

2023



Mayors' short story challenge



District Council of
YANKALILLA

District Council of Yankalilla
Winners & Short Listed Stories

Mayors' Short Story Challenge

The Mayors' Short Story Challenge is a wonderful collaboration between the City of Victor Harbor, Alexandrina Council and the District Council of Yankalilla celebrating creative writing. The challenge is held during term two each year for school aged children from reception to year ten. Each year the Mayors' Short Story Challenge gets bigger and better.

We would like to thank the Mayors, all the Principals, Teacher-Librarians, Teachers and Student Services Officers involved who encouraged their students to enter. This year the Yankalilla Library received 176 entries from across the District Council of Yankalilla region.

Most of all we thank the children and applaud their efforts in "having a go". They have delighted us with their creative and imaginative writing skills. Without their support the Mayors' Short Story Challenge would not have been successful.

District Council of Yankalilla Section Winners

Reception - Year 2

Hugo Vaughan, Yankalilla Area School 'The Heroes'

Years 3- 4

Emma Potter, Rapid Bay Primary School 'Milky the Hamster'

Years 5 - 7

Tayla Deacon, Myponga Primary School 'Shark Teeth'

Years 8 - 10

Lilly Wenham, Yankalilla Area School 'Pirate Life'

Overall Winner

Emma Potter, Rapid Bay Primary School 'Milky the Hamster'

Winning stories can also be viewed on the website at
www.yankalilla.sa.gov.au



District Council of
YANKALILLA

Overall Winner

Emma Potter Year Four
"Milky the Hamster"
Rapid Bay Primary School

Overall Winner



District Council of
YANKALILLA

Milky the Hamster

Hi, I'm Milky, the room 6 class pet. I live in a small cage on a desk at the back of the class room. All I have in my cage is a water feeder, a little food-bowl and a hamster wheel. I have so much fun!

On the weekend a student gets to take me home. They take the Milky book to put photos in. On Monday they share what they did with me.

Week 1 Hannah took me home. Hannah lives near the beach. She lives in a yellow beach house with her Mum and her dog, Dotty.

On Saturday Hannah and I went to the beach for a beach picnic. She fed me lettuce from her sandwich, which was actually sandy. On Sunday Hannah went to her granny's house. That morning Hannah forgot to shut my cage and Dotty chased me all day.

Week 2 Eddie took me to his apartment. Eddie lives on the fifth floor with his Dad step-mum and baby sister Violet. That Saturday Eddie and his step mum went to collect his new kitten, Milo.

Sunday, Eddie and I played with Milo.

The next week, Sally, the new kid, and I, went to the show. None of us could go on some of the rides because they were not wheelchair accessible. We got ice cream instead.

But my favourite time was when the twins took me home to their small city home where they live with their dad.

They took me to their uncle's farm on Saturday. We looked at all the animals. Then I went for an amazing horse ride.

Alice and Albert got off the horse, Barny, but I was still on him. Alice went to lift me off but Barny reared up. I only just stayed on as he galloped down the hill towards the creek. "Oh no," shouted Albert. Albert started to run towards the shed. He pushed open the heavy

Reception to Year 2

Category Winner

Hugo Vaughan Year One
"The Heroes"
Yankalilla Area School

Shortlisted students

Hugo Vaughan Year One
"The Heroes"
Yankalilla Area School

India Edwards Year Two
"The Big Advencher"
Yankalilla Area School

Judd Hicks Year One
"Fly"
Yankalilla Area School

Ethan Brockman Year Two
"Among us and the evil Inposter"
Yankalilla Area School



District Council of
YANKALILLA

The heroes



A FAIRY TALE BY:

Hugo ✓

Once upon a time there was
two heroes that was spider
man and the monkey King.
They were best friends.

They lived in a quiet



forest with a volcano

which was very big and

scary



Suddenly the volcano erupt

and goes everywhere



luckily spiderman and the

moncey king grabbed on

the web and it stopped

the volcano they continue

to be heroes



By Indy

10

The Big Adventure



SUDDENLY

They got lost in the Forest
with the Animals and they were
so thirsty and hungry. But ten ^{minutes} minutes
later they checked their pockets for
food, but instead they found a map.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I am 7 years old and

