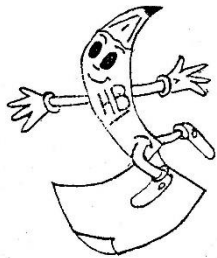




Imagination Creation Western Union Young Writers

Stories and Poems 2019





Imagination Creation 2019

Compiled by Dayle Dunshea

The anthology is a collection of the prize-winning submissions to the Imagination Creation Writing Competition 2019.

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**Imagination Creation
Western Union Young Writers**

Writing competition 2019

Sponsored by:
Western Union Writers
Wyndham City Council
Wyndham Community and Education Centre
Kirpal Singh Chauli
Margaret Campbell

Age 15-18 Poetry

First Prize:	Saanjana Kapoor
Second Prize:	Mya Hicks
Highly Commended:	Saanjana Kapoor
Highly Commended:	Connor Organ

Age 15 – 18 Story

First Prize:	Mahela Meera Mohanadas
Second Prize:	Alisha Diacono
Highly Commended:	Bessie Yuan

Age 11 – 14 Poetry

First Prize:	Sandra Sujith
Commended:	Tisha Shahphon
Commended:	Mariah Cini

Age 11 – 14 Story

First Prize:	Charlotte Lerbek
Second Prize:	Atricia Bodhiwan
Highly Commended:	Senara Wasalthilaka
Commended:	Ashreye Chopra

< 10 Poetry

First Prize:	Odessa Zubanov
Commended:	Aaryahi Taralkar
Commended:	Nethuki Christiana Vadysinghe

< 10 Story

First Prize:	Aaryahi Taralkar
Second Prize:	Vanalika Puri
Highly Commended:	Anshika Thakur



Sherryl Clark Award

Joint winners:

Saanjana Kapoor and Charlotte Lerbek

Wyndham City Council Local Awards

Odessa Zubanov

Mahela Meera Mohanadas

Aaryahi Taralkar

Sandra Sujith

Short-listed Poetry

Mahela Meera Mohanadas

Amy Richardson

Connor Organ

Kaysa

Jamie

Aniesha Kor

Fathima Samah Qaisy

Gina Phiri

Tessa Manoj Jacob

Shanjida

Odessa Zubanov

Shanja Sarita Abisha

Odessa Zubanov

Nethuki Christiana Vadysinghe

Kyla Canares

Short-listed Story

Eva Wadhwa

Anna Chen

Tashreet Kaur

Daksh Solanki

Tijana Pavlovic

Athava Halapeti

Sachiv Uma Mahesh

Yuvan Yeshodharan

Ryder Grech

Hailey Farrugia

Sona Aashika Janga

Ruth Nunez

Senaya Pimburage

Anjali Bijukumar




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My Favourite Sweater

by Saanjana Kapoor

Mamma weaves
the endearments (she keeps crammed in her pockets)
with
the syllables of her laughter
with
the compliments she slathers on every surface her fingertips find
now my favourite sweater is a tape recorder of everything she says
an auditory hug that forever embraces me
and covers my skin
miles and miles of skin
yet papa's taunts hang

like the loose thread

at the bottom left hand corner
which I choose to latch onto and t u g and t u g and t u g
knowing fully well that it would unravel it all
completely



Spaghetti Bolognese

by Mya Hicks

In the photograph
I find in mother's jewellery box,
you are in the kitchen.
Standing tall, with a wooden spoon
in your hand, your back faces the camera
as you make
 spaghetti bolognese.
With the photo clutched between my fingers,
I take it downstairs
to show Mum.
And as she slumps in her sofa chair
that's as moth-eaten as her,
I tell her about how
I can remember you.


How, this one time,
you took me for ice-cream after school
and when it melted in a sticky rainbow
down my chin,
I wailed and screamed until
you bought me
a new one.

“He was a l w a y s
giving you too much sugar,”
Mum muttered.

But
what about the time you surprised us
with a boat for Christmas?
and we spent the summer out on the
crystal blue water with
the wind in our hair and
salt on our tongues?

“That damn boat was the reason we
couldn't afford anything
other than fish fingers for tea
for a month,”
she says.

But
what about your
spaghetti bolognese
that you would always make?
With the tomatoes from the garden and
the special red wine?



“Yes, I suppose
that was good,”
says Mum.

My finger tracing over the
glossy surface of your back,
I carry the photo back upstairs
and I try to remember
the sound of your voice
and the way you would laugh
and I think I do
but
I cannot be sure, because
maybe I’m just
imagining it like
everything else about you.
Because photographs
cannot stop time,
even though you are frozen in frame,
just like how the time
stopped
when your breath
stopped.



I wish I could say it now

by Saanjana Kapoor

I wish I could say it now

I am yours
are those three words
your ears have eagerly waited to hear
for 23 long years
they are those three words I said
before I could speak
those three words that had been tattooed on my forehead (in permanent marker)
when I arrived
and when every girl arrives
so her family is papa>mamma>brother>her
and now
I have gone from being my father's
to yours
the ring is mine
but the dowry is yours
the forehead is mine
but the vermillion is yours
the brightest red stamped in between the parting of my hair
to let every passer-by know that in case they get lost
I am yours
the neck is mine
but the nuptial necklace is yours
the wrists are mine
but the bangles are yours
handcuffing me (evermore)
this stomach of mine
will soon manufacture a child
whose first word might be ma
but his name will always be yours
those three words
have no need to be spoken
when you have monogrammed every inch of me
it is not you that has done the waiting for the past 23 years
but I
to finally say
I am Mine



LOVE

by Connor Organ

It's a mess, it entraps you, pulls you in and keeps you stuck.

Love.

It's is an abyss of emotion, one you can't stop yourself from falling into. A hole that goes on for eternity until coming to an abrupt and painful stop.

Love.

You feel yourself sinking, falling and collapsing. You feel the oxygen running out and your body shutting down.

Love.

It's like your stuck in place. Buried up to your knees in a thick tar that stops you from getting away.

Love.

Imagine having no air, no room to breathe. The walls are closing in on you and your throat tightens from the fear. You're paralysed in that moment with an overwhelming sense of terror, that's it.

Love.

It's as if you lose all energy, you become an eternal source of light and power for someone but leave no energy for yourself, people feed off you and you get drained.

Love.

It's words on a page that you can't make sense of. An equation no one can seem to solve.

Love.

It's a puzzle that no one has the pieces to complete.

Love.

It's a mix of feeling, a recipe for disaster, a concoction of messes.

Love.

It's knowing someone so intimately and someone knowing you completely, then they leave and take a part of your soul with them.

Love.

You feel joy, adrenaline, rushes and bursts of affection. An overwhelming sense of happiness, something that nothing will ever compare too. Then it dies, the rush finishes and you're left with a craving for another fix.



Love.

It's becoming so intertwined with another person, it's someone knowing you in the most vulnerable way. It's someone seeing you for who you are, saying they don't care about your scars and imperfections but analysing you in their mind.

Love.

It's the ecstasy of life, the drug that keeps you moving. It gives you the biggest high you feel like it can never end. You're on the trip of a lifetime, a rollercoaster that goes so high you can taste the stars. But rollercoasters and highs, you plummet back down to earth.

Love.

It's happy feelings that send you reeling, but they soon become the reverse.

Love.

Indefinable

by Mahela Meera Mohanadas

The future is a foreign place; things are better for the people there. I think. The future looked glorious once, when we imagined sleek spacecrafts and hoverboards skirting across our limitless skies. Reaching the stars would have been but the beginning of our journey across the universe. But, the future looks different now. Not as glorious as what I'd once imagined. No longer filled to the brim with wonders beyond our wildest dreams. I used to think about other universes, much older than ours, where their night skies would be a tapestry of sparkling diamonds as more stars blink themselves into existence. Glittering hues of gold and silver bathing the world in its might. Now, I'm not even sure if our planet will survive long enough to see it. So, I'll focus on my future – should I live long enough to see it.

I thought that when we moved things would change. I see now that it won't. But, I'd like to cling on to hope for a little bit longer.

There's a child on the beach ahead of me, her eyes are closed as her feet carry her. The sand is dancing in the wind around her. The light that is reflected from the ocean splays across her body, making her glow like an ethereal being, as if she herself has harvested its light and is now releasing it. Her steps never falter as she hums a soft tune only she can hear.

