

UISZ



# IMPRESSIONS-

JUNE 2017

VOLUME 2



## JUST-A-WORD



I am excited to present, for your delight and (dare I say it?) edification, a selection of writing, art and photography from UISZ students from Years 7 through 11, and staff, in this, our second edition of *Impressions*.

A massive ‘thank you’ to all the composers involved in this process, and particularly to Mr Jon den Hartigh for his ongoing support. In the previous edition, the writers’ provided a segue-way to the creation of the artworks. In this edition, the process was flipped: the artists provided various visual stimuli for the writers. Writers were also encouraged to include the six elements of a balanced story, namely, exposition, description, introspection, dialogue, action and emotion, in their work which, I believe, they have done fairly effectively.

The theme of this edition is ‘The Journey’ in all its manifestations – physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, intellectual, personal and imaginative. Dag Hammarskjöld, in his remarkable journal, *Markings*, noted that ‘the longest journey is the journey inwards; of him who has chosen his destiny, who has started upon his quest for the source of his being.’ The idea of journey is very much a metaphor deeply embedded in the human psyche across all cultures. While it means different things to different people, from excitement, adventure and challenge to an odyssey of self-understanding and a better grasp of the human condition, we also recognise simultaneously that, in the journey, we share, each one of us, a commonality as sojourners in the wasteland, in search of personal meaning, the ‘source of our being’. We intuit that once our minds have been stretched by the journey, they can never regain their original dimensions. For what is life if it does not challenge us to change and grow often?

Our contributors to this anthology have certainly grappled with the diverse concept of journey in their stories and images. Carl Sagan asserted, wisely, that ‘writing is perhaps the greatest of human inventions, binding together people, citizens of distant epochs, who never knew one another. Stories break the shackles of time — proof that humans can work magic.’ And so it is with all art. As you read the various stories and reflect on the images and artwork, I express the hope that you will find some magic in the creative texts in the pages that follow and that they challenge you on your own journey.

*a luta continua*  
JWH

## LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

**Front cover design:** 'Fantasy in Ruins' Series, photo by Alan

**Back cover design:** ZengchengMan, art by Jon den Hartigh

### Writing

Adam	Under the Bed
	Save a Life
Ivy	'Yes'
Shaojia	Victory
Jerry	Trapped
Cherry	Tommy
Kelly	Silence
Aimee	Seeing the Light
Samuel	Nightmare
Ruby	Never Forget
Cindy	Hopeless
Gary	Hell
Alvin	Ghost
Tim	Forrest
Pei E	Bruno
Harbor	Blackie
Mickey	A Stranger Calls
Rose	A Mysterious Journey
Linda	A Journey into the Dark
Henry	A Dog of my Own
Holts Inc.	The Day of the Mouse
Jennifer	The Old Man

### Artwork

Harry	Boom Box
	Furniture design
Gloria M	Hot Dog
Tatiana	Snakes in the Grass
Jonas	Monster
Eric	Food
Tiffany	Past, Present, Future
Alan	Fr: 'Fantasy in Ruins'
	Fr: 'City Discovery'
JdH	Fish out of Water
Crystal	Stage of Sorrow



### THREWORD

Included in this publication is a selection from the year 12 DP Visual Arts' Exhibition. I am always amazed at the variety of work that the young artists produce in a year and a half. From primitive paintings to staged photography, this group was no exception. Much time and energy went into these pieces and I am very happy to see them live on in this edition of *Impressions*. There is no set no formula for creating art; each of the works in this volume mirror the artists' personality and style. From calculated and careful to random and gestural, I am very proud of this year's graduating art students and their work. I wish them the all the best in the future.

**JdH**

**June 2017**

## Under the Bed - by Adam

It was a dark, stormy and icy cold night.

The clouds covered the sky and there was lightning and thunder. The strong wind was blowing on the trees. Raindrops fell hard on the ground. Up ahead, Ada saw an old, dilapidated and scary house.

She sprinted towards it, hoping to find some shelter as she was getting wet.

She opened the door slowly.

It creaked loudly.

She tiptoed into the old, dark, and dirty house.

She remembered the many stories about this old house. It was haunted, the people in the village used to say.

Yet, here she was seeking shelter.

Alone.

She shivered.

It was coal black inside.

Ada called out, "Anyone here? Could I stay here for the night?"

But there was no answer.

"What should I do?" she thought. She was cold and hungry.

"Not much option. I'll have to wait at least for the storm to end."

She wished she could find a bed to sleep in. But the house was too dark. Ada couldn't see anything.

She fumbled around in the blackness, using her feet and hands to feel for anything that might help.

She was exhausted, wet and numb and needed to rest.

Finally, she found what appeared to be a bed with a scruffy blanket. Its smell reminded her of cooked cabbage.

How convenient. It was as if someone had left them there for her to find.

It made her wonder about whether she should stay or not. Every sense suggested running as far from here as possible. However, what else could she do in the circumstances? It was already very late. It was cold. She was tired. What could possibly go wrong?

She quickly jumped under the blanket and drifted off to sleep.

A short while later, Ada awoke, her spine tingling. She sensed that there was something under the bed.

Perhaps she'd just imagined a noise. Maybe it was her mind playing tricks in the dark.

Oh well, she thought, not much I can do about it.

She rolled back over intent on going back to sleep.

Suddenly something touched her leg. It felt cold and rough. It grabbed at her, tightening its grip around her ankle. She tried to resist, but she could not. She seized the bedpost, but the grip stiffened. Its tugging was too powerful.







### *Stage of Sorrow by Crystal*

Bloodied hands and bloodied feet.  
She was ripped off the bed – like a page being torn from a book – and was yanked free.

She screamed.

In a millisecond, Ada had been hauled under the bed. There was a scuffle and a groan.

Then silence.

Many moons later, it was a dark and frosty night. The purple clouds covered the sky and lightning forked the air, followed by grumbling thunder. A strong wind blew angrily through the trees. Raindrops hammered hard on the ground.

Up ahead, Adam saw an old, derelict house. Legend had it that it was haunted, and that people had vanished there, but Adam could not care. He was exhausted, hungry and cold.

He draped his cloak around him and headed for shelter ...

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## A Stranger Calls - by Mickey

It was a darkly ominous and storm-filled night.

The stars were hiding behind the angry clouds. Anny thought she could smell blood, as if somebody might die. Or if someone who might already be dead.

The air was expectant and watery.

Then, the rain began to fall heavily.

Anny could hear somebody following behind her, despite the heavy raindrops. She stepped forward carefully. She sensed a presence behind her sneaking forward when she did. She experienced a deep-seated fear, almost a phobia as one might have for spiders or snakes.

Her heart began to beat at her ribs. Was it a stranger? she wondered.

“Dad! Is that you Dad?” Anny called out.

Anny pretended that she was calling to her dad, but the steps still continued to stalk her. They grew closer.

When she had almost arrived at the front of her home, she heard a loud, deep-throated voice behind her call out.

“Excuse me!”

She was nervous to turn around to see him. But she did so anyway.

Before her stood a stranger. He was wearing a jet-black hat, black t-shirt beneath a black hoodie and dark blue jeans.

Anny’s heart leapt with fright. The man before her looked like a character out of *Halloween*: a cross between Freddy and the Grim Reaper.

She prepared to run. Before she could do so, the stranger spoke.

“You dropped your house key,” he said. She couldn’t quite make out his face because the hoodie mostly hid his features.

He handed her a key.

It was Anny’s house key that she thought was still in her pocket.

“Thank you,” she said.

From inside, the family dog, Milo, barked loudly. She snatched the key from the stranger, unlocked the door hurriedly, scampered inside and quickly bolted it behind her. Her heart was still beating quickly and she was perspiring.

Next morning, after all the clouds had gone, Anny went out to the park with Milo for their daily walk.

Again, Anny felt someone watching her. Milo had stopped and was staring at the bushes. Then he started to bark wildly.

The stranger! Anny thought. He knows it was my house key!

She ran.

She burst into the house.

‘Hello! Anyone home?’

Strange, she thought. Her parents should be there.

Anny heard a scuffle and a sharp scream from the bathroom.

She called out. “Mom! Dad! Is that you?”

A stony silence greeted her. She made her way cautiously towards the bathroom.

She was dumbstruck by what she saw. Walls of red greeted her.

Her mom clutched her stomach from where she was bleeding.

“Help me!” she cried.

Her father leant over the tub, his one hand holding the other. Blood oozed from his feet, everywhere. He groaned loudly.

Anny screamed. There was a grunt from behind her. Too late. There was a loud banging and something hit her head.

“Where am I?” she said, opening her eyes.

“In hospital,” her mother said.

“What happened?”

“Last night was a dark and stormy night; you got a shock from the lightning and almost died. But like a miracle, you’ve woken up!” said Dad.

Just then, the doctor walked in.

“You’re one lucky girl,” he said.

Although she couldn’t be sure, Anny was almost convinced that she had heard that deep, raspy voice somewhere before.

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*Snakes in the Grass by Tatiana*



## A Dog of my Own - by Henry

I found him from the street and he was sick and hurt. I tried to find his owner but I could not. I did not know where to take him, so I kept him and brought him to the vet.

I got him cleaned up and his cold cured and took him home and fed him some dog food and he fell asleep before he finished it. Not long after, when he awoke, he ate all his food.

