



THIRD COAST CAMP FOR YOUNG WRITERS AT
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY PRESENTS

CAMP THIRD COAST BOOK OF STORIES

MIDDLE SCHOOL CABIN
SUMMER 2020

Third Coast Writing Project
at
Western Michigan University
presents work for

**CAMP THIRD COAST-MIDDLE SCHOOL CABIN
SUMMER 2020**

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Editor's Note:

Welcome to the CAMP THIRD COAST-MIDDLE SCHOOL CABIN collection of writing from the 2020 Third Coast Writing Project's Camp for Young Writers at Western Michigan University! As the editor of this anthology, it was truly a joy to work alongside, teach, and have fun on this writing journey with such creative authors. Please note that some young writers were not able to publish their stories. I hope that all the young writers in this virtual session can continue with their stories throughout the rest of summer and beyond!

Mrs. Stephanie Hampton

Paragon Two

By Alaina

Chapter 1

I thrust the door to my little brother's bedroom open, the ten-year-old brown-haired boy was gathering piles of dirty clothes and old toys into trash bags. We were being forced to sell most of our belongings to the Sway, our government needed the supplies to help win the war against Melimia, our neighboring country. And my family needs the money with war raging in the heart of the country that we call home. Our once great president is dead, shot by a Melimian terrorist ten years ago. President Obaid's son took over declaring a war that has lasted ever since. My mother lost her job recently, many shops are closing down in Gorgaden, our tiny town. My school has stopped handing out free lunches, mother says they may too shut down for the time being.

"It's time to eat," I say turning on my heel before Jack can answer. "Don't make mom wait, she's had a hard day." I call over my shoulder, careful not to let our mother hear me. She likes to think she has it under control, pretending we're not losing money and aren't short on food. She thinks that she can protect us from the truth, but I'm smarter than I look.

Plates clang and dishes crash as I rush down the stairs to help with dinner. Mom is setting the table when three of our few plastic plates tumble onto the floor tripping the woman in the process.

"Mom, you need to be more careful," I say kneeling down and offering to help her up. She swats my hand away scooping up the fallen dishes in a rush and pushing herself to her feet. People say I look exactly like my mother, same dirty blonde hair and pale skin. My mom's hair was short, pin-straight, and cut in a neat bob tight against her head. Now it's grown itself out a bit sticking out in a tangled mess. My slightly wavy hair hangs down just past my shoulders framing my face and making my bright green eyes pop. But I can see the differences more clearly now. Dark circles make her gray eyes more noticeable and the smile that we share is no were to be seen. I take the plates from her earning a nod of approval as I proceed to place them around our only remaining table. Mother scurries back into the kitchen returning moments later with a rice cooker and another large pot. She arranges them in the center of the table before pulling out her chair and having a seat. I copy her movements, taking the one across from her.

"Where is your brother?" She asks, but she already knows the answer, I can tell. "Just finishing up with his room," I say anyway, spooning rice and beans onto my plate. Mother nods knowingly, piling food on her plate as well. We don't bother to

wait for my younger brother, he is almost always late for dinner doing who knows what.

"Soooo," I begin dragging out the word to delay from having to ask the question I'm dreading. "Have you spoken to dad recently?" I know I shouldn't get my hopes up, deep down I know that he isn't coming home for my birthday like my mother had promised. But I can't help it. I haven't seen my father in four years. He left to fight in the ongoing war when I was six, I'm fifteen now. The last time I saw him he came home for just a night four Christmases ago, mother said he promised to be here for my birthday just like he had every year. And it never happened.

My mother's face is a clear giveaway. I poke at my food refusing to meet her eyes. She opens her mouth as if to give me reassurance, but hesitates. I'm about to say it's okay, that I shouldn't have expected him to be here when three forceful knocks sound at the door, cutting me off. My head snaps up, eyeing my mother quizzingly. Why would someone be here at this time? I wonder, about to push myself to my feet and answer when my mom's expression stops me. There is clear fear in her eyes, her hands shaking violently as she stares at me in pure terror.

"Mom?" I asked, my eyes darting between her and the awaiting door a few feet away. "What is going on? Who is here?" she shakes her head as if refusing to believe what is happening. Something's up. My mother and I tell each other everything, until just a few years ago when things started to go downhill. I often wonder what had changed, if she confided in me and discussed her worries we could have fixed them together. She shouldn't have to handle things alone.

