

InstaStories

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140 Stories by
Sixth-grade Students of
Berkshire Middle School

Edited by

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To the Authors

The whole world is watching,
and you've given them something worth seeing.
Your editors are proud of you.
Keep writing—for yourself and for others.

Snapshots

Alone in the World

*When a couple of friends just want to have some fun, they end up having to lose their parents and survive a zombie outbreak. Can they survive? Find out in **ALONE IN THE WORLD**, by **Antulio Erickson-Suzuki**.*

“**W**ooh! This party is awesome!”

That’s Jordan; he is kind of a party animal. The one who is trying to chug a gallon of milk is Jack. The last of my friends is Tyler. He’s more of a quiet sports guy. And me, the one sitting alone drinking Pepsi is Antulio by the way. We are just having one of those high school parties at my house. I’m just going to skip to the good stuff because I’m sure that you don’t want to hear about our party.

So, towards the end of the party, Jack went outside to view the stars for a moment. But there was a big boom outside. I mean a BIG boom. When we went outside, people were eating each other! When I looked at where Jack was standing the only thing left was his footprint in the grass. It was *crazy*. We screamed and ran inside. My Mom and Dad came up from the basement and said things that were unbelievable.

“I knew this would happen,” murmured my Dad. “C’mon guys, get in the basement and your Mom and I will take care of this.” He pulled out an axe and a cleaver.

We did exactly what he had told us. We could hear Mom and Dad yelling.

“Come get some! Hey you want some? Get some!”

We can hear bodies hitting the floor without knowing who they are. Just then Jordan yelled, “Hey! Look what I found!”

We ran over there. You won’t believe what we found.

“Oh, my gosh,” Tyler exclaimed.

It was a *gigantic* rocket, bigger than our house. No wonder my parents would not let me come down to the basement. It was partly underground. There was a note on the side.

Dear Son,

If you are reading this, that means your Mom and I are already dead. We

knew this would happen. There was a zombie outbreak on the news. I tried my best to protect you. So did your Mom. You and your friends should get in the rocket and...

Just then there was a big, cracking noise. The zombies were in the house.

"Get in the rocket!" Jordan yelled! He grabbed a hammer that was nearby.

Jordan started to bash the zombie's heads.

"Jordan, are you crazy?" Tyler yelled.

"It's okay. At least the two of you can get out of here. If I wasn't for me, none of us would have made it. GO, GO!" Jordan yelled with tears running down his face. "I've always thought you guys were awesome!" Jordan pressed the launch button and started to kill the zombies.

"No, Noooo, NOOOOOOO!" I couldn't stop the tears from coming out. It seemed like Tyler was having the same problem.

After about 10 minutes of straight crying, Tyler and I started to look around the missile. It was full of food, entertainment, and radar to tell where we were going. I couldn't believe it! But, when I looked at the radar, it said that we are going to Japan; where a missile can erase all trace of disease and sick people.

There was a beeping noise coming from a screen that showed how many zombies were in the area. It said that there are at least a thousand zombies. At least? Tyler and I looked at each other and said in agreement, "That's where we are heading."

We tried to find weapons because we were going to be eaten alive if we did not have anything to defend ourselves. We found a couple butcher knives, a crossbow with 10 shots, and fire axe. We found things to practice shooting, like bottles and cardboard. After a couple hours of training, the ship said that we are arriving in about five minutes. We nodded at each other and gathered everything; we had to get ready for a brutal fight.

We crashed landed on an airport runway. Great, it was the part with the most zombies around. We saw that the missile was about 12 miles away. If all goes right, we can go at least nine miles with the tank right there. Wait, a *tank*?!

“Tyler, come on, we are making a break for it to the tank,” I whispered to him.

We sprinted and made it onto the tank. The tank started up immediately and we started to move pretty quickly. We were on our way. The trip was bumpy because we were running over a bunch of zombies. The trip took about two hours. I was glad that we did not run into any trouble.

It was about 3 p.m. when we got to the missile. It was so big that it was the tallest thing around. We got out and it said to press a red button to launch. We saw a red button right next to a dead zombie.

“I guess he was trying to press the button too,” I thought.

Just then there were about a hundred zombies coming at us. I slammed the button and there was a big sonic boom. I closed my eyes and, when I opened them, everything had changed.

The zombies were gone and regular people started to come out, non-infected. But then I started to feel dizzy and I fell to the ground with my eyes closed. I was glad that I saved the world!

I heard noises while I was slowly opening my eyes. Tyler was on me with his eyes rolled up to his brain. I screamed and shoved him. I was alone and scared. A trailer pulled up to me and a man with a checkered coat walks up with a dog and another man with a sawed-off shotgun. They came up to me and asked, “Need a hand, friend?”

They helped me up, and when I got into their trailer there was a mini gun arsenal and a lot of canned food.

The man with the checkered coat came up to me and said, “Welcome to Fallout!”

The Average Life of Steve the Wombat

*Steve is a pretty boring wombat, but he may eventually develop a slightly less than average lifestyle. Find out in **THE AVERAGE LIFE OF STEVE THE WOMBAT**, by *Sloan Lemberg*.*

Steve is a wombat, and his life is very average until a pleasantly cool day occurred in Wombattyville. The sun was shining, but it wasn't too hot. It was cloudy, but no shadows appeared. We'll start with a short biography about Steve; he lives by himself in a mid-sized log cabin. He always got the average score for his age in the school fitness tests. His fur was never too long, short, dirty, clean, shiny, greasy, or fluffy. As I said before, his life is very average. Now let's get back to the pleasantly cool day that changed his life.

It started when Steve woke up to a loud crash. At first, he was so scared that he just hid under his covers in bed for about a half an hour. You can't really blame him; it's what the average wombat would do. He eventually crawled towards the door holding a baseball bat in case he was attacked. Steve looked out the peep-hole and saw a cute little hedgehog sitting on his porch, but this hedgehog was weird, he was *blue*!

The hedgehog stepped back a couple of feet then lunged towards the door causing an extremely loud crash, the same sound that woke Steve. When he took a closer look at the hedgehog, it really was not cute at all. He was pokey and had a big scowl on his face. He really could make it in the circus for his weird looks.

"THREE! TWO! ONE!" screamed the hedgehog. He stepped back one more time and rammed Steve's door down. After he felt that great strength within himself, he went off on a complete rampage inside of Steve's house. In 15 seconds, he destroyed all of Steve's possessions and the wombat wasn't such a happy camper. The walls were now the floor, the lamp was a welcome mat, and everything else was in some form of a dog pile on top of that. After the hedgehog made the cozy house into a pile of dust, Steve was so enraged that he passed out.

Steve woke up with an awful headache and something seemed terribly wrong, then he looked at his surroundings. "AGH!" he

screamed. He had been abandoned in a creepy looking forest. The trees were bare even though it was July. The animals all had giant, sharp fangs and spiky fur. Even the moon had an eerie presence. All of a sudden, a huge bear came out and snatched him from the ground and ran. The bear ran for miles and miles, days and days, and he didn't stop until both of them fell off of a cliff.

On the way down, Steve thought to himself, "Wow, this is most exciting thing that's ever happened to me." Unfortunately, the bear was squashed flat like a pancake, but he broke Steve's fall. Steve slowly limped away, his feet crunching in the unforgiving sand of the desert.

Months later, Steve wandered by the perfect location. There was a worn-out sign at the border of the small town. It read "No hedgehogs allowed." At that moment, Steve knew that this was the right place for him. Nothing was average in this town, the houses were made of Lego bricks and the windows were made from real diamonds. Steve moved in right away, but it was a little too overwhelming for him.

So, he moved back to the woods for the rest of his life. That was when Steve learned to never trust blue hedgehogs.

Bananas

*Two monkeys, who live in the zoo, plan to escape and find a home with a family. But, will life with their new family be everything they thought it would? Read **BANANAS**, by **Michael Wainer**.*

Bananas had a genius idea. He was going to get out of the zoo. Life in the zoo was easy for Bananas, but he didn't like it very much. One day, he and another monkey named Bozo made a plan to escape.

"Okay! I will make a distraction once the man comes into feed us and he won't lock the door so you can get out," Bozo said in Chimpanzee.

"And, once I get out, people will yell 'a monkey on the loose' and you can escape because the zookeeper will run out to get me," Bananas added.

"Exactly," Bozo said.

A few hours later, the zookeeper came in to feed us. The plan went exactly like it was supposed to. I escaped and then Bozo escaped right behind me. When I looked back, he was still there. We got out of the zoo and I ran across the street. When I looked behind me, Bozo wasn't there anymore. Then a car came zooming by onto a bridge and Bozo was on it.

"Hop on, it's fun!" So I hopped on.

Bozo was right! It was really fun! We went super-fast. I think a human saw us because he got out and tried to kick us off the car. Then came a gust of wind and he was blown off the car. I think the car behind us hit him.

"Oh no, I think that was the driver," Bozo yelled. I think bozo was right because the car started going off the edge of the bridge. So we jumped onto a different car. This driver didn't get out. Nobody did at all. We went home with him to live there forever. I had a fun life with my new family and Bozo who, by now, was part of my family too.

It was fun for all of us for a little while Bananas was with us. I was nine when I first got him and Bozo went to my older brother Johnny. It was all fun until my little sister, Erin, turned six and decided all she wanted for her birthday was a girl monkey. My

mom finally found one and she loved it so much. She named Curly because its hair was always tangled.

Curly and Bozo quickly fell in love. One day, Curly started acting crazy. She would try to attack someone or one of the other monkeys and then she would just sit down and act like nothing happened. We thought she was just playing so we didn't do anything about it. That is until she attacked Johnny.

One day my parents went out. I went over to my buddies' house and Erin had daycare. When we came home, Johnny was sitting on the floor with his face cut and his shirt torn. He was bleeding really badly and Curly was sitting next to him with bloody fingers. My Mom and I went to the hospital with Johnny while my Dad and Erin went to the vet with Curly. Johnny was cut up really bad. He got 27 stitches in all, including 11 on his head.

Later, we found out that he might not make it because he lost too much blood. We also found out that Curly was rabid. She was going to have to be put down. Bozo would freak out once he found out. We went home and Johnny came with us. It turned out that Bananas had a medical degree from Monkey's University. He gave Johnny special banana and he healed. And, from then on, we were happy.

Fluffy Turtle and Goat

*Fluffy Turtle is celebrating Goat's birthday. In **FLUFFY TURTLE AND GOAT** by **Jett Rowinski**, the two friends are going to have the time of their lives. Or, will they?*

We are very rare species, plus we are the only ones of our kind that are left in the galaxy. I am a rare fluffy turtle that lives under a rock with a rare mini-goat. Everybody is trying to find us to make a fortune. We have regular days where we wake up, play catch, and, at the end of the day, go to sleep. Today was a weird day. Let me tell you why.

"Goat, happy birthday!" yelled Fluffy Turtle. "I made you your favorite breakfast of eggs and bacon. We are also going to do some of your favorite stuff. First, let's play some Black Ops II. We at least have to level up to 3rd prestige. Let's watch television! We will watch our favorite show, SpongeBob Square Pants, for at least for five hours!"

And we did just that.

At last, we finally played goat's favorite game, catch. We played that for about four hours to see how many passes we could get in a row. Our record was three complete passes until something happened. Goat dropped the ball on his knee and got a bruise. Goat was crying on his birthday. It was so sad, but we got some band aids and it got a little better. The Band-Aid didn't help anything and Goat was still crying. I had to hug him and we didn't even eat the cake and open presents yet. He took a shower and felt better. After that, we finally ate the cake.

The cake was shaped like goat's favorite stuffed animal, fluffy bunny. The cake was so good, I had made it myself when goat was sleeping. After the cake, we got to the favorite part of the day, presents. The first present goat opened was a stuffed animal. It was another fluffy bunny. The second present was a sweatshirt with a goat on it. The last present was a bottle of Mountain Dew but, he can't drink it all the time because he gets crazy. So, we both went to bed.

But, Goat woke up, went into the kitchen, and chugged all of the mountain dew. He started to crazily jump around, up and down. Goat went into the hidden part of the rock with his favorite stuffed

fluffy bunny. He went over to wake up Fluffy Turtle to have a party with the stuffed animals.

Fluffy Turtle was not in the mood, so he told Goat to go asleep. Finally, he did.

Guinea Pig

GUINEA PIG, by *Scott Talbot*, is about a very talented pig. Find out what happens when a family goes on vacation and finds something terrible when they return home.

“OH, Mom, look at that Guinea Pig!”
“What’s it doing?”
“It’s dancing!”
“Oh, Mom! Can we please get it, please?”
“Michael, we can’t get another animal in the house.”
“Oh, Mom, we only have ten animals in the house, that’s not so bad”
“Oh, all right, we’ll get it.”

Later that day...

“Aw, look at that guinea pig is doing the moonwalk!”
“Oh, Mom, now the guinea pig is doing the shuffle.”
Now, after a few weeks, they went on vacation and they got a babysitter for the guinea pig.
“Mom, are you sure that the guinea pig is going to be okay while we are gone?”
“Yes, of course. We have a great babysitter.”
So she thinks!

Back at home...

“Yes, my plan finally worked, now it’s time to catch that guinea pig and make lots of money,” said the robber.
A few weeks after the vacation, the family came home. They did not see the guinea pig, so they called the cops and started to make posters and signs. But, after a few weeks, no one had called. One week later, they found someone with the same guinea pig that could dance, so they knew it was him. So they asked him a lot of questions and then finally got to the point.
“Where did you find him?”
He said that he got him from a woman in a pink polka-dotted dress with a white t-shirt. So then they thought to themselves, “IT

WAS OUR BABYSITTER!" They called her and asked her why she took their pet. She ended the call, so they had to call the cops and tell them her address and her number.

They caught her and took her to the police station and brought her up to the court. She was fined to be in juvenile detention for years. That should teach her a lesson...never steal, you will always get caught.

When she got out, she apologized. Two years later, the guinea pig does a triple back flip and two front flips. This is insane! This might be the winner for gold in the gymnastic Olympics!

Hybrid

*When Liam and his friend go out hunting, they find a white wolf. Who, and what, is it? Read to find out in **HYBRID**, by **Tessa Bagdon**.*

As the guys and I finished our hunt, we heard a howl that seemed only three hundred yards away. “I thought we cleared the area...” Scot said, looking at me as if for some kind of reassurance that we were alone in our woods.

“So did I,” I answer, looking towards the direction the howl came from. Suddenly, a pure white wolf comes barreling out of the trees at an unnatural speed. The wolf is clearly bleeding, and a lot. Scot and Harry lick their lips hungrily, seeing the fresh animal blood. I give them glares and they shrink back a little bit. You see, unlike most of the vampire population, we drink animal blood. But Aaron, lucky guy, is a shape-shifter, and only ate game animal, like birds and deer.

“Mutt! Idiot, you little...” a vampire dressed in a dark black coat comes running out of the trees, yelling obscenities in the direction of the wolf. It is losing blood, and fast, so it slows down, enabling the vampire to catch it. He catches it and throws it against a tree. Hard. Knocked unconscious, the wolf stops moving. He stares down at it, seeming proud of his horrible deed.

Leon and Harry look at me for some kind of sign, I guess, to do something. Being the leader has its pros and cons. I think for a split second and nod slightly in the direction of the vampire, and they smile knowing what that means. They run out of the bushes that concealed us and tackle the vampire. Leon holds him down while Harry rips out his heart, killing him. Aaron shifts into wolf form and walks slowly over to the wolf, which now looks as if it was a white apron at a butcher shop that hadn’t been cleaned in a while.

He nudges her stomach with his muzzle, and the wolf shifts into a girl. We all gasp and step back, none of us guessing it, or she technically, was a Supernatural.

“She unconscious; let’s take her to the house.” Harry says, adding to our shock. You see, Harry’s father is, or was an Elder, one of the two hundred original vampires that evolved from humans. These vampires were, and the three that are left are, treated like royalty. Also, coming from the richest and most powerful family in

England (besides the royal family, of course) didn't help Mr. Big Ego over here get any humbler. When turned the physical age of twenty, and when he stopped aging, the Government captured him for his bloodline. Then, they altered his mind in ways you as a human can't even imagine.

"Yeah, sure," I answer, and he picks her up carefully. We run back to the house and place her in one of the guest bedrooms. Harry lays her down carefully, trying to not hurt her. Even so, she whimpers slightly like a dog as her back hits the deep purple comforter. Leon sits down with his legs folded like an Indian's and looks at the small girl intently.

"Liam, look." he says softly, and I kneel down, too. He carefully brings her forearm closer to my face so that I can read the words that are printed on her arm. "6875843465 Ana," I read aloud. We all look at Aaron, who is leaning in the doorway. He just stares at her for a few seconds and walk away. Probably out of emotional reasons, since we all know of his dark past as a lab experiment. The guys all leave except for me and Leon and I try and fix her wounds. Nothing is broken, but as I dress the claw marks on her stomach Leon talks to me.

"Leon, I can read her mind," he says. I look at him for more information, "all I can hear is *Hybrid, mutt, you shouldn't have been born* and then the word 'hybrid' over and over again." And he looks at me. I tense up in fear, and Leon nods as if he can read my mind. Oh wait, he can.

If she is a hybrid, then I have to keep Harry away. He could report her out of instinct and the Government would take her away and have her killed. And, I already have a brotherly attachment to her, and having that happen would literally kill me.

She is curled in a ball, but when I try and move her on her side, she wakes up. Leon and I gasp and stand as still as a deer who has caught the eye of a predator and hold our breaths. She rubs her eyes, and yawns while groaning in pain. She seems like a regular eleven year-old girl, but then she sees us.

She flinches back and closes her eyes tight. "A-are y-you going to h-hurt me?" she stutters, her jaw quivering with every word.

"Why would you think that?" Leon asks, reaching his hand towards her. She flinches back so far she hits the wall and her face scrunches up in pain.

"I can't tell you," she says, her voice suddenly stronger while she pulls her varsity jacket a little bit closer to her body.

"We won't hurt you," I say, smiling at her softly. She smiles back, and she slowly takes the grey jacket off of her shoulders. Suddenly, a pair of soft grey wings that each seem to be about four feet long appear. Leon and I gasp out of surprise. She smiles weakly and stares at her hands.

"They're beautiful," I say, reaching out to stroke them. She flinches back, but lets me touch them after she relaxes. They're softer than kitten fur, in a grey so delicate-like that you'd think that they would collapse under your touch.

"So, you're a *shape-shifter angel hybrid*?" Leon asks, and Ana nods in agreement. For you humans, angel shape-shifter hybrids are things of lore. It is said in a legend passed down orally from generation to generation that only the luckiest of us all get to see one. They're kind of like unicorns; they exist, but are extremely rare. Only a child-sized hand full of them survive past birth, and even after that, the Government hates them, and two-thirds of them are caught and killed before they can mature.

This means those only the "luckiest," as my mother would say, of us all are said to either find one, or are born one. Some families, if they're lucky, see one every two thousand years, which draws some people to spend their whole lives trying to track them. My father, before he was killed, spent his whole life trying to find one, and he would tell me stories before bed about these mystical creatures that would keep half the night wondering and thinking about them. As a teenager, my father would take me with him on hunts that he took to try and find food for my family.

And as I think back to my childhood, I realize something.

I am one of the lucky ones.

In the Alley

IN THE ALLEY, by *Elise Cornett*, is about Jazmin's surprise birthday party. She has no idea that her friends are having a party for her. Kristiana is not happy when she arrives at the party.

“Come on Jazmin!” Kristiana and Jazmin had just finished swim class. They were walking home and all of a sudden a truck pulled up next to them. There were two guys in it. When they tried to run away, the guys came up behind them and put blindfolds on their faces, so the girls didn't know who they were or where they were going.

In the truck, the girls were so scared. They could not tell where they were going. The truck continued to drive for an hour. Finally, they arrived at their destination. Kyle and Harrison meanly grabbed Jazmin and Kristiana's arm and pulled them out of the truck and into the house. The girls were very confused.

All of a sudden, everyone yelled, “Happy Birthday, Jazmin!” It was Jazmin's birthday. Harrison and Kyle had thrown a party for Jazmin. All of Jazmin's family and friends were there. There was lots of food and even a D.J. for dancing. The two girls asked if Kyle and Harrison were the guys driving the truck. Kyle said that it was them!

Jazmin was so happy about her party. Kristiana was not happy at all. She was even mad. She and Harrison had just broken up, and she did not want to see him. More people started to arrive at the party. Everyone was having a good time except Kristiana. Jazmin had told Kristiana if she was going to be miserable to just go home.

Finally, Harrison asked Kristiana to go outside so they could talk. She didn't want to, but she did not want to ruin Jazmin's party.

“I know you are mad at me, but can we at least be friends so we can enjoy this party?”

Kristiana said, “Yes!”

Jazmin came outside to see if they were doing okay. They said yes. Then Kyle came out to see where everyone was and to tell people to come in! Everyone went into the party and had a great night.

The Island

*Elise and her family travel to Costa Rica. They see a mysterious island close to their beach. One decision will open something they'll never forget in **THE ISLAND**, by **Elise Carter**.*

My family and I arrived at our condo in Costa Rica. The condo was magnificent; the wallpaper had those pink curly kinds of shells everywhere with a light baby blue background. I thought that the staircase was exquisite. It had simple wooden boards placed upon white concrete steps. They were spaced apart and creaked when you stepped on them. Each made a different sound and they creaked in harmony.

Because of our long travel day, we could not wait to get to the beach. We arrived at the beach and danced on the hot brown sand. We quickly laid out our beach towels and glared into the sun with squinty eyes from the shade of the tree we sat under. Out of the daze, three sets of eyes were snagged by a mysterious island. After a glance, it was clear Mardy, my cousin, my Dad, and I had the same idea. We were going to swim to the island and explore it.

The three of us grabbed our goggles and headed to the shore. We ran through the water that clawed at our ankles until we splashed through at knee deep. Before we knew it, the water held our shoulders and we had to writhe through the water with our hands, until our feet lifted off the ground. It was time to swim.

We all agreed to swim breast stroke to save energy because the island looked a good distance away, but not too far. We figured it would be an easy swim; however, we soon became very tired, even at our slow pace. We were already way too far from shore to turn back now. Mardy and I began to panic. Would we drown before we even reached halfway? I guess it just didn't matter anymore. We just kept on swimming. We had to make it to the island. We had no choice.

As we came closer, the current began dragging us one way and the waves threw us another. We violently bounced up and down round and round while the water slapped us in the face. It was impossible to break from the trap. The battle of the current and the waves began to drive us toward a plethora of sharp rocks that the waves violently crashed against. The unforgiving sea held us firmly

in its fist. We were exhausted, but we had to push on. To give up now would mean death. We were almost there! We started to sprint freestyle so we could try to break the hold of the current.

When I looked down through my water filled goggles, I saw the seabed getting closer. I felt like I was landing an airplane. A few more long hard strokes and my knees hit some sharp rocks. We had reached the land! I let out a shout but I wasn't sure if it was from the pain of my knees being sliced by the rocks, or from the pure joy of finally arriving.

We were all thrilled that we finally arrived. Now it was time to put on our adventure caps! We looked for cool curly shells in a cave with a collapsed ceiling. The cave looked like a lifeless alley. It was piled with sharp black rocks ready for you to step on and slice open your foot when you took a hard step. To keep from piercing or slicing our feet we took careful steps.

When we reached a sandy part of the cave, crabs began to get up and crawl out of our path. Mardy and I smiled and admired the cute little crabs. We saw some big and small crabs; all of them were different sizes and colors. Mardy and I sat in the sand and joked around. We picked up the little red crabs in the palms of our hands. Then, we anxiously waited until they came out of their shells and crawled around. Finally, we dropped them, screamed, and then giggled. My Dad was getting bored and wanted to go back, but Mardy and I had just begun our adventure and dreaded going back. So, we begged him to stay a little longer so we could walk around the island to see what was on the other side and stall our return to the wretched sea.

We happily began to skip around the island when the wind suddenly began to pick up and whip the sand against our shins and backs. We began to wonder how we'd get back because if we turned around the sand would get in our eyes and the wind would just push us back. However, if we remained where we were standing, we would continue to be painfully pelted by sand. We had to move! All three of us crouched in a line with our goggles on and walk backwards toward shore. The sand still pelted us mercilessly, but we had to walk on.

We fought through until our calves burned and we were finally free! Once back to the shore we collapsed on the sand and all agreed this island was horrible. We barely survived swimming to it and it caused so much pain just being on it. There was hidden danger

everywhere we turned. It was time to take the trip back before we got into real trouble.

We waded into the murky water. I decided I was going to sprint swim this one all freestyle no matter how long it took and how painful and tiring it would be. We soon began to get so deep that we couldn't stand any longer. This was it. I thought to myself that this could be the last time that I ever see the light of the sun strike the beautiful earth and feel its tingly warmth again. But, we had no choice; we had to get back. The three of us pushed off. And we swam.

We were back in the wicked currents. I knew that if we could just get passed the violently bobbing waves and sharp rocks up ahead, we were home free. I fought each wave with the fear of not making it back to the beach. I was desperate to get to that shore. My mind fought on, but my strength began to crumble and weaken. My fierce, fast, determined kick began to slow down to be just a few desperate smacks against the water every few feet. My arms once gliding through the water were now slashing into the water in sort of a panicked doggy paddle motion. My heart was beating in two places now; in my head and in my right arm. My lungs were starting to take in more water than air. I was sinking! I gave up trying to keep my head up and put my eyes into the water. Now I could only gasp for air over the fierce waves when I could bring myself to the surface. The sand was getting closer again! I wasn't going to let myself drown when I was this close! I took what I thought to be as my dying breaths in my last strokes.

I was finally there! As I climbed out of the wet blanket, I felt like an evolved fish on the first time it crawls out of the water and breaths air. Mardy and my Dad were close behind and we all ran and hugged my Mom and got her all wet! We had made it! We were safe!

The four of us walked back to the car as a reunited family. As we approached the car, all the drama seemed to wear off for Mardy and my Dad, but I was still numb from the evilness of the island and the horrifying swim. By the time we got to the car, Mardy and my Dad seemed to have completely forgotten all the horror that had just occurred and they and my Mom talked away.

Everyone hopped into the car. But, not me...I slowly turned and took one last look at the island. I wondered who the next victims of overwhelming stupidity would be and if they would be lucky enough to make it out alive. Then I sighed and hopped into the car with the others and we rolled away.

Lonesome

*Lisa has been murdered. Along her path to justice, she meets an old man named Death who tells her of a person that must be destroyed. Find out more in **LONESOME**, by **Enzo Brandow**.*

The world can be lonely sometimes. For me, it's all the time. My name is Lisa. I'm 36 and I live alone with my cats, my favorite, Johnny. Johnny is the only one who really understands me. He's the only one that really comforts me. Lost in his little world, but still always full of energy. I live in an old, moldy flat. My mother left me and all I remember is seeing her with a suitcase, slowly walking away. My father was great and always making my days bright.

But now, in the present, I'm dead. I wake up in a peaceful place; a forest with deer and crows. I get up and wander through the forest. I keep going until I spot a beautiful, glistening deer. I follow it for what seems like hours. But, it's really been only minutes. I find a small cabin with an old man on the porch. "I've been waiting for you, Lisa, for a long, long time."

"Who are you?" I ask.

"Why don't you take a guess?"

"Just an old man on a porch?"

"Really, I'm starting to regret ever even finding you." The old man jokes.

"No, really!" I insist. "Who are you?"

"Come, let's go inside. Such discussions should be told indoors. Besides, it's getting quite chilly."

"Ok, now, I'm begging you please tell me who you are!" I insist.

"Ok then, no need to shout. I'm what you people would call...Death!"

"So, you mean...I'm dead? That murder dream was real?! No, you're lying... you have to be."

"I'm sorry Lisa, but, this is reality. Listen, I've known you since you were just a girl. I brushed your hair while you wept in bed. I cleared your windows so you could see how wonderful your life will be and how wonderful it would get."

"Why am I here? I thought that being dead would be different."

"I have a special reason why you are here. I need you to exterminate the one called the Bugger. He is a horrible, horrible person that deserves to die."

"How will I do this exactly, since I'm dead?"

"Since he is alive, I will grant you one thing...immortality."

"But, how will I get in the living world?"

"All you have to do is two things to open the door to the living world. You will have to kill a soul."

"But, I don't want to kill an innocent person."

"Don't worry. All you have to do is blow out one of my five candles. The people connected to these candles are bad. And, the other thing? You must withdraw some blood to open the door."

"You mean a lot?"

"No, no, only a little! What do people call, oh... yes, by a sharp prick, only hurt a bit."

"Ugghhmmmm ok. But, how will I know where to find Bugger?"

"You will know. Now, go, believe me, you won't regret this."

I walked and walked until I found a weird machine in the middle of a corn field. The wind was softly blowing across my hair, like a tickling sensation. There were five big candles circling the machine. For some reason, the wind wasn't blowing them out. I bent over and blew out a candle. A chill went through my skin. The machine was made of steel and it was so rusty that it didn't even look like it worked. There was also a small bowl next to a door. There was a small drill. It was about three inches tall and about a centimeter wide. It was in a vertical whole about the length of my arm.

At the end, there was a glowing red button. I reached as far as I could to press the button. I avoided the small drill and pressed the button. Then the drill quickly pricked me in the arm, it was only a flash, but it was painful. I put some of the blood in the bowl and covered my arm with my shirt sleeve. I was running through the door as fast as I could. The wind felt so strong, like someone grabbing your cheeks and pulling back. I ran and ran and then I fell and hit the cold, mushy soil, and blacked out.

I awoke with a short yawn. But, this isn't normal; I'm on my kitchen floor still! Was I sleeping walking while dreaming? Wait, that thing, I can't really remember. Oh, wait a minute. I looked at my arm and the needle cut was also gone. Was all of this real? I don't know, I think it was. I went to the fridge to get some food.

What, my foods not cold? I tried flipping on the light and it wouldn't go on. I forgot to pay the electricity bill.

I walked out the front door of my flat and got into my car and drove off. I arrived at the store. It was a little place, a local store. I walked in the store and got some food into my cart. I paid and drove back home. When I arrived, some guy was at the front door, dressed in black. "Hey!" I shouted. "Get away from my house!"

The man was surprised. "Whoa, I thought I killed you, go away!" the man said in fear. "Please, don't hurt me lady."

I dropped my bags and grabbed him by the shirt, "Get in the house!"

We went into the house and I tied him to a chair. "I'll be right back. Don't you try to escape you cold blooded murderer, or I swear, I will torture you in every way possible." I got out my phone and dialed 911.

"Hello operator, I have a man in my house tied to a chair a-

"Wait, you are kidnapping a man and calling the police?" the operator sounded confused.

"No, he tried to break in to my house. Look, can you just come here and arrest him, please?"

I put down the phone and turned to the chair. The ropes on the chair were cut. It was too clean of a cut. It was made by a blade of some sort.

"I'm going to end this!" The man yelled as he jumped on me. I threw him over my head. He crashed into the cupboards. I ran up the stairs as fast as I could. He chased after me. I ran towards the balcony. He was still following me, his knife shimmering as he ran up the stairs. Then, Johnny, my cat, jumped on him and scratched his face. He tried getting him off, but he fell off the balcony, and grabbed me with him. We fell on the concrete, 20 feet below.

I was outside, so peaceful. I heard the sirens, and then cops finally arrived and took him and put him in a body bag. "Why didn't I die? I also fell off the balcony, but didn't die?" I said to myself. Then, I remembered what the old man at the cabin told me. "*I shall grant you the power of immortality.*" The old man appeared next to me. It's almost as if no one knew that he was there, except me.

"Thank you," I said to him, "for all of your help." He nodded and disappeared with a tiny, yet joyful, smile on his face.

Lost

*When Ella goes on a vacation with her parents, she wanders off without telling anyone. Will she ever see her parents again? Read **LOST**, by **Marin Wachs**, to find out.*

The sunset looked beautiful over the ocean and the sand felt soothing below my feet. The weather was perfect; warm with a cool breeze. But one thing that wasn't beautiful, soothing, and perfect ruined it all...I was alone.

My name is Ella. My adventure started a few days ago when my family and I boarded a plane for a family vacation to Hawaii. When we arrived, it was midnight. I saw a beach not too far away and ran off to see the ocean just for a minute. The sight was beautiful, so I stayed a little longer, and maybe got too caught up in the perfection of everything around me, when I realized I had to go back and find my family.

I returned to where they had been by the outside of the airport, but all I saw were the few families that had just gotten off the plane. My parents were nowhere in sight. I checked all over for them! I checked everywhere in the area and inside the airport. I went back to the beach. I was crying and whimpering, but finally managed to make out the words "HELP, HELP!", but nobody heard my cries. No shops were open anymore, and I was out of luck. I found the closest hidden bench by the beach, and cried myself to sleep.

In the morning, I woke up early, and went on the other side of the beach, which was really considered a different one. For some reason, it just didn't feel the same as the other side of the beach that I went too. The sand was rough and rocky, and there were not as many palm trees.

I stayed there anyway. I walked along the ocean shore in my flip-flops, hopeless, and clueless of what to do. I spent the morning here, bored out of my mind, and whispered to myself, "If only I stayed with my family!" Finally, the late morning came, and people slowly started coming and going, while I stood there at the entrance watching for my parents. Time passed, but I stayed. Late afternoon came, and I was ready to pass out. I plumped down, and fell asleep on the sand, which really seemed like rocks.

I did the same routine for the next day. I found some money in my pocket, so I bought some food at the snack bar on the beach. I decided to leave this beach, and go to the beach where I started this whole “vacation”. When I arrived, the beach was packed! People were in crowds! There were people swimming, tanning, playing volleyball, resting, talking, and reading. I searched the crowds and looked around.

Today was hot, with the sun’s rays shining almost directly on us. I was dying to go swimming, but I didn’t have my swimsuit. I was so bummed. I just looked down at my dirty feet and my worn out flip-flops in despair. Then I looked up, and there in the distance were my parents! They were looking around clueless as could be, and then I realized what they were doing...looking for me!

I ran as fast as I could, with tears of joy in my eyes. When they saw me, they did the same. We hugged and we talked for what seemed like an hour, but it was really only two minutes. I was relieved that I had found them! I was worn out, tired, and my clothes were extremely dirty. I had never experienced anything like this, and I admit that it is scary when you are lost with nobody to help you.

We drove back to our hotel room. It was beautiful! The hotel had birds inside, palm trees, an indoor and outdoor pool, and a hot tub. The rooms were huge and they were so pretty! We had a great view of the ocean through our window. We also had a deck to look out at the ocean with chairs so we could read out there too. Finally, the perfect day ended, but I had nothing to be sad about any longer. I still had five more days of vacationing on the big island of Hawaii...with my family!

Magic Fluffy Turtle

*When a poor man finds a strange and mysterious creature hiding in the forest, there is a turn for the worst. Will this creature only offer him trouble? Find out in **MAGIC FLUFFY TURTLE**, by **Hank Peters-Wood**.*

I had just finished my flying routine around South Dakota when I decided to take a stop at my best friend's grave back in Michigan. I landed in the cemetery and had a short visit. Then, I flew over Detroit. It looked so different than it did when I was found in the woods back in 2002. Wow, it has already been 436 years since that amazing day. I love that I don't die. I'm going to tell you the story of how I turned into something bigger and better than I ever thought possible by sitting in a forest. Just so you know, you can call me Magic.

Hello, I'm Leon Clemons. I am going to tell you about the greatest adventure of my life.

The morning of July 22, 2002, I woke up at my best friends, Benjamin and Cassandra's, house. I walked out the door as quietly as I could so I would not wake up my friends. I walked around the city for a while and then I stopped at a restaurant to get breakfast and read the newspaper. After about an hour, I got bored. I took a very long hike to a forest which is many, many miles away from Detroit.

When I got there, I gawked at the amazing trees that are taller than some buildings in Detroit. After a while of just looking around, I sat down on a log to rest. When I sat down, I heard a little murph inside the hollow log. I peeked inside and saw the weirdest, strangest looking turtle ever! It was green and everything looked normal except, instead of a shell, there was pink, fluffy fur. It was six inches long and probably a little less than a pound. I was about to pick him up, but he started to float. It was astonishing.

"WOW! You are magic!" I yelled "Hmm, I think I'll call you Magic Fluffy Turtle." I ran back to the city to show my friends Benjamin and Cassandra. While I was running, the turtle started making this high-pitched, ear-splitting scream, which attracted everybody.

People ran over and tried to take the turtle. They started yelling very disturbing words at me and someone tried to tackle me.

People from all directions tried to take the floating turtle. I grabbed the turtle and hid him in my coat pocket. Someone tried to open my pocket and I was able to shove him off, but he did manage to rip off a piece of my coat. After a while of shoving through a bunch of people, I was able to get away from the crowd of people.

I sprinted as fast as I could towards Benjamin and Cassandra's apartment. But the people who were trying to steal the turtle were right behind me. They kept screaming at me to give them the turtle and trying to grab me, so I started running through the side streets and alleys of Detroit. When I thought I had finally lost them, the turtle floated out of my pocket and flying back to the bad people. I had to go back and get him before he got us both caught.

I found him next to a trash can eating moldy onion rings. I grabbed him and we ran to the apartment. When I finally got there, I leaped up the stairs and started pounding on Apartment 32. They opened the door and I showed them the turtle. "That is awesome!" said Benjamin. Magic Fluffy Turtle looked at me, murred again, and coughed up a crumpled up piece of paper. It said "*I will grant you five wishes because I almost got both of us hurt.*"

When I read this, I was overjoyed! "I wish for 900 billion dollars," I said. A check appeared for 900 billion dollars! I thought about wishing for more, but I was now the richest man alive and didn't need anymore.

"I wish Detroit had 500 trillion dollars!" All of a sudden, we heard cheering in city hall.

"I wish I was super famous," I said. Suddenly, billboards started popping up that said,

Detroit! Home Of Leon Clemons!

"I wish Benjamin and Cassandra had 900 billion dollars for giving me a place to live for the past years and for being great friends." They got a check too.

"My final wish is for superpowers!" Just then, I got super strength and I could fly. The people who wanted to steal Magic Fluffy Turtle had finally caught up with me and they were trying to get in the apartment, but I had superpowers now!

I flew to the door, opened it up, and pounded those guys to a pulp. They tried to fight back, but my superpowers and I were able to take on all of the people and fly them all to the city prison where

they would get sentenced to many years in prison for assault and attempted robbery.

When I got back to the apartment, Magic Fluffy Turtle coughed up another crumpled up piece of paper, this time it said, "*Leon you are a great person and my new best friend, but I must now become a super hero and save the world, but I want you to keep Detroit safe with your powers. Goodbye Leon, I'll visit soon!*"

"Goodbye, Magic Fluffy Turtle!" we all yelled. And he flew away.

Marvin

*Marvin is a Monkey, but he isn't an ordinary monkey! In **MARVIN** by Aaron Simpson, find out about his adventures.*

Monika and Moesha had waited months for this vacation. They were so happy to see each other. They decided to go on vacation in the jungle. The jungle was a place they've wanted to go to for a while now. They met up at the airport to get on their flight. They were so happy when they got off the plane. It was only a two hour flight coming from Brazil. They walked from the airport to their hotel because it was only a mile away.

When they dropped their stuff off at their hotel, they went straight to the jungle. After hours of being in the jungle and looking at all the cool animals, they met a monkey. His name was Marvin. They thought he was very good looking. They got closer and Monika tried to kiss Marvin on the face and Marvin kissed her forehead. From that moment, they fell in love. Nothing could separate their love. Then Moesha came and ruined the moment and barged in and tried to kiss Marvin too. That didn't go very well, so they ditched her. Now, she was all alone in the jungle.

Later, Marvin and Monika ran to the ocean shore and they saw a small boat. There was a man who got off the boat and his name was Jeffrey. Jeffrey was a very nice man and they realized they would be friends. They went back on the boat and rode to New York. While they were on the boat, Marvin ate all the food and drank all the drinks. They had to starve for two days all because of Marvin who ate everything. Monika wasn't that mad at Marvin because she loved him so much and nothing could change that.

When they got there, Marvin and Monika met Jeffrey's roommates. There were four of them; John, Riley, Dawson, and Marley. Marvin and Monika did not like Jeffrey's roommates because they were pigs and ate everything. Marvin and Monika suggested that they should all go on another trip, but without them.

Everyone was on board, but they couldn't decide where to go. "Let's go to the jungle," said Monika. "We left my friend there and we might be able to find her."

So they all went to the airport and flew to the jungle. Marvin and Monika were all alone and they didn't know what to do. They

thought it would be a good idea to just go out to eat. "Let's order Chinese," Monika said. They ordered a lot so they didn't have to buy anything else while the roommates were gone.

Meanwhile, in the jungle, Jeffrey and his roommates are still looking for Moesha. They haven't had any food and they have been living off of dirty water. They missed all of the flights back to New York and will probably die in the jungle.

My New Home

*A girl lives almost her whole life in the top dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. Will she ever find a new home or will she be stuck scurrying around for food at night? Find out in **MY NEW HOME**, by Jansen Eichenlaub.*

*D*ing, dong! Ding, dong! I heard the church bells as I watched the prince and princess exit the St. Paul's cathedral. I had a perfect view of the whole wedding party, a little high but not too high. I bet you're wondering where I am? I live in the top dome of the St. Paul's cathedral. I haven't been living here for my whole life though. It was my eighth birthday and I had been planning my escape from the orphanage for months. At dawn, I snuck out the back window. St. Paul's cathedral was just about to close, but I made it in. I climbed all 1,000 steps to the very top of the church. I remember, when I got to the very top, I gasped for air like I had been underwater for minutes. My legs were shaking and I was pleased to find a bed in the corner of the room. I've been living here for about five years now. My favorite part of it all is watching the sunrise and getting all warm inside when the sunlight hits my skin. It brings joy to me just to see bright lights.

No one had ever seen me; not until a couple days ago. That night, I was making my routine trip down to the lower levels of the cathedral's kitchen when I heard footsteps. At first I thought my ears were just hearing things farther away than they actually were, but then I heard a voice along with the footsteps,

"What are you doing here? Don't you know we closed two hours ago?"

I was caught red-handed. The nun could probably tell just by looking at my ratty clothes and hair that I needed some food. I stared at her, she stared at me.

"Are you hungry? Do you want some food?" The nun insisted. "Come here young lady!"

I approached her slowly.

"Come on now, I don't have all day!"

She gave me some food and then told me things I didn't really want to hear. She told me that I might not be able to stay there any longer, but she promised she'd take care of me. That night, my body

was half joy and half sadness. I didn't want to leave, but maybe if the nun took me into her home I could finally learn to read and write. The next day, the nun found me in my little dome. She told me that I could stay as long as no one knew I was there. I didn't think it would be hard to not get seen. I mean I've been living here for five years.

The nun tutored me in high school math, science, social studies, and language arts. I had a real knack for learning. We waited patiently for months until September came around, when I would become a freshman at Kensington Gardens. Kensington Gardens was filled with amazing athletes. Being surrounded by all these wonderful athletes, I decided gymnastics would be very fun. One of my friends was a gymnast. She taught me how to do back handsprings and front layouts. No one ever would have expected me to be as good as I was. I was outstanding. First place here, first place there. When I was a junior, I got a call from The University of Georgia. They gave me a full scholarship just to do gymnastics at their school! I took on the offer.

The most important day of my life had come. If I got a score of eight or higher, then I would qualify to compete in the Olympics of 2014. I focused my mind, running my routine through my head.

"Jordan Douglas will be the next floor performer, with music by Ariana Grande!" said the announcer.

Sweat filled my body. So much pressure was on me. If I win, I could go to the Olympics and have the experience of a life time. If I lose, I will work harder and wait until next year. I stepped up on the floor got in my position and waited for the music to sound.

"I love the way you make me feel." I immediately started to do turns and cartwheels that led up to my double back layout. I performed like my life depended on it. The song ended as I did my last trick. The crowd cheered. After what seemed like hours the results came in. I had earned an 8.7! My body was shaking; I was so excited. The first thing I did was give the nun a huge hug. She was there in the stands watching me. Every meet, she comes to cheer me on.

If it weren't for the nun, I'd still be back in the dome, searching for food just hoping that there will be leftovers. I mean it wasn't a bad life. I enjoyed being able to look out at Big Ben, and the London Eye, but no way I could've stayed there for the rest of my life. To this day, I still wonder what would have happened if I never went

for dinner that night. Would I be here right now? I don't know. I'm very grateful to have the nun in my life. It's been a tough adventure but, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

My Special Trip to Hawaii

*Leah is going on her dream vacation to Hawaii. When she goes on a snorkeling trip, Leah swims too far away from the boat. What will happen to Leah? Will she ever see her family again? Read **MY SPECIAL TRIP TO HAWAII**, by **Brooke Sandercock**, to find out.*

I was in the car on the way to the Detroit Airport and getting extremely excited. My family is going to the island of Kauai. It is an island in Hawaii. The only thing that I am not excited for is the length of the trip. The longest trip on a plane that I have ever been on was six hours. This trip to Hawaii is about 13 hours, and there is a lot of time at the airport.

My mom, dad, brother, and I walked into the airport. We checked our bags and bought food to take on the plane. Then we walked to our terminal. There were so many people in the airport that it was hard to get anywhere fast. This is why we left our house so early this morning. After lots of slow walking, my family boarded the plane.

The plane was taking off. Minutes later, we were thousands of feet in the air. I was in the window seat. I looked out at the cloudy sky while listening to my iPod. I was so relaxed that I fell asleep. I woke up and looked out the window. There was a blue ocean, and an island with palm trees. This was it, we were there.

The plane landed and we picked up our bags. We also picked up our rental car. Then we drove to the resort that we were staying in. It was beautiful! The resort was massive! We checked in and went up to our villa. The villa was even more beautiful. It had king beds in every one of the five bedrooms, so everyone in my family got their own room! In my bedroom, there was an amazing view of the island and the ocean. This was going to be the best vacation *ever*!

I got into my swimsuit and went down to the pool. It was the coolest pool. The pool was full of dolphins and you could go in the pool whenever you wanted. I swam with them until dinner. For dinner, we went to a luau. It was really weird; they cooked the pig in an underground oven. Then, we ate the pig.

The next morning, my family went snorkeling. The snorkeling guides were Oke and Kapono. They explained the rules about snorkeling. Oke told us about what to do if sharks were to close.

Kapono told us about the sharp rocks and other treacherous animals to watch out for. They told us always to always stay with a partner.

The ocean water was clear as can be. There were small waves and big waves. The sky was bright blue, not a cloud in the sky. You could see the bright flowers on the mountain in the distance. On the mountains, you could see lots of waterfalls. I never knew that a place could truly be this beautiful.

I put my goggles on and my snorkel. My brother, Matt, and I jumped into the ocean. It was like nothing I had ever seen before. The fish were amazingly colorful. They were pink, blue, yellow, orange, white, and green. There were octopi and crabs also.

I looked around to show Matt something. I lost Matt! Or, maybe he lost me! I had swum too far! Then it came. It was the biggest creature I had ever seen. It was a giant squid! The squid sprayed ink, turning the water surrounding me into a big, black fog.

I woke up relieved that it was just a dream. That's when I found out, it wasn't! I was in the middle of the ocean! I looked at my reflection in a sea shell. I was a sea turtle!

How did this happen? When did I fall asleep? These questions kept going through my head. After a while, I thought that maybe that I fell asleep when the giant squid inked in the ocean. That was the last thing that I remember.

I saw something coming toward me. It was a tiny fish of some sort. Then, I felt like Dory because it was not a small fish, it was a whale! However, the whale was very friendly. He explained to me what happened. I was right, it was the squid.

The whale's name was Charlie. I liked Charlie not only because he was nice, but because he had a British accent. Charlie was a blue whale, the biggest animal in the world, well, except for that massive squid that sprayed me.

Charlie told me everything about the squid. His name was Seth. He was the most sinful creature in the entire ocean. Every time he sprays something, he gets bigger. Whatever he sprays, turns into a different species. That explains why I am a sea turtle.

When would I see my family again? This was another question that kept going through my head. I asked Charlie how I could turn back into a human. He told me that I would have to go to the Rainbow Shell. It was the home of the most magical creature in the sea. Her name was Cynthia and she was a dolphin.

I swam to the Rainbow Shell with Charlie. We knocked on the shell. Cynthia came out of the shell. She was the most stunning thing that I had ever seen! Cynthia was different than anything I had seen or ever will see. She was not your average dolphin. Cynthia had bright blue eyes and she was pink and sparkly.

She asked me, "What can I help you with?"

I told her everything and I asked about how I could become a human again. She told me that she could make a magical potion that would make me fall asleep and when I woke up, I would be in my bed in the hotel. My family would not even know that I was gone. I told her it was an amazing idea.

So, I watched her make my potion. Cynthia mixed several things together like seaweed and other sea plants. The last thing that she added to the potion was a small part of the rainbow shell. She blended it all up and handed it to me. She told me that I would like it because she flavored it like a strawberry banana smoothie.

When Cynthia told me that, I drank it right away. The potion actually tasted very good. I could feel myself getting tired, but I don't remember falling asleep. I just wake up, in my hotel room.

Nyan Cat

*When a cat is in space with villains, the cat is in danger. But, there is a sliver of hope. He must fight to survive. Find out how in **NYAN CAT**, by **Brent Lee**.*

In 60 years, this will be my conversation with my grandchildren:

“Hi kids, do you know what a book is?” I ask my grandchildren.

“What is this book you speak of?” they say simultaneously.

I chuckle. “When I was your age, we played a game called Nyan Cat.”

“What’s Nyan Cat?” they question.

“Well, let me tell me tell you a story. Nyan Cat is a game we played on our iPods and iPhones, and it was about a little cat...”

One time, in the middle of space, an intergalactic space cat named Nyan Cat that lived on planet Nyan was hovering through the galaxy. He basically was a pop tart with a cat head who disposed of rainbows. He was collecting pizza and junk foods. While collecting power ups and jumping on things, he saw the evil space creatures.

The evil creatures were space dogs, evil space aliens, and UFOs. He had to fight the evil creatures to defend the galaxy from danger!

He used his magical rainbow powers to make them colorful and rainbows were poison to evil. He restlessly fought them off using magical power ups and things to make them vanish. But then, a massive fleet of space dogs and UFOs were headed in Nyan Cat’s direction! Nyan Cat had to contact his family of Nyan. They arrived just in time.

His whole planet of Nyan was there. And Nyan Cat and his friends from his planet fought them all off. All the friendly space creatures from other planets made him King of Space and his planet the Capital of the galaxy. They even made a game of him!

The Nyan Cat legacy will live on forever. The last Dog of the entire crew of evil space creatures notified that one day they will be

back and defeat them so he fled. But, the dog accidentally drifted into the sun and disintegrated, so the Nyan cats won!

After all of this, Nyan Cat himself was awarded King of Nyan and received a crown, a special robe, a golden scepter, and a royal throne. Nyan Cat announced that he will accept the position of King of the Galaxy. And, if the evil space creatures ever come back, the King's position is to fight the evil. This tradition will be passed down from generation to generation. And they all lived happily ever after.

But 5,000 years passed (space creatures do not grow old) and now they were in the main intergalactic space kingdom. They were in the dining hall to feast on a wonderfully royal meal when a thunderous boom shook up everybody. One of the locals asked what it had been. Nyan Cat sent two of his royal guards to see the disturbing noise. They waited hoping it was nothing serious. Then they heard a loud screech! "Ah!"

Nyan Cat went outside and saw something despicable.

Black smog was forming in the sun! Then the black smog turned into the form of Nyan Cat and a plain pop tart completed the sight. It was an evil shadow of Nyan Cat's former self! Nyan Cat's evil shadow hovered over to him. Evil Nyan appeared with a sinister look in his eye.

"Hello, Nyan! I am your opposite, or as you could also call it, your worst nightmare!"

He rose up and slugged Nyan Cat in the arm and he returned the hit with a blast of rainbow power with a ferocious look in his eye. The battle continued on. Thunderous blasts of color collided with a dark, hazy, black muck. After hours and hours of battle, Nyan Cat got tired of this and blasted the most powerful part of his power to a rainbow blast that hit directly to evil Nyan. He retreated to the Milky Way wounded with dripping smog and rainbow marks, but just before he yelled, "I'll be back!"

They cheered, but Nyan Cat knew he wouldn't be back because he was more afraid of Nyan Cat than anything else. Nyan Cat was a hero. To this day, the Nyans live in harmony protecting the galaxy from danger. They are the leaders of the galaxy. They are located in multiple places, but one of the main sectors is actually on the dark side of the Earth's moon where no one can locate them.

The Sunwarrior

*Deep in an alley in New York City, a young man is jumped by a demon. In **THE SUNWARRIOR** by **Estelle Jude Baste**, a strange girl protects him and he is introduced into a whole new world.*

Caylah is a vampire. Hiding in the shadows of a dark alley in New York City, she watched silently as a demon stalked a young man into an old warehouse, waiting to drain his blood, sucking out his life. Caylah's canines sharpened and her nails were suddenly pointy black claws. She felt her eyes burn, like they always did when they turned into a flaming orange-amber, glowing in the darkness of the alley. The demon was a horrible thing. A monster. It had a muscular body of a man, but had huge horns sticking out from the head, with slit pupils, blood red like the fires of the Underworld. It had nails like needles and fangs that were a whole lot sharper than a vampire's. He looked vaguely familiar.

The demon crouched, ready to pounce on the human. Caylah waited patiently for her chance. Suddenly, the man found himself under the demon's clutch. The demon smiled and the man's eyes widened. He started to scream for help, but the demon muffled his cry.

"Hello, little human," the demon's voice was raspy, but still very clear. As he spoke, a green forked tongue flicked between his shark-like teeth. Caylah took this moment to jump out of her hiding spot.

Yelling, she kicked the demon off the poor man. The demon landed nearby, crashing into an old dumpster. Caylah was already on her feet ready for it. The human's eyes widened even further and he crawled into a corner of the warehouse. The demon suddenly burst out of the dump and faced Caylah. He growled when he saw her face.

"Warrior," he spat. "You have no place here."

Caylah bared her fangs.

"I have every right to be here, demon," she replied, harshly. The demon laughed. Caylah glanced over her shoulder at the human; he looked no more than 18. Caylah looked back at the demon. It was eyeing the boy hungrily, probably wondering how he would taste.

"Oh, please," it said, seeming bored now, looking back at her. "Call me Azazel."

Caylah gasped in horror. He was leader of the fallen angels, second in command to Satan. "Lucifer's slave."

Azazel sneered. "Now, I wouldn't exactly say *slave*," he said, clearly emphasizing the word, slave. "Maybe, Extremely Helpful Assistant. E.H.A. for short."

"Eha?" Caylah snorted.

Azazel smiled, "Yes, I guess that is a little entertaining." He chuckled.

Caylah took this chance. She launched herself at the demon slave, claws extended, fangs ready. But Azazel was fast. He dodged her attack and raked her arm with his needle-nails and Caylah hissed. She dropped to the ground, surprising Azazel and swung out her leg. Azazel toppled to the ground. Hard.

Caylah jumped him, but he pushed him off her. They circled each other and Caylah charged. Azazel put out his hands and stepped forward, ready, but Caylah feinted left and around him, surprising him. While he was surprised, she flexed her right wrist and a dagger zoomed out of her sleeve. She stabbed it into his back, and golden blood, ichor, a sign that he was a very powerful demon, poured out.

Caylah pulled out four gold clamp-like holds, with spikes speckled with iron lining the inside. She slammed it against his arms and legs, pinning him to the ground, so that he couldn't get up. She did all this in less than one second. She slid her dagger back into her sleeve, taking her time. No one could escape the demon holds.

She put her knee to his chest and pushed her forearm against his throat and grinned. "You're out of practice, demon. When was the last time you actually did your own hunting rather than let others do it for you?"

Azazel didn't answer, but instead said, "Do it," he gasped against her clutch. "Doesn't matter anyways. The others will finish the job."

"Let them try," Caylah snapped back.

She dragged her claws across his neck and Azazel disintegrated. But Caylah knew that he wasn't really dead. She couldn't permanently kill him. He was too powerful. A vampire's limits could only go so far. He would just return to the depths of the Underworld, return to his master's side, angry and probably irritated. And possibly still hungry. This would be why he could still be grumpy. The good thing was that it was very painful for a demon

to return to the Underworld when he was disintegrated—at least a good thing for Caylah.

Caylah stood up from her crouch, very annoyed. All her life, she was hunted by all kinds of demons and monsters, each one even worse than the last. There had been the evil flying monkey *things* in London when she had just been trying to buy a birthday gift for her friend, Kira. Then the annoying Fury in Hollywood, plus much, much more. Every demon she encountered tried to kill her just because she was the Sunwarrior, warrior vampire spoken from an ancient legend, who could walk in the daylight, though she still preferred the night. The one spoken from the prophecy: *A family of blood will rise from the dead/They will feast on human's blood and bread/None can defeat them but the Chosen One/ Child of Man and King's son/This One shall defeat them but with a price/She herself would be sacrificed.* She figured out what the “sacrificed” part meant so that she didn’t actually have to die and her favorite part of the whole thing was chopping off the leader’s head, Baltazar. They had made vampire eggs—how, she did not know—and tried to feed them her blood, planning to make any army of vampires whose powers were increased by tenfold, and destroy the world. And take it over. All in all, Baltazar was a psychopath.

She had wiped out the vampires that fed on humans so the demons were afraid that she would wipe them all out, too, and tried to stop her. She had defeated all of those who tried. Sent them back to the Underworld or got rid of them for good, if possible. And now Azazel added to her record. She could handle a couple more hundred. Or maybe even the Devil himself would come. What an exciting life she was living!

Caylah finally became aware of a tingling sensation at her arm. She looked down to see the result of the fight: long slashes drawn on her skin, blood flooding out and dripping into the ground. As she watched, they slowly started to close up, leaving three pale stripes behind. An addition to the many scars she already had. Suddenly she heard a sound behind her, shoes scraping against cement.

She turned around and faced the human. He cowered against the wall. She stepped closer and the human looked around desperately. He picked up a scrap of metal and pointed it at her, hands trembling. “S-stay away from me!” he cried.

Caylah hissed, baring her fangs. The human flinched and almost dropped the metal scrap. She sheathed her fangs and her nails

returned back to normal. She felt the burning sensation in her eyes recede and knew they had turned back to their normal chocolate brown color. She put her hands up, the universal sign for “I surrender” or “I won’t hurt you.”

“You need not worry. I will not harm you,” she soothed. The human slowly lowered the metal scrap. His eyes flicked to where Lukavyn used to be.

“Where did that monster go?” His voice was calm but the fear still in his eyes betrayed him. Caylah inched closer to him and sat down across from him.

“He has returned to the Underworld, where he will not be able to consume you.”

“C-c-consume me?” the fear was back in his voice. “He wanted to eat me? I mean, I know he wanted to kill me, but he wanted to eat me?! Who are you? *What* are you? *You’re not going to eat me, are you?!*”

“My name is Caylah Batchelder. I am a warrior vampire. My tribe has kept you humans safe for thousands of years.” She told the truth and looked at the human full in the eye, daring him to protest that that had to be impossible. He seemed to get the memo. “And I just *said* that I would not harm you. We are not the kind of vampires who feed on humans. Those kinds are all wiped out. Calm down.” She added.

“What is your name, human?”

“Nathan. Nathan Newton. Please don’t eat me.”

“You are of eighteen years, are you not?” she said, ignoring the last part.

“Yeah, I am. So are there such things as werewolves, witches, selkies and all those things?”

“Yes. But especially watch out for the faeries. They are very mischievous, so keep a hand on your wallet. They like shiny things.”

Caylah grinned and stood up and walked to the doorway of the warehouse. Nathan eyed her wearily. She looked up at the sky. She could see the first tendril of Sun soaring across the darkness. That was her cue. “The sun is ready to rise. I must go soon. I am expected back at home.” She turned back to Nathan. “You must leave. You mustn’t walk through the shadows of night or you might be visited once again.”

Nathan nodded soundlessly. He started to get up but halted. “Where do you live? And why aren’t you afraid of the Sun?” He had

noticed that a patch of sunlight was an inch away from her foot. Caylah regarded him curiously. She had never met a human that asked so many questions. She pondered for a moment, trying to decide whether she should answer him or not. “My family lives in underground tunnels, hidden from the vision of humans and protected from our enemies. And I am the only vampire who can stand in the Sun. No more questions.”

For a moment wonder overpowered the fear still in his eyes. Caylah looked back at the sky. Now there was a second stripe of light in the dark sky. She cursed herself silently. She had wasted too much time. By the time she got back for the Council, she would be late. Then she would be in *big* trouble. Although she was the vampire of legend (and extremely powerful), she was still quite young.

“Go. Now.”

Nathan turned to leave, but stopped once again. He looked back at Caylah—or where she used to be. She had left without a single tiny sound. But he was wrong. He looked around and caught a glimpse of a figure darting through alleys at inhuman speed. His mouth dropped to his knees and he gaped like a goldfish. When he finally managed to close his mouth—after he swallowed a fly—he realized that Caylah was telling the truth.

“A vampire,” he whispered.

The Survivor

*Andrew likes meeting new people, but there are only certain days that are right. What is this all about? Find out in **THE SURVIVOR**, by McKenna Gallison.*

Today was a beautiful sunny, Sunday in Charlotte, North Carolina. That's the perfect day to meet people, don't you think? Andrew Layne is a 19-year-old male with dirty blonde hair, 5'10, and green eyes. Andrew has lived in Charlotte his whole life because that's always been his only choice. Andrew's parents died in a shooting when he was seven, and he didn't have any aunts, uncles, or grandparents to take care of him. But, that didn't stop Andrew's life.

Two years after the death of his parents, he went in search to find the person who killed his mom and dad, and came across this town called Pumpkin Center. He never came across the person who did the shooting, but he found old furniture on the streets, and loose change that added up over the years. Andrew moved the furniture into an old house next to the woods. Now at the age of 19, he has a full house and never paid for a thing! He got his clothes from local garage sales for a cheap price. He always wore old jeans and a plaid shirt. Putting aside his clothes and house, he knew he would get revenge on every living soul.

Today was a new day. There was a new girl in town and she was about 5'8 with long blonde hair, and blue eyes. She was wearing a gray and white shirt with dark skinny jeans and rainbow high tops. Andrew spotted this girl out his window and said to himself, "Wow, she is gorgeous! I'm going to introduce myself to her." Andrew ran out of his house in only his ripped old jeans and slowed down as he approached the girl.

"Hello, you must be new. I haven't seen you around before." It was obvious she was new because she was unloading boxes out of a truck.

She chuckled and said, "Hi, I'm Hayley and you are?"

"The name's Layne, Andrew Layne. Nice to meet you, Hayley" he said with a smile.

Andrew couldn't be trusted though; he was still after the person who killed his parents and wouldn't stop until he got his revenge.

But, poor Hayley Simon had no idea what she was in for. Andrew offered to help her unpack, and Hayley happily said 'that would be great!' with a big smile. So, Andrew followed Hayley inside with two boxes in his arms.

"You know...you are very beautiful Hay. May I call you Hay?" He was pleased to spend time with Hayley. Hayley said that was fine as she unpacked her pictures. Andrew seemed to have very much interest in Hayley; she was pretty, had a cute name...everything he wanted. But, if she made one wrong move... bye-bye Hayley!

It was getting late. "I should probably go," Andrew said sadly.

"Don't be sad. You come over tomorrow to help me again, if you'd like?" Hayley replied with a half grin.

"Yes, that would be great," Andrew said happily. "I will be up at six so you can come and get me whenever it works for you, Hay!"

"Okay, I will come over as soon as I wake up," Hay said as she walked to the door guiding Andrew.

"Will do! See you tomorrow. Goodnight, sleep tight," Andrew said walking out.

"Goodnight, Andrew," Hayley said, closing the door.

6:00am Monday morning, Hayley's alarm clock beeped. Hay rose from her bed and opened the blinds to see the beautiful sunrise. Hayley watched for a couple minutes then slowly started to get dressed. She opened a big box on her bedroom floor labeled 'Hayley's Clothes'. She pulled out a black shirt with a red heart at the bottom, then dark short shorts. As Hay made it to the main level, she found the box labeled 'Hayley's shoes'. She opened the box and pulled out beige sandals with a crystal strap. By the time Hayley was all dressed and ready to get Andrew, it was nearly seven. Hay grabbed her key and walked out the front door, heading towards the house closest to the woods.

As Hayley slowly walked the road to the house at the end of the street, she stumbled across a sign on the side of the road reading '*Once you enter, there is no escape*' but she didn't care. When she got there, she knocked three times and the door slowly screamed opened. *This reminds me of something I once saw in a movie, or was it at a Halloween party* Hayley thought as she slowly walked into the house. She just had a feeling in her stomach to turn back, but she didn't care, which was a BIG mistake.

Slowly, Hay made her way to a twisted stair case and started to yell, "Andrew? Andrew where are you? It's Hayley Simon, from next

door!" But, no reply. Hmm, this got Hayley wondering where he could be. So she went looking around the house, all across the main floor, until she found her way back to the twisted stairs. *I just walked in a big circle. How could I be back here?* Hayley thought to herself. Against her better judgment she took a sudden move to go up the stairs, but once her foot hit the first step, *Crrreeeeeakkkkk* is all she heard and stepped back off the stair.

Hayley was getting scared; she didn't know what to do, but just when she started walking to the door, *BAM!* The door whistled as it slammed shut.

She is scared of spirits and unexpected noises, so she was really scared now. "Andrew! Andrew, HELP!" Hayley went running all over the main floor trying to open the windows, but nothing would budge. She finally went up to the front door and put her hands around the handle and pulled with all her strength. She just slipped and fell on her back.

"Ugh... What's going on?" Hay said to herself. But, just as she felt her eyes start to water, she heard a cough coming from the basement. "Andrew! Andrew, was that you?! DON'T PLAY GAMES! THIS ISN'T FUNNY ANYMORE!"

So, Hayley ran to a hallway on the main floor and ran down it until she stumbled across a door with a sign on it reading '*Enter if you dare*'. Then one under it reading '*Your entrance will be at your own risk*', but she knew she heard Andrew. She pushed open the door and ran down the stairs.

Hayley came to a stop once she got to the bottom step. The basement was full of spider webs on the walls and dust on the floor. There was graffiti on the walls, but not all colorful; only black, gray, and dark blue.

Hayley was officially scared, "ANDREW! ANDREW! PLEASE COME HERE! YOU'RE SCARING ME!" Hay said with tears slipping down her face. She realized she should forget about Andrew Layne and get herself out of that house, especially the basement, Hayley turned around and headed up the stairs. She ran, but once she made a step, she started running and once she got halfway to the door, it started to whistle. Hayley heard it say something that she could make out, "Did you murder the Layne family?"

Hayley screamed back in horror, "NO! NO! WHY WOULD I DO THAT!?" But there was no reply.

Hay finally calmed down and slowly walked out of the basement. She was out! But once she got back up stairs to the main level, all she saw were bugs crawling up the walls, spiders making webs, and Andrew up the stairs covered in what looked like spider guts and blood. The blood looked fake, but as the door whistled opened, light hit his face and it had blood all over it. It was coming from his eye, his nose, his lip and his neck, Hayley was terrified of what had happened, and screamed to Andrew, "Are you ok? What happened? Is everything alright? COME DOWN HERE AND EXPLAIN!"

Andrew couldn't reply, he had got bitten by a spider and was hard to understand, but screamed down to Hayley, "LEBE VOW!"

"Lebe Vow? Lebe Vow? Lebe Vow? LEAVE NOW, LEAVE NOW!" She finally figured it out and ran for the door. Hayley made it out, but her foot did not. It got caught as the door slammed, but Hayley knew she could get out. "I can do this," she said as she pulled back and fell as her foot slipped out of the door.

Hayley ran as fast as her legs would take her. She ran to her front door, pulled her key out of her short's pocket and pushed it into the keyhole. Once it opened, Hayley blasted through the door and slammed it shut. She knew she was scared for life, but she went to the kitchen and got a glass of water, she drank a sip and then splashed the rest on her face.

Hayley walked up to her room and pulled out her phone and dialed 932-869-9393. Her mom answered, "Yes, Hayley?"

"I want to move back to New York with you," she said. Her mother didn't ask why, but said that she would be there tomorrow to pick her up.

The next day, at 7 a.m. her mom knocked on the door with a moving truck in front of the house. Hayley and her mom spent about an hour putting everything back in boxes and onto the truck. Hayley took one last look at Andrew Layne's house and saw the door open as they drove off, back to New York.

Toilet Fish

*I thought the fish was dead as I flushed him down the toilet. All of the radioactive waste in the sewers changes him. Find out what happens next in **TOILET FISH**, by **Leo Crepeau**.*

I would agree that spending the day at a carnival is fun, except for today. This carnival wasn't a huge carnival full of roller coasters and huge stands with jumbo sized teddy bears, but a smaller sized carnival with a few stands, balloon animal clowns, and one roller coaster called "The Dark-Future."

I went to a stand where one had to throw darts at balloons and if you popped three balloons you got a fuzzy animal. I only popped two, so I didn't get anything. I went to the next stand, and I got ten rings to throw around bottles. It was so difficult! So, I went to the next stand and from the corner of my eye I saw it, a purple goldfish, and the size of my thumb. I gave the guy a dollar and I got ten basketballs to shoot in the hoop. I was almost a basketball expert and on my ninth shot, the ball hit the backboard and bounced off the rim, but it didn't go in! I looked behind me and I saw Vincent, the meanest, dumbest kid in my class. He shot ten times, made it ten times, and took my goldfish. I was in rage!

I thought fast! I ran around the carnival and caught up to Vincent. I didn't stop running when I tackled him. I could feel my shoulder hit his collar bone. He was lying on the ground and I took the purple goldfish and left.

At my house, I put the fish in a bowl. It was my first fish and I didn't have food. The next day, I woke up and the fish was dead. I tossed it in the toilet bowl and I thought that that story was over. Apparently, my fish wasn't dead, it was just stupid, and in my town, we have this illegal nuclear waste in the sewers and it transformed fish and stuff.

That night, my toilet was making weird noises so I went to check it out, my mutated goldfish jumped out, spit on me and jumped out of the window. There I was, in the bathroom, staring, toilet paper everywhere, toilet water everywhere.

"Breaking news! A mutated goldfish was found in the streets of Badger Hills," said the TV man. "It is purple

and the FBI thinks it came from a goldfish. So if you've flushed a purple goldfish lately, call 1-800-CHICKEN. That's it for the news! Come back tomorrow for information about fire trucks. Goodbye!"

I went to meet Chris at the park; he's kind of a seventh grade detective. He solved the 'macaroni in the toilet' case. On my way there, there was a black van and I tried to avoid it. But sometimes, trying isn't good enough; a man popped out behind a tree and hit me with a shovel.

I woke up in a van, not tied up, and with two other kids, and a man. I decided to ask the man where I was and he said that it was FBI matters and we couldn't ask questions. The car stopped and the door opened. We were in the sewers and I saw some sort of thick green liquid slowly flowing. The man told me that it was radioactive waste and that my fish went in it and was mutated with a crocodile DNA because the zoo is just above. He also said that we needed to stop my fish before it went into a radio-active transformation that will make it five stories tall.

I went back in the van and we tracked the fish using a radioactivity tracer. We found it in the city hall and just in time too! It was eating a sign and growing fast! The driver came out and he had a net. It had sticky spheres on it so it stuck to the ground. The two men threw the net on my fish and he was trapped on the ground. But, he was still growing! He was screeching because he had no space to grow, after about five seconds, the beast exploded.

That night on TV, I saw the two men from the van that were arresting a dozen people for putting radio-active waste in the sewers.

The Underwater Adventure

*An Underwater World adventure goes wrong when the whales escape the tank. Discover what happens in **THE UNDERWATER ADVENTURE**, by **Tyriq Heard**.*

Beep! Beep! Beep! I had to get up to go to my job at Underwater World. It is pretty fun. I work with the orca whales. I am ready to leave early since the president is coming today. I arrive to work and am ready to do the first trick. It is to ride the whale, but then it jumps in the air and swallows me whole. Then there is a big boom and the whale is in the ocean.

I am so nervous that it is going in the ocean. All I have with me is a pocket knife. I started stabbing and it died. I swim out of his mouth and I am in the middle of the ocean. I found a vacant raft except the orca really covered a lot of distance from here to land. I climb in the raft to take a nap, but the worst thing happens; a humpback whale jumped on the raft. I was knocked unconscious.

Ten minutes pass. Finally, I wake up and I am on a back of a dolphin. It saved my life. I was happy, but my raft was destroyed. I didn't know what I was going to do now. I went down to the bottom and looked for stuff that can float. I found some seaweed that I can use to tie things together. I found coral reefs and tied them together. It hurt when I laid on it, but I had to in order to survive. Then a shark came and, of course, it had to be a great white shark. Hopefully it wasn't hungry at the time. I stabbed it with my pocket knife, but that didn't stop it. The shark bit my hand and tugged me under. I couldn't breathe. He pulled it off and my hand was gushing blood. I ripped off part of my shirt to tie it to my wrist, so I wouldn't lose too much blood.

I found something under water; a flare gun. I tried to shoot it, but it backfired. I did it again and I lit up the night sky and saw an island. I swam to the island and took a nap. I woke up in the morning to a deafening roar. It was an airplane. I tried to signal it with my flare, except I was out of ammo.

I just explored the island and looked for food. As I explored, I found some type of tree house and I climbed up and went inside to investigate. I heard a search party outside so I went out, but they were pirates. They captured me and tied me to a pole and took me

back to their camp. It was actually awesome. They had houses and everything. Then, at night, I saw guys in the bushes with guns. Then they freed me and started a firefight with the pirates.

They took me to a helicopter and said we are going to get out of here and we took off. He said things like my situation happens a lot when people get attacked by pirates. He said we are safe and sound now. The pirates are dead.

I think I am going to quit my job at Underwater World and get a different job. I can't believe he swallowed me and I survived. I think I am very lucky to still be here. When we get back to Underwater World, the news is there and the president. It is crazy! The orca tank is empty with no water in it. It will cost 2.6 billion dollars to fix everything that the whale destroyed. It was an exciting experience that I went through though.

That was my adventure and it may have seemed fake, but it was real.