On the second day, he was not really active but the vet said, “He’ll be okay. Give him a few days to recover.”

I was not that nervous about the dog’s health. I knew that he would recover. In the afternoon I gave him some water and some bones to eat.

His body grew less weak. “I think he will heal, but it will take longer than I thought,” I said. “He is still very weak.”

A few days later, he was much better, much to my relief. He was more energetic and much happier. He was running around the garden and so I joined him because, hey, it was good exercise for me too.

During these days, I wanted to find his owner, but how? No-one turned up.

“I’ll keep him until the owner arrives,” I thought. “I can’t leave him by himself, or take him to the pound.”

I decided to call him Alex.

After a couple of weeks, I took Alex out for a walk. I took him out of the house. He was happy and active, running around the street.

After five months or so, I brought Alex to the vet once again to get him checked and vaccinated. On my return, there was a man standing at the front gate.

“That is my dog,” he said.

“Maybe. I found him on the streets. He was hurt and sick, so I brought him home. But if this is your dog, I can give him back to you.”

“Oh thank you. For the time and the money you gave for my dog, I am very grateful. Maybe you can come over to my house,” he said.

“Okay, but it’s everyone’s job to protect animals – their rights and freedom,” I said.

I gave the dog back.

I see the dog and his owner regularly. They come and visit me. And I visit him too. Alex, whose real name is Bolt, is now healthy and strong.

I am grateful that I had time with the dog and that he is now recovered.



I am now thinking that I would like to have a dog of my own.

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**Blackie**  
- by Harbor

It was a sunny day, and not at all dark and stormy. The sun shone warmly and the temperature was ... pleasant. The birds chirped like Zha-Zha. The wind blew gently over the grass and through the trees.

Everything was comfortable.  
Peaceful.

Tom had gone to visit his friend Jack who was sick at home with a bad cold.

"How are you feeling?" asked Tom.

"Worse than yesterday,"

answered Jack, "I have a terrible cough, and there is not a drop of medicine in the house."

"Don't worry, Jack. I'll send Blackie to the drugstore for some medicine. He'll be back before you know it."

Blackie was Tom's dappled auburn-black Alsatian cross Labrador.

Tom whispered in the dog's ear. The dog barked enthusiastically. Tom then put a 50 RMB note in Blackie's mouth.

Blackie bounded off down the street.

"And keep the change,"

Tom shouted after him.

"Tom, don't be silly. You know that dog won't be back with any medicine," said Jack, shaking his head.

*Hot Dog by Gloria M*



“Oh, yes he will,” Tom answered.  
Half an hour later, however, Blackie had not returned.  
Tom was feeling worried and felt annoyed at his friend’s smug little smile.  
"Something has happened to him, I'm sure," said Tom. "As a rule, he obeys me."  
“Come on, Tom, you don’t really expect me to believe that Blackie can go to the store, order medicine and then pay for it and after all that, return with the ordered medicine? As if that’s going to happen!”  
“Why not?” Tom asked. “Why won’t you believe me?”

Nonetheless, Tom was anxious. He glanced at his watch.  
Thirty-five minutes.  
“Blackie has never been this long before. I wonder what’s happened?”  
“You make it sound as if Blackie goes shopping every day,” said Jack.  
“He does!”  
“Now I know that you’re joking to make me feel better!”  
Tom looked at his watch again.  
Forty minutes.  
“Go on, Tom! Admit it! Blackie’s not up to the challenge!”  
“Wait, you’ll see!”

But Tom was beginning to grow concerned.  
Forty-five minutes.  
Just as he was about to get up to find Blackie, Jack said, “Look! Over there!”  
Through the window, Jack saw Blackie at a distance. He hurried to open the door and let him in.  
Jack was shocked to see a bottle of medicine in the dog's mouth.  
"Good boy," said Tom, "But what took you so long?"  
Blackie ran to the door, barking and wagging his tail. Tom and Jack followed onto the front lawn.  
Blackie stood near an object on the ground and yapped loudly.  
“Well, fancy that! A bone.”  
“No wonder Blackie was late. He stopped to do some shopping of his own!”  
“Do you think Blackie can organize a few ice creams?”  
“I wouldn’t put that past him.”  
Jack and Tom both laughed.  
Blackie howled with delight.

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**Forrest**  
- **by Tim**

My name is Professor Gere.



If you haven't ever heard of the story I'm going to tell, you wouldn't even know about me and my German Shepherd, Forrest.

I adopted Forrest a few years ago. I didn't even know where he came from. I named him after my favorite movie character, Forrest.

So, one day, I'm off on a train to Geneva for work. When I arrived at the train station, Forrest refused to go home until I hopped on the train and he saw it leave. Later in the evening, when I jumped off the train tiredly, I was surprised to see Forrest waiting for me.

The workers at the station said that my dog even knew when my train was arriving and when he should arrive at the station to wait for me. In the later months, Forrest was always waiting when I returned. Over time, the relationship between Forrest and me became close.

A year after I adopted the dog, I was chosen on a scientific mission in Antarctica. I was happy at first, but I realized that that would mean that I was going to miss Forrest for several months. The neighbours kindly offered to care for Forrest in my absence.

Did that also mean that he would wait at the train station for such a long time? But eventually, I had to go to the mission.

On the day I was leaving, I left my house with all the equipment I needed for this expedition, and walked with Forrest towards the train station. At the train station, he still waited until my train left the platform, just as he'd done before. He had no way of knowing that I would be away for months.

Later, I heard from the workers at the station that Forrest kept on coming to the train station every evening to wait for me, as always. Although the workers tried to get Forrest to go home, Forrest wouldn't leave. He only left at midnight. The workers even built a small hut for Forrest for him to wait for me.

Months passed, and I really missed Forrest.

How was he now? Was he still at Bern Train Station, waiting for me to return? What if he died before I could return? What was I going to do if that really happened? Seriously, I'd been thinking of Forrest every night I went to sleep at the scientific research station in Antarctica.

Finally, a year later, I finally was able to return to Bern. When my plane landed in Geneva, and I hopped on the train back to the familiar train station, I was excited, but nervous.

Would Forrest be waiting for me at Bern Station? How was he going to feel? How would I feel? Would he know who I was?

I did not know.

The train slowly entered Bern Station. I checked the watch, right at the time when Forrest should be coming to greet me.

When the train door opened and I stepped onto the platform, I shouted, "Forrest!"

Seconds later, a dog hopped right at me, wagging his tail and licking me. It was Forrest, and he had waited for my return for nearly a year.

I was so excited, I threw my bag and hugged him. The workers of the station had gathered and applauded this magnificent moment.

I dropped some tears. I was not sad, but imagined how loyal Forrest was, waiting at the same place every day, at the same time, waiting for my return. Forrest, of course, had become older. But I did not care. I walked out of the station, with my loyal dog, Forrest.

“I’m back, Forrest, I’m back. I’m never going to leave you again.”

I wasn’t sure, but it looked as if he slowly nodded in agreement.

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### Ghost - by Alvin

It was a dark and stormy night ...

Behind the green clouds, the moon tried to look bright. But it could not.

I’d always liked the clean, fresh smell of rain. But that night, the rain was beyond clean. The raindrops and windows kept bumping into one another.

The darkness lightened, followed by a series of explosions. Lightning and thunder. Close friends.

Everything shook. It felt like an earthquake.

The wind blew harder and harder. I peeked out the window. It had become a dangerous situation. I realized my dad had not yet come back home. I worried for him because the weather had grown worse.

But I also had another worry.

I was in the house, alone.

My brother had gone to a party with his friends and mother had gone to grandmother's house for work.

Outside, the dark continued to make strange sounds.

I was so scared. It was as if I had met a ghost.

*Boom Box by Harry*





How could I cheer myself up? I thought. Music! So I went to radio and turned it on. It just hissed.

No reception.

Time to try the television. Before I could turn it on, it spoke of its own accord.

"... Alright. Next stage is ..."

"How did that happen? It can't just turn itself on!"

My heart began to beat faster. I turned my head and looked around to see if anyone was in my house. Perhaps someone was pranking me? But there was only me. I just sat on a sofa, like a rock.

"... I didn't set any TV program for today."

I wanted to go to sleep but it was so noisy and I had overstrained myself and wouldn't be able to sleep anyhow. I took a deep breath to relax. I needed to find the remote control to turn off the TV.

There was a loud banging from outside.

"What's that!" I said to myself.

Cautiously, I looked at verandah. There was something that looked like a person hanging on the ceiling and swaying.

"G-g-ghost?"

I went white with terror. I have a deep fear of the paranormal.

I wanted to run. I didn't want to stay alone. I just hoped somebody came home soon.

There was a banging on the front door. My spine tingled.

"Whose there?"

"Only me!"

I opened the door and it was ...

"Dad! Am I glad to see you! I'm scared because there's a ghost ..."

"Ghost? Where is it?"

"In the house! The television turned on itself."

"Oh, that's because I reserved the program," Dad laughed.

"And then how about that?" I pointed at the ghostly shadows on the veranda.

"Oh, that's just laundry."

Dad fetched it.

"See? There isn't a ghost anywhere," Dad stroked my head. "Stop worrying. I have to go back to work," Dad said. "I'll see you later."