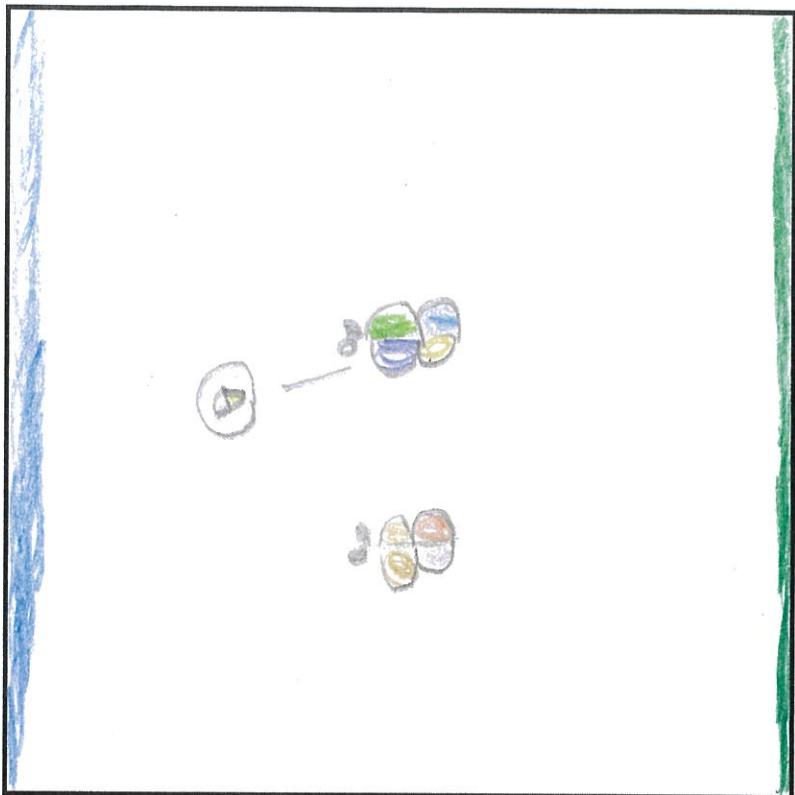
I am In miss abbies

Cross. ✓

By Indi Edwards



05 JUN 2023

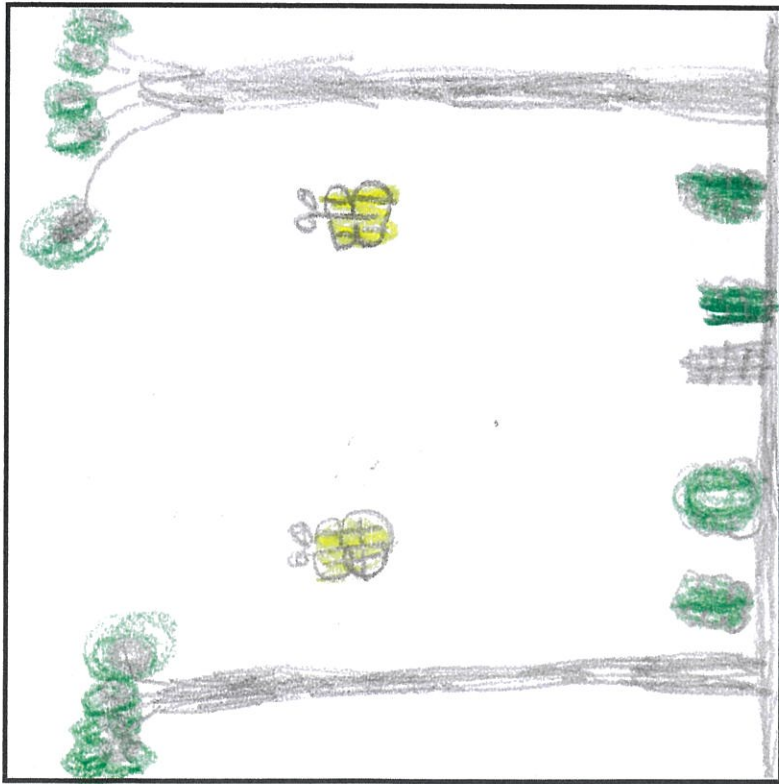


fly

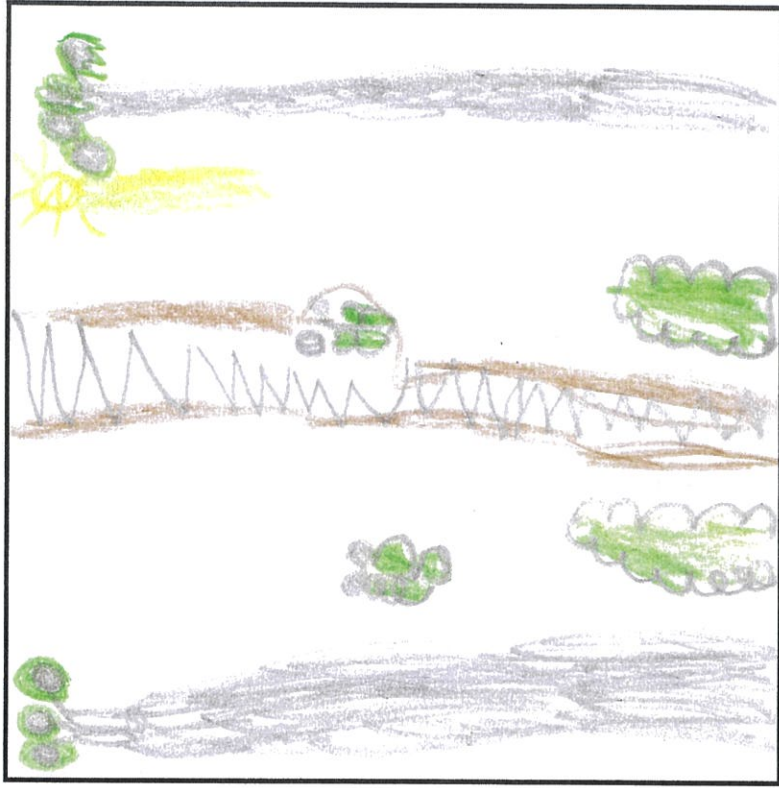
FLY

A BOOK BY

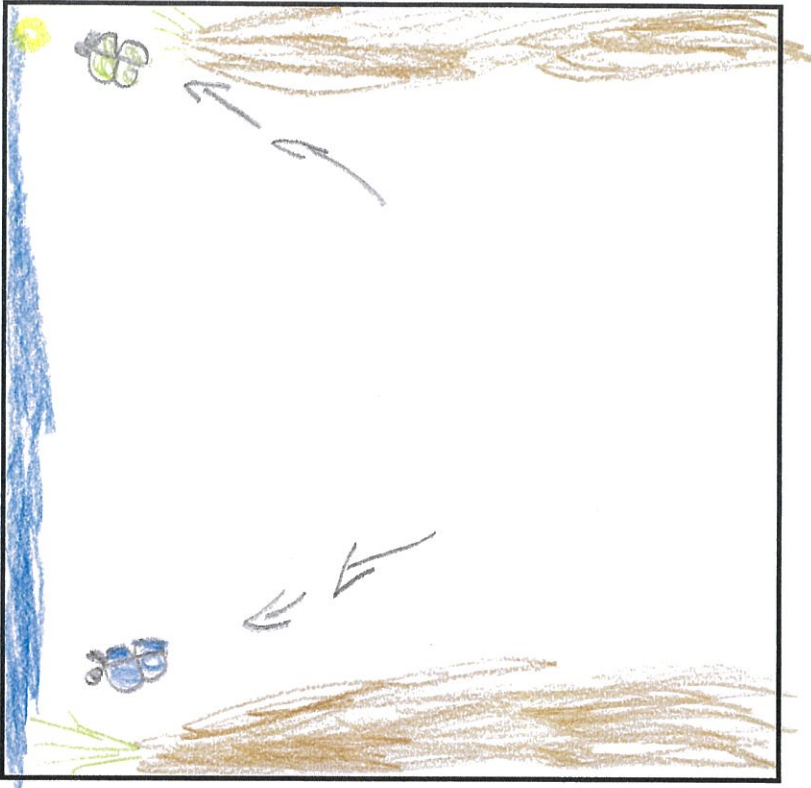
ludd



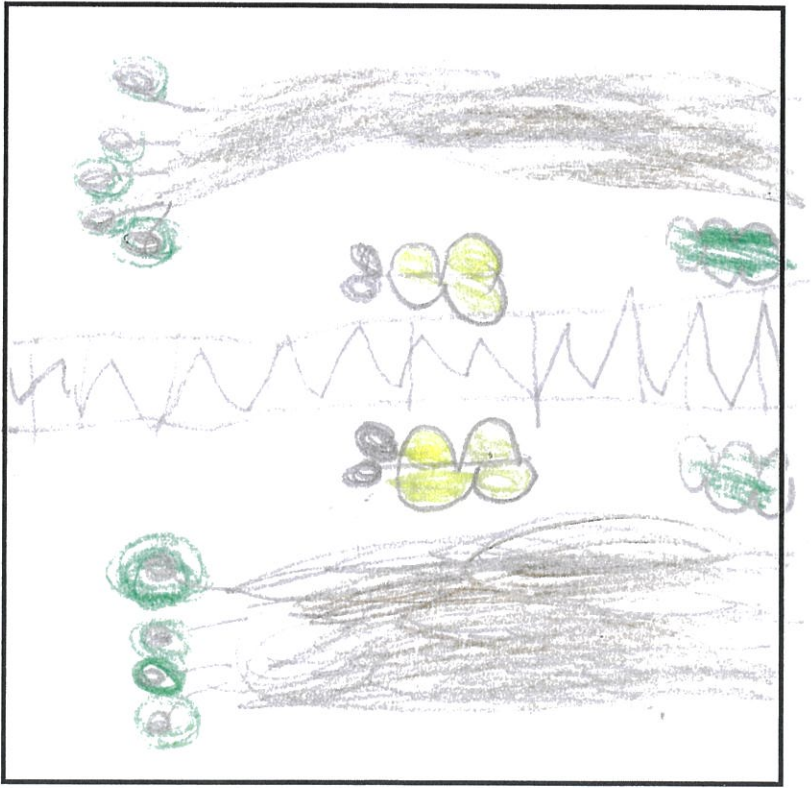
Once upon a time there were 2 butterflies who lived in a forest. One day they were talking about ice-cream.