"Sam, I need you to go upstairs and pack yourself a bag." She ordered, unable to keep her voice from shaking. I'm taken aback by this statement, she was asking me to leave? What was it that she didn't want me to see? Could we be in danger? Why would I need to pack a bag? "Samantha Vouge, go to your room." I'm about to argue when another round of pounding sounds from behind me. My mother is glaring at me now, there is no point trying to get out of this. She has her mind made up.

I race for the stairs, running faster than I think I ever have. I thrust my bedroom door open and begin to pace back and forth across the milky brown carpet. Bag, I remember what my mother instructed me to do. Dropping to my knees I gather some of my discarded clothes, stuffing the fabrics into a tattered lime green backpack that I've had since I was a kid. What else do I need? I throw a flashlight, a bottle of water, and a pack of food hoping it's enough for whatever I might soon be facing.

Thousands of possibilities run circles in my brain, I have always had a restless mind, now more than ever. Are we in trouble? I wonder, has mom done something bad and now the Sway is after her? Then my heart seems to stop, dad. What if he's dead? What if he needs help?

"No, no, no, no," I mumble to myself. "This can't be happening." My heart is beating at a hundred miles per hour so loud it blocks out the soft shuffling of my brother entering my room.

"Sam," he mutters nearly scaring the life out of me. I can see he's nervous, checking behind him every few seconds as if someone might come out and eat him. "I'm, I'm scared," He whispered. Jack has always been a bit of a baby, I would've said so if I wasn't equally as terrified. I beckon him over and he rushes to my side dropping down to his knees. Jack lets me pull him into my lap, burying his head into my shoulder. I run my fingers through his thick brown hair.

A scream assaults my ears. My blood runs cold as crashes and shouts follow. I give Jack one last squeeze before pushing him off me and jumping to my feet. I gather the backpack and head straight for the door. Jack attempts to follow me but stops abruptly as I throw up an arm in a signal to wait.

"Stay here," I order. He opens his mouth to argue but closes it quickly, nodding in agreement as he makes his way over to my bed. After checking one last time to make sure Jack's safe I take a deep breath and head down to confront the chaos.

Two men are standing in my living room both wearing jet black uniforms with silver details. The younger of the two has straight black hair, cut short. sharp features make him especially serious-looking, his brow furrowed in concern. The older one's hair is graying and wrinkles are beginning to gather on his face. I can just make out a silver logo on their chests. C.A.P.S. What is that supposed to mean? Mother is shouting at them, trying to keep the oldest of the two from coming upstairs.

"Ma'am by order of law we will be taking your child," says the younger one trying to push past my mother as his partner distracts her. I'm frozen by this comment, stuck in my place at the base of the stairs. Taking me? Mother screams jumping in front of the younger man but stops short when she sees the expression on his face. None of them had noticed my arrival until then. The younger man brushes my mother aside as if she is nothing more than a fly. He grabs my arm beginning to drag me towards the exit. This snaps me out of whatever trance had settled over me moments before. A mix of rage and fear has taken over me now, I kick and scream reaching for something to hold onto hoping it will keep him from taking me away. I catch the kidnapper by surprise, momentarily jerking myself free from his grasp. I throw my bag down making a break for the back door, maybe if I can run they will leave and forget about me.

My mother has caught on now, she jumps on the younger man as he attempts to follow me. I'm almost there when I feel something pulling me backward. The older man has his arms wrapped around my waist. He picks me up like I weigh nothing and begins to make his way out of the house. I throw my arm back, my elbow making

contact with his jaw. He grunts, not releasing his grip. The man has positioned me in such a way that when I kick I only manage to bump my legs against his shins. The younger man is struggling to hold my mom down as she tries to wiggle free of his grasp.

"Take me!" She pleads, staring the kidnapper right in the eyes. "I'll be much better suited to the army. Take. Me. Instead." The man shakes his head, despite his circumstances he looks disappointed in himself.

"I'm sorry ma'am. President's orders. She'll be safe with us." He assures her, my mother ignores him letting out a string of profanity. But I'm barely listening now, something she said has blocked out the rest of the world as I try to figure out what she means. Army.

The older kidnapper drags me towards the door and out into the icy air. The cold nips at my bare arms causing me to shiver, though it's more than that. Fear contributes to the sensation more than any amount of frost. The man's boots crunch as he makes his way through the snow and over to an awaiting car positioned in my driveway. The vehicle almost looks like a police car, pitch black with large block letters painted in shining silver along its sides. But instead of reading Gorgaden City Police like I'm used to C.A.P.S. is printed on the glistening surface.