"Do you have to?"

"Stop worrying. I'll be back soon."

I began to relax. There was an explanation for most things.

Just as I was settling down to do my homework, there were loud noises from the kitchen.

"Hah? That's strange. There is nobody here except me."

I opened the door. Ah, the window was rattling. Had it been opened? I wondered. I closed it tightly.

I looked around. There was nothing. Nobody. No signs of anyone coming in. I shivered.

There it was again. A banging. In the bathroom.  
Then a creak which grew louder and louder, followed by footsteps. They grew closer.

I stood, unable to move.

The door handle moved gently downward.

It slowly swung open.

I saw grey fingers waving and then wrapping themselves around the doorframe.

I went white with terror ...

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## Hell

- by Gary

Balraj 'Bobby' Singh had a horror childhood. As a result, he liked to do daredevil rituals.

On one particular dark and stormy night, Balraj had gathered with some of his gang – Gary, Ernest, Nick and Leo – to perform a dare-ritual. It involved sneaking into a high-rise residential building and riding the elevator in a random sequence. The lightning flashed and the thunder thundered. The wind howled and the rain smashed the earth ...

Balraj and Co. snuck past security and scuttled up to the first floor. It was easy really. Security had been called away on an emergency – as a result of Balraj's planning.

They piled into the lift. Balraj pushed the floor numbers in sequence – one ... four ... two ... six ... two ... ten ... five ... one ...

"Hey BJ, what's so special about that sequence?" asked Gary.

"Tesler's sequence. I'm hoping it'll take us to another world ..."

"That's an urban legend!" said Nick.

"Don't bet on it!"

The lift moved up and down. The lights dimmed and flashed. Everyone screamed. There was a loud bang and the lift came to a stop. The light on the floor panel flashed on the number ten.

"What's going on?" Leo asked.

Then the doors opened.

The boys scrambled out. They stood in a large space that looked something out of a science fiction movie.

"Hey Nick, hold the doors. We don't want to be stuck here."

"Where are we?" asked Ernest. "This is a little freaky."

There were people all around, dressed in clothes that reminded Balraj of ‘Star Trek’.  
“I think we’d better get back in the lift,” said Gary.

“Good idea.”

The four of them jumped back inside the lift.

“Do you realise that we ascended to the tenth floor instead of descending to the first?”

Just as the doors were closing, a hand shot out and stopped the doors. A young woman entered the elevator. It was hard not to look at her as she was beautiful.

“Don’t look at her!” Baraj shouted in Chinese. “I’ve seen this before. We mustn’t disturb this biome. If we communicate with her in any way, we will all die. Look to the floor and don’t look up.”

The lift shot downwards.

After that, Balraj pressed the button for the first floor. The doors flushed open and Balraj whispered, “Everyone exit now and don’t look back and don’t speak until we are safely away.”

“Where are we now?”

Balraj said, “In another biome and we gonna leave now ... immediately. This place is not safe, so at no time mess around, my buddies, if you don’t want to die.”

But Leo was not listening, as usual. He rushed to the lift.

“Leo! What are you doing?”

“I dropped my mobile. I have to have it.”

“No, don’t push the button!”

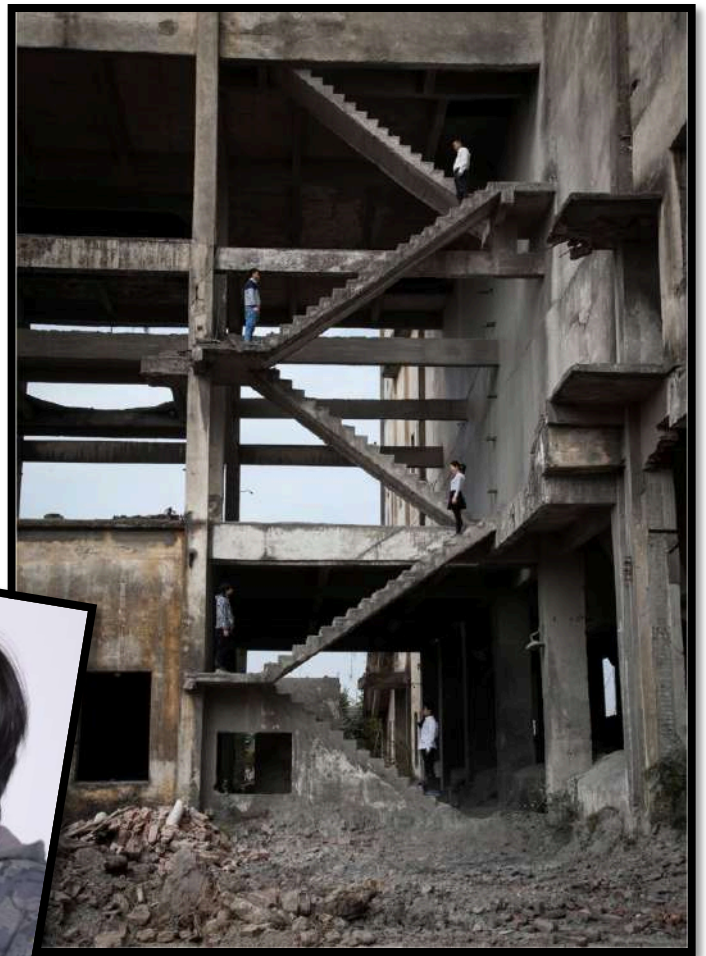
Too late!

The lift doors opened. Before Leo stood the same woman as before. They looked into each other’s eyes.

There was a whirl and they were sucked into the elevator. It rushed downwards and landed in the basement with a crash.

Balraj, Leo and their mates thudded to the floor in a tangle of bodies. Slowly they stood up.

*From the ‘City  
Discovery’ Series by  
Alan*



The lift doors hissed open.  
Heat and fire greeted them.  
“Where are we now?” asked Leo.  
“Hell.”

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## Never Forget - by Ruby

It was a winter day as always.

*Winggggg ... kong-king ... kong-king ...*

The ‘snowpiercer’ train inched and creaked forwards.

Jin was sitting at a window seat. He was alone in the carriage. He looked out. Snowflakes danced to the beat of the wind. Jin stared as they drifted silently downwards. Gradually his eyes began to droop.

He dreamt about that day ...

There is a tradition in Blisstown – when children finish their high school studies, the teachers lead them to a secret place in the town. All adults in the town know that the happiness of Blisstown is created by the existence of that secret place.

After the graduation, Mr. Lee took Jin’s class to the secret place. All the students were excited. As they rode on the bus, they could not help guessing where and what the secret place.

“There was an omniscient elder who guides us as to what we should do in the future,” said one.

Another guessed, “We are going to visit the god of Blisstown.”

Mr. Lee looked at them gravely.

“Guys, you all need to get mentally prepared. The thing in the secret place will surprise you deeply...”

Many students ignored what Mr. Lee said and continued talking about the secret place ...

Eventually, they arrived. It was an old-classical castle. “Like the castle in the horror story,” said someone.





“Looks creepy,” someone whispered.

Unlike the scary but delicate outward appearance of the castle, the hall was empty and dark. Mr. Lee handed out some torches to the students, and led them downstairs.

“Quiet now,” he said, putting his fingers to his lips.

The flying dust made people start to cough. The walls were covered in dust and there were strange looking insects living in the corners. Many footprints creased the stairs.

“It seems as if some groups of students have already got here.”

Jin was surprised.

“This is the dirtiest and scariest place that I’d ever been to,” he thought. Jin looked down the stairs. It was bottomless.

Students wrinkled up their foreheads and kept going downwards for a long time.

Suddenly, Vincent, who walked in front of the line, pointed straightforward and shouted: “Oh finally, there is a light there.”

The students looked towards where Vincent pointed.

“We’re almost there!”

Many students smiled and encouraged one another. The farther they went, the brighter the light became. Finally, they reached the ground, and crept forward through a narrow tunnel with droplights.

They were quick to notice that there was something wrong. A strange combination of smells enveloped them.

“What’s that smell?”

“Not sure. Never smelt anything like it.”

As they walked farther, it grew colder and colder.

Jin shivered.

The students no longer looked happy. Their faces bore frightened, confused expressions.

Mr. Lee, who walked foremost, finally stopped at the end of the tunnel. His countenance became severe.

“Pay attention! Here is your destination.”

Students looked uncertain and disordered.

Josh said: “Pay attention to what? There’s nothing. Unless... that sewer...” “Yes, that sewer,” said Mr Lee. “Line up and look into the sewer quietly.”

Students lined up slowly. Jin stood at the back. He noticed that after each of the students looked into the sewer, each showed amazement, pain and shock on their faces.

Jin was curious. What could be causing such hurt? He wondered.

Finally, it was his turn. He looked into the sewer gingerly. It was totally dark inside, but it smelt of rotten, bloody and decaying flesh.

Jin felt sick but he wanted to see clearly, so he shone his torch into the sewer. Then his eyes widened and his body trembled.

“There’s a kid inside the sewer!” he muttered.

The kid was skinny, his hair was long and messy, and he only wore a pair of

ripped pants. His body had scratches and bruises; his nails were full of dust and grime. Jin saw an empty food bowl, a dying plant, scampering mice and buzzing insects.

