn't stand the pain.

She didn't know he was dying inside,

It was tragic when it came.

His memory was gone,

So it wouldn't be long.

It was too hard to bear.

She loved him so much,

So she was his crutch.

Until it was time to go.

This is a sad story of love and woe,

But lest we not forget.

This man loved Jehovah God,

And Jehovah God loved him.

So when we are all in paradise,

She'll see his smiling face.

She'll run to him and cry,

And say the story of her life.

She'll tell him how she took it all,

Without her love one day at a time.

He'll hold her cheek,

And not worry about life.

'Cause from that day forward,

He would make her his wife.

My mama always told me *don't look for love, let love look for you*, so I decided to follow The Flounder Brick Road in search of love. I mean how is love supposed to find you when you're penned up in a sea anemone 24/7? Anyway, I was just floating along The Flounder Brick Road when my tail started to ache, so I stopped at the local Urchin Café everyone was raving about for some nourishment and a spot to put my tail up. As I sat there enjoying a fresh sea cucumber, the most gorgeous girl I'd ever laid eyes on entered the café.

She flopped in, her teal tale shimmering in the evening rays. She wore a purple seashell bikini and sported the most luscious red hair. She looked over at me and winked one of her delicate blue eyes and I swear I almost fainted. To my utter delight she floated over and introduced herself as Ariel. She then proceeded to tell me about her snobby sisters, her strict father, and her dreams to go above water. Ariel was a daring mermaid and I loved her for it, but how could she ever fall for me, Sheldon, a lonely seahorse. Well I guess you'll have to wait and see.

"Why don't we travel together? It will be safer," Ariel suggested. "The Flounder Brick Road is no place for a seahorse to be travelling alone."

"Are you sure? I don't want to be a burden on you," I questioned.

"No, no it will be fun," she insisted, and so we set off on our quests together.

"So what do you like to do when you're not being harassed by your sisters?" I asked, eager to learn more about my new crush.

"Well, I've always enjoyed watching crab apples."

“No! Really? That’s my favourite too!” I lied.

“You’re kidding, you’re the first thing I’ve met that likes crab apples! Who’s your favourite player? Is it King Crab, Granny Apple, or Sir McIntosh?”

“Well, it’s so hard to decide, they’re all so fantastic,” I replied. I sure had gotten myself into a sea pickle.

“You don’t even know what crab apples are, do you?” she cried clearly distraught. “Why would you lie to me? I thought you were better than that!”

“I am, I just wanted to have something in common. It’s been a long time since I’ve had a friend like you,” I sheepishly replied. I loved her and just wanted to mean as much to her as she meant to me. Ariel didn’t believe me when I told her about me not fitting in and not having friends. She didn’t believe that I was a misfit; that no one loved me back home.

“Why are you leaving the sea? You’ve got friends and family. Your life is perfect down here,” I told her trying to convince her to stay. We had reached the Abyssal Plane and it wouldn’t be long before we got to the Choral Reef and she would leave me.

“Sheldon, seaweed is always greener in somebody else’s lake and I want to find the greenest seaweed imaginable,” she explained.

“But you’re not going to somebody else’s lake, you’re going above water, onto dry land,” I countered. “There isn’t even seaweed on dry land!”

“It’s a metaphor Sheldon! Why do you even care what I do with my life, it’s not like it’s going to change your world! This is going to change my world and that’s exactly what I need. I can’t live my life flopping around on the ocean floor. I’ve got dreams that I need to make into realities,” Ariel fumed. “Why don’t you understand?” Tears welled up in my eyes, I loved her and she just found me a nuisance. Mama was right I should have just waited for love to find me.

“I care about you, that’s why!” I sobbed. “The Choral Reef is a dangerous place and I don’t want you to get hurt!”

“I’ll be fine! I can swim faster than all the fish in the sea,” Ariel countered.

There was no hope for me, I was a hopeless cause, and so I let her swim away. I turned away, she was clearly not my true love. I swam five yards before realizing that love was worth fighting for. I swerved through the coral staying hidden as I caught up to her. I had to let her cool off before approaching her again. I finally caught up to her and followed silently until I bumped into an organ pipe coral. It belched out random notes causing Ariel to whip around. I was caught.

“Why are you following me?” she cried. “I thought we were through. Don’t you understand?! Goodbye!”

“I do, but I can’t say goodbye to you because goodbye means going away and going away means forgetting and I never want to forget you Ariel!” I confessed.

Ariel never did forget me after that, but sometimes I just want to forget her. Like most good fairytales we got married, but we didn't exactly live happily ever after. Turns out Ariel didn't leave her humble abode and family by choice. She was banished for being abusive and a psychopathic hoarder. The lesson being: don't marry someone for their looks; get to know them first, and don't look for love, let love look for you.

Julia Fabbro-Smith
Grade 8
South Kamloops Secondary School

I put all my concentration into moving each foot. Any noises would surely give me away, but there was no one in sight. Wincing, I began to quicken my pace.

I knew that not far away, they were bolting after a runaway girl, dogs at their side.

Through my pain and laboured breathing, I could only concentrate on moving. The images of suffering were seared into my brain and I began to sprint.

In the dim light, the trees formed terrifying shadows as they flew by, tricking my mind. Perhaps someone was on to me? My breath hitched and the pain in my side began to worsen. If this was not a matter of life or death, I knew I would have collapsed many minutes ago.

Tears were streaming down my face, but I placed one foot after the other in an endless pattern. The blackness enveloped me, and it was difficult to make out any form in my surroundings. As my energy began to flicker like a spent candle, my foot caught on a root and I tumbled. That mistake could have cost me my life. I needed to keep running, but I couldn't.

Exhausted, I pushed myself up to my feet. After struggling for a few steps, I collapsed by a tree. Run! Run! While the last of my energy ebbed away, I made out a light in the darkness. As my body began to slacken, one thought penetrated the haziness: run. Then, my world went blacker than night itself.

Isabella Ford, grade 8, Westsyde Secondary

Darkness

His own son watched as he chiseled away meticulously sanding and smoothing the jagged edges of other peoples lives.

However, he couldn't remove the scars that stayed with his child. No amount of concealer could mask the cracks in his china doll wife.

This porcelain woman came and lit up the darkness for the son. When life appeared dim she took his place when the son lost his brightness.

Years passed when the son soon realized that the darkness brought clarity with it. The darkness was guaranteed to stay dark.

Fifteen years of watching him witnessing fallen pieces of the only light he had. Drop so far down into the abyss of brokenness. He listened quietly, as broken bits of his mother shattered under his father's impact.

Fifteen years is enough.

Enough time for a child to stop caring about anything.

Enough time for the sun to burn out.

Enough time to get lost under the influence of fallen stars.

Their ability to rely on one another's light kept them from burning out into darkness.

Little did that man care about his abusive bloodline, soon broken pieces turned into broken bones.

The broken porcelain woman was too damaged to light up the darkness for the son anymore.

She had burnt out.

Isabella Ford, grade 8, Westsyde Secondary

Darkness

Consuming magic pills to send herself up to the stars.

Leaving the boy alone with the only thing he had ever known.

Darkness.

The son met a girl so beautiful her glowing light shone brighter than the fullest moon.

A girl so graceful his broken pieces were swept from her feet.

A girl that was just that right amount of perfect for the son.

I wasn't getting out of the car. Just because my mother thought it would be a good idea to get me out of the city, didn't mean I was going to go along with it. Actually, if it wasn't for the poop outside the car door, I *would* have gotten out of the car – gotten out and walked back to the bus station in the nearest hick town, where I could catch the next bus back to Vancouver.

Unfortunately, I was wearing my new sneakers and I wasn't going to get them covered in poop, so I was stuck in the car, unable to escape the nightmare that awaited me at my destination. I was at my father's cattle ranch in the middle of nowhere.

My mom had pulled up just outside what looked like my father's tool shed. The sign on the door said "Ranch Office". She glared at me and I knew there was no way I was going to win this battle. And when I glanced out the window and spotted the handsome cowboy moseying over to our car, I for sure wasn't going to let him witness a scene with my mom. Out into the poop I went, with a pathetic look of farewell to my mother.

"Mister Cowboy" took one look at me and burst out laughing. I didn't look that ridiculously out of place, did I?

He was tall and well-muscled, with a gorgeous smile and brilliant green eyes that seemed to smile too. "So you're the boss's daughter."

I frowned, "So?"

"Nothing," he said. "I just wasn't expecting a total city-slicker like you, that's all. You'd probably do us all a huge favor if you went straight back to where you came from."

I crossed my arms, trying to keep my face clear of emotion. Though it was true, I didn't need to have him say it to my face. "I didn't come here by choice. My mother thought it would be good for me to get out of the city."

He laughed again. "You'd be surprised at what country life can do for the soul." He held out his hand. "I'm Dave, by the way. I'm the head cowboy here."

I looked at his hand covered in oil and dirt; there was no way that I was going to touch that hand. From the smirk on his face I knew he'd expected me to do exactly what I did – not shake it.

The next morning I woke to the sound of the breakfast bell ringing. Groaning, I looked over at the alarm clock that lay on the night table beside my bed. The red numbers on its face blinked 3:30 am. I sat up and looked out the window. There wasn't a trace of the coming dawn visible in the sky. It was still pitch black. I was going to have to speak with my father about this the next time I saw him.

Forty-five minutes later, I was sitting on the back of a black and white horse, a frown on my face. A six hour cattle drive! Count me officially out of it. Dave seemed to be the only one who understood how I felt, which only made me angrier.

"I used to hate leaving the city," he said, pulling his horse up next to mine. "My parents sent me up here a few summers ago when they got me the cowboy job. They said the fresh air would be good for me. You don't get much fresh air playing video games, but this was a little extreme. Turned out I loved it so much that when your father offered me the head cowboy job this summer I took it. I love it up here. It's a great place if you give it a chance."

He trotted off before I could respond to his story, which I was gratefully for, but it left me thinking about it for the rest of the ride. One can breathe a lot of fresh air in six hours on the back of a horse. Some not-so-fresh air too.

At the end, when the cows had reached their summer grazing meadow, I dismounted. My butt hurt, and I was terribly thirsty, tired and proud. I hadn't fallen off, and I'd even risked trotting a few times myself.

I felt as if I had accomplished something. But most of all, I could understand why Dave would come back to a place like this. There wasn't anything like it anywhere in the city, I thought, as I watched the cows find their calves and start grazing on the tall green grass, dotted with buttercups. The mid-day sun hung above in the clear blue sky. This place was incredibly peaceful.

From that day on I spent all of my school breaks at my father's ranch, riding, learning the ways of the ranch, and helping deliver calves when necessary. I never looked back from there. I often stop and think about how lucky it was that I didn't listen to Dave when he told me the best thing for everyone was to go back to the city. I'm glad I got out of the car that first day in the country.

Creatures – Juliet McGauchie

My mother, Evelyn, passed away a few years ago from an accident. I can't get over my constant nightmares. Every single night, I have a petrifying nightmare about death. I've grown up with dogs and cats all my life. I'm used to the scratching on my door at night, but now that I live alone, it's unsettling. I hear scratching and whispering coming from my bedroom door every night at exactly nine past twelve. I always thought it was just a nightmare until I saw the claw marks engraved in my door the next morning. I remember knocking coming from my window around midnight, but then I realized it was coming from the mirror. Dark shadows were always lurking around in my room, and by thinking logically, there is no way this could be a human being.

As soon as I fell asleep, my nightmare had begun. I looked in my bathroom mirror and saw a dark grey creature on the other side. Its hair was long and scraggly, covered in grease and blood. It appeared to be a woman, but I wasn't quite sure. I looked into its devilish eyes and embraced the moment. This might have been the answer to my nightmares. I flicked the lights on and off and saw my reflection. Once the lights were back on, the creature was staring back at me. I leaned inwards, trying to figure out what I was seeing. I heard quiet whispers coming from behind the shower curtain. I quickly pushed the curtains away and saw that the faucet had black smoke coming out of it. The last time I looked at my alarm clock, it was 12:07. I felt a soft touch on my shoulder so I turned my head around and saw a long, bony arm reach for my chest. Its claws dug into my flesh and started ripping it with its rotten brown teeth. I felt its breath on my cheeks. Blood was dripping from the ends of its hair. I started screaming but the pain wouldn't stop.

I woke up, looking directly at my alarm clock. It was 12:06 and I had heard my closet door creak. I got up and turned my bedroom light on and walked over to the closet and saw the arm that was in my nightmare. It reached for me as I grabbed its wrist. I backed away and slammed the closet door as hard as I could. A high pitched squeal came from inside; the sound of death.

I walked to my bedroom door and turned the handle. I felt a quick burn on my palm as I was grabbing it. I looked through the crack between the door and the doorframe and saw bright orange flames come at me. My staircase was destroyed as was my whole apartment. I grabbed my blanket

as quick as I could and put it over my head as I ran down the remaining stairs. I noticed that the creature had stopped and stayed in the closet. I kept running until I felt the flames on my arms. I threw the blanket off my body and tried smashing my front door so I could get through. As the door crashed open, I noticed that the hallway was pitch black. I started sprinting towards the lobby. The fire had spread across the building, wrecking the whole left side. As I reached the front entrance, nobody was to be seen. The doors leading out into the city were gone. All to be seen was darkness. The fire was creeping up faster and faster. Eventually, the fire was surrounding my feet. I was trapped in a circle of burning flames.

I tried to yell for help but there was no reply. I felt the fire burning my skin; my flesh was sizzling as the flames dug into my body like broken glass. The pain was unforgiving. I looked back, and saw the creature. It walked right through the flames as if nothing was there. Its long and bony arm reached inwards, grasping its fingers around my wrist. It seemed like it was poisoning me by starring straight into my eyes. I felt a quick rush of coldness chill up my spine, and sharp pain in my chest. As I looked down, the creature's arm was holding my blood gushing heart. I screamed, letting out all my fear. It placed his hand on my mouth, not allowing me to scream nor breathe. Its dark grey eyes starred at me for a while before it let her hand down.

She quickly shoved me into the flames and the room went dark. The fire had gone, as did the creature. I felt my chest and realized my heart still wasn't in place. My eyes finally adjusted to the darkness. I saw a long passage way leading to an open door. I started to sprint, trying not to look back. All I could hear were my footsteps. As I ran closer to the door, I became colder and colder. A few minutes later when I finally approached the door, I could see a whole other universe. Tons of different creatures were walking around, each and every one with a different look. In the distance, I could have sworn I saw another human. I ran towards the direction that I saw her. I looked closer and realized it was my mother. "Mom?" I muttered. She looked at me and walked away, pretending nobody was there. "Mom, it's me, Jakob!" She looked back and her face had changed to the girl from my nightmare. I ran back to the door and started crying. I looked across the hallway and saw a monster looking at me in the mirror. It was me. I looked down at my body and I had transformed into a monster. My heart was taken away as was my human life. I'm now one of them.

She needed to get out. She hated it. Her husband was six feet buried in the ground and her beloved children had long deserted her, all her friends had already floated off this face of the planet and into a better place. It was lonely, at retirement home, she mostly kept to herself. The other residents were polite, not overly friendly but nice enough to be able to exchange a few lines of speech.

Set back at a decent distance from the street, the retirement building was a lumbering building, efficiently built to house 300 seniors. Despite the weekly beheadings, a few wild clusters of honeysuckles still had the nerve to grow alongside the soft tendrils of grass on the front lawn, much to the annoyance and scrutiny of the head gardener. The back gardens were landscaped to rival the Greeks; carefully pruned hedges shaped into whimsical creatures, fountains spouting gleaming water.

She glanced past the sparkling glass of the window to be met with the branches of leaves swooping down like the wings of protective eagles. The slight rustle of the wind caused the still surface of the pond to disappear, breaking out into little ripples of velvet. The sweet stir of flowers and grass harmonized with the crystal sharp chirps of the birds, resonating in every direction.

The creaking rocking chair moved back and forth, the stiff, creamy pages of her novel scraping against each other. Her spindly silver hair, arranged upon her head like a

crown, glimmered against the weak beams of the afternoon sun which stuttered in through the window. She sat with her back stick-straight as if a poker was running down her spine; this was the seating of a queen.

Don't let her hollow cheeks, dusted with a light pink, and exuberant, shining eyes fool you; she had become very tired after eighty years. The saggy, deep creases etched into her skin were her only betrayers of age.

A young nurse silently glided towards the worn lady and gently tapped her shoulder.

"Shaula, it's time for tea." Shaula nodded, not able to speak, as the nurse rushed to help her up.

Shaula gently rose, her calloused feet slowly eased on the weight, signalling her frail legs to straighten. The ribbons of arthritis, woven into her bones snap, forcing her to grind her teeth together to avoid screaming.

Despite the aching of her bones, she had a peaceful time in the communal room. The swirled taste of golden-brown biscuits, luscious jam and fresh cream went down nicely with the watery tea, all the while listening to the lulling tunes of the radio.

However, Shaula felt a twinge of loneliness as she watched and listened to the others mingle. It had been a long time since she had a real talk with anyone. She had been able to leave the home without restraint.

It was time to get out.

It was a peaceful Sunday afternoon, Shaula had excused herself from church. An attendant had offered to stay with Shaula but she declined, knowing very well, that she finally had a chance to escape.

Dressed in a tunic, scattered with blooming paisleys, and worn jeans, Shaula swiftly brushed out through the back door. The ache of her bones reminded Shaula that her nimble feet had gone slower in the last three decades. However, the delight of being unsupervised produced a squeal. The subtle wind whispered about, the rays of sun kissed her skin, and the shackles of confinement broke loose.

Shaula continued down the road, deciding to walk downtown. Cars continued to rush past her, on an urgent mission called "work". Downtown, was a modern jungle, towering masses of concrete and glass loomed over heads, housing a mixture of offices, stores and restaurants. The new infrastructure shocked Shaula but the rush of adrenaline pumped through her veins, excitement lighten in her eyes. For the next couple of hours, she would weave in and out of buildings, exploring every inch of the city, leaving no stone unturned.

Only when the sleepy sun began to set did Shaula realize it was time for her to go back. She rushed back to the retirement home, whisking up to her room, barely making it into bed before the attendant came.

Maggie

Grade 8

Sa-hali Secondary

One Last Adventure

The luminous moon smiled in the sky, casting beams of light and shadow to fall on Shaula's fan of spindly hair. She thought about her adventure while slowly and peacefully drifting into an endless slumber.

Flatlining

Kate Nanson

Grade 8

Young Authors 2015

What colour is the sky? Everyone says it's blue, but I wouldn't know. My world is black and white and various shades of grey. Maybe the school bus isn't actually "yellow", and apples aren't actually "red". Maybe my hair isn't black, but instead a dark shade of brown? But I know for a fact that my eyes are green. When I look in the mirror, I see my eyes first, the light, faded green being the only colour in my world.