The younger man appears moments later sliding into the passenger seat as his companion takes the wheel. He turns in his seat giving me what was supposed to be a reassuring smile. I fume, how can this guy kidnap a child and be smiling about it? He was clearly a psychopath.

"Hey," he says, I shoot him a glare before crossing my arms over my chest and staring out the window to my right. He purses his lips nodding solemnly. "I guess I deserve that," he mutters. My head snaps back to look at him.

"You guess?" I ask outraged, I reach for the door handle attempting to push it open and run back home. But it doesn't budge, I should have guessed that wouldn't have worked. The man tosses me the backpack he must have retrieved from my kitchen floor. I look at his face realizing he's grinning, almost laughing at me. I suddenly feel like punching the guy hoping I bruise his perfect face. And I would have if it hadn't been for the steel bars separating me from my kidnappers. I feel like a criminal.

"I like her," he says to his partner, the other guy just rolls his eyes. "I think she'll make it."

THE DOCUMENTED HAPPENINGS OF NUMBER 3, WYVENHURST PLACE, MONTGARNOTH

By Avi

Kajo rapped on the windows, hoping for someone to look until his knuckles began to bleed. They drove for what felt like hours until they reached the rocky wall at the edge of the city. The man got out of the car, opened the trunk. Then, he moved his hand to his face, and grabbed his nose. With a slick upward motion, he took off his mask, revealing long flowing black hair. All the blue blood and red eyes were on his mask.

"leitt að hræða þig sveinn." he muttered.

"You're Icelandic?" Kajo said in awe.

"Helgi Aron, Order of Escape, First Class is who I am. And, also Icelandic, yes. Pleased to meet you." the man said.

"I'm Kajo. What is this place? Why did you take me? Why am I here? Where are my parents?"

"Þögn, Kajo, þögn. We are in The Forbidden Park." Helgi answered.

Kajo stared at him blankly.

"It leads to the tunnel where our ancestors came in from. The government hid this place for years under a rock. The boulders that fell today cracked it open. It holds the Poissa Diamond, the controller of all sea level rising. Your parents are presidents of the Order of Escape whose mission is to find the diamond and stop sea level rising. Your parents are safe from the boulders, and they're in our headquarters, through the tunnel here."

Kajo let out a sigh of relief and confusion. Right now he wouldn't even notice if Helgi said his aunt was a unicorn

"So, what about the shield charm 60 years ago?" Kajo questioned.

"No such thing. Government coverup for us saving their lazy behinds. Those nasty heimskr molars said that President Mako Jeshingko put the shield charm up. We harnessed the power of the Poissa Diamond through robotics, but we don't know its actual location."

The two of them continued on in the tunnel. Kajo could hear bats screeching as they walked down the cave. Helgi stopped walking just as the light from the entrance faded, leaving them in darkness.

"åpne deg lat lure!" Kajo was pretty sure that what Helgi said was Norwegian

"What does that mean?" Kajo said after a few seconds of the rock slowly sliding, making an opening

"It means, "open you lazy fool!" Helgi answered with a slight grin

Before Kajo could react, a short man wearing a green suit and glasses welcomed them to the headquarters.

"Good day Sir Helgi, I am overjoyed to see that you have brought the boy." the man said with a hearty voice and a slight English accent.

"We have been waiting for your arrival, young Kajo. Let me take you inside. Oh, and don't mind the flying snake-rabbits, they mean no harm to us. We couldn't let them suffer out in the waves. We just had to take them in."

Just as the man finished, a huge creature emerged from behind a stalactite in the cave. It was breathing substantial amounts of pink fire, and had the head of a snake, with rabbit feet, and wings the size of a refrigerator. Kajo couldn't help hesitating to take another step.

They walked in the torchlit cave for many silent moments until they finally reached a large dusty room full of scores of odd-looking creatures. One had a human body with cat legs and a horrendous goblin head that held no hair. One other was an octopus with a shark's head that contained a West Montgarnoth King professional handball team hat. This was truly the oddest place Kajo had ever been in his entire life, and right in the middle of all of this were his parents, talking with the Shark-Octopus.

"KAJOOO!" His mom rushed to him and gave him a big hug.

"Oh, have you been okay? We were so worried about you. This Bill by the way." Said his mom, gesturing to the Shark-Octopus. Bill waved

"Yeah, Mom, I'm fine," Kajo replied.

"Alright, Kajo? I see you forgot your helmet to-" Before Kajo's father could finish his sentence, it seemed that Kajo's mother just remembered that boulders had come down that day.

