



MUSTANG ANTHOLOGY

WINTER 2014-2015

By students at
MOUNT DESERT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PREFACE



MUSTANG ANTHOLOGY
STUDENT TEAM

This is a compilation of the writing from the seventh and eighth grade classes at Mount Desert Elementary School. It was written by everyone and edited by Louise, Harley, Peter, and Alexandra. The beautiful artwork was created by Jialan, Louise and Harley. The students would like to express special thanks to Mr. Brzezowski, who helped them with everything technical, and Ms. Philbrook, who thought of the idea and gave up valuable class time to work on it.

This anthology all started when the seventh grade had a unit on realistic fiction. They all loved their stories so much, and so did Ms. Philbrook, that she decided to put them into an anthology. Louise, Jialan, Peter, Harley, and Alexandra signed up to help out. Mr. Brzezowski helped us with the technical process of creating this iBook. The students all contributed to the art and editing of the story, and Peter formatted it.

The art was created using ArtStudio, an app on the students school iPads. First, the artist found an image or images to fit the story online. They imported it into the app, and used tools there to recreate the image in a more animated form. They did this so that they could get more accurate, specific images, and so it was original artwork of a consistent style. After they finished with the photos, they airdropped them to the school Mini Mac, where they were added to the story. Overall, the students drew over thirty photos.

For the editing, they collected all of the stories and edited them using the Pages app, also on their iPads. This involved a lot of homework. Again, all of the finished stories

were sent to the main computer. Peter put everything into the iBook using iBooks Author and made them all the same font and style. With Mr. Brzezowski's help, he created the finished iBook.

The eighth grade class wrote a full length novel titled "Stranded" last year and had been looking to publishing their piece. This anthology was the perfect location for them to finally publish their writing.

Stranded has a variety of different characters all with different points of view. Stranded is based on a plane crash on a deserted island in the pacific, and it tells the story of how the characters deal with their misfortune. We students devour young adult books, but what we constantly ask ourselves is where are the young adult authors? The eighth grade class wanted to change that and add true young adult authors to our library.

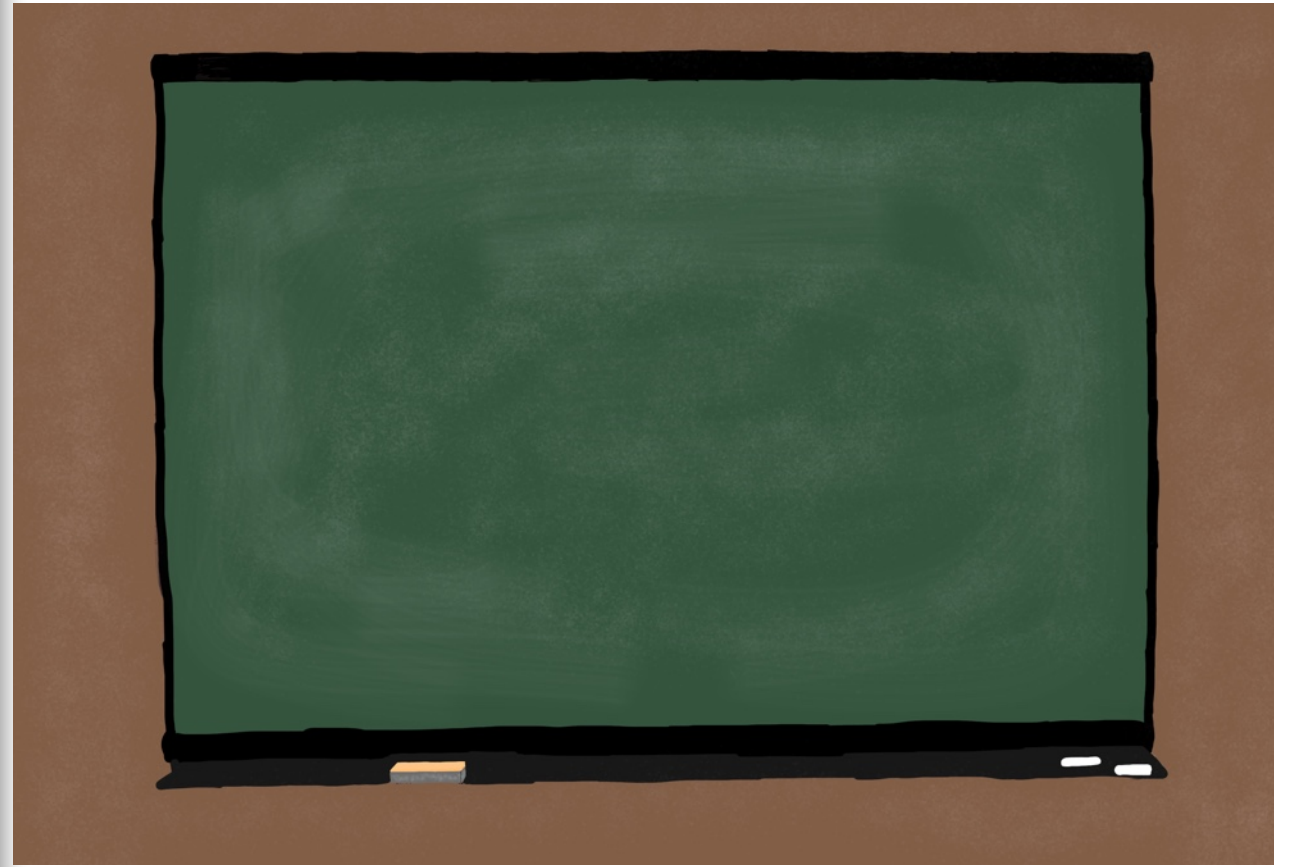
Now, after months of work, it is finally finished and published to the world at large. We truly hope you enjoy our creation. Please feel free to send any feedback to Mr. Brzezowski at mbrzezowski@mdirss.org

Sincerely,

The Mustang Anthology Winter 2014-2015 Team

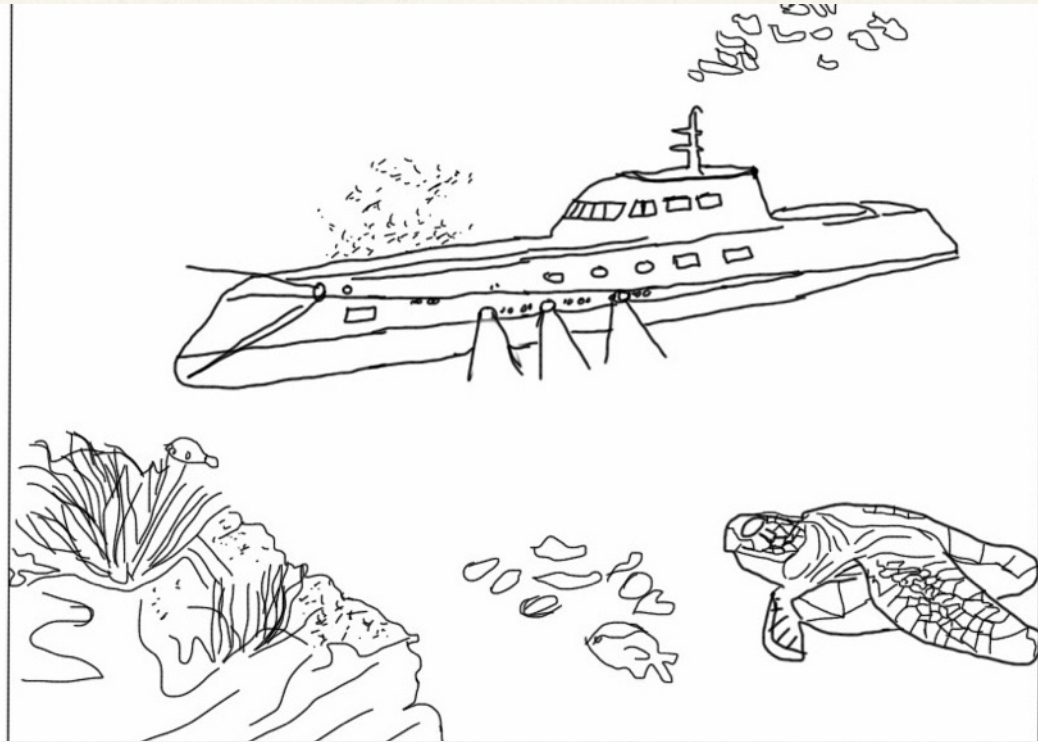
7th Grade

7TH GRADE REALISTIC FICTION



HARLEY

Deep Trouble



"Hey, what does this switch do?" *flick*... *bing* *bing* *bing* "oh." "Woah, look over there! I think it's a fish, and there, over to the right, is that a jelly fish?! And oh my god I think that's a shark! Are you sure it won't break the sub? I hope it doesn't dent it, it's brand new."

"Will you just be quiet?" I said. I can't stand this guy, he hires me and my crew to take him on a submarine trip, and he acts like he hasn't seen a fish before in his life! I mean, if your gonna go on a trip to middle of one of the most diverse ecosystem in the world, you can't scream like a little girl when a big fish goes by, and bounce around like a kid in a candy store when you see a group of dolphins! Eh, at least I'm getting paid big time from this guy, I've heard he's a complete trillionaire.

All of a sudden I hear a loud thundering noise that resonates around the cockpit. I hear Leonardo let out a little yelp and turn around to see him cowering in fear.

"Wh-wh-what was that?" he says in in a quiet voice full of fear and apprehension.

"Don't worry, it's probably just a shark or something," I reply calmly, even though I'm getting a little uneasy, too. When a shark rams a submarine, it can once and a while put a leak in the gas tank, and then your really in trouble. Deep, deep trouble. Just as I'm think that exact thought, I see the swirling shape of shiny oil floating through the water, like the strands of death reaching out and enveloping all the life of the ocean.

"Is that oil? It looks like oil, is it coming from our sub?" Says Leonardo.

"Leonardo, listen to me, there's an oil leak in the side of the submarine, I need you to go outside with the scuba gear and fix the leak."

"WHAT?!?! I can't do that! Why can't you do it?"

"I have to stay here and keep the submarine in place. If you want to live, it's our only choice."

"O-o-ok" he says shakily.

Leonardo

I climb over the piles of supplies towards the storage closets that house all the safety gear, including a tool kit, an axe, life jackets, and a full scuba gear suit. I hastily grab it out of the closet and start to pull on the wet-suit, just like Jack had shown me. After the wet-suit I pull on the PFD, and finally the air tanks and breathing apparatus, the one thing keeping me alive out there. I reassured myself that I could do this and squeeze back into the cockpit. "Ok Jack, tell me what to do."

"Ok, take this ear piece so I can talk you through how to fix the tank. Also, attach this camera to your head, it'll show me what your doing out there, and I'll be able to help you." He says as he hands me a tiny ear piece, and a small camera with a head strap. I push the soft earbud into my left ear, and get it snug into my ear, then I stretch the headband of the camera over my head, and get the camera positioned at the right angle. Then, to hold everything in, I pull the hood of my wet-suit over my head, and make sure that everything is nice and snug. I squeeze my way back into the main cabin and lean over to punch the big, red, square button that opens the airlock. I press it and a medium-sized hatch in the side of the wall opens up into a small room with some other supplies in it, and a small keyboard. I step in and take the flippers of the hook in the wall. I pull them over my feet, once done with that, I punch the password into the keypad and open the door. All at once a massive wall of water surges into the little room, and the pressure in my ears sky-rocket. I push my way out of the door, using the handles and knobs that are all over the place.

All of a sudden, I'm out, I'm floating around in the water, suddenly aware of the hugeness, and vastness of the ocean. I look around and see the trail of oil floating through the water. I follow it, circling

the front of the sub, look around to find where the leak is coming from. I finally spot a small crack in the hard metal, and it's spewing out the shiny liquid. "Good job, I can see the leak now." I hear through my earpiece. It's Jack, talking in a scratchy voice through the microphone. "Now, take the small tool kit out of your pocket, and find the hand welder." I rummage through the deep pockets on my "jacket" thing, and finally find something that resembles a tiny blowtorch. I'm shocked with fear in having to use this thing, I've heard it's extremely dangerous using a blowtorch underwater. "Ok, now your going to have to sort of bend the two sides of the crack into each other, and weld them together." I look at the welder, and wonder how on earth I'm gonna do this. "Quickly!" Jack says through the mic. I put the mini blowtorch in my other hand and use my right hand to bend the metal in. It plies surprisingly easy, and I manage to almost close the gap. Then, I take the blowtorch out of my left hand, and hold the green trigger that I assume turns it on. When I do this, a massive spark flares up, and immediately dies down to a smaller, large-candle shaped flame. I hold the flame up to metal, and the metal instantly starts to melt. I hastily pull away the blowtorch, afraid I had messed up. "It's ok." I hear in my ear. "Keep going, and then try to push the two pieces of molten metal together, then hold them until they cool a little." I'm thinking "ok" but I can't say it, with the breathing nozzle in my mouth. Once again, I hold up the end of the blowtorch to the metal, and wait until it's really melted, then, using my gloved hands, I start to mold the metal back together as best I can, trying to seal up all the tiny gaps. "We've got gas! You did it Leo! Come on back in, nice job!" Says the scratchy voice in my ear. I'm relieved that it worked, and that I was able to save the sub, all the people on the sub, and most of all: myself.

As I'm swimming back I see a massive dark shape floating on the surface of the water a little ways away. I know that it must be a boat, but I don't have a clue if it's good or bad. I've heard that this sea is infested with modern day pirates. I quickly rush back in to tell Jack.

Once I'm back in the sub, the whole crew congratulates me for what I did. Everyone except for Jack, who was sitting at his computer, frowning with his brown furrowed. "Jack?" I ask hesitantly. "You okay?"

"Leo, I need you to come over here." I walk over and look over his shoulder at the computer. On the screen is what looks like a radar machine, and I see a massive boat passing by on our left.

"Hey! I saw that same boat just a couple miles away when I was outside!" I exclaim. I ask Jack what it is, and he replies:

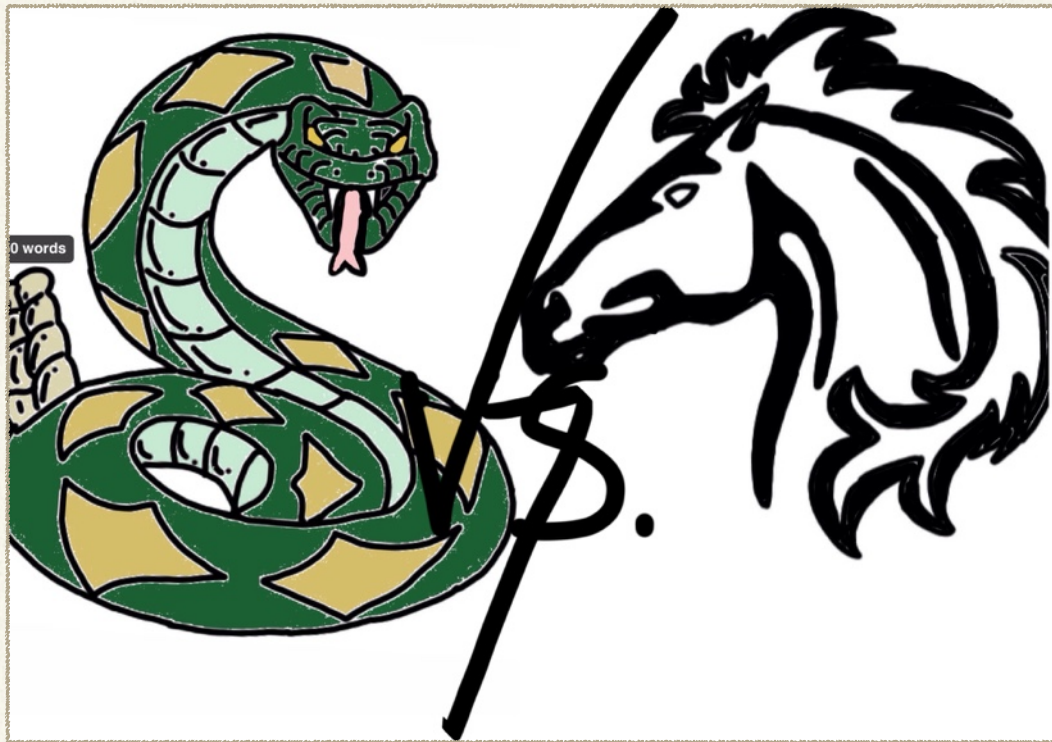
"It's a private German terrorist boat. Their holding tons of slaves on it. It's our choice, we have enough power to outrun the thing, and we could leave, or we could go and try to save them. The sub is armed with small torpedoes, and a mini gun on the top deck, just for this kind of problem. It's up to you Leo, what do we do?" I thought deep and hard about our choices, and what instantly came into my mind is what would Lidia do? Lidia is my sister. She lives with me, but does a lot of work trips. She was the person I was always looking up to, and I've always wanted to be like her. At that moment, I knew what we had to do.

As we chugged forward, I start to see the massive hull of the ship loom into view, a giant hunk of floating metal in the dark ocean. I'm standing by the missile launch system, ready to blow out the ships engines. Jack had given me a brief walk through on how to aim and shoot the missiles, so I sort of knew what I was doing. Still, we only have three missiles, so the pressure is on. We circle around the side of the boat, and I can see the massive propeller that propels the the boat. Since the boat is still moving, Jack is trying to move at the same pace to give me an easy shot. I stare into the sights and line up the cross-hairs with the propellor. Once I know I have a clear shot, I take a breath in, hold it, and breath out. On my exhale I pull down the black trigger and hear a massive *WHOOSH* as the torpedo goes arcing through the water. It's headed straight for the boat, it can't miss. I feel the explosion before I hear it. Like a fist knocking the air out of me, and then, just as I steady myself, the sound comes. It's like if all the Fourth of July fireworks in the world, every store-bought fire work, every bomb in the army went off at the exact same time... At least that's what it sounded like. A big cloud of oil spooled out from the gaping hole that the torpedo had made. I heard a whooping cry from the front of the sub, it was Jack. I smiled, proud of myself for what I had done.

"Nice job Leo!!" Jack shouted. "I've called the local coast guard, they'll be here in a bit, we're all good to go." I was relieved beyond compare that we could save those slaves, and I had realized something. I almost turned away from that boat, I could've just pretended I never saw it, and left. I could have literally killed those slaves. And that is a mistake I will never make as long as I live.

8 years later

Leonardo Vitkensen, a former billionaire, donated all of his money to different charity funds to help diseases, child abuse, starvation, and animal abuse. He has also given away his entire estate to another charity fund to eliminate homelessness. Since he had no where to live, he became a pilot and joined the Air Force. He has been serving our country for only a year, and has saved thousands of lives. Unfortunately, he died in a plane crash when he was trying to save one of the other soldiers. He crashed near the camp, and a medic named Jack went to help him. No one knows who Jack is, or where he went. He only had one interview, and he said that Leonardo's last words were "I'm so sorry Lidia... I did the best I could."



KATELYN

Delilah

Chapter 1 The Playoffs

My heart was thumping, pounding, like it was full of adrenaline. I had goosebumps all over and my stomach was fluttering. It's time. This is the day we beat these jerks and show them who's boss. This is the game that leads to the championships. If we lose, I don't know what I'd do. The team we're against is from Nevada. At the moment our coach is giving us a talk about the game.

"This is it girls. This is the moment. I don't have time for foolishness. We have to win in order to keep our place as first. Melody, you're the only goalie we have so make it count. Britney, you're right full. Lydia, your right half. Delilah your center full." He kept telling everyone on our team their places. "Remember, we've heard from other teams that they're jerks. They will do anything they can to win. You ready, Mustangs?"

"YEAH!" We all scream.

"Let's do this! MUSTANGS ON THREE!" The coach yells.

"ONE..TWO..THREE!" We all scream once again. "MUSTANGS!"

We get the ball first. The referee blows his whistle. I pass it to Britney and she passes back. I start towards the goal.

Run. Run. Run. Kick. Kick. Kick. I turn to my left. A big and buff girl comes running towards me. Think fast. She tries to kick my shin, but I dodge it by kicking the ball through her legs and sliding to the left. Two other girls are running at me at full speed. I have no way out of this one and Britney and Lydia aren't open. I look to my left to see Julia, (one of my teammates who's our left half) wide open. I kick it high in the air towards her and she heads it to Ally (who's left full) who heads it in front of her and goes towards the goal. Under my breath I say, "Come on Ally. You got this." Then I see five girls running towards her and she panics and kicks it as hard as she can towards the goal. A player on the other team runs towards it and prepares to kick it. I sprint. My opponent sees me coming and starts to sprint too. Luckily, I'm fast. I slide and kick the ball right into the goal. The goalie catches it. "Darn!" I yell. I run back a little. The goalie kicks the ball. It flies across the field. I start towards the ball. I can feel the wind rushing up against me. My opponent runs too. She's really fast, I think. I start to run faster; so does she. I don't stop. I expect her to, but she doesn't. I won't stop for her, I think. Then slam. She knocks me over. I fall to the ground.

Chapter 2

Times ticking

I feel limp. My heart stops. The referee blows his whistle. My team crowds around me. My ankle feels like a million needles are stabbing it. Not today, I think. I get up. "Do you need a time out?" My coach asks.

"No way." I say, giving the girl who knocked me over the death stare. She just looks at me, grinning. She meant to do that, I could tell. I get up. My ankle hurts but I can tell that it was only a little bruise and it won't affect me. I look to my left. My family's there. They have a worried look in their face but they are clapping. I smile. My brother, Max, came. He never comes to my games. He brought his friends too and they were cheering me on. He was holding both my dogs in each hand. I felt the adrenaline I had before the game rush

through me once again and the pain in my ankle leaves. I get up and run towards the ref. Penalty kick.

"Goalie ready?" Referee asks. The goalie nods. She seems determined to catch it. "Are you ready?" The referee asks me. "Oh yeah," I say. He blows his whistle. I go back a little, then run and kick the ball right towards the goal. The wind changes its direction and the goalie catches it. The Rattlesnakes cheer. I feel my eyes burn and my chest cringe. My team doesn't do anything but prepare for the game once again. I feel my face go red. This team is going down.

It was over halfway through the second half. It's now 1-1. Lydia scored our goal. Melody runs and kicks it as hard as she can. I zoom towards where the ball was landing, which is really close to the goal. I look at the clock. We had three minutes left. I bite my lip. This can't be good. It's a tie. The ball lands and bounces just about my height and I head it as hard as I can toward the goal, it misses the post just by an inch. It's time for me to sub out. I run to the bench. I look at the clock. Three minutes. "Coach, were tied. I...." He cut me off.

"Your going in in just a minute. Get a drink and relax." I take my Gatorade and drink it for what seems like forever until he calls me in. Great, I think I drank too much. "Okay Delilah. Go in for Eve. I grab my mouthguard and wait for the referee to call subs. One and a half minutes. It's their ball. I have to get this in. The goalie kicks and it reaches half field. It's time, I think. I run with the ball. I slide, and kick the ball through their feet and keep running. I hear my coach yelling. My heart was about to burst. I could feel my eyes watering, my ears popping, my hands shaking, my tongue dry, and my nose runny. Come on. This one defender is running towards me. She chips it up in the air and I head it. It flies in the air. Fifty seconds. Forty. Thirty nine. Lydia sprints and kicks it back to me. I look at the clock, thirty seconds. A defender comes running at me. Oh not again. I dodge and she misses. Twenty seconds. I sprint. I see the goal. The goalie is right in the middle. I need to make a curve, I think. Ten seconds. Nine seconds. I am surrounded by the Rattlesnakes. Oh no, five seconds. I see a chance to kick. I kick super hard. Three seconds. Two. The goalie reaches out to

grab it but misses and trips and the ball goes in as soon as the time was up. I scream. We won! We won! My whole team comes running towards me. Woo-hoo! I see my family. They come running towards me, too. My teammates pick me and Lydia up and scream, "Mustangs!" My family joins. "We won," I say under my breath.

Chapter 3

Home

Later on....."Great job Delilah! You did great today!" Max, my 15 year old brother says.

"Thanks," I reply, smiling. "Goodnight," I say.

"Goodnight Delili," Max calls me Delili. I don't know why. My mom entered the room.

"You did amazing sweetie. I'm so proud of you!" My mom turned around. "You have a visitor." I look in the doorway. There is my puppy. She is a golden lab and her name is Summer. She jumps on my bed and starts to lick my face, and I laugh. My mom smiles. My dad walks in and bends over me. He puts Summer to the side. "Hey honey. Your little brother, Ryan, wants you to go to his championship game tomorrow. Can you go? If not, he has another game. It's his team against family. You can participate that one." I think. Oh no. I have an art show tomorrow and have a meet the next day. "Dad, I have an art show and a meet. I can't. I'm sorry."

"Can't you do that another day?" My dad asks. "You never go to your brother's games."

"Well, I can't. This meet is important. His game, well, he is only seven. It's not that important." I look over in the doorway. Ryan was standing right there. He had tears in his eyes. "Ryan!" I feel horrible. I didn't mean to say that. He runs out. "That wasn't very nice. Your brother's games are important too....." My mom takes a second. "Goodnight Delilah." My mom and dad give me a kiss goodnight and walk into the hallway to calm Ryan. I wasn't trying to be mean, but it's true. He's seven. He's doesn't have to worry about grades, sports and art. And he's a crybaby. He's over reacting. He's fine. My mom comes back and opens the door. My other Labrador puppy comes in, the one

named Autumn. "Mom," I try to apologize but she closes the door. Whatever, I think. I close my eyes. He will get over it. Why would I apologize? It's no big deal. Autumn and Summer huddle next to me. I smile. Wimp, I think as I doze off.

Chapter 4

School

I'm late, I'm late, I'm late. My GPA will go down, I can't be late. I zoom across the street. A car honks at me and the guy in it yells, "WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!"

"Sorry sir!" I keep running. The school's in my view. The cold air is blowing against my face. My backpack is pulling me down. My sports bag hits the back of my leg and I stumble to the ground. I get back up. The buses are leaving the school. Oh no. I run faster, my leg feeling like it was on fire. I run to the door. I open it without hesitation and notice the doors are closing. I run, not caring if the teacher notices. I slip through the door just as it closes. Wow, that was close. I quickly walk to my locker. I stuff my bags in my locker. Lydia and Britney, my best friends, come running towards me. "This Friday there will be a haunted house. Please come. We will have a sleepover and everything!" Lydia yells excitedly.

"And we we can go shopping the next day!" Britney screams.

"Um.....guys.....I can't. I have a meet. It's my last one. Sorry." I feel horrible.

"We will pick up you up after the meet! It will be fine! I swear!" I smile. Leave it to Lydia to figure everything out.

I run into class. I sit down just as the teacher starts speaking.

Chapter 5

Dinner

Later at dinner.....

"So, how was everyone's day?" my dad asks. I look over. My sister Avery starts to speak. "I had a great day. I had a quiz on spelling

and got an E! I exceeded! I also decided I'm doing basketball this year."

"Wow Avery, that's awesome. Am I gonna have quizzes when I get older?" Ryan asks.

"Yes you will. But you will be prepared for it, don't worry." Max answers. Ryan smiles.

"Good. I had a great day too! My friend and I beat the other team in gym. It was amazing. You had to be there Delilah. I hit somebody with the ball and got them out. You could see that I'm good at sports and that my life is important too," Ryan says, a little shy. My family stares at me. "Um....good job Ryan. That's great." I say. My parents smile. "It's just that gym isn't that important. I mean it is, but all you do is play games. It's stupid and not that amazing. At my age it's very important. Thanks for thinking of me though. Mom? Dad? Can I go to the haunted house with my friends after the meet tomorrow?" Max and my mom and dad give me a glare. Ryan looks at Avery and Avery looks back. "That's not true Delilah! Don't be mean. Just because your older doesn't mean you have to be a big butt. You didn't go to his game because of a stupid art show you do every other week. This game was important. That's not how you treat your younger brother. Stop being a selfish brat!" Did Avery really just call me a brat? "A brat!?" I yell. "I'm not a brat! When you get older, this stuff is important. Of course you don't know! Your only ten!" I yell. Ryan gets up and stomps out of the room in tears. Avery follows, trying not to cry. Max stands up and looks me in the eye. "Your a disappointment. Why don't you care about your family? They're ten and seven. Be nice for once! Go to their games. Take your mind off sports and school for just one second and think about us for once! Okay? Seriously Delili." Max gets up and storms off to Avery and Ryan. I look at my mom and dad. I was just yelled at by my brothers and my sister. What did I say wrong? I was just speaking the truth.

"Delilah, room. Now! You will not go to the haunted house after the meet! You will go to Ryan's game with us! You will respect your family! You will, and I mean it, take your mind off sports for once! Your brothers game starts at 4:30 tomorrow and you end running at 4:15. I will pick you up then. In the mean while, go apologize to your

brother and sister. Now!" My dad yells. Tears stream down my face. I run upstairs. I see my brother and sister in Max's room. I walk in. "Sorry that no one cares about your games and sorry that everyone thinks your a brat! Sorry Max, for not thinking about my annoying family and I'm sorry you don't go to my games either!" I run out of his room and into mine and lock my door. I burst into tears. I stuff my face in my pillow. My life is ruined. My family hates me!

Chapter 6

The Meet

Today was the meet. My family is here. I try not to make eye contact after the big fight between me and my family last night.

"Line up everyone!" My coach yells. I run up to the starting line. I'm in front with two others since I'm one of the fastest. I look around. Hundreds of people are here. Maybe thousands. I look to my right. There they are, the Rattlesnakes. Why are they here? I think. Then I remember it is the championships. Their top runner is way taller than me, meaning longer legs, possibly more adrenaline and speed.

"Listen up!" The speaker yells. Everyone quiets. "I'm going to say, 'runners on your mark,' and then going to shoot the gun. You guys ready? Okay. Let's start." The speaker goes off to the side. "Runners on your mark!" I take my position. My heart almost out my throat. Butterflies fluttering, causing me to feel sick. My legs are covered in goosebumps and I'm already sweating. She shoots the gun. BOOM! I sprint. Everyone around me is pushing and panting. This one girl from soccer saw me and recognized me so she went up to me and pushed me as hard as she could. I stumble. I start to lose my balance but I regain it. One person behind me flat tires me and the same girl pushes me. I keep going, running faster. I pass the clump of people and now I'm in the woods. I look around. Wow. What beautiful scenery. I feel a cramp form in my stomach. Oh no. I start to slow. I can't slow down, I think, this is it. I have to win first place. I run faster. I start panting. I hear pounding behind me. It's the girl that pushed me several times. I look ahead. The tall girl on their team is way ahead. I smirk. I turn

again and the girl is right on my tail. I try to run faster. She does too. I turn around. I'm losing her. It's just the beginning, wear her out. I look forward again. A good sized root was right in front of me. I try to jump. Too late. I trip, this time not regaining my balance. The root twists my ankle. It goes numb with pain. I wince. I try not to cry but I do. The girl that was behind me stopped and yelled for help. I yell. "Owwwwwww." The girl beside me has a worried look on her face. I look at the root. It is big and long. I try to move my ankle, but it is worthless. It hurt like a million needles in my flesh and bone. My right sneaker was torn in the front. It's the same foot I bruised at the play-offs. Maybe it's just another bruise. It has to be. I lie down, I must go on, I think. They need me. A whole bunch of people pass me. Watching for the root, apologizing and looking at me like I had five heads. My family comes running towards me, others following. They bend beside me. My mom kisses my forehead. My dad takes my hand and smiles. "You're okay. You're okay." Max takes my other hand and kisses it. Avery and Ryan do the same. I smile. They forgive me. They really do.

Chapter 7

The News

It turns out Ryan's game was canceled until next week because of rain. My family had brought me to the hospital to check out my foot. It was definitely not just a bruise. I look at my doctor and he's focused on my X-Ray. I look at it too. I see my bone, split in half. I look down at my foot. It's the same foot I had bruised at the playoffs. It's still achy but the cast is keeping me from making it worse by moving. "Doctor?" I call. My doctor turns around. "What's wrong with my foot?" He looks me in the eye.

"You have split a bone in your foot in half. It's broken." I look down. I can't run. I can't kick. I can't walk without crutches. I can't do sports. I take a deep breath. I feel my eyes water. The same cramp that formed in my stomach, forms in my chest. I look to my right, trying to hold in my tears. My mom and dad are leaning on the door. My mom notices a tear run down my cheek. She walks towards me. "Honey,"

she puts her finger under my chin and lifts my head up. I look her in the eyes. "I know sports are important to you. I'm sorry you can't play in the soccer championships. I know it's hard. You did the best you could at the meet today by the way."

"Did we win?" I ask, praying in my head we did.

"You guys won third place." I look down again. They lost because of that stupid root. They lost because I was too engaged with the person behind me to notice that there was a root in my path. They lost the championships because of me. "Sweetie, if you were there you would've won." I know, I think. I made them lose. "How long will I be on crutches?" The doctor took a second.

"I'm sorry, you can't do sports, you will be on crutches for six weeks." No, I think, no, this can't be happening. No. No. I burst into tears.

Chapter 8

The Problem

It's been three days since I broke my foot and so far, it's been really boring. I can't play in gym, go to practices, and I couldn't go play in my championships game. I am about to die of boredom. If only I didn't forget to pay attention to where I was running, I wouldn't be in this mess. We won the championships thankfully. Lydia and a girl on our team named Jane scored the goals. It was two to zero. What a tough and tense game. My friends told me it would've been ten to zero if I was there because of my talent and good sportsmanship. Of course there always the ones to cheer me up. My family forgives me for my recent outbreak. I guess I was a little mean. Since I broke my foot, I could go to my brothers' and sister's games more often. I guess you could say I learned something. I guess you could say I learned that my family is a big part of my life and I have to appreciate having them. I learned that family is important too.

JORDAN

Escaping Youth



Unable to sleep, my mind continues to wonder. I think and I think. I'm scared, I really am. I take a huge deep breath to calm myself down, my warm breath lingers in front of my face and blends right into the cold air. I close my eyes, and for some reason they pop right back open. I shove my covers off of me and stand up, I hustle over to the window I always stare right through, and I just think some more. I think about how soon I won't ever look through this window again, and how nothing has changed outside this window and never will. After tomorrow I won't ever have to look at this dreadful orphanage again, I will be a normal 15 year old girl with parents. Orphans dream is to be adopted, and now that this is soon to happen to me. I'm still frightened by the thought of living with strangers. Hours pass by and suddenly I get really tired. I walk silently as possible back to my wooden bunk bed so I wouldn't awake any sound asleep orphans. I pull the covers up over me and I finally dozed off to the thought of leaving the orphanage and heading to America.

"Hana! Time to finish packing, your parents will be here in three hours!" yelled one of the workers. I roll my eyes, and roll out of bed. I trot over to my dresser as other orphans come to tell me how lucky I am and to write them letters about America. I felt horrible, even though I don't really like anyone at the orphanage I still felt very sad for them, but everything happens for a reason.

Hours of packing go by surprisingly quick, and my "parents" are coming to get me in 50 minutes. I use most of that time to stare out the window I will soon never see through again. I think about how long the

plane ride will be and what it's like. I've never even left the orphanage, and now I'm leaving the country. I look at my reflection in the dirty window and brush my long jet black hair that falls to my lower back as I stare right into my own dark brown eyes, and I think to myself how crazy this all is. My reflection disappears from the window when a red sporty looking car drives up the road to the orphanage. It took me a couple of seconds to realize who that could be, because I've never seen a car like that pull into the orphanage, and believe me, I've stared out that window so long now that I've seen every car or truck that has ever gone on this road. When I realized those were my parents I stood by the window in awe, and tried my hardest to get a quick glance of what they looked like. I waited thirty minutes before I got the holler that meant I could come down stairs and meet them.

My packed suit case slammed against my legs as I walked down the stairs to meet them. A tall bald man with glasses stood before me, and said "Hi Hana, my name is Jeff, and this is my wife Miranda." They seemed very like very nice people, and I don't think that I would mind living with them in America. One of the workers talked with them for a while and friendly joked with them about me, and we finally left.

It was a little awkward for a while, but then we went out to eat in Tianjin city before we had to catch our plane and it became slightly more normal and less awkward. I had such amazing food that I never even knew existed at the restaurant we ate at. We left the restaurant that I had the best time at, they got to know me better as well as I got to know them better. We talked about many things, and I learned a lot about America from all the questions I asked.

We pulled into the airport with our red sporty car and waited around for a while before we even left. I saw tons of weird and crazy things at the airport. More things I never even knew existed. We walked onto the plane after waiting in line and handing in our bags and tickets. I sat in a comfortable seat next to Jeff and Miranda. The plane made a loud growling noise that jumped me and we starting to rise into the air.

My ears felt so weird, that's when Miranda handed me some minty gum. It made them feel much better. I fell asleep three times on

our way to America, the plane experience was cool and very boring, but I could sleep there because of the lack of sleep I got from the night before, which helped speed up the process of being on the plane. The plane finally stopped as I was staring out the window for a few hours. We left the airport at New York City. Never have I ever seen something so beautiful and big.

Jeff took us to see a huge gigantic green statue. I started to laugh in amazement, he said I could go up into it if I wanted to. I obviously said yes. It seemed like forever when we finally reached the top. I reached the top of the statue and I saw the most majestic thing I have ever seen. I saw the sun glisten across the water bordering the huge Green Lady. "Wow, staring out this window is way more interesting than the window I stared out back in the orphanage," I said all giggling. Miranda and Jeff laughed with me. I could tell that this would be the best time of my life, living with my parents.



NATE

Miracle on Soccer Field

The worst day of my life, was surprisingly the best too. I know it sounds strange that the worst day of my life was also one of the best. But if you understand what happened, it all makes sense. To me at least. That day started out great.

"Go blue. Go blue", the crowd rhythmically chanted as the game neared the end. It was 2-2, the Georgeson Lions, we're playing the Odis Pumas. It was the championship game and it was tied up. We needed a goal and we needed it fast. I shakily wiped stinging sweat off my face, and glanced at the clock. 2 minutes left. But our chances didn't look to good.

They were getting numerous shots on goal, and it seemed like we couldn't do anything about it. Suddenly I jumped up and ran over to coach . I couldn't take it anymore. I had to be in the game.

"Coach,coach! Can I please go in? I need to play!" Coach glanced at the me, and then at the scoreboard. Seeming to make up his mind, he nodded.

"Sure Ettan, go in for Ravi",he replied. I gulped. Ravi was one of the best players on the team, not to mention one of meanest. He would blame it all on me if we lost. Nervously I walked to the sideline. I shielded my eyes from the glaring sun as I surveyed the field. My heart soared as I watched my team race down the sideline toward the goal. I jumped up, ready to cheer as my team scored a goal. But it didn't happen.

"Ohhhhhhhhh", the crowd groaned as a burly player from the other team slide tackled Ravi from behind. The referee instantly blew the whistle and called for a penalty kick. Yes, I thought, Ravi is the best at taking penalty kicks, we're going to win! But then the referee's short blast brought me to reality.

"Subs in", he called. Oh no, I thought, this is the worst moment for me to go in. I nervously run on to the field. I put up my hand for a high five but Ravi chooses to whisper as he runs past. "If you miss this goal I'll punch you in to tomorrow!" I nervously gulp. Way to boost my confidence I think in my head but choose not to say out loud.

The crowd boos my arrival on to the field. They want to see a win, and they know Ravi is there best chance to score a goal. My teammates though are supportive. They whisper, "you got this", as I run bye.

Finally I make it to the penalty mark. As the referee sets the ball down I stare at the goalie. He has a determined look on his face. His expression reminds me of the look Bulls get before they charge. I had the bad luck to accidentally walk in to a bull pen a couple years ago. And let me tell you, it was not fun. But I got out alive. This goalie had that same look on his face as the bull had before he charged me. It was not a good look.

I stared past the goalie and inspected the goal. I noticed that the goalie was moved a little bit to the left. So I wanted to kick it the right. But low or high? All these different thoughts and questions zoomed around my head. But it was to late now, the referee had blown his whistle. It was time for me to take the shot. It all came down to this. There was 30 seconds left on the clock. So even if I made it the other team would have a chance to score. I meant ally shook my self. This wasn't the time to think about that, it was time for me to score.

I slowly backed up. I couldn't hear the crowd any more. I was in the perfect moment, and I knew that this was going in. I sprinted forward, taking long even strides. As I neared the ball I swung my right foot

back. At the last moment I shot. The ball struck off my foot as if it was a bouncy ball on the concrete. It sailed through the air as the goalie dived, the wrong way. It had been a bluff, he thought that I was going to shoot at the right. But I had shot in the opposite direction. The ball grazed the crooks bar then sank into the net.

"GOAL GOAL GOAL", the crowd screamed as my teammates rushed me. But my coaches gruff shout stopped them. "Get back in the game! There's still thirty seconds to play!" We rushed back to our side, ecstatic with happiness. The other team quickly tapped the ball in to play, but the game was over. There may still have been thirty seconds left but the other team was defeated mentally. And we were to happy to lose. Our happiness was like a wall, nothing could break through it.

The game was over before we knew it. As we walked to the sidelines to shake hands, even Ravi and coach congratulated me. As we shook hands,

I couldn't help feeling sorry for the other team. This was the championship game and they had lost. But now it was our time.

"We did it! We won!", we screamed as we rushed in to a huddle. Suddenly I was lifted clear of the sweaty, cramming body's. My teammates carried me on their shoulders as we ran a final victory lap around the field.

And that's when the greatest day of my life turned in to the worst. Slowly me and my teammates stopped chanting, someone was walking on to the field toward us. As he neared I instantly recognized him, my Mother cleaned his house for him.

As he walked solemnly towards us my team slowly lowered me off there shoulders and dropped me to the ground.

"Ettan", he called my name, "come over here, I need to tell you something."

Instantly I knew something was wrong but I still followed him as he started walking. My euphoria had died down and had been replaced by dread. As we slowly walked side by side he began to talk.

"Great job in the game, that was a really nice..." He started out saying. I cut him off short.

"I know your not here to congratulate me on my game. What is it you want to say to me?" He seemed taken aback by this hard response. "Well it's about your Mother. She's been injured", he sadly replied. I gave an involuntary gasp. My Mother was all I had left in life. My father had died when I was very young and I have no brothers or sisters.

"What happened? Is she okay? ", I blurted out.

"Don't worry, she's fine, she broke one of her vertebrae in her back after she fell off a ladder dusting the chandelier. She's in the hospital now."

Immediately I rushed off towards the hospital. Sprinting as fast as my legs could carry me across the field and out on to the road. I didn't care anymore that I was running in my cleats. I didn't care that I had left my team right after we had won our game. I didn't care because my Mom was hurt. I ran down Main Street narrowly missing a Ricksha.

Finally the hospital came in to view. It's menacing white washed walls seemed to bear down on me. Breathlessly I entered the hospital. The nurse seemed surprised at my entrance. Luckily there was no line so I rushed up to the main desk.

"What do you want?", she asked me in a bored voice, as she smacked loudly on her gum. She seemed like she didn't even care that a twelve year old boy had rushed in wearing a soccer jersey and cleats. I suddenly snapped, I wouldn't deal with this while my Mom was hurt.

"I WANT TO SEE MY MOM!" I shouted at her, and pounded on the desk.

That woke her up.

"Well jeez kid do I need to call security?"

" No No No, please I just want to see my Mom"

"So she'll be that new one in right? The one with the broken back?" Finally we were getting somewhere. I sighed in relief, she knew who she was.

" Yes that's her. Can I see her please?" Her expression softened.

"Of course you can dear. Let me show you to her room", she softly said.

She seemed to feel bad for me, but she must see people like me every-day. People looking for someone who's hurt.

I followed her down a white corridor with rows of doors on either side. If I listened closely I could hear groans of pain coming from some of the rooms. I hoped my Mom wasn't one of them and that she wasn't in pain.

Finally we reached the last door in the hall. "Here she is. There's a ten minute wait time so I'll come get you when it's up", she told me before she walked back down the hall.

"Thank you!", I called after her but she didn't answer, her mean self was back. I waited a few seconds before going in to my Mom's room, I needed time to collect myself. After a minute I slowly pushed the door open. A wave of my Mothers perfume enveloped me. The room was blank save for a small bed and a heart rate monitor, and there were no windows. It felt confined. Slowly I walked to the small, frail

bed. My mom was there collapsed on the bed. As I walked closer I saw a large brace on her back, keeping her from injuring it even more. I don't know how long I sat there next to her as she was sleeping. All I know is that when I finally had gotten up and walked out, I had made up my mind.

I was going to drop out of school. It was the only way to make sure me and my Mom won't starve to death. I was going to drop out and get myself a job to support us as my mother healed. As I walked back to our small hut on the outskirts of the village, I thought about the choice I had made, was it the right one? By the time that I reached our hut, I had convinced myself that this was the only way. But it meant that my education was gone. Ever since I was a little baby I had dreamed about becoming a rich doctor, and leaving our small village. But my dream for that was gone, I'm doomed to live a life of pulling Rickshas or some other low paying job in our village.

Sighing I opened the door and walked in.

Our house is fairly small. Two small beds are pressed in to the way corners of our only room. In the middle of the room is our cooking fire it sits on top of our dirt floor. A small table inlaid with carvings sits next to our cooking fire. We eat our meals there. There is one window that looks out in to the jungle. Though it sounds dirty it is actually immaculately clean, my mother is that type of person. She has laid mats all over the floor, to cover up the dirt. And she washes all of our things in the river near our house.

Before going in I walk to the back of our house. There we have dug a hole that we cover up with a mat. I lift the mat back and reach in, taken out a small bag of rice and our last piece of mutton. Soon the hut fills with the good smell of mutton cooking. I set the rice in a small pot of water and wait for it to cook. Finally it's done. I grab a small bowl and sit down at our table.

The mutton and rice go perfect together, and the warm food sits contentedly in my stomach, lulling me to sleep. I collapse in to bed and I fall asleep as soon as my head hits the pillow.

Our neighbors rooster wakes me just as the dawn breaks. I stumble up from bed and immediately trip. I'm still wearing my cleats and soccer uniform from the game! I hurriedly change and eat my leftovers from my dinner the night before. Anxiously I run out of the house and toward the school. I don't want to be late for my last day of school! I arrive breathlessly to the school. It is a small brick building with a soccer field located behind it. The bell hadn't rung yet so the front of the school was packed with milling students. Ignoring the shouts from my friends, I ran in to the school. Pushing against the tide of students was like running through molasses. I could push them away but they would always ooze back in and block my way again. I gave one last push through the crowd of students and made my way in to the school. As soon as I entered the school, I slowed down. I needed to collect my breath before I went in to the principals office.

I walked slowly to the office where the principal was located. I opened the door with an ominous creak. The principal looked up from his desk as I entered.

"Hello Ettan, what's troubling you?" He said reading my troubled expression.

"Well Sir, I've come to drop out", I hesitantly cut to the point. He immediately stood up from his desk.

"And why would you do such a thing? You've always been a good student"

"Sir, the real reason why I'm dropping out is because of my Mother. She has hurt her self and I need to provide for both of us", I responded. After hearing that he sat back down again. It was a long time before he responded.

"Hmmm...I think I have a solution. This evening are school is hosting a soccer tournament, and the winner of this tournament wins one thousand rupees. If you won that would be enough to care for you and your Mother"

My heart jumped from the despair that it was in. There was a solution to the trouble me and Mom where in! And best of all I wouldn't have to drop out of school! But only if I won.

"Thank you so much! This is the best!", I eagerly told him.

"It's no trouble. But shouldn't you be off now? You shouldn't be late for your classes",

The rest of the day went by in a blur. I couldn't wait till the soccer tournament. Finally the day ended. Immediately as the bell rung, I ran back home to grab my soccer things. I changed my clothes and then put on my cleats and shin guards, before rushing back to the school field. Breathlessly I arrived and surveyed the field. As I watched my heart sank. The players on the field were running around in 200 rupee shoes and performing a number of spectacular moves. I could tell that they were all rich kids who had been getting private soccer lessons since they were a baby. I had no chance against them.

Nervously I headed on to the field. All of the other soccer players glared at me as if to say, "Get off our field. This tournament is for people who are rich."

Shyly I waved as I went past, heading to the bag of soccer balls. I pulled out one of the balls and started warming up, but immediately the ref blew his whistle.

"Line up everyone", he called out loudly. "Welcome to the Tilak tournament. This tournament is World Cup. Everyone will be playing against each other at one goal. You are trying to score on the goal to

progress to the next round. The last two people in every round will be eliminated. any questions?"

No one responded to him, so he motioned us forward as he ran to the goal. As we arrived a goalie stepped out from the crowd and ran to the goal. He was large, and I could tell he was a good goalie. The referee lined us all up and counted us. I looked back and counted to. There were 8 players, and they all looked as if 1000 rupees was nothing to them. After counting us the referee told us to stay where we were. He ran over and grabbed a game ball, then suddenly he threw it out on to the field and yelled, "Go!"

Immediately we were off. A couple of the faster kids ran after the ball, but I stayed back and waited for them to come to me. The fastest kid reached it just before it passed half field. Without stopping he whipped around and sprinted towards the goal. He easily dribbled past all of the other players, but me. Just as he was going to reach the goal I ran from my position and pressured him. Not expecting me, he stumbled and lost the ball. I grabbed it nimbly with my foot and lined it up just right before I took my shot. I brought my foot back, then struck the ball as hard as I could. Like a bullet, it zoomed in to the goal. Score! All of that happened within 5 seconds.

Yes I made a goal! And the first one! My heart was soaring as I practically skipped off the field. I sat down on one of the benches and watched the rest of the round. It didn't take long for the rest of the players to score. Sadly the final two walked off the field. The referee blew his whistle again and we lined up, but this time there was only four of us.

He threw the ball out again but this time we were ready. I rushed to grab the ball along with the rest of the players. But this time one of them got it before it had even crossed the 18! I was close behind him when he reached the ball and he whipped around again without stopping. But this time he got past all of us and nailed a great shot in to the high corner.

Whooping her an off the field. Now there was only room for one of us to score, and it had to be me. The goalie grabbed the ball and punted it out on to the field. I stayed back as the remaining two players rushed to the ball.

One of them reached the ball but was quickly stolen from by the other. He rushed towards me and the goal. I stepped out to steal the ball from him but he nimbly side stepped me. I watched in numb horror as he shot. This was it, I was done. But wait! He missed! The ball struck off the post and rocketed back at me. I lowered my head and iced at the ball, heading it in to the goal. Yes! Another goal!