The Washing Machine

*All that Bunny wants to do is have a drink when he falls into a magical hole. Will he ever get out? Find out in **THE WASHING MACHINE**, by **Jordan Shefman**.*

Have you ever heard a story about an animal that can talk and meets other talking animals? If you have, this is nothing new for you. But if you haven't, this is going to be a wild ride.

One day, a bunny named Bunny Rabbit was hopping along Woodside Road. He was in need of a refreshing drink. So, he decided to find a house with some lemonade.

When Bunny found a house that looked good, he hopped in the door. He opened up the refrigerator with his humanlike hands (that is a different story). He chugged his lemonade, then got another. He chugged that one too. Then, he went to find a place to take a little snooze.

He hopped into the washing machine, but he never hit the bottom. Bunny was falling, and falling, and falling. Then, he saw the ground. There was a sign that said 'I'd turn back if I were you'. But Bunny didn't see how to turn back, so he just kept falling. He closed his eyes and expected impact, but just when he should have hit the ground, he passed right through it. And he kept falling.

Then, after about three hours of falling and falling and falling, Bunny mysteriously felt himself slow down. He wondered how that happened. If there were animals down here, he had a lot of questions for them. Then, he felt his feet hit the ground and he stumbled for a little bit.

Bunny hopped into the darkness until he hit something hard. He heard a voice and looked up. It was a giraffe. Bunny asked his name. He told him that his name was Giraffe. Bunny said hello and asked Giraffe all the questions he had to ask. Giraffe answered all of his questions and told him that he had to take him to Bear.

When he got to Bear, it was obvious to Bunny that Bear was like a leader or king. Bear thought that Bunny was part of the Ancient Prophecy. The Ancient Prophecy goes like this: *"One bunny shall rise above all others and be king. All citizens of this city shall follow this bunny's orders."* Bunny didn't see how this was possible. He was just a bunny named Bunny Rabbit that lived on Woodside Road. But

this was a chance to get some fame, so he went along with it. Bear told him that if he were to be the bunny in the Ancient Prophecy, he would have to take the unicorns to the Spider Kingdom.

Bunny got to the unicorn stables and all of the unicorns looked gross and they had flies around them. Bear lead him to the back of the stables where a unicorn with a sparkly mane and no flies stood. Bear told Bunny that since he might be the bunny in the prophecy, this was his unicorn. Bunny was flattered. He told Bear that he was excited to go on this mission.

When Bunny's unicorn finally took to the air, he was absolutely delighted. The wind rushed passed his face and he hooted with delight. He thought this was awesome.

When they reached the Spider Kingdom, Bunny jumped off of his unicorn and freefell. Then he remembered that he was supposed to pull the string of his backpack when he was falling. He didn't remember why, but he did it because Bear told him to and Bear looked pretty smart (well, not really. But he was the king, so Bunny followed his orders).When he tugged on it, a parachute came out.

He hit the ground and looked up. He saw Bear falling and pulling the string. Then Bunny realized that Bear's parachute wasn't coming out. Bunny was suddenly panicked. He quickly opened his backpack to see if there was anything inside that could catch a 210 pound bear falling from the sky. He saw a water bottle, a map of Spider Kingdom, a sleeping bag, and then he saw a net. Bunny and his unicorn each held one side of the net and pulled. The net stretched out to its full length. This might not catch Bear, but it will break his fall. Bear hit the net and it threw Bunny and his unicorn at each other. Then Giraffe landed.

They walked inside a huge cave and the ceiling was covered in spiders. A spider dropped from the ceiling and led them to the king named Spider. He would decide if Bunny was the bunny of the Ancient Prophecy.

They got to Spider and asked him if Bunny was the bunny of the Ancient Prophecy. He told them that Bunny was in fact the bunny of the Ancient Prophecy. Spider said that it was part of the Ancient Prophecy that they would have to come back in seven years. Bunny was infuriated. He argued with Spider and tried to at least bring down the wait time to three years. Spider kept refusing because in

the prophecy, it said that you had to wait seven years until it comes into play.

Bunny decided that to pass the seven years, he would go back to his real home on the surface. He asked Bear if this was possible. Bear said that he didn't know because everyone who came down here didn't fit the prophecy. So, in the end, they were executed.

Bear said there was one way and it might not even work. Bunny would have to jump on the super trampoline and try and blast his way through the mysterious forces. All Bunny wanted to do was get back to the surface so he said it was worth a try. They all said their farewells to Spider and walked back to the unicorns.

This time, Bear got a new parachute and this one worked. Everyone fell peacefully. When they landed, they went to the secret storage room. This room is the highest guarded room in the whole city. This room held the super trampoline. When they walked in, the first thing Bunny saw was the super trampoline. This trampoline was huge. Imagine a football field in the shape of a circle. Bear called in the servants to carry the trampoline under the hole. Bunny got onto the trampoline. He started jumping. He got so high that he saw the top. On the next jump, he just had to grab the side and pull himself up. Bunny was going up. He grabbed the side. There was one problem. He couldn't pull himself up.

It looked like Bunny was staying here forever.

Zumbaga

*When Bob Shermansky's plane crashes in the middle of nowhere, will he get back? Find out in **ZUMBAGA**, by **Ari Sherman**.*

Bob Shemansky was heading off to his plane one humid, gusty morning. He was traveling to Moscow, Russia for a business trip. Bob Shemansky was a tall, thin guy with bright red hair. He was originally born in Salt Lake City, Utah, but didn't really like the cold weather, so he moved to Manaus, Brazil. While Bob was going to the airport, he realized that he forgot his wallet at home. He hurried home, grabbed his wallet, and flew out the door. Bob rushed back to his car and turned it on. Once he returned to the airport, he blasted through security and dashed to his gate. He got on the plane just in time for takeoff.

After 17 hours into his flight, his plane captain makes an announcement saying there are difficulties with the engine and they will be crashing very soon. Everyone started to panic and when the plane hit the ground everyone died, except for him. He stepped outside in fright and meeting him at the door was a lion. The lion looked angry and famished so Bob took precaution. Then all the sudden the lion said, "Hi".

Bob was frightened and ran away, but he wasn't faster than the lion. The lion caught up with him and said that he was here to help, not harm. The lion said that his name was Zumbaga and could take him to the nearest airport.

Bob agreed to travel with Zumbaga to an airport that was about 106 miles away. Zumbaga took him to his village and introduced him. Zumbaga introduced him to his friend Hundua. They told Hundua what they were going to do and Hundua didn't agree. Hundua said that it was too dangerous and that he wouldn't let them go.

So, in the middle of the night, they set off on their long adventure. The first day went by with no problems and very smooth. They traveled 11 miles in 7 hours 26 minutes on this first day. The next day, Bob woke up to the sound of a howl in the dark outdoors. It was really chilly and his only source of warmth was Zumbaga's soft, fluffy fur. He got up and estimated that it was about 4:00 a.m. so he went back to bed. When it was morning, they

got up and started their routine. They walked for about 2 hours when they heard a noise from nearby. Zumbaga stopped and looked around and screamed, "Hyenas!"

They started sprinting as fast as they could, but they were surrounded. The hyenas were everywhere and they couldn't go anywhere. Zumbaga whispered to Bob to get on his back.

As soon as the hyenas started to move in, Zumbaga went into action. He leaped over the hyenas with Bob on his back and ran. Zumbaga was just too quick; none of the hyenas could keep up. The day was coming to an end and they found a nice place to stay for the night. When they sat down, Bob realized that Zumbaga had a bite mark on his leg. Bob questioned Zumbaga but he kept on saying that it was fine he didn't need anything. So, Bob ripped off part of his shirt and wrapped it around Zumbaga's wound.

The next few days were calm and they were just five miles away from the airport. Bob was starting to move at a slower pace and was not as aware as he was before. They probably only had a half of day left, so they made the best of it. They walked side by side all the way to the airport.

The next morning, they arrived at the airport and Bob bought a ticket for a 5:00 p.m. flight, so they had eight hours left together. Zumbaga and Bob talked about meeting up a different time. There was just one difficulty; they had no way to communicate. So, if they wanted to meet up, it would have to be planned now. Bob said that he would just navigate his way back to where Zumbaga lived since he just took that long journey. After that, they just hung out and said their goodbyes. Bob headed back to the airport and got on the plane to Moscow.

Zumbaga traveled back in fright of what Hundua would say or do for taking Bob to the airport. But, the biggest worry to Zumbaga, was if they would ever see each other for a long time, or ever again.

In Living Color

2995

An agent named Derek Smith tries to escape a prison in Russia in 2995 by Alex Lambert.

My name is Derek Smith. I'm an agent for the U.S.A. The KGB has kidnapped me in Great Britain and brought me to Russia because they want information about a covert operation I was working on for the President. I have had very limited food and water here. I would love a juicy cheeseburger!

I found a paper clip on the ground, and I unlocked my handcuffs. I didn't take them off just yet, though, because I didn't want the guards to look behind me and see me uncuffed. I waited ten minutes or longer to take off the handcuffs and pick the lock on the cell door. I opened it as quietly as I possibly could. I silently took the guards down by breaking their necks. Now I had to get my belongings, which were in a room where three guards remained.

I had to crouch down so they wouldn't see me because there was a big window in front of the room. I had to open the door quietly. The three guards got up for a break, and this was the time to get my belongings.

I opened the door, and as I was looking for my things, one of them came back in the room. He was shouting out "Help!" in Russian.

I tripped him. He fell, and I slammed his face to the ground. The other two guards came in, and I had to take them down. I waited for one of the guards to come at me first, but they both charged at me. I jumped over them, and they both pulled out guns. I tipped up a round coffee table, and it stopped some bullets. I threw the coffee table on them, and they fell down unconscious.

I got my Walther PPK pistol, gun magazine, backpack, phone, and other gadgets that the agency gave me. I walked to the control room to open the gates and get out of the prison. But I couldn't just open the gates before I found a way to get rid of the guards at the gate.

I had checked my gun to find two bullets still in the magazine, and that's all I needed. I cocked the gun, took one deep breath, and shot once. I hit one of the guards right in the neck.

I cocked my pistol again, but the other guards were coming, and some were shooting at me. I did a summersault, and then shot, but I missed. I punched one guard right in the right rib cage. He fell down in pain. I slammed his head on the ground, and he was unconscious after that one.

More were coming after me. I got socked in the face, got shot in the leg, got a black eye, and suffered a broken arm. I was getting one guy down most of the time, but some of the time I got beat up. I finally got out of that mess.

Now the only thing to do was to call the agency for a ride back to Washington. They said that it would take a couple of hours to get there, so all I could do was wait. I waited right in front of the big prison gates.

Hours passed, and I was starving and thirsty. I opened my backpack and found some water and drank it. I looked for food and found strawberries and carrots.

As I was eating, I heard noises coming from the forest right beyond the gates to the prison. I stood up to see what was there, but I saw nothing.

A couple of more hours went by, and I heard a different noise from the forest.

I thought, "Is this the plan?" I looked at the trees to see if the air was moving the leaves on the trees because there was no wind until now. I heard movement and sticks breaking.

To my relief, it was the U.S.A. agents. They asked me what happened, and could see how badly I was beat up. I told them I was pretty sure my leg was broken. A trip to the hospital was in my near future. The big question on everyone's mind was whether I still had the flash drive about the covert operation. I said, "Yes."

Beam

*In the story **BEAM** by **Stephen A. Leacock**, Carter's parents get kidnapped by a notorious criminal named Raz. But when he finds out the reasons for their disappearance, it's a little bit shocking.*

People believe that in the future there could be floating cars and expressways. That's what I dream about. But I have an idea to bring my dreams to life. I did my fill of research and found old blueprints on how to build a machine that creates a beam with enough electricity and magnification power to upgrade machines. This is how my story begins.

I live in a small bungalow with my mother and father in a place that used to be called Great Britain. It's not so great anymore. My house consists of four rooms: a kitchen, bathroom, and two bedrooms. Although we don't have much, my room is full of gadgets and many failed attempts of the "Beam Machine." I don't really sleep in my bedroom much; there's no time for that. Instead I build inventions and play with my pet turtle named Burt.

It is just a normal Friday. I am all excited for the weekend. I walk in the door, and nobody is home. I begin to wonder where my parents could be. I look around the house for a note or some sort of explanation of where my parents have gone. I find nothing.

I decide to go to my room and work on my next model of the Beam Machine. I grab my tools and go over to the workbench to pass the time and wait for my parents to come home. Working with my tools always soothes me.

But instead of my machine being on my desk, I see a small note. I am thinking it must be from my parents, but my dreams are quickly shattered. It reads, "I hear that you are quite the inventor and I am happy to tell you that this newest model of the 'Beam Machine' is on the correct course to completion. So, I am gladly confiscating it for my uses. We came to confiscate you as well but found your parents instead. If you want to see your parents again, you need to find them. Until we meet again. Signed, Raz." I know the name of the greatest gangster when I hear it. Everybody does. Raz is the most feared hoodlum on the streets.

A surge of adrenalin runs through my body, except for my scrap metal, robotic arm. I fear and wonder what Raz has done with my

parents. My father, an inventor just like me, created my robotic arm when I was just a baby, born without an arm. My mother, a talented cook, was hired to prepare meals for the Emperor. Why would Raz take my parents? My quest has begun....

I quickly pack up my sleeping bag, pet turtle Burt, snacks, and a few of my inventions into my newspaper sack. I toss it over my shoulder and run out the front door. In which direction do I run? I don't know. I quickly put on one of my inventions—magnification goggles—and begin looking for footprints.

I run frantically through the town asking anyone in sight if they have seen my parents, or anything suspicious, but have no luck. When I have pretty much given up, I go to the alley in back of the bakery and look for some tossed-out bread for dinner.

That's where I run into Raz and his treacherous gang of misfits.

"Where are my parents?" I scream. One of the misfits chokes on his muffin. He can't believe I am screaming at Raz. I know I should be afraid, but my anger has overcome me.

"Ahh...I knew you would come, Carter," says Raz, in his formal English accent. "You're just what I've been waiting for."

He continues to tell me that my parents are gagged and tied in a secret location. I guess that means that they are still alive...I guess.

"Why do you need my parents?" I shout at Raz.

"I don't," he answers, "I need you! We only used your parents to bring you to us!" A couple of misfits quickly grab me and zip me into a body bag.

"Oh fiscal cliff! This can't be good!" I hear the misfits laughing. I am trapped in darkness. I must find a way to get out.

About 20 minutes later I hear another voice, and I feel my body get slammed on the ground. I finally think of a way to get out. I can use Burt's amazing snapping turtle attributes to cut my way out of the body bag. Good God, I love that guy!

As my eyes begin to adjust to the bright light, there I am face to face with the Emperor. Once again, oh fiscal cliff!

What am I doing standing in the middle of the Emperor's castle? The Emperor approaches me with a nasty grin on his face.

"Hello, nephew," says the Emperor.

Wait. Just give me a second to comprehend this. Comprehending. Comprehending. I'm done. Wait.

“Why aren’t I rich?” I ask the Emperor. I can’t believe what I just said.

“Have you ever heard the story of the fiscal—?” the king answered.

I quickly cut off the Emperor. “Wait, that’s my catch phrase! Let’s get on with this. Where are my parents? Why am I here? And why did you call me nephew?”

“Years ago, your father (my brother the inventor) brought great shame. He didn’t act like royalty. Instead he acted like a peasant. So in order to not disgrace our family, we cast him out on the streets. I see that his son has followed in his same shameful footsteps.

“Enough of this. I want the Beam Machine!” says the Emperor. “No mere peasant will have the power to upgrade machinery and take over my kingdom. Therefore, I must destroy the machine and you as well. Kidnapping your parents was a way for me to get you here!”

Little did the Emperor know that my so called “shameful father” installed a quick-blade knife in my robotic hand. I pull out my knife and charge at the Emperor with rage and anger for all of the things he said about my father.

I stab the Emperor. He falls to the ground. I was quite surprised when his minions didn’t try to stop me. Instead they all cheered!

I race from room to room in the humungous castle searching for my parents. I find them tied up and gagged in the kitchen pantry. I quickly free my parents. We all embrace, and then I tell them that I had to kill the Emperor to free our people of his selfish rule. I also inform my father that I think he forgot to tell me some important family information (like the Emperor is my uncle!).

Epilogue: We move out of our bungalow, and my father, being next in line to rule, accepts the position as our new Emperor. I finish my first successful model of the Beam Machine and use it to bring my dreams to life. I “beam” all my inventions and bring them to life. So now in my father’s kingdom, I can see cars flying outside my window and expressways in the sky. Most importantly, I see my father’s smile, proud of my courage and honesty, proud of my success as an inventor, and proud to be my father.

Best Friend Betrayal

*The best friend she thought she could tell everything to betrays her....
In **BEST FRIEND BETRAYAL** by **Lindsay Merline**, a teenage girl
figures out that her best friend isn't all she seems.*

Catherine showed up at my house around noon. It was summer break. My family and my best friend, Catherine, and I were all going up north. We were going to my grandparents' cottage. She rang my doorbell, and I ran to the door and answered it.

Catherine and I talked and played board games like Monopoly and Sorry.

"I'm happy that you got the part in the movie," Catherine said.

"Thanks, Cathy. If I didn't get the role I would have wished that you would have gotten it," I said and smiled.

We waited for mom to come and tell us that we had to go up north. We kept playing more and more games until finally Mom came and it was time to go up north.

Catherine and I have been best friends for not quite a year yet. But we are still closer than ever. Earlier this week, Catherine and I both tried out for a movie role. I have been starring in movies since I was seven years old. Catherine only started to star in movies this past year. The movie is supposed to be shown in theaters and everything. The directors are already beginning to advertise it on TV. We had to make a commercial for the movie, and it was really fun to make.

We are both professional actresses, so it was hard for the director to choose one of us, but they chose me. The director of the movie said Catherine could be the understudy. He said if anything happened to me before we starting filming the movie, Catherine would play my part as Angelina, the lead role in the movie. Though Catherine had starred in many movies before, this movie was big. She got angry when I got the role, but I'm pretty sure she's forgotten all about that now.

We got to my grandparents' cottage, and we all ran inside. Catherine and I both were dying to go canoeing. Mom said we could go canoeing after we ate and unpacked.

While Catherine and I were unpacking we began to talk about the movie. Then she said a really odd thing to me that I meant to

ask her about, but mom called us down to eat. Catherine ran down the stairs. So I didn't forget to ask her later, I wrote it down on a note. Then I walked downstairs to eat.

It was almost four in the afternoon. Catherine and I changed to go canoeing. My grandparents are letting us stay in the cottage for about a week. My mom, dad, and little sister all went grocery shopping. My brother decided to go on a bike ride for about an hour, so it was just Cathy and me at home.

I have no clue how to swim, so that's why we decided to go canoeing. We decided it would be more fun anyway. There is a lake that is in front of my grandparents' house, so we are going canoeing there.

Catherine was in the front of the canoe, and I was in the back. After about 40 minutes of talking and canoeing, Catherine was acting weird. She kept mumbling things to herself. I couldn't hear anything she was saying. Then out of nowhere when we were close to shore, Catherine pushed me into the lake and canoed away fast.

"I deserve the part in the movie," Catherine said while canoeing away. "You'll never be able to act in the movie now," she said, laughing like one of the evil witches in the movies.

What's wrong with that evil maniac? I'm her best friend. She pushed me into the lake! I couldn't swim back to shore. She pushed me into the lake where I couldn't even try to swim back. It was so far from the shore. Eventually I got tired of trying to stay above water and everything got black...dark and black....

I woke up in the hospital, surrounded by doctors, my family, and Catherine. I had no clue why I was in the hospital. My mom and Catherine came up to see me.

"Mom? Cathy? Why am I here?" I asked.

"You don't remember?" my mom asked. I shook my head no. "You fell out of a canoe. You nearly drowned!" Mom explained. "Luckily your brother Joey was there in time, and he got you out of the water," she said. "Unfortunately, you won't be able to do that movie now because you'll be in the hospital." I was crushed.

Catherine left the hospital after that. Her grandma picked her up because her parents were on a work trip. Something about what Mom had just said made her nervous. I couldn't think about it much, because my head was pounding really hard.

A few days later, we left the hospital and went back to the cottage. I went up to my room. I saw a note on the ground. At first I

didn't understand it. It said, "*Ask her why she said she'd never hurt me.*" What was Catherine talking about? What did I do that was so bad that she would do this to me? My mom walked into the room while I was holding the note in my hand.

"Mom, do you know how I nearly drowned in the lake?" I asked.

"Your brother just told me what he saw a few minutes ago. He told me that he was afraid to tell me before because Catherine was here and she could have also hurt him," Mom explained. "Apparently he was biking up the hill by the lake. He saw Catherine push you in," she said.

"What are you talking about? Catherine would never try to push me in the lake," I said.

"I think she would," Mom said. I had a confused look on my face, and she started to explain. "You and Catherine were competing for a movie. It is the main role, Angelina, in a movie that is supposed to come out in theaters," Mom explained.

"So you mean, she injured me, so she could have the part?"

"I think so," Mom said.

"I thought she was my best friend," I say to Mom. "My best friend tried to kill me."

The Boy Who Lived

*Two kids are having fun when their fun takes a wild turn. In **THE BOY WHO LIVED** by **Alex T. Chester**, you won't know what will happen next.*

One time it was a dark, rainy night. A boy was at a sleepover with one of his best buddies. They went outside and started to play ball. Then a man walked by and saw them playing ball. He pulled out a big bag and swiped them so quickly they didn't have time to scream. The man put them in a van and drove away.

They got up and begged the man to let them go. The man said no, so they got really scared. Then the man started to laugh.

One of the boys said, "I know that laugh. You're my grandfather."

Grandfather said, "Smart boy. When did you figure that out?"

"Grandpa, where are we going?"

"We are going to the amusement park."

"Why there?"

"Because I've been snatching kids for many years, and after I kill them that's where the kids get put to rest."

"Oh, no, we're going to take you down. My dad is a police officer, and I'm going to call my dad and tell him." He took out his phone, but it said *No Service*.

He remembered his dad telling him that he had a tracking device. If he was in trouble, something would go off that he has. He told his friend to hit him in the neck. It hurt, but they were almost there.

They heard another car. It was the boy's dad. He pulled out a gun and shot at the van's tires. He hit one...two...three...four, and—*boom*—the van flipped into a wall and crashed. Then the car was gone, and his friend was sitting there in the van, dead.

The boy got up, and his grandpa was gone. He couldn't get out, though. He screamed, and he heard someone coming. He sat down, and then all he could see was his grandpa.

His grandpa took him and started to run. The boy fell and tried to run away. Then his dad was right there. His dad caught the boy's grandpa and put him in jail. He was charged with murder and received life in prison.

That's the story of the boy who lived.

The Day the Snake Died

*When the game is on the line and the Cubs have to beat the Cardinals for the championship, Beezee finally realizes who he is. In **THE DAY THE SNAKE DIED** by **Laurence W. Bryson Jr.**, Beezee and his team must rise to the challenge.*

On July 24, 2001, my parents and I first met. They were happy to have a healthy baby boy. God had blessed me with a gift that my father and mother would not notice until I was three years old.

On my third birthday my father brought me a Playskool baseball set. From the first time I picked up the bat I knew what to do with it. I placed the ball on the tee, swung, and hit the ball. My mom says Dad had me do it 20 times and 20 times I hit the ball. So my dad put me in a baseball league as soon as I was old enough. I started playing baseball when I was four years old and have been doing it ever since.

Today is the Championship game, and we are playing the evil Southfield Cardinals. That's what my dad calls them because we have never beaten them. Come to think of it, ever since I can remember playing Joshua "Snake Arm" Edmond, "Silky Slim" Miles Carpenter, and "Batter Ram" Brent Johnson, they have always beaten me. My dad was right. They are evil. Today would be different; today I felt we could get them.

It was a tough game. It was the third inning, and we were tied 1 to 1. It was then I heard my dad say, "Beezee, it's show time!"

I gave them smoke and flame pitches—no breaking ball stuff for these guys. "Strike one! Strike two! Strike three!" was all we heard for the next three innings. Since we took the field first we would bat last. When we got to bat in the last inning we jumped right on them.

Jalen hit a shot to the gap and got a double, and then Martin got a base hit, putting Jalen on third. We were going to win. I could feel it. Payback was so sweet, and I would finally slay the evil Southfield Cardinals. I was sure I would not bat because we had a man on third, and I was two batters down. Then it happened. The Snake came into the game. After that, all I heard was "One, two, three you're out; one, two, three you're out." Now it was my turn.

The Snake shouted to me, "Hey, Beezee, it's time for you to strike out!"

My heart was in my throat from the pressure, but I shouted back, "Not today, Lucky, you're going down!"

He reached back and threw his first pitch: a curve. I could see it when it left his hand, but it didn't break. It just kept coming straight to me. I waited until it got right over the plate. Then *boom!* It was headed to the fence. Bennie ran after it and caught it at the fence. He tried to get it quickly, but it was too late. The man on third tagged up and came home. Cubs win!

It was the best game ever. I finally killed the Snake.

Emory-Ville

EMORY-VILLE by *Daniel J Chekal* is based on the author's personal experience. In this story the narrator tries to get his wilderness survival merit badge by spending a night in the woods.

One Saturday my Boy Scout troop was out on a campout to get the wilderness survival merit badge. When I was cooking lunch one boy named Emory went up the nearby hill. Emory is a crazy person. He is so crazy he spent the entire summer without shoes on, and went "hunting" for another kid named Michael Schienke and said he was a Schienkopotamus hunter.

Up the hill there was a small clearing with one fallen tree. Emory called up Max and Aiden to help him move the fallen tree onto another tree to make a lean-to shape. When the task of moving the tree was complete, Max and Aiden went down the hill to see when lunch would be ready.

During lunch my brother Peter asked, "Hey, does anyone know where Emory is?" Aiden went up the hill to see Emory in a little lean-to that looked like a hunter's blind. Elijah ran down and told Peter that Emory had just asked Max and him to help move a log up the hill. Peter went down the hill to tell the others about Emory's little house.

One by one after lunch, Max first, then Chris and Aiden, and soon after Kristopher and his brother ran up the hill so fast that Kristopher's brother's whistle fell off his neck. I finally came up when Kristopher's brother told me, Mr. Romano, and Mr. Keith (who were the scoutmasters) that there was a whole city up there of tipis and lean-tos. On my way up I found Kristopher's brother's whistle and took it. Up on the hill Kristopher's brother paid me a dollar to get his whistle back.

Mr. Romano and Mr. Keith inspected the city. They noticed that everything was good except for a poison ivy vine by Chris's shelter, so they told everyone not to touch it. After the inspection Emory gave me some land behind Max to build a lean-to. Mr. Romano and Mr. Keith found some land for themselves in the far outskirts of Emory-Ville.

The buildings were amazing. Max and Emory were neighbors, and Kristopher was Max's roommate. Peter and I were neighbors

behind Max and Emory. Elijah was across from Emory, next to Aiden.

Before we knew it, it was dinner time. Dinner was tacos at the bottom of the hill. I don't like tacos, so I brought two hot dogs, one for dinner and one for a midnight snack in Emory-Ville. One hot dog was a small dinner, but I thought that saving the second was a good idea.

After dinner we went back up to Emory-Ville to build the fire pit and the latrine. Right before it got dark Alex Schienke came up and set up a hammock by the latrine because he did not know that the latrine was there. The fire pit was right in the middle of Emory, Max, Kristopher, Aiden, and Elijah.

When it got dark and cold we started a fire. We decided that Emory would be the fire marshal because he was the first one to build a shelter there. We gave Emory all the matches. Then we went out to look for firewood. Most of it was wet because it had rained the night before, but we were able to find some dry wood by breaking off tree branches. It took a couple of tries to light the fire, but eventually it lit.

I was sitting in a lawn chair by the fire while everyone else was in their shelter or sitting on the ground. It was a nice fire until all of a sudden Emory randomly stomped it out. Everyone was yelling at him, so he re-lit the fire. The second fire started easily because I added a lot of newspaper to the pile.

Max and I lit candles with burning pieces of rope, so if the fire went out we would still have the candles to light another fire. The second fire lasted to about 9:45 when Emory stomped it out again. Elijah made a new rule that if anyone stomped out another fire, that person and Emory would be officially kicked out of Emory-Ville. Emory thought that the rule was very unfair.

There were two matches and one striker left. Emory remembered that Kristopher had a fire starter called a boom-boom stick; Emory asked him for it. Kristopher said, "I will give you a quarter of a boom-boom stick if you save a match and a striker so that I can terrorize the other city of lean-tos." The other city is down the hill and past the ravine. The citizens of the other city are Alex, Jonas, Anthony, and Kevin. There were only two matches left, but Emory agreed and successfully lit the fire with one match.

The fire lasted until about 10:30 when Emory had to keep his side of the deal. Emory did not want to burn down the other city of

lean-tos because if Kristopher burned down the other city they wouldn't give us any food. Emory threw the match and striker into the fire and kicked over the candles so that they would go out.

Emory's actions made Kristopher angry. Kristopher stomped out the fire, the last fire. Elijah told Kristopher and Emory to leave. They did not leave, though. It was cold, and the only light was from Emory's lantern that Max put in the middle.

At about 10:45 we heard footsteps coming up the hill from the campsite. It was Mr. Padilla. He came to see how our town was doing. Elijah, who was sitting on my chair, asked Mr. Padilla for matches, but all he had were two pocket warmers. Mr. Padilla gave one of the pocket warmers to me and one to Emory. We thanked Mr. Padilla, and he left.

We were all bored sitting around a lantern, so Elijah thought about playing truth or dare. Everyone wanted to play except for Peter who went to his shelter to sleep and Schienke who sneaked to the campsite for food. When it was my turn for truth or dare, I picked truth. Elijah asked me who I liked. Even though we don't go to the same school so he would not know who it was, I replied, "No one." Elijah did not believe me, so he kicked me out of the game.

The truth-or-dare game ended about two minutes later, and Kristopher wanted to go to the other town and steal food, matches, and water. Chris stayed in Emory-Ville to make sure no one tried to attack our city. We marched single file down the hill through the darkness guided by the other town's fire.

Our journey was through a dark forest and a long ravine. When we were at their city, we saw Mr. Padilla around their fire with Kevin. Their fire was huge, twice as big as all of ours combined. Their shelters were better than ours, too; they had a large longhouse and a big tent. I saw Anthony and Alex in the tent. Alex was complaining that Anthony was gassy from the tacos he had earlier.

Jonas laughed at our situation and said we were foolish to not bring water and he would not give any matches. Mr. Padilla said to go back to Emory-Ville. We left.

The journey back was harder than the trip there. Someone (probably one of the dads from the campsite) was shining his flashlight on us. We did not want them to know we left our city so we had to get down every two minutes.

We got back to Emory-Ville at about 11:10. I remembered that Peter had an orange capsule of matches. I went to Peter's shelter to take his matches out of his pocket. When I tried to take the matches, Peter growled at me. I knew he was awake, and he would not give me the matches.

I went to the fire pit area, grabbed a large rock that was a part of the fire pit, and went back to my shelter. I grabbed the rock because rocks hold heat, and this one was still warm.

In my shelter, I lay down on my mat and had my head on the warm rock. I knew it was going to be a long, cold, hungry night.

At about 11:30 I still had not fallen asleep when I heard something coming out of the woods from the direction where the scoutmasters had set up their lean-tos. When the creature came out of the forest I saw that it was Mr. Romano. He put his finger over his lips telling me to be quiet.

About one minute later, I heard a loud, "Boo!" I came out of my shelter to see what it was, and I saw that Mr. Keith and Mr. Romano had scared the citizens of Emory-Ville. I also noticed that Chris was fast asleep in Schienke's hammock.

Mr. Romano and Mr. Keith asked us if we wanted to raid the campsite. We said yes. We walked down the hill when Mr. Keith noticed some bio-illuminated wood. I wanted to take the wood, but it was attached to a bigger log, so we could not take it.

Silently all eight of us walked through the woods. Mr. Romano told us to sneak up on them from the back. We were about ten feet away from the campsite when my dad, who was just coming from the latrine, said hi to us. Then all the dads looked at us. We were caught. We were still able to take some food, though.

Mr. Horton said that some of the older scouts went to the Cub Scout Halloween thing to get some candy, and that we should sneak up on them. Mr. Keith said, "They will be coming back on the dam road" (the road on a dam).

The dam road was right on the other side of the forest past the lake. We went through the forest led by Mr. Romano, and Mr. Keith was at the back.

On the right side of the dam road there was a four-foot-deep ditch, and on the left there was a large lake. We hid in the ditch and waited. We waited for twenty minutes until five guys, Neil, David, and the three Schienkes, came our way.

About two minutes later they were closer to us. We all jumped out of the ditch screaming. Emory even jumped on Michael Schienke's back. Michael said, "Whoa, who's on my back? Emory, get off!"

They did not get any candy from the Cub Scouts. We went to Emory-Ville, and Alex came with us, but Neil, David, and the other two Schienkes went back to the campsite.

When we were back at Emory-Ville, Schienke saw that Chris was asleep in his hammock. Mr. Romano recommended that Schienke sleep in Chris's shelter. Schienke went to Chris's tipi and fell asleep instantaneously.

Kristopher went to the bathroom, and when he came back he said he was crusty. Elijah said, "In a couple of hours your body will produce chemicals that get the crustiness away."

Kristopher replied, "I did not need to know that."

I went to my shelter to get my mat and sleeping bag. I laid them near Elijah's shelter and tried to fall asleep.

It was about 12:45, already tomorrow, but there were six and a half hours left and six and a half hours through. I had already survived half of the night. Mr. Romano and Mr. Keith went to the outskirts of Emory-Ville. Chris, Schienke, and Peter were fast asleep. Elijah was almost asleep in my chair. Emory, Max and Kristopher were in their shelters, and Aiden and I were lying frozen on the ground. All of us were cold, hungry and, thirsty.

Eventually, I fell asleep.

Emory woke up a lot of times in Emory-Ville.

The first time Emory woke, Max made a little window between Emory and his own shelter. In the middle of the night Emory stuck his head through the window and said, "The window works!"

Another time that Emory woke he was right by Schienke's hammock. Emory said that he sleep-walked to Schienke's hammock.

The third time Emory woke up was because his pocket warmer was burning his hand and he was bothered by the light of a glow stick stuck in the ground in his shelter. He put his pocket warmer under the rock to get rid of the extreme heat. Eventually he fell asleep again even with the glow stick.

When Emory woke up the fourth time he was bored and had nothing to do. He was the only one awake, and so he had no one to talk to. He lit a candle with one of ten matches he had secretly

saved and hoarded to himself. He sat by the candle and thought about what he should do. He was rubbing his hands saying, "I need something to do" over and over again

Emory came up with the idea that he would leave Emory-Ville. He went on a hike. At about 2:30 A.M. Emory saw a single ember, and walked closer to it through the dark. All of a sudden a flashlight shone from where the ember was, and Emory saw a 65-year-old man smoking who said, "What ya lookin' at, I'm smokin' here."

After that Emory returned to Emory-Ville and fell asleep again to be awakened for the fifth time.

The fifth time Emory woke up, Peter was in his shelter fast asleep. To make things worse there was also a raccoon trying to eat off Peter's green hat. Emory kick the raccoon and broke one of its rib bones. The raccoon hit a tree, growled at Emory, and then ran away into the woods.

At about 4:30 I was woken up by the sound of barking. The barking woke the others up, too. When Max woke up he noticed his roommate Kristopher had disappeared. I was kind a happy when Kristopher disappeared because he had stomped out the last fire.

When Chris woke up at about 4:50 he claimed he could see the sun rising. He was obviously hallucinating. It was pitch black, and the sun would not rise for over two hours.

We sat around doing nothing until Mr. Padilla came at about 5:45 and told us that we had about one and a half hours to go 'til sun rise. We told Mr. Padilla that Kristopher had disappeared and asked if had seen him. Mr. Padilla said, "I actually heard him go into his tent at about 4:30." Mr. Padilla left to go tell the other town that the night was almost over.

We waited and waited. Everyone in Emory-Ville was awake except for Schienke. The barking went down. At around 6:50, we could just barely see the sun's rays. We all stared in the east. Within 20 or 30 minutes it was completely bright out. The sunrise that morning was the happiest moment of my life. All my suffering was over.

The Fire

*When a fire breaks out in their hotel room, Aidan and Mac have no idea where their parents and sister are. In **THE FIRE** by **Mac Bauer**, Aidan and Mac will face many problems while trying to find their parents.*

Bam! was the sound of the crackling fire. My brother Aidan and I were trapped in our hotel room. On the other side of the door were flames of bursting fire that were breaking down the door. We were on the second floor, and there was only one other way out. That was to jump off the balcony onto the ground. The ground was ten feet down.

The room was heating up by the second. Then the lights went out, and the door broke down and fire was rushing into the room. I yelled, "Jump!" and we jumped right off the balcony onto the hard, cold cement.

Now we were split up from our parents and sister. We had to decide if we should run away from the fire or wait there. There were no firemen or policemen at the scene yet.

The fire was blowing up like a bomb had hit it. So we decided to run. I was so afraid of my parents and sister being dead or hurt. Soon there was nothing left except for ashes.

We were walking, having no idea where we were going. It was around dinner time and a lot of people were on the streets walking and buying food from street vendors. We started walking back to the hotel because the fire had probably gone down by now. We hoped our parents would be waiting for us there. When we got there, there were only ashes and fireman.

We panicked and ran. I couldn't keep up. My knee got hurt when we jumped. Aidan helped me walk. We thought maybe we could go to our uncle's apartment. After two miles of walking uptown we saw our uncle's apartment building. We ran straight to the building. We had the front desk call our uncle's room to let him know we were coming.

Aidan and I were hoping our parents and sister would be there. When we got there, our family was not there. Our uncle walked in and said, "Where is everybody else?" We told him the whole story. We also told him about my knee. He got a bandage for it.

I was worried about my parents getting scared and not knowing that we were ok. I didn't even know if they were still alive. I hoped they didn't think we were dead or lost.

We got a phone and tried to call their phones, but all we heard was static. We ate food and had a drink so we had energy to walk back to the fire. We decided to go outside with our uncle. We were freaking out; we didn't know if we would ever see our parents again. Maybe with some extra help we could find them.

We started walking back to the fire. There were firemen running in and out of what was left of the building. We decided to ask the fireman if they saw two parents and one girl with brown hair going anywhere. They said there were only a few people left when they got there. They told us which way they went and we started walking that way. My uncle started to carry me because of my knee. It was hurting like crazy.

As we were walking away from the fire one of the firemen called us back. He said, "Are you Mac and Aidan Bauer?" We said yes, and he pointed to a police car with our parents and sister right next to it. We ran straight to them.

They told us they looked everywhere for us. They went down every sidewalk for three miles. And they went to the hospital to see if we were there. Then they came back. We all sat there for a very long time and talked about how we were worried and scared about each other.

Later we went back to my uncle's apartment and took a nice, hot shower. We scheduled new flights for the next day. We will remember this night for the rest of our lives.

Fluffers and My Robotic Arm

*A family on a normal car ride experiences a tragic accident. In **FLUFFERS AND MY ROBOTIC ARM** by **Ian Ebbing**, a boy faces his changed life with a new best friend.*

Twenty years ago when I was just nine years old I dreamed of having a puppy. I felt I was a good student, funny, and responsible. Unfortunately my parents did not feel the same way. They felt I just wasn't ready for the responsibility. My name is Gil, and this is my story.

One dark night it was raining, and lightning kept on going off. My parents and I went out for the evening to see a movie. On the way to the theater we got into a car accident. I remember seeing a white pickup truck with a grey-haired old man going through a red light. I saw headlights coming at me, and I could feel my heart racing. The next thing I remembered was waking up in the hospital.

The first person I saw was my mom, Jill. She was sleeping in a chair next to my hospital bed. A moment later a man in a white coat walked up to my bed and said, "Glad to have you back."

I said, "Who are you—," and he interrupted me and said, "I am very sorry, I almost forgot to introduce myself. I am Dr. Thomas." Then he went on and told me about how I had been unconscious for a couple of days. "Everything will be all right," Dr. Thomas said.

My mother must have heard us speaking because she leapt to her feet and gave me the biggest hug, and if she had hugged me any harder I think I would have exploded. She began to tell me the story of what had happened that stormy night. She told me that she and my dad just had a few scrapes and scratches. As she continued to tell the story my mom's voice began to quiver. I will never forget the next thing she said. She said, "I don't know how to tell you this, but after the accident, we had to make a tough decision. The doctor said that they had to remove your right arm."

All of a sudden my heart sank. I could feel pain in my right arm, and yet I didn't have one. Dr. Thomas told me that they are called "phantom pains." I tried to reach over to feel my right arm, but all that was there was a stump. Dr. Thomas said that the sensation would eventually go away.

The next thing I know my dad Jack walked in the room with a smile from ear to ear. He ran up to my bed and gave me a big bear hug. I never felt so happy.

A couple of weeks went by, and I was released from the hospital. I had spent the previous two weeks learning to live with one arm. I went to physical therapy and began to accept that I would never have the use of my right arm again.

During those two weeks Dr. Thomas was researching a new prosthetic arm. He said that there was a new bionic arm being designed. The company was looking for volunteers to test the arm out. He said he would contact me if I was selected for the program.

I felt like I was in the hospital for years, but I never kept track of how long I was in there. From what I remember I was in there for only a few months, and when I returned home I went right to my bedroom. The first thing I saw was a box sitting on top of my bed. It said "SURPRISE" in bold black Sharpie. I began to open it carefully. Before I got to open it I could hear whimpering from inside the box. My heart was pounding and my eyes began to tear up. I could not believe my eyes. The dog I always dreamed of was sitting right inside the box.

He was small and really fluffy, just how I imagined it. He had black hair with big brown eyes. He smelled like something god sent from heaven. He was as soft as my favorite stuffed animal, Coco bear. My heart was going one thousand beats per second, and I was finally complete.

My parents said I was going to have to be very careful with the dog, and I would have to be responsible. I would have to do things to take care of him, and he was all mine. I got to choose his name, so I named him Fluffers because of how fluffy he was. From that day on I had hope that my life would not be as bad and return back to normal.

I knew if I wanted to live a normal life like all of my friends I would have to learn to do things without my right arm. My parents told me that Fluffers was a trained service dog for people with disabilities. He was going to help me with my therapy, and I was going to love him to pieces.

In the next few months I got to enjoy being a proud parent of a puppy. He actually taught me a few things about myself and about what I could do with my left arm. I didn't realize how independent I had become and also strong-willed. Life was becoming easier each

day with his help. We played catch and I learned how to use my right arm and use it for a lot more things. Fluffers and I became the best of friends, and I could not wish for any more.

After weeks passed, my mother contacted Dr. Thomas. She wanted to find out if he had heard back from the company who was looking for volunteers. He said he had just been in touch with the company. I had been selected to be the first person to try the bionic arm. I was so excited! I was part of medical history. It changed how prosthetic arms are designed.

After weeks of waiting, the arm arrived. I was so stoked to get this awesome arm. I felt like Arnold Schwarzenegger from *The Terminator*. From that day on my life returned back to normal.

The bionic arm is so amazing. It is nothing like the average prosthetic arm. It is hooked up through implants in the brain. They place electrode grids in the surface of the brain, which allow the brain to move the bionic arm through thoughts. The movements and motions are endless. I was just like any other kid, but I had a robotic arm.

Twenty years have passed, and I have learned about myself. I remember Fluffers helping reinvent myself. Before the accident I used to play Xbox, baseball, and football. My dog helped me make big changes in my life. Fluffers made me see there was a lot of life to live. Instead of riding a bike I took long walks with Fluffers. If I was feeling down, he would pick my spirits up by licking me. He always knew what I needed even when I didn't. Sometimes I just needed a friend.

Sadly, everything has to come to an end. I had to start taking care of him after he took care of me for many years. He lived a wonderful life. Without Fluffers I don't know how I would have got through the toughest part of my life.

One morning I woke up to find him lying right next to me covered by his favorite blanket. I knew that he had taken his last breath, and I never really found out how he died, but I believe it was from old age. I remember how I knew he died because he always greeted me in the morning with a big lick to the face.

The Great Escape

School administrators hope that an in-school suspension will have a positive impact on a student's future behavior. But what about behavior during the suspension? Will Ervin considers one possibility in THE GREAT ESCAPE.

One of the worst things that you can go through in school is an ISS. An ISS is an In-School Suspension. What you do at these is the opposite of fun. You sit in a white room in the office and do work and eat at lunch time. Why am I telling you this? It's because I have one tomorrow.

It all started back when we were in lunch three days ago.

We were all sitting at our table like usual, when a kid named Jon Magarth got up and threw an apple at my head. I turned around, and he and all of his friends were laughing like a bunch of hyenas. Being me, I picked up an orange that my mom had packed for me for lunch, and I hurled it right at his face. Unfortunately, the lunch lady walked in at the same time. The orange hit Jon smack in the face. I threw my hands up in success, but the lunch lady didn't think that was too funny—not to mention that Jon was now blubbering like a baby with a dirty diaper.

Of course, Jon got in no trouble at all because of the crying.

I was taken straight down to the principal's office, and he was not happy. His name is Mr. Jackson; he is usually really nice but not that day. I had never heard him yell as loud as he did. He told me I would have an in-school suspension on Friday and he would be calling home.

My mom was not happy at all. She called my dad, who was in Texas at the time and had been REALLY mad. I'm just glad it was over the phone.

My teachers were not too generous on the homework tonight, and so it took me four hours to complete it. I guess that's eighth grade for you, though.

I finished my homework, and I had to go straight to bed. I'm lying in bed and thinking about what tomorrow will be like. It probably will not be fun.

* * *

Well, today is the day. My mom woke me up at 6:50 because my bus comes at 7:30. It usually takes me a while to get ready too. I took a quick shower like I do every morning, and then headed downstairs. My hair was ruffled, but I didn't care. It's not like anyone will see me anyway. I wolfed down a bowl of Applejacks, kissed my mom goodbye, and rushed out the door to catch the bus.

The bus ride to school was not very fun. You would never guess who rides my bus. Well, it's Jon. He was the last person I wanted to see. He had a big bandage on his face from where I had hit him. When he noticed I was looking at him he shouted out, "What are you looking at!" I turned around and looked out the window.

Well, we were there. I got off the bus, walked into Skyward Middle School, and was immediately called down to the office. I walked through the office doors, and once I got in I was escorted to a small, white room in the back of the office. It had a single door and a window. Also, a tall table stood to the side with a lamp and a globe. The person that walked me down was my counselor Ms. Gordon. She is a small lady with glasses and short black hair who always wears jeans even on the eighty-degree May days like this one. Before I sat down, she turned to me. "I hope you learn your lesson, especially after what you did to poor Jon," she said, giving me a dirty look.

I sat down on the chair, and she set down a large stack of papers and told me that this was the class work and homework from all of my classes today. Then she set down another stack and said, "If you finish, you will start these." She handed me a box of sharpened pencils, and told me she would be coming back to check on me in an hour. I grabbed a pencil and started the worksheet on the top of the pile.

After three and a half worksheets, I just couldn't stand it anymore. I needed to get out! I was sick of trying to be good all of the time! I didn't deserve to be here! I slumped down in my chair and looked around the room. My eyes wandered to the window. I saw younger children playing on the swing set and laughing. But I was stuck in here, and there was nothing I could do about it. But, since there was nothing I could do, I decided to not complain and get back to the worksheets.

I looked out the door of the small classroom to check the time. There was a small analog clock outside. The time was 12:30 P.M. Then I noticed something on the window. It was a shade. That got

me thinking. Maybe I could close it and make some sort of shadow. But how was I going to do that? Well, for the first time I'm glad Ms. Gordon gave me the huge stack of papers.

I stacked all of the papers together and placed a globe on top. Next, I put my hat on top of the small globe. I had also seen a lock on the door. So if all else fails, then at least I've got a backup. But before I locked the door I checked to see if I could open the window. There was a latch, but I lifted it and opened the window. I walked back across the room and locked the door and shut the blind. I hopped out the window, and I was home free.

At first I wasn't really sure what to do. I mean, I'd never had two hours to do whatever I wanted. But then, I decided I was going to go to 7-11 to get an ICEE. It wasn't too far from the school. It was only about a half mile. I knew I didn't have much time, so I dashed toward the 7-11.

I ran about half of the way and then got tired, so I slowed down to a fast walk. When I arrived I checked my wristwatch. I still had one hour and 45 minutes. So I walked up to the ICEE machine and made mine with all of the flavors, just the way I like it!

In my opinion this is how every day should be spent: chilling and having fun. But I guess that's why you have summer. I had gotten an extra-large ICEE, but I finished it in no time. That was a big mistake: BRAIN FREEZE!

After I recovered from my extreme case of brain freeze, I thought I would get some pizza. I walked across the street to Bob's Pizza Hut. I got a couple of slices and sat down and munched away. That was a very good lunch, much better than the garbage they had tried to get me to eat earlier, which is now enjoying its stay in the garbage can.

* * *

Ms. Gordon walked through the halls to check on Cameron. She didn't even need to go into the room. She could see him from the window. "What a good boy," she thought to herself as she walked away.

* * *

I decided to go to take a walk and let my food settle. That's when I walked by South Skyward Town Pool. I couldn't resist. It

was 80 degrees outside, and I wanted in. I told the lady at the counter my pool number and walked in.

I didn't have a bathing suit. That was a problem. So I walked over to the lost-and-found and looked around. There were not many options. The choices were a Speedo or a girl's one piece. I didn't want to, but I grabbed the Speedo. I ran over to the boys' locker room and threw the suit on.

I ran out onto the pool deck and hopped in. The water felt great! But I needed to keep an eye on the clock.

I was swimming around when all of a sudden a lifeguard stopped me. "Shouldn't you be in school right now, young man?" he questioned.

"It's a religious holiday that my family celebrates," I said.

"And what would that be called?" he asked.

"Who are you to question my religion?" I said angrily.

Then he said, "So sorry. Carry on."

After that I swam around for a while. But after three lengths of the pool I looked at the clock. It read 2:40! I only had twenty minutes! I bolted out of the pool and grabbed a towel. I headed for the boys' locker room. I quickly changed back into my regular school clothes. As I ran passed the lost-and-found, I threw the Speedo back onto the rack and ran.

* * *

Ms. Gordon sat in her office. She started to think that maybe she should just go check on Cameron one more time just to ask him how he was doing.

She started down the hallway and arrived in front of the door. She turned the knob, and when she tried to pull it open it wouldn't budge. This was not a good sign.

She had left the key back in her office. She ran like the wind hoping no one would see, and ran to her door and opened it. She snatched the key off of the table and headed back toward the room. She shoved the key into the lock and turned.

The door opened immediately, and she was not happy. Cameron was not there. She had to get the principal.

* * *

I arrived at the window with ten minutes to spare. There was only one problem: I was soaking wet from sweat and pool water. I tried to dry off as much as I could and hopped back through the window. I put my cap back on my head and sat down just as Ms. Gordon and Principal Jackson burst in the door.

“Where were you, Cameron?” Ms. Gordon exclaimed.

“I was just going to the bathroom. When I got back I realized I had locked myself out. I hurried to go get the janitor so he could open it for me. That’s probably why you didn’t see me when you came to check,” I said innocently.

“All right, I’m sorry, Cameron, but always tell me where you are going. Pack up your stuff, get your things, and go outside. Your parents are here to pick you up.”

I walked out of the office feeling great! I had outsmarted them.

I hopped in the car and my mom said, “I hope you learned your lesson from all this.”

“Don’t worry, Mom, I definitely did,” I said, finally starting to relax a little bit.

James J. Conley, Middle School Detective

*James J. Conley is just your average sixth-grade detective, but when an unlikely someone plans a despicable crime involving his school, it's his duty to stop it in **JAMES J. CONLEY, MIDDLE SCHOOL DETECTIVE** by **Henry Van Faussien**.*

The name's James J. Conley. I'm just your average sixth-grade detective. I solve mysteries like stolen lunches, missing locks, little stuff like that. I wait for the day that my minimum wage job turns into something big.

I just finished a job for my best friend, Tommy Doyle. Average story, missing paper from his locker, easy solve. I set up a camera inside his locker. Theft jobs get you some money, to buy cool things like video cameras. I play back the videos from the day before, and it turns out to be a seventh-grader.

I'm walking to the office, and I'm just about to walk into Principal Mackey's office. The door is locked. I hear him talking on the phone. I can't help but eavesdrop on his phone conversation.

"Yes, I want the orders in by next week," Principal Mackey says into his speakerphone.

"All right, I'll meet you behind the school Friday, January 11, 2013. Make sure nobody follows you. Good doing business with you," the mystery man replies.

What could the principal be doing behind locked doors? Dealing illegal drugs, hiring hit men, maybe just ordering toys for his goddaughter. I don't know what it is, but I need to get to the bottom of this, like I always do secretly.

I walk into the principal's office.

"Oh, James, what do you have for me today?" he said.

"Just a seventh-grader stealing paper from lockers. Nothing too big," I comment.

"What do you mean too big? You aren't getting into big stuff, are you? That's what we grownups are for," he said, almost sweating from nervousness.

“No, I guess you’re right. That is what grownups are for. They make or deal with more dangerous work. I’ll stick to small stuff,” I say, crossing my fingers.

I walk out of the office and go to my first hour.

All throughout the day I can’t wrap my head around the thought of my principal doing illegal things. I have to find evidence for my cause.

I use my detective skills to make sure Principal Mackey is found guilty for his mysterious activity. I know just what to do. I need a tape recorder and a black full-body suit. Also, I need a brown-haired wig.

The week goes by slower than molasses in January. The day finally comes when I go to execute my plan. I take the bus home and I finish my homework, just the regular day, but it’s not normal at all. My mom sends me to bed at 9:45. She kisses me good night. What she doesn’t know is I have my black suit under my PJ’s.

She walks out of my room and makes her way down the stairs. Now’s my chance. I quickly rip my covers off my body. I slip out of my PJ’s. I fix my pillows underneath my covers to form my imitation body. Then, I take my old birthday balloon and put the wig on it. That’s supposed to be my head. I face my “body” away from the door. Then, I have to grab my tape recorder from my desk. Trying to keep the squeaking drawer silenced, I open the drawer and grab the tape recorder.

Luckily, my bedroom is on the first floor of my house. I open my window, and step out to freedom.

I ride my bike up to school. I had my black full-body suit on under my clothes. I hide my bike near the trees outside of the school campus.

I sneak my way through the shadows. I place the tape recorder at the corner of the walls where Principal Mackey and the delivery guy are standing. Then, I jump into the bushes, hiding from sight.

“Thank you for bringing the stuff on such short notice,” Principal Mackey said, handing the delivery man his money. “That is all I need from you. Now leave!”

Principal Mackey rounded the corner so tight that his penny loafers were a centimeter away from crushing my recorder, the only evidence I have so far. I wait for the principal to drive off, and I sprint to my bike and ride home.

I remembered to keep my window open so I didn't have to walk through the front door. Imagine how awkward that would be: "Oh, hey Mom, I was just off spying on my principal." Yeah, right, like I was going to do that.

The weekend goes by quickly. I went to my sister's volleyball game, played video games and watched TV. It was just the regular weekend. Monday was the exciting part, the next step to my plan.

I went to the only faculty member who likes what I do, the Lunch Lady, Mrs. Johanneson. She said she would defend me as I set up the cameras. Our excuse was that she sees mice in the halls and she wants to prove it to everyone.

Monday at school, I come in early. I told my mom I wanted to study for the science quiz. I lied. I went to find Mrs. Johanneson. She was in the kitchen as usual.

"Are you ready?" I ask.

"Yes," she replies in her funny accent.

We walk around the school. I place the cameras all around for maximum surveillance. Mrs. Johanneson watches the cameras from the computer monitor I set up in the kitchen.

I go through the day casually. Just acting normal thinking nothing of the fact my principal may be a criminal mastermind.

At the end of the day I visit with Mrs. Johanneson.

We replay the tapes and we see that the principal compromised the cinnamon shakers. He emptied them and then filled them with the sand he bought. Luckily, Mrs. Johanneson already made the batch of cinnamon buns for that day. We send the tapes to the superintendent of our school district. Our principal was fired for his actions. The best thing to come out of this case was our new principal was Mrs. Johanneson.

Another successful case for sixth-grade detective James J. Conley.

The Llamas with the Magical Pants

*When five llamas go to save the world in Big-Bad-Unicorn-Town, they come across Little Dumpling and have to fight him. Will the llamas save the day in the story **LLAMAS WITH THE MAGICAL PANTS** by **Marcel Hammel**?*

Once upon a time there was a group of llamas: Marcel, Pablo, Philis, Pedro, and Jessica. The five llamas all gathered around at their secret meeting place at the old abandoned pants factory. The five llamas had a club meeting there every Friday at 4:23 after school. The five llamas called themselves the “Pants on Top of Sausage.” This time, the llamas were having extra fun because the pants tasted extra good that day at the factory.

Then Marcel spotted a pair of glowing purple pants sitting in a glass display on the other side of the factory! They had never noticed them because they were in the corner of the factory where they never went. Marcel told all of the other llamas, “Guys! Go look at those glowing purple pants over there. We have never seen purple pants before. All of them have been blue!”

All of the llamas rushed over to take a look at the glowing pants in the display case. “Those pants look delicious!” Pablo said.

All of the llamas decided that they should open up the display case and all take a bite of the pants at the same time. So, they opened up the display case and took a bite out of the pants. Then Marcel, Pablo, Philis, Pedro, and Jessica all felt power coursing through their llama veins.

“Look, I can shoot sharp candy canes out of my mouth!” Jessica said.

“Look, I can make things levitate!” Pedro said.

“Look, I can juggle!” Philis said.

“Look, I can fly!” Pablo said.

“I can do everything you guys can do!” Marcel said.

All of the llamas were amazed at what they could all now do and were shocked that they got powers from magical pants. So from that point on the llamas started to call themselves by the name of their club, except they put “magical” in front of the word “pants.”

Then they decided that they should team up to fight crime in a different town.

They went to a place called Big-Bad-Unicorn-Town. They needed to go there because the unicorns were all in trouble and they could stop it from happening.

“We should ask our parents first, don’t you think?” Jessica said.

“No, we should absolutely not. They will say no right away,” Marcel said. So the llamas just went in the train sitting on the cliff at Mt. Llamacakes. They all went on the train to stop all crime that they shall ever come face-to-face with. The train ride was long and boring, and they wondered why they hadn’t thought of flying there. Some could have flown while carrying the others.

When they got there, they saw a big, giant unicorn destroying all of the other unicorns. All of the little unicorns with fluffy bonnets on their heads were running away from the big unicorn in fear. They unicorns were all running around trying to survive from a giant unicorn. The llamas knew what they had to do. Even though the llamas and unicorns had been enemies for 100 years, the llamas should still fight for them.

Marcel and Pablo flew up in the sky to distract the giant unicorn. Both of the llamas were petrified when they were in the skies fighting for their lives. “Hey, Ugly!” Pablo shouted.

The unicorn roared, “My name is Little Dumpling, and I am not ugly!” Marcel shot candy canes out of his eyes at Little Dumpling, while Pablo was ramming him in his chest up above. While they were doing that Marcel shouted down to Jessica and Pedro to start attacking from the bottom so they could attack from both parts of the unicorn’s body.

Jessica and Pedro attacked from the bottom. The llamas had gotten an advantage on the unicorn because they were attacking from all different directions. They knew that this is how they would take out Little Dumpling.

While they were attacking, Pablo got swatted out of the air and crushed. Marcel and the other llamas cried out his name in sadness. Then Pedro’s sadness turned into anger, and he attacked Little Dumpling head on. It was even harder to fight Little Dumpling with only three llamas, so Pedro and the other llamas had a big disadvantage.

Pedro levitated Little Dumpling’s foot, but he lost focus because Philis was dancing and he started laughing. Then Little Dumpling’s

foot came down on top of Pedro. Marcel, Jessica, and Philis were super-enraged now. They had lost two of their friends!

It was extremely complicated to fight him with only two people fighting at a time. Jessica shot candy canes at Little Dumpling, and Little Dumpling swatted them back at Jessica. Jessica was stuck with a candy cane. She lay sprawled out on the ground, dead.

Marcel was full of anger and agony at that point, and he wanted to kill Little Dumpling so badly that he went all out on him. They were in an epic battle. Little Dumpling tried to swat Marcel out of the sky. Marcel was too fast for Little Dumpling, though, and he could not swat him down. Meanwhile, Marcel was on the offensive, levitating stuff at Little Dumpling and shooting candy canes at him as well. The battle was getting more intense as time went on, and they were each getting quite exhausted.

Then Little Dumpling's eyes started to turn green, as did the eyes of the unicorns that were standing around. All of the unicorns gathered around Little Dumpling, and Little Dumpling screamed "Attack!" All of the unicorns went after Philis because he was the only one on the ground. They took out Philis while he was on the ground. At this point Marcel was enraged. He suddenly felt power coursing through his veins, and he flew up really high with red energy floating around him. Then he shot candy canes out, but they were blue. Everything he did now had more energy to it!

Marcel went to the ground, picked up all of the unicorns, and started to juggle them. Then he threw all of them at Little Dumpling horn first, and Little Dumpling was knocked to the ground in pain and agony.

Marcel had done it! He had defeated Little Dumpling! But his friends were still dead, and there was nothing he could do about that, so of course he was devastated.

Then, Pablo stood back up, taking the form of his body and becoming uncrushed.

Pedro stood up, and he took back his normal form of his body again.

Then Jessica stood up, and the candy cane flew out of her body and was lying on the ground!

Finally, Philis stood up, and he healed from all the damage the unicorns caused! All of the unicorns stood up and were out of their trance and back to normal. Marcel was relieved.

Later that day the unicorns invited Marcel and the llamas to the castle, and they celebrated. All of the unicorns had a toast to all of their new llama friends they made. The unicorns stopped fighting the llamas because the llamas had saved their lives from Little Dumpling. Then they went home and told their parents their epic story. But they did not believe them.

The New World

*In life, you must always expect the unexpected. Twelve-year-old Mia learns the true meaning of this as she encounters an injury with a strange result in **THE NEW WORLD**, by **Lizzie Potocsky**.*

Time is passing by very quickly. School has just gotten out. My plans are outrageous for this summer! If you give me a call, I will probably be busy. I only have three more weeks until the big one. It's the day that I will try out for the gymnastics team. I've been practicing a lot. It's a hard process. I have recently left my old gym team. In a few days, I will be trying out for a new one. I am a determined twelve-year-old girl.

My nervousness always gets to me before my new tricks. I tied my thin, blonde hair into a ponytail. My sparkling blue eyes were moving from left to right. The new stunt was one that was required for my tryout routine. It's the mighty back-handspring. It may look easy to some, but it's not.

I got in my ready position. "Knees bent, arms up, push, and jump!" I yelled, as I remembered what my old gymnastics coach had told me. I took off, and in a split second I fell on the ground.

My body was tense, and my head was aching. My mind was racing with thoughts. *What is going on? Oh my gosh, my head hurts.* All kinds of thoughts were swirling around inside my head, like fish in a pond. I couldn't get up. In fact, I couldn't even move. I heard my mom come outside to where I did my stunt, and she screamed. Then, everything went black.

I didn't know how long I was asleep or what had happened during the time after I fell. I felt my body start to loosen, but it was still aching. I sat up and wiped my eyes. It was still dark. A few minutes later, my eyes started to adjust. I realized that it wasn't me thinking it was dark, but I was in a dark room! I scurried around the odd place in panic. "Where's the door?" I shouted as I bolted from corner to corner. "Great, there is no door!" My mind was going crazy.

I just sat there, wondering if I would get out alive. Suddenly, a figure appeared. One, two, three figures appeared!

"Hello, Mia. It has come to my understanding that you are now a part of the New World," boomed a peculiar-looking creature. I was

confused. I land on my head and suddenly get taken to a new world? I thought I was dreaming. "My name is Gumball. I work for Sir Fluffmagum. My friends, Princess Penelope and Jarvester, are to take you on a journey. Of course, you'll be living in the New World now." I shook in terror at the thought of spending the rest of my life with a gumball.

The other two figures were hard to see. Gumball stepped aside, and my jaw dropped. Two unicorns, which I had just been told were Jarvester and Princess Penelope, were standing right in front of me.

"I thought unicorns are mythical creatures," I managed to say.

"Well honey-boo-boo child, you thought wrong," mumbled one of the unicorns. "I'm Jarvester," he added.

A door opened, and I was pushed through it. The beautiful night sky was all I could see. I shouted for help, but obviously nobody would hear me. Jarvester whooshed by. Apparently, he was riding a flying banana! When I was pushed out of the dark room, I landed on Jarvester's back.

"I see you're curious about my airplane. This is obviously a banana air boat," said Jarvester. I giggled, but in a few seconds went back to my sad mode. I could kind of see the ground from here.

"Is that a palace?" I questioned.

"Yes, it is Sir Fluffmagum's castle," Jarvester answered.

Finally, after what seemed like hours, we landed. This world was beautiful. Trees made of cotton candy surrounded me. There was no grass. In place of grass was red Jell-O. Houses were ice cream cones, with a gummy worm as the door and a gumdrop as the doorbell.

I was led to an ice cream cone. It was where all of the humans stayed. I couldn't believe that there were actually humans. After all, so far I'd seen unicorns and a talking gumball. How much weirder could it get? A lot would be my guess.

I arrived at my ice cream cone home. Peeking out of the window (made from pretzels) was a small girl about the size of me. She had blond hair, just as I did. Her brown eyes looked like chocolate. We were practically identical, although my eyes are blue. I walked in through the curled up gummy-bear door and couldn't believe what I saw: The beds were normal. Three humans lived here.

“Hi, I’m Megan. I’ve been here ever since I was two years old. I’m turning thirteen next July. These are my friends, Sydney and Jack,” quietly said the blond girl.

“I’m turning thirteen July 20th,” I chimed in.

“Really? So am I,” beamed Megan.

“You guys look identical. Isn’t it like you’re looking in a mirror?” Jack blurted.

“Maybe you two are long-lost twins!” screeched Sidney. I giggled.

Megan asked slowly, “What are your parents’ names?”

“Jennifer and Mark,” I said with ease.

Suddenly, Megan’s eyes got wide. “Is this them?” said Megan with a sniffle. She held up a picture. It was a young, beautiful lady holding hands with a handsome man. Two identical-looking babies were in their arms.

Everyone stood in awe. I think I almost fainted. There was no possible way I could have a sister! This was bizarre! “How in the world would you have gotten that picture? There’s no way that we are twins.”

“Long ago, when I was about two years old, I was captured by Sir Fluffmagum. There was a creature named Gumball, two unicorns, and a boy, which was Jack. I don’t know why they kidnapped me or who chose me of all people, but as years passed, I began to wonder. Sydney came when Jack and I were about five years old. That’s when I knew I wasn’t born here. A year later, Sir Fluffmagum called me in to sweep the dust in his library. I sort of saw a bunch of folders, and each of them had a different color. I don’t know why I began to search through them. Maybe I liked colors or I was just curious? Well, it turned out that I saw my name written on one of the few folders. I opened it up and found a whole lot of facts about my family and me. Then, I found the picture. I’ve hung on to it ever since. I think it was in the folder, for my family not to remember me nowadays.”

I shook my head in disbelief. I know that cannot be possible. I knew it couldn’t have been possible, but a big part of my mind was telling me that it was true. “We have got to be, we must be, we are twins!” shouted Megan, practically reading my mind.

For the next few days, we all hung out in our ice cream cone house talking about what had just happened. Once in a while Gumball would tell us that we needed to plant some seeds for our

food. Occasionally, Jarvester and Princess Penelope would check by. They would ask us, "What are you up to?"

We would say, "We're just enjoying the beautiful land of the New World."

We kept on talking, and then I brought something up. "Have you guys ever wanted to go back to where you originally came from? Haven't you guys been lonely over the past few years? I just got here and I already want to go home. Why did they take us here anyway?"

"Mia, I am afraid that is a question that we do not know the answer to. We all miss our families, but didn't get a chance to spend time with them. None of us know why Sir Fluffmagum captured us. We think—"

"Who's Sir Fluffmagum?" I interrupted.

"He is the president of the New World. He is very mean and rich. If you ever go out and spot him, run back. He's very coldhearted and just tortures us by saying we're stupid and we will never leave. Sir Fluffmagum is a rainbow gummy bear. You probably won't see him very often, though. He's busy getting his feet massaged by Gumball and Footie, two of his servants," Sydney explained.

I took time to think through what my friends had been saying. I was trying to make a plan. We could get back to New York if we defeated Sir Fluffmagum. How would we do so? For the next two nights, I was busy thinking. I thought my plan was a good one, a very good one.

"Okay, this is it. First, we have to get rid of the unicorns. We must wait for the perfect day. It must rain and cause a rainbow," I told the group.

"What do you mean? Are we leaving this town? Now? For good?" asked Jack, almost as if he wanted to stay in this torture chamber.

"Well, I said we have to wait for a rainbow. So, we will leave, but not now," I said.

"I want to leave and get out of this prison. Although, what if the crew captures us again?" said Megan, debating whether or not to go along with the plan. "I don't really know why we need a rainbow for the plan, but I think this will work great."

"Megan, I don't want to be here anymore. I think if we outsmart Sir Fluffmagum once, well, why would he bother coming after us again? You know what I mean? What's the point of kidnapping us

again when we can defeat the crew the first time?" Sydney added. Everyone agreed.

I explained, "Unicorns love rainbows, it's where they come from. If we tell them that at the end is a pot of gold, maybe they will go after it."

Three days passed and still no rain. After we ate our lunch, I felt a drop of water. "Rain! It's raining!" I yelled.

Sydney added, "Everyone pack your bags because today we're heading to the big city, baby!"

Jarvester and Princess Penelope were fascinated when we pointed to the color in the sky. We told them that Gumball insisted that they chase the rainbow and at the end, if they jump, is a pot of gold. At first, they didn't believe that Gumball would give orders through us. We explained, "Gumball couldn't find you, and we were walking by the castle. You guys always come check on us, so he figured we would see you."

"The gold we could give to Sir Fluffmagum! Then, he will go easier on us. Maybe we can even quit and move to our old house, the rainbow in the clouds!" exclaimed Princess Penelope. We told them not to come back until they had found the gold. The two unicorns left in a flash.

We all jumped in joy! "Our next step might be a little bit harder. We have to convince Gumball to join in on our plan. He is one of Sir Fluffmagum's most loyal companions, so we must do this well. "

We were off to find Gumball. On our way, of course, Megan noticed that she lost one of her precious pearl earrings. She had gotten her ears pierced before she was kidnapped.

Sidney told us that we should go back the way we came. We all followed Megan as she checked every place that we had approached that day. First, we checked our ice cream cone home. Next, we checked the road that leads off of our home. We checked just about everywhere in the land! Her earring was nowhere to be found!

"I will never find my earring. Let's just give up on trying to find it," Megan said with a frown.

"Are you sure? Do you really want to stop?" I asked.

"Yeah, it's fine," she mumbled.

"Okay. Why are these earrings so important to you, anyway?" Sidney asked.

“Well, they were given to me before the kidnapping. The only way I could’ve gotten them was from my parents. My earrings and the photo are my only items I have from my parents.”

The group decided to go on and make our way to find Gumball. According to Megan, Gumball holds a key. The key is supposedly able to unlock the door where we were led by the unicorns to the New World.

We were off to the castle when Megan said, “Wait! I was here yesterday! Maybe I lost my earring here!” She was pointing to a swamp, which was where we children were supposed to bathe. Megan was about to get into the swamp when she tripped. Megan landed inside the disgusting water. We all rushed over to see if she was okay.

“What could I have possibly tripped over? It’s just grass!” Megan said with a confused look on her face.

Jack went to inspect the grass. “I don’t see anything, except for this key!” he said.

“A key?” we all questioned.

“Give me that!” yelled Sydney.

We both examined the key. “Guys...” I started, “this is the key that we need to unlock the hidden door!” We all cheered with excitement! Now, we didn’t even have to bother trying to convince the evil Gumball. He must have dropped the key accidentally!

“Look!” shouted Sydney, “Megan, is this your earring?”

“Oh my gosh, yes! Thank you so much!” she replied.

We went to the castle. It was big and blue. A flag with a gummy bear was swaying from side to side. It hung right next to the building.

Megan ran to the side of the tower. She grabbed a ladder that was the emergency escape for the people inside the palace and brought it over to the flagpole. Megan climbed up the ladder and grabbed the flag.

She bolted inside the castle, with us chasing after her. We all were in shock. What was she doing? We were all yelling questions at her. “Megan, what in the world are you doing? Why the heck are you doing that?”

“Give me a banana air boat or else this flag will be destroyed,” threatened Megan. Sir Fluffmagum stood in awe as the young girl yelled at the PRESIDENT of the world!

“Aw, that’s cute. You think you can yell at me! Ha, for one thing I am the president and you can become my servant. Come here and massage my feet. NOW! You’re always causing trouble, freak!” yelled Sir Fluffmagum.

Megan disobeyed and started to tug on the flag. Sir Fluffmagum just stood there, putting his foot on the counter he uses for massages. Megan pulled harder. There was already a tiny rip.

“STOP! I will give you the banana airboat. Don’t ruin my flag! This flag was custom made for \$80.00 and shouldn’t be ruined now!” shouted Sir Fluffmagum. I was surprised that he gave in right away. I wanted to ask him why he loves it so much, but I kept my mouth shut.

However, as if reading my mind, Sydney opened her mouth to ask the same question I had. “Why do you love your flag so much?”

“Why do you need to know? Now hand over the flag and everything will be easy. I don’t bite. Hand it over,” replied Sir Fluffmagum.

“Megan won’t give you the flag until you tell us why you are so obsessed with your cheesy flag!”

“What is wrong with you, little girl? This is why I despise people, especially rotten kids like you. Okay, here I go. When I was a young lad, it was my dream to become a ruler of a land. For my ninth birthday, I got forty gummy dollars to purchase a flag. I logged on to a website that lets you customize flags. That’s where I purchased this one.”

I looked up at his bright red flag, which Megan was still gripping tightly, I gazed at the bolts of lightning, which were so bright it hurt, and his green face that was blown up to look humungous.

Eventually, we convinced Sir Fluffmagum to let us have the banana airboat. I don’t think his tiny brain could even process what was going on. We got in, and off we went.