Suddenly there started to be an earthquake and the ground started shaking and cracking. The butterflies started to fall to the ground but then they got an idea.

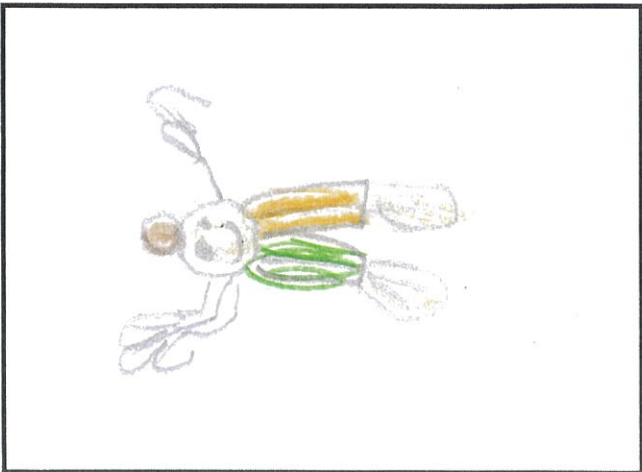


The butterflies then lived happily ever after. The end.



They wanted to tape the cracks up. The two butterflies taped them up and they felt so much better.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



I am a year 1.

Among us and the evil imposter



SUDDENLY

The bad ^{guys} ~~guy~~ attacked the good ~~guy~~ and
they were in war. The bad ~~guy~~
were winning, then the good ~~guy~~
were winning. ~~and~~ It was a tie.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

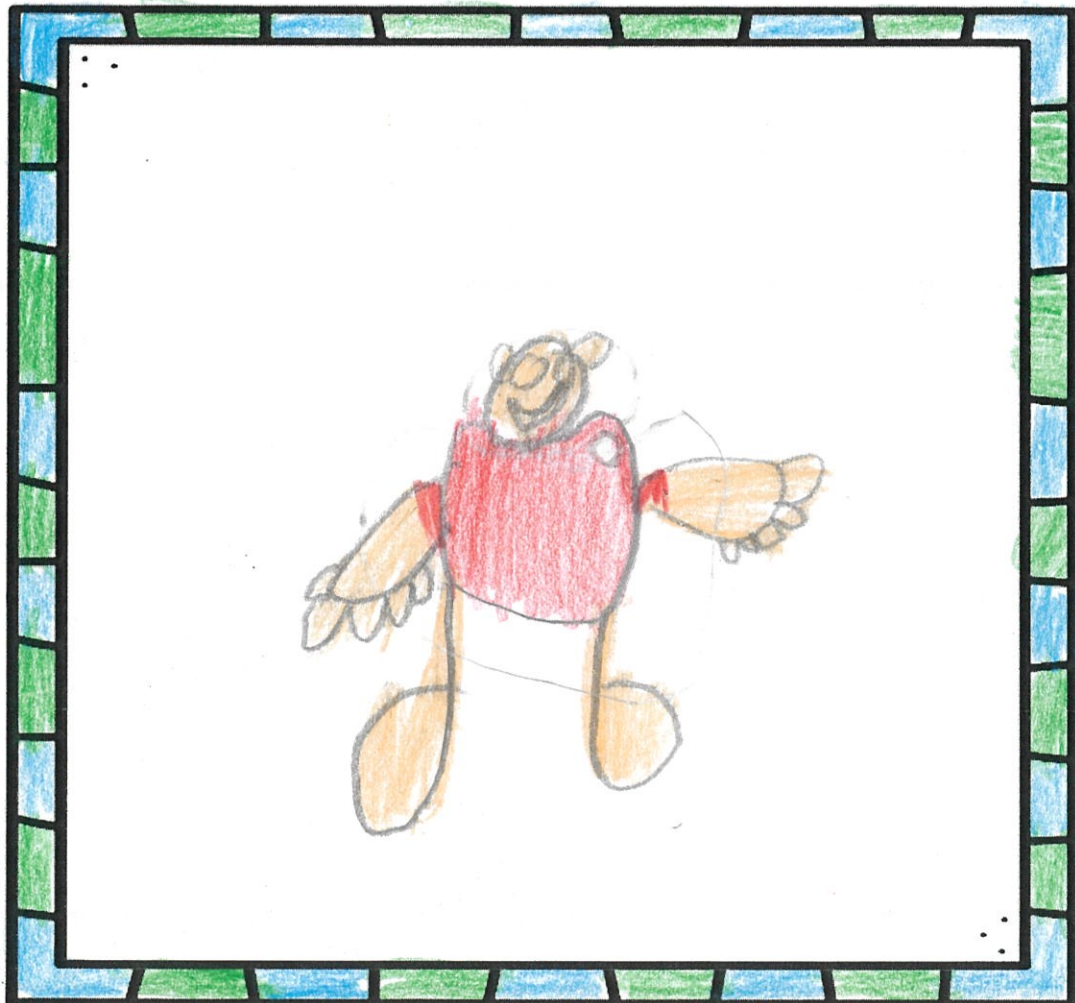
My name is Ethan Rockman

I am 7 years old I am in

year 2 at Yankalilla area

School //

Ethan R



05 JUN 2023

Category winner

Emma Potter Year Four
"Milky the Hamster"
Rapid Bay Primary School

Shortlisted students

Emma Potter Year Four
"Milky the Hamster"
Rapid Bay Primary School

Harper Dowling Year Four
"The unexpected Journey"
Myponga Primary School

Addie McArdle Year Four
"The Dark Seas of the Atlantic",
School

Benjamin Nichols Year Three
"The Speedy Cheetah"
Rapid Bay Primary School

Years 3 to 4



District Council of

YANKALILLA

Milky the Hamster

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The Unexpected Journey

It was a chilly morning at school. Ted and Emily hated learning, but Bailey didn't. He LOVED learning, especially about space. Emily and Ted got a D- on their final grade. Emily was upset about that. But Bailey got a B+ so he was great.

