

# *Imagination Creation*

Western Union Young Writers



## I, Imagination

Stories and Poetry

2016

Imagination Creation, 2016

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# Imagination Creation

Western Union Young Writers

## WRITING COMPETITION 2016

Sponsored by

Western Union Writers

Wyndham City Council

Wyndham Community and Education Centre

Kirpal Singh Chauli Margaret Campbell

### 15-18 Poetry

1<sup>st</sup>: Mia Lo Russo

2<sup>nd</sup>: Lily Taylor

Highly Commended: Amelia Nienaber

Commended: Natasha Shapova

### Age 15 – 18 Story

1<sup>st</sup>: Amelia Nienaber

2<sup>nd</sup>: Evelyn Makris

Highly Commended: Ananya Anoop

Highly Commended: Anne Quan

### Age 11 – 14 Poetry

1<sup>st</sup>: Jasnoor Litt

2<sup>nd</sup>: Libby Knights

Highly Commended: Mikayla Borchard

Commended: Suhani Poddar

### Age 11 – 14 Story

1<sup>st</sup>: Sandra Sujith

Highly Commended: Mahela Meera Mohanadas

Highly Commended: Kym Yaniv

### 10 and under Poetry

1<sup>st</sup>: Daria Yoon

2<sup>nd</sup>: Olyvia Khaw

Commended: Keke Deng

Commended: Olivia Lac

### 10 and under Story

1<sup>st</sup>: Daria Yoon

2<sup>nd</sup>: Anika Choubey

Highly Commended: Syazwana Saifudin

Commended: Enuri Korlagamage

### Illustrated Story Award

1<sup>st</sup>: Jade Chitty

2<sup>nd</sup>: Emma Chitty

Highly Commended: Harini Senthilkumar

Commended: Aaron Massari

Commended: Abdul Rahman

Commended: Kristell Obieta

**Sherryl Clark Award**

Mia Lo Russo

**Wyndham City Council Local Awards**

Sandra Sujith	Daria Yoon
Amelia Nienaber	Jade Chitty
Lily Taylor	Evelyn Makris
Olyvia Khaw	Emma Chitty

**Encouragement Awards**

Evan Massari (aged 5)  
Fatima Waqas (aged 4)  
Athriya Ravichandran (aged 3)

**Short-listed Poetry**

Tara Moore  
Rebecca Wang  
Ruby Dong  
Bernice Liaw  
Olya Serova  
Samara Gracias  
Frances Waddell  
Olyvia Khaw  
Sandra Sujith

**Short-listed Story**

Tara Moore  
Greg Basman  
Isaac Haileselassie  
Saanjana  
Honey Raut  
Angelica Jie  
Aditya Sharma Yarravijhala  
Ashreye Chopra

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## Who Am I?

*By Jasnoor Litt*

I am a beautiful liar  
I am the shadow that lies in between the cracks of walls  
What am I in the eyes of these Kings and Queens?  
A table has more honour than I do.

I am a beautiful victim  
Some claim that words don't hurt the one inside,  
But the whole story is...  
They poison the suffering soul inside.

I am a beautiful ghost  
The visionary dreams I have in my cramped brain are out of this universe,  
However, there are no such things as 'happily ever after'.  
The good-hearted girl inside is dying from the vicious comments.

I am a beautiful loner.  
Black dots frost my vision as I take slow and steady steps through the jam-packed hallway.  
They regard me as chewed gum which has been abandoned on the side of the street.  
The scornful laughter erupting from their luscious, lip-sticked lips torments me every single  
second.

I am a beautiful nobody  
My beating heart is decaying  
For I am a drowning pot of heartache.  
Yet no one comes to save me.

Love is death!  
Love is persecution!  
So what is marooned...  
Because I am EXTINCT...

## **Inside Her Mind**

*By Evelyn Makris*

The cacophony of bells ringing, slamming lockers and giggling teenage girls filled the hallways, announcing the beginning of another school day. Zelda let out a sigh as she trudged along, moving as slow as possible, trying to prolong the moment she had to walk into class. She had not a single friend, thanks to the one and only Eloise who had made her life miserable since the day she arrived. As the number one target of the school's favourite bully what hope did she have? It wasn't easy being 6 foot tall with hands and feet as big as dinner plates and frizzy brown hair that stuck out in all the wrong ways. Not to mention crooked buck teeth and a nose too small for her slightly large, round face. Unable to prolong the walk into school any longer, she arrived at her tattered locker covered in green bumper stickers reading 'pollution kills' and 'save the whales' as a sweet, sickly aroma filled her nostrils. Upon fiddling with her lock and breaking it free from the locker, she opened the door and discovered her school books, drowning in sweetly sickening maple syrup. A groan escaped her mouth as she touched the cover of her dictionary in disgust, the viscous texture sticking her fingers together. With no time to clean the mess made by only one possible suspect, she grabbed her psychology textbook from the bottom of her locker that thankfully, hadn't suffered too terribly from the incident and hastily made her way to room 12 for homeroom.

From around the corner, Eloise stood doubled over, clutching her stomach in delight as she giggled with glee. With her cascading golden blond curls flowing down her back and big ice blue eyes she was a favourite to all the teachers and students, minus the few she chose to single out for a bit of fun. It was easy to do as she liked, to wrap a teacher around her finger and seem the innocent girl they all thought she was. But there was another side to her. The not so pretty side that came out and destroyed the lives of others. That side within her came out that very morning when she drowned her favourite victim Zelda's locker in the stickiest syrup she could find. To Eloise, Zelda was a complete nobody, someone who didn't deserve the attention of others, an easy target to destroy, day by day. That morning was no exception, as Eloise watched her groan in deep frustration at the sight of her locker before continuing on her way, more miserable than before. Eloise waited a few

moments smirking to herself, before tossing her blonde locks over her shoulder, hitching her fuchsia handbag higher on her shoulder and tottering off on her equally pink high heels.

Mr Matthews strolled into the psychology classroom with his red suspenders and sparkling black bow tie, accompanied by a woman, adorned with dangling sapphire earrings and a long flowing skirt. In her hand she held a brass watch, dangling on a gold chain that chimed with a 'tick, tock, tick, tock' as every moment passed. Mr Matthews sauntered to the front of the room.

'G'day kids. Since we've been studying the fine art of hypnotising recently, I've brought in a good friend of mine to show you a little 'bout how it's done.'

Students' laughter at the peculiar lesson they were about to encounter rang around the room as they whispered to one another.

'G-g-g-ood mor-n-i-i-i-ng, ki-i-i-ds,' she stuttered. 'To-o-d-d-ay we're going to -p-p-a-a-rtner up to practise a bit of hyp-n-n-o-t-i-ising. Your teacher has partnered y-y-y-o-u u-p-p.'

A groan spread throughout the students at the thought of being denied the privilege of choosing their own partner. Mr Matthews began. 'Kayla and Lily. Callum and Marcus. Zelda and Eloise.'

Eloise's head snapped up from the doodles she had been drawing in the margin of her psychology book. She tried to protest but was ignored by both Mr Matthews and the mysterious woman with no fashion sense. Zelda stood from her seat, trembling slightly as she made her way to the back of the room where Eloise was seated. A small smile appeared from her crooked teeth but was greeted with a scowl and an eye roll from her hypnotising partner. According to their psychic instructor, by holding a pocket-watch in front of their partner's face, the person undergoing hypnotisation could take on the mind of the hypnotiser for a day, if performed correctly with no laughter and constant staring into one another's eyes.

From around the room, students laughed in disbelief at the practise of hypnotising, not considering it to be possible. All that is except Eloise and Zelda, who had nothing to laugh about when stuck with each other. Eloise threw the pocket-watch into Zelda's hand with force, her vivacious pink acrylic fingernails scrapping Zelda's hand.

'Just try and hypnotise me you loser,' she grumbled, as she scowled at her in disgust. Zelda's hands trembled slightly as she picked up the watch and held it just in front of Eloise's



face. It moved from left to right then right to left, back and forth, back and forth. Neither of them spoke, just stared into one another's eyes, Eloise's blue eyes full of hate and anger, Zelda's brown ones full of intimidation and worry. Minutes passed and neither of them moved, the contact between them remaining strong. Only when the bell rang with the familiar DING, DING, DING, did they break eye contact. Hastily, they packed their books and exited the room, surrounded by the chatter of other students mocking the lesson and giggling at the idea of hypnotism actually working.

Only moments after leaving the room, Eloise heard an acrimonious voice inside her head, though it seemed to be coming from somewhere outside her body. 'You're a worthless loser, no one likes you,' it cried. She rubbed her head in dismay, and looked around to see whose voice spoke those shocking words, but the hallway was virtually empty. She shook her head and picked up the pace looking over her shoulder uncertainly every few steps. As she arrived at Science for second period, the ugly voice spoke again, with a familiarity she couldn't place. 'You're the least popular girl in this school. You're not worth anyone's time.' Her whole body shook slightly for a moment. She placed her fingertips on her temples and told herself it was just a headache as she rubbed her faltering head gently.

As the day progressed, it only got worse. Awful remarks appeared in her head more frequently. 'You're such a freak. Just leave this school already.' 'Not a single person would befriend you.' 'Why do you even try? You've got no chance at anything.' By lunchtime, Eloise couldn't handle it anymore, she was miserable. How could anyone ever think of thoughts like those? Unable to cope any longer, she fled to the door of the girl's bathroom and pushed it open, tears threatening to spill down her face. At first she thought she was alone, and she stood against the wall, the floodgates opened and her face was caressed by tears. It was only then, that she noticed Zelda watching from nearby, concerned at the sight in front of her. Before Eloise could escape, Zelda spoke.

'Is everything ok?' Her face was saddened by Eloise's emotions.

'Leave me alone you freak!' Eloise shuddered back. It was only then that everything made sense and the realisation within Eloise occurred. The voice inside her head really was her own, just not in her own mind but in Zelda's. The hypnotisation had worked and she had taken on the mind of Zelda in psychology class that morning. It was a shocking realisation, to know that because of her, those thoughts were what occupied Zelda's mind each day.

Because of her, Zelda and all the others she had victimised were miserable. Only then, seeing life through the mind of someone else was she able to realise the type of person she was. Tomorrow she'd take on her own mind and feel good about herself once more, but Zelda wouldn't. She gently placed her hand on Zelda's forearm.

'I am so, so sorry.' Her voice barely reached above a whisper. Zelda just smiled a small, shy smile.

From that day on, Eloise was different and though she spent only a day in the mind of someone else, that day lived on forever within her. Never again did she call someone a name or set out to ruin the life of an innocent victim. Sometimes 'you never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view- until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.' (Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*.)

## **The Long Journey**

*By Suhani Poddar*

I feel scared,  
It's all new,  
It's everything I ever feared,  
I'm going to live here, like you.

I'm here on this boat,  
Uncertain of where we are,  
I don't know if we'll float,  
My home seems so far.

I hope we'll be safe and sound very soon,  
before the bright sun comes up and we can't see the moon.

A cold and wet tear trickles down my cheek,  
for I know it is only happiness I seek.

I wipe my tears away and enjoy a faint smile,  
I know by showing love, my heart will be warm for a while.

My sister is so stressed,  
She wants this journey to end.  
I feel like my responsibility  
is to be her true friend.

I give out a giggle, and admire the moon so bright,  
as we sail silently into the night.

## **A Plea for Refuge**

*By Ananya Anoop*

‘...It was around 11:30 at night when it happened. The knock sounded harsh and obscure, yet somehow I knew it was bound to happen. My wife was crying, and that is the last memory I have of her. Her unruly face, tear-stained and frightened, flashes in my nightmares, the nights when I can sleep. Things like this happen in Mullaitivu. The war took place there and it was one of the main targets of the LTTE to recruit members. The Sinhalese government knew this and wanted to destroy the LTTE, a newly sprouted terrorist organisation. But they didn’t stop there. They wanted to weed out its roots.’

He paused. He tried to find something to take the pressure off of what he was going to say next. Finally he settled with fiddling with the edge of the napkin.

‘What happened after you were taken away?’ Something had to be done to break the pause and I didn’t want us to be sitting in silence for the rest of this interview. I was hungry to know more.

‘I was taken away to an isolated building. We were driven for hours and I remember it being the early hours of the morning when I finally reached the building, handcuffed. However, I was thankful I had reached safely. All the Tamilians were thrown in the back of the truck together and the guards would threaten to kill us with their guns during the night. But once we were in the building, it didn’t matter if it was day or night outside. There were no windows and no one was allowed outside once they were admitted in.