We went everywhere, because the door was really hard to find. We knew it was well-hidden behind the clouds. I began to lose hope, when finally I spotted a speck of purple wood. We had found what we were looking for!

I took out the key, which was hidden in my shoe, and threw it against the door. We appeared in a dark room, and then we entered a town. It was bustling with people, instead of candy. Buildings which were as tall as the beanstalk in the fairytales filled the city. We were actually home. We were in New York!

Days went by. Megan wanted us to go and look for our family. We walked a couple of blocks, but we still were in a part of New York that I didn't recognize. We decided just to stay put.

Police found all of us. Nobody contacted them, but there were reports of us being lost. Jack and Sydney were put in an orphanage. Megan and I were sent to our real family.

Tears filled the room when we approached the door. Mom said that she left the room, and I had just bolted out of the hospital.

"Who is this girl? She looks just like you..." said Mom slowly.

"She is your daughter and is my sister. It's Megan."

"No," Mom replied.

"It's true," said Megan.

"I can't believe it!" Mom started to cheer.

Megan cried as this happened. Mom did as well. It was a big puddle of happy tears. Megan explained how scared she was and told me about how confusing her new life was. She was adjusting slowly, but everything was working out well.

There was too much for us to explain. Our story is so unbelievable people would think we were crazy. Megan was having trouble trying to adjust to the family. She was new, and now my life was changed.

Our family was a whole family. Mom told us the story of the day Megan had disappeared. Apparently, she fell down the stairs and was put in the same hospital I was put in. Then, she disappeared. Only Megan and I will know the truth behind where we actually were, but we chose to keep that to ourselves.

It was like a puzzle that had just been put together. All of the pieces aren't scrambled up anymore. We were a family.

I realized that none of us ever knew why Megan pulled out that startling act on the flag. I decided to ask her. She answered, "Well, what ruler of a land doesn't love a flag? Gumball told me that in America, if you drop a flag, you're supposed to burn it, because I always asked him about the flag. I wondered what Sir Fluffmagum would do if I tried to rip it. I guess I was, in a way, bribing him. I guess you could say I was torturing him until he gave us the banana airboat."

"What's today's date?" I randomly asked out of curiosity.

Dad replied, "It's July 5th."

"JULY 5th?" I shouted, so loud it was as if China could hear me.

“Um, yes. Why is that such a big deal? You were only gone three weeks.”

“That means that today is my gymnastics tryout! I haven’t practiced one bit! I bet I can barely do my left split! That is how much I didn’t practice!” I cried.

“Are we going or not? It’s at 4:30!”

“I don’t know.”

“Come on, let’s try,” convinced Dad.

“But—”

“We’re going!”

“Okay, fine.” I took a deep breath. My insides were having a panic attack!

We arrived at the gym right on time. Other amazing gymnasts took their turns on the floor. Then, a young lady tapped me on the shoulder. She looked just like Sydney. “Hey, it’s time for your turn!”

I approached the floor. The music began to play. All eyes were on me. Usually, I do well with the stage, but today I was scared. My routine was going great, just as I had thought. I had just done my split. It was time for me to get up and do my back handspring. I was scared, and when I looked at my family, they were shaking. I knew I had to try.

“Arms up, knees bent, momentum, and jump!” my mind told me. I did as my brain said. For the first time ever, I landed it. I finished my routine, and people were applauding. The judges stood up.

From my experience with all of this, I learned two things. First, never give up. You will never succeed in anything that you don’t try. Second, if you believe, dreams do come true.

Oh No!

*Ana loses her sister on a camping trip. In **OH NO!** by Nya Batts, Ana realizes her younger sister means more to her than she thought.*

It was spring break of 2013. A girl named Ana and her family were going on a camping trip. Ana's little sister Beverly couldn't wait to go.

They got in the car and drove for about an hour. When they arrived they found a place to stay, and Ana and Beverly started to look for wood for a fire. "Why are we here? Where are we going? Where are Mom and Dad? Can we play hide and seek?" asked Beverly anxiously.

"Would you shut it for one second?"

They kept looking and Beverly wouldn't stop yapping. Then it was too quiet for Ana. She turned around, but Beverly was nowhere to be found. "BBBBEEEEVVVVVEEEEEERRRRLLLLLYYY!" she said angrily. "STOP PLAYING AND COME OUT!" But then she realized Beverly was gone.

"What am I going to do? Will I be blamed if she ends up dead? Why did I even have to have a little sister?" She was so worried she could feel herself gag a little.

She searched for hours and hours and hours. After a while she didn't want to, but she gave up and went back to the campsite. She didn't care if she was tired, hungry, and dehydrated. She didn't want to say it, but, "I want my annoying little sister back."

So she went back to the campsite to tell her parents the bad news. "Mom...Dad..." Then she paused. "Beverly, BEVERLY! But, how, when, oh you're going to get it!" She ran and gave her sister a huge hug. "I love you soooo much."

She realized there was a dog standing behind her. "When did we get a dog?" she said curiously.

"That's the dog that led me back here!" Beverly said.

"Mommy, can we keep him?" Ana said anxiously.

"Yup, we already named him Buddy."

Then the family and the dog went to go look for water together!

The Pittsburgh Project

*A group of kids set off to Pittsburgh on a community service trip and end up having a fun time. It was more fun than they were expecting, as reported in **THE PITTSBURGH PROJECT**, by Gillian Harnadek.*

I am going to the Pittsburgh Project. It's a community service mission trip with churches. What you do is you go to Pittsburgh to a campsite and basically have a normal daily life except for the part where you go to someone in need of help and help them all week. These innocent people need our help, and we help

The morning we were leaving was super busy. I was packing last-minute things, I was getting snacks from Target, and driving there I wouldn't know...I was asleep. When I got to the church, there was a bunch of kids waiting outside of cars, bored...really bored.

My friend and I struggled but accomplished getting all our stuff in the car. We were waiting outside of the cars basically for an hour. No one knew what to do but talk and wait. Then finally they told us to gather around and take a few unnecessary pictures, say more goodbyes, and then get in the cars.

The drive there was about seven hours. We stopped at gross fast food restaurants and gas stations many times. We did stop to eat at this "Eat and Shop" place thing.

I got a lot of beef jerky and a really good Starbucks.

The trip wasn't really that fun at first, but then we got to Pittsburgh. Everywhere there were beautiful old bridges, rock walls, and paintings of people on the walls. It was just so pretty and was so warm. I was glad to finally be there.

We drove into the site, and right away we knew we were going to have an unusual time with these unusual counselors dancing to every car they saw. Did I mention water guns? All of them were pretty much soaking wet. It was hilarious. I had a heavy bag, so I needed help getting my stuff up the stairs. When I got up to the girls' floor, there were a million girls, beds, and suitcases thrown everywhere. My friend's bed and mine were bunk beds. Then once we got settled, we went straight to Club. Club is like church but with more electric instruments.

After Club, the counselors told us it was time to go to the

homeowner who we would be working with for the next week. Our counselor, Kimber, showed us to the homeowner's house. Her name was Mrs. Monroe. She was small and very weak. Her husband died about ten years ago.

All week we went back to Mrs. Monroe's house. Each day it became more work, and the more work we had, surprisingly the more fun it was!

After the days with a lot of work done, we would reward ourselves with a break at the pool. There was a pool for everyone in the neighborhood. It was really fun and refreshing. Speaking of water, one day it was pouring rain, and we were all so tired, but we just started dancing in the rain. It was really funny!

I do miss Pittsburgh and my friends. But I am going back next year!

Tanya the Seagull

The suspenseful story TANYA THE SEAGULL by Ian Rosenwasser tells of a seagull that finds a nice family and has many adventures there. It is a story about friendship between animals and people.

The seagulls were living in central Michigan. The year was 1995, and it was a scorching afternoon. The seagulls circled the park searching for food while the kids happily played. The leader of the seagulls was Tanya since her husband Max had passed away.

Tanya was a positive seagull. She always was very confident in what she did, and looked on the bright side of things. She had great posture, and you could always tell the difference between her and the rest of the seagulls. Tanya had a white, feathery coat with a black stripe on her back.

This flock of birds had 32 seagulls. They lived in the bird houses in a central Michigan park. They had all their food and water from the lake near the park.

One day the seagulls flew by a little brown house. There were two kids eating sandwiches outside. There was a boy named Brian and a girl named Emily. When they saw the seagulls fly over they quickly ran into their house. Tanya was puzzled that the kids would run away so quickly when the flock approached.

“Can we feed some bread to the seagulls outside?” asked Brian. His mom came outside with them and gave the seagulls some bread. The kids motioned the seagulls to come for the bread. The seagulls were confused at first, but then they came. Tanya was thankful for the bread and decided they would come back to the family.

Soon the family had made a birdhouse for all the seagulls. The seagulls were now living there and were ecstatic when they got to see the kids. The kids loved the seagulls. They still fed them bread and sometimes gave them leftover fish for a treat.

One day a seagull named Bob became sick. Brian went outside.

“Oh no,” Brian said, “This seagull looks really sick.” Brian rushed back into the house and told his mom and Emily to come out.

His mom checked out the seagull and found a gash in Bob’s wing. Tanya looked on as the family cared for Bob, concerned for one of her flock. Tanya watched the family leave Bob as they rushed

into the house. Soon a stranger appeared out of the dark, and began probing Bob. Tanya realized, as the stranger seemed to be examining her friend, that the family had gone inside to call a vet to save Bob. The vet worked tirelessly, but was unsuccessful.

The kids were heartbroken at Bob's death. They held a funeral and prayed for the seagull. In Bob's memory, the family created an organization that helps seagulls stay healthy. They raised plenty of money for animal health and saved many seagulls' lives.

The kids grew older, and it was time for college. They had everything all packed up to go to college the next day.

They couldn't sleep that night. They were depressed about leaving the seagulls, especially the one they had named Tanya.

The kids got up the next morning, and suddenly they heard a loud gunshot. *BAM!* They saw Tanya on the ground, dead, and a poacher running away from the bird.

Tears rushed down their faces. Anger boiled over at their hatred for the poacher. "Why did this have to happen?" they shouted in unison.

The kids went off to college still feeling the sting of the death of their feathered friends. They continued generously contributing to charities that help seagulls. The government appreciated their generosity, and created a law banning poaching. Tanya's former flock was featured in the newspaper. The article stated that a family had helped save seagulls' lives. Next to the picture of the seagulls stood the family, and you could see in their eyes, human and seagull, a strong bond had been formed.

The Lost Timeporter

*An invention made by a scientist takes him to a strange place. When he loses his Timeporter, he has to make a dangerous journey to get it back in **THE LOST TIMEPORTER**, by **Gabe Liss**.*

My name is Maxwell Peterson, and I am a scientist. It is the year 7001, and I just finished a brilliant invention. My invention is called the Timeporter. It is a combination of a time machine and a teleporter. The Timeporter is a gold device that can fit in your pocket. It is waterproof, and it is very sturdy.

To make sure my invention is safe, I'm going to test it. I set my teleporter on the random switch so it will take me somewhere randomly, but I set my time machine function for 1520.

When I arrive, I realize I am on an island in the middle of the Indian Ocean. I have studied all about the Indian Ocean and know about every island.

The time machine part has a side effect that makes you really sleepy, so when I get there I fall asleep with the Timeporter sitting next to me. When I wake I realize my Timeporter is missing! I can't get back home without it, so I know I have to eventually find it.

Right now I am hungry. I need to find some food. I see a big blue jay, and I see it start to fly, so I wonder if it will lead me to food. I decide to follow it, and on the way I see a big, green bush full of berries. I feast on those berries until I absolutely can't eat anymore.

It is getting dark out, but luckily I have some matches in my lab coat so I can start a fire. I immediately fall asleep from the long day and sleep through the night.

When the sun rises I eat some more delicious berries for breakfast. After breakfast I go look for my Timeporter.

I am walking by a stream when I suddenly hear voices. I crouch down and spy through the bushes. I see a whole group of people talking to each other, and then I see the king stand up and yell, "Quiet!" Everybody stops talking and listens to their king. Their leader says, "Remember, if we see any outsiders on this island leave them, but if they harm us in any way we must capture them and bring them to our dungeon." They are standing in front of a very nice castle. It is very big and on top of the castle it has two enormous blue pillars that stand like statues.

I take another look at the king, and I see he is holding my Timeporter in his left hand. I creep in closer and hear him order his guards to put the Timeporter in his bedroom and guard it.

I have a plan to get the Timeporter. First I have to run a mile away and build a huge, smoky fire to lure all the people away. I start out sprinting really fast, but I soon get tired and have to slow down. I finally see the perfect spot for the fire. There is a perfect piece of rocky land to build the fire.

I quickly go grab some logs and some pieces of wood and I take out my match. I only have one so I have to make this work. I count down from three in my head: "3, 2, 1." I light the wood, and I see a tiny spark of light. It is the fire. I put some tiny pieces of wood in and smile at the sweet smell of the smoke.

Somebody sees the smoke and yells "Fire!" The king orders everyone to go to the fire to search around the area for any unusual things. The king tells two guards to stay in his bedroom and watch the Timeporter.

I circle the castle until I find a window in the back. I have very strong legs, so I kick the window and it smashes. Glass flies all over the place, but none of it hurts me. The castle is very big, so I don't know how long it will take me to find the king's bedroom.

I start walking, and all of a sudden I hear, "I win, you will never beat me." I figure out that it must be the guards in the king's bedroom. I keep following their voices until I see a back door. They are so busy playing Rock-Paper-Scissors-Shoot they don't even notice me open the door.

I decide to take advantage of the element of surprise. I slowly creep up on the guards and get ready to kick his shin. I kick his shin so hard that he has to start hopping on one foot. "Ugh," the guard moans as he hops. I kick him in the other shin, and he falls to the floor. He is moaning very loudly, and to stop the moaning I kick him in the head, and he blacks out.

The other guard comes charging at me, and I don't know what to do. "I got it!" I say and I start sprinting toward the window that I broke. Now I am standing right in front of the window.

The guard charges, yelling, "Aagh!" and right when he is about to pounce on me I quickly duck. He lands outside the window, unconscious. I grab the Timeporter and make a break for it.

When I am safe I set the Timeporter to go back home. After that experience I confirm that it is safe as long as you don't lose it. I send

it out to other scientists to try it, and they approve of. Soon it starts selling in stores all over the world.

My Timeporter is famous, and almost everyone has one. My great invention has made me a billionaire, and I am now considered the greatest scientist ever.

The Tragedy

THE TRAGEDY, by *Chello B.*, is a story about a man who finds himself being tracked down by a mysterious man. This story teaches us to understand and pay attention to our surroundings.

It was a rainy October night. A man by the name of Dean Barton was driving his car to the nearest CVS to get his medicine and a late night snack. Dean had bad hearing and had to take a pill every week so that he could hear better. While Dean was driving, his phone started to vibrate. He quickly answered, thinking it was one of his friends.

“Hello?” Dean said.

“Hello, Dean,” said a deep, scary voice.

After a moment of shock Dean asked who was on the other line. The voice answered, “Watch your step or it’ll be the last step you take.” Then he hung up the phone. Dean decided to turn around toward the police station and file a report on the phone call.

At the police station the nearest officer assisted Dean. Dean told the officer about the phone call, and the officer got the sheriff to investigate.

They put Dean in a maximum security home while they tracked down the phone from the person that called him. But when they called that number it said the number was no longer in service.

After a while Dean didn’t get any more mysterious calls.

Dean was going to get his last pill jar from CVS for the month when it started raining. Dean pulled into the parking lot of CVS and got out the car.

BANG! Dean was attacked out of nowhere. The same man that had called Dean a month earlier had him pinned to his own car with a gun pointed at him. “I told you to watch your step,” he said. *BOOM!*

No one could tell Dean had just been shot and left to die. But the cashier thought that the thunder was a little too close, so he went outside and saw a man running away with a gun.

The cashier quickly called the police; they were there in a flash with an ambulance. They saw Dean lying on the ground bleeding to death. They quickly gave him medical attention and later found the shooter. They went to court, and the judge ruled that he owed Dean a fine of one million dollars. The shooter also was locked away for good.

The War of the Llamacorns

*Two tribes that have no business being with each other have an ongoing conflict. Find out how it starts, how it ends, and how everything unfolds in between in **THE WAR OF THE LLAMACORNS**, by **Griffin Kozlow**.*

In the happy days of Lorncarf, the llamas always stayed on one half of town, while the unicorns did their thing on the other side of town. The two groups had some get-togethers to decide laws, but were mostly separated. The llamas and unicorns were treated as two different countries.

During one get-together, everything went wrong. Dave the llama and John the unicorn were not getting along. When they went back to their clans that night, Dave and John each complained to their separate clans.

“April, John beat me up last night for no reason. I’m really hurt, and I don’t know what to do,” cried Dave. April was one of the toughest llamas, and she intended to put a stop to this.

Meanwhile, on the unicorns’ side of town, John was complaining to Jessica, Bob, Brittany, and all the other unicorns about Dave. “When we were together yesterday, Dave started talking bad about us to his llama friend,” started John. “I went up to him, and asked him nicely if he could be a little more polite around us, and he got extremely mad. I just gave him a taste of his own medicine, and he went home sobbing like a big baby.”

April ran full speed to the unicorns’ side of town, even though she knew she wasn’t allowed because she was going into the unicorns’ territory. She sped to John and went over what her speech should sound like in her head: “What do you think you’re doing, hurting my fellow llama like that? You know, he’s a living thing too. I can’t believe you would....”

She realized that no one had noticed her. She looked around and saw all of the unicorns sitting around their campfire listening to John. He was telling a story. It seemed to be about Dave being mean to John, and he wanted to stay out of it. Eventually, John lost it with him and beat him up. He felt bad after, but he thinks he did the right thing.

April stomped over to John and scooped him up by the shirt. "What are you thinking? I can't believe you would lie like that. You beat up Dave, and he did nothing to you."

"Where are you getting this information? Are you getting it from your dear little Dave? Well guess what? He's a liar. He was being mean to me and I just used self-defense," explained John. April was enraged! Without comment, she sprinted back to home.

When April got back to her own side of town, she asked Dave for the truth, nothing more, nothing less. Dave said the same thing he said earlier that night.

The next morning, April woke up to a scream. She rushed out of her house to see if anyone was hurt. There were no signs of anything. April went back into her bed, and moments later she heard it again. What was happening? This time, April looked through the window. Nothing was there. Was she imagining things? She strained to open her eyes wide into the bright sun, and saw Dave tied to a tree. The whole unicorn clan was circling him.

April picked up her newly-polished spear, and ran out the door. When she got to the tree, she shouted, "Why are you doing this?"

All she saw was John wrapping rope and making knots.

"What are you doing!" exclaimed April.

Hands covered her mouth.

April turned around. John must be trying to suffocate her. John took April by the head and slammed her against a tree. He pulled rope out of his pocket and tied April to the tree. She was stuck!

April fought with all her strength to get out, but she just couldn't. "Please let me out! I'll do anything! I beg of you!" April pleaded with no luck. She used her teeth, hands, and even her spear to try to get out. John was holding Dave to a tree, and Dave wasn't particularly strong, so he wasn't able to get out by himself.

After April's spear became dull, she started biting down on the rope to escape. She was grunting, squealing, and crying. After hours of work, her teeth did the trick, and she was free! Before she could help Dave, John and Jessica the unicorn came out of nowhere, and pinned her against the tree. "Why won't you just let me go?" April questioned.

Jessica glared at her with anger in her eyes and said, "We don't trust llamas, and we really don't trust you."

April pulled back her spear, and aimed it into Jessica's leg. It was perfect aim, because April had no intention of killing Jessica.

Jessica fell to the ground, screaming in pain. Jessica was yelling, "You won't get away with this!" April had bought herself a short amount of time. She knew Jessica would find a way to bandage the wound. She had to act quickly. She knew she had to get to Dave before Jessica could come after her.

April had to get through John first. He was working to make the rope around Dave impossible to escape. Dave was screaming and kicking, but John was overpowering him. April overheard him saying, "You will be sorry you are doing this. We won't let this one go!" John was making a very good trap, and April knew she had to stop him quickly. She did the only thing she could. She stabbed John in the leg also.

John screamed in pain and fell to the ground. "I will get revenge for this. You can count on it!" he screamed. Now that the two unicorn leaders were injured, April had time to get Dave out. She quickly untied the rope and freed her friend.

"Thank you so much, April! I was worried that you wouldn't get out, and if you did, I thought you would just leave me behind. Thank you!" Dave was so grateful.

"Dave, I would never leave you behind! And you know me, I wouldn't give up!"

A few days later, April and Dave were walking around their half of the city to get some fresh air. They were on a large area of bright green grass. When they were rounding a bush, a hooded figure popped out from behind the bush and stabbed Dave straight in the heart. He fell to the ground. Nobody knew who committed the crime, but they suspected someone from the unicorns. April bolted back home. She had never felt sadder.

April's life was so different without Dave. She only had thirteen llamas to help her in combat, and they were all in training. She felt lonely when she was walking around, and every day, she stopped by the bush where Dave was killed. Whenever she saw that spot where he fell to the ground, she could not stop the tears.

April had to win this fight in honor of Dave. She wanted to make a new weapon that could destroy all the unicorns. Every day, April worked on her new invention.

After two long months of working, she was finally done. It was a black sphere with a red string coming out of the top. April had invented an explosive device. She would pull the string and it

would explode and destroy everything within 100 yards. She called her invention “the bomb.”

April went close to the border of the unicorns’ territory, and saw all the unicorns peacefully sitting around their campfire. April calculated the aim and power, and marked a line 150 yards from her target. Finally, April threw the bomb with all her strength. She ran full speed to the line, and turned around, her wide eyes watching the bomb with excitement. She saw the bomb explode, and red flames flew everywhere.

April ran to the unicorns’ side and looked around. Not one unicorn was still alive. She had wiped out the entire species. Though April was still very sad about Dave, she called her mission a success. She had gotten revenge for Dave’s brutal death.

That was the last glimpse anyone ever saw of unicorns. Now, the unicorn species is extinct, and llamas live peacefully. If April hadn’t invented the bomb to kill the unicorns, llamas would be extinct, and unicorns would still be roaming the world today.

The Water Kingdoms

Cooperation among five kingdoms results in a wonderful life for all citizens. But when that cooperation breaks down, tragedy strikes in THE WATER KINGDOMS, by Chris Tubera.

Deep below the ocean were five different kingdoms full of people who lived in water. All the people in the five water kingdoms were very peaceful. The five water kingdoms shared a leader. The leader was Queen Gisha. She kept the Kingdoms very peaceful and beautiful. The water kingdoms had government that didn't have any problems, so everyone was rich but never bragged.

The first kingdom, named Ameralan, was on the tallest mountain the five kingdoms were on. The second kingdom, named Ralan, was for food and livestock. The livestock there were fish, sea creatures, and sharks. People worked for the kingdom and the other kingdoms as well. The third kingdom, Alicia, was the kingdom known for transportation and technology. It provided the technology and transportation for the other kingdoms. The main control building that controls the kingdom of Alicia goes so high that at night all the kingdoms could see it light up. The fourth kingdom was named Imsetia. The kingdom Imsetia built everything for the other kingdoms. They made them as beautiful as the Egyptian structures and statues. And the fifth Kingdom, Anura, was known for beautiful architecture. They worked together with Imsetia to build the temples, structures, and statues. They were all united.

In Imsetia a girl named Megan was headed home from a long day at school. School was ten hours long. Other kingdoms had only seven hours of school. When Megan got home she went into her room with surprising news: She was going to a very rich college. She was so excited, but there was something that could stop her: She did not know that the war was about to begin among all five kingdoms. She would not be able to go to the College in Ralan. It would be very dangerous. Nobody would like her because there would be a war and Ralan people would not like her. She decided not to go. Instead she would help her family when she graduated, which would be in two weeks.

The next day she saw troops on streets, which meant a war was coming. Her family was preparing for it, and they found a shelter nearby underground. When Megan graduated she headed straight home to help her parents. Her sister Christina was gathering her belongings, and her parents were rushing. They didn't even notice Megan at the door. She helped without being noticed.

That night she cried about the war and how it could break apart her family.

In the morning two soldiers arrived to escort them to the shelter. Her family was the second one there. The shelter was very nice. They were escorted to their room. It was small but good enough to fit Megan's family. Soon they unpacked, and she took a shower. More families arrived, and she saw a guy who was very handsome, and she blushed and went into her room. She went to bed and thought about him all night.

The next week they heard bombs, gunfire, and thumps. It was scary. News came in about more troops dying. Megan was taken by one of the troops to be trained to become an army medic. She did not like it, but it was for her own good to protect her family.

While she was being trained outside the kingdom she lived in, a bomb exploded nearby and another one came and blew up the camp. She was inside. It killed the trainees and the instructors. Her family was upset.

When the war ended, everything went back to normal. Her family made a memorial for Megan, and she was honored as a very important person to help in the war. Her name was carved on the kingdom's war memorial.

At the memorial her parents saw a butterfly. There was a saying when a butterfly appears after a loved one has died it means that the spirit of the loved one will always be with the loved one's family. In the end Megan was remembered even after her family was all dead. The butterfly was always roaming by that one place at her house where she grew up.

The West Hill

In **THE WEST HILL** by *Hannah Lemos*, a girl and her brother are trying to free all the children from the West Hill. They will have to do it all in just a few hours....

I quickly scribbled on the wall, in a code that only my partner would know. I looked over the wall to see if there were any new messages. I didn't see any, but there were some messages that I couldn't read. Were there other people that were doing what my partner and I were doing? The message that I wrote said one simple word – **tomorrow**.

I really needed to hurry out of here. It was almost dawn, and the chief makes his rounds around the building at about 7. What time was it? 6:00, 6:20, 6:50?

I heard some voices. Quickly, I scrambled up the jagged stone and up onto the roof. By the looks of it, this building was a factory where the blacksmiths made the weapons, but more about that later. Right then, I was focused on the people rounding the corner.

There were two men; one had short gray hair and the other one had longer white hair, almost making him look like a ghost. "What should we do with them?" one said.

"Trap 'em and force them to tell us what they know," said the one with the white hair.

He started to creep me out. *Who were they talking about?* I thought. *It isn't likely they had other people spying on them, besides Noah and me.*

"I found the name of one of them; Kris, I think. She's listening to us right now, isn't that right?"

What! How did he know I was here? Of course I didn't answer him, because that would be stupid. I scrambled to my feet, as the white-haired guy started climbing up the building. *I have to get out of here! Think fast, think fast!* I couldn't think of anything, so by instinct, I jumped off the building.

Lucky for me, I landed on my feet, but twisted my ankle in the process. The ghost man (wow, I am one lucky girl) wasn't so lucky. In the process of getting down, he sprained both his ankles and couldn't run. The other guy, well, he just stood there watching this all, and don't ask—I don't know why. I knew that the guy wanted to

capture us and continue training us, but of course I didn't want that, so I ran, ran, and ran all the way to the hut that I call home.

Now I can talk about the past. I'm Kris, I have a brother named Noah, and we're runaways—not from home, but from a place called West Hill, a place where kidnapped kids are taken for war training. As far as I know, my parents are still alive, but I barely remember them. My brother and I were at that camp when I was eight and Noah was seven, and were captive there for about a year. There, they trained us to be in a war, as they did with all the other kids at the camp, which was actually really helpful. But that's not the point. They are bad guys. They want to rebel against the king (I guess they want money or something), and they have a whole army of kids! We ran away, and ever since we have been living in this house.

We couldn't return home because we were on an island. Once the boats brought us here, they returned to the mainland. They only kept one boat there at a time, and that was a big, big boat, a boat big enough for a whole village, maybe a whole city! It was definitely something we couldn't operate, and it was way too far to swim to the mainland, so we had to stay here.

Lucky for us, the island was big and so hilly that there was room enough for us to live in the burnt-down old hut that was probably from the remains of a Stone Age village. It was made out of clay, mud and some wood, the one-story, one-room hut that was our home. We had brought our rugged sleeping bags from the camp and constructed a bed frame out of wood and put dried up straw from the fields on it as a mattress. That was pretty much it. We stole food from the camp and washed in the nearby water, so we were fine with just a bed.

We were trying to stop them, but so far, we hadn't gotten anywhere, and now, with that creepy guy with the long, white hair knowing that we were trying to stop them, we had to be extra careful.

We had an idea, but it wasn't great: I was going to distract them and get caught, but put up a big fight and keep them busy for a while, and Noah would sneak in and hide in the doorways where the kids are being trained, and all he's told me is that it has something to do with nets. He hasn't told me what he was going to do after that. I begged him for ages to tell me what it was, but he just wouldn't tell me! I'm the older sister, and I should know his plan, especially because we are partners! Truly, I thought he had

something to do with the mysterious code. I had agreed to go out and get all the attention because I know Noah, and Noah is the smartest person I know, so whatever he wants to do, I trust him. *Why doesn't my brother trust me, though?*

Noah and I had been walking for about a good twenty minutes to get from our house to the town (it's a big island). We reached the outskirts of the area. If you had never been here, you would have thought it was a normal town! Even on the inside of the old wooden fence, it looks like a normal town. Some girls are old enough to be mothers, there were plenty of trainers that looked like soldiers, and there were plenty of kids! So anyway, we climbed over the wooden fence and quietly sneaked into the busiest part of the town. "By the way, when you go out there don't look up. Are you ready?" Noah asked.

"Nope," I said, and I jumped into the middle of the street—almost. Noah pulled me back and told me his plan, some of it. *Wow.*

I think I did a good job. I started shouting, "Hey, I am Kris, and I'm going to free all of you!" I know it sounds stupid, but it worked. Everyone started to crowd around me, and out of the corner of my eye, I saw Noah sneaking out of his hiding place. But he wasn't heading towards the training center; he was going in the opposite direction! I knew I couldn't shout at him, so I just acted even more stupid.

I shouted to people who I remembered from when I was here, and I just did dumb things. When the trainers tried to grab me, I pretended that I thought they wanted to dance with me, so I grabbed their arms and started spinning around.

It went on and on, for about five minutes or more, with me just acting stupid. After about two minutes it got hard. When the trainers had recovered from their shock, they seemed to remember they had weapons. I did then the stupidest thing that could have gotten me captured or worse. I pretended their weapons were walking sticks or magic wands. *I really want my brother to hurry.* Then, at that second, my brother's plan unfolded.

Nets came dropping from the sky! They fell right on top of all the adults and wrapped around them until they couldn't move. Then, they started to rise up, and I saw that the nets were tied to ropes. The ropes led to the tops of buildings, where my brother and some kids were tying them to chimneys.

I couldn't believe it! Even though he told me, it was a lot more amazing than I would have thought. Who would have thought that nets, out of all things, were the trick for stopping the West Hill, the most evil group of all that no one knows about?

All the adults were trapped, and the kids were just standing there, stunned! Then I took a bow and escorted them away.

Noah had decided to make a barrier around the village with the remaining nets so anyone that had escaped would get stuck in them again, and the misty weather would make the old fishing nets hard to see. The trainers that were away were on the boats, and that was taken care of already. They didn't know how to swim!

We had decided that we wanted to use the big old boat. We figured that some of the older kids knew how to captain a ship, and we were right. There was a boy whose training was for sailing, and he knew how to operate the big boat. So we got to work, and at noon, we were ready to sail to shore.

Later, on the boat, Noah told me the rest of his plan. "That writing on the wall, in that code, that was me and the kids who helped me set the whole thing up. If you've noticed, when I go out to spy, I'm gone a little bit longer than normal. That's because I've been setting up the nets little by little so I would just be able to set them off when the time was right."

We reached land in a couple of hours; we had to take the long way so that the trainers wouldn't see us. After that, all the kids, including my brother and I, ran in various directions to our homes, which surprisingly, we remembered. We were even more surprised that the kids that had stayed the longest still knew where their homes were. We were lucky that worked out. Our parents were so happy and relieved that we were alive that they started crying. All night, we exchanged stories of the past four years of our lives. Our job was finished.

***Tomorrow.** That was the day we would go to the West Hill and set free all of the kids, a day when almost all of the trainers would have been out on the smaller boats going to the mainland, and getting more kids. (By the way, we cut holes at the bottom of the boats so they sank when the water got deep enough, and I am so happy the creepy guy was one of them.) Only a few of the trainers would be there, and they would be the trainers in training, I guess, so they wouldn't be that experienced and (yea!) the ghost guy was one of the better. All the kids would have a free day, almost. They had to*

go on to this one big street and do all of the trainers' sheets, and clothes, and polish their weapons, and do all of this stuff. So they would all be in one spot with inexperienced trainers. Why wouldn't that be the day? That was yesterday. Today is tomorrow.

Why?

*When a girl gets mixed into trouble with other girls at school, her whole life becomes more difficult than it should be. Does she get the problems solved? Find out in the story **WHY?** by **Rebecca Burke**.*

I was sent to my room. I guess I did something wrong, but I'm not entirely sure what I did. I've been trying to be nice to everyone. I have tried my best at becoming a respectable child. I absolutely hate when my parents yell at me.

"VICTORIA!" my mom yells from her room.

"Yes?" I call back, unsure of what might happen from that point on. My mind goes blank, and I feel like I'm suddenly in some kind of dream. "What?" I call to her.

"I said come here!" she yelled back immediately.

I walk as fast as I can to her room. She hates when I supposedly "take my time" with things. She stares me down, dead into my eyes. She gives me this disappointed look. "Why were you in the principal's office today?" she says with an annoyed tone.

"I didn't do anything! I swear, Mom! It was Alyssa from school! She's trying to get me in trouble for things I didn't do!" I say really fast to get it over with.

She nods slowly, "I get it," she says in a breath of relief.

The next morning my little sister Allison asks me the weirdest question as I'm trying to get a snack. "How do I be like you? And where do dogs come from?"

I stare at her like she's dumb. I don't answer because I simply don't know how to really answer her. I kiss her on the forehead and continue on with what I was doing. She's three years younger than me. She's ten and is completely sweet. I never have fights with her like regular sisters do.

At school that morning I decided to go up to Alyssa and see what's up. But I chickened out and went to talk to her after school instead. "Why are you out to get me?" I shouted out louder than I intended. Her group of friends looked at me with great surprise.

"I'm not. Are you talking about that principal's office thing?" she asks.

"Yes?" I say in the form of a question.

"That wasn't me! Someone told the principal that you did something to me, and that's why you were called down there. I would never try to hurt you, Victoria! You're truly one of my best friends."

I stared at her like she was crazy. "Okay, I'm sorry, Alyssa."

I turned, and she came running up to me. She patted my back slowly and whispered something. I couldn't exactly hear her. I kept on walking because I didn't want to be in their presence any longer. I walked to my bus outside, but on the way I kept sneezing.

When I got home, I went in the house and then straight to my room. My sister called for me as I was walking up the stairs to my room. I didn't look back, but just kept going. I sat in my room alone.

I suddenly smelled something weird. I started sneezing like crazy! It started feeling hot in my bedroom. I took off my hoodie and saw there was a note on my back. It said "*Sweet dreams, Victoria.*" With a... DAISY TAPED ON IT! I'm highly allergic to daisies! How did she know!

I ran to the bathroom next to my bedroom. Holding my breath the whole time, I flushed the daisy down the toilet.

I sat back down on my bed. Just then my sister walked in. "Hey, Alyssa called last night. Asking what you were allergic to? And, uh, I told her. Because she said she was gonna have a party. And didn't want to have anything there that might cause harm to you!" I stared at Allison with a twitchy eye.

"What's wrong?" she said coming to sit next to me.

"She isn't having a party. She asked you because she is trying to get me hurt. She put THIS NOTE on my back today with a daisy taped on it!" I shoved the note in her face.

She read it and suddenly a look of worry came upon her face. She looked back up at me after reading the note with horror. She just then hugged me and started crying. She seemed more worried about this than I was. Or maybe she just didn't want me to rat her out to Mom.

Downstairs the next morning I heard Allison telling my mom what happened. I walked into the living room bright-eyed. My mom stared at me. I stared back. Finally Allison broke the barrier. "We have to call Alyssa's parents!" she shouted, even though my mom and I both were just within a few feet of her.

"Why, so she can tell everyone how my mommy has to handle

everything for me? No thanks." I broke the short conversation and just drifted into thought. My sister is not that stupid. She would not have been that dumb to tell people what I'm allergic to. She knows Alyssa and I are not friends. Not even close. Maybe Allison isn't all that sweet after all. I know I shouldn't blame her, but she's the one who told! I just don't get why she would do that.

A few hours later my mom started making lunch. Since it was Saturday, I had a volleyball game that I had to go to later. Best part? Alyssa was going to be there. What a happy day!

We won. And Alyssa's mom brought the snacks for after the game. She brought blackberries and oranges. I'm allergic to both of those! Alyssa came over trying to hand me an orange. I shook my head and pushed the orange away. She let it fall to the ground, and juice squirted everywhere. I started coughing, and Allison and my mom walked me to the bathroom.

Why is she doing this? All I have ever asked since I started middle school is "Why?"

Allison and my mom cleaned the orange juice off of me. We went home after that. Allison and I lay on the couch together and watched a movie to help me get my mind off things.

Monday morning I went to the principal, but only because my mother told me I had to. I told him everything. He called Alyssa's mom, which is not what I wanted at all! Alyssa had to write an apology letter to me! I felt so embarrassed! She probably told all of her friends how I got her in trouble. But if she did, I guess it was worth it, because from that day on she never bothered me again.

Wizards vs. Dark Shadows

WIZARDS VS. DARK SHADOWS, by *Antonio Moses Narra*, is a story of three wizards who need to save the people of New York City from being captured by the Dark Shadows.

It was a dark, storming night in New York City. Jasper was lying down in his bed. He got up and stared out the window, watching as bolts of lightning shot down from the sky. It was keeping him awake, so he decided to go downstairs to get a drink of water. He heard his parents talking about the mysterious people that others have been seeing and disappearing from. When his parents went back up to bed he tried to figure out how they knew about the mysterious people. Then all of a sudden Jasper seemed to be stepping over a newspaper.

Jasper picked it up and read it. It said that people have been disappearing from these strange Shadows during the day and have not been seen again. Jasper thought these Shadows must be some sort of dark, magical creatures that the people didn't know were magical.

Jasper and his two friends from wizard school, Jordan and Audrey, decided to go to the dark Shadows tower and eliminate the Shadows. Jasper is very brave, and once he starts a quest he will finish it. Jordan will do anything to try and help the team. Audrey is a highly trained wizard who has learned and mastered spells in her spell book and uses them to help where needed.

But they all knew that their parents would never let them do such a thing. So Audrey said, "Let's cast the forgetting spell on our parents by saying the words 'frozen frosted time stop.'"

Once they did the spell they prepared to go to the dark Shadows tower. But Jasper remembered something, and he said, "There are three pairs of glasses that make any invisible creature visible." So they took out their magical tablet that show every place in the world and flew on their flying dragons to the tower that had the magic glasses.

It took weeks to arrive at the tower, and the weather wasn't easy on them either. They went through storms and blizzards. Then they realized they were being watched and had to do something quick, so they flew to their magic school and gathered some of their

friends to distract whoever was watching them so they couldn't stall Jasper, Jordan, and Audrey.

They waited until morning so if the dark Shadows were going to sneak-attack them, they would at least see the Shadow. Once the sun began to rise all the wizards got on their flying dragons and headed for the tower of the glasses, but they were being much more sneaky this time. They started to see Shadows after them trying to stop their arrival at the tower. They took out their wands and cast fireballs at the dark Shadows.

At the end there were three Shadows left. They attacked three kids that were helping Jasper, Jordan, and Audrey. They fell off their dragons, and were captured by the Shadows. It was already too late to go back to rescue them because it just turned night and they didn't have the time before the Shadows turn the humans into Shadows as their minions.

They finally arrived at the tower, and they found out that the door had a huge magical lock on it that only extremely strong power could open. They had their dragons use their fire breath, and the wizards used their wands all at the same time to open the lock. The lock exploded, and the doors busted open. Inside they found the three magical glasses, so Jasper, Jordan, and Audrey each took one.

When they walked out, all of their friends were gone. When they put their glasses on, they saw a huge army of Shadows that had taken their friends. The Shadows were flying like the speed of lightning and were way too fast to catch. One Shadow was highly trained, and he used a dark spell that made Jasper, Jordan, and Audrey's glasses disappear.

They didn't know what to do, so they went to wizard school and asked their teacher what they could do to see the Shadows at night. The teacher said, "Well, no student has ever found out this magical thing that every wizard gets when born." The teacher is not supposed to say anything, but in a situation like this the teacher had no other choice.

He taught Jasper, Jordan, and Audrey the secret type of vision they all had, but in order to do it, it required them to move their eyes in lots of different directions. Once they did everything the teacher taught them the vision activated. It included night vision, and any creature would show up green.

They left wizard school and continued their journey to the Shadows tower. They took their tablets out, but all they could see was a huge blur. They thought that when the Shadows attacked them they had used a signal jammer on their tablets. So they couldn't use their tablets to find their way. They made one last trip to wizard school and asked their teacher how they could find the Shadows tower. The teacher said, "There is a man who knows where every place in the world is, but be sure no one is following you, and be careful."

They went to the man's house and rang his doorbell. The man went to the door and opened it. The man asked what Jasper, Jordan, and Audrey wanted, and Jordan said, "We need you to lead us to the Shadows tower."

The man responded, "It is very dangerous for me to go out anywhere. Many people are after me."

Jasper said, "We can protect you from anything after you."

The man trusted them because they all were wizards and had been in their studies for years, so he felt safe around them.

Then the man got out of his house and led the way. They did not have any patience for riding on their dragons for days, especially because of the many blizzards and the days getting colder.

When they finally arrived at the tower, the man left and went home. But Jasper, Jordan, and Audrey had to pass this magic-proof maze, so they couldn't fly through it. Right before they started the maze they recognized sensors, so they made the secret invisible potion that is created with something called undetected magic.

The problem was they couldn't see each other because they were invisible, so they all had to go through the maze solo. They felt like they were going in circles for hours, when all of a sudden Audrey fell into a hole. There is an alarm that usually goes off when someone falls in, but it didn't go off because she was invisible. There she saw a straight pathway, and at the end, there was a ladder leading inside one of the corners of the tower. She climbed up the ladder, ran quietly to the main doors of the castle, opened them, and knocked out the guards.

Luckily, right after she knocked out the last guard, her invisibility eroded. She saw Jasper and Jordan waiting at the end of the maze, and she called them. They walked up the steps, and then Jasper said, "We need to blend in with the Shadows. Let's use the

disguise spell.” Once they were all disguised as a Shadow they silently entered the tower and looked around for the kidnapped people.

They saw that the people the Shadows had kidnapped were getting turned into Shadows with a converter machine. Jasper, Jordan and Audrey ran to the Shadow converter, and they found their friends who the Shadows had kidnapped, plus all the other people Jasper had seen in the newspaper.

Jordan said, “We all have to take on the destruction spell but first rescue all the people who are about to become Shadows.”

Then Jasper said, “We need to use the vanishing object spell on the Shadow converter.” So they did the spell very quickly before anyone would become a Shadow permanently.

Then all the wizards got their wands out and said to each other quietly, “We are doing the destruction spell that no wizard has ever done. Get ready.” They all cast it at the same time.

The tower was about to blow up and was crashing down. All the wizards teleported out of the tower and went home. Jasper, Jordan, and Audrey watched as the Shadows’ souls were flying up into the sky and disappearing.

All the wizards had saved the day, especially Jasper, Jordan, and Audrey. Then all the wizards headed home, and Jasper and his friends went back to their homes and had to undo the forgetting spell that they had cast on their parents.

Once they undid it, all their parents thought it was the next day. But it really wasn’t.

They picked up the newspaper from the door for that day. It said the people that had been kidnapped had been found and as of today no mysterious creatures have been seen anymore. The parents were shocked to see that they had vanished in one day. But it was really weeks because they were in the forgetting spell the whole time.

Picture This

5 Days of Misery

*Kara was ready for a fun camping trip with her friends, but a kidnapper has other plans for her. Will Kara be able to escape? Find out in, **5 DAYS OF MISERY** by **Claire Higley**.*

Hi, I'm Kara! On the night of August 31, 2008 I was kidnapped. I'm here to tell you all about it.

It all started when some friends and I were leaving for a camping trip at Loop Lake. I was going with some friends like Brooke, Jack and of course a grownup; Kenny. When we got to Loop Lake, it was pretty dark, which made it look super scary! We wanted to play a game called *Assassin*, where you run around in the dark and whoever the murderer is they try to tag you so they can "kill you." So we tried, but it got pretty scary and we decided to play a different game instead. That night when everyone was falling asleep, we all heard people talking; they just didn't care about our sleep! Or at least that's what we thought.

August 31, 2008

The next day we played some games and then had a campfire lunch. We went back to the cabin to take a break, and decided that later we would go out for dinner. When all the boys went out to play catch, Jack ran back five minutes later because he saw a knife on the ground.

Kenny followed him back in and asked, "Dude, what happened?"

Jack said, "Well I was running to go get the ball but then I saw a huge knife on the ground and got freaked out! So I ran back inside."

"Oh, well that's weird," said Kenny, "I'll keep an eye out for it, ok?"

"K," Jack said.

"Well I'm starving; let's go to dinner!" I said.

Later that night, we decided we were brave enough to play *Assassin*. Jack was the first one to be the Assassin, he went to hide and we went out! I was creeping around with Brooke and Dana when Jack jumped out of the bushes and screamed!

We all yelled "assassin, assassin, assassin!!!!"

Then, we ran back to the safe place and none of us were killed. (metaphorically speaking). In the next game, Kenny decided to be the Assassin. We were all super scared about it!

The next round we played I was creeping around and started hearing a rustling sound in the bushes. I thought it was a raccoon, but I thought wrong!

“Oh my gosh!” I screamed.

I was being pulled into the bushes by some stranger! I started to scream for help and tried to get out of this person’s arms but this stranger gagged me so only quiet, muffled noises came out. I was set down behind bushes, with a gag in my mouth. I had just been kidnapped, it was so scary. Will anyone ever find me? I thought to myself.

The person, who took me, removed my gag and said, “If you scream, you’ll be dead.”

She shoved something into my mouth. It must have had knock out medicine on it because things went blurry, and then everything went black.

September 1, 2008

“Where am I?” I whispered to myself. I looked over and saw a woman sleeping; she must have been my kidnapper. “Wait a second,” I whispered to myself again, “That’s Wild Wendy!”

Wild Wendy was a kidnapper who was wanted in 20 states! The only reason I knew that was because I had seen her all over the news. Wendy started to wake up, and then she saw me staring at her. She got up and yanked me by my wrist!

“You say one word, you’re dead. You try to get away, you’re dead. If you ask for anything, you’ll be sorry. You got it?” Wendy asked.

I nodded my head quickly.

“Now let’s go!” she grumbled.

Wendy dragged me behind the bushes and through the woods until we reached some tiny cabin which was obviously her hide out.

Meanwhile, the rest of the group had been up all night looking for me.

“Where could she be? What could have happened?” Kenny was pacing back and forth muttering things to himself. The police had been there too, searching and looking for clues.

“Sir,” the police started talking to Kenny, “Our guess is that Kara has been kidnapped. We’ll have to look for clues and investigate with other people who are at the camp. For now you guys get some rest.”

“Okay, but wake us up right away if you find anything!” said Kenny.

“We will,” said the police.

September 2, 2008

“Eat this,” Wendy chucked an apple at me.

I was so hungry, but I was thinking, “What if she poisoned this?” I was angry and sad. I had been kidnapped and was with someone who was cruel and abusive! I said, “How do I know that you didn’t poison this?”

Wendy turned around and stared into my eyes, “Did you just talk?!” “I warned you not to talk!”

“I’m sorry!” I yelled.

“Oh, it’s too late for that!” Wendy yelled back at me.

She took out a knife and in those couple seconds all I could think was, “This is the end of me. In two seconds, I’ll be dead.” Then Wendy sliced my arm open! Blood was rushing out like a fast river! I lost feeling and I was so shocked that I wasn’t crying. “She didn’t kill me!” I was thinking.

In a minute those thoughts were gone. I was holding my arm, which was now stained with blood. I could feel pain shooting up my whole entire arm! I looked up at Wendy.

“Now you know what happens.” she said.

And with that, she walked out of the cabin, and left me there, alone, bleeding, and about to pass out. My next thought was, “It will be a miracle if I make it out of here alive.”

September 3, 2008- Morning

I woke up and could feel a huge amount of pain in my right arm, and then I remembered I had been cut. I really didn’t want to look but I had to. I rolled up my sleeve and saw the most horrific thing I had ever seen! My arm had a huge gash from my wrist, up to my shoulder. I could see bruises of blue, purple, and black. Underneath those bruises and that huge gash, I had lost so much blood, my arm was white. I pulled down my sleeve and looked up to see Wendy looking at me. “You shouldn’t have talked,” was all she said.

I looked down. "I have one question," I asked her, "Why did you kidnap me?" I didn't care that she had told me not to talk; I wasn't going to let her treat me like that.

"You just talked again!" Wendy pulled out her knife again and walked towards me.

"I don't care that you told me not to talk!" I screamed at her. Wendy started backing away from me. "I asked you a question didn't I?" I asked Wendy, "So are you going to answer it?"

"Yes, I will. Right before I hurt you again, but this time; I don't know if you'll make it out alive," Wendy replied.

I backed away, and I knew she wasn't kidding; she was for sure going to kill me now! But instead of just killing me right then and there, she walked out of the cabin again! Now, I wasn't going to eat or drink anything she gave me.

September 3, 2008- Afternoon

"Kenny!" Brooke yelled.

"What?" Kenny rushed over to where the police officers were standing with Brooke.

"Kenny, they found a bottle of knock out medicine in the bushes!" Brooke was saying, "This could have fingerprints or some type of evidence of who the kidnapper was!"

"Is that true?" Kenny asked the police officers. The police officers nodded their heads in agreement.

"We can test this to see if there are any fingerprints from the kidnapper. And if so, we can probably track them down."

"But why would this person use knock out medicine?" Kenny asked.

"We aren't sure," replied the police.

September 4, 2008

"Kenny we have found the kidnapper," the police officers reported.

"Really, who?" asked Kenny

"It is a woman named Wendy Willows. She is wanted in 20 states for kidnapping children. Police stations all over the United States call her Wild Wendy because she is so crazy and cruel," the police exclaimed.

"Do you think we can try and find her?" asked Kenny.

“Of course, we are actually heading out right now to try and find Kara and Wendy,” The policeman said, “Would you like to come with us?”

“Yes!” everyone including Brooke and Jack had heard their conversation, and they all wanted to find me.

Meanwhile, Wendy hadn’t been back in the cabin all night. I couldn’t sleep, because what if she just killed me while I was sleeping? The door opened, and in walked Wendy! I could see the knife in her pocket, she was walking towards me and I was backing away. But soon, I was cornered.

“It’s not so funny to talk now, is it?” Wendy laughed, “As a child I was abused and hurt, so I’m going to do the same thing to you!” And then right there at that moment she pushed me onto the ground! I couldn’t get up because I had hit my head super hard. Wendy pinned me to the ground and whispered, “Any last words?”

I couldn’t think of anything to say. Wendy had answered my question. She was abused, so now she was going to do the same to me.

“Okay then, no last words?” Wendy asked. “Bye, Bye!” Wendy started to raise her knife; I started to think of the game *Assassin*. In *Assassin*, you scream before you get murdered, so why don’t I scream right now!? And with all of my might I screamed! I screamed as loud as I could! Wendy just froze, her knife in the air, her eyes looking straight into mine. Then I heard footsteps, but it wasn’t Wendy’s it was someone else’s! A police officer opened our door and saw me pinned to the ground with Wendy, on top of me, about to kill me! Behind the police officer I could see Brooke, Jack, and Kenny. The police officer rushed into the cabin and lifted Wendy off of me, but I couldn’t get up, because I was so weak. Kenny rushed in, picked me up, and called an ambulance. I looked back inside the cabin and saw Wendy trying to fight the police, and yelling, “Let go of me!”

“Thank you for all of your help,” Kenny said to the police officer.

“You’re welcome.” replied the police, “Could you call 911 for me? I think it’s time to put Wild Wendy in jail.” Kenny happily obliged.

September 5, 2008

“You’re very lucky,” said the hospital nurse, “You could have died because of dehydration, and the loss of so much blood in your

arm.” Over the days that I was captured I had only three cups of water and had lost more than 50 percent of blood in my arm. So when I arrived at the hospital they had to stick an IV in my arm to rehydrate me, and they had to stitch up my arm. I had lost half of the feeling in my arm also, because when Wendy cut me, she cut nerves apart.

While it had only been five days, it felt like I had been gone for months. Those are five days I’d like to soon forget, but it’s not likely that I will. I will always refer to those days as my five days of misery.

The Adventures of Little Kitty

*It's lunchtime for Little Kitty, and he's tired of cat kibble. So, while his owner is at work, he sneaks off to his neighbor's house to steal some sausage. However, it's not as easy as he thought. Will he steal the treat, or be caught in the process? Find out in **THE ADVENTURES OF LITTLE KITTY**, by **Rayyan Mahmood**.*

It was noon. The country sun rose high up in the air. There were a lot of feelings around: happiness, sadness, and most of all—hunger. Yes, hunger. It was lunchtime, and Little Kitty was starving! His owner poured him a bowl of disgusting cat kibble.

“Eat up, Little Kitty. I’ll see you after work!” his owner said cheerfully.

Kibble! Not again! Little Kitty despised kibble. He wished he was a dog. Dogs got good food, like sausage and salami. His next-door Persian cat nemesis, Mark, has fresh fish every day, unlike Kitty, a tall Siamese cat. Kitty gritted his teeth whenever Mark came by. He kept teasing Little Kitty about how he got fresh fish and sausage every day, but all he ate was kibble. Kibble, kibble, kibble. Every day. While Kitty was feeling sorry for himself, a delicious aroma suddenly attacked his nose. Sausage! Kitty peered out of the window. His neighbors were having a party! There were tons of delicious food there (not cat kibble). A grin emerged on Little Kitty’s face.

“Maybe, just maybe...”

It was final. Kitty wanted sausage, and when Little Kitty wanted something, he would do anything in his power to get it. Plus, it would be a great chance to prove to Mark that he’s not the only cat that can get good food. So Kitty hatched a clever plan to steal the sausage. Operation Yum Yum had now begun. It was time to go. But, before he left, Little Kitty eyed his cat kibble.

“I’ve got to erase my tracks!” Kitty thought.

He dumped the kibble back into the bag. There we go. Now Kitty’s owner would never know what happened. Kitty stepped outside and.....

Cars. Lots of them. Kitty would have to find a way across the road. He looked around.

The road was lengthy. He wouldn't have time to walk around it. Then, he looked up, and saw a lady carrying a small dog in her purse. Quickly, Little Kitty leapt in the lady's purse. The small dog, however, noticed Kitty.

"Hey! What are you doing in here?" questioned the dog.

"Can't talk. Gotta go!" replied Kitty.

As soon as the lady was halfway across the street, Kitty jumped out of the purse right next to his neighbor's house. He had managed to overcome the road. He was a step closer to his sausage.

Kitty looked under the gate. Thankfully, there were no people outside, but... Oh no! Another dog! Kitty almost fainted. How could he snatch a sausage with a dog at the front gate? Kitty looked around. His neighbor's fence was old and scraggily. He ran over and started to claw at it. He clawed and clawed until he made a kitty-sized hole in the fence. Little Kitty slid through the fence. He peeked around the corner. The dog was a German Sheppard, one of the best guard dogs. Little Kitty knew he couldn't just walk in the front door. He had to find another way. After circling around to the back of the house, Little Kitty saw another door. He looked through the keyhole. There were two people inside- a sleeping man and an old knitting lady. With his claws, Kitty nimbly picked the lock on the door. He snuck into the room. There, he saw a long, winding staircase. And so, Kitty decided to climb them.

After his long climb, Kitty was apparently in the attic. He observed lots of straw and boxes. Some boy was gathering straw there. Kitty swiftly hid behind a hay bale. Below him, he could hear lots of people chatting. The party must be downstairs! But how could Kitty get there?

Suddenly, Kitty's cat mind hatched an idea. He clawed the straw away and made a small kitty-sized hole. Then, he weaved the straw together and made a little harness. He fastened one end of the straw harness to a hay bale, and the other to himself. Carefully, he lowered himself down into the kitchen, even better-right above the delicious sausage. He found it! The meaty, succulent sausage made his mouth water as its aroma blended-no, transfused- with the sweet smell of pineapple and steak. There was good food all around him, like lobster and chicken, and for a moment, Little Kitty was dazed, lost in the maze of food before him. He was tempted to just

fall down and stuff his little cheeks with all kinds of scrumptious food, but he knew his mission. He was here for the sausage, and only for the sausage. He lowered himself down and reached out. His paws clutched the meaty goodness.

“I did it! I made it! The sausage is mine!” Kitty exclaimed.

He grabbed two sausages and hauled himself back up into the attic. He unwove the straw and replaced the hole in the roof. Now, all he had to do was escape.

The boy from the attic went downstairs, and the man had woken up. There was no way

Kitty could make his way out without being seen. But then, Kitty saw a way out. No. That was insane. But he had to do it. Kitty walked over to the window and picked the lock with his claw. He was on the very top of the house. With the sausages in his mouth, he slid down the roof, flew off, did two somersaults in mid-air, and landed on all four paws.

“Yes!” Kitty thought.

Until...

“*BARK! BARK! GRROWL!*” the German Sheppard cried.

Oh dear! Little Kitty completely forgot about the dog. Quickly, he ran to the gate, but the dog cut him off. How could Kitty escape? The dog was much stronger and faster than Kitty.

“But not smarter...”

Kitty thought. He looked at his two sausages. He took the bigger one and swung it as hard as he could. The smaller one flew off, and the dog went chasing after it.

“Goodbye, beautiful sausage.” Kitty cried.

His little eyes filled with tears. No. He would mourn his lost sausage later. He sprinted as fast as he could to the gates, and by the time the dog had finished gobbling up the sausage; Kitty was already under the gate. Mark saw him holding the big, plump sausage. His eyes bulged.

“Wow! That’s one big sausage! Maybe, you would like to share it? Please?” Mark begged.

Kitty replied, “Let me think about it... No!” he exclaimed, with an evil grin on his face.

Ignoring the cars, he dashed across the road into his small village house. Then, Kitty sat down to enjoy his treat.

“I have to savor the moment. I’ll take little teensy bites, and—”
CHOMP!

“Yum! That was good!” Kitty remarked.

But as soon as Kitty swallowed his sausage, another smell assaulted Little Kitty’s nose.

“I smell fish-yummy, salty fish. I could go for a piece of fish right now.” Little Kitty commented.

“Looking for fish, Kitty?”

Kitty turned around and saw a shady figure holding a box of fish sticks.

“Mmm, mmm, mmm! That was delicious!”

“Who are you? Wait... Mark!”

“Ha! Not even close! I’m Zark, Mark’s evil twin brother! I plan to steal all the fish in the world! And who are you, brave enough to face me?”

Little Kitty looked up with a sly face.

“The name’s Kitty. Little Kitty.”

The Blood Trail

THE BLOOD TRAIL is about a normal teenage boy who loves horror movies and sees blood down the street from his house, follows it and almost dies. See what will happen in this story by **Kenneth Reid**.

Kenny was a normal teenage boy who loved basketball, his family, and horror films. He always wanted to star in a horror film so he actually was excited when he saw a trail of blood as he was walking home from school. Most teenagers would run at the sight of blood but not Kenny.

He followed the trail of blood until he saw a man hitting another man with a crow bar. The guy with the crow bar had a mask, and was approximately 6' foot 5" with a top hat on like Abraham Lincoln. He also had black leather boots, a scarf and a black puffy coat. Kenny and the man with the crow bar made eye contact and Kenney was frightened by his piercing black eyes. Kenny ran for his life. Kenney looked back and the guy with the crow bar was chasing him. Kenny had to think quickly and remembered that in all the horror movies he had seen if you fall, you die. Kenny knew he had to be very careful.

Just then Kenny saw a park and hid under the slide. Kenney grabbed his cell phone in his pocket and called 911. Kenney was so frightened and whispered to the woman on 911, "Help! A maniac is trying to kill me!"

Kenney was so frightened that he shook the slide. The guy with the crow bar saw the slide shaking and tiptoed over to Kenney. Kenney knew that the guy with the crow bar was going to get him. Just then Kenney heard loud sirens and an officer yell, "Freeze!" The officer tackled the guy with the crow bar and put hand cuffs on him before they shoved him in the police car. Another officer led Kenney to a separate car and took both of them to the police station.

At the police station it seemed like Kenney had to answer 1,000,000 questions. Kenney looked over to his right and saw the police man taking the man with the crow bar's mask off. Kenney couldn't believe his eyes. The person who he was looking at was his best friend Danny. Kenney couldn't help himself. He jumped over a

chair and dodged a desk. Kenney ran over to Danny and said, "Why did you try to kill me?"

Danny replied with a smirk on his face, "I always wanted to be you."

Stunned, Kenney left the police station and walked home. Kenney couldn't believe that Danny tried to kill him. Kenny and Danny were buddies. They used to play video games, stay up late, eat junk food, and they even went to school together. They were almost like brothers.

When Kenney finally arrived home he just wanted to lie on his couch and go to sleep. Suddenly the phone rang. Kenney picked up the phone and the police man on the other line said, "Kenney, Danny has escaped."

Kenney was terrified. All he could think about was running away. He ran to the door and he saw Danny. Kenney backed into a corner while Danny said, "Hi Kenney."

Kenney replied, "What's wrong with you? Kill that one guy and now me?"

Danny replied, "That guy owed me money. When I saw you in the alley I became enraged. Your life was so easy."

While Danny was talking all Kenney could think about was how he was going to escape. Just then Kenny's dog started barking. He almost forgot that his dog was in the laundry room. Kenney took his chances and opened the door and the dog Spike attacked Danny at his leg. Just then Kenny saw the police and they charged through Kenney's door. The police searched and searched for Danny but all they found was a dead dog. Danny had escaped once again and though Kenny never saw Danny again, he couldn't help but remember the one time he starred in his own personal horror film.

Bully

*Have you ever been bullied? **BULLY**, by **Damonté M.**, is a story about a boy who has to deal with ugly, mean, nasty-looking eighth-graders. This time, they didn't know whom they were messing with and got a taste of their own medicine.*

Hi, my name is Kevin Pablo. My house is small with the usual stuff that a house needs-like a television, a refrigerator, and a bed. Also, my backyard is not that big, but it has a lot of stuff. My attic is one of the scariest places in the house. I hear strange things like a hissing sound in the attic because my room is under it, but that doesn't compare to my first day of middle school.

I woke up from my annoying alarm. It was the first day of middle school. I did my normal routines. I did two push-ups, a half of a sit up, and a quarter of a pull up. Then I walked down to eat the worst breakfast of rotten milk and hard cereal. After that I walk to school (which is about ten minutes away).

The next ten minutes I was in middle school. I was so scared that I couldn't move my feet until this 6' 8" guy pushed me about ten yards. I was teeny tiny compared to the six foot eighth-graders towering over me. It became scarier because my locker was in the eighth grade hall and mine was between the two biggest, meanest, bullies in the school. Their names were Bob and Rob. At least, that's what the kids said. I did not know for sure. They came up to me like it was their destiny to bully me at Central Middle School. The very first thing that I said to anyone, in middle school is "Don't hurt me; I will give you my lunch money." Can you believe that?

But they did not want my money; they just wanted to hear my scream. At the end of the day, I had no underwear. They were lost in the school somewhere. When I got home from school I asked my dad what he would do if he were bullied. He replied, "Are you getting bullied son?"

I lied and said, "No! My friend is getting bullied I just want to help him."

Then my dad said, "Well, if you want a bully to get off your back, you need to stand up to him. Say, 'STOP! I won't give you this or do this for you anymore.' Then tell the teacher."

The next morning, I had a great breakfast. I was excited, however nervous. I walked down the eighth grade hall and there they were, Rob and Bob, next to my locker. I was terrified. I walked straight to them and said the exact words my dad had told me to say. Luckily, there was the teacher right behind me to see everything. Then I walked away hearing the kids laughing at Rob and Bob.

Carry On

*Sarah Brown was a 12-year-old foster child. "I was happier at my old house by myself. Who cares if my father is dead or alive? I was happier," Sarah would say to the receptionist at the foster home. Because of her attitude nobody would adopt her. But finally she got lucky. Will Sarah find out if her father is dead or alive? Read to find out in **CARRY ON**, by **Aiden Tomkinson**.*

"I've been through a lot. I've been left alone once, and it didn't feel good." Sarah was a twelve-year-old foster child. Her mother died in a car accident three years ago. After Sarah's Mom died, her dad began drinking. Sometimes he would pass out on the floor. Sarah loved her dad, but four months after her mom, Emery, died, he forgot Sarah's name. Sarah thought she would die. Nobody took care of her. He forgot to pay the bills, so Sarah learned how, and she couldn't go to school. One night Sarah and her father went to bed and the next morning Sarah was alone. So one of her neighbors turned her into foster care.

The foster house for the children was AWFUL. It smelled like dirty clothes and dry food with no flavor. The walls were dark and dingy. Everyone was welcoming, but nobody could fill the void of losing her mother and father. "I guess I'm not the only one. All of the other kids don't have parents either," Sarah would say to herself. All of the walls were white but they looked brown from dirt and age. There was a girl sitting in the corner who looked about Sarah's age. She looked abandoned and lost. Sarah walked over to her and she looked up. The girl was pale and blonde. It looked like she wanted to say something but Sarah heard nothing.

"Hi, I'm Sarah. Is it okay if I sit by you? I've been alone for a while and I need someone to talk to." Sarah sat down as the girl nodded.

"I'm Stella. I've been here for what seems like forever. Every little kid gets adopted, that's why I'm alone, and not with my sis. Don't worry. We'll be here a while," Stella replied. She looked as if she was about to cry, but Sarah wasn't sure if it was out of joy or if it was because she missed her sister so much.

Sarah and Stella became good friends and would always hang out together. Finally one of the workers at the foster home noticed

what good friends they were and he made sure that if and when they got signed up for a foster home they would go together! The girls were overjoyed that they would be fostered together. All they would do is look through house magazines to try to imagine the house they would live in. Everything was going swell until one day a plump red haired woman walked into the foster home. She nagged at the woman at the desk for a long time.

"I asked if you had any girls that are bigger than toddlers. I want one girl!" The woman yelled.

"Ma'am we have two girls but they need to be fostered together!"

"Fine, let me meet them." The woman started walking toward them. She did not look like a person who wanted to give them a new home. "Those are the girls?" she asked. Stella and Sarah were right. She was not going to be a good foster mother, even though they didn't care about her in any way.

"Hey, who are you?" Sarah asked.

"I am your new foster mother I guess. Now go gather your things. We are getting out of this place. It smells awful!" Sarah thought that this would be worse than being at the foster home, and she was right!

When they got to the house, Stella and Sarah were shown their room that they got to share. It had light yellow paint, and they knew it was in the attic but "Jenny," as she wanted to be called, denied it. She handed them two boxes full of old clothes. The woman told them they were for work, but they didn't understand.

"Oh yes. You girls will wake up in the morning and do this list of chores." The list included doing the laundry, cleaning the car, hanging the laundry, making breakfast, cleaning the rooms, and mopping the floors. "This must be done before 7:30 A.M.," Jenny smirked.

Stella asked about where they would wash up. The woman said that there was a bathroom across the hall with two toothbrushes, a shower, and two hairbrushes.

"Speaking of hair," the woman smirked, "we must get you girls haircuts. You both have hair like a bird is nesting in it." Sarah knew it was true, but she had to ask about school.

"Will we be attending school?"

“Of course you will go to school, if you finish the chores and walk to school. There is a school about a mile down the road. You may attend if you please,” the woman remarked.

Sarah rolled her eyes. *At least this smelled better than the foster home* Sarah thought. The girls were about to do the chores when Sarah noticed the sunset from the window by her bed. Sarah remembered this. In her old house, they had a perfect view of the sunset. Sarah and her parents would sit outside on a picnic blanket and watch the sun. The girls stared at the sun for about 15 minutes then had to walk the route to their new school for tomorrow.

After the girls walked back from the school, they realized Jenny had a wonderful backyard, and the sun was still on the verge of setting. There was a large tree that the girls climbed up and they got the most amazing view of the sun. The sky was pink, orange, and yellow. The girls sat in the tree until the pink sky turned to dark blue. They climbed down and went to bed.

The alarm went off at 6:00 A.M., and Stella and Sarah put on their work clothes and started the work. “I’ve been looking for you girls. It’s time for you to get changed. We are getting our hair done today. Stella and Sarah were proud they did all of the chores by 7:00. The girls changed and drove to the salon, ready to get their hair done.

When the girls were getting their hair done Sarah heard Jenny talking to the hairdresser. She said, “I don’t know, but I’ve been thinking of getting a pet to make the girls learn some responsibility.” Sarah told Stella about it once her hair was done. Stella seemed a bit jittery because she never had a pet.

“I wonder what pet we’ll get?” Stella asked when they were on their way home.

When the girls came home, the phone was ringing. Jenny walked over and picked up the phone and said, “Hello.”

“Hello, this is Carl Brown. I’m calling about the horse. When do you want me to drop it off?” the man asked through the phone.

“Oh yes. How about you drop her off at 3:30 this afternoon.” Jenny talked to the man for about five more minutes and the conversation ended with, “Okay thank you, see you then.”

Sarah thought that was very weird because her dad’s name was Carl Brown. Also her dad would always talk about having a farm. Sarah was freaking out because she wondered if that was her dad.

She recognized his name because she was eavesdropping by the stairs.

"Girls, can you come down here for a minute?" Jenny asked nicely.

"Well I've been thinking girls. I know I have made you do a lot of chores, but I was thinking of getting you girls a horse. There is a horse up for slaughter and I don't want that to happen to the poor animal. What do you think about it?"

"We would love it," Stella piped out!

"Well, you need to take care of it and the man will deliver the horse at 3:30 this afternoon."

The girls ran outside and jumped and squealed with delight! When the deliveryman showed up at the house, Stella was getting a shelter ready for the horse and Jenny wasn't home, so Sarah got to help unload the horse. The man with the horse stepped out of the trailer. He looked very familiar. Apparently he recognized Sarah too, because he asked if he knew her.

"Do I know you?" the man asked.

"I don't know. Do you have a daughter?" Sarah asked the man.

"I did, but I left her about a year ago," the man replied.

"Was her name possibly Sarah?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"Hi Dad. How have you been?"

They both realized it. They were father and daughter! Sarah's dad called Jenny and she said he could stay with the family. After Sarah's dad finished talking to Jenny, they took care of the horse. She was tall and gray. Stella and Sarah decided to name her Lovely. Sarah suggested it because the horse had a heart shaped mark on her face, and she was well mannered. Lovely had a loving soul, and so did Sarah's mom.

The Crystal of Light

*I was on my way to my mom's house and a secret agent calls me for a job to retrieve, **THE CRYSTAL OF LIGHT**, by **John Garrett**.*

Ring! Ring! "Hello? Is this Mark Carpenter?" asked the stranger.

"Yes! Yes, it is. Who are you?" replied Mark.

"We are the CIA, and we need you to retrieve something," the stranger answered.

"Why did you pick me?" Mark asked interested.

"Well, we read your bio and learned that you were very sneaky, fast, smart, and ex-special forces. That's why we chose you," replied the CIA agent.

"We are trying to retrieve the crystal of light, the most powerful thing in the universe. It may blow up the world; it also opens a portal into another universe. The universe is very far from earth. If the crystal gets into bad hands, everything could go bad. The world would end at a terrible cost. That's why we cost you to retrieve what is rightfully ours. This universe has people who are practically gods," added the agent. "I'm pretty sure there is only one God, and He doesn't look like that. Mark, we'll call if we need to give you more information. See you at the base in 1200 hours. This job will be for \$100,000," the agent expressed before ending the call.

Ding! Dong! Mark ran his mother's doorbell. "Mom, it's me! I'm here to tell you something." *Whoosh!* The door opened quickly by his mother, while Mark was talking. "Mom! I've been on the phone with the CIA.

"Mark, you know the CIA is going to turn on you in a heartbeat," exclaimed Mark's mother.

"Mom! The job is for a \$100,000. I'll be OK," Mark said.

"OK, but if you are not home in a month, I will go to the government and **START SOME TROUBLE!**" answered his mother.

"Mom, I'll be fine. I love you," said Mark.

Err! Err! "Let's go, Carpenter. We have to be on that helicopter," remarked the CIA agent who called Mark for the job. Inside the helicopter, the agent gave Mark orders. "OK, we're flying right over the tunnel that you have to be in. Grab your parachute and go Carpenter! It's too dangerous for us to fly in," yelled the CIA agent.

After Mark Carpenter made it inside the tunnel, the mikes were cut. There were a lot of bugs inside the tunnel. Mark kept walking towards this room. There were a lot of guns and ammo in there. Mark walked in the door and closed it behind him. He looked at all the guns and ammo and saw some really old guns like the Thompson. He took one of them and went through the door he came in.

He walked inside another room, a big room. There were scientists everywhere testing on the crystal of light. In the middle of the room stood the boss and many bodyguards. Mark had to silently take them out. Mark glanced at his watch; it was already into the next week. "Man, my mom said I had a month to return!!" he said.

Bang! Boom! Bam! Mark was knocking out the guards one by one, snapping their necks, and they never saw him coming. When he looked at the boss, he saw it was the same CIA agent who hired him for the mission. *It was a set up!* "I gotta get that crystal and get out of here," Mark said.

The boss showed the scientist a picture of Mark and told him to push a button if he saw him. Mark made a plan, saw a rope, got on the rope to pick up the crystal, dropped to the floor, and ran out of the building. Luckily, he had another parachute and was able to jump out of the tunnel and fly all the way down to the ground.

Mark Carpenter saw a car; he also saw a cigarette burning on the ground. He looked over at the tall building. It was a coffee shop on fire! He saw a man flying in the air, face on fire. Mark looked again and the car was talking. As he opened the door to the car, he saw a dog that was black, dirty, and had no legs. Mark got into the car and drove off to the airport.

He got a flight but had to wait for two hours. The CIA agent who set him up came into the airport with his bodyguards. Mark roughed them up while everyone else ran for cover. When Mark heard the lady announce his flight back to America was now boarding, Mark slipped onto the plane. It flew for seven hours before finally getting to Miami. He ran to his mother's house and told her about his adventure and about what he found, **The Crystal of Light**.