Together they went to the library to borrow some books. When Bailey was looking for some books, he found a purple sparkly book. It was covered in many microscopic pastel crystals that reflected the afternoon light. Bailey called Ted and Emily over to see if they knew what it was.

While they were touching the crystals, their bodies began to disappear into the book. They were all starting to freak out! Then they were inside of the book. It was all majestic and sparkly! They saw some pictures of the moon and facts about the moon too.

Suddenly, they randomly woke up in a rocketship ON the moon! As soon as they got out of the rocket, aliens surrounded them! They were all confused and scared of what was happening. Emily saw the purple crystal book on the floor. She picked it up and found those pastel crystals in the book. The aliens got closer. "What's happening?" said Ted.

The aliens kept getting closer and closer! They each picked up a crystal and the crystals got sucked into the aliens. The aliens fell off the moon and disappeared. Bailey, Emily and Ted were joyful that nothing horrible had happened. Ted and Bailey went back to the rocket and pressed some buttons while Emily was still looking at the moon.

Ted and Bailey woke up in the library and put the book back in its spot, and pretended that nothing ever happened. "Someone is missing", said Bailey. They realised that they left Emily on the moon....

By Harper.



The Dark Seas of the Atlantic

By Addie McArdle

Sixty years ago, well 1963 to be exact, there lived a beautiful mermaid called Ariel and her brave father Aqua Man. Ariel was confident, independent, and always stuck up for her friends and family. She loved her dad and they spent their days swimming peacefully in the beautiful, clear ocean water of the Atlantic.

One beautiful sunny day, as they were swimming peacefully in the ocean, they saw something strange. A large and angry-looking sea witch was standing in front of them, blocking their way. The sea witch was hideous looking, her face covered with a fluffy moustache and disgusting pimples.

The sea witch was furious and demanded that they leave her ocean immediately. "No way, sea witch", yelled Ariel bravely. "What!!!!!! Are you not scared of me you weak little girl?" demanded the sea witch. "No, you look just like my auntie, and I am definitely not scared of her!" remarked Ariel confidently.

Ariel's defiance infuriated the sea witch and she began to cast a spell that would have caused huge waves and destruction in the ocean.

Aqua Man could see that they needed help. He pulled out his trusty trident and used it to make the sea witch disappear just in time. Ariel and Aqua Man were relieved, and the ocean was safe once again. Ariel gave her dad an enormous hug and said "You have saved the whole entire sea, dad. You are a hero!"

Aqua Man turned to his daughter and told her, "You were very brave standing up to that evil beast. Your mother would be so proud of you!"

Ariel started to cry, remembering her mum who she loved so much.

"Thank you, dad, I love you to the moon and back."

And thanks to the bravery of Aqua Man and Ariel, the sea witch is now history and the sea and all of its creatures live happily and safely.



THE SPEEDY CHEETAH

by Benjiman Nichols

28/6/23

The speedy cheetah joined the other cheetahs for a race and challenged them to beat him around the world. Speedy was no ordinary cheetah, he was a special blue colour with dark blue spots. There was a total of eleven cheetahs racing, but Speedy was the only blue one.

The race started at McDonald's restaurant, Victor Harbor because they were the sponsors of the race. The winner was going to win free burgers for a whole year, "Wow !". In the beginning, the cheetahs raced to Port Noarlunga where they raced to the end of the jetty. Speedy almost fell into the cold ocean when a bigger cheetah bumped him along the jetty.

The speedy cheetah was lagging behind as the racers left the jetty and headed towards Adelaide. Speedy was catching up to the leader when a bright red Lamborghini cut in front of him as he ran along the Southern Express Way. This upset Speedy so much that he had to stop for a bit of a rest.

After a while he tried harder and breathed harder and caught up with the leaders and then the other eleven cheetahs were behind. The speedy cheetah won the race to McDonalds. He said I never give up! The speedy cheetah then ran all the way home.

Category Winner

Tayla Deacon Year Six,
"Shark Teeth,"
Myponga Primary School

Shortlisted students

Tayla Deacon Year Six,
"Shark Teeth",
Myponga Primary School

Willow Russo Year Six
"The Figure",
Rapid Bay Primary School

Sage Vessey-Thomas Year Five
"The Apocalypse",
Rapid Bay Primary School

Layla Hibbird-Peters Year Six
"The Mysterious Pyramid",
Myponga Primary School

Year 5 to Year 7



District Council of
YANKALILLA

Shark teeth.

Carter and Stella sat daydreaming about the beach in their stuffy math class at Bayside High School. They were both 17 years old, with shiny golden hair. They were best friends and felt a bit different from the others. The beach was their favourite place to be themselves and have exciting adventures.

One sunny day, Carter couldn't hide his excitement. He whispered to Stella, "Hey, Stella! Let's go to the beach today! It will be so much fun!"

Stella's eyes sparkled, and she nodded eagerly. "Yes, Carter! I've been waiting for this! Let's go!"

When the school bell rang, they dashed out of the classroom and hopped into Carter's car. Carter was old enough to drive with his parent's permission, and he felt free behind the wheel. The wind blew through their hair as they rolled down the car windows, and they could already smell the salty breeze.

As they arrived at the beach, they leapt out of the car with excitement. The sandy beach stretched out in front of them, inviting them to explore. They kicked off their shoes and felt the soft sand between their toes. The sound of seagulls filled the air as if cheering for their beach adventure.

Without wasting any time, they raced towards the water, laughing, and splashing each other. The waves crashed against the shore, making their hearts beat fast. With a daring jump, they dived into the cool water, feeling its refreshing touch. The sun shone brightly, making the water sparkle like diamonds.

Carter collapsed onto the sand, feeling weak and in pain. Stella knelt beside him, her voice filled with worry and determination. "We need to get help, Carter. Stay with me!"

Stella ran back to the car as fast as she could, searching through her bag for her phone. She realised she had left her keys inside, but she didn't give up. She found a big rock and used all her strength to break the car window. She grabbed her phone, dialled 000, and pleaded for help.

Soon, they heard sirens approaching. Stella's heart filled with hope as she saw the paramedics rushing to their rescue. They carefully lifted Carter onto a stretcher and put him in the ambulance. Stella climbed in beside him, holding his hand tightly.

The ambulance raced through the streets, its sirens wailing, as they hurried to the hospital. Stella prayed silently, filled with hope and worry. She refused to give up and focused on getting Carter the help he needed.

At the hospital, doctors quickly took Carter into surgery. Stella sat in the waiting room, holding her fingers together and praying. Time seemed to stretch as she anxiously waited for news. Finally, a doctor came out with a smile. Carter had made it through the surgery, but he had lost his arm.