‘They would torture us like anything. Sometimes they would make up stories and demand why I didn’t own up to them. They would question me about every detail in my life. Why my wife didn’t work? Why we didn’t have any kids? Mostly they would ask me if I had any relations with the LTTE. And if I denied them, they would start torturing me again.’ Like blood from a deep wound, his motivation began to drip. ‘I still remember the worst form. I was made to hang from the ceiling with only my two thumbs holding me up.’

We were in a coffee shop and I no longer had an appetite. But this was the depressing truth. Northern Sri Lanka was in utter chaos until the year 2006, the official end of the civil war in Sri Lanka between the Sinhalese majority and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The Tamils originally immigrated to Sri Lanka from southern India and

make up 10 to 15% of the population, compared to the Sinhalese majority, who constituted about 75%. In 1972, the Sinhalese government declared Sinhala and Buddhism the official language and religion. The Tamils, who practice Hinduism and have their own language, took this action as an offence, and Vellupillai Prabhakaran founded the Tigers soon after. During the first years of their existence, the Tigers were one of several resistance groups competing for support from the Sri Lankan Tamil population. But after a 1983 LTTE attack on Sri Lankan security forces sparked riots across the country that left hundreds of people dead, they emerged as the dominant Tamil insurgent group.

The Sinhala government needed to retaliate. And fast. Things were getting too tigerish. They sent out armies to patrol all Tamil inhabited towns, in hopes to sieve through the Tamilians who were involved with the LTTE. An outbreak of mass raids ensued, and every Tamilian was harassed whether guilty or not.

Kaavalan Ponmudi's family were also victims of this movement. Although having no connections with the LTTE, Kaavalan was seized from his home one dire night on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, leaving his family, his home and a part of himself behind. Sitting directly opposite me, he now stares down at his tightly clasped hands outstretched on the table in front of him. His lips part and his eyes start searching the table, but then on second thoughts he sinks back lower into the seat. He tells me he is 35, but I can't tell. The extent of his suffering has worn off and has tainted his life permanently. His eyes, compressed by thickly black eyebrows, scan the outside. Skin is cling wrapped onto his skull. Cheekbones jut out like handles on a dish. He opens his mouth once more, and this time he lets the words come out.

'After being locked away for about two weeks, I along with couple of others decided to escape one night. One of the guys said they knew somebody who was escaping that very night to Australia by boat. We knew if we wanted freedom we needed to escape the country.'

Kaavalan knew it was the only chance he was going to get, and it needed to be grasped by the neck.

'I was told how Australia protects their refugees. How they were sheltered, fed and given a new opportunity at life.'

He was ecstatic. The dream of living in a first world country had become so tangible, that he made a decision for his family in a matter of seconds. 'I was going to Australia, find

employment and find a way to bring all my family over.’ Kaavalan laughs and shakes his head. ‘The plan seemed to be so simple at that time.’

Kaavalan must have managed to escape, because next he finds himself sardined on a small wooden boat on a one way trip to Australia. ‘I was scared for my life, but most of all I was scared for my wife’s, and that’s what made me keep pushing.’ The boat was initially meant to hold 50 or so people. How many the boat contained, was 150.

‘The journey must have been dreadful,’ I say.

‘The journey to Australia was violent. The first night, I came to the shocking realization how vast and unmerciful the world was. I wasn’t able to sleep the first night, I was shivering uncontrollably. I wasn’t sure whether it was due to the cold winds or the thought of the enormity of the world.’

On the boat, food was rationed. Water was rationed. Any little they had was shared among 150 people. People started falling like dominoes, except they were all falling sick. Pneumonia and diarrhoea were very common. A person had already died within the first two weeks, he was immediately thrown overboard.

The tides were scathing during the night. The sun was coarse during the day. On board, vomit mixed with urine, the same way each day mixed in with the other. Kaavalan had lost track of how long they had been off land. But he knew they were just off the coast of Christmas Island when they spotted an Australian navy ship patrolling the seas. Kaavalan says he had never been happier in his life. He could hardly believe what his eyes were telling him. He honestly did not know how he had survived from eating raw fish and drinking rain water for that long.

‘Within the matter of a day, we reached Christmas Island. We finally reached Australia!’ Kaavalan raises his hand off the table and brings it smashing down on the table to add effect. He flashes a buck-tooth smile. My heart throbs with happiness, as I flash a smile back. I have noticed Kaavalan becoming more and more involved with this interview. I’ve started to warm towards him. This weak and helpless picture he brings forward is only a facade. He is a true warrior underneath.

‘First we were taken to the detention centre in Christmas Island. I didn’t know what exactly to expect from a detention centre then, but from my experiences, it was like I had gone back in time. I was back at the isolated building which the guards had brought me to.’

Detention centre was just another ersatz label which was used to hide the bareness of the term jail. Essentially, they were the same thing. 'About 2500 people were put in one big building, and it was all fenced off. Only the fence forced me to stay within the detention centre for those 2 years.' Kaavalan blinks past his strong brown eyes. His palms are facing up, and I notice a long scar scratching from the inside of his elbow to half way down his arm. It stands out quite strongly as well.

'I witnessed people go mad there. I nearly witnessed myself go mad. People came and went from that place quicker than I.' From his boat, he was one of the last people to come into the mainland. 'Once,' Kaavalan breaks, 'once, these two people started to dig their own graves in the volleyball court. I didn't know why I didn't join them.'

After the second year in the Christmas Island detention centre, Kaavalan was finally granted permission to be deported to the Melbourne detention centre. Six months later he was released into the community, given instructions to await his first trial which would determine if he was an eligible refugee. But Kaavalan found it extremely difficult to settle into his new life. Given the bridging visa, he cannot be employed, but instead should rely on the weekly Centrelink doles. He says once he has finished paying the rent, he can barely suffice paying for the rest of the week's expenses.

After one month, Kaavalan was given the shocking news. His first case to earn him a refugee status had lost. Now only one more chance remains. Until then Kaavalan is chained – restricted from an earning. If the second case was to lose again, Kaavalan would immediately be sent back.

'I can't imagine what it would be like if I go back. As an asylum seeker who fled the country, I would be imprisoned upon arrival. I would be tortured and jailed again. The hardships that I faced would amount to nothing.

'I think about my wife all the time. I don't have any idea where she is in the world.' He shifts his weight. 'I really, really hope she's okay. I want to bring her to Australia, show her what a great country Australia is once you are a free citizen. She will probably be really surprised; she has never lived in a place where she wasn't surrounded by violence.' As children, Kaavalan and his wife grew up with a civil war right outside their doorstep. 'She has also never seen an iPhone!'

'I love the Australian community; they unite to help each other out. Because I cannot work, I enjoy volunteering for Red Cross. It enables me to take my mind off my difficulties,

and it also makes me smile to see others happy, when we come to help them. I have a friend there called Margaret. She's a really nice old lady who helps me with my English. She tells me I should always be hopeful. She says she has a good feeling about my second court trial for my refugee status. But we still have to wait and see.'

I think about Kaavalan during the car journey home. I think about the war in Sri Lanka and how it has affected people like Kaavalan. It made his life spiral out of control. I had just encountered the pain, paranoia and tackiness left in the LTTE's wake. Throughout the interview, I had sat in my chair exploring the meaning of dumbstruck, rolling the word around, and around in my mind. I want to try to help Kaavalan. I want to tell him he is finally safe. Instead I simply sit, struggling to grasp the enormity of what a civil war can do.

#### *Author's Note*

I have conveyed my story in a narrative journalism style. The purpose of my piece is to bring awareness to my audience, to expose them to the hardships faced by a Tamil asylum seeker. The new Australian reform of banning boats has ignited my curiosity as to why asylum seekers seemed to come by the thousands for the government to make such a drastic decision. For my piece, I've tried to go for a simplistic approach in regards to my sentence structure and length. Not only does this enable the piece to flow easier, but readers may find it an easier read instead of tackling through a lump of text with complex wording. I envisage this piece to be found in a magazine, so I've given it features in an attempt to match the professionalism of a magazine article.



## **A Multicultural Aussie**

*By Mikayla Borchard*

My heritage is German  
Maybe Italian too  
Of course I'm mostly Aussie  
'Cause we're all a bit true blue

Sometimes I tend to wonder  
If I could bring back the dead  
Would it answer all my questions  
About exactly how I'm bred?

I feel my heart belongs in the bush  
With Ned Kelly and his mates  
I'm sorry that they had to  
Meet their gruesome fates

It could mean I'm a Koori  
Caring for the land  
Maybe I'm part bushranger  
Wouldn't that be grand?

I know I'm English too  
My great grandma came on a boat  
I've still got accent on my tongue  
And her fingers of which to gloat

I have soldier blood in me too  
My great grandpa fought in the Second World War  
Yes, he's seen the darkest times  
Like many men before

Most of them are dead now  
But I am proud to be  
A multicultural Aussie  
You can't take that from me

## **In the Name of King and Country**

*By Lily Taylor*

News broke out, war was declared  
We will fight young and old; no life will be spared.  
They left their wives, mothers and kin  
To fulfil their duties to the king.

They boarded the boat with visions of splendour  
Of lands near and far, seeking an adventure.  
They thought joining up they would see the world,  
Little did they know they would spend years in the cold.  
To a bloodstain battle, fighting to the death,  
They gave their very last breath.

No matter background, job or colour,  
We will fight in the name of valour.  
They had a constant target on their back,  
For they were a target for a sniper's attack.  
They fought at the Somme, Ypres and Loos,  
With horses, guns and the war blues.

The bodies lay row by row,  
And the poppies grow in the snow.  
We will think of them with passion and pride,  
On the roll of honour for those who died.  
We will remember them, the lives they gave,  
For our way of life they saved.