And now, sitting in this hospital room, this greenless hospital room, with the incessant beeping, I feel the urge to wish, as I do almost constantly, that I can see colours. That I can see *life*. But lately, my wish has been for Lea to be okay.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Most people associate beeps with alarm clocks, or school bells. I associate it with death. Or something close to death, anyway. Do you remember reading *Sleeping Beauty*? "A sleep like death." Can you imagine? Breathing but not actually *living*? That's how my best friend is.

Lea is the kind of person who deserves only good. She's the girl who volunteers at the homeless shelter, gets good grades, and is always smiling. She's the girl who talks to the "weird" kid everyone ignores. She's the girl that everyone loves.

However, Lea has been comatose for months. We were at her grandparent's cabin by the lake last summer, and, in short, she dove in and hit her head on a rock. And now, she's just kind of laying in the hospital, existing. They keep talking about unplugging her, but her parents were adamantly against it.

Luckily, the doctors told her parents a short while ago that she's showing signs of "waking up". They've been with her almost 24/7 since they heard, and if they're not with her, then I am. Whether it's sitting in the sterile hospital room finishing homework, or reading Lea her favourite book, *Fahrenheit 451*, I hate for her to be all alone. One of my biggest worries is that when she "wakes up", she'll be all alone, and scared.

I stare out the window, at the rainy Chicago sky.

Promises

Free Verse Poem Written By: Sage Needham

Beattie Secondary School

Grade 8

When the mirror shatters
and I have fallen to pieces
will you still stand by me?

When I have fallen
like a tree of the forest
will you help me stand strong?

When the snow has fallen
leaving me cold and weary
will you tell me that it will be alright?

Some promises are spoken,
while some promises
go unsaid.

So be courageous,
in the times when I cannot.

Be a hero,

My Voices

Free Verse Poem Written By: Sage Needham

Beattie Secondary School

Grade 8

They speak another language,

one of my past.

So ignore my voices,

and the things I have seen seem strange to me.

The Blueprints

‘She left early.’

‘Who?’

‘The girl with dark hair and green eyes. With the odd clothing. You know who I mean?’

‘Yes.’

Quentin Wilcox strode along the corridor casting dark glances at the servant who stumbled along behind him trying to keep up with his quick gait. Quentin was frustrated and angry. He had been looking forward to this night for weeks, only to have it spoiled by this incident. The sound of music from the hall down below was still audible, and he itched to get back to the dancing and socialising that promised to come with such a night. Usually he wouldn't have bothered to look for a guest who left the party early, it happened all the time, but with the events leading up to it he couldn't afford to take any chances. He'd been tipped off from numerous sources that someone would be breaking into his house tonight, but even that was nothing special. He had to have been given similar information on numerous different occasions and nothing bad had happened yet. No, what bothered him was that the information had been preceded by dreams warning him of upcoming danger, and while Quentin tried to ignore them and pretend they didn't happen he knew that he should heed their warning, especially after what happened last time. He preferred not to think about last time.

And the girl bothered him. He was sure he had seen her face somewhere before, although he couldn't place where.

Quentin spun on his heel to face the servant.

‘Give instructions to every member of the household to keep an eye out for a girl of average height with black hair and green eyes. She is dressed like a traveller. If anyone sees her alert me immediately.’

The servant, knowing that the description was not much to go on, but knowing not to argue, nodded and with a quick subordinate phrase, left. Quentin Wilcox was strong minded. If he decided he wanted something done, then done it would be.

Quentin glared at the servant’s retreating back. He would return to the party, of course. It would not do for the host to disappear suddenly, but he would do something else first. He turned and strode off down the hallway, the opposite way to that which the servant had gone.

Once both were out of sight, a girl of average height with black hair and green eyes stepped out from where she stood concealed in the red curtain that hung along the corridor giving it a stifling feel. She cast a glance down the hall and padded quietly after Quentin. She had heard every word he said and knew she had to get out of there as quickly as possible without alerting him to her presence. She was not afraid of him, but he could add unnecessary complications which would add costs her client might not be willing to pay. Her one advantage was that he did not know who she was. He would have a lot more security features in place if he knew Dragonsbane was loose in the building.

Finally she stopped outside one of the many identical, oak doors that lined the corridor. It was locked, of course, but it was the work of only a few seconds to get it open. She found herself in somebody’s bedroom. Not what she was looking for. This was obviously the wrong floor. She tried the next floor up. This one seemed to be more of a work space. It took her a few tries to find the door she was looking for, but eventually there it was. The master’s study. She kicked the door closed behind her and settled herself in the chair behind the desk to have a good rifle

through his belongings. On top of the desk sat an unfinished letter that looked both important and private. That would be a good enough place to start. She skimmed through it and had to restrain sudden desire to laugh. Instructions as to where to find a false floorboard under the desk. Could Martin Wilcox actually have been that stupid? She knelt down and followed the instructions carefully left for her to find. I didn't take long to find the right floorboard and prise it up. She flipped through the documents. They were right. She grabbed some loose papers from the desk and placed them inside. That way if Martin glanced in he would find everything to be in order. She replaced the floorboard and, as she left, she noticed a signet ring sitting in plain sight on the desk. She picked it up and flipped it once in her hand before dropping it in her pocket. Those were always useful to have.

The papers tucked safely away in a pouch under her jacket, she kicked the door open. She strode out, only to come face to face with Quentin Wilcox.

She smiled at him.

'What were you doing in my father's study?' he demanded.

'Oh, this and that,' Dragonsbane replied, keeping a pleasant smile plastered on her face.

'I've finally figured out where I've seen you before,' Quentin said bluntly. 'You were on a poster a while back. Killed a dragon or something.'

Dragonsbane smiled at him. 'That's why they call me Dragonsbane,' she said as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

'But Dragonsbane isn't your real name, is it?' Quentin pressed. 'It's Cecilia Black.'

'Maybe,' Cecilia replied, pushed past him and ran for the window. He yelled and chased after her, but she was faster. She reached the window long before him and vaulted neatly out. As

she fell, she thought about what Quentin had said. It *had* been a while since her famed incident with the dragon. She needed to remind the world that it had not heard the last of Cecilia Black.

"...if there's been an emergency, you can contact me at 867-251-3945..." Over the tinny speakers, it was impossible to tell what sort of person this phone belonged to. Even the phone itself - a generic brand, with the default background set on the lock screen - said nothing about the owner. I had already called the number (the internet revealed it was a small pharmaceutical shop), and left a message with a number to call. It was pretty late, and I decided I'd head down to the company tomorrow. They were probably closed anyhow. It had been a long day - probably best just to get some shuteye.

Here's a fact about me - I have very odd dreams; at least, the ones I can remember. Most fade away moments after I wake. When I asked one of my college friends, Anna, about it, she recommended a dream diary. I tried that for a bit, but all I remember is small details. I gave it up after a bit. Some guys write stories out of what's in those things, but I don't see a point if I can't remember anything. I decided this morning that it would be a good idea to try again. Picking up a pad of sticky notes (I never go anywhere without them!), and a pen, I gave my mind control. Without even trying, I filled up two pages with tiny, unfamiliar handwriting. My hand is cramped, and my head is buzzing in a frequency somewhere between a swarm of bees and the sound nails make on a chalkboard. I force myself to focus on what I wrote.:

Oct 1st, 1727.

I've dreamed of this day. I was sure it would come.... Certain, in fact. The Mary May has left port at last, heading North to destinations unknown! glorious day for us, prisoners on the death row! Woe to those left behind, that think they are free from the marauders and scoundrels, yet-soon to meet the wrath of the cold! Then they shall know, we are those that have been saved! The captain tells me that within days, they shall all be frozen and dead, burned alive by Winter's tongue! We will be skirting the edge of Father Winter's lands. Let us hope he lets us pass unharmed...

What had I been writing? *Maybe it was some ancestral memory.* I've read about that somewhere, DNA passing memories... Although, it could have been one of Carlos's magazines; then it would be complete and utter baloney. Carlos said he reads that stuff for fun, to see how it feels to believe everything you read. I can't help but feel if you spend so much time reading it- some of the craziness starts to rub off on you... Who knows? Carlos is a strange guy, but he's also loyal, and stubborn to a fault.

I'm usually up and ready for the day by at eight o'clock, so I'm more than a little confused when I glance at the clock - ten fifteen already? I might have fallen asleep, I was dazed after the writing.

I've heard it gets cold here, well into the negative twenties at night and it's only getting colder. If I still lived out of my car, I'd have frozen to death. Carlos and some friends helped set me up, and when I get a job I'll be able to start a life here. Maybe the message is a sign, if I can start getting those dreams down on paper, I could start my dream job as a writer.

I wake to a message on my cell, about the phone. "Hello, my name is Andrea Clarence. I guess you found my daughter's phone. We're worried sick about it. She has so much stuff on it, you wouldn't believe it. I told her to call the Police! If you could call me, I'm here from twelve to five. Thank you."

"So much stuff"? I think. *It looks brand-new... Oh well. I have a couple of hours before I drop it off.* I glance towards the bedroom, .. the note....the whole writer thing. Better to wait until I find out more about the *Marie May* and her crew. I'm sure I'll dream about it again.

I walk down to the shop, ..it's not that far away the phone in my pocket, I'm there in minutes. *Clover Pharmaceuticals. Established 1727.* Inside It's darker than I expected. My eyes take a second to adjust.

"Are you the one who called about the phone?"

"I am." I reply

"Thank you, so much!" The speaker is an older lady, with bright red hair and green eyes. She has pale skin, freckles, a couple of wrinkles starting to appear. "I'm Andrea, by the way."

"Nice to meet you. This building seems much too new for a company established so long ago." I enquire This building could be anything - a law firm, an insurance company, a fancy store.

Andrea seems amused. "Yes, we're *just* getting settled in. We're from the South."

"I I just moved here, too. Unpacking can be a pain right?"

"Don't I know it. My daughter isn't here to thank you - something about a friend, but thank you."

"No problem. Nice meeting you, ... um .. Andrea. If you need any help unpacking, I guess you have my number." I turn to walk out.

"They say she looks just like me." Andrea mutters it, so quietly I almost think she isn't talking to me.

"Who?"

"Everyone. I think she looks like her father - she kept his last name, you know. Liked the initials better than M.C."

"That's... interesting."

Kylie Coates

Fire is everywhere I look. Trees are smothered by the spreading inferno and they suffocate under heavy black smoke. The sky is thick with orange, red clouds, reflecting the dancing flames. The screams echo loudly through my head, hoping someone beyond this disaster will take pity on these innocent victims. Maybe they'd send us the miracle we need to survive this. If only they could hear us clearly enough. Or if the screams will take away the pain, and restore what is lost. But it never does. I realize warm tears stream down my face, and drip from my chin. But I don't even know what is happening. Looking down at my hands, I see blood, and an overwhelming confusion takes over my entire body. Terrified by the lie my eyes force my brain to see, my knees give out and I collapse onto them, still watching my blood-stained, trembling hands in horror and disbelief. Only then, I realize a familiar boy is lying just to the left of me. I try to turn my head and see who he is, but I can't. All I see are my hands. Is it *his* blood that has soaked my skin and stained my fingertips? It can't be. It all seems unreal. Until I realize it is.

My body jerks forward and I let out a desperate gasp. I look down, avoiding the bright light, too afraid to open my eyes. The air is heavy and the scent of dust fills the room. As I try to catch my breath, a small body across the room speaks, and I finally allow my eyes to adjust to my new surroundings. "It's my birthday," he says unhappily. It's my brother, Ethan. I try to focus my eyes on him. "Happy birthday," I say. Ethan sits in his small bed on the other end of our room. His knees are pulled up to his chest, as he leans against the wall and watches out the window. I can see his thoughts engraved on his face. "Everything will be fine," I claim, hopefully sounding as confident and reassuring as I'd meant to. I hope he knows I mean it. But even though he smiles my way, his face is full of worry and exhaustion. I don't think he slept last night. Of course, tomorrow our leaders will come for him. The day after every boys' tenth birthday, they

As for me, I was left with the eyes of my mother. Dad has dark brown hair, which now turns grey, and his stubble of a beard reaches his side burns.

Looking towards the entrance of the kitchen, I find my brother standing there.

"Hungry?" Dad asks, hopefully. He nods his head and sits by him. Luckily, the batter's almost gone and I serve them both a pancake with a bit of syrup. Although dad, of course reaches across the table and grabs the bottle to add more. Ethan rolls his eyes, "Would you like some pancake with that syrup?" And he chuckles. "That joke gets old, you really do need to find a new one." I watch them argue over Ethan's poor, overused joke, until they fall silent. Outside the window we see men, around the age of 20 years old, dragging a handcuffed mother and son in the direction of the penitentiary. They must've ran away, trying to avoid joining the army and hunting crew. Ethan turns white. Then I see another couple of young uniformed men, walking up our doorstep. Before they see us my dad curses under his breath, tosses the dishes in the sink, and grabs Ethan and my hand, running toward the back door.

Two Kingdoms

“Check.”

Jack looked down at the black and white chessboard and glared at the white queen who threatened his king. He slid his king to the right, safely out of harm.

“Don’t relax just yet,” Alice warned him, her hand hovering above one of her other pieces.

Jack watched her, studying her face. After some moments, he grinned. Contrary to what she had just said, he could relax. She didn’t have the slightest clue as to what move she should make next. Her expression was solemn, her eyes showing no emotion. But, he knew her like the back of his hand. After all, they’d spent all of their thirteen years of life together.

Alice was his twin sister, and the spitting image of him. The only difference was their gender. They were the royal and well-loved children of the long gone King and Queen of Banson. Their parents were in a place far away and the only way to see them ever again was to surrender their bodies to the earth and let it slowly consume them and turn them to dust. A year had passed already, and while the pain was gradually softening, it would leave behind scars that could never be healed.

Alice moved her piece, and Jack took his turn, expertly avoiding the capture of his one remaining knight. They maneuvered their pieces around the checkered board, the group of captured pieces beside it slowly growing in number.

They both loved chess. They whiled away many of their hours playing it. But, at that moment, Jack didn't really like it all that much. All that ran through his mind as he battled against his sister, was that the game would soon become their life and that this was the very last game that they would play together.

"It's sad," Alice said suddenly, her voice quiet. "I'm going to miss you."

"We can't help it," Jack replied. "You know Uncle Glasmir has been planning this from the very beginning."

"It's not fair!" Alice growled, slamming her fists on the table. The chess pieces trembled. One of the captured ones fell and rolled off the table. "You were the heir to the throne, not him! Banson's become such a horrible place to be ever since he took Father's place as king."

"We can't help it," Jack repeated, sliding out of his chair and bending to pick up the fallen piece. It was one of his pawns. "We are both just pawns in the game that we call life. We cannot choose our fate."

"Of course we can!" His sister argued. "We don't have to be pawns."

Jack said nothing and went back to playing the game. Alice sighed angrily, but continued as well.

In less than half an hour, they were going to be separated. Their uncle had arranged for them to be sent to two different kingdoms. Alice would go to the kingdom of Margold with King Eric

and Queen Ava and when she was old enough, she would marry their son, James, the future king of Margold. Meanwhile, Jack would be taken to Southlas, where he would become the adopted son of King Lock and his queen, Sarah, who was unable to give birth to a child of her own. When Lock was gone, he would take his place.

“I hate Uncle Glasmir. It’s bad enough that we’re being separated, but the two kingdoms he’s giving us away to have been enemies since the beginning of time. We’re to be enemies! Can you believe that?”

“When we’re grown up and we sit upon the thrones of Margold and Southlas, we will change things,” Jack reassured her.

“And until then, we are to hate each other,” Alice muttered.

Jack watched as she glanced out the window and froze, eyes glistening, her hand paused midair above her white rook. “They’re here.”

Jack followed her gaze. She was right. Outside, down below were two carriages; one white with intricate, blue designs and the other black and decorated with red diamonds. Their time was running out.

“We’re on the topmost floor of the palace,” Jack reminded her. “It’s going to take them a while to get up here. Let us finish our game.”

Alice nodded and grinned. “I’m going to win this time.”

“No matter what happens,” Jack whispered as they played the game. “I will always think of you as my sister and I will protect you from far away.”

“Sure you won’t be the one needing protecting?” Alice laughed. Then her expression turned serious. “You will always be my dear brother and my very best friend.”

Though they said the words, Jack couldn’t help but wonder if they would end up going against them, and breaking their promises. A promise was a very fragile thing, after all. One of the easiest things to shatter. Who knew what the future held? Maybe, they would bring the two rival kingdoms together or maybe they would get sucked up in tradition and fight to slay each other. He hoped it would never be the latter. But, if that did happen... who would be victorious? In everything they did, they were always equals. Their minds were too alike and they knew each other too well.

“Oh, look at that,” Alice said, a small smile on her face as she ended her turn.

Jack glanced down at the chessboard and couldn’t help but smile with her. He knew it had been coming. Every time they played, the results were the same.

“Stalemate, again.”

The Boy Who Cried Home

"I'm going home," were the last words written by Ethan in his depressing journal.

On his twelfth birthday he arrived to school shaking and painted in snow. Jacketless. Several stares drilled into Ethan's back as he found his seat. Ethan stood out in his grade six class; he was too towering. Too angular. Too brainy.

Teachers knew his daily struggles. He was bullied, called a nerd, dealing with a drunk father, and had a dead mother. It never stopped.

When he got home that day he encountered Mark - his father. Mark smelled like beer. Confined to his room, he glared into a mirror where he analyzed his so called 'disturbing features,' as other kids put it. Torched amber hair that needed a wash. Shadowy eyes: endless caves.

It wasn't until that night at ten-thirty, that a drunk man erupted into his room. Mark. He began yelling, but Ethan couldn't understand any of it. Ethan was flung against his wall and punched in the gut.

In the past, Ethan never fought back. Why would he? Mark was the only thing Ethan had left.

The Boy Who Cried Home

Thrust from thought, Ethan was spun around and slammed into the door. Without warning the hinges snapped off and the door plummeted downwards. Splinters plunged into his back. Normally, he would not even care because he was in so much pain.

There was no pain this time.

And for once, a fiery feeling burned inside Ethan. A spark. *Hope? No...* In the next moments trepidation rushed through him. It was a scary feeling and he didn't like it. Good thing courage dominated.

Fist connected to jaw, and for the first time, the drunk abuser was knocked unconscious by Ethan's own hands.

Ethan didn't think. He dashed outside to his backyard and clambered over the icy fence. After running for a few minutes in just his socks, he crumbled to the ground and reclined against a frosty tree. What had he done?