Days turned into weeks as Carter fought to get better. Stella stayed by his side, cheering him on during his rehabilitation. Carter's determination and Stella's unwavering support helped him regain his strength and independence.

The Figure

By Willow

KLABAM! A figure appeared when the lightning shook the dead ground. "WAIT!" I looked at my watch and realised I was late for church. I hopped into my rusty old truck and chucked on some clothes from the back seat. I yanked down the visor, I looked into my pigmented blue eyes and rubbed my hands on my pale skin. My gapped shiny white teeth beaming into the field. I fixed my short scruffy hair. I slammed the visor shut and started the engine and drove out of the field onto the wet main road.

I walked into church and sat down on a pew and my mate whispered to me, "Ay why you late?" "Ah I was in the field." "Aha okay" We both then continued to listen. Soon enough it was time to go home. I got into my car and drove home.

I lived with my parents still. I have a job at the local supermarket, it's not very good but it does the job. "I'm home, miss me?" I yelled "Oh very much dear," my mother replied. I came running towards my mum. We hugged tighter than ever. I love my mum so much. "How was church?" She asked. "Wonderful" I said. "Sorry I couldn't come with your dear." "It's okay, don't be sorry." My mum couldn't attend church this morning, she had a sore back. I made some soup and we had it together, and it was delicious. "Mm you're a very good cook dearie." Oh, thanks mum! My mum didn't have much time left so I tried to spend most of my days with her.

For the next couple of days, I stayed home to stay safe. You see I see this random person or well thing every night when I go out for shooting in the field. I've tried looking for this thing but it just disappears into thin air. It looks like a human body but it sounds like a toucan. Squawk! I never understood why.

I did some research and found nothing! I don't understand was it mythical or like a hybrid? No, it couldn't be its earth. I'm just overthinking too much.

I really want to know what this thing is, so I went to the police station. "Hello what seems to be the problem today?" the front desk officer asked "On our property in the field there's this weird figure that I see every time there's a storm. " "Hmm okay we will soon investigate." The officer asked my address and all of that information. "I will send people down in about two hours understood?" "Yep okay see you then bye."

I was sitting on the couch and yet again I saw the figure! I grabbed my phone and rushed to the window, started recording but when I looked at my phone it didn't show up. Was I delusional? Did I imagine it?

The cops arrived and looked around for a bit, nothing... There was nothing apparently. They searched my house, the lake, the field. Everything! My mother got a lil bit upset with me for inviting them, but she eventually got over it. I didn't understand what was going on.

Later on, in the day I walked out into the field and I saw it again! I rushed over to the figure. It was a guy... And that guy was my father. "WHAT THE HELL?!" "Listen kiddo..." "What's

The Apocalypse

By Sage Vessey-Thomas

CREEEEEK! The door swung open, and Hope made her entrance. She was a 14-year-old girl with dark, wavy ginger hair, dressed in her tattered, dirt-stained green T-shirt and chocolatey brown pants. During an apocalyptic world, Hope resided in an abandoned house with her father and dog. Within the house, she had a dedicated karate room where she would practice tirelessly.

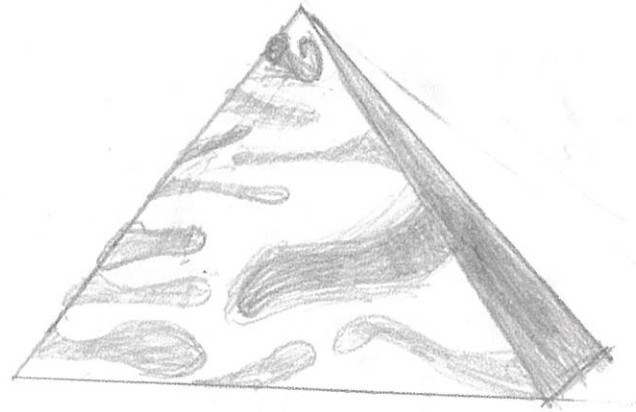
"Oh no, I'm late for the meeting," Hope exclaimed. Without wasting a moment, she leaped into the truck, snatched her hat, and swiftly placed it on her head. Racing down the dusty, hazel brown dirt road, she arrived at the decaying building. The once pearly white exterior had faded to a dark creamy colour. Memories of a time when everything was normal, when she lived happily with her mum and dad, flooded Hope's mind, reminding her of a world that was once awesome.

Stepping into the old, crumbling building, with rocks falling and torches flickering for light, Hope observed around 20 people seated in a row, engrossed in various conversations. As one of the speakers made her way to the front, she began addressing the curious crowd. "So, you probably know why you're here," she began, her voice echoing in the room. "We all know about the zombies obviously". She announced, someone stuck their hand up and began speaking "Well duh we know but what about them"!? The lady roared, "Well if you had let me speak, I was going to say that I have bought an area where there are no zombies". Everyone screeched of the thrill and thanked her for helping them then she spoke again, "I have hired a bus so if you would like to come meet me at ***** street tomorrow morning at 6am or drive to the address ***** Thank you". The lady walked out the crowd encouraging her on. Hope exited the old crumbling and hopped in her old, rusty truck.

Driving down the old dirt road she saw a group of zombies, so she pulled off the road and sprang out her car. Luckily a group of bushes covered her as she crawled down and watched them from a far. The apparent lead zombie opened his mouth and started to talk. "So, the humans living in this small town have found a so-called safe house and they are moving tomorrow at 6am so we are going to infiltrate their plan". Hope sprinted back and leapt into her car, speeding along the bumpy road until she arrived at her house.

Hope started stressing and overheating because she had no idea what to do. "What am I going to do! I can't let this happen!" she exclaimed. She called her friend Willow. "Don't go to the bus tomorrow!" She screamed. "Why not?!" Willow replied. Hope explained everything to her, convincing her friend until she finally believed her.

They kept the call going for about 3 hours talking about ways to stop everyone going on the bus. They devised a couple of plans to stop the bus going to the "safe house" but didn't know what ones would work because they only had one shot at stopping them. One of their plans was to block the road but they didn't know how that would turn out to be like so maybe not. They ended up going to bed, exhausted from the strategizing and worrying.



layla hibbird peters

THE MYSTERIOUS PYRAMID.

Once upon a time, there were three siblings named Ziana, Noah, and Edith. They were an adventurous bunch who loved going on exciting journeys together.

One day, they set off on a road trip with their dad. Ziana, the oldest sibling, yawned as she saw Dad getting ready in his cool outfit. Dad loved playing his favourite song on the car radio, but Noah, in his pyjamas, shouted, "Dad, I hate that song! Please turn it off!" "Turn yourself off, mate!" Ziana chuckled to herself thinking how she burned Noah with her sassy comment. She looked at Dad, and he gave her a thumbs up.

As they drove along, they noticed a big red truck in front of them. Suddenly, Ziana screamed, "Dad, watch out!" The truck seemed huge and dusty, causing a moment of panic.