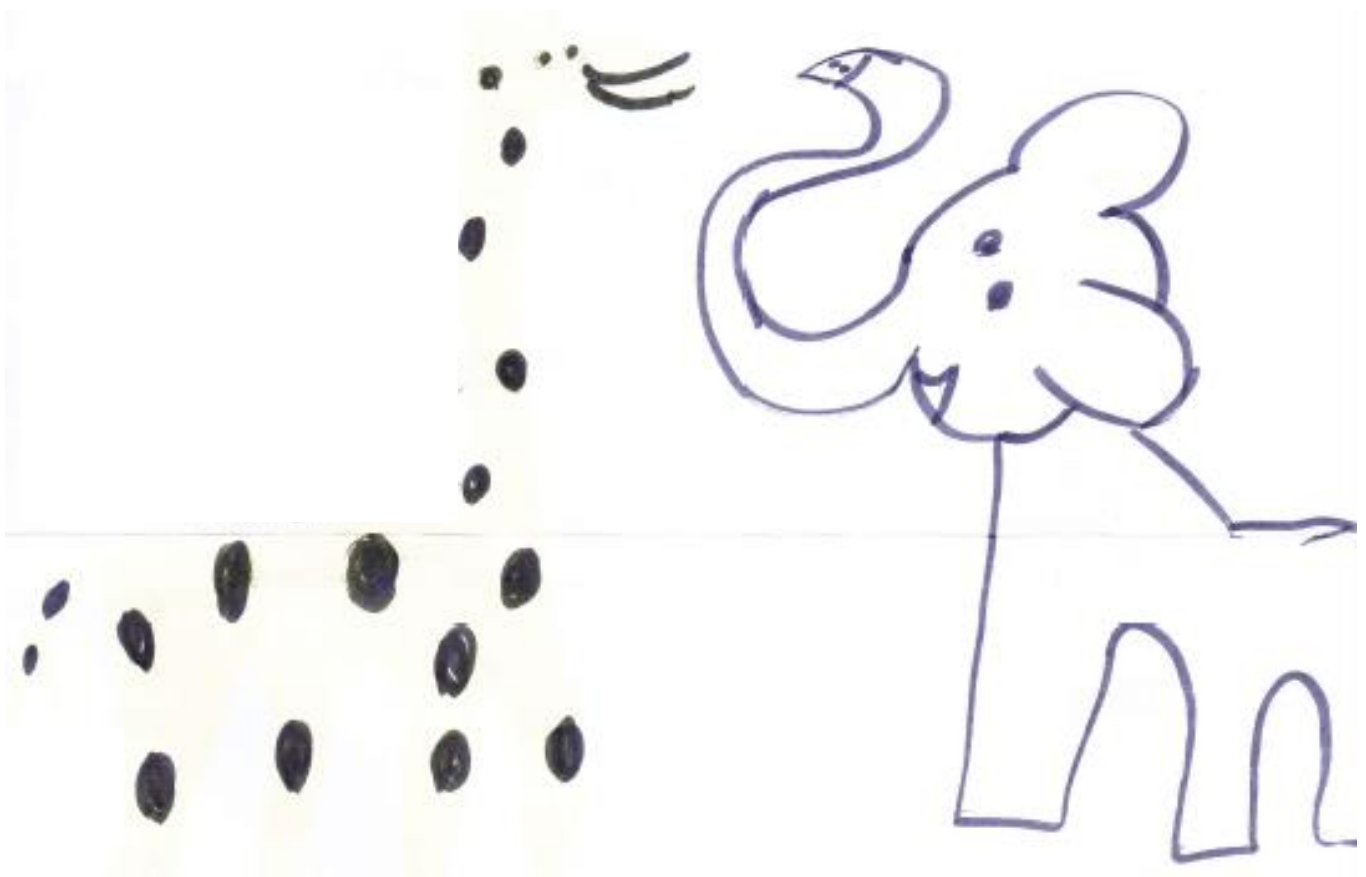
## Peace

*By Daria Yoon*

Flying on white wings  
Over the breezes of the world  
Seeing all, wise  
Observing to wait for us to learn our lesson  
Then swooping down to save us  
Always hidden away until someone finds it  
Healing those who are broken, who have seen enough  
Letting the world restore itself  
Before watching again, on currents of air  
Rarely acknowledged, weaving through history  
In a never-ending battle with war  
But it is growing tired  
Of our ignorance and stubbornness  
Why can we not see the truth?  
For we should be united as one, not making borders, building walls  
But we are still selfish, not willing to make this world a better place  
So before you go to bed tonight  
Call out to the bird of peace  
Explaining that you are willing to help humanity survive  
Because it will hear  
And silently nod  
Waiting for others to follow, as it always does.

**Giraffe's New Look**

*By Kristell Obieta*



Once upon a time Giraffe decided to join a dress up contest.

Giraffe looked in her dress up box.



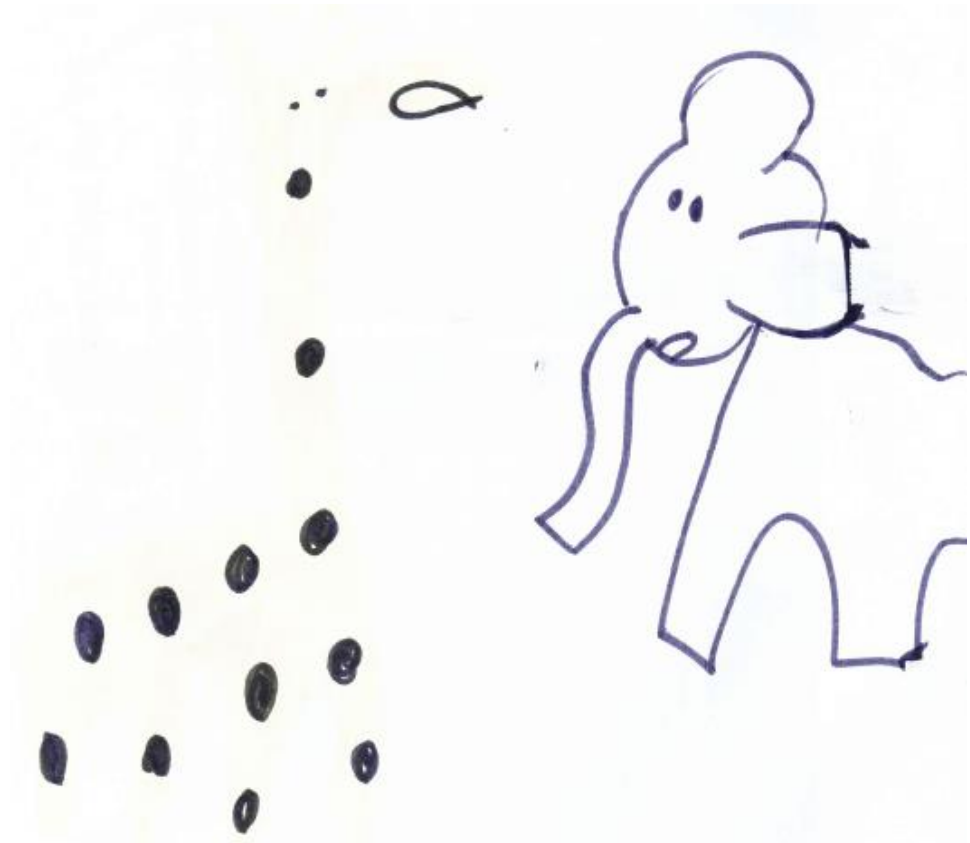
Giraffe could not find... ANYTHING!

Giraffe asked Monkey, 'Can you help?'



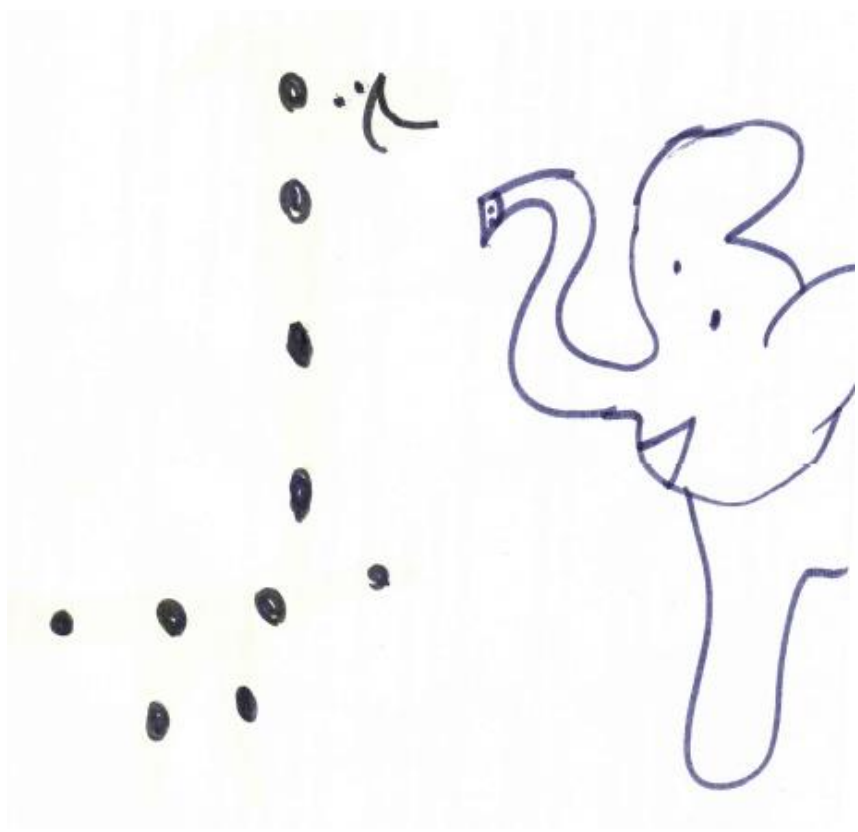
Monkey said, 'No.'

Giraffe asked Elephant, 'Can you help?'



Elephant said, 'Why don't you make your own dress up?'

Giraffe thought it was a great idea.



Giraffe got to work.



When Giraffe got to the show she looked beautiful.





## **Disaster At Sea**

*By Enuri Koralagamage*

I laid back and relaxed on a comfortable chair, reading my favourite novel when a waiter came to me and tapped on my shoulder and asked, 'would you like a drink ma'am?' I nodded my head and ordered a mango juice. My mouth quivered with pleasure as the waiter finally brought my drink to the table. I sipped on the cold and refreshing liquid; it flowed through my taste buds and trickled down my throat. The sun was smiling down at me from the expanse of cloudless, blue skies.

It was a perfect carnival of fun and a whale of a time aboard the magnificent cruise across the Pacific Ocean, going down the waterslides and playing in the gigantic and deep pools, entertaining acts in the theatre, eating the marvellous food, and gazing at the light blue ocean.

Suddenly, I heard a loud noise and then an announcement went through the speakers.

'This is your captain speaking; the ship has collided into a rock and now is descending into the Pacific!'

At the sound of those last words, everyone started racing towards the life jackets and rubber boats and made groups. They got into the boats and were sailing across the Pacific, not knowing where they were going.

The sun was scorching directly on our boat and a warm and gusty breeze was blowing my hair unheaded. I felt a sudden hit of a haunting and horrible sense of insecurity behind me. I slowly turned around and gasped in horror, nearly turning pale white as right in front of me was a huge, white, bone-chomping shark! It was now circling round the boat and opening its mouth filled with sharp teeth, ready to attack.

I gathered all my scattered impulses and formed an act of bravery. I grabbed the oar of the boat and vigorously slapped the shark several times. I was thrilled to the depths of my being that I had scared the shark off. Everyone looked at me with half breathless murmurs of amazement on their faces and started cheering.

A few hours later, the sun was staring angrily at our boat so that you could recognize colours streaming from red to blue. Everyone was extremely exhausted and felt like drinking

the sea and eating the sun. Luckily, we had spotted an island in the far distance and desperately rowed the boat as fast as our hands could towards it. We set the boat ashore and gazed breathlessly at the low volcano which wore a haze of blue and purple and steam was arising from it like a bull's nostrils.

A sense of adventure whistled through the wind. It was getting darker and darker by the hours and the moon was now sailing across the expanse of dark blue, starry sky like a ghostly galleon, so we decided to rest for the night.

We woke up, bright and early the next day, just at the crack of dawn, ready to search for food and water for breakfast. We tackled tall plants and vines, scavenged through mud and fought back at insects, especially mosquitoes. It was a full on obstacle course, but still we did not find even a speck of food or a drop of water. Sadly empty-handed, we disappointedly walked through the jungle. As we were walking through the jungle, we heard running footsteps, we turned around and out pounced a leopard! We started dashing around trees and over logs, unaware of our surroundings.

We kept on running until we finally lost track and sight of the leopard and started slowing down, we were panting heavily and took deep breaths. We finally continued our adventure. An aroma of opulent and fresh fruit pervaded the air so we walked deeper into the jungle and found an active and busy village filled with houses upon trees, opulent fruit and most importantly glorious water! The villagers stopped what they were doing and stared at us for a long time and then a wise man finally broke the silence.

'Why are you here?'

We all explained the painful series of events and they ensured us that they would build a raft so we could go home. The minute he finished everyone started working on the raft, collecting bamboo sticks and leaves, supplies to take with us.

The next day, disaster took place, the active volcano had erupted unexpectedly and now molten lava was flowing from all directions, flowing through houses, fruit and water except the raft. The villagers and passengers raced and jumped on to the raft and sailed as fast as a cheetah into the ocean. We sadly watched the island engulf in lava, leaving all the rest of the fresh fruit and most importantly all the water.

Days seemed to pass by like a train and all our supplies were gone, we sat there on the raft silently, watching the clouds in the sky and the sun which was so much brighter than it had ever been. We prayed and hoped for a miracle to appear, but when we finally thought

that all hope was gone matters got worse. The wind was howling like a werewolf and the waves were rough across the sea, it was a spectacular display of wrath.

We prayed several times and, by an act of true God, several helicopters had spotted us and were now fighting the heavy weather towards us. They shot down ladders and soon enough we were safe from the storm. We all were relieved that the harrowing experience was finally over and sooner or later we would be able to go home and see our families and friends again.

The very next day, I was aboard a plane heading to Australia, I was excited and impatient to see my parents. As I came out of the departure I found my parents and gave them a gigantic hug and started crying with immense joy. The thought that I had survived was unpredictable and incredible.