Now it was just me and the extremely fast player, in the championship. He swaggered on to the field, and I shyly shuffled on to the field. The referee blew the whistle for the final time and threw the ball on to the field.

This time I matched him foot to foot as we sprinted for the ball. We both reached at the same time, and as I reached out to the ball, he ran in to me and we both fell to the ground.

"Penalty! Penalty kick", the referee gruffly shouted. Numbly I ran to the penalty marker. It all came down to this. It was going to end the way it started, with a penalty kick. I needed to make this shot. For me, and my mom. The referee set the ball down on to the marker, and backed away, blowing the whistle as he did. Time seemed to slow down as I backed up. It was time. I sprinted to the ball. Just as I was even with it, I brought my foot back for the kick. I struck the ball as hard as I could, and watched it sail towards the goal. It was a great kick, but the goalie was better. He dived and barley managed to tip it with his outstretched hand. It bounced off the goal post...right to the other player. He barely kicked it with his foot, and the ball calmly rolled in.

I dropped to the grass. My world was crashing down around me. I could feel the tears sliding down my face and on to the grass. I would

have to quit school, and work for the rest of my life. My dreams of being a doctor were gone. Suddenly I felt a tap on my shoulder. Looking up I saw the worried face of the other player.

"What's wrong?", he asked me.

"That money was my last chance. Now I have to drop out of school and work to provide for me and my Mom.", I cried out. Sadly he looked at me.

As I looked up to him he pulled something out of his pocket. He brought his hand down and gave it to me. I looked at what he was holding, it was the reward money.

"You need it more then me.", he replied compassionately. I looked up in to his smiling face. I was saved.

THE END



RACHEL

My World

I start down the long, narrow hallway, filled with students. I keep my head down and stare at my tan boat shoes. I try not to make eye contact with anyone, hoping that they will walk right past me.

Of course I am wrong.

Three tall, muscular teenage boys come down the hallway, making it feel smaller than it already is. They found me. Each of their faces hold a distinct look, giving off a dreadful vibe. They are coming straight towards me. Please no, I say in my head, over and over again, but they don't care. I clutch my books, praying they won't go flying across the floor again, as they did yesterday. I keep walking, head down, books tight. The faces come closer, a laugh escapes a mouth, the bell rings and they are standing right before of me.

I watch as a hand flies through the air, and then impacts my small arms, my grip on the books break and they scatter on the ground, a foot steps out at my own feet, and a shoulder slams into my body. I collapse on the cool tiles, stumbling over the sneaker that waited to trip me. Feet shuffle behind me, and a roar of laughter fits in with the students still in the hall.

My hips have crumbled from the force of a body hitting mine, and my knees ache from smacking the floor. A tear collects in my eyes. Why me? I think. I struggle to keep the pain inside; giving my weaknesses away for people to use in high school was not my plan. I hear shrieks of laughter from the three boys, that are now turning into the next hall. It was the kind of laugh that would make your stomach hurt and your eyes

water. I pull my weak body to my knees, and wipe away the streak of tears falling across my cheek. I slide to the nearest binder I can find, papers everywhere, pencils still drifting across the hall. But, before I can reach the purple binder, a hand drifts down and touches my own. It's soft and warm. I look up, and the hand belongs to a friendly face.

"Are you alright?" he says, with a comforting tone that makes my heart skip a beat.

"I think so," I say, lying. He takes my hand in his own, and pulls me to my feet. I brush my light blond hair behind my ear.

"No, I don't think you are." He makes it clear, brushing his hand across my face, collecting another tear. I instantly blush, my cheeks turning so red I can feel it. A shaky breath falls from my lips, as he bends down to pick up my books. His brown hair stays in perfect place, and his blue eyes still keep their claiming gaze on me. He returns my books, and smiles widely.

"My name is Tyler," what a perfect name, I think to myself, "and who might you be?"

"Lexi, Jones." I hesitate to say it, what a not so wonderful name. "I have to get to class," I tell him, taking my books from his hands.

"What class?"

"Tenth grade History Two," I answer, wishing for him to be in it as well.

"Well, let's go," he holds out his arm, and as if we were entering the homecoming dance we walk to the history room, together.

"Lexi?" I hear a voice. I have been sitting in my large bedroom for hours doing algebra, eating junk food from our pantry, filled with it. "Honey, someone is on the phone for you!" Mom's voice squeaks at the end of her sentence, showing she is excited. "It's a boy!" I race down the steps, knowing that it is Tyler, I can just feel it.

"Hello?" I frantically say, grabbing the phone out of my mother's hand, taking only a glance at her large smile before I race back up the stairs.

"Hey, Lexi." His voice is so clear, I can imagine him sitting in his room, his blue green eyes staring off in the distance, and his brown

hair perfectly shaped on top of his head. It has been three weeks since I met him, and each and every day he meets me at the main entrance to Manhattan Station High School, and walks me to History Two, where he then sits next to me. I close my eyes picturing him, wishing I was there with him.

"I didn't see you at school today, everything alright?"

I want to tell him that everything isn't right, that nothing is okay, because it's not. "Yeah," I say, "I have to go, sorry, bye Tyler." I press end before he can say anything else, I couldn't say another word to him without bursting into tears. Early last night, I received a phone call. It was one of those boys, I could tell from the low, scratchy voice that made something inside of me want to scream.

"You are so stupid," he said, "You are just a stupid little girl, with no body, who has to have a wimp of a man protect her, and pretend to like her. Don't even bother showing up at school tomorrow, you worthless idiot." I spent the rest of that night crying, and didn't bother showing up at school, but tomorrow I know that I will have to go.

The halls are packed once more, but Tyler is standing next to me. Once history class ends, he will go to sports class, and I will go to art.

I sit through history, my stomach churning, and my head burning. I know that they will come looking for me, it has been three days since my last book "knock down", "body slam", or "ground push." Once the bell rings, I immediately run to the girls locker room, and I see them, waiting outside of the class room for me. Waiting. Once I am in the locker room I climb into one of the stalls, and lock myself inside. My breath comes out harsh and hot, drifting through the chilled air of the locker room. The stall door is stained with curse words, and tenth grade slang. The gears in my head turn, and I feel ready to pass out as I hear the locker room door swing open. Feet shuffle across the blue tiled floor. The sound of whispers run through the walls and a laugh sprays out into the air, crushing me from the inside.

"Thought you could hide?" More laughter.

"Your dead meat," says a new voice, cold as stone. I stand completely still, barely even breathing. The sound of hard, clumpy shoes is now right in front of the stall door.

"Knock it down, Rick," I hear from a voice doing its best to whisper. Everything falls silent, except for the hum of the lights above my head.

Bang! The door slams into the side of the stall, it's has been kicked in. The lock of the stall falls to the floor with a crackling sound, as I am yanked by the arms out of the stall. For a moment the boy with a hard, bone-cracking grip on my arms almost looks sorry. But the look does not match the movement as his right arm flies up in the air, and slaps me across the face. I scream, yanking myself away for him. My cheek burns, and I can't feel the left side of my face, which I am safe to assume is bright red and soaked in salty tears. I dash towards the door, but before I am even half way there a hand wraps itself around my hips, lifts me up into the air and drags me back into the cluster of what I think is three boys. They laugh, a hard laugh reminding me of Santa Clause. A set of hands land on my shoulders, stuffing me down towards the ground and with a final blow I impact the ground. My forehead aches where I contacted the tiles, and I can feel hot blood surrounding my upper brow. I let out a cry, and feet come flashing at me, stabbing my sides, knocking the wind out of me.

For a minute I can not remember how to breath, and I don't. I lie on the floor, gasping for air like a fish out of water. The boys erupt with laughter, their dead, black eyes watching me. The boy who threw me on the ground raises a leg to break me in half. This is it. I think, but before he can move again the boy, who slapped me, looked at me with the same expression as before.

"She's had enough, Ed. Let's go." He turns around, brushing the boys shoulder and the others follow.

I lie in on the cold floor, scared and alone. But hope in me still burns, and I find the energy to lift my body off the floor. For a minute I look at my face in the mirror, red and tear stained, with a deep cut above my right eyebrow stinging my face. My blue eyes have a grey, lifeless tint.

The world would be better off without me.

The next thing I know, I swing open the locker room door, busting out into the hall way, and running as fast as I can towards the main door. I watch as faces gasp, and fill with horror as I sprint past them. But there is one face, that sticks out. Tyler's. He reaches out a hand to stop me, but I dodge past it. Tears stream down my face as I think about him, my heart then breaks, wishing I could be with him.

I fly down the road on my bike that was placed in front of the school on a rack. I swerve past pedestrians on the road, just how cars swerve past me. My blond hair whips around my head, sticking to my wet cheeks. The buildings grow as I enter uptown Manhattan, and my large penthouse building comes into sight. I climb into the building, and instead of taking the elevator, I dash up the stairs, not even leaving my bike in the port. Floor five, that is the floor my apartment is on, five flights of stairs, 35 steps on each flight.

All I am, is in the way. Four floors left.

This world would be so much better off without me. Three floors.

I am just a block in the road. Two floors, one floor. I pull out my phone, from the back of my jean pocket, it's 11:38, I pull up the messaging app, and search for Tyler's contact. I am sorry, I type, but I am just in the way.

Instead of opening the door to the fifth floor, I keep going to the seventh floor: the roof.

A blast of cold air rushes on to me, as I open the door to the roof. Gravel crunches beneath my shoes, as I make my way to the edge of the building. One more step, and know one has to deal with me anymore. I stand directly on the edge, and wish that I didn't have to do this, but I know that I do. I slowly exhale, and inhale, shaking. I can just fall. I close my eyes, and prepare to fall.

"Lexi!" A harsh scream rolls behind me, I turn around. Tyler. "Lexi," he says, his hands shaking, "Please don't jump." He looks worried, and he is out of breath.

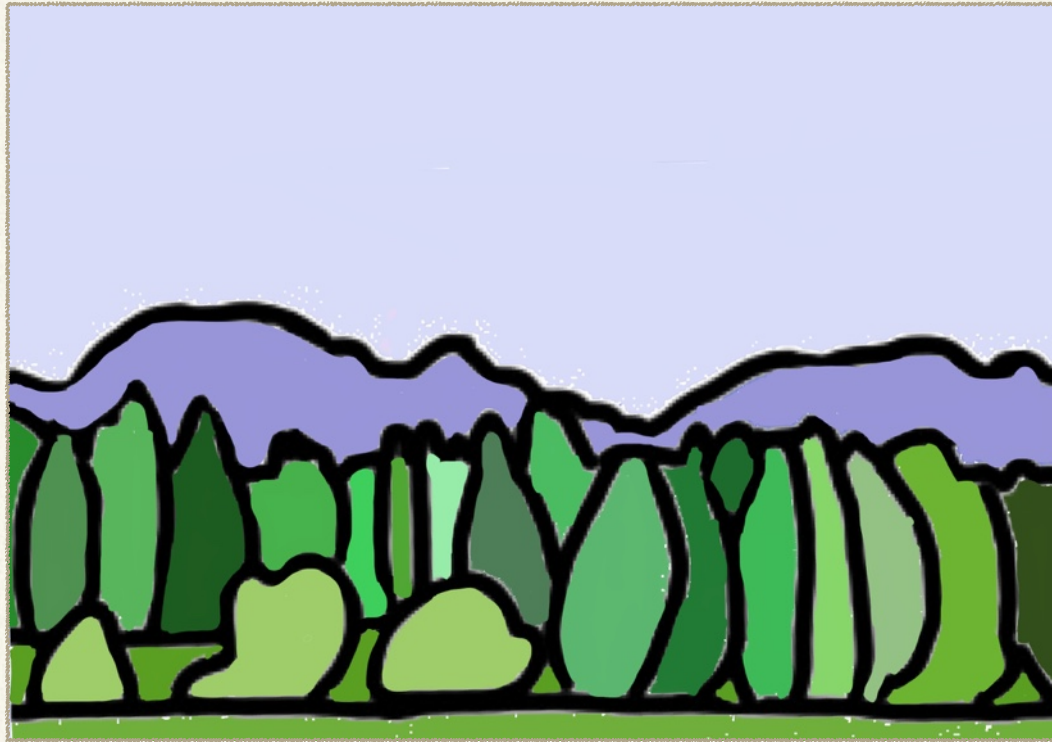
"You would be better off without me." More tears come, flooding my cheeks. He takes a few steps towards me, I open my mouth to speak again,

"The world would be better off without me." He is now standing on the edge with me, so close to me.

"My world wouldn't." He says, wrapping his arms around my waist, "I love you." He says, and slowly brings me closer to him, and kisses me. His worlds ring in the air. "I love you too," I say, he pulls me even closer, and hugs me. Tears start to roll down my face, but it is a new type of tears, they are tears of joy. Just as I am about to pull out of his warm embrace, he holds me tighter.

"Things are about to get better, I promise."

The New Beginning



"WA WA WA WA WA...", goes the alarm. We are crashing. "Keep your buckle on," I demand. The strong guy doesn't listen to me. "I'm fit," he says. OH NO, two others take off their buckles, but they are about half the size of the first guy. "Get back in your seat! We're crashing!" *Who even made me in charge?* I think. "Just because you're one of the privileged doesn't mean you can boss us around anymore," the big guy says. BOOM! We hit earth. "Is it safe to take off our seat belts?" Jasper says. "I think so," I say. We all take off our seat belts. I walk to the two guys that took off their seat belts. They are dead. "Thanks a lot," I say to the big guy who took off his seat belt first. "It's not my fault they followed me," he says back. I just ignore him. I am just happy that our race is back on earth after the 200 years we had to spend in that space ship. Claire walks out on to the green ground. "We're back on earth!" she yells. Everyone cheers and runs out. Claire is a young, 16 year old girl with blonde hair. Without her I don't think we could survive down here. All of us that came on this space ship have all done some sort of crime. They sent us down to test the earth to see if it's livable. Claire knows how to live-she has more knowledge than us.

After the nuclear war, earth was not stable to live on. And it still might not be. All 100 of us, I mean 98 of us, have these wrist bands to see if we're still alive and also to check if the earth is still livable. Our race was living on a big space ship in the sky because earth wasn't livable. So they sent us down to see if earth was stable yet. Our big spaceship is

starting to fall apart. That's why we are down here. To find out if we can move back to earth.

I walk out onto earth. This is my first time ever stepping foot here. I was born on the space ship. It's green and brown everywhere I look. There are lots of tall and short trees. I feel the wind on my face and the warm sun on my back. I think I might like it here, if only we can survive.

Now, on earth we have no rules and we are stuck to fend for ourselves. Everyone goes off to check out earth. I look up at a guy as he jumps down from the ship that crashed. "Why so serious?" he asks. "Try saying that to the two guys who followed you out of your seat," I say.

"I can tell you don't like me" he says. *We shall see* I think to myself. "See that peak over there"? I point to the tall peak in the distance. "It's called Mount Lightning and there's a radiation forest between us and the mountain. They dropped us on the wrong mountain. How can we get to the right mountain?" I walk back to camp to plot our route out. My good friend John comes over.

"We need to get to Mount Lightning to survive," I explain. A group of guys walk over to us. "Hey, what are you doing," one says in a cocky voice.

"I'm plotting the route to Mount Lightning."

"Who cares about mount lightning!" he yells.

"If you want to live we have to get to Mount Lightning" I tell him.

"The only thing that matters is that we're on earth! The mountain doesn't matter" he yells.

"Our leader told us to get there, and the longer we wait the more hungry we'll get and harder it will be to live here," I explain.

"Then go," he says. "You and your friend leave and bring the food back."

"We need more than two people to go," I say.

"I'll go," says Steve.

"Yeah, me two," says Greg.

"Count me in," says Parker.

"Ok, we will leave now," I say. We grab our bags and head out on this long adventure.

We start to walk.

"So why are you guys here?" asks Greg. "I was protecting my sister." "Shhhh! Do you hear that?" I say. I don't think we are alone. I point to a lake. "We will sleep here. It's too dangerous to be out during the night, and we don't know what is out there."

"I'll go look for food," Steve says. He runs into the woods in front of us.

"So why did you come down on this ship with us?" asks Greg. "You don't seem like the kind of person that would kill anyone."

"If I hadn't come down, this place would be madness," I say.

"Ahhhhhhh!" A scream is coming from the woods where Steve went. We sprint to him. "WHERE IS HE?!" Parker yells. We're not alone!

Back At Camp

"We need food! Everyone go out and look for food!" My name is Jona. I came down on this ship because I shot someone. The only reason I shot him was because he beat my mom. Wouldn't you? My mom is all I have left and now I'm on earth... But the people I'm with trust me and value me as their leader.

The Adventures

"Where is he?" cries Greg.

"Someone or something took him! Look!" I point to a bloody spot on the ground. "We need to find him! We're leaving now!"

We all run back to the spot where we made camp, and all our things have been taken, except for my bag, which is filled with one other pair of clothes, a knife and a water bottle. "Let's go!"

We all start running toward the place where we lost Steve. "Wait, if someone took Steve and also stole our bags, then there's more than just one thing after us," I say. "What's that?" I point to something in the distance.

"Is that a person"? asks Greg.

"I don't know what that is, but there's more of them, run!"

We sprint through the long forest. If we can make it to the lake we can get away from them.

"Look I see the lake! Run!" I shout. We run to the lake and jump in.

"Are they gone?" asks Parker.

I bring my head from the water. "What?"

"Do you think those things are gone?"

I look into the distance. "Yeah, I think."

"But they still have Steve!" cries Greg.

"We will find him," I say. We all swim to the shore and get out of the cold water.

"Look!" says Claire, as she points to a water bottle floating away. I run to it and fill it up. "Greg, you look for some berries, and Parker, make some sort of weapon. Claire you come with me," I tell them. We need to prepare and be on the lookout.

"So why are you here?" I ask Claire.

"I was trying to save a women with kids and I attacked the guard," she tells me.

"Well, did you save them?" I ask.

"No, sadly, and that's why I'm down here on earth with you guys," she tells me. I fill up the water. "What did you do?" Claire asks.

"I was trying to save my mom. She was stealing because we needed food, but they didn't kill her, luckily."

At that point, I step back and think about my mom. Unless I think of a plan, I will not see her again. I need to find out if earth is even still liveable. I need to find my friend and get back to my mom.

I turn to my group and ask, "Would you be willing to try to find a way to save the people still on the big space ship?"

Everyone is silent for a few moments and then...

"I'm in!" says Parker.

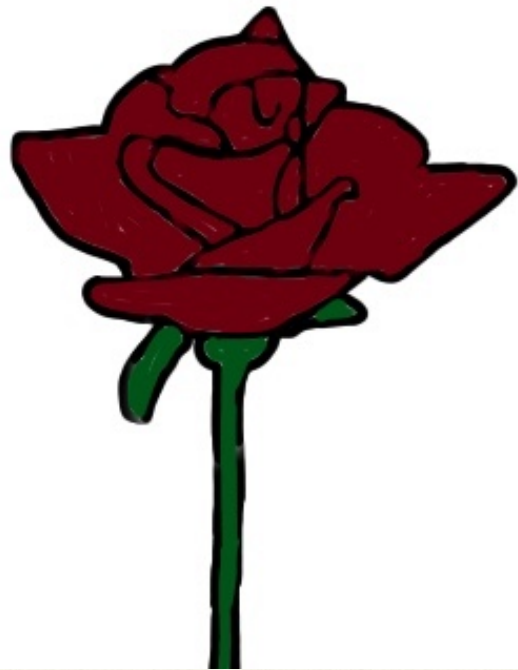
"Me, too," agrees Greg.

We all turn to Claire who hesitates. "I guess I'm in, too."

We look around at each other. We're obviously scared, but still we are driven by wanting to find our friends and our families. We turn to see the dead trees in the distance, and we set off together.

JIALAN

A Rose



I walked into the room like it was a funeral. Which it was. The horrible itchy dress that I had been forced to wear rubbed across my shoulders. Candles filled the air with their sickly scent. Mourners filled the room, people who I have never seen before. Who had never been there in life but had gathered in mourning at death. I wonder, if they had been around than she wouldn't have been dead. The coffin was empty. We're just mourning a memory of a woman. A woman who had jumped off a bridge. My mother.

I remember the last time she left. She was wearing a dress the kind you see on TV where a beautiful, glamorous lady goes off to a party and dances the night away. My mother had a lot of dresses like that. She had come in to say good night. It was dark, the Christmas lights that my dad and I always put on the banister lighting up the hallway in a multicolor glow.

"You'll come back in the morning right?" I asked.

"Of course sweetheart." Her long blonde hair brushes across my face.

"Promise?"

"I promise." Then she stood up and left.

She had promised me she'd be home in the morning. She had **promised**. But if there's anything I've learned from my mother, it's that promises aren't always kept. She used to spin me around the room and tell me about all the places she's been. Paris, London, New York. She said that one day she'd take me with her. That never happened.

Mourners swirl around me like wisps of fog on a night with a full moon. They all blend together until all you can see is black. Outside the window the trees seemed to reach for sky with bony fingers. I clutch the single dark red rose in my hands. It should be a simple thing walk up, place rose on coffin, walk back. But somehow staring at that big, wooden coffin walking became the hardest thing to do in the world.

Someone is giving a speech about my mother. I caught the words, "a dedicated mother and wife." Ha. If dedicated is leaving them time and time again without an explanation just to come back at a whim. How many times have I woken up and she's missing? We had stopped calling the police because she had always come back never offering an explanation. Now she's gone forever. No explanation. Just a witness who says that a woman jumped off a bridge. She left everything behind.

We all go outside into the freezing December air. The coffin is carried out and lowered into the cold earth. The cold air whooshes all around me. I shiver and the rose's thorns prick me. I take the shovel that offered to me and throw a bit of dirt into the hole.

Once the hole is filled everyone begins filing into the church. I stand there just staring at the grave. I am the only one left. The cold bites into me, yet I still stand there. The sky begins to darken. The sun has slipped under the earth. The thorns press into my fingers. I think I see blood. I throw the rose on the grave, and turn to leave. The cemetery gate swings open with a screech. I slam it shut behind me.

Wednesday, no practice Thursday because of the x-country meet." Berman said, holding up a slip of paper. "Great work today! Hands in!" He said, as all our hands filed the center of the clumped circle. "Greg? You want to say it?"

"TIGERS ON THREE!!!"

"ONE! TWO! THREE! TIGERS!" We all yelled in unison, at the top of our lungs, and as we yelled tigers all of our hands raised to the sky.

We all separated into different directions, some towards the corner flags, some toward the penny bucket, and the rest of us gathered all the balls and brought them to Alex and Max, who were standing with the two ball bags, ready for us to put them in.

After all the jobs were done and everything was put away, I headed up to the top of the hill where my stuff was waiting. I grabbed my backpack and swung it onto my back, then I bent down to grab my sports bag, and my iPad. Once everything was loaded and ready to go, I walked up to the front of the school and across the road to our public library.

Once I got there I found two of my closest friends, Ally and Molly, in the young adult section, which is upstairs.

"How was soccer?" Ally asked. She was always the one to start a conversation.

"It was fun! You guys shouldn't of quit. It's been getting a lot better!!"
I taunted.

"Well, we knew you weren't going to quit because you can do everything all at once, but we want to focus on practicing more!" Molly taunted back.

"Haha! Anyway, are you ready for the big auditions Friday? It's going to be awesome!" Ally pointed out.

"Yeah!!!! I've finally persuaded my mom into buying me a new mute for....wait!" I exclaimed. I looked down at my hand where the slip of paper was still in my firm grip. "I completely forgot! I have the finals to go to! I can't believe they're on the same day!! Ugh!"

"Hillary! You have to go to the audition! It's the opportunity of a life time! Anne McDouge is going to be there!" Molly pleaded. Anne McDouge was one of the most famous trumpet players in the whole state of Maine. She also happens to be our idol, I couldn't miss this audition.

"Beep beep!" My phone sang. I grabbed out of the side pocket of my backpack. The screen was flashing with a calendar alert.

"Sorry guys, I've got to go to the soccer field, I promised Carly that I would help her with shooting and passing. I'll talk to you guys tomorrow." I said, picking up my stuff again.

"Bye Hillary!" They both said, one after the other.

"Be at the auditions!" Molly called after me.

I smile on my way down the stairs. I couldn't imagine a life without Ally and Molly. But before I could go any further with my positive thoughts of my best friends, I remembered the traumatic drama about the soccer game and the trumpet audition.

What was I gong to do?

[illegible]

"BEEP!" The score board said as the other team, the Blue Whales, kicked the ball off and everyone went to their positions. Every so of-

ten I looked back at the clock to see how much time was left. "Two minutes", I said to my self. I smiled at my dad as the ball finally came into our possession. I called for the ball and our captain, Melony, kicked a smooth pass towards me. I dribbled as fast as I could and dodged every player in front of me. I looked across the field and saw Penny was open. I yelled her name and kicked it over the heads of the girls and boys on defense for the Blue Whales. She received the ball with a smile on her face. But then she looked worried as everyone came running towards her and she passed the ball right back to me. I was stunned for a minute but then I realized that the boy who was supposed to be standing in the goal was still on the other side of the goal guarding Penny. There was no time to waste. I fumbled the ball at my feet and I kicked it as hard as I could. One defender tried to get the ball out, but it went through his legs, across the line, and into the goal. The score board beeped again and I ran to the sidelines where my dad stood with the biggest smile on his face. It was the best feeling. It was as if I had just won the only olympic gold medal in the whole world.

Everything was perfect. The score board beeped again and I ran to the sidelines where my dad stood with the biggest smile on his face. I was in my dad's arms, with a smile on my face, and I could hear my dad whisper; "I'm so proud of you Hillary!". I was looking at the rough grass that had only seconds ago been played on by my teammates and I.

Then it was all lost. My heart dropped and I could feel my face turning as red as a perfect apple. My dad put me down on the ground, and he could tell something was wrong. It was the worst feeling I had ever felt. I slowly fell to my knees and I knew I couldn't go back. This was going to be my life, and I would never be able to fix it because I knew that fate would never be on my side. From kindergarten when I got locked in the bathroom, in third grade when I lost my sister's phone, and now in seventh grade. It was no different, and it would never change.

I looked up at my dad who had a confused look on his face.

"Is everything okay? What happened? You just scored the winning goal! I'm so proud of you!!" He said bringing me back up to my feet. I could still see the calendar alert on my phone. I didn't have to read it to realize that I had missed the audition. I looked at my dad and tears filled my eyes. I couldn't believe I was stupid enough to think that I could be in two places at once. A crowd filled around me to congratulate me about scoring, but my dad pushed them away from me.

He took my hand and dragged me to a clear spot on the sidelines. "Honey what's wrong?" He asked with a sympathetic tone.

"I just... The audition was about five minutes ago. I missed it." I said between huge breaths, trying to keep my tears in.

"I'm so sorry... Can I do anything?" He asked.

"No..." I said as best I could without crying.

He leaned down and gave me a big hug. He held me in his arms for about five minutes before my tears had gone, and I was only thinking of him. But the moment was over when I heard my name.

"HILLARY!! HILLARY" I let go of my dad and looked behind me. Ally and Molly were running towards me with smiles on their face.

"Hi girls! I'll just go find your mother, Hillary. See you later." My dad said, politely leaving us to talk.

"Bye dad." I said. Then looked at my friends standing in front of me looking as if there was a bomb about to go off inside them.

"We heard you scored the winning goal!! Hillary that's AMAZING!!" Ally practically yelled.

"It's incredible!! You just won the finals!! You must be so proud!!" Molly said with excitement.

"What about the audition though? Did you guys get in?" I asked, confused that they were jumping up and down for something other than the audition.

"Oh, that. It doesn't really matter. I didn't enjoy it very much." Ally said. I was confused. "So did you guys get in, but say no?"

"Not at all. I messed up with the sight reading, so I didn't get in anyway." Molly admitted.

"Yeah, and I messed up on the high notes of my audition piece, so K didn't get in either." Ally said.

I was still confused. They both had a look of awe on their faces. Why were they so excited? "So why are you so happy?" I asked them.

They looked at each other, then Ally decided to share. "It was just so funny how much Anne was a jerk to us. The other judges were really mean too, but Anne kept saying things like, 'Your posture is all wrong.', and, 'That note was terrible!', and, 'Where did you learn to play like a piece of poop?' Okay, maybe that last one was just in my head but..." We all laughed at that.

"So you guys are okay with that?" I asked.

"Yeah! Now let's go celebrate!! You've just won the FINAL!" Molly exclaimed.

We all walked off with smiles on our faces. The team met us at the top of the hill and asked us if we wanted to go into town to get some reward food. I looked at my dad who I found sitting with my mom on the grass behind us. He smiled and nodded.

"Come on!" Penny yelled, with a humorous tone.

I looked at my dad again and he still had that look of pride. I knew he would have to go back to Australia to continue his project on the Australian Koala's tomorrow, but I also felt closer to him, more than ever. I could see my mom behind him smiling, showing her beautiful smile. I looked at both of them, and saw the same twinkle in both of their eyes. They were holding hands and smiling. I was going to be sad when he leaves, and I know my mom will go back to work all day to keep up with our expenses. But I knew that we would be able to lean on each other.

I looked at my dad again and thought that maybe my parents would like to have some time alone. So I turned around, smiled at my friends, and headed to Penny's car.

Today, I realized that I can't be in two places at once. But I now understand that it doesn't matter that I didn't go to an audition for one of the worst music programs in the state of Maine. As I was eating a nice cheese burger, and laughing with my friends, I realized that the people you care about are more important than doing everything. My family isn't in its best spot, but at least it's something. No, it's everything.



ELISE

Stalker From Above

"Mom, I'm home!" Alison yells as she walks into her kitchen. She drops her school bag on the counter next to the wall and puts her flute case on the floor. There was no returned answer from her mother. Alison takes a seat on a counter stool and finds a yellow lined sticky note with scribbly yet readable writing on it.

She had an urgent call from her boss and had to go on an immediate business trip. Not to far away, but far enough that she wouldn't be home by tonight, probably tomorrow afternoon or so.

Alison shrugs and pulls her phone out of her pocket and immediately calls her best friend Stacie, because when your mom isn't home, you know it's time to party.

"Stacie, my mom's out of town and my dad is still with my brother on his class trip in France!" Alison says.

"Oh, I know what this means, it's time to call the 'squad' and have a sleepover!" she replies.

"Yes!" Alison says in return. Then Stacie goes on about what all of the girls should do and she lists movies such as *The Notebook* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Alison listens to Stacie's natural southern accent and giggles. That's when several camera snaps click from the other side of the room. Alison squints her eyes and rises off the stool. She slowly walks toward the window where she heard the snaps. But all she sees are the beau-

tiful waving palm trees in her backyard of the outer skirts in San Diego, California.

"Ali? Um, hello?" Stacie questions.

"Uh, I have to go. Um, call the 'squad' and tell them to arrive at 5 sharp." Alison says and hangs up before Stacie could say another word.

About two and a half hours later 'the squad' arrives and are louder than ever. The smoothie blender is buzzing like a whirlpool, and the laughter and clapping and smashing of glasses is constant.

When everyone has dropped into deep sleep in Alison's room, the morning comes like a flash of lightning. Lily, a dark haired girl with tan skin wakes up first and immediately has to go to the bathroom. She nudges sleepy Autumn.

"I have to go to the bathroom." She says. Autumn rubs her eyes and straightens her back.

"Okay, I'll wait here for you." Autumn says. Lily gets up and tiptoes to the bathroom. Autumn dozes off again very quickly.

Lily turns the brass doorknob and rubs her eyes. Cameras snap she slowly walks into the bathroom. Snap! More camera sounds. Lily whizzes around and immediately panics. "WHO ARE YOU?" She shrieks. A camera snaps again and the image of it reveals in Lily's desperately terrified eyes a black dressed figure of a tall human with dark, evil eyes.

A few hours later, back in Ali's room the girls all rise. To their surprise Summer, the girl at sleepovers who was usually the last one awake, was sitting on the floor with a piece of white crumpled paper in her hands. She looks worried.

"Sum, what's that?" Gabby asks. She gets off the bed and sits next to Summer.

"Guys, look what I found. But I can't find Lily. This was taped to the bathroom door." She says. We all read it aloud in unison.

"Follow my rules or you will all disappear.' Signed 'SFA'"

"What the heck is SFA?!" Autumn scrunches her nose and scratches her forehead.

"It probably stands for something, or maybe like an abbreviation," Stacie suggests. Suddenly a window shatters and all the girls shriek. "WHAT WAS THAT!?" they all scream.

Out the window the girls see Lily being bashed in the head by a black dressed figure. Then she is dragged across the lawn in the pouring rain. The thunder rumbles and roars like an angry lion and the lightning strikes like a bursting light bulb. By the time the girls all got downstairs, Lily was gone. And so was the figure.

Hours later two other girls were gone. Gabby and Stacie. Stacie was violently yanked into a closet and Gabby was almost murdered. That is until the girls found her in Ali's garage next to a blood puddle and a shattered shovel. They got her to the hospital in time, luckily.

"Tick, tock, you took to long. Times up and so are you," signed SFA. That was the last threat they got. The squad was terrified. They were all going to die. All they could do was go through the torture of waiting to be killed, while a freak was taking pictures of them and hurting them. Footsteps came towards Ali's room. Summer started trembling, Alison started whimpering and all of them froze. A glass smashed. The lights went completely out. Cold air surrounded them and soared through the room. All the girls linked arms and squeezed their hands tightly. The lights flashed on. They were all still together. But disgusting liquid covered the ground. It was blood. Ali screamed. On the surface of the blood Stacie's breathing and luckily living body lay there. When she woke the girls were surrounding her. She explained the person who kidnapped her.

"He smelled terrible, but I never saw his face. He was awful to me and threw me around. Then he gave me a note that said not to tell the police and that he was going to kill Lily if we did. He also gave me a

doll of me in a coffin with another note explaining that I betrayed him once. I don't know what to do..." Stacie sobbed. This was going to be worse than any of them thought.

They didn't know who I was, but they soon would. I am dangerous. I've learned from my life and real situations how to get what I want. I'm telling the whole story of what they did to me. Now they are going to pay. They mess with me, I'll mess with them.

I'm always watching.

-SFA

"The stalker is a girl. A 5'11 foot girl. Now she's in jail." Lily says. She's stunned

"Alright Lily, Gabby, Alison, Autumn, Summer, Delilah, Stacie, Whitney, and Samantha, which of you were kidnapped." The police officer says. He intertwines his fingers and leans forward on his desk.

"Eventually all of us." Delilah answers. She has a straight, stern facial expression on.

"Now, we are going to bring in the person who kidnapped you. Are you all ready?" The officer says. The squad nods together. The officer snaps his fingers and gestures to another officer. "Bring her in." He says.

Two officers push in the girl. She's a bit older than us. Stacie looks up.

"Oh my god." Stacie starts crying. The officer takes her into another room and talks to her.

"Recognize me?" The stalker says.

"Ms. Henderson, please take a seat." A new officer enters the office and pulls out a chair for the stalker.

"No, I'll stand. I won't be here for long." She says.

"Actually, you will be here until we tell you to leave." The officer narrows her eyes at her. "Ladies," he turns to them. "This is Amanda Henderson." He says.

"I don't know her." Summer whispers to Alison.

"Alright Amanda, we are going to hook you up to these wires. It's a test, the machine will detect when you are lying and it will detect when you are telling the truth. I'd make a smart choice and tell the truth. First off, we will ask you a bunch of questions we know are true, others that we don't know are true." The officer says.

"First question. What is your legal name?" He says as his eyes watch the detector.

"Amanda Rona Henderson" She says.

"Which one of these girls are you targeting the most?" The officer says.

"Stacie fields." She replies.

"Why is that?" The officer keeps the questions going.

"Because she lied and betrayed me." She sounds furious.

"Why?" He asks. He looks interested in the story. So far all the answers from her have been answered in truth. There is a pause and finally Amanda licks her lips and rolls her eyes and looks at us, then the police officer.

"Because. She's my sister." Shock floods the room. Tears run out their eyes. The doors open and Stacie rushes in.

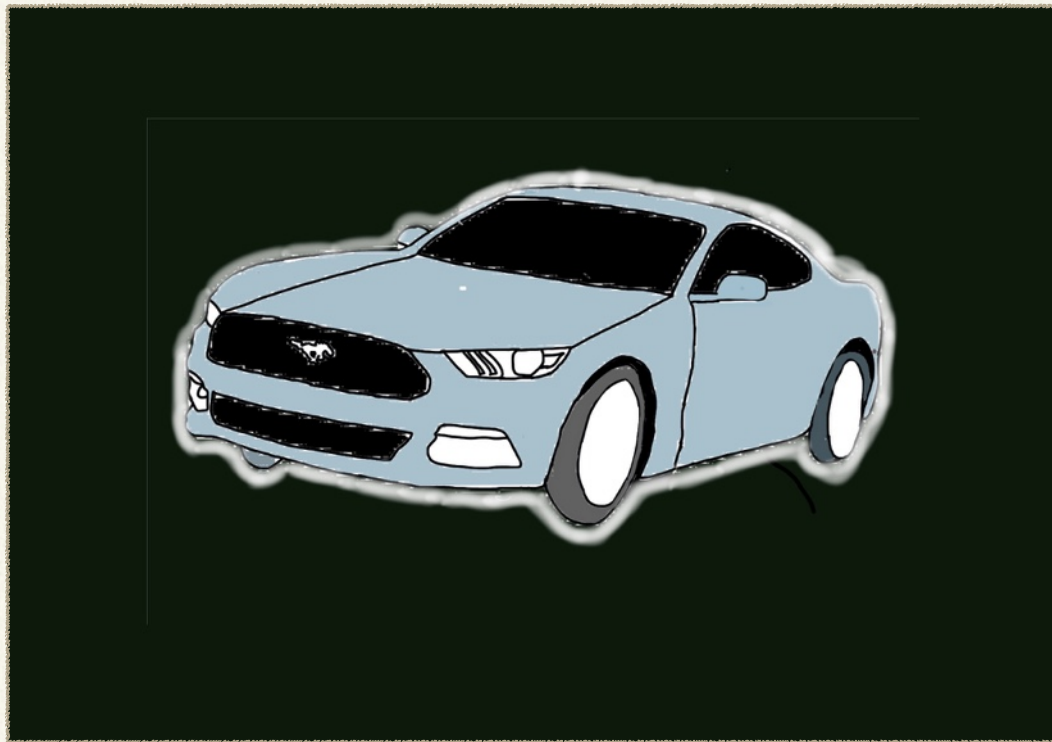
"Amanda I'm sorry! It wasn't supposed to end like that." She sobs.

"It's too late for that. You know what you did." Amanda stiffens her back and scowls.

"Amanda please come home! Mom and Dad don't even think you're alive anymore!" Stacie tries to hug Amanda but she backs away.

"Well if mom and dad care about me just as much as they care about you, then have them bail me out of this dump." She says. She rips the wires off her head.

"Take me back to the cell, officer." She says. They strut off.



JACK

The Stealer

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP

"Shut up car," Grady thought.

I got in the car and shut the annoying beep off. I took two wires and put them together to get the car started. After a few minutes I finally got the car started and shut the door and drove away before anybody noticed.

Wait... let me go back to why I stole that car. My name is Grady and I am 18. I love cars so much. I don't why, I'm just super addicted to them. They're so cool and awesome. Both of my parents were in jail for 2 more years. I lived by myself in New York City in a small, small apartment that I could barely afford. While I was driving home I had an idea. I would invite her to dinner because we hadn't gone out to dinner in a long time. When I got home I picked up the phone in a pile of popcorn. "Uuugghh, my house is so messy," I said in a sigh. I dialed her number and and the phone barely rang when I said:

"Hey Allison."

"Hey, what's up?" Allison said.

"Nothing, I was wondering if you wanted to go out to dinner tonight?" I said hopefully.

"Yeah sure. Where are we going to go?" she said.

"You choose," I said.

"Ok, ummmmm, lets go to The Hater at 6:00."

"Ok, that sounds good. See you tonight," I said.

"Bye," she said.

The day went pretty slow after that. All I did that day was watch TV and look cool cars up online. But when it was about 5:15 I got in my new car and drove off to The Hater. When I got to the the Hater she wasn't there so I waited for about 5 minutes, staring out in to the road watching cars go by. The first car that went by was an old van that was a really faded blue, and there was a 20 year old boy driving it. Then finally Allison showed up and we were taken to our seats. When we first sat down I told her that I stole another car and she got really mad at me.

"I told you that you can't steal cars anymore, you're going to get caught and you will go to JAIL!!" she yelled at me.

"No, I won't I promise" I said confidently.

"Just promise me that you won't steal any more cars," she said in a stern voice

"Fine, I won't," I said. But I was lying. I would never stop stealing cars.

The next day I awoke in my bed feeling desperate for a new car. Anxious, I almost forgot that I had a screen door to go outside and almost ran into it. So I quickly jumped into my car and drove fast to a popular parking garage in the city with the most cars. I insert my garage card to get into the garage. BEEP! Then the arm lifted up and I drove into the garage and looked for a good car that I wanted. I looked on 3 floors and couldn't find a good car. They were all old junky cars. I went up 2 more floors and found the perfect car. It looked new. It was a fast car and it was my favorite car of all time. The Mustang. I quickly parked my car in a parking slot and went over to the car. I check Ed my surroundings and I tried to open the door to the car. Luckily, it was open. So I hopped in the car and grabbed two wires to start the car. The engine roared super loud.

"This is AWESOME!" I yelled.

I looked out my window and there was a guy staring at me.

"Ohhhh crap," I said to myself. So I decided to speed out into the streets and hope he didn't see the license plate. I tried to forget about the guy but then I heard the sound of the police.

"Ohhhh no," I said in a deep sigh.

I sped away as fast as the little car could go, hearing the engine roar the further and faster I went. My heart was pounding, ready to pop out of my chest. The farther I got the louder the sound of the siren became so I took a turn so I wouldn't run into the police. But *as I turned I saw the bright* blue, red and white lights of two police cars blocking the road. There was no way out of this, I said to myself. When I entered the street two more police cars came and blocked the exit. Then, all four of the police officers got out of their cars and pointed their guns at me and said:

"Hands up! You are under arrest for stealing cars. Get down on your knees and put your hands behind your back."

So I did what they said, while trying to think of a way to escape, but there was no way. One of the officers come over to me with his gun still pointed at me and puts handcuffs on my hands. The officer pulled me up off the ground and pretty much dragged me over to his car and shoved me into it.

The next thing I knew was that the same officer that shoved me into the car was shoving me into a jail cell and locking the door and walking away with no emotion at all. There was nothing I could do to in the jail cell except just lie down and think of a way to get out. I was lying down on the bed for about 10 minutes, staring at the old rusty wires holding the bed above me. Then, I got an idea. I needed to talk to Allison. I needed her to help me break out of the old place. My idea was to ask Allison to get me a laser so I could cut through the wall. But, there was one problem - Allison would never help me break out of jail. She wouldn't buy me a laser and she probably wouldn't want to talk to me.

The next day an officer opened my jail cell and said:
"Come with me. It is time for you to go outside and get some air."

"YES!" I said to myself, super excited in my head.
When I got outside I saw a phone booth, and ran over to it and called Allison. It rang for a little bit and then I heard:
"Hello, this is Allison."
" Hey, this is Grady. I'm in jail and I need you help me get out."
"WHAT!?" she yelled into her phone.
"Ok, I'll bring your laser tomorrow at the meeting room," she said.
"Ok, thanks," I said.

The next day I went to the meeting room and I found Allison waiting for me at a table.

"Hey, Allison. Do you have the laser?" I said.

"Yes," she said to me in a mad way.

"Thank you so much! I have to break out of this place," I said in a whisper, so the guards wouldn't hear me. Then I put the laser into my pocket under the table so nobody would see.

"I am very mad at you Grady, I told you not to steal cars anymore and you did, and look what happened," she said, very angry.

"I know, I'm sorry, I had t-"

"NO YOU DIDN'T," she yelled at me.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't help myself," I said, ashamed of myself.

"I think tha-"

A guard came over, interrupted Allison and said:

"TIMES UP."

Then Alison got up and stomped away.

"Great, now she's mad at me," I said to myself.

When I got thrown back into the cell I waited for the guard to walk away, and I then I lay down on my bed and thought when am I was going to do my escape. I thought it through for a while and then I got an idea. I was going to do I when the guards come and make sure that you are in bed and sleeping. After that a guard would come by for maybe another 40 minutes. That would be plenty of time for me to laser a hole in the iron bars in my cell and get out. Then, when I got out, the search light wouldn't come by my way for about 3 minutes so in that time I would laser a hole in the fence and run away into the wood and hide for the night so that they can't find me.

Later that night I hopped into my bed and pretended to be asleep while the guard came by. The guard stopped at my cell for a little bit and examined my cell. "Please don't come in. Please don't come in. Please don't come in." I said to myself. Then the guard walked away and I got out of my bed, climbed up to the bunk-bed and cut a hole in the iron bars in my cell. So they didn't fall on the ground and make a loud noise I had to hold on to the bar one by one.

I got all of the bars done and then I started to make my way out of the little window that the bars were in. I jumped down from the cell and then the search light shone right in my eyes and then a loud loud siren started to go off.

"OHHHHH NOOOOOOOOO!" I yelled at the top of my lungs. I had no choice. I started running for the fence and made a hole in it. Finally I got a hole cut in the fence and crawled through it. I sprinted across the street and into the woods. Right behind me were a bunch of cops with shotguns chasing after me. I started to get super tired and looked for a place to rest, but there was no place. It was just a bunch of trees for miles, probably.



MARY BRIDGET

Story

Another day at high school, another boring day at Parker Ville High. The bus bumps along the dusty dirt roads to the school. As soon as first period is over I want to go home and sleep. I pop out of the classroom door just as my best friends walks by. "Hey, you two," I say. I walk down the one stair case with my best friends Sarah and Jamie. As we get to the bottom my phone goes off. Bizz bizz, my phone vibrates in my pocket. I quickly pull it out and glance at the screen. As soon as I see my dad's name I want to shove it back in to my pocket and ignore it, but I push the green button instead. I slowly put the phone up to my ear. "Hello," I say cheerfully, but I am met with a far less enthusiastic response. "What's the matter?" I whisper because I am in a hallway jammed packed with teachers.

"Well, your mother is in the hospital, I am late for work and you're being tough," screams my dad.

"Gee dad, I'll meet you at the library in 5 K?"

"I'll call the school and excuse you," my dad said in a low, dry tone.

I end the phone call and run to my next class. I am late so I walk quietly to my seat and sit. Too bad my teacher is nasty in this class; he calls on me to answer the question even though he knows that I wasn't here. "I-I don't know," I say as a signal tear rolls out of my left eye. The whole class turns around expecting a breakup but instead I blurt out, "My mom is i-i- in the hospital dying." With that the tears come. I cover my face with my hands so no one will see the makeup running down my face. I feel my

friend's hands on my back they pull me up out of my seat and drag me to the bathroom. I sit in between the sinks on the counter and drop my hands to my sides. After about 5 minutes my friends know the whole story and I look like a movie star. "I have to go," I whisper as I slide off the counter and walk to the door. I get to the library just as my dad speeds into the parking lot in his stupid red sports car. He doesn't fit in our family; all he is good at is his business and making first impressions. If he were an animal he would probably be a turtle because if you put any stress on him he pulls in his legs and any more in goes his head. The horn blaring brings me out of my small day dream. I look up in to my dad's eyes and I see all of the madness, and I decide that he doesn't even like me or my mom. As I walk out too the car I feel a raindrop on my head. I look up just as it starts to pour. I make it to the car half soaked. As I open the passenger side door to the car my dad starts to talk rapidly.

"I thought that you wouldn't want to stay at the house so I packed all of your clothes, shoes, jewelry and makeup in your Mom's suitcase it's in the trunk."

I was in shock! His wife was in the hospital and he didn't even what to see her! All he wanted to do was drop me off!? After that remark we rode in silence, as he thinks about work all I can think about is mom. I finally decide that if mom is dying I would try to make it joyful, and so she won't feel abandoned my me. And if she does die... I tell myself that I will be positive because I know that that is what she would want. I can see the the hospital doors now, but I just want to see my mom. As soon as the car stops I jump out the door and run to the trunk, grab my bag and book it to the front desk.

107.....108.....109..... My mom's room is up ahead. I hear the woman say:

"Margo is here to see you, miss."

With that I burst throw the open door, drop my suitcase and run to my mom's side. My mom whispers, "Why the suit case?" and I tell her about Dad's meltdown. She just sighs and rolls her eyes. The doctor walks in and says hello to me, then turns to my mother and says, "Helen, we have come up with a diagnoses for you..... I am afraid you

have cancer. I hate to say this but we will start your treatment now, we will start with kemo."

"No no, that is ok with me," my mom says with a hint of worry in her voice. After a little while a woman with wild curls steps in to the room. "Knock knock," she announces as she pulls scissors out of her back pocket. After my mom's hair is shorter than my dad's she buzzes off the rest. She turns to me and says, "Do you want your hair cut too honey?" in her big voice. "Umm, sure," I say in my small, shaky voice. When she finally leaves we both crack up and re-enact her funny quirks. Soon the day is over and we snuggle like 3 year olds in the one person bed. As I fall asleep I her her whisper, "I love you honey."

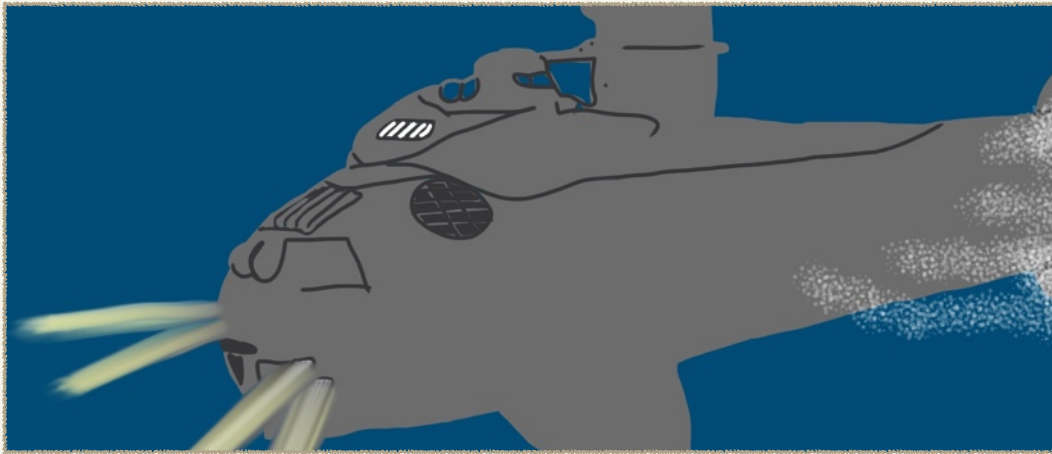
"I love you to," I whisper before I fall asleep.