He looked into the child's eyes and found himself tearing up. The child, who could not have been more than seven years of age, stared at Jin with innocent eyes. Jin could feel the fear, helplessness and sadness, which came from those large guiltless eyes ...

After all the students had seen the child, they looked at one another and thought the same thing: what could be done to remove the torment of the child? To keep the 'bliss' in Blisstown? If someone did not save the child, Blisstown could no longer be.

Jin squatted with his hands on his face, crying. Many of his fellow students did the same. After a while, he dried his eyes, his face solemn.

"Save a life and you save the world. I need to leave, I must find a way to save him," he thought ...

"Never forget," said Mr Lee. "Never forget ..."

"Jin, wake up!"

Jin rubbed his eyes and sat up quickly. It took a while for him to realise where he was. He was shocked and excited. His classmates sat in front of him.

"Why?" said Jin doubtfully.

"Do you think you are the only one who decided to leave? So are we," said Josh laughingly. Jin and Josh smiled at each other.

Suddenly the snowpiercer rushed into a tunnel as it gained speed. It was extremely dark for a while.

Eventually it re-emerged. The students on board shouted and cheered. The snowpiercer was no more. It was the 'springtrain'.

Yes, the darkness of winter was behind. Spring had arrived to welcome Jin and his class.

Jin knew, in that instant, what he needed to do ...

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## Nightmare - by Samuel

After the carnage to his family, Ben, the ugly dinosaur, headed back to the farm.

He saw that the dead and putrefying carcasses of cows and pigs were beginning to smell. The sky had turned blood-red and the vultures flew lazy orbits, waiting.

Ben stood and surveyed the chaos before him.

There was a splutter and drone above him. He looked up. A bi-plane flew over Ben's head, swooping low as it did so.

"What's that?" Ben wondered.

The object in the bloodied sky continued to dive and lunge around him, irritating him like an annoying fly on a hot day.

"I've had enough of this!" he thought. "I need to get out of here."

Up ahead he could see the golden, welcoming aura of the bright city.

"That's where I'll go," he said. So turning away from the plane that buzzed and droned above, he headed off towards the light.

The plane continued to pursue him and so he quickened his pace. Eventually, it left. Ben could not understand what it was and why it had left so suddenly.

After a time, Ben reached the peach glow of the city. It was busy. People and vehicles rushing during peak time.

The people looked at Ben and began to scatter and run in all directions. Wherever he walked, the results were the same – weird faces, screams of fear and people running.

Away.

Confusion.

Disorder.

"Why are they running away from me?" Ben thought.

"What is that thing?" someone shouted.

"Disgusting!" yelled another.

"Call the police!"

There was a wail of sirens and flashing lights.

Then a loud voice spoke.

"Stay where you are. Do not move or we will open fire!"

Ben couldn't quite make out where the voice came from. He stared for a moment and then moved forward.

"Fire!"

There was a series of shots as the police opened fire.

Ben became angry. He picked up police cars with his mouth and flung them all over. They crashed, rolled and burned. The policemen also ran.

More police arrived. They kept firing at him, but it only made him angrier. Ben growled and snarled and began to pick up the police as though they were toothpicks. Body parts were scattered to all areas: a bloodbath of legs, arms, heads, feet, lay littered all around.

Ben rushed forward, killing everything that blocked his path.

The army arrived.

“Time to leave,” he said, breathing heavily. “I should get out of the city as soon as possible.”

He headed back the way he had come. The police and army continued to shoot at him, blocking his way. “If I can make it through, I can escape to the countryside but if I can’t, I will be trapped forever.”

There was a whoosh overhead as two fighter jets closed in and unleashed their missiles. The two lights hurtled towards Ben.

“What the hell is that?”

They exploded.

The last thing Ben remembered was being struck in the head like a bolt of lightning, suffering a severe pain and thinking “it’s time to give up my life” and then darkness.

Some-time later, Ben woke up. His head was pounding and his mouth felt dry.

“Where am I?” he thought.

He looked around. It was dark, musty and damp. It looked like a cave of some sort. Outside, the sky was a bloody crimson.

“What happened?” he thought. “Did I merely dream it or was it real? If it were a dream, man, it was a nightmare!”

Ben became aware of a buzzing in the distance.

It grew closer.

He wasn’t sure, but he’d heard something like that somewhere before. It flew low overhead.

He ducked.

Ben watched it fly off. It banked, turned and came back towards him.

Up ahead, through the red haze, the golden city lights beckoned.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Seeing the Light

- by Aimee

It was a dark and stormy night ...

I sat at a window watching the outside, but could not see anything through the rain splotches.

Only the wind and rain called to me. And the swaying of the trees.

No-one dared to walk outside ...

Then, there, in the distance, I saw a faint reddish glowing light hovering in the middle of the road. It looked like a flashlight.





At first, I thought that it was something reflective out there... However, it appeared to be moving. It also seemed to penetrate everything.

I was wonderstruck. Was it human? I thought. It might be something ghostly.

I decided to follow to see what was going on.

I pulled on my rain-coat and scurried outside into the dark and wet.

It glided for a while, bouncing around, and then shifted down the road. After a while, I saw it disappear into a nearby house.

After a short while, the light emerged, carrying an object. It looked like a doll of some sort. It bounced away from me.

The storm grew more violent. The wind became bigger and bigger; trees bent lower and lower and I had to lean far forward to keep my balance. I grit my teeth. I hoped that I wouldn't be blown away.

The dancing light suddenly stopped, the doll suspended close by. I could see a human shape outlined by the light. The figure turned around and saw me.

My heart beat at my ribs. I turned and fled ... but the light followed.

I noticed that the wind and rain had stopped.

The light bounded closer. My strength was running out. I had to stop as I was out of breath. When I did not move, it also stopped.

"W-w-who are you?" I called out. "What do you want?"

It drifted closer. I could see its eyes. They were crimson, glowing red.

I also noticed that the figure had a massive mouth ... that was all I could see.

Although it looked terrible, I didn't feel threatened. I did not think that it wanted to hurt me.

It continued to float, staring at me. It seemed to be waving at me to come closer. I sensed that it wanted me to do something.

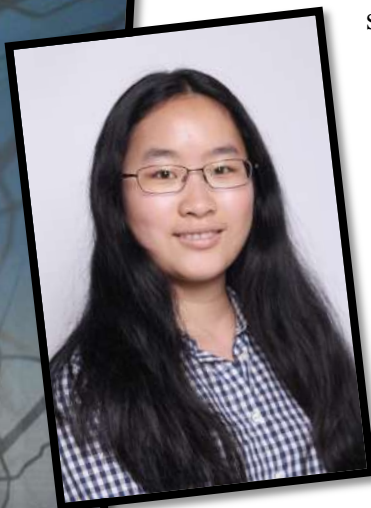
"What do you need from me?" I whispered, stepping nearer.

I stretched out my hand and tried to touch it. It moved suddenly, shoved the doll into my outstretched hand.

Then it smiled at me.

I looked at the doll.

It was a small princess. It had long auburn-brown hair and big sky-blue eyes ...



*Past, Present and Future by Tiffany*

The rain had drenched it, but that had not affected its appearance.

In truth, I felt strange. I looked up, and saw that the figure continued to smile at me. It was an ugly smile, but it made me feel kind. I returned a smile. Not long after, it disappeared.

To this day, I am still confused by this experience. Who or what was that figure? Why had it given me that doll? Why had it chosen me? Could it have been a message? A gift? A warning?

I still don't know.

But I keep the doll as a reminder that not everything in our lives can be easily explained.

\*\*\*\*\*



## Silence

- by Kelly

My name is Annie.

It was a long time ago, I remember, on a dark and stormy night.

The wind howled outside the windows and the trees in the fields roared loudly. Broken branches blew downwind over a distance, crashing into the windows.

The sky was thundery, the lightning whipped at the wasteland, and the rainstorm, was ear-splitting.

At the edge of this wasteland, stood a school. It did not look very prominent, but it was an elite school.

I was one of the students who boarded in this college.

The events happened on that one particular stormy night, I remember, after evening study. Most of the boarders had already returned to the boarding house dormitory. There was no noise from any of the students, apart from that which came from the club activity room.

This was the photography club, of which Mr. Smith was the adviser. There were only four students there – Nancy, George, Darcy and me. We had stayed there and cleaned up the room. The rest had already left. But the weather had suddenly changed, so we had to just stay there until the rain stopped.

“Damn this weather,” I said.

“Yeah, always so unpredictable, humid and mouldy,” said George.

“You’d better believe it,” said Nancy.

Darcy disagreed. “I love the stormy weather. I love unpredictability,” she said.

Darcy never agreed with anyone. She was the odd one out. Mr. Smith had graduated from this school many years before and had been working there for four years. All the students were on good terms with him and one another, except for Darcy. Darcy

was very arrogant, she seldom talked with others. And when she did, it was to disagree with them.

Darcy also had a history of personal conflict with me. But then again, Darcy had a history of conflict with nearly everyone.

Originally, I wanted to negotiate with Darcy after the club session. Unfortunately, the weather had changed and I could not talk with Darcy in front of the teacher. So I had to just wait for the rain to stop.