The station had a bright red and yellow sign that said "SHELL." They entered and placed their order with a moody teenager. Edith, excitedly munching on her burger, accidentally dropped some lettuce with mayo. Noah, being picky, commented on it, but Ziana scolded him for being ungrateful.

After their meal, Ziana urged everyone to get back in the car. Noah, still sleepy, questioned why they were rushing. Ziana replied with impatience, "Come on, sleepyhead! It's time to go." Reluctantly, Noah got in the car, and Ziana started the engine.

As they drove away, Noah glanced back and saw something strange in the distance. He exclaimed, "What the...?" Ziana widened her eyes and added, "Oh my goodness!" A magnificent white marble pyramid floated mysteriously in the middle of the desert. It was an incredible sight that left them both captivated and a little scared.

of a terrifying encounter. Through trembling lips, she explained how a dark and eerie creature had tried to touch her.

Ziana's protective instincts kicked in. She held Edith close, comforting her and assuring her that everything would be okay. Noah, though scared himself, stood by their side, ready to defend his sisters.

As they assessed the situation, Ziana realised that the creature resembled the dark and grim figure from the fairy tales their dad used to tell them. It was as if the stories had come to life before their very eyes.

Realising they had to escape, Ziana, Noah, and Edith made a swift decision. They turned to leave the chamber and found themselves face-to-face with the creature once again. It loomed over them, its presence more menacing than ever.

Fear threatened to consume them, but Ziana's determination flared up. She looked at her siblings, their eyes reflecting the shared resolve. They joined hands, forming a circle of unity and strength.

In a courageous display of defiance, Ziana shouted, "We won't let you harm us! We are stronger together!" Her words reverberated through the chamber, filling the air with resolute energy.

To their astonishment, the creature faltered. It seemed to shrink before their eyes, its malevolence diminishing in the face of their unwavering unity. Slowly, the creature dissolved into thin air, leaving the siblings in a state of both relief and triumph.

With the threat vanquished, Ziana, Noah, and Edith made their way back to the entrance of the pyramid. As they stepped outside, they witnessed a miraculous sight—the pyramid began descending to the ground, its mystical powers broken.

Category winner

Lilly Wenham Year 9,
"Pirate Life",
Yankalilla Area School

Shortlisted students

Lilly Wenham Year 9,
"Pirate Life",
Yankalilla Area School

Ella Lovelock Year 9,
"The Nightmare",
Yankalilla Area School

Riley Wake Year 9
"A hopeless future",
Yankalilla Area School

Alice Maclay-Ross Year 9
"Missing",
Yankalilla Area School

Years 8 to 10



District Council of

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PIRATE LIFE!

The cold air blew back into my face filling my nose with the smell of salt. The loud squawks of the birds soaring high above our heads could be heard. Glistening blue water broke against the hull. This was a life not many could take on, the life of a pirate. Down below the chatter of my crew was muffled by the sound of the wind against my ears. Reaching above, I grabbed onto a rope, swung forwards, and sailed off the bowsprit and onto the deck joining my crew, who were up to their antics.

Someone new to the ship would be overwhelmed by the hive of activity, but for my crew who live on this ship, this is our everyday life. I walked past several men, all entertaining themselves in one way or another. Four burly blokes sat around an old, wooden barrel wrapped in rusty metal bands with a set of cards, from the look of it the game was getting pretty competitive, cash and treasure piling up in the middle. Others were challenging themselves by seeing who could swing out the furthest on a rickety rope without falling off into the water. "That's a risky game boys, I hope you have a plan when someone falls," I barked out with a laugh. The rest of the men were lounging around either drinking, chatting, messing about, or sleeping. An average day on our ship.

From up above, sitting in the crow's nest Jacko yelled out to me, "Captain, you have to come up here right now!" I studied his face, it was solemn. Quickly, I scaled the pole, joining him in the nest. Fear covered his face; in his hand he held a long, smooth telescope. "Captain, can you see that?" he squeaked. I snatched the telescope from his hands and raised it to my eye, the metal ring felt cool against my skin. Beyond, in the distance, there she sat, a huge wooden boat, visible that it was new and a big one too. It was just bigger than my own, three large masts with all nine sails propelling her along, a distinctive symbol I had seen before caught my eye. I recognised this boat, and my stomach sank. We were about to have company and they wouldn't be happy to see us. A hiss escaped my lips.

I yelled, loud and clear so that my crew would hear me, "We need to prepare an attack! Another boat is on its way, and it doesn't look friendly." I could feel my heartbeat quicken, I knew that this was going to be bad, but I couldn't let my crew know. I couldn't let them sense my terror, I had to keep my cool. Taking charge, I jumped down from the crow's nest, landing on the deck with a thud. Heads turned toward me waiting for further instruction, "Grab your swords boys! Prepare the cannons! Hide our treasure!" I exclaimed out across the deck. As the crew's pace picked up so did their voices, directing one another into place and making sure the valuables were safe.

Adrenaline rushed through my veins; I dashed across the deck straight into my quarters. In the corner of the room sat a large metal trunk. The lid flew open with the speed of my hands, smashing it into the wall behind. Hastily, I rifled through the contents looking for my knife. Just in case. There it sat right at the bottom; I reached it and secured it to the strap around my ankle and ran towards the door grabbing my sword off the hook on the wall.

To check on the enemy I climbed up to the bowsprit, the ship was drawing closer, I could see it clearly without the telescope. "Guys it's getting closer, make sure that everything is prepared we are about to fire!" I bellowed down to my men below.

"FIRE THE CANNON!" I commanded, Pete lit the cannon ... Nothing, the cannon didn't fire. Oh no! The enemy was too close, and they were about to attack. "Everyone, get ready for an attack! Jacko fix the cannons!" As soon as those last words left my mouth, they had reached us. I could hear the yell from the other boat. Then THUMP! They landed on our own ship with a loud thud and the fight began.

The sound of metal clanging filled the air as swords connected. I raised my sword and slashed at the nearest person. He was young and small; it was obvious that he was new to this, but he knew how to use a sword. Determination flared in his eyes, eager to prove himself to his new crew. As he twisted, I grabbed

The Nightmare

On cue, Oscar wakes up in his bedroom at six o'clock in the morning. He reaches out for his phone, but his hand simply hits the nightstand... Curious, he sits up and looks around to see where it had gone, while searching he realises that there was something very different about his room. The flowers his mother brought him just a day before had completely dried up and had fallen on his desk creating a petal-mosaic. All his pictures and paintings had completely been flipped upside down in their frames. *'How peculiar,'* he thought to himself. He leans off the side of his bed to see if his phone had fallen onto the floor. He searches under the bed, but when he stares further into the abyss, three charming little dust bunnies are staring back at him. Their noses twitch, but they sit unfazed. *'How adorable,'* He sits up, puzzled. "Am I dreaming...? Where am I...?" he whispers shakily.