She advances with crystal clarity and absolute control. Each stride purposeful. The flurry of her clothes acts as an extension of herself. She whirls wildly, yet with faultless precision. Painting a picture that sound alone could never hope to achieve. That a camera could never capture. A wordless exposition of soft strings entwined within a language that has no vernacular. And yet, the language is understood by all.

She has been taking dance lessons for years and tomorrow is her concert, her parents had taken her out for her to relax and get some rest. It didn't work out it seems, I can't hear what they're saying, but the exasperated looks tell me enough.

Or, at least, that's what I think is going on.

I turn from the sight and continue with my walk.

Up ahead is an older couple, arms wrapped around one another as they walk in my direction. Be it for comfort, or help for walking, I do not know. The old man clutches clumsily at his walking-stick, more preoccupied with adoring his wife than his ability – or, to be more exact, inability – to walk. On his face, the flow of time seemed to have sprouted wrinkles across his forehead whilst leaving only a few specks of brown in his winter-white hair. When he gazed my way, his eyes seemed cloudy. But, when he gazed at her it was if bright sapphire blue was bursting at the seams of the milky haze, twinkling in response to her own. Chapters of their life so obviously sprawled into the air surrounding them. They passed me unbothered, content with one another's company. Whispers of their 60th wedding anniversary dancing through the wind as I trailed on.

A man sits on a side of the path, a cardboard sign laying across his abdomen. *'Spare change'*, it reads. His eyes are open and speckled with hope -I think –, but, unseeing. Almost, as if, he wills himself not to see something that will make him lose his faith. Faith in having a better tomorrow. I don't know whether I should call it strength or fear.

A young boy tugging at his father's hand catches my eye, *he wants to help*. But, his father pulls him forward a hush whisper on his lips, "The government cares for people like him." *'Then why aren't they helping him?'* The boy seems to think to himself. The confusion on his face is obvious, but he knows that that was all he was going to get out of his father. And so, they keep walking and the homeless man is left unsurprisingly forgotten amidst the crowd that passes him. No other pedestrian bothers to deign him with a glance. I wonder, *do we ignore him because we think we are better than him? Do we think that helping him is below us? Or rather, do we fear that one day they will end up just like him and so avoid it as if in doing so our chances of survival are heightened?*

A light drizzle settles in, and everyone rushes for their cars or an umbrella. The man quickly rises from his seat and rushes across the road umbrella in hand, probably to get out of the rain, his other



items momentarily forgotten. But, as my gaze follows his rushing figure I realise the umbrella isn't for him. I read the 'Thank you' that spills from the woman's mouth as her hands shakily regrip the wheels of her wheelchair. I hadn't even noticed that she was there. The umbrella is littered with miniscule holes and is too small for two, and the man knows it. But, there's no hesitation in his movements as he passes her the umbrella and starts to push her forward, hurrying for shelter. By the time they reach the entrance of the mall the man is already drenched, yet a smile is flittered across his face. The woman, I see, reaches for her bag on her lap – to retrieve her purse, I assume – but the man is already walking away, tattered umbrella in his hand. He only looks back once with a slight shake of his head, a slight murmur along the lines of 'Get yourself a ride home' is what I'm guessing he says. But, *did he not want to be rewarded for his good deeds? Doesn't he need it?* The small act went unseen by those around me, as the hide beneath the skeleton of their umbrellas. More preoccupied with themselves than the welfare of others, but, that's human nature. Isn't it? I mean, *what's the world ever done for us? We had to work to get where we are didn't we? So, why should I care about some random homeless man who leeches of other people to survive?* Yet, my hands move on their own as they open my umbrella to shield myself and the man's items from the onslaught of the piercing rain. The minutes pass, but I don't mind waiting. I've been waiting my whole life. Maybe, maybe, that's human nature too.

"Thank you so much." There's gratitude strewn across his face, a small spark of light shining through his eyes. I wonder how long it'd been since some had helped him.

My umbrella dangles towards him in my outstretched hands. *Why am I doing this? It wasn't me he helped. I don't owe him anything.* And yet, I can't leave him as he is.

There's a light sheen of water on the outer layer of his eyes. *Is-Is he crying? Did rainwater get in his eyes?* His hands grasp mine. *They're shaking. How have other people treated him?*

He passes me his umbrella, and I quickly throw myself back into the crowd around me. I can only imagine the reaction he would have when he finds the \$50 note in his bag.

How many people had just passed him before me?

Too distracted in my thoughts, I don't notice the foot that shoots out for me to trip on. Pain shoots up my arms as my palms slam into the wet pavement, stopping the rest of my body before it crashes. My feet find their way beneath me once more and I rise up, annoyance flashing across my features as I make eye contact with the person who tripped me.

"Watch where you're going", they scold, a smug look on their face, before walking away to join their ragtag bunch of friends.

I don't bother replying as I wipe my hands on my jeans, releasing pebbles that etched themselves into my palms. I reach for the umbrella that I dropped only to find that its ribs were now broken. *I just got it too.* A long sigh escapes me as I leave the umbrella where it fell before walking on.

At least the rain is letting up.


The onlookers stop watching and carry on, their interest in the event dispersing as I walk away. No one bats an eye. *Typical.*

All these people that I pass have their own stories, they're own lives. This town I'm in, I'm just passing by, but to them it could be their home. Their life. Their future. All I am to them is probably some random kid that got their blood on their pavement. Honestly, they've probably already forgotten the encounter they just witnessed. Not that I'm angry about that – no, they don't have to help me. It wasn't their problem to handle. They have their own problems and I have mine. But, I'd like to think that we're people who are more than what we seem.

People that are filled with limitless possibilities, brimming with potential. People that are words and colours meshing together to create disjointed and hastily made plans for a future they want to grasp. People that are our own source of light in the world. People that are born with galaxies running through our veins and wonder pounding in their hearts. A crescendo of symphonies singing in the wind. People that are limitless. People that are *indefinable*.

But, then, we label ourselves.

I can only help but wonder, *why?*



So, what is it that people see when they look at me. What label has been attached to me, pre-determined before I even had a say? A child who should be at home? A future businessman that earns a six-figure salary fresh out of university? Or do they see nothing? I know who I am, but it's unsettling to think that in someone else's mind I could be an entirely different person. The sunlight is freely falling across my face, infiltrating the locks atop my head and making it look more golden than brown. Moving to the side of the pavement, the brick wall meets my back whilst my eyes mindlessly zone in on the clouds the flitter across the sky above me.

What do you see when you see me?

Hell, what do I see when I see me?

Who even am I?

There's an insistent buzz in my jeans that tries to pull me from my reverie, but I don't let it.

To my left there's a clicking of heels on pavement. A man, that looks to be in his early twenties, carrying a laptop bag that hangs to his side as he approaches. He has earphones plugged in and seems to be mindlessly humming along to his music.

I see him glance at me out of the corner of his eyes, but that's not what I'm focused on. There's a look in his eyes that I can't quite place, but it clicks in a matter of seconds.

His right hand moves so fast that I'm not sure it was ever in his pocket, as it moves to a new location where it clutches the bag closer to his body.

His pace picks up as he continues down the street, his body language mirroring what I saw in his eyes. *Fear.*

An earphone releases itself from his ear, but neither of his hands move to put it back in.

That's what you see me as.

My eyes sting, blurring my vision.

The phone in my pocket buzzes again.

My hand automatically pulls it out. A message notification. *Mum.* A finger slides across the screen, unlocking the phone, as I blink back my tears.

Don't stay out too late! It's dangerous. It reads.

A laugh tries to make its way out of my throat, but it's more of a breathless choke.

I type back a quick response.

Yeah. It is.



Blanket

by Alisha Diacono

A heavy blanket, as if weighed down. It hangs over me, like a warning, like a threat. One day, the blanket will be ripped from me, and I'll be exposed. One day, everyone will see it. What has happened, what I've become.

Am I still human? Sometimes, I doubt so. Nothing scares me, nothing makes me feel. I used to feel so much, and that was why it started. But now, nothing. Nothing but the bleak void that encases me like the blanket.

I call the lies a blanket, because it hides everything. The bruises, the scars, the screams, the promises. I don't know how much she can take anymore. If I keep layering more blankets, will it be easier for her to learn to live with them, or will the weight suffocate her until she breaks? I'm not sure which I'd prefer.