The Demon

In THE DEMON by A.J. Gilbert, Jack Smith has a sister who becomes possessed when they move to Michigan. His sister haunts the entire family and the results are devastating.

Hi, I'm Jack Smith and I am going to tell you my story. It was a tough day to move because it was 85 degrees out and sunny. Sadly, I had to move from California where it was always sunny to Michigan where it rained half the time, no oceans to surf on, and no beaches to relax on. I had my last meal before I left. It was 12:30. I had a crisp, burnt, delicious, juicy cheeseburger. It was exactly how I liked it.

My dad got a new job so we had to move. I had a lot of friends back home and I had to ditch them all for that dumb job my dad took. We were finally there after a 22 hour drive. We stopped at one of the worst, most beat-up houses I had ever seen.

I asked my mom in a whiney voice, "Mom are we really living here?"

She responded, "Quit your whining."

We went in the house and it sounded like someone was opening and closing a door. My mom told me to go upstairs and check it out. I saw an eerie shadow out of the corner of my eye but no one was up there. I went downstairs again and told my mom that no one was up there.

She said, "That's strange."

Later that night we all went to bed. My brother and my little sister and I all had to share a room. It was one of the worst nights of my life. I got no sleep whatsoever. Sarah was crying all night and Andrew took over the whole bed.

Next morning I woke up to the delicious smell of chocolate chip pancakes. I was the second person down there. As usual my mom had made her Saturday special, pancakes.

"Yum," I said in an energetic voice.

She asked, "Have you seen Sarah yet?"

"No, she was crying all night though."

We went looking for her. No one could find her. My mom ran right to the phone and frantically called the police. They said they would be over in 10 minutes at the most. It took them 20 minutes.

We were all sobbing next to the burning hot fire pit. They didn't find her.

That night we heard a soft voice that whispered, "Sarah" three times and then she giggled.

It woke me up and I went in the hallway to check it out. I saw her, but in a more deformed version.

I said, "Sarah is that you?"

She responded in a deep voice saying, "No." She stormed right at me.

I banged on my parents room saying, "Open the door. Help me please." They opened it.

My dad said, "Get in." We locked the door.

"Mom, I saw her in the hall. I asked her if it was her and she was talking in a really deep voice."

"I'm calling the cops," my dad said in a scared voice.

The demon in Sarah's body barged right through the door and said, "Put the phone down if you want your family to live." My mom put down the phone slowly. She was shaking.

"What do you want?" my mom said in a frightened voice.

"Your heads," said the demon. "Here is your son's head if you don't believe me."

We all started crying and the demon left. We didn't see it for a while until two weeks later at the funeral for my brother Andrew.

Everyone was sobbing and saying, "He was too young."

We told the police but no one believed us. The demon was standing under a tree. I didn't notice it was her until she came closer. Everyone started running. The rabbi started saying a prayer and the demon fell. The demon had died. It was Sarah and she was back to normal.

My mom ran right to her and said, "Sarah, you're normal!"

We were moving back to our old house in California. When I heard the news I was so happy. I was finally going to see my friends again. When we got home everyone was holding up "Welcome Home" signs. That was the first time I smiled since my brother died. We were finally safe.

Drama

In DRAMA by: Lindsay Martin a girl got horribly hurt and they have a play that night. How will they run the show without breaking the girl's heart?

Oh, how I HATE Heather Appell! With her short ivory hair, pig-like nose, and squinty brown eyes, with little gleams of red in them, oh how I hate her! Maybe I should explain... she is Ariel in the little mermaid. The role I dreamed about getting, and Jeff is the prince! (He is the cutest boy in the world!)

Over the past month, she got this new mermaid costume, which covers barely any skin! The sad thing is Heather isn't even model skinny, she's a little chunky! But, guess what part I got, well I'm just small, dancing seaweed. Isn't that just dandy? No! It isn't just dandy! My one line is "And that's the story of the Little Mermaid!" The thing is I have the whole script memorized, so I could be the understudy of everybody, but I'm not. I guess the director doesn't need understudies, because the play is tomorrow.

Afterward, if we have time we play a game called "Zip, Zap, Zop." The rules are simple, you stand in a circle and someone starts out by saying "Zip!" and points to another person and they say "Zap!" and then they point to another person and say "Zop!" It goes in a cycle like that for a while until someone hesitates or says the wrong word. I won, like always.

After I left acting we went to a cast party before the play, it was at a kid named Patrick's house, and he had a zip line. It was really amusing and everyone went on it, except Heather. Everyone was telling Heather to get on the zip line but she wouldn't, then Jeff came and said, "C'mon Heather don't be a lame-o!" So then she went, over his rocky pond and through the emerald trees and then she jumped off on the way back.

I yelled, "Bend your legs!" but she didn't listen. Heather screamed and landed flat on her back on the bank of the rocky pond. Everyone ran over to her. She was lying smack on her back in a little pool of her blood, moaning.

"Help me, call 911!" So I pulled out my phone and called.

“Hello what is the problem?” they asked.

“Ummm, well, so... there is this girl and she was on a zip line and she fell, and is losing blood quite rapidly and Ummm, well, Ummm,” I stammered.

That’s when Patrick took the phone and said, “We are on 9712 West Brook Road. It’s a small street right off of Telegraph. Please come quickly, this girl is hurt badly.”

A few minutes later the police appeared with an ambulance. They took Heather on a stretcher, even though Heather was whining about the play and how she needed to be Ariel. That’s when I was dumb and said, “I have the whole script memorized, and I could do it.” Right after that I clapped my hand over my mouth and let out a small whimper. I couldn’t do it. I would feel so bad taking away her part.

Then Jeff had to go and say, “Great, Danielle saved the show!” Everyone started clapping and cheering for me. It was SO awkward!

“Danielle, Danielle, Danielle, Danielle!” I can’t believe they started a chant! Then I felt really bad for Heather. I mean, this girl was lying on a stretcher and I was stealing her part. That’s when I had my idea.

“Hey guys, I think Heather deserves this part, I just can’t take this away from her.”

I explained my idea to them, and they really liked it. My idea was to have Heather star in the show. I would push her around in her wheelchair and she would recite her lines. We went to the hospital to see if Heather was up to it. She was sitting up in bed, wearing the pale blue scrubs. I told her my idea and she loved it. I asked the doctor if it was alright with him and he said it was fine.

“As long as Heather didn’t use her legs, because they are badly damaged,” he stated.

We stepped onstage, the lights created a bright cloud that formed a barrier between the audience and us. The show had finally begun. Heather started singing the first song. At first it sounded a little grim, but as the show progressed the singing got marvelous. She hit the notes with ease, and you could almost see the emotion pouring out of her.

I wheeled her over to the “prince” Jeff. Instead of dancing with Heather, he took my hand and whirled me around and around. We danced and danced while Heather sang, and it was amazing. So that

is when I led him in the direction of Heather's wheelchair, and we danced/pushed Heather offstage to get her crutches for the final bow.

When we were offstage we looked everywhere for Heather's crutches. They weren't anywhere! We were running out of time. That happened to be the time Jeff had an idea.

"Hey Danielle, grab Heather with me, let's just carry her onstage!"

We ran onstage with Heather in our arms. Everything was quiet, silent. That's when people realized that this was the final bow. One by one they stood up and then they started to clap. They were full out clapping now! We got a standing ovation! And that is when I said my line.

"And that's the story of the Little Mermaid!"

After the play, Heather thanked me for giving her the opportunity to do something she loved, and really wanted to do. I finally saw what our director saw in her. I think I made a new friend.

The Haunted Mine

*Three kids set out on an adventure one crisp day in Russia, but they never thought it would be their end, their grave stuck in a mine with a perilous battle looming around the corner. Will they survive or die? Find out in **THE HAUNTED MINE** by Jack French.*

One day a group of teens whose names were Jack, Joseph and Phil lived in Russia around 1997. Phil was not very smart, but he was just about perfect at everything else. Joseph was short for a 19-year-old with ragged black hair. Jack was taller than most; he did well in school but was normally just an average teen.

One day they were eating in a restaurant when they overheard an old man blabbering about some haunted mine, but they didn't know whom he was talking to. Jack said, "Why don't we go this weekend?" Phil agreed right away. Joseph pointed out it was an old abandoned mine with over 97 miners who died in it back in 1978. The government had closed it a few months after the collapse.

Phil said, "It's amazing what smart phones could do."

Jack said, "We're not going to miss a chance to explore a mine and I wonder why it was closed by the government? It says it was deemed unstable or it was haunted." During another argument Joseph pointed out that the old man was crazy and didn't know what he was talking about, but there was an abandoned mine north of the maps on their phones. So, Phil gave in and agreed to go to the mine Saturday afternoon. If only they had listened to Joseph.

Saturday afternoon was a beautiful day in Russia. So Joseph said they should just go to town and walk around while it was warm, but the idea got squashed. So they set off into the mine. They opened the gate to find it fine, no collapse, but they took a few more steps in and the door shut and the lights turned off. It was pitch black and Phil started freaking out being afraid of the dark. They knew something weird was happening when an orb of red light appeared.

Jack reached out to touch the orb and it started glowing. Then they realized it was no orb, it was a face and the orb glowed bigger and bigger and time slowed down. It flew towards Phil and encased

him. Then it was gone, just like that- but Phil was different. His eyes glowed red and started shouting, "You shall all serve the queen in time." He rushed down the tunnels. Joseph and Jack gave chase but were soon lost and could not find Phil.

So the two started wandering the tunnels for a little bit when they saw light up ahead and the ugliest, most messed up creature ever! It looked like a big ball with a massive eye and tendrils all around, some encased in the wall. Joseph and Jack became paralyzed with fear as the creatures and the monsters started turning towards them. They looked like fly humanoid creatures. They started to make a series of screeches that the two teens thought must be communication, so they came to their senses and ran, but the "fly men" took haste. Jack and Joseph eventually were chased into a dead end.

They were trapped. Joseph ran over and grabbed a stick of dynamite off some old barrels. It was probably left there from before the mine got infested and closed. So he lit the fuse and chucked it at the wall, but their luck was bad. The fuse went out. Jack screamed, "They are right behind us!" This time when Joseph hit the fuse it exploded next to him, but Jack ran for the exit. As he made his way out, the tunnel collapsed so he ran and ran and ran. He found his car and drove home. The following morning on TV, some people were talking about a mine collapse, but Jack knew that wasn't true because he saw only one body visible in the rubble- Joseph's. He realized the government knew the truth.

The Masked Man

*In this thriller horror story, you can find out who the masked man is that is trying to kill Billy Parker. Find out who it is in **THE MASKED MAN** by **Mason Shaevsky**.*

I saw him and the ugly tattoos on his arm. He was chasing me through the streets. My name is Billy Parker. I am 28 years old. My father left the house one night when I was little and never came back. He disappeared. He was a very bad guy.

Lately I've noticed someone following me wherever I go and I think he was looking in my window at night. It started about two weeks ago. It was a dark, rainy night. I had nothing else to do so I went to a diner for dinner. I was eating my delicious corned beef sandwich. I love the texture so much with its greasy fatty taste of it. I saw other people eating delicious crispy, crunchy, greasy fries. I also saw one guy outside playing a depressing song on his guitar eating a hamburger. I saw the masked man in the back window with a knife in his hand. He had ugly snake tattoos and was wearing a black ski mask and all black clothes. He mouthed something that looked like he was going to kill me, so I left the diner and sprinted out as fast as I could. I never looked back. I was sweaty from running and I went back to my home. Thank God he didn't follow me. I went upstairs and went to bed.

That night, I had the worst nightmare about the masked man. I woke up sweating at 8am. I got up to make my morning coffee. Oh no! It's 8 A.M. and I was supposed to get to my job at 7 A.M. I have to take a shower.

When I left my house I felt different. It was almost like someone came in and moved my stuff around. I swear I put my phone on the dresser, but it was on my bed. It started blinking and said I had one new voicemail. I went on my phone and listened to it. In an eerie voice someone said, "Turn around Billy." I turned around and right on my floor was a dead person with a bunch of blood on them. They had been stabbed repeatedly. I looked a little closer at the body and it was my mother! She looked a lot different with her guts and organs on her body. I looked even closer and there was a

note. It said don't call the police or you will die too! At this point, I was very scared and was in a panic from seeing my dead mother.

I did not call the police since I did not want to die, too. I helped my family plan my mother's funeral. It was a small, private ceremony. Obviously, my dad wasn't there, but my grandparents and aunt and uncle were there along with my cousins and some family friends.

For several weeks after the funeral, I still felt that someone was following me. I repeatedly looked over my shoulder and slept with the lights on at night. I had moved in with my aunt and uncle, since my mom was dead and I was too scared to live on my own. I hired a security guard to follow me around during the day since we thought whoever killed my mom, might come after me next.

I was in school (since I am a high-school teacher). As I walked down the hall, I could sense that someone was following me. I turned around a couple times, but no one was there. Finally, I felt someone put a hand on my shoulder. I turned around and it was my father. He looked awful. His eyes were bloodshot and he was un-shaven. He was missing a couple teeth and he had an odor like alcohol.

My dad told me to leave the school with him. I said no, but he forced me out the back door. Luckily, my security guard saw what was going on and called the police. His car had lashes, scrapes, and as my father and I reached his car, the police were already at the school. They told my dad to let me go, but he did not listen. My dad shot the policeman and drove away with me.

He kidnapped me and took me to this abandoned building. He dragged me into it. He did not take my phone. When he went out to lock his car, I called the police. They would be arriving shortly. When my dad came back in he came up to me and hit me in the head with his gun. Then everything went black.

I woke up in the hospital. The police were in there. They said right after my dad hit me they sniped him through the window of the building. They told me not to worry and they know everything now, they even said they found out about my mom.

My Brother Matthew

*“My brother Matthew was a life changing and inspiring brother who battled pediatric cancer for 18 months,” says author **Elana**. Find out more about Matthew’s journey in the story **MY BROTHER MATTHEW**.*

My twin brother Matthew had an extremely busy Saturday. He had a basketball game in the morning. When the game was over, he went to his friend's birthday party. That evening, we went out to dinner with another family. When we returned home, we went to sleep. During the night, Matthew woke up screaming at the top of his lungs. He was in so much pain that he started yelling in his sleep. He told my parents that his left leg was killing him.

On Sunday, my mother took Matthew to our friend's home. He is an orthopedic surgeon. My parents were extremely concerned about the amount of pain my brother was experiencing. The doctor examined his left leg. He did not think it was broken. He insisted that my parents bring him to see Dr. Zaltz in the morning. Dr. Zaltz is a pediatric orthopedic surgeon. He also told my mother to give Matthew some Tylenol to help ease some of the pain.

The following morning, Matthew and my mother went to see Dr. Zaltz. He said, “There is no break and you must take Matthew directly to Beaumont for blood work and an ultrasound.” Matthew and my mom went from the doctor's office to the hospital for the tests. Then, they returned home. When he went to sleep, Matthew was still in a lot of pain.

When I woke up in the morning, Matthew and my parents weren't there. A family friend was at our house. I was really upset. I couldn't imagine where my parents and Matthew were. It was the first time that Matthew and my parents were not in the house when I woke up. What could have happened? I started to get upset, but I covered it up because I didn't want anyone to know how I was feeling. I later learned that Dr. Zaltz called my parents shortly after midnight to tell them to bring Matthew to the hospital. They could not tell exactly what was causing my brother's pain, but they wanted him to be admitted to control the pain. They also wanted to further test Matthew to determine what was wrong.

Several days later, they were able to figure out what was causing Matthew's pain. He and I were only four years old and he was diagnosed with Neuroblastoma, a form of pediatric cancer. Matthew was at Beaumont Hospital when they gave us the horrible news. It seemed like no time had passed when my parents took Matthew to Chicago for treatment. I couldn't think straight. I had never been away from my parents or Matthew and suddenly they had all disappeared in a matter of seconds. I'm not sure I understood what was happening. I had no idea how sick my twin brother was, but I figured it couldn't be good based on the information I knew. There is no way he could still be in that much pain without some type of big problem. I also knew that since Matthew was in the hospital, he couldn't walk. What I mean is that he wasn't able to put weight on his left leg and have it function properly. It all happened very fast. My last hunch was that my parents wouldn't just take Matthew to Chicago for help unless it was bad. They just wouldn't leave my sister, other brother and me for just a minor issue. All these reasons made me very nervous and scared.

Once my parents got Matthew settled at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, my father returned to Michigan. After this short time, we always had one parent with us in Michigan. My father, sister, brother, and I drove to Chicago every weekend to visit Matthew and my mom. During the time he had pediatric cancer, the treatment made him lose his hair. I remember the first time I saw him after he lost his hair. I was shocked. He looked really sick without hair. When he had a full head of hair, he just looked like my healthy, normal brother. All of a sudden he looked totally different.

At first, I didn't know how to act around him. Fortunately, he made it very easy. He was always in a good mood. I can count how many times I saw him when he didn't have a big smile on his face. He usually had something funny to say or told us something funny that happened. He made it very easy to be around him. No matter how many times I tried to figure out how to act around him, he took care of it all. I always felt bad for him because he had to stay in the hospital for a week at a time, if not longer. When he wasn't in the hospital, he'd have to go there for tests. It seemed really hard. Every day I worried about Matthew and what was going to happen to him. I always wanted to visit him in Chicago. He loved when his

family came to visit and was so happy to see everyone. I felt sad when I couldn't see him because I felt a part of me was missing. When you have a brother who has pediatric cancer, you always worry about him.

It was really scary when I didn't get to see him. Things seemed so much worse long distance. My mind would wander to a bad place. It was easier to be with him. When I was with him, he seemed like the same old Matthew. The first thing he would say when I saw him was, "How's school and what have you been doing?" My brother liked to have fun, so he would always joke around and say, "Gotcha good." He never let me know how bad he truly felt. There was a time we came to visit him. He had just had chemotherapy. His coloring was off and he started to throw up. I had never seen him so sick. As soon as he finished throwing up, he made a joke to make me feel better. He made me believe he would be ok.

When I was not with Matthew, I never knew what to think or do. I never felt I could really talk to anyone about Matthew's illness since I only had one parent home. We were all worried about him and never really talked about how we felt about the situation. If we ever talked, it would be about what Matthew was doing and how he was feeling. When you hold all your feelings inside, they all jumble up and you never know what to do about it. I would always worry about him, but all of my feelings kept on jumbling up in my head. I didn't know what to do about it.

Matthew was not feeling well. It was a difficult summer. I moved to Chicago with my parents. My older brother and sister went to over-night camp. Matthew needed most of my parents' attention. I went on a short trip to Wisconsin with my cousins. When I returned home, my parents pulled me, my brother, and sister into another room. My mom and dad said, "Matthew was trying to wait for you to come home, but unfortunately he passed away while you were in Wisconsin." I wasn't sure I understood what they had told us. I knew it wasn't good. Everyone was crying and I was just sitting there. We were all in shock. Then I realized that Matthew had died. I didn't realize at that time how much it would affect my life. I would never have any more time with him. We were only six years old. How could this possibly happen? It was only eighteen months ago that we had discovered what was wrong with him. None of it seemed fair. He was getting better and all of a sudden everything changed. It seemed like everything was different

overnight. I will always remember him and I miss Matthew every day.

It's been about six years since my brother passed away. I often think about what I learned from his death. The one thing that always comes to mind is that you have to cherish each person in your life. You never know what could happen in a matter of minutes. I also try to live every day to its fullest. You can never take time for granted. I could never imagine a life without my twin brother and best friend. Within a short time everything changed in my life. I'm so glad Matthew and

I had such a great time when we were together. I will always remember him.

I know my parents tried really hard to make sure I was all right. I think my situation was really hard. At the beginning, Matthew was at Beaumont Hospital, which is located in Michigan. It was better because I could visit him and I felt more a part of things. Once he left for Chicago to continue his treatment it was much harder. My mother was away with him all the time and I didn't know what was happening each day. It's hard not to be a part of your twin brother's life for 18 months. I visited him every weekend in Chicago, but it just was not the same. My imagination would go to bad places. We were all so worried about getting Matthew better that we didn't talk about our own feelings. My advice to other parents going through something like this is you can't forget to talk about your own emotions and the emotions of the other children in the family. It's hard because there is so much going on, but it is really important. It will help all of the family members unify and be less confused emotionally.

The Robots Take Over

*When a kid goes from being an ordinary student to trying to save the world, can he do it before the robots take over? Find out in **THE ROBOTS TAKE OVER**, by **Reed A.***

I'm Reed. Living in the year of 2999 is nice, and we are surrounded by cool, amazing technology, but I'm not very different than a student from 2013. I still have school, I still get grounded, and I still have homework. But, I bet what I am about to tell you has never happened to you before. This is how it started.

Our math robot (yes, we have robots) called Mrs. Tuckerbot is teaching us how to make a graph. I'm doodling in my book as she talks about plotting points when all of a sudden—*BANG*. I ducked under my table, but no damage had been done. I got up from under my table and sat down. Everything was quiet. Mrs. Tuckerbot just stood there at the whiteboard (which wasn't very white because it got stained over time). She turned around, her eyes red, and said, "We will take over the world." Her programing must have been messed up because that was how all the robots were. They were trying to chase the kids, and all of the robots had red, evil eyes.

I have to stop this, but where is it happening? Where is the base of the robots? Oh, yeah, it must be at the old car factory where the robots are made now. I hopped on my flying motorcycle and headed over to the factory at the speed of light. When I got to the factory it was surrounded by robots, all with glowing, hollow, red eyes. I would have to go to the roof and enter from there.

When I got to the roof I pulled out my laser and made a circle, and the bits of roof crumbled below. A robot saw me, but lucky for me the bits of roof fell on him and he powered down. I went to the room where they are programmed to be nice, but in this case they were being programmed to be bad—very bad.

The room was like a massive stadium with robot parts all over. I felt scared. The room was very eerie, and it smelled of slimy, goopy oil and crusty, red rust. It was dreadful. I wanted to get out of there as soon as possible. Then I remembered I had to find the main power switch for bad and nice, but where is it? Then I saw a big box that said "DO NOT TOUCH." It was red and white on the wall like the one that protects the fire alarm at school. I went over to it and

pulled the lever. It worked, but I started to feel dizzy, and then I blacked out.

I finally woke up in a hospital all weary-eyed. My parents came into the very bright room and said, "You did it! You stopped the robots from taking over the world."

I asked how I got there, and my mom said, "The fire department got you out of the building before it collapsed. You are very lucky to still be alive when you blacked out."

I did it! I actually stopped the robots from taking over the world, but I wonder who was the one who was making the robots bad? Then I got a really sick feeling in my gut like a man had punched me in the gut and I could not breathe. Did I really stop the robots?

Shark Attack

*In the story **SHARK ATTACK** by **Chase Mentag**, an eight-year-old boy is at his family reunion in Florida. He is playing on the beach and having a lot of fun, but little does he know what is lurking in the water below.*

It was a beautiful day in Florida. It was Jake's family reunion. He was on the beach looking at the water and saw huge waves farther off shore. His brother asked him if he wanted to swim out into the waves. Jake agreed. They jumped into the water and started swimming. After a while, Jake got exhausted, but they were almost there, so he kept swimming.

Once they got there, he saw a gigantic wave coming. Jake's brother yelled, "Get down!" He swam under the water. He felt a rush of water go over him. He struggled to get air. The waves forced him under over and over.

Jake was getting very tired, so he told his brother he wanted to swim back. Jake thought he was going to drown! He started swimming back to shore. He doggy-paddled all the way to shore.

When he got really close to shore, Jake felt teeth sink into his leg. He felt searing pain. He looked at his leg. There was nothing there from the thigh down. A shark had bit him!

"Ahhh, somebody help!" Jake shrieked. He freaked out. He looked at the water. It was filled with a pool of blood. He didn't know what to do. He froze up.

The lifeguards rushed for him. His mom was on the beach screaming and wailing. The lifeguards brought him onto the beach. There was an ambulance already waiting for him. There were people screaming everywhere. The sand was red behind him. Jake was slowly passing out. Everything was eerie to him. Everything seemed like it was in slow motion.

When Jake awoke, he was in a hospital bed. He looked at his left leg. There was nothing there from the thigh down. He freaked out. He realized he would never be able to play football, basketball or soccer ever again. He was thinking he would be in a wheelchair all of his life or get a fake leg. He was thinking how his friends would take it, that he didn't have a leg anymore.

When he got back to his hometown, there were people holding signs saying, "Welcome Home!"

He turned out fine. When Jake got older, he ended up getting a fake leg and going to the Paralympics.

Stars and U.F.O.s

Sent off to Michigan's Upper Peninsula woods for a camping trip with her friend, Lilly, Heather, and Oliver see something amazing while stargazing. Is all this U.F.O. talk too good to be true? Find out in STARS AND U.F.O.S by Miranda S.

Summer is always the best. My mom told me on the last day of school, "Lilly, Heather, and her family are going camping for a week and you're going with them to their cabin in the Upper Peninsula." I hate when my mom plans without me. But there I was, four weeks into summer with Heather and her brother, Oliver. We were just sitting, talking, and naming constellations at the campsite. Oliver, not knowing any constellations, was using an app on his phone and naming some we have never heard before. I named Scorpio and Libra and after I had named all I could, I even started to make up some.

Out of nowhere a large plane flew overhead. It was lit up like a Christmas tree and going as fast as a jet plane. The sound of the plane nearly made the three of us wet ourselves. Heather then said very dramatically, "That was definitely not a plane. I'm positive that was a UFO."

After she said that I just thought to myself, *my best friend is going insane!* I tried to tell her that it was a plane and not a UFO, but she asked, "Then explain why it was flying so close to the ground."

I told her, "It was flying so close to the ground because it was a plane preparing to land in an airport."

Heather didn't believe me; she was so stubborn sometimes! I wanted to prove to Heather that she was wrong, so I calmly said, "Then why don't we follow it?"

She argued by whining, "But it's going way too fast for us to follow it."

I said, "Then we can follow it in Oliver's car."

"What?" mumbled Oliver, who was paying no attention to us whatsoever.

Before Heather could even open her mouth, I asked, "Oliver, can you follow the bright, flying thing that just flew overhead with your

car?" He didn't seem like he really cared, but luckily he said he could.

Oliver told their mom we were going to go for a drive. We all piled into his car and drove through the Michigan woodland. The summer breeze smelled of pine needles. Darkness hadn't swallowed the woods yet, so we could see the trees that lined the dirt road. Oliver had rolled the windows down and I was kneeling on his cloth seats, looking out the window. I heard the plane before I saw it.

Heather was right; the plane was flying low. I thought the shape was very similar to a plane and the sound was, too. We began to see the airport lights in the distance and more planes take off and land in the airport. "See Heather, I told you that was a plane," I mocked. Oliver who was oblivious to our fighting over whether or not it was a plane or U.F.O. was very confused.

"I was wrong," admitted Heather. "You were right; it was a plane." I made her feel better by suggesting we go roast some marshmallows.

"That sounds good to me," commented Oliver. He always listened at the right time. On the way back to the campsite, there seemed to be more people on the road than on the way to the airport. When we stopped at the red light, I turned to look out my window and saw a couple sitting in their car. But something made me take a second look. It was their skin; it looked as though they had a dreadful sunburn. I figured I was just getting tired, which I was.

Before I looked away I realized it was two heads, connected to one neck. Then they waved a friendly hello.

The Tempest Treasure

*The British astronomer Dr. Jackal gets a mysterious letter from a man named Mr. Franklin and tells him to go to a place located somewhere in northern Germany. Find out what Mr. Franklin wants with Dr. Jackal in **THE TEMPEST TREASURE** by **Adrien W.***

My name is James Nefarious Jackal, and I have been invited to a hotel in an area called Tempest Falls. I could not find it on a map. The only thing I know is that tempest means time. This first started when I received a letter from a man named Mr. Randy P. Franklin. The letter said:

Dear Mr. Jackal,

You are invited to a meeting of extremely important people at Tempest Falls. The directions are on the back of this letter. Everything will be explained when you get there.

*Sincerely,
Mr. Randy P. Franklin*

I thought it was very strange he knew my address because I had never heard of him. After looking at the directions, it looked like Tempest Falls was located somewhere in northern Germany. I started to call my friend Dr. Blake when I noticed something in small print. It said, "Bring no one." I left for Germany at once.

As I walked into the hotel called Tempest Resort, I wondered why every name in this place started with time in Latin? The hotel looked deserted on the outside with the windows boarded up and the color of the brick was faded. On the inside there were golden chandeliers and light blue walls with a dark red carpet. On the desk in the lobby, there were five keys. One had my name on it. I turned it over, it had a number on the back, and I said out loud, "I guess this is my room number—547." I went to bed, and when I woke up the next morning, there was a note on my nightstand.

I hope you slept well, Dr. Jackal. If you will be so kind, come straight down to the dining hall. The map is on the back.

P.S Everyone is waiting for you.

I arrived in the dining hall about three minutes later when I saw a familiar face. "Hello, Dr. Blake, it's nice to see you again." A man reached out his hand to me. I said, "You must be Mr. Franklin."

"Yes, yes I am."

"Who are this other three people?" I asked.

"This is Mrs. Conner, Mr. Zack, and Ms. West."

"Why are we here?"

"Have you ever heard the tale of the lost treasure of the Wisdom Eye?"

"Yes I have. Why? What does it have to do with us?"

"You all have a special ability no one else has. Dr. Jackal is an astronomer, Dr. Blake is a geographer, Mrs. Conner is a mountain guide, Mr. Zack is a mythologist and Ms. West is a geologist. I need all your skills to help find the treasure."

"Why do you want it so much Mr. Franklin?" I asked.

"It belonged to my ancestors; the wisdom eye is magic and can take you through time and space. In the wrong hands it could be very dangerous".

"Are you telling us there are others after the treasure?" said Mr. Zack.

"Actually, yes." replied Mr. Franklin.

"You're telling us this now!" everyone said at once.

"Don't worry; they don't know where it is. That is why we met here, so they would not find out. Only a few people even know Tempest Falls exists. The general area of the cave is in the Swiss Alps under the Gorner Glacier. The legend says, "The way will only open when Orion takes off his belt at eight."

"I know what that is! That is when the stars forming Orion's belt line up. Wait, that's in two days at 8:00 p.m.," I explained.

The next morning we boarded a private jet to Switzerland, rented snow vehicles and headed towards the Gorner Glacier. We decided to make camp for the night next to the 65-foot vertical shaft that was the entrance to the cave system below and start

descending down into deep icy caves at 5:00 early the next morning.

At 5 a.m. the next day, Mrs. Conner helped the team get ready to climb down into the caves. "We only have 13 hours to find the archway that leads to the room where the treasure is kept," announced Dr. Jackal, as they start climbing down.

"I've never been in a cave made out of ice before. I did not expect it to look blue," said Ms. West.

"Same here." said Dr. Blake. The team spent most of day climbing through the caves in search of the treasure room, when they finally stumbled across a tunnel with markings on the wall.

"These markings tell us we are almost there. "The archway to the treasure room should be at the end of the tunnel," says Mr. Zack.

It was already 7:58 p.m., when we exited the tunnel and saw an empty archway. At 8:00 p.m., a light flashed and we felt a strong wind coming from within the archway. A white portal opened sucking them in. Mr. Franklin entered first followed by the rest of the team. They all stood in amazement staring at a large cave filled with glittering gold and jewels. In the center, we saw the wisdom eye jewel on a pure gold podium, the gem was glowing a dark blue.

"I have finally found my ancestors riches! All of you will receive a reward for helping me find this lost treasure," exclaimed Mr. Franklin as he moved to the center of the room. We all followed him toward the wisdom eye. Mr. Franklin reached for the jewel.

"Don't touch it while it's glowing!" screams Mr. Zack. "It's set to transport you to another time period!" It was too late, Mr. Franklin picked up the gem and a giant yellow portal opened up with the gem glowing a deep red in the middle of the portal sucking in everyone and some of the gold, transporting everyone and the gold to the time of Mr. Franklin's ancestors. Mr. Franklin had put together the perfect team to help him find the wisdom eye. Now we are trapped together in the past, ready to solve our next mystery. How do we get back to 1985?

Trapped in Hawaii

In TRAPPED IN HAWAII by Jeanmarie Albert the little girl Elle goes tumbling down a pit. Will she ever come out or will she be trapped trying to survive?

The Macy family is a very popular family known nationwide. Their father created Macys. They really wanted to go on a family vacation; they searched the Internet like crazy until they found their beautiful destination in Hawaii. They were not only going to Maui, Hawaii, they were going to the most popular travel spot in Hawaii, the Diamond Cave.

When the Macy's finally got to Maui, Hawaii all the way from West Bloomfield, Michigan, it was nine hours later when they finally hit land at Hawaii. They weren't so tired since they left for the plane at 10:00 p.m. so they could sleep on the whole plane ride all the way there. So by the time they got there, it was around 7:45 a.m. because of all the delays and the time change. Sure the times were a little bit different but they were fine to tackle the day after they visited the five star hotel suite to drop their possessions off. They went to the Diamond Cave they had been waiting for; they had planned to make it a two-day thing. They would go today and then stay until tomorrow.

By the time they reached the cave, it was around 10:00 because of packing all their gear and equipment not to mention all the food. When their dad got their tour guide, they hit the caves. The tour guide said they were going to go spelunking. They went through 1/3 of the trip with no problem, but then it started to get rocky and slippery where in seconds the little girl Elle slipped and fell.

When she woke up she was at the bottom of the cave. It was pitch black so she started searching through her gear for some kind of light. At this point, she was looking for anything. She searched and searched through her fanny pack. She had all kinds of junk from gum wrappers to petite toy princesses for fun. Then at last she had finally found what she was looking for- a flashlight! It was her favorite flash light with princesses and tiara stickers all over it. She turned it on and right in front of her was a path. She thought

about following it for a minute, but then realized what her mom had told her about the caves.

She said, "If you ever get lost in the cave, first find your flash light." She had done exactly that. "And secondly, stay exactly where you are because help is on the way." So Elle found a comfy rock and started to cry. Elle was only eight and didn't know what to do. She was scared and alone; she had never been alone before. Elle thought about all the things she had done the second before she had fallen. She sat there for just a few more minutes then left. She wanted to walk to try and find some twist and turn back up so she would be able to get to the top before they sent a whole search party in here.

She was walking for about an hour until she had to stop for a few minutes to find something to eat. She wished she was at home, so to help get rid of the blues she sang her favorite song.

"Twinkle, twinkle little star how I wonder what you are, up above..." and so on. She started to feel very hopeless. She reached in her pocket and found a tiny cookie deep inside from lunch. She was saving it for later, but she just had to eat it now. It was chocolate chip and it smelled like salt because all of her peanuts that had spilled in their container. The chocolate was melted in her pocket but it tasted as fresh as if it had just come out of the oven. She ate it slowly trying to make the flavor last but as she knew it would not last forever.

Suddenly, she thought she saw the weakest light just to find out it was a tiny crack in the cave. She saw a tour bus and tried to yell to them but they were too far away to hear her. All she wanted was to find her mom and dad. So she decided to keep walking to try and find them, but all she hit was a dead end so she turned around back the way she came. The feeling of doubt went through her like a cold ice cube down her back. She had every reason to just lie down and cry but something told her she couldn't; she just had to keep moving. That was when her thoughts came to the "what ifs"? What if she never found her parents ever again? If she didn't, then she would be stuck here in this cave going in circles over and over again. It terrified her.

She found the waterfall that they had first filled up their water bottles for the tour. She looked up to see where it was coming from, but she just saw a hole. She thought and thought until she realized that it was a manmade hole. So she thought maybe they

would be coming here and that by now people needed to refill their water bottles. Again, she sat for another 30 minutes, but then fell asleep. She slept for what felt like a long time. She dreamed of being at home in her own bed but when she woke up she found out it was just a dream. She was still lying on the chilly, firm, soaked ground. She picked herself up and began walking again. She needed to get to her parents and soon. Elle was becoming more frightened by the minute. She walked and walked and walked with no breaks or anything.

By now, she had no food and her stomach was growling. She walked until she saw a flashlight. She thought it was her parents; she was so happy. She ran all the way to them only to find some miners and a tour guide. Still, she was so overjoyed to see them she cried and cried until they were up and out of the cave and her hands were able to grab the grass. The tour guide tried calling her parents, but just as expected, there was no cell reception in the cave. So poor Elle had to wait longer until they finally came out with their tour guide who was also relieved to see her because that meant he wouldn't get fired.

The Macys returned to their hotel and the first words that came out of Elle's mouth were, "Can we go again tomorrow?" Even though that whole time, she was scared out of her socks! Her parents were surprised that she still wanted to go back so badly. Elle promised very enthusiastically that she would hold their hand the whole time to make sure not to fall down a pit again. Elle knew that wasn't really how she wanted to explore, but it was better to have them following close behind.

Treasure Hunt 3

*Listen how a great explorer Drake and his partner go hunting for the great Stone of Forest in **TREASURE HUNT 3** by **Amir Mitchell**. The path is very dangerous and they might not make it alive.*

It was 2017 and Drake and Gryphon were exploring a cave when suddenly they fell down into a secret compartment. They see a treasure box, and they find a lot of old coins and they find their way back up to the surface. They find out how much its worth and they say to each other, "Why just look at caves when we can earn money too?"

So they began their journey.

They stopped at the nearest library to find where the best stone or gem could be found, and so they stopped and read about the best one of all - the Stone of Forest. The description said that it could give any man invincibility if were cracked open. It was being shipped from Boston to the New York museum when the helicopter that was shipping it crashed! It was never seen again.

Drake said, "If we find that Stone of Forest, not only will we be really rich, we will also get to enjoy it forever." And so they went to the area where it was dropped. Their helicopter was just like many others who were looking for it too! So only one person could retrieve it. So they fought for it. They planted a bomb on the tree and blew it up as they ran because they had guns but Drake and Gryphon were un-armed.

As they were running, they went into a cave nearby where the Stone of Forest was dropped. While they were looking, they see ancient writing on the cave wall. "It's amazing how someone was in this cave just like us," said Drake. Then they saw the forest protector that came running at them and Drake counter- attacked them and he fell to the ground. At that time the forest protector ran and bit Gryphon's leg. He could see and smell the blood from Gryphon's leg and got Gryphon and then ran out as fast as he could to get away from the forest protector.

They limped out of the cave after finding out that this was not the stone that there looking for. So they looked up into this huge castle about a mile from where they were, so limping in pain Gryphon and Drake walked to the castle. They found the Stone of

Forest just sitting on a gold pedestal, and so Drake went to get the stone. As he stepped on one of the stones, the tile floor shifted down about one inch. He stopped and then arrows started flying at him.

He dogged them and kept running, and finally he took the Stone of Forest while carrying Gryphon out of the castle. Then he sat and saw a large campground. So he went there and there was a radio. So he used the radio to contact a rescue team.

Once the rescue team got there, they flew off and took Gryphon to the hospital to help him. After a full recovery and about ten years later, the partners retired while being rich and looked at the mission that they completed. So they both died 50 years later. They will be remembered forever as great partners.

Thank you for listening for to my story, I really hope you learned to always explore because you might find something really good. Good night and have a great evening. GOODNIGHT!

The Triplets of Thornville

*Three sisters think it is an ordinary day for them, but fate has other plans. Something twisted and unordinary lies ahead in **THE TRIPLETS OF THORNVILLE**, by **Brooklyn S.***

It was just any normal day in Thornville. My sisters and I went to school that day and had just gotten through the last day of school. “YES! SCHOOL IS OVER!!” says my sister Rose.

“The whole summer to do nothing but have fun,” says Albany my other sister.

We are triplets. We live with our dad who is a chemistry professor. Our mother died when we were fourteen and since then we all kind of drifted apart. Our mom would always solve the little fights between us and would always have days where she would take all of us out to do something fun just the three of us. I joined cheer squad and became super popular. Rose became a skater girl and blended in with the crowd. Albany joined the mathletes and became a geek. We still have to share a car though.

“Genevieve it’s my turn to drive,” whined Albany.

“Fine,” I grumbled. When we got home I heard the fire alarm go off. I could smell the smoke coming from the kitchen. After we got home Rose asked, “Where’s Dad?”

“He’s probably in the lab,” answered Albany. Our dad has a lab in the basement. He’s always working on experiments. We rarely go down there because he says and I quote, “It’s dangerous.” We think he just sits down there and does nothing all weekend.

“We’re home,” I said into the intercom.

“Oh good, I want you all to come down here,” my dad replied.

“Are you serious?!” I asked in shock.

“Sure come on down.” We walk down the steps to the lab very slowly. When we get to the bottom I saw multiple beakers of different colored substances. It looked like a rainbow exploded and its colors rained down into the beakers. I could smell the cleansing powders and solvents to keep the lab clean and tidy. I could see dad working vigorously on the computer and I could smell the solutions burning and melting. I could hear the purring and hissing of his machines as he turned dials and pushed his gizmos.

“This is so cool!” Albany squealed.

"I wanted to show you guys when you understood science." Dad said. "You girls also need to find dresses for Kayla's wedding."

"Do we have to go to Kayla's wedding? It's not like she likes us," said Rose.

"Yes, she does because she is family and you're all are going."

"She is only mom's half-sister," I say.

"You still are going. Here is \$300. Spend it amongst yourselves. Now go find some dresses!"

When we drove to the mall we decided to hit Macy's first. Albany found a one-strap peach mini-dress and matching peach wedges. After we went to Forever 21 and I found a strapless floral mini and a pair of navy sandals. Then we went to Nordstrom where Rose found a burgundy spaghetti strap with a pair of black heels and fishnet gloves.

As were walking into the parking lot and to the car, we heard a scream and we looked towards the scream and saw people running away from some sort of monster that looked half-frog half-bull. We jumped into the car. Rose called dad and told him what was going on. "Put him on speaker," I said.

"I knew it was coming but not so soon," he said.

"What are you talking about?" asked Albany.

"Girls, remember those necklaces your mother gave to you before she passed?" I reached up to my neck and felt the black snake.

"Yes," we all say. We all have one. Albany has blue shark and Rose has a red hawk. We never take them off.

"Get out of the car and open the trunk. Do you see three little imprints shaped like your pendant?"

"Yes!"

"Take your pendants and put them inside the imprint that matches your animal. As soon as we do the base of the trunk opens and we see a bunch of odd-looking guns and small tool belts with different weapons and guns.

"Girls," he continued over the phone. "Each of you take a belt and use the guns and weapons to defeat the monster."

"We don't know how," I say.

"Just do what you would do in a video game."

"That doesn't help!"

"I szszs hear szszs do szszs best."

"Let's do this for mom," Rose said.

“Okay.” As we ran toward the monster, we shot our guns. POW! POW! POW! We slashed our knives! Shoo! Shoo! Shoo! Then we captured the monster in a small capsule.

After we drove home our dad said, “How did you do?”

“We did awesome!” said Albany.

“Well you girls are going to need some training.”

“That sounds good.” I said.

“Aren’t we forgetting the big question? What that was and what is going on?”

“Yeah, seriously!” Albany and I agreed.

“It goes back to your great great-grandfather’s time. He was an archeologist. He traveled all around the world. He was in Mongolia when he released Filos and her children. Filos is the mother of all monsters. Since then your great- great-grandfather and his children have been fighting them. When your mom died it was because of Filos. We tried to defeat her once and for all but Filos’ energy was too strong for us. When we tried to capture Filos in the capsule, her energy was too immense for your mom to handle. Since then, I captured Filos in the capsule and threw it to the bottom of the ocean, but someone probably found it and released her.”

“I’m in,” Rose said. “It’s not every day you get to fight monster.”

“So am I,” agreed Albany.

“I don’t know,” I said.

“Please Genevieve, with a cherry on top!” Albany whined.

“Do it for mom,” Rose persuaded.

“Okay, for mom.”

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! “Girls there is a monster attack on Main Street,” my dad said. “Are you ready girls?”

“Ready!” we replied.

The Worst Field Trip Ever

*For Christian a school field trip out of the country sounds awesome. But when the plane crashes off course, will Christian and his classmate make it out of the deep, dense Brazilian forest? Read **THE WORST FIELD TRIP EVER** by Jarreau Campbell to find out.*

My name is Christian, Christian Alexander Gilbert. I've lived in Chicago all my life and it's a really great place, especially since I go to Northville High. I've been waiting all week for this trip in social studies. We are going to Paris!! Today is finally the day; we are staying for a week in one of the finest hotels in Paris. My brother Jon went in 2009 and four years later, it's my turn! When we got to the airport it took, a really long time just to find the correct gate!

While I was on the plane I decided to go to sleep because it was an eight-hour flight. I woke up because it was getting really bumpy and then the pilot started talking.

He announced, "We have gone way off course because the compass on the plane was broken and they were over Brazil!" I just went back to sleep when all of a sudden there was a huge siren going off and the oxygen masks came right down in every one's faces. I looked out the window and the left engine was on FIRE!!

Everyone on board screamed, and then the head pilot yelled, "BRACE FOR IMPACT!" I felt my heart drop into my stomach; we were going down faster than I could have ever imagined. I looked out of the window again and all I could see were trees, then I realized we were over a forest! By the time I closed my eyes, we hit the ground, *BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM!*

I woke up and my best friend Jake said I had just been unconscious for about 20 minutes! I tried to get up but my leg was stuck under my seat and as I pulled it all the pain rushed to my leg, it had to be broken. I looked around and I could only see six moving people, the rest, I had assumed, had died. I noticed that it was really hot; then realized the whole top of the plane had come off. I pulled and pulled at my leg and it finally came loose and when it did I let out a blood-curdling scream. Jake was also injured. He had a huge gash going up his arm. He didn't notice so I didn't tell him because

he still probably had adrenalin left. Then he screamed too; he obviously didn't have much left. I looked to the left where the engine had exploded and noticed it was still on fire and was leaking gas. I yelled as loud as I could to everyone, "The plane is going to blow!"

I got up and ran with Jake and the others. We didn't have to run far since the plane was in pieces. Once I got outside, I kept running, dodging trees and shrubs. I looked back and saw everyone following. Then the plane blew, it was the loudest thing I had ever heard in my life. When I looked up, the plane wasn't on fire anymore because I couldn't even recognize the shape of the plane. I felt a sharp pain in my left arm; I looked over and saw a piece of shrapnel wedged in my arm. It didn't hurt that bad, but I knew if it weren't covered soon it would get infected. I looked around to see how everyone else was doing and they seemed ok. I limped over to the rest of the people. I introduced myself. My classmates' names were Mario, Cole, and Jake (obviously), Marisa, and Alexis. They were all people from different classes. Alexis, Jake and I were the only ones hurt; she had a broken arm and a broken rib.

We sat there with our heads down. We were all completely exhausted, when I heard a faint buzz in the distance. I could see the helicopter glimmering in the sunlight, and I could smell the musty smell of its diesel. When it hovered above us I could almost touch its golden propellers. I jumped and screamed to the sound of its loud motor. I was still jumping when I saw the helicopter burst into huge orange flames. In seconds, the helicopter had hit the ground. The last thing I saw before I was knocked unconscious was the pilot hurling himself out of the helicopter.

I awoke to the sound of nothing; no one screaming just the smell of fire. I looked around and tried to get up but I was pinned. A huge red piece of shrapnel was crushing my legs.

"Is anybody out there?" I screamed hoping for an answer. Then I heard a voice I didn't recognize. It sounded like a man, and then I realized it could have been the pilot.

"Are you the pilot?" I hollered.

"Co-pilot," he said in a raspy voice.

"Are you trapped? I can help if you are," I lied. I got no response, but I heard a radio. Maybe he was radioing the heliport? I didn't want to go to sleep because I was losing a ton of blood. So I decided to put some pressure on the parts where I was hurt. Then just as I

was dozing off, the co-pilot mumbled something. I screeched, “Are you ok?”

He yelled back, “Yes! I got a signal, help is on the way!”

“Are you positive?” I argued.

“Yes, they will be here any minute now.”

We waited and waited, and then finally I heard a loud engine. The helicopter hovered over us and sent down an EMT with a gurney. I let out a sigh of relief.

I was airlifted to the hospital and recovered about two months later. I haven’t been out of the country since.

Focal Point

Bob the Tennis Ball

*A tennis ball named Bob gets sick because of playing too much tennis. In **BOB THE TENNIS BALL** by **Kyle A. Alkatib**, bad things happen to Bob because he did not listen to his doctor.*

There once was a tennis ball named Bob that loved to play tennis. He was so interested in it that he didn't even sleep! He played 24 hours 7 days a week.

One day in school he bounced to his locker and bounced high to touch the button to open it. It always hurt him really badly when he opened his locker. He got all of Language Arts homework by getting in his locker, getting behind his stuff, and pushing it out. While he was pushing his stuff to his class his friend Larry came to him. He said hi. Bob said hi back. Larry asked if Bob wanted to come to his house and play a game with his human parents. Bob said that he couldn't because he had a tennis tournament after school.

When Bob got to the tennis tournament the game started. A human threw Bob up in the air and hit him really hard with his racket. Bob said, "Ouch." The opponent hit him again, and he kept on saying, "Ouch." When the game was over, he couldn't bounce. All he could do was roll home.

When Bob got home he was so dizzy that he couldn't bounce up onto his bed. He had to sleep on the hard, cold floor. But he couldn't go to sleep. He kept rolling everywhere because he wasn't comfortable. He got even dizzier and threw up.

When it was morning he was sick, and he had to go to the doctor. The doctor said, "No tennis for you today."

Bob said, "But I can't miss it."

The doctor said, "Well, if you want to take the chance of getting someone else sick or you getting even sicker you could go to your game."

Bob had a choice to make: either getting sicker or getting better. Bob thought, "The doctor didn't say that I couldn't go; he said that I could choose if I want to go." Bob went. He was so sick and weak that on the first hit he ripped. Bob died.

When he died the people washed him off so that he would be clean. It turns out that he had painted himself green and white to

make the people think that he was a tennis ball, but he was actually a baseball. The people thought, "That's why he was heavier than a normal tennis ball, and why he couldn't bounce that well."

All of his tennis ball friends were so mad at him because he lied to them by telling everyone that he was a tennis ball when he wasn't. Many were happy when they buried him. Some people weren't happy because they were his family or very good friends. He was a very good person to them but not to everybody.

Bobby Baseball

*In **BOBBY BASEBALL** by **Joey Shapero**, a runaway baseball has many adventures as he attempts to achieve the dream of a lifetime.*

It was the year 1924 on a chilly morning in the Bronx. There was a package, #6219 to be exact. In that package were 32 of the finest baseballs in the world. There was one ball in that package that was like no other. It was perfectly laced with the crisp white color, while all of the others had minor problems like rubbed ink or a ripped lace. It was January 24, 84 days until the first baseball was pitched.

That one special baseball's name was Bobby. Bobby had one dream: being pitched to the one and only Babe Ruth. When Bobby was a little baseball his parents told him about Babe. Ever since then Bobby has wanted to be hit by him.

Bobby and his fellow baseballs would be sitting in this compressed box for 35 nights until they were brought to Florida for spring training. Bobby wasn't happy about this. He had to get out. He needed a plan.

His plan was to distract the head baseball by banging on one side of the box and sneaking out the other while he was distracted. The next night he tried his plan, and it worked to perfection.

When Bobby got out it was pitch black. He dodged some cars and got to the sidewalk. But as he was rolling, a big, hairy creature appeared out of the darkness. Bobby rolled so hard but was caught and was in this beast's mouth. Slobber was dripping down his cheek. There were two men chasing the dog. One had a net and caught them.

Next thing Bobby knew he was in darkness. He woke up to the loud screeching sound of wheels.

After about another day the doors opened and Bobby saw light. He rolled out of the darkness and saw a sign that said "John's Dog Catching Facility," and in small letters it said "Gulf Port, Florida." That was six miles from the Yankees spring training in Saint Petersburg!

One of the dogcatchers threw Bobby so far. Luckily for Bobby there was a half-mile of hill for him to roll down.

Once he came to a halt, a little boy picked him up and took him home. When he arrived he saw a teenager with an ugly smile who

snatched Bobby out of the boy's hands and said, "Let's have some fun."

Bobby was taken outside and got thrown up against a wood board five times until the boy was tired and threw Bobby into a trashcan. He climbed his way out and rolled for miles and miles until he reached St. Petersburg. He was in disbelief. Bobby had made it!

Two men in baseball uniforms walked over to Bobby and picked him up. Bobby was startled. His head was going bonkers, and he didn't know what to do. But he thought to himself and figured he should stay calm.

They started tossing him around until the pitching coach asked them for Bobby. The coach threw Bobby, and he approached Babe Ruth. But it was a bad pitch, so Ruth didn't swing. Babe Ruth gave Bobby's chance just a glance.

Bobby was devastated and thought his chance was over; it was just a dream that would never come true. After two more hours of being tossed around Bobby was put into a bag.

The next week spring training started. Bobby never once got chosen to play in a game. He just watched the Yankees play great.

Finally spring training ended, and Bobby was off to New York. On the bus Bobby sat there angry that he had never played. Once the bus stopped Bobby was taken to Yankee Stadium.

The next day he was taken out, and he saw the big field. His heart was racing, and he was so excited. Here was the starting lineup: Pat Collins, Lou Gehrig, Tony Lazzeri, Joe Dougan, Mark Keonig, Earle Combs, Bob Meusel, Herb Pennock, and finally Babe Ruth. The Yankees won that game five to three, and Babe played great. The days went by and Bobby got bored just watching.

Then came a road trip to LA. He was so happy. But this trip was also crazier than any other.

On the bus Bobby sat in the storage room and waited until he could get off, but about an hour into the ride a warning told passengers to dive under their seats. When alarms went off Bobby got scared. He busted out of the room and into Babe Ruth. Ruth instinctively picked Bobby up. Five seconds later Bobby heard a crash, and everything went black.

Bobby woke up and was relieved he was still alive. But what about Babe? When Bobby saw a cast on Ruth's arm, Bobby was scared. There were only 20 more days until the playoffs, and Babe

had to be ready. Once Bobby overheard the doctors he knew Ruth had broken his arm.

The Yankees lost three of four in LA and were in trouble. Babe wouldn't be ready until the World Series (if they made it). The Yankees ended the season barely making the playoffs. The Yankees swept in the first round but won in seven in the second. The World Series was against the Cardinals, and Babe was ready.

The Yankees won the first two but then lost three. After a six-to-five thriller, the Yankees made it to game seven. Bobby knew this was his chance. It was in Yankee Stadium with a sold-out crowd. This game was going to get intense.

It was one to one in the eighth, and the Yankees weren't looking very good. In the eighth the Yankees overcame a bases-loaded jam. They couldn't score either, so it went to the ninth. The Yankees had a one-two-three inning and had Ruth coming up. Two quick outs left the Yankees in a huge hole, but Babe was up. Bobby wanted to be in so badly. It was 0-2, and Bobby got the call! The Cardinals pitcher nodded, and Bobby was thrown. *Crack!* Ruth hit it. It carried and carried, and it was gone! It was a walk-off home run for Babe Ruth!

After the game Bobby was given to Babe as a gift from the fan that caught him. When Babe Ruth arrived at his house he hung up Bobby and said, "I hope I made this baseball's dream come true."

Boomer Saves the Day

*As a black lab puppy struggles in his job of being a leader dog, he has to take on the challenge of caring for an old lady. In **BOOMER SAVES THE DAY** by **Christian Thomas**, Boomer tries to fulfill his duties as a leader dog.*

Boomer has just been born as a purebred black lab puppy. He was born in Oklahoma. Both of Boomer's parents were leader dogs. Now it's Boomer's turn to carry on the tradition.

Once he was old enough, he was shipped out of Oklahoma to Rochester, Michigan, and is now becoming a decent leader dog. But Boomer is having problems. He is very attracted to small animals such as squirrels and chipmunks. He is also afraid to go down the stairs with a leash on. Those two concepts can really affect a blind person and what might happen to him or her. Soon Boomer had been re-tasked, and now he has lots of big shot dogs who are bullying him to the point that he can't take anymore. These dogs act like Boy Scouts around their trainers, but when not on film they bully Boomer.

Since Boomer has been re-tasked he has to help this old lady named Miss Patty. Boomer is with this woman because she volunteered to take him for one year to help Boomer with his problems. Miss Patty is very grumpy and is color blind. She is a very big cat lady. She loves her cats with all her heart. But she can now take care of them with Boomer to help take her to places like the veterinarian and the grocery store.

As time goes by Boomer is helping Miss Patty day after day, and getting sick and tired of her nagging him to help him with everything she needs. Soon Boomer tries to take a rest every once in a while. Miss Patty hates when Boomer lies on the couch. One day when Boomer did this, Miss Patty got so out of control that everything started to go wrong. The cats were whining, moaning, and crying for their food. As all these things are going wrong, one of Miss Patty's cats runs out the back door in panic about to cross a busy road. Miss Patty runs out the door not knowing what to do. She can't see very well.

As Miss Patty runs out into the middle of a busy road trying to find her cat, Boomer sees that she is about to be hit by a car. He

opens the door by nudging his snout in the bottom right corner of the door and bolts to save his owner's life. He gets to Miss Patty just as a car is coming straight toward them. Boomer bites onto her sleeve and pulls her to safety.

Miss Patty woke up in the hospital with a minor concussion. She tells the doctors that her dog bit her as hard as he could and yanked on her arm, pulling her to the ground.

Later she realized that while she was getting her cat she might have been in the street, and Boomer bit her and pulled her to get her out of the middle of the street. She thought to herself for hours while doctors were doing tests on her about how Boomer bit her and pulled her on purpose. She realizes she would've died if he hadn't bitten her.

An hour before they let Miss Patty out of the hospital they bring in her savior. Miss Patty was giving Boomer so much thanks that he actually thought he had an amazing owner. For once Miss Patty had actually loved Boomer.

From that day on Miss Patty and Boomer have been nothing but best friends. Miss Patty and Boomer will always remember that day and what happened to save Miss Patty's life.

A Day in the Life of Kora

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF KORA by *Willow Cooke* is the story of a girl with pretty much a different adventure every day in her life. For Kora, weirdness not only comes around but stays around.

“**M**om, there’s an armadillo in the bathtub!” I yelled. I was so frightened. That ugly little animal was staring right at me. It had really creepy, beady eyes.

Oh, how rude to not introduce myself. Maybe we should back this story up a little. My name is Kora. So here is how today went.

I woke up on a Saturday morning with no homework and freedom. But I had barely gotten any sleep because I kept hearing this weird banging noise in the big pipes of the apartment.

I went to brush my teeth in the bathroom. When I looked in the mirror, behind me I saw an armadillo! I was flustered, frustrated, and freaking out. I didn’t know what to do.

I yelled to my mom, “Mom, there’s an armadillo in the bathtub!” and she was pretty much freaked out.

“Um, okay, I’ll call Animal Control!” my mom yelled back at me, pretty frustrated.

I ran out of the bathroom, because I could not just stand there and look at that ugly animal.

I heard a big screech, like from a car in front of my apartment. Then a couple of minutes later Animal Control was in my apartment in the bathroom catching that disgusting animal. After they caught the armadillo they put it in a cage and drove off somewhere. Now that I think about it, I think that weird noise was the armadillo climbing up the pipes.

My wonderful Saturday morning with no homework and freedom pretty much turned to an armadillo fiasco. I hoped this weird situation wouldn’t get around.

“I’m going to the park to take my mind off of things!” I yelled to my mom and shut the door so she didn’t have a say in it.

I played by myself really strangely, like I had an imaginary friend. The park was empty on that Saturday, so thankfully no one really saw me. I guess I only have one real friend. Her name is Mikayla, and she is kind of freaky, but she is a wonderful friend.

On Sunday, I told her about my bathroom incident, and she was kind of disgusted, but then the rest of the day we had a lot of fun and put it behind us. When I am with her I can tell her anything.

That Sunday afternoon I went home exhausted from walking home from the park and playing so much. I lay in my bed that dark night thinking, "My life is kind of weird, and that was just a day of it. Imagine what'll happen tomorrow."

Dragons

*Have you ever been in such a bad mood that nobody wants to be around you? In **DRAGONS** by **Tessa L. Irish-Minewiser**, a dragon named Aurum has, and this is his story.*

In the country of Drakos, in the Third Age of Dragons, there lived a ruler named Aurum. Aurum was a smart gold dragon, but he had a bad temper. Because of that, most citizens of Drakos avoided him. They sure didn't want to be the ones to make him mad in any way. The avoidance made Aurum very lonely and frustrated. He tried really hard to control it, but it was no use. He had seen the best psychiatrists in all of Drakos, but each one gingerly told him that he was a helpless case in their books.

Aurum had had enough of his temper driving off other dragons, so he set off in his chariot driven by air dragons to the temple to pray to the gods. He prayed to Flame, a sun dragon, god of the underworld. He lived below the clouds where dragons live, and below the Earth, where the Others crawl around on two legs, like a moss dragon. Then he prayed to Glisten, a moon dragon, goddess of heaven. After that, he prayed to Iris, a rainbow dragon, goddess of the gods and goddesses. Iris helps all dragons make the right decision. As he began to leave, he remembered to pray to Shannon, the seasonal dragon, for good weather.

When Aurum was done praying, he ordered some tree dragons to hunt some forest animals that most dragons eat. Then he went to his bedroom to think of how to make a friend.

After hours and hours of thinking, eating, and pacing around his spacious bedroom, he couldn't think of anything. Now he was mad and frustrated. He was madder than the Mad Hatter in his favorite book, *Dragon in Wonderland*. He stormed through his magnificently large castle, ripping down paintings with his thick, lashing tail. Couldn't he have a single friend?

When Aurum got to the throne room, a scrawny plant dragon scurried over to him. "You have a visitor, master Aurum. She is waiting in the parlor," she managed to squeak.

Aurum was confused. He hadn't invited a visitor to his palace. And besides, no one liked him. Or so he thought.

Aurum quickly stopped his temper tantrum, and hurried along to the parlor, unsure who would want to see *him*. Just before he reached the parlor, a voice as smooth as silk said, "Hello, Aurum. I am pleased to make your acquaintance. Please, come in!"

Yeah, Aurum thought. *As if I need permission to enter my own parlor. Who does this lady think she is? A goddess?* But, as he trudged in, he realized that he was right.

"Hello!" exclaimed Iris, the goddess of gods and goddesses. "I have wanted to meet you some day or another, King Aurum. I am Iris, as you may know. I have heard your plea for help, so I left my lunch with my dear friend Shannon to come see you. So tell me—what is the matter?"

Aurum couldn't answer right away, for his golden jaw clattered to the ground, red beard and all, the moment that he saw her. Finally, after what seemed like many millennia, Aurum pulled himself together. With as much dignity in his voice as he could muster, he proclaimed, "Hello to you, too, Miss Iris. How lovely for you to visit. Yes, I was in the temple to pray today, but I was not, ahem, 'pleading for help,' as you put it. I was actually just asking for a dragon to laugh with me, a wing to lean on, and a dragon to talk to. In other words, I want a friend. Either that, or my temper to go away so I can have friends." He scowled as he found himself pleading after he had said that he hadn't been. "Please, Iris. I have been lonely for so long. Just one friend would do. Please."

Iris pondered his words for a moment or two, and finally said, "Very well. I shall relieve you of your temper, *and* give you a friend. But, in exchange, you must go to every dragon in your kingdom, and give them one sack of food each. The greens you shall buy from the farms nearby, and you shall hunt where no dragon in your kingdom has ever hunted before. This is to make sure that the animals are pure. When you succeed, your friend shall be waiting in the spot where I am hovering right now. Do we have a deal?" There was a look of slyness in her eyes as if she had a grand plan, but Aurum didn't seem to notice.

"Deal," Aurum said heartily. "Thank you so much, Iris. Thank you so, so much." And with a *poof!* she was gone. *Funny*, thought Aurum. *She left a misty rainbow in her place.* In the best mood he had had in a while, he left.

Aurum did all of the things Iris told him to do. He bought greens from the nearby farms. He hunted from a forest where no dragon

of his country has ever hunted. He even gave a bag of food to every dragon in the clouds—each baby dragon, juvenile dragon, and adult dragon! It took him three days, but he did it. He felt the anger and hatred melt out of him like butter on a frying pan. It was replaced by a new feeling, a strange feeling, one that Aurum had never experienced before—the feeling of true joy.

Then he raced back to his palace. He flew through the door of the parlor full-heartedly, and saw a beautiful silver dragon in front of him. Her scales shone like the bright morning sun. “Hello. I’m Asimee. And you are?” she asked expectantly.

“I’m Gaurum—I mean Aurum, and welcome to my palace! Please, sit! You must be tired,” replied Aurum sheepishly.

“Why thank you, Aurum, I think that I will,” replied Asimee as she sat down in the nearest comfy chair.

“How did you get here, and why?” Aurum asked coolly.

“I came here when a nice rainbow dragon asked me to come meet the king. Of course,” Asimee said matter-of-factly, “I couldn’t resist. I think that her name was Iris? Isis? Oh, something like that. Anyway, I came here as quick as I could in a chariot that the dragon gave me.” She sighed. “She really was a doll.”

They talked and asked questions like this for hours on end. It went something like this: “Where were you raised, Asimee?” Aurum asked.

Asimee replied, “I was raised in a little town in your country called Poli. It was a nice and cozy little town, but very renovated. We have paved roads, and a few years ago, we got sidewalks!

“My family and I lived above a café, and the smells were exotic! Sometimes, I would wake up to the smell of sweet creamer. Other mornings, to black coffee. That was the worst!

“Anyway, it was across the street from the café when the rainbow dragon came up to me. Did I mention that she was nice? Oh, well. As my mother would say, “That’s my story, and I’m sticking to it!”

You get the point.

After a while, Asimee and Aurum felt like they had known each other for their whole lives. Aurum asked Asimee to marry him one or two years after they had met, and she said yes.

They had five little platinum dragons of their own, named Harry, Barry, Doris, Norris, and Charlotte.

Oh, and one more thing. Whenever Aurum felt frustrated or angry, he would give more to the dragons in his realm. He gave clean carpets to dirty, cheeky, warty mud dragons (theirs were always getting dirty for some reason). He donated some of his golden scales to the poor, and to the temple. Aurum was the most popular and praised king in all of the clouds. Little did he know, though, that this was Iris's plan from the beginning—not to solve problems by throwing tantrums, but to satisfy the anger with love and compassion.

Emma

EMMA, by **Claire Hornburg**, is the story of a college student. When she is home alone for the whole summer, she finds out that her little sister's "imaginary" friend may be more than just a product of a wild imagination.

I walked into Carrie's room. It was purple, as you would expect from an eight-year-old girl. It also had fairies painted everywhere. She was having a conversation with her imaginary friend, Emma, while Mom and Dad were packing for her.

"Ash?" she asked me,

"Yes?" I replied. Carrie is the only one who calls me Ash and not Ashley.

"Will you take care of Emma while I'm gone?"

I sighed. "Yes, I'll take care of your imaginary friend for you."

"Don't say that!" she yelled. She glanced over her shoulder. "She'll hear you," she whispered. I rolled my eyes. Carrie could be so dramatic sometimes. She is creative, though, I'll give her that.

Carrie is my little sister, and she's going to summer camp, while my parents are in Jamaica for the summer. I'm going to be in the house, all alone, for the entire summer. I was kind of excited, and a little bit scared at the same time.

Something crashed on the floor.

"Lucy!" I yelled at our cat as I rushed to pick up the lamp she knocked over.

After many hugs and goodbyes, my parents called, "Bye, Sweetie, have a nice summer!"

"Bye!" I managed to reply just as they shut the door. I heard another crash.

"That is the last time, you *stupid* cat!" I whirled around, but Lucy was nowhere near the nightstand.

A chill ran down my spine.

"H-hello? I said. I heard scratching behind me. I turned around slowly. Behind me, on the wall, was written "I am Emma."

My mouth dropped open. *This wasn't happening. Ok, Ashley, I thought to myself, you can think this through. Carrie's imaginary friend is Emma, right? So...that must mean that Emma is real. But if she's invisible, that must mean she's...*

“A ghost?” I thought out loud. As soon as I said that, a little girl appeared sitting on the bed. “Emma?” I said shakily to the girl. She was maybe six years old, with long brown hair tied up in pigtails. She also had on a pink footie and was holding a stuffed bear. I was thinking there was something strange about her when it hit me: I could see straight through her! She crossed her arms and looked the other way.

“You are Emma, right?” I tried. She still didn’t move.

“I-I’m sorry I didn’t think you existed,” I said kind of awkwardly, and this time she uncrossed her arms and sighed.

“I guess I shouldn’t be angry, no one ever does. That’s probably because you can’t actually see me until you believe in me.” I jumped a bit. She talked! *Well duh, she has all those conversations with Carrie*, I thought. We sat there in an uncomfortable silence for a while.

“So...you’re Carrie’s friend?” I asked. She stared at me.

“You know Carrie?” she replied.

I laughed. “Know her? I’m her sister!”

Her eyes opened wide. “You’re Ashley!” she exclaimed. “Carrie has told me *so much* about you!”

Suddenly, I couldn’t see through her anymore. She was, or *looked* at least, completely human. I blinked.

“What?” she asked.

I smiled. “Nothing.”

She yawned.

“Are you tired?” I asked. She replied by climbing under the blanket and not moving. I took that as a yes. I sat there for a while, not wanting to leave a ghost—of all things—in Carrie’s room. After about fifteen minutes I started to get tired. I finally conceded and went to bed. What harm could a six-year-old do anyway?

As I lay there half asleep I thought to myself, *This summer might be more interesting than I thought.*

The next day, I went to the storage locker we own to drop off our winter coats. As I was walking down the street, I saw an old lady dressed in black just standing there. I thought nothing of it, so I dropped off the coats and turned around. The lady was walking toward me. When she got to me she said, “He’ll come for her, and there’s no stopping him now!” She cackled and ran off. I shook my head. *Weird*, I thought to myself.

I walked home. As I walked through the door I called out, "Emma?" but there was no reply. *She must be sleeping*, I thought. I walked into Carrie's room, but Emma was gone.

I panicked. Emma never goes out of Carrie's room, so that must mean someone took her! Suddenly it clicked. *He'll come for her*. Oh my god.

I saw a green light behind Carrie's bed. When I walked over there, I saw it was some kind of portal. *There's no stopping him now*. I jumped in.

I started the adventure by landing on my face. When I got up, I was all disoriented. As soon as I got my bearings, I began to look around. It looked like a field in the middle of a forest, but everything was an eerie green and sort of transparent. I heard a scream. I turned around and saw two dark figures heading into the forest, so, obviously, I followed them.

When I got into the forest, everything was dark. I got close to them and saw that a masked man was holding Emma tightly by the wrist. They stopped, and the man said something to Emma, told her not to move, and walked away. I waited a bit until I could no longer hear his footsteps and leaped out of the bush I was hiding in. I tapped Emma on the shoulder and she jumped a bit. I motioned for her to follow me back out into the clearing.

When we got back to the portal, we heard a yell.

"Hurry!" I whispered to Emma. We jumped back through to Carrie's room. We sat down on the bed.

"So, do you want to tell me what happened?" I asked.

She said, "That man killed my family, and now he's after me." She started sobbing. "We were coming home from a party when our car broke down. The rest of my family got out of the car, but my seatbelt was stuck. I cried for help, but no one could hear me over the rain. Then, I saw a masked figure come up to the window. The rest of my family was already gone, and he was after me. He almost got me, but just then, flashes of green light exploded around me, and I became a ghost, left to wander the earth until I grow old. He thought he could get rid of me by creating a portal into the ghost realm. It's a place all the really evil ghosts go so they won't harm anyone. But now the portal's gone, so he won't be able to get out, ever."

I looked back. She was right; the portal was gone. I put my arm around her and thought about this. I guess the man is just evil and murdered the rest of her family and wants to get rid of anyone who knows about it. She continued to cry. The door opened, and I heard a familiar voice call, "Sweetie, we're home! Why is there so much mail? Did you even get it all summer?"

WHAT?

"Oh," Emma said, "there's something I didn't tell you. The ghost realm makes time pass by really fast."

I was slightly disappointed that my summer was gone, but more relieved that Emma was safe. I ran into the kitchen to greet my parents. After many hugs and kisses, I heard small footsteps from the front door. Carrie rushed in and exclaimed, "ASHLEY!" She gave me a bear hug—or whatever it is that eight-year-olds give college students. "Where is Emma?" she practically yelled.

I replied, "She's in your room, but she's a little bit upset." We walked into her room, and she looked scared.

"Did the man come back?" she asked Emma. She nodded.

I said, "Emma, why don't you talk with Carrie for a while?" She nodded and jumped into Carrie's arms. She looked from Emma to me, and then back to Emma.

"You can see each other! That's good. I was worried she would remain invisible to you," she said to me. I smiled and nodded.

"Ashley?" my mom called. "I want to talk to you."

"Sure," I replied, and stood up.

I walked over to my mom, who was sitting down on a kitchen chair. She motioned for me to sit down. "I just want to say I'm proud of you. It's so good of you to play along with the whole 'Emma' thing. It must be hard."

I smiled really wide. "Actually," I replied, "it was easier than I thought."

The Fantastic Four

*When an evil villain comes out of hiding, four boys must fight him off with their magical powers. In **THE FANTASTIC FOUR** by **Stav Dvir**, these boys must save their planet.*

A long time ago there was another planet with living humans on it. These humans lived the same way that we do. However, four children had the abilities of magic. These four boys were named Scott, Marcus, Joe, and Bob. Bob was their leader. Although they were all friends and all had the same magical abilities, each one was very different from the next. Scott was hyper and energetic. Marcus was very calm and cool, but when he got mad it got ugly. Joe was quiet and didn't contribute much to the group when in battles, but he was the man with the plan. Finally, Bob was loud and heroic; he was a good person to look up to.

However, with every good guy comes a bad guy, and to Bob that man was Zurk. Zurk was an evil sorcerer who wanted to drain the power from Bob and his friends. Zurk had been tracking them down for years, following their every move.

"Did you hear anything about Zurk?" asked Bob.

"No, ever since our last fight he has been gone," replied Scotty.

"Well, I hope he learned not to mess with us four," added Joe.

"Maybe he did learn his lesson," commented Marcus.

"So, Bob, we never really got to talk about what happened when the three of us were knocked out," said Scotty.