"Oh my god, Kajo!! Is the house okay? Is Kadex okay? What about Mr. Delphi's Lutefisk stand? Oh my god, I would hate to lose that, but not more than the house, you know,"

"Mom! Mom. Our house was-was...taken down by boulders..."

"We will rebuild." Said his mom after a few moments, with a sniff. And that was the last thing that was said for quite some time.

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When the family went back that night, they stayed in a hotel near downtown. The noise of the electric cars, buses, and trains kept Kajo awake for hours. He was thinking about the red glint that caught his eyes earlier that day. Was that the Poissa Diamond? He should talk to someone in the Order of Escape about it in the morning. Maybe Helgi. He did not want his parents to know. He wanted to capture the Diamond without their help.

The hotel alarm clock buzzed at 9 am. Kajo was lethargic from his lack of sleep. He meandered over to the small table in the room and poured a bowl of cereal. When his parents woke up at 10, they decided to go out to Moonbucks, the local coffee place.

"Kajo. We are going to the Forbidden Park again today, but first, we will assess the damage to our home." Kajo's mother then took a sip of dark coffee, swirling in a circular motion.

The family got in the car and went across town to Number 3, Wyvenhurst Place. When they arrived, Kajo looked out the window at the caved-in roof, the left side of the house where the kitchen was, now destroyed. Only one part of the house still stood, and in that part, Kajo could see the shadow of a man through the curtains of a window. He opened his car door and walked up to the house with his parents behind him. Kajo let out a great sigh, and opened the great, spruce door.

Gunshots fired all around him. The man he saw in the window earlier was the beheaded body of Helgi Aron. Twenty people came out from hiding with guns and knives. Kajo ducked down and ran to the car. Bullets made loud bangs as they hit their electric Subaru. His dad was hurt. Kajo helped him into the car and his mother took the wheel.

The Villain Tradition

By Bo

CHAPTER 1

Finn Solep was overjoyed; Happier than he had been in a long time. Ever since the COVID-19 vaccine had been invented and robots decided to live comfortably with humans, he had thought his wildest dreams would never come true- Sure, there was WWIII, when robots fought against humans- but his dreams eventually did become reality, and now he was rambling on about it at the dinner table: "2020: waited 7 years for flying cars. For robots to walk the streets. For lasers to be the new fireworks show. But no. Seriously though, where was all of the cool tech stuff? Maybe they won't ever come.... UNTIL NOW!!! In 4096, flying cars avoided collisions with birds. Robots have minds of their own, and LASERS put fireworks to shame! The streets are now titanium-plastic compounds with houses and grass patches on them. AND FINALLY!! QUANTUM HYPER- WARP DRIVE HAS BEEN INVENTED!! adventuring past the milky way!-" "Ok, that's nice, honey," Finn's mom said, exasperated. "But can you let someone else talk? I'd like to say something. How come you haven't embraced your destiny?"

Finn had heard this talk about a hundred times, so he tuned out his mom's lecture and started wondering why his relatives and family wanted him to be a- "Super Villian!"

His mom finished with angry eyes. She was a short woman with thin blonde, shoulder-length hair. She was a pianist and a drawer. Most of Finn's picture's had his Mom's help. Her glasses had spectrum upgrades, which let her see in x-ray vision, infrared vision, and all the other light waves. She could even blast light beams. Finn looked up. "What's so great about being a supervillain?" He asked cautiously.

Mrs. Solep leaned back in her chair and rubbed her eyes. "Give your mother a break, Finn!" His father interjected.

He was the opposite of Finn's mother; He was about an inch and half taller than his wife and had a PHD in technology, engineering, chemistry, and biology. He also had upgraded the family robot with defensive weapons, and his footwear had hi-jump technology. Finn sunk back into his own chair. This conversation would be continued later.

CHAPTER 2

The next day Finn woke up early; he still had 45 minutes until he had to get ready for school, so he grabbed his alarm clock and threw it out the window. The self-repairing glass didn't mind. Finn slumped back into bed and heard his parents chatting about something. Quietly, he snuck to the crack of the door. This is what he heard:

"What are we gonna do?" His mom asked. She sounded distraught.

"He's going to have to face it someday," His dad said back.

"It's not too late though, all we have to do--"

"Lucy, I know but do you think He's ready?"