Ethan's mind raced. He could never face Mark now in fear that he might be - no *would* be - killed. **Oh.** *But he might not remember. He was drunk right?*

The Boy Who Cried Home

After pondering life and death, Ethan stood and sluggishly started a stroll back in the direction of his house. Sixty seconds passed before he heard a howl of animosity.

Sounded like Mark was awake.

Panic time.

Running back into the white thicket, farther than ever before, Ethan detected a rope drooping from an overgrown oak. On the ground beneath, an old tire sat buried in snow. His primary thought was to keep running. However, a voice in his mind told him to stay. Ethan listened.

Climbing carefully up the tree, Ethan clutched the rope. Frostbitten fingers weaved and lifted, remembering how to tie the knots right without thinking. He hoisted the rope up and settled it around his neck. Ethan dropped off the oak and dangled.

"I'm going home," he thought before his mind swept into eternal darkness.

Kitara Holm-Mckay, "Our Final Summer Days"

Grade 9

Beattie School Of The Arts Secondary

Word Count: 1154 words

I didn't have many friends during my childhood, I grew apart from the ones I did have. All except one, Arizona Brown. Her family became my second, since my parents weren't often around and their company kept them away from home. Arizona and I had known each other for years. I'd met her on the first day of third grade when I came into the classroom, saw there was a new student and welcomed her. We'd hit off a forever long friendship. We were unstoppable together until the night both of our lives were changed, where I'd lost her forever.

We were on the drive back to town from a two week getaway together at her family cabin. The highway we were driving on that night was windy and dangerous. Seeing Arizona was tired, I took my turn at the wheel then the car lost control. I was trying to regain control when the car flipped and crashed into the concrete barriers with half of the car on the road and the other hanging over the cliff. When the paramedics came there was blood everywhere, and I was unable to move. By the time I was out of the car, it had lost balance and went over the cliff into the land below. I was so dizzy that everything had become one great blurred image. Before I'd lost consciousness, I realized that I didn't know if Arizona had made it out or not. My heart nearly stopped.

I awoke in an unknown bed with my mother holding my hand and my father at her side, I was assuming I was at a hospital. I was relieved to have my parents there. I looked up at my mother and saw her eyes red and puffed with tears.

Kitara Holm-Mckay, "Our Final Summer Days"

Grade 9

Beattie School Of The Arts Secondary

"Mom why are you crying? Wait is Arizona Okay? Did she make it out?" I could tell from the look my mom gave me told me that she didn't.

"Oh honey I'm so sorry...but Arizona didn't make it out of the car, they tried to reach the car before it went over the cliff but they were too late." She sobbed.

"No! It can't be possible, I swear she made it out... no, no, no..." I scream and end in deep sobs,

"Dad? It's not real is it? She can't be dead."

My dad grabs my hand and looks at me with great sadness and responds "Yes sweetheart it's unfair and I'm sorry, I know it's hard but it's true. Arizona is dead."

I couldn't look up from my hands because of the indescribable feeling I got, knowing that my best friend was gone forever. The grief was unbearable. I rolled over to my side facing away from my parents, quietly crying and wishing it was a dream. My parents had gotten up, left the room to get coffee and I thought to myself, why couldn't they have saved her? I cried myself to sleep knowing it was all my fault, from the idea of the road trip to her death. I don't know what I'm going to do without her.

One Week before the road trip;

"Hey Arizona, you think we could go on that road trip we planned next week?"

"Yes! Why not. We could go on a road trip and stay at my family's cabin down at the lake we used to stay at, when we were kids. Remember?"

"For sure, that'll make it the last trip before we're off to college."

Kitara Holm-Mckay, "Our Final Summer Days"

Grade 9

Beattie School Of The Arts Secondary

"Ugh college..."

"God it's weird that we're off to college in two months."

"Yeah it is. Especially since we're at different schools."

"You know I'm going to miss you."

"Yeah, I'm going to miss you too. Least we'll still be there for each other, right?"

"Yes, I promise."

"Okay, back to our road trip of a lifetime- so I'll pick you up next Monday and we'll drive for two days, then stay at the cabin for ten more days, then for another two days we'll drive back."

"Sounds great!"

"Okay, I'll talk to you tomorrow."

"Okay- but be ready for our trip, before college."

"Thanks, goodnight Dove."

"You too Arizona."

Very little did we know that indeed it was going to be our final adventure together.

A few weeks after I was discharged from the hospital, came the harrowing day of Arizona's funeral. The days leading up to her funeral were pitiful and grueling. The frustration and guilt kept building up because it was my fault, I couldn't handle it anymore it's becoming unbearable.

I did attend the funeral, but it was agonizing.

At the end of the funeral the priest thanked everyone for coming out.

Kitara Holm-Mckay, "Our Final Summer Days"

Grade 9

Beattie School Of The Arts Secondary

"I'd like to thank everyone for coming out today for the passing of Arizona Brown, who died tragically, but will never be forgotten. For today we'll close with a eulogy from Arizona's best friend- Dove."

I looked up from my lap when the man called me up but I didn't make a move. I simply looked at him and shook my head, stating that I wasn't going to share my eulogy.

"Well I guess that Dove's not going to share her eulogy today, so I'll close today with a prayer, Dear heavenly father..."

I zoned out when he began the prayer and when the service ended, I walked over to the Brown's for their gathering. I went inside, just ran up the stairs to Arizona's bedroom. When I walked into the room, I saw all of the pictures of us from over the years. My eyes filled with tears as I grabbed our photo album and just cradled it in my arms crying.

I must've fallen asleep, because Arizona's mother came in and woke me up by gently asking

"Dove are you okay?"

"No, I'm far from okay. Your daughter was an amazing person who was raised by two other amazing people, thank-you Eva." I got up and left. As I was leaving I thought to myself, it's all in your head, a nightmare. It has to be, she can't be gone. I looked over my shoulder one last time and it wasn't a nightmare, it's real. I ran back to my house and locked myself in my room for two weeks, because it all hurt too much. When I did come out, it was my last time. Before I left for good I went up to my parents room where they were sleeping, walked in, gave them both a kiss on the head and left the note in my mom's hand. I walked out the front door and never returned.

Kitara Holm-Mckay, "Our Final Summer Days"

Grade 9

Beattie School Of The Arts Secondary

The note I left read;

Dear Mom & Dad,

I'm truly sorry but I can't let you live with a daughter whose hearts permanently damaged. I can't be here, not in a world without Arizona. By the time you read this, I'll be in a better place. I

love you, Goodbye...

- Sincerely your daughter,

Dove Herman.

There are different kinds of monsters that roam the Earth.

Monsters that we conjure up in our mind for our amusement.

But some monsters are very real, and this monster is the scariest of all.

This monster wakes up everyday and puts on a mask.

Why does this monster wear a mask? Why does its hide it's face?

Now the thing about the monster, it wears different masks for everyone it meets.

Whenever it is approached or approaches someone it wears a mask that displays an image the other individual finds pleasing.

To please people and not to frighten.

It wears these masks so it doesn't scare anyone.

To please and not to reassure.

For this monster does not want to be feared.

It wants to make people happy, even though the monster may not be happy itself.

This monster is deceptive; that is why it is the most monstrous

Manvir Kang
Sa-Hali Secondary
Grade 9
April, 8,2015

Monsters

It wears these masks because it's true self is either so dark that it drowns anyone who gazes upon it.

Or it is so bright that it burns away all those who behold it.

It never reveals it's true face to anyone but itself. Maybe it's so used to wearing these masks for so long it probably doesn't remember what it's real face looks like.

If I were to meet such a monster, I would most likely be devoured by it.

For in fact, I am that monster.

Manvir Kang
Sa-Hali Secondary
Grade 9
April, 8, 2015

Sorrow

Sorrow

Creeps in slowly.

It follows Despair like a younger brother.

It saps Strength and crushes Confidence underfoot.

Silence is the coffin. You lay motionless as Anger the undertaker
lowers it into the grave of Depression.

Regret piles the dirt of Mockery onto broken Will.

Reflection bestows upon you Knowledge who flies on the wings of
Power as Redemption wrenches you free from the ground into the
light of Opportunity.

Behold!

Reborn are you into Life! Mother's child returns to her.

Sorrow the killer wails as it is cut down by Pride as he rides the
tempest of Confidence.

Manvir Kang
Sa-Hali Secondary
Grade 9
April, 8, 2015

Sorrow

Sorrow, the defeated, sulks back into the shadows.

Whimpering as it nurses its wounds.

On May 1, 2159, guns sound and many soldiers fall, two of most importance. A man and a woman, married, with a child waiting at home. The child, a young girl of only eight, waits at home for her parents who will never return.

10 years later

"Nikita wake up. You're going to be late for orientation!" yelled Cara.

A rush of excitement swarms through the 18 year old as she jumps out of bed and grabs her military uniform. It had been a month since graduation and she was finally going to do something about the now frequent threats from the Northern Rebels, a terrorist group with a taste for the annihilation of the government. Finally ten years of specialized training was going to pay off and she could get some revenge on the group responsible for the death of her parents.

After getting dressed, Nikita grabbed a piece of toast and followed Cara, her previous caretaker and now high military officer/girlfriend of president Tom Banbury, out the door. It was only a few minutes until they arrived on the military campus, a large, maze-like building. Soldiers filled the halls and Nikita and Cara weaved their way into a grand conference room. Nikita took her place at the front, while Cara went up and stood beside the president. As he raised a hand, the whole room fell silent.

He began to speak, "It has come to my attention that due to the increasing threats coming from the rebels, our people are becoming more afraid. However, because of your loyal commitment to this country, it will one day prosper again. I and your commanders have decided that it is time to strike back and settle things with these terrorists on the battlefield. You will be updated when we have more information, just be prepared for anything. You are all dismissed."

The room was cleared in a matter of seconds, but as Nikita left she heard Tom whisper to Cara, "Does Nikita know the truth?"

"No, and let us hope she never finds out," Cara replied.

Nikita didn't know what to think. She had always known the president kept secrets but this ... this sounded more concerning. She swore to make it her mission to find the truth, even if it meant crossing legal boundaries.

Several days passed and Nikita still had not gained any information on what Cara and Tom were hiding from her. She had even snuck into the restricted files library of the military archives, with no luck. Hopefully today would be different; Tom had invited Cara and her to dinner. On a regular day it was almost impossible sneaking into his house without getting caught. Today she might have a chance getting some information. Being close to the president was one advantage she did appreciate. She had full access to the layout of his house though she would have to be careful. She had to hack into his security system without getting caught so she could hopefully find something on his computer. This was probably her best chance at getting some info; she could not blow it.

Once Cara and Nikita had arrived, they were warmly greeted, by President Branbury. "How nice of you two to join me," he said as they all stepped inside.

They walked down a long hallway before entering a grand dining hall, with a large table sitting in the middle of the room. They took their seats and almost immediately waiters came and took their orders then left for the kitchen. Nikita sat in silence as Cara and Tom talked about whatever until she finally decided to put her plan into effect. She excused herself and walked into the hall. The hall seemed to go on forever. She was sure happy she knew this house well enough not to get lost. Once she had reached the president's office she peeked her head in to see if anyone was there. Once she knew it was clear she quietly snuck in and went over to the president's computer. But she made one fatal mistake, she missed the security camera sitting neatly above the door. She took out a holo-drive and placed it on

the desktop, and tapped the download icon. Once it was finished she grabbed the holo-drive and put it in her pocket and headed back to the dining hall.

After dinner was over, Tom walked Cara and Nikita to the front door and said his goodbyes. Nikita looked back at the president as she and Cara left, and saw him give her a strange look... almost concerning.

The drive home seemed long as anticipation ate away at her wondering if she would get the information she needed. She quickly got to the privacy of her room and put the holo-drive on top of her laptop to start searching. Hours passed with nothing to show for it, until she came across a locked file named "Battle of 2159." She clicked on it, and a password entry space came up. She thought if it regarded the war of 2159 maybe the password did as well. The war had started on April 6 so she typed in 06-04-2159. It worked! A large file opened with the names and causes of death for countless soldiers. She scanned the list, and found her parents' names but when she read the cause of death, it showed something horrific. Slamming her laptop shut she jumped up and began packing her things.

She had definitely found what she was looking for.

Suddenly a loud bang rattled her house, the familiar sound of a door being broken down.

Thinking quickly she grabbed her bag and went through her bedroom window. She got into her car, glad she always had her keys on her, and started out for Fort CND, a base for the Northern Rebels.

It was time she got her revenge on the person responsible for her parents' deaths.

THE PRESIDENT!

Into the Mist

Mist circles my feet as I walk towards certain death. I feel the eyes of a hundred monsters on me, but they are not a threat. The threat is the cruel creature keeping my love, Zereph captive. As I follow the pathway of mist my heart races as I think of my impending doom. The prophecy echoes in my ears. I shudder, whispering the fateful words under my breath:

"Path of mist,
the immortal maiden follows,
leading in due course,
to true loves folly.
At the end of the road there lies,
a sacrifice to be kept with her last breath
to save loves life,
in exchange for eternal death."

Glancing down at Saraline my timber wolf, I realize her fate. As soon as I make my move she will die as a consequence of my oath of swearing off men to Artemis being broken . I am surprised that she hasn't keeled over already because I am truly in love with Zereph. When I joined the hunters I swore off men.

Into the Mist

My brain urges me to hurry or I might be too late and all this will be in vain. Poor, idiotic Zereph. He is a son of Apollo and loves to show off, just like his father. Three weeks ago, we were in a mall hunting a hydra that had been torturing the sons and daughters of Apollo and the hunters of Artemis. He had decided that doing 'parkour' on the escalator would distract it so that we could kill it. That's when the cyclops grabbed him. One week ago when the prophecy came I had hope for him, but as my death draws near the hope slowly trickles out of me turning to despair.

I hear shouts and tortured screams. This gives me a shot of adrenaline. I speed up to a steady jog. I break through the trees and the mist lightens into a haze. The setting sun creates a halo of light around me; I figure it makes me look strong and dangerous. The new found warmth gives me courage and I draw my bow. I aim at the Cyclops, the cruel creature that stole Zereph. I advance.

"You there!" I shout. "Let Zereph go!"

Redirecting at the last moment, I let my arrow fly, severing the bonds holding Zereph captive; I charge into the fray with my beloved friend, Saraline, at my side.

Why isn't she dead? She should be dead. Not that I'm complaining. I shoot until all my

Into the Mist

arrows are gone while Saraline darts and weaves, nipping and clawing with her sharp teeth and claws. Zereph roots through the Cyclops' supplies and tosses me another sheave with ten measly arrows. I shoot one arrow, then two, and so on until I have one left. I know this means defeat but Zereph must live. He only has one life while I have lived a thousand life times.

"Please help."

I give a silent prayer to Artemis. Notching my last arrow, I aim for the Cyclops' smoke coloured eye and let it go. He swats it out of the air in the last second. I sigh in defeat. Just as the moon rises I see a bright light forming and Artemis appears. She runs at the monster and with just three arrows, kills him. The next few moments happen in slow motion.

The Cyclops falls backwards, his spear flying straight at Zereph. My heart stops and in a split second my decision is made. I run towards his fear frozen body and shove him. Hard. He soars across the sky landing just behind the tree line. I see him get up and I sigh in relief. He will survive. That's when the spear hits. It enters my chest and I fall back with the force. The spear enters the ground leaving me pinned and helpless.

Into the Mist

Artemis is at my side in an instant, brushing my long blonde hair out of my eyes. A single tear escapes her. "My lady, please don't cry," I say, not wanting to see my strong leader this way.

"My dear, I weep of both regret and sorrow for it is because of the oath you are here."

There is one last thing I need to know, something that cannot be left unanswered.

"Why isn't Saraline dead?" I whisper.

"Because, sweet Aria, even your oath is no match for true love. It was your faithfulness to both me and Zereph that makes her able to thrive."

My vision begins to black out and I struggle to find breath. As I draw my last breath I hear Artemis say, "Rest well my huntress, my daughter. I will look out for Apollo's son and make sure he lives."

I leave this world with a smile on my face. My love will live.

Darkness Stained

When I opened my eyes, I was standing in a lake with my sister, Kristina, and the current pushed the cool water up around our feet. Krissy looked over to me and smiled her contagious smile, the one that everyone loved. "C'mon May, let's go swimming!"

She dove into the water and I followed laughingly.

We swam in lazy circles as the sky darkened above us. When I looked to the sky, I could see great dark clouds pooling on the horizon, heading rapidly in our direction. I glanced around worriedly, finding Krissy swimming happily. I continued to swim, cautiously keeping Krissy in my peripheral vision.

Suddenly, I heard a scream.

I brushed the water out of my eyes and saw Krissy waving her arms wildly, splashing and screaming for me; "May! Help, please!"

The current of the storm was slowly pulling her into the lake. Gasping for air, I reached to go save her, but something stopped me. A whispery voice called in the back of my mind, telling me to not help her, to let her go.

I halted. Her shrieks became more desperate, she was clearly stuck and couldn't save herself. And I was right there in front of her, doing nothing. All I could see was black and emotion fell from my face. I silently watched as she frantically thrashed. She wailed until she had no voice.

From the rolling clouds overhead, rain pelted down, muffling her cries. Tears streamed from my eyes, despite the bitter visage I had in place. How could I stand here, helpless, while my sister drowned?

Darkness Stained

Her head bobbed in the water, up and crying one minute, down and spluttering the next. It seemed to be ages that I was frozen there while she struggled. Then, suddenly, it was over. Her fighting stopped abruptly as she sank beneath the surface of the water.

My breath fell out in a ragged gasp. Finally, I moved. I swam forward, tentatively calling her name, "Krissy? Kristina?"

My voice cracked slightly. I swam back to shore, not looking back, but I could feel the blackness gloating. It writhed all along my body, crawling up my fingertips, leaping up my legs and covering me all in black. Enchanting, horrible, black designs. They promised pain, anger, hurt, sadness. They promised death.

I blinked, and the flashback ended.

When I opened my eyes this time, I looked directly into Mom's eyes. I was back in the present, and the horror in her eyes was evident. She yanked her hand from mine and stumbled backward. "What are you?" She stammered.

I started shaking, my mother didn't love me. I had hoped that we could work it out, but she just kept backing up. She crashed into the coffee table and reached behind her grabbing for something, anything desperately. She pulled the cordless lamp from the table and brandished it, obviously expecting me to attack her. I was horrified. I placed my hands in front of me, walking forward slowly, "I won't hurt you Mommy."

I hadn't called her 'Mommy' since I was eight but I was breaking. A frightened little voice in the back of my mind whispered the worst to me, and all I wanted was for Mom to be there for me.

Darkness Stained

"I don't know what happened to you, but I can't trust you. You were right, you did kill your sister. You just watched and did nothing. It's your fault she's dead!" Mom screamed at me in a rage.