"Ok, I'll tell the story then," said Bob. "After we broke into Zurk's castle we walked over to the back room where he was waiting for us, as you remember. Then he called in the guards to attack you guys. The guards shot paralyzing spells at all of us, except they missed me. I quickly jumped out of the way and didn't get hit," said Bob dramatically. "Then I paralyzed all four guards. I shot a fireball at Zurk, and he just made it to jump out of the way. Only a little of his face got burned. It was a serious burn, though," finished Bob.

"So he must be recovering from that burn," commented Marcus.

"I'm sure he is," said Bob.

Years passed, and Zurk was still healing. But Zurk decided it was time to come out of hiding and capture the boys. Zurk knew

where the boys lived now. The boys had no parents or relatives to take them in, so they just hid their whole lives.

Zurk ordered his henchman to go in and attack. Zurk went in too.

BOOM! They knocked down the front door to find the four boys watching television. The boys jumped. Scotty was energetic as usual and jumped off the couch, ran around the house twice, and sat back down.

Zurk ordered his henchman to attack. The henchman shot fireballs at all four boys. They all jumped out of the way.

WHOOSH! The house caught fire. The boys tried putting it out with a water spell, but didn't have enough time before four more fireballs came. Now the house was really burning. The boys shot lightning bolts at the henchman and paralyzed them all. The boys ran out of the house.

Zurk knew he couldn't catch them alone, so he decided to look around the house for a minute before going home. Inside he found a bomb that if set off could blow up a whole planet. He took it and ran home. Zurk had fought the boys before, and he had a hideout clearly marked "Zurk's House" outside.

The boys knew that Zurk wouldn't stop until he had them caught, so they trained up. The boys found a large pile of rocks and stones and trained with those. They practiced spells for water rushes, fireballs, levitation, wind, lightning bolts, lights, and unlocker of anything. Finally each of them shot one thing. Scotty shot water, Joe shot fire, Marcus shot wind, and Bob shot lightning. When the forces hit each other they created a ball of balance and exploded onto everything except for them.

The boys were ready. They set off for the towering castle marked "Zurk" on the walls. They went inside and walked the halls until they found the backyard with Zurk and his henchman waiting for them.

"See this bomb?" Zurk said while he locked the bomb in a safe.

The boys understood that Zurk had stolen their bomb, so they continued to fight. They were lined up perfectly, each boy on one henchman, except Bob was against Zurk. The boys had trained for this and waited to attack second.

FOOM! All the bad guys shot fireballs. The boys ducked and avoided them. The bad guys kept it coming with a whole river of

water. There was no avoiding this. The boys were wet and had to tread water because it was so deep.

When the enemies shot lightning into the water it traveled through the water and electrocuted the boys. The enemies took out the water and left the boys down on the grass. They were cold, wet, and in shock. They were all hurt except for Marcus.

Marcus had the power to heal them all. They got their health back and decided it was time. Scott shot water, Joe shot fire, Marcus shot wind, and Bob shot lightning. *BOOM!* It exploded in a big ball of everything and killed the henchman.

Zurk, however, got enough health to run out of there. Now they realized that Zurk planned to run out when there was only one minute to disarm the bomb.

They didn't know what to do. It was all locked up. Then it came to them. They used the unlock spell and opened the case with only 20 seconds to spare.

They didn't know how to disarm the bomb, so they levitated themselves and flew right off of their planet and threw the bomb. It created a huge *BOOM!*

They were bruised and injured, but they stayed strong. They knew that this was what they were made for: to fight evil and make things right. So they thought of a group name. They went with The Fantastic Four. The Fantastic Four continued fighting evil, and one day they knew Zurk would return.

A Gamer's Nightmare

In A GAMER'S NIGHTMARE by Dylan Kirsh-Carr, three friends realize an arcade game is not as simple as they think it is. In fact, whether they win or lose may determine whether they live or die.

Ava is sitting at home watching TV. "Ava, come here, the phone is ringing," her mother said.

"Hold on, I'm coming, Mom!" Ava yelled. She picked up the phone and said, "Hello, who is this?"

"Hi, Ava, this is Noah. Want to come over to my house?"

"Sure thing. I will be right over. Is it okay if I bring my brother Daniel along?" asked Ava.

"Sure, it's fine. Your brother is cool," said Noah.

Ding, dong. The doorbell rang. "Hey, Ava, Daniel!" exclaimed Noah. "Ava, I just bought the new Donkey Kong arcade game and the truck is dropping it off."

"What? Man, you're so lucky!" Daniel said.

"How about we play the game?" Noah said.

"Okay, let's do it!" they all shouted at once.

"Okay, now that it's all set up, how 'bout we plug this baby in? Ava, you do the honors of plugging it in," Noah said.

Ava said, "Okay, 3...2...1. Wait, what is happening? Why are we getting sucked into the game?"

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh, dude, we are getting sucked into the game!" Daniel screeched.

"Hey, where is Ava?" Daniel said.

"Uh, you might want to look up," Noah said.

"What? Why does Donkey Kong have Ava?" Daniel asked.

"It looks like we are the players trying to save a princess, aka Ava," Noah said.

"Okay, Noah, you lead the way," said Daniel. "I have never played the game before so I don't know what to do."

"Well, we need to get past all ten levels before we can save her, so we need to get past the first level. We start now!" exclaimed Noah.

“Wait, Noah. What is the point of the game, like the controls?” said Daniel.

“Well, you need to jump, climb, and grab items to get a high score and win the game,” said Noah.

“Sounds easy enough, let’s go.”

Jump, climb, jump, jump, grab, and jump.

“Ow, I got hit by a fireball,” said Daniel.

“That means you lost a life! I think you might die if you lose all your lives,” Noah said.

They passed levels 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9... and then they reached 10.

“We are at the final level, Daniel, but we only have one life. Let’s go do this,” Noah said. They gave each other high fives.

“Yes, we are almost at the top. Wait, why is Donkey Kong coming? Why is there a stack of barrels behind him?”

“This is the final part. We must jump and jump and jump. Let’s do this,” Noah said.

“Okay, we are almost there, just one more jump and... jump!” Daniel said.

“Yea, we won!” they both said simultaneously.

“Oh my gosh, guys, thank goodness you saved me, I was so scared,” cried Ava.

As the friends returned to Noah’s house, they went through some tough things and had the biggest nightmare ever.

A Glimpse into the Future

A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE, by Caitlyn Moore, is about a boy who thinks his life is terrible. After getting a glimpse into the future, he soon realizes that there are worse and better things than what he experiences every day.

Why is it always me? I'm always the one who my mom makes come outside. I'm always the one who has to lose at a race. Lastly, I'm always the one who has to sit on the hot sidewalk, in August, in Alabama, for thirty minutes.

Allow me to clear some things up for you. I was doing a science experiment, as usual, and then it kind of exploded some type of blue goo. To put this in a nicer manner, my mother was VERY upset. I know this because she didn't even yell. She simply said this: "Mm mph, Peter, why can't you just play like other boys? I would rather you track in mud than have you using my pots and pans!" I knew she was very angry because her face was red the entire time. So she told me that I needed to leave and play with the other boys.

She practically shoved me out of the house, but instead of making her more angry and coming back in, I thought that I should try to make my mother happy by trying to play with the other boys. Well, it turns out that all they like to do is race. They don't like to make up their own games with rocks and grass. So I did what my mother wanted by racing, but I knew I was going to lose. And guess what? I lost. So, as a penalty I have to sit on the hot sidewalk, in August, in Alabama, for thirty minutes.

Now that I have told you my circumstances, let me tell you about myself. My name is Peter Jobs, I am thirteen years of age, and I am not a normal boy. For example, during the summer most boys like to play and race. I like to make "rotten things that destroy the house," as my mother puts it. But in my opinion I like to invent things.

Ever since we moved here last year and I saw how they built new houses and used cement to lay new sidewalk, I got the idea of making new things. I don't mean new kinds of houses, but new kinds of house equipment or work things to make our lives easier as humans. It may be a crazy idea, but that is what I enjoy as an activity during my summer vacation.

I realized that I was sitting on the new sidewalk that has “1929” stamped into it. I outlined the engraved digits and made a wish: I wished that I could see my future to learn if it would be better than the present.

Before I could blink again the world was spinning around me. When I tried to get up, the wind pushed me back down. My brain became all fuzzy, and for a second I thought that I was going to pass out.

All of a sudden it all stopped. I saw myself not like in a mirror but as an older version of myself! I was looking at the front lawn, and there “I” was!

This is incredible. Of all the times that I’ve tried time travel, when I least expected it, this happened. I am the first of the entire great scientists to actually carry it out. I was terrified and over the moon ecstatic at the same time.

My older self was leaving, but where was he going? Before I could think about that any more I realized that he was putting things in a car. Was that my car? I had so many questions that I was starting to get a headache. So I decided that I should just watch instead of question everything.

Older me was in a uniform, a soldier’s uniform. He was putting luggage in a cherry red car. But I couldn’t pinpoint what type of car it was; I wasn’t a car person. Then through someone’s window I saw why he had on a uniform. The world was at war! It was not just any war but the Second World War. People in my time did say that this was coming, but I never wanted to believe so.

“Why would you go?” I found myself saying aloud. The older me turned toward where I sat; it seemed as if he looked right into my eyes. But still he turned back around.

An older version of my mother came thundering out of the house crying. I was about to get up and ask her what was wrong, but she spoke before I could even wince. “My precious, are you sure you want to go to this war?”

“Mother, I need to go. I need to see life for myself,” older me said, getting teary as well.

“Well, then, I suggest you take this.” My mother was holding my journal that I used for my inventions. It was aged, but still usable.

“Thank you,” older me said, now letting tears fall from his eyes, or I mean my eyes.

“Also this. It was your father’s, but you can borrow it to remember your family.” She handed me the old compass that used to be my father’s before he died.

“I love you, Mother. Goodbye.” And without another word, older me grabbed the items, hurried into the car, and drove away. I didn’t have to be a genius to know that I was probably sobbing in the car right now. I wanted to sob while watching!

This was way too scary. How could I see this? I knew that this wasn’t a dream because everything was real. What is going on? I yelled my mother’s name, but when she looked my way I guess she didn’t see anyone because she walked back into the house. Why couldn’t anyone see me? I was on the verge of tears, but I was rudely interrupted.

The swirling thing happened again, and then there was my house. But neither my family nor anyone I knew was in it. Another family was. The father was playing catch in the yard with his son. There were also a mother and a daughter sitting by a television set watching a coffin being held by black people and other people marching along with it. Then someone began to scream and cry about a man named Martin Luther King and how he shouldn’t have died and how it was wrong that whites hated him so much that they could kill him. Quite frankly, I didn’t know who that was but I could believe that a white man killed him. I always get so angry about how all people can’t just get along.

I didn’t want to hear about Martin Luther anymore, so I looked around the neighborhood. The Sullivans’ house was replaced with a new-looking church. Also some of the houses that used to be my neighbors’ were replaced with new, different style houses. It kind of hurt to know that what used to be my neighborhood had been replaced with the people of this generation’s neighborhood.

After the Martin Luther march ended, the swirling thing happened again. The blinds were still opened in my house. This time there was news about me! I was a famous doctor and inventor! But this news was bad. I had died.

This was too much, far too much. I retraced the digits backwards. The swirling thing did not happen, but dates were flying everywhere in mid-air. I felt like there were a million bats hitting my head at the same time. I emptied my stomach.

Although I felt like I was going to die, the retrace-the-numbers thing worked. How did I know that that would take me back in

time? That is a mystery to me. But I got home safely. It may have been terrible that I died, but at least I know now that there are far worse things than sitting on a hot sidewalk, in August, in Alabama, for thirty minutes.

The Golden Bird

*When new neighbors Maria and Lily move next Lindsey's house, Lindsey soon discovers some of her family's secrets. What do the secrets have to do with the new neighbors, and what will she find out? It's all in **THE GOLDEN BIRD**, by Nico-Simone Jones.*

Over one year ago, a girl named Lily and her mother Maria moved into the old house two blocks away from me. Although it was two blocks away, I could see their house since I live on a circular road. They had moved in the middle of the school year, which was strange. I met them on the way to school. I introduced myself, and they said they were new to the area.

After school I noticed them again, but this time they were following me home. This was really awkward and creepy because there isn't a walkway they could use to get to their house from mine.

When I got to my door I turned around and said hello, but all they did was turn around and start walking to their house. When I got upstairs, I looked out my bedroom window and noticed them looking out their window. They were making strange hand signals and pointing at my house. Suddenly they stopped and stared at me! I quickly moved away from the window so they would not see that I was now staring at them. "What on earth were they doing?" I wondered.

I tried to forget about what I saw and went about my evening routine. As night grew near I got ready for bed to go to sleep.

All of a sudden I heard thumping in my basement. Since my bedroom is on the first floor and my parents' bedroom is on the top floor, I was sure I was the only one who heard the noise. I needed to investigate.

As I walked down the basement stairs I heard the thumping noise again, and saw a faint, yellow glow that seemed to be going off and on to the rhythm of some kind of heartbeat. I crept toward the light to find everything was coming from an old, odd box.

There was no time to get scared. I am not afraid of anything, so I quickly opened the box to find a glowing bird made out of pure, solid gold that seemed to come alive the closer I looked at it. I quickly covered the box back up so it would not fly away and wake

my parents. I headed back to bed, but I couldn't sleep. I was too busy thinking about the odd bird I had seen and how I was going to show my history teacher. My parents didn't need to know that I was looking in old boxes at night. Besides, my teacher had researched birds.

The next morning, I got ready for school. I grabbed my books and the odd box that contained the golden bird. At school I walked straight into my class up to my history teacher and showed him what I found.

He opened the box and stared at the bird. As I studied his expression it almost looked as if he was scared. The bird then winked, and gold coins started appearing in the box!

He quickly covered the box, and with worried eyes looked around the room to see if anyone had seen what happened. Then as quickly as he looked at it, he gave the bird back to me and shoved me out of his class. He said, "Get out of here NOW!"

I asked him, "Why?"

"There is something special about this bird. Never let it out of your sight! It's a very rare Egyptian bird that possesses great powers. They can be good or very dangerous if possessed by the un-rightful owner!" he replied.

As I turned to walk out of the class I looked out the window and noticed that the sky was turning from bright, sunny, and pretty to dark, gloomy, and scary. It seemed a strange face looking into the box affected the weather.

I walked to the office get a leave slip. I noticed Mrs. Maria and Lilly talking to the principal. Lilly quickly turned to me and announced to the principal that I had stolen her bird. I blurted out, "I did not steal anything, and I found this in my basement last night!"

Mrs. Marie's eyes widened and she stared at the box I had in my hands. Mrs. Marie yelled, "No, you didn't. You followed Lilly and me home yesterday and snuck into my house and stole it. Now hand it over!"

"What! You followed me to my house yesterday!" I yelled.

We started yelling back and forth so loudly the whole school could have heard. The principal looked very confused, so she stayed quiet the whole time. Mrs. Maria and Lilly looked eager to prove it was their bird, and I was angry because I knew I didn't

steal anything! I asked Mrs. Maria and Lilly, "If this is your bird, tell me, what can the bird do?"

They both looked puzzled. After about two minutes Lilly yelled, "If you don't give me back my bird I will burn your house down to the ground!"

On that note, the principal quickly called the police, and Mrs. Marie and Lily were taken away.

Soon after, the principal called my mom. My mom arrived and confirmed to the principal that the bird was mine by a will left by my grandfather. The document revealed my name was Simone, but I had changed my name to Lindsey.

It turns out my birth year was carved into the old box in Egyptian writing.

On the drive home, my mom told me that my great grandparents were Egyptian, and she needed to do more research on the bird and our family history. She also wanted to keep the Golden Bird hidden until she knew more information. She knew it was a special Egyptian bird passed down for generations and each bird has unique qualities that are beneficial but can be very dangerous.

Decades ago, there were three birds in all in our family to be kept secretly by those who had them, which was still a mystery. There are different tales of how we have family members and others who may come looking for the birds because of their uniqueness. Two or more of the birds together can cause the climate to change and the universe to shift. I told my mom about the climate changing when I left my history teacher's room.

She made me promise to never take the Golden Bird back out the house without her permission until we had discovered what the Golden Bird can really do and why Mrs. Maria and Lilly acted like the bird was theirs.

Many years have passed, and we now have found another golden bird in our grandparents' attic. Mrs. Maria and Lily have to stay at least 50 feet away from us at all times. Now that we have two birds that can completely control the climate and weather, we have also moved to a remote island off the coast of Cuba so that no one could be hurt from the two birds.

Herobrine

*When Philip loses a friend, he embarks on a righteous adventure that gets him stuck between a rock and a hard place. Forced to face off with a super power, he learns that revenge isn't always the answer in **HEROBRINE**, by **Michael Valk**.*

It was a warm summer morning in the parallel universe of Derpon, where everything is somewhat backwards. I had just woken up out of my cozy bed with a red blanket. I did my morning routine and went to my food chest, got a pork chop, and ate it for breakfast. I grabbed a couple more for later.

I went to my friend Luis's house and woke him up. He is quite the oversleeper for a miner. He ate, and we went down to the mine, about sixteen blocks above bedrock. That's where diamonds begin to spawn.

We opened up a new section to branch-mine in. Time passed, and we stumbled upon many less-valuable materials such as iron, coal, and redstone. After that we decided to make a huge cave and split up.

About 26 blocks in, I found a diamond! I broke the first layer and was looking for the second, but it wasn't there. It did open up into a symmetrical cave that was bordered with diamonds. It had iron doors and a glass ceiling that was stopping lava from pouring in.

"Hey, Luis," I yelled in awe, "come look at this!"

He came fast, very fast. "What?" he said, gasping for air.

"Look at the walls," I replied.

"Wow, just wow!" said Luis.

"I know, right!"

We started mining out the diamonds when Luis pointed out that there was a three-by-three cobblestone section in the middle of the room. We mined it and fell into a shrine of some sort. The shrine had a cross of gold blocks and nether rack in the middle. "Isn't nether rack flammable?" asked Luis.

"Yes," I replied.

He took out his flint and steel and lit it. About three seconds later... a person with a blue shirt, blue pants and white eyes with a diamond sword appeared. I tried to take out my sword, but it was

too fast. He took one hit to kill Luis, and it happened in a blink of an eye! Literally, I blinked.

“Luis! Luis!” I cried, denying the inevitable. “Are you all right?” There was no response.

I found a stack of diamonds on the floor and picked them up.... Then I saw the rest of Luis’s belongings surrounded by blood. I fell back in reaction to the blood.

I picked up Luis’s lifeless body and ran up the mine. I went to Luis’s mom’s house and carefully laid down his body in front of her. I tried to calm her down as she started to cry.

At this moment, my mind was glowing fury. I sprinted home, looking to get revenge. I made diamond armor and started out to go to Herobrine’s castle. I really don’t know the so-called spirit’s real name, but Herobrine seemed to fit well.

Several hours into my adventure for vengeance, I went to bed in my sleeping bag that was also red. When I woke up about two hours later I was surrounded by ten soldiers who were sleeping standing up! The soldiers were wearing muzzles and armor that said, “Captors of Soul” and in small print, “Property of the Soul Catcher.”

I was stealthy enough to slip past them without their noticing. I managed to take their weapons and pickpocket them for valuables. A guy’s gotta do what a guy’s gotta do. I found a map and a compass, but those were the only two things that were of value.

I kept treading, knowing that my time was getting shaved down to the bone. I only had four hours until dusk. I continued on with my journey.

Three and a half hours later I arrived at a cave, and just my luck: The soldiers had caught up to me to capture me, and they shoved me into the cave. That was the last thing I remembered.

Locked in my perilous dreams and thoughts for what seemed like years, I had begun to think that I had fallen into a coma. I was seeing floating donkeys and ponies. I finally woke up and saw a sponge on the floor absorbing my drool. I stood up and heard TNT being placed behind me. I turned around and the noise was behind me again. And then it was on top of me! I was going to blow up, so I broke off a piece, and it was ignited with a fuse!

I tried to run, I tried; but I was tied down with chains! I knew my time was short, so I took my shovel that was still in my

inventory and broke the chain. I ran at top speed to the wall of the cave and dug in. From the blast I was shocked and temporarily blinded. So were the soldiers.

I managed to continue on my way to the huge castle known as the Soul Catcher. I approached it and entered cautiously. As I entered, I saw him, just standing in the grand staircase with the I've-been-expecting-you face, which was not controversial given the circumstances.

He took out his sword while leaning on the wall. I took my sword out and yelled, "Yolo, you only live once!" I charged full speed and took one big, hard swing with all my might. I gave him an analytical impact right to the head, which seemingly did nothing toward helping me defeat him.

We had a sword fight, and he birthed a couple of yawns while I was getting bitterly defeated. I tried to take one final blow, but I got turned on, and I missed. My sword went straight into the wood of the guardrail. It was stuck, my sword was stuck... I was doomed.

I turned around, and he was just standing there, as glowing as ever. Out of the blue, he reached toward me and kissed me! Out of disgust, I backed away and pulled my sword out of the wall and tried to hit him and run, but all that did was enrage him. I ran. Gasping for air, I turned around and yelled, "You have no power over me!"

"Oh, you don't know too much, now, do you?"

"Huh?"

"Oh, your intellectual level is not very high, sorry," and he cleared his throat, "so you are not the sharpest knife in the drawer."

"Ohhh, why thank you."

"Point proven."

I took a final swing with my sword and completely missed! With that terrible attempt to finish him I realized that I hadn't even started to work on him. He tapped me and said, "Have a nice fall," and I fell over the guardrail. Then I was inside of the court hall, and the last thing I saw was the effulgent blade of his beaming saber.

Jack vs. Aliens

*When a human goes to a strange planet, he finds he is not wanted by the president. In **JACK VS. ALIENS** by **Jevon**, this man will find that some aliens can be harsher than you expect.*

BOOM! POW! Jack just gave a knuckle sandwich to a guard. Before he threw his next punch, he considered how this all happened.

It started like this. Jack is on a planet called €™® in the year 4152 and is 36 years old. He was originally from planet Earth, but he found €™®, and he decided to live there. But when he got to the planet there was a hologram covering the planet. It said “NO HUMANS!” Jack thought he knew why. Another human had come to this planet before him. That person was an idiot for not seeing the planet. He must’ve been facing the other way. But the president flew up into space, grabbed that traveler, and killed him. It is a weird story.

Although Jack knew that could happen to him, he thought that he was smarter and more devious than that person and could live there. It was like his big challenge.

After he saw the “keep out” sign, Jack dressed up as an alien and sneaked in. His suit had four eyes, was all green, and had three feet with seven toes on each foot, two hands with six fingers on each hand, a cone head, and a secret camera that can observe all sides. His suit was impeccable.

The president, who has super vision, found out that Jack was a human. Since the president is the president, he could see the whole world because of his very powerful presidential powers. The president was worried that more humans would come and eventually take over the planet. This makes him hate Jack and makes him hate newcomers. The president decided to kill Jack, who has only been there for four days. As you might think, he is the only human on €™®. Everyone else is a Nenbook, which is the name for a native of €™®.

Right now Jack is at the pet store trying to find the right kind of food for his monster, Stripes. He got a pet because it reminds him of his home, where he has a pet dog. Jack thought he needed a pet right away so he wouldn’t be homesick. When he finally found and

purchased it, he went home. On the way home, he heard two aliens talking about how everyone hated the president. “Why would everyone hate the president?” Jack thought. He decided to put the thought aside.

When he got home, there was a note on his door, right below the place where you put your hand to get in. Only the owner of the house can open the door. Isn’t that pretty neat?

Before Jack looked at the note, he prayed in front of his cross that he would be safe. Then he looked at the note. He was just learning © (the language the Nenbooks spoke), so he couldn’t recognize part of the words. “We...like newcomers a lot. We will *something* you,” Jack said. “No, wait, um, it says: We *don’t* like newcomers a lot. We will *kill* you!” Jack was freaking out.

Suddenly, he heard a noise. He looked above him and saw his arch coming down. Jack jumped out of the way a split second before his doorway arch collapsed. He stumbled to the door and opened it with shaky hands. Then he closed it right behind him, his face pale.

Jack took out a notepad and pencil. He wrote down:

Problem—people are trying to kill me.

Solutions—try and find out who this person is.

Writing things down always helps Jack think well because he gets to process what he is thinking. While he was writing this down, he thought about his cross on his arch. He always prayed in front of that. It had Jesus and God and everything. That was his favorite thing in the whole galaxy. Whoever this person was, Jack was going to make them pay.

Jack now was hungry. He went outside to his food garden and was shocked. Everything was dead. To him, it looked like the crops had been drowned. All of them were dripping wet. Then Jack screamed. Everything in his life was going wrong. Why did he have to be killed?

From the corner of his eye, Jack saw something move in the forest. He thought it was probably his monster. But when he looked closer, he saw that it wasn’t his pet. It was the president, Umpanki. He met eyes with Jack and ran. “So that’s who’s ruining my life,” Jack thought. He had a lot of questions, but for as many questions as he had, he only wanted to do one thing: Catch that stupid Umpanki.

Jack took his hover board and rode to catch up with Umpanki. His hover board had a button on it that showed whatever was behind him. He had another button that opened up wings on the sides of the hover board.

Jack was holding his hands out like he was surfing. He had his tongue stuck out on his upper lip, a habit Jack has when he is determined to do something. His eyebrows were arched, and his right knee was bent. His left leg was straight.

Jack and Umpanki turned and twisted. They bumped into other people. They flew up and down the buildings. They ran super-fast and did flips on stairs. It seemed like it would never end. Umpanki was fast, but Jack was faster. He caught up with the president just as he was turning a corner.

But right then, as Jack caught the president, they came upon two guards who were leaning against a wall. It looks like they had been there for a long time and were bored out of their minds because the guards were talking about baseball

Then Umpanki said, "Stop, you idiots! He is a human, remember! Get him or I'll kill you too!"

The guards scrambled into position. "Yes, sir," they said.

Jack wasn't about to lose this. He punched one guard, and the other flipped him over. Jack slid his leg toward Umpanki and he tripped the president. Then Jack threw his hover board at the president. It hit his head. Jack took both of the guards' heads and knocked them into each other.

Then he said, "You are all full of baloney." He left them there in the cold.

A witness saw the whole thing. Soon, word went around, and everybody thanked Jack for knocking out the president. €™® let humans inside their planet while a new president was being found.

Jack soon became famous on €™®. He was also famous on Earth for discovering a new planet. Umpanki went to jail for attempting murder. The Nenbooks and humans have worked together ever since.

Jack lived a happy life and got married but sadly had no kids. When he died in the year 12158 at the age of 8,006, he was a person you couldn't forget.

Katie's Summer

KATIE'S SUMMER by *Malia Warren*, is the story of a girl who is just trying to have a good summer. Read this story to see if she succeeds.

Once my mom and dad left I was stuck with our dumb babysitter. I walked up to my room, not wanting to say hi to Sarah. My parents have work Thursday and Friday at a hospital, so we have our babysitter. The only reason we have her is because, according to my dad, I'm not old enough to be home alone with my crazy younger brother, Zach.

Once I get into my room I read my book, *Kelly's Amazing Adventures*. About 10 minutes later I hear Sarah's voice yelling to my room. "Come and watch a movie with Zach and me!" I slowly walk down the steps, not wanting to do this at all.

"What movie is it?"

"*Finding Nemo!*" Zach yells loudly.

I sigh and sit on the couch, drifting off to a deep sleep.

After I wake up, I realize I fell asleep on the couch for the whole night. I go to the kitchen and make myself waffles. Once the toaster pops and scares me like always, I add syrup and enjoy my breakfast. A drop of syrup falls on my red shirt with my name across it, Katie. I made the shirt in second grade, and it still fits me to this day.

It's still the second week of summer, and I still have done nothing entertaining, not once. My mom walks down the steps with baggy eyes. "Did you have fun last night?" I nod, not caring.

When I get done with my breakfast I go back to my room and get ready. When I have everything done I tell my mom I'm going to Amy's house. Amy is my best friend who lives next door.

I ring her doorbell, and her dad opens the door. "AMY!" he shouts up the steps.

Amy walks down the stairs, smiles once she sees me, and then walks outside. Amy has long blond hair with light blue eyes. "Can't play, I have swim practice," she says when I'm first realizing she has her bathing suit on under her clothes.

"Ok. Bye!" I say on way back to my house. I slump back on the couch, disappointed I have nothing to do.

"Amy can't play?" Mom asks.

“No,” I grunt.

The next day I am in the car to go to our swim club. “Katie, make sure your brother stays close,” my dad says, looking at me through the mirror.

“I know,” I say, looking at Zach with his floaties on, ready to go swim. All I do is sit by the pool or swim a little with Zach.

The second Dad drops us off Zach runs straight to the pool. I lay my towel in the shade and take out my phone. Amy texts me and asks if I want to play. I tell her I am at the pool, and she can meet me there, but she doesn’t reply.

For about three more hours I only get in the pool once for an hour. Then Dad comes to pick us up. We have to pull Zach out of the pool and carry him to the car.

Amy is outside waiting for me. I rush out of the car door and walk to her house. “Hey,” I say.

“Want to go to the ice cream store with me?” she asks.

“Let me get money from my dad,” I reply.

Once I get money we start walking. On the way there we talk about our summer so far. “I haven’t done anything fun yet,” I explain to Amy with a sad face.

“All I have done is swim practice and my cousin’s birthday party,” Amy replies. We start to talk about how we are going to miss school and all of our classes together.

The ice cream store is only a half mile away, so in the summer I go a lot. When we arrive there I am still wearing a bathing suit and a pair of shorts. The scent of ice cream cones fills the cold place.

“May I have a small mint chocolate, please?” I ask. The cashier has a big smile and is wearing a blue shirt that says “Barney’s Ice Cream Shop.” Amy orders her ice cream, and then we sit outside.

While we are licking our ice creams the sound of cars passing on the road rings in my ears. “How was the pool?” Amy asks.

“Fine, I didn’t do much.”

The rest of the time we are silent.

When I get home the first thing I find is Zach watching *Finding Nemo* again. It isn’t long before my dad calls my name. I walk outside to see what he wants.

I find him and my mom working on our garden on the side of our yard.

“Do me a favor and grab me a big cup of water,” he says. Before I can answer he turns back to his work. I shuffle my feet and walk into the kitchen to get a big cup of water.

After I give him the cup of water I walk upstairs to my room. I sit on my desktop and start to draw. I stroke my pencil and end up drawing an ocean with big waves. Then I start to color.

I hear a knock on the door. I get up to find my little brother crying his eyes out and his hands all wet.

“What happened?” I ask.

“Fish is dying,” he says through breaths.

I rush downstairs to find our goldfish on the kitchen counter, not in his tank. Zach must have taken him out, I think. I walk over to Jimmy and pick him up and gently put him back safely in his tank.

“See, he’s not dead, just needed water. Don’t take him out again.” I sit on our couch while Zach looks at the fish tank. My mom and dad walk through the door with dirty hands and holding weeds.

When Sarah gets here all we do are puzzles. Every Thursday and Friday my parents have work at Mary Ann Hospital. So those nights I’m stuck with Sarah and Zach. When Zach finds the last piece to the puzzle he stands up and cheers.

“*Finding Nemo!*” he screams too loud.

“Again?” Sarah asks. He nods his head and then rushes to the couch.

“Okay,” she says. “Katie, do you want to watch it again?”

“No thanks,” I reply, walking outside.

Even though it is almost 6:00 I go to see if Amy can play. She invites me in her house and we go up to her room. When I walk in her room all I see is poster-filled walls with piles of clothes everywhere. We play with her hamsters for a while, and then she asks if I want to watch a movie. I have had enough of *Finding Nemo* so I just say, “No thanks,” and go home.

The next day I go to the pool with Amy. At the pool we play on the diving boards and play other pool games. “We should go now,” Amy says.

About 10 minutes later her mom picks us up from the pool.

“How was the pool, girls?” Amy’s mom says with a big smile.

“Fun,” I reply.

“Can you drop us off at the ice cream store, and then we will walk home?” Amy asks.

“I suppose,” her mom says with a slightly smaller smile than usual.

When we get to the ice cream store we order our usual ice creams. “Hey, let’s go to the new park across the street,” Amy suggests, looking outside the store’s window. I turn my head and look across the street and see a blue playground with a bunch of kids on the swings. After we finish our ice cream we head to the blue, fun-looking park.

Amy and I spend most of the time on the swings. We walk home talking about how we should go to the park more often. I just realize this was the first time this summer I did something fun. Amy and I end up having a sleepover, and for the first time this summer I have a great day.

King Revolting

KING REVOLTING, by *Melissa Ryan*, tells the story of a peasant who writes about a revolt against the king. It tells us about the importance of freedom of speech.

In England in 1134 A.D., a selfish and evil king named Arthur ruled over a kingdom. He usually had large banquets with his nobles and they usually led to food shortages. He was an only child, and he killed his own parents to get more power. He taxed peasants for everything they had, including their homes, food, and money. Everyone in the kingdom was afraid of him.

One of the suffering peasants was a man named Edward. His fiancée, Aleena, died from a severe case of the bubonic plague. The slave masters whipped him and the other peasants if they slowed down while working in the fields. He lived all alone in a small hut with a straw roof and a dirt floor.

He was all alone in his hut one day after work, and he decided to write about a revolt against the king on a piece of paper. When he was done writing, he hid the paper in a burlap sack. "No one will ever know," he thought to himself.

The next day, while sleeping on the floor after work, Edward heard someone knocking on the door of his hut. He opened the door, and three of the king's guards on horses came bursting in. In front of them, was a peasant named John, who was completely loyal to the king. "There he is!" John shouted. "Yesterday I saw him writing treacherous thoughts about the king! Tie him up!" And the guards almost immediately tied him up in ropes and threw him in the back of a cart drawn by a mule. And with that they went off to the castle.

Later, in the dungeons, Arthur came down to Taunt Edward. "So, you thought you could get away with it then," Arthur asked. "Writing words of treason against me?"

"I don't care," Edward shouted. "I was only stating my mind about you and your way of government!"

"Very well then!" the king said with rage. "I'll let you starve here and die as the rats eat your flesh!"

Later, 300 years after Edward's death, his bravery encouraged a group of barons to start a revolt against the king, which led to the beginning of something big.

Life or Death

*There is an anonymous murderer in Camp Fog! John and Abby have sworn to find out who this mysterious killer is in **LIFE OR DEATH**, by **Eddie Jevahirian**.*

Once upon a time there were two kids named John and Abby. They loved summer like any other kids, but they hated summer camp.

In the summer of 2015, their parents made them sign up for a camp called Camp Fog. It was a seven-week long camp. It was the first time they had heard of the camp, so when they got there, they had no idea what to do. Eventually, they got all their stuff unpacked in their cabin, Cabin #2. There were 14 other cabins. They thought it was going to be lame, but what they didn't know was that it was going to change their lives forever.

The first day, they got up, brushed their teeth, got dressed, and headed for the mess hall. After breakfast, it was time for them to go to their electives. Of course John and Abby had the same one; it was hiking. While they were there, they met a boy named Matthew. He was a strange kid. He had piercings all over himself that made them think he was emo. Matthew told them that he hated this camp, and that he only came to avenge his father's death. His dad was a counselor who drowned there when Matthew was eight. He told them they only let him in because he had changed his last name and his style because all his clothes were hand-me-downs from his dad.

When John and Abby woke up the next morning, all the kids from Cabin #9 were dead. They thought Matthew had done it, but it would be hard to prove. Also, the night before, everybody had sneaked out for the extra dessert except for a few cabins, including #9. It was a murder mystery that they had to solve.

About halfway through the day, all the counselors were found dead, and there were no signs of the killer anywhere. The killer locked the main gate and electrified the fence. The phone lines were down, so the kids couldn't call the cops.

Week after week, this mysterious person was killing kids. Kids were found in the locker rooms, the mess hall, the cabins, and even in the pool. They were all being killed at different times. But each

murder led John and Abby closer to the killer. Finally, it came to two cabins, and then they had a theory.

The cabins were Cabin #2 and Cabin #14. They put traps in both of the cabin doors: motion sensors that would sound off and then drop a 100-ton cage on the killer. Then finally, to top it off, an alarm would sound to signify that the killer was caught!

The night came when their trap was put to use. The killer didn't notice any of the systems and triggered the sensor. The cage dropped down, and John and Abby had caught the killer!

They took the ski mask off to find that it was Matthew! On the first night of the murder when they had sneaked out, it wasn't for the whole night for Matthew. There was just enough time for him to slaughter his first victims in their sleep. John and Abby found Matthew had hijacked the power lines and that he had a cell phone that he smuggled in. They used that to call the cops. The cops came, and Matthew was given 100 years in prison for murder.

After that, John and Abby were rewarded with one thousand dollars each for solving the case. The authorities had to shut the camp down. But John and Abby were now in love with summer camp so much that they opened a new one called Camp Mystery because they were fond of mysteries, puzzles, and riddles. John and Abby ran their camp successfully for many years after.

The Lord of the Bees

*When a young bee goes on an adventure full of surprises, he becomes a hero and finds his destiny. In **THE LORD OF THE BEES**, by **Eric Ajluni**, he will not just change himself, but the world.*

I was ready to say my grand speech to the whole kingdom of bees. This was really before I knew what kind of adventure I was in for. I am Wasper, the crown prince of the majestic kingdom of our hive. I am a bee, and am one out of 999,999 children of the grand royal family of the hive. I am the eldest of my family and next in line.

The bees live in a giant hive floating high in the sky away from the outside world of Skyranicus. No one down there knows of our colony in the sky. All the bees of the hive are forbidden to leave the hive. Even if someone below found us they would not get through because the bees' outer wall is impossible to get through unless a hole is made from the outside.

There is one catch to my life, though. When I was born I had a condition where I would grow much bigger than everybody else. I am a little taller than a normal being from the outside, but to the bees I am a giant. Through my childhood I was always teased and bullied because of this. I felt bad on the inside but would not fight back.

There is one more key factor to beehive culture. There is a sacred legend all beings in the hive know and believe. It is the legend of the eight warriors. It is about eight warriors who are all different species and represent different elements. These chosen eight would find their true power. They would figure out their powers when the world needs a hero. It is said that one warrior will be a bee from the hive, but no one knows who.

I was at the royal ceremony and was about to give the huge speech I had worked on for months. I walked to the podium and could feel the sweat trickling down my back. "Hello, my great people," I said.

I was about to continue when a bully in the audience yelled, "Hey Wasper, I always thought giants were supposed to be dim-witted. You have a really big head with a lot of extra room because your brain is so small," he yelled.

The whole crowd started laughing and making their own clever quips to make me feel bad. My father tried to calm them down, but they kept going. Soon the whole kingdom was in a groove.

I got so angry I felt a power grow inside of me. My anger blinded me, and I shot out of the ceremony hall and toward the exits of the hive. I flew full speed and zoomed past most of the kingdom to the grand outer walls. My whole kingdom flew past my eye, but I knew I had to leave.

As I got to the outer walls the guards tried to stop me, but I was too strong and went right past them. I got to the wall and summoned all of my strength and physical resources to smash a big hole through the wall and into the outer world.

The world was not peaceful and lush with trees and beauty. It did not have many people walking around the area below me. No, it was covered with machines and robots and weapons as far as I could see. One war base had a flag above it. The flag showed the most evil army in history has returned: the Arkon clan. Then the cold, hard truth came to me: Arkon had begun its conquest on the world.

Arkon was a secret organization that the world had always feared. The bees have not feared them because we were safe in the hive. But I now knew the threat was all too real. All Arkon members are robots, and they have fleets they use for their quest for destruction. Even so, I had to leave the hive and really explore the world. With that I stormed into the air to see what was left of the world.

After one entire year of exploring I knew more of the world. I was better off in the hive. The whole world was under heavy Arkon control. The only place not seized was the hive. I wanted to go back, but I was sure they would not forgive me. I still went back. I really wanted to go back.

I flew as fast as I could. When I got there I saw a war base was right under the hive. I decided to check the war base below me to see what I could find. I flew down with the wind gushing in my face and finally got to the ground. I came to discover the camp empty. I explored a bit but came up with nothing important. I decided to check the captain's area.

The camp was a series of large buildings with the Arkon symbol on it. In the captain's area I found a file saying "Plans for Conquest." I opened it up to find the latest plan and stood there in complete

shock. “Oh my gosh,” I said in disbelief. The plan said that the Arkon fleet would fly up to the sky to enter and destroy the hive through the hole I created.

All the guilt made me feel horrible. The hive would be destroyed, and it was entirely my fault. The people up there may have been unruly and disrespectful to me, but I had to save them because they were my family and friends. So I flew up there to let Arkon feel my wrath.

I went full speed—and to me it seemed I was going at the speed of light—and I did get there. But once I got there what I saw was horrible. The hive was on fire, and all of the bees were swarming out of it. The attacking fleet was commanded by their captain, Xolo. I went straight for Xolo at the top of his great fleet. “Wow, aren’t you a big bee,” he taunted me.

“In a minute you’re going to wish I was not this huge,” I yelled. We clashed, and I tried to land a powerful blow on him, but he was too quick and dodged away. He was not very strong, but made up for it with speed and agility. He carried a quick saber he used to slash his enemies.

Around the fight was a nauseating scene of the fire and the fleets destroying all I cared for. But I got caught up in the moment. He did a tremendous jump and landed his saber right into my shoulder. The second it hit I felt my mind being worn away and everything started to get black. My vision went blurry, and then I felt nothing.

That is when I heard the cry for help from my family, mixed with the roaring of the fire. That is when I woke up. I sprang up, and the power coursed inside of me. I was ready to end this guy. “You should be dead,” he said with a shudder. Instead of responding, I flew up and punched him straight in the gut. Now things were serious.

We were trapped in a stalemate for a very long time. I had to help the bees, so I finished the match quickly by grabbing him and throwing him off the fleet to plummet to the ground. The fleet halted its fire, and left the scene with no captain. I leaped inside the hive to evacuate everyone.

After I thought I was finished I heard one more cry for help from an older bee in the library. I went as fast as I could and saw him under a bookshelf that had toppled on him. I came to help him and I moved the bookshelf away. As he was going to get up the

ground cracked beneath him, and he fell out of the hive. He fell from the air toward the ground where he would die. I had to rescue him. I didn't have much of a plan, but my gut instinct told me right away. I leaped in after him. I flew downward as fast as I could and saw him screaming for help.

I flew fast and caught him in midair. We thought we were safe until we looked above us. The hive was on fire and was falling out of the sky like a meteor. It would fall on the planet, and devour it in flames. The bee and I touched the ground and braced arms, getting ready for the worst. I covered the old man and knew in my heart that this was the end. But then I thought I couldn't give up, so I let out a ferocious roar when it hit.

I thought I was dead, but I did not feel dead in any way. I looked around in amazement to find I had summoned an energy shield to protect me and the old bee. I figured out that I had some power inside of me. It reminded me of an old myth told throughout the lands about eight warriors who would understand their true power.

Once the flames died down, I saw a book from the library that had survived the crash and was at my feet. The librarian picked it up to see the last surviving piece of his collection of books. "Thank you so much for saving me. You are really a true prince. You have great power too. Alas, the hive is gone and we now must survive out here. At least I have one book left. I wonder what it is."

He opened it up to see what it was. It happened to be about the eight warriors myth. On one page it said the eight warrior names, but the letters were scrambled. It said if one of the warriors comes near, the names would be revealed. I looked at the book, and magically the letters unscrambled to spell my name. I was then shocked that I was really a fabled warrior. Before I could dwell on it, the rest of the bees came by. They all cheered for me, and even the bullies said they were sorry for being mean. I forgave them, and I knew in my heart that the kingdom would live on in the outside world.

"We probably will not survive out here," someone said. The bees started to complain of it, but I knew that if we stuck together it would be fine. They also brought bad news too. "The king did not survive the attack. This means Wasper is our new king."

I could hardly understand what they were saying. Then, they all bowed down to me. I sat for a moment to think. I felt like crying, but

I was king now, and after all I had been through that would not be right. Arkon was gone now. With their leader gone they would separate and crumble.

I took a deep breath and accepted the fact of my father's death. I now knew I was in charge. This would be my greatest challenge and responsibility. But I knew I could do it. I would have to lead this kingdom to not just survive, but thrive. I would have to take this role as a legend to restore the world after the Arkon rule. After all, not only am I the chosen warrior, but I am also the Lord of the Bees.

Louie's Journey

In LOUIE'S JOURNEY by Andrew Beggs, a puppy gets scared by a firecracker and runs away in horror. This story is about a little runaway puppy that has to survive in the woods...alone.

It was a sunny spring day in Ohio on the farm. The roosters had already announced the start of the day, and in the barn, one of the dogs was about to have puppies. Her labor was long, but by the end of the day, there were nine new puppies on the farm. Most of them were mixed colors, but one was jet black. He was the tiniest puppy of them all.

He was a lively dog. He grew fast, and soon it was discovered that he was the fastest runner of the litter. The puppy liked life on the farm. There was lots of land and he ran and played with the other puppies. But he noticed that little by little there were fewer puppies on the farm. People came to visit often and they would play with the puppies when they came. Soon, the puppies left the farm with the people who visited, but somehow nobody picked this little dog.

Soon the hot weather of summer came, and it was July 4th. The farmer and his family decided to go visit the local fireworks display in town, and the puppy happened to be sleeping in the bed of the farmer's truck when suddenly it started to move. He didn't know it at the time because he was asleep, but he was headed to the fireworks display, too.

The farmer's family got to the fireworks, but they had no idea that the puppy was there with them. He was alone in the back of the truck when all of a sudden, *BOOM!* A huge shell burst. Again and again, *BOOM! BOOM!* The puppy was terrified. In a huge jump, he leaped out of the trunk of the truck and ran and ran as fast as he could possibly go.

Suddenly, he stopped, not knowing where to turn next. He found himself in the middle of a place crowded with trees that he had never seen. It looked dark and unfamiliar. He was so tired, but he didn't recognize anything. He decided to trot over to a tree and rest for a while. He didn't know what else to do.

He hadn't had anything to eat but squirrels and chipmunks for the past two months. As September came, the small puppy was losing a little bit of fur each week. He barked and barked all day, longing to get someone's attention. Nobody answered. He felt like collapsing down on the ground and giving up. He was thirsty, hungry, and exhausted. But God gave him his strength, and he kept moving.

It was very quiet in the woods. At first he felt lonely, but after a while he heard sounds he had not heard before. He heard birds chirping, the buzzing of bees, and the sound of snapping twigs as animals darted around.

But the woods looked dull, and he didn't feel at home, except for the leaves in the trees. They were bright and vivid, and the sun shone through them.

During the evening it looked scary. The puppy felt like somebody was watching him during the evening.

Another month passed, and it was now October. The puppy woke up to another lonely day. He caught a squirrel to eat, and kept moving.

It was about seven o'clock when he heard a nasty growl from behind him. He turned to see a wolf pack of three, smiling and licking their lips. They had quick movements and darted at the little puppy in a heartbeat. They started lunging at him and biting him. He was yapping and could taste the blood in his mouth.

He found a way to get free, because he kicked them with his back legs. He started running very fast. From all the running he had done with his siblings, he was quick. He was very fast and outran the wolf pack. He stopped and collapsed near a tree, injured and tired.

The puppy woke up to a rain shower. He heard a river nearby. He walked slowly, still sore, toward the river. He saw the fresh water and tried to run to it, but he forgot he was sore and stumbled a little. He managed to make it to the stream, and he took big gulps of water.

After that, he looked and saw his reflection in the water. He had three scars on his forehead.

The small puppy started to trot now because he was impatient. It was about lunchtime when he heard the voices of humans. He saw them, and the humans saw him. They had nets, and on their coats it said, "Dogcatcher."

He tried to run away, but the rod of the net was long, and it snagged the puppy instantly. He whined, but the dogcatchers just laughed. One of them took out a notebook and put a tally next to a bunch of other ones. The dogcatchers took the puppy on a harness and a leash.

They walked him about a mile to a gray van. They shoved him in a cage and said, "Sit down, relax, we're going to take a little ride." The door shut, and everything was pitch black.

He could hear other dogs in the van sniffing and growling at him. He was frightened because he could tell they were very big and strong by their growls. The puppy couldn't see them because it was so dark in the van, but he could hear their cages rattling on the sides of the van while it drove.

The ride was about two hours, and he was getting impatient. Finally, the van stopped, and the catchers opened the doors. They hauled him out of the van. Then they took him into the building that was there. They took him into a room with a lady.

She said, "Sorry, we're full here. You're going to have to take him to Michigan. I heard that Michigan has some open spots right now at their dog pounds, so that's where he will have to go." There was some arguing among the three, but then they hauled him back into the van, and just like that it was pitch black again.

The van stopped, and the dogcatchers opened the door to give the poor puppy something to eat. It was some dog food.

The puppy licked it up.

It was the best thing he had ever tasted. He ate it in about 10 seconds.

"Well, he was really hungry," one of them said. They shut the doors, and then kept moving.

The stopped about four hours later and took him out of the van. The dogcatchers took him into the hospital because he was so sick and so thin. His hair was dull and torn out in patches. They also discovered that he had ringworm. He spent two weeks in the hospital section of the dog pound until he was ready to go to the adoption center. But they did not have a name for him because they didn't know anything about this puppy.

When he was finally ready to join the other animals, there were tons of dogs barking and yapping at everybody in sight. They gave him a tag that read "Ivan," and stuck him into a cage. He sat there quietly for a long time. He was scared from the cage, and felt he was

locked in there forever. It was now bedtime so he fell into a deep sleep. The next morning he ate breakfast, which was delightful to him.

It was about lunchtime when a family of a mom, dad, brother, and sister arrived for a visit. They walked around looking at all the dogs there. They had settled in on a dog that was beautiful. He was part collie and part shepherd, and his name was Stewie. Just as they were about to tell the workers that they would take Stewie, the dog lunged at the bars of his cage and snarled at them.

“Oh no,” said the mom. “Maybe this is not the right dog for us.” The mom walked over to another cage and said, “Who is this?” “Ivan,” the nametag said. “I’m going to go home and think about it for a little bit. You guys stay here and make sure nobody takes him.”

“Why is she going home?” said the boy to the dad.

“I don’t know. Maybe she is just a little worried about the idea of getting a dog.”

The puppy wanted to be taken home to a family and be adopted.

After about an hour the mom came back. She had been thinking, and she finally said, “Okay, we’ll get him.” The small puppy was wagging his tail harder than ever. He was so happy he was about to pee in his cage. He got taken out of the cage and put into a car that was very warm, and the puppy was wagging his tail.

“What should we name him?” the boy said.

“I don’t know,” everyone said.

“We’ll think about it on the way home,” said the mom.

They all drove home in silence staring at the dog and thinking what they should name him. The family lives in Beverly Hills, Michigan near Detroit. When the dog got in, he made himself comfortable on the white couch.

“I think his name should start with an L,” the sister said, “because I was singing the alphabet in my head so I could figure out a good letter to start the name with, and when I said L, I got a little tingle. So I think it should start with a letter L.”

“Yeah, that’s a great idea,” everyone else said. And suddenly the dog wagged his tail hard.

“Maybe we should just keep his name as it is,” the dad said.

“NO!” everyone else said. The family thought a long time about the name.

“How about Lucky?” said the girl. “He’s lucky he has a new home!” There was silence.

Finally, the boy looked at the dog and said, "What name do you want to be?" Nothing happened, and so the family waited.

"How about Lightning?" the mom said.

"That's ok, but it doesn't suit him quite right," said the dad. The whole family including the dog went to bed that night. In their dreams they were all thinking what the puppy's name would be.

The next morning the mom decided to make pancakes for breakfast. She was tossing the pancakes in the pan when she suddenly thought of a great name for the dog. She turned around, and said, "How about Louie?" Everyone sat there for about five minutes thinking about that name.

"I love it!" said the boy.

"I like it, too," said the girl. Everyone liked it except the dad who hadn't said anything about the name yet.

"It's a great name for this dog," said the dad.

"All right, should we name him Louie?" said the mom.

"Yes," everyone said.

"Louie it is," said the mom.

Ever since the family named the dog Louie, Louie has been a happy dog living with the best family, in the best community.

The Magnolia Tree

*When a boy becomes a highly wanted criminal by the police, he finds out that some people cannot be what you expect them to be. In **THE MAGNOLIA TREE** by **Bryce Ulep**, a kid finds out that even if someone looks bad you can grow to like them.*

Once upon a time there was a magnolia tree. It housed many microscopic villages. One in particular had a runaway criminal. His name was Logan. He lived in a nice house.

One reason he was a criminal is because he built his house in a bump in the leaf. He was not allowed to do this because his clan made a deal with the tree. The deal was they could not damage the leaves, and in return the tree would let all the villages stay on it. Also the police could not find his house, so they had no clue how to catch him. They knew his house was in a lump because Logan told one of his friends when he was four.

The police spent all their lifetime looking for Logan, but they could not find him. The only thing they found was some peculiarly placed obsidian. They wondered how it got there. They also wondered why it was there. They used spies to try to find Logan. There was only one problem: They had no idea who it was. The police did not know if Logan was a boy or a girl, or if Logan was tall or short.

It was early spring when Logan started to go to school. Logan was an orphan, and he was not known by the government. It was Logan's first day of school. Logan could not wait; he just wanted to start. School started in the spring and ended in the fall. Logan walked outside to get on the Hover Bus.

Logan noticed a new girl at his bus stop. He felt really weird when he was around her. She would say hi. Logan would just stare at the ground and pretend he did not notice her. As the day went on Logan got up the courage to talk to her. He asked her, "What is your name?"

She said, "My name is Lulu." Logan and Lulu became best friends.

One day they had become such good friends Logan invited Lulu to come over to his house. Lulu said OK. She went to his house, and she saw something she had never seen before. It was obsidian in a

rectangle. Logan said, "I need to get the portal open." He took a match and threw it on the obsidian. It sparked. Then the middle turned purple.

Logan and Lulu stepped inside. Lulu wondered where it was. It was exactly like a regular house except the walls were pink. Then it suddenly clicked in her mind, "He is the criminal. He is the one who hollowed out a hill that the government has been after." Logan realized she noticed he was the criminal. So he trapped her in a metal cage.

Logan went back to school the next day thinking about what to do with Lulu. He could not just kill her. Everyone would wonder where she was, like they were that day. He also could not let her go because she would go tell the Emperor and get him killed. He decided never to go to school again.

When he got home Lulu was gone. The cage was pried apart. By that time it was the end of the summer. Lulu went to the police and took a match and got into the house. By that time Logan was running. With every step he took fall got closer, which meant the end of the world.

Logan decided to go the edge of the leaf. He went there. By then the police had gotten there on their horses. The police said, "Don't take another step."

Logan said, "If I did I would fall off the leaf to my very painful death like both my parents." He looked at Lulu. She was a super huge, bloody monster.

Just then the leaf fell free. Logan realized he would not die by falling off the leaf. The leaf turned brown and turned super mushy. The ground felt like stepping on tons of rotten mashed potatoes. The leaf hit the ground with a thud. The ground sent out a sonic boom.

Everyone died except for Logan and Lulu. They took the whole winter and climbed back up the tree. They went up and up. Somehow they managed to stay alive.

Lulu had three babies on a leaf. They had more and more kids. Logan and Lulu decided that they wanted to do what their parents had done. So on the count of three they jumped. It felt like hours soaring down there, not like a few seconds like when they fell on the leaf. They hit the ground, and they were gone.

Logan and Lulu had made their own, one-of-a-kind village. Thus the story of the Magnolia Tree went on and on.

Maldon Middle School

*A boy is lost in a mysterious world! In the story **MALDON MIDDLE SCHOOL** by **Gabriel Vidinas**, Arthur goes an action-packed adventure through the land of Maldonia.*

Sometimes I wonder why my school is called Maldon Middle School. It sounds like some kind of fairy tale world, but no. It is just like any dumb middle school: guys talking in class, bullies in the hall, food fights, and all the usual. I am just one of those bystanders that nobody talks to. My name is Arthur.

Now I know that you are thinking about that hero from the round table, but I am the complete opposite. Like I said, I am just a bystander. I don't get involved in those gangs like the popular kids, or get bullied all the time. I just stand around watching life go by. I am pretty good in school, but nobody tells me good job or anything. From my perspective, this is the worst school in the world. Pretty much everything is bad, like the education, the food, and especially the kids.

One day after school, I missed the bus, and I was locked inside the school. I decided to simply roam around the school.

As I was walking, I saw a lock that was very peculiar. It was in the shape of a dragon curling its tail to lock the locker. It had a button on the bottom of its foot with strange markings around it. I had no other choice. I was locked in the school, so I decided to push it.

The dragon suddenly startled me by turning alive and hissing at me, and then it sped away in a scarlet flame. I pulled the locker open with a tug, and a slight breeze blew into me. A dark cave of limestone revealed itself to me, lit by only a single torch. The door slammed behind me, enclosing me in the dark. I noticed that I was standing on a crumbly ledge, with a dark sea of water below me.

Suddenly, the ledge collapsed under me, with gravity tossing me into the dark water. I tried to swim to safety, but the water never seemed to end. I was swimming for my life, trying to reach shore. The water started to churn under me, and it felt like I was sinking into the water. I did not want this to be the end of me, so I tried swimming even faster. No matter how hard I tried, the water was always stronger than me, pulling me into the dark abyss.

I woke up with a blinding light piercing my eyelids. As my eyes adjusted to the light, I found myself in a blue-leafed forest with strange creatures crawling, squirming, or flying around. These animals included flying frogs, furry snakes, and reptilian bears.

I had no choice but to explore this strange land, and I found another strange creature. It was an extremely fat hummingbird that was struggling to fly. I put out my finger, and the hummingbird swayed to it. When it landed, the heaviness toppled me to the ground. I read somewhere that a hummingbird weighed less than a penny, but this one weighed more than a ton.

I suddenly heard an ear-piercing buzzing noise overhead. I looked up and saw a giant dragonfly diving straight at me. I ducked out of the way, speeding away as fast as I could. As soon as the giant bug recovered, I looked back and saw it buzzing toward me with a humongous needle in the front of its face.

I picked up a sharp stick and attempted to stab it, but the bug had a tank-like, indestructible shell all over its body that broke my stick like a toothpick. It lunged toward me, pummeling me to the ground. I was struggling to keep the needle as far away from me as I could, but some of the jabs were too strong.

While I was attempting to dodge, the dragonfly took a hard stab, right next to my left side, and another next to my right side. The dragonfly took another hard jab extremely close to my pelvis, between my legs. I yelped with relief: The needle got stuck in the ground. I pelted away as fast as my legs could take me.

I didn't want to look back, but I heard the bug coming fast. There was a twelve-foot-wide tree in front of me that I could not avoid. As much as I didn't want to die, I turned around, facing my destiny. The dragonfly was just about to pierce my skin when the bug screeched and fell to the ground.

I saw a hooded girl with long, pitch-black hair and a tan hoodie. She was pointing a bow at me. She sprinted away, and I did, too, after her. I yelled to her. She took a quick glance at me and sprinted even faster.

After minutes of running and screaming in the endless blue-leafed forest, I finally caught up with her. Snatching an arrow and getting on top of her, I pointed the arrow at her neck.

"Who are you and why did you save me?" I asked her forcefully.

"Your skills are impressive, for an amateur," she spoke in a cool voice. "Follow me. I will get you up to speed."

I asked myself, *What else is there to do? Walk around this forest like a blind monkey or follow a girl who saved my life and knows this place like the back of her hand?* It would be wiser to go with the second option, so I followed the girl.

While we were walking, Quorra caught me up to speed. She told me that this land was called Maldonia. The land was filled with interesting creatures, from the fat Abbaar birds to the giant Kokoou bear. But the land was not just forest; it had over 300 different biomes from the blue forest of Anakolpo to the red sands of Danteraan.

It was getting dark outside as the sun started to set. She led me to a giant bird with all different colored feathers, a stubby beak, and golden, slit eyes.

"The name is Quorra," she said to me in that cool voice that she has.

She told me how to ride on the bird, and after a little while, Quorra and I were off, flying in the dim light of the moon.

Over the years of fighting monsters and living in this land with Quorra, I got to know her better. Eventually we got to the point where we both became old and weary. We could not fight anymore, and all we could do is walk and talk. From these days, I knew that this was the end of our great adventures.

The Quack

In THE QUACK by Donovan Ward, a cow and his friends meet a giant duck. This is not a misprint.

Hi, my name is Jack, and I'm an eleven-year-old cow. I live in California with my two parents and my pet human Steve-o. Tomorrow is my first day of middle school, and I was very excited. It was about eight o'clock when I decided to go to bed.

The next morning I had frosted human bites for breakfast. After that I went to the bus stop to go to school. At school I met a girl named Pocahontas and a boy named Bruce Willis.

There was also a boy named Kurt Jones who was mean to me in 5th hour. Kurt lived right next to me, and since I had told Bruce about what happened at school, he went over to Kurt's house said some mean things about Kurt's mom and then punched him in the face. Kurt said he was going to even the score.

Later that day Bruce, Pocahontas, and I went to Subway and got some sandwiches. All of a sudden we heard a huge *boom*. We all ran outside to see what happened. There was a 10-foot duck outside the Subway! He cried out, "People of California, I have come here to be a cuddly DUCK!" We all talked it over, and since it was a duck we made it our pet.

A few weeks later we decided to name the duck The Quack. After a day or two of duck school The Quack was a nice duck, besides the point that he speaks English and sounds like a commercial announcer.

The Quack ended up being the captain of the Duck High basketball team. The Super Ducks were unstoppable that year.

After high school The Quack moved on. He moved to Illinois and became an accountant. Kurt became a criminal that was added to the FBI's most wanted list for theft and possession of illegal drugs. I became a car salesman, Bruce became a lifeguard, and Pocahontas became a mother of three children named Brad, Eric, and Charlie.

Late one night I turned on the TV and heard that a man named Kurt Jones had escaped from prison. I knew what he was looking for... Bruce.

Shadow

*When an ordinary girl meets a new, mischievous neighbor called Shadow, she finds out some shocking things about him and his life. In **SHADOW** by Ana Caroline Bayma Meyer, a girl finds out how evil life can be.*

The hot sun glared down at Shadow, the boy who lives across the street from me. I always thought there was something wrong about his dark, lifeless house and him, but I didn't know what. I took one last look at his depressed, unforgettable face and looked away.

I walked to the kitchen to feed my cat, Alina. She has been acting peculiar recently. She has been hissing and watching the corners of the house. I'm getting concerned and frightened about her.

"Ana! Dinner's ready!" my mom exclaimed. I dashed downstairs and sat down at the dinner table. We said grace; I wolfed down my appealing lasagna.

Something didn't feel right. I felt anxiety in the pit of my stomach. I thanked my mom for the delightful dinner and headed upstairs.

There I saw it. Its enormous golden eyes were fixed on me: a wolf! I couldn't look away. I was stiff as stone. I shrieked to my mom and cried, "A wolf is outside of my window!"

I looked closely and examined the wolf. The wolf was larger than normal. It had an ashy black coat like Shadow's hair. Shadow! I knew it was him. I knew that there was something different about him.

My mom came right away, and when we looked back the wolf vanished. The only thing left was the beautiful reddish-orange sunset.

My mom said goodnight to me when I got to bed. Too bad my mom's going to work tonight; I could have had fresh breakfast in the morning. I couldn't forget the wolf's face. It was a heartbreaking and abandoned face. I felt sorry for Shadow, if it was Shadow.

I woke up with a screech from Alina. "What now?" I moaned. I looked over, and then everything stopped. I felt fear flush my head to my toes when I saw a black figure. I looked harder, trying to make out the shape. I saw the wolf!

I immediately got up and took hold of my scissors and howled in the dark, "Who's there?" making it seem I was scared, which I was.

I look at Alina, and then she stopped. She just looked up, nervous. When I looked back at the wolf, I saw it was now human. It seemed like Shadow. Was it Shadow? My head denied it, but was it true?

I took a step, and the human laughed. He seemed friendly. It can't be Shadow, can it?

It stepped into the light of the full moon. I gasped and stumbled backward. "Sh-Sh-Shadow?" I stammered.

He laughed again. "Yes, it is me, Sh-Sh-Shadow." He laughed a little more.

"I didn't think you talked to anyone," I said.

"I don't. But there's something I need to tell you." He took a step closer. "Run," he said.

I stared at him, petrified. I started to take steps back. He copied every step I took. My heart started to beat faster and faster until blood was screaming in my ears. I turned around and ran out of the house.

I heard him transforming into a wolf behind me. I heard flesh and clothes ripping and howls of pain out of his mouth. Every time I stepped, the more frightened I got. Then I felt a stabbing, treacherous pain in my left shoulder.

He had me! I fell on the ground. Then I heard his huge paws stomping and shaking the ground in the back of me. He picked me up by his teeth. I screamed in pain and fear until I felt the poison in my veins.

I felt numb all over my body. It felt like my body was on fire. I howled one last painful cry, and then blacked out.

I woke up and felt reborn. I was in this breathtaking plain with Shadow. The plain had beautiful little white flowers sprouting out of the ground and tall oak trees and pine trees in the distance.

"Where am I?" I said, feeling a little weird.

It felt like my teeth were made out of iron and had grown an inch. Then a pain struck my heart. It felt like an aching, burning sensation. I felt like I was dying, but I wasn't.

I went on my hands and knees and I started to holler; the pain I had was unbearable. I felt my legs and arms developing and felt

hair sprouting everywhere. I felt like I had a tail, which could not have been right. Then the burning ended.

“You are at the place where my family lived, until I got bitten and turned into this,” Shadow spoke.

My head then was spinning with questions, but I didn’t ask any of them. I listened a little more.

“You are a werewolf now, Ana.”

The Show Must Go On

*Two girls get the opportunity of their young lives in **THE SHOW MUST GO ON**, by **Ellie Magnan**. Will a locked door put an end to their dreams?*

“**M**om!” I yell. “We’re going to be late!” My mom comes rushing downstairs and grabs the car keys. We run to the car, and my mom drives me to school. I meet my friend Isabella in front of our science class. Isabella is 15 years old. She is an actress. She is friendly and funny. I’m Alexa. I’m also 15 years old. I’m an actress, too. I’m athletic, and I love to draw.

The bell rings, and I rush to my seat. I grab my papers and pencil out of my backpack. My science teacher is Mr. Hartley. He is very nice and NEVER gives us homework.

It was like any other science class. We did a worksheet and took notes.

The bell rings again. ART! I absolutely love art! But right now, it’s boring. We have a substitute. I almost fall asleep, and then my phone beeps. So does Isabella’s. It’s a good thing nobody hears. I take out my phone and read the text:

ALEXA, A TV SHOW DIRECTOR WANTS
YOU TO BE IN HIS LATEST TV SHOW!

Isabella and I look at each other at the same time. I get off my seat and crawl over to her so the sub won’t notice. “You got a text from your mom, too? Are you going to do it? I am,” I whisper.

“Of course I’m going to do it,” she whispers back. Satisfied with the quick conversation, I crawl back over to my seat.

After school I run to my mom. “Can I do the TV show you told me about?”

“Uh, what is it about? I don’t want you to be in some stupid TV show.”

“Isabella told me it’s about these five girls whose mom and dad go away. Their parents told the older girls to take care of the little ones. The parents were supposed to be back in four days, but they didn’t come back. They have to take care and do everything that their parents would have done.”

“Yeah, you can go, especially since you have been in a TV show before and you know how everything works. Your dad has to take you,” she replies.

I go up to my room and get dressed for the audition.

I am at the theater early so I can get the script and practice. I am trying out for the oldest girl, who is 15. Her name is Jenna.

Isabella walks in, and I start rehearsing with her. She is trying out for the second-oldest girl, who is 14. Her name is Rebecca.

When the directors are ready, we rush in line. We are the first ones. “I guess we’re the first ones up,” Isabella says nervously. We walk up and hand them our slips.

“Okay, start whenever you’re ready,” one of the people says.

We look at each other and nod. I have the first line. “Rebecca! Help, come downstairs!” I scream.

“What happened?” she replied.

“Ava is gone!”

“How could you lose our little sister!” she screamed.

“That’s enough, thank you,” the director said. I was cut off.

“How did we do?” Isabella asked excitedly.

“You were good. But we can’t tell if you got the part yet because you were the first ones here. We will let you know tomorrow,” he says. We both look at each other, very excited.

“Thank you so much!” I say. We leave the small room, happy with our performance.

The next morning I wake up from my little brother Leo’s screaming. I look at my clock. 7:32! “I’m late!” I say out loud. I rush out of bed and get dressed. I go downstairs and skip breakfast. “Where’s Mom?” I ask Leo.

“In the car.”

I rush into the garage and hop in the car. “I did well at the audition,” I say.

“I know. I heard you did well. Your dad said you were very enthusiastic,” she says.

We get to school, and I meet Isabella in science, like always. The day goes by. In math I fall asleep a little. In art we have another sub. In sixth hour I get a call. It’s my mom. I ask to go to the bathroom so I can answer it. I don’t make it to the bathroom in time, so I call back. “Mom, what happened?”

“You got in the TV show! They called, and I couldn’t wait to tell you. You start today after school.”

“Thanks, Mom! I have to go. Bye, love you.” I hang up my phone. Then I text Isabella:

DID YOU GET THE PART? I DID!

I get a text back:

SO DID I! IM SO EXCITED! MY MOM JUST CALLED ME!

I go into one of the stalls. Why not go while I’m here? The bell rings. *I have to get back to class!* I think.

I hear a loud sound, the sound of a lock. I run to the door. It’s stuck! “Help!” I scream. I can’t miss rehearsal! They’ll replace me! “HELP!” I scream again. I stand there kicking the door and screaming for almost 20 minutes, hoping that someone will walk by. I stop and pull out my phone. It’s dead.

Ten more minutes pass, and I hear footsteps. “HELP!” I yell. The footsteps get closer, and the door opens.

“Alexa! I have been looking all over for you! Come on! We’re going to be late!” Isabella says. “Let’s go! My mom is waiting outside!”

We find her mom’s car and jump in. We make it to the rehearsal 20 minutes late. “Mr. Director?” I say nervously. “Did we lose our jobs?”

“Um, no. Yesterday we didn’t have anybody as good as you guys to put in the roles, so you can keep your jobs.”

“Thank you so much!” Isabella says excitedly.

We finish the first episode in five days. It is done so early because we get excused from school and the other actors are easy to work with.

“Come on!” I say to my family one week later. We gather around the TV. The first episode comes on.

“You did great, honey. I can’t wait for the other ones to come out,” Mom says at the end of the show.

“Thanks, Mom!”

The Sugar Games

*Being in a competition against five other kids in a candy forest may sound fun, but in this case it's not too joyful. In **THE SUGAR GAMES**, by **Kelly Goodwin**, A girl and five other children compete in a battle to the death for fifteen million dollars. Will it be a sweet dream, or a nightmare?*

“Welcome to the first day of our journey!” a Sugarcane soldier announced. “If you are new to Overland County you must be introduced to our yearly tradition in order to win a check for fifteen million dollars. We have won only twice against the other counties. It is a fight to the death among six eleven-year-old children. At this time we would like to announce the six winners of our raffle to see who will compete in the Sugar Games!”

My body shivered as they called out the first name. I was feeling lucky that it wasn't me.

“Jake O'Bryan!” the Sugarcane soldier called out, and Jake walked up to the stage. “Jasmine Winter! Nathan Ping! Sydney Adams! Connor Jackson!” All of the winners walked up the stage. “And last but not least, Avery Johnson!”

I gasped. As I walked up to the stage, my body was shaking so much I could barely stand up straight. My eyes sizzled with tears.

“All right, thank you everyone! Have a nice day! We will see you at our annual Sugar Games!” the soldier called.

“Quiet down, children! I am Reece Cups. You may call me Reese's. We want you all to get to know each other before we put you in pairs,” Reese's said. The next thing I knew everyone was going around the room mingling.

“All right, now you will each find a paper in your left pocket with a number on it; that number is the same as your partner's. So let's hurry and get in your pairs! We are on a tight schedule!” I reached into my pocket, and found a small slip of paper that said in swift print: Avery Johnson, 6. I searched the room for my partner, until I found who had my matching number: Nathan Ping.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to present to you, our six contestants for our Annual Sugar Games!” the soldier announced as

the crowd cheered. "First we have Connor Jackson paired with Jasmine Winter." Connor and Jasmine walked down the aisle in their candy wrapper representation outfits. Connor had a Kit Kat jacket and shorts on along with Jasmine who had a Kit Kat Dress on. "Next we have Jake O'Bryan and Sydney Adams!" Sydney and Jake ran down the aisle in the same outfit as Connor and Jasmine, only they were in Dum-Dums wrappers. "And lastly we have Avery Johnson and Nathan Ping!" Nathan and I walked down the aisle in Laffy Taffy outfits. "All right, now we're going to insert a tracking device that will show your partner's location and will beep if you are near or above a Pop Rocks landmine," Reese's said.

I shrieked as they inserted the huge needle into my arm. "Okay, now the games will start bright and early at 6:00 A.M., tomorrow. Since this may be your final hours, we are giving you all the rest of the day to be able to call your families or just bask in relaxation and fun. See you at the games!" Reese's said as she walked away.

"So I guess this is it. I am going to die tomorrow," Nathan said.

"Don't say that, there is a one out of six chance that you could win," I said.

"Yeah, like that's a big chance," Nathan said sarcastically. "I'm gonna hop in the pool," Nathan said as he walked away.

I sighed as I waited for my mom to pick up, listening to the ringing tone.

"Hello?" my mom asked.

"Hi, Mom," I answered.

"Oh my God, Avery, thank heavens you're still alive!"

"Mom, the games haven't even started yet. Don't worry."

"Your father and I miss you very much and hope you come out alive."

"Thanks, Mom."

"Emma and Luke miss you too, they wish you good luck," Mom said as a soldier told me my phone time was up.

"Bye, Mom, I'll miss you."

"Good luck, Sweetie, I love you!" Mom ended off with.

"Whoa, that was rude, that stupid soldier cutting off your phone call," Nathan said as he shook his drenched hair.

"Yeah, I know, but it's fine," I said.

"So you wanna have a game of Street Speeders?" he asked.

"Sure," I replied.

Nathan and I ate pizza and played Street Speeders. As I was driving in the virtual cars on the game I thought about the driving course of the games and how terrifying it could be. We finished our game at about 1:00 A.M.