One month later...

Today my mom is getting released from the hospital. We are going home after her exam. I am so excited. I am sitting in this super scratchy seat outside the exam room doors, waiting and waiting, and as I sit here I think about all of the test after tests after tests. All of those bad days will be over all the pain will end and we will go home happy. I am just waiting for her to walk out of those doors with a big smile on her face and say, "Time to go home honey," and we would walk out of those doors hand in hand.... but that moment never came. Instead my mom was pushed out of the exam room on a stiff bed that reeked of bleach and other disinfectants, and rushed in to a smaller room. As several woman and men shouted orders the room went crazy, people running here and there. The whole room was just a blur of colorful pants and shirts and occasionally a surgeon would run into the room or out of the room. Then came the equipment crowd more people flooded the room but this time they each had a device. IVs and breath monitors and fluid bags and other stuff also. I sat there paralyzed at the edge of my chair waiting for someone to come and get me, to tell me everything was alright, tell me that my mom would still come home safely and unharmed. The seconds dragged on and soon they turned into minutes, then minutes turned into hours and for hours I sat there at the edge of my seat waiting for the good news. Then the

thought hit me: something must be wrong, but what could go wrong? The chances were so low, but you always have to expect the unexpected. She is bound to die some day, maybe today is her day. Just as I suspected, a woman came out of the room, (which I finally figured out was the surgical room,) and sat down next to me. She sighed and then asked me if I wanted to go talk some place else. 'Ok,' I thought but I just stood up and followed her instead of saying anything. Once we had gotten to a small room with a couch and a few chairs she started to talk.

"Your mother is a fighter. She has lung cancer in the 5th stage and she still doesn't give up on life. Today we found a tumor in her lung while we were doing the scan so we decided to perform instant surgery. But she will be ok." I breathe slowly for a few minutes, gulping down tears of joy as they threaten to flood my eyes. A single sigh of relief escapes my lips. Release floods over me as all my fears subside. She's alive and happy and we will go home hand in hand.



OLIVER

Submarine

I hug my wife for what could be the last time. My partner Jackson does the same I and walk toward the submarine nervously. I feel a strange cold gust of wind I Shiver and get in, Jackson follows and soon after the heavy door shuts. The entire wall in front of me is covered with Gauges and buttons. I test the lights "Check" I Say. out side Lights "check" batteries "check"

"All good."

We start the decent toward the water. The next thing I know the sub is completely dark. I reach out and turn on the lights. The sub lights up and we continue our decent.

On the decent down, we see turtles, tuna and squid which I thought was really cool. But, Jackson did not even notice, even when I showed him. He just said

"Get back to work."

"You don't think that is cool?" I said

"Not really, I see that stuff all the time."

Already, we really don't get along.

We keep descending, i look at the depth finder, 17 ,000 feet.

"Almost in the twilight zone!" I point out excitedly.

"Oh cool." He says not even looking up from his clipboard. He mutters something under his breath. I hear "immature", but the rest is unclear.

"Why don't you like cool stuff?" I ask

"It's not cool. If it was I would show enthusiasm." He snapped back

"Okay," I say, "You don't have to be rude about it."

"I'm not being rude," he said, "You're just being really sensitive."

"No, I'm not. I am being totally reasonable."

"Whatever." He says, just trying to shut me up.

The next thing I know, he turns and throws a punch. It catches me off guard, but I still manage to get out of the way. His hand hits a button and I hear a "swoosh." I look to see what button he hit. Then I look to see how much oxygen is left in the tank, too little.

"Oh, great! Look what you did now." He says

"What? What did I do?"

I grab the controls and head towards the surface. It is going to be a long ride and I know we do not have enough oxygen.

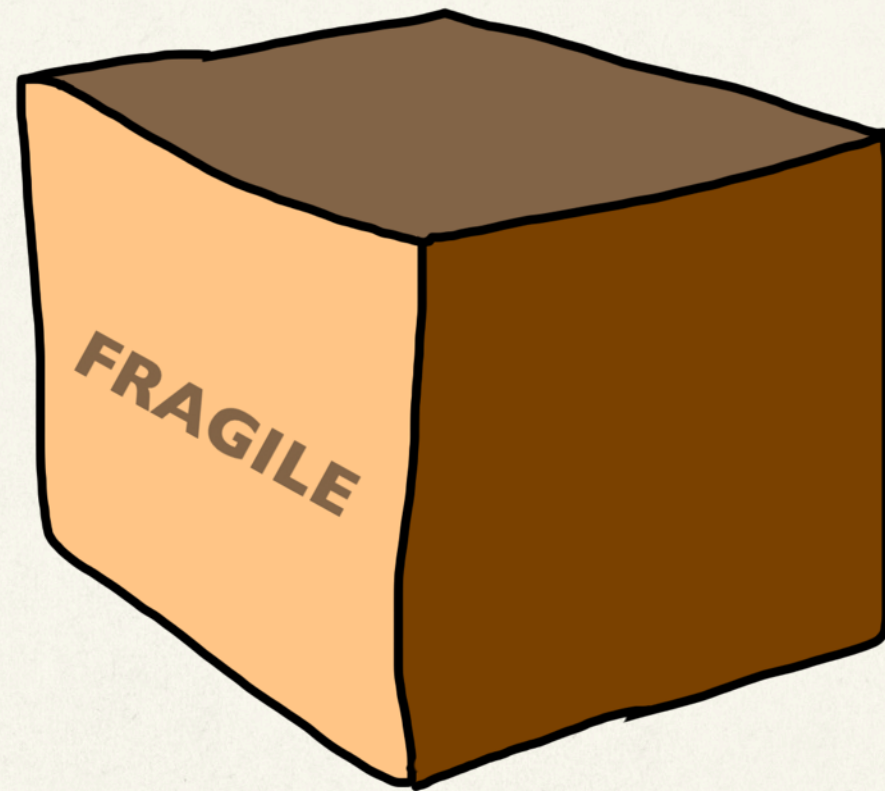
"Try to breathe as little as possible." I say

"Okay." He says

I tap the touch screen and it says 10 minutes to the surface.

We reach 5 ,000 feet, I look back at the monitor. It says 5 minutes. Then I hear a crash next to me. Jackson is hunched over in his chair, unconscious. I prop him up and look back at the monitor. 4 more minutes till we get to the surface. My head is pounding from lack of oxygen. 3 minutes. I start to feel nauseous . 2 minutes. I turn to the trash can Next to me and vomit. I need to do this not just for me but for my wife.

The next thing I know, the sub breaks the surface. I rush to the door woozy. I twist the hatch and pry it open. I take a big deep breath and start looking for the command boat. I finally see them and wave them over. After a couple of minutes, they get here. They drop down a crane hook pull us up. I drag Jackson's limp body to the deck and start doing CPR. After a couple minutes, the doctors come and take over. I turn around and hug my wife, I know it won't be the last time.



ISABELLA

The Time I Moved To Maine

"Bye, Lily. I'll see you tomorrow," said my best friend Emily

"Bye," I replied.

This was the routine we had every day. I was dreading the move to Maine. I didn't want to leave Emily.

She was parent pick-up today. "BUS 601-first call."

I raced down the stairs of the school to get to the bus first. Every day was a race to get the back seat. I have gotten it only a few times when Emily was on the bus with me. I was the first time I have ever gotten the back seat by my self. I was so happy.

As the rest of the kids filed in onto the bus, the kids who usually get the back seat groaned. The bus ride was short. Only about 15 minutes, as it always is.

As the bus pulled up to my stop I got off and started to walk home. It was only a 5-7 minute walk home.

"Hi mom," I said as I walked through the door.

"How was school?" she said.

"Great," I replied.

I was so excited for tomorrow. It was my last day of school. And then on Wednesday I would be moving to Maine. Actually, MDI, (Mount Desert Island,) to be exact. I was so excited but scared at the same time. What if they don't like me? What if I don't fit in? But then I thought of new friends, a better school. What did I have to be worried for?

"Ugg, I hate this homework."

They expect me to know 13X12X100 by heart. Only Nate, the smartest kid in my class, would know that. They won't let you use a calculator on your homework so I pretty much fail at math.

"Mom! Can I be done with my home work?"

"Sure honey, as long as you spent 20 minutes on it."

They have a 20 minute rule on our homework at school. If you spend 20 minutes on it and still don't get it, have your parents sign it so you won't get detention.

"Come eat dinner," my mom said.

"Okay, coming."

For dinner that night we had my mom's roasted chicken, mashed potatoes, and rolls with butter.

"Mmm, this is good," my brother and sister said at the same time.

"Jinx, you owe me a coke," they said together again. They kept repeating that until my sister won.

That night as I settled into bed, I thought about how it was my last night laying in this bed in Methuen. Tomorrow I would take it down and then Wednesday we would be leaving in the afternoon.

"Beep,beep,beep,beep," went my stupid alarm. I shut it off and then I realized that it was my last day of school! Yay!! I was so excited. I rushed into the bathroom and jumped into the shower. After my shower I threw on my clothes and ran downstairs. I packed my bag and ran to eat breakfast. After breakfast I put on my shoes and ran out the door.

"Goodbye mom, I love you," I said.

"Goodbye, love you too, have a great last day of school!" She said.

"I will!" I replied, and then ran down the street to my bus stop.

That day at school went by in a flash. In the morning I had math, then science, social studies, lunch, and music, and then went home.

As I got off the bus, I ran home. When I got home I ran to my room. I threw down my stuff and started packing. Hey, I wanted to move to Maine! Don't judge me! 15 minutes later my mom texted, "Please pick up kids at bus stop,"

I replied with an "ok" and left.

15 minutes later I was walking back asking my brother and sister how their last day of school went. They both replied with a "good".

When we got home I put out some milk and cookies for a snack. We all gulped down the milk and ate the cookies. After they finished they went outside to play on our trampoline that was being taken down that day. I cleaned up the plate and cups. 15 minutes later my mom came home and asked about our day. I said it was great and gave my mom all of my artwork, math work, and all of my other work I had done over the course of a year. Then I went to my room to finish packing my clothes. After I finished I went down stairs and smelled pizza. My mom said the pizza would be done in 15 minutes, so I went to get the remote and watched one of my favorite cartoons, Tom and Jerry.

After dinner I went up to my room and I took out my paints and brushes and started painting a mountain with a beautiful purple and pink sunset and a calm stream in front of the mountain. I started to think about how scary it would be on the first day of school again. I was scared that nobody would like me, that I would get bullied, that everybody already had their group of friends and that nobody would except me into their group. I kept scaring myself with these questions over and over again. I didn't like them. So I kept painting.

When I was finished painting my dad came up to my room and said, "Time to take your bed down, honey."

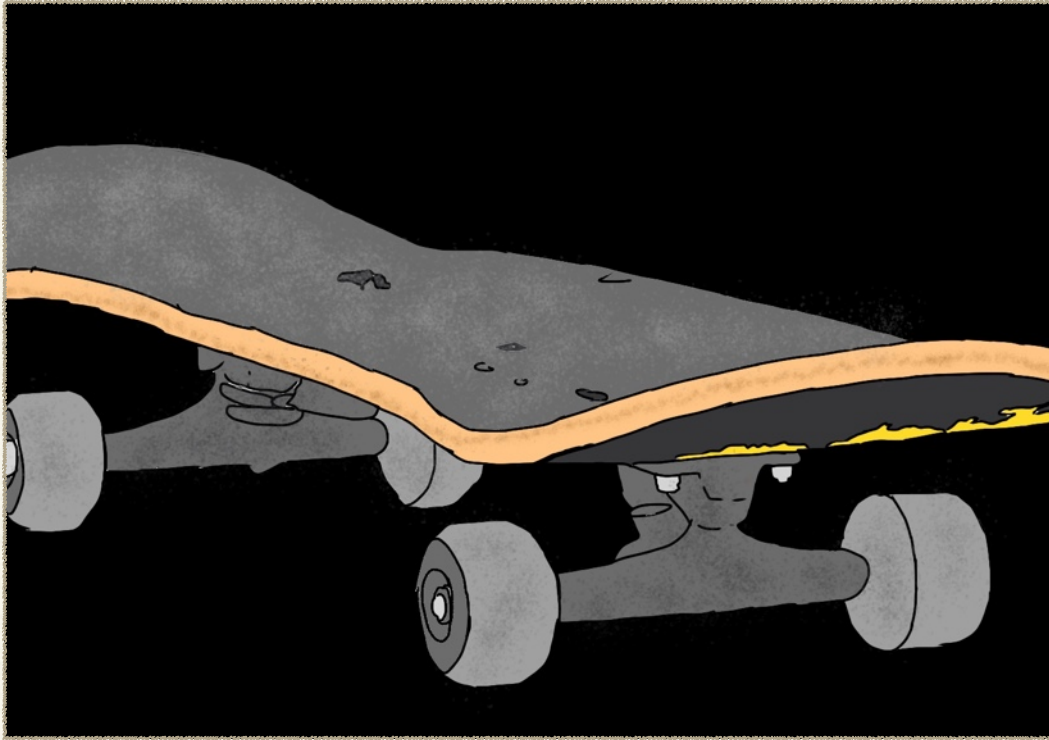
"Okay" I said.

Later that night as I was falling asleep on my mattress in my empty room, staring at my bedroom ceiling, looking at the shadows dancing across the ceiling, I was thinking of how I was moving tomorrow. After a while of thinking about my new school I fell asleep.

The next morning I awoke to my mom yelling, "Get up, it's time to go!" My parents let us sleep in because they hated us getting in the way of things. So I got up, showered, and helped with the last few boxes.

As the last box was put into the car we were off. We were okay for the first hour and then my brother and sister started to fight about how his stuff was on her or her stuff on him. It got annoying so I put on my headphones and started to read. After awhile I fell asleep. I woke up 2 hours later. Two more hours to go. I was tired so I fell back asleep. I woke up as we were pulling into the driveway of the house. It was pitch black out so I couldn't really see. I got my duffle bag out and my pillow and walked into the house. The house was small but livable. I went up to my room instantly. I was so tired. My room was small with a big bed that took up most of the room. I had a huge closet and small windows. I lay down on the bed and then realized it had memory foam. I was so happy! I fell asleep instantly. The next morning I woke up, went downstairs, looked out the window and saw my school. Well, there was my school. The school was small compared to my old school. I went and had breakfast and then I went to the local library that was right across from the school. I met the librarian and checked out 2 books.

The next day I took a shower and ate breakfast and then walked over to my new school with my brother and sister. I was so scared to walk into that school but I did. In that school I met my best friends. I guess moving to Maine was better than I thought.



LOUISE

Tomboy

The wheels of my skateboard glide along the sidewalk, and I turn the corner with a simple shift of my weight. My dog, Oreo, runs along next to me, his black and white coat covered in dew from the misty fall day. I jump off the edge of the curb, my skateboard flipping perfectly under me in the air. I make amazing landing, and continue down the nearly empty street, dodging parked cars and people on the sidewalk with ease. Suddenly, I look up and see my best friends, Cara, Laney, and Amanda. They are loaded down with shopping bags and are carrying tiny, pink sparkly purses. Ugh. I hate pink. And sparkles. And shopping. I don't know how they stand it, but I have known them since kindergarten, so even if they love the things I hate, we are still friends. Eight years will do that to a person.

"Hey guys!" I call out, "What's up?"

"Ohh, hi Jo," says Cara, "We where just, uh, like, hanging out at the mall."

"The mall?" I say.

"Yeah, uh, we where at the mall. We didn't go anywhere you would like," says Cara to fast.

"Oookay," I say.

"Well, actually, um, that's not totally true," says Amanda, the most truthful person I have ever met, "Yeah, um we sort of went to Taco Loco."

"Oh," I say, and I can barely keep the disappointment out of my voice. Taco Loco is my favorite restaurant. I absolutely LOVE Mexican food. I would spend the ENTIRE day wearing pink, carrying a sparkly purse and shopping in the mall if I got to go to Taco Loco. They should know that.

"Ok. See ya later," I say, already hopping on my skateboard and zooming off. From behind me I hear snickers. Sometimes I wish I wasn't the way I was. I ignore the whispers, and continue skateboarding along the streets of Portland, Maine.

When I get home a few minutes later, I immediately hear my mom yelling at me to, "Clean up your room right now, Josephine, or no TV for the rest of the day!" I hate it when she calls me that. Jo is SO much cooler. I go up to my room, and instantly realize why she is so angry. My room is a disaster, as usual. I sigh. This will take a while. I grab mounds of clothes, not even checking if they are dirty, and stuff them into the already full laundry basket in the corner. I climb into my loft bed and shove my hideous pink blanket off of the bed. My Aunt Betty gave it to me. She should know by now that I hate pink. My mom says that I should use it just to make Aunt B happy, but I usually shove the awful thing in the darkest corner of the basement. Apparently my mom found it again, because it has mysteriously returned to my bed. I look down, worrying that Mom has found my other stash of things-that-should-not-exist. No! The princess tiara, glittery heels, and hot pink dress are on my shelf, covering up my favorite lava lamp.

I jump off my bed, grab the unmentionable pink rag, wrap the other things-that-should-not-exist in it, and drag it down the stairs, (thumping it as much as possible in hopes that the things will break,) and into the basement. I stuff it behind the dryer, hoping that maybe the plastic shoes will melt and ruin everything so that my mom won't make me use the stuff. I go back up to my room, and spend a few minutes staring at the wonderful sight of my lime green bedspread. Ahh. No more pink. I make the bed, fix the Red Sox poster that fell off my wall, and pick up the candy wrappers on my desk, which is under the bed. I throw them away, and arrange the stuff on my shelf so that it isn't falling over in a heap. Then I grab the vacuum from downstairs and vacuum the fuzzy green rug. When I'm done, I pass out on the floor. Well, not really. But I lie down on the floor and close my eyes. Then I call to my mom for, "inspection," of my room. I pass, fortunately, because I'm not cleaning another inch of this house for a while.

After dinner that night, I grab my backpack and go to do my homework. Oreo curls up under my desk. When I *finally* finish my extraordinarily hard pre-algebra math sheet, I go to watch tv. I leap onto the couch, startling my identical twin brothers, Ryan and Eli, who are eight. I attack them with tickles, and finally steal the remote so that I can change the channel from their Star Wars TV show to the Sunday Night football game. Then they jump on me and do baby eyes until I change the channel back. After a few minutes of suffering, however, I sneak up on them from behind and steal the remote again. "I just need to check the score!" I exclaim. 21-3, and the Pats are winning against the Dolphins. Good. Then I change the channel back to their show, and wander into the kitchen.

Later that night in bed, I think about what happened today with my friends. Sometimes I feel like they are embarrassed to be around me. Like, sometimes in the cafeteria, I ask them to sit next to me, and they say something like, "Oh, I'm so sorry, Jo, but Sasha already asked us and we said yes." Then, when I'm sitting at a table alone, I look over and they aren't even sitting at the same *table* as Sasha! It gets really annoying. Sometimes I think that if I liked pink and sparkles and shopping, they would want to sit next to me instead of the popular girls. But since year before last, in fifth grade, they have been hanging out other girls more and more. I feel abandoned sometimes. After an hour of worrying and fretting, sleep finds me at last, with the help of Oreo's calming breaths under my bed.

That night I have a dream. In it, I'm walking down the road after school. Up ahead of me, I see Laney, Cara, and Amanda. They're walking with a bunch of other girls. Not just any girls - the most popular 7th graders in all of Casco Bay Middle School. I call out to my friends, and they turn their heads, so that I know they heard me. They don't call back, though. They keep walking and gossiping. I catch up to them, and when I'm just a few feet behind them, I hear Amanda saying, "Yeah, she's so boyish. She hates shopping. She is *so* dumb. I hate her. I wish I weren't friends with her."

Then I Laney says, "I know! She is, like, *such* a boring person. She just doesn't know when somebody doesn't want to be around her."

I was really surprised. Laney and Amanda? They were the nicest, friendliest people I had ever met. How could they talk about me like that? Even if it's in a dream?

"She is never interested in stuff that girls should be interested in. She doesn't have a crush, she doesn't like shopping, and stuff like that. She's so annoying. And sullen," says Cara.

Cara?! I have NEVER heard Cara talk like that about anybody, not even in a dream. How could my brain be making this up? Oh, I know how.

It's.

Not.

A.

Dream.

The other girls start laughing - not dream laughing, but real laughing.

I turn and run away, my jaw clenched in burning anger. Tears stream down my face. I don't care. Usually I hate to cry, especially in public, but right now I don't care. My heart thuds like a drum as I run as fast as my legs can carry me all the way home. I run into my bedroom and collapse onto my bed, sobbing. It takes awhile for the truth to sink in. It takes awhile for me to *allow* the truth to sink in. My only friends, the friends I have known since kindergarten, made fun of me behind my back. To the *popular* girls. Normally I don't care about being popular, but for some reason it makes it even worse. A whole new flood of tears takes over. How long have they been making fun of me? How long have they thought of me like that? Have they ever been real friends? I think of all the good times we've had together. The time that we all dressed up as ghosts for Halloween. We made the costumes ourselves, and they were really good for a nine year old. Even puppy Oreo had a costume, although he tore it off the moment we looked away. I invited them to spend the night afterwards. There was also the time that we came home to my house after school one day, and had a pillow fight.

Then I realize that even when I thought we were having fun, there was something hidden in each memory. On that Halloween in

fourth grade, they said no to my invitation to spend the night. I figured that they had family stuff to do. Now I realize that they had been hanging out with Emma, another girl in our class, towards the end of Trick-or-Treating, and had left with her. They went to her house to spend the night! When they came to my house, my mom got mad at us for having some cookies that I found in a cabinet. I didn't even eat one, and when Mom found out, Cara, Amanda and Laney blamed it on me! Mom yelled at me after they left. I felt so bad. I should have picked up on the little clues that they kept leaving. Now I know, and it's too late. They don't like me. They might have never liked me. It has all been a lie.

I lie in my bed for about another half an hour, pretending to read a book about American History. I need to read it for school, and it is incredibly boring. My mom comes home from work around 4:30, with Ryan and Eli, who were at a soccer practice. She comes into my bedroom, and asks what I've been doing.

"Nothing," I reply.

"That's not the answer I was looking for," she replies, smiling.

"Fine," I say, "That's not true," and I tell her the whole story about my friends.

"Oh, honey," she says when I'm done, "None of the things they said are true. I hope you know that. You are a smart, kind, wonderful, unique individual. If they are making fun of you for being who you are, then they are not true friends."

"But they are the only friends I had!" I say, struggling to keep my voice calm.

"I know. I'm sorry. This must be really hard for you. But if there's one thing I know about my daughter, it's that she is a very stubborn kid. And that stubbornness is what makes you Jo. And I know that you are going to use that stubbornness to make new friends. I know you can do it. You just have to find the right people. I'm sure there are other girls just like you out there. Maybe you haven't noticed them, but they are there," she says.

"Ok. Thanks Mom. I love you," I say.

"I know," she replies, "But I love you more." She pinches my arm gently, and we laugh at our old joke.

She leaves, and a few minutes later my little brothers invade my room. The clamber onto my bed, fighting for space on my lap. I laugh at their attempts to shove each other off of me, and adjust them so that they each have equal space. They wrap their little arms around me, and we lie down on the soft bed.

"Why have you been crying, Josie?" asks Eli.

"Don't you worry. Just stupid girl stuff," I reply, tickling him, "And I was *not* crying!"

"Then why are your eyes so red and puffy?" asks Ryan.

"Ok, you got me. I was crying. But only a little bit!"

The twins giggle and cuddle even closer.

"Josie?" says Ryan, very slyly, "Can we have some candy?"

Ryan and Eli found out about my stash of candy hidden in my dresser several years ago during a game of "Ultmet" hide and seek, which is their version of hide and seek tag. There are many rules, including, "You can't wear shoes" and "If you see a banana, you are out." I'm pretty sure that that one was created when Eli started attacking Ryan with a banana during a game, and it just evolved from there. There are also a lot of rules made up during the game, and are usually forgotten by the next day. Anyway, Ryan once tried to hide Eli in my dresser drawer, which turned into a huge pile of my stuff on the floor and the twins gobbling down a bag of Heribo gummy bears.

"No, absolutely not. For one thing, you we are going to have dinner in a few hours, and for another, that candy is mine," I say, trying to suppress the giggles at the sinking faces of the twins.

"Pleeeeeease?" They ask.

"No!" I say, mocking anger.

"Ok, fine," says Eli, "We'll just have to attack you until you 'lent!'"

"Relent, and there is not going to be any attacking going on in this house tonight," I say, grabbing the boys under my arms.

"Why?" Asks Ryan.

"Is it not obvious? I've got you pinned down!" I say, squeezing them. They laugh.

"Let us down! Let us down!" They shout.

"No, I think I will just have to sit here and hold down these two little naughty boys under my arms!" I say.

Then I allow them to escape, and they scamper down the ladder and out into the hall. I hear an attempt-at-yodeling noise that is the universal signal for the start of some sort of game, which probably won't be decided on until they start playing. Those two are ALWAYS able to cheer me up.

That night after dinner, which was Mac and Cheese, homemade the way I like it, I finish my homework look at the class picture for this year. There are 52 7th graders total, divided into two classes of 26. I look at the faces of each girl, and think about what they are like. If they could be my friend. Who they are friends with. I skip over the large groups of popular girls, and spend a moment staring at the smiling faces of my ex-friends. And me. Oof, do I look dumb in that photo. A long line of no's, and then my eyes slip over a girl I have never noticed before. She is in the other class, and I'm pretty sure she is new this year. She has short blond hair exactly like mine, except mine is brown. She has wide blue eyes, and isn't wearing any makeup. A good sign. All of the popular girls, and recently Laney, Cara, and Amanda, wear an insane amount of makeup every day. Mascara, overload on eyeliner, thick pink or red lipstick, blush, concealer, the whole nine yards. I hardly ever wear makeup. The blond girl, Emma McLouden, I read under her small, rectangular photo, looks shy, but intelligent and caring. Emma. I make a point to sit with her at lunch tomorrow.

All night long, I think about Emma. I do remember seeing her once- I think she was in front of me in the lunch line once. But Laney was behind me, so I didn't pay any attention to Emma. But she seemed not to care. She just stood in line, staring off into space and reading the posters on the walls, telling us the proportions of vegetables to fruit that are supposed to be on your plate. When I fall asleep, it seems like minutes before I wake up again.

I crawl out of my bed, and throw on some jeans and a t-shirt, and grab a hoodie from a hook on the wall. I trudge into the bathroom, and sit on the edge of the tub while hastily brushing the snarls out of my short-cropped hair. I walk slowly down the stair, until my mom calls out for me to hurry up. I walk into the kitchen to find scrambled eggs and toast waiting for me, gobble down my breakfast, and rush back up

the stairs to brush my teeth. While doing so, the bus arrives outside. I sprint downstairs, grab my backpack and sports bag, check one last time to make sure that my soccer cleats, shinguards, and all my school stuff is there, and sprint out the door. Over my shoulder I say goodbye to my mom, just before flagging down the bus driver who was already pulling away from our long driveway. I leap into the bus, and find one of the few remaining seats. Finally, I can relax after yet another stressful, rushed morning.

As the bus rumbles along the road, I look back and realize that Emma is sitting in the seat behind me! She is listening to music on a pair of Beats and has a black leather knapsack on her lap. I think for another few minutes about what I can say to get her attention.

"Hey. What's up?" seems to casual.

"Hello, I'm Jo. What's your name?" is way to formal.

Finally I settle on a combo of the two.

"Hey, what's up? I'm Jo. What's your name?" I say.

"I'm Emma. I'm new. I just moved to Rodick Street. Where do you live?" she replies.

"I live just one block over! I live on Britain Street!" I say ecstatically.

"Really? What does your house look like? I walk my dog down that road every day!" says Emma.

I describe my two-story, blue-shingled house to Emma, and she exclaims, "I know that house! Is it the one with two little boy's bikes in the front yard?"

"Yes! That's it! Those are my brother's. They are eight-year-old twins, and are a serious pain. They're cute, too, though," I say.

"I have a little sister. She's ten. She can be annoying, but I have a lot of fun with her," says Emma.

"What does your house look like? I bet I know it," I say.

"It's wood shingled, and it has a garden in front with a little stone garden," she replies.

"Cool! Hey, do you want to come to my house this afternoon? I don't have soccer practice today." I say.

"Yeah! That'd be awesome! Let me text my mom," says Emma.

She takes out her cell phone just as the bus pulls up at the school.

"Ok, see ya at lunch!" I call as I gather my pile of stuff and climb off the bus.

"See ya!" Emma replies.

During break, I call my mom and ask if Emma can come over. She says sure, as long as we don't break anything. She knows me so well.

The whole entire day I can't focus on anything, in anticipation of the afternoon.

What is Emma's favorite sports team? Does she like sports? What's her favorite TV show? What does her room look like? Does she like shopping and pink and sparkles?

Thousands of questions run through my head, and when Mr. Davidson calls on me in math, I have no idea what is going on. Finally, the bell rings announcing the end of the day and I take off for my locker, shove all of my stuff in my bag, and race off to the bus so that I can be sure to save a seat for Emma. When she climbs others, it is only a little while after me, so I know that she rushed, too. I wave to her, and she smiles, walks down the aisle and sits in the seat next to me. "Hey," I say.

"Hey," says Emma.

"How was your day?" I ask.

"It was good. How was yours?" she responds.

"Fine. I was really excited about this afternoon." I reply.

"Yeah! Me too," says Emma. We smile.

After the bus drops us off at my house, I teach Emma how to skateboard. She's not very good at first, but once she stops being afraid of falling off, she's okay. She tries really, really hard to mimic my tricks, but all she can manage is riding the board right off the curb. She falls into the gutter, laughing her head off. She stands up, brushing off the soggy, rotting leaves. There's one thing I admire about this new friend, and it's that she is not a quitter. We decide that if she attempts any more tricks, she might fall and break her neck, and THAT would be a problem to explain to our parents, so we head inside. I show her my bedroom, and we hang out on the floor, just chatting about ourselves. I learn that she moved from South Carolina, and that she has a dog named Coconut. She shows me a picture on her phone, and he is

the cutest a thing ever! He's this tiny brown lab puppy, and he has these enormous puppy dog eyes. So sweet! When she meets Oreo for the first time, they immediately fall in love. Oreo nuzzles Emma, and she pets him and gives him huge kisses all over his silky head.

After a little while longer, my mom arrives with the twins. Emma and I go downstairs and I introduce her. The boys want to show her their room right away, but I shoo them off.

"They are so adorable!" exclaims Emma as soon as we are back in my room.

"Yeah, adorable menaces," I say, laughing. Emma laughs back.

"Yeah, I get it," says Emma, and I remember about her ten year old sister.

"So what is your favorite thing to do?" I ask, trying to start up a conversation.

"I *love* swimming. I was on the swim team back in South Carolina, and I had a state record. 200 meter breast stroke," replies Emma.

"Seriously? That's amazing! State record? I stink at swimming! There's a swim team here in Portland, you know. The Portland Tunas," I say.

"Cool! Maybe I'll join," says Emma excitedly.

Just then Emma's phone rings, and it's her mom telling her to come home.

She says goodbye to my mom, and I walk her home. On the way, she talks about herself, and I talk about myself, and all I can think is, Wow, I really like this person. As we arrive at her house, she turns to me and asks if I want to come over to spend the night that weekend. I smile, and say yes. On my way home, I can't stop grinning. I have a friend.

An Uphill Battle

Part 1

A New Life

I dropped my leopard print backpack on the smooth hardwood floor. It was already filled with homework even though it was only the first day. My frail body could hardly support its weight. My military style jacket was still hanging on the stainless steel coat rack, where I forgot it this morning. I padded into the modern kitchen, with all its clean lines. Everything in my penthouse apartment was stark; it represented the lack of affection in my life. I sliced up a granny smith apple (80) and grabbed some almond butter (95) to dip it in. This was my favorite snack. It was healthy, brain food, as my grandmother used to say. The calorie count was high, but I hadn't eaten breakfast or lunch, so I figured it was a treat.

I sat in the palatial apartment alone, watching the first day of school on replay in my head. So many things had been taken away from me in my life recently. I missed Los Angeles, all my friends and family were very far away from me now and most of all I missed my grandmother. She died five months ago, I still feel a great emptiness in my heart for we were very close.

My grandma and I were lying next to each other on the lounge chairs. We were soaking up some of that warm Barbados sun. The turquoise, crystal clear water lapped against the bright white sand. We talked about how we were in paradise and never wanted to leave. My life is slipping out of control and I need to reel it back in.



My mother walked through the front door, looking as tense and rushed as always.

“Oh! Hey Sammy, How was your first day? Were the kids and teachers nice?” My mother said in a careless tone.

“It was fine, the people were okay. I am sure I will make some friends and adjust to East Coast living.” I responded in a steady voice that lacked emotion.

“Ok. Your father and I are going out to dinner tonight, if you would like to join us.”

“Where are you going and what time are you eating?”

“We are going to Pylos, the new greek restaurant in the east village at about 8pm. I have to go review a case now, but I hope you decide to come to dinner because we would like to talk to you about school,” she said in a hopeful voice, “We haven’t spent a lot of time together in a while.”

“Ok. I will come to dinner, they will probably have a yummy greek salad (107) there.”

She turned on her heels and disappeared into the home office.

My mother is a criminal defense lawyer from Long Island. She opened her own firm two months ago when we moved back to New York City. We don’t have the best relationship; sometimes I feel as though she doesn’t have time for me and her motherly nurturing instincts are practically nonexistent.

My father is much more laid back and loving. He is a real estate agent from Santa Barbara. I have to admit that I am a bit of a daddy’s girl sometimes. My parents met at Harvard, and it was sort of a love at first sight kind of thing. On occasion my dad has opened up to me about how mom used to be, more fun and exciting, until she began to shoot to the top in her career and work became her number one priority. Sometimes it is hard to imagine my mom letting loose and having a good time. I have caught glimpses of what that personality must have been like, but the moments usually fade away before you even know that they were ever there.

I finished the last slice of apple and chugged down a glass of water (0), because good ole H2O helps you feel fuller for longer. I heaved my backpack onto my shoulder and I walked into my room where I

emptied its contents on to the floor, clad in a zebra skin rug. My school ID slipped out first. The card said Samantha Knickerbocker, LAB Middle School, Grade 8, Homeroom Teacher Mrs. Jane Fenwick. After that I started in on my math homework. Algebra is definitely not my thing, it takes me such a long time to complete and my brain just doesn’t think that logically. Let’s face it, homework is important to mental growth and I want to keep my grades up so therefore I have to give everything my best shot. The two things I can control in my life are my: school assignments and my weight.

Two hours and fifteen minutes went by before I realized that it was 7 p.m. and time for me to get ready for dinner. I peeled off my jeans, black t-shirt, and chunky cardigan. The necklace my grandmother gave me fell to the floor, and I scooped it up and placed it gingerly onto the jewelry dish on my armoire.

I opened the little blue box that my grandmother had just placed in the palm of my hand. Inside was a beautiful gold necklace with a diamond pendant. I loved it, I gave my grandmother a huge hug and sunk into her arms.

I had to begin my nightly routine of dissecting my image in the floor length mirror. FAT. All I see in myself is that simple three letter word it explains everything, my thigh gap isn’t big enough and my bikini bridge needs to become more defined. I better eat less. I will be ok though, I am managing my weight in a perfectly healthy way, it is not like I have a disorder or something.

I hopped into my stand up glass shower, where I started to cry. Missing is a hard emotion to feel, I longed to be back in LA for I was so much happier there. The salty tears and hot water mixed together and trickled down my body. Collect yourself.

The worst part about clothes is that no matter what you put on, something about the piece is unflattering, that’s why pretty much everything I own is simple and classic. It is hard to look unattractive when you are wearing basic pieces. FAT. I finally settle on a camel colored shift, black leather jacket, and camo printed pony hair booties.

I sat down on the edge of my bed and scrolled through my Instagram feed, I saw picture upon picture of some gorgeous slim model. Why can’t I look like them?

The restaurant was buzzing on this Monday night in September. It was the second week the place had been open and it was already looking pretty successful. The ceiling was covered in clay pots, the furniture was all either beige or sea blue, and there were lots of fresh flowers. The hostess guided us to our table in the back of the restaurant; I sat in the booth opposite my parents.

Part 2

Appetizers

“Here are your menus, please enjoy your evening, a server will be with you in just a moment. If you have any questions about the menu please do not hesitate to ask him or her,” said the hostess, a tall, lanky blonde woman.

She strutted away in her killer Louboutins. I brought my eyes to the menu, trying to find something that wouldn’t contain too many fattening ingredients or calories. Spanakopita (200), fried zucchini and eggplant with a yogurt sauce (440), and calamari salad (267). I am paralyzed. IamnohungryIamnohungryIamnohungry.

“I am not very hungry tonight because I had a big snack after school, so I think I will skip out on the appetizers. I might just get a big Greek salad (107) for my main course and I’ll be set!” I said trying to sound normal.

“Okay honey, I think your mother and I are going to split the spanakopita as well as the calamari salad. We could not order just one thing because everything looks so good.” My dad said in his happy go lucky tone.

“Hello, my name is Gerasimo and I will be your server tonight. Is there anything I can get you to start off? Appetizers? Wine?” Gerasimo, the attractive young man, inquired.

“I think my wife and I are going to split the spanakopita and the calamari salad. May I please have a light red,” stated my father.

“May I also have a light red, thank you very much,” said my mother politely.

“Yes, I will be right back with that wine for you,” said Gerasimo. I watched the waiter walk to the bar and put in the order. I wonder if they punch the order in to a computer or just hand in the little piece of

paper that they write it down on. I really do not want to be here with my parents right now, they don’t care about me anyway.

“So, can you fill us in on what your school’s like in general?” questioned my parents, in unison, with these sickeningly fake grins on their faces.

I could tell them what school is really like, the mean and awful bullies, the popular rich girls carrying their chanel bags, the cute boys that are totally out of my league. Or I can sugarcoat it to avoid more pressing questions; I choose the latter option.

“It is fine, first days of school are always tough especially when you are coming to a new middle school in the final year. The teachers are pretty nice. My science teacher is a mousy, middle aged woman, who seems very interesting and nurturing, a grandmother type. My math and English teachers are men, who are best friends, that love to travel around the world together. The history teacher is a very nice young woman, who is obviously just starting off her career, she seems very bubbly and I love her fashion sense. Overall the kids are pretty standard. You have your plain old nice kids, popular girls, popular jock guys, sporty girls, nerds, and the people who are just plain old mean. There are 98 people in my grade, so I’m sure that I will make friends with someone.”

“Good, that’s great, I am glad that you are liking it,” said my mom as if she cared.

Please note that I never said that I liked the school, I never gave an opinion at all, I just stated the facts.

My parents totally do not care, I bet they were not listening to half of what I was just saying, they hardly ever even acknowledge me. Usually, when I vocalize my thoughts and opinions, they go in one ear and out the other.

It was the first day of 7th grade, I was in class 7B, so were most of my friends! The day was warm and sunny as I pulled up to school and hopped out of my mom’s Mercedes convertible. My new backpack was loaded down with brand spankin’ new school supplies. I was wearing light wash denim high waisted shorts, a sunflower printed crop top, and white high top converse. LA style is so much more boho and

laid back. I ran over to two of my friends and hugged them, we started in on the conversation as if we hadn't been apart for two months.

My parents food came and they ate their appetizers, while in deep conversation about their jobs and the days at work. I sat in silence, shocked by the amount of food they were consuming.

Part 3

Main Course

I reviewed the menu and found what I was looking for, a salad (107) containing cucumbers, tomatoes, onion, olives, feta cheese, oregano, and an olive oil dressing. Perfect.

"What can I get you guys tonight as your main course? Just to let you know we do have two specials tonight. Our first is a lamb shank with an eggplant marmalade and roasted potatoes. The second is a whole branzino fish with spinach and feta cheese rice. They are both absolutely delicious," said our server.

"Can I please have the Greek Salad (107), it sounds really good." I murmured.

"Well can I please have the lamb then, that sounds fabulous," uttered my dad.

"May I please have the fish with the rice and a side salad," chirped my mother.

"Yes, your meal will be ready shortly," said the waiter enthusiastically.

"Isn't that a bit too much food? I find super large amounts of food gross." I said in a sharp tone.

"No! I am very hungry!" My dad exclaimed.

"Plus we practically want to try everything on the menu because this is a new restaurant." My mom added.

I wondered how servers always stayed so nice and positive, working in a restaurant seems like a surprisingly difficult job. You are on your feet all day and sometimes you have to deal with rude and immature customers, without going off on them. I could never do that; standing for long periods of time leaves me faint and I am bad at dealing with people who annoy me in a calm manner.

"Well do you feel like there are any potential friends for you? I know it is early to ask that, but you might have some ideas," said my mom.

"There is this one girl named Jennifer who seems like a good girl, apparently she is interesting and outgoing. I can tell that she is admired by many younger students and that she is popular in her grade! I actually walked home from school with her today because she lives close to us. We stopped by an ice cream place on the way home and she got an icecream but I wasn't hungry. She is really funny, and I am glad that she is showing me around." I said. "Oh by the way, she invited me to go shopping with some of her friends on Saturday, and I accepted with alacrity - it will give me a chance to meet some other girls."

We walked in and out of stores at the Grove, sipping iced coffees, it was the hottest day of the year even though it was already mid September. My best friend and I hauled around our backpacks as well as shopping bags filled with new clothes for the fairly young school year. The upcoming weekend was a four day weekend and we were going to Lake Tahoe in Sierra Nevada.

I missed my best friend Ceci so much, I had to hold back tears that were beginning to form in my eyes. We just understood each other so well, and she was there for me through thick and thin. I felt like when I left LA I was leaving the other half of my heart behind, that's how much I miss her.

"Well I am so happy that you see potential new friends, that is so great. I know it was hard for you to leave Ceci, but I promise you will see her soon. I have been talking with her parents and they might be coming up to New York at the end of September." My dad said, trying to be reassuring.

My biggest fear was growing apart from this friend that I once loved and knew so well, what were we gonna talk about when we did not go to the same school. Did we have anything at all in common anymore?

"Sorry to interrupt your conversation but your meal is ready." said Gerasimo, as he placed our plates in front of each of us.

"Wow! This looks so delicious, I can't wait to dig in." said my mom.

“I am glad, please let me know if you need anything else,” he said. My parents ate but I could tell that they were watching me as I nibbled at and took tiny bites of my salad, but I did not know why.

Part 4

Dessert

“Here is the dessert menu for you all, tonight we have one dessert special that I would like to let you know about. The special is a molten chocolate lava cake, that is to die for!” the server informed us.

“Wow that sounds amazing!” my dad cooed, his mouth was almost visibly watering.

“I am just going to review the menu and see if I want anything, please come back in a few minutes. Thank you,” said my mom. Everything looked so good, but I couldn’t have any of it. Icecream sundae (437), creme brulee (210), chocolate mousse (454), and a cherry napoleon (320). FAT. I wanted chocolate mousse, but it would cause me to lose more control, I had to keep everything in line.

“What are you getting sweetie? Chocolate mousse, we know it is your favorite?!” my dad said, in a voice that sounded like he was trying to coax me into it.

“I don’t want anything, I am very full. Thanks for offering, everything looks fantastic, maybe next time.” I said.

“Oh, ok. This may be very hard to hear and we are not trying to pick on you in any way, shape, or form, but you have been losing a lot of weight lately. You are starting to look unhealthily skinny, and we are worried about you,” said my mom with genuine concern in her voice, “are you still upset about the loss of your grandmother, who we both know you were very close to?”

My grandmother lay there in her hospital bed, her body was motionless and her face was a pale ghostlike mask. There was constant and furious beeping, many machines were working to keep her alive. I sat there holding her cold lifeless hand, until she took her last breath and all I heard was one long beep. I sobbed and sobbed, and when I thought no more tears could come out more came.

My grandmother and I always had a very special bond and connection, I felt like I could talk to her without her judging me and she always gave me great advice when I needed it.

“There is nothing wrong with me! Are you trying to suggest that I have an eating disorder? I am a very strong person, all I am doing is keeping my life together. My mental state is fine, absolutely fine. Do I miss my grandmother dearly? Yes, yes I do, not a day goes by where I don’t think about her or shed a tear over the fact that she is gone and that I will never see her again. That is the reality of the matter, this is my life in black and white,” I whimpered with tears running down my face.

“Oh darling, I don’t want to see you hurting like this, maybe you should talk to a therapist. They would be able to give you tools to deal with your sadness and help you get over this prolonged grieving period. Remember that your father and I love you very much,” she suggested.

“Mother I do NOT need a therapist, I am fine. I can deal with my emotions by myself, thank you very much. You are making it sound like my grandmother is just someone that I need to forget about, and that I need to erase the mark she left on my life.” I cried.

“Can I get you guys any dessert? Or would you just like the check?” the server interjected.

“Check please,” said my dad.

We sat through the rest of dinner in complete and utter silence, my parents faces were sad and concerned, there is no greater pain than that of a parent whose child is falling apart.

Part 5

Home at Last

I ran in to my room and slammed the door; I needed to be alone, just my thoughts and I. I took off my clothes, and glanced at myself in the mirror. FAT. I pulled on my polka dot pajama pants and bright pink oversized t-shirt. The items were draped over my skin and bones. As I was brushing my teeth in the bathroom, I felt a weird sensation of extreme hunger and weakness, and then everything went black with a thud.

Part 6

Hospital

I slowly floated back to consciousness, and I was surprised to see my parents hovering over me with red tear-stained faces. What happened? Was a family member dying? That is when I realized it, it was me I had passed out. I felt so strange and lightheaded, weird tubes were sticking out of my stomach pulsing strangely, I had two iv's in my right arm, and my head was bandaged up in one spot.

"Mom, Dad, I'm scared, what happened to me?" I said in a quiet and weak voice.

"Oh thank God, my darling you're ok!" My mom said as both my parents started kissing and hugging me frantically.

"Doctor! Doctor! Doctor! She is awake and talking, come here quickly."

A gorgeous Asian woman in her mid thirties came rushing into the room. She looked relieved and overjoyed.

"Hello, My name is Doctor Kristina Wang, and I would like to explain your condition to you, so that you are aware of your treatment options. I am afraid that you will have a long recovery ahead of you mentally, physically, and emotionally."

"Oh, thank you, Doctor Wang, I am so confused and I would just like to know why I am here," I slurred, my words heavy from the medicine.

"Well, you passed out because you were severely malnourished as a result of stress and you used your food intake as a way to take control in your life. I understand from your parents that you just made a big move and that your grandmother who you were very close to passed. I am so sorry for your loss. When you fell you also gashed your head on the bathroom countertop-we stitched you up and that will heal fairly well," she said. I could tell that Doctor Wang was working up to a bigger diagnosis.

"I do not understand how my grandmother dying and a move has anything to do with any of this!" I said, I was even more confused and frustrated than before.

"I am sad to say this, but you have severe situational depression from the loss of your grandmother. We are going to have to have you see a therapist and get you put on medication to help with that. Also, you have anorexia, which is an eating disorder that makes people lose more weight than is considered healthy for their age and height. You seem to have a fear of weight gain which is one of the symptoms, and anorexia is something that is very hard to get over. I believe that with counseling, family support, and medical professionals you will be able to get over this disease," she intoned.

I started to cry, I didn't know what to do, I had heard stories of girls dying from anorexia and I never thought it would happen to me. I did not want this disease to take over me and ruin my life. I know it will be an uphill battle but I am ready to fight until the end. I stayed in the hospital for two days, and then I went home for a little while until I was shipped off to a rehab facility for teenage girls with anorexia. My parents are finally making time for me, they love and care for me and they are my number one support group.

Part 7

Rehab

I know that someday I will be 100 percent better, but for now anorexia is something I struggle with every day. At first I was in denial but now I understand the full extent of my illness and how I am going to continue the road to recovery when I leave rehab and go home tomorrow. It has been almost a month since I was hospitalized and I have gained a lot of weight, I am now healthier and happier. I have learned how to channel the pain of losing my grandmother into drawing and singing which are two hobbies that have become very important to me over the last few weeks. If you suspect that you are suffering from an eating disorder or if you think a loved one is suffering from an eating disorder please get them help, because anorexia is not a joke.