**Captain Friendly**

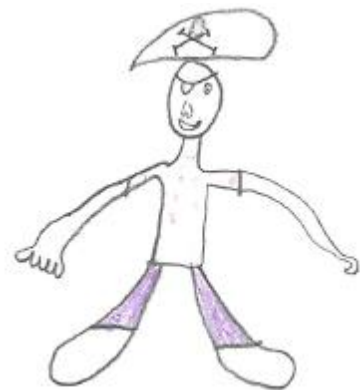
*By Abdul Rahman*



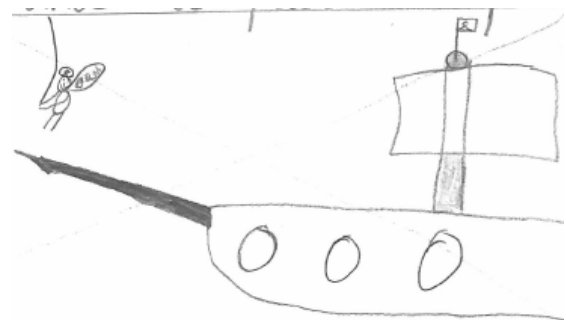
Once upon a time, there was a little friendly boy who had not dreamt anything else than being a pirate.



When he grew up, he did become a pirate, in fact he was captain. He was then called Captain Friendly the brave.



He was called Captain Friendly because he wouldn't plunder ships. One day, he was invited to a dozen ship race. For the race, Captain Friendly needed more crew and a faster ship

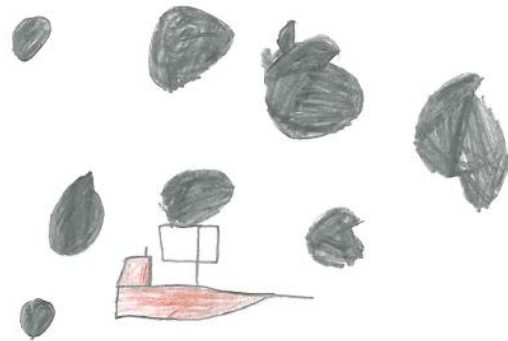


So Captain Friendly asked Pakistan, Australia and New Zealand to help. They all said yes and helped on the day the race was on.



This is what happened. When they started the race, everyone wanted to win, so they bombed each other. But they weren't able to bomb Captain Friendly's ship because he was too far ahead. All the bombing drowned six ships.

Next they entered creepy cove. Because it was really dark, one ship crashed, another ship's captain was too afraid of the dark and just jumped out of his ship. After that, only four ships were left.



The next part of the course was that they had to go past Rockyville. Captain Friendly's ship grew small and they passed easily.

Then for the next and final course, they had to go to Treasure Island and Captain Friendly won the race. He after that was the happiest Captain Friendly to sail the seven seas.



## Waves of Memories

*By Daria Yoon*

It's my fault. They tell me it isn't. All those police officers, my little sister, my mother. But I know it was me. It was my wish to visit Phillip Island for the school holidays. It's impossible to think of anything as normal as school now. I remember it clearly, even though it was a week ago. My father getting out of the car to get fuel for our trip. The entire gas station blowing up, us kids and my mother surviving, sheltering by our car. Dad. The word is painful, even now. Everything around me reminds me of him. The dark waves washing up on the beach, his grey eyes always lit up with fun. The light sand, bringing to me memories of his wavy hair. I shift a little, finding a smoother spot on the massive rock overhang that looks down on the ocean. Even this place, this beach, washes memories of happy gatherings, whispered conversations and giggles over this very spot I am sitting on in a mental barrage.

I imagine my father now, sitting by me, explaining the beautiful world around us. He had smiled at me fondly, then began, 'Aela, did you know that we rely on water as much as oxygen?' Of course, I knew, but then he went on to a beautiful description of water, running words across his tongue and adding long sentences full of magical words as clear as a river. His voice dripped with cool words swishing around me, entrancing me, drawing me closer. His words always calmed me and took me to a place only his voice could.

I wish he were with me now. I glanced at the water beneath me, in turmoil, thrashing around and swirling in jerky movements. Like me. The ocean has always been the only thing that makes me truly happy. Of course, my father came pretty close as well. But now...

I miss him.

I miss his funny jokes, his habit of running his fingers through his hair, his brilliant stories. It is my fault, and everyone knows it. I was the one to convince him to go. I was the one who needed to go to the toilet at the gas station. I was the one who went into the car and agreed with him that we should top up on petrol. All me. I wish this were a dream, that I would be shaken awake by his calloused hands, laughingly told to '*wake up, sleepyhead*'. But I know it isn't. I want to join him now, to feel his arms around me again.

The wind howls through the scrubby clawed trees, hardly shaking them. I want to let go.

Can I?

Who am I to decide?

I don't think about my family, my friends. I just walk to the edge of the rock, and I let myself fall.

*I love you, dad.*

I am thrown into the waves, but I relish the feeling of death washing over me. Everything fades away, memories spinning until they are just a blur, a last image of dad smiling at me.

*Good-bye.*

And I know that this will be my last thought alive.



## **Whiter Than White**

*By Olyvia Khaw*

The soft and silky pillow that my head always sinks in,  
The beautiful but evil cabbage butterflies that flutter around crops.  
The light and fluffy clouds that float in the sky,  
As well as the yummy and squishy marshmallows that swirl on hot chocolate.  
A lady's satin dress with butterflies that are embroidered on it,  
The cold but wonderful snow that showers the Alpine Mountains.  
An Edelweiss flower that is bright and minute,  
As well as a carton of freshly made milk from the local dairy farmers.  
A cup of thoroughly sifted flour that a cook would use for all kinds of purposes,  
A swan's feather that slowly drifts from place to place.

## Grey Walls

By Mahela Meera Mohanadas

I am in my cell. Sitting silently. Observing, the haunting grey walls of the room that had so quickly become my new home. Fingers of darkness were spread out across the floor, as if trying to entrap me and drag me into their lair. These thoughts would usually have made me uneasy, but I have grown used to the darkness' cold touch. I now find comfort when wrapped in it. *Comfort*. The word is foreign to most who live in these walls of which overlook us. They feel about as forgotten as the warmth of the Sun. Most here had pleaded innocent, I was one of the rare few who pleaded guilty. *Why did you do that?* Is a question I hear most often. A question that I'm answering now.

I had been walking down a road, one I hadn't walked down before. Yet I was looking forward to the reward that awaited me. Only the reward had changed significantly when I saw the blurred lights of red, white and blue behind me, speeding to catch up. It was a race. The race I had lost before it had even started, but I hadn't given up. No. I had to give them a challenge. Only minutes before had I been the hunter but, now, I am the *hunted*.

I had formed an alliance with the darkness. It encompassed me, shielding me from the ones that followed in pursuit. I ran. Shadows danced past me, occasionally lending a helping hand. Streetlights dashed around me. I had thought of calling for backup, but that would have created unwanted *complications*. Complications that wouldn't last long, but nevertheless would somehow end up affecting *us*. I took a right down an alley that held little to no light. I halted, pulling out my phone, and took out its sim while looking around the rats nest. Rubbish littered the cracked floor, the supposed path now obscured by putrid smelling obstacles. I flicked my sim to the side, now I was *alone*. Alone, with nothing but my thoughts to *comfort* me. Something they didn't do. The black of the night surrounded me. I closed my eyes, allowing myself to see the scene that happened only moments before...

*11. 12. 13. 14. Wait. 13.* I thought to myself backtracking towards the house I'd just passed. I gazed upon the house, taking in its sight. Eucalyptus trees flanked its sides. It held a welcoming look; however it was going to be anything but to me. I walked through the black metal gates, and up the cemented steps. I was taking my time, as after all, I wasn't the

one in trouble. I rang the doorbell. Seconds later it was opened by a man, who looked to be in his late-forties. He eyed me suspiciously.

'What?' he'd questioned, in a harsh voice.

'I think it's best if you were to invite me into your home. After all I am *his* messenger,' I had responded, amused.

He let me in, which was probably his biggest mistake. He pulled me into the living room. 'Tell *him* the money will be transferred in two days' time,' he had stated.

'Sorry sir, no can do. *He* gave me specific orders,' I had replied, whilst reaching for the gun, that was tucked into the waistband of my jeans. I aimed it at him. 'No hard feelings, yeah?'

*Bang!* There was now a hole in his chest. Blood cascaded down, slowly forming a pool of blood. He collapsed to the floor, gasping for breath, his face beheld a look of disbelief and shock. He stared at me, recognition flashed through his hazel eyes. He held me with a gaze that screamed hatred and a twinge of sadness. I watched as he drew his last dying breath. His blood was splattered onto the floor as if Picasso had painted it. I took one last look at his lifeless body before stepping out the front door.

...The dull thud of footsteps break me out of my daydream. They were treading closer, I had less than a few minutes to decide on what to do. Shall I live the rest of my life looking over my shoulder? Or shall I turn myself in? I debated. Yet what had happened hadn't been my choice. I had wasted precious time thinking about choices I'd never make. *Bang!* 'Stop! It's the police, freeze!' I didn't freeze. In fact I didn't stop either. Instead I ran, ran for my life. I took of down the rats nest looking for an exit, only to find a dead end. *Lovely, I've always wanted to get arrested in an area covered in rat faeces,* I thought to myself. 'Hands where we can see them!' I complied with their wishes.

I don't regret killing that man, or rather that despicable excuse for a human being. He deserved it. I had pleaded guilty to make it a point; he deserved to die. This is where I pause, allowing the audience to a few moments to ponder on how I knew that man. There was a reason as to why he had recognized me, even it had only been for a second. It had been 6 years since the incident, but a son never forgets. No, he doesn't; and he definitely doesn't when his mother never woke up. I allow a grim smile to cross over my face. I had enacted revenge, a revenge that I will never forget. I suppose that was my reward all along. To kill the man who took my mother away from me. To bring about a sense of justice.

I observe the bars of my jail cell. In a way, I am thankful for them. It reminds me of the corruption that exists in the world. The laws that will never change. The wrong people of whom are protected. Just like the man I killed. My mothers' death was no accident, yet it was swept under the carpet. That mans' death was no accident, and I was thrown in jail. *Corruption*. That was the difference between me and the man. He had been *important*. I had made my point by killing him. Now, I felt *complete*. I lie in my bed, staring at the ceiling. My eyelids droop on their own accord, the darkness overtaking my vision. I will *never regret* what I did, and you will *never regret* what you did either my fellow cellmate. We have done different things, and had different reasons for what we did, but we both had felt we needed to do it. Then I allowed sleep to take over.

**The Big Fat Cat**

*By Aaron Massari*



The big fat cat sat on the mat.



The big fat cat wore a cool hat.



The big fat cat liked the kids' pats.



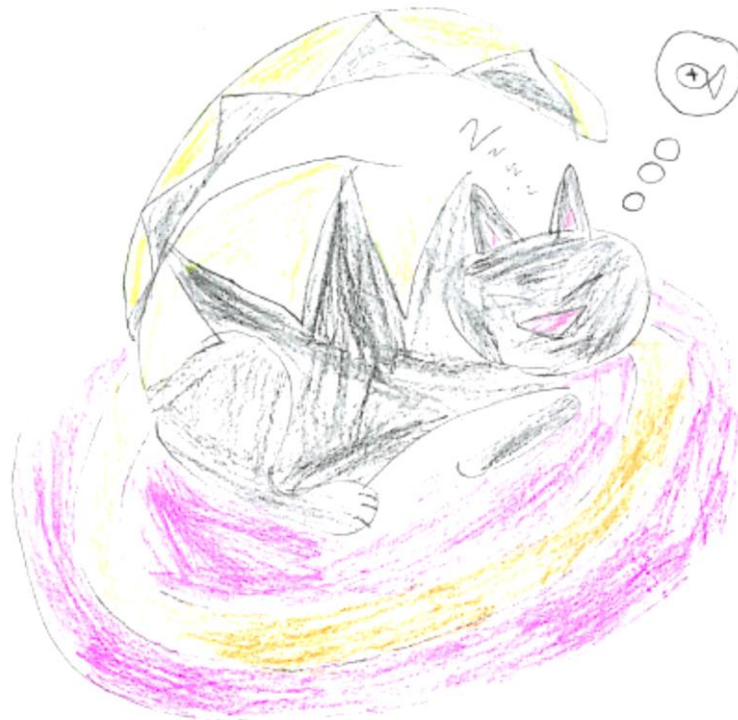
The big fat cat caught a rat.



The big fat cat ate that rat.



The big fat cat that sat on the mat. That wore a cool hat. That liked the kids' pats. That caught a rat. That ate that rat. Curled up in a ball on the mat. And had a long nap.