In a corner of my mind, I love her. I love just as I did back then. I want her to be happy, as long as she is with me. I want her to stay with me. I want her to be mine. She used to joke around and say I was controlling. Now, she avoids my eyes as she speaks. Some days, she won't speak at all. I hate it when she doesn't speak.

The house is silent when I get home. The door creaks open after I turn the key, and inside, there is darkness everywhere. Every corner is soaked in the shadows I created. I know that the reason this house is bathed in misery is because of my own rage. The thought that this is all my fault makes me angrier. I slam my keys down onto the bench.

I search for her. She's hiding, damn it. She's trying to avoid me, trying to be bigger than she is. Does she not know who I am? She's supposed to love me, yet she's fucking lying again. Probably off with that asshole from her work. Fucking bitch should stay home. Tells me what to do. It's her fault. She pushed me here. Didn't listen. Never listens! Should've done as I'd told her. Should have respected me. Didn't open the door for me. Thinks she can disrespect me. Thinks she can stop it. Thinks I won't open this door. Thinks I won't do it. I will. I will! She's telling me to calm down. I won't! She won't listen. Listen! Listen!

The fist that hits her face sends the sick euphoric feeling of being in control through my bloodstream. She backs into the wall. I keep telling her her place as I physically remind her of what she is. Nothing. I leave her on the floor when I'm done. I never show her the moments like this where I regret it. I return the next night and repeat the ritual. The blanket gets thicker.



Belong

by Bessie Yuan

The voices carried across the well-manicured lawn, through the mottled gum trees before disappearing without a trace. If you crossed that lawn, weaving through the objects littering it and passing the child size pool, you would be able to hear the voices. A male's deep baritone contrasted with the female soprano. If you entered the house, and climbed up the lavishly decorated stairs, took a right turn and entered the room furthest from the stairwell, you would discover a little girl. A little girl who was looking out the window, feeling like a caged shark and hating the world. A little girl who thought the world hated her back. A little girl who never felt like she belonged.

Evelyn McCain was a nine-year-old girl who owned fourteen dollhouses, each complete with its residents, four wardrobes full of clothing, three life-sized dolphin plushies and exactly two friends. These two friends were made after a particularly rough day at school, when the aquarium turned into an ocean that she was drowning in.

Every day at school was the same. Evelyn would arrive, her clothes clean, starched and ready for the day ahead. After a morning where no one sat with her in class, she would head to the back of the school. This is where four boys circled her, taunting, mocking, stealing and shoving. The bullies were like piranhas, circling her before going in for the kill. She was the fish food in an aquarium of piranhas. Then came the end of the day. Her once clean uniform was rumpled, one collar ripped. Dirt marks which adorned her shirt, from the grubby fingers of the piranhas would earn her a lecture from her housekeeper. She left the school. Alone. The taunts echoed as her feet dragged down the well-worn path. 'Fattie McFee' 'Why are you so fat, fattie?' 'You don't belong here!'

When she reached the intersection to her street, she noticed two men sitting on milk crates on the empty lot of land that never got developed. The men were homeless, Evelyn could tell by their unshaven beards, dishevelled appearances and slightly sweaty odour. Right then, she felt a sense of camaraderie with the men. Looked down upon, at the mercy of other's; giant in the midst of tiny, tiny people. Evelyn didn't know what possessed her to do it, but she approached the men. As she approached, they stopped talking and looked at her. Evelyn was a short, slightly chubby from the baby fat she never quite managed to lose. Her eyes were a plain, lifeless brown, her hair a ratty brown colour that couldn't decide if it was chocolate or chestnut. The men stared at her. She stared defiantly back, a defensive gaze that challenged them.

Finally, the man on the right spoke "What you want, little girl?"

Evelyn smiled. Today she would be someone she had never been. A girl who belonged somewhere, who had fish food friends, loving parents and everything she could ever have. But mostly, a girl who was happy.

"I'm Lyn. And I'm happy. And I want to join your group."

The men looked at each other and laughed, great big belly laughs that came from within.

"Sure, Lyn" said the second man. "D'you wanna sit down? We can all have a chat and play cards" Lyn approached them and sat on one of the empty milk crates. The first man began to deal the cards.


"So Lyn, what your story?" asked one of the men.

Lyn replied with a defiant "What's yours?"

The man laughed. "Okie, no stories today, let's just play cards"

Lyn spent the afternoon playing cards with the men, their voices drifting through the scribbly gums as the sun set over the outback.

Every day, after school Evelyn would walk 327 steps to the intersection where the old scribbly stood. She would join her friends, Jerry and Bill in the lot, where they played cards, a worn out deck that had definitely seen better years, as she told them about her day. Her day as Lyn, the newest popular kid. The clothing marks were a fall in the dirt, the scratches an entanglement with a tree as she



climbed trees with her best friends. Evelyn craved these hours, where she could be just Lyn, a girl who was happy to belong.

One day, after one of the worst piranha feedings, she asked the men as they were playing cards “What would you do, if say... a girl was getting bullied, and no one was helping her. And she’s trying to be someone that she’s not?”

The men looked at each other. Bill spoke “I would tell ‘er to stand up to ‘er bullies. I’d tell her to get stronger, and don’t ever look back. Accept ‘erself”

“Don’t try to be someone you aren’t”

“Just be yourself, Lyn”

Evelyn had always known the men knew. But with this knowledge that they stood with her, she started to cry. A fat salty ocean drop fell onto the crinkled card; a coloured joker grinning happily back at her.

Both men smiled contentedly.

Life didn’t change much after that.

Evelyn continued to go to school, meet with Jerry and Bill and try to escape the clashing voices of a dysfunctional family.

But something inside her had changed.

Evelyn had realised that she didn’t need to fit in to be happy, she didn’t need to pretend, she was just Lyn. Plain and simple.

Nothing, not even an ocean of hopelessness could drown out who she was.



The colours of my canvas

by Sandra Sujith

Red

is thick fluid,
oozing out of a broken body,
staining my shoulder, my arm,
my murdering palm.
I scream and scream
at the twisted corpse,
ruptured belly,
cruel posture.
my eyes never leave the shattered face of that mosquito.
Dead.

Orange


is a magical wand,
loaded with colour,
creating wonder,
my imagination runs wild.
I lose myself in the moment,
never letting go.
I smile at the 'ooh's and 'aah's
and when my drawing ends up on the fridge?
I couldn't be happier.

Yellow

are warm rays,
a golden river,
crickets chirping, fish splashing,
a bird flying in the sky.
I stand and observe,
this wonderful world of mine.
I laugh and smile,
take a happy bite,
out of my caramel slice,
and relish the sweet sensation.

Green

is envy,
jealousy,
her smile too friendly,
my icy stare.
Stolen work.
Stolen friends.
A cesspit of lies.
Friendships die.
and if a part of me cries,
weeps and dies,
I have to hide
from my demons who whisper at night




laugh in the mirror
haunt me in my mind.

Blue
is a lagoon amidst crashing waves,
a serene paradise I build
with undying faith.
silence,
as ripples streak and shimmer across the surface of the sea,
I smile in peace and observe quietly,
the turbulence of life far behind me.
Of course, of course, construction's not done,
On the horizon, a storm is yet to come,
but in the meantime, I sink into the sea
like a satisfied tortoise sinks into its shell.

Purple,
is Cadbury's chocolate
rich, divine,
smooth as silk and just as sweet.
I find it hard to count chocolate;
they disappear so rapidly!
but if you get me alone,
and ask me quietly,
you'll know that Cadbury's
feels heavy, too sweet, too sugary
a sort of irresistible poison.

White.
a blank page.
Fresh, sharp, clean, new
The perfect chance to start anew.
My palette is ready;
Red, yellow, green, blue,
Purple, white and orange too.
I breathe out, relax,
And let my paintbrush move again.