"Charlie, It might not be up to him. Sooner or later we are going to have to help him or make him- start acting like a--"

Villain, Finn thought. He flopped back down on his bed. For Finn, being a villain was a family tradition. His grandfather had blasted Uranus out of orbit; that's why it's on its side. Both of his aunts had teamed up to annihilate Pompeii by using a machine that was disguised as Mt. Vesuvius. Even his cat was in on the fun. Finn doesn't go to the attic anymore, that's all he said. Finn himself was a medium-sized person with thin black hair. He looked completely normal, except for the fact he had a robotic arm. This was no accident- he just wanted it. The arm had infinitely rotating wrists and fingers, and 118 interchangeable tools and weapons. "FINN!! GET DOWN HERE! YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE!" His dad bellowed from downstairs. Finn flew from the bed, grabbed his backpack, and launched himself out the door.

"Want some oatmeal for the road?" The family robot asked.

"Oh, uh, no thanks, Rz-5," said a confused Finn. As he ran down the street, Rz-5 sadly lowered the tray.

Finn walked casually down the street. Things have changed since the 21st century. Now technology was everywhere. Finn saw a robot help fix the building across the street, and at the edge of the woods, some young children were watching an open-air holo-movie. Finn dodged some hover cars, two robots, and a sentient van stopped another robot from running over a duck family and was almost at school when some kids at a nearby park wanted a push on the merry-go-round. Finn dialed up his Robo-arm to 17 strength, wound up, and spun.

"THAAAAAANNNNNKKKKSSSSSS, FIIIIIIIIINNNNNNNNN!!!!" The kids screamed with delight.

Finn nodded politely, then lunged into the school. Zooming down hallway after hallway, already knowing he was late, Finn skidded to a stop right outside of room 748. He burst through the door. "Welcome, Finn," Mrs. Morris said with a touch of sternness in her voice. She had long thin, blonde hair and wore cat-rimmed glasses. She could, for some reason, shoot radishes out of her gloves. Any kind: raw, diced, sliced. Mrs. Morris tried to turn on a science documentary for the lesson, but it wouldn't work.

"Could someone help me with this?" Mrs. Morris asked. Finn raised his hand.

"Thank you, Finn." She said.

As Finn and the teacher tried to troubleshoot the problem, the class bully, Jack, secretly hacked into the computer mainframe. So instead of showing "Chromosomes

and Enzymes: How they work!", the projector started showing Despicable Me. The kids screamed with delight, and Jack roared with laughter, while Mrs. Morris worked feverishly to fix the problem.

"... But if the screen says all systems Aux.." Finn mused.

"...Then that would mean that the mainframe was hacked!" Mrs Hopper announced the situation. She shut off the show just as Gru was saying "Assemble the Minions!" "AWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW, MAAAANNNNNNNN!!!" moaned the kids.

"Quiet!" Mrs. Morris said. "Tomorrow I will fix this. In the meantime, open your science books to page 187 and read the first two paragraphs on DNA." Finn was glad he could help. He winked at Mrs. Morris, and she winked back.

CHAPTER 3

"I'm home!" Finn announced. As usual, no one answered because both his parents were at work. He scribbled answers to his homework, fed the cat, and fell asleep. 3 hours later, his parents arrived. "Hey, Finn! Get down here! We have to talk about something!" His mom shouted up to him. Sighing, Finn trudged downstairs- but not before another alarm clock went through the window.

"What's up, dad?" Asked Finn. His father asked, "We've been putting it off for far too long. WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO START ACTING LIKE A SUPERVILLAIN?!!!"

Finn had no intention of answering this.

"Um... well.."Finn started.

"I'm WAITING!!!!" Shouted his dad.

Finn could hide the truth no longer. "I DON'T WANT TO BE A SUPERVILLAIN!!!"

His parents were taken aback. After a brief silence, his mother spoke up: "Finn, villainy is a family tradition. Just do something evil: It doesn't have to be big."

Finn backed away, shaking his head. Here were two crazy parents who wanted him to be a villain, and his relatives were, too- every one of them. His parents kept pressing: "Please, Finn."

"Anything evil- not big, just something."

"Do anything evil. ANYTHING."

"NOOOOOOOOOOO!! I'M GETTIN' OUTTA HERE!" Finn shrieked.

And with that, he turned on his heel and launched himself out the window. Since the house was powered by A.I, the window sighed and repaired the glass yet again. As for Finn, he landed safely using his Robo-arm as a trampoline. He was alone. Alone in the world. He decided to leave and go away on his own. With that, he grabbed his secret stash of supplies hidden in the wall and left to figure out his place in the world. Inside the house, Rz-5 asked, "Sooooooo.... Who wants oatmeal?"

Finn's parents didn't answer. "Okay.. I'll just leave. The tray.. here," Rz-5 said nervously as he backed away.