Tears streamed down her face and the lamp shook in her grasp. "Mommy, please." I begged. My hands still traced delicately with black swirls, reached out toward her, begging her to trust me still. Before I got close, Mom swung with all she had. Clearly I wasn't her daughter anymore; I was a threat.

The lamp flew through the air and hit me hard in the jaw. I tasted blood. The blackness raged behind my eyes and my face hardened. As Mom raised to swing again I dodged quickly, wrenching the lamp from her grasp. I swung quickly and hit her solidly in the side of the head.

It made a sickening sound against her skull and blood flowed from the side of her head. I hit her again, and again, and with a jolt against the bare skin of her arm, blood poured. I hit her face again. The bulb from the lamp had broken long before, and now, with every hit, millions of little cuts opened up on her skin. She was bloody all over now, and yet, I continued swinging.

The one person I had trusted to confide in, and she'd turned on me. The blackness burned in a rage behind my vision, spurring me on. She screamed. Piercing wails that broke through the dull sound of the makeshift weapon hitting flesh. She screamed anew with each hit. The little girl inside me shrieked and banged her fists against the cage she was hidden in while the black monster raged around her.

With one last *thwack*, she crumpled from her feeble, prone position. With one last hit, she fell to the ground and lay there, broken. Her blood splattered around the room, and covered my hands, merging beautifully with the blackness. I dropped the lamp and my hands started trembling.

The black leaped joyfully up my fingers, up my arms, over my shoulders, down my stomach, up from my toes and along my legs. I stumbled backward, trying to find something to

Darkness Stained

hold myself up. I held my black hand up, watching the blood drip down my fingers. I didn't know whose, but it dripped slowly down my fingers; I was entranced.

I felt the blackness swallow me, it covered every inch of me. I turned, and when I looked in the hall mirror, I saw a monster. The blackness covered me and writhed, and all I could see were a pair of violet eyes staring back at me.

Kayla Meecham

Grade 9

Brock Middle

Monster in a Bottle

Love turns to enmity; pain and sorrow are likely to follow.

Booze changes a man. You fall in love with someone you believe to be so perfect. Your heart longs to be with him, every physical touch burning you. He's handsome and charming, intelligent and kind. He's everything you've ever wanted. He's everything you *need*. But there's one monstrous problem with him: booze. He can drink and drink until he is unable to stand. You believe that he can be changed, but then reality hits, and his problem worsens.

He gets home, stomach filled to the rim with alcohol, and he has changed into a man that you hardly recognize. He's no longer handsome or charming, more like disagreeable and repulsive. No longer intelligent or kind, he's become idiotic and cruel. You feel a sort of hatred towards him and wish him the worst, most painful death. But you're being unreasonable and callous. He will get better. He could never get any worse than he is now. You can help him. Can't you?

You want to approach him so badly. You want to tell him what your heart is advising you to say. But, for fear of unleashing the beast inside him, you keep your mouth shut and your head down. You dream of ways to get him to finally listen to you. But it's not just a matter of him listening. No, it's definitely more than that. You want him

to listen *and* to change. You love him, and you just want him to be like he was before. Everyone has their flaws, and he has his. But your greatest flaw is him.

Okay, you tell yourself as he enters your home once again stumbling and groaning. You can do it. Just tell him what you've been meaning to tell him for so long. Just tell him what's wrong and tell him why you want him to change. Threaten to leave him if you have to. Do anything, just to have the love of your miserable life back.

He approaches you before you can think of exactly what to say. You stutter and stammer, tripping over the rocks on your tongue. Before you know it, you are on the ground with a stinging pain on your right cheek. What happened?

He stands over your small body sprawled across the floor. He grins down at you and you wince. Was it him? Did he strike you? Your mind is like scrambled eggs, asking question after question, each one just as hard to answer as the last. He's never acted like that before. But he leans down again, fist clenched, and his fist collides with your jaw, taking you on a tour of the stars behind closed eyes. Never have you felt a pain so excruciating and breathtaking. You groan and cup your face with your hands. You can feel your eyes water and your face aflame. Never have you felt a rage such as this. Your body feels like it has been dipped into a fiery pit of lava and tossed into a black hole of complete nothingness. Pain furiously converts to anger.

"How dare you strike me?" You try to be stern, but your voice is hardly heard. All he does is look down at you, eyes bloodshot.

"Hi there, pretty lady," he slurs, with the biggest, most sinister grin you have ever seen. You know that he has completely ignored your previous question, as always. He does that when he's drunk.

A single tear streams down your cheek as you look up at the monster standing above you. You love him but must remind yourself now that this is the man you love. You would never betray or harm him. But he harmed you, didn't he?

The next thing you see is a chef's knife clutched in your hand and him sprawled across the tile flooring of your small kitchen, his hands over his middle. You're standing. When did you stand up? Where'd the knife come from? *Oh no*. He's on the floor. This must be a nightmare like the ones you've been having since the whole problem began. Or have all your daydreams and nightmares become reality?

You drop the knife from your scarlet hands and collapse to the floor beside him, becoming soaked in the scarlet lake. You are done for. Your misery is over, but a new one begun; the love of your life is gone. And you will soon have the same fate.

I stumble down the stairs, my eyes half open. I just woke up, and my brain and body haven't resigned themselves to my consciousness. I reach the kitchen, and find my mom, her blonde hair tied back in an impeccable ponytail, doing planks, her latest exercise obsession. My dad is sitting at the table, studying the newspaper. "Good morning Juliet! How does your throat feel? I phoned the doctor, and he has an opening this afternoon if it's still hurting, but if it doesn't feel *too* bad then you could just take some of those pills we bought last time-" I lift my hand to halt the constant flow of words coming from my mom's mouth. Then I use sign language to respond that my throat feels fine, thanks....

Why do I use sign language, you ask? It's for the same reason that my throat felt like it was being stabbed by knives last night. Ever since I was born, I've had an incurable disease that affects my throat, and leaves me mute. It's definitely challenging, but after 17 years, I've learned to deal with most of it.

My mom launches into a new speech, but in my semi-conscious state, I can't bring myself to listen to her. Besides, I've heard her lectures *many* times already. Don't get me wrong, though. I love my mother. It's just that sometimes she goes overboard on her sermons. Suddenly, I hear the sound of my dad's voice. "Juliet! Come see this!" My mom and I race to see the article that he is waving in the air so excitedly. The title reads: *Newly discovered surgery makes speech possible for mute patients*. I blink, then I lift my head, hardly daring to believe what I've just read. My hopeful eyes meet my dad's, then...

"No! There is no chance whatsoever that I'll let my daughter get that surgery! Did you read that it's *new*? The dangers are infinite!" While she rants, I share a look with my dad, whose

eyes have a new, almost frustrated, sadness in them. We communicate that we won't argue with my mom. It's just not worth it. I lower my eyes and sign to them that I'd better get ready for school. Then I rush to make it upstairs before the tears fall.

At school, I try, in vain, to focus. I've never wanted to argue with my mom as much as I do now. I feel like I'm trapped in a tower, and my dreams are in the trees surrounding me. Now, my mother is in possession of the key to my escape, but she won't give it to me. A rush of wind brings me back to the present, and I look up to see an unfamiliar young man enter the room. "Why hello! You must be Sam!" My teacher looks up from her desk.

The boy looks shy, but he replies respectfully; "Yes, ma'am, that's me"

"Excellent! You haven't missed too much in this class. Why don't you go sit next to Juliet?" She points at the only empty desk in the room. Normally, I would not be excited about sitting next to a complete stranger, but Sam looks like he hasn't got a discriminatory bone in his body, so when he smiles at me, I smile back.

We're told to start working, and he asks me if I'd explain the material to him. I decide that there's no sense in keeping my muteness secret. My cheeks as red as tomatoes, I pick up my pen and write, "I'm mute." I look up, and, to my surprise, I see a new softness in his eyes.

Then, a miracle happens. He starts talking to me in sign language! "Is this your preferred method of communication, then?"

My eyes wide with disbelief, I answer, "Yes! How do you know sign language?"

“A while ago, after reading a book about a deaf man’s struggles, I took it upon myself to learn it. It’s supposed to make life easier for those who can’t talk, or hear, but it doesn’t help them if only they know it!” In this moment, I know that I love Sam. Someone who’s willing to learn a whole new language just to make life easier for a few people? That’s what I call virtue!

At lunchtime, he sits with me, which is exciting in itself because no one’s done that in years. We have a whole conversation, with him talking and me using sign language! I begin to wonder if I’ve died and gone to heaven! All at once, his eyes light up. “Juliet! I just remembered that I read in the newspaper that a new cure for muteness has been discovered!” My emotions from the morning, forgotten for a time, come rushing back.

“I read that, too”, I answer dejectedly. “My mom’s convinced that the surgery’s too dangerous, though.”

“Are you serious? I think that’s a violation of your rights! You’re practically an adult, and if *you* understand the risks of getting this surgery, then it should be *your* decision whether or not you get it!

“I agree with you, but apparently my mother doesn’t. I can’t get the surgery without my parents’ permission, you know.”

“I do. That’s why *I’ll* talk to your mom for you, and convince her that it’s your right to be cured.”

“Oh Sam, I appreciate the offer, I really do, but you don’t know my mom. She’s so stubborn, and she doesn’t even know you...”

Love, Lust, or Run?

210 days since I met him.

I still wanted to see him; for some reason I was craving it, like a kid craves candy on Halloween.

In a way I now regret meeting him, letting him into my life. But at the same time I'm glad because the relationship taught me a lot. Even now my heart still flutters thinking about him, even after the world of hurt he put me and my family through.

I had wanted to stay a virgin, but he got me so drunk, drink after drink after more drinks. I just didn't care anymore. I was a scared, helpless, vulnerable teenager who couldn't find the strength to say no.

Weeks before, I had met him at the gross, grubby bus stop around the corner from the school. Sitting on total opposite sides of the bus; our eyes wandering in each other's directions; not a word left our mouths.

BOOM! Next day I noticed him again at the same bus stop. I was ecstatic, my heart beating faster than it ever had. He plopped himself beside me. Right there. Next to me. Why me?! There are so many seats on the bus. That question ran through my head a million times in just a few seconds. Even though we didn't know each other, I just knew we'd clicked. I could feel it in my heart; I could hear it in his voice when he spoke delicate words to me days later.

We spent time together, and really got to know each other. It was great; fantastic, really. Until the part I dreaded most about knowing: his age.

Twenty Two.

I knew it was bad and so did he. But the heart wants what the heart wants. I've never felt so alive, protected, loved. I know love sounds crazy; maybe lust fits better, but I don't want to believe that, either. How could I love, even lust, after someone who could jeopardize my family? My family is my everything. Anyone would wish to have my loving, rambunctious family.

But my stepfather could never accept him. He wanted to press charges. 'WHAT?!' Charges? If not, then I was getting kicked out; maybe my side of the family would even be told to leave.

No way would I let my family get hurt. I had to call it off. So I did. Hurt, upset; I was broken. But two people's happiness stripped away is better than eight. I felt like he hated me at the time of the separation, but did he really? Or is that what love feels like?

I dropped the charges for rape; I have no regrets. I know he never meant to hurt me or my family. I have the proof he loves me. Maybe that will fade one day.

But even though a part of me hates the man, he changed my life, maybe even for the better. I can't really deny it, even though I really don't want to agree; he was one of the best things that has happened in my life because I learned a lot about myself. I learned that I don't need to have an older man to shadow my father's place. Just because my father isn't in my life anymore, it doesn't mean I need to have an older man to potentially unlock my repressed childhood memories. One day I wish to thank him for teaching me that.

I might have loved him. But how would I know what love is at fifteen? Maybe I'll see him again one day. Maybe, just maybe I'll know what love is by then.

Vague

The warm night breeze streams through and knots my hair. The flickering lamp post is buzzing with moths, severely misplaced and ugly compared to the velvety night sky that glitters with stars.

I'm walking home, passing the city park along the way. The leaves on the trees whisper with the breeze, and there's a distant melody of a bird singing. The spring flowers sweeten the air, and I breathe it in deeply. It's so tranquil, especially compared to the explosive house party Jyl forced me to attend.

Jyl is my best friend, and we're completely opposite. She's a social butterfly, invited to every special occasion. With silky blonde curls that never frizz, sky blue eyes that twinkle mischievously, sun kissed skin, and a model's body, she's a bombshell among girls and guys alike. Paired with a funny, sweet, charming personality, not a single person is capable of hating her.

I wanted to party with Jyl, I really did, but parties are just not for me. Jyl ignored me to flirt with some guys, leaving me to fend for myself. She'll text me in a few minutes after she stops making out with a boy, and she'll question my absence. She'll be upset I left, saying that if I'd asked, she would've ignored the guys.

She would've left them, though, for me. Jyl would do anything for me, as I'd do anything for her. She's more like my sister than my friend. The thought brings a soft smile to my face, and I stroke a lock of hair behind my ear.

I continue to trek back to my house, knowing it's a twenty minute walk from here. My footsteps are painfully loud against the pavement, and I'm already sore. Mom thought I was sleeping over at Jyl's, not dancing around for five miserable hours. I'll tell her that Jyl was feeling sick, so I left. Jyl will indeed have a "monster" hangover tomorrow that she could blame on a cold.

Suddenly, I hear a rustling in the nearby bushes. Just as I'm about to look, my phone vibrates in

Vague

my pocket. I fumble for it, flinching when the light glows white, contrasting the complete darkness.

“Where r u?” Jyl texts.

I truthfully reply, “*Headache. Sorry, heading home :(*”

I know she can take care of herself at a party, she always knows when enough is enough. She texts her apology: “*Sowwy. U ok?*”

I hear the rustling again, and glance around. Nothing suspicious. I look back to my phone to reply, when it's knocked out of my hand and smashes against the concrete. A hand clamps around my mouth, and I scream into the glove.

I try to fight back, thrashing and kicking, but the hand is solid and strong. Panic crawls into my throat, suffocating me; I barely register the sting in my shoulder. Immediately, I feel exhausted, and I slump into the arms of the monster. The thing that's taking me away.

I can't even think properly, I'm just...

I'm just... so tired...

I fall into the blackness.

The Oceans Call

Ashley Kilgour, Grade 10

Sa-hali Secondary School

Breathing in softly, the familiar scent of salt, and the airy ocean breeze filled her nose.

With eyes kept closed, the call of seagulls were echoed back and forth in their strange language,

and the gentle rush of the sea seemed to go on forever.

Hearing sweet laughter escape gleefully from the elated children,

a euphoric sense of tranquility filled her heart.

She knew that this moment was special, she knew that her prayers could be answered here.

Her only desire, to discover the secrets of the sea,

was finally within reach.

The warm summer breeze tenderly stroked her skin,

her hair dancing carelessly with the wind.

Curling her manicured toes, she felt the velvet like sand slip onto her feet,

memorizing her very essence.

A small smile crawled its way onto her face, and despite her urge to open her eyes,

she kept them closed, for she knew this was it,

this was the very moment she had waited so long for.

Slowly she took a deep breath, in and out,

and allowed herself to drift to the oblivion of the oceans soft call to her soul.

The War's Birthday

Ashley Kilgour, Grade 10
Sa-hali Secondary

Today is my birthday, and I know not what my future holds.

There is talk of war, of bravery,
love, and honour.

The stories told tell tales of adventure and sacrifice,
about how exciting a war would be.

Crowds are cheering and I now know that this day is no longer,
a celebration of my own.

Today is my birthday, and the rumours are true.
the men are leaving and mothers try to stay strong,
a few cry quietly in the corner.

Yet there is still hope in the air,
they still believe they will be the ones returning home.

I am torn.

I don't know what I believe any more.

Today is my birthday, and I've just turned 13.

I witness the bombs dropping daily,
my hearts turned to stone.

I don't feel, I survive, but what for?

That,

is what I'm not so sure of anymore

The War's Birthday

Ashley Kilgour, Grade 10
Sa-hali Secondary

Today is my birthday, and there is one thing you should know.

No one chooses their race, no one gets to pick their lifestyle,

for I certainly didn't pick mine.

See birth, it's a matter of luck,

and who knows?

This story I've told, of horror and death,

well it could have been you.

You are a forest.
Every step a work of art.
Your sunlight drips into my eyes,
Your wind sways to my beating heart.

Sharp thorns prick my ankles,
Freezing rain starts to pour.
As long as I feel your shield at my side,
Nature's wrath will not hurt me anymore.

However, I am merely a child.
I snap branches and throw dirt,
My hands tear at the earth's walls,
Forgetting what I've done and who I've hurt.

You bring silence to my shouts.
You place a light hand on my heavy shoulder,
Promising shelter when it stormed out,
And warmth when it grew colder.

If I look close enough,
I see your love in everything.
When bland snow from dark Winter,
Washes into the blue skies of Spring.

Summer starts the sprouting of the pines,
And I find myself sitting at the bottom.
You pull me up through the branches,
To watch the colours of Autumn.

Iced Heart

Brianna McLellan

Ashcroft Secondary School

Grade 10 (Page 1)

Ice cold blood flowing
within my veins
numbing my heart,
preserving my soul,
yet still destroying
my spirit

A frozen lake
daring to be crossed,
waiting to fracture,
to melt into water

The warmth of the sun
is my only weakness,
the only thing capable
of breaking
the ice wall around
my heart

Mask of Hurt

Vulnerable, empty, abandoned
three things I've never wanted to feel,
but now they take refuge in my heart.

I will not let this painful experience
make me cold, in fact I know this will only
become a stronger part of me in the end.

Insecure, jealous, terrified
feelings I have to keep buried deep
in the ground. The mask of a cheerful smile
worn upon my face, I refuse to show my hurt,
he does not deserve to know how much he meant to me

If he is happy, there's not much I can do
besides hope one day he'll feel the same way I do now.
I never thought I would be down on my knees,
gasping for air, with tears streaming down my face,
not even in my worst nightmare.

Brianna McLellan
Ashcroft Secondary School
Grade 10 (Page 3)

Mask of Hurt

This isn't me, to not be happy,
to not have sweet laughter bubbling from my lips.
One day I'll be alright,
just not today.

#338f4a (51,143,74)

The colour of washed up seafoam
stretching back home to the depths of the dark, oily water.

The color of the tall, thick trees
swaying like grass in the wind.

Or a snake
that slithers throughout the thick vines that
are found in a similar shade of camouflage.

The interior of a kiwi or lime,
slightly tart and lush with citrus syrup.

The cutis of a pear, an apple, a pepper.

An emerald taken away from May,
sparkling in the meretricious yellow light
of a conflagrant star.

The colour of freshly picked clovers
and the look on the face of a jealous friend.

The colour of luck and envy.

Buddhas carved out of the finest jade,
meditating in fields of bamboo
resting high above.