After a long while, the rain eventually did stop. Nancy, George and Mr. Smith left the activity room, and Darcy went to the rooftop. I thought this was a good chance to talk with her, so I followed her. When I reached the rooftop – it was above the fourth floor of the boarding house – I saw that Darcy was sitting on the tiles near the top of the building, smoking.

I knew that Darcy was in a somber mood because she had recently lost her father. I summoned the courage to walk up to her.

I sat at the edge of the rooftop, and said, "I see that you're feeling bad recently, losing your father feels very bad, right?"

"I don't need your care, go away."

"Well," I said. "After all, everyone feels sad when they lose someone close. And that your father was burnt, that was very cruel."

Darcy was silent for a moment. Suddenly, she thought something, looking horrified.

"How do you know my father was burnt? No-one knows this thing except my mother and me. What does it have to do with you?"

"What does it have to do with me?" I laughed. "Let me ask you: my father died four years ago, what does it have to do with you?"

"So what?" Darcy cried. "Your father was useless. It was nothing to me. Are you blaming me for his death? Are you saying that this is your revenge on me for him?"

"It's nothing for you? You knew those bandits wanted to kill my father, but you still told them my father's whereabouts. You did it deliberately."

Darcy screamed. "Do you know for sure? And so what? It's a dog eat dog world!" Clearly, she was furious. Even I could see the fire in her eyes.

"What goes around, comes around," I said. "It's called pay-back. Nothing personal."

I shook my head and prepared to leave. At that moment, she suddenly stood up. "It's always personal!" she yelled as she reached out her hands, trying to push me off the rooftop.

I slipped and nearly fell. I guess that I wasn't expecting her to do that.

"What are you doing?" I shouted.

Darcy didn't respond or come over. She stood staring at me.

"There's more to what happened than you will ever know." She moved towards the edge of the roof. She looked as if she were going to jump.

I stretched out my hand and tried to grab her. She looked at me without blinking.

“I’m sorry. Good-bye.”

Darcy slid and fell from the rooftop.

She never said a word or uttered a sound. I thought she smiled as she fell.

Then there was a whump, followed by silence.

Looking back, that silence has been with me ever since. And the smile on Darcy’s face as she slid from the rooftop, clutching at the roof-tiles.

They dismissed it as an accident.

But it wasn’t.

Even though I did not know why, I knew better.

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## Tommy - by Cherry

It was a darkly ominous and storm filled night. But for me, it was also a miraculous and magical night.

I was on my way back home. Walking next to the highway. Multi-storeyed purple clouds made me uncomfortable so I walked faster. The roads were busy. The cars and trucks rushed by me, making me dizzy. I breathed deeply to clear my head. I had to get away from those cars.

A raindrop splashed on my face and quickly vanished away. Was it called ‘evaporation’? I discovered that word in my science lesson today.

It began to rain heavily. It took me a few moments to realize it.

The windscreen wipers thudded back and forth on those enormous vehicles as they thundered past me.

It was dangerous to hurry, and had to slow down to a snail walk.

“Mom will be angry and crazy if I make my shirt wet? Right?” I muttered to myself. I muttered to myself often, because it was the only way to keep the loneliness away.

As I made my way home, I came to a chapel. It was a small white building with a large steeple. For some reason pushing me, I walked past the chapel and into the cemetery.

“It’s so peaceful. It seems so tranquil. Nice place,” I thought. It felt safe and secure.

"Hello, who are you?"

Taken by surprise, I turned around and saw a boy standing near a gravestone. He looked about the same age as me, with a big smile.



"Er - ... hello? Who are you?"

I asked him respectfully and quietly, because I worried that my tone of voice would make him want to run away. And I didn't want that.

"Oh, don't be so shy, I'm in the same class with you! You forgot me? So sad."

He looked disappointed.

I searched for his face in my memory but, I had no history about him.

"Well, never mind, let's be friends together!" he said.

These words jogged my memory like a bomb blast. My brain took some time to adjust.

"Of ... of ... of course yes, we are friends now!"

"My name's Tommy. What's yours?"

"Ruby."

I could not stop my excited heart beating faster and faster. Happiness and excitement came together.

"Well, it is very late now, Ruby," Tommy said. "I'll see you at school tomorrow."

"Ok, see you soon tomorrow, bye-bye."

I ran back home. Even my mother scolding me for being wet could not make me upset. I had a very comfortable night and the best sleep I have ever had.

Next day, I went to school very

"Ha-hah, good morning, my friend Ruby," said Tommy.

"Ha-ha-ha, good morning, Tommy."

I walked into the classroom with him.

"Oh my gosh, are you okay?" a student sitting at the front desk asked. "Why that stupid laugh and silly talk to no-one?"

"What do you mean, no-one?"

"Well, you're standing there talking to no-one. It looks funny," she laughed.

"Take no notice of her," Tommy said, "what does she know?"

"Yeah, what do you know? You're just jealous."

Yes, what did she know? I thought. She was jealous. They were all jealous.

Arm in arm, Tommy and I strolled to the back of the classroom and sat down.

excited.



*Furniture design by Harry*



From around me I could hear the other students sniggering. I didn't care. I didn't need them.

After all, I had Tommy.



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## Trapped - by Jerry

People like to travel in the summer vacation. New countries, new cultures, new experiences.

But Ming was different. He had a special plan; he wanted to go back to Disneyland.

Sounds weird, seeing that Ming was a 17-year old high school student.

“So, hey, Ming, why do you want to go to Disneyland?” his classmates always asked him, sniggering.

“Because I want to find my childhood.”

His mates just laughed. Same question, same reply. They thought that there was something wrong with Ming's head.

But Ming knew that he was normal. He just wanted to find that childhood feeling again ...

One day, he just picked up and left. Disney was just in front of him. He bought an air-ticket and went.

When he arrived in Disneyland, he found that all things looked eerily familiar. In front of him was the oldest and the most classic Disneyland, back to the future in 1999. People swarmed around him. They appeared to be having a good time. But this was not the Disneyland he remembered or imagined. Old, crumbling buildings and staircases greeted him everywhere he looked.

“What the hell is happening?” he thought. “What do I do?”

Fear gripped his heart. He rushed around in a panic, looking for an exit, but he couldn't find a single sign leading to one.

Oddly, it dawned on him that there were no exits at all. All paths led back to where he'd started. It was as if he was trapped in a Chrono Rift or time warp.

“I'm stuck in Disneyland ... forever ...” he screamed.

He ran and ran, knocking and bumping his way through the crowd until he stood before a huge fuzzy figure. It looked a bit like Goofy. Or was it the White Rabbit?

“This has to be a nightmare,” Ming thought. “Here I am, trying to change my history and my life, and I'm trapped in the La La Land Horror Show.”

A voice whispered to him. It must be Goofy, Ming thought.

“Ming ... Ming ... are you okay?”

Definitely Goofy, Ming thought.

“Yeah, I’m fine,” Ming muttered. “Who are you and where ...”

Before he could finish, the landscape began to whirl as if he had been sucked through a vortex or star-gate.

A stinging slap to the face snapped him out of his lethargy.

“Ow! What was that for?”

His eyes slowly focused moving from the white rabbit to something that looked like his mother.

“Ming, wake up, you lazy oaf. You’re meant to do the washing up and here you are, taking a trip to Wonderland.”

Ming sighed.

He had to escape his boring and monotonous life.

But he had a plan.

He was going to go back to Disneyland ...

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## Victory

- by Shao Jia

It was a dark and stormy night ...

The angry, purple clouds hid the blood-moon. Behind them, some moonlight illuminated the ground.

Tommy shivered. He felt as if he were in an American horror movie. Like ‘Scream’. Or ‘Nightmare on Elm Street’. This was the third night that he was outdoors waiting for the beast to return. He patted his rifle gently. He was ready. Perhaps he would be lucky tonight.

As he breathed on his hands to warm them, a fierce, black-brindled dog emerged from the cemetery. It looked like an Alsatian. It was tall, thin and had bold, red eyes. It glared at Tommy and gave a warning growl. It began to move slowly towards him.

Tommy lifted his rifle to his shoulder and aimed. Nothing happened. He looked to see if the safety catch was off. It was. He tried cocking the weapon, but the bolt would not move.

“Not now. Please not now!” Tommy groaned.

The creature continued to growl and advance towards him. Tommy didn’t wait to see what happened next.

He ran.

Away.

As fast as he could.



The dog chased after him, barking and roaring loudly. Tommy couldn't be sure, but he felt as if the dog was barking for him to 'please stop'. Tommy reasoned that it was just his mind playing tricks.

He continued to sprint in the opposite direction, looking around anxiously for a place to hide. The dog was starting to gain on him and he was growing tired. Wherever he ran, the animal was not far behind.

He needed an escape route or he would be in trouble.

Running in a daze, he came upon an old farm barn. He spied a door and crashed through it. He climbed up into the loft and hid amongst the bales of straw.

The dog would be on him shortly, so he frantically worked the bolt of his rifle to unjam it.

His heart jumped like a running horse. There was a loud shift of metal on metal and his rifle cleared. Tommy breathed a sigh of relief. He could use the rifle once again. The dog leapt through the door and came towards him yapping furiously.

He raised the rifle and fired three shots in rapid succession. The dog whimpered and thudded to the floor.

"Victory is mine!" Tommy shouted. "The people of the town are sure to be impressed. No more scary nights for them and a pot of money for me!"