Oscar decides it time to investigate further. He slowly stands up and ambles to the wardrobe. *'I could do with my dressing gown right now.'* He opens the doors cautiously, there in the wardrobe, beneath the hung-up clothing, sits a family of mice, sitting at a mice-sized dining table eating what looks to be *roast moth*. His eyes widen, he stares. The mice pause and nod to him politely, then resume their meal. Oscar pulls on his dressing gown, he gives the mice a kind wave, closes the doors and heads to the kitchen.

Now, frankly Oscar had though he was going mad, or perhaps he was just dreaming, that was the most reasonable explanation anyway. Or maybe he had died... Who could be sure? Though, haply mad, he didn't feel very troubled, I mean, what's so bad about some adorable dust bunnies, and Oscar never had a great fear of mice... Questioning all, he decided it was time to venture outside... excited, and a little worried, he headed out.

Now in the living-room, at first glance everything seemed normal (apart from this reoccurring theme of pictures being flipped upside down in their frames), but, looking closer at the snake scale lamp shade, it appeared to be moving. He inches closer, leans in to see that that it was a real snake. It hisses at him standoffishly, he slowly backs into the kitchen. Other trivial details scatter the room which made this place differ from his *real* home. Oscar looks down onto the counter, there sits the familiar chocolate box... Could it possibly be full of his favourite sweets? The second the lid was off the box, out burst a horde of chocolate scented beetles. An infinite amount was spilling out of the box, flooding the countertop. Then onto the floor, crawling all over him. Now bugs, Oscar wasn't very fond of, this was enough to send him running out the front door, but outside, it became increasingly more dangerous.

Now standing outside the front door, his eyes dart back and forth to situate himself. Instead of seeing his homely street, he observes an ill-lit forest. Gusts of cool wind sound through the branches. He takes a few cautious steps. The second his right foot hit the ground he knew something was wrong, he turns to see that his house has completely dissipated. Oscar began to feel strikingly uneasy. The anomalous day was mutating. He stands paralysed. Short, and quick bursts of air pumping from his lungs to his mouth. He grasps that he's going to have to move. Disoriented, he treks through the forest, catching glances of glowing eyes darting back and forth amidst the trees, just so far out of the corners of his eyes, he's unsure of his own mind. He's losing his grip of reality. *"Is any of this even real!"* he yells. *"Take me back, take me back take me back..."* he mumbles frantically to himself repeatedly.

One set of eyes began turning into three sets, then four, five then six. He became certain he wasn't without company. *"Show me... Show me who you are!" "Tell me where I am! Take me back!"* he calls out into the night. The holders of the eyes are darting betwixt the trees. Making out their bodies, he can see their movements now. They move with agility, circling him, until the distance between the entities and Oscar shrinks. He falls to his knees and covers his eyes. The unknown figures stop one by one, lining up in front of him.

He lowers his arm to see six Siamese cats, 4-feet tall, staring at him with their glowing eyes. Again, he's motionless, his mind keeps repeating *'demons...?'* Instantaneously, the cats' glowing eyes flash, growing brighter and brighter, until they're blazing. Oscar's eye sockets are burning. He turns his head into his shoulder. Then... suddenly the forest turns to darkness. He looks around but can't see a thing, all has disappeared. Sharp pain penetrates his chest, his upper body drops to the ground hard, he's out cold... stuck in an unknown world.



A Hopeless Future

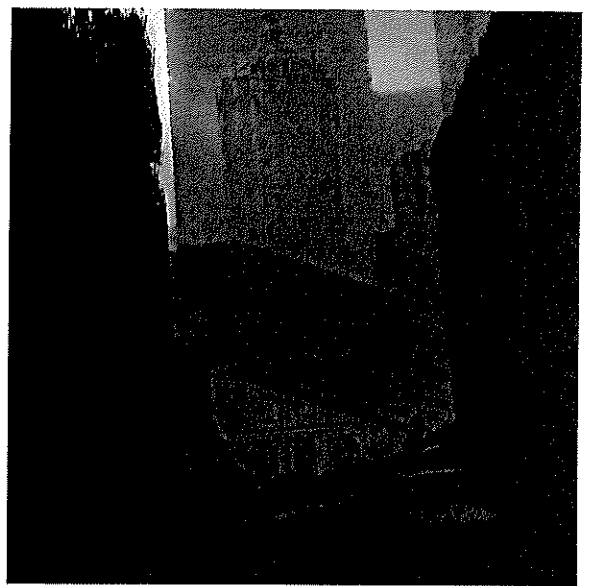
"Run!" cried Jesse, fearfully "Get out of here, now!"

"I can't leave you!" I exhaled.

"Go, there are too many of them!" he urged, getting dragged in by the rotten undead. He was gone.

"No!" I shrieked. There was a loud bang. Blinded by the blast, I saw an orangey-white light ahead. My ears beat with a high-pitched ringing noise and my head pounded with pain. I ran fast in the opposite direction, stumbling over the fallen tree branches and broken street lights in my way. Finally, I reached my horse. Grabbing the rein tightly, I hauled myself up. Huffing and puffing, I galloped off thinking, I was out of the woods.

I couldn't tell what caused the explosion or where on earth it came from, but in this desolate city, it could have been anything. I rode out of the Dead Zone, where the walkers lurk and hunt in large groups. I continued through a great patch of dead long grass, across a rickety old bridge, through a foggy lake, to my safely-barricaded apartment, on the west side of the water. Hastily, I opened the front hatch, a loud gust of black ashen dust burst out. I inhaled it softly, but instantly coughed a deep cough. Recklessly, I took a few steps inside, being hugged by warmth before realising that I was too late. Darkness surrounded me. Everything that I owned was broken and burnt.



I fell to the ground, staring at the last of my axes, it was fractured and burnt but still usable, the only item that survived. A shock of pain burst through my heart. All of my Supplies? Burnt. All of my gear? Charred. The only reminder of my existence was that one axe, lying there, mocking me in the centre of what was once my sanctuary. I staggered towards the door and struck at it with the axe, tearing it in half. I stumbled back to my horse in denial, shivering with terror. "It's all gone!" I snapped, "Everything is gone!" I bellowed. My horse flinched, frightened by my screaming I presume. I placed one unsteady, shaky hand after another on my horse, tugging as hard as I could to haul myself up on to Alfred once again, I couldn't help feeling like the world was against me. *Is this the way the world's going to end?* I wondered, frightened. With a stiff kick of my heel, I was off once more.