The colour of the unwanted alarm clock resting on my bedside table
glowing, begging me to wake up.

The soft chroma of the grassy field,
chopped away by children's dirty feet.

The stain on a pair of rarely washed denim.

Contrasting.

The reason your mother hates when your soccer team wears white.

The colour of nature;

mother nature's true hue.

Land on a middle schoolers global map.

The scent on the coastline, as you're driving down to the island.

Trees and dew-splotched leaves giving of sweet aroma and breath.

The colour of eternal life,

health

and greed.

grammar

Proper grammar

confuses me.

all this nonsense

about he and she;

you and I,

me and you,

did anyone ever think this through?

Whom did this?

or

Who did this?

Why can I use

one but

not the other?

Why can't I say it

how I prefer not

how you?

Why must grammar

make me

so

confused?

Kendall Dick
Grade 11
Westside Secondary School
Title: Playback

I stumbled out of the bar, my vision blurry from all the alcohol I had consumed only moments ago. My slurred laugh echoed off the walls that encased me inside a dirty alleyway lined with litter and the occasional rat that scurried past. As I slowly made my way to the main road where I could hail down a taxi, I heard the sound of a scream in the distance; possibly the next street over.

Even in my drunken state I knew that the scream was a woman and she was in trouble. I jogged towards the sound, nearly falling over several times until the bright lights of cars were flashing in my eyes, momentarily blinding me. The blood-chilling scream echoed again and I was able to identify the source of the sound. About a block away from me in the distance a woman was standing stiff with a huge man behind her. To anyone glancing it looked like they were embracing, but I knew better.

My brain was fuzzy, and I was unable to think of what to do until she screamed a third time and the man roughly dragged her, kicking and screaming, into the nearest alley. The fuzz cleared enough for me to command my legs to work and suddenly I was running full speed towards the woman and her attacker.

By the time I reached the dark crevice in between buildings the man had her in a headlock, threatening to snap her neck. I darted forward and weakly grabbed his arms; my efforts a clear waste against the giant. He barely took notice of me, only bothering to shove me onto the ground, cracking my head against the pavement and watching stars dance across my vision.

Weakly, I sat up releasing a river of colourful curses at the man who was searching the woman, concentrating on finding something. As I began to wobble into a standing position I found myself staring down the barrel of a deadly looking gun that was held with a perfectly steady hand.

I blacked out.

As I slowly came back to consciousness I was aware of the hollow sound of water dripping onto a stray piece of tin in a broken pattern that danced on the fragile strings of my patience. When I was able to unglue my eyelids I realized the water was dripping from a drain pipe; it was raining steadily from black clouds that had rolled in while I was sleeping.

My head felt as if I had been smashed in the temple several times with a large hammer, but there was no blood to show of an incident. Memories of the previous night came rushing to me in a flood and in no time at all I had quickly jumped to my feet, looking at the dark street signs in search of my location.

I was in the same deserted alleyway, but something, though unknown to me, seemed slightly off about the atmosphere. Before I could figure it out, the sight of several people rushing towards an unknown destination. When I tried to shout out at the people they all seemed to be too absorbed in their task at hand, so I ran out into the street and followed.

Up ahead of me, there was the flashing lights of an ambulance and a sizable crowd was gathered eagerly around to glimpse the paramedics. I slowly picked my way through the crowd until I was standing pressed against the police tape that blocked me from moving further.

Watching the paramedics load a covered body onto the paramedics, I felt the blood drain from my face. A man beside me pulled out his phone and moved to take a picture, despite the disrespectful nature of his action. I tried to tell him to put the phone away, but he ignored me, not even bothering to take notice of my words.

Irritated, I reached out to place my hand on his shoulder and it ghosted through as if I was trying to put my hand on a hologram that floated on the pavement. Panic quickly pumped through my veins stronger than adrenaline ever had and sent me running through the crowd; physically running *through* them to the edge of the pool of people.

I heard the paramedic speaking in hushed tones, mentioning my name to the others injecting ice into my blood. Ever so slowly I walked up to the body, seeing the corner of the blanket lifted up to reveal my face cold and lifeless like it had been uninhabited for centuries.

In the distance the sun rose above the hills and chased the remnants of night into the shadows and the truth finally dawned on me. I'm dead.

Aynslea lay in her backyard gazing at the moon, devouring it's alluring imperfections with her icy blue eyes. Her narrow, freckled face tilts back as the mottled stars overhead are immortalized in her mind. For on cloudy nights, she is lost examining the stygian sky, searching frantically for what simply cannot be found. Yes, if she can relive this evening, there will be no need for woe. Sealing her eyes shut, her petite lips curve upwards. Aynslea begins to drift away, her pale form illuminated by the brilliant orb of night.

Opening her eyes, Aynslea is amazed to find herself suspended above her diminutive hometown. Her gut twists anxiously, immediately she feels an instinctive falling sensation, expecting a dreadful impact within seconds. However, this appears to not be the case, she is simply drifting alongside the stars. Aynslea could not quite believe how smoothly she soared, albeit she was not in control. Gradually coming to a stop, Aynslea observes the star's destination, a collection of secluded hills beyond the town's border. She is placed with utmost care at the base of an incline, the grass tickling her bare feet. Not recalling taking her shoes off, Aynslea looks down to examine what she is wearing. To her sheer amazement she observes the plain white summer dress she is currently wrapped in, her normal attire has up and vanished. Curiosity surges through her like electricity, directing her vision to the familiar heavens.

Studying the sky, it seems as though someone has found the off switch to space. The only exception being an odd formation at the peak of the slope. It looked quite like the kneeling form of a man, with his arm extended, beckoning to her. Deciding that there is no other course of action, Aynslea sweeps across a sea of green towards the intriguing figure. Stopping a few feet short, Aynslea briefly pauses to better examine what exactly is before her. Planets and stars twinkle across the still form, endlessly shifting; it's terrific beauty halting all

comprehensible thought. Full galaxies dance before her eyes, sliding over the dense shapes of bones, black holes hugging slopes of muscle. What appears to be the head of this whimsical creature shifts upwards, almost as if it were looking directly at Aynslea. Scanning the vastness of its features, she pinpoints what appear to be eyes, two hauntingly imperfect moons, locked with her own frozen lakes. Almost lost in translation, there was a simple request displayed in the face of the benevolent creation, "Would you care to dance?".

Almost instantaneously the fluctuating hand reaches out, searching for a partner. Aynslea felt dreadfully inclined to accept the offer, with the dance initiated, music begins to flow through the air amidst the wind. Recognizing it as a formal waltz, she allows her right arm to be guided to shoulder height, and feels a firm but gentle hand cup her shoulder blade. Falling into their omniscient eyes, Aynslea allows her partner to guide her through the dance. Dipping and flowing around the chords of music, the pale form of Aynslea becomes lost in the ever wavering hues of her partner. Following every pivot, she is pulled effortlessly back to the divine being. The rise and fall of each bar carrying them across the hills. Every individual step was as confident as the next, they truly ruled the night. Weaving over the land and through the sky, until the music gingerly dissipates.

Once the final chord has dissolved into the air, the figure delicately pulls Aynslea close and envelopes her. Reaching up and embracing the visually deviating neck, they stand as one for an extensive amount of time. Slowly pulling back, Aynslea is unexpectedly greeted with a full night sky, shining down upon her. Bewildered, she frantically searches the hillside, only discovering dirt and grass. Tears rising to the surface, trepidation beginning to consume her, she jolts awake in her backyard.

Aynslea awoke with a wet face, openly sobbing once she regained full consciousness. Raising her round, moonlit face to the stars, she wonders if they enjoyed the dance as much as she did. Before the precious memory is consigned to oblivion, Aynslea grasps it securely, refusing to allow such a prize to drift away. Eventually reaching up to wipe her face dry, Aynslea treads back to her house. With one last look at her beloved twilight, she glimpses a fiery comet stretching across the entirety of the celestial sphere. Flashing an ecstatic smile, Aynslea reluctantly steps inside, anxiously anticipating her next encounter with her celestial dance partner.

Swarf

Hello. My name is Jordan Micheals and I made one hundred and twenty thousand dollars last year. I work at a company that buys and sells metal swarf. Now I know what you thinking, "he just made up that word." No. Swarf is the leftover metal when something is machined and, as you can tell, it's very profitable. But you see there is one problem in all this. I hate my life. Now before you go off saying how I should be thankful that I'm so well off I have some things to explain to you.

I live a good life. I wake up at 7:00 am everyday. Between 7:00 and 8:00 I get ready for work, shower, eat breakfast and put my suit on.

I do this every day.

Then I start my one hour commute to work. I usually get to work at 9:00 if the traffic is normal. I do this commute every day. At work I am an accountant-I work with the same numbers.

Every... Day.

At 6:00 I get off work and do the commute again, it only usually takes a half hour to get home because the traffic is lighter.

I do this every damn day.

When I get home I eat the same dinner of steak potatoes and broccoli. I've eaten it so much I almost don't even taste it anymore.

I eat this every...day.

Jager Mazurkewich
Grade 11
Ashcroft Secondary

Swarf

I go to bed at 8:00 pm after watching the news, but it's all the same stuff anyway, so what's the point?

Then It starts all over again.

The same pattern every day.

That's why I hate my life. I do the same thing everyday and I have for as long as I can remember. And that all changes today.

I went through my normal day. Wake up get ready, drive to work, crunch the same numbers but on the way home that's where it changes.

I started driving.. fast...very fast, until my car couldn't go any faster and then I lost control and swerved into the right barrier of the road.

The last thing I remember was seeing the road above me, I guess the car was upside down I was in the air. I heard a sharp screaming; I realized it was me.

Then nothing.

Then I wake up in my bed after thinking what had just happened? I thought there was no way I could have survived that. I had a sudden revelation that my attempt to break the monotony had not worked at all, it never will with because...

I'm in hell.

"Ugh," I groan "This is hopeless. I'll never be able to figure out an idea for this short story!"

Banging my head against the hard computer screen, the salty tears roll down my face. After sniffing and wiping the tears away. I give myself a pep talk.

"Alright Lizzie, you can do this. You can think of something great, and Mrs. Morrison won't kill you."

"Have you figured out an idea, hon?" my mom questions as she strolls into the kitchen.

"No, I can't think of anything, and the ideas that I come up with are stupid and cliché!"

"Don't worry; you'll think of something soon. Hey, why don't you go for a walk to clear your head?"

"Alright. I'll give it a try," I say, disbelieving her advice.

I sluggishly put on my shoes, open the door, and trudge down the path leading to a puny creek. As I slog along the overgrown path, some frogs croak.

"Ribbet, ribbet," they chant perfectly out of pitch.

I laugh, and rest on a fallen log near the creek's bank.

"These frogs have such an easy life. They don't have to worry about homework, or short stories, or Mrs. Morrison hitting them with big sticks," I grumble crossly.

After a few moments of listening to the peaceful stream flow by, ideas leisurely enter my thoughts.

"Maybe I should write about ninja frogs ... nah that's been done before. Hey, what about singing octopi who travel across Atlantis performing songs from The Little Mermaid? No can't do that. Think think ... ugh who am I kidding. This is impossible!"

Frustrated at the world, I angrily storm back home hoping a sudden miracle occurs. As I march to my house, it starts to drizzle. I pace faster. A few minutes later, the rain erupts into a torrential downpour. I sprint full-out. The beating rain creates muddy puddles; therefore, I slip and plunge face first into the largest one. Splat!

"Yuck!"

I spit the gritty muck out of my mouth and wipe my face with my soaking sleeve. Gradually, I stand and drag my drenched feet back home. So much for clearing my head.

When I return from the creek, the aroma of fresh-baked banana chocolate chip muffins greets me. The scent soothes my irritation and takes my mind off the terrible ordeal. Almost. Reality swiftly sets in, and I realize I must change my filthy outfit. Hastily, I take my shoes off and hurry upstairs to my bedroom. Grabbing my favourite pair of sweats, I dart to the bathroom to clean up.

After finally getting all the mud off my body, I put on my cozy clothes and my worn sheep slippers. Resolutely, I head to the computer to resume my battle.

"How was your walk, sugarplum?"

"Awful. I couldn't think of any ideas, then it started raining, and as I ran back home, I fell into a giant mud puddle!"

"Oh sweetie, that's terrible. Here have a muffin. They're fresh and your favourite."

"It's okay mom. I've got to get back to English."

Maybe reviewing the criteria will help spark an idea. I flip through my binder and grab the sheet. I read it over. Okay I need the five senses, MLA style, and a conflict. I skim the rest of the page.

"Okay this seems easy. Wait, there's one more thing."

You must write EXACTLY 1000 words.

"Oh no. No, no, she can't make us write 1000 words. I mean how am I supposed to write that many words? It's not possible!" I screech.

"Calm down. You can do this. Have faith in yourself." I remind myself, but panic rapidly spreads in my mind.

"Ok, Liz, just think of an idea then deal with the criteria later."

I ponder, and then suddenly I have it. My story can be about a war between werewolves and vampires. The werewolves fight for their right to share North America with the vampires. Alas, the vampires hate the werewolves and plot to destroy them. The battle wages on, but both parties realize their mistakes and forgive each other. Wait. An even better idea bubbles to the surface. The werewolf prince and the vampire princess fall in love; however, fate drives them apart. A perfect story. A supernatural spin-off of Romeo and Juliet.

I embark on my story typing rapidly on the computer. Before dinner starts, I reach 957 words. I cannot wolf my dinner fast enough.

"Hon, slow down, or you're going to choke on your spaghetti," Mom chides me halfway through dinner.

“Sorry Mom. I’m almost done my story. I only have 43 words left, and then I’m free!”

“Wonderful, what’s your story about?”

“It’s about werewolves and vampires. There’s also this whole forbidden love thing.”

“Liz, I hate to burst your bubble, but didn’t Mrs. Morrison say that you couldn’t write supernatural stories?” she asks.

I pause. Mrs. Morrison despises the supernatural.

“Ugh, I’m so stupid! How could I forget that? What am I going to write about now? That was my only good idea!” I sob.

“Oh darling, I’m so sorry. Hey, I’ve got an idea for a story.”

“What is it,” I sniffle.

“Liz, you’ve been struggling with this whole thing when it’s been right in front of your face. What about writing a story about writing a story? It would be perfect.”

I think, “Wow, my mom is a genius. How could I be so foolish?”

“Mom that’s wonderful. Thank you so much I love you.”

“No problem sweetie. Now finish your dinner and then write to your heart’s content.”

I gobble the rest of my spaghetti and dash to the computer. I open up a new word document and put in MLA style. I stare at the screen for a moment. After some hesitation, I type the opening line:

"Ugh," I groan "This is hopeless. I'll never be able to figure out an idea for this short story!"

Into the Forest

The forest is not an enchanting place to be on a dark, eerie, fall night. The trees are towering over me with evil mocking grins. The wind's howling seems as though it's laughing at me for being foolish. Each step I take Autumn leaves crunch loudly under my feet letting everyone and everything I know, I'm here. I'm running in and out of tree after tree. My arms, face, and body are being scratched with the long-armed branches. My eyes are red and puffy. My cheeks are swollen and stained with tears and my lungs feel like they're going to collapse any second.

The horrid sounds of the forest only makes this night more frightening. The owls are showing up out of nowhere. Their big yellow eyes are penetrating deep down into my soul, making me realize that tonight will be my last night on Earth. The wolves' cries become more and more distinct as I slow my pace. Each night one poor defenseless child is chased into the "Haunted Forest" and eaten by the threatening beast. Their small, black, beady eyes show fear that has never been shown before.

I didn't know how much longer I could handle being in the darkness. It is suffocating, swallowing up everything. I want light, something to chase away the never ending darkness. I try to reach out and feel the area around myself, but my hands are bound together but a thick, rough rope that digs into the skin of my wrists. I can barely feel my legs, which are numb and useless from scurrying across the mysterious beds of leaves. My breaths are struck by the deafening silence and my heart pounds through my ears. I feel it now, fear.

For the first hour, I had just felt fury, screaming out curses and threats in my ears. Now, I am scared that I will never see the golden warmth of the sun on my face or the sweet wind sweeping across my cheeks. My eyes close as I think about the feeling of the soft blades of grass beneath my feet and the scent of falling rain. I feel a cool trickle of water over my face as I open my bright green eyes. The peaceful feelings suddenly disappear. I wish I could feel something other than than the painful rope.

My stomach aches with hunger and my mouth is as dry as a desert. I flicker my eyes around the pitch black, once again hoping to see light. A quiet roaring roams into my ears, I can tell what it is, but it is getting louder. A light glow begins lighting up the area around me, letting me further examine the mysterious forest. I am close to a little cottage that emits a bizarre aroma.

I creep little by little towards the cottage, revealing broken furniture tossed from corner to corner. I see bits of crumple titles and articles which I may have read. The light grows brighter now, an orangey-yellow light flickers off the walls and the surroundings. I can feel heat, the burning warmth that makes me want to run for the cool air. I am gasping for a breath, the air is thicker filling with smoke and heat. The sharp scent of burning wood triggers me to cough. My

eyes water as the smoke touches them. I blink repeatedly yet the pain gets worse each time. I scream out, begging for someone, anyone to save me from the burning heat.

My pleas are not heard as nobody is around to help. Once again I struggle against the tightly bound ropes that hold me. Suddenly, the fire flashes off. I know my death will be slow and painful. My house is not far from the forest. I can hear the dreadful, pain filled cries of the poor children. Hearing the growls and snarls of the dreadful beast, I freeze and my breath is halted. The dark grey creature begins encircling me. It licks its lips and makes sure I can see the hunger in his one eye. It leaps at me and sinks its teeth into my left arm making me cry out in pain, tearing my flesh and leaving me sobbing. My body is numb as my limbs are being unattached from my body. My vision becomes blurry and I'm drifting off. Soon all I see is black and I know, I am no longer alive.

There are places and people that make the world one massive experience. Areas we have been too, events we have seen, even the sight of watching a young bright eyed boy hold the door open for one of our elderly. We may look at the sky as if it's always a dark rainy cloud, or the sun is shining bright onto the smiles of everyone filled in the streets. This is how I see it. Until I hear a simple, "I want to party", coming from the lips of a beautiful and innocent girl: Angela.

This girl just happens to be my best friend. Her story started with one bad decision- when she went to a grad party, at that mysterious location- where she lost who she was. She was having fun, gabbing about the latest gossip, while sipping on one of her too many drinks she had that night. Little did anyone know it was her very first night of consumption. She never thought that she would have Natalie watching her every movement, or the hatred filled in her head to do as she did. A little "mix" to go with her drink would do her just fine. No, that substance almost killed my best friend. She experienced a great amount of trauma that should never happen to anyone in the entire world. From that night all she remembered was the laughing and giggling about the night swallowed by one mouth full of a powerfully mixed drink, then the sounds of sirens and a vision of wavy objects swaying back and forth.