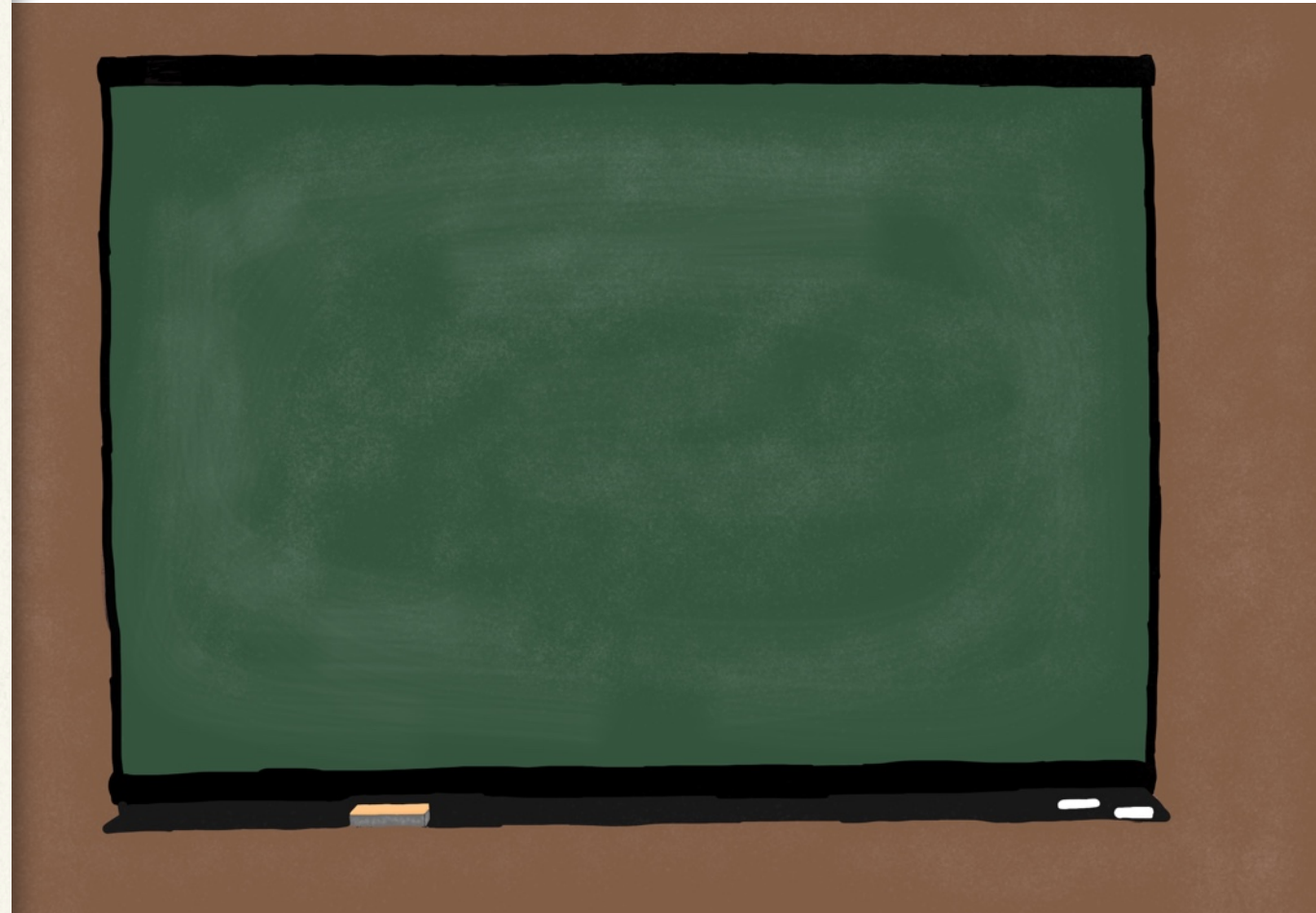
Part 8

Homecoming

I ran into my parents open arms, and we all cried. Once we were in the car they complimented me on how great I looked; I felt a fire-ball of joy inside. To calm their nerves I reviewed the after rehab plan with them, I am to see a nutritionist and therapist twice a week to stay on track. On the way home from the rehab facility we stopped at a mall in New Jersey, so that I could buy new clothes in bigger sizes. To most girls it seems terrible to buy clothes in larger sizes but to me it was an accomplishment-I even ate half an ice-cream cone at the mall food court! My life is turning around, and I look forward to going back to school, battling anorexia, and leading life as a happier person.

Chapter 2

7TH GRADE
FANTASY/
HISTORICAL
FICTION





PETER

The Abbey of Life

Father Alexander rode through the crowded streets of London as the Great Bells began to toll. He clutched a newborn baby in his arms. The horse he was riding was on its last legs.

Good thing, too, as the Abbey of Life lay just down the street from where Father Alexander was. He spurred on the horse, but it didn't speed up. Father Alexander leapt off the tired horse and sprinted with the baby up the steps and through the doors of the Abbey of Life. He entered it just as the Great Bells stopped tolling. The mass of monks and nuns in the Abbey of Life came over to him to adore the baby. Wheezing and out of breath, Father Alexander handed the baby to Sister Rebecca. She passed the baby around to the other nuns, who smothered the baby with kisses.

"Good day, Father Alexander! Which Abbey do you think this baby will join? The Abbey of Life, or the Abbey of Death?" greeted Brother Henry from the large altar. He began making his way closer to Father Alexander.

"Good... Day... Abbey... Life...!" called back Father Alexander.

"We need your help in the kitchens. Mother Rachel wants to feed everyone in Piccadilly. We are all baking rolls and making soup," Brother Henry informed. He was about four feet away now. After he finished speaking, he hurried off to the kitchens.

"Alright, Alright, I'm coming now. Wait for me!" Father Alexander called out. He ran after Brother Henry down the hall to the kitchens.

Almost every monk or nun was crowded into the massive, steamy kitchen. Mother Rachel was standing on one of the many counters in her white habit, yelling out orders of who should go where.

"Alright, you lot over by the ovens! That's enough rolls! Put em' in 'ere. That's the spirit! And you lot making soup! We need more bowls of it! Anybody done with work, go join 'em!" she yelled. Brother Henry and Father Alexander wound their way around counters and tables over to a stove where Mother Mary and Father Abraham were busy with a pot of soup. They were working quickly, white habits flying behind them.

"Hello, Father Abraham! How can we help?" asked Brother Henry cheerfully. Father Abraham directed him to chopping vegetables and pieces of chicken. Father Alexander helped Mother Mary add broth and the various ingredients to the large pot.

"In my opinion, you were a bit late this time. You know, with the baby?" commented Mother Mary after a time to Father Alexander.

"Possibly, but I still did it neatly and properly. Besides, once I get too old for this job, Brother Henry can take over. Eh, mate?" replied Father Alexander.

"Yeah. I think it's almost time. I might not do it though. There's that other guy, Brother Samuel, I think, who might be able to conclude the service with one of those babies," said Brother Henry teasingly.

"Well, it's not all that much of a hard job. All you have to do is deliver the baby to the Abbey from the hospital before noon. Your job would be much easier if you started much earlier than 11:55!" added Father Abraham. "They thought about choosing me, but I wasn't a very good rider. The horses hated me."

"First of all, the midwives took much longer to clean that baby than they usually do. Second of all, the mare I was riding was the one that absolutely despises me. So, that's why I was a little late today!" yelled Father Alexander at the other monks and nuns.

"Oy! You lot making soup over there! Quiet down!" screamed Mother Rachel at them. They resumed their work in silence.

Together, they made about six pots of soup before Mother Rachel made everyone stop. The people of Piccadilly filed into the Abbey. All of the monks and nuns served them while the organist played a joyful tune that kept resonating around the Abbey even after he had stopped.

Everyone was served, and there was still food to spare. Sister Martha was put in charge of storing all of it. After a long evening of feasting, it was time for everyone to go back to their rooms.

Father Alexander and Brother Henry shared a room. They walked to it together, talking and laughing and making merry the whole way back. Finally, it was time to be quiet before bed. Mother Rachel had just announced it loudly and proudly, and had been helped by the Great Bells. Father Alexander pulled out some sculpting tools from a drawer by his bed and set to work finishing up a small cherub he was going to put in his church, the Cathedral of Hope. Brother Henry was studying to be a philosopher. He was reading a large book about philosophy, titled Basic Philosophy.

After a time, Father Alexander yawned, put away his newly finished cherub, and extinguished his bedside candle.

"Night then," he mumbled to Brother Henry, then got into bed and pulled the covers over him. Brother Henry put down his book, put out his candle, and got into bed.

"Alexander? D'you hear that?" mumbled Brother Henry a few minutes later.

"What?" replied Father Alexander softly.

"Sounds like a mouse... or something," Brother Henry mumbled in reply before his loud snores began to fill the room.

"I'll get it," Father Alexander said warmly. He listened for a moment. Sure enough, there was a tiny scratching sound coming from the wall above Father Alexander's head. He got out of bed, tossing the covers to one side and felt around the wall for where the scratching was coming from. It was emanating from about halfway up the wall, behind an old painting of somebody named Sir Edward the Brave.

Father Alexander gently took down the painting and removed the wooden board that the scratching was behind. A tiny nest, made of cotton and little scraps of fabric lay there, amidst the many boards and planks. In the nest was four tiny baby mice. Two of them were brown, one was grey, and the last was yellow. The gray mouse had only three legs.

Father Alexander carefully lifted the nest out from the wall and gently placed it on his bedside table.

"Goodnight, mice," he mumbled gently before drifting off to sleep.

They were awoken by crashes and screams. Father Alexander leapt out of bed and yanked Brother Henry out too.

"Right then, let's go!" he yelled at Brother Henry.

"Sounds like a plan!" Brother Henry replied. Father Alexander kicked down the door of their room and sprinted into the hallway.

Flames ran down the length of the once beautiful hallway that held many tapestries. The said tapestries were flaming, and some were falling down to the floor and burning, burning, burning. Tears, both from the fire and from sadness, streaked down the faces of Brother Henry and Father Alexander.

"Come on!" cried Father Alexander. They ran down the hallway and into the main section of the Abbey. There, they found many white-habit clad monks and nuns running out of the burning Abbey. The beams that held the roof up were falling one by one, and stones rained down into the Abbey. The Great Bells were crying out in anguish, only to be silenced by the crackle of fire.

Together, they ran out of the doomed building and into the street. A crowd of people had gathered outside the Abbey of Life.

"My Church is probably open now. We should go!" commanded Brother Henry. Father Alexander nodded quickly, then took off running through the crowd. They found a group of nuns and a monk huddled together, and watched the Abbey burn with tear streaked faces.

"Let's go! Can't be left waiting here! I'm pretty sure the Abbey of Death is here!" whispered Father Alexander to the monk, who he knew to be Father Abraham.

As if on cue, the monks and nuns of the Abbey of Death began running out of the nearby buildings with their sacrificial knives flashing in the light of the fire. Wicked laughter and the sounds of suffering rang out through the night, and the entire crowd began running away in different directions.

"Wait! The baby!" cried Father Alexander.

But one of the monks from the Abbey of death was after them. A knife sailed past Father Alexander's ear, and embedded itself in a nearby building.

"Go! I'll hold him off!" screamed Father Alexander. He turned around and jumped on the monk, pinning him to the building and putting him in the best choke hold he could.

"Why... Must... You... Sacrifice... Us?!?" seethed Father Alexander at the monk.

"It is our right, otherwise our God will not be pleased. We can't sacrifice commoners, so we must sacrifice you!" The monk choked out. Father Alexander choked him even harder.

The monk screeched in pain and writhed to try to get out of the choke. Horrible, animalistic noises came out of the monk as he struggled for air.

Finally, after about a minute, the corpse of the monk flopped onto the ground and lay there, still.

Father Alexander bent to his knees and vomited three times onto the ground. He said a quick prayer for the fallen monk, then sprinted back into the Abbey.

By now, the entire place was alight. But the screams and cries of the newborn still were heard over the crackling of the fire. Father Alexander took off, heading for the nursery.

The smoke made him cough, and he raised the collar of his habit over his mouth to try not to inhale any more smoke.

Pieces of wood fell all around him. Father Alexander rushed past the tapestry corridor, lifting his foot just in time for the baby mice to come running under his boot. He pushed forward, becoming more dizzy and sick as he ran.

After about two minutes of navigating the winding corridors of the Abbey, he reached the nursery, where the baby he had brought to the Abbey just yesterday lay. The baby was crying loudly, flames rolling up the side of his small cradle. Father Alexander rushed over to the baby and picked it up tenderly, the baby still in its standard blankets.

By this time, Father Alexander was very sleepy. He carried the baby over to the corner of the nursery that had the least amount of fire

in it. Father Alexander sat down in the corner and gazed at the baby, rocking it gently back and forth.

"J... John. I'll name you... John," he whispered to the baby. A silent tear splashed onto John's tiny nose and stayed there for a moment. John stopped crying and looked up at Father Alexander with quiet innocence in his eyes.

Father Alexander slumped to the floor, and John resumed his crying, but this time not quite as loud.

"Bong! Bong! Bong! Bong! Bong!" tolled the Great Bells. Father Alexander blinked his eyes blearily, then tried to sit up. His muscles were sore, but John was still in his arms. The baby was currently fast asleep in its white blanket, that had soot stains all over it.

"Hello? Hello!" called out Father Alexander into the charred ruins of the Abbey. No reply came back. Only the Abbey's tall stone steeple was still standing; the wooden main section had mostly collapsed. The roof of the nursery had partly fallen in, giving Father Alexander a view of the sunrise.

"Well John, looks like we survived," said Father Alexander softly. He stood up cautiously, for fear of broken or sprained bones.

"Hey! John! We're alive! Ha ha ha ha ha!" cried out Father Alexander happily. The baby opened his little eyes, blinking slowly to adjust to the light. John saw Father Alexander and gurgled softly.

"Now, what happened to Brother Henry and the rest of them?" wondered Father Alexander aloud.

He opened the charred door of the nursery that led outside, and stepped through it into the bustling streets of London. A newsboy stood on the corner, waving a newspaper and shouting to the few people who were out and about this early in the morning.

"Extra! Extra! Abbey of Life burns down! Most monks and nuns of both Abbeys not found! Extra! Extra! Electricity comes to..." yelled the newsboy. Father Alexander quickly walked away from the Abbey and over to the newsboy.

"Scuse me, what day is it?" Father Alexander asked.

"December 25th, I think," replied the newsboy surely.

"Thank you!" said Father Alexander, walking away.

"I'm sorry John. I simply can't take care of you. I'm going to have to leave you someplace. I am so, so sorry John. It is the best I can do. Remember me," whispered Father Alexander, hugging John gently and placing him on the doorstep of a nearby house.

"Goodbye. Have a good life with... Ebenezer," said Father Alexander softly, reading the sign above the mail slot, which read: "Ebenezer T. Hopwood".

"I have a new life to live!" called Father Alexander to himself, walking away.

Ebenezer T. Hopwood woke up on December 25th feeling tired and sad. Which was normal. Ever since his wife had died and his three kids had been married off to husbands and wives in Wales, he had been stuck in his lonely big house, waiting to die.

That morning, he stepped outside on his doorstep to get the morning paper, but found no paper.

"Oy! Where's my paper?" he yelled at the world, stepping forward and shaking his fist. In doing so, he tripped over John and tumbled down the steps of his house. John began wailing at him.

"Shut up, you... Oh my. Now, where did you come from?" said Ebenezer. John kept crying loudly. Ebenezer picked John up and rocked him back and forth. John wailed at him. Ebenezer patted John gently on the back.

"It's okay. It's okay. You're fine. It's okay," whispered Ebenezer, tears rolling down his weathered face.



The Lord of the Swords

"Dragon, Sam, drago...!" Then as he's cut off, it appears over the hill, then rises to fill the sky with fire. It's red scales glow with heat. It's head, big and orange, blows a puff of fire out his putrid nostrils. "Nonsense, there hasn't been a dragon in these parts for two ages, Eomer." But as he turns to look he sees it and he hits the deck.

"Where did this evil come from?" then taking action shouts, "Officer, send for a squad to block off the north Farthin..." But Sam was cut off by a blinding light, as bright as Gandalf in his shining white robes.

The dragon loomed big, snorting, readying itself to lash out at the party. Then, as some rise, thinking they could race home for shelter, turn back to their friends to yell, "Let's go," the dragon comes down like an arrow out of a bow opening its jaws to spew fire on the cowering group! As it soars it roars into a fizzling popping fire ball, spinning into the distance!

With a bang and a fizz, the spinning ball explodes and fills the sky with fireworks forming a great big G in the sky over the hill on the other side of the river. The whole of Hobbiton was lit up, all the hills and the river glowed and cheers filled the air.

As Sam rose to watch he felt a tremble in the ground under him. He turned and strode up the hill behind him to look onto the rolling hills and the last hobbit holes for any sign of Gandalf. And as he crested the hill Gandalf came up the hill, fast leading twenty or so men on horseback, equipped with battle supplies.

"Gandalf, why have you come so heavily armed? Is there some great peril coming?" said Samwise the brave.

"Indeed there is, my old friend, and it's hard to say how long we have to prepare," Gandalf said, in his almost silent voice trying to keep out of ear shot of the party still watching the show. "Where is my good friend Frodo, he isn't at his party."

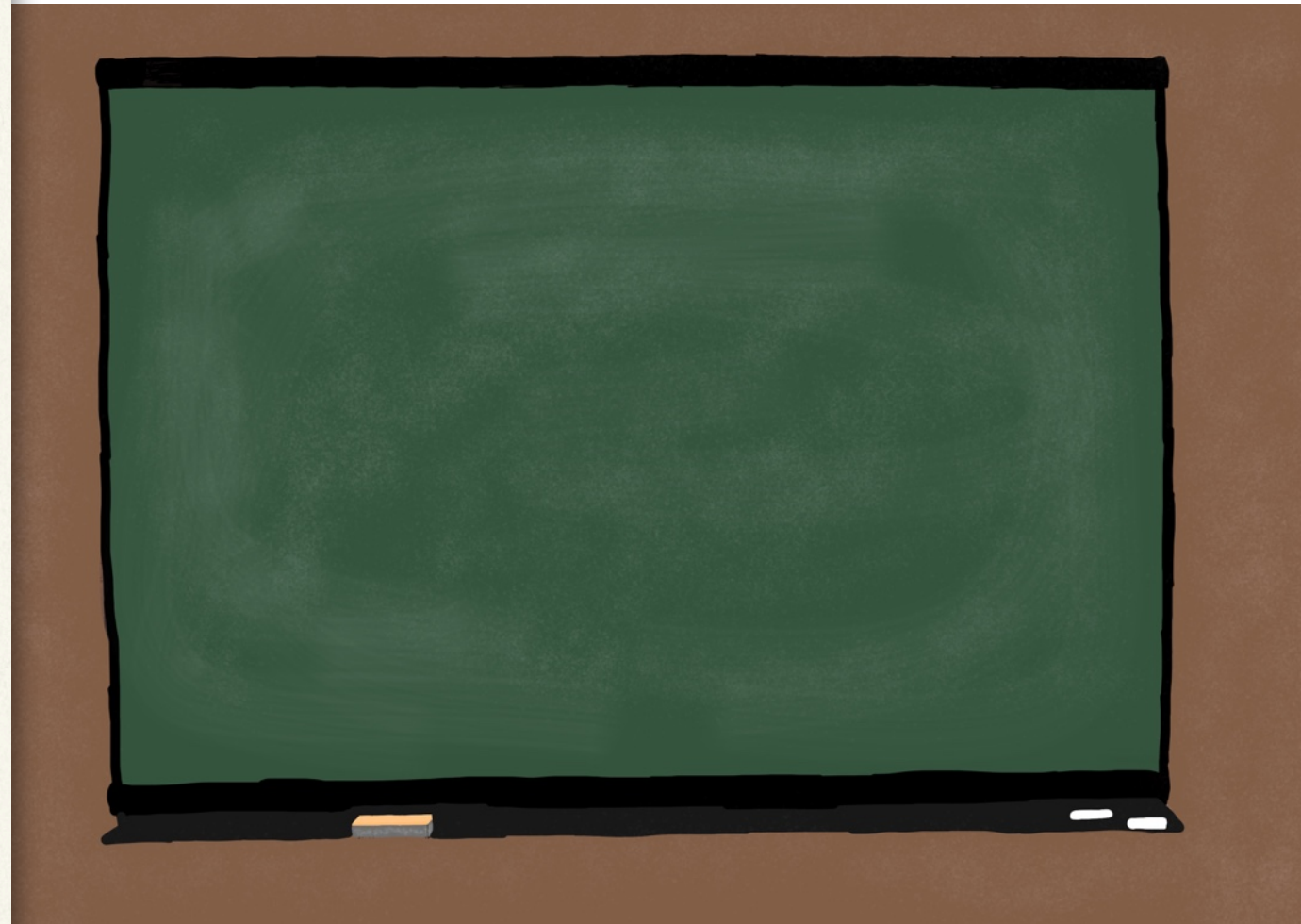
"He went home to take a break Gandalf, the hubbub was just to much. I was thinking of doing the same!" Sam said, "Let's go find him."

"Frodo, my dear Frodo, where did you get that idea, the Dark Lord knows that if he makes it look like he's dead, we won't watch him! He's back and he's formed 8 swords with all his power like last time, and the Nazgul have left the land of dark to find these lost weapons to take over the world once more. You must go and stop them Frodo, find the swords and defeat the Dark Lord!"

(To Be Continued)

Chapter 3

8TH GRADE
REALISTIC
FICTION



The Black Dot

Bill stares down at the black dot on the paper in his hands, he crinkles it up his face goes pale, and he starts to tremble in fear. For that dot is the end of his happy life, his loving family, all gone because of a single dot on a piece of paper. He tries to run to get away, not knowing where to run but to just run away, from his soon fate, But he is instantly met by a sea of hands holding him back.

I watch as Bill is led down the road, but why Bill? I think. He was always helping everyone out. He had a loving family also a wife and three kids, one kid was six and he had two 4 year old twins also. Such a loss to his family, I'm not sure why this had to happen. Especially to my wonderful brother bill... A tear rolls down my cheek, and falls to the floor. I look out my window once again, and my eyes meet bills. His blue eyes filled with tears. A pleading look on his face, I look down and try to hold back tears. But I can't, one tear rolls down my cheek. Then the tears start to flow clouding my vision. As I clear my eyes I look up just in time to see Bill dragged out of the gate.

Bill walks in shame tears flowing down his wrinkled face. His wife and young kids stand near in all black crying as her husband and the kids loving dad is led away from their family. They lead him down the dirt road out of the village. Then to the outskirts of the nearby forest. They

lead him to a huge oak tree, and they take his hands and tie him down to the tree. After they are done he stands limp tied to the tree. Knowing that he is not long for this world. Waiting for it to come take him away.

I stand letting my bonds support all my weight because I have no strength left everything has been taken out of me, my life is gone there is nothing left. I mean I am tied to the "tree of death" the tree that has been used every year for the unlucky man who gets the dot every year at the lottery. The tree is a large oak and has few remaining red and orange leaves. One by one, slowly blown down by the crisp fall wind. As I stay tied to the tree watching the leaves fall all I can think of is the fear of what will come. I've heard the screams of other men. Completely terrified by whatever is out there...

And whatever that something is. It's going to come tonight. To take me, then kill me. The chilling screams I've heard in the past. Will now be heard by others.

(60 years earlier)

I watch out my window the full moon casting light over the town. Small puddles in the road reflecting the bright light. Then comes a piercing scream, I have always heard them. Screams of the man who gets the black dot. Being attacked by it, I hope I will never have to meet it, but that's only a wish. And wishes don't always come true. Then just as suddenly as it began the scream ends. Replaced with a low growl. The growl of it...

It came that very night you could hear it in bills helpless screams, and to this day nobody knows what it is... Nor do they want to know, all they need to know all they need to know is it wants them... And bill got the black dot.

I stand tied to the tree, my tattered clothes and my long gray hair being blown around by the cool wind. But then I hear the noise the I prayed I would never have to hear. The same low growl that I've heard every year. The growl that caused the screams, the growl that silenced them also. I look around trembling in fear as it slowly moves closer. Then I see a pair of yellow eyes in the black tree line. I watch as they look around then they land on me. "Come get me!" I yell as I stare back into its yellow eyes, a fake grin on my face attempting to mask my fear. Then they are gone. I stare into the darkness trying to find the eyes. I close my eyes as tears well up from staring into the dark. When I open them I see the yellow eyes a foot from my face, and a set of yellow teeth glowing in the moonlight. The grin I had is now a face filled with terror. I let out a short scream, and then everything goes black...

ANONYMOUS

A Daydream to Remember

Chapter 1

Bailey woke up rubbing her dark puffy eyes. She looked left to find her older brother Cooper's short blonde hair tickling her shoulder. When she turned her head the other way she started giggling when she saw her older sisters face pressed against the glass window. Bailey watched as her sister Tallulah's drool raced down the window. She thought to herself how gross it was, then was startled by the pilot's words.

"Everyone please fasten your seat belt we will be landing in approximately twenty minutes." This announcement interrupted everyone's actions. Tallulah woke up grumpy. Cooper was the complete opposite. He was happy to get off the plane, and start their adventures in the Bahamas. After, they finally found their luggage the family left the airport for their new house. It took the taxi driver a little extra time than expected to find the house. Cooper couldn't sit still on the ride there, but they all were exploding with excitement!

A memory came to Bailey as clear as day. She never understood why these flashbacks happened. She didn't even know for sure if they were flashbacks, she just assumed. This one was quicker than usual. Bailey stood there white faced. She stood on the patio of the kid's cottage. Her eyes were lost in the memory. What she saw was confusing her. Normally she can determine when the memory happened, but this time she couldn't. Bailey stood watching, as glimpses of people she didn't remember meeting flash before her eyes. Then it was over. She was getting them more often as she got older. She hadn't told her parents or siblings about them yet. Bailey shrugged off what just happened and headed inside to

find the others. Cooper and Tallulah had already picked their rooms and were unpacking. Bailey took her bags into the room between her siblings. She bobbed her head to Cooper's loud music and sang off the worry of the flashbacks. She wasn't going to let them ruin her trip. She finished unpacking and slipped on her bathing suit and a pair of shorts. She walked in on Tallulah bending over putting her long brunette hair up in a ponytail.

"Is this outfit okay?" Tallulah asked her younger sister.

"Yah it's fine, now lets go check on this stud," Bailey giggled to Tallulah as they walked out the door to their brother's room. "Should I wear the Quiksilver shirt or Hurley shirt? I want to look good for all the native Bahamian girls!" he told them laughing as he held up both shirts.

"Would you just put a shirt on already. You are probably going to end up shirtless anyways. It's pretty hot out," Tallulah informed her brother as she pulled him out the door.

"We need to go tell Mom and Dad where we will be and when we are getting back. If we don't they won't be very happy." Tallulah stated to her siblings. They all walked out of their cabin to their parent's cottage.

"Yes, we will allow you guys to go wherever you would like, but you all need to stay together and be smart about the people you talk to. This is the first time you guys have been out of the country so please just be aware. And Cooper I'm trusting you to watch out for your sisters. I know you guys aren't young anymore, but there are still bad people out there." The kids mom said this to them, while glancing over to their father repetitively.

"Yes mom we know, you tell us this every time we leave the house," Cooper said rolling his eyes at his mother as they turned around to walk out the door.

"Alright be safe guys," both parents said together. The three kids were walking out the door when Cooper stood in the doorway blankly. The girls noticed he wasn't with them right when they got down the stairs.

"He must have forgotten something. We'll just sit here and wait for him," Bailey told Tallulah as she sat on the steps. The girls weren't exactly right. Cooper didn't forget something he was seeing

something. He is about five years older than Bailey so he had been having the flashbacks a lot longer than she has. He knew the symptoms for when they are going to start. He ran to the bathroom and sat down as he saw the bright lights come before his eyes. Because of his age the memories were much longer than Bailey's. This flashback was very abstract to Cooper. He couldn't put the pieces together, like usual. The memories they both had are very odd. There is always a setting and a conflict that the person is going through. Sometimes it's themselves doing something, but other times it's someone they don't usually recognize. But this time Cooper definitely knew these people. It was his parents... He couldn't understand what they were doing. It was dark and they were running. Cooper's heart started beating fast as the tension from the memory came before his eyes. His dad tripped over something in the dark ally, and the black van got closer. His wife came to help him, but he told her to keep going. As his mom was bending down to assist her husband the van's bright head lights shined black in their eyes as they looked up. It came to a quick stop. The two front doors flung open. The memory was gone. Cooper stood up confused. It was the first time he actually wanted the memory to come back. He wanted to know who was chasing his parents.

Cooper walked out to the girls. "What took you so long?" Tallulah asked him.

"Oh, ummm I think the airplane food was bad. I got a little sick, but I'm okay now. Lets go find a place to fish," Cooper answered not looking them in the eye. Tallulah didn't think anything of it, but Bailey knew something was up. The thought of her siblings getting the flashbacks never entered head. But when she saw Cooper's face she hardly even had to question it.

The kid's first destination was a fishing pier they found on a old back road. Cooper lived for being around the water and fishing, so the girls knew they weren't going to be able to fight against him. They just went along with what he wanted and knew they could do their stuff later. After he checked out the pier he headed back to shore to the mangroves.

"Let's just stay here and tan while he fishes. This is perfect! I wanted to lay out in the sun, but didn't know if you guys would want

to. But now that he's busy we can do whatever, if we stay close." Tallulah told Bailey as she took her sun dress off to lay on. She fixed her bathing suit to make sure she was getting as much sun as possible. Bailey didn't really care about her skin color at the moment. She was too busy worrying about her older brother.

Cooper saw Bailey heading his way by her bright aqua bathing suit top. He knew what she was going to say, but he didn't want to talk about what happened while leaving the house. Bailey didn't want to talk about the flashbacks either on the trip, but she needed to find out if he was having them to.

"I know this is going to sound really weird, but do you get flashbacks of stuff you don't remember doing or people you don't remember meeting?" Bailey quickly spat out at her brother fiddling with her hands.

"I have been having them ever since a year after we moved into our new house. I always thought they were just me, daydreaming a little to much. I never really thought anything of them until I saw the look on your face as you walked away from Tallulah and I as we walked out the door. I've seen that face before, I've had that face. So is it me going crazy or do you get them too?" Bailey asked her brother. She watched his face go bleach white, and knew he didn't think she was crazy. He reeled in his line and settled his fishing equipment up near the mangrove roots away from the water line. The two siblings were sitting in the shade of the mangroves when Cooper answered his sister.

"Yes Bailey I have been getting the memories," he said with a sigh.

"But I don't remember when they first started for me. When did you say the started for you? A year after we moved into the new house. That just doesn't make any sense. Wait, a second this could have something to do with our life before we moved. But, why would that have anything to do with it." To look into Coopers eyes you could see the focus he had to figure this out. He needed to know if his sister and him were in danger.

"It so weird that we get these. Should we tell Mom and Dad?" Bailey ask Cooper as she glanced over to Tallulah making sure she didn't leave.

"No not yet, I think we should keep it to ourselves. The one I just had earlier had them in it and it was super weird. They were running away from a van. It looked like they had done something terribly wrong and were being chased because of it. We definitely know that Tallulah doesn't get them because she would have to tell someone. I mean, when is she not telling us everything. Make sure you don't tell her. She'll tell mom and dad." Cooper sat on a rock next to the water. It was all Adam could do to not fiddle with something. He wasn't happy he couldn't figure out what this all meant. Cooper was too distracted to keep fishing. They decided to go explore the island. He needed to think through what they were going to do about the memories. He really needed to know if his family was in danger. Bailey got Tallulah from the pier, and told her where they were going. Tallulah was excited to check some shops out. They headed to town.

Cooper rolled his eyes at Tallulah, her joyful, innocent manner got on his nerves. Bailey sat back and watched, as Cooper glared at Tallulah. He had no reason to be mad at her; he was just upset at himself. Normally, Cooper kept his anger to himself, but this new problem that has entered his life had changed his actions. Bailey being the youngest always wanted things to be right. She hated when things weren't resolved. Bailey felt Cooper's discomfort, she knew he needed a quiet place to think. Bailey answered Tallulah with short one word replies, as she asked her about clothes that might look good on her. Tallulah's cluelessness shocked Bailey. How could she not notice their stressfulness? I guess it's okay because we don't want her to know anyways, but wow is she dumb, Bailey thought to herself.

"Hey, Cooper why don't you head back to the house. We will meet you there," Bailey whispered to him.

"No I can't leave you guys alone, Mom would kill me. Just let Tallulah shop to keep her happy and let me think. I'm sorry I'm being rude. It's just that, that I don't know what to do. I'm confused Bailey. I can't figure it out. Normally I'm good at this stuff, but it's stumped me." Cooper scratched his head with discomfort.

"Can't figure what out?" Tallulah asked smiling with a paper bag filled with stuff in it.

"Oh nothing, just some homework, we were working on together," Bailey told her pulling her to the next shop. Cooper bought a lemonade for himself and sat down. He needed to just think things through. Why in the world would two people get flashbacks that contain the same thing? What does this mean? Cooper thought staring down at the dusty ground. He needed to tell his parents he told himself. But could he trust them? In the very bottom of his stomach he felt a feeling of distrust. Cooper wasn't sure if he should accept this feeling or push it away.

ANONYMOUS

First Part of My Story

Ending: As Solas stood in the center of the expansive carnage he cried, and the tears he shed were to be his last. He fell to his knees, cringing as his lungs heaved at unsteady rates. He had finally transcended humanity. His journey was over, yet as he sat there hunched and weeping, he had never been more human.

The land of black insanity, a city-state on the verge of collapse, in the most literal sense of course. It is located along the northern most point of the the ice fields. It is secluded, uninhabited, and being constantly bought and sold by lords and nobles farther south as a way to get their voice heard in the government. While the actual city itself is more of a pile of rubble. There are stories though, of an era past when this land was bountiful and very luxurious. Some people speak of a great, impenetrable wall surrounding it and an ominous spire protruding from the heart of the city and piercing the sky. Rumors circulate that the old king still dwells within the spire, and that they sustain life through many great enchantments to its basalt walls. Only half the rumor was ever true...

Solas was born with the royal blood of a king pumping through his veins. His childhood was filled with luxuries. No troubles ever crossed his mind, and no misdeeds came his way, until one day when Solas was in the back shelves of the castle's library. He loved to wander about the endless sea of shelves, and smell the stench of rotten wood and paper. As he walked he heard a crack coming from overhead. He looked up and saw a black cube plummeting towards him. At twenty feet Solas recognized the shape as a book, and then in another instant the leather crashed against the floors creating a loud resonating roar. Slowly the noise grew distant and

then became a low hum. Solas stood paralyzed. As his senses returned he quickly fell into another bout of shock, for the title of the book read, A Complete Encyclopedia of the Wildlife of Ice Ridge, the Ice Fields, and the Frost Bridge. Upon recovering for the second time he picked up the book and whisked it away to the nearest chair. The chair was old and appeared to have been untouched for years. It was made of an ancient wood and intricately carved. As he sat down in it he felt the thick dust pressing against him. Then he realized the armrests were two strange beasts. One without legs but instead with strange triangles protruding from its body, and the other was long with rough bumpy skin and stubby legs. What were these beasts? Perhaps the strange book would hold answers. He began to lift the book's cover. A pungent smell of rot began to fill the little nook he had found. Disturbed, he dropped the cover and stared at the old book. He began to drift off into a sort haze. That haze remained unbroken until the yelling began. At first they were little whispers, but as they grew louder Solas began to panic. They were yelling about the noise the book had created. He had to hide it, but where? It could go under the chair! He grabbed the ancient thing and heaved it under the chair right in time, for as the book slid to a halt Sera, two other servants, and three nobles came running around one of the book shelves. "Solas!" she yelled as she slid to a stop on the dusty floors. As she came to a halt her hair kept moving, covering her face with a mop of hair. "Are you okay? What happened?" she gasped. "Yeah, I'm fine." Solas replied.

"What happened?"

"Just the books. This place is getting pretty old." Sera looked at Solas skeptically and the other people went back to their library business,

"What really happened?"

"Well this happened" Solas said as he removed the book from its hiding place. Upon reading its cover Sera went into a similar haze. "Do you think we should ask my dad about this?" Solas asked, "He'll probably know what it's about."

"Okay, let's go."

Solas and Sera then left the library and travelled through the long, narrow, confusing hallways of the castle. As they walked Sera trailed behind a little bit behind not only because she was shy but be-

cause she didn't know the way to the king's chambers. No servants other than the King's personal servants were allowed to know of his whereabouts. Remembering this Sera stopped short and said, "Solas?" "Yes?"

"Uh, well, I'm not exactly, allowed, to go to your fa-" she was cut short as the king himself came around the corner, "Oh, hello. What that you have there son?" The King asked. "Well I was hoping you'd tell me." Solas said as he handed the book to his father. As he read the title of the book emotion began to drain from his face until all that was left was an emotionless mask of flesh, "Son." The King began, "We will never talk about this book, understood?" Understanding that his father's word was law, Solas asked no further questions and bowed his head in defeat. The question of what those animals were still lingered in Solas's mind, and where did they belong. They didn't belong in any place in the castle which means they must live somewhere else. Unfortunately, in Solas's known world there is nowhere else. These revelations fundamentally shattered his conscience. Eventually with the help of Sera Solas did manage to mostly recover. Save some slight paranoia.

Two years later Solas had built himself into a fine man of twenty years, and Sera a fine lady. Solas was extraordinarily tall, but thin. With feathery bronze hair and matching eyes, there was something strange about him. His fingers seemed to have overgrown and were longer than his palms. He was also quite sharp, reserved, and curious. The latter a trait not normally attached to the previous two was thanks to his childhood incident. Lastly Solas's obsession, although less apparent, had grown tenfold. The little question of what lies beyond continually scraped the back of his brain, tempting him to drift off into a world of fantasy and radical, improbable theories. He often wondered if there were people like him out in the unknown. On this particular day he fancied the thought of pursuing his inquiries for the millionth time in his life. He told himself he could run, but where to? And what would everyone else do without him? Would they continue their lives as always or would they pack up and follow him to the unknown? Would Sera, his best and really only friend come with him? Lastly, who would take care of his father's tomb if not him? After all as the son of the King it was his responsibility. This last thought reminded

him he had to clean the dust from his father's casket today. he dismissed his fantasies and carried on to his job. He entered his fathers tomb, and after a moment of hesitation began the laborious task of cleaning the intricately carved casket. He tried to force the cloth into crevices too small for his hands and had to go over everything twice. Eventually he came to two statues placed as if they were on his fathers face. They were two strange beasts and whenever he saw them some strange feeling washed over him like a dark cloud hanging low over a landscape. These beasts were locked in glorious combat for the rest of eternity. He began to clean them, but he ran into problems. He began to press the rag on the statues harder, and began shoving it into the little notches only to take away no dust. Then they broke, and Solas felt a sharp pain in his hand. A shard of rock had plunged itself into his palm. Blood began to seep out as Solas was taken aback. He had always thought the statues were solid. After recovering from shock he quickly ran through the halls to the infirmary. There he saw an old nurse. As he entered she looked at him, and then at his wound. With a grunt of disapproval she beckoned Solas to over to where she was sitting. She picked up a needle and thread, shifted her weight, and went to work. She cleaned up his wound and stitched it shut. As he left the nurse shook her head in a judgmental way. A shiver ran down his spine, and then he set about going to breakfast, but something didn't sit right with him. The nagging questions in the back of his head had stopped.

On his way to breakfast Solas bumped into Sera, "Did you know I got the day off?" she asked him in a rather chipper tone.

" You did? Nice."

" So what're we doing today?"

" We can start by eating breakfast. Then you want to explore the lower floors?"

" You know we aren't allowed down there it's " ruling of the queen"."

Solas gave her a teasing look and she laughed. " I'm serious though, let's do it." Solas said in an almost menacing tone.

" You alright?"

" Huh? Yeah I'm great?" Solas mumbled. Set on edge, Sera said nothing else until they reached the stairwell leading up to the kitchen,

"Well we're here." She spoke softly. Solas, without a word than began up the steps closely followed by Sera. Before entering they had to let their eyes adjust to the light first, for unlike most of the other rooms and hallways the kitchen was made of a creamy, white tile instead of the customary basalt bricks and vaulted arches. On the adjacent wall to the entrance was a freezer. Opposite them was an assortment of counters, sinks, and cupboards. Of course the main feature was the colossal island in the center. Everyone used it for tasks varying from eating, to slaughtering livestock. Solas however used this room for another thing. Late at night he would lose many hours of sleep with his ear up against the one blank wall listening to the noises coming from the other sides. Mostly just various tones of howling and the sound of many small beads hitting glass. This time when he thought about the noises he didn't try to reason about them, he just had a great urge to discover what they were, and that's when he snapped, " I've got to get out now."

" What?"

" I've. Got. To. Get. Out."

" Ummm Solas?"

"Now!"

Solas ran, " Wait! No!" Sera cried after him, but he didn't care. Nothing mattered. As he darted down the hallways Sera's voice faded, leaving him in the silence and the darkness of the of the hallways. His mind swam. Shadows began to grab at his feet, and he tripped and fell. He felt himself falling, but his head didn't hit the floor. Scarlet dots began to fill his vision, and the last the he heard was Sera's horrified screams piercing the endless silence.

Fred's Life: Book 1

Chapter 1

Why is this faucet dripping another liquid? The question is, why? Is it because pipes weren't aligned right to the ocean? Or was it because of another reason?

Well, let me tell you this: On Friday, pipes were not as they should be. They were running and one was disconnected and attached to something else. This was a Coca Cola machine. Whoever touched the buttons, it came out of the faucet. One thing was missing though, water. This was an invention made by a man named Fred.

Fred worked at the Coca-Cola company with his boss, Tom.

Tom is grumpy and short tempered, but when he heard about the invention, he wanted Fred to make them all around the world. A long time ago Tom was destined to have an invention that would change people's perspective on Coca Cola. That would not only be sold in shops but you could also get it at home, and that is when the life of Fred began. Fred was 20 when he began the invention. This is when he came to the Coca Cola Company. He asked his boss what to do. The boss said, "Make me an invention that will change people's minds about Coca Cola."

So Fred tried and tried and then on Friday, Fred made the invention Tom was looking for. Fred was 28 when he began rearranging pipes, all around the world. The purpose of this invention was to change people's

perspective on Coca Cola. That would not only be sold in shops but you could also get it at home. This took Fred 4 years to finish. When Fred was 52, he retired.

The rest of the time on the project, the workers patented his invention.

Then Tom took the idea of the invention for him self. Fred laid back and enjoyed life as it was. When Fred died, he was 97.

Now let me tell you about Fred's boss:

Fred's boss is 85. He was always mean to Fred until the invention happened. So now you know what the invention is, That it's all over the world and that Fred is dead.

But now let me tell you about Fred's family: Fred's family is at home in Ohio where Fred lived when he was alive. He has five sons and a wife. His sons names are Jorge (with a J not a g) who is taking over the company for him, John, Matthew, Jim, and Jasper. His wife's name is Lilly.

One day Jorge with a J (not a g), was walking along the sidewalk.

When John comes up behind him. John says, "Hey Jorge, where are you going?"

"To work," Jorge says.

"To the coca-cola company? But you said when father died, you didn't want to take over the company," John replies.

Jorge continues, "That's why I'm going to tell them I don't want their stupid job." So when he got there, he shouted angrily, "I don't want your stupid job."

"We don't want you anyway," the Coca-Cola company boss shouted back angrily "And Don't disturb us while we're working."

So Jorge left. Jorge left not because Tom was mean to Fred, but because Jorge does not know this. He quiet because he didn't like the job.

DAWSON



Harold

As Harold Hedrick stepped off the bus, he looked up at his masterpiece to be, nineteenth century slate tiles, waiting to be reborn. Harold was a roofer, he had been in the business for four months now, and he made a decent amount of money. He only had to feed himself, and his cats. Harold walked into the building below the roof he was about to work his magic on. It was the Swedish National bank, with houses of 25 million Kronor, or over 3 million and five hundred and fourteen dollars. It is one of the main banks in Sweden. The bank is in Malmö, where Harold lives.

Harold strode into the bank and made his way over to the counter. The teller looked at Harold and said, "The roofer?" "Yes" replied Harold. You could easily tell that Harold was a working man, his typical roofing get-up consisted of faded ratty overalls, bleached light blue from years of sun exposure, a white sun hat that was now brown and a pair of old leather work boots with roofing nails stuck horizontally in the grips of the sole. The teller proceeded to give Harold the thumbs up on climbing up to the roof. "You're all set," he said. Harold was not the traditional roofer; he had an alternative way of getting to his slanted work space, he doesn't use a ladder.

Harold climbed up the building using the windows. He would do that by putting one foot on the window sill and grab the bottom of the next window and pull himself up. He didn't always do it this way. One time he

came across a building that had windows that were completely flush with the exterior walls. He had also once called in the his pal at the local fire department to get him up a five story building with a latter truck. Harold admired this roof; he had never been on one like it.

Harold had been interested in roofs his whole life, although it was only recently he started the Hedrick roof service. it was something about being up high and looking over the town and having nothing in his way. It was not necessarily a glorious job, and you'd think that it would pile up with all of Harold's bland jobs that preceded this one. Such as, a clerk at a department store where he had managed to gain a pile of free appliances when the company went under, most of which he had no use for. He had served a small time as a boat builder, and had acquired a small mahogany picnic boat carving that now sat on the mantle of his apartment. He'd had too many waiter and busboy jobs to count, and had been a gas attendant several times. Harold wondered if this job would last longer. He had never truly enjoyed a job, except maybe boat building. It wasn't the work that he didn't like; it was the job. He had enjoyed what little roofing he had done so far. He remembered climbing on the roof of his childhood home in the suburbs of Malmö with his father to fix their faulty chimney that filled their house with smoke each time they lit a fire in the hearth. He remembered loving to be on the roof, and also hating it. It gave him a chance to glance out over all the identical roofs in his neighborhood, and seeing how plain the area in which he lived was. The only difference between his house and the others was that his rarely had smoke coming out of the chimney.

Although Harold's roofing techniques were are less than normal, they proved quite effective. At this point, he was getting ready to climb the steep weathered walls of the bank. He put his first foot on the outside sill of the first window and started his clime. For jobs that had very large windows, Harold sometimes used suction cups tied to his hands. He acquired the suction cup method from his grandfather. Who used

this climbing process in World War Two. When he was trained to climb using ropes and ladders and found it useless. He eventually fashioned a crude suction climbing system out of broken rifle straps, and two toilet plungers that he gathered from houses in abandoned towns that he marched through. He used the suction cups throughout the war. He used it to climb into enemy controlled buildings, and to grab onto tanks on the outside. Harold was very close to his grandfather, and continued to learn all sorts of war-time jerry rigging. Anyways, the suction cup method was passed down from Hanson Hedrick to Harold. He has been using it ever since. Like most downtown businesses, the bank had large display windows in the front of the building. So, Harold needed to use the suction method to get to the second story. He went one hand at a time, using grippy shoes to help climb up the glass. He had to be careful climbing large pieces of glass. Some of the old buildings in town had pretty shaky windows, if he messed up he could end up pulling the giant glass pane out and landing in the street with it shattering on top of him. The bank was old, but the front of it, with the windows, had recently been re-done. Harold also had to make sure the stone and woodwork on the building were stable, or else he could risk falling off the building, or causing something else to fall from the building. Not only was he a roofer, but he practically doubled as an inspector. By now, Harold was nearing the top of the building, using window sills as foot and handholds. He eventually reached the large, slanted roof. He put his first hand on it and quickly pulled back. The black slate acted as a giant pointless solar panel, absorbing sun all summer. Harold spit on the tile and it sizzled and bubbled into nothing. This roof was hot; no doubt about it. If he went up there, he could risk melting the soles of his boots, leaving sticky rubber bootprints all over the tiles, and ruining this 250 year old roof. What could he do?

He thought of calling his buddy at the Malmö Fire Department, but that would involve climbing back down with all of his gear. And spraying the roof with water, and getting the tiles wet, would rapidly cool them and risk cracking them. This would be catastrophic. Then, he re-

alized something. He had a pair of ice grips back at his apartment outside of town. He could attach them to his boots so the rubber soles wouldn't touch the tiles, but then he realized that those things wouldn't have any grip on the slate. He eventually decided to climb down and go home to look for a solution...

Harold's apartment was about five minutes outside of Malmö. It was a small green house on a slope near the winding road through the hills. Harold shared the house with three other people. He lived on the top floor with his three cats. As Harold started up the steep stairs he peered out the foggy window adjacent to the staircase. Rain had gradually started dripping from the vibrant blue sky, and the blue had started to vanish into gray. Harold then realized that the rain would cool down the roof, but, because the rain is gradual, it would not crack it. He quickly backtracked his steps and took off out the door.

As Harold pulled up to the bank he spotted a place between a dark black minivan and a sportscar to shimmy his sky blue moped between. The streets were always busy this time of day, but no one seemed to be around. The only sign of life was the expanse of cars lining the foggy main street. Harold gathered his gear, his nailgun, hammer, and nails, and other roofing related supplies, and made his way to the bank. Of course, rain heightened the risk of climbing, but Harold was confident in his abilities, so he went anyways. When Harold reached the top he wasn't surprised to find the tiles were no longer scalding hot. He pulled himself up to the top of the bank and staggered his feet as to prevent slipping.

He began to inspect the tiles, and while doing so he noticed several melted rubber shoe prints plastered to the soaked slate. Some of them were still soft, and were running down the slant of the roof with the rain. Harold stopped and thought. Those prints weren't from him. He

never walked on the tile before it rained. He then noticed where the prints were heading; right towards the sunroof of the bank.

Harold slowly made his way toward the window, then cupped his hands around his eyes and peered through the glass. A man in a gray sweatshirt was standing at the counter. He had a gun in his hand, and he was threatening the teller, who had welcomed Harold that morning. The man with the gun handed him a canvas bag and urged him to fill it with money from the vault. Harold observed the transaction for a second, then began to think of what to do. He suspected that the burglar would escape through the front door, but as he thought that the teller emerged from the vault with the now bulky bag clenched in his fist. He handed the robber the bag then turned around to close the vault. The thief then gave the teller a shove into the vault, locking him in. The robber then abruptly looked up toward the skylight, and Harold jumped back dodging the glance. Harold noticed a long rope hanging from the window and it was now apparent that the burglar intended to escape through the window in the roof, and that Harold needed to stop him. Harold positioned himself behind the window's hinges so when it opened, the thief would have his back to him. A second later Harold heard a click, and the window swung open, making way for the robber to come. He stuck his head out first, and then climbed out. Harold looked around, frantically looking for something useful. His eyes settled on the nail gun...

Harold reached for the nail gun, being careful not to make a sound. He lifted it, made sure it was loaded and aimed it at the robber.

"Freeze! I have a gun!" ordered Harold.

The robber slowly turned around, and Harold adjusted his aim. The robber gave a look of surprise when he realized what Harold was threatening him with. He had his pistol in his pocket, so it was not quickly accessible to Harold.

"Hands up!" Harold commanded.

The robber hesitated, then put his hands in the air. Harold heard sirens below on the street coming towards them. A look of panic flashed across the robber's face. In the brief silence Harold could hear the faint beeping of the alarm below them. The sirens were getting closer and Harold kept a steady eye on the burglar. Harold took a moment to look down the street. He saw two police cars and a ladder truck plowing down the wet main street. Harold recognized the truck, it was his friend Han's firetruck. They must know we're up here, he thought. Harold glanced back at the crook, his eyes were darting nervously between Harold and the street. His hands were shaking above his head as he was struggling to hold them up. The authorities parked in front of the bank and moved the ladder into position against the roof. One of the policemen yelled,

"Come down with your hands up!" Harold coaxed the robber down the ladder, keeping the nailgun trained on his back.