“That was fun, but I’m too tired to play another round. I’m going to bed,” Nathan said as he went to bed.

I dozed off and dreamt about the games.

“Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Sugar Games!” the host, Mickey Milky Way announced. In 10 seconds the games would commence. “10, 9, 8, 7, 6—” the timer counted down, “—3, 2, 1!” The buzzer beeped and everyone quickly grabbed one weapon and a backpack and went to search for car materials. Nathan and I grabbed a harpoon. We split up to gather our materials: icing, Oreos and cupcake ingredients.

We all had 10 minutes to make our cupcake mobile. I could hear the other contestants planning each kill spree. Nathan and I had a better plan.

“All, right, now when each car is next to us, that’s when you try to ram into them. If they fight back, fire the harpoon,” Nathan said as we put together our car. I was nervous about the harpoon, but apparently Nathan wasn’t.

“All right, folks! You have 10 seconds left to finish up your cars!” Madam Mamba announced. The crowd counted down until it was time to race. “Good luck to our competitors!” Madam Mamba yelled excitedly. The other contestants, Nathan, and I got into our cars and drove off into Candy Road.

Jake and Sydney sped as quickly as possible, throwing cherry bombs at us. Connor and Jasmine caught up with them and stabbed Jake, causing him to lose control of the steering wheel. Sydney nearly struck Connor in the chest with her machine gun as she glared at him with anger.

As Connor, Jasmine, Nathan and I were neck and neck getting closer to the halfway mark, Jake shot out one of our cookie tires. “Ahh! Nathan!” I screamed as we spun out of control and got smashed into a block of bright orange Jell-O.

“Aha, the world famous orange sticky Jell-O! That’s something you’d like to stay away from. The sticky fluid causes intense

suffocation. Ping and Johnson better get out of there fast, or they're done for!" Mickey Milky Way announced on the monitor.

I screamed as we tried to break free before we suffocated.

"Avery!" Nathan screamed as he escaped.

"HELP! ME!" I screamed as I gasped for breath.

The suffocation had started. Nathan tried as hard as he could to break me out. It was nearly too late when I finally slipped out unconscious. Nathan carried me to the car and caught up with the other competitors.

"Aw, crap, Jasmine, they lived!" Connor said to Jasmine.

"Why don't you just kill the sleeping one over there?" Jasmine said as she pointed at me.

"Good idea!" Connor yelled as he aimed to throw a knife at my neck.

"No!" Nathan screamed as he swerved the car, dodging the knife. Nathan then shot the harpoon at Jasmine, killing her.

Connor gasped as he looked at Jasmine. "Oh, you're really dead now!" he said as he tried to ram into us. Connor missed and crashed into a Jolly Rancher tree.

Jake and Sydney had already won the race, earning a tent and candy. Nathan and I set up camp near a soda lake, where he revived me with CPR.

"So how many people are left in the games?" I asked.

"Just five," said Nathan "I killed Jasmine, but only because she nearly killed you."

"Wow," I said. "Thank you."

"It was no big deal. I mean, that's what these games are for, right?" Nathan joked.

"Yep."

"Well, I guess we'd better get some sleep. Goodnight," said Nathan.

"Yeah. Well, goodnight," I said as I lay down. "Um, Nathan?" I started.

"Yeah?" he said as he turned to me.

"Never mind," I said.

"Um, okay," he said, confused, as he went back to sleep.

"I love you," I said under my breath.

The Next Day

“How about we wake our contestants with a secret Pop Rocks landmine?” Mickey Milky-Way whispered on the monitor. “Won’t that be fun?”

Two soldiers quickly placed the land mine underground and then planted a bunch of candy goodies around it in order to convince us to go over there.

Our trackers started to beep, which woke us up. Everyone was confused and scared.

“Aw, sweet, Air Heads! My favorite!” Jake yelled excitedly as he ran over to the pile of goodies.

Sydney quickly remembered about why the trackers beep. “Jake!” she screamed. “Don’t do it! It’s a trap!”

“What are you talking about? There’s no landmine, stupid. Look, I’ll prove it!” Jake said as he threw his shoe near the area of the goodies. “See I told—” Jake started as the landmine exploded.

Jake had nearly exploded and was scared out of his mind, but he still went over and ate the burnt Air Head. Sydney rolled her eyes and then started cursing at the monitor. Nathan and I went along to start the second day of our journey.

“Welcome to the second day of our journey. We have lost only one contestant so far. Let us remember Jasmine and pray for her family. Nonetheless, we must get started. Wichita isn’t known as a patient community,” Reece’s said.

“You must search the woods to find your note card with the location of your new campgrounds. Then the next day our remaining contestants will compete against Wichita’s remaining contestants. Oh, yes, and watch out for Pop Rocks landmines and angry pomhowls,” Reece’s said.

“What are angry pomhowls?” I asked.

“You’ll see,” Reece’s replied. “So, let’s begin!”

We went out into the woods to start the competition, searching through caves and bushes for what seemed like hours, until we heard an angry growl.

“Nathan, what was that?” I asked.

With his eyes wide open in horror, he replied, “Is that what they meant by angry pomhowls?”

As we looked over the corner of the bush, a giant, hairy animal with sharp teeth and angry eyes jumped out at us. We both

screamed as we ran away from the pomhowls. Chasing us, the pomhowl was growling and barking. We crawled into a dark cave, trying to hide. Inside the cave we heard a faraway scream, along with a growl and mauling sound.

I shrieked as I heard each cry for help. The pomhowl soon ran away to attack a chocolate bunny.

"Hey, what's this?" Nathan said as he lifted a rock with a note card stuck to the bottom.

The note card read: *Behind the gummy bear garden, and next to the Twix tree. The new second campground, go and you'll see.*

We left the cave to find our campground. A group of Sour Patch Kids came to us saying, "Follow us to your campground! Just follow this trail of gummy worms!"

Our trackers started to beep as we got close to the gummy worms.

"Oh, don't mind that, the gummy worms react to that quite roughly," the sour patch kid said.

As we were about to walk the trail we heard a different Sour Patch group farther away. As the contestant walked on it, we heard an explosion.

We gasped. "These are landmines!" Nathan yelled.

"Sour then sweet!" the Sour Patch Kid said with a scary voice and creepy smile. They pushed Nathan and me into a chocolate syrup pit.

Sticky, we swam out of the pit, our feet sticking to the rocky road pavement as we trudged to our campgrounds.

When we finally arrived at our campgrounds, we heard on the monitor, "Our second group has arrived! The winner will receive Life Savers to stay invincible! We have sadly lost two contestants, Connor and Jake. So get shuteye because our final competition against Wichita will begin at 5 A.M. sharp! Goodbye!" Mickey said.

The Next Day

"Today the three remaining contestants of Overland and Wichita will compete head to head in a race! The winning county will receive 15 million dollars and a new gold medal for their collection. Each contestant will be locked in a room with a Wichita contestant. You will have 15 minutes to escape. The first contestant to escape will become the champion and receive medical care if

needed. The remaining contestants will be sent home. Good luck!" Mickey said.

I was put inside a room with the Wichita contestant, Ashley Kachadorian. We both had free range of each other and a table of weapons, but it seemed that we were both afraid of the other. As if hearing screams and cussing through the walls, Ashley was shy and rarely talked. The only thing she did was grab a knife and start cutting into the keyhole. I didn't want to risk my thought of her chucking the knife at me, so I didn't talk either. I grabbed a sword and started to try cutting a hole through the door. I didn't know what was going on in the other rooms, but I was just glad that I wasn't in them.

After 12 minutes had passed, the other contestants had finally given up on killing each other and started to actually escape. Nathan ran out of his room, through a hole he had cut with a chainsaw. With a huge, bloody gash running through his forehead he picked up the giant gold medal.

"Yes! I did it! I finally did it!" Nathan screamed with joy.

When his family came from the audience, he ran up to his mom and kissed her and hugged his little sister.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the winner of the 2012 75th Annual Sugar Games is Nathan Ping! We're going to have to do something about that gash, Nathan. Go to Nurse Violet, she'll treat your wounds," Mickey said to Nathan.

The rest of the contestants were let out of the rooms. I ran to Nathan and hugged him.

"Congratulations! You did it!" I said.

Nathan replied by planting a kiss on my cheek. I stared at him with awe.

"You think I didn't hear you at the soda lake?" Nathan said.

The Swing Wing Massacre

In THE SWING WING MASSACRE by Seth Petersen, Jimmy and John have to save Michigan from the Swing Wing and its evil leader, Mr. Fisher. Embark on an all-out battle in a story with action, suspense...and the Swing Wing!

“Jimmy, come down here!”
“I’m coming, Mom.” Jimmy walked down the stairs and saw a box on the kitchen table. “What’s that, Mom?”

“It’s a Swing Wing.”

“Never heard of it,” said Jimmy.

“It’s a brand new toy. It’s the new thing and I got it for you so you wouldn’t feel left out.”

“What’s so cool about a stupid hat with string attached to the top?”

“You swing your head around and then the string whips around.”

“Sweet. Can I open it?”

“Of course, did you think I bought it for decoration?”

“Ok, so how does it work?”

“You put it on your head and then just flail around like a maniac.”

“Sweet!”

“You’d better get going to school now; you don’t want to be late.”

“Okay, bye” said Jimmy.

As Jimmy walked out the door he was hit with a snowball. “I got you, Jimmy!” John yelled from across the yard.

Jimmy bent down as if he was tying his shoes and quickly made a snowball. “Yeah, but I also got you,” Jimmy said as he tossed the snowball. John ducked, and the snowball landed right in the middle of the face of the man who lived across the street. “Sorry, Mr. Fisher!” Jimmy yelled.

“You’ll pay for this,” he murmured.

“What’s with him?” John asked.

“Oh, I don’t know. He just got a snowball to the face,” Jimmy said sarcastically.

“Yeah. Let’s hurry and get to school before we are too late.”

“Yeah, you know what happens to the kids that are late,” said Jimmy.

“Oh yeah,” John said with a chuckle. As the two boys walked to school, a Swing Wing came out of nowhere and landed right in front of them. “What is that?” asked John curiously.

“It’s a Swing Wing,” said Jimmy proudly.

Jimmy picked it up and put it on his head and showed John how to use it. “That seems more like a weapon of mass destruction than a toy,” John said.

“It’s fun. Do you want to try?” asked Jimmy.

“Nah, I’ll pass. I’d rather not get arthritis in my neck when I’m older.”

“Your loss then,” Jimmy said smugly.

Meanwhile, school had begun, and the teacher started to take attendance. “All right everyone, be quiet so I can take attendance,” the teacher said. “Max.”

“Here.” Max said.

“Ella.”

“Here,” Ella said.

The teacher went through the list until she reached Jimmy’s name. “Jimmy!”

“I haven’t seen him yet,” a girl in the back of the room said.

“Same with John,” a boy said.

“All right, I’ll mark them absent,” the teacher said as a random lightning bolt hit the flagpole in the schoolyard with a monstrous *boom*.

Everyone gathered at the window to see what had happened. To everyone’s surprise lightning was still arcing through the flagpole. The lightning was now shooting out in random directions. The kids were so amazed by the sight they were frozen in place and unable to move as a stray bolt shot at the crowd of children, hitting one of the kids. They were so close to each other the electricity passed through them all. Ten seconds later all the kids dropped to the floor—not dead, but in a paralyzed, frozen state. All their hair was sticking up.

Luckily for Jimmy and John, they were late and so didn’t get shocked. They walked into the classroom to see everyone on the floor over by the window. The boys at first thought it was a joke because these kinds of jokes had happened to them before when

they were late. They went to their desks quietly so the other kids wouldn't know they were there and would sooner or later realize that the two of them were not actually absent.

Twenty minutes had passed when John said, "This doesn't seem right. They haven't even flinched."

"Yeah, we should skip," said Jimmy.

"No, let's just wait for a bit, and if they don't get up then we can."

"Fine," Jimmy said.

Just as they finished talking the kids got up in unison. Then Swing Wings flew through the broken window and landed on all of the kids' heads except for Jimmy and John. "What the heck?" said John in amazement.

"Run!" yelled Jimmy. The kids started to swing their heads around in unison. "Too late! Get down!" yelled Jimmy. They both ducked just as a giant ray shot over their heads. "Run!" Another ray shot at them and just barely missed John. "You okay?" said Jimmy.

"I'm fine. How 'bout you?"

"I'm good, but let's get out of here."

Just as they turned the corner a dozen more people with Swing Wings on shot at them. They ducked and ran toward the window.

"Jump!" yelled John. They both jumped through the window, just barely missing a ray.

"Run to my house."

Ten minutes passed before they got to Jimmy's house. The city was in ruins from the Swing Wing. When they turned the street corner they found all the houses were destroyed except for Mr. Fisher's house. They ran to Jimmy's house. The walls were gone, but Jimmy's dad was still sitting there in his recliner watching the Lions versus Packers game. "Dad!" Jimmy hollered. They ran up to him and told him all that had happened.

Jimmy's dad shushed the two of them. "Ten seconds left, fourth and goal, tie game, and the Lions are on the Packers ten-yard line." Then the TV went blurry and turned off. "What happened?" yelled Jimmy's Dad. "Did you turn it off? But there were ten seconds left," he whimpered. "It probably blew a fuse," Jimmy's dad said. As Jimmy's dad stood up and saw that the house was gone he said, "What did you do this time, Jimmy?"

“It wasn’t me this time.” As Jimmy’s dad filled with anger he grew and grew and grew until he was at least 100 feet tall. “I want my football!” he yelled, and it echoed across the city. Everyone looked at him (they could see him easily because there were no houses or trees in the way). Everyone that was left screamed and ran into the only part of the city that wasn’t destroyed.

“There goes my Dad now. Mr. Fisher must have done this. He probably sent that lightning and destroyed the houses and the cable company with the Swing Wing rays,” Jimmy exclaimed.

“Yeah,” said John. As Jimmy and John sat on the floor moping they heard a loud engine, and then something that sounded like a fighter jet taking off from a runway. Suddenly a UFO emerged from Mr. Fisher’s house. They heard him say, “I told you that you would pay. Mwa-ha-ha-ha-ha—*choke*. See ya!” said Mr. Fisher in a teasing voice.

“We have to go warn everyone!” John said.

“Yeah, let’s go. My dad has a Ferrari in his garage,” said Jimmy.

They were all warning the people who were in the part of the city that wasn’t destroyed that a giant and a UFO were coming. Of course no one listened, and they all went back to what they were doing while others hid in basements and storm shelters so they could stay safe from the giant and UFO. Then there was a loud, very deep voice that said, “Football!”

“Here he comes,” said one of the people in a storm shelter. Then the people heard a loud buzzing and saw a UFO fly over the city. The people recognized something familiar about it. Mr. Fisher was driving the UFO.

“You all will pay!” said Mr. Fisher. He shot a long ray across the city, vaporizing everyone in its path. Then the giant grabbed a person and climbed the tallest building in the city. Mr. Fisher was shooting at the giant, and the giant hit Mr. Fisher’s UFO. As the UFO plunged toward the streets below it kept shooting its rays. One stray ray struck the giant and killed it instantly. The giant vaporized, but the person he had been holding did not. The person luckily landed on a giant marshmallow from the extra-size marshmallow factory.

Now both of the villains were defeated and peace was restored. All the houses were remade, and they renamed the city Beverly Hills. The citizens were envious of Beverly Hills, California, and they thought that if they copied the name the cloud people would

mix up the weather schedule and they would get the nice weather and California would get the crappy weather. Jimmy and John also got an illness that was thought to have been eradicated but hadn't been because Mr. Fisher released it, and they died a few days after the incident.

The Three Bears

Goldilocks is nowhere in sight in THE THREE BEARS, by Griffin Richter. This is definitely not the bedtime story that your grandmother used to tell you.

“I’m happy we donated that money we stole,” said Teddy, as he was sitting in the food court of a mall in Mexico.

“Me too,” said Fuzzy.

“Let’s never do something like that again,” said Bear.

“I think the children in the children’s hospital of Mexico are feeling much better,” said Teddy.

“Did you say something about stealing money?” asked a local police officer behind them.

“Yes, we did,” said Teddy, the leader of the group. “Here’s what happened.”

It was a nice, sunny day in New York. The bears were used and abused many times by a mean and cruel owner of the toy store where they lived. The owner never liked the bears and treated them badly because he thought they were old and filthy, but mostly because he was mean. The people of the area, seeing the store owner behave in such a way towards the bears, treated them the same way, thinking it was ok to do so because the owner had done it. After years of being treated poorly by the store owner and customers in the store, the bears decided that they wanted a little payback on the owner and all people for their abusive treatment.

The bears came up with a plan to try to show people what it felt like to be abused. When the owner of their toy store came to open the doors, Bear jumped off the top shelf and covered the shop owner with cotton stuffing, suffocating him until he was unconscious.

When they were finished with the shop owner, the bears discussed a plan to give the people a taste of their own medicine.

“We should kill them,” said Bear.

“We should hurt them,” said Teddy, the leader.

“No,” said Fuzzy, “killing and hurting people is wrong. We just need to teach them what it feels like to be treated poorly to make them aware of their behavior.”

The bears started their plan. Teddy yelled as loud as he could and started running around the mall with a rubber baseball bat in his hand, swatting people's bottoms. The bears, being on the shorter side, learned that a rubber bat swung with force creates a mighty sting when struck. Bear smashed a window with some jawbreakers he had picked up from the candy jar in the toy store, and then he started breaking everything in sight. Fuzzy started taking food from the people eating at the nearby outdoor cafe and pushing it in their faces, unless, of course, the food was of the dessert type. Then he ate it himself. The people were completely stunned.

After the mall incident

"That was fun," said Bear, laughing.

"People will think twice before messing with us now," said Fuzzy.

"Shut up, both of you. We have to plan our next move, but first we have to find a place to stay!" yelled Teddy.

After many days of searching, the bears finally found an empty house and decided to hide there. In the house the bears started talking.

"We need money to get away, so we should rob a bank," said Fuzzy.

"That's a good idea," said Teddy.

"When should we do it?" asked Bear.

"How about 12:00 noon tomorrow?" said Teddy.

One day later

After a night of planning, the bears got ready to rob the bank. They made sure they had everything they needed. At 12:00 noon the bears left their house and went to the bank. They had to sneak through backyards and alleys to get to the bank. When the bears finally got to the bank, they saw that it was heavily guarded. The bears looked around for a way in.

They saw some plants right next to the door, so they went in and hid in the plants until the coast was clear of people. The bears had to wait about ten minutes. Then it was okay to go.

The vault was right ahead. The bears figured out a way to get it open and took all of the money. They left the bank quietly through a window.

After the bank was robbed

When the bears got back to their house, they thought it would be smart to go to a different country on a bus so they would not be identified, because they were wanted in America. The bears left with their money.

In the new country the bears realized they had done bad things, and they felt terrible.

“I feel really bad about what we did,” said Fuzzy.

“Me too, was it too much?” said Bear.

“Hey, I got an idea,” said Teddy.

“What is it?” asked Bear.

“We can just donate all of our money to charity,” said Teddy.

“That’s a good idea. That will make me feel better,” said Fuzzy.

The bears decided to donate all their money to the children’s hospital of Mexico. The workers at the hospital were so happy about the donation that they invited the bears to live at the hospital. The bears accepted.

At the hospital, all the children loved the bears. They played with them every day, and each night the bears helped the children fall asleep.

They lived their life as happy bears from then on.

“Wow, that’s a great story!” said the cop. “Since you are making kids happy, I will pretend I never heard you say anything about stealing money.”

That’s the story of the three bears.

Trash Land

A boy who finds out what the government was hiding from the world ends up fighting for his life. Will he survive? Find out in the story

TRASH LAND, by **Marco Neumann**.

There is a rumor that when you are about to die, a flashback happens. I was in the middle of falling off a cliff, and there it happened.

Location: Flying in an airplane somewhere over the Pacific Ocean

Time: 3:00 A.M. Date: 1/19/2045

Screaming voices woke me up. The pilot was saying over and over again, “Mayday, Mayday, some giant bird hit us. We’re going down!” I put on my life vest. Then I started to panic just before we hit the water. The entire airplane ripped apart. The massive impact made me black out.

Location: In the middle of the Pacific Ocean
on some sort of trash island

Time: 6:45 A.M. Date: 1/19/2045

I was swept to a trashy beach. Everything was blurry. Slowly but carefully I stood up, though. It was like the series *Lost*, except it was the real deal. I looked around and just saw trash. There was nothing else except trash. It smelled like someone’s armpits, and looked like I was shrunken down and thrown away. I thought that’s what the government was hiding when they said that they found a chemical that dissolves trash.

Then I started to help as much as possible. After getting all the survivors out of the water, we had the challenge to find or build a camp before nighttime. We collected sticks, plastic pieces, a car wheel for the campfire if we could even get one started, old mattresses that smelled, and a tent. At least we had one advantage: We had everything. We didn’t even have to craft anything.

Location: On the island trying to find food and water.

Time: 6:50 A.M. Date: 1/20/2045

We were lucky that nothing ate us at night. Tom, Gary and I had the job of getting some food and water, which wasn't the easiest thing.

After searching for an hour we saw a skeleton of a bird that was bigger than a car. We were shocked. Tom said they are some kind of mutation, and it is probably from the poison gases. I had a bad feeling. Now we have to worry about two things: mutated creatures and gases.

The island was huge. It felt like it was endless. When we finally found some water we weren't alone.

A loud screeching sound came out of nowhere, and filled me with fear. I started shivering, and the hairs on my neck stood up. We tried to go closer to the water when out of nowhere a huge bird swept down.

We ran as fast as we could. We tripped and fell but kept getting up and running. The bird could easily keep up with us until it grabbed Gary. He screamed and screamed till we couldn't hear him anymore. I thought it was the end of the line, but it did not return.

Then I saw a huge hurricane of trash that was traveling in the direction of the camp. We tried to warn the other guys to take cover. We ran as quickly as possible to the camp, but we were too late. We were cursed.

The camp was thrown all over the place. The tent and the mattresses were ripped apart. We did not see anybody. It was like they just dissolved into air.

Location: On the island

Time: 8:39 P.M. Date: 1/20 /2045

"The weird thing about that hurricane is that it looks like it is coming back," said Tom.

I agreed but added, "It doesn't look normal. It looks like it is sort of alive." I tried to look closer and there was some sort of big shadow in it. I asked Tom if he saw the big shadow in it, and he agreed. He got back to work to build up the camp again.

After some time passed Tom screamed, "Dig into the ground! It's coming back!" It was really smelly in that trash, but it was the safest place to hide, so I dug down.

I just heard trash ripping through the wind and a sort of laugh like a huge creature. I wished to survive and to get out of the trash. But suddenly something made a horrible sound like some big object just hit the ground. The trash started compacting, squeezing me, and it seemed like it wouldn't stop. I screamed, but that didn't help anything.

I dug myself out of the trash to breathe. My arm was probably fractured, and Tom's leg was bleeding. I looked around and saw what had fractured my arm. It was a boulder that was the size of a bike on steroids. We were thankful to be alive.

We tried to sleep after the hurricane passed us, but it wasn't easy with all the pain.

Location: Still the trash island

Time: 12:00 P.M. Date 1/21/2045

"Help me! Help me!"

A voice woke me up. I got up as quick as possible. I got a metal pole out of the ground just for safety and ran toward Tom. There was a huge wolf trying to take him away. "Help!" he repeated.

I hit the wolf with the metal pole, which wasn't the best idea because out of the plain darkness of the night more of them came. I tried to get them off of Tom, but there were too many of them. The only chance I had was to run and leave Tom behind. I didn't want to, but even he said to run. So I had to. I saw how Tom got pulled backwards into the darkness.

I had a horrible feeling. My mind did not want to let go of Tom, but my body walked slowly away like it had its own mind. I couldn't get over all those lives taken. I hopped back into my den and tried to sleep. I thought that was the end of my life.

Location: On the cliff

Time 6:29 A.M. Date: 1/21/2045

After a long night and nobody except me alive, I got out of my den. I have a plan today. I don't want to die, either, but I have to. I will wait for the wolf to come back. Then there will be no turning back. There will be two choices: being eaten alive, or a painless death. I will try to get up a huge mountain. It is pretty much like Templerun, except there will be an end. And when I reach the top I will jump off. And one last thing: Whoever reads this is doomed.

Trip to the Great Wall of China

*When Evan Darwick goes to the Great Wall of China, he encounters one of the Seven Wonders of the World, as well as the Chinese environment and people. What will the Great Wall bring? Find out in **TRIP TO THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA**, by *Evan Darwick*.*

My name is Evan Darwick, and I am seven years old. While I was living in Japan with my parents, school was out for two extra days, and it was time for a long four-day weekend. We needed something to do for the weekend, so we decided to go to Beijing, China to see the Great Wall of China. We had traveled to many strange and interesting countries in Asia, but this was a new place and was destined to be exciting.

We arrived after a three-hour plane ride, and immediately after we got off the plane we were struck with the scent and eye-burning pollution of Beijing. Soon we saw more examples: a dark grey sky and trash blowing around. It was not a very good first impression. The airport was gross, and it was in horrible condition (not helping our impression). Then we saw that nearly every Chinese person was either spitting in the trash or smoking.

Soon we found our tour guide and met up with him. It turns out that his name was Dug (Mr. Dug to me), and the first place he was going to guide us to was the Great Wall of China. First he had to take us to our hotel.

After finally finding the exit in the airport we were immediately greeted by Mr. Dug's Chihuahua who was nervously barking at his new company, us. Mr. Dug, my mom, my dad, and I helped to get all of the luggage into the giant Ford SUV.

In the car there were seven seats, but only five people including the driver. We soon filed in. I sat next to my mom and dad, and the Chihuahua (whose name was Johnny Depp) sat in my lap. We buckled up and drove to the hotel. When we arrived we went to our room, and we got unpacked and ready for the next day.

The next morning I was woken up by the sound of firecrackers. In America and Japan I had never heard such sounds so early in the day, so the only thing that popped into my mind was "Crazy guy with a

gun!" I yelled scarily and began weeping. Now, I may have been only seven, but I have heard about all of the stories on CNN about people dying from guns, and I wasn't about to become "that" person...literally, because it was just firecrackers. Though I was still unaware of this, my parents did the best they could to calm me down. Now, I admit I may have overreacted a little bit, but *come on*, firecrackers, in the *morning!*

So, it was not the best start of the day, but breakfast should be better, right? Wrong! The only options were cold dumplings, hard noodles, and crunchy cornflakes with sugar and skim milk. I couldn't believe it. Not only was this a FOUR STAR HOTEL with only three choices for breakfast, but there weren't any spoons for my breakfast of crunchy cornflakes. I had to eat them with chopsticks, and that was impossible, so I decided to break out my stash of candy bars.

So, I had an interesting morning. Oh, and let me remind you that this was happening at 6:00 A.M. because the Great Wall was so far away that we had to leave early so we could get there before noon.

After I had had enough of my candy bars and my parents finished their third helping of cold dumplings, we found Mr. Dug, and we got in his car for a long drive to the Great Wall.

A long drive means lots of things to do: look out the window, play a game, eat, or sit still. I was doing none of these things. I was making up for my lost sleep because I woke up at 5:45 A.M. The weird thing is once you go to sleep you find yourself awake seemingly in the next moment, but hours might have passed. That's what happened to me; I fell asleep in the car, had a good dream, and then woke up at the end of the ride.

Well, I soon learned that it wasn't the end of the ride, and that the reason I woke up was because the van had just swerved out of the way of a truck going what seemed to be 60 miles per hour. Then while we were going around a hairpin turn another truck came racing toward us. I tried to prepare myself for impact, but...I fainted.

At the Great Wall we walked up a long, winding path. There were many trees and other vegetation throughout the whole area. So I began to wonder: "Why are there so many trees in a place where we're supposed to be seeing a wall?" My question was answered when I realized we were on a long sloping mountain leading up to the Great Wall. Soon it became so unbearably steep on the mountain that my mom had to get a thick stick to prop herself up. It took almost as long to climb up the mountain as it did to get to the mountain.

Suddenly, we were there...at the Wall. An explosion of sights hit us right in the face. The view was of incredible flowers blossoming on every stem, trees with the most beautiful greens and browns, and the Wall, with all these beautiful things around it, was a light grey with thin mortar holding it together. The Wall had to be thousands of years old; there were broken pieces of the Wall with piles of dust where the other parts should have been (I took a hint at what happened to those pieces). In either direction there was wall for what looked like thousands of miles. After our introduction to the Wall Mr. Dug said, "The Great Wall was built because there was a war that was taking place and to keep people from trespassing into this part of China."

After looking around at everything we decided to start walking on top of the Wall.

"This is the steepest wall I've ever been on," I humorously complained.

"It's the only one you'll ever walk on," my parents replied.

We literally had to climb on our hands and knees on the really steep portions of the wall. Unfortunately my mom dropped her stick during one of these climbs, and I nervously said, "Fetch" to Johnny Depp. But I didn't want the dog to actually fetch it because he might get lost.

At one point we had to stop because there was a sign that said (in Chinese) "This part of the wall is illegal and if you are caught you will be arrested. Have a nice day." That made us run for our lives to the mountain pathway.

We ran through every obstacle. The worst problems were the steep hills. I found the solution by sliding down it like a slide. I didn't care that I ripped my pants because what's better: being arrested at the age of seven, or ripping my Ralph Lauren pants? Obviously ripping the pants was better, and I soon took the lead.

We managed to get down without getting caught. The first thing we did was fire Mr. Dug for putting us in danger of being thrown in jail in a foreign country, and tell him that his only duties left were to get us home. He said he was sorry, and that he didn't know it was an illegal area. We said that was fine but that he was still fired. Also my dad came up with a joke that whenever we saw a brick wall he would yell: "Look buddy, Great Wall," and I'd look...and he still gets me to this day.

What's My Code?

*When a girl starts her first year of middle school in **WHAT'S MY CODE?** by **Ny'dea Terrell**, she seems to have an unknown enemy. How will she fix this?*

9/2/12

I'm so ready for sixth grade. I just went to Famous Footwear. I went with Jane, and we both tried on at least 25 pairs of shoes. I ended up getting a pair of Nikes, and Jane got a pair of neon orange Converse high tops.

9/3/12

Tomorrow is the first day of school, which means today is when I visit my grandmother, because she likes to buy me a few back-to-school outfits. Grandma was feeling a little under the weather, but I still came to see her. Since she didn't have any outfits, she felt bad and gave me another hand-knitted sweater. She wanted me to take care of her errands and housecleaning and washing. I couldn't make an excuse, because she gets super-irritated when she is sick.

9/4/12

Today was the first day of school, and I was pumped. I had a dream that I was the MVP of the tennis team and had become BFF's with Taylor Swift. It couldn't have gotten better in my dream. The sad part was that I was having a bad time in real life. My dog had chewed up my pair of Nikes, and my blue jeans were in the dryer, shrunk. This is the third year he has done that. I was just glad my shirt was okay, or so I thought. When I went back into my room, I found myself following a trail of slime. I saw my shirt ripped and in a ball that was covered in slime. I couldn't believe that it was happening now. So I threw on my other favorite t-shirt, some jeans, my favorite sweatshirt, and my other Nikes.

9/5/12

Great, another day of school, I thought. I thought my outfit was bad, and I made it to two classes late. Mrs. Curly thinks I should practice my lay-up, and my locker is between two eighth-graders. Today I have to see my counselor, Mrs. Duel. I need a new

schedule; the advanced math teacher doesn't think I should be in advanced math if I don't know how to change a decimal to a fraction. And that was the only class I had with Jane, too. I couldn't believe that.

9/6/12

When I got to school and tried to open my locker, it didn't budge. I tried over and over again; I even had the teachers try. By the time they got my locker open it was in the middle of second hour. The janitor had to pry the locker open, too. But there was an upsetting twist: When they opened my locker there was nothing in there. My three folders and jacket were missing. I needed my missing folders for Skills for Living, Orchestra, and Engineering Technology. I still checked to make sure this was my locker, and it was. There was a note at the bottom of the locker. It read:

*One whose locker is worth stealing
Has a crazy unknown feeling.*

I tried to figure out what that meant.

9/7/12

Today it was hard to focus, between the letter and knowing it was Friday. While I was in the Orchestra room I noticed something. There was a piece of paper hanging on the edge of the recycling bin. I thought it was another pass, but as I took a closer look it seemed like the same handwriting and words from my note. It couldn't be mine, because I tucked my note away in my pencil case. I studied the two notes. The person used the same black ink on both notes, and it was written with a fountain pen. I can tell, because I went to a calligraphy class. One day I want to win every award there is for writing books. Getting back on topic, the handwriting did look familiar, but I could not quite put my finger on it. My only guess was Jane, but that doesn't make sense, because we've been BFF's since kindergarten. I guess the only way to find out is to ask.

I searched the cafeteria for Jane, and it didn't take long, because she was wearing a neon orange t-shirt. I walked over to Jane with a big smile. "You have nice handwriting," I said.

"Thank you, it is mostly in the—wait, how did you know it was me?" asked Jane.

“I have my ways,” I said, with a soft chuckle.

“The only reason I did that was because you did not believe the myth about the girls. Plus you never like to have fun or joke around,” said Jane. “That might have been a little mean. Next time I will just tell you that I miss having fun with you,” said Jane.

“There won’t be a next time, because you’re right, I need to loosen up. That trick did help in other ways because my teachers gave me new folders and my mom got me a new jacket. But don’t ever do that again,” I said.

When the World Ends

*After being forced to work in a factory for three years building a force field, it is time for 12-year-old Abby Clume to get out in **WHEN THE WORLD ENDS**, by **Claire Wilusz**.*

I went out one morning to take my dog Boomer for a walk. All of a sudden I started seeing visions spinning around me. The only thing I saw was a flaming ball on fire coming nearer and nearer until I could not control myself any longer. I fell over, and the only thing I could see was the cold, black darkness that felt like I was dead.

The next time I woke I up was in a room filled with white light. I was wearing only a white robe. Lying in the bed was so uncomfortable. I could hardly move. The only thing I heard was my mom screaming, "Abby! Abby! Are you all right?" I didn't respond (I was partly sleeping). All I could think about was that there was an eclipse. When was it going to happen? Was it even real?

The doctor went up to my mom. They talked for a long time, but then my mom looked at me and nodded back to the doctor. This was not good.

I am Abby Clume, and I have seen the future. I'm now working in a power plant, building a force field and preparing for when the sun will explode. I was only nine when I was given away and taken to a factory where I was forced to plan out what I saw in my dream. Today is my birthday, and I'm turning 12. Today is also the day that I get to go outside for the first time in three years! I haven't gone outside because I always pass out in the light. Honestly I'm a little worried because on my ninth birthday I saw how the world is going to end. I didn't see when it was going to end. What if the world ends today?

There are ten minutes until I go outside. I've been walked to the door with guards surrounding me. Now I can walk on my own. I run down the hall to the exit door. I have my favorite shirt on that says "I'm cool" with a picture of a penguin with sunglasses on. One of the security guards slowly opens the door, and I step outside.

Somehow life seems different than it was three years ago. A lot of the grass is not green at all but just an ugly brown, and the sky is like the darkest gray I have ever seen. I don't usually think about weather. But it's really hot, and I am already sweating. And I have

only been out here for a couple of seconds. I am getting really freaked out because all at once everything is getting darker and darker.

The guard takes me inside and throws me back in my cell, and I sit in bed and think about what a terrible life I have.

I turn on my radio. "Scientists are picking up huge heat waves coming from the sun!" says the guy on the radio. OH NO! This is just like my dream! This cannot be happening. I don't want to die now! But I know what to do. I'll go by what I did in my dream. I'll have to go tell them how to stop it before it's too late.

I ignore the guards running after me and run right through the factory doors. I hear the alarm go off. I run up and down all the streets until I see the giant white dome that is the observatory. I burst through the doors and say as loudly as I can, "Hey, I know how to stop this from happening. I had a vision about this!"

Everyone stares for a long while until someone stands up and says, "What do we do?"

Then someone says, "We need to somehow stabilize the Earth in a force field because first the sun is going to die, and then a new one is going to form. So if the force field is over the top of it we are all safe." Now I feel kind of awkward because no one is talking.

"Well, we have something like that, but it's not fully tested," I hear a man with a German accent say.

"It has to work now. Do whatever you can," the person says again. I hear someone pull a switch and a huge force field is now covering the Earth. "Now we need to get to shelter. It's about to get really hot!" he says so loudly that the room seems to shake because there is a loud roaring noise over the top of that.

We go under the dome into a bomb shelter and all shut our eyes as we hear an ear-piercing noise that I am sure is the sun exploding. Then after it is something that sounds like a bomb exploding. This probably was the new sun forming (or the force field exploding). Then there is complete silence. We have done it!

I have a feeling that everything is going to change now. Science is now a career for a lot of people. I've heard they're trying to figure out when the next sun will form and this one will explode. And I guess the new job that a lot of people want is designing new force fields.

With the new sun, I don't have to work in the power plant anymore! Well, now I can look at the green grass and the blue sky. And now I can continue my walk with Boomer.

Wonder Struck

*When Lucy falls down a hole, she enters Wonder Struck, where nothing is normal. In **WONDER STRUCK** by **Emma Marszalek**, Lucy follows directions in the hope that she make it out alive.*

Lucy's dress pinches her in all the wrong places as she waits for her cousin's wedding to start. She looks around to see all of the people sitting there waiting.

Lucy hadn't wanted to come to this wedding, but she knew she had to. Lucy thought of a way to get out of it. She thought of multiple ideas, but only one seemed just right. That idea is for Lucy to take a walk out in the garden and disappear.

Lucy did exactly that. She went for a walk and sat down by a tree. Lucy didn't want anybody to know she was there. She just closed her eyes, snuggled as close to the tree as she could, and hoped for the best. Lucy didn't see the hole in the tree until she felt herself falling backwards.

After Lucy falls for what feels like forever, she lands with a thump. She looks up and sees a dog staring at her. He looks friendly, so she sweetly asks in a shaky voice, "What's your name?"

Lucy is shocked when he replies in a deep voice, "My name is Todd the Dog. But most people just call me Todd. And what must be your name?"

Stunned, Lucy asks, "You can talk?"

"Yes, yes I can," Todd replies. "But who are you?"

"I'm Lucy. Where am I?" Lucy asks in a frightened voice.

"Do not fear. You are in a land called Wonder Struck. This is the place where good meets evil. Right behind that door is a magical place where no human has ever gone before. The key is right over there. I dare you to open the door and go."

Lucy gets the key. She opens the door to find a large worm sitting on a gigantic mushroom. As soon as she steps into Wonder Struck, Todd closes the door behind her.

The ground feels squishy under her feet. Lucy is amazed at the trees around her. They are purple with yellow apples. Beyond the trees, Lucy can see a meadow that seems to go on forever. And there, smiling in front of her is the giant worm.

"Well, hello there. What's your name?" Lucy says to the worm.

“My name is John the Worm, but call me John, please. I see you met Todd. Keep the key. You may be able to use it later. I would be pleased to know your name,” John says in a high-pitched voice.

“My name is Lucy and I’m lost. Can you help me?”

“The nearest place is the castle, and that is about three miles away. Maybe they will help you there. To get there you just go straight.”

Lucy tries to find the castle. She crosses the meadow lined with the greenest grass she has ever seen. Looking up, Lucy sees crystal blue skies with huge, puffy, white animal clouds. She is very uncertain about where she is going. Finally, she sees a line of elephants in the distance. As she gets closer, Lucy sees that these are no ordinary elephants. First of all, they are standing on two legs. Even more shocking, they have on red pants with a royal blue sash. Lucy knows they are soldiers because of the uniform and the giant swords they are carrying. This has to be the place.

Lucy is so small and the elephants so big that she is able to quietly sneak past them. Once she gets inside the castle she sees this beautiful fountain. She is quickly surrounded by guards and led to the throne room to see the Queen.

“What do we have here? She looks scrawny, but like she could work,” says the Queen in a snobby voice, while looking Lucy over head to toe.

The Queen quickly decides that Lucy must stay and orders her to work in the Tea room. Lucy is shooed into a room filled with stacks and stacks of tea cups.

“Hello? Is there anybody there?” Lucy says.

“I’m here!”

“Show yourself, please.”

“My name is Tilly the Tea Maker, but please do call me Tilly. And you must be...?” said Tilly showing herself.

“My name is Lucy and I’m here to be your helper, but I really want to find my way home.” Tilly looks and acts so silly, that Lucy forgets to be scared and laughs instead. Tilly gives Lucy the job of cleaning. The job of cleaning must have a different meaning to Tilly because all she wants Lucy to do is just dance around the whole time. Lucy is very confused, and even though she is happy to be with Tilly, she still wants to get home.

Hours later, exhausted from dancing, Lucy happens to look out the tea room window and sees the Queen walking around the

garden and mumbling to herself. Then, the Queen walks into a hedge and disappears. Lucy watches for about five minutes and the Queen doesn't come back. Lucy, desperate to escape this life of constant "cleaning," slips through the back door of the tea room and follows the Queen through the hedge.

Lucy hasn't gone far when she comes across a very odd-looking wood. It is filled with dead trees, and it looks dark and gloomy. There is a raggedy looking sign that points to a bramble-filled path.

Lucy reads the sign, "This way out of Wonder Struck."

Lucy hesitates, but is so desperate to get home that she starts down the path. At first, she hopes that there is going to be a beam of sun coming at her. There is no sun, and she worries that she has made a terrible mistake. Terrified, Lucy turns around to go back, but the path has disappeared behind her. Lucy knows that she can't go back now. She has to finish. It feels like she is almost home, because she can see the daylight again. Lucy is scared, like how a balloon feels when it's next to something sharp. Lucy knows that she has to get out of this misery.

Finally, she sees the light and knows that she has made it safely out. But this is Wonder Struck, and nothing is as it seems. Instead of finding safety, Lucy sees a giant, green dragon waiting for her. He turns stiffly as Lucy comes into his view. Almost as if...yes, Lucy realizes he is a mechanical dragon. His joints creak, but he moves quickly toward Lucy. Lucy tries to calm down and convince herself that this is all a dream, but it doesn't work. She has to think fast.

Lucy screams and tries to run back, but the dragon just picks her right up with his sharp, dirty claws. Lucy screams at the top of her lungs and tries to kick the dragon. But nothing seems to work just right. The dragon is lifting Lucy towards his mouth, and she is just about to get eaten. Suddenly, Lucy sees a keyhole on the sharpest tooth. She quickly pulls the key out of her pocket that Todd told her to keep. Lucy shoves the key into the hole, and the dragon releases Lucy from his grip and shuts down.

Lucy falls to the ground with a loud thud and is knocked unconscious.

Lucy hears a familiar sound. But what is it? It is her mother's voice saying, "Wake up, Lucy. Wake up."

Lucy wakes up breathing heavily. Her mother tries to calm her down.

“I was looking everywhere for you, and then I heard this noise that sounded like you screaming. So I went over to look and find you lying under this big tree,” says Lucy’s mother.

Lucy tries to explain what happened and how scary everything was, but it all sounds so silly.

“I must have fallen asleep and had a bad nightmare,” Lucy says, trying really hard to believe it. Then, she sees a familiar dog running by.

He winks and says, “Hi, Lucy.”

Tag

Aaron the Alien

In AARON THE ALIEN, by Aaron Clark Stottlemeyer, Aaron, a small alien on a planet, far, far away, is on an adventure to save his planet from invaders, but there is one small problem. Aaron is about as big as a Thumb, so he doesn't stand a chance. Right?

Once, at the core of the universe, there was a planet. But this was not an ordinary planet, no. This was the planet of the elements. Each element had its own part of the planet; Water owned the sea, Air ruled over the clouds, Earth owned the mountains, and Fire owned anything that burned. They were all very powerful creatures.

The elements have waged warfare between each other for eons. But this story begins on the water's side on a small island in the middle of the big blue...

Running around with his friend at the middle of the island, was Aaron. He was a blue humanoid who had webbed hands and feet, he had scales everywhere, he had gills on his face, and he was extremely minuscule. Wrapped around his neck was the amulet his mom gave him. She said it had magical powers that would help him some day, but he didn't believe her.

Aaron was still running around when he noticed his friend was just staring into the sky in disbelief; Aaron looked where his friend was looking.

"What's that?" his friend said. They were both staring at a large, metallic, spherical orb falling out of the sky, and it was falling toward the ocean.

"RUN!" Aaron screamed, and then the friends ran. But they didn't get very far. Before they get far away, it hit. Moments later, a huge tsunami rose out of the ocean due to the impact. It went in all directions, and eventually hit the island. It carried all the island inhabitants away. Aaron was thrown into the middle of the ocean. The impact made him black out.

"Where am I?" Aaron mumbled as he woke up. But there was no response. He looked around and realized where he was, and the next thing that came up on the poor creature's mind was getting back home.

After swimming for miles, he stopped.

"It should be right here! Where's my home?" Aaron screamed. He looked around and gasped in dread. He was at the island, but the tsunami washed it away. Aaron saw the remains of the houses and structures that his people took centuries to build everywhere,

"Why didn't the titan protect us?" he asked. But then, he looked a bit further. "What's that?" Aaron asked as he saw a shiny object in the distance. "I must investigate!" he said as he started to walk towards it.

After swimming for a while, he finally reached it. *What the...* Aaron thought as he stood right next to a gargantuan, metallic, spherical object that was about 50 times his size! Aaron reached towards the strange machine, but before he could touch it, it sprang to life. Strange tentacles popped out of small holes in it and they flew into the distance. *What was tha...?* Aaron didn't even finish his sentence because just then, a giant door opened up and strange contraptions stomped out.

"Terminate everyone. There can be nobody left to stop us!" one of the machines said. Aaron assumed that he was the leader.

"Yes, my master." Four other drones said as they each went to one of the sides of the elements. Four armies followed. Many went right past Aaron but didn't see him.

"I guess I'm too small for them to see." Aaron said as he ran inside. "Whoa! What is this place? It's so shiny!" Aaron said as he stepped inside the strange contraption. "Ooh! What's that?" he said as he wandered off to inspect a room.

After a while, Aaron stumbled upon the main control room. But everything was too high for him to reach. But then, Aaron heard footsteps coming in his direction, so he hid under a desk.

"I can't wait! Once we drain the planet's core, its elemental power will help us create new technology that will lead us one step closer to universal domination!" said a drone to another as they walked by.

"I'm going to need some help with this," Aaron whispered. So he found his way out and set off to warn the elements.

Before Aaron headed off, he thought to himself, *How will I get there fast enough?* And if by magic, a wild esrohaes, which is a seadragon-like fish that can swim up to 100 miles per second, drifted up to him. "Well, this is convenient!" Aaron said as he hoped

on its back. "First, I'll go to the Earth elementals," he stated and they swam off.

When they reached the mountains, they swam to the surface. "Wait here, ok?" Aaron said to the esrohaes. The fish did as it was told, and laid down.

It was a beautiful sight. Above, there were floating islands with trees and bushes, and occasionally chunks of dirt would fall off the bottoms and onto the ground. One of the islands even had a waterfall coming off of it. In the center of the island, two colossal mountains stood. They had many giant caves, with many strange creatures inside. There were many rocks everywhere, big and small, with one thing in common. They all had a Giomand in their center. (A Giomand is a legendary crystal said to hold mystical powers.) Aaron had to try and take one. So he went to the nearest pebble, and reached out.

"GET YOUR DIRTY LITTLE HANDS AWAY FROM ME!!!"

And then, every rock, pebble, and boulder sprang to life. They grew arms, legs, and heads!

"What's a Water elemental doing here?" one said.

"Why's he so small?" said another.

Everyone started talking at once. Most the conversations were about Aaron, and other stuff that related to him. But then, they all went silent as a bigger, older-looking one stepped out of a cave.

"Shut up everybody!" he yelled.

"Who has dared enter the lair of the rock people?" said the elderly man.

"I have!" said Aaron

"Who?" the old man replied

"Me! The small, blue guy in back!"

"Ooh, you. You're almost too small for my scrawny, little rock eyes to see. Well, WHAT DO YOU WANT!?" Aaron ignored the screaming.

"Awake the Elemental Titan!" (An elemental titan is the guardian of an element. They will sacrifice everything they own to protect the lives of the elements.) Everyone gasped at Aaron's statement. "But... he was sent into eternal rest and commanded us not to awaken him unless there was a war coming. Besides, you're just a small puny water element. The pebbles can even stomp on you!"

“But there really is an invasion comin'...” Everyone laughed at that remark.

“ATTACK!” said an army of machines as they charged onto the island.

“Wha...?” said the elder in shock. But he quickly snapped out of it. “ATTACK BACK!” said the elder.

“I’ll go wake the titan,” he said once more, and he walked off.

Then the entire place started to rumble, and the mountains slowly started to rise. They merged together and formed a rocky figure. The entire elemental island was the titan! “Wow.” Aaron said as it sprang into action. It grabbed a portion of the island—chunks left with the most robots on it, and ate it whole. Half the robots ran away at that, but the rest kept fighting.

“Advance to their base!” Aaron said, and he ran to the esroheas and they swam away.

When they got to the Fire elementals, Aaron noticed something. “Hey! Where is everybody?” he asked, because the island that was usually filled with life was filled with nothing but flame and the slight bit of machines laying down everywhere.

“The shiny guys must have taken them by surprise. Well, off to the next Element!” So he hopped back onto his esroheas and swam away.

When they got to the Air elementals, Aaron remembered something. “Ooh yea. The Air elements live in the sky. You need to fly to get there. I really need some help.” Just then, his necklace started to shine.

Voices in his head said, “Look on the back and hold *the button under water.*”

“Who was that?” Aaron asked, but there was no reply. “Well, I hope I’m not going insane!” Aaron said as he looked at the back of his necklace, and of course, there was a button. “How did I not notice this?” he said aloud as he stuck it under water and held the button. Then it started to glow brighter. It kept getting brighter until Aaron couldn’t look at it anymore. He decided to bring it back up. So he brought it above the surface, and let go of the button. Water started to pour out, but the water was not normal. It was white, and silky, and instead of just falling into the water, it went down the chain, and onto Aaron.

“Wha...?” Aaron said as the liquid went onto his back. It formed two spots on his back, and then something amazing happened -

wings burst out! Aaron somehow knew how to use them right away! He started flying upwards, and in less than no time, he was at the Air elementals. But it seemed that they had met the same fate as the fire people. "Grr... Well! Off to the final battle!" he said, and he jumped on his esroheas and they swam back to the robot's base.

When he got to the robot's base, he wanted to walk right back. For all the elements, including his people, were in cages. But again, his necklace started to shine.

"Use it again," the voice said. So Aaron pressed the button and his amulet started to grow brighter. But this time, the guards noticed.

"Get him!" The guards shouted, and they charged. But before they could get to him, Aaron's necklace was finished charging, and Aaron let go of the button. Then, the guards stared in horror as... nothing happened. The guards quickly snapped out of it and kept running towards him. But then, instead of pouring out, the necklace exploded. The white water flew around Aaron, and turned him into a white, giant replica of himself, but with pointed teeth and spikes all throughout his back.

"ROAR!" Aaron screamed as he was formed into a beast. *Now I know why our titan never protected us.* "I AM THE TITAN!"

Aaron stormed toward the sphere, which was once fifty times bigger, but is now fifty times smaller! Aaron reached into the sphere, ripped open the prisons, and war waged on between the elements and machines. Aaron then ripped open the sphere and punched the controls in two, which turned out to be the power source to the robots, which just fell.

"Hurray!" everyone screamed, and Aaron shrank back to normal size, and lived happily ever after.

Agent G

*Victor is trying to take over the townspeople's minds. Will they be saved in time? Find out more in **AGENT G** by **Tia Alexander**.*

It was a gorgeous afternoon. Agent G was headed into the base late. When he got there he found a letter that was left on his desk from his boss, Jerry. *What could he be up to this time?* he thought as he opened the letter:

***Dear Agent G:
Yes, you guessed it! Victor is up
to his old tricks again. We are
trying to get more intel on his
plan.
Sincerely,
Jerry***

After Agent G finished reading the letter he decided to do some investigation and look for any more information. He followed Victor to see what he was buying. Agent G decided that he was going to go to Victor's house when Victor left and see if he could find out any information about this mysterious machine.

Agent G headed to Victor's place. He opened the door very quietly just in case anyone was in there. He went into the lab. He started looking around for anything that might look like plans or blueprints. He checked out Victor's desk for blueprints.

Agent G figured it out. Victor was making a machine called "The Brain Control". Victor was planning to take over the townspeople's minds so that they would make him mayor of the town.

Agent G told Jerry about the machine Victor was making. "I found out what Victor is making. He is making a brain control machine," he said.

"Why might he be making this machine?" Jerry asked.

"He wants to be mayor so he can get away with all his plans," Agent G replied. "I will go and do some more investigating".

The next day Agent G returned to Victor's house so that he could find out more information or see if Victor started to build it yet. He found the machine in his lab.

Victor wasn't there. Agent G guessed he was out still getting supplies for the machine. I took the opportunity and cut the cords and I pulled out the main battery before he could finish any more of the machine.

Agent brought the machine with him so he could give it to Jerry to look at. Agent G's mission was now completed and the townspeople were now safe.

"Good job Agent G! You completed your mission," Jerry said.

"Thank you sir," he replied.

Back in Time

In BACK IN TIME by Kate Marszalek, Astrid, the intern who has high hopes of being a demon hunter, finds out how difficult it can be. While chasing a demon, she falls through a portal and is transported to another time. Will she make it back? Will she catch the demon and have her wishes fulfilled, or will she be an intern forever?

Running, running and you can't stop, not until you catch the demon of course. My name is Astrid, but people call me Ash. I work for the DH. It stands for Demon Hunters. I'm not an official Demon Hunter - yet. I'm just the dreaming intern that may never get a job as a Demon Hunter, but that will change. I just know it will. I simply have to keep training and going on missions with the "professionals". Ugh, I hate going on missions with the professionals. They are so cocky; they think they are so cool and to tell you the truth? They really aren't.

A beeping alarm stops my writing. I squirm out of my bed and reach my beeping buzzer that's supposed to tell me when I'm needed with the Headmaster. I turn the alarm off and head to the Headmaster's office. He rarely ever calls for me. I wonder what I'm called for this time. I reach the Headmaster's office and knock lightly on the door.

"Come in," says the Headmaster. I open the door and to my surprise I find no one in the room except the Headmaster.

"Ah, good you came fast. Now listen quickly, there is a demon on the loose and all of our professionals have taken off. I need you to fill in and catch that demon." The Headmaster said very quickly. All I pick up is that I need to go catch a demon.

"Wait, what? What do you mean I have to go catch a demon? I'm only an intern!" I said in a panic.

"I know this is a little hard to take in, but we need you to leave right now," Headmaster replied. Someone ushered me out of the room and took me to prepare for the mission. As I strapped all the gear on I began to think that this was all a practical joke and soon all the professionals would come out laughing about how they pranked the intern. I started laughing at myself. This is only a joke! They can't send me out like this. While I was thinking about this, I

didn't realize that the same person who took me to get ready was now pushing me out the door!

"Hey! Stop! I get it now! It was all a joke! Hahaha!" I say. My heart starts to beat out of my chest and my head is pounding. I'm pushed into open air and the door closes behind me. "Hey, wait, stop! You can't leave me out here! I'm not ready yet!" I cry. But no one responds to me. My speaker crackles and I hear the Headmaster.

"Come on Astrid I know you can do it. Now just follow my instructions and you'll be fine." "Ok," I say with a sigh.

"Great, now on your navigator a red dot will appear. Do you have it?" says the Headmaster. I look down at my navigator and see the red dot.

"Yeah I got it," I reply.

"Ok, great! Now follow that red dot because that's where the demon is. Got it?" Headmaster says.

"K," I reply. "On it." I start out north and my navigator tells me I'm getting closer. I am so scared right now, but I know I need to keep going if I ever want to be a DH. My navigator starts to beep a little bit, as I get closer. My foot steps on a twig and it snaps. I jump. My navigator is beeping wildly now. I turn it off and that's when I hear it. It's a deep moaning sound of sorts. I stop and look around to see if anything is there. I hear a twig snap and crunching leaves. I run after the sound. It's fast, but I'm faster. I turn right and I'm face to face with the demon. Now let me tell you something, demons aren't a pretty sight. I know what you're thinking, but it is way worse than what you thought. Demons are all differently repulsive in their own way. They all have this rotten smell, not like the trash you take out, I mean like you're in a wasteland. Anyway, the demon runs right past me and I'm so shocked I just stand there for a second, but only a second. I sprint after the demon. The demon is heading towards this portal. The demon runs through it and I'm going way too fast to stop. I bolt straight through the portal. I black out.

I wake up and my head is throbbing. I sit up and already I'm starting to feel dizzy and nauseous. I stand up and a wave of pain hits me in my shoulder. I must have banged my shoulder when I blacked out. My eyes adjust. I realize that I'm in a room. Not just any room, a bedroom. The light from the windows shines brightly

and puts silly shadows on the wall. The walls are painted a light pale color and the bedspread is sewn out of tiny colorful patches. The bed frame is made out of wood. The room is small, but cute, and it has a sweet little dresser with a mirror on top and many drawers to it. There are wooden doors to the closet. Everything in here looks adorable and cozy. I hear footsteps coming towards the door. I quickly lie down and pretend to be asleep. The door opens and I hear a voice say, "Ahh, she is awake. Come on dear it's time for breakfast." The person walks out and I stand up very quietly. I creep towards the door and hear many voices chattering. I walk out self-consciously.

"Ah, here she is everybody! It's the wonderful Astrid!" I look over to see who said it. To my surprise, it's one of the professionals.

"Wait, what am I doing here," I ask. "I just went through a portal. I thought you weren't supposed to land in a house."

An old woman to my right says, "No silly. I brought you here to the halfway house. It's where all the people who go through portals stay." I'm so confused but pieces are starting to come together. I went through a portal and blacked out; I woke up here and met these people. Ok, I think I can handle this, but I have one question to ask.

"What are all the professionals doing here? I thought you were all on a mission?" No one has time to answer the question because we all hear a rumbling upstairs. I look up and try to process it. A bunch of grumbling people comes down the stairs and into the kitchen.

I don't think they even notice me as they say, "Oh this smells so good." The guy in the front stops abruptly making people crash into him.

"Who... are you? Maggie, I thought you weren't going to bring any more people in here! It's crowded as it is," he whines.

"I know, I know, but I just can't leave a first timer on her own! You know that Jim," the old woman answers. She must be Maggie.

I clear my throat. "Umm, my name is Astrid and I was hunting a demon when he ran through a portal and I followed him here."

"Ok, Astrid where did you come from?" says Jim.

"Where did YOU come from?" I reply with some sass.

"Oh! Ok, I see how you play. Well, I'm Jim and I came through a portal from the 1900's and unlike you, I'm not a demon hunter," pronounces Jim.

“Did you all come from the 1900’s?” I ask.

“No, we all come from different time eras. This is 2013. When is your time?”

“I come from 2113. Um, I don’t have any parents. I was dropped off at the DH when I was little and have grown up there. The Headmaster sent me to catch a demon because all the Professionals were out on a mission. Does that satisfy you enough?” I retort. I’m REALLY getting annoyed with him.

“Yes, thank you,” Jim answers as we walk into the living room.

I spend a long time meeting everyone, except of course the Professionals I already knew. Little bit by little bit, I start to get comfortable. I discover that all the Professionals were chasing this really terrible demon and caught it, but unfortunately fell through the portal and ended up here. I’m sitting on the couch talking to everybody when unexpectedly my speaker crackles making everyone jump.

I hear the Headmasters voice, “Astrid, can you hear me? Astrid, come in.”

“Yes, I can hear you! What do you want Headmaster,” I say.

“Have you caught the demon yet? He is very dangerous and where are you? We lost you on our navigator.”

“I’m at the halfway house. The demon went through a portal and I followed it. No, I have not caught the demon yet,” I say.

“Well, you still need to catch that demon, but there is one problem,” Headmaster says.

“What?” I reply.

“Umm, I haven’t realized this until now but you can’t come back once you enter the portal. I mean you’re not an “official” DH yet, so it won’t let you back in. Sorry, but you’re going to have to stay there, catch the demon and send the Professionals back,” Headmaster says.

I sit there completely in shock and then say, “It’s ok. I can stay. I will get on the demon right away.”

“Great, thanks,” he replies. I get up and notice everyone’s eyes on me, but I don’t care. I walk back to my room and get my stuff ready. I look at my navigator and see the red dot.

“Well at least I know where it is,” I sigh. I organize my gear and walk out. Everyone stops talking immediately. “What?” I bark defensively and walk out. I head north because that’s what my navigator tells me to do. While I’m tracking the demon down I try

to process what the Headmaster said. I can't go back; I can't become an "official" DH. No, that will not happen. I may not get to go back, but after this I will become my own "official" DH.

My navigator starts to beep to notify me that I'm getting closer. I turn it off to hear better. Once again, I hear that deep moaning sound. I say very softly, "Come out, come out little demon. Where are you?" I hear a twig snap behind me and turn around. "Ha got you now." I creep towards the place where the noise came from. I get closer and closer. Suddenly the demon starts sprinting. I dash after the demon. I can hear the demon slowing down. This is my chance. I jump behind the demon and use my taser to stun the demon to buy me time. I have this weapon that will kill the demons silently with no pain. It's my favorite. I pull it out and put it on the demon. There is a little jerk and the demon dies. But here is why they call me Ash, I pull out a cool looking weapon (It's my favorite color pink! Guess what—it even has sparkles on it!) and point it at the demon. There is a little Whoosh and the demon turns to ash. Get it? After this I start the walk back to the halfway house.

I get to the halfway house and knock on the door. Maggie opens it.

"Why, hello, Astrid! Did you get the demon?" she says.

"Yep, sure did. Since I cannot go back to my time, do you mind that I stay here?" I ask.

"Well of course you can! Come on in!" Maggie replies. Since it is late at night, everyone is asleep. I walk into the kitchen and get some cereal and some water. I sit down at the bar and eat.

"I'm gonna go to bed. Are you alright by yourself?" Maggie says.

"Yep," I reply with a mouthful of cereal. Maggie chuckles and walks upstairs. I finish my cereal and put it into the sink. I walk into my room and lay down on my bed. I don't mind that I can't go back. Actually I'm quite content here. With that thought I fall asleep and start my new life.

Banana World

*A giant Evil Monkey attacks Banana World. Will Banana World be able to stop the giant Evil Monkey? Mystery lies ahead in **BANANA WORLD** by **Nick M.***

One day in Banana World the King Banana was eating his feast when all of a sudden the giant Evil Monkey was eating the city so he yelled, "HELP!"

That didn't work so instead of yelling what he did was leap into his banana plane and put the pedal to the metal and fly off into the Banana Woods. The Evil Monkey was still on his tail, so he flew around in circles. Then he had an idea to fly super high up so the Evil Monkey could not reach him, but that didn't work so King Banana sent out the Banana Army to fight the giant Evil Monkey, but before he called in the Banana Army he flew as far away as possible.

This giant Evil Monkey was no ordinary looking monkey. He was mostly purple and his stomach was pink. The giant Evil Monkey was attacking because he was hungry and hadn't had a banana in days. The Evil Monkey didn't just want one banana but 100 bananas. This terrified the king. The thought that he might not ever have a Banana World to be king of was terrifying for him.

The Banana Army could not do anything to harm or scare off the giant Evil Monkey, so they called in the Banana Marines to kill the giant Evil Monkey. The Banana Marines showed up and there were 2,000 Banana Marines in fighter jets, planes, helicopters, and vehicles. In all those aircrafts and ground vehicles were missiles, guns, and every other kind of weaponry.

The Banana Marines set up and fired off everything, but it wasn't working. So when they came down to their last missile, they thought they were doomed but then realized that it was the largest and the most powerful.

They were relieved that it was the largest one. The reason they never realized it was the last one because they weren't paying attention while shooting off the missiles. They sent it off and it hit the giant Evil Monkey, but nothing happened.

So what they did was give the Evil Monkey 200 bananas, thinking the giant Evil Monkey would eat them and he did, but

nothing happened. Then they realized that there was a banana left, so the giant Evil Monkey ate it. Then all of a sudden, *BOOM!* The giant Evil Monkey's belly exploded causing the giant Evil Monkey to die. There was giant Evil Monkey everywhere around Banana World.

After spending 20 banana years (10 human years) cleaning, they had the party of a lifetime with dancing competitions and of course, bananas. The parade was also in honor of those 200 Banana Marines and King Banana made it back home, safe and sound, to Banana World.

Brobot

BROBOT, by *Alex Bradley*, is a story about a boy and a robot called a brobot. It was one of the coolest robots until one day everything went crazy.

One normal Day in May, a boy named Billy went to his favorite skate park where he went every weekend. He saw his friend Johnny there who was surrounded by people. I went over to Johnny and said, "Hey, Johnny, why is everybody surrounding you?" With a smile on his face he told the people to clear so I could get through. When I reached him he had a controller in his hand and he was controlling a little robot on the ground.

"What's that?" I asked with curiosity.

He said, "It's a robot that I got for my birthday. My parents gave it to me."

He invited me over to his house after skateboarding. We didn't do any skateboarding because we were too caught up in his robot. When we finally got to his house, he showed me all the cool features that his robot had. It could talk, it could pick up items half its size, and it could do a dance. Since it was a Saturday, I slept over at his house. The robot was so annoying because it kept saying, "Would you like to dance? How about we play together, and mail time!" I thought that seemed a little weird for a brobot. I never understood the "mail time." I made sure I never slept over at Johnny's house again until he got rid of the brobot.

Monday morning I saw Johnny at school, and what do you know? He brought the brobot. I could tell because there was another crowd around him in the cafeteria. It was weird not having anyone to talk to because they were all obsessed with the robot.

On Friday, after a long week at school, I came home and sat on the couch and started watching my favorite TV show. While I was watching TV, Johnny knocked on my door. He brought his robot—shocker! We didn't play with his robot until he was about to go home. When we did, the robot's eyes got red, and it grew until it was six feet tall. It was thrashing around and ruining our house! Johnny pushed a button on his controller and the robot shut down.

Johnny left my house with the robot, and I was relieved. Johnny wasn't obsessed with that robot any more. He realized it was kind

of trying to take over our friendship. When I walked outside to check if the robot was gone for sure I saw thousands of them all over. They came from the satellite station down the street that was powering them. So my mom and I ran to the car and picked up Johnny. He knew all about the robots, and he was the one that started this mess.

When we were on our way to the station, we rammed brobots here and there. The car broke down after a ton of hits. Luckily, we were close to the station, and we ran to power the robots down. After we reached the station, the robots surrounded us. They came after us, so we ran to the emergency power switch. The brobots closed in on us, but we reached the emergency shutdown switch, and the robots all fell to the ground. We had beaten the brobots! After we stopped, the robots were all cleaned up and towed away to the dump.

Crazy Family Vacation

*The story **CRAZY FAMILY VACATION** by **Christina M. Young** is an adventure. Sara and her family are taking their first family vacation in years. What will happen when the kids get lost?*

It was a hot Monday on summer break and my five-year-old brother, Max, was outside practicing his karate skills. I don't like intense heat so I stayed inside and watched the TV in the den. Dad walked into the den, looked at me and said, "Hey Sara." Then he turned to the front door and yelled "Max, get in here!"

"Why?" said Max.

"Because I said so." Max ran into the room. His shoes covered with dirt.

"What's up?" I asked Dad.

"What's up is we will be going on a summer vacation to Orlando, Florida."

"You're kidding right? We haven't been on a vacation since I was two and I'm twelve now," I said.

"Nope. I am not kidding."

"Ahh!" Max and I screamed like we had just won the lottery. We ran upstairs and started packing our things, necessary and unnecessary. We rolled our suitcases down the stairs and set them down near the door. I followed Max into the kitchen where we found Dad.

"Oh, and you might want to start packing. We leave in two days," said Dad.

I smiled real big and said, "We already did that." Dad just smiled back and started to drink the coffee he had just prepared.

Mom walked in the front door almost yelling at her co-worker over the phone, "I told you I'll be back in a week. I am taking a family vacation." She hung up quick and then made that face when someone annoys you. Mom was ecstatic about the trip. She was so excited that she told us about everything we were going to be doing in Florida.

After waiting restlessly for two long days, today was the day of our trip. "We're going on a road trip, we're going on road trip," My brother and I sang as we jumped into the car. The ride to the airport was not exactly a road trip because we live about ten miles

away from it. Once we were seated on the plane Mom started reading her magazine, Dad pulled out his newspaper; Max turned on his PSP, and I unpacked my lap-top.

It was time to get off of the plane and when we went to find our luggage, we headed in the exact wrong direction. It took us half an hour to figure that out. Then it was time to rent a car. While Max and I talked, Mom and Dad debated about which car we should rent.

“The Ford Flex has way better gas mileage.”

“Oh, please, Mike. You just think that it looks cool.” Mom went to the desk and told the man, “We’ll be getting the Chrysler Town & Country,” in her best lady-like voice. Disappointed, Dad drove us to our hotel and checked us in. The room was so awesome. After settling in it was time to go to the Orlando Zoo.

When we arrived at the zoo, we went to see the lions, tigers, and the bears. We were going to go see more animals but Max was famished.

“I’m so hungry, can we please get some food. I’m going to die of starvation,” Max whined.

“Okay, Max we will go get something to eat,” Mom said with that annoyed face again.

“But....”

“But, what?” This time I was using the annoyed face.

“I need to go to the bathroom.”

“Well, Sara can take you to the bathroom and Mom and I will get some food. We’ll meet back here,” Dad said.

Max and I headed into the bathroom, but the lights were not on inside. The room was warm. It felt as if we were in a cool room, but there was a door open letting in the hot weather from outside. I stepped back slowly until I bumped the wall. I felt around the rough brick wall until my fingers hit a light switch. I calmly turned the light on. This was not the bathroom. It was a place that the staff goes to feed and care for koala bears and kangaroos.

Immediately we both started screaming, “Help, help, help.” The kangaroos came in the room and tried to chase us away. That is until a man came out of a room and said, “What are you doing in here. You should not be in here.” He grabbed us and rushed us to the door, only to find out that the door was locked, and the door locks from the outside. He almost went crazy.

“Um, I hope no one forgot the fact that we are surrounded by kangaroos?” I said.

“Yeah, about that. I need to feed them. But I can’t get the food out while they are inside. We need to get them back outside. Now!” the zookeeper said.

“I got this,” Max said in that voice when you think you know what you are doing, but you really don’t. “Actually I don’t because I really have to use the bathroom.”

“There is a bathroom right over there,” The man said. Without thinking Max walked right pass the animals and into the bathroom. Instead of following Max, the animals went outside so the people could see them. Swiftly the zookeeper ran into another room and grabbed the food. He gave half to me and kept the other half. “Do you mind throwing that into the koala bear area?” He asked.

I threw it and then said in an angry voice, “Are we ever going to get out of here? I am going to shriek.”

“Well, we have two choices; we either wait for someone to come open the door. Or we go through the animal grazing area and jump over the gate to get out,” the staff man said.

I did not even have to think about it, “Through the animals it is!” I ran and knocked on the bathroom door but I heard no reply. I knocked again and still no reply.

Then I heard Max talking to some animals, “Here kangaroo, here. Ouch!”

“Wait a minute! Max is out there with the kangaroos.” I ran to him, grabbed his arm pulling him toward the fence. Then I jumped over it.

“Come on Max!” I encouraged him to climb out too. I turned around and there they were. Mom and Dad were coming toward us. I turned to face the animals, but Max was not there. I looked to my left and there he was, standing right beside me, looking at the kangaroos from the outside of the gate.

“Hey kids, ready to eat?” Dad said.

“Yep,” I replied.

“When you went to get food we had a great adventure,” Max said.

“In the bathroom?” Mom said. I gave Max a look and a jolt with my elbow.

“Yeah, we had a hard time finding it,” said Max.

The Escape

In **THE ESCAPE** by *Cameron Morency*, Cameron is attacked immediately. He survives, but will he ever be safe from these everlasting dangers? Will he ever make the escape?

Cameron woke up, and was looking at the sky. It was still bright out, so it helped him wake up. When he finally had the strength to sit up, he started to look around. The first thing he saw was a tree made of blocks. But that was normal. Then he saw a sign. He stood up and started to read it.

*I'm coming for you
I hope you're ready*

That was weird, because he didn't see any trees missing from the landscape, and there wasn't anyone else around. He decided to leave it there in case another one popped up. He started to look around, and he realized he had been here before. He walked around some more and found a partly built house in a small clearing. He entered the house, and there was nothing but a furnace on one side of the wall. He decided to mine the wooden planks on the floor so he could finish the roof. But when he mined the middle square, he found a chest in the middle of the square. He opened it, and found some wooden tools and some oak wood to finish the house. Once he was finished with everything, he prepared himself for the long, restless night.

He woke up, and went straight to work with the escape plan. And over the next few days of collecting materials nonstop, he started to mine for diamonds. He easily made an extremely complicated system of underground tunnels, and was very successful in finding all the diamonds he needed. Then he decided he would take out the ender dragon, just for fun.

He sparked the nether portal, jumped into the spinning vortex, and entered the nether, and found out that the portal was on the bridge of a nether fortress. *How convenient*, he thought to himself. He wandered around for a little bit and eventually found a blaze spawner. So then he just killed some blazes for a while, until he had enough blaze rods to make enough blaze powder to make

everything else he needed to slay the ender dragon. But when he got back to his house, he got a big surprise.

Someone had lit his house on fire! It was blazing everywhere uncontrollably, and it was becoming nighttime. By the time he had gotten his stuff from his chests, he hurried to try to make his house stop burning, but it was already done. His house was completely burned, except for a few blocks that had somehow not caught on fire. Then he saw some light in the distance. It was a new sign with redstone torches around it.

*I told you I was coming
Are you going to be ready next time?*

Over the past few more days, he had recovered from when someone lit up his house. Plus, he had found a stronghold, and had all the materials he needed to slay the ender dragon, and he thought he was ready. So he headed underground to where he found the stronghold. He inserted the eyes, opened the portal, and entered the end.