Her thoughts ultimately destroy her inner core. She allows every thought to thrive straight to her heart where it hurts the most. Natalie was the same age, had her life all figured out, was living alone, and was in a perfect relationship. After Angela dated Natalie's ex-boyfriend, Natalie made sure that my beloved friend got what she deserved.

Angela was slipped the wrong drink on the night of her first and last grad party. What she thought was "fun" was only the worst of what she could experience. That night Angela was given two doses of a powerful drug called Rohypnol. Not one but two drugs mixed together were contained within her "special beverage" of the night. It was only one drink that did as much damage as Angela experienced. Of course this drug did not show any significant colour, taste, nor smell. Rohypnol is considered a date rape drug, and luckily Angela was safe, or as safe as could be. She became weak and confused all within only a little amount of time and then soon went to sleep. That night, no one in that entire house knew if she would be okay, except for Natalie. Angela not only went to sleep, but this sedative had my best friend in a coma.

Seeing my best friend laying in a hospital bed, in a coma may just be the most disturbing sight I have experienced. Not knowing, "Will she awake today?" or Will that night be the last memory of Angela Smithers? Known as the innocent young woman, all she wanted was a night full of rowdy and partying teenagers and what she got in return, was a night she will regret for the rest of her life. With a face of an angel she looks incredibly peaceful and thoughtless in this deep sleep.

My dearest best friend will always be with me because I witnessed her make her decision she did and the way that resulted may have cost her, her life. She will always be remember as the innocent girl who loved everyone. To this day she is still in the coma and that has made a big influence towards me.

Amrak

Way up in the sky and invisible to the human eye, sat a tree. Now this tree, if we could see it, would be quite the sight to behold. Silver and gold danced up it's trunk, swirling in an elegant waltz, dipping together and breaking apart to create twirled branches. Dangling from each luminescent branch were hundreds of crystal glass leaves, each a milky iridescence. The tree heightened and shrank as it must, in order to accommodate and categorize the new leaves that grew, and the judged leaves that had been plucked off...

Amrak outstretched a single, thin arm toward the tree, and pulled one of the tiny crystal leaves off. The leaf held no beauty to him, nor any majesty- simply sorrow. For inside the leaf, were a young girl's memories swirling. He watched as the contents played out, years of bedtime stories and soccer games; platinum pigtails turning into golden curls as the years went by. He longed for the simplicity of her life, how innocent and pure it was, killing herself out of a broken heart- only knowing unconditional love gone awry. Amrak spectated the actions of the girl, all that her life had consisted of, and the decisions she had made in the moments that determined ultimately, whether she was a good or bad person.

Chloe Boone
NorKam
Grade 12

Amrak

Possessing only the ability to have an objective outlook, the translucent, green eyed man longed to experience what heart-break felt like- anything, so long as it was new. He was the embodiment of the cosmic energy Karma, and it was his duty to determine where a souls energy was reincarnated in order to achieve a positive and negative energy balance. He played a god of sorts, determining ultimately what path someone would be born into... which is where his story ended and began.

Amrak had no say over how the people behaved during their time reincarnated, and over the years he had grown bitter and apathetic through watching his misplacements cause chaos. He had started off as an identic character, taking his duty seriously and placing people into a situation of balance. Hundreds of years having passed however, and witnessing millions of unnecessary deaths at the hands of despicable creatures, he was beginning to lose faith in the purpose of his job.

Every day he plucked hundreds of leaves off the tree, and watched innocent children live and die in the name of war. It angered him, how driven the world was by greed.

Chloe Boone
NorKam
Grade 12

Amrak

How could the silly people not see the beauty of the planet they were destroying? Every three seconds a new leaf grew on the tree, and he watched the contents as man, woman and child gasped for air, so thirsty and hungry that their energy could no longer survive in their bodies. He had watched in disgust as leaves touched by poverty passed through, witnessing murder of the worst degree. The tree itself was already monstrous, looming tall as people passed on faster than Amrak could revive them. An outburst of leaves bloomed on the tree, and as it grew another ten feet in the air, he snatched yet another leaf off the tree, praying that it was someone who had lived a long, healthy life and had passed peacefully.

Heaving a sigh as he assumed a catastrophe occurred, he tightened his gauze drape closer around him. Instead however, he was caught off guard as the leaf burned his hand. Getting down on all fours, he observed the contents in horror, as he watched the man drop a bomb on an entire country. The tree continued to expand faster than he could judge the leaves as pandemonium erupted on earth, and Amrak started to cry for the first time in decades. He had seen the beauty of the absolute wonderment that filled the lives of those above materialism, and he could no longer take the pain of watching so much hate and destruction.

Chloe Boone
NorKam
Grade 12

Amrak

He compared the two leaves, that of the young girl's with that of the assassinated bomber. He looked up at the tree that was supposed to be the epitome of beauty, life itself. Dropping both the leaves on the ground, Amrak fell to his knees as a shattering filled the air. He clutched his disappearing hands to his chest, and gasped for air as the trees roots lifted out of the cloud. The two leaves sat on top of each-other, unshattered, capturing the essence of how one life truly affects everything, as Amrak's heart sat, torn in half. His ability to see objectively vanished as the balance that sat within him ripped into opposites, holding two halves of a whole apart, and ultimately keeping them from succeeding. The homeostasis needed to keep the Earth's energy from imploding had been destroyed once and for all, and with it, the tree and Amrak as well.

My Name is Anna

Hello, my name is Anna. I am seven years old. And this is my story.

I live with my daddy. My mom left when I was three years old. Every night, I fall asleep and picture my mother singing to me. The memory of her soft voice soothes me. My dad is a very busy man. He tries to help me with my school work whenever he can. In my spare time I like to write my mom letters, and go play outside in the front yard.

I wonder if my mommy ever gets my letters, or reads them. I hope she knows how much I miss her. She probably wouldn't recognize me. I've grown so much. My hair is long and fiery red. I have bright green eyes that twinkle and I have a lot of freckles. My daddy says I remind him of my mommy a lot. Apparently we look a lot alike, but I can't see it.

There is only one picture of her. Before she left, she put a picture of her holding me in my room. She looks so happy. I don't understand why she left me and daddy.

Daddy is always working. He works at a busy lawyers' office and is always on the phone. Maybe that's why she left us. He tries to pay attention to me as much as he can. He tells me I'm his little princess, but is always busy with 'important calls' with clients and his boss. When I'm outside, I like to draw on the driveway with my chalk, and play hopscotch. My dad tries to watch me, but seems to be distracted by his phone.

Sometimes I feel like daddys' boss gets more attention from him than me. But I know daddy works hard, and he tries to be a good father, but I wish he was able to spend more time with me.

When I'm outside playing, I like to imagine my mom there, teaching me how to hula hoop and rollerblade. Daddy says that my mom was really good at those things. And then daddy could finally finish his phone calls without worrying about me.

Last Wednesday, I was playing outside like usual. My neighbourhood was quiet. The sun was warming the pavement I was drawing on. My dad was on the phone with his boss, and some clients. I heard him say he was going inside so he could hear the speaker better. I went into the car port. I was grabbing more chalk, and my bear that I like to play with.

I remember feeling a tight squeeze along my ribs, as I quickly gasped for air. The air felt sharp and hurt my nose as it was the last breath I can remember. This man covered my mouth with his stinging hands, and threw me in the back of a van. I hit my head on the side of the white door. I woke up in darkness. I knew I was still in the van. It felt like we were going over rocks, and I kept bouncing all over in the back of the van. The cold and hard metal were leaving welts on my limbs with each bounce.

I can imagine my dad rushing out to the yard, and hugging my bear that I dropped as I was stolen, tears rushing down his cheeks and calling out my name, regretting going inside, and for letting my mom leave him.

Hello, my name is Anna. As of right now I am seven years old. A stranger has abducted me and I don't know if I will ever come home.

If you see my mom or dad can you please tell them to forgive themselves? I want them to know this isn't their fault. I love and miss them very much.

April.9 2015

My Two Emotions

Storme Darian Crabbe
Norkam Secondary
Grade 12

When I was fifteen years old, my whole world began to shift. If you are not like me, then you may not understand. Many family members in my life didn't understand either. Heck I didn't even understand until just a few short months ago. My nan is Abbigale Duffey. I'm nineteen years old, currently attending my grade twelve year in high school and going to hairdressing school. I am also living independently with my husband, Ryan Duffey and our five ferrets: Falcor, Molly, Bandit, Koda, and gus gus.

I am usually very normal, but you would have never thought this while I was growing up.

I have two "friends", May-belle and Octavia. They have been in my life since the I was born, and will be there until the day I die. Although, they existed, I wasn't aware of them until they became a problem for me. They were also unnoticed by my loved ones around me.

I'll start by talking about May-belle. She is the more likeable friend. She's always so energized, outgoing, extremely happy, and enthusiastic. Although, she has her flaws, such as spending way too much money on the most unnecessary things. She will also do reckless things; drugs, partying, and just constantly putting herself in vulnerable situations. Maybelle has always been very delightful and enspiriting.

Octavia became more familiar to me at a younger age. She is almost the opposite of May-belle. She is always sad, anxious, and blaming herself for everything that goes wrong. She is also very easily irritated by the slightest problem, always talking about "the end" and having no future. Octavia often looks weak and tired, even though she seems to sleep more often than regular, never doing anything enjoyable. She has a very difficult time interacting with others, only me. Octavia also has a problem with drugs, self harm, and suicide attempts.

When I was about fifteen years old, Octavia began to encircle her dark cloud around me like I was a magnet, blocking my vision. She convinced me of nasty things that are very untrue. She separated me from others, alone in the world. She would say I am fat, unwanted, and worst of all, unloved. At the time I could never understand why she wanted me to feel this way. Over the year, the darkness she had attracted to me, when I was about sixteen, became significantly darker. I became weak, and tired. I had become Octavia.

I couldn't stop thinking about death. I had become so hopeless. Octavia told me the only way to make the pain go away was to scratch my skin until it bled, so I did. This became "normal" to me. "You are fat, ugly, unlovable, and a failure." She wouldn't stop screaming hurtful things at me.

I could no longer hold on to the brightness that I had always once had. I could no longer see through the darkness around me and Octavia had convinced me to try to commit suicide. I was hospitalized for nine days, and closely monitored by doctors and nurses making sure Octavia was never around me. This was a first time experience for me.

I didn't know what it was like to not have Octavia around. It was almost relieving, but only for a little while. The doctors gave me a pill to keep Octavia away, virtually making me numb. This only helped for a few weeks, before she worked her way back into my brain, took over and told me that my pills were no good, and I would have to stop taking them. For some reason, I listened and I would repeatedly end up back up in the hospital.

This was an experience of its own. I lay in the hospital bed, just waiting for it to all be over, but we all know that was not going to happen.

When I was seventeen years old, Octavia and I got so into drugs and alcohol. We were sent to drug and alcohol detox and treatment in Vancouver, BC. Three weeks after we arrived I found myself once again away from Octavia, but again not for long.

Maybelle was not as problematic for me early on in my life. I became aware of Maybelle when I was about halfway through my seventeenth year, shortly after I met my husband. Maybelle presented herself to me as an excited, enthusiastic, and extremely happy teenager.

Ryan, my boyfriend at the time, liked Maybelle in the beginning, everyone did. Just like Octavia had, Maybelle changed me quite drastically, but in a different way than Octavia had. I began to realize she was also reckless and uncaring of the consequences. She made me feel so good, and happy, almost too happy. I became as reckless and uncaring as she was.

I would only get a visit from Maybelle once in a while, but as soon as she left, Octavia was always there waiting. Octavia brought me back to the hospital yet again, shortly after my eighteenth birthday, but this time was different. It was then I got an answer, an answer to why I had these "life time friends". The doctor called them different names from what I call them. He called Maybelle "Hypomania" and Octavia's name was "Severe Depression". He said the two "friends" put together is actually something "abnormal", called Bipolar II.

Today I am living a healthy life, going to school, and also living what would be called a "normal life" with Maybelle and Octavia managed, thanks to my loving husband, my doctor, and, of course, myself for wanting to get better. I do have to take medication everyday, but, to be honest, the new medication seemed like more of a miracle than medicine.

I will continue to live a happy, healthy, enjoyable lifestyle and stay the way I was before I told my story.

The glistening sand burns my eyes as we race through the desert wasteland. Thousands of dunes stretch for miles all around us, as if a sea of sand flooded the world. Smoke pillars billow into the sky from the ruins of what used to be bustling cities. The landscape around us looks like it took a few pages from the Book of Revelation and turned it into reality.

The rusted metal walls of the settlement are the only calming sight left in this god forsaken hell hole. Two men guard the settlement gates at all times, glassing the wasteland we now call home. An old hunting rifle rests across one guards lap, the other leans his against the wall.

For months we've been cut off from any other human contact, if there are any left to be contacted that is. We'd been camping out in the deserts of southern England until Ivan spotted the walls of the settlement we now currently reside in. The name "Lancaster" was roughly painted in white across the gates when we first arrived. Just south of Bristol these stragglers managed to set up camp. The war wiped out the most populated cities. It happened almost instantly. No one still understands how it all happened. One day you're sitting with friends pounding back beers, the next you're running for cover while the world unhinges itself. It is my crew's month for scavenging. Most of my men are glad to get out of that bloody kitchen; one more day and Ivan might have stabbed one of the other cooks. It's not right having mercenaries cook meals for these ungrateful sods, but everyone has to do his part or take his chances in the wasteland.

Lancaster

"Hey Jackson, find anything worthwhile out there?" asks the guard to my right. The guard peers into the cab of my Ratrod searching for anything we may have scavenged.

"A few cans of beans, some canned pears, and a crate of pistol ammo," Ivan replies from the passenger's side seat.

"Well, I guess it's better than nothing, eh?" chuckled the guard. "You boys get yer' selves inside before the sandstorm hits, looks like it's gonna be a rough night."

I tipped my head in acknowledgment to the guard. He's right about one thing, the storm heading our way isn't gonna make for a pleasurable night. The gates slide open, creaking and scraping against the hard ground.

We've got ourselves a nice little garage to call home for the time being. The door slides up along the roof revealing our mechanic, Matt, yanking down on the chains. He's a stout man in stature, probably from sitting around and tinkering all day. We put up with his laziness because without him we wouldn't have even made it to Lancaster. The hair that he lacks on his head is made up in the braided beard which hangs from his round chin. Small scars run along his head from not paying attention under the rig, but it's his hands that take the brunt of his injuries. Almost completely callused from gripping tools, his monster paws move swiftly while he assembles and disassembles his pistol.

"Anything new for me to play with today, boss?" he yells as I drive over into my stall.

"For once you're in luck, Matt!" I shout back. "Follow me over to the Rig!"

An excited expression runs across his face as he makes his way over to me.

"Well are ya gonna tell me what it is, or am I gonna have to start guessing?"

"I'd tell you if I even knew what the damn thing was."

Lancaster

I reach into the glove compartment of the Rig's cabin searching for the item I found on the scavenge run today. We don't divulge everything we have to the other residents here in Lancaster. If we did they would have thrown us out long ago. I pull the mysterious device out from the cabin. It's a long, spiked piece of metal. One end has eight spindly leg like structures to hold it upright. A sickly green interface glows along the midsection of the device with strange markings flashing across it.

"Where in the hell did you find this?" Matt asked.

"We went north towards Bristol to see if we could find anything in the city, but all the highways were too badly damaged to travel on. On the way back we stopped at an abandoned campsite, which is where we got the food and ammo. This thing came rocketing out of the sky, nearly took me out." I tell him.

"And You thought It'd be a good idea to bring it here! Are you insane? The world has been turned upside down and you bring some random device that fell out of the sky. It could be a nuclear weapon for all we know! Maybe it's some sort of tracking device and whoever sent it is on there way here as we speak!" Matt bellowed

"Calm down will you. I thought it might be able to help us understand why this war even started in the first pla..." I'm cut off by a noise emitting from the device. Lights start flashing from the devices interface. Matt looks up at me with eyes wide open.

"Everyone out now!" I shout to the rest of the crew. Matt chucks the device back into the Rig's cabin as we sprint towards the garage doors. Just as we step into the streets the garage erupts into a fireball. I look in disbelief at our home. Everything we needed to survive, now destroyed in the fire.

Lancaster

As we gather ourselves, there's a disturbance in the flames. A figure walks through the debris and flames, unscathed by the explosion. Wearing armour that's as black as night, the figure advances towards us. Red eyes glare from behind the figure's helmet.

"This one's on you boss. You brought this thing here," Matt spits out as he coughs up blood before falling to his side fighting for his last breath.

Lesson

Moraya Harrison

Norkam Secondary School

Grade 12

The cold breeze blew past me as our hands slipped into one another. I had that familiar warm feeling again but it didn't seem to last. This wasn't the first time I had walked this path with him, but it was about to be my last. Loosening my grip, thoughts flowed through my mind, trying to remember why I had agreed to this.

A few weeks earlier I had walked this same route with the boy who had been my boyfriend at the time. It was a beautiful sunny day and we were off on our usual Sunday walk. Josh had seemed a little off, but I didn't second guess it. As conversation struggled when it usually flowed made everything a bit odd. He was constantly paying attention to other things, prettier girls, nice cars. I didn't put much thought into it at the time.

As the week grew old, things got worse. It's almost like a switch went off, like he was suddenly occupied. I didn't get that good morning text or that cute little smirk he always gave me. I instead was left in the dust with no explanation. He just dropped me, like it was nothing. I noticed he had been talking to other girls but he insisted they were just friends. I let him be, just like he seemed to want.

The following week the news reached me. I hurt, but I swallowed my words and tried not to react. After being in a relationship for two years and he only knowing this girl for a few days, he decided to choose her. It didn't make any sense to me. I sat back and let it happen. I thought a lot and wondered how he could do it.

A couple days later, Josh contacted me begging for a chance to talk. He explained how much he loved me, and how big of a mistake he had made. The soft part of me that I had for him made me allow this to happen.

Now I find myself standing here in this familiar blissful place, but why? He pleaded for me to stay with him but for now he needed time on his own to think about the situation more clearly. I believe that if you love someone you can't just walk away with every glance of a prettier girl. If you're feelings aren't really there for her then don't let the temporary feelings over come the real ones. I realized in the end I just ended up hurting myself.

I have never felt this way before. I always see television and movie characters going through breakups, crying to their friends and eating buckets of ice cream straight out of the container. I would laugh at them and tell myself how pathetic they looked, never stopping to think that one day, I could be one of those girls. Well, now I am, and it hurts more than I ever would have thought.