"Be careful, he has a gun!" warned Harold. When they reached the bottom the officers took the robber's gun and packed him in the car. Harold told the cops about the teller and the vault, and an officer went in to free him. Harold greeted Han and told him the whole story.

"Some lady across the street said she saw two people on the roof, and one had a gun. I didn't think it would be you!" Harold went back home, proud of his bravery. Harold always finished a job. He went back and finished the job at the bank the next day. And the bank paid him extra for his trouble and heroics of the day before.

As Harold drove home he was shocked, he had never seen this coming; this day had completely changed his idea of a job. He could do something important each day; a job doesn't have to be something to drag you through the day. It could be something that he truly enjoyed doing. He could be "Roof climbing detective, Harold Hedrick". Or,

"Harold Hedrick, PI." Whatever it would be, Harold would wake up with a new purpose.

Leningrad (Preview)

1

THE ONLY WAY TO LIVE, IS DROWN THE HATE

My breath seamed as though it was as loud as a gun shot. My heart pounded like a hammer to a screw. I felt as a if I had just been running for three days straight. I adjusted my Mosin-Nagant sniper rifle again and again as my grip loosened from draining sweat rolling out of my hands. The Nazis were in clear sight, my orders of taking them out one by one frightened me... Afraid of taking the life of another human being.

The whistle was not yet blown, but my sights were zeroing in on a Nazi very roughly as I was trembling. He was hidden behind a sand bag, but his head was just sticking above the height of the wall. Suddenly the whistle blew. I could here the fellow Russians screaming in hopes that they were too survive, but knowing they weren't. I lost sight of the German quickly as gunfire ran past me... I was being shot at. Shots were clearly heard as the siege was beginning below me. "Daniil...Daniil." I whispered, then realizing I was in no need to whisper, the Germans were far away, and the loud noise of fire arms would take over any talking from being heard by the enemy anyway. "Daniil!" I shouted over the thousands of bullets below us. "Daniil get down!"

He crouched under the window and reloaded his sniper.

"What?!" He replied with no sign of fear in him.

"Daniil there's someone shooting at us, were gonna get bloody hit our first day in battle, what should we do? We have to leave this building or else we won't be here another five minutes!" I got up but made sure I was in no sight of the enemy. "C'mon let's go!" I screamed to Daniil. I noticed Daniil's look of disagreement and I nodded my head towards the door. He didn't seem to be persuaded to leave the building, so I decided to proceed by myself, as I was in complete panic.

"What are you doing?" He shouted angry. "We've got a country to defend!" He grabbed me by the bicep and pulled me to a squatting position. I felt relieved to have a soldier stand by me that was brave, but not excited for what was to come as he was a risk taker and could get me killed. "Listen to me Andrei, you have to accept the fact that your already dead. We both sure as hell know were not gonna make it through this war. Now the least we can do is contribute to our country in a way that shows these Nazis what passion truly is." Said Daniil looking me straight in the eyes. I sat still, my head slowly turning towards the ground. There was a moment of silence before Daniil grabbed his rifle from below the window and handed it to me. "Mines a better shot." He claimed. "Now I'll provide distractions and suppressing, you take him out. I saw where he was, he was another sniper shooting at us, twelve o'clock, the barn right in between those two trees, second story window all the way to the left. Take him out... I'm trusting you." I looked at him and felt a drip of sweat rolling down my cheek.

"Okay." I muttered under my breath. He crouch walked over next to a window that was right of my original window. I crawled assuring no sights were on me over next to my window.

"Ready?" He asked. I nodded. "Three, two, one." He shot up and rapidly started firing. I stayed in a crouch but laid the center of my weapon on the window sill to steady my gun. I toggled it to find the two trees in which the barn was located in between. I found the two trees in my sights and focused in between on the newly built barn. I then turned my gun to the left, still hearing Daniil's gun shots being fired, but knowing he was almost empty. I noticed the enemy sniper. I focused my sights on him, and took a breath.

"C'mon." I gently whispered to my self. I squeezed the trigger and a bullet came flying out of my gun. My shoulder came flying back, I new I had missed the target. "Damn!" I yelled.

"I'm out! Did you get him?!" Daniil yelled. I just looked at him in a non convincing way and pulled back on the bolt action rifle. I then set up once again ignoring Daniil's annoyed face and aimed toward the sniper. He was now aimed towards our building and in shock I fired once again. The bullet hit the sniper in the chest, and his body went flying backwards. I was now in relief, but sad at the fact I had killed someone that I didn't know.

I took off my overcoat, and draped it over the rusty coat hanger inside the door. My coat weighed it down, and the hanger tilted making a fall towards the ground. I caught it and pulled it up, like I was making a romantic move on a woman. I steadied the hanger and walked on, bringing my rifle. "Hello mum." I pleasingly said before getting interrupted into a peaceful and warming hug. For what seemed like years I was in a dark cold abyss, I just then realized I was to go through what will seem like decades of pain and agony. We drifted apart and my mum Anvisa stared me down as tears rolled out of her glistening eyes. "Mum, I'm fine." I claimed.

"Andrei you don't understand. You may have not come back today, the least I can do is pray to the god above for letting my boy come back to me in conditions better than lying on the cold ground dead." There was a pause, and I acknowledged what my mom had just said. I wiped my nose with my cold gloves.

"Mum, what do we have for food? I'm starving."

"I've got pasta boiling, get a bowl from the shelf, there clean." I snatched a bowl from the shelf, and set it on the wooden counter next to the stove. I placed my hands over the boiling pasta to warm them up.

The house I had been raised in luckily was still standing. It was near the center of town, and that part had not yet been attacked by the Nazi forces... Luckily. My mum was normally a nurse during the days

when her other two children besides me went to school, but because of the war she was forced to stay in the house.

The house was a small two room with a stove. We usually just had pasta for dinner because it was one of the cheapest things to purchase, and was easily cookable on the stove top. We occasionally had some sauce mixed in with the noodles, but only if mum had made a few extra euros that week. We often had bread as a small side dish as well. Our lunches were normally left overs from dinner the night before, and breakfast was cheese, or a scrambled egg.

Our home also included a small living area with three small wooden chairs that were about to collapse. As family members we generally took turns using the chairs, and the fourth person would just sit on the thin rug placed on the floor when we had family dinners. The living room was mostly where we would all be at night, talking about our day and such. Mum would usually not be home until late as she would be working over time at the hospital. When home she would cook but sometimes I or my younger brother Stein would prepare dinner for us and leave a portion for our mother for when she would arrive. The house also had another small room that's floor was covered with scrap mattresses. My brothers and I would sleep in this room as my mom would normally sleep on a small mattress in the corner of the living area. The mattresses were covered with several blankets that were old and dusty and almost never washed. We weren't exactly the wealthiest of family's. My mum struggled and us children could notice. We would often do chores such like the cooking to keep my mom from revealing that stress when coming home. But now the war has begun, we are forced with an unreasonable pain and our ways of living have changed massively.

"Mum, where's Stein and Igor?" I asked removing my hands from above the boiling water as they were beginning to sweat. I then picked up my bowl from beside the boiling pasta and turned off the stove while listening for an answer.

"They're in the bed room, you should call them out here, I'm sure they will be excited to see you. Igor's been asking me constantly all day where you've been. He's begun to worry." I ignored the pasta and entered through the doorway to the bedroom to find Igor and Stein

listening to the old P&C American radio we shared as kids. I saw Stein glance at me once and ignore, but then realizing this was no ordinary arrival from me he crawled across the several beds and came to a stance to hug me. Igor realizing the spastic dash by Stein came rushing after Stein and joined the hug. We came apart and Stein gave me a look of curiosity. I knew he was going to be annoyingly asking me questions all night, but I decided to go ahead and answer him in the most simple way I could for every question so that I could just get them over with.

Stein is my younger brother, thirteen and a half years old. He was always focusing on school work, while I would be taking care of Igor or working. Stein is probably the most independent of us three siblings, and he doesn't seem to have many close friends at school.

Igor is the youngest, I think about four now. He hasn't started school yet so he sometimes has to go with mom or I to work. Or my mum's mother would take care of him. But he didn't necessarily like it when Susan my grandmother would take care of him. He claimed she would always skip words when reading, or make him take naps to often.

"Andrei, did you fight? Did you see the Nazis? What happened? I heard on the radio that the Nazis took over the south end of town, is that true?" Stein fired through questions before I could process them. It's like I was doing a complete interview in three minutes.

"Stein, I don't want to talk about it. Yes I was in battle. And they may have taken over the south end, but I can assure you they won't be here long enough to take over our part of town.

Hi Igor." I answered Stein's question in a short summary, and then greeted Igor. I walked out of the room to finish pouring the pasta into the cheap wooden bowl. After I finished supper, I rushed out the door to assure my self I was not going to be caught sneaking away from the headquarters. As I exited the house I gave mom a warming goodbye hug, and for some reason the idea of me not ever seeing my mom again didn't cross my mind until I was out the door and walking towards the HQ.

When I arrived at the base I entered the bunk room and greeted a few of our officers, acting like I hadn't just left the base. Daniil was

snoozing in a bunk that was two to the right of mine. "Hey Victor." I whispered my best of friend who was resting in the bottom of my bunk. He rested his american magazine on his chest and cracked his knuckles as he replied.

"How is Igor, and Stein?"

"Fine." I replied. He had known I sneaked out. "I'm gonna get some sleep, I'll see you in a few hours." I pulled my self to the top bunk and pulled the thin itchy blankets over me. The bed squeaked as I nested my self, and my eye lids quickly fell close to each other and I drifted to a sleep.

2

WE'RE LESS THAN LUCKY, BUT MORE THAN UN-GRATEFUL

I woke to the sound of bombs exploding over our heads. Dust fell from the cracked ceiling. Soldiers ran through the small hallways navigating to find out the orders. I quickly lifted the slim blanket from atop my body, and swung my legs from underneath around to prepare myself to jump onto the cement slab. I hopped to the ground and grabbed my cap from the rusty bed pole that held the cheap bunks together. Daniil was making his bed, minding his own business not distracted by rushing comrades surrounding him. "Daniil what's going on?" I asked

"Just an air raid. The Germans will be out of here in no time, until then, there's nothing we can do." He answered like he had been experienced in war fare. His face showing no emotion, as usual.

I asked "What is it with you? The rest of us are shivering out of our clothes and you are just minding your own business!"

The Sleep

THERE'S A FIRST AND SECOND TIME FOR EVERYTHING

Chapter 1

Slowly I walked toward the girl, she is running but then she trips, I speed up she screams and screams a gurgling sound then silence".

I am Bill Gordon I live in Hayden, Indiana I have been a officer of the law for 5 years, and have made 30 arrests. Then came this case.... As I drove to the crime scene, I thought of the horrible dream I had last night, I got out of the car. I looked at the corpse, she had strangulation marks on the neck, then came the real kicker all of what was once inside her was gone, leaving a fleshy mass shaped like girl laying there. I asked a cop next to me Orin I think his name was "know where the rest of her is"? He pointed to a stake where a scarecrow would hang and there it was skeleton and all. It was posed in a grotesque peaceful way; but it was screaming. "She had this hanging on her" said Orin he handed me a piece of paper, on it written in blood where two words "It Begins". "Any DNA" I asked "no this guy was was smart ,covered anything that could tell". "Get her to forensics" I said. As I drove home; I thought about the day and if there was a way to figure out, who did it. As I got home I started to say "Ann, honey I'm ho-" and then remembered, she was dead, from the cancer 4 years ago, I ate a stale, cold dinner, and went to bed.

Chapter 2

"I drove a car down a deserted road, then I saw a man, walking down the road I accelerated, he gave a quick yelp, a squelching noise, a crunch and then silence"

I woke up, the phone was ringing, I picked it up "Bill" said officer Orin. It was horrid, but know skill was in it. We could tell who it was even thought the body was mashed to a pulp. Parts lay all over ground one half of a bone, a eye and several teeth it had not been quick and painless. " Horace, not my Horace" screamed a middle aged woman, she had New Jersey accent, the makeup she was wearing was runny from the crying. I ignored her ,and was looking at the corpse when officer Orin walked over, "we have car tracks" he said in a silent dull monotone voice.

While waiting for the lab to come through I interviewed girl-friend of Horace who Was named, Margret. "Did your husband have any enemies" I asked "No, my Horace was a saint, whoever did this is a ---- faced ---" I ignored the language and asked " why was he on the road" she answered "he was do'in his taxes, whadia think he was doing he wanted some air". "Thank you" I said. "No ,no ,no ,I want you to tell me who the ---- killed my boyfriend" she screamed I left the room with her still screaming " I will sue this entire--- town and put your ---- --- out of the force". I went to the other officers and told them to let her go. I got a call on my phone from the lab, and drove over to the lab to see who the car belonged to. Then came the the news that was the kickoff for every thing going downhill.

THE PERP , THE THIRD AND FINAL?

Chapter 1

"They found a scapegoat they won't find me and it's her of all people I framed"

"Mr. Gordon its Luanne" Luanne was my daughter, we had not talked sense Ann died she found it to be to hard to be near the man who decided to pull the plug on her mom. I could not bear taking her in myself, the trial was quick and the sentence was a death penalty manslaughter 1. It was a lethal injection it was quick and painless.

Chapter 2

"The couple is in the drive in movie, they are laughing some cheap comedy, I have a glass cutter and a crowbar, first the man; then the girl"

The call I get that evening was hate, they found more body's. Two teenagers beaten to death with a crowbar. When I get there only one police car is there, officer Orin "Where are the other cars" I ask. " we found the killer" said Orin "who is it" "don't play dumb Bill, its you"! " Luanne told us before she died you killed her, even though the cancer was curable" "no,nononononono,no" I yelled" "by the way here's your crowbar" he yelled and threw a bloody crowbar, with the fingerprint powder still on it. Thunder rumbled, and it started to rain "noooo" I screamed I pulled out my gun, and shot Orin in the stomach. He grunted and fell to the ground, bleeding. I here a whispering in my head "*run run, run*". I can't run there's no point I here sirens in the distance, I guess as a officer of the law, I should stop the criminal who from Orin I can tell is hostel. I pull the gun out, its loaded I point it at myself then, darkness.

DEVIN

Spooky House

10 years ago...

My eyes opened. Something woke me, a noise. As soon as my eyes opened I felt as if I was watched. I stretched my body, causing my neck and back to snap back into consciousness. I lift my body into the cold, and rather stale air. Rubbing my eyes, I peer around the room. No movement, except my curtains swaying in the breeze from my cracked window. The old boards of the house creaked from the wind grasping the house. I still had the eerie feeling that I wasn't alone. Sadly, I had the pleasure of sharing a room with my annoying big brother Cameron. He is 12 and I am 8, but he was sound asleep in his bed across the medium sized room.

I tore the sheets off of my body and brought myself to the edge of my twin sized bed. I placed my little feet on the freezing, hard floor. I stood up, planning on waking up my brother for comfort. It took me about 7 or 8 steps to get to his bed. More like I ran across our room as fast as I could to avoid any scary monsters that might be in the room too. I reached his bed and grabbed his shoulder. I shook him lightly hoping he would get up. He moaned in annoyance from being used to me bugging him. He rolled further away from me to the other side of his bed trying to avoid having his beauty sleep interrupted. So to counter his tactic, I hopped up on his bed, grabbed his pillow and started beating him senseless with it. He rolled off of his bed onto the wooden floor.

He poked his head up from the floor. Dazed and confused he looked at me. He also had a touch of the usual big brother hating any other per-

son on earth, look on his face as well, and then "BANG!" my once open door slammed shut and vibrated the room. Cameron looked over at me with his mouth wide. We both stood up, me on his bed. Our eyes where glued to the door. I swear we could hear each others heart beating in fear. My brother took a step towards the door, which sent a squeak through the floor. He then took another, and another. Until he was only a few feet from the door. I heard what sounded like a foot-step coming from the far end of the hall on the other side of the door, and then another one, and another. They where getting louder and closer. Louder and faster. I snatched my brothers flash light from his night stand and flew underneath his blankets. My brother rushed himself all the way back to his bed, which I was in. We both sat there, under the covers, waiting. I anxiously clicked on his flashlight, spreading beams of light into the fabric of his old itchy blanket. It now sounded like a football player wearing work boots was running full bore down the hall towards our door. At this point we were both under the covers hiding, like ants hiding in their hill. The running came to a halt right outside our door. We lifted the blankets off of our heads. We saw the shadow of two feet just outside our unlocked door, and just like that-- Snap!

My eyes opened from sunlight bathing them. Instantly remembering, I jumped out of my bed. I saw my brother sleeping and my open window. Just as it was last night. My door was also ajar, just as it was when my mom tucked me in last night. Had it all been a nightmare?

Out of nowhere I hear my mom shout to me, "Honey, did you get in the closet last night?" She shouted.

"No" I shot back at her.

I threw on my fuzzy, red, plaid slippers and drowsily lingered into the hall to see my mom in her pink, polka-dot pajamas looking into the open closet with a rather confused look on her face. She is a classic mom. All she does all day is clean, cook, and attempt to keep up with me and Cam. Lately she herself has been acting weird, paranoid I mean. It's like she's been having weird experiences too. Ive seen her sitting in the kitchen reading at rather late hours sometimes. She said she, "couldn't sleep" she nearly had a heart attack when I walked into the kitchen. My Mom and Cam have been acting strange since we

moved into this house a few months ago. She shrugged and closed the closet door securely. Then she went down stairs most likely to the kitchen to prepare her famous pancakes.

I turned away and started to go back to my room when I heard a small click behind me. I froze solid. I slowly turned my body back toward the closet's direction. The closet door that my mom just slammed shut, was open! My first thought was that the door had a faulty lock on it since the house was built in the late 1700's. I had that eerie not alone feeling again. I ventured over to the closet. I jabbed the light switch on and one delayed second later the light soaked into the old mildewy closet. The light flickered a little, as if electricity hadn't been sent through the wire in ages. I looked around, but I didn't see anything suspicious.

Just as I was about to turn off the light, I saw something. It was tucked into the far left corner of the closet halfway under a box of hats and mittens. I bent over and picked it up. It was an old photograph of an old man. He was bold and wrinkly with glasses. He was wearing old suspenders and corduroys, one of those old fashioned leather caps rested on his head. I stood up and was about to turn off the light when, with me inside, the door slammed shut! I dropped the photo and started screaming at the top of my lungs. Stuff was flying all over the closet! And the light went out! I was thrown to my knees, and I saw the door fly open!

My brother ripped me out of the closet. Crying, my brother helped me up. Once I got to my feet, I looked back into the closet. The light was flickering on and off. My brother looked at me as if he had just witnessed something horrible, probably because he did. I scrambled down the stairs screaming,

"Oh my god sweetie, what's wrong!?" my mom screeched.

"There's something in the closet!" I mumbled back at her.

She grabbed my hand and we walked back upstairs. I noticed she had a look like, Oh my god, there is something in this house on her face. The closet door was wide open. I stopped when I was about 10 feet from the door. My mom and brother ninja walked over to the closet door.

They both peered in and looked around. My mom touched the old picture on the floor half-underneath some jumbled up papers. As soon as she did I heard a tremendous bang right above me. I looked up only to find the attic door. I looked back at my mom. She was also staring at the attic door. Just as I was about to look up again, some white Sheetrock dust fell on my shoulder. I felt like It the clown was standing right behind me...or something worse. I was so tempted to just walk out of the house. Just leave...this house. It's haunted. At least it's old enough to be. My mom said it was built in the late 1700's. And even before creepy things started happening in the house I had always thought I heard strange things at night. Like creeks and stuff like that...weird.

My brother jumped to try to reach the attic door string. But before he could grasp it, my mom moved him out of the way and got ahold of it. She slowly pulled on the string, "Stay back." my mom told us. This created a loud squeak and more dust fell. The half ladder half stairs folded down. ***My stomach felt like it was in my throat. I could feel something evil up in that attic. But it also felt like it could feel me. (P)Like it wanted me. Like it was...connected to me. I almost told my mom to close the attic door and nail it shut, but I didn't. I thought of the night before, with the loud running. I couldn't believe my mom didn't hear it, or maybe she just didn't want to hear it.*** A blast of cold air slapped me across the face as soon as the hatch was opened. Mom placed her foot on the first step. My brother was underneath her trying to look up into the attic. My mom's head was just entering they old stale air when she looked down at us, "Boys, go down to the living room and lock the hall door behind you. Okay?" mom instructed. "But mom-!" I attempted. "Just go!" she yelled. Me and Cameron moved down the stairs and directly entered the living room. Cameron looked back and closed the hall door. He jammed the old skeleton key into the key hole and twisted the door locked. He then put the key in his pocket. We decided to pass time by sitting in the couch and talking. We talked about our new home, just outside of Boston. And how weird it has turned out to be so far, and all of the sud-

den, the hallway door shook out of control. The door knob was practically shaking off of the door. Like someone was trying to shake the door open. Then...it stopped. I walked over to the door. I arched my back a bit to meet my face level with the key hole. I was looking through it, and saw nothing. BANG! The door slammed and an eye popped up in front of the key whole just on they other side of the door. It was a red eye. Deep and dark. I swear I saw flames in it too. I looked away quickly. I dared myself to look back into the key hole, and did. I peered thru the hole once again, and what I saw shocked me! I saw the blurred figure of a colonial British soldier. He was tall and fit, but one thing was wrong. He was headed up the stairs. Right towards Mom. But then, he stopped and turned his body back toward the door. What I then saw horrified me. His face was bloody. Blood dripped from every hole in his head, and he had a bullet wound on his forehead. The same red eyes too. He then turned back toward mom and kept walking up the stairs, "UNLOCK THE DOOR!!" I screamed at my brother! He fished the key out if his pocket and clicked the door unlocked. We ran toward the stairs and got partially up them, and then I saw his feet. Going into the attic, after mom, and then...a scream flooded my ears... **(Continuation of story)**... My brother pushed me out of the way and ran to the attic stairs. He ripped his way up into the attic. I was crying on the floor when I heard my mom's screams pouring out of the attic. I got up and hobbled over to the attic stairs. With tears pouring out of my eye sockets I made my way into they attic. I looked around and saw a dim light to the far right side of the attic. I could taste the old dust in the air. I saw my mom crouched over crying next to an old trunk. My brother was holding her for comfort, and trying to get her to stop crying. What I saw next frightened me the most. A hand print of blood on the top of the trunk. It was old and brown. I found it odd that there was no dust on the trunk.

we all stopped crying after a few minutes and sat down in some old wooden chairs that were being stored in the attic.

NELLIE ELIZABETH

Trust Fall

Chapter one

Rose

"Mom, I'll be fine- I promise." I stare at the floor of my new dorm. Plop, plop, plop. Mom's tears fall to the floor. I dare not to look up because if I do, I'm afraid I'll start crying too. "Thanks for helping me," I choke out. Mom helping me before she leaves and finally says good bye was much harder not to cry. With my dad and brother, it was much less uneventful. Dad couldn't come up because it would be hard with his wheel chair. My brother Adam stayed to help him. My dad is my hero. He inspired me to follow my dreams to the fullest. Even with his wheel chair, he could defend the truly innocent. My dad got "his seat" when I was little. He had an awful car crash-I think. A couple years after I asked him what had happened. I couldn't have been more than six when I finally asked him what had happened. I still remember to this day his exact words. "I like to climb forward to repel into the past." I trust him either way he didn't really tell me what fully happened. Later he said it was just to sad. He doesn't like sad things. I really believe that he didn't come up to my room because it would seem to real and sad. It wasn't that he didn't trust us to make the right decisions, he knew we would. I think it was scary more for him then us. He didn't take Adam going to college lightly. I think he was just trying to ignore that his baby girl was going to. I smile at mom. In a way, we look almost exactly alike. Honey brown hair and a perfect smile, except that I have light purple eyes. Yes, they're real. I've gotten asked that question so many times-I try hard not to be rude. Espe-

cially when I swim. When my hair is all tucked up in a cap, my eyes are all they notice. "Where do you want this to go?" Mom asks me, standing on a chair. "I don't know, wherever you think will look good." Before my room looked empty but mom and I did a good job. We gave it color with my metals and, a just swim bed cover. A bright pool of blue and me standing on the diving block. Pictures of me at the pool or in the water, surrounding my bed now. Creating a cocoon of memories. I sort of think about starting college like a butterfly. Before I was safe in my cocoon. Now I have hatched. But when will I spread my wings and fly?

Cliff

"Bye mom. Yep, I'll talk to you later, when I'm more awake. Love you to, bye." I set the phone down on my blue comforter with a thump. Wow. I must be really sleepy. **She** said that **I** should get some coffee. That's coming from a women who's against it. Chuckling, I put on my new sparries by the front door. I stumble out of the brick building. I trudge down the street. My wallet! I dash back up the never ending stairs. Click. I unlock the door. My eyes go directly to my wooden desk. Right were I left it. I have my money, keys, phone. What else could I possibly need? Well, my brain seemed no where in sight. I smile. Being around my brother was wearing off. More like sarcastic, was wearing on me. Clomp, clomp, clomp. I trudge down the stairs and out on the street. A mini version of whole foods but, only for coffee comes into view. This place has the best black coffee I've ever tasted. I could go on and on about it but I really just need some. The bell jingles as I open the door. The sweet smell of brewing coffee fills my nose, making my mouth water. I make my way up to the counter. "Hi, can I have a large black coffee to go?" The guy at the counter nods. "That will be four dollars." I fish four bucks out of my old leather wallet. "Here you go." The guy at the counter says as he hands me my coffee. "Thank you." I reply and start back up to my dorm. The bell jingles as I exit. "This is your mom calling." A song plays. Ironically its also the ringtone for my mom. "Hello?" I say as I glance down to get it. "BAM." I run into some one spilling my coffee and theirs all over the side walk. "I'm so sorry." We both say at the same time. I extend my hand to help her up. "Are you all right? I really do apologize. I should have looked where I was going." "Hello, hello?" A small voice says. I laugh. "Mom, I'll

call you back." I slide my iphone into my coffee stained back pocket. "Oh no!" She says. "I spilled my coffee all over you! Oh my gosh! I'm so embarrassed. Are you ok?" I laugh. "I'm fine. The only reason I got coffee was to wake my self up." I grin. "I guess I haven't woken up yet." "Bring, bring. Oh crap, I'm going to be late." She says. "I'm sorry about your coffee." "It's fine." I say. "Have a good day." I trudge back up to my dorm. I should take a nap.

Rose

"Hi Jenny its rose. I just got my coffee so now we can talk.." I practically yell into my phone. I wait for the little blue line to go through. "I'll meet you at Cafe this way in ten minuets." Where is the reception? "Bam!" My coffee goes flying into some cute stranger. "Oh no! I spilled my coffee all over you!" Really, really? Why did this stuff have to happen to me? "Oh my gosh! I'm so embarrassed! Are you ok?" I question faster than a bullet. "Oh, no. I'm fine. Just not awake yet I guess." He gives me a grin. I think I melted a little bit inside. "I'm sorry again." He says and walks away. I snap back into realty. I just had a conversation-I don't remember any thing but his grin. "Bring, bring." The sound brings me back to earth. Oh crap. I really do have to go!

Cliff

"Hey man, what up?" I say putting my brother in a loose head lock. "Nothing much." He laughs as I release him. We try to keep in touch. My mom wants me to look out for him because he's new in collage. "Do you want to go to this free climbing class?" I question for the billionth time. "Yeah, right." He says, "I can't go past the second story without feeling my knees tremble." We laugh. "You and the rest of the world." I've always loved climbing. I remember when we were just five and four. My younger brother, James Looking up at me. His blonde hair and his wide brown eyes, stare up at me with awe and fright. I looked up at the bright blue sky. There was not a cloud in sight. That was why I climbed. To be in and just in my thoughts. To have two different worlds, one above and one below. "Catch you later." I call out to James as our paths split. I was off to free climbing. I love the thrill of it. Don't get me wrong, I love college. (Either way I still don't know what I want to do.) The thrill of free climbing was,

amazing. I glanced around, I'm here. I walk to the huge oak doors. Before I open them I feel as if something big will happen; I step inside.

Rose

There must be some mistake. I look at my set schedule again. Yep. I got put into an extra class. Well, more like an activity. Free climbing. I feel bad for the person who didn't get my spot. I'm a swimmer so, cross training is always a good thing. Why not try it? Dad had some books in his office about free climbing, I think it would be worth a try. I briskly walk down the hall where the class is. Or at least where it meets up. I walk towards the huge oak doors, before I open them I feel that something big will happen; I step inside. The gentle sun light gently fills the room, the room itself is in the middle of the courtyard with windows covering three out of four of the walls. Light green paint makes the room feel like a forest, but the windows make it feel like a meadow. The climbing gear is neatly hung up on the hooks, on the one wall that isn't covered in windows. The middle of the room has a small rug with a dark wooden table in old mismatching wooden chairs. Wow, such a pretty place. "Hi!" I look up and see a guy with bleach blonde hair and bright blue eyes walking toward to me. He was wearing khaki shorts and a light green T-shirt. "I'm cliff." I smile, "Hey I'm Rose." Omg. My mind races. That's the guy I spilled coffee on! "Wait, are you the guy I spilled coffee on?" He smiles. "That would be correct." "Are you the guy in charge? Or is it him?" I say as I nod to the guy in the corner with long black hair pulled back into a pony tail. Cliff laughs. "Me? I'm just here to climb. Ethan, that's the guy in charge." Ethan looks up when he hears name and Saunders over.. "Hello." He says when he reaches cliff and I. "Your name?" He glances down to his clip bored, "Wait- don't tell me. I like to guess." He pauses, and looks at me. "Please, spin slowly." I laugh and do as I'm told. This has definitely been the strangest way I've met someone. Well spinning, Cliff says, "Are you a dancer? Because usually when people spin they trip over their feet." Ethan laughs. "Only twice people got knocked unconscious." He smiles. I stop spinning and come face to face with cliff. Time slows. His blue eyes pierce

mine. My breath catches in my throat. Then he gives me a goofy smile a million miles wide. "Are you excited to climb?" He ask. "Yes, of corse!" As I say that I realize how excited I really am.

Cliff

"Have you ever free climbed before? I ask Rose, as we walk up to the buses. She considers it for a while. And then in that while I snuck a long glance at her. Rose's honey brown hair covers part of her face making her eyes pop out even more. They're light purple. "I don't think I really ever have-" "Wow! Are your eyes real? " I blurt, amazed. "Oh, yep." She laughs. "I was born with them, some kind of mutation, I guess." She shrugs and smiles. "That's amazing!" I say. "Thanks!" Rose laughs.

Rose

"Wow dee-ja-voo." I look around. The cliffs come sort of abruptly out of the ground. Small trees and plaques dot the path. The rock was tan with streaks of white. It was exactly like before. Wait, what before? "This is where the people came to watch best climbers in the world compete. The Finnish guy named David, won. He was a really nice guy. Taught me everything I know." Cliff glances at the plaque. "He seems to have disappeared after that though. There's more information about him. Maybe there's more inside. After we climb do you want to check it out? " "Sure!" I say, "David my dad's name, and he's Finnish. But I don't think he would have rock climbed though." I smile. "Really, you're positive?" Cliff asks. "Yeah." I laugh. "He's a lawyer and been in a wheel chair as long as I can remember." "Ok," Cliff laughs. "Let's start climbing!"

Cliff

"Yep. Just try to keep your self-centered." I pause with time. I hear my heart beat in my ears. Thump, thump, thump. I take a glance at rose; then gather my courage. "Your really pretty." Rose smiles. "Thanks." She concentrate to scale the easy wall. We left the rest of the group minutes ago. Depends how fast Rose goes, we will get to the top fairly soon. "What do you do other then climb?" Rose asks. I laugh and say, "Well, I'm still

not sure. I really love to climb. I could just climb for the rest of my life but, how could I get paid?" "True," she pauses. "Couldn't you compete? She says as we reach the top. I smile. Truth be told, I'm deathly afraid of competing. What if I'm not good? What if I fail? To young? To old? What if? I shrug. "I don't know. I've never competed before."

Rose

Going down was a heck lot better than going up. We glided pass people coming up and down. Poof. My feet softly hit the ground. "Wow, that was fun." I say to cliff. "Where should we put the gear?" "We can take them in side-" We stopped by one of many plaques. "That was my climbing coach, the best climber in the world, then he just left; with out a trace, Strange right? Later on the news it was said that he was pushed from a jagged rock. And hurt. Poor guy, he was really nice to." I look at the picture. My brain recognized the picture immediately. It was my dad. I saw it once when I was very young. It was in his office. Almost hidden with dust. "Daddy is this you?" I had asked with my two front teeth gone. "Rose Marie! Give that to me now!" My dad never yelled. I knew then it was important. "Rose?" Cliff asked and I snapped back into reality. "You're kind of pale, are you okay?" He asked. "Well, yes, I'm fine, and, well; He looked at me with confused but concerned eyes. "What?" I bit my lip. "That, is my dad." I say astonished. "Wait, what?" Cliff asks. His eyes pop out of his head. "He, he never said he was a climber." I pause reflecting. "Holy shit! I've been lied to my entire life! Every thing! My dads been in a wheel chair sense the car crash that never happened! What if he can walk? What if he's just afraid? What else's has he lied to me about?" I finish as a tear runs down my cheek. "Would it be weird if I gave you a hug?" Cliff asks. All I can do is shake my head no. I feel his arms around me as my world goes black.

Rose? ROSE!?!

"Beep. Ba beep. Click , click, clunk.

Rose

I woke from the silence. In my sleep every thing was black and white silent peaceful. Creek. My head throbs. My eyes fly open all at once colors are everywhere. Blurry at first, but sharper, sharper, sharper, with each blink. Things are getting to sharp, to clear. Like daggers. I softly close them. Slowly enough to see a man looking at my charts. His grey hair messy as if in a rush. He moves as if he's floating. Wait, that's a wheel chair! I suck in a handful of air; then start hacking. My dad. Why is he here? His finger runs down the white board going over basic information and stops where I was before I blacked out. He gasps. He knows what I know. My mind races. "What didn't he tell me? Who really is he? Why did he keep this away from me? Why has he hidden is past? Why?" He turns to me. His face creased with wrinkles and his eyes sparked with nervousness. "Rose there are some things I need to tell you-

Untitled

Dr. Orion has a large, modern, and comfortable office. Peter knows that she is talking, but is only slightly aware of her words, and finds his mind wandering, examining the large fish tank filled with exotic species on the wall right his position on a cushy black leather chair. Large glass windows take up two of the four walls, which look out at an elegant courtyard with stone fountain centerpiece, surrounded by tall, flowering plants. High cherry ceilings shade the room slightly, but soft light from the large windows floods most of the room. Dr. Orion sits comfortably while she talks across from him in her own leather chair, and a few yards of carpeted floor stretch between them. A large oak door across the other side of the room remains closed for privacy, and the fish tank, which still occupies his mind, bubbles softly under the continuous drone of Dr. Orion's "advice". The words friends and companionship and bonding catch Peter's limited attention, but not quite enough for him to tune in to Dr. Orion. And Peter must again remind himself of the only reason that he sits in the large office with a therapist every other Tuesday at one o'clock until two. For his wife, Helen, mostly. About three months ago, she had claimed that Peter not being "his normal self" and was not "enjoying many things anymore" and had promptly suggested that Peter go talk to a therapist. For Peter, this was completely out left field. Had he not seemed his "normal self"? Peter had concluded that it was because of his new promotion, had brought upon him more responsibilities, and with that, more stress. Peter thought that the stress was to be expected, he was now the Chief Financial Officer at MemTech, an advanced neurological science and technology company that remains highly respected and innovative. According to

Helen, however, it was more than just stress. She had said that he was "too tired to do most things" and "seemed a little down". So, Peter had agreed to see Dr. Orion, because he didn't like hearing his wife tell him repeatedly to do something about his "depression". The only thing that makes me really tired is coming here, Peter thinks bitterly.

Suddenly, Peter is brought out of his mind when he hears Dr. Orion's voice say his name loudly.

"Peter," says Dr. Orion with clear exasperation, "are you listening to me?"

"Yes," Peter lies sheepishly. "Well, I'm trying to."

"I realize those fish that you have been staring at the whole time are very interesting, but you are paying me every other week to help you and talk to you. It never seems like I have your true attention, though. Why do you come here if you don't want to listen to me or talk to me?"

Peter is slightly annoyed and taken aback now, because Dr. Orion had never talked to him in such away.

Peter shifts his position in his chair, and says, "Alright, I'll tell you why I come here. I come here so my wife will be happy and won't think that I'm depressed all the time." Dr. Orion looks at him for a minute.

"Maybe you are depressed. Not clinically depressed or anything like that, but I think you are slightly down, as your wife says," Dr. Orion observes calmly. Peter refuses her words.

"I'm just stressed, that's all. I've already told you. Then you tell me all this stuff, and I can't do anything with it because I don't need help." Dr. Orion looks at Peter some more.

"You told that you don't golf or play much of your guitar anymore," says Dr. Orion. "Why do you think you don't?" A safe answer appears in Peter's mind.

"I don't have time." Dr. Orion raises her eyebrows skeptically.

"I know your schedule, Peter. You could do the things you like on the weekends or even before or after work." Peter doesn't look directly at the small, intelligent woman across from him. He can't. He isn't sure why, but he can't look at her.

"Maybe I just don't enjoy them as much as I used to," says Peter defiantly.

"That sounds like you might be a little bit depressed," says Dr. Orion.

And out of some dark, concealed understanding in Peter's mind, the thought of Dr. Orion being right seems actually logical. Even after definitive denial and refusal to acknowledge his possible problem, it seems as though Dr. Orion has unlocked his true feelings of inner reflection, that Peter himself had been sure even existed.

"Maybe you're right," Peter says, in apparent defeat. This new found self-discovery consumes his mind for a few moments more, until the words of Dr. Orion fill his ears.

"Do you know what I want you to do?" asks Dr. Orion.

"Golf and play guitar more?" asks Peter despairingly.

"Well," says Dr. Orion, "I would like you to do more of the things you love. But I also want you to try to make a friend." Peter looks directly at Dr. Orion now.

"A friend?" asks Peter blindly.

"Yes. A friend." says Dr. Orion. "It is my understanding that you do not have very many, if any, at the moment."

"Well, I had friends at the company I worked at before Mem-Tech, but yeah, I don't really see them much anymore."

"Precisely," continues Dr. Orion. "I think that maybe you are lacking some male companionship. What do you think?" This made logical sense to Peter. He had had some great times at the old accounting firm where he used to work, but those days were long behind him, and had lost touch with all of his co-workers there.

"Yeah, I had some friends there. But I'll probably make some new friends at MemTech." Peter's own words hardly reassure himself, but he says them for Dr. Orion.

"No, no. I'm talking about friends outside of work. I'd like you to try to make a real friend." Peter is again astounded at her words. This kind of friend-a non-work friend-is something that Peter had never known, much less considered. Everything makes sense in such a dark, new, and uncomfortable to Peter way in this meeting, except for one thing.

"How? How do I make a friend like that?"

"How you do it is up to you," says Dr. Orion. "You join a club, or a pickup intramural sport. There are lots of ways to meet new people, and I am confident that you find one that is right for you."

"Okay," Peter says. A long silence follows. Dr. Orion's words echo repeatedly in Peter's head, and the feeling of inner barriers being broken remains, although Peter does not feel very positive about this experience. Peter had given in to his inner darkness, and admitted to himself that he that he was, in fact, depressed. Dr. Orion had finally gotten through to him, and yet, Peter thinks that the depression is truly reaching the surface.

"Can you promise me something, Peter?" asks Dr. Orion, breaking the silence.

"Sure," says Peter quietly.

"I want you to try some of the things that I've suggested. You don't have to do right away, but I want you try to make a friend." Peter feels the meeting concluding, although he wants more help from Dr. Orion for the first time in about six meetings.

"Okay." Peter stands up, and reaches for his coat that is draped over the right arm of the leather chair.

"I'll see you in two weeks, alright?" asks Dr. Orion.

"Yep. See you then." Peter slides his arms through his jacket and turns to leave.

"Bye, Peter," calls Dr. Orion. Peter turns and waves as he is opening the door.

"Bye." Peter exits the large office, and that feeling of raw self-examination occupies his brain once more.

Clinton

At about two thirty p.m., Clinton knocks twice on Dr. Orion's door; a ritual that he is accustomed to after several weeks of seeing Dr. Orion. "Come in," says Dr. Orion from behind the large oak door. Clinton opens the door and moves into the large office cheerily. The office has high ceilings, large windows, and a modern looking interior with leather chairs, a desk at the opposite side of the room, and a large fish

tank on the right wall. Dr. Orion stands beside her desk, looking at paperwork of some kind.

"Hi, Dr. Orion," says Clinton warmly with a smile. Dr. Orion reciprocates the smile and says,

"Hello, Clinton. Have a seat." The pair sit in two identical black leather chairs that face each other directly. After the pair of them are comfortably seated, Dr. Orion begins the conversation. "So, how are things?"

"Good," says Clinton generically.

"Do you still think you're feeling pretty down?" asks Dr. Orion.

"You know, I'm actually feeling pretty good," answers Clinton honestly. "I've tried joining some community activities like you said. I'm now involved with the YMCA chess club, and it's actually really fun." Dr. Orion looked pleased.

"Oh, good! That's wonderful, Clinton. I'm really proud of you for that, and you should be, too."

"Thanks," says Clinton with a grin. He had thought when he joined that Dr. Orion would be proud. He had honestly done it for that. "But Dr. Orion," says Clinton, remembering what he had wanted to talk to her about. "I haven't really made many friends yet. I mean, there are lots of nice people there and everything, but it's mostly just teenagers and older folks, you know? I haven't really found anyone my age yet."

"You know, I think as long you are having a good time at the chess club, you should stick with it. If you are not making more friends, though, you could try doing something else. I know we had talked trying pick-up basketball. Would you still be interested in giving that a try?" asks Dr. Orion.

"Yeah, maybe." Clinton isn't sure whether he'd do it, although he surely could try it, as Dr. Orion had said.

"You don't have to, Clinton. I'm sure you'll know when it's right for you." Dr. Orion finishes calmly. A long silence follows, and Clinton attempts to gather his thoughts. What does he want to tell her? He decides to let her begin the conversation, and lets his mind slip into work while they are quiet. His accounting job brings constant thoughts

and immersion to his mind. He will take a trip tomorrow, to the city to go through the accounts for a large technology firm...

"So, Clinton, I'm wondering how you are feeling about your mother these days," ask Dr. Orion sensitively. Clinton expects this question. This topic-for his mother died months ago-is a common one in their meetings. In fact, the death of Clinton's mother is the reason that he started seeing Dr. Orion months ago. Clinton's mother was the sole surviving family member, that is, until a few months back. Clinton had been devastated, and had sought out further help in his grief. His mother had been his only family, having no siblings and a long deceased father. It turns out, however, that Dr. Orion had helped him with more than just sadness since he has been seeing her. Dr. Orion helps him discover himself more, and find out more about himself.

"I'm doing fine. I'm just really thinking about her being in a place of rest, and she really deserves that. I don't think she would have wanted me to get over her passing."

"Clinton, I think you are totally right," says Dr. Orion. "I think it's very mature of you to think in this way. I'm really proud of all of the steps that you're taking to heal."

Clinton smiles with gratitude. "Thank you." Pause. "You know, Dr. Orion, I been thinking: maybe I'll take a break from seeing you for a while. Just to try it out, you know? I really think I'm in a better place," Clinton finishes anxiously. He looks at Dr. Orion, awaiting her response.

"You know, Clinton, I think that you are definitely in a better place with yourself and your mother, and I think if you want to try taking a break for a while, you certainly can." Clinton is reassured when Dr. Orion is done. A brief silence follows, and then the conclusion begins from Dr. Orion: "Clinton, it's been a pleasure working with you. As I've mentioned, I'm so proud of your growth from when I first started seeing you to now. The pleasure has been all mine." Clinton does not cry, but his eyes sting slightly with appreciation for Dr. Orion.

"Dr. Orion, thank you for all that you have helped me through. Thank you as well for helping me see things in a different way, especially myself."

"You're quite welcome." Pause. "Well, Peter, I think we can end our meeting early."

"Okay, Dr. Orion. Thank you so much."

Clinton stands up, walks to the large oak door, and waves as he leaves the large office for the last time.

Clinton

The next day, Clinton drives from the accounting firm outside the city to the place of his assigned account, which happens to be in the city. He parks in a newer concrete garage near the top, and hikes down the stairs to the street. It is around noon, and the city is buzzing with engines and horns and chatter. He walks briskly in the warm spring air down a central avenue towards his account. The building, as he realizes upon his arrival, is tall and modern looking, with large framed glass windows covering all of the exterior. A large pink sign pops at the top of the building and reads MemTech. After this brief inspection and assumption that this will indeed be a large account, Clinton moves through a matching glass revolving door and into the tiled lobby, where a short male receptionist anticipates his arrival. Clinton states his business, and the receptionist instructs him to take also-glass-elevator to floor eight where the man he will meet with, Mr. Carson, will await his arrival. Clinton does what he is told with a smile and a quick, "Thanks," and hastily gets in the available elevator, pursuing punctuality with this seemingly large client. The elevator hums continuously, and dings when a new floor is passed. On the eighth ding, the elevator shudders to a stop. The doors part for Clinton's exit, and waiting in front of him outside the elevator is a tall man in a black suit and red necktie. His shoulders are broad, and he must stand about six-one. His hair is dark brown and styled with gel, and his face is clean shaven. Clinton steps out of the elevator.

"Hey, I'm Clinton," says Clinton as he extends his hand to the man, "and you must be Mr. Carson."

"You are correct," the man says with a smile as the pair exchange a firm handshake. "But, you can call me Peter. So, shall we get to it?"

Peter

Peter proceeds to give the man a brief tour before they go over the finances of the company. The man, Clinton, has never been to Memtech before, but he seems very interested in the work done there. They move quickly through neurological experiments and laboratories while Clinton looks on in wonder. Clinton seems very nice, and very curious. A man of intelligence and inquiry, Peter decides. He rather likes Clinton.

“And here we have the Memory Room,” Peter says as they stride past a pair of double doors with inside concealed by frosted glass. “Once we’re done with the audits, I could have some people in there give you a demonstration.” Excitement is evident in Clinton’s face.

“I’d love to.”

Clinton

The accounts are easy enough to review, as Mr. Carson has come prepared for their meeting. Spending habits seem ordinary; for an innovative, technologically advanced, large scale science and research company. Expenses range from equipment to chemicals to toilet paper, and they certainly had the funds. Clinton quickly runs some more numbers through a table system, and they are soon finished. That is, except for the demonstration that Clinton been promised. The anticipation is making him itch, because he hopes Mr. Carson will remember. Silence.

“So,” says Peter with a smile, “are you ready for that demonstration?”

“Yes, of course!” exclaims Clinton excitedly. They walk out Peter’s office and down the large hall towards the Memory Room. Peter reaches for the handle, and the pair are immersed in the midst of a large machine that takes up the entire room. A large tube that resembles that of an IV scanner in a hospital lies in the center.

“This,” says Peter, “is an amazing device that lets one relive certain memories and dreams through just a few wires that connect

through the brain. But you see, the wires are all connected to this massive device, which we call the MemScan. It is our most famous machine, and we hope to one day make it available to the public.” Clinton is dumbfounded, and remains speechless with his mouth slightly agape and his eyebrows raised. The words following astound him even more. “Would you like to try it?” Peter looks at Clinton, waiting.

“Yes, of course!” says Clinton quickly.

“Good,” says Peter. I’ll go grab a technician to get it started. Wait here, would you?”

“Sure.” Clinton is still processing everything that has just been explained to him. Reliving memories? Clinton had thought before hearing this that they were just an average technology and science facility, but this... this is incredible. Absolutely incredible. And he, an average auditor, just doing everyday work should get to experience such a device? The idea fills Clinton with wonder and fright, for he has never, ever experienced such a thing. He is speechless. Even when Peter brings back a thin female technician, he says nothing.

The technician starts the machine through a computer at the edge of the room, and a hum echoes where the three of them stand.

“Now,” asks the technician, “have you ever been in an IV machine?”

“No,” answers Clinton, “But I’ve seen one before.” He has seen one before. With his mother in it, just before she was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Fragments appear in his mind. Clinton shakes the images from his head.

“Okay, I want you to remove your shoes and any electronics you have on you, place them in that bin, (she points to a bin beside the large tube) lie down and try to keep very still, alright?” Clinton does as he is told, removing his watch and his cell phone from his pocket and placing them in the plastic container. He slips off his black leather shoes, and slides on the “tray” on his back. A shiver of excitement and fright passes through his entire body while the technician attaches adhesive strips with wires attached to his forehead. “Are you ready?” asks Peter.

“I guess so,” says Clinton with nervous chuckle. The “tray” slides inside of the tube, and Clinton's face is inches from the top of

the tube. Clinton closes his eyes. He hears the technician's voice from outside the tube.

Her speech is muffled as she says, "Your experience will begin in about a minute, alright? The wires connect to your brain and send signals at the beginning that help to relax you. Once you are asleep, the machine can access your memories and you will be able to experience some meaningful ones, okay?"

"Yep. Okay." Clinton breathes heavily in his claustrophobic space, and soon, his eyelids begin to grow heavy, and the fear and anxiety vanish as sleep envelops him.

Clinton suddenly finds himself aboard a crowded train, where he is standing up and holding on to a silver pole that reaches through the floor to the ceiling. The train rocks back and forth, and little bumps jolt him around. A buzz of chatter hums throughout the train. Clinton is still not sure where he is... that is, until he looks out the window: Vast green countryside stretches for miles, and a sloping mountain range extends along the horizon. He is, as it seems, riding the same train that he took everyday to his day-school. Thud! A painful blow to his shoulder makes him turn around only to see a grinning boy staring at him.

"Hey, I know the view is great," says the boy, "but wouldn't you rather look at my gorgeous face?" The boy chuckles profusely at his own joke. Clinton looks down at himself, and finds that he and the boy are wearing matching blue blazers and ties. And then, a name rushes to his mind, and he knows precisely who he is talking to. It's been so long... Removing himself from his thoughts, he does the first thing that comes into his head. Thud. He punches the boy hard on his arm.