## You Have One Hour. Don't Touch the Walls.

By Kym Yaniv

Lying on my left arm, I woke. My bed felt hard and stony. Like gravel. I could feel the daylight warm on my eyelids. It shone through the window curtain, almost blinding my closed eyes. As I adjusted to the light, the faint sound of birds tweeting comforted me. My eyes opened.

I thought my eyes had become accustomed to the light, but I guess not, because as the sunshine came rushing in, I shut them closed again. It was brighter than usual. *Much* brighter than usual. It was like my bed had decided to place itself right next to the sun. I chose to confirm my theory.

My eyes reopened, once again letting in the dazzling daylight. But instead of seeing my bedroom ceiling, I saw a wall. A murky green wall. *Did Mum paint my walls overnight? Why did she choose that colour,* I wondered. I felt a wave of anger blast through my body. *She never asks my opinion on anything!*

Great. Just great. I had woken on the wrong side of bed again. I looked down at my sleeping position. I was lying on my left arm. Left. All my bad days start with a numb left arm. All of them. So I turned over and rested of my right arm. I thought that on this side, I might see a plain white wall, but no. The ugly puke colour took over that wall too.

Then, as I looked at my position again, I saw it. I saw my bed. Well, I saw what wasn't my bed. I was lying on cold, hard gravel... without a blanket, or a pillow. Then I saw something even more astonishing. The walls. The walls were about two metres apart from each other. And then I realised where I was. I wasn't in my bed and I wasn't in my room. I wasn't even in my house. I was out in the sunny open.

I leaped vigorously to my feet. That was a mistake. Now my soles had gravel imprinted on them. But I could fuss about that later - first I had to find out where in hell I was!

I took a few steps forward, but I realised I was at a dead end. I spun round. It looked like a dead end too, but when I actually got to the other side, it turned out to be an intersection. 'If there are two ways to go, which way is the right way?' I mumbled to myself.

Aha! The *right* way! I rotated to my right and started walking. I didn't even look back. After all, the left side is always the wrong side. Even in bed.

So, even though I went through the right side, I still had no clue of where I was. Surprisingly, it took me a whole two minutes to figure it out. *What sort of place has a bunch of paths leading to dead ends?* You think I'm an idiot now, don't you? I thought I was an idiot for a second there too. That's right - a maze. A flippin' *maze*, has a bunch of walls leading to dead ends. Of course it does.

And just when I figured that out, I saw something that caught my attention. A plate of wood? - No - a sign. *If I'm lucky, it might tell me where to go*, I thought. But, I think you've noticed by now, that it wasn't my lucky day. So to answer your question, no, the sign did not tell me where to go. Instead it told me something that sent a cold shiver down my spine; 'You have one hour. Don't touch the walls.'

Above the sign was an electronic billboard. It said: '01:00:00 - Your time starts now.' But just as I had finished reading the last word, it changed. '00:59:59 - Your time has started.'

*Don't touch the walls? What's wrong with the walls?* I was confused. Then I noticed what the walls were really made of. Ugly puke coloured ivy. Very fine, precisely cut bushes of ivy. Aha! *Don't touch the walls* - they're made of ivy. *Poison ivy*, I was guessing. *Why else wouldn't you want someone to touch them?*

So, I was very careful for the next few minutes. I'm guessing it was about ten. Maybe fifteen. I kept my body straight and upright, and I always took the right turn at an intersection. If the intersection didn't have a right, I would continue straight ahead. I didn't go left once - not *once!* Until there was an unusual intersection. It had two ways to go - right and left. Of course, I started going right, but then I saw something that made me stop in my tracks.

*What was it*, you might ask. Oh, I'll tell you what it was... spikes. Yes, that's right. *Spikes*. In the *gravel*. As if *that* was necessary. So I turned left. That decision, well, I guess you could say it pricked a hole in my luck. Huh. Well, it was good enough for me that it didn't prick a hole in my *foot*, like it would've if I'd gone through the right intersection.

A few meters in front of me I saw another sign. No, it was another billboard. '00:43:32 - Sudden change of heart?' It was talking about why I went left. It was *mocking*

me. Then the writing sunk into my head. '00:43:13'. I'd already been doing this for seventeen minutes! *No, this is enough*, I thought to myself. That's when I started to run.

This time, though, I turned left at every intersection. *Sudden change of heart. I'll show you a sudden change of heart!* I was starting to huff and puff, hence why I began to slow down. But I was still going very fast. And that's why I tumbled. My handy footwork had had a sudden change of heart too. I could feel the cold air whooshing against my bare face. I could feel my feet lifting off the ground in what felt like slow motion. I could feel my hand touch the base of the ivy plant as I tried to break my fall.

Four words flashed across my mind - 'Don't touch the walls.' Crap! My hand had floated past my body and onto the ivy. The *poison* ivy. My hand was now starting to swell. It was inflating like a balloon. My knees were grazed and blood was flowing down my leg. The swelling was starting to hurt. *Really* hurt. My hand looked terrible, but it hurt even more. Hang on! Something was happening to the ivy. Something strange.

The ivy was moving. It was making a passageway. A teeny, tiny, ultra-small passageway. *How did that happen*, I wondered. *What changed since the ivy started creating the passageway? I was running and then I fell. I got hurt. No, it can't be that – I was hurt when I was running, because of the gravel. So I was running, then I fell, then I accidentally touched the ivy, and then I got up. Wait. I accidentally touched the ivy.*

By now the ivy had stopped moving. The passageway was tiny. I would barely be able to fit my inflated hand through it. I sighed. Then my train of thought continued. *Hang on. If I touched the ivy and then it started making a passageway, maybe I can touch it again to make it bigger! So hang on again. I thought the sign was trying to keep me safe. But all along it just didn't want me to escape.*

I reached out my bloated hand and rubbed it against the ivy. I was right. The passageway got bigger. It got bigger and larger and bigger again. But it wasn't big or large enough. My hand was now the size of a basketball. But I touched the ivy again, subsequently making my hand more swollen than I thought it could be.

I squeezed through the slightly large passageway on my right. I could just make out what was on the other side. A beautiful, long footpath made of glass mosaics and topped with rose-petals. But before I went any further, I popped my head back into the maze. 'Thirty-six minutes and twenty-three seconds to go. You think *that* was a challenge? Try

eating my Mum's special recipe for macaroni and cheese,' I said, as I checked how much time I had left on the billboard.

Do you want to know where the footpath led me? You do, don't ya'? It took me straight back to my bedroom. I never thought that my bedroom could be so warm and cozy, so soft and comfy, but most of all, so at home. As I stepped into the room, the footpath disappeared and my room was back to normal.

I opened my bedroom door. 'Mum! Lisa! Where are you?'

'Isaac? What are doing up so early?' My mum poked her head out the doorway.

'Mum! I went to another place. It was like a maze and it trapped me. I didn't know what to do, and then I fell and grazed my knee, and my hand got puffy 'cause it touched the poison ivy, which wasn't actually poisonous, and it was actually the way out and Mum! I was so scared. In fact, I was terrified.' I was running out of breath, so I took a moment to find my voice.

'Sweetie, we all have bad dreams, it's nothing to sweat about. And your knee and hand look fine to me. I'm going back to bed.' And with that, her head disappeared into the darkness.

I stood at my bedroom door, dumbfounded. *Was it really all just a dream?* I looked down at my hand. It wasn't puffy. If anything, it was a bit skinnier than usual. Then I gazed at my knee. My blood-filled knee. Maybe Mum couldn't see it because she was still in her sleepy mode, and she didn't open her eyes properly. Yeah, that was probably it. But I needed to convince someone that I wasn't lying.

'Lisa,' I whispered. 'Come on, sis.' No reply. 'Lisa,' I raised my voice a bit. Still nothing. I realised she was probably still asleep and couldn't hear me. I turned back into my room and decided I should get some rest. But then I saw her. Lisa was holding a whiteboard marker. She had written something on my whiteboard. 'You have one hour. Don't touch the walls.'

'Isaac, is yow knee ok? It wooks a bit bwoody.'

## **The Trade of the Thinking Man**

*By Mia Lo Russo*

I was born into the trade of the thinking man  
Where pretention is a medal

If dimes were self interest  
And dollars expectations  
Then consider me rich  
For it's the currency of greatness

My hands will only ever become grubby  
With the grand mess of greed

My uniform is composed of many important items:  
Tough work boots  
Crafted from premium leather  
Designed for the gruelling task of stomping out the competition

Collars so sharp  
They cut the  
Tongues  
Of those who object

Ties tied tight,  
Like nooses of responsibility

Hand cuffed links.

## Revenge

*By Amelia Nienaber*

You tread carefully the first time. It takes you a few weeks to find him, to watch and to choose the perfect moment. Then, when you have it all set up in your mind, you creep into his life and snatch him away. You make him yours.

It all goes well, maybe a little too well because you hesitate. It's only for a minute, no more, but he sees the haunting question in your eyes and hope blossoms on his perfectly tanned, flawless face. It's beautiful, mesmerising even, it has to stop.

All second thoughts, the regret and the uncertainty shatter as if a gunshot had sounded. Maybe it did.

No.

You prefer to be the last thing he sees.

You make it quick, he doesn't plead or scream or cry. As you take a lock of his beautiful, curly blonde hair your need, your want, your desire, is filled.

\*\*\*

*Whoever did this must have planned ahead. The location, the time, the way the victim died, is not impulsive or personal.*

*It's organised.*

*The victim lies in the corner of the room, limbs fling out as if he had struggled or fallen backwards after the suspect had slashed his wrists and peppered his bare torso with hundreds of tiny little cuts.*

*21 years of age, an enthusiastic surfer, a uni student, tanned from hours on the beach, blue eyes and a mass of blond curls, this boy didn't have enemies. He wasn't involved with drugs, didn't sleep around, didn't drink.*

*So why was he killed? Why was he attacked in the early hours of the morning after his every day surf session and left to be found by his mates who had only been minutes late to pick him up for breakfast? More importantly, why didn't he fight back?*

\*\*\*

This time it's easier. The other handfuls of clumsy first trials are over and you're tired of playing games.

This time finding him isn't a problem. You don't have to trail him longer either before he makes a mistake.

Now, you come up alongside him as he packs a heavy crate beside the café's back door. When he notices you he smiles apologetically and points back down the ally. Your forehead crinkles and you tilt your head slightly as if you don't understand. Then, as he steps closer to explain that the quiet corner cafe isn't open yet, you lodge the blade between his ribs and watch the look of surprise enter his eyes then turn to horror and, finally, fear. His scream is cut short by the sharp steel, you close his dull eyes and decorate his muscled arms with crimson stains.

It calms your need, your want, but clearly not enough.

You don't have time now, but you will, soon.

The blonde lock, as always is taken with.

You know who's next, you can wait a little longer.

\*\*\*

*The sight isn't as gruesome as others have been. The culprit knew they didn't have the leisure of time. There's only to stab wounds, one to catch him off guard the other to kill, though his arms are covered with small cuts. That's what gives the culprit away.*

*It's the same suspect, the murderer of five other young men. The MO is definitely theirs; using a knife, killing a boy in his early twenties, blonde hair, blue eyes, still in uni, athletic. This one skis.*

*First was the surfer, then the cyclist, the swimmer, the hiker, the abseiler.*

*No one struggles, they all die quickly. More importantly, none of them had enemies.*

*The culprit is getting better, but they're getting edgy. The murders are quick and closely spaced. Whoever is doing this is looking for someone specific, they want something and there's no telling if they've found it yet.*

*The biggest question on the force right now, who are they searching for?*

\*\*\*

You're upset now. The one that you want, the reason you've practised his fate and played it out so many times before, has been removed from the case. Your case.

He didn't show up to your most recent scene and you heard the others talking about it. They all look like him, live like him, someone was bound to figure it out eventually. You're surprised it took them so long.

You were starting to have fun, twisting tails and watching them sniff around your creations like hounds.

What makes it worse is that your newest creation, the one he didn't come to see, wouldn't play the game right.

He begged, pleaded, then threatened you, he tried to escape, he gave you a split lip. So you took your time.

No matter, the one you want is next, you've decided. He deserves to pay for what he did. His time has come. It will all be over soon.