After two and a half years, Michael is gone. The worst part is that I knew I lost him long before it was over. For the duration of our relationship, I was there for him, and he was there for me. We were one another's comfort zones, and for a while, we were all each other had. I would have done anything for the guy, I adored him.

Suddenly, he started surrounding himself with new friends, and they started to change him. It was like all he cared about was his ego, his friends, his status, and not at all about me. He began to treat me poorly, getting mad at me for every one of my mishaps that never used to bother him. I never saw him anymore. He was distant. He became very close friends with the rudest, most unpleasant girl I know, Melissa.

Melissa was horrible to me, calling me names in the hallway and deliberately making me feel horrible about myself. I was angry, I had done nothing to the girl. I confronted Michael about it, and asked him what it was that he told Melissa about me to make her do what she was doing.

He denied it, and said he didn't tell her a thing. As the name calling got worse and his other friends began getting into it, I knew what I had to do. I called Michael, and I told him I couldn't do it anymore. I wanted him to fight for me, to tell me he loved me and he would do anything to make it right. He didn't though. In fact, he ignored me completely. There was no closure, but at that point, I knew we were over.

One month has passed since I broke up with Michael. Seeing him hurts. He's always surrounded by tons of friends with a permanent smile on his face. I don't understand how I can be going through such a hard time while he has completely moved on already. The feeling has turned to anger. I hate him, and it's because of him that I can still not sleep at night. I started my new classes recently, so it's nice to have a distraction. I sit beside an absolute sweetheart with red hair and vibrant green eyes in my music class. Her name is Megan. I talk to her about the situation with Michael because it feels nice to vent about it, and she listens intently and talks to me sweetly about it. One day she says to me "You're beautiful, and he's not worthy of an amazing girl like you. What he is putting you through is unfair, but I promise you, he will come back. He will realize what he has done, and it will be far too late. It's called Karma." Megan is a sweet girl, but I don't believe her words.

It's summertime now. I've been spending a lot of time with Megan and I have made many new amazing friends and great acquaintances through her, including a new close friend of mine named Hailey. I've been going out a lot, having movie nights with Megan and going to the beach with my new friends. I'm quite surprised that I am enjoying the

relaxing summer. I find myself checking Michael's facebook and instagram accounts much less now. Of course I still do, but only once or twice a day rather than five or six. I can sleep at night now, quite well actually, and I have stopped checking my phone every two minutes for messages from him. I've been distracting myself well, and it has started to pay off.

When the new school year started, everyone seemed much friendlier and more mature, maybe because we're seniors now. I also felt more confident and less threatened. On the first day back, I saw Michael looking at me, but he looked away quickly. That was three months ago, and the school year is well on its way. I have even more friends now, and they are always surrounding me and making me smile and laugh. Two days ago, I was chatting with my friend Jackson, and I looked over his shoulder to see Michael staring at me. The look in his eyes was a mixture of sadness, anger and betrayal. I ignored it. I watch him more closely now however, and I have noticed a change in him. When he is with his friends, he is no longer smiling, he is staring blankly into space, or at me.

It's almost been an entire year since I parted ways with my old boyfriend and best friend Michael. As I lay in bed with my headphones in, I feel my phone vibrate. I see a number that is not a contact in my cell, but looks vaguely familiar. I don't answer. Only then do I realize who's number it is. I check our old messages to confirm, and it's Michael's number. My heart pounds. What does he want? Why is he calling me? Is he going to try calling again since I didn't answer?

I ponder all night, until I crawl into my sheets to get some sleep. Suddenly, my phone vibrates again, and I am staring at the same number. With shaking hands, I pick up my phone, my finger on "answer". However, there is a change in my heart, a shift, and my finger hits "ignore." I lay back down and try to stop the smile that tugs at my lips. This is the closure I have been looking for. He may not have accepted it, but I sure have. Thinking of my best friend Megan and what she once told me about karma, I fall into a deep and peaceful sleep.

Diwali Fun

Jasmit Mahal

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Grade 12

The day was November 5th 2010 the day which Diwali fell under. Diwali the festival of lights is held for three main reasons one to worship with the goddess Lakshmi, who is the goddess of prosperity Hindus pray to the goddess to bring them good luck and wealth, Diwali also celebrates the return of Ram and Sita and the start of Harvest season. Most little kids in India see Diwali as a time they can get their hands on all types of delicious mouth watering Indian sweets and to light up lots of fireworks. On Diwali all kids get school off so all day you would see kids running around on the streets with their little sparklers looking for Diwali fun and mischief.

On that warm day. Inderpreet and her friend Parv were sitting outside of Parv's home just sitting around since Parv had the day off from school. Inderpreet's parents were gone to the temple for their Diwali prayers with Parv's, so the girls were alone and bored. They had nothing to do since their parents weren't home so they couldn't do the Diwali fun other kids were doing. Inderpreet is from Canada and she was on vacation in India. She was staying at her dad's childhood home and Parv was her neighbor. They were the same age and they clicked immediately because they loved the same thing and that was causing mischief. Inderpreet never celebrated Diwali the way they did in India in her home in Canada she had to go to school but in the evenings she would go to the local temple and watch the fireworks, Inderpreet and Parv always played together. They would pull pranks, and be nuisances. Parv was a troublemaker and always liked to fool around especially on the roof of her home.

Fireworks were being sold all over the little village. Parv and Inderpreet were really bored they didn't have much to do: When they saw the cart going around the village selling fireworks for a really cheap price, Inderpreet said "I've never lit fireworks before because shes young and in Canada you need a license to light them also my parents would never let me they think its to dangerous even in India" . Inderpreet then lit up with a mischievous grin and said "Well no ones really home right now and its Diwali we should light some! " So the girls collected all the rupees they could and bought a few little fireworks and stole a pack of matches from Inderpreet' home. They decided to go to Parv's home but when they got there they saw Parvs grandma was home and their worker in the farm. Parv's grandma was too busy cooking away her sweets for Diwali. She didn't even notice that the girls purchased fireworks and were running up to the rooftop. Parv's roof was flat and had no fencing at all around it, it was not a safe place and Parv told Indepreet to be careful because a few people have fallen off her roof before. So there they were two young little girls

playing with fireworks and laughing away.

They were having a blast, but it was all going to be over because Parv's grandma noticed what the girls were doing and it wasn't safe so she yelled to them. "Get off that's dangerous we'll light them up at night!" But the girls just said "ya ya" and that they'll be down in a second. Parv mainly lit them since she was experienced but Inderpreet wanted to try. They only had one left so Inderpreet lit that one up, but as she soon and she lit she got scared and regretted her decision and ran as far back as she could. She was too caught up in the moment and was too scared of being hit by the firework to see where she was going and didn't notice her surroundings. Parv was screaming "Inderpreet what are you doing, you're running too far back you're going to fall!" and before you know it, Inderpreet fell off the roof letting out a huge scream and in a blink of an eye Inderpreet was on the innocent worker's leg who let out a huge scream. Inderpreet didn't notice what she had fallen on. She just bursted out crying.

Inderpreet however did not get hurt at all. But the poor worker who works for Parv's family was relaxing and enjoying his diwali sweets on his break from his hard job working for Parv's farm, screeched so loud and was also crying. Inderpreet fell on the left leg of the worker who was already in pain from the farm work and having an hundred pound girl fall on his leg only made things worse. Parv's grandmother made Parv run next door to grab Inderpreet's aunt, Inderpreet's aunt ran as fast she could to see her niece crying and screaming and their worker doing the same.

When Inderpreet's parents got home they rushed over to see what happened and took Inderpreet and the poor worker to the hospital immediately to see if hopefully everything was fine. When they returned from the hospital, the doctor told them Inderpreet was fine and nothing happened to her but the worker had to get surgery on his leg. The worker was furious at what happened and the fact that his surgery was going to be way more than what he earns. As a gift for saving his daughter and hopefully not to get a lawsuit, Inderpreet's dad paid for the worker's surgery and all his medicine.

That same night the Diwali festivities still went on, even though there was trouble in paradise in the morning. Every single member of Inderpreet's family was up on the roof lighting fireworks, laughing and eating. But Inderpreet was still bitter about what happened. She stayed downstairs and watched. She was too scared to go on roofs. Ever since that incident Inderpreet vowed to never celebrate Diwali in India ever again and that she never wants to be near fireworks.

The cupboards were full of cans. Tomato paste and various beans were labeled on the tins but all just part of making food and not being food. The fridge provided the same result, ingredients to improve food but nothing I could prepare. Tossing on a raincoat I left the house to try and get food from other sources. A chilled wind pushed against me, making every step more laborious and returning home the more glamorous option. A darkening sky and growing need for sustenance drove me to pick up my pace and find the fastest food fix. Scanning the neighborhood I saw very few food options. I knew the people who lived at one of the houses.

I started on the pathway to the house reciting in my head the names of the people who lived there, taking note of the shrubs lining the cement path and the windowed doorway. This family should have food. I pushed the door bell and heard a buzzing through the interior. Listening intently I didn't hear any movement so I rang the buzzer again. I held my ear against the door hoping to hear any sign of life. Annoyed I attacked the buzzer to gain any response from within but to no avail. A glimmer out of the corner of my eye caught my attention and I stooped down to shrubbery level.

Closely examining the healthy brown dirt with little specs of plant food I saw a key! Probably the spare key to the house. I grabbed at it hastily getting dirt between my fingers that fell out of my hands as I held the key to the heavens in thanks for this opportunity. I thrust the key into the door and with a click I was in.

I rushed into the house, checking hastily through rooms to find the kitchen in the far side of the house with a sliding door overlooking a well kept yard. I thrust open cupboards looking for the fastest cure for my hunger. Finding bread I decided a sandwich would be simple. In the fridge I came upon peanut butter and jam, a simple meal but filling. I slathered the peanut spread on both

sides of the sandwich and as the spoon went in the jam I heard a deep male voice commenting on how the door was open. Tossing the jam on the sandwich with no spreading and shoving the sandwich in my mouth I made for the sliding door. It wouldn't budge! Rushing quickly I got up the stairs and ran into the first door on my left locking it after me and searching for an option of escape. A clean bathroom gleamed back at me, the holy throne of the room seeming to shine with cleanliness, and above that was a window shining with sunlight.

With sandwich in mouth I climbed on it and opened my window of opportunity and prepared myself to crawl out. The bread in my teeth began to grow soggy and rip apart from the rest of the meal. As it fell from my mouth my foot slipped off the lid flushing the toilet as I fell out the window. Sticks dug into my back when I landed. Shocked and dazed I laid there for a moment. Swallowing what sandwich I had salvaged, I got up and sprinted out of the yard, over the fence, and kept running until I couldn't see the house any longer.

I found myself in another yard, untrimmed grass tickling my ankles and the smell of trees tickled my nose. A few garden gnomes guarded a walkway, and birds splashed in their stone bath. Following a pathway I found a small vegetable garden.

My stomach reminded me that I wasn't actually able to eat the whole sandwich. I grabbed at the leafy top of a carrot. An old womanly screech erupted behind me and I jerked up vegetable and all. Standing stiff and straight I saw the hag in a light blue ugly flowered gown with her silvered hair in lifeless curls. Looking at the bounty that I plucked a scrawny beet stared back at me that wouldn't be much of a meal even if I could eat it like this. Dropping the meal I ran in the direction of the forest smell with the old coot yelling bloody murder at me.

A wall of trees blocked my path, small bushes filled the spaces between the giant wooden pillars and no path in sight. Squirrels chattered in the trees and there were life sounds everywhere. Surely for any being to survive there must be food in the woods. Forgetting any doubt I charged into the forest.

Keeping my eyes to the bushes I looked for anything remotely edible, buzzing distracting my thoughts and a chill that returned with a vengeance in the dark left me disoriented but determined. Small circular silhouettes appeared on a bush and grabbing a bunch they squished and left a dark residue on my hands that was sticky and smelled sweet. Taking a small lick I waited a moment. How does one tell if berries are poisonous? Ignoring that thought and focusing on my hunger, I grabbed handfuls of berries and shoveled them into my system. Feeling full I started to head homeward.

Looking at the darkened trees I tried to figure out where I had come from but I could tell none of the plants apart in the darkness. Choosing a direction I began to walk until I started to feel pressure in my lower abdomen. Stopping I felt a jolting pain worse than any cramp I ever experienced. Collapsing at the base of a nearby tree my insides felt like they were shutting down, I began to retch but tried to keep what food I had inside. Tears began streaming from my eyes as I tried to think of a way to escape the pain, then with an idea I decided to sleep. It would be better in the morning.

Helios

Cleaning armor sucked, especially when someone such as myself was injured and still had about a hundred more sets to clean out of the ten I had just finished. It all started when I went out on my own---again---on a job that I barely understood in the first place. Simply, the money reward was good enough to warrant my attention.

Had I read the actual description, I would've realized that I was hunting a high-level Kithkin--a type of dark entity that took the form of any animal it came in contact with but was easy to spot because it had a purple sheen to it and red eyes. This one had modeled itself after Arachne, a vain mortal woman who had been turned into a Chaoskin spider by the Godling Athena, but had been killed long ago by a Fighter, like myself.

Chaoskin are similar to Kithkin, but are actually found on four of the five continents of Niflheim (Durathor, Zephyrus, Fujin, Shuu, and Centrumm) and normally keep their noses clean for fear of getting both hunted down by the Clans of Centrumm or the Godlings. As such, Godlings are the ones who we either worship and trust, or fight and refuse their guidance. Terrans are the earthen monsters Clan members fight with the most, but some we can learn from and even partner up with.

The Kithkin, however, are demons from another dimension that had been accessed via a portal the Government had opened despite warnings from the Godlings. They normally look like black smoke, but when they take form, they're even more dangerous and deadly.

So, as ill equipped as I was with just a steel sword and armor that was more jerkin than metal, I went to the town of Sequoia, determined to get my ten thousand rupees. That much could cover two months worth of rent for me and then some. Talk about sold! Little did I know, (thanks to the villagers not telling me) this Kithkin had been kidnapping villagers to take back to its nest to feed its babies.

The nest was a run down house that it had lured me to after attacking a couple on a nighttime stroll. If I had half a brain, I would have realized that this was a trap right from the get-go. When I did realize it, I was already being jumped on by the monster. Thankfully, I killed it, but now I was stuck with its angry kids.

When I had tried to escape, a floorboard had given way and my foot fell through and I fell to my knees. I tried to pull my foot out, but it was caught. As the spiders got closer and louder, in my panic, I began to have flashes of my past when I was a slave before I became a Fighter. I could practically feel the cuffs on my wrists as haunting laughter echoed in my skull.

A cold sweat began to run down my back as I stared at the thousands of tiny, beady red eyes and I screamed for someone to help me. I hadn't screamed like that since I was a child. Thankfully, some of my clanmates who had been sent by our master had come to my rescue. Apollo, the master's son and a Summoner by birthright, used one of his Salamanders to burn down both the house and spiders while Luna, a Tamer, and the twins, Cassandra the Bard, and Helenus the Scholar, pulled me away.

Because I was so suddenly traumatized by the experience, I passed out. When I woke up, Apollo gave me a stern lecture, Helenus also scolded me for not reading closely, and his sister complained that I--again--broke clan rules by taking on an A-level job. Luna only smiled sweetly and said she was glad I was okay and should say thank you for having such good friends.

After I muttered out my appreciation, we went back to the clan house where I got another scolding from Master Helios and was promptly sent to our Terran Dwarven blacksmith, Mr. Ymir. He grinned widely when he saw me, his gold molar flashing brightly at me.

"Aye, thar ya are, lass...I see ya got some more "reminders" for not paying attention to the trouble ya were gettin' in'ta."

I scoffed at him.

"Just tell me what I got to do."

He chuckled again and motioned to a large pile of randomly discarded armor and weapons.

"Clean'em up nice an' shiny, lass; I wanna be able to see my soul when I come back an' check up on ya."

"Yes, sir...." I mumbled, grabbing a rag and a piece of armor, sitting down to start cleaning it. So now, here I was, cleaning armor because I was too interested in money and not my own well being. Feeling tears sting my eyes, I rubbed the breastplate in my hand a bit harder until I heard a jingle and looked down to see a large bag of rupees by my foot.

Looking up, I saw Apollo staring back at me. His lips were pursed in annoyance but his green eyes were kind.

"What's this for?" I asked bitterly, holding up the bag.

"That's half of the reward," he replied shortly, "I figured you deserved something after the earful father and I gave you."

I rolled my eyes.

"I don't need your help, Prince Helios."

His eyes narrowed and he smirked.

"Then give me my money back, Ser Twyla."

I held the bag defensively to my chest and we both laughed. As I turned back to my "job" I felt a warm hand brush against my head, playing with the strands, but it disappeared just as I was relaxing to the touch.

Embarrassed, I hunched over and began to furiously clean the armor in my hand.

"Oy!! Twyla, ya buffoon!! If ye keep scrubbin' like that, yar gonna peel off the finish! Stop!!"

Ashton Moses

Grade12

Norkam Secondary

Bad Meets Evil

Kyle was always tempted by the adrenaline rush Mr. Bad paid him to do his dirty work. Whenever Kyle was offered a job, he just couldn't resist it. His parents always tried to get Mr. Good to hire him but everytime he offered a job, Kyle would deny it, then instantaneously turn to Mr. Bad and ask him what's next. Everything from talking back to teachers to doing graffiti all over the school was on Mr. Bad's list of jobs. Every job had a different amount of pay, some longer lasting and others short but intense.

One day Kyle saw a job recently posted. It's title was "Do any drug you can get your hands on." Of course Kyle accepted it and went on a hunt for drugs. What Kyle managed to find was LSD, MDMA, and marijuana. He was satisfied with what he found and talked to a couple buddies who also were employees of the infamous Mr. Bad. They were excited to join him on his business 'trip'.

They went to a friends house where there were no parents and proceeded with the job. They divided up the substances equally and then started doing them. About an hour later the drugs really kicked in and they were all high as a kite. This is the moment Kyles employer let him in on a little secret. He told him how he had just met a new business partner and his name was Mr. Evil.

Mr. Bad told Kyle that Mr. Evil would also be posting jobs for him to take from then on. Kyle looked at the new list with Mr. Evil's additions to it and was shocked. He felt frightened by this new work, which he wasn't used to, so it made him uneasy. It consisted of things that were way beyond his level, stuff like burn down a house, destroy as many car windows as possible and walk into someone's house and forcefully take some of their belongings.

It was hard for him to get rid of the thoughts about the jobs Mr. Evil listed because of his current mind state and it actually pushed him to introduce himself to an employer he never met before call Mr. Afraid. Mr. Afraid told him a few of the jobs he had available and Kyle automatically accepted the offer to work for him. The first job was to run away from his friends because they're evil. The second was to get home, go to his room, and lock the door. Then the third was never open his door, not to talk to anyone no matter what, and isolate himself from society forever. After that unfortunate day, Kyle quit doing work for Mr. Bad because of his notorious partner Mr. Evil and did work for Mr. Afraid for the rest of his miserable life.