100 Cranes of Hope
by Tisha Shahphon

She folds another one
No one else understands why
She is almost done

These birds she makes help her
They symbolise the hope she carries
Her childhood so far has been a blur

She folds another one
Wondering when these will heal her
She is almost done

She can hear them whisper to each other
She knows that it's not working
She just wants to be with her mother

She folds another one
She feels weak these days
She is almost done

She smiles and says that she loves them
She has accepted her fate
All her fears have been overcome

There's another one
She was almost done



Why Can't I Look Like Her?

by Mariah Cini

Models plastered over billboards,
Elegant and happy,
A flat stomach,
Gleaming skin,
And designer clothes.
Yet I stand before the mirror,
The last glimpse of self esteem that I had left in me slowly fading away,
Why can't I look like her?
My face is full of zits,
Hair oily and tangled.
My eyebrows are bushy,
Legs full of hair.
My stomach bulges out of my jeans,
Lips dry and cracked.
Why can't I look like her?
But, when was beauty defined,
Why do I have to have luscious hair and the perfect body just to be pretty?
My freckles are what make me unique,
And my curves make me just as gorgeous as any other girl.
It occurs to me that,
I don't want to put makeup on,
And I don't want to straighten my hair,
Solely for the approval of others.
Because for the first time in my life,
I don't want to look like her.
I just want to look like me.



The Want to Be Loved

by Charlotte Lerbek

I am the moon. My light feebly shimmers against the midnight blue sky and I am suspended in the frosty, biting cold. I see the same shadows slinking along the ground like snakes, their claws groping for anything in their path. I hear the eerie, empty music of the world below, each night a different melody. Emptiness encases the world like a thick, dense blanket, Again and again, I as the moon watch the night.

I also watch the day. Though no one sees me. I am forgotten in the brilliant blue, ignored in the sun's presence. But I do notice the blissful smiles that dance around people, the love that blooms on people's faces. Joyful laughs are shared amongst small children, and their eyes are jewels gleaming with cheerfulness. I see the sun as well, her vibrant face, smiling motherly down upon the Earth. I notice all of these things in the day, and think about them at night.

Dusk sets, night swallows the day. No smiles. No love.

I am left once again on my own in the night and I gaze into it subconsciously. In my head, thoughts swim in an unceasing circle. Why don't people smile in the night? Why don't they laugh in the night? Why don't I get to share some of their love?

Why.

Suddenly, the cold seems colder, the eerie sounds are quieter, the shadows appear darker. The emptiness is more lonely.

Longing. Craving. Yearning. All for something I never had. I see it every day. The smiles and laughter. The love. And I'm tied here, in a place of bitterness, with nothing pleasant or bright to be seen.

It goes on. I sit in the same spot, watch the same shadows, and listen to the same sounds. Nothing changes. The longing and craving and yearning never leaves me. Every day I see the merry faces of children and the cheerful smiles upon them, glinting in the sun. The sun, her beautiful, dazzling radiance. I would give anything to be like her. Happy, contented and loving.

Then, one starry night, it all changed.


The stars checkered the night and twinkled like fairy lights. The sky was clear of clouds and a light breeze wavered past. A particular ray of mine beamed down onto a mountain. On the mountain, was a boy and a girl.

They were smiling.

They were laid down on their backs, side by side, the blades of grass tickling their heads. Their eyes were reflecting the night sky and, arms outstretched, they were connecting the stars to make pictures. They were so blissful, so happy.

Then the girl pointed at me.

"Look at him." She breathed. "Beautiful."
The boy shifted his head.



“He’s like a guardian, isn’t he? He guards the night, all by himself.”

At these words, a tiny smile timidly stretches across my face.

“He’s smiling.” The girl whispered and the boy looked at her in surprise.

“I can’t see a smile on his face!”

“You don’t have to, I just know that he is smiling.”

After that night, the girl and the boy came back and sat on the same mountain. I smiled down onto them, and they smiled back. I watched them, and they watched me. And for the first time, I felt something, something that I couldn’t describe for a long time, but then, I realized.

Love.

Hidden Talent

by *Atricia Bodhiwan*

“You’re a loser!” I screamed, “You have the voice of a dying dog, you can’t say a word in tune and you’ll never achieve great things!” Although the mirror didn’t agree as it hadn’t shattered into a million pieces as I’d expected. Instead I saw my angry face getting bigger and bigger every second like a glowing, red balloon. Ever since I started taking singing lessons, everybody said that I had the strongest voice they’d ever heard, probably the best in whole human history. Me? No, my voice sounded like a drowning cat to me! It was never good. Never. Which is why I still took lessons to improve my voice, so I could be the star I always dreamed to be.

“But it sounds like magic!” my Mum would say, never realizing that I would never agree with her. And my Dad would always agree and follow up with, “Seriously, it is that good. You just keep denying yourself Coco.” And when I regrettably sang in front of my friends, they would say something like, “Wow!” or, “You’re really good!” You get what I mean. Which is why it came as no surprise when my singing teacher registered me to audition for Australia’s Got Talent.

“Really?” I sighed, “I’m not doing it.”

Trust me, you’ll impress the judges.”

“But you voice is amazing!

“Me?”

“Yes, you!” I shrugged, “Alright, but just letting you know that it’s not my fault if I don’t get past auditions.”

As I walked onto the stage, I looked back to see my parents and singing teacher smiling from the side. I gave a fake smile back, and suddenly the cheers and claps came from the audience. First of all, I was still processing the fact that this whole thing would be on TV sooner or later and everyone I knew would view it. I took one last deep breath before all the action would begin.

“Hello!” one judge started, whom I didn’t know of, “What’s your name and how are you today?”

“I’m Coco and I’m 12,” I said, and I have to admit I was already starting to feel pretty nervous and stressed.

“Well hello Coco, such a pretty name!” said one of the other judges and they continued in a little conversation which I completely paid no attention to, just standing there and giving a face. “So what will you be doing today?”


“I will be singing Climb by Alexis Black.” And then came the comments and faces about how beautiful that song was. Eventually silence fell. Then the first note played. Then I sang. The words flowed out of my mouth and into the air, like an elephant on a pogo stick, unbalanced and what I heard was completely out of tune. But one look at the judges faces and I was perplexed; they were staring in awe and every eye had my attention. When I ended my song, I smiled as I believed it was just normal practice and thanked everyone, but it didn’t stop there. One person stood up and started cheering in the front row, and I was really confused by this stage, and then the whole row stood, then the next, and the next, I’d received a standing ovation? I glanced towards the side of the stage and my parents were cheering along too. I just couldn’t understand. At last what seemed like forever of praise subsided, and all the judging began.

“That just amazing! Like, I’m just speechless right now,” said one guy, and it felt like I was being bullied by nice words. And I’m sure my face showed it all.

“What the *beep* just happened? Literally that was the best *beep* performance of the entire night! I’ve never heard anything so *beep* powerful before!” said the next person, who clearly seemed pretty enthusiastic with my performance.

“Coco,” the lady who greeted me at the start began, “All I can say is that you are fabulous and I assure you that you’ll become a star!” Now I was really jumbled up. Listen world, my voice is a suffocating cockroach, okay? But then she spoke again. And it happened.

“Coco, I think this explains it all...” and with that my world enters slow motion: her hand



stretches out and like a buzzing firefly, slams down that solitary shining button. Yup, that golden buzzer. And this is when I came back to normal speed, scratching my head but jumping for joy at the same time. Then pausing to realise how all this happened; it was all my voice. That ‘best voice in the world’ that everybody called me. I was in the middle of processing this when that lady came up to the stage and held up my hand, for all Australia to see. Not knowing what to do, I smiled, but this time that smile was something I was proud of. “CONGRATULATIONS, YOU HAVE GONE STRAIGHT TO THE SEMIFINALS!!!” the host screamed through the microphone. And I left the stage feeling on top of the world for once in my life.

That night I stood in front of the mirror again, looking at what used to be my big, red head. Why did I bully myself? Why did I refuse to believe the truth, that I could really sing like I was born to do it? Why did I fear my very own dream? Then I sang like I never cared if anyone heard me, the same song that I had sung at the auditions, this time really focusing on removing that old lie and listening to my voice’s beauty. And this time I paused in the middle of the song, for it was really the best voice in the world. Now I knew that my singing teacher was right, I certainly did impress the judges and that I now have a purpose, I was entered in the competition for a reason, and I was going to sing like I meant it and I was going to win it.

Semifinals. I woke up to the sun shining in my face that morning reminding me of that wonderful gift – that confidence I’d gained through my past performance. I was all ready that day, I had the ends of my hair curled to look nice and even went on a whole-day shopping spree just to pick out the right outfit for the day. And now I have another chance to show Australia that I can win Australia’s Got Talent. No more of the old Coco – afraid to share her voice and denying herself, letting fear itself taint her heart. But showing them who’s meant to win. As I rehearsed my performance for that evening on that same stage that I took disgust in myself, I thought ‘What if I did actually win? What would I do with my prize? What will my Future be like?’ All that I know was that I was excited for what lied ahead.