\*\*\*

*Taken off the case. The culprit's MO changing. It can't be a coincidence. It has to connect.*

*They're looking for someone and it's scary how similar the victims look. Nobody knows who the culprit will seek out next, the Chief has a pretty good idea though, which is why she's trying to save his life.*

*However, the killer is gaining confidence and their murders are brutal, cold hearted acts.*

*The newest body is by far the worst, at least that's what the officers allowed to see it had said. This victim changed the rules, he fought and the killer didn't like that, so they made a mess of him.*

*The killer has found who they're looking for now, but the other detectives don't know why they've chosen this target.*

*Maybe it has something to with the sweet girl whose life had drained away because of his actions, until nothing but the tender memories were left behind. Maybe they're jealous of his career, his look, his life. Whatever it was he was certain he hadn't done anything to deserve the spotlight.*

*I should know. If Chief is right, I'm the next victim.*

\*\*\*

You have him in your sight now. His perfect build, his tanned skin, his wavy blond hair. His ocean blue eyes meet yours and he knows what's going to happen.

You're going to make a mess of him, make him pay for walking away from what he had done to her without a second glance back. Without pausing for just a second to see if it had taken an effect on anyone other than her. For acting like he didn't know about you.



His steady gaze, however, tells you that he's not going down without a say in what happens. He's going to fight until the very end.

For a second you falter, what if he had a reason, would you want to know what it was?

No.

You're too far gone now, there's no possible way you could turn back.

Either way, only one of you will make it out, and you sacrificed everything a long time ago.

## **A Painful Memory**

*By Natasha Shapova*

When you're with her do you remember me?  
Or the quiet whipping of the sea?  
The crumbling sand barricading us from each other  
The uneven crevices of my skin when you made me quiver

Perhaps you remember my smell  
Showering you in department stores that want to sell  
Do you take a sample of my favourite perfume  
And spray it on your own clothes like I used to?

Do you walk alone at night and remember  
The breathless tension we had between each other?  
The suspense of an awaiting kiss  
Stiffened between us with a persuasive hiss

Do you walk by the river with her  
And remember that night we sat by it, intertwined, like a blur?  
Decorating each other's necks in painted bruises, the colour of sunsets  
Swallowed by an aroma of old and burnt out cigarettes

Do you embrace her and feel my silk hair cascading between your hands?  
Do I ever haunt your nightmares?  
Do you pretend that it is still you and I  
Twisted amongst the grass, observing the sky?

Or have you moved on with her?  
Have you really learnt to not hurt?  
Or are you just using her for fun?  
Taking advantage of the years, while you're still young

But I still remember how we used to be  
Swamped in dramatic conversations, drinking tea  
I still wish we were what we used to be  
But I know that too much time separates us now for you to remain the same to me

## **Façade**

*By Amelia Nienaber*

It's all too easy  
Twist your lips and smile  
Force the air past your throat  
Let the laughter last a little while

It's easy to avoid the problems  
Hide behind your porcelain mask  
Busy your time, your life, your mind  
This way they don't have time to ask

What happens when, in your façade,  
You stumble and fall  
The mask drops and shatters  
A thousand million little pieces in all

You can't hide behind it anymore  
No more waiting 'til none of it matters  
The tears won't wait for anyone  
What happens when the mask shatters?

When your world is falling apart  
Because you hid what held you mired  
And the Truth you fought to hide  
Because the truth is you're scared

You don't want to be alone  
You want someone to hold you tight  
Someone to tell you everything will be okay  
Even when you know he's out of sight

You're terrified  
And you don't understand why  
Nobody else can see through  
Your little white lie

## Falling...

*By Libby Knights*

I told you I loved you,

But you didn't believe so.

I wanted you to open your heart,

But you told me you had to go.

I can see the hurt in your eyes,

When the one you loved said goodbye.

You're now built up like a wall,

Stretching to the sky, so very tall

You were used and broken,

How could this be true?

That someone who you loved,

Didn't love you.

You were falling, falling,

From the sky

Never knowing,

How and why

But I will catch you,

From where you fall

Because I now know,

I will always be there through it all

## **Footscray Market**

*By Anne Quan*

The automatic doors slide open at my presence. Immediately, I'm hit with an explosion of noise and aromas. It's all too familiar. I tread carefully across the slippery floor with bits of mushy fruit and vegetables smeared across the tiles. My eyes can't seem to concentrate; there's movement in all directions. My pupils keep wandering around but can't catch everything, it's all too much. People knock past, some brush past, some squirm past and some simply push past.

The grocery store is packed with large shelves of goods. The atmosphere smells sweet and sticky. There are people bending over the fruits, their hands racing past the goods, as they conduct their test to see which ones are good enough to buy. There's a long line at the cash register full of impatient customers, all squirming their heads around to check if the line was shortening. The lady at the cash register was like a machine. Her hands moved fast, weighing the bags of produce, packing it into bags whilst chatting casually to the customers, in a language I'd recognise anywhere but just can't make sense of.

There was also the man with his glass cabinet of eggs. Cartons of eggs piled on top of each other behind the glass. His voice was booming, piercing the chatter of customers. He walks around his stall and yells again and again trying to sell his eggs. Everyone hears his voice alright, but ignores and continues their shopping.

As I continue to walk straight ahead, the fruity aroma changes into a horrible raw stench. I always hold my breath and breathe through my mouth as the corridor of raw meat welcomes me. Customers crowd around the glass coffins of meat. Some poke their fingers against the glass, demanding the best piece of beef. The workers slide opens the glass doors and crouch into the cabinet with their gloved hands to collect the customers' choice. Others have their heads swerving around the glass searching for their desired meats. The workers behind the counter reach over on top of the glass bench to collect the notes and coins from the customers.

I spot the seafood stall, with its display of blue tubs of fresh seafood. It always smells like the ocean there, but a little more on the fishy side. There's a glass tank of fish with metallic grey skin swimming around frantically. The stall owner is always in his blue apron,

standing proud in his black boots and holding his net, ready to draw out the piece of seafood that has caught your eye. Suddenly, a customer at the stall chooses a crab. He carefully reaches into the tub and pulls out a crab with a dirty brown shell. The crab probably knows its fate when its legs wiggle pointlessly with its body chained by orange plastic string, as it is lowered into a bag.

I continue my journey through the busy Footscray Market, when I finally arrive at the most crowded spot yet. It takes more effort to lift my feet off the ground because of the stickiness that grips my shoes, which tells me I'm in the fruit section of Footscray Market. My mum begins to disappear into the crowd. I walk quickly to keep her in my sight, but it's hard when there's a gang of people washing through the corridor into your direction. Finally, the free buffet awaits me. There are plates of nectarines, mandarins, oranges, grapes and so on, sitting on top of piles of fruits, ready for customers to pick and taste. I see customers picking up apples from the pile and turning it around in their hand, examining its quality. Others are quietly scanning the grapes and secretly taking one and popping it in their mouth for a quick taste test. Some people hold tomatoes in their hands testing for their firmness; some are sniffing at the porcupine-like durians to see if they're sweet and some are waving the Choy Sum around searching for any unneeded yellow leaves.

Footscray Market sure is an interesting place, gathering some of the most intelligent customers. The customers all come in with a great knowledge of food and their skilful ways of testing for the best produce. This place had always amazed me with its people and functionality.

## In The Bush

*By Jade Chitty*

The Stone family were on a walk in Trentham, Victoria. They walked along a stony path with lots of trees and bushes.



Later down the track, the path split. There were no signs just two paths leading in different directions.

'Which way do we go?' asked Will.

'This way,' Dad said, pointing to the left path.





The paths were full of mud and rocks. Ruby came across a cute fluffy koala. The family was amazed.



The koala was sitting on the ground, looking upset. Ruby stood near it, going to touch the animal but Mum stopped her. Dad saw she had a gash on her leg. Ruby pulled her old scarf off her neck to wrap around the koala's leg.



Mum had her phone out, trying to call the local vet.

'There is no signal out here!'

'If we walk another 500 metres, we are in Lyonsville,' Dad said.

The family lifted up the heavy animal and walked to the local vet.



They walked in the vet's, holding the creature carefully. The lady at the front desk took them straight to emergency.





The doctor explained the koala has a broken leg.

'Do you want to name the koala?' asked the vet.

'Sure!'

'We normally name animals after the founder and where they were found.'

'What about Ruby Trentham!' requested Will.

'Awesome name,' said the vet.



The family got welcomed into the room. Ruby Trentham looked a little worried. The vet sat her on a comfy seat to relax.



After a few days in the vet, the doctors returned Ruby Trentham back to the forest.



The next time the Stone family had a walk in Trentham, they made sure they visited her.





Wilderness Wombat Adventure

*By Emma Chitty*



'Come on Wanda, you will get lost!' Wanda's mum yelled out. Wanda loves finding new places to wander around.



She's got a mother, a father and a brother. Their names are Winy, William and Wilfred.





Wanda went for a walk with her family. Wanda was way behind them. Then Wanda started following footprints. They led to a river, then they stopped.



Wanda slept next to the tree. Wanda was wondering, 'Am I going to stay in the forest all by myself forever?' It was a cold night and Wanda survived.



In the morning, Wanda was going tree to tree.

'Mum. Mum can you hear me.'

She jumped over the river, jumped over the tree stump.

Wanda just remembered that when you're at the tree stump, you are almost home.



Wanda found this other animal, it looked hurt. It was a koala. Wanda picked it up and took it with her. Wanda climbed some rocks. She had to go up this big high hill with mud.





Wanda looked up.

'Mum, Dad, Wilfred, you're ok. I found this koala that was hurt.'

Winy, Wanda's mum, fixed him up.



So they walked the koala back.



Winy looked back and...

...Wanda wasn't there!



'Oh Wanda!'



The Magic Drink Bottle

By Harini Senthilkumar



'Wow!' I said to myself. 'Ok finders, keepers. I, Jodi, claim this as mine!' I proudly announced, laughing halfway through. I'd just found this fantastic drink bottle. It was violet with pink flowers on it. I felt love at first sight.

I've always been a believer. I believed in everything. Good, bad, evil, magic and just about everything else. You might think I'm weird, but I was sure there was magic in it. I jogged over to the kitchen to wash it out and show Mum. 'Wow, that's lovely!' exclaimed Mum, when she saw it. 'Thanks!' I replied, grinning. Then I rushed up to my room to have my first sip.

'Yuck!' I spat it out. I looked at the content. I filled it up from the kitchen tap, which obviously doesn't come out with my least favourite drink, orange juice! I poured out the disgusting content and filled it up with some fresh water. I had another sip. It was cranberry juice. How, was the only word I could hear. But I kept drinking and now it was raspberry soda. I couldn't quite believe it, but I'd formulated an outcome. This was a magical drink bottle that changes drinks every so often.

I started using my drink bottle every day and the only person I told was my best friend, Clarissa. Everything was great until one day when I tried to drink out of my bottle, it didn't work! I'd left it and came back later to try it out again. No! I almost screamed in frustration. A big rush of questions hit me. Why wasn't it working? What happened? I rushed into my room and searched it up.





I didn't expect any good answers but I found an image of this old, worn-down shop which said 'Fuels, everything and anything!' I knew I couldn't find it on my own so I called Clarissa and asked her to help me.

The next day we set off to find the shop. First we checked the main plaza. Then we checked the other ones. As we went into the fifth one, we saw this tiny worn-down shop and sure enough it said 'Fuels, everything and anything!' We rushed in and rang the bell.

'Hello, come inside. I love the sight of new customers!' greeted this weird little man. He was short with dark spikey hair and twinkly green eyes. We told him our situation quickly.

'Ok, how much are you going to pay?' he asked, eyeing us up and down suspiciously.

'20 bucks ok for you?' I asked, getting my purse out.

'I can't be sure without seeing the object,' he replied, looking at my bag that Clarissa was holding for me. I took it out and showed him and he suddenly gasped, his eyes wide open.

'Um, sorry, I think the phone's ringing. I'll be back in a few minutes or so,' he mumbled.

'Clarissa, I didn't hear a phone ring. Did you?' I asked Clarissa, turning around.

'No, but maybe he's making one. Let's spy on him!' whispered Clarissa.

My face lit up instantly. 'What a great idea!' I replied, laughing. 'Follow me,' I said, tip-toeing across to the room the man went into.



'Put your ear to the door and we can easily hear his conversation,' I whispered.

'Ok,' said Clarissa.

'I can't believe those dumb little kids have the bottle. I'll tell them to come back after a few days and I'll quickly move out and bring the bottle to you. Is that ok? I've left them outside, so I'd better get back to them otherwise they're going to know something's up. Ok, bye, and don't worry, everything will be how we've wanted it,' the man said on the phone.