He wished someone would give him a chance in the world. He decided to follow Finn. Meanwhile, Finn was at the end of the street when Rz-5 came hurtling toward him. "Finn! No one is trying my oatmeal! Can I please go with you?"

Finn pondered this for a moment, then said, "Sure".

And with that, the robot and boy set off to determine their place in the world.

The Farm

By Dontray

Today at the farm in Nebraska the Smith family a farmer trio made up of the dad Lance he's 33 and is really got mad easily. The wife Ocean is really lazy. She barely helps and really doesn't try to help. The son Lance is 16 and is the #5 basketball player in the country and has a lot of scholarships he really loves to help out on the farm.

Lance looked over at his shoulders and looked at his door and because they have been failing to pay the bills. Lance looks surprised he claimed to have paid the bills the wife is yelling like she helps any day. Lance went to his room in disappointment then he pushed his pillow finding the money surprised but he said what I didn't even sleep in the room. I sleep in the living room. Then he said Ocean did this; she didn't even want me to be a farmer. Lance said he will give her a day to confess.

The next day Lance asked Ocean is it anything that she wanted to tell him she said no why is it anything I should want to tell you. Lance said, is it? Finally Ocean said fine I stole the money because I don't wanna be a farmer I don't like being country. I wanna go back to our normal life. Lance was made this was his true job. Ocean was still unhappy about his decision but he was the only one with a job. His wife finally decided to help out at the end of the day and went and turned in the bills and talked about the misunderstanding. The family soon did not get evicted and the ended up becoming the #1 farmer recommended to buy crops from. The son ended up making it to the NBA player, the mom stopped being lazy, and the dad wasn't easy to make mad anymore.

The Four Elements

By Dorian

"JORDAN!," yelled mom from the bottom of the stairs.

"...yea?," I mumble from my head buried in the pillow

"Come eat some cereal before school. Remember you have that math test"

"Oooookkk," I say as I peel my face from my pillow. As I said before I hate Mr. Clark's math tests. As I get ready I get a text from the gang group chat saying...

Jackson: We're gonna help each on the math test right?

I roll my eyes. This was from Jackson of course. He, like me, isn't always the best at math and always asks us to help him. Tyrone replied saying...

Tyrone: Boy, get a math tutor you know Mr. Clark be watching us like a hawk in class

Me: Especially since we always talking and fooling around in class

Alonso: That's only because you and Tyrone always picking fights

Me: Hey, but I always win

Tyrone: Ha! You wish with your short self, you only win sometimes

Me: Such a sore loser as always

Jackson: For real y'all who gone give me the answers

Me: Nobody struggle like the rest of us

"JORDAN! I swear if I come up there and you aren't dressed for school you are getting that phone took," my mom yells from the kitchen

" Jordan, you better listen to her she's in a mood," my dad adds

Me: Ok y'all I gotta finish getting ready for school before I get killed. See you guys at school

Tyrone: Alright be safe lol

Jackson: Stay alive

Alonso: See ya

I get dressed and put on my "Space Jam" hoodie, some black sweatpants, and some Air Force 1 high tops. After I do my hair and clean my braces I head down to snag a waffle. Luckily Dontrell had to leave early for a field trip.

"Hi dad, Hi mom"

"Good morning honey, eat something before the bus comes," replies my mom I grab a waffle and eat that as I say goodbye to my parents.

"Jordan, after school don't stay out too late with your friends there's supposed to be a storm," said my dad with a stern look on his face.

"Dad I won't it's not like I'll get struck by lightning," I snickered

He was about to add something but just in time, I heard the bus pull up from the window to take me to school. I could already smell the corn chip and the smoke smell of the bus.

"Remember, Be....Safe," my dad says over the top of his newspaper

"Yeah, Yeah," I mumble as I head out the door

I walk out of the blue door of my house and to the end of the street to get on the bus. I get on the bus and greet Ms.Kathy, our bus driver. I walk to the back of the bus where my friends greet me.

"Wassup shortie." taunts Jackson

"Nothin, what bout you Baby J," I taunt back

We all have this joke about Jackson because he still has his cute little baby fat.

"Haha," says Jackson

"Anyway y'all ready for this math test," implies Alonso

Math class. Oh, we do not agree. I'm actually kinda decent at it, it is just Mr. Clark. He is always giving us way too much work. The work is also very confusing. Some problems ask for a whole different way of solving then what was taught. He expects us to get most of them right. Like, come on it's his fault.

"No. not at all it's probably not even what he taught us like it always is," I reply

"This is why nobody likes his class anyway," Jackson adds

"Anyway guys let's struggle together like always," implies Tyrone.