My performance of Jaya’s Louder really brought the crowd wild that night. It was definitely better than my first performance, I enjoyed every moment of it. And what the judges had to say also showed just that. The results too, after about a minute of daunting nervousness and hearing my heart beat in my head, I was relieved to be going into the Finals. The Finals. My last chance to get the title of Australian Got Talent Winner 2011.

Finals. The big moment had arrived. Getting my hair and makeup done professionally for the first time. Going live. The decider. The homestretch. As the stage darkened and all lights came on me, one little thought of denial entered my head, but I whacked it out just before I started. After all, it was too late to turn back anyways. I was performing a song that I’d written myself for this very purpose; after realising that my voice really was powerful, I decided to share what had been going on through my mind at those times. So I did, and this is what I sang:

Listen

I’ve got something to share

Oh, the pain just cruising along, well I was there

Sitting by me

Haunting my every word

Denying the truth like a stupid girl

But I said-

No, no more of this pain

I’ve just shown what it’s like to win

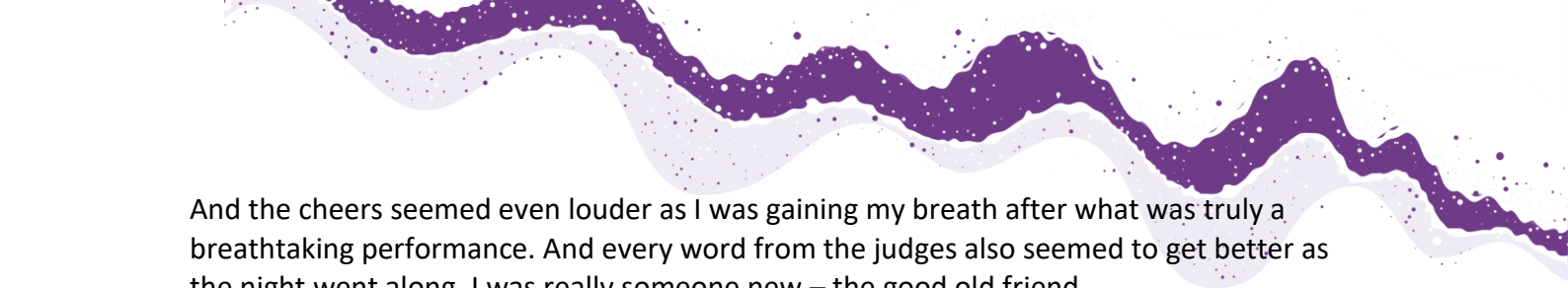
Never before has this happened, and it never will again

Now I’m here to show you how I came about

Knowing what comes next

You saw me then but you see me now

You see me, the good old friend



And the cheers seemed even louder as I was gaining my breath after what was truly a breathtaking performance. And every word from the judges also seemed to get better as the night went along. I was really someone new – the good old friend.

My heart started echoing through my head again as I was called in to the top 3.

“And the act in third place is...” suspenseful music started playing for about a minute. Then the silence broke, “Energy Dance Group! Come on down!” Relief rushed through me again and pulsed in and out of my heart. That meant I was either runner-up, or the grand title. As soon as Energy Dance Group left the stage, all of the feelings entered me again. Excitement. Anger. Nervousness. Suspense. Fear. Happiness. The feeling when you really feel like jumping up and down at the inappropriate time.

“And the winner of Australia’s Got Talent 2071 is...” my heart raced again. Everything, completely everything comes down to this moment. I even had to control my breathing. It seemed like my whole life was passing by before the host’s voice came through “COCO TRISTAN AND HER AMAZING VOICE!!!!” The suspense shattered and I, completely taken by surprise, jumped back and burst into another stretch of emotions. Tears of happiness now rolling down my cheeks blurred my vision, but all I could hear were shouts of joy and people crowding around me. I was embraced in a few hugs before the microphone eventually reached me.

“Thank you everybody!” I said, as really that was all I could say. And from that day onwards, I was known as Coco, a singer and winner of Australia’s Got Talent 2071, girl who inspired the ones who never believed in themselves.



The magic shoes

by Senara Wasalthilaka

Alicia needed new shoes. Her dog, Fluffy, had chewed up one pair. Another pair had just fallen apart and she had lost her favourite pair of shoes. Luckily, her mum had promised to go shopping for shoes with her on the weekend.

When the weekend finally came, Alicia was all ready to go. Until she and her mum got to the shoe shop, she wore an old pair of shoes that were really tight. Alicia was glad to get some new shoes.

Once they got there, Mum said, "Hurry up Alicia, we don't have much time." Unfortunately, shoe shopping was a lot harder than Alicia thought. One shoe was too hard, another pair didn't come in her size and all sorts of other problems. She was exhausted.

Just when Alicia was ready to give up, she saw the shoes that were perfect for her! They were a pretty purple colour with rainbow laces and the back part of it sparkled. She immediately knew those shoes for her!


"You're very lucky to get those shoes," The man at the counter said a few minutes later, watching Alicia admiring her new shoes." That's the last pair in the whole shop. In fact, I think that's the only pair we've got." Alicia wore her new shoes all the way home, thanking her mother all the way home.

When they got home, as soon as they got home, Fluffy came running up to Alicia. "Woof, woof! WOOF!" he barked excitedly. "Hello Fluffy!" Alicia hugged him. "Look at my new shoes! I love them!" but Fluffy didn't care about shoes. He leaped out of Alicia's hands and ran up the stairs, wanting her to chase him.

Alicia couldn't say no to Fluffy. She chased after him, laughing. But instead of running, she felt like she was flying. She was running so fast! Fluffy was a very fast dog, but she caught up to him. She had never done that before! But she didn't have time to think about it, her mum made her do homework.

When she went to school on Monday, Alicia wore her new shoes. Her friends would love them! She was right. They all crowded around her, admiring her shoes. Even the teacher had something good to say about them.

Everyone wanted to sit next to her. At lunch there were so much people playing with her and they had a big game of tiggy. Alicia ended up being 'it'. She waited until everyone ran away and then ran after them. She was so fast again! She caught up to her friends in no time and got all of them!



“How did you run so fast?” they all asked her. Not even Alicia knew! When she got home, she burst through the door. Her dad was sitting on the couch. “Dad, dad!” She put her school bag on the floor and took off her shoes.

“I ran so fast today! Look, I’ll show you!” she ran across the room. But she was terrible at it! She nearly bumped into her dad and squashed him! Alicia was really disappointed.

Later, while she was sitting on her bed with Fluffy, wondering how she ran so fast, she remembered something. She only ran fast when she had her new shoes on! Did they make her faster? She had to see if she was right. And Alicia knew just how to do it!

The next day after school Alicia went up to a poster that was stuck on her classroom wall. It was for a running race. First there would be tryouts at the gym. The top five from there would race against each other, and the winner from them would go to a big race, against all these other schools!

Alicia dashed to the gym. She was just in time. Everyone was getting ready to race. Alicia saw Maya, the fastest girl in her grade. But this time, Alicia was sure she would beat her!

3, 2, 1, GO! They all started running. “This is a piece of cake!” Alicia thought as she flew across the room. She passed the finish line in no time. Maya was in second place. They were both chosen for the race, along with three other kids.

“Okay guys, good job! Next race is on Friday, remember to come in time!” Announced the sports teacher. Alicia left happily. When she told her parents, they were really excited too.


On Friday Alicia put on her new shoes and went to school excitedly. The day seemed to take so long!

Finally, school was over and Alicia rushed to the gym. Some kids had come to watch and they were all cheering for Maya. “If only they knew who was really going to win,” Thought Alicia. All five of them lined up and the teacher blew a horn, signalling them to start.

First Maya was in the lead, but then Alicia felt herself getting faster. Her shoes were working! Maya was close but Alicia won easily. “Well done Alicia!” Shouted her sports teacher. “Now you can run in the big race in two weeks!” Everyone clapped.