“Jamie! You get your rear end back into this house immediately!”

I slammed the door behind me as I exited the house. Shoving my hands in the pockets of the grey jeans covering my spindly legs, I stepped over the really short fence, and walked away from the house that contained my drunk mother. Normally when a situation happened at home, I would head to my boyfriend's house, but Lucas was at work and I had other plans.

The dark grey thunder clouds started crying as I passed Lucas' house. The black shirt I was wearing quickly became soaked by the sky's tears. I did not bring an umbrella for this endeavour because after I would not need it. Dark strands of blue hair dripped with rain water in front of my face.

I rounded the corner of the street and came onto the vehicle busy street leading up to the bridge. I walked by the Esso that Lucas worked at and paused on the sidewalk. I stared longingly at Lucas through the convenience store windows, before continuing on with my journey.

“Jamie!” I could hear Lucas calling for me from the Esso doors.

I ignored my boyfriend, my walking taking me to the bridge, or at least the foot of it. I still had quite a bit of walking before reaching the middle of the bridge. Lucas was walking up behind me, still calling my name trying to get an answer from me. I took a step onto the bridge, looked behind me and started towards the middle of the bridge. Nervously I glanced down at the river water being rippled by the raindrops that fell from the grey clouds. I bit my lip and placed my hands on the bridge's railings to keep from falling.

As I continued towards the middle of the bridge the pounding rain blocked out Lucas' voice and blurred out the passing cars. I stared at my destination which was now about to be

underfoot. My grip on the railing tightened as I stepped onto the middle of the bridge and I looked down at the roaring river.

I pulled my foot up, placing it on the railing before lifting myself up onto the thin line of metal. Balancing, I looked down at the water that had just recently thawed from winter, so I knew that it was going to be cold. Biting my lip again, I closed my eyes. Cars were flying past, their tires splashing the puddles up onto my soaked jean legs. I could hear the river below me raging on in the current it took. The faint yelling of Lucas hit my eardrums, and it opened my eyes.

My balance became uneasy and I found myself fighting to stay on the bridge railing. "Lucas!" I practically screamed for him as I fell forwards.

I was plummeting towards what would be frigid waters and my limbs were flailing about me like a rag doll. The wind from my fall was pounding against my ears, so I did not hear Lucas strip from his jacket and jump after me. Lucas was a strong swimmer and I wasn't so I did my best to trust that he would be able to catch me once we hit the water. I hit the water with a smack and was quickly yanked underneath the uncontrollable river currents. My side smacked up against a rock formation, which caused me to suddenly inhale, bringing freezing, murky water into my lungs. I faintly could see a figure swimming towards me, despite my limp body being tossed about. I was slammed against another rock, leading to another inhale of water. A strong arm wrapped around my waist and I was pulled up to the surface as fast as possible. My saviour and I broke the surface; and Lucas quickly filled my senses.

"Breath Jamie! You need to breath!"

I took a deep breath in, pain filling my chest. I wanted to scream out that I was in pain, but Lucas was already dragging me up onto the sandy beach. Lucas flagged someone down so that

he could phone for an ambulance, while I lay on my back, trying to take slower, shallower breaths. My lungs were not hurting as much anymore and that was probably a bonus.

Lucas walked back over towards me as the ambulance sirens filled the air and he crouched down at my side. "You ok?" He asked, brushing wet hair out of my face.

"I am now."

The corners of Lucas' mouth twitched into a small smile. "Good, because you are my boyfriend, and if you were to die... Well I do not know what I would do."

Just to be Free

It's only a jump... It just happens to be a jump to freedom or to my tragic death. I feel my palms sweat as I look down at the jagged rocks far below. One chance, one fate. If I fall that is it; there will be nothing afterwards. If I stay I would rather be dead. One chance, one fate. How much do I want this freedom?

<One week earlier>

What is Freedom? It is something I will never experience. Being born in a prison, I remain here to suffer for my father's crimes. My mom died at childbirth and my father was never found. People come and go but this is where I remain. This floating cage is the reminder that there is no escape from this hell.

Well... almost no way to escape. There is a chain that hangs from the ceiling, but you have to jump for it. No one has ever made the jump. All who have tried just fall the twenty feet to their death.

Those around me talk of freedom and the world beyond this cage. But, for me, seeing the sun rise and fall is the closest to freedom I will ever get. Here I remain stuck, floating above ocean water and jagged rocks. And all I can do is watch and listen. I watch night turn to day, day to night. I watch as storms approach and waves constantly hit the rocks. I even watch the helpless souls that fall to their deaths.

I do like to listen to the stories of the world away from this cage. I like to hear what others saw and experienced and even how they ended up in this place. Stories like these are told at night. It is our version of a bedtime story. And, as I listen, I inevitably

I tell them of the chain and that anyone who tried to jump for it lost their lives. But, much like any free bird that has experienced freedom, they want to break free. As the week slowly comes to an end, the one with a head injury passes on from his wounds and the other starts to crack. I can tell he wants to be free and, truthfully, so did I. Their stories of freedom have sparked what I had for hope: the chance for a better life, for a chance to prove that I am not my father, to be able to feel the ground beneath my feet, or to hear busy streets full of rushing people. I would rather die than live a life trapped. I know what I need to do.... I need to make that jump.

As night slowly rolls into dawn, I look over the edge to the rocks below. I feel a slight nausea ripple in my mouth while butterflies wreaked havoc in my stomach.

'How much do I want this freedom?' I think over and over. As I stand there contemplating what I can do, a slight wind pushes at the cage causing it to sway in the wind.

'That's it.' I mutter to myself. Holding onto the middle chain, I allowed my body to rock the cage back and forth. With every sway, I inch closer to the chain, but, as the taste of freedom becomes too much, I jump. Closing my eyes and sticking out my arms, I fear that I will not make it. Soaring through the air, I feel my body start to descend and then out of nowhere my hands grasp on a rough object. As I open my eyes, I find myself swinging over open water. I made it.

Slowly I let myself slide down the chain and drop into the water below. As I plop in, I immediately scramble to the surface. Gasping for air, a huge sense of relief and excitement wash over me.

Rebekah Rosebush, Grade 12, Westsyde Secondary

This is the beginning for me.

Slowly I swim, knowing whatever I am swimming to is my freedom.

The End

John

He is the only love I had ever known. My most passionate and dearest secrets lay in the deepest depths of his heart. Over the years I have become a slave to his soft touch and kindred smile. I met John when I was only four years old. He always tells me that the second he laid his dark green eyes on me he knew he had to have me. I had gone to the supermarket with my grandmother and he lured me away with promises of tea parties and princess gowns. Little did I know at such a young age, I had just agreed to the rest of my life with my one true love.

Today is our fifteenth year anniversary and also my nineteenth birthday. John said I get one wish for leaving childhood behind, after being locked away in my bedroom for three months the only thought I had other than John was the warm summer sun kissing my pale skin. In the fifteen years John and I have lived together, I have never been allowed outside. I have pleaded many times and have been beaten black and blue for my foolish tongue. John says that the world is a dangerous place and people will try to steal me away from him. Though from time to time I contemplate if what he has been saying is true. How could a universe so dangerous and terrifying be the same universe that put us in that same supermarket at the exact same time? My thoughts immediately stop and my heart speeds up when I hear the latch open from the other side of the tattered wooden door. The door flew open and John looked me up and down and slyly bit his bottom lip. He slowly walked in my direction, kissed me hard and sat next to me. I knew John wouldn't be very fond of my wish, though I was in hopes he would still fulfill it. He began to talk about his day and I interrupted,

"I-I know what I want." I mumbled.

My head flung back and hit the wall. My face was bright red and my left cheek was now burning. "Don't speak out of turn!" John shouted. A stray tear made its way down my face and John kissed me again.

"You know I didn't mean to do that. I would never hurt you baby. Now, what do you want for your birthday?" he said in a soothing tone. "Outside John, I want to go outside." Immediately after those words escaped my teeth I felt the same face numbing pain I had encountered just moments prior.

"You know I can't do that," he shook his head and walked towards the door. I heard the door slam and the latch close and I ran to my bed to cry and scream into my pillow. I won't give him the satisfaction of listening to my pain. Lately, this has become a reoccurring theme. John and I have a petty argument and he comes back several hours later to apologize and make up. Although this time around, I will be prepared for his arrival. I begin to analyze the room for the heaviest, most blunt object I can hold with both hands. Despite my lifelong lack of food and petite size, I like to think I am quite strong. I drag the wooden chair across the room and set it just behind the door. Hours of starrng at the same dingy white carpet, time continues to slowly progress until I hear the latch slowly open again. The door crept open and Johns voice brakes,

"Hey Jess listen, I'm really-" The trophy I have been gripping on so tightly falls to the floor along with John. My heart is racing, I had never felt so alive. John's head starts to bleed from the massive blow. I know this is my only chance to escape this room and make it into the sun. I jump over his unconscious body, run up the stairs and burst the cellar doors open. My long brown hair glistens in the sunlight and all my mouth can do is scream and laugh. I start twirling and running around the backyard when I hear a familiar voice on the other side of the fence.

"Je-jessi-jessica?" a stunned voice calls out from a distance. My head turns in the direction of the noise. My jaw drops as we made eye contact from across the fence.

"Mom?" I call out, a tear rolls down my cheek. She shouts my fathers name and she began to cry. I hear John's footsteps in the distance behind me.

"Momma, it really has been too long. You have to meet my husband. His name is John."

The Photo

Sammy Shaw
Norkam Secondary
Grade 12

Sarah walked down the hallway, which seemed to be a regular occurrence for her but there was something different about this time. She could sense it. As the sound of her heels echoed in the emptiness of lockers all around her, she started to question what was going on. She turned the corner and walked up the stairs to the office, told the secretary her name and sat down in the hard blue wool chairs. The scent of dense old lady perfume hung in the air as she glanced at the paintings of wildering flowers on the wall. She looked over at the desk to see in bold writing **Brenda** on the nameplate.

Brenda finally called her name and she gradually rose from her seat and made her way to the door that said "Principal Smith" at the top. She turned the handle and pulled the door open, as the creaking filled the silence of the room. Walking into the room she saw the principal sitting in a dark grey rolyly chair across the room from her. She silently inspected him head to toe, slouched over with his leg crossed, and his hands sternly on top of them. He looked at her. "Sit we need to talk about what's going on." Her mind raced and she nervously made her way to the seat furthest away from him.

Once she was settled with her eyes fixated on the floor , he sternly said "I've recently come into some information about you sending inappropriate pictures to boys within the school." Her heart instantly sank. It felt as if she was falling as her stomach turned. She glanced down at her hands nervously as she asked how he had found out about her pictures. He continued to explain that a student had come and shared this material with him, and that he had contacted her parents and they were coming to get her from the school. She finally met his gaze with hers for the first time and let out a muffled "I was just trying to fit in and get the attention other girls get without even trying," from under her breath. As she sat there in silence, she felt as if she was going to puke. Her mind was racing as she tried to comprehend what her life had become. He told her to go collect her books from her locker then wait for her parents out front.

As she walked down the same empty hallway, it felt as if the lockers were closing in on her. She scrambled to catch her breath. How had her life become such a mess? She just wanted to fit in, just wanted guys to like her. As she grabbed her books and made her way to the front doors, she knew her life had spun out of control. She walked out to the car and could see the anger in her mothers eyes. She went to open the door and she knew this was going to be the end for awhile. It was all over.

What the heck is a narrative?

Moments after sitting down in my first block writing class, I look around to discover I was all alone. A rumble in my pocket told me that my friend was going to be late, and that I had to tell my teacher of her tardiness. A call out to my teacher was received, and replied back with an unfamiliar voice. With the substitute teacher in my sights, I settled back into my seat and waited for a class full of Iphone games. After attendance, the substitute teacher reminded my class of the narrative that was due tomorrow. Narrative? What's a narrative? Just as my hopes of my friend arriving to class had almost faded away, she silently pulled out the chair to sit down beside me.

"Hey, what's a narrative?" I asked her.

"Oh, we learned about those yesterday! It's when you explain an issue and you use persuasion to- wait, no, that's not it. It's when you take the five senses and you use them to- no, that's not it either" she tried to explain as she stumbled her words.

"Did you even take notes of the lesson?" I asked again.

"Yeah I'll try to find them." She looked around her binder for a few minutes before finally pulling out a crumpled piece of paper, half written on. "Oh, okay, so it says here that a narrative is.. a story?"

"A story?"

"Yes, I guess we have to write a story?"

"Okay, well what view do I have to write this story in?"

"She said something about first person perspective I believe, or second person limited omniscient? I think that's the one where the person knows everything about everyone."

This was the moment where I first knew I was going to have problems writing a story. I spent the rest of my day cutting wood for a table, always being off a few centimeters. Along with playing the drums with thirty other kids, and learning about the intestines of rabbits. Somewhere in the back of my head I kept the thought of trying to figure out what to write my narrative on, which followed me back to my home.

I took a spot in my bed and decided to sit down and just write this awful narrative. Before I could start though, I needed to figure out exactly what I was supposed to be writing. In the search box of Google I typed in 'What's a narrative?'. The search gave me many answers such as: a fictionalized account of historical events, a story told in short form, and based on imaginative events or stories that did not actually happen. So, I would be writing a fake historical event that happened in seconds? Again, I felt hopeless and decided that now would be the best time to take a quick break and come back feeling refreshed.

After a few TV episodes of 'Arrested Development', Netflix asked me if I was still watching, and decided that maybe my break had been too long. Settling back into bed, I started to wonder what exactly I would write my story about. I read a tip online that said I should write about an event that actually happened to me, and tried to remember the last time something interesting had happened to me. Nothing in my life was interesting enough to write one thousand words about, and realized I need to get out more.

My teacher had told me that she would give out full marks to any student who wrote about puppies or bread. Maybe a story about how puppies need bread to survive? Or how bread was turning everyone into puppies? Both stories were trash, and I needed to figure out the perfect story. There I started feeling desperate. How did my teacher expect me to write a story in one night, especially one that I didn't know how to write? Maybe I could skip her class tomorrow and by then I'd have an inspiration. Or maybe I could just skip every day and tell everyone that I dropped the class, or that I graduated early.

I threw my laptop to the side and walked over to my bathtub where I tugged on the handle and chucked a bath bomb into the disintegrating water. As I lay in my bathtub I thought about how writing seemed much easier when I was younger, and didn't need to know exactly what a narrative was. How was I going to take moments of my life and turn them into multimillion dollar stories? Just as I finished my thought, I started to create a narrative about my day.

It was slightly overcast and only slightly rainier than the clouds in the night sky would suggest. Two of the planet's moons reflected their light off the water-covered pavement, well, wherever there was an absence of giant rats and large insect-like aliens fighting over bodies. Although "bodies" is bit of a loose term, given most of them were in pieces before the sewers inhabitants caught a whiff of them and decided to begin tearing them into fun size snacks. Truth be told, most of the pieces were already that size due to the amount of force that tore them apart, and the fact that the smallest of the rats would make a dog turn and run, tail tucked between their legs. There were also all the little bits of rubble strewn about the pavement, some of it concrete, some of it drywall, but a lot of it indistinguishable from the rest.

The moons were not the only source of light on this once normal street (as normal as any place could get on this planet), the other sources of light were strange multicolored fires that danced in what used to be marketplace windows, residential suites, and restaurants. Random explosions caused by the flames not reacting well with whatever used to be inside the hollowed out buildings, and a few lights flickered wherever power lines weren't obliterated.

There wasn't much noise other than the pitter-pattering of raindrops, crackles of fire, crumbling buildings, squealing rats and bugs, and the rare citizen waking up screaming, finding his or her self being divvied up between warring sewer denizens. Most of the former residents of this area had either fled after the myriad of explosions, were blown to pieces right as the first building went boom, or now lay scattered in the stomachs of the rats and bugs. Some citizens were torn in two, some in three; a surprising amount were added to the street's collection of grease spots, and those that were close to the epicenter of the explosion were just simply vaporized. Some residents were so scared they immediately ran for cover, hid, became petrified, and released whatever contents their intestines and bladders held (not always in that

order). But the ones that tried to take action in the chaos and rally the local militia were quickly swarmed by the bugs and rats.

Soon the bugs retreated back into the sewers, not because they were full, or that the rats scared them off, but rather because a large hooded figure in an even larger trenchcoat strolled into the street. The bugs, however, were actually a sentient species with intelligence rivalling that of average humans, and one gift they had is the preternatural ability to sense danger, which this towering goliath seemed to have dripping from him. So unlike the rats, they knew better than to stick around to see just how dangerous this figure really was. The rats on the other hand were very stupid, although they can be fairly smart when they aren't being driven by hunger, breeding, and a greed for shiny objects. At the moment, running through their primitive minds was the lack of food, the shiny properties of the pavement and shattered glass, the fact there was a rather large chunk of meat that was still moving, and finally, they were still rather hungry. All the rats swarmed the figure, as a low, booming chuckle came from his mouth, echoing off what remained of the street. He flicked his wrist up at the tide of rats, a lightning bolt emanated from his outstretched arms, frying one rat, and then the bolt jumped from one to the other, until all that was left was a pile of steaming corpses.

The Figure walked into a bar, not through the door, but rather a large gaping hole that was most likely where it used to be. He sat down at the bar, which it in itself was pretty rare in this area, let alone intact.

"Barkeep? I need a drink over here."

A few seconds go by, he looks over the counter to see where the bartender is, when he doesn't find him, he grabs a bottle on the shelf. He takes off his hood, revealing spiky, shock white hair, and a reflection off a piece of glass displays a ragged series of scars on his face. He

pops off the bottle's cap and begins drinking, the gulping noise now the only sound on the street besides crackling fire. He places the empty bottle on the counter, he looks around the destroyed bar, he leans back on the stool to get a better view of the street outside, he sighs and shrugs before grabbing another bottle and quietly mutters to himself "Father isn't going to be happy about this."

He begins drinking again, and when the bottle empties, he adds it to the pile of empty ones next to him. Sirens and flashing red and blue lights begin to fill the street outside, but this barely bothers him, he just keeps drinking. He hiccups and stumbles off of his stool, bracing himself against the counter, he flips his hood back on before tripping outside into the street. Laughing, he pulls himself back up and begins walking away; police officers begin shouting at him to put his hands above his head, he ignores this and keeps walking. The officer with the stun gun shoots, the bolt of electricity hits the figure, stiffening him, he begins laughing, a few tiny lightning bolts course across his body, building up charge.

You can probably figure out where this is going...