"That's what you get, Chris." Chris had been Clinton's best friend at their day school, and they were practically inseparable back then.

Chris rubs his arm and says jokingly, "Is that all you got?" Suddenly, Chris' smiling face fades into blurs of color.

Clinton wants to see Chris more, and he wishes he hadn't left the memory. And just like that, Clinton is surrounded by his mother's embrace.

"I'm so proud of you, Clint." In Clinton's hand is a letter, and all Clinton can make out is "Congratulations..." before the memory fades. He gets a sick feeling in his stomach, and he only wants to go back. Back to Chris. Back with his mother. He just wants everything to slow down, and stop moving so fast.

Then he feels the firm grip of a man standing behind a desk on his hand.

"I'm glad that you'll be joining our team here, Clinton," the man says happily. Clinton is smiling, but he wants to just go back. He has no control, though, it seems. The blurs begin again and suddenly he is standing alone in a large cemetery. Freshly dug earth sits in front of him, and he knows exactly what the grave says. The smell is making him want to vomit, but he is stuck there, with tears streaming fast down his face. The painful memory lingers for a moment longer, and then he sees the outline of a man—a tall man in a black suit that he does not immediately recognize...

Clinton is jolted awake by Peter, who looks down at him, concerned. "You alright, Clinton? You look scared to death?" Clinton looks at him for a moment and stares at him in awe, realizing who the man was in his last memory.

"Yeah, uh, it was just a very real experience."

"Yeah, I know right? Pretty cool stuff," says Peter.

Clinton lies there for a moment, and the realization hits him like a bullet. The sadness leaves him.

"Excuse me, would you? I have to use the bathroom." Clinton strides towards the doors and quickly calls, "I'll meet you back in your office, Peter. Thanks." Peter looks confused, but does not say anything as Clinton leaves the room. Clinton strides to the bathroom, thoughts exploding in his mind. He thinks he knows the reason those memories were shown to him, those memories in particular, because he knows it is the thing he most desires and has lost since Chris. But had he really forgotten? Had it really been that long? Clinton pushes open the door of the men's bathroom and rushes to the sink, where he splashes cold water on his face. He knows what he must ask Chris. And he knows it is significant. He knows it.

Peter

The two men stand in Peter's office.

"Thank you so much for everything today," says Clinton genuinely. "It was an amazing experience. It was really like nothing I've ever felt before."

"You're totally welcome," says Peter with a smile.

"Hey," says Clinton, "I'd like to get to know you better. I'm part of a chess club that meets every Thursday the YMCA downtown, and I was thinking that if you want to stop by, I think we'd both have a good time." Peter is slightly taken aback. "It's okay if you don't want to, I mean, we don't know each other that well--"

"I'd love to. Chess is one my favorite games actually," says Peter, surprised at his acceptance.

"Alright, well, if you want to come to the Y and come play chess, I'll see you then, okay?" says Clinton, looking relieved.

"Alright, see you Clinton."

"See you." Clinton leaves and shut the the door behind him. And a feeling that is long missed washes over Peter. He chuckles to himself, thinking that Dr. Orion would be proud. And Peter is proud, too. He has made a friend.

KATIE K

What Happened In Dover?

Everyone loves a gift, all wrapped up with a bow, just begging to be opened. But sometimes the greatest gift comes wrapped in the strangest package. Or, in Lydia's case, not really a real package at all but instead a move to Dover, England. Wait a little longer Lydia and your gift will come. You just need to wait.

...

Lydia slowly walked down the cobblestone road. She was a curious girl. You could tell by the way she explored every nook and cranny in the quaint English town. But it was also obvious that she was not native to this land. You could tell by the way she gazed at everything, as if she was trying to memorize the area, the nooks, the crannies, the roads, the cobblestones. And she was.

Lydia stopped in every shop and she smiled as she talked to the shopkeepers. It was easy for her to tell the old men and women how she felt about moving and what it was like to be the new face in a tight spun community. They all understood, they had seen other newcomers move to their village and try to adapt to life in their coastal town. And they thought it was funny that she complained about the community being so interwoven, so connected. Few newcomers moved to their village and fewer still decided to stay. But, they all still smiled and nodded at her, hiding their secret. In this town everyone was hiding a secret.

As Lydia walked by the grocers she noticed a group of girls about her age. Suddenly uncomfortable, she turned away, hunched her shoulders and walked in the other direction as silently as she could. In the end her attempt to disappear was futile. One of the girls saw her hiding by the

wall of a house, and never one to ignore a stranger in town, she quickly approached her.

"Why, hello there. Are you trying to be a shadow? Well, you are currently excelling at that right now," the girl told Lydia. She had long blond hair and blue eyes. "Too bad there is not a class at school for that. Why you would be the teacher."

"No, I am just smelling the wall," Lydia told the strange girl sarcastically. 'Does this girl really want to get under my skin?' Lydia thought.

"Do you want to hang out with my friends and I?" the girl asked Lydia, realizing that annoying her would not work.

"Sure," Lydia replied and then thought to herself, 'Why not? Maybe I can actually make friends before school starts.' Lydia followed the blond girl over to the others. They all started talking, and soon the whole group was chatting away as if they were old friends.

As it started to get dark, they all said goodbye and headed in different directions toward home. As Lydia began her journey back to the house she realized that she was lost. The trees loomed above her and nothing looked familiar. She shivered, not from the cold, but from the fear of being completely lost in a strange country. But she was determined to find her way home, and magically, like a lighthouse in the fog, Lydia's new house appeared in the darkness. 'Home', she thought, finally this house felt like home.

Lydia woke up to the constant rhythm of the rain, convinced at first that she was still in her small blue room in South Dakota. But as she opened her eyes, reality hit her all at once. She was in Dover, England, in a small light green room, listening to the rain gently fall on the slate roof of her new house. She spotted her large red suitcase on the ground, a constant reminder of her long plane ride a week ago. The suitcase was a gift from her mother. It was an old fashioned one. Her mother had found it at an antique store somewhere. Her mother was obsessed with antiques. Half the things that they owned were from the seventies and some were much older. Her parents had already unpacked but everyday a new box arrived with more of their possessions

from Gran. As if on cue, the doorbell rang. Lydia leaped out of bed, grabbed her blue robe, and met her parents at the door.

Her mom opened the door to find a thoroughly soaked postman with three large boxes. They all grabbed one, her mom signed the paper, and her dad shut the door with his foot. They dumped the boxes in the living room planning to open them after breakfast. Lydia raced upstairs. She grabbed some clothes and threw them on. She ran back downstairs, and sat down at the table. Her mom handed her a bowl of Cheerios. "Cheerio, Mate!" She thought. Her dad was reading the paper and her mom was on the computer grading college papers. She hated that computer. It reminded her of that spring day when her mom received the e-mail from a college in Dover, England offering her the "job of a lifetime".

'Who would ever name a town Dover?' She absentmindedly dipped her spoon into the empty bowl and brought it to her mouth. Realizing that nothing was there she dropped her spoon, and in a daze she stood up and brought her bowl to the kitchen where her dad was doing the dishes.

"Lyd, you ok honey?" her dad asked. Lydia shook her head to clear it, gave him a false smile and told him that everything was ok she just needed some fresh air.

She slipped on her sneakers and opened the door. As she lifted her head up, she smelled baking bread. The sky was slowly clearing and one last drop dripped from the sky. Letting her nose lead her, she walked down the road. Lydia was daydreaming about a crusty baguette when the smell of the ocean suddenly overtook her.

"Watch out there, miss. That French bread could lead a person off the dock, it could," an older man on his lobster boat said.

"Oh, I'd never mistake the sea for the bakery," she told him in her best English accent.

"Don't try to fool me miss. I know you just moved here from the states," he said, his gentle brown eyes crinkling at the corners, reminding her of her grandfather. She asked him the direction of the main town.

"Use that nose of yours to follow the scent of the bread back uphill," he said smiling. "Just take Waterlilly Lane. It spits you out at the

main square, it does," he said pointing to a red sign labeled Waterlilly Lane.

"Thank you," she told the kind old man.

"You're welcome," he said with a wave.

She turned and slowly started down Waterlilly Lane. She noticed that almost all of the bricks on the narrow street were red. But there was one blue one. It was in her line of bricks, so she stepped on it. Suddenly, she felt her feet vibrate. The bricks started shaking. With her arms out for balance she stumbled towards the nearest house and fell by the garden gate. She hit the bricks hard and banged her knee. Barely noticing the blood oozing from the scrape she stood and hobbled on. About five paces past the house the vibrating stopped.

"Father, father please don't go!" a small child whispered. Lydia turned and looked back to where the whisper had come from. The house she had just passed was all lit up. In the dooryard was a small child and a man. It looked like they were dressed in costumes for a play. The child's clothes looked like something her grandfather might have worn when he was a little boy. Maybe from the 1940's, she thought. And the man was wearing a uniform of some sort. In his hand was a red suitcase.

"I have to. I will just be across the bay. Take care of your mother and little James," the man said to his small son.

"Father, take this," the child handed him a small wooden boat. "Remember me."

"Oh Adam, I could never forget you and you must always remember me," he kissed the child on his forehead. "Remember, Adam," he whispered, and picking up the red suitcase he turned teary-eyed into the lane. As he passed her, Lydia looked at the suitcase and realized that it looked just like the antique one her mother had given her.

Lydia had just started to back slowly away from the house when she realized that the child had disappeared. As she shook her head in confusion she heard the child's voice whisper, "Always." The child's word lingered in the cool breeze.

...

Lydia closed her eyes to try and steady her mind. 'People can't simply disappear.' She thought. When she reopened her eyes she was startled to see that the house was dark. "What just happened?" she thought out loud. **Am I dreaming?** "Ow," she said as she pinched herself. **Nope, I am awake and freaked out. Did I have a hallucination? Am I seeing things? Was it nerves? Maybe I am homesick. But that doesn't make any sense. Wouldn't I see South Dakota if I was homesick?** Confused and scared, she ran the rest of the way to the town square. Reaching the square she slowed to a walking pace. She hunched her shoulders, tipped her head down, and walked slowly. Feeling eyes watching her every move she glanced up, to see if she could find the group she had talked with the previous night.

"What happened to you? Do you just randomly gain and lose self confidence whenever you want to?" Lydia turned around to find the girl she had met yesterday.

"Um, no," Lydia responded. "I was just lost in thought." She smiled at the blond she had met yesterday and shoved all thought of the mysterious house and disappearing people out of her mind.

The girl looked at her suspiciously but then smiled too and said, "Oh, I realize that we never met properly yesterday. I'm Emily Smith, Em for short."

"And my name is Lydia Wilder."

"Wilder, what an unusual last name. At least it's unusual around here," Em corrected herself. "And these are my friends, Molly Partridge and Lindsey Noel," each friend said "hi" after hearing their name. "So Lydia, what is your schooling level?" Em asked.

"It's my second year at high school," she responded.

"It's ours too, and you will love Dover High," said Em.

"We are the lions!" Molly sang.

"The mighty, mighty lions!" Em and Lindsay sang in response.

"I'm sure I will love it at Dover High" Lydia said joyfully. She was glad that she finally had friends, even if it was only three. But she wished that her new friends could meet her other friends in South Da-

kota. A twinge of sadness filled her, and for a moment she stared off into space.

"Lydia," Em asked, "are you alright?"

"Yes, I'm fine," Lydia responded. "Just a little homesick for where I used to live. You gals remind me of my friends back home."

"Gals, what is a gal?" Molly asked.

"A gal is like the country version of girl," Lydia explained.

"Gal, I like it," said Emily.

"I'm a gal, you're a gal, all of us girls are gals!" Lindsey sang in a "country" accent. "Oh! We should all try to do accents!"

"Okay!" The rest of the girls shouted.

"Parle vous francis?" Molly said with a giggle.

"Ello, mate!" Lindsey said, trying not to laugh.

"Y'all better get over here and get some grub!" Emily said, gasping as she had been laughing too hard.

"I'm Italiano! I own Italy's finest pizzeria!" Lydia finished as she bent over laughing. "Speaking of pizza, I'm hungry! Anyone want to come home with me for lunch?"

"Yes!" The girls all shouted and the four of them laughed all the way to 54 Willow Way, Lydia's new house.

54 Willow Way was a small two story home about five minutes from the town center. It had a few lilac trees in the front, that framed the stone walkway. Luscious green vines grew on the front of the home. Lydia's window faced the side of the home, and as the house was on a small hill, she could view the water and ships in the

"Whoa, Lydia your house looks good," Em said with a soft tone of voice.

"Thanks. The first couple of days were spent doing lawn work." Lydia told them.

"I can tell," Molly exclaimed, "the lawn didn't really look good before."

"Yeah," Lindsay said in awe.

The friends followed Lydia into the house. When they entered the kitchen, Lydia's mom was already there.

"Hey Lydia," she said, "who are these young ladies?"

"Mom," Lydia told her, "this is Emily, Molly and Lindsey," she said gesturing to each girl.

"Hello, girls," Lydia's mom said to them.

"Hello, Mrs. Wilder," they said back.

"Lydia," Mrs. Wilder said, "I am so glad that you have found some girls to hang out with." She turned back to the others, "Oh, you girls must be hungry! Lydia, there is a baguette over there, and there is cheese, ham, jam and peanut butter in the fridge," she said as she walked out the kitchen.

"Thanks, Mom", Lydia said calling out after her. "Okay, so what do you want?" Lydia asked.

"Ham and cheese, please!" Lindsey told Lydia.

"Ham and cheese, got it," Lydia said as she opened the fridge and got the stuff.

"Peanut butter, please," Molly next told Lydia.

"PB and J," Lydia told herself as she took out the peanut butter.

"I will have peanut butter, too," Em said to Lydia.

"Alright, and I will have a cheese sandwich," Lydia said with a laugh. The girls formed an assembly line of sorts. Each created their sandwich and then they sat at the table.

"Water for everyone?" Lydia asked.

"Yeah," They said together, including Lydia.

"Lydia, wait a moment," Mrs. Wilder said coming into the dining room with her laptop.

"Oh," Lydia said taking the laptop from her mother. "Hey guys!" she said into the computer.

A blond and a brunette were taking up the screen. Lydia told her friends who was who. The blond is McKenna, the brunette is Amelia. "Americans," Lydia addressed the screen, "this is Molly, Lindsey and Emily," Lydia pointed out each one as she said their names. "And English, this is McKenna and Amelia."

"Hey, I'm McKenna."

"How do you do, my name is Molly."

"My name is Emily."

"I'm Amelia."

"Nice to meet you, my name is Lindsey."

"And my name is Lydia," Lydia finished with a laugh.

"So, do you English say 'mind the gap' often?" McKenna asked.

"Do you always eat McDonald's?" Emily asked boldly.

"Do you say 'keep calm and carry on'?" Amelia fired back.

"Are you obsessed with wars?" Molly said with a death stare.

"And I heard that Americans all own guns, are poor, and that they don't care about anyone but themselves," Lindsey said finishing the conversation.

"Guys, come on! Are we really going to have a 'name all the American or English stereotypes' war? How about I answer all the questions with one word: No! Just because McDonald's started in the US doesn't mean that we eat it. And 'keep calm and carry on' came from World War II and people don't randomly say it. Can't you all just try to be friends for me?" Lydia finished.

"I'll try it tomorrow," Emily said blankly.

"Me too," McKenna said after Emily.

"Tomorrow at noon then, we will have a fresh start," Lydia said as a closing to the video chat. "Bye McKenna and Amelia."

"Bye Lydia," they answered, then the screen went black.

The girls found their sandwiches and ate them in silence. Finally, Emily said, "I'm truly sorry, Lydia. I guess I felt my English pride in me, and I felt like I needed to defend my country of England. I'm sorry, Lydia, will you forgive me?"

"Yes, Emily, I will forgive you. And I forgive Molly and Lindsey, too," she said looking at the other two girls. "I figured that you guys will also beg for forgiveness," Lydia told them, forcing a smile to go along with her words.

"I guess we will see you tomorrow then? Noon alright?" Molly asked.

"Noon is fine, but you will need to provide the lunch for tomorrow," Lydia responded.

"Great, noon. I'll talk with Em and Molly about lunch. I think that we will be able to see ourselves out," Lindsey said gently.

"Bye girls," Lydia told them.

"Bye Lydia," Emily, Molly and Lindsey said back to her.

Once they had left, Lydia went upstairs to her room. She fell onto her bed and buried her head into her pillow and let the waterfall of tears fall.

"Honey, are you alright?" her mom asked.

"Why?" she hiccuped, "couldn't they get along?" she wailed. Her hiccuping almost completely took over her words.

"Oh, hon," her mom said as she rubbed Lydia's back. "Everyone does this."

"But," Lydia hiccuped, "why?"

"Because, they are jealous."

"Why do they have to be jealous?" Lydia sniffed. "And why are they?" before answering Lydia's question, Lydia's mom took a tissue out of the tissue box on Lydia's beside table and wiped Lydia's face off.

"They are jealous of each other. Your English friends don't like your American friends because the Americans have known you longer. Your US friends don't like your English friends because your English friends are your new friends," Lydia's mom told her. "I think it would be better for you not to include England on your next video chat."

"But they already promised that they will try to get along the next time!" Lydia pointed out.

"Then don't follow up on your promise," Lydia's mom told her.

"But I want them, no, I need them to get along!" Lydia said.

"Why?" her mom asked back.

"They are all my friends, so they should be friends," Lydia told her mom stubbornly with her arms crossed.

"That's not how it works and you know that."

"But..."

"No, Lydia. Your friends all have a mind of their own. I think that they can choose if they want to be friends, yes?" Lydia's mom asked.

"Yes."

"Kapeese?"

"Kapash."

It was a done deal. Lydia never asked her friends about meeting each other ever again, and they also never mentioned it again.

The next day was market day, and Lydia asked her mother if she could go and get the produce that they needed.

"Alright," her mother answered, "but if you see your new friends don't talk about the video chat that happened yesterday."

"Yes, and thanks!" Lydia said as her mother gave her some pounds. Lydia put the money in her pocket and ran out the door. Just like yesterday, she let her nose lead her down to the docks. But unlike yesterday, she didn't need directions and she quickly headed up Waterlily Lane. Almost immediately she noticed that the blue brick had moved and was in front of a different house. The brick hypnotized Lydia. The blue was not a dull dark blue, but a bright blue one. It looked as if it was polished everyday. As if the everyday weathering never affected it. "As if-" No. Lydia pushed away the thought. 'Think about your friends, think about something, anything else.' But the thought mocked her, pushing back into her brain. Deciding to humor herself, she thought aloud, "As if whatever magic the brick has, keeps it looking like it did the day it appeared."

This house was a blue cape, and it looked abandoned. **I shouldn't do this. It's just too strange. Besides, who would I tell anyway? My parents would just send me to an asylum. But, what if it is real. I could solve a mystery, just like Nancy Drew. What the heck! I'm just going to go for it.** She bolted towards the blue brick. "Right, left, right, left, blue!" She thought. After she landed on the brick, she stopped running and braced herself for the mini-earthquake that was about to occur. She stood there, all tensed up. After a minute, she relaxed and was immediately brought to the ground. The tremors had started, and she was forced to wait until they stopped.

"Father, no! I won't let them take you!" a crying girl shouted. The girl was about 14 and had long auburn hair. The girl shouted after a man whose back was turned to her. The man was slightly older with white strands throughout his dark hair.

"Father. Father please don't leave me - us. Please don't go," the girl whispered forcefully.

"I would never leave you, Elisabeth," the man whispered back. "I would never leave you, Mother, Danny or this country. But when my homeland needs protection, I will protect it," the man turned around to look at his daughter.

"But Father, there are thousands of men headed where you are. Can't you stay with us?" the girl asked with concern.

"By threatening our country, our enemy is also threatening my family. And that is something that I cannot allow," the man said his words firm, his lips in a tight line. "Don't worry Elisabeth. I will always be here in spirit, if not in body," the girl looked up at him and hugged him.

"But I feel like I will never see you again," the girl told him, trying to hold back her tears.

"I know. How about at 3:30pm we see each other. Mother and Danny, too," he said wiping Elisabeth's tears away with his large calloused fingers.

"How will we be able to do that?" the girls asked.

"Remember when we used to look at the clouds?" he asked her.

"Yes."

"At 3:30, I want you to look at the sky and find the biggest cloud. I shall do the same thing," he told her. "Look at the time!" he said looking at his watch. "The boat leaves in ten minutes!" he gave Elizabeth a quick hug. He turned to a window on the first floor and waved to it. Lydia saw a woman and a small child waving. **It must be Danny and Elisabeth's mother,** Lydia thought.

"Father, here," the girl said, quickly unclasping her locket that Lydia hadn't noticed before. "It has a picture of the whole family inside," the girl handed it to her father, who quickly put it in his pocket. "Goodbye father!" she said as the man turned and ran for the pier.

"Goodbye, Elisabeth! Remember the clouds!" he yelled back to her.

"I will always remember!" the girl yelled back, wiping her tears, "Always."

...

Lydia closes her eyes and opens them again. "Whoa. I need to go think for a minute," Lydia said to herself. Lydia turned the other way, and walked toward the ocean. As she reached the pier, the smell of the ocean overtook her. The smell of mudflats and seaweed was still a novelty after spending a lifetime in South Dakota. Back home they only had pigeons and bluebirds so she enjoyed watching the seagulls and their antics. Laughing, she watched a seagull try to steal a fisherman's snack. The fisherman finally shoveled the biscuit into his mouth. Having failed, the seagull took off with a few "squaks". Satisfied that the gull finally left, the man glared at Lydia as she stifled a laugh. "What a different world this is from anything I have known before." She thought.

After watching the seagulls a bit longer Lydia decided that she should try to find more information on the local men who fought in World War II and their families. "The library? No. The town hall? Hmm, yes," she thought. "Yes, the town hall," but Lydia did not want to risk the potential of another flashback. She decided to go up her road and then take a different road to the town center.

Twenty minutes later, she was standing in the town square. Looking lost, she looked around for a sign that said 'Town Hall' but didn't see anything. "It's obviously not here because I need it," she grumpily thought to herself.

"Hey, Lydia!" someone shouted. Lydia turned to see Em, Molly and Lindsay jogging towards her. "Are you lost?" Em asked with disbelief.

"I have only been here for a week," Lydia said to prove her point.

"So, you are lost!" Em said triumphantly.

"Whatever. Anyways, I need to find the town hall."

"Why?" Molly asked.

"I - I was just admiring the houses on Waterlily Lane and -" Lindsay cut her off.

"Waterlily Lane? You, you saw them!" Lindsay said staring at Lydia with wide eyes.

"Who's - who's them?" Lydia asked.

"Oh, she definitely has seen them," Molly said.

"Has an outsider been known to have seen them?" Em asked Molly.

"I don't know. But I bet Mr. Tiddle does," Molly told Lindsay and Em.

"Who's Mr. Tiddle?" Lydia asked.

"Oh, he is this old fisherman, he loves to give you directions. I don't know why. He is always at the docks when you need him," Molly told Lydia.

"Oh?" Lydia said. She realized that it had been this Tiddle fellow who had given her the directions yesterday. He was the one who had gotten her into this whole Waterlily mess.

"Where is he?" she asked.

"Follow me," Molly said. The girls followed Molly out of the town center, and towards the water. Towards Mr. Tiddle.

The four friends stopped at the dock but the old fisherman was nowhere to be seen. Molly turned to the left and walked toward a grove of trees. The trees were all evergreens, and there were seven smallish trees in front. Behind them was a beautiful and dark woods. This was Mr. Tiddle's evergreen forest. The small trees in front marked the entrance to a blue cobblestone path.

"Wow. He lives in here?" Emily asked.

"What did you think this mini-forest was?" Molly asked Emily.

"Actually, I thought that it was a national reserve," Emily told Molly.

"Alright then, Emily. Well, are we going then?" Molly asked.

"Yeah," Lindsay said in awe.

"Let's go," Molly told the gang.

Lydia waited a moment. She wanted to take this small marvel in, and she wanted to prepare for the conversation that would reveal all. She noticed that his house number and sign were all artistically created with lobster traps and driftwood. She followed her friends down the cobblestone path. Blue cobblestone path. **I wonder why they are all blue cobblestones?** Lydia thought. She wondered if it had anything to do with Waterlily Lane. Perhaps it had everything to do with Waterlily Lane.

The path twisted through the woods, finally coming to a clearing with a small red house in the center. As Lydia and her friends walked up to the house, they saw Mr. Tiddle standing outside. He seemed to have been waiting for them. **How creepy**, Lydia thought.

"Ello, ladies. I was hoping to would stop by. Molly, always a pleasure to see you," Mr. Tiddle directed to Molly.

"Mr. Tiddle, I am terribly sorry that we cannot start off the visit with the traditional introductions, but we have a bit of a problem," she told Mr. Tiddle.

"Oh, Molly. It's alright. I do know all these young ladies," he looked at each girl. They nodded in return. "Even if I still haven't formally met this one," he said looking at Lydia. "Well, what is the important question?" he asked, looking at Lydia.

Lydia shrank back into the comfort of her friends. She ducked behind them, only to be pushed back in front where she faced Mr. Tiddle. He looked at her, smiling, with his eyes crinkling at the corners, reminding her of the day when she first met him. Envisioning him as her grandfather, she took a deep breath, drawing out the courage to tell him. **But what was the point anyway, where was the point in that deep breath, in the courage.** Lydia thought. **Besides, he already knows. He must know.** Lydia looked at Mr. Tiddle, and simply told him. She told him everything.

"So you not only saw them, you actually heard them, speaking?" he asked with awe.

"Has no one ever seen them speak?" Lydia asked him, fully engrossed in the conversation.

"No. Everyone, well almost everyone has experienced the time warp. They have all seen snip bits of the past, but the scene has always been irrelevant."

"What do you mean, irrelevant?" Lydia asked.

"No words, no importance to what they saw," Mr. Tiddle explained.

"Well, what I saw may be of importance, but I am not sure," Lydia told him.

"Go on," Mr. Tiddle said expectantly.

"Well I saw them twice and each time there was a different man and a different child. Both men had a similar uniform on. Circa 1940's I believe. The child was always crying, it was evident that the men must go to war. The child was always begging for their father to not leave. After each child understood that the father must go, they gave their father a token for remembrance. Once a locket, then a small wooden boat. Then the scene always ended with a promise."

"A small wooden boat," Mr. Tiddle said solemnly and slowly. "What was that child's name?"

"The girl who gave the locket was Elisabeth," a gasp came from Emily, "the boy with the boat was Adam," tears slowly came to Mr. Tiddle's eyes.

"That was me," he said, starting to cry.

"What? So you gave your father the toy boat?" she asked.

"Yes," he said solemnly.

"What happened to your father?" Lydia asked.

"He...died. In the war," Mr. Tiddle said, tears silently running down his cheeks.

"I'm sorry," Lydia said.

"thank you my child, but it was many years ago. Well, shall we try to understand what is causing these snippets of the past to show themselves in the present?" Mr. Tiddle asked.

"Alright," the girls all said.

"Come inside, girls, and make yourselves at home," Mr. Tiddle told the girls. They followed him inside and they sat on his living room couch. They all marveled at how the house was decorated. There were seashells adorning the windows, sea glass in glass jars creating a rainbow of colors reflected on the wall. On the mantle was two pictures. One of Dover, and the other of Calais, France.

"That's funny," Lydia said aloud. "It's as if the artist drew them identical. But, why would an artist do that," Lydia said.

"It was on purpose. The waterfronts of the two towns are identical. It wasn't planned, but it did happen. No one knows why the architects did that. Although each side does have its own cultural flair. But,

some say that identical towns have identical problems," Mr. Tiddle told the girls.

"Is there any truth to that?" Emily asked the man.

"Yes," he told them mysteriously. "When Calais has a problem, Dover has a problem. And when Dover has a problem Calais has a problem."

"Is it always the same problem?" Lydia asked.

"Yes, it's always the same."

Lydia started thinking, her thoughts coming and going like rapid fire. **The two towns have identical problems. So if Dover has a flashback problem, then so does Calais. And if the waterfronts are the same, then there is a Waterlily Lane. And if there is a Waterlily Lane, then there is a blue brick. And if there is a blue brick, then there are flashbacks. But, Calais and Dover are only half symmetrical, so the flashbacks must be the other half of our flashbacks. And if we put them together then we can solve the mystery.**

"Lydia, whatever are you thinking?" Emily asked.

"I think that we need to go to Calais. They have the flashbacks also. They have a blue brick, they have a Waterlily Lane. And they just might have the answers."

"Alright, girls. We need to have a full day to do this, so we shall leave tomorrow at eight fifteen. I will see you all at the docks. We will take the ferry. It costs £13,00 round trip. We leave at eight twenty five and we return at six forty five. Bring a backpack with water and snacks. And you will need extra money for lunch, if you want to buy lunch," the girls all nodded then stood up and left. Lydia was the last one headed out when she was called back.

"Oh, and Lydia," Mr. Tiddle said, "I need you to write down exactly what you saw and heard."

"Ok. See you at eight fifteen," Lydia responded as she walked out.

Lydia spent the rest of the day writing. She found a small notebook that she could easily put in her pocket. She wrote and wrote, erased and rewrote. She filled half the little notebook with what was

the complete truth. Around dinner time she flipped the notebook closed with a sigh. Now all she had to do was convince her parents to let her go to France, and give her twenty pounds.

She knew her parents would not say yes at first. And, she knew why they would have second thoughts. She would be in a group of three sixteen year olds and a man the age of her grandfather. They would also be traveling by boat, and they had no idea what might happen to them.

Lydia walked down the stairs to the living room. Her mother was typing on the computer and her father was watching a British television show.

"Mom, dad, can I ask you something?" Lydia asked.

"Sure, what is it?" her mother asked.

"One of the...uh...high school teachers is taking a few of the students to Calais. We are taking the ferry over at eight twenty five, but we need to be there at eight fifteen. And the tickets are £13,00. We need extra money for lunch. In all, I think I will need about £20,00. Can I go?"

"What high school teacher is this?" Mr. Wilder asked.

"The French teacher. He wants us to have a true french emersion experience. The real thing," Lydia said nodding vigorously.

The parents looked at each other and then turned to Lydia and said yes. Her father gave her £20,00. She went into the hallway and grabbed a small backpack. She put her wallet, water bottle, and notebook in it. She zipped it up and put it by her jacket and shoes. Lydia is all set for tomorrow.

Lydia walked out the door at eight. There was still a light fog and a gentle mist was in the air. She walked down to the pier and arrived right as the rest of her group did. They got in line for the ticket booth. When they reached it they all handed their £13,00 to Mr. Tiddle who in return gave them two tickets. They then proceeded to the ramp onto the ferry, and they handed their ticket to the official. When the official handed the tickets back, the girls all ran to the top level balcony of the ferry. Mr. Tiddle went to a more comfortable location.

The engine roared to life. The girls could hear the seagulls squawk as they left their perches. Then, the boat moved forward. Lydia, overwhelmed with excitement, snapped her head forward and backward. Looking toward the land that was getting larger, or looking back toward the land that was becoming smaller. It was all so exciting for Lydia that too soon it was over.

As they got off the ferry Lydia and the others met up with Mr. Tiddle. Beyond the pier they were all astounded that the Calais waterfront really did look just like Dover. "What now?" Emily asked.

"We need to find Waterlily Lane," Mr. Tiddle said. "I believe it should be this way."

"All of the street signs are in French," Lydia said. "So Waterlily Lane should be Nénuphar Voie. If the waterfront is just like home we should go this way, I think."

They crossed the street and saw a road that was the exact replica of Waterlily Lane. "This has to be it!" Molly shouted. The five of them walked up the lane, eyes glued to the ground, searching for a blue brick.

"Are you looking for something?" a local girl asked.

"Oui, do you know if there is a blue brick somewhere on this street?" Lydia asked.

"You have seen them? The specters-ghosts- from the past?" the girl asked in amazement.

"Yes, we have them in Dover too. We think that you have seen one half of the vision and we have seen the other. We need to solve the mystery. Can you please help us?" Mr. Tiddle replied.

"Mais Oui," she answered. "Please follow me and I will show you le bleu brick."

The group continued up the street and stopped in front of the blue brick, the twin to the one in Dover.

"Lydia, you step on it. The visions are stronger for you," Mr. Tiddle said.

Lydia took a deep breath and stepped on the brick. Just like in Dover the ground shook and Lydia fell to the ground. Before her she saw the same men that she had seen in Dover but this time they were together, huddled next to the ground in the street.

...

"Here's the boat my son made. Quickly, put it in the sack and don't forget your daughter's necklace. We haven't got much time, we have to be back at camp before dawn."

They put the sack in a small hole they had dug under one of the cobblestone bricks in the street and quickly painted it blue.

"No one will notice the brick, it's off to the side and the same color as these flowers that cover it. Maybe some day we will be able to return and bring back these cherished gifts to our families. I wish we didn't have to leave them here but the battlefield is no place for such mementos. May God protect them," the man whispered.

"Amen," the other man replied. They put the blue brick on top of the sack, and pressed it into the earth. Little did they realize that the moment the brick clicked into place, another blue brick magically appeared in Dover.

...

"What did you see?" Mr. Tiddle asked Lydia.

"The heirlooms..." Lydia said thinking. "I know where they are!"

"Where are they?" Mr. Tiddle asked.

"Underneath the brick," Lydia replied.

"You will need a digging tool, Oui?" the French girl asked, slightly confused at the fast English conversation.

"Yes, we will need a tool," Lindsay told the girl.

"But first, you need lunch," the French girl told the group. After she said that, there was a bit of stomach growling coming from the English.

"Lead the way to the nearest café!" Mr. Tiddle said to the French girl.

"Follow moi! Oh, and my name is Salomé," the girl informed them.

"Well Salomé, my name is Mr. Tiddle and this is Molly, Emily, Lindsay, and Lydia," Mr. Tiddle replied. They followed Salomé to the

main square, and into the **Café Noir**. They all ordered sandwiches, and finally Lydia was able to taste the French bread that almost took her off the dock.

After lunch they went to the local hardware store called Le Quincaillier. They bought a screwdriver to pry the brick out. They left the store with a "Merci," to the shopkeeper. Then, they hiked back to the blue brick.

"Mr. Tiddle, you should do the honors," Lydia told the old man.

"Yes, you should do it," everyone agreed. He knelt next to the brick. Using the screwdriver, he pried the brick out. Everyone held their breath.

"It's here," Mr. Tiddle quietly told them. He gently scooped out a old burlap sack. He let the edge fall open and reveal the sack's contents. A small wooden boat that had not seen the light of day and that had been shielded from decay was the larger object. Next to it gleaming in the sunlight was a golden locket. Mr. Tiddle picked up the locket, and gave it to Emily. "I do believe that this belongs to you," he said knowingly. She opened it to find a small family photo.

"Why, Em! The girl looks like you," Lydia commented.

"It's my grandmother. When we return, I must give it to her. She thought that it had been lost in the war. My great-grandfather survived the war, but he decided to block out the years he was in service for. She could never get an answer from him when she asked about her locket," Emily said, relief in her eyes. "I'm glad it has returned to our family." While Emily was telling her story, Mr. Tiddle was crying. When Lydia looked at him, she saw he was going through a mix of emotions. He was smiling a true smile, but his eyes were mourning his dead father who cared enough to preserve his small wooden boat.

"This is such-such a gift," Mr. Tiddle said crying. "If I only knew where his suitcase ended up."

"Why would you need some old suitcase?" Emily asked him.

"In his last letter he mentioned having gifts for us," Mr. Tiddle mentioned.

"But wouldn't it be hard to locate the suitcase let alone the gifts," Molly told him.

"I guess your right. But I have searched all over Europe for the suitcase," Mr. Tiddle explained. Lydia slowly remembered when she had seen Mr. Tiddle in the past. **His father had been carrying a red suitcase. A suitcase that was all too familiar.** Her throat became dry.

"I think that I know what happened to this suitcase of yours," Lydia told Mr. Tiddle.

"How would you know? Wait, did you see it in the past? Was it in South Dakota? I have been meaning to take a trip to the States," Mr. Tiddle rambled.

"It's a lot closer than you think," Lydia told him hoping that he would take the hint.

"You have it," Mr. Tiddle said with wonder. "Why Miss Lydia, you are full of surprises aren't you," Mr. Tiddle said. "I think that if we all hurry, we can catch the earlier ferry," he said excitedly.

"Lets go!" Lydia told her friends.

"Yeah, let's go back to Dover," they all agreed.

"Goodbye my new friends!" the French girl told them.

"Goodbye!" they all said grabbing the sack and heading towards the dock.

Lydia boarded the large ship. Once again the four friends sprinted to the top deck. **The view is beautiful**, Lydia thought. She felt so free with the wind in her hair. She was so high up that she felt that the wind could pick her up and carry her to far off lands. But once again before she knew it they were docking in Dover.

"Lydia," Mr. Tiddle said, "I presume that the suitcase is at your home. So we will travel down Waterlily and crossover to Willow Way. Is that alright girls?" Mr. Tiddle asked.

"It's fine with me, is it alright with you?" Lydia said looking at the other girls. They nodded back. The group headed down Waterlily. When they passed where the blue brick was last, it had disappeared. **Strange**, Lydia thought. They then crossed over to Willow. Lydia's

house was close to where they had joined onto Willow Way. Five minutes later, they were standing in front of Lydia's house.

Lydia's parents weren't at home when they arrived. They all headed upstairs to Lydia's room. Out the window they could see Mr. Tiddle's boat in the harbor. In the corner of the room was the old red suitcase. Mr. Tiddle's eyes showed recognition. The suitcase was empty so she could easily lift it onto her bed. She opened it, but stepped aside so he could explore the suitcase.

"What are you looking for?" Lydia asked him.

"My parents had always talked about a secret panel in the suitcase. I had always wanted to see if there really was one but I never had the chance," Mr. Tiddle told them. "Aha, it is here!" Mr. Tiddle opened the panel. The panel was hidden so well that no one could find it unless they knew it was there. The panel flopped down to reveal three small packages. The first was labeled Mary, the second James, and the third Adam. **It must be for Mr. Tiddle's mother, brother, and himself.**

"I will need to ship my brother's to Scotland where he lives," Mr. Tiddle said. "But, as my mother is not alive, I believe hers shall go to Lydia. You deserve it my dear," he told Lydia looking at her with a grandfatherly look.

"Thank you, Mr. Tiddle. I never knew my grandfather. I hope he was like you," Lydia told him.

"And if I ever had granddaughters, they would all be like you girls," Mr. Tiddle said. When Lydia opened the package she found a set of four jewelry pieces. There was two necklaces each different, one bracelet, and one ring. Mr. Tiddle, delighted that there was once piece for each girl, allowed them to pick the one of their choice. He then slowly opened the once for himself.

"Why, the lobster boat looks like your boat. The one in the harbor," Emily noticed. It was an exact replica of his lobster boat. The boat was named Adam's Trapper.

"Why is it called Adam's Trapper?" Lydia asked the old man who was crying again.

"The name Trapper comes from when my mother decided to make us all dream catchers. The idea is to catch the bad dreams, but let the good ones through. But I never liked the name catcher. I decided to instead call mine the dream trapper. So my dad replaced my catcher with a lobster trap. But even then I didn't like the concept. So, I modified the trap so that it would catch the good dreams, but let the bad ones continue on. My dad said that 'In every trap is a dream cached.' And the boat is the boat that my father and I had always wanted but could never have. His saying never worked for him, maybe it was because the saying becoming truth was also a dream. When I was finally able to buy the boat, I named it after my father. It's called the Henry Tiddle. I think that I will hang this small boat in the cabin. You can always use a little luck when you are making your living off the sea," Mr. Tiddle explained. "Well, thank you all for helping me find my father and connect with him. I think that I will drive to my brother's house tomorrow and give him a gift from his father that he never met. Thank you Lydia," he said giving her a hug. He then waved goodbye to the other girls and then he turned and left. The girls all left right after Mr. Tiddle. They all promised seeing each other tomorrow to talk about what happened.

Left in her room, Lydia thought about what had happened in the last three days, and what she had done for an old man.

This is truly remarkable, Lydia thought. A mystery solved, a bridge created to span the decades. This could only happen in Dover.

Yes, Lydia. This could only happen in Dover.

Zombies

It was the day of the Apocalypse and unfortunately I knew it was coming. With Devin's help we had to stop it because it was our destiny, and I had to save my friends lives. I thought we had more time, a lot more time but I was clearly wrong.

I was at school laughing with my friends, when the screams started. Our teacher rushed to the door and looked out in the hall, closing the door with horror.

...
"What is it?" said my friend Devin, but he was interrupted by Mr. Fournier.

"Get against the wall NOW!" he screamed with terror.

I snuck past Mr. Fournier and as I did he shouted at me to get against the wall. I've never seen him this scared. I looked out the door and saw the creature. We call them zombies.

"Everybody get down and back away from the window." I said. I was the only one that could stop them.

"Jared and Lukas, get the couch and drag it over to the door!" I screamed.

Everyone started asking questions such as "What's happening?" and "Who are you guys?"

The zombies had come once before, but the legion stopped them. That happened 20 years ago, and everyone thought it was over but it isn't.

...

My name is Sage. My friends would say I'm smart, that I kickbutt, am funny, and I don't give up on things easily. I know you have all these questions and they will be answered, but you have to be patient. I'm still trying to piece all of the craziness together.

...

"Who are you?" They all asked.
"They call me the DEVINATOR." said Devin.
"They call me Donkey On High." said Nellie.
"And they call me Zombie Killer, Killer for short." I said with confidence.
"And Jared and I don't have nicknames." said Lukas.
"What's going on? Why is Mr. Fournier freaking out." said a classmate.
"We need to get out of here and go to the basement." I said.
"I agree." said Devin.

Jared and Lukas moved to our town in the beginning of 8th grade year. Jared really helped me understand the whole kill zombies thing. He and his twin brother Lukas as well as the rest of us are apart of this society called the B.A.Z.S

...

Devin and I discovered we were apart of this society called the B.A.Z.S. Our mothers sat us down and told us Devin and I we were cousins, and in 8th grade zombies were going to come back cause they had gone extinct. The members of the B.A.Z.S, at the time, had defeated them for good, at least that's what our mothers thought. Now it was our time to save everyone.

"How are we going to save everyone?" I said. "We're just 10 years old."

"When you guys are 14, the rest of the legion will be uncovered, so until then you have to train yourselves."
When we were about to go into 5th grade, our mothers each gave us boxes with keys shaped like crosses in them.

"What do these keys go to?" asked Devin.
"Come with me, we're going to the school." she said.
She lead us down to the basement and moved a box on the shelf, behind it there was a keyhole. We put our keys into the hole and the shelves slide to the side and a door appeared. I opened the door to find stairs. She lead us down the old creaky stairs.
"Under the whole school is rooms with weapons, spells, training area, and a safety room. If there is ever a zombie attack come down here. There are areas in each room with guns and walkie talkies in case you aren't in the same room. You will open them with your keys. ALWAYS CARRY YOUR KEYS!!
"Why can't you train us?" I asked, but she didn't answer.

Three years later zombies started to show up on the island and with our very little training we were able to kill them. Without the other members it was really hard to do it all by ourselves especially without the training we needed.

In 7th grade Nellie, my best friend, showed me a necklace that her mom gave her and it was exactly like mine and Devin's. We told her that her necklace looked exactly like ours.
Once 8th grade came Jared and Lukas moved here. Jared and I had this connection that I couldn't quite understand. One day we got a signal on our phones telling us there was a zombie alert. Jared and Lukas must of got the same signal because when we got there they were there too. That is how we found the rest of the legion. Ever since Jared has been training me, and I have to say Jared was good, but in the end I was kicking his butt.

Then came the end of 8th grade year. When the zombie attack hit...

...

"You need to follow us down to the basement."
"Why, whats down there?"
"Killer, the weapon wall is over here, the keyhole is in the outlet." said the DEVINATOR.

I walked over to Devin. We both put our keys in the outlet. There was a quiet clicking noise like gears, like a secret being unlocked. The whole wall slid back and a new wall appeared with guns, knife, bow and arrow, machetes, and swords. I grabbed a handgun and strapped it to my thigh. I got the bag of arrows and put it on my back like a backpack and grabbed the bow. Jared and Lukas both grabbed machine guns. Devin took to curved machetes. Nellie picked up a automatic pistol.

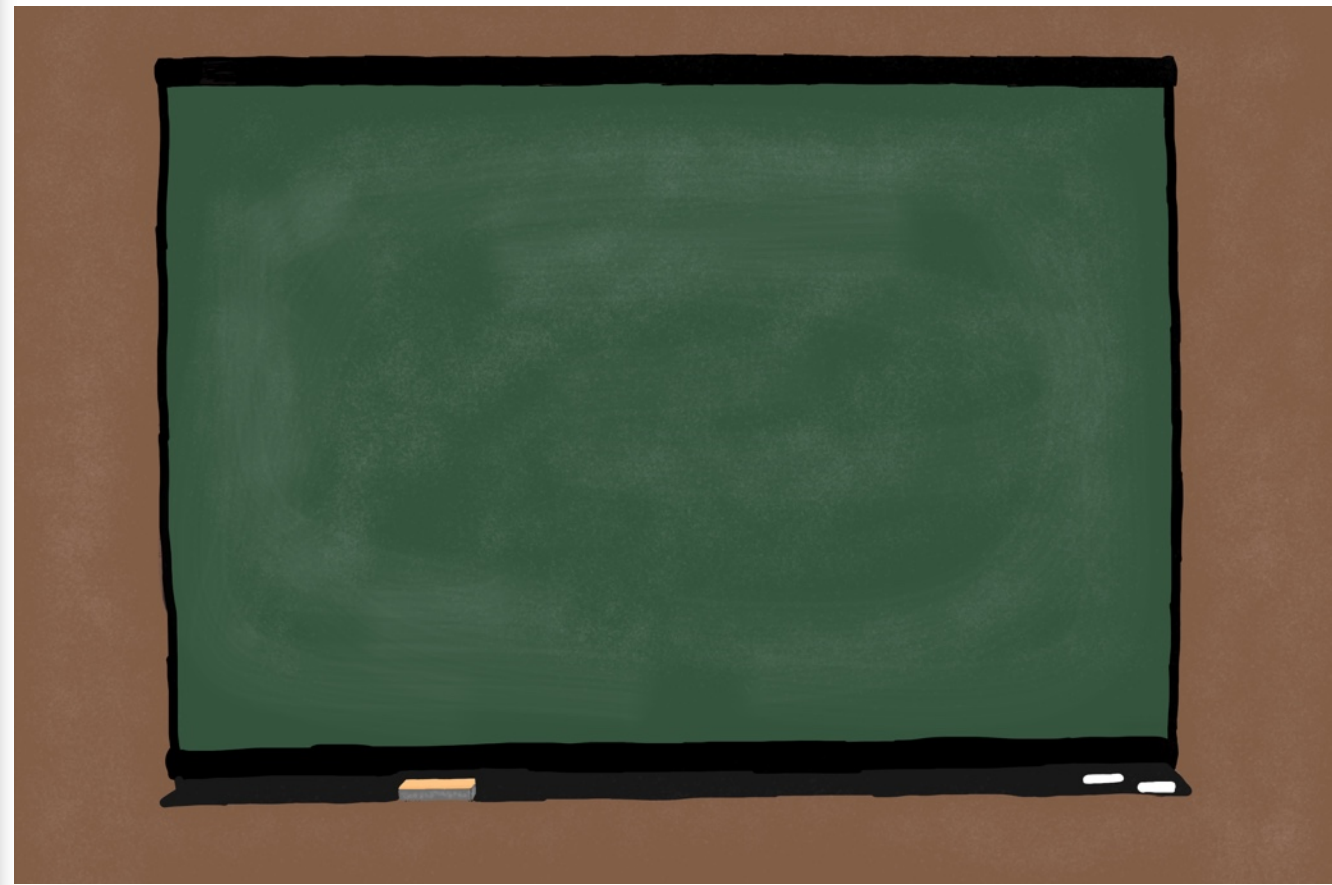
We slowly walked down to the basement. After having so such good luck and everything going smoothly, I had a bad feeling. We got down to the basement to find Zombies crowding around the shelves. They started to run towards us and I shot i herd the kids in my class yelling and screaming. I turned around and a zombie was attacking jared, the zombie bit him and i shot the zombie with a arrow zombie but it was too late.

"JARED!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Chapter 4

STRANDED

This is a story created by Mr. Fournier's class during the 2013-2014 school year.



SECTION 1



Stranded

A 7th Grade Production

MDES Publishing

©2014

Table of Contents:

● **Chapter 1: At the Airport**

- **Nikki**...written by Camden
- **Rob**.....written by Forest
- **Alfonzo**...written by Dawson
- **Zoe**....written by Nellie
- **Dan**...written by Zeke
- **Adam**...written by Brigitte

● **Chapter 2: The Plane**

- **Stacy**...written by Tiana
- **Lila**...written by Sage
- **Troy**...written by Devin
- **Michelle**... written by Katana
- **Jessica**... written by Katie
- **Floyd**...written by Chase
- **Frank**...written by Sam
- **Dr. John**...written by Gilbert
- **Dan**...written by Zeke
- **Floyd**...written by Chase
- **Michael**...written by Isaac
- **Stacy**...written by Tiana
- **Frank**...written by Sam
- **Jessica**...written by Katie

● **Chapter 3: Crashing**

- **Jessica**...written by Katie
- **Jessica**....written by Katie
- **Zoe**....written by Nellie

● **Chapter 4: The Island**

- **Alfonzo**....written by Dawson
- **Dr. John**....written by Gilbert
- **Michael**....written by Isaac
- **Frank**....written by Sam
- **Jessica**....written by Katie
- **Michelle**....written by Katana

● **Chapter 5: Meetings**

- **Nikki**....written by Camden

● **Chapter 6: Struggles**

- **Frank**....written by Sam
- **Zoe**....written by Nellie
- **Rob**.....written by Forest
- **Floyd**....written by Chase

● **Chapter 7: Encounters**

- **Alfonzo**....written by Dawson
- **Dan**....written by Zeke
- **Jessica**....written by Katie
- **Troy**....written by Devin
- **Stacy**written by Tiana
- **Alfonzo**....written by Dawson
- **Rob**....written by Forest
- **Troy**....written by Devin
- **Stacy**....written by Tiana

● **Chapter 8: Defeat**

- **Frank**...written by Sam
- **Rob**.....written by Forest
- **Jessica**...written by Katie
- **Dr. John**....written by Gilbert

- **Alfonzo**....written by Dawson

Chapter 9: Hellos

- **Adam**....written by Brigitte
- **Stacy**....written by Tiana
- **Jessica**....written by Katie
- **Lila**.....written by Sage
- **Adam**.....written by Brigitte
- **Stacy**....written by Tiana
- **Jessica**.....written by Katie

• **Chapter 10: Goodbyes**

- **Lila**.....written by Sage
- **Adam**....written by Brigitte
- **Floyd**....written by Chase
- **Alfonzo**.....written by Dawson

CHAPTER 1: AT THE AIRPORT

"In three words I can sum up everything I have learned about life: It goes on."