'Quick, go back!' I whisper-shouted to Clarissa. We rushed back quickly and pretended to look at the paintings he had on the wall.

'Ok girls, the bottle's fuel needs to be shipped from our other branch so I can only refill it two or three days later, unfortunately,' lied the shopkeeper.

'Ok goodbye, we'll come back on the weekend. Is that alright?' I asked, while trying to see if the bottle was anywhere to be seen. It wasn't, but I knew how to get it back from this stupid crook.

'Clarissa, I need to talk to you. Follow me,' I whispered to Clarissa. 'Listen, we know he has the bottle and we need to get it back before he takes it to that guy he was talking to. Ok, I have a plan; listen carefully,' I whispered, looking down. 'Ok first, we need to tell our parents where we are. We can each tell them we're sleeping at the other person's place. They won't suspect anything because we're both super responsible basically all the time. Then we'll hide here, spy on him and get the bottle back. He probably filled it already. Ok?' I whispered.





‘Yes, now we can quickly do the phone calls and then we can start up our plan,’ Clarissa whispered back. So I quickly rang up my mum and told her I was at Clarissa’s place. Then Clarissa did the same. Next, me and Clarissa looked for a hiding place. We decided to split up and when I came back to look for her, she was nowhere to be seen until she rang me on her mobile. She’d found such a fantastic hiding spot! I jumped in and sneakily peeked out and I could see the crook’s big suitcase and small duffel bag. A sudden thought hit me. I knew where the bottle was. Since Clarissa was faster than me, I gave this mission to her. ‘Clarissa, get the bag and run! Do you get this? Go, you can do this!’ I whispered to Clarissa. ‘Ok,’ said Clarissa, nervously. She quickly rushed in and got the bag and ran like the wind while signalling me with her fingers.



We both ran like crazy until we reached our safe zone. Then she chucked the bottle bag at me and both of us went back to our own house thinking of good explanations in our heads. When I got home, I told my parents I’d felt a bit sick so I’d walked home quickly. They were a bit mad and they grounded me for a week but at least I had my precious drink bottle back. I took it out from the bag and filled it up with water. Then I had a slow sip with my eyes screwed up and... it worked! It was giving me delicious strawberry soda! I quickly opened up my cell and rang up Clarissa. ‘Really! That’s great Jodi!’ She squealed when I told her. I knew I’d have to find a way to refill it again but right now I couldn’t be bothered to worry about that. I was so happy to have my bottle back and everything was getting back to normal.



## **Marina and the Frog**

*By Anika Choubey*

Marina was a very famous jungle explorer. She lived in London but she went to lots of jungles to explore animals and nature. One day she went to a jungle named the Atfos jungle.

As she was walking quietly in the jungle, she spotted a frog crying under a lonely shaded tree. She asked, 'What happened little frog, why are you crying?'

The frog replied, 'My family and friends cannot go to the river to drink water and swim there. A great big snake wanders around it with two of his friends who help him catch the frogs who come to the river. Some frogs get so thirsty that they cannot resist and go to the river and they get eaten. If those snakes keep living there, how can we drink water then?'

Marina said, 'Don't worry little frog, we will work this problem out. Don't worry.'

So Marina and the little frog started thinking about a plan to teach the snakes a lesson.

Suddenly, Marina shouted, 'I got it!'

So Marina told the frog her plan and after that both of them started walking towards the river. What could the plan be?

Marina was hiding behind the tree while little frog stood a bit scared, near the river. It was not long before Marina and little frog heard a snake's hissing 'sss'. When little frog heard the snake he jumped out of fright, but at that moment, Marina jumped out of the bush and blocked the snakes' way.

'Why are you blocking my way,' asked the snake.

Marina said, 'Do you know that there is a mongoose that comes here to drink at night time?'

'Really?' said the frightened snake.

'Yes it does come here,' said Marina.

Frightened of the mongoose, its natural enemy, the snake ran away. From that day on, the snakes never came near the lake. Thus, the frogs were saved as there was nobody to eat them.



'Thank you Marina, what can I do in return for you?' asked the little frog.

'Well... I suppose you could do one thing.' Marina took a very nice photo with the little frog, his family and friends. She then published it in a wildlife magazine upon returning to her home.

The frog, his family and friends lived happily from then on.

## **Unicorn**

*By Olivia Lac*

A unicorn is a world full of colours,

She is the vivid spring

In a child's world.

She is the rainbow after a storm.

A unicorn is a magical cape,

She is the vibrant carpet,

She is Twilight Sparkle

A unicorn is rainbow ice-cream.

## **Fall into Fairytales**

*By Sandra Sujith*

### **Kitchen Discovery**

It was a broody Monday evening on Eversfield Lane. Three pigeons sat in the clouds, quietly observing the cranky little girl who was stomping all the way home in a huff.

Catherine Walverfooy certainly wasn't having a good day and she certainly didn't bother to mask her unpleasant mood as she made her way down the gloomy lane.

DING DONG! Catherine pressed the doorbell impatiently and tapped her foot. A few moments later, her cheery mother swung open the door and greeted Catherine with a welcoming smile.

'Hello, Catherine. School was fine?' her mother said, quite happily.

'Next time, cut the chatter and just open the door!' yelled a disgruntled Catherine. She turned her back to her mother and ran up the stairs to her bedroom. Catherine took care to slam the bedroom door shut, shaking the frame. Her mother stood dumbfounded at the door for a minute before sighing and retiring to the kitchen.

Ugh – what a frightful day, thought Catherine. She slung her purple pony bag over her shoulder and then plopped it down on her purple pony bed. She promptly took her purple pony laptop out of its case and switched it on. She surveyed her bedroom with disdain – her mother clearly hadn't vacuumed the carpet and dusted her fake trophies. She rolled her eyes. Did mothers always have to be reminded? A beep pierced the air, focusing Catherine's attention solely on the source of the sound – her laptop. She clicked open her browser and opened up her favourite computer game – Frogger, to be exact – and started playing, paying little attention to the minutes slipping by.

'Catherine! Take this book off the kitchen counter! Book stew is tomorrow!' yelled Catherine's mother, desperately trying to make her daughter laugh. Catherine let out a groan that could be heard from Mars and trudged upstairs. Each step on the staircase groaned. She trudged wearily into her mother's kitchen, thinking how annoying parents were. 'What is it, Mum?' she said dismissively. 'Take this book off the counter, please,' her mother commanded. Catherine strolled over to where her mother was motioning to only be greeted by something extraordinary.

Sitting on the polished white kitchen counter was a large book, larger than a sheet of paper but smaller than her face. It seemed to be leather-bound and Catherine thought it looked like the stage props for her school's fantasy play, except more lifelike. The pages were yellowed and faded and the entire book had a layer of dust on it. Edging closer to this book, Catherine found herself forgetting where she was. Catherine was half disgusted with herself – it was a book, after all. However, the book seemed to be commanding her, as she reached out and stroked the book semi-consciously, sending a tingle up her spine. She saw nothing but the book. Nothing but the mystic book...

'Catherine, take that book out of the kitchen!' yelled her mother. Catherine was too dazed to reply and she took the book and marched out of the kitchen. She was filled with glee as she went up the stairs, three at a time. She ran into her room and didn't bother to shut the door.

### A Swirl of Colour

Catherine popped her newfound prize on her purple pony bed, causing a cloud of dust to rise from the book. 'Aachooo!' she sneezed. Her computer beeped but, this time, she paid her computer no attention. She wiped the cover with her purple dress, revealing an ancient leather hardback book-cover with golden engravings on it. She wiped off more and more of the dust, getting more excited with each stroke. Slowly, she wiped the entire book clean and now, on further inspection, she realised that the book was very fragile. The leather was soft and felt magical. The book seemed to be radiating with a magical aura that made Catherine feel happier just by being close to this phenomenon. On the cover, in gold, was the title - *Fall into Fairytales*.

Catherine flipped the book over to see more golden engravings on it. On the back was what seemed to be a poetic verse.

*Bound between this ancient book,  
Are secrets for none to look.  
Thief, beware, do not dare  
What is within the pages is meant to scare.  
Do not peek or seek what lies within,  
The creatures inside will make a din.*

Catherine read it again and again, but the poem still seemed to be nonsensical. She flipped the book over again and gazed at the cover intently. Suddenly, she saw a sentence written on the spine – DO NOT READ. You Would Have To Be A Fool To Read This. Catherine, having read plenty of stories where the main character ends up neck-deep in trouble due to ignoring warning, left the book there and went back to playing Frogger on her laptop.

Creak! Her bedroom door opened a crack and her black cat nimbly stepped into her bedroom. Catherine glanced at her cat, Midnight, angrily.

‘Meow,’ complained Midnight, gesturing to the book that was occupying her evening seat. ‘Meow.’

Catherine paid her loving cat no attention. ‘Shush, Midnight, can’t you see that I’m about to win the game?’ Catherine asked, not even blinking. Her cat rolled her eyes and kicked the book off her purple pony bed.

Catherine swung around in her seat a moment too late. The ancient book seemed to be flying through the air at an incredibly slow speed but Catherine was rooted to the spot as she helplessly looked on. The book landed on the carpet with a soft thud and bounced open, fanning the pages. Catherine ran over to the book and sat by it and her cat, surprised that her owner was paying attention to something other than her laptop, pranced up to the book.

After staring intently at the book’s pages, expecting something to happen, Catherine felt dizzy. She looked up to see the room contorting and twisting. Soon her bedroom was a wild swirl of purple and she felt the ground slipping away. She screamed as loud as she possibly could but no sound escaped her lips as she fell further and further through the tornado of colour. Everything went black.

### Arrival

Catherine gingerly rubbed her head. Where was she? She waited for a minute for the world to stop spinning and, as the world slowly came into focus, she realised she was in a grassy clearing in what appeared to be a thick forest. She slowly stood up, only to collapse again, so she decided to stay put. According to the sun, it seemed to be the late afternoon. Grey bunnies hopped across the flat, grassy landscape. Ducks waddled from the nearby pool, with many young, yellow ducklings following eagerly.

After surveying her surroundings, Catherine concluded that she was in a deep, lifelike dream. There was no reason to be scared. Soon she would wake up and shrug this crazy dream off like the many other dreams she had experienced. Then Catherine caught sight of what bordered the clearing and took a deep breath to quieten her fear.

The grassy clearing was surrounded by thick woods that had little to no sunlight within them. She gulped. What was she going to do, all by herself, without any access to the modern world, not to mention her phone! Soon Catherine was so scared that she was jumping at every slight movement.

‘Meow.’

Catherine snapped her head up and sighed with relief to see something familiar – Midnight. Midnight purred and snuggled up next to Catherine. Feeling a new surge of confidence, she got up and recklessly rambled into the dense forest with her cat at her heels. At first, the edge of the forest was made up of seedlings and young trees, not to mention bushes with plenty of berries. Catherine ate to her heart’s content before venturing further into the impeding trees.

The forest foliage was as thick as a hippo’s bulletproof skin. Not a spot of light got through. Catherine was trembling with fright. Soon Catherine was blindly following her cat, who navigated the forest like the back of her hand. After a few dark minutes, Catherine found herself in a well illuminated forest, in which the leaves were almost transparent.

‘What kind of trees are these?’ mused Catherine.

The sun had set and a stunning full moon lit up their path. Midnight, however, was jumping at every sound and tensely searching the trees.

‘What is it, Midnight?’ Catherine asked.

Midnight pawed the tree carefully.

‘There’s nothing there, Midnight. Let’s chill and enjoy this dr...’ Catherine started, only to be interrupted by a distant howl that seemed to be nearing them. Catherine dropped her voice to a hushed whisper. ‘...eam.’

A resounding howl pierced the air. Catherine screamed and bolted with Midnight in her arms. Catherine caught a glimpse of what was chasing her – a majestic, rugged pack of wolves and they looked hungry. Catherine’s heart was pumping so loud, she was afraid that it would attract more wolves. To her horror, the lean wolves were gaining on her. She

gulped. Midnight slipped out of her hands and landed on all fours. 'Run Midnight!' exclaimed Catherine.