The city seemed to have changed in that last hour, it was shrouded in a fine dusty fog, the buildings were entirely covered in a dark green moss, bricks were decaying, most of them with a thin sheet of ice on top. I had no food and no home but most importantly, I had no Jesse. Roaming through the silent, dead streets of the tainted, perilous city, I looked for supplies. The feeling of unknown danger came over me. Not the zombie horde around the dark corner kind of danger, but the feeling of risk and danger someone acquires when they are blatantly in the way of harm. As I shook off the feeling, I blankly stared as a large mushroom shaped cloud of dust splashed down before me quickly followed by pieces of rubble, before I could react, half a ruined building crashed down, just a few meters from me, shooting small shards of brown-white brick and pieces of cinderblock. In panic, my horse dashed for cover, pulling me with him. "It's alright Alfred, calm down, calm." He slowed but I could still feel that he was quaking. He was quite clearly feeling the adrenaline of living in this hellscape. I settled him down on a small grass patch that somehow still survived all the mayhem, thinking, *you're lucky God spared you.*

Cautiously, I walked over to a few muddy crates, I heard the undead growling and snarling. I dashed for the crates, worried that if I hesitated all would be lost, but the walkers heard me, I snatched 2 crates and ran off before they could see me, barely escaping with my life. Amidst the snarling and growling, I heard a grinding noise, the worst and most dangerous creature makes that noise, a hunter, which forced me to run. If you encounter a hunter, just hope that God's on your side, if he's still alive.

I hurried back to Alfred just in time and mounted the crates to him, getting mud all over his polluted fur coat. We made haste out of there. Hearing a deafening roar behind me, I clenched Alfred's rein as the adrenaline kicked in. A large rowdy horde of walkers were sprinting, tearing their way towards me. I kicked and yelled, just hoping that my horse would be faster than the horde. Alfred ran and jumped, dodging each obstacle in our way. We sped out of the Dead Zone but kept running. Our victory was a bit of a fluke, but we'd survived. The horde was still rushing towards us but we were too far away. Some of the mob smashed into the ground, others climbed the broken mossed buildings. Being surrounded in a patchy, dense yellow fog while getting chased is one thing that will guarantee you don't get a good night's sleep!

Turning the corner, I saw untouched concrete, and a fine, shiny white layer of paint. It was a large building that looked completely clean, as if someone had polished it. Curiously, but cautiously I rode towards it and dismounted my horse. Although confused, I strode up to the front door, banged on it three times. To my shock, someone I recognised opened the door...

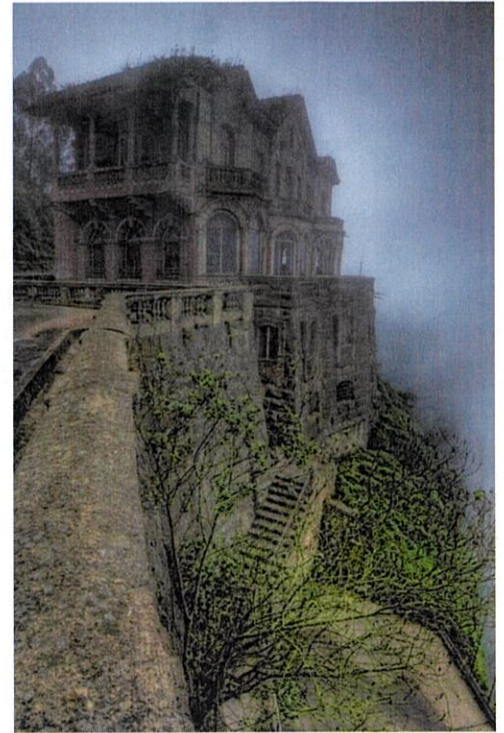
It was Jesse!

Riley Wake
Year 9

Missing

A murder, an abandoned hotel, no suspects, nowhere to start. Colombian detectives had left us little to work with. I suppose that was why they had asked us to come. We were assigned partners. The investigation of the hotel would begin tomorrow.

Wary, our team arrived at the hotel the following day. It loomed above us, haunting, daunting, stirring a sense of unease. Old and built of mossy grey stone, the hotel's stained glass windows were shattered. The place looked forgotten, covered in invasive, spiny plants which constantly got in the way. It would have been pretty, if I had not known of the brutal scene which was about to be uncovered. Entering, I felt sick. Blood splattered the walls, painting them a deep scarlet red. A sickening smell, that reeked of blood, and decomposing flesh, seemed to suffocate me, encasing my thoughts, removing me from reality. We got to work, examining every inch of the room. A stuffy brown moulding box with a chandelier crashed in the centre, gave us nothing. Or so we thought, it had not been known at the time that a vital piece of evidence had been missed. Hanging on the chandelier, a very small key had been hidden. However, this was not found until it was too late. We set to work, exploring the rest of the grand old hotel; it seemed to go on forever. The rooms were endless, but no evidence was found.



My heart dropped, it dropped to my stomach as the first piercing sound of many echoed through the halls. A scream, full of sheer terror, sliced through the stuffy air. I panicked, and ran back to the main room. Everyone else was there, all looking equally as scared, except for one person. One of my workmates looked like he had seen the grim-reaper himself. His mouth moved, but I did not hear anything. The world was spinning around. I couldn't see. The overwhelming stench was suffocating me yet again. The room was spinning. My partner put her hand on my shoulder.

"Hey are you there?" My partner looked alarmed. I shook myself back to reality, nodding. ***"Lenny's partner has disappeared, he was the one that was screaming. And- and."*** she stuttered, taking a breath. ***"And Lenny can't talk, he won't talk. We don't know what happened,"*** she continued.

We got back to investigating, somehow. My heart dropped as I heard the same gut-wrenching scream. We all raced back to the main room. Another person left, unable to speak, in shock. This process repeated and repeated itself, I don't know why we didn't just leave the hotel then and there. Each time I returned to the room, I was suffocating from the pain and stench. It surrounded me, it was all I could see. I was imagining the worst things happening to my missing workmates. There were 6 of us on the team, but 4 were already gone. Everyone had disappeared, and anyone who was with them at the time was unable to speak at all, now gone too. My partner and I suppressed our fear, shaking from terror. Stumbling around, an idea formed, to return to the main room, where the first person had vanished. Both of us looked up, down, around, keeping a spare eye on each other. My partner called my name, I could tell she had found something important. I stumbled over to her, crouching down. She lifted up a tiny key. My mind brought me to the locked door we had found earlier. It was next to one of the broken windows. It had debris piled in front of it. I now noticed a splatter of blood, very small, almost unnoticeable. It was our only clue.

With shaky hands, my partner inserted the small silver key into the rusty lock of the creaky, old wooden door. She slowly turned the key. The squeaking, creaking noise made me more anxious by the second. The door opened. There were patterns carved into the wood. We stumbled cautiously down the stairs, each one complained as we pressed our weight onto it. At the bottom of the staircase was a hallway, with wooden pillars and bricks enclosing it. We pushed on, persisting through our fear. Another door appeared at the end, equally as terrifying. We opened it with shaky hands.