- Robert Frost

Nikki T.

The Present

"Ugh! This line is taking so long!" I babbled to my sister.

"I know right, why is it taking so long? I'm so bored!"

I took a glance at what was waiting in front of us. It was a long, narrow line of eager citizens, ready to get the heck out of this city, and to paradise... I was there with my sister, in the longest layover ever! I had waited for two and a half hours now to board the next plane and get on with my vacation. My sister is twenty-four, and I'm not so sure that I should be here with her right now alone. Ever since the time that her and I attempted to go to the nearby water park in her rusty old junker. It was a weekend and we were desperate for some fun! Next thing you know, we were on our way to the "Suzy Q's Happy Fun Park!" The most boring thing you could possibly do... Anyway, we were on our way there. And we were cruising down the highway with both windows open and music blasting. We all of the sudden started to feel a slight shake, and it got louder and louder. We finally decided to pull over, only to find out that one of our tires had popped. It was about ready to actually come off of the wheel. "Well, I guess we better get a ride home." She yelled over the roaring traffic going by. She ran out to the road and on the side she stopped, she stuck her hand out and lifted her thumb. The rest of her hand was in a fist fashion.

"Sammy! What the heck are you doing! We can't hitch hike, something bad could happen! What if we get kidnapped?!" And, well, I'll just leave it right there for you to figure out what happened next...

Rob

The Present

Everyone was probably thinking something like, "Oh, I hope I turned the bathroom light off!", or something pointless like that. But me? No, no way. I can't wait to get away from all these people, with their memories, and their anxiety to get away radiating around the room. I hear some people behind me, and I turn around. The one talking looks like he's about thirteen, and he seems to be talking about police work. Soon I start

chatting with him, and he seems like a pretty cool kid. Too bad I gave up on friends a while ago.

The Past

"Rob, something's happened. Your parents, they, ah, well, they're gone."

The words pierce my heart like a dagger. A cold, sharp blade pushing deeper, and deeper, the more I think about it. I sit silently, waiting for the words of hope I knew were going to come. An apology of any kind, or even a wish for things to be better for me. To say it never should have happened.

But it doesn't come.

The man in the suit darts up, and waves his hand in a crisp 'I've got better things to do' kind of way. "Mr. Bursells will take it from here."

I look up at him, hatred in my gaze. How could he be so cruel? He had just informed me that my parents are dead, yet he acts like it's the most meaningless thing in the world. He adjusts his tie in a nervous kind of way, unsure whether to make up for his mistake or leave. He eventually chooses the latter one, and I am left alone in the room weeping.

Alfonzo

The Present

I was flying to Hawaii for my 13th birthday, when I thought three years back to what had changed this day forever...

The Past

I sit in the hospital waiting room as my mother is giving birth to my eighteenth sibling. as I sit on the hard plastic chair I stare down at the pile of outdated magazines, the one on top says "Brain Science." I wondered if my parents were crazy, you know, having had eighteen kids, this one having been born on my

birthday I was not too happy about having another brother or sister.

My oldest sibling Is named Gobyn he is twenty two, he is my favorite. I awaken from my thoughts as I see the hospital Room door shoves open and out comes my father holding a baby in his hands and a huge smile on his face. Surprisingly after over twenty two years of this, the excitement still gets to him. "What's its name?" I ask as I peer into the wrapped up bundles face. "it's name is, Alfonzo junior" my dad exclaimed, "Isn't it great?! We named him after you!" Great, I think, this baby has stolen my birthday and my name. After seeing the look of joy on my dad's face and my little brother's, I couldn't stay mad long.

The Present

"Flight 409 to Hawaii is now boarding," announces the flight attendant. I feel a rush of excitement roll through my body. I was about to get on the plane of destiny.

Zoë

The Present

People were staring at me like I was a precious gem. I looked down at my phone, ashamed. It's not like I did anything bad, but I'm really not used to being famous all of the sudden. I hear the blaring of the last chord of a song. Well, not really any song, my song. I hear the announcer say, "And that was Zoë O'malley singing

Falling in her new album Run On."

The thing is, I didn't sign up for being a pop star. Nope. I was going to be an runner. I'm new though to being famous, so I don't really want to tell anybody about my dreams being sort of crushed. I feel like the song that Pink sings its called, Perfect. They all might think that I'm perfect but really, so they should have seen me before they told me what to wear and how to act. I guess that everybody thinks that I'm just like every other pop star. Dumb, fake, and stuck up. Truthfully that makes me so mad. It makes my head hurt and my mouth go in a thin straight line. Well thats just not how I grew up. Me and my brother were taught how to be kind and gentle,to speak up and know that your parents would die for you. Thinking about my mom and dad makes my eyes burn. I close them quickly. "First class may bored now," says a dull toned man. I get out of my seat quickly and walk over to the line confidently. Well, I know it looks confident bec I had to practice walking in front of a mirror for three

hours. But, if you could feel what I was feeling, It would be just like my middle school years. I was different. I said what I wanted to say and looked different than everybody else. I had short hair and the all the other girls had their hair in pony tails. Grabbing my ticket I almost run down the the gate to the plane. Then I get this weird feeling in my stomach. Stumbling I make it to the plane ok. Once I sit down I know what that feeling was, homesickness. Wiping away tears I make a beeline to the bathroom. When I come back my body guard/Air Marshal was seated across from me. I give him a nervous smile and the plane takes off.

Dan

The Present

I needed to get out of the California district, and fast.

"Sir, I need your ID," the officer explains.

"I am the Prime Minister of, ah, Swaziland," I lied.

"Sir," I didn't let him finish his sentence I gave him the eternal death grip back. "Thanks pal," I

muttered. I took the handcuffs, badge, pepper spray, and the taser . I walked up the run way and though the plane and made my way to the front I was in the third class section that way I would be noticed. I sat next to the man with a hole in his face just my kind of person I thought. I was doing it and it felt good to be on the plane escaping from the death penalty.

The Past

I woke up a few months ago and I said I need some excitement, and that's where it all began. "Dan get over here now, I need you to drive 16 Lambo's over to the other dealership."

"Ok." I groaned back.

"Oh, and make it quick or you're fired." I got in the front of the 18 wheeler and started my drive, then five minutes later I could see the Jimmy Car Dealership sign so what did I do I kept on going. As soon as I got on the highway I turn the truck so that I was blocking the whole road. I did this so I would have some room to drive around. Then, I opened the back, put down the ramp, and got in the lambo and backed down the ramp, and once this was done I floored it. And since the road was blocked there was no one in my way. I was now at 80mph

and I could see pretty clearly. My heart rate was rising as I watched the speedometer climb to 90 mph, 100 mph, 120 mph, 130 mph, 140 mph, 150 mph, 160 mph, 170 mph, 180 mph, 200mp. Wam. I woke up in the front seat the yellow lambo. I looked out the shattered windshield, and what I saw was shocking. Five cop cars all condensed to the size of a table. There were shards of glass all around the area. The cars were crushed together. I realized two things at that at moment, one, I just drove through a roadblock and two, there was no turning back and ever since that day I have stole \$300,000,000 worth of cars and sold them for \$600,000,000.

Adam

The Present

I keep going over in my head, "My surfboard is the only thing I have to worry about. I have my military backpack and that's all." This isn't my first time on a plane, but it is the first time going so far. I just want to get on the airplane and sleep. The drive from Maine was endless. "Oh my gosh, where's my fly rod," I screamed in my head.

"Oh yeah it's in my surfboard case." As I stand in the secured line, up ahead of me I see this crazy guy having an argument with the secured guard. As the guy is arguing with the guard, he swats at the air like he's grabbing something. "He's crazy," I say to myself after I hear him say he's the prime minister of Swaziland.

"What in the world is he doing I really hope I don't get stuck sitting with him," I tell myself.

"Flight 102 to Hawaii may board now," said the stocky lady behind the desk in a raspy voice. Yes, I am finally on the plane and on my way I thought, as I tucked my backpack in the corner of the over head. I glanced at my ticket to notice that I was in the way back and had a window seat. I was used to being this exhausted. Back home I'm a lobsterman. Lobstering is hard work, but I love it. Being on the water is in my blood. I grew up in Massachusetts, but every summer my family wemg up to Maine out to a little mile by a mile island called Islesford. Now we live in Maine having to leave after every summer felt like leaving home. My parents are in the military now my dad's retired, but my mom is still in the service. I have three siblings, two younger sisters and an older brother. My youngest sister Lindsay and I are really close. I'm not sure why but we always have been. Us four siblings were all home-schooled until my sophomore year.

I'm flying to Hawaii because I deferred from college for a year and I have always wanted to go to Hawaii. See, I surf in Maine and I mean there is great surf, but who wants to wait ten minutes for a wave, when in Hawaii you don't even have to wait. Also this is my last chance to do something fun before college.

My eyelids start to feel like they're being weighed down by bricks. Then SLAM shut I was gone into a deep sleep. *I watched as the fake insect came to life at the end of the line. My line elegantly glided through the air then quickly plopped into the almost green pond water. "This will be my last cast for today so lets make something out of it," I whispered to myself.*

The Present

It hit me like an out of control train. The turbulence shakes me out of my chair. I get back in my seat as fast as I can and struggle to buckle up.

CHAPTER 2: THE PLANE

"Tourists don't know where they've been, travelers don't know where they're going."

- Paul Theroux

Stacy

The Present

As I start to draw a light green flower stem, a skinny blonde haired girl sits next to me in the eighteenth seat. She looked young; around 16 or 17. She said, "Hello! My name is Samantha," in a cheerful tone. I replied with a smile. "Hi, I'm Stacy," I said. Then she started to ask me questions like it was a quiz in college. "What is your favorite color?" I replied, "Red, neon green, and black." She carried on the color conversation. "Black is not a color," I replied not knowing if she was trying to be funny or trying to argue with me."It is in a way, shouldn't you be with a parent or someone over 18?" I asked. She replied in a low voice, "Umm..yea..I just, well...to tell

the truth, ummm..I just turned eighteen!"

I replied in a confused voice, "Oh, eh, okay."

"What are you?" she asked in a tired voice. At this point I was very confused and tired. "I'm an alien, duh. Can't you tell," I replied in a sarcastic tone. I picked up the red colored pencil and started drawing the last petal of the flower I was working on.

It was silent for the last three minutes, but she was snoring..like really loud. At least I think it was her. I was finished with my flower and I put away the colored pencils and drawings back in my red big purse. I looked over at Samantha, she was already asleep. She was snoring so loudly, I thought the whole plane could hear her. It was totally possible.

Lila

The Present

I wanted to hurry in so I could get my seat. I was exhausted and I haven't been sleeping; I guess that's what cancer does to you. I bet someone is going to be in my seat. Someone is always in my seat. When I went to a concert with my mom before she died of cancer, there was someone in our seats.

I walked through the terminal gate to the plane. I stepped onto the plane. There were maybe 30 people onboard. I walked to seat 52. Just what I thought, someone in my seat. She was blonde, her hair was cut like the singer, Pink. I walked up to her and said "You're in my seat. Now, I'm very tired and sick, so can you please find your own seat?"

"You're not going to barf are you?" She said.

"Unless that's a symptom of cancer that I don't know about, so no, I dont think so."

"OMG you have cancer," she said shouting so the whole plane could hear her.

"Speak up, I don't think the WHOLE plane can hear you,"

“Sorry, looks like I sit right next to you,” she moved over and sat next to a quiet girl. That’s how I met my best friends. The girl with the blond hair was Zoë. The other girl was Jessica. Jessica and Zoë seemed to know each other, but I am not sure how. I said “Hi my name is Lila,” and she said, “Hi.”

Troy

The Past

I was thinking of my top floor patio apartment in New York city. It was on the far eastern side of the city. I was also thinking about my left leg. The metal surface of it. When I was 11 my leg was obliterated during 9/11. I remember 9/11..it was so...just traumatizing. It was like everything was happening so fast. People running and screaming. Smoke and chunks of buildings falling everywhere. Children without parents and parents without their children. I was a victim of the 9/11 attack. Ever since the attack, I haven't gone out of my apartment except to get groceries. I have been very reserved and to myself. I have been labeled” agoraphobic” for most of my life in NYC by the fancy doctors. The building debris from one of the Towers had crushed my leg when I tripped over a running person. They had to amputate what was left of my left leg. After that I got a prosthetic leg. The thought of getting on a plane again after what happened wasn't an easy decision to make. I didn't close my eyes for one second on the plane to Hawaii. I was not looking forward to the flight.

Michelle

The present

Mom and I are on a plane going to Hawaii to go see her dad, my grandfather. I’m really looking forward to seeing my grandfather and escaping the cold weather. The plane ride was going normally then the pilot announced that “the plane is going down.” And I can tell just by looking in my mother’s eyes that she was freaking out. The plane made a hard “bang!” and I hit my head on the window. When I woke up I went to see if my mother was okay, but she didn’t move. She never woke up.

Jessica

The Present

I was scared. I don’t know why, but I was. I gave my sister Lydia one last hug

my brother Jason ruffled my hair. I started to break down and cry. I had never gone anywhere without my parents. My family was my world. A world that was collapsing at my fingertips. My dad gave me one last hug with a tear running silently down his cheek. I held on trying to imprint his smell, the smell of Old King permanently into my brain. I turned to look at my mother, tears flowing freely down her cheeks, just like mine. I blinked a few times, so I could see her clearly and closed my eyes as she pulled me into a monster hug. I had my eyes closed so I could remember her with all my senses. I pulled away and slung my backpack over one shoulder.

I wiped my eyes dry and walked towards the terminal. I gave the flight attendant my boarding pass. She ripped part of it off. I looked back at my family. My mother was crying silently into my dad’s shoulder. Jason and Lydia gave me cheerful waves goodbye. I snapped my head forward whipping my hair into my face. I walked forward. I walked with a purpose now.

I was Jessica Wilder, Maria and John Wilder’s third child. I used to be a baby, their baby, but I was not a baby anymore. I was 16 and heading to Hawaii to be part of a huge peace conference. Organizations like Pennies for Peace would be there. I walked confidently onto the plane. I sat down in my seat. My father had paid extra so nobody could sit next to me in the small row of seats. I knew the TVs would work once we were a half an hour into the flight. I suddenly dropped my new found confidence when I realized for the first time that I was alone. I took out my book and started to read. Reading always took my mind off things. Fifteen minutes later the flight attendant poked me on the shoulder.

The bright lights lining the runway reminded me of last year when I went to Europe. I had sat between my 17-year old sister and my 18-year old brother. He was focused on his book and my sister was chewing gum and squeezing my hand so hard that it threatened to snap. I could see the bright runway lights out of my parents’ window.

Floyd

The Present

I pull up to airport parking lot in my Dodge Neon, with Tracy in the passenger`s seat. Time for a well earned vacation. Well, the plane ride is first, but then- it`s me, Tracy, and the beach. The exotic dinners, and the volcano hikes... Though three years of accounting has been boring, and I must have the worst car ever, it is all worth it. A release, not just from work, but from everything else. That little bit of something that drives me crazy everyday. My tire going flat on the highway, my old barber giving me a bald spot because of his shaky hands. It was is time to relax, release, and let it all go.

Frank

The Present

I look all around at the unfamiliar faces as I stroke my grey fu Manchu lightly, thinking. I hope it will all be worth it, I mean, I had to drive all of the way from my home in Texas in a white van!! I mean, people give you some pretty weird looks if you drive in a white van, wear a leather jacket, and have a fu Manchu. But I am here now and I am going to make it to my destination, Hawaii. Maybe, I might even wear one of those funky grass skirts; one might never know.

The numerous passengers lined up, waiting to board the plane to Hawaii. Excitement filled the air. Some were looking for a new beginning, some escaping from their first...

They were all going to get what they wanted, just not in the way they expect.

Dr. John

The Present

My name is Dr. John Homlenstein, and solitude is my sanctuary.

The Past

I was back at my house. In my closet, all alone. I love this feeling of emptiness, quiet, peace. Then he came. I heard his heavy boots tramp up our wooden steps. I can imagine him walking ever so slowly to savor the anticipation building in his throat. Soon I heard rapping on my door, "Open up your door welp!" I heard shouted through both my closet and room doors, "open up or I'll break down this door and give you hell!" I stay wedged in my closet pushing deeper into the corner trying to disappear. The footsteps walk away from my door, but I know he isn't giving up. He's getting his ax. When the sound of his steps return a chill runs down my back. "I warned you!" He yelled as he hacked at my door. First I heard a loud thump. Then the crack and splintering of wood. My closet door swung open and I saw my father staring down at me. Rage flooded through his eyes and filled his soul, if he had one. He gripped an ax with all his strength and I could see his muscles tensed under his skin. "Hello," he snarled through bare teeth, "missed me?" I was yanked out of my hiding place and thrown across the floor with all the splintered shards of wood. My father turned around to face my and started lifting his ax. Once it was over his head he gripped the wooden handle of the ax and heaved the rusted head of the ax at my body. I darted out of the way of the old ax and ran for the the stairs. As I left the room I also left my father trying to yank the ax out of the floor it was stuck fast in. I took the stairs five at a time and was suddenly put the door running for the tree line. Once I was hidden behind the twisted branches of the trees, I looked over my shoulder and saw my father roaring blind threats at the air, acting like it would bring me back. Of course it didn't. While pushing myself deeper into the forest, night fell quickly. Soon it was pitch black and I heard various noises and movements out of the corners of my eyes. This was my life now...

The Present

I was dragged back into reality by the voice of a shady looking block of a man, he wanted to know why I was stroking my scar and he told me I was terrifying children. Past him is yet another gigantic man about seven feet tall and definitely in his late fifties like me. I apologize quite harshly, not used to conversations with other

humans. We were in the plane now and I was sitting near the back. We're flying over the ocean towards our destination. I despise these trips.

Dan

There are eyes looking at me. I can see it on their faces. I am not crazy.

Floyd

The Present

A few minutes later, the seat next to me is occupied by sweaty man about two times my width and a couple heads taller than me. His gigantic legs take up about half of our row, and his flabby arm envelops the armrest. *Great*, I think. Once everybody else is seated, a flight attendant reviews the safety precautions of the plane. I notice that my sweaty neighbor begins to pick his nose, and I shoot Tracy a look of annoyance. She looks back at me questioningly, and then she looks past me and sees him. She sticks out her tongue in pure disgust, and turns away to look out her window. I look back at the man. His chubby finger has disappeared in his monstrous nostril, and his eyes are closed from concentration. I shut my eyes, hoping he'll stop, but the image of the man still flashes in my head. Open my right eye slightly, and to my relief, he has stopped. "Thank you for listening, and please enjoy your flight," the flight attendant concludes. Finally, I think. I just want to fall asleep, and not pay attention to my disgusting neighbor. Suddenly, I felt the plane begin to move, and then slowly lift off the ground. My ears begin to pop from the rising altitude, and I drift into a deep sleep...

Micheal

The present

I am thinking of going back and starting college. I hope the plane lands in Oklahoma, but I might not. I have a memory of going to school and walking in the halls to go to writing class. But then I remember I'm in the real world now. Then we hear are flight being called. We get on the plane and get in are seats. I wait until we take off. When we take off, we fly for a long time.

When I drift into sleep, I dream of college and me walking through the hallway. Some how I'm dreaming of the plane heading down, the lights begin to flicker. Someone wakes me up, but I don't know who it is.

Stacy

The Present

Lunch time was here and Bethany the flight attendant was scrolling down the hall with a big cart full of food, it wasn't just any food, it was everything. Samantha woke up as Bethany spoke to us, "Y'all want anything to eat?"

I replied with a question, "What do you have to eat?" She smiled and spoke like she was reading my mind. "Do y'all like Chinese food?" I spoke very quickly in a happy tone of voice, "Yes! Can I have crab ragoons please?" She said, "sure." then she handed me a plate full of crab rangoons. As my fingers touched the plate, the plane started moving from side to side, very fast. We both let go of the big glass plate, it broke into tiny pieces. Yummy crab rangoons wasted. I think that's all I was worried about until I felt super sick and very worried.

Frank

The Present

I snap out of the memory as the attendant then calls people to the gate. I walk over and pass her my ticket. She just took my ticket and kept staring at me, and that's when I remember something. Let's just say I don't fit in that well; I am seven feet tall, and I have a Fu Manchu, a ponytail, and I always wear a biker jacket. But I

just kept walking onto the plane. As I glide down the aisle, I grab a seat next to a man. He looks strange, and not very sane, but all I know is when I ask him his name he doesn't respond. I don't think much of it so I just fall asleep.

Jessica

The Present

“Excuse me, miss, but your carryon needs to be on the floor in front of you.” The nasally voice commanded. I looked down to see that my backpack was on my lap still. “Oh, sorry.” I told her. I zipped up my backpack and shoved it under the seat in front of me.

“Thank you.” She snapped back and continued on to use the nasally voice of hers to tell people what they were doing wrong. I rolled up my window shade and looked out. It was 7:15pm and the flight was due to leave in 15 minutes.

The Present

I snapped back to reality and buckled my seat belt. The TVs silently came to life and showed a video of how to use the mask things and what to do if the plane landed into the ocean. The screen went black and I looked to make sure that my carryon was secure. The massive plane engines roared to life and we took off. Out of habit I reached for my sister’s hand to hold and all I found was air. “Stop it!” I thought to myself. “Lydia is not right next to you and Jason isn’t either!” I realized for a second time that I was alone. “OK, all I need to do is look out the window.” I told myself.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the TVs come on. I turned my head from the window and onto the TV. I found the remote control and went to the tv section. I found old classics like The Sound Of Music and Brigadoon and decided to watch that. I barely remember the last five hours. All I can recall is TV, movies, sleep and food. Disgusting second class food.

CHAPTER 3: Crashing

"The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself."

- *Franklin Roosevelt*

Jessica

The Present

I laughed as I watched White Christmas for almost an hour when suddenly something didn’t seem right. The flight attendant came onto the intercom and announced, “Hello ladies and gentlemen. We have a message from the co-pilot.”

There was a pause and then the co-pilot said, “Hi everyone! We have a problem so we are going to land on this island below us. I am going to ask that everyone sit tight and not panic. Thank you!” She was quite cheerful which surprised me- if I had to make an announcement like that it wouldn’t be done cheerfully. I’m not quite sure how she managed to do it. We all became silent. I waited, dreading what was yet to come.

Alfonzo

The Present

After a long day of flying, I was ready to sink my feet into the hot sand of the beaches in Hawaii. instead I was going to have to sink my feet in to the grimy carpet of the aisle of airplane, I had to go to the bathroom,

bad.

As I plant my bottom on the seat I feel disgusted, I hate airplane bathrooms. My feeling of relief quickly diminished as I heard the pilots muffled voice start talking hastily and the red warning sign lit up I kicked open the door and ran down the aisle tripping on my pulled down pants my foot stamps down on my pant leg, I plummet towards the floor and land on the carpet, I slid down the length of the plane on my stomach and legs. As I slide down, I topple over a burly man standing in the isle. I feel burning as I slow to a stop at the front of the plane. I stand up and look down at my bare thighs, they are bloody and raw.

The flight attendant comes to help me up, "Are you ok?" she asks me. Before I can respond, the plane juts downward and the stewardess falls to the floor. I manage to get to my feet and stumble to my seat and buckle in after helping the attractive stuartist up. The pilots voice comes on again but stops abruptly, I am worried. "What is going on?" an old man questions. I hear a dog barking, I wonder what he is saying? I look out the side window and see ground and ocean hurtling towards us, I brace for impact and impact braces for me, then we collide.

No one was prepared for what was to happen next.

Zoë

Five hours later...

My eyes fly open and the plane twists and turns. Oxygen masks are jerking back and forth. The crashing of bags and people create a pounding headache. Sweat and fear fill the air and then it hits me. This plane is going to crash. Memories are pushing on my head and rushing around like a puppy in a new house. The brown bag crinkles as the guy next to me make a gurgling sound. The woman a crossed the aisle with long wavy grey hair starts murmuring things. Then glances up to the ceiling, praying. "Should I be doing that? Ahhh, I'm so

confused!! " My brain whirls with emotions. "Stay calm, stay calm, stay calm." My head screams. "How am I gonna be calm when everyone's screaming?!" I paused, "Oh."

What do I do when I'm nervous? I sing. Should I just stand up and just go for it? Will it just add to the noise? Or will it calm people down? Rifling through my memories I zoom in on a special memory. When I auditioned for the school talent show. It was a very noisy room. Sweat filled the air and chatter noise and instruments and dancing were all going on at once. I had gone only because the music teacher had made me. People were auditioning but none of them quieted down so they could hear another audition.. There was a few really good ones and the room had gotten more quiet but there was still chatter all about the room. My turn was up and a just sang with one music. The room quieted down more and more. I didn't notice it till someone started clapping at the end. The on clap echoed into more claps. So I could silence a room! Having confidence from my memory I stand up and unbuckle. "Click." Since it's near Christmas I decide to sing Silent Night. I open my mouth. And the words fall out. I think of it like a wave. The louder with every roll of a wave and softer with every ripple. Faces of all kinds start looking up. The parents who have to be brave for their kids. The kind old smiles that make you want to cry. The hopeful children that gaze up at you with faith. The scared. They're so scared they not afraid to show it. I hope they understand that I'm not doing this so everyone can worship me. I want to help them, and this is what I know to do. Calming relief washes over my body and a start to relax. I finish the song start singing what child is this. The plane jerks back and forth more rapidly then starts to tip. I brace myself for the worst. I keep singing until I got to, his mother sings a lullaby, and then we flipped. There were different pitches of screams. Before I could start singing again the captain came on. "Please get ready for crashing procedures." I scramble back to my seat. Faster than a bullet.

You know when your going down on a roller coaster? How you feel that strange airless feeling and then gravity come back to you well that's what happened. Except for that gravity didn't come until we hit the ground. I'll put it in slow-motion for you, the seats slowly jumping into the air. The echo of screams ricochet from the sides of the plane. The semi calm faces to the terrified faces. The shock faces when the seats landed back on the ground. The slow motion disappeared as my instinct kicks in. Well, maybe second instinct. My first instinct was to scream, but I decided to tell people to get out. Busting down one of the plane's door, I heard my wrist crack. It wasn't like when you see people in movies breaking down the door, because you know there is no real effort. This was different though. It was as hard a running up School House Ledge three times nonstop. The burn was everywhere. But going down hill you could get your breath back. "Whoosh" the door came down. Darting

around to the back part of the plane to get my bag I didn't really notice the casualties. Getting my checked bag out a decided to go back by the plane. Scanning the outside of the plane a bump into this guy. "Sorry, and umm, I think your body guard ummm, died."

"Jim?" I said in a questioning voice.

"I was going back from the bathroom when the plane was crashing. I tripped. His head go caught." The poor guy broke down in tears. His blue shirt that said funny monkey was almost brown with dirt. "What's your name?" I asked.

"A-a-Alfonzo."

"Well Alfonzo, I guess Jim has gone a better place, and well thanks for telling me that." I said wiping my eyes. I walked back to the stairs and climb back up. Sure enough Jim's head wasn't really connected to his body and well I really don't want to tell the rest. I grabbed his gun and headed back onto the ground. The caption was setting up a place where we could put all the dead people. "Umm, This is Jim." Right when I was saying this a mom walked over to me. Her strawberry-blond hair looked very bright against her whiting skin. She had a small infant in her hands. A toddler walked behind her. The kids looked ok but the mom looked like the walking dead. She handed her infant to me and said, Her name is Lily Ann O'gennes. Lily's birthday is October 24, 2013. Her voice was fading out. Their dad has died. I needed to get her to tell me about the other girl. She sat down in the pile by the dead people. And said, "The other girls name is Madrid Marrie O'Gennes . She's born December 17, 2011. I love them both with my entire heart, my soul. I need you to take care of them because you were in the dream I had. So thank you." With that she closed her pale eyes and went peacefully off to sleep and death.

Wiping my eyes I take lily in her pink blanket. "This, is, only, supposed, to happen, in, horror, films." The guy next to the crushed captain mutters. I kneel down and scoop up Madrid. Her pale yellow hair has some streaks of blood in it dripping downward on her light blue shirt. My left wrist throbs from opening that door. I search the pale sand for a stick and rope to tie my wrist in a sprint. I spot a skinny piece of driftwood and use a piece of fabric for my wrist. Taking in all in a feel emotions of all sort confusing me even more. Snapping back to reality, I ask the crucial question to our survival. "Now what should we do Lily? How about you Madrid? What do you think?" Their small faces look up. I think, we need to get shelter. So off we start, the three musketeers. In to the wild unknown.

CHAPTER 4: THE ISLAND

Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.

- Albert Einstein

Alfonzo

The Present

As I awakened, everything was dark, I feel a sharp pain in my right arm, where am I? I think as I attempt to move but can't. I feel crushing weight lifted off of me and bright sunlight blinds me temporarily, My eyes adjust to the light and I see the scarred face of a man maybe in his twenties "thought I might take some weight of your shoulders pal " he says cheerily. "Thanks," I reply gratefully. "No problem," he says. He helps me to my feet. As I emerge from the wreckage, I examine the crash site, a few passengers are lying scattered among the bits and pieces of the plane, unconscious and maybe dead. I hope for the best as I struggle to my feet and getter an even better look. Not all of the passengers were asleep, some were wandering into the jungle, some were scouring the wreckage and some we're scouting the beach. "Why don't you join me and some others to walk the beach?" I follow the man towards the beach. I finally get to sink my feet into the sand, but It wasn't the way I expected it. I embark on my mission to search the beach. eventually I think about how I seem to do better on my own, with my own rule. I then decide to go astray from the group and wonder the beach on my own.

If only the survivors had any idea where they landed.

Dr. John

The Present

For awhile I slip in and out of dreams. I remember the plane going down, and us spinning. Then I heard a young girl scream and was knocked out by some shrapnel. Afterwards I was incapable of differentiating reality from my imagination. The man who was seated next to me during the flight was standing in front of me holding me at gunpoint , "Give me back my bro." He spat in a deep tone. This queer statement baffled me. I attempted to stand only to realize a lump of fur in my lap. Assuming that was the 'bro' he was referring to I handed the small creature to the colossal man. Within seconds he had vanished from the plane. I looked into the sky. I could have sworn it was midday when the plane went down, but now the moon was shining upon my face. I stand and brush off any debris that had stuck to me. As I look around I see passengers less fortunate than me slouching in their seats. In the dim light of the moon I crawl through the tarnished body of the plane. Where could I be? I exit onto the right wing and see a beach, and an unending ocean. I jump down from the wing to inspect the underbelly of the plane. Gashes in the metal run the length of the plane. I crawl through one into the darkness. Oblivion surrounds me as I delve deeper in. Tripping over suitcases and bags I search for Rupert, my pet t-devil. I don't hear any noises. What if Rupert hadn't survived the crash? What if the other survivors ate him? As I fantasized about my pet's

death a squeal sounded through the plane. It was Rupert! I stumbled to his cage and unlocked it. I couldn't see him but I felt his hot breath on my face. Worming my way out of the plane I made for the treeline. I'd lived in the wilderness back home for fifty years straight. I could survive on an empty island. How hard could it be?

A castaway, like a boat lost in a thick fog, becomes quickly unaware of the mysteries and secrets that lurk just outside of their reach.

Michael

The Present

We are on an island. I'm injured. I could die right now! But I won't. Then I crawl out of the plane and onto the right side wing. I look around the wreckage and I see people. Then I crawl around to the right side. I see more people, and then I scramble to a birch tree until everyone is gone. I don't want people to be all excited saying, "Oh, someone else is alive!" I rather go off by myself, and let them think I am dead. Being alone is what I like. I look around the wreckage some more, and see some dead bodies and some live people.

The pilot's cabin is ripped off of the plane. Then I think, where is the pilot? The pilot is probably dead anyway. I grow bored, so I get my tennis racket and my ball and play tennis on the side of the pilot's cabin. When I get bored of that I got a basketball out of my duffle bag, and played basketball by bouncing it off of parts of the plane. The plane got dents in it and I cracked the front window, but I didn't care. I had fun. I put my balls, racket, and suitcase in my backpack and put that in my duffle bag. I left the wreckage.

Frank

The Present

I open my eyes, only to see smoke flying throughout the air. I bolt up and look around to take in my surroundings. I see the sand, the water, and the coconut trees. We have crashed on an island. I fling my hand towards my suitcase. It is still there. The guy that is sitting next to me still seems to be sleeping "dang you're a heavy sleeper," I say sarcastically. I unzip my large suitcase and take out my M1911 colt out of its leather case. How I got it on... Well that's another story for sometime else. My mind then snaps to my rabbit Fuzzy. I look over to the man in the seat next to me, he has fuzzy. I take my colt and press it into his forehead, "Hand my bro over!" he instantly hands my white bunny over. I stuff Fuzzy into my jacket, grab my suitcase, and run. As soon as my feet hit the sand I opened up into a full out sprint across the beach.

Jessica

The Present

Half an hour later people went off and did their own thing. I stuck close to Lila. I had met Lila on the plane. We had an empty seat across the aisle. We were having a lot of turbulence and she was walking up the aisle when we hit a bump. The next thing I knew she had plopped down into the seat and was talking up a storm. Basically it was her life story in half an hour. We became fast friends. I was glad to have a friend and just as I needed her, she needed me. She had some type of cancer, but I wasn't listening to that part of her life story.

We walked up to the wreckage. "Let's try to find our stuff, Lila." I told her. The wreckage was pretty bad. Lila finally found her suitcase and I found my suitcases. I had two red ones. All we did that day was to salvage water and food. We found water in water bottles, both the ones people own and others from the airplane's food and water supply. To find food was even harder because we had to go through suitcases. It felt like trespassing into a person's life and memories. Every one of the suitcases was different, each with its own identity. We sorted out people's belongings, putting them in different piles. The piles were: food, water, first aid, bathroom stuff, clothing, random items and things that weren't usable. We didn't find any dead bodies so everyone was alive. We started up fires and used the light to tally up everything we found. We used the back of a map to record everything. We set up makeshift sleeping bags by the many camp fires and ate dinner. My phone did not survive the crash, and my family must be worried sick. My mom especially. Lila and I ate our dinner together and slept around the same campfire. I started thinking about my journey. Even if it had just been a few hours after the crash, it had felt like a lifetime. It was one of those times that you really want to block from your mind. Besides who knew how long we will survive? I just wish my phone still worked. My parents must be sick with worry. I haven't called them in a day, and I was supposed to be in Hawaii by now, enjoying the peace conference. Well, there is always next year.

Michelle

The past

My mother was athletic and strong. She was 6'1 tall with dark brown, thick, long hair. She and I share the same hair color. She is important to me and was an inspiration to others. I loved her and she was my best friend. She was funny, and really fun to shop with. And I'm really sad that she's gone. It's like I've lost my best friend; the one person I had to stick up for me. She was always there for me, even when she and I argued. She loved me through thick and thin. When you lose your mom, you lose the one person who will always stick by your side.

The Present

I lifted my mother's body and took her somewhere safe and buried her. As I went to bury her I heard a sound. it was the sound of me panting, my heart beating against my chest so hard, I thought my heart was going to explode. I can feel the sweat and tears coming down my face, everything that her and I had done was fading slowly. Shopping, all the pain, and all the fights her and I have gotten into. I'm feeling vulnerable and I don't know why.

A day later, I struggled to find food, water, and shelter.

CHAPTER 5: MEETINGS

Don't walk behind me, I may not lead. Don't walk in front of me;

I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend.

- Albert Camus

Nikki

The Present

Morning came and I surprisingly slept well after I fell asleep. I glanced at my sister who was still asleep, and I assumed it was early in the morning, around six or seven. I got up quietly and walked around the rock so that I could see what was going on. I glanced into the area that was the camp for the crash victims. There was no one there! I wondered if I was dreaming, or perhaps looking in the wrong spot. I sprinted all the way around the rock to make sure that I was looking in the right direction the first time. I was positive that I was dreaming now, as I could not see the people there anymore. But I could see the footsteps. And a granola bar wrapper flying around in the strong winds of the cold sea. I ran to my sister and pushed her around, trying to wake her up.

"What?" she groaned, keeping her eyes shut.

"The crowd! They're gone! They must of left without us, I mean we're behind this rock they probably forgot about us!" she jolted her eyes open, and looked straight at me.

"Where could they have gone? Why would they leave, this is a perfect spot to camp!"

"I don't know, maybe they went back to the crash to get more luggage or something." I replied.

"Yeah maybe. We need to do something, we can't just stay here we have no food!"

"I know, why don't we just go back to the plane?"

"Well do you know your way back because I don't." She said.

"Well I was hoping you did. But It couldn't be that far, we got here why can't we get back?"

"Okay, but if we get lost it's your fault, okay?" I had to make this deal with her, I mean the other option is we die of starvation so why not go for it?

"Okay, lets get moving we want to catch them before they leave the airplane." She got up and dusted the sand off of her. There was sand all through her hair but I decided to keep it to myself because I didn't want to delay much longer. We started to the pom tree filled jungle at the top of the beach.

"Lets head straight for now." I said.

"Okay but you better get us there. I don't to end up in the middle of the woods with no food or water."

"I promise." I probably shouldn't of said those words. We kept walking for about an hour. I knew that we were lost, but the last thing I wanted was for my sister to though a fit, and start crying. Finally came the tantrum!

"I knew you would do it! I knew we would get lost! Why did they have to leave? Why did they have to do that? Couldn't they remember us? And someone could've spoken up! And why did you have to make us leave? What is they were going to go back there? What if they would come back to get us?"

She sat down on a small log and held her head in her cupped hands. Creak, a small sound was heard from a distance. My sister sat silenced. She probably thought it was me or something.

"HEY!" Yelled a voice from far away. My sisters head jolted up, she turned her head looking around to see what she had heard.

"Did you hear that?" She asked.

"Yes, what should we do?"

"I don't know, why don't we yell back that could be the group." Before I could reply I saw a small dot getting bigger and bigger running towards us.

"HEY!" Yelled the voice again and this time I ,knew it was another human being because I could now have a visual sight. My sister got off the log in preparation for a possible attack. The person was now twenty feet away from us.

"HEY!" He was breathing heavily. "Hi, I d-don't mean any harm, do you l-l-live here? Who are you? D-d-do you speak english?" He stuttered.

"Yes, we speak english." My sister replied. "Were from the plane crash, do you know about it? We got left back at the beach." The man looked about seventeen, he had blond short hair, and was wearing a pair of jean shorts, with a plain red t-shirt. He had sneakers on and a backpack stuffed with clothes hanging out.

"Uh, y-yes, I'm from the plane crash t-too. My parents sent me out to l-look for my sister, th-they told me not to go far, but I'm l-lost."

"Us too," I said. "We can't find our way back to the plane crash, Is that where you came from? Is that where the group went from the beach?" I asked.

"Yes, we went from the beach back to the p-p-plane crash to get more supplies. The c-captain woke us all up," he said.

"Well, what should we do? We don't have much time, its beginning to get dark!" my sister said.

"Y-y-yeah I know, maybe we should set up camp, that might be best."

"I think he's right, I'm getting tired, I think we should get some sleep and find the plane in the morning," I replied.

CHAPTER 6: Struggles

Problems are not stop signs, they are guidelines.

- Robert H. Schuller

Frank

The Present

As I lay back on my green palm leaf bed, I think a man can really get sick of fish after a while. I groggily get up, and look over at Fuzzy, he's munching on his dinner of leaves. I then gaze at my dying fire, I yank myself up, and begin the search for firewood. As I walk back into camp, I see fuzzy laying down on the pillow I made for him sleeping. I toss some wood on the fire, and the sparks fly up and the flames start engulfing the wood. Time to

sleep I say finally as I walk to my bed and fall asleep. I wake up the next morning hungrier than the day before. I raise myself from my leaf bed, and start think on what I could eat. While I look around, and I see what seems to be a coconut!! I forgot about those, I could drink, and eat from those. Not wasting any time I rip out my colt and fire at a branch that is holding three little brown coconuts, they all fall to the ground. I pick one up, and start to shred the outer layer of the coconut off, to uncover the final shell. I pick it up, and start hacking it against a rock. Finally it cracks, I dig my fingers into the crack and rip off the shell. Water starts to drip out I quickly start to drink all of the liquid. After I finish with the water I rip the meat out and stuff it into my mouth. After I finish all of the coconut I could eat I start back to camp. As I round the final corner to my camp I see something that I hoped wouldn't happen. A wild boar stands just feet away from my pet bunny. My father like skills kick into action, I rip the gun from my side and fire into the boar about seven times. It squeals and starts charging towards me. I rip out a dagger and get ready as it charges. I jump over and stab it in the back. It drops to the ground, I get up rip the knife out and shove it back in its sheath in my belt. Time for bed is all I think as I grab Fuzzy and head towards my camp. It is only like three pm, but I need sleep. So I slowly drag myself into camp, crawl into my hut, say my prayers to god and fall asleep.

Zoë

The Present

"Madrid, Lily, do you think we need to some water, or wait, Lily's going to need milk, uh-oh." Thinking about this type of stuff worries me. Being responsible for the kids life is one thing but not having one of the most important things to keep Lily alive, well that's really not good. The mother was counting on me to keep her alive. What the heck am I going to do? My breathing quickens. I have to keep them alive. I can do this, I think. Lily looks up at me, her eyes wide. Her adorable face is wet with tears. Madrid looks over at me and give me a hug. She yawns and curls up by my side. They probably haven't had a nap yet. I softly lay Lily down in the sand by her sister. Grabbing my duffle bag I take out everything. OK. I think, "What do I need?" I dump out everything from my duffle bag. It looks like a colorful waterfall spilling out. The sand spraying up gives it a misty feeling. Coughing, I put my gun and pink pocket knife back in my duffle bag. The snacks will go back in. Soap can go back in my bag, as well ask the medical kit. Now, for my clothes. I look at my grey sweatshirt. Its my favorite and I

think the warmest. That will have to go back in. My pink extra large duffle or sports bag is almost half way full. I put in two other sweatshirts and a small fuzzy blanket. There, all done. I look out on the horizon. Past the endless blue water the sun sits a little lower in the sky.

"Madrid, wake up sleepy girl," I say as I lift her from the pale sand. Her fiery red hair covers her face. Her questioning eyes look up at me. "Huh?" she says. "Time to wake up," I say in a quiet tone. "Momma?" she says. "Shhh," I say gently rocking her back and forth on the log. We sat there for a while. Soon the sun was slowly starting to set in the sky. "Ok, we're going to put your sister in my duffle bag. She'll be able to sit up if she wants but she won't fall out. You can ride on my back. We need to get shelter. Fast." The air was changing. The smell of the water turned tangy. Or bitter sweet. Then I heard a sound. My heart speed up. The wind changed direction and then there was a moaning sound. I turned to Lily thinking that it was her, but no she was just waking up. My head whipped around to Mairead. She was clinging to my leg like a very sacred child. Placing Lily in my bag I grab Mairead. Then I make the run for the very place that I thought the sound was coming from, the jungle.

I don't know what I'm thinking right now, but we need to get on high ground and be safe. I can't believe that I sent all that time packing and napping when I should have been making a hammock or shelter. Wow I was dumb. Zoë, how could you do this, you're responsible for children now. Wake up. This isn't a dream. Pinch yourself. Be smart. Like running you have to know where to speed up and slow down. Stay by the beach in case a rescue boat comes. You need to survive. We came to a stop about 100 feet from the edge of the jungle tree line. To tall palm trees were next to each other. "Good place to stop you guys. These trees will provide water and cups." I scanned around the area of the trees. Moss lined the damp ground. With some other strange plants. Taking out one of the extra shirts that I brought with me from the beach, I pulled out the strange looking plants. Stacking them up I glance up at the towering coconut trees. Just when I'm looking up at the funny looking trees a cocoanut falls. On the opposite side of the tree. Grabbing Lily and Madrid we all go to investigate. Walking around the tree takes little time yet it feels like it take forever to get to the cocoanut. Grabbing my knife I cut off the very top. Spit comes to my mouth out of hunger. Need for taste. I widdel down the open end of the cocoanut so that it will be easier for Madrid to drink out of it. The cocoanut was about the size of my head. The pale shavings fall down into the duffel bag or officially called Lily's crib. Her pudgy fingers reach up into the falling flakes. Smiling, I gently help Madrid drink the coconut water. Her face is instantly replenished. Taking the water from her hands I put it up to Lily's small face. "slurp." After drinking for a while, the sun is sending its last rays of sun through the trees. "alright everybody, we really need to go to sleep. I lay down the fuzzy blanket." Come here,

Madrid. I say as I take out my favorite sweatshirt. Picking her up I, put the huge sweatshirt making a sleeping bag sort of thing. Laying her down I do the same for Lily. We all were all snuggled down together and on the verge of falling asleep when.....

*Sometimes the thing that goes 'bump in the night' is really a **THING**.*

Rob

The Present

Something is not right.

I can sense it in the air, the animals, the sounds. In fact, that's just it. There are no sounds, save the constant pounding of waves against the rocks.

I grab my knife and sit up. Stop. Listen. Still nothing. I slowly peek outside the protection of my little hut. Nothing moves. Nothing. The tree line stands as an ominous wall, dark and thick. Nothing like the jungle earlier today. I dash out of my hut, and grab my makeshift spear I crafted earlier in the day. I move from shadow to shadow, silently and swiftly as I approach the trees. I check back towards my hut. Still nothing.

Just then I turn around into the face of a giant beast. I am so horrified, I barely even notice its features other than its long, sharp claws and jagged teeth.

I duck just in time, and it's teeth chomp down on nothing but air. I get up again, and the thing launches its second attack. This time I am ready, and I hold the spear up in defense. It closes in, and I take a couple quick jabs at it, both of which do not find their target. It runs around and circles again, preparing for another strike. Before it has enough time to think, I run back towards my hut, not to seek shelter but for the defensive advantage. The thing stops for a second, then charges and leaps into the air at the last second. Unprepared for the sudden change of attack, I fall back and it leaps on top of me, knocking the spear out of my hands. It gnashes at my face, and I feel it's hot, stinking breath on my face as the jagged teeth close in. I feel around with one hand, and push up with all my might at the beast, using my free hand and both feet. The spear is too far out of my reach, but I

do feel something else. The edge of the cliff leading down into the cove. I shift the other hand under its massive body, and with a surge of adrenalin, I push up on the thing. It rolls off, but unfortunately for it, it rolls right off the cliff ledge. It thrashes out at me a couple more times, but I get up and back out towards my hut. After another swipe, it loses it's balance and tumbles into the water below. A large splash comes up, and I spot the beast desperately paddle towards land. It reaches the shore and tears out of the water into the deep jungle, in the direction of the mountains and the crash sight.

Unsure whether it will come back or not, I spend the rest of the night staring up at the roof of my little hut, thinking.

Floyd

The Present

My slow trudge through sand comes to an abrupt halt when my foot catches on a fat tree root at the edge of the forest. I tumble to the earth, my right knee scraping on a jagged rock. It cuts deep, and as I right myself, scarlet rivers flow from the cut, rushing fast toward my sock. Grab whatever I can find to stop the bleeding. I grasp a leaf in my fingers. I don't want my socks to be stained. That's when realization of what is really happening with me and everything truly sinks in. Would it have mattered if the blood had stained my sock? I'm trapped on this island now, and as far as I know, there is no way of reaching any form of civilization. It had happened so fast... The plane had rocked from side to side, and then, the most horrible screams I had ever heard. Then the impact, being hurled into seats and people, and then, once we had landed... silence.

We had dragged bodies from the fiery wreckage, and salvaged what we could from the plane. Who was we, really? I hadn't gotten to know anybody, and then I just started walking. Walking to find... I didn't know. I hadn't really been there though. And Tracy! Where was Tracy?! I had been in shock, in denial really. I felt like hurting myself for not remembering sooner. I scrambled from my spot on the forest floor, and got hack on the beach. I ran, calling her name along the sand, but there was never an answer. My poor girlfriend, where was she? I didn't see her when I got to the wreckage, only a few desperate families. I had not seen her in the body pile. I knew what I had to do. I looked at the treeline. I had to find her. I just knew she was alive. I walked towards the

forest, knowing I would find something in there.

CHAPTER 7: ENCOUNTERS

I don't believe in accidents. There are only encounters in history. There are no accidents.

- Pablo Picasso

Alfonzo

The Present

As I walked into the woods I trampled over a mess of vines and foliage, the thorny shrubbery cut up my feet as I made my way into the depths of the jungle. After about fifteen minutes, I emerged from the cool, wet forest and found myself on yet another beach, this time it is in a small cove with greenish water. I scanned the shore line and decided to explore. I started of along the beach, and reached the other side of the cove, I then ventured into the woods. I climbed through the trees and yet again wandered into the jungle, only to find myself stumbling into a cave, following a trail of bones. As I approached the the dark abyss that was the cave, I heard noises, much like the ones I had heard earlier on the beach. I let my curiosity carry me deeper into the depths of the cave, deeper and deeper in. I could hear the noise getting closer and the air was getting cooler. There is just enough light that I can see what lies ahead of me,a large spotted cat, sprawled out on the cold rock floor, maybe a jaguar or puma, the moaning started again, lower and more agonizing than ever, you don't have to be a vet to

figure out that this animal was giving birth. As I stand there in the dim light, wishing I could help this poor animal, I turn around and see the dark silhouette of a man, slowly making his way into the cave, "Hello?" I call. "Hey kid" he says as he starts twitching frantically, I look at him worriedly, he speaks again, this time with a funky accent. "Howdy" he says as he struts towards me, as he gets closer the light illuminates his face I recognize his face from the plane, with his wide eyes and disheveled hair, but he didn't seem like this on the plane... "can you direct me to Huston?" He asks me "uh" I reply, being from Europe, I did not know much about America.