That night, after the celebrations, Tommy returned to his motel room. He was tired after his hard night's work, but he was happy. He stood before the bathroom mirror, brushing his teeth.

After a while, Tommy became aware of a ghostly face in the mirror behind him. It was as white as paper. From its mouth emerged a long red tongue. Coal black hair covered the eyes. Tommy noticed – on looking closer – that the eyes were odd. It spoke with a sepulchral smile.

"Thank you for killing the dog. It prevented me from coming into the town. Now it's easy. I can do whatever I please. So thank you."

Tommy realized that the dog had been trying to warn him, that he was not his enemy.

"Yes, too late. For you."

Tommy suddenly saw what was wrong with the eyes of the figure before him. There were no pupils in the eyes.

The face laughed loudly.

Tommy screamed as the creature wrapped its arms around him.

When Tommy awoke, nothing looked familiar.

"Where am I?" he said out loud.

A voice, which seemed to come from his head said, "Don't worry, you're safe. You're with me now ... forever ... Victory is ours ..."

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**‘Yes’**  
**- by Ivy**



It was a freezing night on the outskirts of the village. The wind howled and the rain dropped heavily. People were supposed to be sleeping, but they had run from their houses and had gathered at the central train station to wait for the train.

A mother said quietly to her little kid: “Jump on the train as quickly as possible when it comes.”

The train finally arrived. There was a mad scramble with pushing and shoving and yelling. Many of the villagers clambered aboard the train. The young child managed to board, but where was his mother?

“Mother!” he cried, but only the wind answered.

The rest were nervous, praying for another train to come. They felt insecure and uncertain as long as they were still there. A short while later they were finally able to leave this fearful village with the appearance of another train.

Apart from a few people, the little village had become an empty world.

Five days later, the mother from the village went seeking her son. She realized that there was no-one remaining in the village to whom she could turn ... thankfully her child had made it aboard the train.

She knew that the disease that had infected her would be easily transmitted. The virus was deadly and that was why the people had left ... Nonetheless, she also knew that she must seek help.

The woman left her house on foot for another nearby village. After 3 nights’ travel, she finally arrived in a small hamlet. She stood before one of the houses. She was cold, tired and hungry.

She shouted out, “Hello! Anyone there? Can you please help me?”

The old host opened the door. “What do you want?” he yelled.

“I am hungry, tired and sick. Can you help?”

But the host saw a face covered with red spots and he quickly closed the door. “Go away! I can’t help you!”

The sick woman staggered to another house.

She called out from the gate. “Please help me!”

This time a young woman opened the door and saw her. “Stay away! Don’t come any closer!”

The young woman covered her face with her hand and said, “What’s wrong with you?”

“I ... I’m sick; I am here looking for help,” she replied.

“Well, I really have no idea what to do with you. You can’t stay here. There’s a doctor in the next village. One day’s travel to the west.” She pointed.

“Can you give me some food? Water?” begged the sick woman. But the door had already slammed shut.

The woman was on her own.

Alone.

She had no other choice. She walked westwards.

Very slowly.

Every person who walked by her was frightened by her face. Each was careful not to care.

Finally, she arrived at a house on the outskirts of the next village. Outside the front was an old sign with a red cross painted on it with the words ‘Doctor’s Surgery’.

She stood at the front door, took a deep breath, and knocked. She knew that this might be her last chance to seek for help.

She knocked again.

Nothing.

A third time she knocked, more urgently than before.

“Please!” she said. She swayed slightly from dizziness.

After a brief moment, the door swung open.

“What can I do for you?” an elderly man said, his eyes twinkling.

“I need ...” she fell into his arms and he carried her inside.

The woman awoke slowly. Where am I, she thought. She lay in a bed beneath warm blankets. A fire crackled in the fire-place.

The door opened gently and a man stood before her. She thought that she had seen his face before.

“Glad you’re still with us,” he said.

“Who are you?” she asked.

“That’s not important. If you want, I am the Master here. That’s all you need to know. What is important is that you have bubonic plague. I can cure you by using my magic arts, but that means you must give me something in return. Are you willing to make a sacrifice?” he asked.

“What do you want? I have nothing left to give.”

“Ah, you are wrong. What about your son?”

“No! Leave him out of this!”

“Okay. Then you still have yourself. What do you say?”

The woman thought for a moment.

“If I live, perhaps I will see my son again. I have everything to gain and nothing to lose.”

“Yes,” she answered.

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## Save a Life - by Adam

*The journey is long but if you can adhere to it, you may just finish it.*

A long time ago, there was a master who wanted to know the meaning of life and death. So he started a journey to the west. He was hoping to find the answer on the journey. He hoped that he could find the truth about life and death.

After many days, the master saw a monkey trapped under a mountain. The mountain looked like a hand. The fingers watching the sky, clutched the monkey. Taking pity, the master helped the monkey to escape and, because he had done so, the monkey stayed with the master, returning his help.

And so the master and the monkey journeyed together. As they travelled, day after day, month after month, the monkey protected the master from all kinds of dangers and kept him company.

Finally, one day, they arrived in the west and found the Buddha.

The master asked the Buddha: "Please, can you tell me the meaning of life and death?"

The Buddha spoke with the master, but the master did not understand the Buddha's words.

So, puzzled, he sat down beneath the Bodhi tree and thought for a long time about the answer the Buddha had given him.

After a while, he fell asleep.

While he slept, he had a strange dream. He saw himself saving the monkey from the mountain's fingers. He watched the monkey protecting him against wild animals. He observed how the monkey had become his companion.

When he woke up, he smiled. He now understood the Buddha's answer.

"Our life and death can have meaning only in small acts of kindness. In these small, random actions, we can save a life. And if we save a life, we save the world ... and ourselves."

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## Bruno - by Pei E

Before Bruno, I had never liked dogs.

I had always thought that they were very noisy and a waste of time to raise and feed. I thought that people who had pets were always people who had time and money to waste. These thoughts had blinded me ... for years ...

... until Bruno.

It all started with that morning ...

I was a spy, a government secret agent who had spent most of her life escaping from enemies made in missions. I had been destined to have no friends; friends to talk to or rely on.

That morning I was in a rush to escape from my safe location because my safety had again, become compromised. I packed my things hurriedly and sat in my car ready to leave. As I started on the road once more, evading pursuers, I realized that I had regressed into a more and more depressed state.

“Will I ever be able to claim full freedom?” I thought.

As I drove down the road, it felt as if I hit something. I pulled over to the side of the road, leapt out and ran to investigate.

It was then that I saw the dog lying in the road.

A German Shepherd.

He looked at me as if he was about to cry, just like a person. His weary eyes were filled with tears.

I patted him. “Are you okay, my friend?” I said.

I checked him for any physical injuries, if that could be the reason for the tears. But I could feel that there was something more than just the shock from the accident. Perhaps it was also fear and sadness of his current situation.

Looking at his truncated tail, I understood. I understood his fear and despair. He was just like me.

As I looked into his eyes, I heard squealing tyres and a loud engine in the silence of the empty road. I realized my enemies had caught up.

I gazed into the dog’s eyes and, instantly, decided to bring him with me.

I eventually lost my chasers but I knew that they were eventually going to find me. I had been on the run for such a lengthy period of time. My luck couldn’t hold out forever.

I looked over at the dog on the seat next to me, that I later named Bruno.

“In some ways our life and destinies are similar,” I said to him. “Both of us are escaping from something that has caused sadness, fear, and despair within us.”

Bruno just stared back at me, as if he knew exactly what I had said.

As time passed, I became glad that I had company on this long and once lonely journey. Later on, we spent days and nights together. We camped together, we took walks together, and we travelled on our escape journey together.

“Strange,” I thought, “I would never have believed that I would have bonded with any sort of animal like that before. Two months ago, I would never have imagined this possible. In the past, I would have thought that I was crazy.”

Slowly, Bruno became part of my journey, my partner.

One night, we had stopped our car at a convenience store, just for a small break on the way to our next safe house. When I emerged from the car, too late I realized that there was a man standing about 10 metres from me, with a gun pointing directly at me.

I knew who he was.

He was the boss of the organization that had been trying to kill me this whole time.

“Finally,” he said. “It’s been a long time.”

Before I could say anything, Bruno ran, leapt and bit the man’s ankle to take his gun-point off me. In that distraction, I approached quickly and made contact, trying to tackle him to the ground.

But he was too strong.

He lifted me and swung me in the air. I was thrown on the floor. I was somewhat dazed, I struggling to see the man, and when I did, I only could see, with very vague vision, that he still pointed his gun at me.

“Good try,” he laughed. “But it’s game over.”

He grinned and squeezed the trigger.

I closed my eyes. There was an echoing pop.

I thought that my life was over, but I found that I did not feel any pain. I realized that I had not been shot. Bruno had saved me by jumping in front of me. I instantly jumped forward and caught the man off guard, grabbing his gun and ending his life.

I ran back to Bruno, and held him in my arms.

I looked into his eyes and I saw the exact expression that I had seen when I first found him in front of my bumper.

I felt heartbroken that I had to let him sacrifice for me.

But I also saw that there was something different in his eyes. His eyes were not filled with sadness and despair, but with happiness and gratefulness, as if he were trying to tell me that he was satisfied with his life and to thank me. It was as if he was also trying to tell me to stop worrying – that he had been willing to sacrifice himself for me.