We play around and talk until the bus pulls into the school. A big, dusty building with 3 floors that looks half-dead.

"Dun, dun, dun" jokes Jackson.

We all head into the school and put our stuff into our lockers. Coincidentally our lockers are by each other so we always share with each other. We even put each others' stuff in the others' lockers. The number of clothes we've stolen from each other. As much as we didn't want to, we head to math class. As we walk into the door we are met by the glare of Mr. Clark's gold lines glasses. He's a balding, pale man with the face of a bulldog. He always has on khakis with his teacher shirts. Today it was purple.

"Take a seat you guys class will be starting shortly," says Mr. Clark in an annoyed tone

I swear he only has it out for us because he's always trying to catch us with something. We take our seats in the back per usual just as the bell rings. Mr. Clark hands out the tests and gives us an extra hard stare before he goes to the front of the class. See he's always on 10 with us.

"Ok class start your tests now and do your best. No. Cheating," he says sternly I look down at the test. Essay questions. He hates my brain and class. The sound of pencil chewing intensifies. I look at my friends. Eyes wide and hands in hair. We weren't kidding about struggling together. I look at my test then at Mr. Clark. He was staring a hole in my head, yikes! It looks like he's trying to kill me so I then do my test to divert my eyes from his. What was his problem?

The rest of the day classes went smoothly. We dissected brains in science (Jackson is the most dramatic partner he kept fake fainting. Alonso, Tyrone, and I just laughed. Mrs. K did not). In L.A we talked about essays. My brain melted and Alonso died. Social studies we read about China and let me tell ya so much work. And then there's gym. We played basketball and I dominated the court. Alonso is such a sore loser. He and Jackson just held the balls over my head. Tyrone was too busy laughing his butt off.

The bus ride to our neighborhood was a chill one. We talked about the day and how we think we did on the test. Jackson said his brain exploded. Dramatic as always. We all got off the bus to walk to Alonso's house. We all live close to each other so we've been friends since childhood. Alonso's house is nice. It's like mine but it has the biggest field in the back. We play there and hang all the time. We arrive at the house and are welcomed with the smell of food.

"Oh! Hi kids you can have some food if you like," offers Mrs. Alvarez

Mind you it is 4:30 and Mrs. Alvarez already has food out and ready as always.

"That can wait for mom we got homework to do" whines, Alonso

"Ok but you guys have to eat later," replies Mrs. Alvarez

In Alonso's room, we help each other out with our 5 pounds of homework. This takes a total of 4 and a half HOURS! And most of that was having mine fights and Mr. Clark impressions, but we finished all of the work. We then went down to eat the food Mrs. Alvarez cooked. She made burritos, quesadillas, chorizo, and more. It filled my nose with the aroma of spices and love. Let me tell you we all stuffed our faces that night. We went to the back of the house to walk to the big field.

"Uggghh I feel like I'm gonna give birth," groans Tyrone

"Me too I'm pregnant," replies Jackson

"Hey guys, I'm already 5 months," I joke back

"Beat ya to it I was already pregnant with two food babies," replies Alonso

We laugh down the rest of the path down the dark woods. We came upon the big, green field where we played in since we were little. The big oak trees that held all kinds of living creatures. The field was so clear you could lay down on the huge grass bed and stare at the stars. Only tonight it was filled with dark, gray clouds. We sit on the grass and talk about our favorite rappers.

"Obviously Lil Uzi Vert makes the best songs," says Jackson

"Ok he's pretty good but Trippie Redd makes some pretty hype songs and you know it," I reply confidently

"Guys puh-lease Playboi Carti is the best," sneers Alonso

"I like him but every time I try to remember lyrics I can't think of a single word because it don't hear any when he raps," jokes Tyrone

"Hey just look up asdfghjklkjhgerty," replies Jackson

We sit there laughing for about 30 minutes when we hear a rumble from the clouds.

"Maybe we should head back before it gets too bad," I suggest

"Yeah you're right I don't feel like being soaking," chuckles Jackson

We walk a while on the trail when we stop to see this weird building hidden in the woods. We all looked confused because we were pretty sure it had never been there.

We walk inside the creepy wooden shack. It smelled of burnt hair and stained wood and looked abandoned.