The first thing Midnight did when she regained her balance was screech in fear. The second thing she did was seek refuge in a tree. Due to Midnight's superb night vision, she soon found a safe refuge – a tree. Midnight shot up the tree like a bullet and not a second too late either, as the wolves snapped at her tail. Catherine copied her smart feline. However, halfway up the tree, she slipped and lost her footing. Pain shot up her right leg. A wolf had scratched her. Catherine scrambled up the tree in pure terror. The wolves clawed the tree furiously and tried to climb up, much to her horror. They were unable to, however, and they were restricted to snapping at the foot of the tree like crocodiles.

### A Tasty Home

It was morning when Catherine awoke from her deep sleep. Out of sheer habit, she reached out to turn her alarm clock off, but whacked her black cat over the head instead.

'Meow,' complained Midnight.

Catherine looked groggily around the transparent dome the leaves formed. Suddenly, the afternoon's events all came rushing back at her. On an instinct, she gazed down at the well illuminated forest floor. No wolves were there to eat her alive. She sighed in relief.

Catherine rolled over her right leg to see a scar that stretched from her knee to her ankle. Was it possible to feel pain in a dream? Was it possible to sleep in a dream, like daily life? Judging from the stabs of pain from her leg, Catherine concluded that she must be delirious or in a very strange dream.

'Come Midnight.'

She glanced down at the forest floor and slowly began crawling down the tree, feet first. Midnight leapt down and landed on all fours.

After an hour or two of traversing the forest, Catherine started to wish that she had taken more of the tasty berries she had eaten before. Her stomach was demanding food. She started to lose the strands of hope that kept her going. Suddenly, her cat meowed and bolted off into the trees. With a disgruntled yelp, Catherine took off blindly into the dark forest.

After bumping blindly into a few trees and getting whacked in the face by a lone branch, Catherine arrived at a small clearing that miraculously appeared – Catherine recalled stumbling through that certain part of the forest without seeing any clearing. The clearing was heaven on earth. It was a house made entirely of every type of sweet you could think of. Chocolate, gummy bears, jelly beans, gingerbread, cotton candy, ice cream and candy canes all made up a large structure which appeared to be a cosy little cottage. However, all that Catherine cared about right then was getting some food into her hollow stomach. Semi-consciously, Catherine ran to the house and grabbed great handfuls of the sweet candy and stuffed as much of the delicious food as she could down her throat.

After eating a large hole right next to what seemed to be a window, Catherine trudged over to the other side for a taste of the chocolate river to see a large, pig-like boy stuffing his face with sweets. He was wearing what seemed to be at the height of fashion a few years ago and he had a white bird with a yellow head on his shoulder. As soon as he realised that there was a girl standing behind him, he turned and squinted at her, as if he couldn't believe what he saw.

'Hello,' greeted Catherine, feebly.

The piggish boy mumbled something incoherently before returning to his meal.

'Good afternoon,' replied a voice.

Catherine shot her head around and glanced behind the house – who could have said that?

'Hello, am I invisible?' the voice asked, sounding slightly irritated.

She focused on the large bird on the boy's shoulder. Suddenly the boy turned around and mumbled something. The bird cocked its head, as if it was listening carefully, and then said, 'Don't be alarmed, my bird talks for me all the time. My magnificent cockatoo can speak and understand any language.' The bird winked.

Soon, Catherine was casually discussing the strange forest with all its wonders with a talking cockatoo that was perched on the boy's shoulder. In any other occasion, she would have been shocked at what she was doing. Now, comparing it with the huge gingerbread cottage that they were devouring, it was normal as ever.

'... and that is how I ended up here,' finished Catherine, only to find that the piggy boy, whose name was Hamish, had disappeared. 'Hamish?' asked Catherine, feeling dread



spread through her. A cold shiver ran down the back of her neck. A split second later, a hand was clamped over her mouth and everything went black for the second time.

### Locked Up

Catherine gingerly rubbed the back of her head and opened her eyes. The world seemed to be closing in on her. Big, grey bars obscured what she could see beyond. Where was she? From the delicious smell that wafted into her cage, she realised that she must be inside the cottage that she had eaten earlier. The possibility that all this was a dream was slowly fading away.

'Meow,' Midnight informed. Catherine felt a weight fall off her shoulders at seeing something familiar. Faced with new courage, Catherine realised that the bars of the cage would also be edible. She bit hard into the bars which she instantly regretted, searing pain spreading throughout her mouth.

A woman strolled into the room. She was clearly a fashionista, her modern, new clothes contrasting heavily with everything else Catherine had seen so far.

'So little Cathy has woken up at last,' she snickered.

Catherine shivered involuntarily, and it wasn't cold. She got up to fire a retort at her, but a sharp jab of pain from her mouth silenced her. Struggling, Catherine asked the woman who she was with a shaky and painful, 'Who are you?'

The woman looked at her happily, with an unnatural glint in her eye and answered. 'No need to ask. I am the most beautiful person in the world and I intend to stay that way. Guess how old I am?' She paused. '974 years old and I turn 975 next week.' She looked hurt for a moment and then her signature smug look returned to her dainty face. 'And that brings me back to why I need you. Did you know children's blood is an essential ingredient in the Elixir of Life? So is a cat's bone marrow.' She shot a look at Midnight, who looked slightly perturbed. 'I need to kill you before next week, when the potion wears off. However, not many of my charming suitors know that I relish children's meat. Fresh children's meat.' She advanced towards me, when she suddenly seemed to remember something and she dashed out the door.

## Escape!

A few tense seconds later, Hamish barged in, looking heroic.

'Hurry up, I need to free you,' his bird squawked as he fiddled with the lock.

'What about my cat?' asked Catherine, whose hope was slowly slipping away.

'I can't save her,' he said simply. Hamish grabbed her hand and yanked her towards the door. Midnight dismally gazed at her.

'I can't,' proclaimed Catherine suddenly.

'Hurry up, that loony will be back soon,' whined Hamish.

'I can't,' repeated Catherine.

Hamish looked at her dejectedly and then told her to continue straight through the trees and mutter 'Romulus' again and again. Then he ran out of the cottage and into the wood. Catherine hurriedly closed the door of her cage.

She wasn't a second too late either, as the witch barged in barely a half a minute later.

'I'm back, my pretty!' cackled the witch. She was carrying a bag of wood. 'Get in the oven,' she snarled.

The words tumbled out before Catherine could string them together. "Don't... know... how," she stuttered.

'Do I have to show you?' the witch muttered, as she knelt down in front of the oven. Catherine jumped out of her cage and kicked the witch's feet so hard that she went tumbling into the oven. She was stuck. Catherine quickly swiped her keys and unlocked Midnight's cage. She ran out of the house with Midnight in her arms and the witch screaming at her.

After chanting 'Romulus' a dozen times while traversing the forest, Midnight and Catherine arrived at a clearing. She was anxious to get home, as it was nearly nightfall and she didn't want another encounter with a pack of wolves for the rest of her life. Catherine's hopes were all dashed away after ten minutes of exploring the clearing. It was just that – a clearing. Midnight meowed suspiciously while pawing the ground.

'Quit it, Midnight, I'm trying to find a good tree to climb in to hide from the wolves,' she ranted. Midnight meowed loudly. Catherine turned to see what seemed to be a rich, creamy coffee-coloured book that Midnight had unearthed. It was the exact same book as the one that had led them into this mess.

## Home

Upon closer inspection, Catherine realised that the title was different – the first book's title was *Fall into Fairytales*, while this was labelled *Move into Modern Reality*. Catherine suddenly realised what she had to do. She gripped her cat tight and opened the book.

Catherine felt the familiar sensation of dizziness. She looked up to see the forest contorting and twisting. Soon the strange forest was a wild swirl of brown and green and she felt the ground slipping away. She gasped but no sound escaped her lips as she fell further and further through the tornado of colour. Everything went black.

Catherine woke up on her bed, in a different position that she had been when she left. Midnight purred. Her book was on her desk and twelve messages lay waiting on her computer from her friends. Catherine, however, turned her computer off and glanced down at the bag that was on her purple pony bed. Her bad day at school seemed like it had happened a century ago. The clock read 3:42, which was odd, considering that she had left at 3:32.

She walked over to the book that was the cause of her adventure and flipped it open. Nothing happened. She shook the book. Nothing. She was half relieved and half upset – after you got past the hostile nature of the 'other world', it was actually quite beautiful. On an instinct, she rolled her leg over. No scar. She sighed. It had been a dream, after all. She shrugged it off. She had changed now. She understood the purpose of family. What was inside mattered more than what was outside. Right now, Catherine reflected, right now what is inside of me is not so good. Right then and there, Catherine decided to make a change. She headed downstairs, with her cat at her heels. Catherine closed the door quietly.

Unknown to her, in her bedroom, the book shook strangely. It rose up into the air, shaking all the while, and with a white flash it was gone. All that remained was a completely transparent glass leaf.

## The Thing About Couleur

By Syazwana Saifudin



### 2090 Paris – The City of Love

Young Couleur Leroy was wandering the streets of Paris looking for inspiration, inspiration for art. Couleur felt empty and isolated. The city's lively atmosphere had changed for the worse. Dull buildings stood everywhere and everyone seemed so disdainful. It was as if all the colour, love and compassion was sucked out of Paris. What was once known as the city of love, was now the city of hate and misery. World War 3 had begun and people were fighting for food, shelter and security. Her father was fighting in the war, which

left Couleur to fend for herself. Couleur was only sixteen years old, but she had a secret ambition for her talent and passion for art to change not only the French art world, but to make the lives of children happier through her art. But she couldn't do it all by herself; could she?

Couleur saw herself as an artist who loved to paint and draw. She had a fighting spirit; she would use whatever art mediums there were to make art. Couleur knew that if she stopped painting, she would be losing hope like the rest of the Parisians as a result of the war. Painting made her happy. But the hope lingering in the air was fading away. She overheard people talking about giving up and saying things like, 'What's the point of living?' or 'I've lost everything. When is this going to end?'

Every day seemed like a thousand years in Couleur's mind. The hope seemed to be fading from Couleur's heart too, but she was a resilient girl. Yes, it was annoying to see someone so upbeat and cheerful when they clearly knew that a war was taking place.

Couleur was walking around her neighbourhood's streets when something colourful caught her eye. A bucket of used paintbrushes and paint pots was in the middle of an alley opposite her apartment's building. 'Someone must have thrown it away,' Couleur thought. Taking her chances, she crossed the street and ran to the bucket and started painting on the alley walls. Couleur felt an instant sensation of pure joy and a temporary sense of freedom from the reality she was in. It was not the best paint or paintbrushes in the world and so what if they were used, Couleur was just happy that they were there. She wanted to paint something fun and colourful to uplift the spirits of the little kids of Paris. This could be their little play area. Sure, war was happening, but Couleur had created her own little paradise. It was magnificent.

The next morning, Couleur walked down to the place where she had painted the mural on the walls. She was surprised to see kids laughing and playing in the alley. Couleur was feeling so gleeful! She had made the children happy and cheerful. There was joy in the air. While the children were playing, a young war journalist walked past the alley. He spotted Couleur and her mural. The war journalist was amazed at the use of colours and lines of Couleur's work. He introduced himself to Couleur and sought permission to take photos of the street art.

'Good day, miss, what a lovely piece of artwork you have there. I am Martin Laurent, a war journalist and your artwork seems to have attracted kids to come and play here.'

Would you mind if I interview you and write about what you have done here? It is quite a marvellous piece of work,' Martin exclaimed.

'You like my artwork? Well, I was only trying to make the children of Paris have their smiles back. I mean, I don't want the war to stop them from living normal lives. Well anyway, thank you so much for commenting on my artwork. Thank you, Martin. By the way, my name is Couleur Leroy and no, I would not mind at all if you want to have an interview with me.'

### 5 years later – 2095

The war has finally ended. Couleur is now known as one of the best young artists of Paris. But it was not easy for her; she worked hard to achieve this success. She is now twenty-one years old and is working in an art museum. But she still paints little paradises for young kids everywhere. Couleur's wish finally came true, in a way which is bringing joy to children. Every day she practised more and more. She has yet to discover her true potential.

## **A Story**

*By Keke Deng*

My pencil skims along the page,  
It tells of travellers along the mountain range,  
It tells of how a tiger got trapped,  
Or how a cat placidly naps,  
Page by page, I turn with great courage,  
Writing how Goldilocks eats the porridge,  
Lost in thought and dreamless memories,  
I turn my hopes into remedies,  
The words are music, sweet and mellow,  
Sometimes loud, booming and shallow,  
But if it's for adults or kids like Nemo and Dory,  
It's alike, as both are stories.

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