I held him in my arms and watched him take in his last breath. I took him in my car to our last campsite, and buried him there.

I had never felt so bonded with an animal before.

Looking back, I am grateful for my experience with Bruno. He taught me how to overcome challenges when I was in despair. He stayed with me when I was a mess. I am thankful that he was my partner, my soul-mate, the most important part of my once lonely, journey ...

**The Day of the Mouse**  
- by Holts Inc.

*Fish out of Water by Jon den Hartigh*

The neat, square, white door of number twelve, Oak Crescent, Mount Pleasant, opened and out stepped Jeremiah Mullins. He paused for a moment on the clean, well-swept front step, adjusted his bowler, looked at his fob watch and nodded in a satisfied way. Then after a quick look to the left and right, he set off down the road, walking with military precision, his smart black brief-case held closely at his side.

Jeremiah Mullins was in a rut. In fact, he felt much like a fish out of water, hooked, gasping for breath. At forty-five years of age he was what every normal, well-adjusted bank clerk should be. He was happily married, with a wife who nagged him just the right amount, and he had four children who showed every sign of becoming decent, upright citizens. He had a good, steady, monotonous job at the bank, where he didn't have to use any imagination – and this pleased him. His house was simply and normally furnished, with its set of plaster ducks winging their way up the wall of the sitting room, in the same way as they did next door, in number thirteen.

At the bank he was what every man should be – brisk and efficient with his customers, ingratiating with his superiors and rather snappy with his few subordinates. He was regarded by all as a rather 'funny old stick', but no-one took much notice of him as he worked in his rather obsequious, insignificant way.

On this particular day, Jeremiah arrived home at the usual time, after a gratifyingly normal day. He walked briskly up Oak Crescent, with his briefcase in one hand and his newspaper neatly folded under his arm. He was rather surprised when his wife opened the front door and ran out to him. She was clutching a thin, somewhat dirty piece of paper in her hand. It billowed in the breeze as she threw her bony arms around him and sobbed deeply into the crest of his neck.



Jeremiah was rather horrified at the uncharacteristic flippancy of her behaviour and began to recoil as he sensed disapproving eyes staring from behind partially closed curtains from either side of No. 12.

‘Miriah,’ he whispered urgently into her ear, and then more insistently, ‘Miriah!’

The said Miriah continued to weep uncontrollably, oblivious to the frantic hissing which seeped into her left ear.

Jeremiah smiled and waved at Mrs Padmore in Number Thirteen and Mrs O’Badiah in Eleven as he stood on the sidewalk attempting to console his wife. He saw Mrs Padmore knowingly and conspiratorially nod to her neighbour in tacit agreement as if to confirm their belief that the Mullins’ clan was decidedly odd.

Jeremiah scanned the lonely road in search of aid. Finding none, he began dragging his whimpering wife to the shelter of their verandah. After a short while which felt like an eternity, he succeeded.

‘Now, Miriah, could you please explain the meaning of this spectacular outburst?’

He was shocked when his wife weakly looked up into his face and handed him the scrunched up piece of paper.

Then she whispered into his ear, “You’ve done it love, you’ve gone and won the Lotto!”

Jeremiah stood still for a moment, unable to credit her words. In that brief fracturing of the divisions of time, he involuntarily recalled the screechy voice of Madame De Farge, his high school French teacher, scolding him with ‘You’ll never make anything of yourself, Jeremiah. You’re headed towards a lifetime of mediocrity.’

He grinned mischievously as the world caught up with him. That such a thing should happen to disturb the happy, yet mundane order of his life, was almost impossible to comprehend. He had been buying Lotto tickets for years, but only as a matter of routine, and he had never in his wildest dreams, expected such a thing to happen – after all, he was an ordinary sort of man, wasn’t he? The thought of complete luxury for the rest of his life seemed an almost disgusting, grotesque idea.

And then, all the pent-up frustrations, hidden fears and anxieties of the past forty years overcame him, and in one dizzy moment of ecstasy he completely forgot the neighbours. His status. And his wife. He let go of her and pulled off his jacket. Waving it around in one hand, he kicked his brief-case into the air, spilling the neatly filed documents and papers onto the sidewalk and began to do a wild can-can up and down Oak Crescent. The papers flapped wildly in mid-air, before catching the early evening breeze, slowly drowning and disappearing into nothingness.

Mesdames Padmore and O’Badiah stared dumbfounded out from now fully drawn curtains, their giraffe necks craning beyond their normal capacity. Their faces bore expressions of sheer amazement and scandalised horror. ‘Well fancy that!’ said Mrs O’Badiah. ‘And I always thought he was such a mouse of a man! And all the time, here he is, a stark, raving lunatic,’ Mrs Padmore exclaimed.



But Jeremiah did not care about the disapproving faces in Oak Crescent that day. Nor did his poor wife as she sat on the front lawn laughing hysterically and uncontrollably. Jeremiah had begun to live and the relief was enormous.

The mouse had had his day.

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## **Journey into the Dark** **- by Linda**

From the day I was born, I was assigned the role of 'loser'.

From the moment I opened my eyes, my troubles began.

I had been abandoned on the side of the road on a cold winter's night. The darkness of the street and the dimming light were my first impression of the world. Cold and cruel would be my understanding of the world along every part of my life's journey ...



I remember being picked up by someone from *The Orphanage*.

When I eventually made it out into society, I often heard people describe life in *The Orphanage* as 'paradise'. Every time I heard that, I would have a bitter smile. *The Orphanage* might appear as a paradise to society, but only someone who had grown up inside of it would know ... it is darker than hell.

From the moment I was brought into *The Orphanage*, my life was surrounded by an inky darkness and an unspeakable cruelty.

I was a nobody in *The Orphanage*, neither cute, nor popular.

Visitors came and went, children left with the sun shining on their smiles. I sat in my corner, staring at my shadow under the sun.

I was always an outsider to happiness. No matter how hard I worked, how good my scores were in school, no-one bothered to pay any attention to me. Of course, who would ever want to hang out with an orphan?

The principal of *The Orphanage* treated me like a slave. I had endless jobs to do after school. My childhood was nothing but relentless torture in the darkness away from the sunshine.

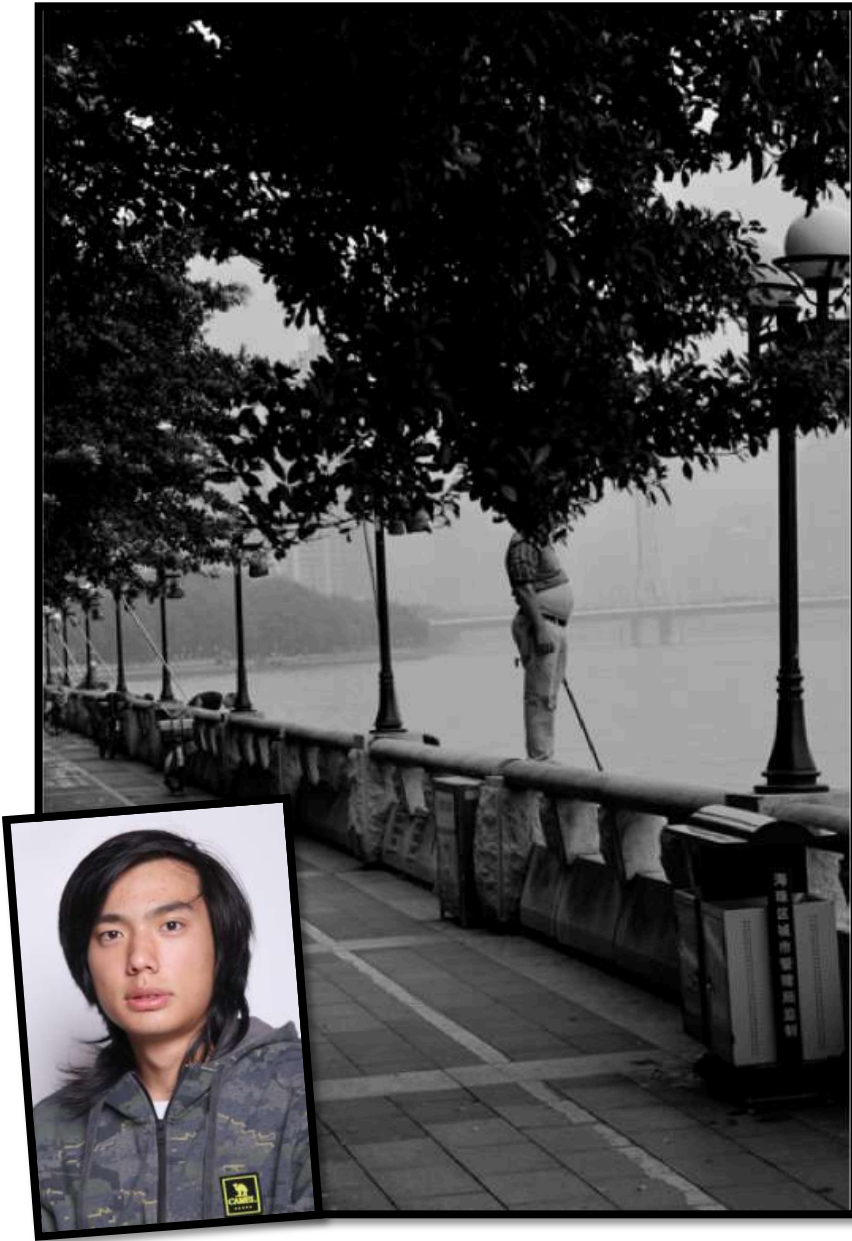
When I reached my adulthood, I could finally leave *the orphanage*. I had always thought

to escape but when I actually got away from it, I discovered that being an adult did not make my life easier.