The end stone room wasn't hard to get out of, but he didn't have a chance to look around because the ender dragon came right at him, ready for a fight. But he was ready, too. So when it came down at him, he went rage mode. Right in front of the ender dragon, he went from a regular armored warrior to a fury of rage. He started to swing his sword everywhere and destroying anything that stood in his way, and he went straight for the ender dragon. He just kept swinging and damaging him. One-two! One-two! One-two! He just kept swinging until the deathblow. And then BAM! He delivered the deathblow and the ender dragon exploded in front of him. He was shot back onto one of the walls of the obsidian towers, and he fell to the ground. And when he looked up at where the ender dragon had been destroyed, he saw a silhouette of someone walking towards him.

"I hope you're ready," he said.

Then he heard the ender dragon screech above him. He gathered enough strength to look up at the ender dragon coming straight at him getting closer, closer, closer and then the impact.

The Evil Fortune Cookie

In THE EVIL FORTUNE COOKIE by Rania Abbasi, a man named Ted walks into a whole lot of trouble by reading a fortune. He gets terrible bad luck. Will Ted survive?

One day I was walking to my favorite Chinese restaurant in Detroit called Eye of the Dragon. I eat there a lot because their prices are not expensive, and their food is delicious! It is always so peaceful there.

As I walked in, the sweet aroma of fortune cookies filled the air. I looked around and I saw that small cherry blossom scented candles lighted the restaurant. The owner, Yugi San, with his shimmering Hanfu, which is a traditional Chinese silk robe, was standing in front of the register. He directed me to my table. As I walked through, I saw people slurping up the mouth-watering, hot soup. I sat down comfortably. I knew that I was falling asleep.

Yugi San came to take my order. He saw I had fallen asleep, so he woke me up. I told him to bring me my usual. My usual is Hot and Sour soup, the Mongolian Combo, two egg rolls, and a small bowl of brown rice. With his incredibly thick Chinese accent, he said, "Of course Master Ted!" Then I waited until he brought out my food. I had to be very patient, but my food finally came.

"Ah! Thank you, Yugi San! This looks delectable!" I said eagerly.

"Oh! You are very welcome Master Ted!" Yugi San replied with anticipation.

He put the food on my table and boy, did I dig in! I always put soy sauce on my egg rolls because it makes them have a more pungent taste. I took one of the egg rolls and stuffed it in my mouth like there was no tomorrow! I took the soup bowl, pushed it closer to my face, and drank the whole bowl. The Mongolian Combo was the best because it had the juiciest chicken, the freshest shrimp, and the tenderest beef. When I finished, my mouth was dripping soy sauce.

"That was great!" I said while smacking my lips.

"I am glad you liked it Master Ted! I will bring out your fortune cookie with the bill as soon as possible," Yugi San said as he walked into the back room.

"Okay!" I replied.

I looked at the placemats while I waited. They had the Chinese zodiacs organized by year. I started to look for my year, but suddenly Yugi San walked up to me, gave me the bill and my fortune cookie. I put my credit card on the bill, and then opened my cookie wrapper. I ate half of the cookie, and then carefully pulled out the fortune. It read, YOUR LIFE IS IN DANGER. It was probably some childish joke. Fortune cookies are never true! But then I thought if it really wasn't a joke. I started to get scared. Oh well! I yelled thank you to Yugi San and walked out of the door.

I was walking on to the sidewalk when a giant tree branch almost fell on top of me. I freaked out! *Tree branches fall all the time! There is nothing to be worried about!* I thought. I kept walking home but soon after, I tripped over a sharp rock, and then fell into a mud puddle. I got soaked! "Oh no! I bought this shirt yesterday!" I yelled. I just kept walking and bad things kept happening to me. When I got home, my clothes were torn, I was soaking wet, and I had an oversized bump on my head.

I showered and tossed out my ruined clothing, the whole time thinking that my daughter is having a dance recital, and I can't miss it, otherwise she would be very upset. I thought of driving up to our cottage, where nobody could find us. After all, my daughter's dance academy is closer to that cottage.

I told my family about my thoughts, and I made sure not to tell them about the fortune cookie because I didn't want them to freak out. They would freak out so much that they would faint.

While we were driving, I saw a colossal boulder in the middle of the freeway and it looked like it was coming closer to me, not just because I was driving closer to it. I tried to go really fast around it but I punctured my tire and it went flat. We got stuck in the middle of the road and at the same time, were a roadblock. Somebody came out of his car and walked up to me. I rolled down the window to ask him why there was a huge boulder in the middle of the freeway, but then the man forcefully punched me in the face.

When I woke up, I knew I had been knocked out. It looked like I was in a secret laboratory. I was strapped to a chair. I tried pulling out of the ropes, but I was too tired at the moment. I looked around and saw a few men.

"Well, well, well. Look who we have here. Mr. Ted Putter. GIVE IT TO US RIGHT NOW!" a man taunted.

"Where is my family, who are you, and what are you talking about?" I replied in confusion.

"I am John Shwartz. Your beloved wife and daughters were lucky enough to find a spare tire in your car, and then drive away. We would have got them too, but at that point it was too late. Oh, and you know, THE MONEY!" John shouted.

"What money?" I exclaimed while struggling to rip my hands out of the rope.

"THE MONEY FROM YOUR 29th BIRTHDAY! When you went for your birthday dinner, your wife gave you the packet with the money in it. I was the waiter and I heard her tell you that that money was her grandmother's. I followed you home and we have been tracking you down ever since," he replied.

"We want that money to buy an enormous warehouse and sell illegal DVDs for lots of money."

"Oh yeah... Well, you will never get that money, because I will never give it to you! You'll never get away with this!" I shouted angrily.

"Where is it?" he said.

"Oh, at my house with my wife locked in my secret safe." I replied. "Oops. I should not have said that," I whispered to myself. I am one of those people who keep rainy day money at my house so if the bank ever gets robbed, I have money.

They ran out of the door with five big bags to carry the money.

I kept pulling until I finally ripped my hands out of the rope and got out my phone. I dialed 911 and told them what happened. They said they were on their way to my house. I hung up the phone and untied the other ropes with my free hand. I ran back to the freeway and took a spare tire out of my car. I changed the tire and got moving. I drove all the way to my house and it looked like the police were already there. They were dragging the men out of my house.

My daughter and wife came up to me and yelled, "WHAT HAPPENED?"

"To make a long story short, fortune cookies are real," I replied with a smirk on my face.

The Evil Nanny

In the, THE EVIL NANNY by Maciah Lipsey, it was dark and stormy night when three kids named Johnny, Sammy, and MJ had to watch their mom and dad leave for the weekend. They weren't sure how much they would like their new nanny, but they knew she was mean. Sweet dreams!

As our parents were backing out of the driveway we were very upset because this was the first time that we have been away from our parents. Sammy was in tears and screaming, MJ was having a total meltdown and I, Johnny on the other hand was calm and responsible. By the way they are leaving to go on a work trip to Ireland. The worst part of all is that they are leaving us with a nanny that baby-sit's the worst kids on the block.

"Oh, kids don't forget we chose the Nanny because she was recommended by the neighbors," our parents shouted as they were backing out of the driveway.

"Kids, come out, come out wherever you are, I want to meet you," said the nanny. When we were coming down the steps to meet our nanny we were all terrified because we didn't know what she was going to do us. "Hi my name is Johnny and I am 11. These are my sisters, Sammy, she's 8 and MJ is 7. MJ stands for Mary-Jane."

Hi, my name is Elizabeth and you might know me because I used to babysit the worst kids on the block before I quit. I quit because they were just really hard to handle. I got out of high school two weeks ago and if I have a bad night's sleep, the next day I am grumpy and might try to hurt you. Over the years I have killed 300,477 people."

"MJ go get me the phone, so I can call the cops," Johnny instructed.

"I was just kidding. I wouldn't do that. What would you like to do?" asked Nanny Franny.

"Well, we like to tell scary stories on nights like this," replied MJ. "Let me go first."

"No," said Nanny Franny. "If I don't go first I am going to scream."

MJ started sobbing and ran off to her room. Now Sammy, Nanny Franny, and I were left," Johnny said.

"Ok kids let's start the stories. It was a dark and stormy night just like this night, when an old lady was coming home from the grocery store she hears moaning, she thinks it is just her apartment. She was wrong. It was someone who was following her to apartment. When she got to her apartment she hears BB I'm on the first floor. She didn't do anything besides lock all the doors and windows. She hears it again except this time she hears him say I'm on the tenth floor. BB lives on the 20th floor. She started freaking out so she hid in a secret room and then locked it. She hears him again but this time she hears him say, I'm right behind you. She slowly turned around and saw him. She tried to scream but it was too late because she was stabbed and murdered. That is my all-time favorite story to tell, explained Nanny Franny."

"That scared the daylights out of me and Johnny."

"Wasn't that the point"? said Nanny Franny.

"Yeah it was. It's getting late and I think we should go to bed. Nanny Franny, you can sleep in the guest room in the basement."

The next morning Nanny Franny woke up grumpy and started scaring us because she kept saying me things to us like, if I hear a peep out of you at breakfast I am going to punch you. Right after she said that the phone rang and it was our parents☺. The only bad part was that Nanny Franny picked it up and said everything was alright and not to worry. She just lied to mom and dad. Then she hung up, took a knife, and put it to my throat and said if you call your mom this knife will be sliced across your neck. "Get it Johnny" said Nanny Franny.

"Yes Nanny Franny. I am going to play in the basement to play with my baseball" said Johnny. As I was walking downstairs something felt weird and I heard something mysterious say come into the guestroom and you will see. I walked into the room and I found out it was a lab to try to get rid of us. I went screaming up stairs and told Sammy and MJ. Nanny Franny must have overheard us whispering because she came storming in, screaming and starts beating MJ. I ran to my room, grabbed my iPhone and started videotaping while Sammy was getting The Evil Nanny off of MJ. I quickly sent it to my parents. When they saw it they called the police and our neighbors and asked them to watch us until our parents got home from their work trip. When the police arrived at

our house Nanny Franny was getting ready to stab Johnny but the police had got there just in time and shot her. She almost was shot in the heart but she moved just in time for it to hit her elbow. She dropped to the ground throbbing in pain and in terror Sammy, MJ, and I watched her leave.

“NNNNOOOO! You can’t take me away. You know that I could kill you!” Franny screamed.

Well guess what Elizabeth you aren’t staying in Florida. You’re going to Alcatraz Island in California. Sweet Dreams, said the cops.

Our neighbor’s took MJ and Sammy outside while I was getting checked by the police. About 20 minutes later we went over to our neighbor’s house.

As the Franny lady left she yelled out the window, “I WILL GET YOU.”

We will never forget what had happen this day. Not in a million years. Johnny you saved my life from the death trap. So did you Sammy. You battled against her even if that meant dying. It was the right thing to do and that is what older sisters are for. It was a pleasure to save your life by videotaping. Let me just say this MJ you were really brave to battle her until Sammy kicked her in a weak spot. Apparently she thought it was me so that is why she went after me with a knife. I was so scared that I would be able to say goodbye or anything. If we switched spots you would have done the same thing. Thanks for being the best sisters I could have ever think of. Your welcome Sammy and I said at the same time. Group hug we all said. Then we were taken next door to spend the night for a couple of days until our parents came home.

When our parents got home they said they were so scared, worried, and they said that they would take us with them onto their next work trip.

Five minutes later the cops walked over and said we did the right thing by sending the video and being brave until we got here. We also caught one of the world’s deadliest female killers. They also said we would get an award and reward.

Two days later the cops came over to our house and told us that we will be getting a free trip to Hawaii and we would get security cameras put into our house. They also invited us to dinner at the most EXPENSIVE restaurant. Mom and Dad said that we couldn’t afford, but the police said that the police eat free at every

restaurant and they can make us eat for free. Ever since then, we all wanted to become cops.

Have you ever had a feeling that something really bad was going to happen, said MJ.

Of course. I had that feeling when Franny walked in. That is why I introduced all of us.

Well that is what brothers are for. Aren't they?

Yes, yes they are.

Do you think we should start packing because we are leaving in two days and we haven't started packing? We also have to make sure that we have packed everything once we finish packing, said MJ.

I think you are right, you young little duckling, said Johnny

OMG Hawaii is AMAZING! They have the freshest everything. They had the freshest shrimp to delicious fruit. Don't even get me started on the stores. The beach is AMAZING because the sand is nice and white colored. And it is very soft. Well so far so good, except one thing is out of place. I think I see Nanny Franny, said Johnny.

The Garage Sale

*A girl named Elizabeth went to a garage sale. She bought an urn and went home. When she got there, things got a little out of the ordinary in the short story, **THE GARAGE SALE**, by **Lauren Lucas**.*

Elizabeth decided she wanted to go get some stuff for her new apartment at a garage sale. So she went to the garage sale and as soon as she walked in, she spotted this beautiful urn. The main color was a dark shade of purple. The designs were all different and unique. Elizabeth knew as soon as she saw it that she was going to put it on her bookshelf at her apartment. She looked around to see if there was anything else she could get to make her apartment look better. After several minutes of looking, she didn't find anything that would work, so she left.

When Elizabeth got home, the first thing she wanted to do was put her urn on the bookshelf. She was about to wash her urn but she saw something in there. She decided to inspect a little more with some of her tools since she took a little bit of science in college. Then she figured out what it was. It was like a light bulb above her head. There were ashes in the urn!

Then, Elizabeth's power went off. She was a little bewildered since she just paid the bill and there were no alarms about storms on the news. Elizabeth flipped the power back on. Then she went to the kitchen and her cabinet opened on its own. This is when she started to get frightened.

Elizabeth looked around for the flyer from the garage sale so she could call them to tell what they had left inside the urn. She looked in the couch and under and she should look on the table too. After looking for 15 minutes, all she found were a couple peppermints, a ponytail holder, and a safety pin. She grew tired and famished, so she ate dinner and decided she would keep looking tomorrow.

The next day she still could not find that number. So she called her mom and told her what they left in the urn. Her mom was so shocked. She said, "Who could forget something that important? They must have a really awful memory or they hated that relative!"

Elizabeth said she would be sure to tell her mom what happened after she went back to the place where the garage sale was held.

When Elizabeth got to the garage sale she saw a lady that looked like she knew what she was doing. So she walked up to the lady and asked if they could talk. The lady said yes, and asked what she needed. Elizabeth told her how she purchased an urn thinking it would look nice on her bookshelf. Also how when she got home and was about to wash it, she found that there were someone's ashes inside it.

Elizabeth was so surprised to see that there was a calm look on the lady's face. She would expect that anyone would be angry that her relative was not taken out before the urn was sold. What the lady said next, Elizabeth would have never expected. The lady said that they had left their relative's ashes in there on purpose. She said that the family never liked the relative and said that she had been a gold digger. The lady also said the urn was cursed and they were happy Elizabeth bought it.

Elizabeth stood there, shocked that anyone would say such a thing about a family member. Even though she thought it really did look beautiful on her bookshelf and she didn't want to throw it away, Elizabeth knew she had to. She didn't want any more bad things happening in her apartment. So, she took a picture of the urn and threw it away. Elizabeth took the picture because she was going to take it to a potter and have a duplicate vase made. She thought that urn was too pretty not to have something similar made.

The Haunted House

In **THE HAUNTED HOUSE** by *Alyssa Leighton*, a girl is forced to move to a house she's never seen and a place she's never been. When she arrives at her new house she meets an unexpected guest.

Packing. All we've been doing the past couple days is packing. My parents are always carting me around to a new place; this time it was Oklahoma. Couldn't my dad just stop getting transferred for his job?

The moving van pulled up to the driveway to take our stuff; it was going to be a very lengthy journey from New York to Oklahoma. The houses that my parents showed me were okay, a couple of them were actually really nice. My dad's boss called a couple days before we were going to make an offer on the house when he said, "I found this house, it's enormous and it fits all your needs. It's also ready to move in!" Of course, my dad said yes. So there we were on our journey to our new house.

"Ready to go, Chels?" inquired Chelsea's dad while he was putting the last thing in the car.

"As ready as I'll ever be," snapped Chelsea. "Wait, isn't this child abuse? I mean you're carting your kid around time after time!" This was the everlasting conversation.

We were about to make our first stop. About an hour after we started this new journey, I decided to write. I write about what happens every day in a diary, no a journal. Yes. It's kind of like I log in what happens every day.

Days passed and we were finally only hours away from our new home. I was not eager to move into this house, but my parents were. It didn't take long and soon I was bored and sick of being stuck in a car with no radio reception. The car jolted to a stop as a police car raced by. *Wow, that was the most fun I've had so far!* I stared outside and saw cows! *Yep, we've moved to the country.* Drip...Drip...Drop... Drip...Drop... It started to rain and that's the only sound I heard for miles and hours until finally my dad yelled with excitement, "We're almost there; we'll be there in about five!"

We finally reached the house and I leapt out of the car screaming, "Weeeeeeeee!" I stopped.

I took one look at the house and my smile disappeared immediately. My parents didn't tell me we were moving into a HAUNTED HOUSE!!! The house looked frightening. There were gates around it and it was all black. It was pouring so we had to get inside quickly. I actually saw lightning hit the house. I could tell two things already. It was going to be a gigantic storm, and a very long night.

It was the first time I had ever seen the house. It was gigantic, entirely black, and truthfully? It looked just like one of those haunted houses you see in movies. I walked up the extended path to get to the front door. I pulled open the large gates with all my might. I heard a creaking noise as it opened all the way. People couldn't have lived in this house for a long while. I continued walking up to my new house when I saw lightning strike the house again! Birds were flying all around the house in a panic. I finally reached the door, unlocked it and stepped inside while slamming it shut behind me!

Weeks later, when we were settled in, my parents decided to go on a trip, without me. "Ready to go?" my mom called out to my dad.

"Am I allowed to have some people over while you're off partying?" I inquired casually.

"Sure sweetie," and with that they were gone.

Excited, I grabbed my phone and started dialing Sara and Becca, my two new friends from school. A few minutes later the two girls were on my couch talking, watching T.V and chilling out. All of a sudden, the sound of footsteps echoed in the house and without a warning, we heard a loud BMMM!

"Uh, what was that?" Becca shouted as she put her long brown curly hair in a ponytail.

"I don't know, but let's check it out," I said. "It sounded like footsteps."

"There it is again," Sara screamed. We all jumped up.

"Let me get a couple of things from my room," I said as I raced up the stairs to my room. I grabbed three walkie-talkies and a few water bottles, passed them out and then we hurried back downstairs. We were ready for anything!

We all went in different directions. Frightened. Alone. We didn't know what we were searching for or what we were going to find. We kept our walkie-talkies on. Again there were footsteps, and then

I heard voices. I kept repeating to myself, “No one is in the house, no one is in the house.”

Becca grabbed the walkie-talkie and sang, “Who’re you gonna call? Ghost busters! I got it! Why don’t we call someone to help?”

“I don’t know who we would call,” I shouted.

“Wait, I think I know who to call. Let me try calling them and I’ll let you know,” Sara said excitedly.

Sara dialed her phone and said to someone that she thought her friend’s house was haunted and they needed to get there right away. A few minutes later a van pulled up that read, “NOT A GHOST HUNTING VAN”. “They’re here!” shouted Sara through the walkie-talkie. About an hour later their equipment was all set up and ready to go.

“Okay, so we’ll get started now. All I want you girls to do is open all the doors in the house,” stated the man from the Ghost Hunting Van.

“Okay, but why?” I asked.

“We have to try to make it like a sneak attack,” said the worker. “We need all the doors open. Okay?”

“Okay,” we all replied in unison.

15 Minutes Later...

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh, HELP, HELP PLEASE HELP ME!” someone screeched.

I ran, not knowing what it was. “Ahh, it’s a ghost!” I called out to the worker and he was there in a split second.

“What, what is it?” he questioned.

“A GHOST! It’s a ghost!!” I screamed. Sara and Becca rushed over.

“I’m not a ghost! I’m a person, a regular person!” revealed the man.

“Prove it!” I shouted.

“Okay, I’m not a ghost because I’m not invisible and you can’t go through me!” The man stated as Sara poked at him.

“Okay, but why are you in Chelsea’s house?” Sara demanded, her voice shaking.

“Well, I used to live here with my wife and three children. We just moved out and my wife noticed that she forgot her special diamond necklace,” the man told them. “And I came here to get it.”

“Oh, we thought that you were a ghost or someone trying to break in. Sorry,” I exclaimed.

“It’s all right!” said the man. “I’m Robert, by the way, and I’ll be going now.”

My parents returned home a day later. I was so thrilled to see them. I really missed them. I wrote in my journal that night: “My parents just got back, and boy am I ever happy to see them. Now I just need to figure out how to tell them about the ‘ghost’. ~ Chels”.

Later, I explained to my parents what had happened when they were gone and they got a huge kick out of it. “Ha ha ha, you called the ghost people, and then ha ha, he wasn’t a ghost,” chuckled Chelsea’s dad. We were talking and laughing at our kitchen table. My parents were making fun of me and we were having a wonderful time.

Horried at Camp Monahockalugi

In HORRIFIED AT CAMP MONAHOCKALUGI by Jenell Skowronek, three friends go to camp with their school, and expect to have fun, but weird things keep happening. Will they make it through?

Today was the day the whole fifth grade was going to fifth grade camp. I was thinking on the bus about what it was going to be like. Who was going to be in my room or what would happen? The bus ride there took forever! I sat by my best friend Julia. "Hey Paige did you bring your phone with you?" asked Julia.

"No we weren't supposed to," I exclaimed

"Well, I did because I thought I would be so bored without my phone."

"Did it ever occur to you that there might be a reason why we could not bring our phones, other than the fact that they could get lost?" I asked.

"Like what?"

"We'll it could interfere with the things we are doing that involve electricity or the electricity in our rooms."

"Well it is too late now because I already brought it with me."

We were now at Camp Monahockalugi and it looked really cool and fun! There was a garden with beautiful flowers and fruit! There was a decorated sign that said, "Welcome to camp Monahockalugi!" It smelled like fresh raspberries and watermelon. I went over and picked a flower, and put it in my hair. It was a yellow daffodil. I ran my fingers down the flower petals. The flower felt like smooth silk.

I wanted to go to our rooms first so I could see who was in my room. Mrs. Gonzo said to find our bags and go to the cabins. The girls were on the right and the boys on the left. I went upstairs to see my room number and it was room 13. I thought that was pretty cool because it was also my favorite number.

I looked on the list and Julia and Robin were in the same room as me and they were both my best friends and Katy was also in that room and I have never heard of or seen her before. Julia was

behind me and said, "Cool! You, Robin, and I are in the same cabin, but I have never heard of this Katy person before."

I said, "I know, me neither." We asked five people and none of them knew her. I finally found a teacher and said, "Do you know anyone named Katy?"

"No I do not," the teacher replied.

"Well she is supposed to be in our room and no one knows who she is!"

"Well that is very odd, let's go to your room and see if she is there." We got to the room and there was no one there. We ignored the fact that there was an anonymous person that was supposed to be in our room and we just unpacked our things.

We went outside to go to the zip line with our group and it was beautiful outside. By the time we got to the zip line, it looked like there was going to be a thunderstorm. Julia, Robin and I got in line to go on the zip line and Julia said that she left her phone in our room so it would not be damaged. Then she realized that was not safe either with this mysterious person around they could take it.

It was Robin's turn to go on the zip line and she promised to wait at the bottom for Julia and me. The zip line looked really fun, but I was scared because of all this weird stuff that was going on. It was my turn to go on the zip line. It was so much fun, but I wanted it to end fast before it started to rain or something.

When I got off the zip line Robin was not there. I was getting really freaked out now. I waited for Julia to get to the bottom of the zip line and told her that Robin was not there. She said, "Let's go back and see if she is there, if she is not then we have to tell one of the teachers fast!"

We were running faster than we ever ran before to get back to the zip line area and seemed like it took forever because of how scared we were. We got back and Robin was not there, but then we heard Robin's voice calling our names. "I'm sorry, I did not wait for you guys, but I really had to use the restroom."

"It's okay, but we were really worried about you. We're so glad you're okay."

"Where did everybody go? They probably went to the next thing which is rock climbing."

"Good no one can vanish doing that."

We got to the rock climbing wall, and we all got to go on at the same time. We got hooked up to the cables and then we started to

climb. We almost got to the top and then we saw a huge bee and the next thing I knew there was a whole swarm of bees in front of our faces. We dropped down and then the teacher said to run and they all ran. We were still hooked up to the cables and they were locked close and the workers ran away with the keys. We started yelling, "HELP! PLEASE HELP!" Then someone came, but they did not have the key for it. They ran to go get one of the people with the right key. They came back and unlocked the cable.

The worker asked, "Did anybody get stung by one of the bees"? We each got stung a couple of times but it was nothing serious. We still had to go to the nurse to make sure we were not going to have an allergic reaction.

The nurse escorted us to the campfire. We sat down on one of the logs and started singing the campfire songs. Then all of sudden a huge spark flew toward us and landed on the log we were sitting on, we shot up and ran back then one of the managers came and blew out the fire with the fire extinguisher.

The teachers said that this was enough excitement for one day and she told us to go take our showers and go to bed. We went back to our cabin horrified at what might happen next. We got back and Julia's phone was gone. "What do you think could have happened to it?"

"Maybe this Katy person stole it."

"Let's just take our showers and worry about it later?"

"Ok" then we took our showers and came back to the room.

We decided we were not going to go to sleep because of the stuff that was going on and then we started looking for Julia's phone. I said, "I told you should not have brought it and it is nowhere to be found. We looked everywhere."

"Now I am starting to think it was a good thing that we are only staying here one night." "I know!"

It was 4:00 in the morning when we started hearing noises. We did not make a sound, but then the doorknob slowly started to turn and then it opened. It was just a teacher saying we had to be quiet. Robin said, "That was so scary. I thought it was going to be Katy."

"Or should it be Freddie?"

"Why would it be Freddie?"

"Well, yesterday was Thursday the 12 and today is Friday the 13, so the worst of our problems will be today!"

“I’m so scared what are we going to do?”

“Well there is nothing we can do except wait and see.” We accidently went to sleep and Julia and I woke up and Robin was gone again! This time she was not in the bathroom. We told the teachers and then the search party began. Mrs. Gonzo told us to get ready and go to breakfast. We did not want to eat, but we did anyway. We ate our breakfast but everyone was asking us questions about the stuff that was happening.

We finished our breakfast and then went to our scavenger hunt. When we were there we had to work with partners and the partners were assigned to us. Mrs. Gonzo said the names Julia and Paige and I was relieved that we were partners. We were the first ones to get done with the scavenger hunt because we knew that we only had the hike after this and then we could go home, but Robin was still lost and we were so worried about her. It was taking everybody forever to do the scavenger hunt, so we had to help some groups get done faster. Eventually everyone was done and then was able to go on the hike. We started the hike and we saw some weird plants and then we started to get scratchy, but we did not agonize about that because our friend was still missing. “Do you think they will ever find her?”

“I do not know.”

Then I saw something moving by a tree. It was Robin! She was tied up to the tree. I told the teacher and everyone was so excited to see her.

“Who did this to you?”

“I don’t know, but I think it was someone named Jody or something like that because I remembered her from somewhere.”

“That’s because you did know me and I was the one that sent out the bees and I put a firecracker by the fire so it would blow on to the log you were sitting on.”

“Why did you do all this?”

“Because Robin said she did not know me when I was on the list to be in your cabin.”

“Oh it said Jody not Katy; how did we even mess that up?”

“I’m sorry Jody; they just got your name wrong on the list.”

“I’m regretful for doing all this to you.”

“It’s ok, but did you take Julia’s phone?”

“No!”

“Oh, that was me,” said Mrs. Gonzo.

“Mrs. Gonzo, why would you take it?”

“I took it because you are not supposed to have them here.”

“Ok, well now all of our problems are solved. So let’s go and finish the rest of this hike now.”

I Wish It Were a Different Day

In I WISH IT WERE A DIFFERENT DAY by Alex Prebenda, you will see if Alex makes it off the mountain or not.

I am a man named Alex, in the year of 2097 C.E. I am on top of Mount Everest, but first let me tell you how I got here. I was on my private plane, enjoying an ice cold I.B.C. (an I.B.C. is another word for root beer), when the captain said, "Mr. Prebenda, we have a little something for you at the nose of the plane."

So I said, "I will be up there in just a moment." As I made my way up to the nose of the plane, the lights suddenly went out. I didn't know it at the time, but my wife had planned a surprise party on the plane for me because we were going to Mexico for my birthday.

The drinks tasted like banana, strawberry, and smelled of juicy nectarines. The captain said to me, "You should make your way back to your seat for the surprise." As I turned around the lights turned back on. The captain said, "We are about four hours away from our destination." We were all so pumped up. But then all of a sudden I could see my Mom, Dad, my wife Julie, and even my best friend, Bryce.

They said, "Your present will be waiting for you at the airport in Mexico and is highly guarded."

We were on our way not only to Mexico, but to pick up my brand new car from my wife because that was her present to me for my birthday. The last time I had received a present like this was when I was about 20 years old. The present that I had received was a red Jeep, and boy, that was an awesome car.

That was when suddenly the captain started shouting, "MAYDAY, MAYDAY, I repeat, we are going down. One of our engines got hit by a flock of geese." We all needed to go to our seats, but Julie, my wife, was frozen in fear and shock. I could not get to her in time before we crashed. The whole left side of the plane was wiped out by Mount Everest. The pilot, my Mom, Dad, and Bryce had all fallen out of the plane when the crash happened. They just

all vanished faster than a lightning bolt, and I did not even get to say goodbye to them or give them a kiss goodbye.

Here I am now on top of Mount Everest. I have been sitting here inside the plane since. But then I remembered that the captain said to me, "Mr. Prebenda, I have a parachute for you in case anything goes wrong."

Then I went underneath my seat and found the parachute right where he put it. I put the parachute on and started running out the side of the plane. As soon as I got out and cleared everything else around me, like rocks and debris, I yanked the parachute cord and waited. I could feel the cold mountain air for what seemed like forever, and I finally saw the ground and made it to the ground safely. Even though the search and rescue crew could not find the bodies of my Mom, Dad, Julie, or my best friend Bryce, all the funerals were still really sad. Then I guess you could say, I went on with a somewhat normal life.

Johnny and the Zombie Apocalypse

Johnny and his family fear they will be attacked by zombies in
JOHNNY AND THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE by *M. Sherr.*

Johnny's day started like a normal Saturday. He slept late, woke up, ate breakfast, went downstairs and watched TV. He was flipping through channels when the news alert flashed on the screen. The reporters were saying there were mystery attacks on people. They didn't know who committed them, but they seemed to be the same kind of attacks. The victims always had their heads missing.

Johnny thought it was just some random crazy guy who was doing this. He didn't even think twice about it until dinnertime when his parents brought it up.

His dad, David, said, "So Susan, did you hear about the mystery attacks?"

"Yes," Susan said. "I heard there have been more and more murders happening."

"Knock on wood, we're safe," David said. Then the conversation slowly died out. Johnny didn't say anything more. He finished dinner, went upstairs, got into his pajamas, brushed his teeth, and went to bed. Still he didn't sleep well that night.

In the middle of the night he heard a boom. He immediately woke up and looked out the window. There he saw an army firing bombs at weird looking zombies. His parents came running up stairs and his dad said, "Johnny we got to go now!" Johnny nodded and, jumped out of bed. He ran into the basement where he and his parents waited for an hour, not saying a word. Still in their pajamas, his dad held a baseball bat in his hands the entire time. After all the noise stopped, Johnny asked his parents what happened.

David said, "The world is being attacked by zombies!" Johnny wanted to scream, cry, do anything but he was too scared.

Susan said, "We need to go now."

They ran to the garage, got into the car, and sped off. All they could see was a long empty road ahead and thousands of zombies trailing them.

Susan screamed, Johnny screamed, David just had an angry expression on his face when one mile up the road they ran into a bunch of zombies. About an hour later their car broke down. They were scared until Johnny remembered he left his hockey stuff in the back seat. He climbed in back and grabbed his hockey stick. David took it out of his hand and said, "No, I'm going out."

It looked ok until he saw a zombie leap out of the ground. David, with his quick reflexes, managed to hit the zombie. It fell with its body a yard to the right of David, and its head rolled to the left. David started walking back to the car thinking he was safe, when a zombie popped out of nowhere and jumped on his back. David fought for his life when another zombie jumped on and another. Soon he was covered with zombies. Finally, one bit his head and he died.

Watching all that and trembling with fear Johnny screamed, "We need to get out of here." Susan grabbed the wheel and tried to start the car, but it didn't work until finally after ten tries, the engine turned over and they sped off not once looking back.

It was starting to get late and they knew they had to sleep. They stopped, locked the doors, and went to sleep on the side of the road. Before sunrise, they heard a faint noise coming from the radio. It was saying, "Go to the safe house at 911 East Street." They cheered because they realized it was only ten miles away. They put the pedal to the metal, trying to get there as fast as they could. Finally, they saw it. There was a half torn down sign that said, "Safe House".

Susan said, "Wait here I better go check it out." It looked ok. No zombies were in sight. Then again, that's how David died. She knew she had to take the risk so she walked up to the door, and knocked. No one answered. She opened the door and to her horror, she saw 20 zombies eating dead bodies. She ran for her life, and almost made it to the car when she tripped and twisted her ankle. She couldn't get up. The zombies immediately caught up to her, killed her and ate her.

Johnny was now alone, without parents and scared to death. Sitting in the back seat, he had to make a decision - give up now, or keep fighting. He made his decision and hopped in the front seat knowing a twelve-year-old shouldn't drive. But rules don't matter when fighting for your life, so he took the steering wheel firmly and floored the gas pedal.

He was driving for hours when he saw something way down the road. He sped up to see what it was. It was another person. He got so excited, like it was the best birthday present of his life. He pulled up, and then rolled his window down. The man outside looked like someone who knew what he was doing. He had guns and knives all over him. He asked if he could get a ride. Johnny, becoming lonely agreed.

He said, "My name is Charlie."

Johnny said, "My name is Johnny."

Charlie said, "You look kind of young, Johnny. Why don't you let me drive?"

Johnny said, "OK" and then they talked for a while.

But then Charlie said, "We're here!"

"We are where?" Johnny asked.

"At my house!" Charlie said.

Johnny had second thoughts until he realized he had nowhere else to go. They walked in. It seemed safe until a zombie jumped from behind Charlie and got him. Johnny was fighting for his life until the zombie grabbed him and ate him as well.

When he woke up, the sheets were tangled around his neck and he was wrestling his pillow, but otherwise he was OK. He looked out his window and saw it was a sunny day. He took the zombie DVD that sat by his nightstand and threw it in the garbage can. Then he went down to breakfast.

The Key

*Imagine having to move to a new house in a new area that you don't even know! Well, Olivia is having that same problem, and having a hard time making friends. With all the misery going on, Olivia finds a mysterious door that might change her life forever. Find out what happens in **THE KEY** by **Chloe B.***

Hi, I'm Olivia, and I am 13 years old. I live in Square Ville. Square Ville is the new addition to Modern Ville. Everyone just calls it (M- Ville) for short. I live a normal life, just my city is in the sky and everyone in Square Ville has all the new technology that no one else has. My dad is the leader of Square Ville! My dad and I are very close. We never get in fights, but the sad part is, is that I have to move because my dad cannot afford the amazing mansion that my family lives in. My parents have not really told me anything about the move yet, but what I do know is that my family is moving to some disgusting old house that is in Crash Ville. Crash Ville is a nice place, but it is nothing that I am used to! First of all Crash Ville is not in the sky, it is on ground, and there is no new technology for us to use! It is far away and I am not happy at all about the move.

Four Months Later

I have been living in Crash Ville for about seven weeks now, and I have not liked anything about it. The sky is always dark and the people at my school are not anything like my old friends. My house is really weird looking, but I have learned to deal with it. It is dark brown with lots of windows. There is this one door that I discovered in my closet that will not open with any key I try! I have gone through lots of my parents' keys that I found in their bedroom. I asked my mom if she would take me to a key store, "Sure, get your coat." Mom exclaimed.

I am trying to keep the mysterious door a secret because I do not want my younger brother coming in to my room all the time to figure out what is on the other side of it. When I got to the key store I asked the man at the front desk if he would help me. I told him about the door and made him promise that he would keep it a secret. We both shook hands and he helped me with what I came

there for! I got a key and just hoped that it would unlock the door so I could figure out what was on the other side. When I got home I waited for my mom to stop chatting to me so I could get upstairs and figure out what was inside this door!

I got into my room and made sure my door was locked, just to be safe, I put my tiny bedside table next to the door so that no one could get in even if they picked the lock. My mind was racing around with thoughts about what could be inside this door! I took a deep breath and slowly put the key into the handle. I shouted with enjoyment inside my head because the key fit! I was twisting the handle when I opened the door! I was very disappointed because there was just a wall inside the door.

Later that night, I was thinking about how sad I was when I found out that there was nothing in front of me when I opened the door. I decided to give the door another try because I could not fall asleep; there was a horrifying storm. Once again, I locked my door and put the key in my closet door. I knew that I was just going to be disappointed again because there was nothing to see. When I pulled the handle toward me, I heard lots of footsteps. *Strange* I thought to myself. I quickly opened the door. My jaw dropped! There was a whole new world inside of that door!

I walked inside with total excitement! I was not sure if this was a dream or not, but I did not even care! This was the most amazing thing that I have ever seen in my life! There were lots of little people that looked like gummy bears walking around a path way that looked like graham crackers, and instead of grass there was pink and blue cotton candy! One big gummy bear asked who I was but I was speechless. I finally caught my breath and could answer his question. Once the gummy bear started to talk to me, I realized that I was not dreaming! He told me that his name was Leader Jay.

After about one year I told lots of people about the new world inside of my closet. The day before it all opened I hired a man that could take all the visitors on a tour! I became very famous and got paid lots of money for what I had discovered. I finally got enough money for my family to go back to Square Ville! We moved and I got to live my life happily ever after again!

Midnight Mountain

*Steven's father takes his family on a vacation to Hawaii. Who knew there would be such trouble ahead in **MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN** by **Greg Morphew**.*

There once was a boy named Steven. He lived with his mom and dad in Florida. Steven was a very happy kid. He loved playing video games, especially Minecraft. He always felt like he could be a spy or a crime investigator because he was so good at solving problems or mysteries.

One day, his father came home from work and he announced, "We are taking a vacation to Hawaii!"

Steven liked that idea and yelled, "This is gonna be awesome!" The family packed their suitcases and left for the airport. On the ride to the airport, there was a news announcement on the radio about unusual tremors in Hawaii. "It sounds like we are heading straight for something mysterious," Steven said. "I wonder what is causing the tremors." Steven and his family arrived at the airport and boarded a really big airplane to Hawaii! This was the beginning of their adventure.

The sky was clear and Steven was looking out the window and saw the Hawaiian Islands down below. Steven noticed an island that didn't look like it followed the string of the Hawaiian Islands. "Hey!" Steven called out. "What's that island down there that is sitting out by itself, and not on the path of the other islands?"

His mom looked out the window and said, "There is something unusual about that island."

The plane landed on the big island of Hawaii. Steven and his family happened to be staying along the coast of Hawaii where they could see the mysterious island they saw from the plane. Looking over the ocean, the mysterious island looked like a single mountain standing alone. That night, when it was dark, Steven looked out at the mysterious island and it seemed like it was in a different location, like it moved. "What the...?" Steven said. "Can an island really move?" Steven raced to their cottage to get his parents. "Mom! Dad! Wake up, come look at the mystery island!" yelled Steven. "I think it moved!"

“Steven, you’re right, that island did move,” his dad said. “Let’s investigate that in the morning, we can take that boat that is pulled up on the shore.”

Early the next morning, Steven ran outside to check out where the island was. The mysterious mountain island moved again while they were sleeping! Steven ran to the boat on the shore. “C’mon, quick, Mom and Dad, we have to go check that island out!” Steven shouted. So they piled in the boat, started up the motor, and pointed the boat toward the moving mountain.

As they neared the island Steven called out, “Do you see that hole in the mountain? I think it’s a cave.” They all agreed to go check it out. When they drew close to the holemountain they realized it really was an entrance to a cave. Steven’s dad slowed the boat way down. The boat quietly idled near the cave entrance, rocking in the waves. The cave entrance was rocky, with a low ceiling. The smell in the air was not tropical at all; it smelled greasy, like a factory. Steven could hear a mechanical humming sound, like a computer, but louder. Looking into mouth of the cave Steven saw the flickering light of flames. “There are burning torches lighting the inside of the cave,” Steven said. “We must not be the only ones here.” The family silently bobbed in the boat wondering what they should do next.

“Follow the torches,” said his dad. His dad tied to boat to a jutting out rock, and then they climbed out of the boat onto the rocky cave floor. The family followed the torches and went deeper and deeper into the cave. Finally, they reached a big, hollow area. The greasy smell was gone, there seemed to be fresh air flowing from somewhere.

The sub cave had a door on the opposite side. “That door might lead to a secret passageway,” said Steven.

Steven and his family walked to the door and tested the knob. They were surprised that the door opened easily. “Hello, is anybody there?” Steven called out. Nobody answered back so they all stepped carefully into the room. There was a bright overhead light on, and there were a bunch of controls on a wall panel that made no sense to Steven. Suddenly a man entered the room. He kind of looked like a scientist, or maybe just some crazy hobo.

The man said in a wacky voice, “Hi, I’m Jack.” It seemed like he had an accent. “So, what brings you here?” he cackled.

“We wanted to see what is going on with this mountain, it seemed to be moving,” Jack answered.

“Sorry to surprise you,” said Jack, “I don’t get many visitors here. This is a new experiment I’ve been working on. I’m trying to get a mountain to fly into space all the way to Mars, where I will set up my ultra-secret high tech lab. I’ve invented this giant engine, bigger and more powerful than anything you’ve ever seen before and I think it will launch a mountain”. Then Jack gave a goofy laugh.

I am so creeped out right now, thought Steven, to himself.

“The mountain has been moving due to an engine malfunction that keeps making the mountain move sideways instead of up!” said Jack. “I was just about to test the repair I just made, care to go for a ride? It will be nice to have company on Mars.”

“We’re outta here!” Steven and his family yelled. They ran at top speed to the door and through the cave and to their boat just as the mountain was beginning to rumble!

“Quick, Steven, start the engine!” yelled his mom. Their boat engine started. They pointed toward the big Island of Hawaii just as the rumble grew very loud and they could hear a roaring engine sound. They looked over their shoulder to see a huge wave coming towards them, and the mountain, shaking loose, suddenly flew up into the sky. The huge wave sent their boat all the way back to the shore, where it crashed onto the sandy beach. Looking up to the sky, Steven saw a brilliant flash of light. The mountain was gone.

The Mission

*Secret Agent Joe is facing the biggest threat of his life; Dr. Evil Scientist Bob is trying to take over the world with a slave machine. Will Joe save the world, or will he fail leaving the world in great danger? Find out in **THE MISSION**, by **Donavin Stoops**.*

When I wake up, I'm tied up. I smell the rusty tools and chopped wood. My arms, legs, and body are aching from the ropes tied on me. I see a man on the other side of the room; he seems like he's trying to make a machine. When he messes up, he throws his tools on the ground then picks them up and continues to work. I can hear each tool touch the ground. Heavy or light, each one has its own sound. Some of the lights are flickering and others are dimmed. The skin on my arms has red marks on them from the rope. I feel the coldness of the room and spiders climbing up my leg. I can hear the slight hums of the machines running. I can taste the tape stuck on my mouth. For a second, I have no clue where I am. Then it all flashes back to me.

I was in my office at the SBSA (Secret Base of Secret Agents) when I got a video call. It was my boss, and he said, "Joe, first of all this is going to be your 383 mission! Also, today you have a new nemesis; his name is Dr. Evil Scientist Bob. He tried to take over the world seven times and is going to do it again. Even though he tried seven times he never actually ruled the world. He has never been to jail because the past seven times he tried, those agents never arrested him because they aren't smart enough to remember it, so now you have to arrest him. He's making a slave machine that brainwashes people to do whatever Bob says. Bob wants to do this because when he was a kid his parents, friends, family, and even strangers made him do whatever they wanted. Go and stop him before he turns the entire world into his slaves!" After my boss said the words "Evil Scientist Bob" I wasn't worried at all, because I heard that he was so easy to defeat without even a fight!

After that I walked down to the parking lot and hopped in my flying car. I flew to Bob's lair and landed in the parking lot. My car was rumbling and almost broke down until I fixed it. Once I got out of the car, there were security guards everywhere and they were

attacking me. I knocked them out and hand cuffed them to a flagpole outside.

I started looking for the secret elevator that would bring me to the basement of the lair. I looked and looked. That's when I saw a bookshelf and started pulling them all out of the shelf until I found one that said "Evil Plans." I pulled it out and a door opened. It was the elevator. I went in and the guard dogs inside started jumping on me and chewing my face. I couldn't see so I said "Down boy, down!" By the time they were off me, I could only see through one eye. I clicked the basement button. When the elevator door opened, I saw a little TV that showed the lobby where I knocked out the security guard. I stepped out the elevator and somebody hit me on the head with a hammer. Everything went black.

That's how I got here. I still have a mission to finish. Before I left I took some things that I thought I might need. I got a dart gun, bomb, laser pen, handcuffs, jet pack, and a phone. I'm going to use my laser pen to cut the rope to get out. I get it out of my pocket and it takes me about thirty seconds to cut it. I keep the rope on and wait until Bob is not looking. Then I take all the rope off of me.

Once he turns around I take all the rope off, jump out of my chair and into the air about eight feet (longest jump I ever did!) Then I kick Bob right in the face. He falls to the ground and is really mad. When he gets back up he opens a door and a huge army of people attack me. I shoot them all with sleep darts and they all fall asleep.

Bob is really mad but I shoot him with a sleep dart, and when he falls it is like an earthquake! When I am sure he is asleep, I call headquarters to take the two security guards, Bob, and the fifty-five-person army away.

Later...

While I waited for the agency to come, I put the bomb in the machine and blew it up. All of the agency's prison workers took them in the van and started to slap them. My boss came in stomping and gave me a one million dollar award for capturing Bob. After he gave it to me, I hopped in my flying car and went to Las Vegas for a long vacation.

My Tournament Goal

MY TOURNAMENT GOAL, by *Mason Cirone*, is about going to Toronto to represent the USA. Can he and his team win The Canadian Cup? Read to find out....

“Maaaaasssssssoooooo00000nnnnnnnnnn! C’mon, we have to go!” screamed my dad. That second I hopped up out of bed and knew where I was going- to my hockey rink. Not to skate but to board my team bus. We were about to make the long 12 hour journey to Ajax Toronto, Canada. It was a 30 minute drive to the rink. I was so exited the whole way. I had gone on a charter bus before with my dad’s team (he coaches) but never with my team. I got there first and got to pick my seat. I picked the far back. When everyone showed up, we all shared our new Christmas gifts. I got an iPod 5 and a pair of cherry red Beats and a 2 liter bottle of Gatorade. My teammates got stuff like I pads, Kindles and iPhone 5’s as well. I had gotten some movies for Christmas as well so we watched them. About three hours in we decided to stop at Tim Horton’s and Wendy’s for food. There was a gas station as well. I chose the gas station. I went in there and I bought a protein shake because that’s all I needed. We got back on the bus after 30 minutes and kept going. By the time we got there, it was 1 am, so we just got in our hotel rooms and went to bed.

The next two days we did nothing but win every game by at least six goals. We were representing the United States of America well and we were happy. I picked up five goals in three games. We got to the semifinals. We weren’t nervous because we knew we were going to win and we did in a shootout. I scored in the shootout to win it. We went to the hotel after and celebrated, but went to bed early for the final. I woke up the day of the final ready and focused. I knew I would have a good game; I knew it. So we ate breakfast and got on the bus. I was as solid as a rock listening to my music. I was focused and mentally prepared. We got to the rink I could feel the cold Canadian rink air and the sound of tape unreeling from the roll onto a stick and the skate sharpener grinding. We went into the locker room and taped our sticks and we warmed up as a team. We got on the ice for pregame warm-ups. I took a shot at the goalie and scored. I was warmed up so I got off

the ice and went into the locker room. My coach talked to us and told us what we needed to do. I was ready.

The game went very smoothly. There were goals all the time. I scored the first one, and then my teammate scored, but with ten seconds left, we were down nine to eight. I was in the penalty box for fighting. I had one second left.

The ref dropped the puck. I went out on the ice and called for it. My center man cleared it and I caught it. I was on a break away! I went in 5 4 3 2 1 shot and scored top shelf!!!! The game was going to overtime. I had two goals so far. I wondered if I could get a hat trick. I was going to try. My line started. It was time to show Canada what we could do. My center man won the face off back to the defenseman. He passed to me. I skated as hard as I could to the net but got hit really hard. Hurting, I went to the bench. Five minutes goes by, five minutes left. My line was up next. The play was in the corner. The left-winger came to the bench and I got on the ice. My teammate cleared the puck, but I caught it behind. So I skated so hard my legs were burning. I was on a breakaway! I went in; I did a quick dangle and shot five holes. All I saw was the puck go through and into the net and the red light goes on. The refs arm go down... it was a goal! We won the tournament and got the Canadian cup!

We skated around with the cup around our heads. We loved it. Then we took a picture. We went to the locker room got undressed and got on the bus. There I was presented with player of the tournament award.

We had one more day left so we decided to go to the Hockey hall of fame. I saw a bunch of stuff like jerseys and sticks. We got back to the hotel after that and partied all night. We went to bed around 4a.m... The next morning we woke up and got on the bus and went home. It was sad, but I was happy because not only did we represent the U.S.A. well, we represented our team and that was our goal. We left with the Canadian Cup and we couldn't have been prouder.

Ninja Dog

In NINJA DOG by Jordan Lesson a dog goes on a journey a dog has never been on before. When an evil villain plants a bomb under the city of Petropolis, Ninja Dog comes to the rescue in a heroic and unexpected form. Will he make it out alive?

I was at my base with my other friends, Tony Hawk, Foxy Fox, and my crush Sydney Shih-Tzu. Tony is my best friend and he is very generous. We have been fighting crime since we were babies. He is more skilled and intelligent than me because he took more classes than I did in college—The Ninja Institute of Technology.

I started fighting crime because Tony's dad is a superhero and he too fought crime. Also, he was my hero, so I dedicated my life to crime fighting. Foxy is stubborn, she gets into people business and tells everyone's secrets. Sydney is my crush; I've had a crush on her since the second grade. She has white whiskers and a cute nose.

The police detective Captain Whiskers came barging into the room. "Paws, we found intel about the evil villain Fuzzy Pants!"

"I'm on it sir," I said it in a rush. Fuzzy Pants is a cat and my arch nemesis. He attacked me while I was eating my chow and in dog world that is unbelievably rude. Fuzzy Pants also has the sharpest teeth and the sharpest claws than any other cat in the world.

I looked at the computer across the room sitting on the dark and gloomy counter. There it was - his mischievous plan to destroy the whole city of Petropolis. Petropolis is the pet capital of the world. Then I ran to the dog mobile and drove off into the big city.

I found his headquarters rather quickly and turned on invisible mode for my car so nobody would see it. I looked through the window of the base and saw two security guards next to the elevator. I walked in very slowly and asked the cat with long claws at the front desk for the room number to his secret lab.

The cat then replied, "Sure honey, but I'll have to take your name first."

"Paws," I said confidently.

The cat said, "3rd floor Room 69."

I walked onto the elevator without the guards noticing anything suspicious and listened to the horrific elevator music. When I arrived at the 3rd floor I took out my ninja gear and went to room 69. I opened

the door slowly and crept in. I saw Fuzzy Pants going through a tunnel. I stopped first to look around. I couldn't see anything; it was dark. It was so warm that ice cream would melt. I could hear a drop of water every few seconds. *Splash, splash, splash.* It felt as if someone were watching me; it was a strange feeling. Then I left.

I followed Fuzzy Pants into the tunnel and I could see that he was planting the bomb. I knew I had to take action. So, I waited until he fully planted the bomb and then I went up to the bomb to defuse it, but Fuzzy Pants had put lasers on it. I dodged them and thought to myself *Good thing I took gymnastics.*

Then I called my friend, "Hey Tony, which wire do I cut to defuse the bomb, red or blue?"

"Red," he answered faintly.

I cut the red wire very quickly and ended the phone call. Usually when a bomb is defused, it indicates that the bomb was defused, but this time it said nothing. Then I realized that it was a decoy. I jumped and ran out of the tunnel and saw Fuzzy Pants waiting for me and waving. "Bravo!" he said while laughing. "I knew you would find out my plan, so I made two bombs and the real one is over there." He pointed to the other tunnel that I hadn't seen because the lights were not on.

"Why would you do this Fuzzy Pants?" I said angrily.

"I did this because the Government of Petropolis took my yarn away."

Before responding any further, I bolted towards Fuzzy Pants and grabbed him by the shoulders and pinned him against the wall. I taped him to the wall with ninja tape so he would not escape. I sprinted into the tunnel and ran to the bomb. When I reached the bomb I saw the timer, 45 seconds to destruction! I thought fast and I called up Tony again.

"What is the wire I cut to defuse a C4 bomb? Red, yellow, blue, or purple?" I said quickly.

"Cut blue then purple," Tony answered.

I cut the blue and purple wire in the exact order with two seconds to go. I ran out of the tunnel and saw that Fuzzy Pants had escaped. I didn't try to follow him.

When I returned to the base, the other ninjas had a party ready for me. Sydney Shih-Tzu kissed me on the cheek. This was the most amazing mission I've ever been on.

Pretty in Blood

*When an innocent girl goes to her first day of work, all she finds is horror and murder in **PRETTY IN BLOOD**, by **Bella Brandow**.*

It was April 15, 2022, and Mary Zyphox had gotten her first job at Vince's Virtual Pizza. She was very excited to have a new job where she would also get paid. She was also a little nervous about if the people there would like her or not. She called her mother and told her about her new job.

She woke up the next morning at 5:00 A.M. to get ready for work. She got up, fixed her bed, got dressed, fed Whiskers, her cat, and ate. While she was getting ready, she watched the news. "Five local women with the last name as Zyphox were murdered today." She thought about it, but couldn't think of anyone by the last name "Zyphox" except for herself.

As soon as she got out of the door, she saw out of the corner of her eye a man in a black coat wearing a red cap, just standing in front of a house staring at her. He looked very mysterious. She ignored him and quickly unlocked her hover car and drove off to work. While driving, she got stuck in traffic, so she was afraid that her boss was going to be really mad at her. Within ten minutes she was out of the traffic and at work, rushing into the kitchen.

"Sorry I'm late Mr. Vestix," Mary said, in an unsteady voice.

"It's fine, but please don't be late again," Mr. Vestix said.

Was he the guy I saw in that yard this morning? Mary thought.

She could hear loud electrical music in the background, and there were all different kinds of colored lights everywhere. The building was very big. She smelled the scent of french-fries filling the air, and the aroma of tomato sauce. She could feel the warmth from the micro ovens, making the delicious pizzas. It was very noisy and busy in there, and she ignored all of her thoughts. She could hear everyone's conversations.

"I need two large pizzas with olives and termites at table Z, and it needs to be extra electrical."

"Uh excuse me, but I asked for pineapple, not pepperoni." Mary just stood there, and then someone asked her for an order.

"Um, excuse me, but I'm ready to order," said a chubby man in a grumpy voice.

“Oh, I’m sorry, sir. My name is Mary, and I will be waiting on you today. What would you like to order?”

“I would like to order a super wild soda, and the triple deluxe bird ear pizza with a side of chocolate covered grasshoppers.”

“Will that be it?”

He nodded his head and she walked away yelling, “I need a triple deluxe bird ear pizza with a side of chocolate covered grasshoppers!”

She walked over to the soda machine, grabbed a cup and said, “Super wild soda.” Then the machine started to pour out the soda. She walked over to her customer and set the drink on the table. She walked back to where the chefs were setting plates and took the pizza tray and the plate with the chocolate covered grasshoppers and walked over to the man. She set the plates down and said, “Here you go sir. Will that be it?” He nodded in delight while taking his first bite.

As she turned around and looked back, she saw Mr. Vestix staring at her, in a strange way. She ignored it, again, and continued waiting on people.

By the end of the day she was just giving someone his bill when Mr. Vestix called her into his office. She went in and the lights were turned off and she said, “Um... Mr. Vestix? Are you there?”

She heard the door close behind her and quickly turned around in complete surprise. She could only see the silhouette of him. She saw in his hand something that looked like a knife. She gasped in surprised and started to holler loudly. He started chasing her and she soon got past him and out of the door.

She ran outside into the parking lot and looked behind her. There was no one there. She quickly got in the car. She put the keys in and drove into a busy street. *Why me* Mary wondered.

As she was driving she called 911. “What is your emergency?” said the lady on the phone.

“Someone is trying to murder me!” Mary said in a shaky voice.

“Where do you live?”

“On Galactic Drive and my address is 67452!”

“Can you describe the person?”

“Yes, his name is Vince Vestix, owner of the restaurant Vince’s Virtual Pizza. He was wearing a grey striped shirt, with a black jacket and jeans.” As Mary was saying this she was walking into her house.

“Okay and the last time you saw him was...?” asked the lady.

“The last time I saw him, I was at the restaurant.”

“Okay, well get in your house and stay safe.”

“Okay, I’m in my house right now. AHHHHHH!” she screamed as she felt someone grab her hand and shove a gun front of her face.

“Hello? Ma’am?”

The phone disconnected and Mary was paralyzed because she was so scared. It felt like her life was flashing before her eyes. She felt so helpless. She kept on screaming, but no one came or answered.

“Why are you doing this?” yelled Mary.

He gave no response. He just gave a devilish smile, and breathed heavily in anticipation of what he knew was coming next.

“No, please stop! You’re crazy!”

“Maybe I am,” he replied, in the most evil voice ever.

She bit his thumb and ran into the kitchen. He started yelling, but that only got him angrier. This distracted him so she could find a weapon. She found a very big and sharp butcher knife.

As she turned around to defend herself, she found herself looking into the barrel of the killer’s gun. The final, but most frightening words she heard were, “You’re going to look pretty in blood.” Then it all went black for Mary as the killer’s gun echoed through the night.

The next day when the police arrived, all they found was Mary’s lifeless body, and a bloody smile on her face.

Project E

*Daniel is Agent D and he is working for the Good Guys Agency. He is trying to stop his former partner, Kessler, from destroying the agency. Kessler will stop at nothing to destroy the agency. Agent D must defeat Kessler's evil project to accomplish his mission. Will he survive in **PROJECT E** by Jack Hill?*

Daniel is just a normal person with typical problems. He is 24 years old, has blond hair and is 6'2" tall. He joined the Good Guys Agency around 2001 and became known as "Agent D". In 2004, the agency started to use the nickname "GGA" and fought evil guys in New York. The main bad guy is Kessler and he was Agent D's partner until he made this invention and GGA destroyed it. This made him angry, so now he will stop at nothing to defeat us. Agent D has been trying to help him ever since to stop doing wrong. GGA tries not to kill the bad guys, but sometimes they have to because they try to hurt others. Cornell is Agent D's boss at the agency.

One day, Cornell called Agent D and told him that Kessler was causing trouble on Main Street. Kessler was in the process of creating a new invention to help with his evil deeds.

"Just great!" said Agent D angrily. "George, go get my car."

George is Agent D's assistant at the GGA. Agent D traveled to Main Street but did not see Kessler. Suddenly, Agent D saw cars swirling around in the sky and wondered what was going on?

He recognized Kessler who then yelled, "Agent D, just in time for my experiment!" Kessler continued, "Do you want to know what this thing does? Well, of course you do!" Kessler explained that the machine allowed him to have the strength of a ton of muscular men that could carry airplanes.

Agent D wondered how to defeat Kessler. He said to himself, "Think Agent D!" He tried to think about Kessler's weaknesses. He decided to shoot the machine with a laser gun. "Got it!" BOOM! BOOM! "Got you Kessler," said Agent D.

Kessler was surprised that Agent D disabled his machine. He realized that Agent D shot the power button. As he was fleeing, Kessler regretted putting the power button in an obvious place on the machine.

Agent D said, "Ah, Kessler come back!" Agent D called Cornell and told him that he stopped Kessler, but he got away. He also told Cornell that he has a very powerful tool that could give him the power of a ton of muscular men that could carry airplanes.

Cornell said, "Okay, report back to base and I'm furious with you for letting him get away." Agent D thought about how he still needed to find Kessler's base. He planned to tell Cornell that he would go alone to infiltrate Kessler's base. *Where could his base be?* Suddenly, Agent D remembered seeing solution leaking from Kessler's machine. He picked up the solution and headed back to base.

Agent D heard the GGA base computer call him over the intercom. "Agent D, code 345679," said the base computer. Agent D explained to Cornell what happened and about the solution.

Cornell said, "Agent D, we need to know what direction Kessler went and where his base is located so we can infiltrate it."

"NO!" Agent D yelled because he was very frustrated. Agent D said, "We cannot go together, it will blow our cover. I will go alone."

"Well, okay. Go now," said Cornell. He gave the solution to Cornell and told him to examine it, so they could know what we're dealing with here.

Agent D knew how to find the Kessler's base using the solution his machine left behind. Agent D followed the solution trail that Kessler's machine left behind and found the base on Bell Street. He knocked out security and found the machine, but not Kessler. Agent D knocked out the scientists and asked the repair workers where Kessler was but suddenly he appeared.

Kessler said, "Well, well, well, if it isn't Agent D. You have a lot of guts and technology to find my base."

Kessler knew that he knocked out the guards and scientists. Kessler tried to flee but,

Agent D caught him and said, "Not this time Kessler". He blindfolded Kessler and his workers and then returned to base. He called Cornell to let him know what happened and that he was on his way back with Kessler.

Cornell said, "Good job, Agent D. Your mission is complete."

Stranded

*In **STRANDED** by Anna Scharf, Julianne is on a plane by herself. She is expecting to go to her aunt's house, but doesn't end up making it there. When the pilot mysteriously jumps off the plane, she and other passengers are forced to live on an island. Will anyone be able to find them before it's too late?*

I was at the airport waiting for my extremely long plane ride to start. I had to go live with my aunt in Florida. My parents had gotten killed in a fire at their work. "Plane 211 to Florida, repeat plane 211 to Florida, leaving in five minutes," a man announced. That was my plane. I grabbed my suitcases and followed the man to my seat.

I sat down next to an older man, who just spent the whole time working on his laptop, like my parents used to do. I really missed my mom and dad. I felt like I could hear them calling me, "Julianne let's go get some ice cream!" I always got ice cream on Fridays.

I was really tired, so I fell asleep on a head pillow my mom had once given me. It was a peaceful ride, so it was easy to fall asleep. The ride would be very long. It would take over 18 hours.

Since I was asleep, I didn't notice everyone screaming. I woke up quickly. It felt like I was falling forward really hard. Are we landing early? No, we had only been on the plane for a few hours. I took a little glance up front. Then, I noticed that the plane was crashing!

I watched in horror as the pilot was parachuting out of the plane! We all panicked. I was frantic with fear. I ran back to my seat. I strapped on my seatbelt and held on tight. I closed my eyes. I was expecting to not wake up, but when I opened my eyes, the plane had landed.

An older man had landed us safely. I had no clue as to where we were. I immediately smelled some sweet berries. I felt a cold chill going down my back. I grabbed my large blue suitcase from the top bin. I pulled out my warm, soft, winter coat. I unstrapped my seatbelt and ran to the door on the plane. The man had landed us onto a very small island in the middle of the bright, blue, ice-cold ocean. Everyone was screaming and crying. One guy fell into the

ocean when the plane crashed, and he drowned. His family couldn't find him.

"We need to find some food," a man stated.

"Did anyone bring a fishing pole?" another man wondered.

"I did!" a lady shouted. She ran and found her suitcase that had fallen into the sand. She opened it and pulled out an old fishing pole. It was broken, but it was the best thing we could get.

"Great!" the man exclaimed. He found a worm in the sand and attached it to the end of the rod. He launched it into the ocean and nothing came. We waited a while but nothing pulled on the line. Then, out of nowhere, the man almost fell into the ocean. We got a bite! A strong man helped him wheel it in. The fish was huge!

I waited in the sand with a few other kids, while the adults made a fire, and got the fish ready. Finally, it was finished. We sat around the fire. We each got a little piece of fish on a stick, and roasted it over the fire. It tasted bitter, but I was just glad I got some food.

When the night came, we all scattered around the small island and lay down in the sand. Luckily, my suitcase wasn't ruined. I got a blanket, and warm pajamas. A lot of people's suitcases were ruined. They had to lay in their clothes with no blankets.

When I woke up in the morning, people were crying again. A lot of people froze last night, and died. Men threw the dead people's bodies into the ocean. There were only thirty of us to begin with, and now there were only fifteen. There was only one other kid left, but he was a couple years older than I was. A few men found a bush, and we got some raspberries.

We were working really hard. A few men were so sweaty, that they decided to take a little swim in the ocean to refresh. One woman told them that it wasn't a good idea, and that they could drown. They wouldn't listen. They went and swam so far out that we couldn't even see them anymore. A minute later we could see them again. They were drowning! A man tried to go in and get them, but it was too late.

It was soon nighttime again, and we all had to sleep close to each other for body heat. It was really cold. Everyone was covered with blankets and warm clothes. I saw two men and two women walk into the ocean. "What are you doing?" a man stormed at them.

“We can’t survive. We are going into the ocean and hopefully someone will find us. It’s better than freezing,” one of the men replied.

When we woke up the next morning, I noticed the other boy wasn’t around anymore. I now was the only child left. There was one woman and two men left. They all seemed to keep leaving me. They went to search for food, firewood, and other types of survival gear. They would leave me behind, and then feed me with a small portion of food. We went to bed and we are all fine.

We woke up the next morning, and the only other survivor was an older man. We were alone on this island in the middle of an ocean. This was already the fourth day, and no one had found us yet.

“Ok kid, we need to find some food,” the man snapped at me. I nodded. He led me to a small forest with a lot of trees and bushes. We went into the forest and looked for some food. He found a group of bushes, so we grabbed as much as we could, and went back to our spot.

When we went to bed, we had a lot of blankets, from all of the non-survivors. I woke up the next morning, and looked around. The man was nowhere to be seen. I searched all around. He wasn’t on the island.

I went to go look for some food. I couldn’t find anything. I never found any of the other food on my own. The adults found all of it, but now they were not there to help me.

I went to lay down again, when I heard an amazing sound. It was a boat! They were waving to me as they came closer to the island. I ran towards the shore and happily waved back. The boat came closer to the island and the captain helped me aboard the boat.

Once I got to main land, I got to an airport and flew to my aunt’s house. I told her everything that happened. She took me out to dinner, and I was so glad that I got real food.

Super Piggy

SUPER PIGGY by *Conner Reilly* is a story about a pig that gets superpowers. Read more to find out what happens and what superpowers he gets.

There was once a pig whose name was Piggy. He was just an everyday pig until one day. Then one day Piggy went to a mud puddle and it was a perfect, golden-brown mud puddle and Piggy played in it all day long. When night came, he went to sleep.

The next morning Piggy had some really cool superpowers. The superpowers were he could fly, exhale fire, and had a ton of knowledge.

So, Piggy flew to the White House. Piggy wanted to be treated like all the other humans get treated, so he asked the president, "Can I be treated like the humans are treated?" exclaimed Piggy.

The president screamed, "No!"

So then Piggy burned down North America.

Piggy flew away after he did that and he went to Africa. Piggy treasured it there, but Piggy rolled in this mud puddle to see if he could get more powers, but it was a creepy, shadowy, and black mud puddle so he lost all of his powers.

Trouble in Maine

In TROUBLE IN MAINE by Bryon Woodruff, Derek and Timmy have a problem that happens to be a dangerous man. What will happen?

One day there were two boys named Derek and Timmy on an island in northern Maine. There was big trouble. There was a big, mean, trigger-happy man coming to the countryside where they were living. His name was Redneck, and Derek and Timmy's parents said to always stay away from him. He could be very dangerous.

Two weeks later, Redneck arrived, and his house smelled like a farm. At night, it was hard to snooze sometimes, but that didn't prevent us from getting into trouble. Derek and Timmy always heard "Yee ha" and then loud banging.

One night, Derek and Timmy were snooping around near his house when Redneck shot a few rounds right where they were standing. Suddenly, Timmy dropped to the ground, and Derek fell because a bullet went straight through his foot.

Derek was hit in the arm and feet but he managed to reach Timmy. He tried as hard as he could to stop the bleeding, but Timmy was still losing too much blood, and then nothing happened. Timmy was still, and Derek knew he would need help soon before he passed out. He shouted, "HELP!"

Redneck came and had a puzzled look on his face, and for Derek it was worse because he got a look at his teeth. They were as green as grass with holes in his teeth. Derek almost blacked out. It was terrible.

Soon he heard people coming, and Redneck darted because he knows that he'd in trouble when the people came. Derek saw two faces that he didn't want to see. It was Timmy's parents, and when they saw Timmy, his mom dropped and started to sob.

It was two days later. Timmy's parents were always upset. His mom cried whenever something reminded her of Timmy. His dad would stay in his office most of the time. At last, it was Timmy's funeral, and Derek found out that Timmy's parents were getting divorced because they were always fighting now. The Redneck was sent to prison, and Derek's family moved to California.

Derek's family bought a house near an outstanding view of the ocean. Shortly after, Derek was ankle deep in the warm water listening to the waves lap against the rocks. Then he stared at the scar that is on his arm that would haunt him forever. The warmth of the sunset relaxed him. His mom yelled out that it was time for dinner, and Derek yelled back, "I'm not hungry." Derek dove into the water, and he swam for about an hour.

Later on that year, Derek went to school and always got in trouble, and it was just like old times, sort of, just not with Timmy.

Now You See It

Alone

In **ALONE** by *Royal Goodwin*, Josh has a hard life that he tries to keep hidden.

*R*ing, ring, ring goes my almost-dead phone as I wake up as sweaty as ever. That's what happens when you live in a car alone. I always wonder why I'm here. Why haven't I spent my money to buy a place? I guess that I'm so used to living in a car that I can't focus.

Honk, honk. "There's the bus," I say in my head. I do that a lot because I'm alone.

"Dang it," says the girl I live near. What she is doing here? "Who's there?"

Oh, no, she saw me. What do I do? So I jump out of the car.

"What are you doing?" she says.

"Nothing."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure. I'm not crazy."

"Sorry for wondering."

"It's ok. What's your name?"

"My name is Jodie."

"Jodie what?"

"Jodie Mash."

"My name is Josh."

"Josh what?"

"Josh Kenmore?"

"Do you live in a car?" says Jodie.

I want to say no, but I don't look like I'm telling the truth. So it slips out. "Yes."

Ha ha ha haha.

"Man, you are mean," says Josh.

"I'm not laughing at you, silly. I remember you from kindergarten."

"Great," says Josh, "another embarrassment. Wait, you're Bucktooth Jodie!"

"And you called *me* the mean one," says Jodie.

"Sorry. At least I don't have buck teeth," says Josh.

"Are you trying to help or make me feel worse?" says Jodie.

"So what school you go to?"

"Whitehall High School," says Jodie.

"Cool. Me, too," say Josh. "We probably should catch the bus."

"No thanks. I walk."

"What?" says Josh. "You walk to school? But it's 10 minutes away," says Josh.

"I know," says Jodie.

"You're crazy if you think you can make it to school on time."

"Whatever. I'll show you I can do it, Josh."

"Fine. I bet you couldn't make it halfway."

"Deal. To make it perfect if I make it before the bell rings you owe me 100 dollars cash."

"Deal. Let's shake on it."

"See you at school."

"Ok."

I climb on the bus. I shout, "Hey, Creg, you wouldn't believe what happened this morning."

"What now?" says Creg.

"I met this amazing girl."

"Would you stop making up imaginary friends?" says Creg.

"I'm not and I'll prove it."

"Bet you 100 dollars she isn't the real deal."

I called him a sucker under my breath.

Finally we made it, and she is nowhere in sight. I knew it, and then I get off the bus. Where is she? I start running because I hear sirens. What's going on? "Oh no, her backpack," I say, and there's blood.

She's...she's alive. "Hey, you're alive!"

"Yeah, it's just this kid that fell and got paralyzed."

"But isn't that your backpack?"

"No, that's my backpack. Oh, let's go to McDonald's."

"Cool, but I have no money on me," says Josh.

"Don't worry; my dad is the owner of McDonald's."

"All right, let's go. After we eat I need to go home."

"Why?"

"I need to do some stuff?"

"Why?"

"That's just how it is."

"Oh, well, ok. After we eat you can go home."

"All right. Cool."

An hour later

“That was good. Those French fries were perfect.”

“Hey, you want to come over?”

“Sure. Wait, are you sure you want me over?”

“Yeah, I’m sure. I’m tired of being ALONE.”

Animal Addiction

*It's not easy being an animal lover who isn't allowed to have pets. Kimberly tries to change that rule in **ANIMAL ADDICTION**, by **Katie Satullo**.*

You know how animals love humans and humans love animals. It's great and all, but sometimes it can be tough. You don't think so at first because all you're thinking about is how you're going to love your animal and it's going to love you. You see, this is how this story starts.

Today in language arts class we had to talk at our table about our favorite things.

Tommy said, "My favorite things are my turtles."

Sara said, "My favorite things are my cats."

Melisa said, "My favorite things are my cats, dogs, bunnies, turtles, fish, lizards, geckos, mice, hamsters, chickens, and my most favorite is my horse."

When it was my turn I said, "My favorite things are my video games and my Xbox." I guess that was the wrong answer because everyone was staring at me and was laughing. I'm sorry if I don't have any animals.

The rest of the day I was embarrassed. Going to a small school isn't that much fun when it's easy to pass on news. Great, now I'm the school joke.

When I got home the first thing I did was make a list of all the animals I want.

ANIMALS I WANT:

- *Turtle*
- *Duck*
- *Hamster*
- *Gecko*
- *Fish*
- *Rabbit*
- *Cat*
- *Dog*
- *Horse*

And the one I want the most of all is a BIRD!

When Mom got home I showed her the list. She looked at it for a while, nodded her head a couple of times and then shook it in disbelief. When she was finally done she said, "What a nice list."

"So can I get some of the animals?" I said.

"Let me think - NO!"

"But why not?" I whined.

In a frustrated voice Mom said, "You know perfectly well why. Now go do your homework."