Maya looked disappointed. “It’s okay,” Alicia told herself. “Maya’s already been in so much races.” She was so happy. Her parents were too, when they found out. They promised to come and watch. “Now you’ll have to practice a lot, if you want to win!” her dad reminded her. Alicia just smiled. Not as long as she had her shoes!

Slowly, two weeks passed by. On the day of the race, Alicia drove to the race with her parents, since they were coming to watch. Fluffy was coming as well! He sat on Alicia’s lap,



while she bit her nails nervously. Even though there was no need to be nervous, Alicia couldn't help it.

Once they arrived, Alicia was going to the changing room to put on her special costume that she had to wear for the race, when she saw Maya. She had come to watch to watch, even though she didn't look very cheerful.

When Alicia saw how sad Maya looked she began to have second thoughts. Was what she did right? If it wasn't for the shoes, Alicia never would have won.

Suddenly, Alicia felt horrible. She really did want to race, but it wasn't right. She walked over to Maya. "Hi Alicia," Maya said. "Good luck. I hope you win." Alicia pretended to look sick and said quickly, "Look Maya, I feel a bit sick right now and I'm not sure I'll be able to run so could you take my place?"

Maya's eyes widened. "Really?" "Of course," Alicia told her and handed Maya her outfit. "Now remember to win!" "I will!" promised Maya. She looked really happy.

Alicia went back to her parents. She was so good at looking sick that her parents were convinced that she really couldn't run. So, Alicia sat down to watch too, just in time because the race was starting.


All the racers went to their places and the race started. Everyone was running really fast. So far, Maya was in fifth place. Alicia held her breath. She watched as one by one the racers started to get slower and cheered when Maya passed them all swiftly.

It was a really close race, but guess what? Maya won! Everyone cheered loudly, especially Alicia. Right after Maya got her trophy, she ran to Alicia, saying "Thank you so much!"

Alicia went home happily. She got changed and then did some homework. After that, she thought about her shoes. She decided not to wear them for races and just wear them for when she went somewhere.

She went downstairs to get them, but they weren't there! When she was looking for them she found Fluffy, with the remaining parts of her shoes in his mouth. He had chewed them up! But this time, Alicia wasn't angry. Maybe it was for her own good. She laughed and gave Fluffy a big hug.

The end



The Cursed Book
by Ashreya Chopra

She wandered into the old library, searching for another book full of mystery, hoping to find some new stories.

Hearing the rustle of paper she called out, "Good morning Mr. Linden."

"Morning Ivy."

"Do you have any new books for me?" the t eyed, russet haired girl asked hopefully.

"Yes, just one. I think you will like it, full of paranormal themes, found it at the bottom of the pile," the old man replied, knowing that she loved the paranormal suspense.

After borrowing the book, Ivy was just about to leave when she noticed a red book in a velvety cover in a glass case. She had to go on her tippy toes to see the full cover, which was covered in jewels.

"Mr. Linden why is that book there?" she asked.

The old man looked her way, than shook his head furiously. "My dear, never is anyone to touch that, for it is cursed in such a way that if you open it..." Mr. Linden stopped speaking.

"What is it?" she asked wanting to know what was so bad about it.

"There is...a tragedy behind it. The author lived in this very town, but he died in one of the most horrendous ways one could die. And he was my son." The old man obviously remembering the day when tragedy struck.

Ivy took a sharp intake of breath from the sudden news. She had known that he had a son, since nobody spoke of him, she decided to leave it. Knowing that he was dead, explained why the old man was so lonely and why he spent all his time in the veteran library.

"Please tell me, if you do, I won't ask about it ever again." Ivy said sighing in remorse, knowing that she would ask again if she did not get the answers she needed.


Mr. Linden started with a sigh of his own, "it was about 15 years ago. Jason had come back from a trip to London, where he had just published his book. His mother and I were on a month long trip away in Bali," he paused before starting again, "when we came back we found the house entangled in vines, and him...dead."

Ivy left quickly with the new knowledge of Mr. Linden's past, but filled with curiosity about the red, velvety book. Deciding she wanted to learn more about Mr. Linden's son; Jason, she went to her desktop and looked up his name. Many things came up, some about random people and even one about a football player. Then there was one link about an author. Clicking on the link, Ivy's heart raced, hoping for this to be the one she was looking for. It felt like seconds had turned into minutes as she waited for the information to open and unfold.

Finally, it opened. Only to be greeted to a blank black page. And there was only one explanation. The power had gone out. Groaning in mild frustration, she tried repeatedly to turn on the desktop with no avail.

Tired, Ivy got into the covers, tossed, and turned thinking about Jason. Finally, she fell into a deep slumber.

Waking up to the sound of her radio-alarm clock, Ivy sat up, rubbed her eyes and yawned. Within a moment, she remembered what had occurred the previous night. Fully awake, Ivy ran towards her desktop and switched it on, silently praying for the power to be back on and working. "Yes!" she yelled triumphantly.



She clicked onto the tab she had saved earlier, waiting in anticipation. Finally, it opened... Opened to a page filled with scribbles.

Putting her head in her hands, Ivy vociferated in annoyance. Then, it came to her. Once in a book she had read, the main character found a message on paper but they could not read it so they got a mirror to translate the writing. Ivy ran to her bathroom, retrieving her mini mirror and she brought it to her desk. Putting its side next to the glazed screen, she read the words on the mirror:


‘Jason Linden was once was the most renowned authors, he was known worldwide for his books. Then he travelled to London to publish his newest book, it was going to be different to all the others. After publishing the first edition, Jason got a call from his publishers telling him that they would not be able to publish another book for unknown reasons. Shortly after that, he disappeared along with his book. In Tasmania, strangled to death in vines alongside his book he was found dead, in his home.’

Then the screen flashed a glaring red and shut off. However, Ivy took no notice. Curiosity had sparked and she wanted to know more about the book, so she searched everywhere on the internet but nothing came up except for the link with the one paragraph of information. Frustrated, Ivy decided to steal the book knowing that if she asked for the book Mr. Linden would not give it to her, instead, he would further discourage her.

Ivy waited for the sun to go down, running out of the house she did not stop until she got to the small town centre. She quietly lurked in the shadows as she waited for the familiar sound of the shop door locking. Then, when she was certain that Mr. Linden had left, she brought out her hairpins. She knew it would unlock the door as she had tried before successfully. Within a click, the door opened. Ivy walked inside, walked towards the bookshelf and retrieved the book out of its glass chamber. Then just before she was about to leave she noticed that the book had a lock. Sighing in annoyance Ivy walked towards the browning desk covered in ageing books. Ivy checked the draws, finding nothing. She walked back to the glass case in which the book was kept and felt around in it hoping to find some sort of opening. Feeling a dense part in the case, Ivy pushed against its refrains. With a soft click, the small latch opened to a bronze key. Pulling the small key out, Ivy closed the glass case and moved towards the door. Then she heard noises. Small footsteps came closer and closer towards the small shop. She paused and quietly ran towards a bookshelf. She prayed for whomever it was to leave the door and walk away. The tension was unbearable. Ivy held in her breaths.

The footsteps slowly retreated, and Ivy stood up from her crouched position. Walking stealthily towards the door Ivy peered outside. She opened the door with caution with the book tightly enclosed in her arms. She stepped out into the cool night air and closed the door. It made a final click signalling that it had locked. Ivy ran all the way home, not stopping once in fear of being caught.

Once she had entered the house, Ivy closed the door softly. She walked up the stairs with her heart beating erratically from excitement to what she would find. Climbing into her bed, she switched on the bedside lamp. Retrieving her mirror, she put it on her bed. Ivy pulled the book towards herself and took the key out from her pocket. Sliding it in the key shaped hole, Ivy twisted the key. She kept twisting until it would not go further. She had an internal debate with herself, debating whether she should open the book or give it back. Then the book opened. Small wisps of a smoke like substance came out floating around. Ivy flipped to a random page, put the mirror next to the thick book, and repeated the words:



Magic moon,
Magic night,
Let us ignite,
Give us what we want tonight,
Let us escape,
From the depths of this curse,
Full of ivy,
Full of poison,
Let us leave this dreadful curse,
We have once before,
Just one more time,
In this world we will forever stay,
We need revenge,
On this black day,
To make our troubles go away,

After repeating the strange words, Ivy flipped to the first page and read what it said aloud. "Book of Curses, not to meddle with!" and in smaller words it said, "All wishes come with a curse."