Thousands and thousands of college graduates looking for jobs - just like me. They appeared hugely talented, more socially adept ... so much better than me. I was just small again, as if I were back in the dark corner of *the orphanage*.

Walking down the street near by the water, I received the phone call from the only business company to which I had applied for work.

Cutting the bright ringing sound, the only light which shouted impassively at me said, "Sir, I'm sorry to inform you that your application has not been successful this time."



I stared at the screen. The voice continued, "While we were impressed by your resume, our company has opted for someone with more experience and better qualifications ..." the HR manager announced.

Not that I really heard what he said.

Long after the phone call ended, I stand beside the lake, leaning on the rail, trying to work out what to do next.

My mind is blank ... empty.

The growing noise from the crowd draws my attention.

I look around.

A man stands on the railing about to jump. Is he trying to end his life by drowning?

For a moment, I envy his action.

*From 'Fantasy in Ruins' by Alan*

In the moment I think, *how good would it be to get away from the endless torture of society?*

With a resentful smile, I talk to myself.

“You don’t even deserve to die, you are born to accept the cruelty of the society. No matter what you want, there are people who are stopping you from being free from the torture.”

Staring at the sunset, I know that I must enter the world of darkness.

It is time for me to start the next part of my journey ...  
... a journey into the dark.

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## Hopeless - by Cindy

I  
visit the school gallery  
to see  
an art exhibition.

I see  
some very interesting  
artwork.

One  
in particular catches  
my  
eye.

Dark blue-purple-blackground  
arms outreaching  
suffocating beneath the

sea-surface

I  
feel hope-less  
helpless

a lone figure on a vast ocean  
powerless  
vulnerable

Lost at sea  
in the middle of the ocean,  
little possibility of being  
rescued

In my mind  
I'm in that ocean,  
drowning  
the wind blowing the water,  
the storm attacking.

Hopeless  
I know nobody will come and save me.

I use  
my last strength  
to let others know that I'm here

but  
it seems  
point-less

HOPE.LESS

not unlike life itself  
it seems sometimes

\*\*\*\*\*



*Monster by Jonas*





## A Mysterious Journey - by Rose



Thirty years ago, when I was still young and curious to the world, something happened to change my life.

I recall the date: July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1990.

I was having my 20<sup>th</sup> year birthday journey. I was in a little boat, trying to get on an uninhabited island that I had researched and observed for a year. Unfortunately, on that day, the sea was not co-operative for sailing, but because of the plan, I still needed to start my journey.

This was when things began to happen.

There were great, storming waves on the ocean, strong and dark. It came as no surprise that my boat capsized and flung me into the ocean.

I drifted downwards. I was surrounded by water. Deeper and deeper I went, my air growing less and less.

Just as my lungs would burst, I felt that a huge animal had swallowed me. When it opened its mouth, it sucked in everything nearby, including me.

“Where am I right now?” I asked myself. “It is so dark here!”

All I could see was black.

“Luckily there was tons of air.”

I didn’t need to worry about not breathing. The last thing I remembered before passing out was feeling an intense water column shift me upwards.

When I awoke, I realised that I was caught inside a huge creature’s belly.

There were piles of junk and stuff inside. Waste of all kinds – paper, bottles, plastic bags, caps, tins and tissues. I didn’t see fingerling or shrimp; instead I saw trash, human created trash ...

At first, I was really scared about what would happen next to me. But then, I was not afraid anymore. Instead of fear, I was angry and sad at the same time.

“How can people create that much trash and then just throw it anywhere they wanted?” I asked myself.

It was really hard to walk through tons of trash. *They* were trying to stop me from getting deeper into the creature’s belly, just like those wronged ghosts in the abyss of the hell, trying to stop your steps.

Finally, enduring untold hardships and sufferings, I managed to crawl deeply in the belly of the beast. I found out that what I had seen before was not a big deal compared to what now confronted me. Before, the trash came just up to my knees. But here, it was as tall as me, some of even higher.

“How sad! This trash-filled world! Trash, trash, trash! Everywhere is TRASH!” I shouted.

I didn’t know for how long I stayed in the belly. It seemed for a very long time. When I was hungry or thirsty, I found food and water from the trash pile. When I felt





*Food by Eric*

I finally found out that the huge animal where I'd been staying for many days was a whale. Those fishermen were quite excited and enthusiastic, but after they had cut open the whale's belly, they became sentimental and depressed. What they saw was only tons of trash. They didn't find things they wanted to find.

cold, I found clothes from the trash heap. Everything I needed could be found from the trash.

I started to think that maybe those things that we call 'trash' were not totally useless. Maybe as people we think that it is already 'useless', but in fact it is still fine to be used.

"What if we started to let people know how important it is to reduce using products, trying to waste less in order to protect the environment? Would the situation begin to improve?" I thought.

I knew that because of the consumer nature of society, products were produced cheaply and quickly, creating a build-up of waste leading to our current environmental crisis.

I saw with new eyes.

My experience inspired me. People should start putting more attention on the environmental problems that we have created by ourselves. That's how we can protect the environment, and this is how we can let our next generation have a clean and wonderful place to live in.

A fishing boat eventually caught the giant creature, whose belly had been my home for a while. When those fishermen cut open the fish, they found me inside its belly.

Weren't they surprised!

They pulled me out.

They cast whale out of the boat.

At that time, I should have stopped them, but I couldn't. I could not stop them because I was on my own and they were many. All I could do was watch helplessly.

Start from the day I emerged from the darkness of the whale's belly, I have been working on my 'protect the environment' project.

Starting with me.

I'm trying to waste less and reuse and recycle as many products as I can, and by not throwing trash in a wrong place. After that, I'm going to visit some schools to speak about how important it is to protect the environment. If I can raise awareness among the young generation, then they can understand how important it is and then the next generation can have what we have now. I have also started my own novel called *A Mysterious Journey* to record the experience that I had, trying to let more people know about the importance of protecting the environment.

It is almost thirty years ago, to the day, but I am still working on promoting the importance of the environment.

It has been hard work, but I will never give up. This is for the whole human race and for our next generations.

The struggle is hard, but we cannot ignore this problem.

The alternative is total destruction, and that is a terrible alternative.

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## **The Old Man** - **by Jennifer**

The old man stood on the balustrade, looking out over the dark waters.

He remembered happier times.

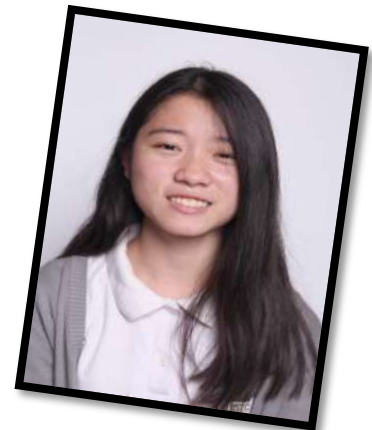
"I've reached sixty-five and what do I have to show for it?" he thought. He looked up to the sky.

The clouds were gunmetal grey; the sun had lost its way. He sat down carefully, and then put his crutch back into a grey coloured bag.

He spoke aloud.

"My name is Kelvin. Once I had a loving wife and two sons. It was just enough for me, but I lost my wife 18 years ago, when my children were only 7 years old.

Up until that point, my whole life had been very normal; childhood playgrounds with friends, school, university, many girlfriends, work. The



normal stuff. I experienced things that most people experienced growing up. But something happened here, on this very spot, that has affected my whole life ever since ...”

Kelvin stood up, held his hands together and, with a gentle smile, continued talking.

“I still remember that night, when she smiled at me in the moonlight, her beautiful eyes looked straight at me and winked. Her name was Linda, which means ‘beauty’ in Italian, and she was just like her name – beautiful – and attractive.”

Kelvin looked at the shadow of himself reflecting from the river, then the smile on his face disappeared.

The memories about Linda gradually emerged in Kelvin’s mind. He took some time to get the smile back on his face, even though the smile was forced.

“Linda ...” he whispered. “Why?”

Kelvin stopped speaking because he had a lump in his throat. Just thinking of Linda made him hoarse. He took out a water bottle and drank.

“Linda and I married after falling in love. After for 3 years, we had our first baby. It was a son and we named him Arthur. One afternoon when Arthur came back from school, we told him the news about how he is going to have a brother. I still remember how happy he was. He asked Linda a lot of questions about this brother. I believed that they would be good brothers to each other.”

Kelvin shook his head and sighed.

“Anyone who has listened to the story up until this part would think this was a sweet family, but life is always full of surprises.”

He closed his eyes trying to control his sorrow and anger.

Why had she deserted them?

He looked at the dark waters below.

He felt dizzy and began to sway ...

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