"It seems I Lost my cattle" he exclaims. "Sorry, I can't help you with that," I respond hesitantly. He glances down at the struggling cat on the ground "what the?" He says. "I think it's giving birth." I answer "No way!" He responds sarcastically. "I used to birth my cattle all the time back at the ranch," he informs me as he kneels down next to the mother cat "Let's see here," he says as he stands up, I then see something fall out of his pocket, it lands on the cat, the animal lets out a mighty roar and struggles in pain, the struggling induces the birth and a slimy, scrawny little baby kitten appears on the floor near the cats feet, the mother grabs the baby and slowly meanders out of the cave. "Ahhh!" I yell in confusion. "What did you just drop on that animal?" I question as my eyes follow the thankfully unharmed cat as it makes it's way out of the cave. "Well" he says "it appears I dropped mr. Taze". I look down at the stone covered ground, there is a tazer lying next to where the birthing took place "You own a taser?" I ask, wondering if this man was crazy.

"Yesiree! You know, it really keeps those cows disciplined." Before I could respond I see yet another figure emerge from the light and walk towards us. It is Troy. "Alfonzo! What were you think running off back there?" he interrogates. I look down at my feet unable to come up with an excuse, but my thoughts are interrupted as the strange cowboy esc man starts rambling on. "What do say, we quit this gibber gabber and get out this place, it gives me the creeps!" he says. Me and Troy nod in agreement and we head towards the exit of the cave. "Why don't we split up, we can cover more ground that way?" suggests Troy. "Sounds good," replies the cowboy.

Troy heads into the woods and we start of in the other direction.

Budro

(A personal journal entry)

Ma

y 17

It has been fifty years since that fateful day when my ship 'The Landryn' crashed on this blasted, lonely island. I have decided to start this journal to charter my stay here, in the months following the crash I constructed this cabin that I currently reside in, I built it out of palm trees and mahogany logs. I am writing this journal out of the remaining pages of my ship log. The tragic event that caused the crash still lingers in my mind, a ruthless mutiny. Our ship captain, Ivan Vonstrukl was struck down by a bullet, shot by my rogue crew mate, John Shapton, the Landryn's chief, I quickly evacuated the ship, not wanting to meet the same fate as my late captain, now after fifty years of misery, I fear I have lost my sanity.

Alfonzo

The Present

As we trampled through the woods, the terrain gets more swampy. I step into seemingly solid ground and my foot sinks deep down in the mud and I feel water seep into my shoes. I pull my feet out and free myself from the mud, unfortunately, my shoes were still in the mud. I bend down to retrieve my stuck shoes but the hole I created in the mud fills in.

I walk on, barefoot, the ground gets wetter and wetter as we progress through the swamp.

eventually the tree line stops abruptly, at the foot of a small pond.

Me and the cowboy stand on the edge of the lake, looking out at the glassy, un polluted water and see a dim light on the opposite side of the new found pond.

We make our way along the sandy shore line and eventually reach the source of the light, a small cabin built out of hand cut wood, I approach the door and attempt to open it not even thinking twice about how a

cabin got here, I turned the drift wood knob, it was locked, "I'll take care of that" says the cowboy, he pull so out a gun and aims it at the lock, "you own a gun too?" I ask surprised. "Sometimes those dang cows don't do what you want," he pulls the trigger and, BANG! He shoots a hole clean through the lock and the door lurches open, and there tied down in a makeshift chair is Troy.

"Troy!" I yell as I run into the cabin. "Don't move!" Says an old man sounding voice, I turn to face the voice an old man in a white sailor uniform is standing in the corner of the room, with a gun.

"Who are you?" Asks the old man skeptically "who are you, is what I want to know" I tell him.

"Budro Willson, first mate of the vessel, 'the Landryn" he informs us, "we'll aren't you proud of yourself mr. sailor boy!" Says the cowboy, "you haven't answered my question yet, who are you!" Yells the man. "My name is Alfonzo Borrego" I tell him "and your name is?" Says the old man eyeing the cowboy, "the names Dan Wess, what's it to you?" Asks the cowboy. "Well that gun you got there looks pretty fancy, I find that it's nice to know someone's name before you steal from em' " and with that, the old man charges towards dan, "Alfonzo, catch!" He alerts me as he tosses me his shiny revolver, I catch it and the cold gleaming metal touches my hand, the old man leaps at dan, but dan is quick on the draw, he pulls out the cow prod and thrusts it into budro's stomach, he falls to the ground shaking like he is in a seizure. Budro's unconscious body stops shaking, and we untie the still speechless Troy we drag budro to the chair. "Tie him up." I suggest. "The rope broke when you freed me" says Troy. "I had a feeling these would come in handy" says dan as he pulls out a pair of handcuffs. "Handcuffs? Why do you have, never mind" I say with a sigh. We shove budro into the chair and latch the handcuffs, "lock him in the closet," says Troy "we'll sleep here tonight" as I drag budro into the closet I see the red tip if what appears to be a match, not thinking much of it, I proceed with my task.

The passengers soon realized that this was no ordinary island. Several even began to understand that some of their fellow passengers that boarded the plane earlier that day were ‘no ordinary passengers.’

Dan

The Present

"Hello," said the youngin.

"Howdy," I said.

"Can you direct me to Houston? It seems I lost my cattle," I explained to the boy. "I was riding along the plane and I got seperated from my cattle going down the Mississippi, and then all of a sudden I got knocked on the head and now I am here." I shimmied on over the to kid. I looked him over head to toe. He was a scrawny fellow. "What's goin on here?" I asked the boy.

"Having a baby, what else you moron?" said the boy in a demeaning tone.

"No need to get antsy here." I say. The boy then walked forward and knocked me right in the gut. With that, the contents from my trousers pockets came out onto the jaguar. All I saw was a stream like lightnin from the cow prodder and a baby jaguar came out the big jaguar faster than a bull out of its cage.

"Wow, what is this?" said the boy as he picked up the object and passed it to me. I racked my brain trying to remember, then it kicked me like a donkey

"My friend Doc Hollerday bought yall new cow prodders. Mr. Hollerday likes his cattle up to today standerds, and irf they're not then bang bang bang bang."

"We have to go now," said the youngin.

"Where we goin?" I asked.

"Out." We ran and ran until we came a small lil shack. The boy twisted the knob.

"It's locked," said the boy. "We just have to stay out here and die."

"Just hold hold yer horsies." I told the boy. With that, I took the revolver out of my pocket and pulled the trigger. The door flew off the hinges. Bound to a chair was a young man. And next him was an elderly man in a sailor suit smiling. I knew what to do instantly. I passed the gun to the kid and took my cow prod out and prodded

em silly. He squealed and shrieked from the pain and fell on the ground.

"Well thats that."

Jessica

The Present

I rose to the sound of chirping birds and the bright golden sun. I walked around the wreckage of the plane. I had forgotten about Lila, so when I walked back to my makeshift sleeping bag, she wasn't there. "Hey Lila!" No answer. "Lila!" I yelled again, starting to panic. No answer. "Lila!" I screamed, desperately wanting her to answer. I needed her, I needed a friend. Yet in our friendship I realized that being friends was an excuse for being and becoming friends with myself. In that moment I knew that I was just about the best friend I could get. I wasn't the last person to leave the crash scene. Some crazy man was still here. I had seen him on the plane, he was just your regular crazy man. He had no real accent, when I had passed him, but now he had a deep southern accent. It was so fake! Hey, he was just crazy, getting crazier.

I started walking towards the forest. My footsteps becoming jumbled up with others. My feet started sinking in less and less the closer I became to the trees. I started to wonder if she had perhaps gone to use the bathroom. I felt like I needed some bonding time with myself, so I walked off into the woods. I put the piece of hide into the back pocket of my jeans. The woods I found were not really woods, well, not my type of woods. The woods I was used to were full of oak trees, pine trees, maple trees and the smell of evergreens. This forest was the opposite. It was filled with palm trees, big flowers, small flowers, and smelled like a tropical version of Florida. I'm calling it the Florida woods with a hint of topicality. Not your typical New England woods, but lovely just the same. There were a few hummingbirds that flitted through the petals of a rose colored flower. I walked up to the hummingbirds and realized why they are called that. They move their wings so fast that it truly creates a humming sound. "Amazing!" I whispered. The humming birds flew away right as the word left my lips. I jumped back surprised that they had left. I turned around realizing that trying to bond was useless. As I looked over my shoulder I gasped and covered my mouth with my hand. A blood red handprint was on the tree in front of me. It was either a warning or a sign.

I touched the handprint, staining my finger red. I wiped my finger on my jeans and remembered the leather. I pulled it out of my pocket and examined it. I felt very smooth on one side but rough on the other. It hadn't been precisely cut but looked like it had been ripped off. "Hmmm," I thought aloud. "There is some of that paint on the leather." Sure enough, there were three small red dots on the corner of the leather. It was easy to spot against the brown leather hide. I looked up and saw that many other trees in this area also had handprints. I remembered a trip my family took a couple of years ago. We had gone to Acadia National Park on Mount Desert Island in Maine. We did a lot of hiking. On some paths the trail wasn't very clear. To mark the right way there were trail markers that looked like blue rectangles painted on the trees. The handprints looked like trail markers. I looked up at the sky and realized the sun was beginning to set but I had no idea where camp was. I spotted a tree, I'm not sure what kind, and walked up to it. The tree was a grandfather tree with its branches drooping down like a weeping willow. The tree had grown around a big rock that was stuck in the middle. I used the old heave-ho mechanism, and I finally had it free. The rock rocked back and forth, finally tumbling off backwards. The hole was big, but the tree was not hollow. Feeling like I was an unfortunate player on the game show "Survivor", I decided to make a makeshift shelter. I skipped around the "Florida woods with a hint of topicality" to find moss. Once I had an armful I skipped back to the tree, the big grandfather tree. I packed moss down to make a make-shift bed and I started to whistle while I worked.

"So whistle while you work, if there's too much to do, don't let it bother you. Forget your troubles try to be just like a cheerful chickadee," I sang loudly. I had never done any type of singing lessons, so I probably sounded like a dying moose. However, I was warm and climbed into my "bed", settled down and drifted off to sleep...

"Grumble!" I woke with a start. I jerked up. "Bang!" I hit my head on the tree. I started to lay down when "Bang!" I hit my head again. "Oh," I mumbled. I rolled over and I rolled right out of the tree. Halfway through mid-fall I remembered everything. Then I hit the ground. "Bang!" A really big bang. "Why does this have to happen to me!" I screamed. "I could really use a doctor right now." I thought. Then I remembered my parents. My parents probably have the FBI looking for me right now. At least I hoped so. Then my world went black.

I woke up some time later with my head looking like a balloon. "Ow," I moaned. My head hurt, but I didn't remember anything else about it. "Huh? Why aren't I up in the tree? How did I get here?" I asked.

Usually in the movies this is about the time when the guardian angel comes and takes you away or saves you. No such luck for me. But it couldn't hurt to try.

“You-hoo! Guardian angel over here! I need help! A damsel in distress needs saving!” I yelled. Then I knew the perfect thing to say. “Guardian angel-Kenobi you're my only hope!” That didn't work so I tried again. “Guardian angel, hee hoo, I am your father!” I said menacingly. As you can see I was having fun with this guardian angel thing. But nobody came. So I gave up on my guardian angel. I guess if I was going to be saved I would have to do it myself. Instead of thinking about my problems I decided to think about the red hand print mystery. Isn't it funny how little things like that can pick you up?

Troy

The Present

I had a huge pounding headache. I decided to leave the group because nobody was making any efforts to find food or create any type of shelters. This one girl named Stacy was having a complete panic attack, I couldn't stand being around it any longer because it was starting to infect other people with fear.

My stomach felt like a tumbling washing machine with no clothes inside. Empty and exhausted I moved forward with my plan of independence. I felt kind of like I was going skitzo. My eyes started to twitch. I felt like I could devour a cow! Just before I left I decided I would search the wreckage for any useful items. I had made my way behind the fallen plane to search for these items. I was almost certain no one had spotted me. I looked around the plane's mangled interior; the dented and smoldering seats made it hard to move throughout the plane's fuselage. I saw a door that was screaming my name. This would be perfect piece to build my raft for my rescue. When I got to the door, to my surprise, it was unlocked and ripped off the hinges easily. Not far away I saw flashes of orange. I investigated further and found that it looked like rubber seat padding. I hauled it out of the plane, and discovered an emergency float raft.

I struggled with the raft, as I dragged it down to the beach from the plane. I plopped it in the water. The only thing that I had was a paddle, a small container with some berries and that small radio. I got in the raft,

taking a final look at the island. I looked out to sea. A weird and eerie fog was rushing towards the island. I struggled to paddle, for my strength was weak. I woke up. The water was like a gigantic glass mirror. I looked around, trying to see anything, a boat, land or anything that meant getting out of this raft. I took hold of my little radio and turned the running nob in search of anything that said civilization. There was only static, more static, and then more annoying static. My ribs where starting to show, and my mouth didn't have any moisture whatsoever. I stared at the water surrounding me. "I cant take this hell!" I screamed at the top of my lungs. After my yelling I dove my head under the water and began taking in salty pacific water.

Stacy

The Present

We could hear water dripping. We looked at each other with weird faces, then we started walking faster. Two minutes went by, at this moment we were standing in front of a huge waterfall. "Wow it's beautiful" Samantha said. "Yeah it is," I replied.

Then we heard people whispering. We ducked down and watched an older guy and a older lady walk out from behind the waterfall. The older lady had a nice looking camera hanging from her necklace. We stood up and they looked at us like they had never seen humans before. I spoke first, "hello!" The older dude spoke with surprise, "Wow someone is on the island besides us, how did you guys get here?" Samantha spoke first, "We were on a plane that had crashed..there are more people on the beach." after Samantha had spoke I decided to small talk, "why are you guys on this island?" I asked. The older man started to speak but the older lady cut him off, "It is our job, we were talking photographs and then the boat had left without us..we are unaware how long we have been here though." I said, "ohh that sucks.." Then they started walking towards us. The older guy held his hand out and spoke, "you can call me Isaiah and you can call her Sally." the older lady named Sally looked at Isaiah with a funny face. I replied with a smile and said, "I'm Stacy and this is Samantha." then Samantha and I shook both of their hands.

It appears that there were passengers on the plane that would have still boarded knowing that it was making it's final flight.

Alfonzo

The Present

I wake up to the smell of smoke, and the sight of smoke, "Troy! Dan!" I yell as I crawl out of bed, as I shuffle through the smoke, I caught a glimpse of a chest in the corner of the room, it reads EXPLOSIVES. This alarming sight forces me to quicken my pace and I crawl through the door and emerge into the still dark out doors. I am relieved to see the Troy and dan are standing there waiting "are you guys all right?" I pant as I walk towards them, "we're fine but. I think we are both a little 'well done'," jokes dan. "We got to move," I warn them "I saw a chest of explosives in there." "What about budro?" Asks Troy. "I'll get him I say as I start off towards the engulfed building.

As I creep along the floor, I look to spread my immense heat, ahh, explosives, the old stand by....

The air gets hotter as I approach the cabin and it gets harder to breath, before I get the chance to turn around, something stops me, the explosion must have rattled the whole island, it saw no barriers, including me...

As the sun rises over the island, it shines in my eyes and my fresh, bloody wounds.

I wrap my cuts with leaves to stop the bleeding and we continue on through the woods, after a while we stop to take a rest, and as I lean up against the tree I feel my backpack, I had forgotten I had been carrying.

"The chest!" I exclaim, as I rummage through my pack and pull out the chest. "I've been trying to get this open, can you help?" I ask dan. "Sure can" he replies with a mischievous grin on his face, he reaches for his gun, but before he gets it out of the holster, a bang comes from behind him and the next thing I know,

The lock is on the ground next to the chest, with a steaming bullet hole through the middle. "Uh,

thanks" I say as I turn to face a tall girl with blond hair, wearing a tank top and shorts "no problem, Zoe o'mally, " she says as she extends her hand, I shake it. "Do I know you?" I ask thinking she looks very familiar, "other than the fact that I am a world famous pop star, I don't believe we've met." She responds. "Well, uh, nice to meet you!" I say wanting to end the conversation quickly so I could see what was in the in the chest, I kneel down next to it and start to open the creaky wooden top and as I attempt to reveal what awaits inside, I think what it could be, a treasure map? Gold? Silver? An old shoe? What ever it was, even if it was a rotting possum, I would still be curious about it, "sorry, I can't stay to see what's inside, I got to focus on getting out of this place, bye" and with that Zoe ran into the endless darkness of the woods, I look into the chest, as it fills with light it reveals the silhouette of a key, knowing the mystery has not yet been solved, I reach for the key. as I attempt to lift the key I realise that it is not a real key, but the shape of one protruding from the metal it was pounded from.

Rob

The Present

I am woken up by a loud gnashing sound.

I open my eyes, and above me I see the roof of my hut being torn to shreds.

Confused, I grab my knife sitting right next to me. The roof continues to be ripped, and through the falling debris I spot the door. I start to crawl towards it, but as I do the noise stops. Dead leaves I used to make the roof slowly rain down, looking like ash from a volcano. I sit still, and the seconds I sit there it feels like hours. I start counting under my breath as they tick by.

Then, I hear it.

Barely audible over the sound of the pounding surf, but still, I hear it.

It's coming.

I suddenly recognize the sound from last night, from behind me when I was searching for the that unsure feeling.

It's the beast, coming to finish the job.

I stand up abruptly, and run out of the little hut. Feet away lay the spear, and I dive for it. I grab the wooden shaft in my hands, and jump up in the air. I turn around towards the hut, but all I see is a rabbit sitting there next to my hut. I look at it, and it immediately turns and runs towards the jungle. I lower my spear in relief, and decide I should probably follow the bunny and get it for food. I run towards the jungle in pursuit of the rabbit, but once I get to the edge of the trees I can't find it. Maybe if I put some berries it'll come back. I run up to my house to get the berries, tossing my knife and the spear to the side as I do so. As I come to the door, I duck down through the door.

That's when I run into something.

Sitting right inside the door is the beast.

It stares at me, dead in the eyes.

*I feel at my hip for my knife, but then I realize I threw it to the side when I ran up to get the berries. I scan around quickly for and kind of weapon, but nothing comes into view. The beast slowly stalks towards me, with long powerful strides. I start back out towards the door, faster than the beast is walking towards me. I keep watching it though, making sure it doesn't make any sudden movements. It suddenly unsheathes it's claws, and I trip backwards over a fallen piece of the roof. 'This is the end,' I think. 'All that for nothing. Everything, everything I lived for, for nothing.' From my spot on the ground I look up at the beast. It has stopped, and stands still a couple feet away from me. I look up at its face, but as I do I realize something.

It's smiling.

Troy

Present

"Quick, turn around now," I weirdly shrieked. An alarm started blaring in the cockpit of the helicopter. There was a little blinking red light, and usually when lights are blinking red, it's not good. I looked out at the

water, which was getting rapidly closer to the helicopter, or vise versa. We where going to hit the rocky beach. gravity threw me out of the side door of the helicopter. I landed on a enormous boulder that was on the shore. I heard a shattering snap and saw a bone sticking thru my good leg. It was peeking thru the ripped flesh, looking me right in the face. It made me want to throw up. blood gushed over the rock. I looked up at the sky only to find a helicopter rotor one foot from my head. SLICE!!! The helicopter collided with the huge boulders of a beach right next to me and a massive explosion sent a flock of seagulls cawing and flying. Blood spilled and poured all over my neck and shirt. I fell backwards trying to inhale oxygen. My vision started blurring. I saw a blinding white light. I tried to roll over to try to stop the bleeding, but I didn't have any air. The last cough of blood happened. I breathed my final breath, and laid my head on a piece of flaming driftwood and drifted into a never ending sleep on the ever lost island.

Stacy

The Present

I turned around to walk back to my bed and Samantha grabbed my upper arm before I could take a step. She whispered, "I need to talk to you." I said, "Okay, well talk to me over there cause I need to sit down." then I pointed to our area on the beach. As we were walking across the beach I was thinking, “what does she need?” I spoke, "Oh okay, what is this about?" she spoke slowly and clearly, "I hate lying...but those people seem strange. I don't want to give out any information because we don't know them. Can we lie? and say we are sisters because they seem like they’re hiding something." I thought about this for a moment. I spoke in a soft tone, "Yeah, just follow my lead."

We walked back to the spot where they were standing, they were smiling and laughing, having a good time. I spoke, "do you think we will be here for a long time?" Isaiah answered me with a kind of sad face, "I'm so sorry... I hate to tell you this, but probably a long time. But you never know, someone could come by in a month or so." I opened my mouth to speak but when I did Sally opened her mouth and started speaking over me, so I just shut up, "But since we are all here why not get to know each other?" I spoke looking at Samantha, "Sure, why not." Sally and Isaiah smiled.

We all sat down in the hot sand. Sally spoke, "Where are you guys from?" Samantha answered, "We are from Miami, Florida." Sally replied, "That is cool, they must have great weather, right?" "Yeah its really hot down there all the time," I said. "Are you guys sisters?" Isaiah asked. Samantha looked at me and I spoke very fast, "Yes, we are sisters, I'm the oldest." Sally spoke asking, "Do you guys go to school? How old are you both?" Samantha said, "I'm a sophomore in high school and I'm 16" I added on to the answer, "and I'm a sophomore, but in college. I'm 22." Sally interjected , "I have a daughter about your age," then she eyed Samantha. Samantha responded, "Thats cool.."

CHAPTER 8: DEFEAT

We are not interested in the possibilities of defeat. They

do not exist.

- Queen Victoria

Frank

The Present.

As I unzip the pouch my gun was in, I reach my hand into the pouch and pull out my tightly wrapped colt, not my colt my friend my brother. As I unwrap the gun my whole body is hoping it will still work. I finally

get the clothes unwrapped from the gun but darkness is right around the corner and light is fading fast so I have to check it quick. As I quickly go over to my guns parts I scan the beach on the big island. I then see what nearly makes me drop my gun. A huge animal, well I don't know if it was even animal. It has a huge mouth bearing a set of huge teeth not only that it has massive claws also. And it is walking towards Steve's camp and Steve was probably sleeping. Right at that moment I realize I left fuzzy over there. Knowing if I don't do anything my brother and my kind of friend Fuzzy and Steve would probably die. I raise my gleaming gun in the air and slowly squeeze the trigger and wait for the shot. The beast looked over and started to move my way. Dang. At least I will have saved Steve and my brother fuzzy. As the furry creature starts to paddle over to my little island I ready myself with my colt and take a shot at the beast, it hits but the creature just keeps moving in on my position. I fire a few more rounds at the beast and still no effect. I think of all of things I could use to stop this thing besides my gun. I think I could wait for it to get here and then stab it with my knife. I then grab my all metal ten inch dagger from my pocket and get ready for the beast to come ashore. It lumbers out of the water and across the shore to me but I stand my ground getting ready for the strike. But it didn't attack me at first it stood up, it probably stands seven foot so I look it directly in eyes it's endless expressionless eyes. "Hey buddy," and that's when it's huge black claws paws ripped down on my undefended head. I throw my hands up as if trying to block the blow but its way too late for my hands to block it. It was then that I realize that was the end of my fearless life on earth.

Rob

The Present

Not just a cute animal smile, but an evil smile. Like its happy. Like it's enjoying every second of this. It knows I'm defenseless, and can't do anything to stop it. Time doesn't matter now, and it can wait as long as it'd like. Disturbed by the demonic smile, I turn away for a second and think about my life. Pointless, worthless and sad. My parents died when I was a kid, and nobody cared. Nobody even bothered to say, "I'm sorry for your loss, Rob." But no. That was too much to ask. So, I hated them. All of them. After my parents died, social workers asked relatives to welcome me into their home to stay. I was relieved, knowing I would be with family again but when the social workers returned, they said nobody was willing to take me in. Nobody. The same thing happened at the orphanage, nobody accepted me or even tried to be friend. They all slowly slipped away with other

family's, to a warm bed and good food, while I was left here to rot in this place. Once I was old enough, I moved out away from everyone into the woods. Hawaii seemed like a great place to get away from everything, so I decided to get on the next flight. People talked to me, and soon became friends with me. On the outside I was friends with them too. But on the inside, I hated all of them. Every last one. But now, sitting here waiting to die, I realize how pathetic it all was. I had plenty of opportunities to turn it around, I just didn't.

I open my eyes once again, and look towards the beast. But when I do, it's gone. I sit up and look around, but it really is. Gone without a trace. I crawl through the door of my house out into the sea air, but there's still no sign of it. The waters rough below down in the cove, and I walk over to the edge. I remember my childhood, all the possibilities I had to change it. But it's too late now. Nothing can save me.

Down below I hear a gunshot. I look down to see a man standing out on the little island. I follow his gaze, and suddenly see the beast swimming out towards him. It'll probably do the same thing to his that it did to me.

I look back down into the water, one last time, then I close my eyes. I shuffle forward until I feel the edge of the cliff under my feet. With a deep breath, I take a step forward. The air flies by my face, consuming me like a coffin of nothing. Nothing. Forever now, there's no changing it. All I've got is nothing.

Jessica

The Present

I walked softly into the dimly lit Palace of the Moon. A little girl, no more than five, was there to meet me. She made a motion that seemed to say follow me. So I followed her. My eyes slowly adjusted to the dark corridors. When I could finally see, I looked around. There were murals painted on the walls. Bright blues, reds and greens shown out into the darkness as if the colors were a light of hope.

Suddenly I saw a little dot of light. As we walked closer, it got bigger. Then I stepped into it. I shut my eyes tight, unwilling to let them open.

“Jessica, me glad you here!” A voice boomed. I forced my eyes open. I was standing in a big square

hall. The chief looked at me annoyed.

“Me glad too.” I said hesitantly. Was I really glad? I really don’t know. “Why can’t anyone else talk?” I blurted out.

“It will be answered when you learn about Flu Flu.” He clapped his hands twice. Young women came out of the shadows and moved to different spots in the room. I got a feeling that they were dancers.

“Years ago, Flu Flu was a huge village. The chief Spaniska told other tribe that Flu Flu was great. Tribe Neski came and ward happened. Flu Flu had almost won when white man came and Flu Flu people died. The Neski won war and put us on island. Then they curse us. Flu Flu will always be haunted by beast. Beast come every hundred years and so will Flu Flu. Flu Flu and beast stay for 13 days. Then Flu Flu go to sleep. Flu Flu wake up after hundred years. Then Neski tell Spaniska that people of Flu Flu will not talk. Spanistka do what Neski say. That is the story of Flu Flu. We hunt beast, but cannot find him.” He told me. The dancers stopped.

“Perhaps, we can break the curse. I could teach the people how to talk.” I thought it was a great idea. He didn’t think so.

“You teach them to talk?” He laughed. “No, no. You not real talk. You talk different from what they know. It would be against the curse. Bad things come to Flu Flu.” He explained. If I can’t teach them how to talk, they could teach me their language. I finally accepted the truth. I wasn’t getting out of here. I was instead going to weave myself into their life. It was hard to let go of the past. those wonderful 16 years of my life. Never finding out what will happen to my family. It felt like dying, and yet it was starting anew. I locked away my past life, my world I lived in, the hopes and dreams I had for the future. And yet I allowed myself to hold onto a little flicker of hope. It was to be my ray of sunshine, when I felt lost in this strange, new world I decided to live in.

“What if the people of Flu Flu taught me their language?” I asked. Ishan stood there stunned. When he finally broke out of the silence he said:

“Yes,” and so my schooling began.

Dr. John

The Present

I climb down from a tree. The other survivors are getting closer to my hut. If they find me I can only imagine what they'll do. They might seriously injure me or even kill me. After all, these people are here for themselves. From atop that tree I could see mutiny brewing in that group. Heading back to my hut I decided to collect some coconuts. I find a good tree and knock some down. As I watch the brown bulbs fall from the tree a strange noise resonates in my ears. Five second pass, then ten, thirty. After a minute a toppling Gus rushes through the tropical trees and the noise is gone. I collect my coconuts and continue on home. As I walk I fathom the creator of the noise. What could it have been. Was it a lost city sounding their horns? A primal beast thundering its roar? Maybe it was a phenomena of nature. I arrive at my hut to find its door ajar. I pause before entering the hut. Something tells me I shouldn't enter it. Slowly I press my palm against the uneven surface of the door. I take a deep breath and charge through the door. Inside is a tall blond boy. He has orange shorts and an old t-shirt. Rupert is curled up at his feet. "Hello," he says.

Alfonzo

The Present

The metal key shape in the box leaves me stumped, I scratch my head, confused. I Then notice a diagram pasted onto the inside of the box. It shows a box, similar to the one I am holding, being fit into a square hole in a woodsy area, looking similar to the terrain on the island. I close the box and trudge into the woods with purposeful in my stride followed by Troy and dan, about 15 minutes into the wilderness Troy decided to go looking for the other passengers, and me and dan continue to walk through the woods.

As me and dan burst through a line of shrubbery we stepped onto an overgrown pathway along the edge of a stream, rushing with cold clear water. About ten feet from the path is a circular slab of metal, protruding out of the soggy moss. "Oh! Looky there! Looks like there's a door in the ground over yonder!" Yelled dan as he pointed at the metal slab. "Huh, let's go check that out" I step off the trail and inch towards the door.

the slab has a small rectangular indent in it, in the bottom of the indent is the shape of a key pounded into the metal. i immediately remember where i'd seen it before, the box... find myself yet again digging through my bag, I pull out the box and examine the door with it side by side, I notice that the box is the same shape and size as the rectangular indent in the metal plate. I place the box in the hole, it fits like a glove, but nothing happens, I then turn the box clockwise like a key, nothing. I then turn the box counter clock wise, the metal panel becomes loose, and I lift it off. "Gee golly, looks like some big gopher abandoned his hole!" Exclaimed dan as the dust settles to reveal a circular hole in the ground. "Wow..." I say, taken by the holes mysteriousness. I immediately know what needs to be done. "I'm goin' down there" I announce "are you crazy! Woohee you must be dumber than a rattle snake,who uses his rattle to play back up percussion in a Mariochi band!" Rants dan "besides, it's dark down there! Here, take this." Dan says as he hands me his taser. "Maybe you can light up the place with it" he suggests. I take the taser, I think for a second before grabbing a nearby plant stem and wrapping It around the taser, holding the power button down.

I toss it into the hole, the small room instantly glows with electric blue light.

"Wow, it's some sort of bunker!" I exclaim "I'm going in" I declare "there goes the dum snake shakin' his rattle! I'm gettin out of here!" And with that, dan galloped into the woods

"And then there was one" I mumble to myself as I lower myself into the hole.

As my feet stamp on to the cement floor a cloud of disturbed dust fills the air,

I look around the small room, there is just enough light to see an old gas lantern, sitting on a table next to a stack of extra gas canisters. I struggle to turn on an old gas lamp next to the canisters and just as the room is eliminated with warm light, I hear the sound of a large iron door slamming above me, I was speechless,

I was stuck.

CHAPTER 9: HELLOS

Each friend represents a world in us, a world not

*born until they arrive, and this is only by a meeting
that this new world was born.*

- Anais Nin

Adam

The Present

I reach up to snatch a coconut not really paying attention to my hand when I feel something silky and soft. I look up to see an animal staring at me. I can't recognize what kind of animal it is because the palm leaves are in the way. The creature jumps out of the tree onto my chest and starts licking my face. Totally not what I was expecting, I had a Tasmanian devil on me, licking my face. I thought these animals were aggressive and dangerous to be around. Well I thought wrong. Then I hear the jingling of what sounds like a collar for a pet. I jump up and feel around the animals neck for a collar. I feel something hard and circular I bring it to the surface of the animals fur. On the dog tag was the name Rupert.

We had been walking for about ten minutes when we come up to a wooden hut. Rupert runs inside the front door. I follow behind Rupert to the door, I knock on the side of the door. "Hello anybody home I think I found your pet."

"Well that sure does look like you Rupert. Why are you here?" said an old scruffy guy in a angry voice. I explained to him how I had found Rupert while I was gathering food for the people back at the plane wreckage. He told me he was also on the plane, then invited me in for a fresh coconut.

"Oh and by the way I'm John.

"I'm Adam."

Stacy

The Present

A loud boat noise broke the awkward silence. We all looked over at the ocean. We could see a small boat in the distance heading our way. The captain yelled, "Everyone grab a branch and toss it in the air, wave them around so the boat can notice us!" I jumped up and picked up the first branch I could find, then tossed it in the air. It looked like I was trying to juggle branches. Everyone started yelling, "OVER HERE!" or "HELLO PERSON WE ARE STUCK ON THIS STUPID ISLAND!!!" The boat kept coming towards the island and I smiled at Samantha. The small boat rode up onto the sand until it came to a stop.

This lady stepped out of the small boat. She was wearing a purple and pink polka dot short sleeve top with white shorts. The lady spoke, "What are ya'll doing out here?" Bethany spoke with a shocked face, "Omg! Sis is that you?" The lady spoke quickly, "BETHANY! I finally found you guys!" The captain spoke, "how did you find out we were here on this island?" The lady answered, "because we tracked the plane to this island." captain replied, "oh, I forgot about that!" Everyone had no idea what they were talking about so we all started to stare at them in shock and wonder.

Captain turned to face us all and reached in his pocket. He pulled out this small square silver thing. Then he spoke, "This is a tracking device that all pilots must wear when they're on the plane in case of an emergency they can track where we a-." I cut him off and I couldn't stop myself from blurting and yelling out, "YOU ARE SUCH A DUMBO." once I said that everyone turned quickly to stare at me with shocked faces. I quickly spoke, shocked myself, "so sooo sooo sorry! I am just over tired." The captain spoke, "it is fine, I completely understand why." Then the lady spoke again, "well everyone gather your things and let's go." After she spoke everyone ran back to get their bags.

Me and Samantha ran back to our place on the beach. We picked up our bags "wow finally someone came," said Samantha. I replied, "I know right." We hopped in the boat and sat down next to Sally and Isaiah.

Samantha spoke softly to them, "I'm sorry we lied to you guys." Sally started to speak but we couldn't hear her over the loud engine. "What did you say?" I said loudly. She spoke again, "What did you guys lie about?" Samantha spoke before I could, "well..we aren't sisters but everything else is true well most of it is." Then Sally

spoke, "where are your parents?" Sally asked Samantha. Samantha spoke, "I'm not sure..at the moment." Isaiah and Sally spoke at the same time, "ohh" they both said. Then Isaiah spoke, "we kind of lied too." I looked at Samantha with a shocked face.

Then turned my head towards Sally and Isaiah then I spoke, "what! What do you mean?" Sally spoke, "We lied about our names." then Sally spoke again, "My name is Sammie." Samantha smiled and spoke, "that's my mothers name too!" Sammie smiled and Isaiah spoke, "my name is Henry." Samantha's eyes widened till they couldn't get any bigger. "What's wrong?" I asked her. Then she passed out. I spoke to Henry, "you must have a lovely name because she passed out when you spoke." Then he replied in shock, "I must have."

It has been three minutes since Samantha woke up. When she woke up the lady that had rescued us got into a little freezer and told Samantha to drink half a water before she gets up again.

Samantha jumped up when she was finished and walked slowly towards me, Henry and Sammie. When she got over to all of us she sat down slowly. She spoke, "why did you leave?" She looked at Henry and Sammie. They looked very confused,I was also confused too. Sammie spoke, "what are you talking about?" Samantha asked a couple of questions, "do you have a daughter?" Their eyes widened then jumped up to hug Samantha. Sammie spoke "Hunny is that you!?" She replied, "yes mom!" I started putting the pieces together. I realized what was going on. Samantha finally found her parents, after a year of their disappearance.

Jessica

The Present

One week later, I was standing outside, pulling a bucket of water out of Miss Drapes well. She was standing next to me trying to show me a technique that might make it easier to pull up the water. So far, it didn't seem to help, judging by the sweat that was pouring down my face. I heard somebody walk up to me. Missdripi dropped her hands from perfecting the technique.

"Jess, is that you?" An astonished voice asked. Only my family knew and called me by my pet name, Jess. I turned around like it was my turn to be astonished.

"Jason?"

"Little sis!" He pulled me into a hug which in my opinion is much better than ruffling my hair.

"How did you get here?" I exclaimed.

"Well", he started, "you know Mom and Dad. They weren't ready to let you go, so they sent me here to keep an eye on you." He finished, but his eyes told me the real reason. I was still their baby. No matter how hard I try to think that they see me as an adult, they still and would always see me as their baby.

"I found a brother and sister who I hung out with. They helped me find you."

"Well, Jason, it was wonderful for you to stop by, but I'm fine." I needed to tell Jason that I was 16, not 5, and that I didn't need him to trail after me like a lost puppy.

"Jess, I knew you will need help," he started.

"How many days have I been here?" I ask Missdripi. She shrugs and gives the hand motions for a lot.

"I went a lot of days without you, or anyones help really." I say, motioning to Missdripi's sign language. We stare at each other awkwardly, wondering what to say.

"Do you still want to do the peace conference?" Jason asks breaking the silence.

"Yes, of course! Why?" I asked.

"A girl flagged down a boat. All of the survivors were asked if they wanted to leave. So, if we don't leave soon we will be late." He explained.

I came into Flu Flu as a stranger, but came out as one of them. I had a feeling that I would see them again. I thought about my adventure as we walked into the great city. We walked out into the clearing where the stairs were. I didn't walk out as Jessica Wilder, but as She Who Comes From Sky. For I had endured. It was an adventure so great, one that I will never forget. And with Jason I walked out of the sun city, up the golden, gilded stairs, and towards the plane.

I never looked back.

CHAPTER 10: GOODBYES

**It's time to say goodbye, but I think that goodbyes are sad and
I'd much rather say hello. Hello to a new adventure.**

- Ernie Harwell

There are now those on the island who have come to stay.

Lila

The Present

“Jessica, what was that?” She didn’t answer.

I looked over to where she would be laying, she wasn’t there. I began to get worried, I wandered into the woods wondering where she was and what that noise was. Before I got on the plane I got a call that i didn’t have much time that i only had a week to live. So i had to get home to see my sisters and my dad but the plane crashed and now I can’t see them until we get off this island. But if I only have a week than I don’t know if thats going to happen.

I ran faster and faster and deeper into the woods i mean what was I supposed to do she could of gone to get some firewood but I couldn't help but think that something had happened to her. She wouldn’t let me worry like this. I heard the whistling again I ran faster and faster. THUD I fell right on my face. I had tripped over a

stump. I got up but I had to wait a moment before i kept going because I hadn’t been feeling so hot lately. I heard a snap so I ran I kept looking behind me to make sure no one was behind me. I looked in front of me but it was too late SMACK I ran into a tree. I should really watch where I’m going, I got up and felt a big bump on my head. I was dizzy, but I had to keep running. I came to a big opening and stopped in the middle of the field. I began to feel like I was going to faint, and I had this bad pain in my side. I collapsed and I lay there saying to myself it will be all right. *I thought about what happened a couple days ago, the plane landing. I didn't really freak out I thought they were going to fix it but I thought wrong. If i just lay here i will feel better but i knew that was not the case. “I’m going to die happy,” I thought. “I met two wonderful friends and I was blessed that I got to live this long. Then I thought, what will happen after I die? Will someone find me and and leave me there to rot? Lila stop worrying about something that’s going to happen after you die. Think about funny things. And that’s when it happened; I took my last breath, and I slipped away.

Adam

The Present

I bring the fish over to John; he's awake now. He seems very surprised that I just brought in a thirty-six inch snook on a fly rod. We both are very hungry so I quickly run back to the big island for wood to make a fire. I was bending down to get my last piece of wood when I hear the whistling and a huge gust of wind. I struggle getting back to the little island. Going through the water with my hands full with wood is a struggle, but I want to get back to see if John's idea was right. John thought the noise was the wind going through the trees, so he made a flag out of my shirt to see if the wind was coming from the north which meant his idea was right. As I walk up to John’s flag I notice writing in the sand. The end of the message must have been washed away by the waves because I can’t see the end of it. Now I’ll never know where John is. Well I guess if fate wants us to see each other again then we will.

Adam you showed me that I have been wrong my whole life, that people aren't selfish and that they do care for others, but I need to go think things through. Thank you so much.

P.S. I was right, it is the wind going through the trees. Please remember me. I want you to keep Rupert. If you need me I'll be-

I look up, and there was Rupert. I was happy by the fact that I was now alone with Rupert, but I will miss John's company. I finish my fire just in time for dark. Rupert and I really enjoyed the snook. Once we were done eating I was about to put the fire out when I hear, "Anybody out there?" It was coming from the water, a boat. "Yes, it's me and my pet. Yes, I'm stranded out here!" I desperately scream.

Rupert and I got onto the coast guard boat. "Are there anymore people?" asked the captain as he turned the boat around. I was so excited that we were getting rescued that I didn't hear the captain ask his question. I was just in totally aw that we got rescued it just seemed like perfect timing. Then I realized he was talking to me.

"Yes, there was a plane crash they are all probably at the front of the island,"I stuttered bending down to pet Rupert.

"Alright we will go straight there then," said the captain. As we speed up to go to the front of the island I sat on the rail of the boat quietly just thinking how lucky I got. I look up at the cabin of the boat and see the captain steering the boat and a young lady i think by the name of Stacy. I remember seeing her on the plane so she must of gotten rescued before me.

Floyd

The Present

After an hour of trekking through the forest, I have still not found Tracy. I know I will, though. I hear something behind me- I turn around to see a bustle in a thick cluster of bushes about fifteen feet away. I walk towards slowly, not knowing what to expect after what`s happened today. I peer into the bush, I see something moving. The bush is too thick to identify what it is.

“Hello?” I call out. No answer. “Is there anyone there?” All of the sudden, my heart electrifies with shock as the bush explodes and leaves and sticks fly everywhere. A large form- some kind of furry animal- charges out from the bush right towards me. It is trampling the ground and its racing to the kill on all fours. All that I can think to do is run. I have no idea what that thing is, and as I look behind me, I see it getting closer. I sprint through trees, over logs and around bushes. I am running as fast as my legs will carry me, and I take the longest strides I can in my khakis. The thing is almost right behind me. I can feel myself slowing down just a bit, and the beast is so close that I can feel its heavy footsteps. I am almost out of energy, I need a way to distract it. I see a long, thick branch in the middle of the path, and as I am running, I lift it and hurl it at the creature. The creature leaps out of the way and charges even faster at me. I turn back around, and I don’t see the log in the middle of my path. It hits me square on my knees and I topple head first to the ground. The beast skids on the forest floor to a halt, and pounces right at me. Its teeth sink in my back like twenty tiny knives, and the pain makes me scream in agony. The creature rips flesh from my back, and my vision becomes blurry as it violently tears at my body. I feel its fangs go into my back one more time, and everything is black for good.

Alfonzo

The Present

I am stunned, I am frozen, there on the cold cement floor, while thoughts bounce around in my head like out of control bouncy balls. I then a have a sharp stab of pain on the side of my head and everything goes black.

As I awake I feel dizzy, my hair is sticky with fresh blood, and I have a bump the size of a cantaloupe on my sore head. As my vision clears, I see a face above me that I would recognize anywhere, the one and only Budro Wilson.

"Well, well, look what the cat dragged in..." Budro snarls, his musty breath lingering in the humid air. "Welcome to my bunker. I see you found the key, my chest key, specially designed by me.”

"What a pleasure, seeing you again!" I groan sarcastically.

"You must of thought old man Budro was killed in the fire! Oh but no! I started the fire! I escaped! Heh heh heh!" he says.

“Well that's good news, but you see your kind of an issue, a pain in the butt, a stick in the mud. You're making this harder than It needs to be. If you helped us in the first place, we could of worked together to get off this island! But noooo, Budro had to be the villain--you had to be the bad guy!” I rant.

"Yes but now look where the bad guy is! In an hour, a rescue boat will arrive and when there is no Alfonzo hogging a seat, I will catch a ride and get out of here! I will be free! I will be on that boat and you will be in this cement coffin of a bunker!" Budro rambles.

"That's not gonna work..." And with that I thrust my foot into budro's stomach and he falls into a shelf full of canned food. It collapses and lands on top of him. "You rat!" He yells, as he emerges from a mountain of Campbells. As his balding head appears, I pick up a large empty can and pull it over his face. His muffled threats are barely audible. I pick up the large wooden branch he whacked my head with and, CLANG! I strike his can covered head and he is out cold. I collapse to the floor, exhausted after the brawl. I rummage through budro's pocket hoping to find the key to the hatch in the roof. Instead I find a rhinestone covered revolver, the owner being none other than Dan Wes. I remembered being in possession of the gun, budro must have stolen it from me when I was sleeping. I pull it out and grasp the handle. Budro's head rises and I heard mumbling from under the can, I pulled it off his head and aimed my gun.

"Where's the key?" I question.

"What key do you speak of?" Budro growls.

"Where is the key to the hatch out of here?" I demand.

"here it is! Back off! And stop pointing that gun at me!" Budro says as he hand me a rusty key. I snatch the key and begin to climb the iron rungs to the top until I remember I still had to get off the island. I turned around and my feet once again met the cement. I see a shelf of supplies on the wall, *how am I going to get off this island?* I think, then I remember the row boat where I found the metal chest. "Yes!" I exclaim.

"What is it? What did you find you little punk!?" Budro questions.

"Oh nothing." I say as I hide a small army shovel Behind my back that I found on the old shelf.

"Sweet dreams." I whisper before suddenly beating Budro on the head with the shovel.

I climb out of the bunker and head in the direction I came. Before long I find myself standing at the still smoking remains of Budro's cabin. I then follow the soggy path to the beach. I walk along the beach and it is deserted, I feel as though I am the last one on on the island. After a while of walking the hot beach, I find the row boat from yesterday. The boat appears to be ripped in half, its hard to tell because it is half sunk into the sand, thats what I got the shovel for. I thrust the shovel into the sand and pull up my first load, I dig up more and more sand and eventually I come to the conclusion that the boat was completely intact and usable. I was finally free.

As I unerth the second half of the boat, I am relieved, I finally can go home, I can finally see my family again. I lift the boat out of the sand and start pushing the boat towards the translucent blue ocean. As the boat meets the water I give one final push, and im off, using the rusty army shovel as a paddle.

I paddle my way off the island and turn the to face the shorline, the shorline that made me stronger, the shorline that made me weaker. The shorline that changed my life.

I paddle for an hour before I hear a whiring sound in the distance. I look around, and to the northeast I see the sillouette of a motor boat in the distance. I stop paddling and stand up and wave frantically. The boat is coming towards me, I see a man standing on the bow of the boat. The vessel is coming closer. I see the words US COAST GUARD painted on the side. *I am saved*, I think. The boat is getting closer and closer.

“Gobyn! Dad, Mom”I scream. The boat pulls up next to me and I throw myself at the three of them. After a long group hug, a warm towel is draped over me by a coast guard and the boat starts moving away. I can still see the island in the distance, and the old row boat bobs in our wake.

It is over.

Katie King:	Katie was born in Bangor, Maine on July 13, 2001. She would like to be an archeologist when she grows up. She is kind, loyal, and outdoorsy.
Katana Gray:	Katana was born in Texas. She would like to be a physical therapist for the military, or a writer. She is nice, outgoing, and caring.
Michael Fournier:	Michael was born in Newport, Rhode Island on a Naval base. He will not reveal the date of his birth. He thinks he is adventurous, curious, and very silly. He wants to be an explorer when he grows up.
Nellie Horvath:	Nellie was born in Bar Harbor, Maine on February 12, 2001. She would like to be on Broadway, serving as the president of the United States, and an olympic runner. She is inspiring, outgoing, and optimistic.
Raven Radziewicz:	Raven was born in Maine, on March 22, 2001. He would like to be an action figure designer someday. He likes to collect toys, he likes science fiction, and pets. Raven was on the editing team of Stranded. He does not have any writing in the book.
Sage Cross:	Sage was born in Bangor, Maine on March 10, 2001. She would like to be a photographer or do something with photography. She is nice, very funny, and a great friend!
Sam Hoff:	Sam was born in Indianapolis, Indiana on January 8, 2001. He would like to be an NBA basketball player when he grows up. He is athletic, likes eating grass, and enjoys dump trucks.
Tiana May:	Tiana was born in Bangor, Maine on September 4th. She would like to be a police officer or a model when she grows up. She considers herself to be young, wild, and free.
Zeke Valteau:	Zeke was born on May 21, 2001 in Bangor, Maine. He would like to be the star of his own TV show. He is intriguing, determined, and funny.

Biographies:

Brigette Olearck: Brigette was born in Springfield, Massachusetts on June 5, 2000. She would like to be a Veterinarian when she grows up. She is athletic, outgoing, and kind.

Camden Garland: Camden was born in Bar Harbor, Maine on January 5, 2001. He would like to be a musician when he grows up. He is athletic, musical, and outgoing.

Chase McGee: Chase was born at the Maine Medical Center in Portland, Maine on December 4, 2000. He would like to be a writer someday, either writing books or newspaper articles. He is introspective, observant, and dry.

Dawson Burnett: Dawson was born on September 25, 2000 in Bar Harbor Maine. When he grows up he would like to become a professional musician, preferably a drummer. He describes himself as funny, kind and perceptive.

Devin Wescott: Devin was born May 25, 2000 in Ellsworth Maine. When he grows up he wants to be a birthday party clown/entertainer. He describes himself as outdoorsy, humorous, a deep thinker.

Erin Allen: Erin was born in New Haven, Connecticut, on August 7, 1979. She would like to be mindful and grateful when she grows up! While being mindful, she'd like to explore being a teacher, a photographer, a doula, a writer, and a nutrition and bodywork therapist.

Forest Watras: Forest was born in Ellsworth, Maine on August 24, 2000. He would like to be a landscape architect =when he grows up. He is athletic, outgoing, and sarcastic.

Gilbert Isaacs: Gilbert was born in Opelika, Iowa on September 1, 2000. He wants to be an oceanographer, He is thoughtful, determined, intellectual, and passionate.

Isaac Philbrook: Isaac was born on Islesford, a small island off the coast of Maine. It was April 4, 2000 . Isaac wants to be a writer/salesman. He would describe himself as patient, a quiet boy, and playful.

Ilia Colson: Ilia was born on September 5, 2001. She would like to be a cosmetologist. She is crazy, loving, and creative.