Just then, she felt a sort of calming feeling wash over her. Then Ivy wished she had never opened the book, as they say, Curiosity killed the cat.

Mr. Linden had warned her about the book. Now it was too late.



Jelly Beans

by *Odessa Zubanov*

Jelly Beans, Jelly Beans on the shelf,
Each one smaller than an elf.
Colours bright, flavours right.
Jelly Beans, Jelly Beans on the shelf.

Oh... which to choose,
There are so many different hues!

I'll begin with salmon pink,
Yuck! What a stink!
I'll throw it in the sink.

Next electric blue,
Oh! It's like eating glue.
It's got way too much chew!

Now for grinchy green,
Gosh! It tastes lean and mean!
I think I prefer a lima bean.

How about purple grape?
Oh no! It's making my mouth gape!
Where can I escape!

I'm sure I'll be safe with butter yellow,
Oh dear! It's way to mellow.
I'll leave it to a sleepy fellow.

Now, my all time favourite fiery red,
Ouch! It's burning right into my head!
I'll quite before I'm dead.

I'll be brave... just one last try... licquorice black,
The flavour hits me like a smack!
If I have too many, I'll turn into an insomniac!

Jelly Beans, Jelly Beans stay on the shelf,
I think I'll leave them to my brother Ralph!



Our City

by Aaryahi Taralkar

Cars so fast,
Trains going past,
Graffiti too much,
Flowers not a bunch.

The Freedom Tower,
New York's power,
Over people who cower,
And people who are sour.

No children are playing,
These days no one is obeying.

Out on the street,
I see so many feet,
Cars and buses and taxis,
All continuous beeps!

Road work,
So many jerks,
And quite a lot of clerks.

The train stops,
At 'Willberry Pops',
People get off,
And people get on.

I hear a sound,
I go on,
Another round,
Of the train,
'Harmonies Abound'.

A train goes fast,
A car goes last,
Was it really like this,
In the past?...



The Elsa

by Nethuki Christiana Vadysinghe

As I travelled down the icy glade
the dandelions blew away
As everywhere I stepped and stayed
everything transformed into gauzy flakes

As the wind blew my cape flew
My blue gloves shone, my magic power grew
I travelled over the frosty night
Until the chilly morning begun

The frosty leaves that covered the ground
The dreamy world and loneliness were all around
My family that I left behind was just a memory
All I want to do now is to find my destiny

The Pancake Machine

by Aaryahi Taralkar

Professor Branestawn's wonderful machine started playing up on Pancake day – in front of all the important people he had invited for lunch. One dropped on the professor's head, another just missed the mayor and landed on the wall whilst another landed in his mouth. They were flying everywhere! Another hit the vicar whilst four firemen tried to stop it with no success. The clever Mrs Flittersnoop hid under the table but was hit when she popped her head out. What a mess!


The Professor was so embarrassed. He picked up one of pancakes that was lying by his feet and studied it carefully. He knew, he was no scientist or magician but only a mere professor. And he wasn't even good at maths! He studied the tiny specks of dirt on the flustered pancake and realised that his pancake was growing a strand of hair! Oh... And it already has dandruff! But with a more focused assumption, he soon noticed the floor was unacceptably dirty! With all kinds of gruff on the floor, which pancake would survive this war?!

Anyway he threw the pancake back on the floor and wiped the maple syrup of his forehead, with a napkin. He pulled out a chair and stood on it, quite unsteadily. 'Listen up people! Ooof! Again the mad pancake machine started firing pancakes and cranking down! A pancake hit the professor in the stomach and made him fall off the chair and land on his bottom. He got up and walked over to the machine, ducking every pancake the machine spat out! Though one did hit him on the bottom. Quickly, the professor ran to the plug and pulled out the plug. The machine wound down and led the room to a serious silence.

After a minute or two, the ladies and gentleman stood there, staring at the machine or the professor. A young man named 'Anthony Collages', forced himself to get out from behind a curtain and give the professor a standing ovation. The rest of the people were about to clap as well, but somehow, the pancake machine managed to clog out a few 100 more pancakes... Finally the professor took one of the camera stands and hit the wonderful but cranky machine, until it suddenly stops...the mayor got up and off the floor. While she was up, everyone picked up a pancake off the floor and threw it in the air.

She walked over to the machine making sure it wouldn't hit her in the stomach. Quickly she picked it up, held it out, far in front of herself and walked out of the room; her gold, pencil heels click clacking on the concrete, almost heard from a mile away. People were quite ,... Stunned. No one knew what would happen. No one had the courage to say anything... Not because they were afraid, but because anyone now had the power to say anything and hurt the poor professor's feelings...

Mayor Aila...



I thought that this was going to be one of the best creations I ever would see or ever exist... But I really got in for a surprise. Poor professor Branestawn really got hurt in the heart... I couldn't bare the pain he went through. His thought best invention turned out to be a nightmare. I didn't want to walk out on everyone, him... But it left me with no choice. I was the mayor, and had the right to do anything I pleased.

I chose that I probably should have run out but my heels were killing me. Me being the mayor, I should have gotten used to heels. But no. If I was chilling on my couch at home, I would have been wearing a sweet shirt and pants. AAAHHH... But not the point. The moment I touched that huge machine, I felt a chill down my spine.

But I took it to my personal mechanic to get it fixed. Thirty minutes later I return to the community room. Wondering, what is going on in the marvellous professor's mind? What is everyone thinking, thinking of me for doing what I did. I was thinking of myself being very brave...

Anthony Collages...

I was upset! From the mayor's point of view, she wouldn't mind one bit having to pay \$50.00 just as an entry pass. I was furious! And to actually be allowed in the community room, I had to pay another \$75.00... Mad is just an understatement. I was fuming. You could see the smoke coming out of my ears. But then when I heard the professor talking to some other governor's, about how amazing his new machine was, my mind shifted perspectives...

I overheard him saying 'It's beautiful. You will love it. Believe me.' When I heard that, I thought 'He's so proud. It just seems silly to complain. When someone puts so much effort in something, why whine?'

And then the machine, he was so excited about, just clogged up. It was smacking everyone, everywhere! In the stomach, the head, the bottom and the face. Suddenly it all stopped... there was no noise no yelps, or screaming, no one saying 'OUCH!' I realised that the amazing professor was upset. Really upset.

No one would thank the professor for him creating a new machine that would help us in the future ourselves. No one would thank him for being brave enough to smack down, wreck his own machine. So I did. I stood up, strongest I could, got up from behind the curtain and I thanked him. Yea. I did do that. And after that, the mayor, she took the machine and disappeared with it... Only for 30 minutes though.

From my opinion, if the machine started up again, she would be fine. I mean, she has so much money she could get a doctor and still have \$9999999999999 left. Literally; that's how rich she is. Or go to the hospital and have the same amount of money left. HAHAHA!...



Professor Branestawn...

I did it wrong. I know it. Everything I have created has been perfect, but not my pancake machine. HUH!... I let everyone down... The camera people from 'Cool News', were there. Capturing every moment of the night. And I was there, scared, trembling with fear... But I did my best. And I knew that I was doing the right thing; I knew I was so courageous. But I was wrong.

My mother was watching on TV, my father was watching it all from Heaven. (Sitting with God, both looking down at me). Mother always told me that I would grow up to be an amazing son, but also get a beautiful occupation and become famous. When I was 6, my darling mother told me, that when you are in a bad situation and you have to choose between 2 decisions...Pick courage over comfort. That's the one thing that is going to get you through everything. I remembered her words till now. 14 years later, I still remember.

I messed up bad. And when the mayor took my machine and left for 30 minutes,... I-I-I freaked out. Maybe she hated my machine! Maybe she dumped it the bin! Maybe she would never come back! Or come to see any of my new creations! NOOOOOO!!!

Epilogue

Everything was fine. Dear, old Professor Branestawn got his machine and was fine. He thanked the mayor for getting his machine fixed. He offered to pay the bills - \$257.00. She didn't mind and said 'No, that's ok.' Everyone thanked the professor and he got to meet the best inventor, Daniel Cambia. His idol. They shook hands, talked and the professor got some great advice on how to improve for next time. Along with that, the professor got Daniel's autograph. People were still furious at the professor, but the professor was very pleased with himself. Happy. And that's what matters the most. Not the least...