I huffed and went to do my homework. I don't understand why mom won't let me. I know we live in a small apartment, but why can't I have a hamster or something small that the landlord wouldn't notice?

That night I put the list in a box. When Mom was asleep I sneaked outside and put the box in a hole that I dug near my favorite tree. I was hoping that somehow a miracle would come true and I would get some of the animals that I wanted.

That night there was a big storm, with lightning everywhere. *CRASH! BOOM! BANG!* I was really scared and hoped that my box would not wash away.

In the morning I woke up late, so I had to hurry to get ready for school. I wanted to check on the box to see if it was still there. When I went outside by my favorite tree the box was gone! It looked like an animal had dug it up. Now my box was gone, and on top of that I missed the bus. My day was off to a bad start.

After the long, wet walk to school I found out that Melisa had gotten another animal. She could almost have a zoo now. It's not fair.

After school I looked in the hole for the box. In the hole instead of the box there was a turtle in there. It was so cute and adorable I brought it in the apartment.

When Mom saw it she screamed, "Kimberly El Jones, why do you have a turtle? You know if the landlord catches us we will be out in a second. There are no pets allowed."

"But Mom, he was just lying there so helplessly. He needs a home, and nobody will find out." Mom gave in and said I could keep it! "YES! Thank you, thank you, thank you, you're the best," I said while giving Mom a big hug.

The next day when I came home from school, I looked in the hole by the tree again and found a baby duck. It was so little and

fluffy I couldn't just leave it there. Mom was working late, so I sneaked it into the apartment and hid it in my bedroom. Mom was leaving for a long business trip tomorrow morning. Mrs. Limger, the old lady next door, would be watching me, and she would never notice.

The next morning I woke up extra early to say goodbye to Mom. Now she would never know about the duck under my bed.

After school I checked the hole again. This time I found a hamster. This has to be my lucky week. Sneaking the hamster in was no problem at all. Mrs. Limger didn't see a thing; she was too busy watching *Wheel of Fortune*.

I continued to check the hole every day, and each day I found something new. There was a gecko, a fish, a rabbit, a cat, and a dog. I couldn't believe it. I was finding all the animals on my list. If this continued, the next day I would have either a horse or a bird. How was I going to hide a horse? This was going to be interesting.

The next day when I went outside I didn't need to check the hole because there was a big horse standing over it. Good thing *Wheel of Fortune* was on. I would have no trouble getting him past Mrs. Limger. The hard part was deciding if I should use the elevator or stairs. The horse might not fit in the elevator, but the stairs might be noisy. I decided to take the stairs because no one takes them. The other hard part was how I was going to hide it in my room. Wait, Mom's not home for another two days. I'll just put it in her room.

The next afternoon, I checked the hole again. There was a small bluebird that was just too cute to be true! I just had to keep him.

Everything was all right until Mrs. Limger said, "Your mom has decided to come home early, and she said she has a surprise for you."

"Oh boy, do I have a surprise for her too." I was scared that Mom was not going to like it, which she wasn't.

When Mom got home I was waiting for her with a big bouquet of her favorite flowers. "Surprise!" I yelled. "I'm so glad you're home. I missed you so much."

"I missed you too. Oh sweetie, do I have a surprise for you," Mom said in a cheerful voice.

"I bet that I have a bigger surprise for you," I said, trying to think of a way to tell Mom that I had nine more animals.

“I was not on a business trip; I just bought a house in the country. Now you can have all the animals you want,” Mom said excitedly.

“Mom, I think you should sit down. I have something to tell you.”

The Cruise

*Work hard, and you will be rewarded. That is certainly true for one hard-working student in **THE CRUISE**, by Nala Coleman.*

One day I was at school, and my fourth-hour teacher, Mr. Phillips, said, “I have a surprise contest for the class. If you get 95 percent or higher on the upcoming test, your name will get entered into a drawing for a cruise on the Detroit Princess for two people.”

I could not believe it. I thought to myself, *How could Mr. Phillips give away a cruise just for a high grade on a test?* It didn’t matter because I really wanted to go on that cruise. It would take a lot of work like studying, taking notes, and paying more attention in class.

When I got home from school that evening, I did my homework for my other classes. After that, I got out all of my science materials and start studying as hard as I could.

The next day in fourth hour I told all of my friends, “I’m going to try to get a great grade for this test!” But half of them said the same thing. Some of the other kids said they weren’t going to try because they never get good grades in Science.

That night when I got home, I did the same thing as the day before: did all my homework and studied. That day was the last day I could study, so I stayed up until 11:00. My mom was not happy about me staying up late just to win a prize. She said, “Nala, you are supposed to study hard on every test.”

Finally, the test day was here. When I got to fourth hour, I ran to my seat and took a last-minute look at my study guide. Other people were just sitting there and talking. When we got the test, it looked very difficult. But I told myself that there was no need to worry because all of the answers were in my head.

When I was taking the test, I did not rush like I usually do. I took my time. After I was done with the test, I felt really good. I was able to answer all the questions pretty easily.

The next day I got my test back, and I got a perfect 100 percent. Wow! I never thought how easy a test could be when you study so hard. My name and those of 10 other students got entered into the

drawing. I closed my eyes and was hoping he would draw my name.

Mr. Phillips announced the winner of the cruise. "The winner is...NALA COLEMAN!" I was so happy! Everyone clapped for me. Mr. Phillips said, "Who do you want to take with you on this wonderful cruise?"

I said, "I would like to take my best friend, Emilie Felax." Emilie and I hang out at a lot of places together. I know she would enjoy this, too.

When I got home from school and told my mom I won the contest, she was happy. But then she asked me, "What did you learn from this experience?"

I said, "Studying is a lot easier when I stayed focused. And it makes taking tests a lot easier, too." She said that it is important to always do your best, because the best prizes are having great grades.

A Day in the Sun

*A plan for fame and fortune unfolds as three friends talk. But making the plan and carrying it out are not the same thing. See what's up in **A DAY IN THE SUN**, by **Morgan M. Henderson**.*

“I know, right?” Vanessa said to Dylan on the phone. Vanessa and Dylan have been best friends since the second grade. Now that they are in sixth grade, things have changed big time.

Dylan asked, “Are you still friends with Elaine?”

“Sort of, but not BFFs like we used to be. Why?” Vanessa responded.

Dylan said, “Just curious. Hey, why don’t we meet at the beach? Golden Gate beach?” Dylan asked. The weather was 87 degrees, and Vanessa could just picture the beach as they spoke. She saw a baby blue sky, a big round gold sun with perfect-shaped rays, and the big palm trees swaying in the cool summer breeze.

Vanessa said, “Sure,” quickly. “Can I invite Megan?”

“Sure. Okay, cool. See ya’ in 15,” Dylan responded.

Vanessa dialed Megan’s number.

“Hello,” Megan’s mom said, with a deep voice at first but getting higher at the “lo” part.

“Hi, Mrs. Mirhoni, is Megan home?”

“Sure, I’ll put her on. One sec,” Mrs. Mirhoni responded.

“Hello, Ms. Skibol. How do you do this fine mid-morning?” Megan said, all sophisticated.

“Cut it or I’m hangin’ up,” Vanessa said, getting frustrated because Megan always did that every time she answered the phone.

“Okay okay, what’s up?”

“Not much, just meeting Dylan at the beach. Wanna come?” Vanessa explained.

“Sure, what beach?” Megan asked.

“Golden Gate,” Vanessa said, worried because she was wondering if she would go to that beach or not.

“Okay, cool,” Megan responded. “I have to go ask my mom. One sec....” Megan really wanted to go. “Okay, hello?”

“Hey,” Vanessa said anxiously.

“My mom said, ‘Sure but be home before dinner.’”

“Okay, cool, be there in 5.”

“Knock knock,” Vanessa said as she softly knocked on the door. Megan was at the door in under 10 seconds ready to go with her big powder puff blue beach bag. Vanessa’s was blue and white with sparkles. And Megan’s didn’t come with a matching headband and socks, which Vanessa had been wearing.

“Did you bring money?”

“Yep, I got \$13 out of my piggy bank,” Megan said as they both walked toward the sidewalk.

The walk there was kind of quiet because Megan and Vanessa haven’t hung out much since they started middle school. They had both made a lot of new friends. Vanessa never liked Megan’s new friends, and Megan never liked Vanessa’s new friends.

They came up to a gold and black sign that read: Golden Gate Beach.

“Yeah, I hope walking six and a half blocks was worth it,” Megan said sarcastically and kind of snobbily.

“It will be,” Vanessa said as she yanked Megan’s arms and started running toward Dylan.

“Hey, Dylan,” Vanessa said.

“What’s up?” Megan said boringly.

“Hey, you guys, what’s cookin’?” Dylan said as he stood up from his black and white beach chair.

“What’s cookin’?” Vanessa asked as she and Megan sat down.

“Well, I had an idea; you know how in like third grade we wanted to start a surfing crew?”

“Yeah...” Vanessa said, thinking, *Where’s he going with this?*

“Ok, well, I thought we could start making surfing routines and present them for money.

“Wait, we as in who?” Megan asked.

“You, Vanessa, and me.”

“Okay, this could work.”

Vanessa said doubtfully, “Sounds good, but, it would take a lot of practice. And according to the state laws of Florida, we’re not allowed to make profit until were in tenth grade. But we could just make a lot of routines and practice a lot.” As more negative than positive thoughts about this occurred to her, she started to think harder and harder about the benefits and the work that would come out of and be put in to this.

“We already have our boards and two winning routines.” They had previously come up with what they thought were pretty good

stunts when they just made routines for fun. "Next we need a name," Dylan said enthusiastically. "Here are some ideas I came up with over the years," Dylan added as he unfolded a piece of paper.

"What about the Two Sisters and a Dude?" Megan asked excitedly.

"Perfect!" Vanessa announced.

"The name is...The Two Sisters and a Dude!" Dylan replied.

"Why don't we go out for pizza? To celebrate the new coming out of our name? If that made sense..." Megan stated.

"Sure that sounds fun," Vanessa said.

"I could go for that," Dylan responded.

They all walked down the hill and entered JUJU Pizza Stop, their favorite pizza place since they were four and five year old. "Hey, guys, what kind?" Mr. Ghostery asked. Mr. Ghostery had been their favorite employee at JUJU Pizza. He had worked there for four years and had known them for all but one year.

When their order was ready, they picked up their pizza and drinks from the new employee they had never met, and didn't bother to meet because they weren't interested, and walked to a red-and-white-striped booth where they sat down.

"I don't think we should start this until we are sure we'll make money, and are really into this when we get in tenth grade. I think we'll change our minds. I mean, c'mon, we are only in seventh grade. We got some years to go," Megan said as she took a big bite out of the sides of her pizza.

"I kind of agree," Vanessa said, already done with her pizza. She began sipping on her drink. Dylan was done with all of his food, and he walked up to Mr. Ghostery and asked for a cookie and a mint while he thought of what to say.

He came back to the table and started, "I really think we should start now because we're going to need routines and practice. Why did you guys have all this trouble and all of a sudden decide not to anymore?"

"I'm out... I don't know; maybe we just weren't thinking at the time and we just started thinking harder," Vanessa said, pushing her empty cup into the trash can behind them.

"Same," Megan said as she stood up and started walking out the door without another word.

“Fine!” Dylan said to Megan, disappointed. He also headed out the door. Megan walked out feeling like she had done the wrong thing.

They never started the surfing crew and never talked about it ever again. “It just wasn’t a great idea from the start,” Vanessa whispered as she walked home alone.

First Camping Trip

In FIRST CAMPING TRIP by Harrison Kelly, there is something in the woods besides trees. Now you want to read on, don't you?

It was the summer of 2010, and my family and I were on vacation in Vancouver, British Columbia. It was my cousin's idea to go camping, so we all went. As we drove through the entrance of the campsite there were these signs saying "Beware of Bears."

After we set up the tents I was responsible for making a fire. Leo told everyone to come around the campfire and said, "Hey guys! We should go into the forest and explore, just us cousins." The parents thought it wasn't a good idea since it was getting dark, but eventually we convinced them it was okay.

After the older cousins got supplies like water, food, and a first aid kit, we headed off into the woods. When we got further into the woods we saw another "Beware of Bears" sign, but we just ignored it. We went off the path and went a different way. "Hey Lucas," I said, "it's getting a little dark. Do you think we should ask the others if we should head back to the campsite now?"

Lucas replied, "Nah, this is a lot of fun. We can head back later." I agreed with Lucas, which I really regret.

As we continued walking, it was pitch black. We then heard a growl from somewhere nearby. Bryce, the eldest, got out his pocket knife and a stick.

"Bryce, what is that?" I asked. He just shrugged his shoulders in response. *Well, that's nice*, I thought, but then he threw his the stick.

I looked around at the other cousins, and they were all wide-eyed looking at something. I turned my head to see what they were staring at. THERE WERE BEARS!

There were four cubs and a mama bear. "Awe, they are so cute," Lauren said, but then she and my cousin Lizzie freaked out. They immediately started climbing the closest tree.

I was getting scared because I didn't know what to do. We all grabbed sticks and started throwing them toward a river. Bears love salmon. DUH! Why didn't we think of this before?

Eventually the bears finally went into the river, and Lizzie and Lauren both came down from the tree. We had a group hug and then started to walk back to the campsite. We all talked about our

crazy adventure. As we were on our way back we passed the “Beware of Bear” sign. I laughed and said, “We should’ve taken that sign more seriously, guys.”

They all laughed and said, “Yeah.”

When we got back to the campsite, I told the parents about what happened, and every now and then the cousins will say something about the crazy adventure.

Frozen

*Gym class isn't supposed to turn into a battle against the elements. But in **FROZEN** by **Ashton Arbaugh**, four friends find themselves trapped in a gymnasium that becomes more like a walk-in freezer.*

Ashton woke up for school and got dressed and had breakfast. It seemed like just another normal, boring day. On the car ride to school the guy on the radio was talking about how crazy cold the weather was going to be. His mom dropped him off, and he went to his first class in the gym.

Ashton liked his gym class mostly. All of his best friends were in the class with him, and they always goofed around and had fun. Right away he saw Ricky, his best friend. Ricky was laughing and talking with his brother Joey. Ashton walked up to them and they all started talking about the game of Xbox they had all played last night. "Hey Lukas, I'm going to beat you tonight. I'll be playing my lucky song called 'The Flying Spaghetti Monster'! I always win with that song playing!" said Ashton.

Lukas, their other friend, walked up to them, too, smiling and laughing and teasing everybody about how he beat them in the game last night! Lukas laughed and said, "Fake! You are crazy, Ashton!" All the other kids and the teacher were still in the locker room, and the boys were all alone in the gym.

All of a sudden everything in the gym froze! The boys looked at each other and then all around the gym. Literally everything was frozen, and it looked like they were inside an ice box! The floor was like an ice skating rink, all sparkly and shiny. There were two-foot-long pointy icicles on the basketball hoops and many coming down from the ceiling!

Ashton tried to walk to the door, but it was so slippery he kind of had to skate over there. It looked like he was not even walking but more like floating through the cool air like a small helicopter. The floor was silver and sparkling from the ice and looked like a frozen runway at the airport. His shoes felt like legs of the helicopter, and he skated along the floor to the ice-covered door. The door was completely frozen shut, and the whole gym was silent and cold!

The boys looked at each other and had no idea what was going on. They tried their cell phones, but they were all frozen. "Oh, no! Help, we are all going to die!" cried Joey.

"Relax, Joey, we'll be ok," Ashton chuckled.

Joey started to get really scared and worried. Joey worries a lot about stuff, and Ashton tried to calm him down and make him feel better. Ricky was shivering and shaking from the cold and getting worried, too. Ashton was not really affected by the cold, and Lukas was a little cold, but the cold situation was not affecting him too much. Ashton and Lukas knew they needed to be strong and tough and figure this weird situation out!

Ashton and Lukas started throwing things at the doors to see if they could break the ice. They threw basketballs and baseballs, hockey sticks and pucks, too. Nothing broke the ice. Then Ashton noticed the stage door did not look so frozen because the handle did not look icy. So, the boys carefully slid over to the stage, climbed up, and walked through the door into the band room.

The band room was also totally frozen and looked like the ice age had arrived! All the instruments were covered in ice and looked like Popsicles! Ashton picked up a tuba and threw it at the window to break the window, but it did not work. He threw the drum sticks and drums too, and nothing worked. "Oh no, this is terrible!" Ricky sighed.

"No worries, my friend," said Lukas."

Then Ashton and Lukas decided that maybe the noise of the instruments might help. So both boys picked up the trumpets and played them as loud as they could, and the terrible sound made their ears ache. The window started to break, and they all cheered! But it only broke it a tiny bit.

Ashton ran back into the gym to look for something else to help break the ice on the window and found a machete. The school had done a play recently and did not clean up all the supplies. The play was *The Pirates of the Caribbean*, and they had used stuff like swords and machetes in the play. He poked the point of the machete at the window, making the hole a little bigger and bigger. Finally it was big enough for one of the boys to fit through. Since Joey was the smallest, they all decided he should try to go through the hole in the ice and window.

Joey climbed up and got halfway through, and then the ice all froze around him! Half of Joey was inside and half was outside! Joey was now frozen inside the window!

They all put their forces together and pushed really hard. Joey pushed and wiggled and eventually got free and ran for help.

In the meantime, the other people in the school had tried to get in the gym, but the ice was too thick. The fire department guys showed up and tried using a pick-axe, saws, and crowbars to get the boys out, but nothing worked.

Ashton thought and thought about this crazy situation, and finally figured out a way to unfreeze his phone. Ashton found a lighter with all of the leftover supplies from the play and used it to melt the ice. He called his step-dad, Chip. Chip had just raised up his pickup truck with giant tires, and Ashton knew that truck could break down the whole wall if he rammed into it.

Chip drove as quickly as he could to the school. He lined his truck up outside of the window, and the boys stepped way back out of the way. With his pedal to the metal he rammed into the wall of the school with his truck, and finally the window broke! The boys were free!

The rest of the students and the principal were still in the locker rooms. It was icy cold in there, and everybody was huddled together on the benches. The fire department cut a big hole in the roof above the locker room with a laser they borrowed from the Air Force. They lowered a swinging ladder from their cool emergency helicopter, and everybody climbed out carefully until they were all free.

The Air Force then showed up and dropped a million hand-warmers into the hole where they climbed out. This warmed the whole school in five minutes! The ice quickly melted into drippy water, and then dried up like nothing had ever happened.

The principal was happy that everyone got out safely but was a little upset about the hole in the roof. He got over it!

Everybody cheered and laughed, and Ashton decided it was time to go home. Unfortunately, news reporters came and wanted to talk to the boys. Ashton tried to push them out of the way so the boys could just go home. The crazy freeze had become a giant news story, and Ashton and the boys had become media heroes! All the reporters wanted to talk to them and hear about the crazy freeze!

"I'm so tired and want to go home," Joey said.

“Me too,” said Lukas.

“You’d think heroes would get a break around here!” joked Ashton.

The boys really had no idea why it all happened but expected that the news people would figure it out. The reporters had already called some famous scientists who were working on the puzzle of why it happened. The best guess was that a chemical reaction between the air conditioner and heating system had caused the air conditioner to go crazy! There would be a lot of scientists studying this in the future, Ashton felt sure about that.

After the boys talked to the reporters they were declared by the mayor to be heroes! The mayor decided they had earned the right to go home and play Xbox for the rest of the day! The boys all went home and enjoyed a well-deserved evening of Xbox play without their moms bothering them once!

The Homework Machine

In THE HOMEWORK MACHINE by Justin Andrew Murray, a school kid's dream comes true. But is it really a help in the end?

One day there was a kid named James. James was tall, had short, dark brown hair, and was skinny as a stick. He absolutely hated doing homework. He hated doing homework for first through sixth grades. He would scream and shout in his room when he had to do his homework.

James got all Es and Ds in school because he never did his homework. Then one day as he was walking past a store he saw a homework machine. James begged his mom to buy it, but she said, "It cost \$1,000 plus tax, so you can't get it." It was the size of a printer, green, and had the words "Homework Machine" carved on it in bold, blue letters. Finally, James and his mom agreed that she would help him buy the machine by paying him \$100 per week for doing all his chores. It took him two and a half months to get all the money.

He was so excited when he got home after buying the machine that he ran up the stairs as fast as a jet soaring through the air. James had homework to do but had no clue how to use the machine. Luckily he had the directions. They said, "Put homework in the top. The answer will be on the paper. If it is in a book, scan the pages, type which question you have to do, put a sheet of paper in the top, and the answer will be on the paper." James only had a worksheet to complete, so he put it in the top. It came out the bottom and had all the right answers on it. James was so amazed he screamed out "Finally!" while jumping on his bed.

Over time his grades improved to Cs and Bs, and by the end of the year his grades improved to all As and Bs. For the first time in his life he earned a spot on the honor roll.

When he went to high school, James's mom decided to take the machine. James was devastated. His mom said, "You need to do your homework on your own. The machine is giving you good grades, but you need to earn good grades on your own."

From then on James started doing homework by himself. During the summer James decided to sell the machine for \$800.

Ironically, the kid that bought it reminded him of himself at that age, but he warned him not to depend on the machine to get good grades. He said that the key to getting good grades is not a machine, but studying hard.

I'm Different

*The differences among people make life interesting. But how different is too different? See for yourself in **I'M DIFFERENT** by **Jalen Daniel**.*

Once there was a boy named Jr. Everybody called him the weirdest kid in school, but he was also the smartest kid in school. He was a straight-A student. The kid looked normal, but the thing is, he wasn't.

He had black hair with a big nose, and wore a strange-looking watch every day that had white stripes with black polka dots. The extraordinary thing about Jr. is that he did not wear shoes, but he would wear socks with black on the left foot and white on the other. He had the most outlandish-looking feet. They were so big.

He would also wear these striped shirts every day. If he didn't he would freak out. One time in third grade he wore a plain shirt. He literally went to the bathroom and took off his shirt, and came back in the classroom without a shirt on. His chest was a faded green with lots of big bubbly bumps. All the kids, including me, were so scared that we ran out of the classroom to the office. We ran so fast that the teacher couldn't stop us. Jr. felt bad that he scared everyone and went home sick.

He didn't seem to know that much about being a human being. He would do odd things like surround himself with rocks during recess, and stare at the sky. His parents shopped for him at this secret store called Mars for Cars. If you're wondering where I get this information from, he tells me because I'm his best friend. My name is Jake, and I'm 11. Jr. says he is 20. We knew each other for five years.

Only twice I've been over his house. They live in a small house that is very far away from school. It's weird because their house is painted with white stripes and black polka dots. I had dinner at his house once, and they make delicious food they call mars. It looks like purple mashed potatoes, and tastes like lemon and strawberries. They have it every day.

I started to think my friend was an alien after I went over to his house the second time. I went to his house to celebrate his birthday, and he did not know I was coming over early. Through

the window I saw him, his mom and his dad putting masks that looked like the face he wears to school every day. But his real face looked faded green. I said, "Mom, look!"

My mom said, "What?" but she looked too late and did not see. I told her Jr. looked like an alien, and she said, "Did you drink the wrong drink again?" Then she said, "Come on, silly boy."

We went inside the house, and they all had big feet with socks on them. I realized that Jr. was wearing a black sock on his left foot, but his parents were wearing a white sock on their left foot.

Jr. and I went into the basement to play Uno. I got a little jumpy when I noticed Jr's eye was blue, yellow, and green. That's when I went upstairs to ask my mom if we could go, and she said, "No, we just got here."

Jr. said, "WAIT!" and his arm reached across the whole room. I hit it and started running and said, "We have to go right NOW!"

On the way home I started to tell her about how his eyes changed colors and his arm got long, but she stopped me and said, "STOP! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR YOUR STORIES, SON." My mom thought I was making this up.

I was scared to go back to school. I told every single one of my friends that Jr. was an alien, and not one believed me. Well, there was one person that heard me and said he knew about it too. His name was Will.

He came into my tree house and we had every single Egypt/Mars/alien book we could find, and we read and read and read. Five hours passed by, and the last book, the Mars book, had some information in it. The book said that Mars is where aliens come from, and some special aliens come down to earth in an invisible UFO. They make a mask so they can camouflage themselves and look like humans. I also found out why he always wears stripes. Stripes represent the flag on Mars, and the colors on the flag are black and white.

The book showed a picture of what an alien looks like with and without the mask. I'm telling you, without the mask they are not so pretty. Their skin is pale green with lots of wrinkles and brown spots. The mask looks just like Jr., and the book said that the kids are named Jr.

The next day I was at school, and Jr. wasn't there! I ran out of school and went to go look for Jr. I went to his house, and he was in

his backyard. My friend Will followed me. We were in the backyard hiding behind bushes looking at a UFO!

Our moms were looking for us because the school called Will's and my parents. They looked everywhere. My mom thought I would be at Jr.'s house because she remembered when I tried to tell her that he was an alien. They found us ducking behind bushes in Jr.'s backyard. They were pretty upset because we ditched school.

They asked what we were doing, and we said, "Look, that's Jr." My mom was traumatized. She saw Jr. and his family walking onto the UFO without their masks on. Their bodies were lumpy and pale green, and they had brown dots on their foreheads. They took off in their UFO, saw us, and waved. I said, "Told you, Mom!"

"I know, I know, I'm sorry for getting angry at you yesterday."

She gave us, the biggest hug, and Will's mom did too. "Wait, how did you find out he was an alien?" asked Mom.

"UHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH...Will and I kind of stayed up all night reading books in the tree house."

Will's mom said, "Ohh, that's where you were." With a furious face the two moms looked at each other and both said at the same time, "Let's get them."

We ran so fast that we both tripped and fell. Our moms TACKLED US! "MOM, THAT HURT!"

"Well, you've learned your lesson. HAHAAHAHAHAHAHAH." Then we all lay down on the grass, and all of a sudden a UFO came by. They waved and took off and disappeared.

I'm going to miss Jr.

Kayaking Trouble!

*Summer camp brings new experiences to everyone who attends. In **KAYAKING TROUBLE!** by **Antonio Seman**, one of the hardest activities turns out to be the best.*

One of my most favorite activities in camp was the last activity: kayaking. But before I got in the kayak, I wondered, "What will happen if I fall? What will happen if I can't steer the boat?"

There were big, small, and colorful boats. I wanted to go on a colorful kayak. This kayak was a really strong and heavy kayak. I tried to push it in the water, but it was tough. People helped me push the colorful kayak. I really liked pushing the boat because I felt like I was the strongest guy in the world.

We did this after the directions were told. The directions took 25 to 30 minutes.

When I stepped into the colorful kayak it was not very stable. I almost fell out of the kayak because I was leaning to see if somebody on a boat was about to crash into me. I was checking to see if somebody was about to lose control so I could get out of the way.

After all of this happened I had trouble. I thought, "I am going to get in hard times a lot," because this was my first time ever on a boat. I know that the first time you do something you always get nervous. I smacked into small leaf pads twice, and under the leaf pads were terrified snakes. I yelled, "I need help!" The person who told us the instructions was on a motor boat and dragged my kayak out of the leaf pads. After that I almost crashed into a canoe.

After all that happened I raced to land with my friends, and I won the race. I felt really happy when I won, but the way I won was kind of funny. Someone paddled the wrong way because they thought it would be faster, but that cost them the race. The race started when someone thought they could beat me to shore.

Sadly I did not get to go all the across the river. The river was a circle, and they made a trail for us to follow.

When I was getting out of the kayak I stepped into water. I felt really mad because I did not like feeling wet the whole way home.

After that we had to put the boats away. After putting the boats away we went to eat, and then I packed to leave camp.

When I went in the noisy bus I got sad because it was a fun experience and I didn't want to leave. The reason I got happy was because one of my best friends was sitting with me. I was giving him some of my snack, like Starbursts, peanuts, and M&Ms. We were talking the entire bus ride.

When the ride ended, it was time to find my parents. I had no idea how to find them. I walked around Greenfield and found my dad. Greenfield is the neighborhood elementary school where the bus dropped us off. But before I went to my dad I said bye to all of my friends. Then I went to my dad, and he took me to his car so we could go home.

It was a really fun experience. I enjoyed playing with my friends. The best time I had there was kayaking. I am pretty sure I did really well for a first-timer. Camp made me feel not nervous, and my fear of heights left, too, while I was there.

Lacrosse

You've got to start somewhere. Chase Whitelaw explains how he became a lacrosse player in LACROSSE.

I play lacrosse. I play attack. I started last year. I was not that good. So I played in a practice league.

I got a stick and was ready to play. I was nervous because the older coach was mean, old, and scary. I was one of the younger kids.

We started cradling down the field.

We started throwing. I went with a kid younger than me, so he could not throw. After that we started running. I was so thirsty I thought I was dehydrated.

I was going to the end when I twisted my ankle. It was hurting all day. When the practice was over we played a little game. It was fun. Even though I hurt my ankle I scored two goals. It was great. The score was 7-2. We creamed the other team.

After that I went to the shop and got lacrosse shorts. Lacrosse shorts are athletic shorts that are stretchy.

I no longer play in the practice league. I play for the Birmingham Bulldogs lax team, and now I am better than I was two years ago.

Mississippi Catfish

*Cats like fish. Doesn't it make sense that they would really like catfish? In **MISSISSIPPI CATFISH** by **Corrina Rose Picano**, cats and catfish combine for one big adventure.*

One day in a little town in Mississippi near the Mississippi River, an old couple lived happily with their four cats named Cece, Speede, Tete, and Meme who are different in every way from each other.

First there's Cece, who was extremely lazy and would only get up to have her cat food. The rest of the time she slept on the comfortable couch covered by a fuzzy blanket. Cece has a nickname known as the "Naggy Sheep" for two reasons: because of her shape and size and because of how naggy she is at times. She would hiss when someone would bother her, and yes, she would always win. Whenever anyone would go by her she would run away to another comfortable place until someone would interrupt her again. Sometimes if you came up at the worst time she might bite you. She thought that cats were happy and fun, unless she ate too much cat liver cat food and decided to lie low on the sofa and take naps. As time went on, she kept doing this and it became a habit. She didn't force herself to do it; it just came naturally. Sometimes she might be happy and would get up for a while to walk around and think for a moment.

Speede was the energetic one who liked to run around the house. He would be the first one to wake up. When it came to company coming over he would always hang around the humans. His favorite place to go was the garden to play with the butterflies and try to catch them. He would also eat crops, which made his owners mad, and they'd try to keep him inside for the night, which made Speede angry at times. He would always be thinking about his life before he was adopted. He was a stray cat with a taste for adventure, but he never really knew what adventure was. He just did what he wanted and found adventure on his own.

Then there's the bratty devil cat in the family, Tete, who would hiss at anyone who would get in her way. Different from the rest of them, she hid from everyone, or walked around just to hiss at the cats and owners. She spent most of her time away from everyone.

Tete would like to be called “Teresa” after one of her favorite movies stars who was a brat just like her. Her owners didn’t know that. It was one of the reasons why she was angry at most times, but sometimes it was because she was just grumpy. Tete would hide too, but when she and Meme met both would react to each other negatively.

The real reclusive, shy, and scaredy cat was Meme. He would hide under anything... beds, cars, tables, and much more. He used to be very playful when he had a different family. That changed when he was sent to a pet store where he lived with total strangers. Meme was shy around everyone. Even before his new owners adopted him he would stand in the corner and look to see if anyone would take him away from his home.

They were all very different, and didn’t interact with each other very much. However, when they had to find a way back home one day, working together was the only way they were able to accomplish it. This is when they overcame their differences and their fears of talking to each other and became friends.

It all started on a beautiful sunny and dry afternoon when all of the cats were starving. They begged and begged for food, but the grandma was too ill to feed them. With no one to feed them they tried to find solutions to their starving stomachs. None of them could handle it, and basically would eat anything when it came down to it.

“I’m starving,” Speede thought as he walked through the halls waiting for food. Tete walked in very proper-like and didn’t say one word to Speede. Speede walked down the stairs and found Meme hiding under the table and Cece in the family room, awake for once, with a starving look on her face. Speede knew everyone was hungry, but didn’t know what to do about it. “Someone please feed us,” he said, thinking nothing was going to happen. He felt his heart beating fast and couldn’t stop until a bowl of cat food came to his mouth.

All of a sudden a wonderful aroma wafted through the air to Speede’s nose, which made his taste buds go wild. The aroma kept getting stronger, and he couldn’t help but walk closer to where the smell was coming from. He then ran outside with excitement and saw a big truck full of catfish come into sight. He knew what he was going to do.

He licked his lips and ran onto the truck that had stopped with its back gate wide open. He began eating the catfish and couldn't stop. He didn't even stop when he felt the truck begin to move. The delicious seafood was melting in his mouth. That was also when he noticed all of his companions, Cece, Meme, and Tete, beside him doing that same thing as him, for what cat alive can resist fresh catfish? In his mind he thought this was a dream. "Could it be?" he thought as he sighed.

After a long time with the floor beneath them moving steadily, the truck slowed down at a local exit, coming finally to an abrupt stop. All of a sudden a bright light appeared, and the driver of the truck was shocked to see them there.

Cece was surprised too and ran out of the truck. She looked for home. Nothing seemed familiar to her. The cloudy sky made the concrete smooth like glass and contrast with the green garden beautifully. She didn't know what to do, so she ran away from everyone. "Where am I?" she said. She looked around and ran to a gate. Following her were the rest of the cats, just as scared and confused as she was. They all exited the garden to find themselves on a lonely sidewalk. She wanted to be left alone, but at the same time she needed help.

"Okay," she said, taking a breath after running so fast. "What just happened?" The rest of them didn't know what to say to that. She wished she could curl up on a couch and hide, but since there was no couch nearby she had to make the best of it.

She didn't know what to do just as the rest of them didn't either. Meme blurted out his first words to them, saying, "We got on a truck with catfish and now we are lost!" They were all shocked to hear him speak. Cece thought she should run again, but she felt like her feet were glued to the concrete with indecision. That's when she knew that everybody else's feet seemed to be glued to the concrete as well.

Tete was mad to be around everyone, so she decided to run away to find home, wherever home was. She became lost and decided to run down the street when she noticed a gray car coming toward her. All of a sudden the car came speeding toward them. Tete thought she was going to die as the headlights of the car shone on her. But the car stopped suddenly. Tete picked up her feet again. She was scared, so she started running away from everyone. She reached a corner, not knowing which way to go. "Where do I

go?" she said. Pressure was on them to find home. She decided to turn right at the corner, and she ran, leaving the others behind.

"Stop!" Speede screamed with panic in his voice. "Do you even know where you're going?"

Then like a flicker of light through Tete's mind, everything looked familiar. Tete looked to find Meme and Cece staring at her in shock. "Just follow me. I think I know where I'm going." Without a hiss she kept walking, with Cece, Speede, and Meme behind her.

She walked for about 10 minutes and came to a sign that she couldn't read, but she knew it was familiar. It was a sign that they were close to home. "Guys, I think we're close," she happily announced. "I can feel it!"

All of Meme's feelings turned from horrible to happy within seconds. Meme was behind everyone, but still could see Tete in front leading the way. He wanted to run and hide but had to find a way home, and his only option was to follow the others. Then he approached a gate that was open just like the one near their house. It made him excited. "Could this be it?" he whispered.

"This is our neighborhood," he announced. Everyone looked at him with shock like before when he said something.

"Really? Are you sure?" Cece asked quietly. He continued to follow everyone.

Meme nodded.

"Fine, how about you lead the group?" Tete said.

Meme was running with confidence. Then he saw a catfish truck that looked like the same one that he rode away in, but with all the fish that he ate the smell didn't make him jump with joy like before. When all four cats approached the house that looked just like their house they all knew that the truck had come back, and they heard the man talking to their neighbor about forgetting to deliver the fish to them. He looked up and saw the sign "The Margos" that was the old couple's last name. They were home at last.

They all felt sleepy after that. They were happy to be home safe and sound where they could do what they wanted.

After that adventure it felt good to be home. And the next time they passed each other they would not think about just themselves or hide and run away.

After that Meme would say hi to Tete, and Tete wouldn't hiss or roll her eyes. She would just calmly say hello back. Cece became more active and talked to Speede while Speede took a break from

running around so much. They all became friends and actually made the family more close. They know that they'll never, ever run away ever again.

Still to this day they are friends. Cece is becoming more active, Speede is not becoming too excited, Meme is actually talking and not running away, and Tete is walking by without hissing at anyone.

Ninja World

*Adventure can begin anywhere—especially when there a portal to another world nearby. Two brothers find an experience more exciting than a video game in **NINJA WORLD**, by **TaVaughn Walker**.*

When TaVaughn and Evan, TaVaughn’s brother, came home from school, Evan and TaVaughn went into their room. TaVaughn was watching TV while Evan was trying to find TaVaughn’s PSP. “Where do you keep your PSP?” Evan said.

“Why do you want to know?” TaVaughn said.

“Because I am sooooo bored,” Evan said.

“It is in my drawer, and don’t take anything else out!” TaVaughn said.

“OK, you don’t have to scream,” Evan said.

“Say anything else and I will not let you see my PSP,” TaVaughn said.

Evan looked through the drawer where TaVaughn keeps his PSP. “Nothing is in here,” Evan said.

“My PSP should be in my drawer,” TaVaughn said. TaVaughn went to take a look. There was nothing in there except a big circle with swirls around it.

“What is that?” Evan said.

“I don’t know,” TaVaughn said.

“Do you think it is a portal?” Evan said.

“Once again, I don’t know. Why don’t you put your hand in it?” TaVaughn said.

“No!” Evan said.

“Are you scared?” TaVaughn said.

“No!” Evan said.

“Then put your hand in it,” TaVaughn said.

“Fine, I will put my hand in it, but you owe me a lollipop,” Evan said. Evan put his hand in the swirled-circle thing in the drawer. When Evan put his hand in it, the swirled-circle sucked him in.

“Ah, man, now I have to get Evan before Mom finds out,” TaVaughn said. TaVaughn jumped in.

When TaVaughn was in the portal, all that he saw was a big hill, and on top of it was a town. It was kind of blurry because it started getting darker and darker every time he looked at the image. When it was pitch black, TaVaughn heard a big explosion. The explosion was like fire all around him. The fire from the explosion went in TaVaughn's body.

After that, TaVaughn found himself falling from the sky. He landed on the ground with a thud. When he got back up, he found Evan right next to him with lightning around Evan. For some reason, Evan and TaVaughn were both wearing outfits that were the same, but different color.

"Where did you get the outfit?" TaVaughn said.

"I was going to ask you the same thing," Evan said.

They both started looking around. "This place kind of looks like the image that was in the swirly thing," TaVaughn said.

"I know, right?" Evan said.

"Wait, how do you know about that image in the swirly thing?"

Before Evan could answer, ninja people were standing right in front of them.

"Hi. I am SoHo," one ninja said.

"I am Tensai," the second ninja said.

"And my name is Wu," the last ninja said.

Evan started laughing, but TaVaughn stopped Evan from laughing by punching him in the gut. When TaVaughn did that, Evan's outfit was on fire.

"What was that for?" Evan said.

"I did not know I could do that," TaVaughn said.

"Let me get the fire off of you," SoHo said. SoHo got the fire off Evan by using a scroll and throwing the scroll at Evan. When SoHo did that, the fire that Evan had on his outfit magically disappeared.

"Thanks, man," Evan said.

"You're welcome," SoHo said. "What are your names?"

"My name is TaVaughn, and his name is Evan," TaVaughn said pointing at Evan.

"It is nice to see the both of you," SoHo said.

"It is nice to see the three of you, too," TaVaughn said.

"Do you want to come to our village?" Tensai said.

"Sure, why not?" TaVaughn said.

The five of them walked to the village. Inside the village was lots of stuff that TaVaughn and Evan had never seen before. "Let us show you around," SoHo said.

When they were walking around, they walked right next to a building and stopped. "This is a training school for all four elements," SoHo said.

"What are the four elements?" TaVaughn said.

"The four elements are fire, water, air, and lightning," SoHo said.

"Can you tell us if TaVaughn and I are one of the elements?" Evan said.

"TaVaughn has the element of fire, and Evan has the element of lightning," Wu said.

"No wonder there was lightning all around you, Evan," TaVaughn said.

"And I thought I was dreaming," Evan said.

Suddenly, a guy on a skateboard with no wheels appeared. "Who is that guy?" Evan said.

"His name is Alvin," SoHo said.

"Is he supposed to be a bad guy?" TaVaughn said.

"How did you know?" SoHo said.

"Wild guess," TaVaughn said.

Alvin used a purplish-black energy blast at the training school right next to them. "What kind of element is that?" TaVaughn said.

"I forgot to tell you that there is one more element, and that element is called darkness," SoHo said.

"We better do something before he destroys the whole village," Wu said.

"Let's get to it," TaVaughn said.

TaVaughn used his fire powers at Alvin, but Alvin deflected the fire. Evan used his lightning powers at Alvin, but Alvin redirected the lightning at Evan and TaVaughn. The two boys fell to the ground. They both got back up slowly. "How can we defeat Alvin, SoHo?" TaVaughn said.

"We need to use all of our powers," SoHo said.

"Won't that destroy us?" Tensai said.

"It is a risk that we will take," SoHo said.

The five people used all of their powers and destroyed Alvin. TaVaughn used his red fire powers, Evan used his lightning powers, SoHo used his air powers, Tensai used his green fire powers, and

Wu used his water powers. All of those powers made Alvin explode.

Once they destroyed Alvin, the swirly thing appeared. "This door should lead you two back home," SoHo said.

"Thanks for all of your help with destroying Alvin," Tensai said.

"You're welcome," TaVaughn said.

"Will we ever see you guys again?" Evan said.

"You will see us again. Just jump into your drawer," Tensai said.

"Don't forget this," Wu said, holding out TaVaughn's PSP.

"Thanks," TaVaughn said. "How did you find it?"

"It's a long story," Wu said.

TaVaughn and Evan both said bye to SoHo, Tensai, and Wu and walked into the door. When the swirly thing dropped them back home, their mom popped in and said, "What are you doing?"

TaVaughn and Evan both looked at each other with a grin and looked back at their mom and said, "Nothing."

Pie Monster

*Is this about a monster who loves pie, or a pie that is a monster? You'll know in seven sentences if you read **PIE MONSTER** by **André Brock**.*

There once was a man who loved pie. He ate it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It was his favorite thing in the world. But soon he grew bored with pie. Eating all that pie turned into a drag. He thought maybe there was a way for him to do more than eat pie. Then he thought, what if his pie were alive?

He did research on Google and Bing with conspiracy.com for this ridiculous theory, but there was evidence that you could possibly make food alive if lucky. He went straight home and prepared for the experiment. He went and grabbed his favorite pie, apple, from the bakery on 12 Mile Road, and then he rushed home in his car. He plopped the pie on his contraption that looked somewhat like Frankenstein's and hit a switch and *BAM!* His pie was alive and breathing.

His pie was a very nice guy. He held the door for ladies, and said please and thank you. He even put his coat on puddles for women to walk on. Though the pie was nice, his master noticed as he got older the pie got meaner. Soon his pie got so aggressive that he either had to contain it or put it down.

The master did not have the heart to kill his creation. So he contained it.

While the master was away from the pie, he got sicker. Soon he got so sick that he had to go to the hospital.

Two weeks after the man was taken to extreme care, the pie got free, taking down five guards with a single burst of energy. After that he stormed downtown.

The pie went on a rampage, destroying cars, buildings, and harming people in the process. He was throwing tanks sent by Obama to help the cause, and kicking men. He even took out some of the world's greatest fighters, who will not be named due to lawsuits.

The mayor requested that the FBI find and retrieve the pie master and speak to him immediately. Upon hearing the news, the master shouted, "Why do you want to kill my baby?"

They told the master, "People are being sent to their deaths. If you saw, you'd be horrified."

"I don't care!" the master shouted. So they turned on the TV. The blood and gore this man saw being caused by his creation shocked him and changed his heart. "Take me there," he said.

The man walked to his pie. The pie roared! The man said, "Love you," pulled a gun from behind his back, and killed his creation.

The man dropped, for killing his baby was too much. He was dead, yet he got what he wanted: to spend eternity with his pie.

The Pig and the Flower

Jealousy is a miserable feeling with terrible consequences in THE PIG AND THE FLOWER by A. R. Allen.

Once upon a time there was a pig. The pig's name was Henry. He was a really awesome pig who cared for other people. Henry lived in a mansion that was so amazing you had to pay a hundred dollars just to get a tour of the house. One day the pig was in his house having a bath with BUBBLES!

Later on that day there was a particular lady in the town who was not in the best mood. The lady was coming in from picking plants from her garden. She had come in to rest. When hearing her neighbor say how she made enough money to go get a tour of the pig's mansion, she got really jealous. This is what she said: "PISH POSH! This is not fair that this pig I hear of is living in a castle when I am stuck in this messed-up shack and only get paid minimum wage."

BANG! she heard on the door. It was the mail. She took it off the door, and found it was an invitation to come to the pig's mansion for a free tour on Friday. She had a plan to ruin the pig's life

She had to do some research. She found out that the pig was allergic to black rose spray. If the pig touched or smelled it, he would get really sick or die.

She went to the store called Switch Shop, and she traded some carrots for some spray.

After a long day, she finally got some rest.

Two days went by, and the lady took the bus to the pig's mansion. It seemed like there were millions, no, trillions of people there. The lady did not know how she would find the pig. It was a good thing she brought her GPS device. She said quietly, "Where is the pig?" The pig was on the 19th floor, so she ran up 19 flights of stairs.

She was finally there. She walked in, but he was not there. So the lady sprayed six times—and *BOOM!* A maid heard the noise and ran upstairs. She saw the lady on the floor.

The pig was never allergic to the scent of black rose. The lady was.

The pig decided not to have any more tours. He felt bad, though, and made a fun park for the whole community.

A Princess in Gazerville

A PRINCESS IN GAZERVILLE by *Jordan Hammonds* actually is a story with more than one princess—and more than one message.

Once upon a time there was a gorgeous princess. She had beautiful, long blue hair with a little bit of pink and red. Her eyes sparkled like the moonlight. Her name was Princess Niq. She was the sweetest and kindest of the land. But evil Queen Lynz was trying to kill her. Here is how it all began.

Princess Niq woke up. Her hair was flowing perfectly. She got up and got dressed. She thought, *Why don't I go help the children of the village?* The children of the village were very poor; they sometimes didn't have food to eat.

She got her basket and started roaming through the land, looking for fresh fruits and vegetables. Once she had gathered enough food she made her way to the children of the land. They cheered when they saw her. She spent a few hours playing, talking, and eating with the children.

Princess Niq was on her way home when a mysterious woman popped out of nowhere. She was the ugliest human being you could ever see. She had pimples and moles and old wrinkly skin. The woman said, "You need to go." Princess Niq was confused and thought, *Why would I need to leave?* The woman said, "Do you see that castle? That is evil Queen Lynz's castle. You must destroy her before it's too late." The woman disappeared before Princess Niq could blink her eyes.

She turned to walk away and there was a note left for her. It said, "Go to the library and look for the book *Endless*. It will tell you everything you need to know."

The next morning Princess Niq went to the library and got the book. Inside of the book were notes explaining what Princess Niq needed for her journey to defeat Queen Lynz. She had to start her journey by going to Angel City and getting Queen Bee. She told the village she was going on a trip for a little while.

She went to Angel City and found Queen Bee on her throne. Queen Bee asked, "What brings you to my beautiful city?"

Princess Niq said, "Evil Queen Lynz is planning to attack."

“Oh my, oh my,” said Queen Bee. “So what are we waiting for? We will have to go get Princess Bre from Doll Town,” said Queen Bee.

Early the next morning they both left and found Princess Bre waiting anxiously for their arrival. Princess Bre already knew about what was happening, and they left as soon as they got there.

Princess Niq and Bre spent the next few days getting to know each other and became more like sisters. They spent their days devising a plan to defeat Evil Queen Lynz and their nights singing songs and joking around. Their bond was so strong they could do anything together.

One week later they reached Evil Queen Lynz’s castle. They knew they couldn’t just walk in, so they disguised themselves as workers and went in.

They took off their costumes and defeated Queen Lynz’s with kindness. They were able to win her over by saying, “Why do you have to be so mean? We never did anything to you. You’re beautiful. You’re loved.” Queen Lynz just gave up and promised to never try and mess with their kingdom again. They all went back to their lands and lived happily ever after.

The Princesses and the Prince

*What is a prince to do when he can't find his princess? He has to keep looking! Follow Jack's quest in **THE PRINCESSES AND THE PRINCE** by **Blake Hennard**.*

Two hundred years ago there lived a prince named Jack. He really wanted to find a wife, but there was no one in his kingdom who he thought would be a good person to marry. Jack came from a small country, and his parents wanted him to get married so that he could rule the country when they died. His parents were very old, so he needed to find a princess quickly. He decided to go on a search.

He walked very far before he found Sarah. When he saw her he thought she was the one, but he was let down. He said to her, "You're meant to be with me," but she responded, "In your dreams!" Jack walked away in shame.

He next went to the Sussawawa Kingdom. There he met Princess Kourtney. "Hello there, missy; how are you doing?"

Kourtney responded, "Good, I like to dance!"

Jack said, "Cool."

So Kourtney said, "Do you like to dance"?

With that question Jack answered, "Yeah, sometimes, if I'm in the mood."

All of a sudden someone from inside the kingdom yelled out Kourtney's name. Jack wondered to himself, *Who was that?* When Kourtney heard the voice, she said, "Sorry, that's my prince." Jack was devastated because Kourtney was already married, so he decided to leave the kingdom and continue on his search.

After two long hours of walking he reached the Ruffyluffy Kingdom. He saw a woman picking flowers. Her name was Nickel. Jack said, "Hi," and then he sneezed twice.

"Are you OK?" she asked. "You are sneezing a lot."

"I'm just allergic to flowers," he said, and then he sneezed again.

At that, she said, "Then get away."

"I'm sorry for bothering you," said Jack, and then he walked away.

Jack was just about ready to give up. He thought he would never find a princess that would like him. Jack was on his way back to his kingdom when he came across a small kingdom located beyond Sussawawa Kingdom. The kingdom was called Heaven Paradise. Jack was hoping that he might find his bride among the crowds of beautiful people that were gathered in the town.

Jack found himself looking around. Then all of a sudden he saw her! *Oh my, who is that?* Jack wondered. Jack walked up to a woman whose eyes were sparkling blue. She had blondish brown hair and pale skin. Jack went up to this woman and said, "Hi, I'm Jack." He was starting to sweat. He was very nervous. "Um, what's your name?"

"My name is Sunshine," she replied. With that, she lost her balance and almost fell into the nearby river.

Jack caught her, and she felt relieved. She looked into his big brown eyes, and she said, "I've been looking for you forever." They smiled at each other. Holding hands, they walked away toward the kingdom.

Their future looked awesome. They decided to get married, and so they did. All their friends and family came to the wedding to celebrate their happiness. Jack became the ruler of his kingdom, and Sunshine became his princess. They lived happily ever after!

Second Chance

*A girl gets an unusual chance to decide the fate of her soul in **SECOND CHANCE**, by **Delaney Dowsley**.*

It's prom, and the most popular girl in Pasadena High is ready to get her tiara. Everything is perfect besides her date. He does nothing but drool over himself. She gets super mad at him on stage when she gets her tiara, and storms off. She finds herself at the beach, tired from running from her problems.

All of a sudden there was a huge flash of lightning. It hit her tiara. She got struck by lightning! She passed out, but never woke up.

They found her body the next day. Her single mom and little sister were in tears. They held a funeral the next day because of their Jewish beliefs.

She woke up in shock in a place that seemed to be a beauty salon but in white. There was a guy in a white suit. He spoke and said, "Hello, this is Richard. I am God's helper, so to say. I'm here to test you before the golden gate is unlocked for you. You must find the person in your school who is least popular, and make her be able to be discovered and shine through."

She was sent back to Pasadena High the next day. She was at an assembly for her own death. Everyone didn't notice her besides this one girl. The girl was freaked out but tried not to stare at her and moved on. The angel noticed that she glanced at her. Then she ran up to her. She spoke and said, "I was sent here from God. I know you can see me. I'm here because I'm being tested by him. My test is to make you popular."

The girl who was lame spoke and said, "Um, okay, just don't harm me. What do we start with? Do I get a facial or something?"

The angel replied and said, "No, but it wouldn't hurt. We first go to the mall and find some actual cute clothes."

The girl spoke and said, "Okay!"

The next day they went to the mall. They first went to Forever Twenty-One and got some cute dresses and leather jackets and lace tanks. Then they went to Victoria's Secret and got some delicates, lace to be specific. Next they went to PINK which is kind of the same thing, and got cute bandeaus and tees. Finally they went to

Nordstrom and got some cute lace-up heels and even some tennis-shoe heels to spice up the wardrobe.

They finally got home, and the girl hit the pillow and was out in a blink of an eye.

The next day she went to school styling. Everyone was amused besides her friends. They could be less than happy. She ignored them until homecoming.

She talked to them and they spoke and said, "You really are taking Brianna's (which is the angel's name) role."

The girl said, "Well, then, I guess I got to go." She went up on stage to get her crown and she spoke and said, "This crown does not belong to me. It belongs to my friends." She gingerly handed them the crown.

The angel was furious. Instead of going to heaven, she was going down under!

The bus was here to take the angel from the white salon. They were a mile away from the drop-off when Richard, God's helper, appeared; he spoke and said "Brianna, you completed the test and graduated!"

She looked at him like he was a clown in a bellhop suit. She spoke and said, "But the person I changed didn't get the homecoming crown and become popular."

Richard chuckled and said, "Yes, she did. Her friends were flattered but insisted that the girl should have it!"

Brianna and Richard went to the golden gates, and they opened. Richard motioned her to the stairs. Brianna couldn't believe her eyes. She hugged him and ran to the pearl white stairs. She was carried into the light and lived happily ever after.

Skylanders Giants

Perhaps you've heard of the place in the sky where giants and other creatures exist. If not, here's an introduction to the world of SKYLANDERS GIANTS, by J.P. Rosenthal.

One day, the Skylanders—Tarafin, Synder, Flame Slinger, Eruptor, and Chop-Chop—were in a field in the middle of a forest arguing about whether or not the Giants were real. Flame Slinger was about to speak when all of a sudden, it felt like an earthquake. What they thought was a large tree behind them was actually not a tree. It was Tree Rex, one of the Giants.

Tree Rex has spikes on one arm and a giant stump on the other arm. His head is like a giant wooden boulder with horns. Tree Rex spoke to them and said, “Giants are real and I am not the only one.” At that moment, to help Tree Rex out, the rest of the giants—Bouncer, Thump Back, Crusher, Nin Jin, Eye Brawler and Hothead—all appeared. Once they arrived, Chaos, who had tried before to take over the Skylands, summoned his evil minions to attack the Skylanders. When they arrived, a huge battle started between good and evil.

In the end, the Skylanders lost and were sent to Earth, where they were turned into statues. The Giants, however, went to Chaos's fort and battled the master robot, Slayer. Eventually, they defeated Slayer and made peace in all the Skylands until Chaos came back.

Super Boy

Not just anyone can get superpowers. But Jack can and does in SUPER BOY, by Jordan A. C. Davis.

There was a kid named Jack. He lived at home with his mom and dad and sister.

He was walking home from school past this factory when he tripped over a rock and fell into a puddle of acid. Then he said, "Ew, I fell in acid. It feels so yucky." When he tried to clean the acid off, it was gone. It went right into his skin.

When he got home he told his mom what happened. She said, "Let me see if some is still there." She didn't find any.

He went upstairs into his room, and his little sister was there. He said, "Get out." She ran out and knocked his Xbox controller off the corner of his desk.

Jack went to catch it, and it flew up in the air. It was floating! Jack was like, *What the heck is this?* Then he was like, *This must not be happening. Maybe it's a dream. When I pinch myself I will wake up.* He pinched himself, and he said, "Ouch, that hurt. This must not be a dream. Maybe I should experiment in my room before I decide what's going on, but I think I might be a superhero."

He threw a stuffed bunny in the air and made it float. Then he threw his chair in the air. Just as it was about to hit the wall he caught it. He said, "Ok, I have superpowers!"

He went to go tell his family. They were all in the kitchen. Jack ran in there and said, "I have superpowers."

His dad didn't even look up from the newspaper he was reading. He said, "Yeah, yeah."

Then Jack said, "Want me to prove it?" Then his dad looked up from the newspaper, and his mom and sister turned around. Jack said, "Dad, I am going to make that knife rise from the table," and it started to float in the air.

His whole family was amazed. They said, "Wow."

Then Jack said, "I told you." Then he said, "I want to be a superhero."

His parents were still and shocked. They said, "Go ahead."

Jack put the knife down and left. He went upstairs and made a suit with an "SB," which stands for "Super Boy."

Then his family came on the porch with him. Then he said he was going to try to fly into the city. His mom said, "Be careful, son. Don't get shot."

Then he said, "I won't." Then he flew into the city.

And he heard this lady scream, "He took my purse!" Then Jack flew into action and lifted up the bad guy and made him drop the purse. He threw him in a Dumpster. Then he gave the lady her purse back. Then the lady said, "How can I repay you?"

Then he said, "No need for that." Then he flew into the sky.

Jack's mom was just sitting at home when she yelled up, "Jack, do you want to go to the store with me?" Then she said, "Oh, yeah, he's out fighting crime. I can't believe my baby is all grown up. I hope he got his coat."

When Jack came back and told his mom what happened, his mom said, "Good for you, but you're grounded. No video games or TV, but you can go fight crime only if you tell somebody where you're going."

After that day Jack flew to school rather than walk, but nobody saw him when he was in the sky.

Then when Jack was flying home he passed the acid building, and it was on fire, and then Jack said, "It looks like those people need help" and flew in the building and was going past the stairs when a brick from the ceiling fell on him and he landed into acid, and then he got up from under the brick and ran up the stairs, but he didn't know he fell into acid, which means he doesn't have his powers any more, but he didn't know that.

Then he ran into the room where the person was, and he tried to lift the wood off the windows, but it didn't come off, and that's when he realized that he didn't have his powers, so then he jumped out the window with the person and fell on the trampoline and saved the person, and that taught him that he can save people without superpowers.

Tomato Wars

*A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.... Okay, it's not that kind of war. **TOMATO WARS** by **Megan Williams** concerns a neighborhood battle of summertime fun.*

It was a nice Friday afternoon. The sun was shining, the birds were chirping, and the temperature was 78 degrees. But that didn't matter because the day, August 21, was my favorite day ever. Actually besides my birthday and Christmas, it was my favorite day ever. It was my third favorite day ever because it was TOMATO WARS!

Tomato Wars is the name for our neighborhood end-of-the-summer competition. Now, Tomato Wars is not your normal holiday. Tomato Wars is a nine-year-old tradition for the kids and families in my neighborhood. This year will be the 10th year of Tomato Wars. It is a variety of games put together by the kids and their parents. The original Tomato Wars was started when a bunch of kids started throwing tomatoes at each other, and then seeing who could throw them the farthest, and then adding a tomato toss, much like egg toss. This first year did not involve the parents until it was over, and the parents were very angry at the kids for emptying the final tomatoes from their gardens. It left a big tomato mess in the streets. Anyway, Tomato Wars now happens every year in our neighborhood. The competing streets include West Rutland Street versus East Rutland Street versus South Rutland Street. In the past Tomato Wars, East Rutland has won seven times and South Rutland has won two times. West Rutland (my street) has not won yet, but this year it will be different. This year West Rutland will win!

Tomato Wars is played in the late afternoon. We have to finish getting ready, so I invited my team over to my house. On my team are Sam, Maddie, Rebecca, Isabella, Matt, P.J., my sister Katherine, and me, David. Everyone is 10 years old but Maddie, who is 11 years old. Just before they arrived I made a deal with my annoying little sister Ally that she could help Katherine and me make the posters for the Tomato Wars competition.

Ding-dong goes the doorbell, and I go running down the stairs so fast that I trip on the third step and fall to the floor. I hear *ding-*

dong a second time, I open the door, and standing there is Rebecca, Matt, and Maddie. “Hey guys, what’s up?”

They come in, answering, “Nothing,” except for Matt who answers “The sky,” trying to make a joke. Rebecca and Maddie giggle a little, but I don’t think it is funny. Matt starts laughing at his own joke, to the point where he falls down and starts rolling around.

Ding-dong goes the bell again, so I go around Matt to open the door. Sam, Isabella, and P.J. bust through the doorway out of breath, and P.J. starts yelling, “David, are you done with everything yet? Because guess what? They changed the hours and now Tomato Wars starts today at 1:00 p.m. instead of 4:00 p.m. because the weather channel said there was a chance of rain later in the day

“What...1:00 p.m. today?” I respond. “It is already 12:17 p.m. right now!”

“Yeah we know.... Let’s hurry and get ready!” the others yell. We all run upstairs.

“Okay, P.J., Sam and I will make a game plan. We’ll go over it later,” I command. “Katherine, come here!” I shout with excitement.

She comes out of her room. “What?” she answers. Sam tells her what is happening. Rebecca, Maddie, and Katherine get our t-shirts ready. They finish painting our names on the back.

“Wait, what about us?” Isabella says, pointing to Matt.

“Right,” I answer. “Matt can help with the t-shirts and Isabella can help Ally with the posters.”

When everyone is done with their jobs, we put our t-shirts on and go over our game plan. It is already 12:50 p.m., so we rush outside. We see the parents, families, and older neighbors gathering in front of Maddie’s and Sam’s houses. Someone shouts, “Hey, where is East Rutland’s team?” Everyone except the East Rutland team is gathering. It turns out that everyone on the East Rutland team has come down with the flu.

Our team is only a little bit sad that East Rutland will not be here. While it is more fun with more kids to compete against, we feel we have a better chance to win.

“Teams, please get ready for the game of Tomato Wars. Get to your stations,” the announcer says over the loudspeaker. (This year the announcer is Maddie’s father because most of the games will be held at his house.) “Did everyone pick a team captain?” he asks.

Our street team ends up being team two, and South Rutland is team one. Team one answers, "Yes!"

Team two says, "Yes, David is our team captain."

We can see many of our neighbors gathering in the surrounding yards to watch the events.

The first game is tug-of-war over a swimming pool. The pool is about nine feet long and about ten feet deep. It is in Maddie's backyard. Each team lines up on the grass on either side of the pool. "Three-two-one-go!" the announcer yells. We pull and pull, but it is not enough. Team one pulls our whole team into the pool. We jump out of the pool and towel off. The other team cheers, "We got a point! We got a point!"

On the scoreboard it says "Team one, one point. Team two, zero points."

"Ok, team one earned a point," states the announcer. "The next game will be pen tapping. Please have one person on your team come up to participate."

Pen tapping is a game where a melody is tapped out on a table with a pen. It has to be repeated in the exact order to win. We have P.J. come up for our team. On the other team, Nick is up. Nick goes first. (We think that he is pretty good.) Now it is P.J.'s turn. (He is way better than Nick, because he is always tapping something.) There are a few melodies played, and eventually a winner is decided.

"Our team won!" Nick shouts. "Well, just a point."

The next game is swimming. The teams have to race ten laps. It's all on Maddie. She is a great swimmer. The announcer yells, "The next game is swimming!" After the kids from each team line up at the shallow edge of the pool, we hear, "It is time to get a little wet: Three-two-one-GO!" The race has begun. Maddie and a kid named Izzy dive into the water. Izzy is in the lead, but Maddie catches up fast.

"Go Maddie! Go Maddie!" we all yell. The swimmers are on their seventh lap when Maddie takes the lead. We count eighth lap, ninth lap, and it is still Maddie in the lead. The tenth lap ends, and Maddie is the winner. Our team goes wild with excitement as Maddie gets out of the pool. The score is now team one with two points and team two with one point.

The next game up is the race around the neighborhood. It is the game I am in. I am racing against a girl named Sue. "Three-two-

one-GO!" the announcer yells. The race has begun. Everyone is yelling and cheering. My heart is pounding. At the halfway point I can hardly breathe because I am running so fast. I am in the lead. I can hear my team cheering as I run. Sue closes up on me fast, and I win by only three inches. I am thrilled. "We are going to win this year and we still have a few games to go," I think to myself.

It is now time for the gymnastics game to start. Katherine is going to compete against a girl named Chloe. "Step up on the beam, three-two-one-GO!" the announcer says loudly. The girls start doing flips, cartwheels, and jumps. The competition finishes, and the judges are tallying marks. "We have a winner! The winner of the gymnastics competition is Katherine!" states the announcer.

"Attention, everyone! Attention, everyone! The dance-off has been canceled," the announcer says.

"What?" asks Isabella with surprise. "Why? That was my game." We hear the announcer say the dance contest is canceled because there were some problems getting the music to work. Many of the kids are upset by this news. I wonder how this will affect the final tally of points.

After a few minutes the winner of this year's Tomato Wars is announced. "Team two, the West Rutland Team, is the winner."

"We won! We won!" our team chants over and over again. We give each other high-fives.

After the cheering stops, we all gather in the street for the Tomato War block party. There are tables filled with food, drinks and goodies. To keep with the Tomato War theme there is a table filled with items made by parents. Each item has a name and a number. At the end of the table is a fish bowl for everyone to vote on the best item. The only rule for this final competition is that there must be the same ingredient in each recipe. The ingredient is...tomato. Our team fills our plates and sits down under a tree to discuss our favorite recipe. We usually vote on the same item.

I ask my friends, "What do you think of our win, guys?" Everyone starts to answer at the same time. I think this has been an awesome day and one of the best Tomato Wars ever.

A True Patriot

It's the game of the year, and all eyes are on the team superstar in A TRUE PATRIOT, by Storm Mullen.

We start at the 1998 Super Bowl brought to you by Verizon: Rule the Air. It's the Patriots versus the Chargers. The Patriots have a new receiver on the field named Mark Hazardred. He's been here for three months and already is a superstar. It's his first Super Bowl, and he gets around two million dollars a year.

The first score goes to the Patriots with a field goal. They kick off, and the Chargers take it back to the thirty-three yard line. The Chargers get the three-pointer with the field goal, and then they kick off again. This game is going to be a quick game if it keeps on going like this. The Chargers intercept the ball and take it where it needs to be: in the end zone!

The Patriots were winning and now are on the bottom.

Well, it's the end of the second, and it's the Patriots' ball. The quarterback threw it to Mark Hazardred who catches the ball and gets tackled at the fifty-two yard line. Mark Hazardred isn't getting up. He has an injured elbow. He is a star player, and the Patriots' desperately need him.

There are two minutes left in this game, and earlier this day Mark Hazardred injured his elbow. If he can feel better and come out here, he can win this thing. The Patriots need 50 yards for a touchdown.

Wait, is that Mark Hazardred? The coach looks surprised. I guess he had nothing to do with it. So the coach is going to put him in.

The quarterback says, "Hike," and Mark goes all the way down. Time is counting down, Five... four... three... two... one... and Mark Hazardred catches it in the end zone, and the Patriots win!

They get to meet the President in Washington, D.C. They get the ring and the championship trophy to go with it. They dump the Gatorade on the coach, and Mark Hazardred is lifted in the air saying, "YEAH!"

In memory of Mark Hazardred, 1952-2005. We'll miss you.

☹Died in a car accident☹

The Patriots

The Unicorn Problem

*All Emma wants for her birthday is a unicorn. What could be the problem with that wish? **THE UNICORN PROBLEM** by **Audrey Lanczynski** tells the rest.*

Once upon a time there were two princesses who lived in a huge castle. The room that they slept in it was very small. It was decorated in unicorns and rainbows.

One day the youngest called Emma went into her parents' room, but only the king, Hector, was there. She asked her dad if she could have a unicorn, but her father said that there was no such thing as unicorns. Emma started to whine and cry, and she was mad.

The next day Emma asked her dad again as the queen walked by. The queen's name was Alice, and she was very nice. When Hector said that there was no such thing as unicorns Emma was sad again. That's when Alice said that there were such things as unicorns! She said that there was once an old king with a huge castle with a big dungeon. He had a giant ghost tiger that scared all the unicorns into the dungeon. The king needed the big ghost to scare them. There were only five unicorns left in the world, and only in special areas.

The king and queen said that they would try to get a unicorn for Emma's seventh birthday.

They went out to find the unicorn right away since there were only two days until her birthday. While Hector and Alice were doing that, Emma was prancing and dancing around and saying, "Unicorn, unicorn, unicorn."

That day Hector and Alice found a unicorn! They caught the unicorn and bought some carrots and hay. They left the unicorn in the cellar until they gave it to Emma for her birthday.

Emma named her unicorn Abby. The unicorn kept getting in trouble by eating the food that they left on the table and knocking down all the books in the library. She was very destructive.

Hector and Alice were thinking about taking Abby away, but Emma wouldn't let them take her.

One day when Emma woke up, Abby was gone. Emma was very upset. She asked Hector and Alice if they took her, but they said no.

She asked her other sister if she took her. She said no, but she hesitated, so Emma thought that she was lying.

The sister's name was Jacky. She was ten and a half, and she was jealous of Emma. She hid the unicorn from Emma. Abby was still in the castle so she couldn't run away.

Three days later Emma found Abby, but she was sick. She hadn't gotten enough food, so Emma had to take Abby to the vet. The vet had never cured a unicorn before. The vet decided to feed her a lot, and she started to feel a little better. Then, the vet gave her a shot of special medicine.

Emma took Abby home. Emma and Abby were happy again and so were Hector, Alice, and Jacky. They lived happily ever after in their castle.

What's in the House?

WHAT'S IN THE HOUSE? by *Jihad M.* should make you want to double-check that your doors are locked. You have been warned.

Once there was a boy killed by a creature; it was not just any creature, but an unknown creature. This creature was a violent monster, and it killed for no reason whatsoever. The creature had never been seen before by man.

Jay was at Trinity's house. They were playing all sorts of games such as chess and checkers, and they colored in coloring books for some reason even though they're thirteen.

Then Trinity heard a door open downstairs and peeked out of her bedroom door. All she saw were strange footprints. She knew she had to keep her distance. Then she saw the horrifying monster. She started to scream inside. She whispered to her friend Jay, "Be quiet!" Jay tripped and fell right on the floor. Then the creature slowly started to come up the stairs.

Trinity started to cry.

"Why are you crying?" Jay asked.

"The creature is coming up the stairs," Trinity whispered. So, her best friend Jay peeked out and saw that it had the teeth of a dinosaur and nails as long as butcher knives. The creature had blood running down his body and had black eyes.

Jay went to try to get the nine-foot beast out of the house. He pushed and tried to stay alive, but the nine-foot best was much stronger than Jay.

"No!" Trinity cried.

Suddenly, Trinity heard a lot of screaming from downstairs. , Trinity went downstairs to investigate. Trinity screamed, "Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

She saw her best friend stabbed multiple times. His bones were broken and blood and parts of his body were gone. Her best friend Jay was dead. She ran to him to try to save his life, but he had lost too much blood, and he was pale. "Why?" Trinity screamed.

She ran out of the house and went straight to her parents at a restaurant.

"What are you doing here?" Trinity's mom asked.

“A monster killed Jay and I’m not going back to that house!” Trinity replied frantically.

It took Trinity a long time to recover from that night. Trinity and her parents eventually moved to a new house, and she went to a new school. She was really popular at school. But every night she would think about her best friend Jay, who was killed by a creature she had no desire to see again.

Every night she remembered how it all happened so suddenly, and she couldn’t help but feel like she could be next.

Who Is It?

*It's a casual night at home with popcorn and a movie until things start going bump in the night in **WHO IS IT**, by **Jazmin Kareem**.*

“Chrissy! Stop making me laugh! I’m trying to watch the movie.”

“Ok, I will stop,” Chrissy said.

“Thank you,” I said after her. Chrissy’s my younger sister. She and I were home for a few hours while Mom and Dad ran some errands. We were just watching a movie.

As Chrissy and I were watching the movie I heard a knock on the front door. I checked the window to see if anyone was there. I was mad, because people are annoying. There was no one even standing outside. It was probably our neighbor who lived a couple of houses down. His name is Ryan. He’s two years older than I am. He is sixteen.

I just walked back to the living room where Chrissy was eating popcorn, looking at me strangely. “Who was at the door?” she asked.

“No one,” I said.

“Huh?” she said in confusion. “How weird,” she said.

“Yeah, I think it was just Ryan trying to mess with us,” I said.

“Yeah, it probably was,” Chrissy said.

Five minutes went by, and I heard the doorbell this time, instead of the knocking. I was a little curious why Ryan would try to be messing around with us, but I walked back to the window to check again. This time I told Chrissy to come with me. Chrissy and I both looked out the window, seeing absolutely nothing besides the streetlights lit up.

I was starting to get a little nervous, thinking it wasn’t Ryan. I called Mom and told her what was going on. She said, “Well, are you sure no one is out there?” I could tell in her voice she was curious as well. Then she told me she and Dad wouldn’t be home for another hour.

Mom told me to make sure every door and window was locked. I checked and everything was locked. I was still scared.

We continued to watch the movie. Twenty minutes went by, and my phone rang. The call was blocked. I freaked out. I ignored the

call. And that person called four times. I still didn't answer. Then the person left a voice message. I played the message. It was a man's voice. His voice was real raspy and creepy! It did not sound like Ryan at all.

During the message he was talking about how he was watching two girls watching a movie. Wait! Chrissy and me! I screamed! I pulled Chrissy's arm. I pulled her all the way up into Mom and Dad's room. I locked the door behind us.

As I told Chrissy about the message she flipped out. I held the phone up to her ear. Then Chrissy made a big gasp! "Oh my god!" Chrissy said, still in shock. "Well, what do we do now?" she asked, a little more calmed down.

"I'm not so sure at this point," I said.

"I'm scared, Chrissy said.

"Yeah, so am I. We'll just sit in here until Mom and Dad got home. Here, I'll turn on the television," I said. Then I got a call, and the number was not blocked. I didn't know whether or not to answer. I answered, but still shaking. "He-hello?" I said.

"Hey!" the person said, excited.

"Who is this?" I asked curiously, still shaking.

"This is Ryan! I just wanted to let you know that was me who rang the doorbell."

"Ugh!" I said angrily. "I knew it, Ryan! How could you? You really scared us! Wait, was that you on the phone calling me over and over and leaving the voice mail?"

"Voice mail? No, I didn't call you or leave you a voice mail," he said curiously.

My heart dropped, and absolutely nothing came out my mouth.

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