The Performance

by Vanalika Puri

I looked through the curtains. Just as I started getting butterflies in my tummy, I heard something. It was the director.

“The show is starting in 2 minutes people!”

“You hear that? You’re going to be on in 2 minutes!”

Dad turned to me.

“It’s going to be alright, Mel...”

“O.....O...Okay dad” I said, my voice trembling, and my body shaking.

I had so many questions, and only 2 minutes to answer them!

How many people are out there, waiting to watch me?

Will I remember my lines, or will I just go blank?

Will the play be interesting, or will people just sit there, staring, falling half asleep?

Will I perform confidently, or will I just stand there whimpering?

Right then, that’s ALL I was thinking of...

I started feeling a shortness of breath. I knew I was getting the jitters. I started regretting auditioning for the performance. If I had known that I would have reacted like this, I would NEVER have taken part. EVEN if I had the lead role...

“Okay, we’re on !” As SOON as I heard that, my heart skipped a beat. I looked through the curtains one more time. I saw a thumbs up. It was dad, sitting in the front row of the audience. At least dad had more confidence in me than myself. Besides, he was the only one I had. Mom had a genetic disease... She passed away 8 years ago, when I was 7. A tear rolled down my cheeky, as I remembered that thought.

“PRESENTING.... MELLISA WILLIAMS, AS... ANNABELLE!”


I recollected from my thoughts. It was time to face the reality...

I walked out of backstage. As the other actors came up, everyone stood and clapped. When the last person came on stage, we all lined up in a single file. It was like a before-play curtain call...

As soon as we walked back behind stage, the play started. “Our marvellous play, which we are sure will astound you, is ANNABELL’S EVERLASTING SWEET DREAM!’ Our actors have been working VERY hard, and have given up HALF of their holidays, to prepare this. From behalf of the whole team, I would like to say, we hope you enjoy the performance.” After that, I lost track of what they said. The only thing I heard was, ‘Annabelle’.

I knew that I had to go on. I couldn’t let the team down now. I decided I HAD to go on and face my fear. My jitters. My butterflies...

For the team... For my father... For my mum, who I knew was watching me from heaven... I knew EVERYONE was with me...



When I started entering the stage, all I was saying was OMG! I realized that without knowing, I was already doing my part. I was walking with precision, expression and attitude. Then, I was reciting my lines. I was saying word for word. Perfectly. It was like the story was happening. Like I was Annabelle. Like this was MY story. MY life.

I saw everyone's eyes looking at me. I don't know why, but I actually liked being watched... Being one of the main characters. It felt sort of cool... It felt nice being the star... Like the ones on TV...
And, the truth is, I actually stopped getting the jitters.

When the played ended, we all exited the stage. Everyone asked how it went. We all had the SAME answer... "AWESOME!!!" WE were then all called for a curtain call...

We all entered the stage differently this time, though. Like we had more CONFIDENCE. This time, we all entered with a pose. The girl who played Maya, entered with a spin. The boy playing Anthony, entered with a jump and thumbs-up. I entered with a peace and spin. Like before, we all lined up in single file and bowed. When I looked at the audience, I couldn't see dad... No sign of him...
I realized what up AFTER I went back behind stage...

As I walking, I heard a loud "WELL DONE!!!!!!" As I heard this, I felt my body get lift in the air, and turn around. It was dad! When I looked at him, I could see he had been crying. I knee that these were proud tears.

After that, it was all compliments, signatures, happy thoughts, questions and replies. And.. yeah. That's where the rest of the day went...
Even after that, I got ANOTHER BIG surprise...

After everyone else had gone, the director announced that he had organised dinner at Dominoes for the star cast, and their families, and that Limousines were booked for all the actors to get there. When we heard that, we all squealed with excitement. Dad nudged me. He lightly pushed me forward, as if to signal me to go ahead. "I'll meet you there", he whispered.
"Go ahead... I'll be fine. You really want to, and you won't get this opportunity again. Go live the night of your dream...."
For some reason, it seemed like dad could read my mind...

I wanted to stay with dad, but I really wanted to go too, because I knew that I wouldn't get to experience this in my life again...

As I got there, I saw dad enter in as well. We signalled each other, to make sure we know where we are. The rest of the night was awesome. The dinner was AMAZING, and the night was like a DREAM! It was the best day of my LIFE!!! Today, I felt like the HAPPIEST girl in the UNIVERSE!!! It was an experience like never before...



When we got home, I literally FELL on the bed. An that's it. The next thing I knew, I was dreaming the whole thing, over again...

A Precious Gift

by Anshika Thakur


My class teacher, Miss Black introduced the new girl Sophia to our class. She was tall with long, silky, brown hair with beautiful, hazel eyes. Hiding behind her hair was a glamorous necklace with a charming white pearl down the bottom of it. I couldn't exactly get a clear view of what was engraved on it as for after a glance at everyone, she hung her head down. I thought that she might've been shy. Sophia murmured a quick 'hello' to everyone and sat on the vacant seat next to me. I smiled at her; however, she did not look back at me. Throughout the class, she kept her head buried inside her books. I caught sight of a little photo poking out of one of her books like a bookmark. I felt an urge to ask her about the photo she had, but at the same time I thought it was too early for me to ask. I was also finding it hard to resist from asking her about the pretty necklace I had caught sight of earlier this morning, but again I reminded myself it was too early to question anything without a proper introduction of myself. She appeared so timid and polite, I wanted to talk to her and be her friend, so I thought about starting a conversation with her by asking her about her family to begin with.

During our snack break, it looked as if Sophia felt neglected as I noticed that nobody was including her in their groups. She sat in the corner of the playground and continuously looked at the picture she had kept unrevealed in her book. As I was keeping a close watch on her, suddenly I noticed there were tears streaming down her pink, rosy cheeks gazing at the photo. I couldn't see what was in the picture but I thought that it might've reminded Sophia of something or someone she might be missing.

It hit my mind that when Miss Black had introduced her to the class, she appeared to be frightened and nervous. Questions were racing in my mind as to why she was really heartbroken and feeling out of place. 'Could she be missing her friends from her old school?' or, 'Could she be feeling neglected and left out by every one?' I was becoming impatient to ask her if she was fine, but I knew she had to be given some time alone to settle down. After snack, we had our French class but Sophia was confused and didn't know where the French Room was. That's when I felt confident enough to show her to our room and took her there with me. She thanked me for showing her the room. We stayed together during our French Class. I helped her understand slowly what the teacher was teaching.

We started to have our lunch and snack together every day. The following week, Sophia decided to ask me if I would be her friend. I was delighted so I gave her a cheerful smile and nodded emphatically towards her. I thought about asking her what I was willing to but without me questioning her, she told me the reason for her unhappiness. She took out a photo of a woman. She looked exactly like Sophia. Tall with beautiful hazel eyes, long, brown, silky hair. She told me it was her mother who had passed away recently, at the start of this year. She had been sick since a long time and even the best doctors could not save her...nothing worked.

Tears started streaming down Sophia's cheeks and I could not hold mine either. Sophia also revealed that her mum had given Sophia a necklace as a token of her feelings and all the good times they had spent together. My heart was going through a lot of pain after hearing what Sophia's story. I could imagine being in her place and having such a difficult time. I was barely able to say a word. I was speechless and filled with misery. Whenever she looked at the picture of her mother, it reminded her of all the fun things they used to do together until one day... when she left her alone.



It had been a semester and Sophia and I were now best friends. We used to spend a lot of time together and enjoyed each other's company. Sophia would share all her secrets with me and I did too.

It was my birthday and it would be a special one as I was turning 13. Sophia brought me a present. It was a small box wrapped in a pink gift wrap but the creases were not tidy and I could make out Sophia had packed it herself. I opened the box and found the same necklace, similar to the one Sophia wore. I took the necklace out of the box. I was astounded by this gesture but I politely refused to accept it. I did not want to hurt her feelings as it was her mother's token of love. She mentioned that her mother got 2 identical necklaces one for herself and the other for Sophia.

She wanted to gift it to someone special, someone who will be her best friend, who is very generous and kind. I hugged her and told her that I would always be there for her. Tears of happiness rolled down our cold cheeks. It was truly the biggest and most precious treasure one could ever get from a friend.

Three years have passed since then and whenever I look at this precious necklace, it reminds me of how we met and how our friendship grew. I feel blessed to have a friend like Sophia.



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