"I think we just found Frankenstein's house guys," says Tyrone

"Looks like it," replies Alonso

As we go further in the broken-down shack we notice that in the middle of the shack there's this weird metal chamber with all these symbols. I don't know what they mean but it looks interesting. Meanwhile, the storm was getting worse. You could hear trees crashing and the thunder rolling. The rain was coming down like stones. "Guys maybe we should leave before we get trapped in the storm," urges Alonso

Just as he says that a bolt of lightning shots from a hole in the roof and hits the metal chamber. It then emits a blinding electrical surge. We are all blown back by electric shock and the power of the force. The last thing I remember is seeing a weird twisty symbol as I blackout.

I wake up with a pounding headache as I wake up in my bed. After that weird event we all woke in a daze confused at what happened but we were all ok. We walked back to Alonso's to discover it had only been an hour. Weird. We all said goodbye and walked to our houses. Tired and exhausted I told my parents I was tired and went to bed with my clothes on. I get up to use the bathroom to see towels littered all over the floor.

"Ugggh why does Dontrell always leave towels on the floor agggghh"

I feel a sudden heat in the room and I look at my hands they were on FIRE! I leap back in shock knocking over every bottle on the counter. I'm lucky my parents left early for work that morning and Dontrell was at school. I look at my hands again the flame is gone. "Maybe I'm hallucinating," I think to myself. "I'll just go downstairs and eat something"

I walk downstairs and stop midway. What if what happened in the bathroom was real? I needed to make sure. I stretch out my hand and think about making a big flame but a tiny little glow of flame just comes out. I am taken aback. Why is this happening? What is wrong with me? I decided to text my mom to tell her I don't feel well. She said this was the only time I was allowed to do this because she is paying for a school for me to just stay home. Oy. I decided to call my friends.

"Hi guys, how do you guys feel," I ask.

" I don't know I've been seeing weird things since last night," replies Tyrone

"Me too I'm pretty sure I just blew a hole in my wall by breathing," says Alonso

So Alonso has been experiencing weird new "powers" too! Maybe

"What bro," replied Tyrone

"Yea I woke up, yawned and this gust of wind came out and blew a hole in the wall. I just told my mom I was sick so she wouldn't see it"

"That's weird because something happened to me too. I could control water" exclaimed Jackson

This was a whole new level of weird. Were we cursed or something?

"How?" I asked

"So I was in the shower and I had water coming down my face. I put up my hand and the water went a different direction it was weird"

"That's crazy! I woke up and I got frustrated and fire shot out of my hands," I replied

"Woah really that's freaky," Tyrone replies with a surprised emoji. "I could just move rocks"

"???" said Me. Alonso, and Jackson

"On my way home yesterday I took a shortcut through this path with a hill by it. All of a sudden a boulder comes crashing down. I put my hands up to protect myself and it just stopped. I was pretty confused'.

"Tyrone that's amazing you control the earth bro," exclaimed Jackson

"Wait, really I thought I just hallucinated or something wow!" Tyrone gasps

"So we got fire girl, waterboy, the rock, and air? This is beyond weird," says Jackson

"Hey at least we are all at home," I reply

" Do you think this has anything to do with that weird building," Tyrone says in a concerning tone

"Maybe we should go check it out to look for anything," Jackson offers

"I don't know, what if what or whoever caused this is bad," worries Alonso

"We should at least know what caused this," replies Tyrone

"Ok, but let's be careful this time I don't wanna come back transformed into an animal," jokes Alonso

We end the call to meet up on the street to look for the old house. Little did we know this was going to change our lives for good.

Alone

By Elliot

Sofia crept slowly through the lush underbrush knowing the smallest snap of a twig could mean days without food. She was desperate but she knew there was no rushing this. The doe she had been tracking stood in a clearing drinking water from a small stream running down from the mountains. The doe quietly drank while Sofia picked the spot she wanted the arrow to land, the heart, or at least where she thought the heart was. She had some practice with a bow before she was stranded, on what she thought to be a large island she couldn't tell because mountains surrounded her on all sides. In the little valley area, there was a stream that flowed down the mountain and through to the small inland lake near where she had built her shelter.

Sofia had woken this morning to deer tracks near her shelter. She tracked it all the way to the edge of the valley (about 5 miles). She had to hit this shot or she would go hungry as she had been most of the time she was in the mountain range. She steadily took aim and pulled the string back to the corner of her chin, found her target, took a deep breath, listening to the chirp of the birds and the trickling stream, relaxing her shoulders, feeling the slight breeze on her cheeks and she let go. With a satisfying twang the arrow was cutting through the air towards the deer it hit the doe at the base of its neck with a thud. The doe squealed and kicked wildly while Sofia cursed at herself because the shot she hit would kill the doe but it could take hours. She didn't have that kind of time. It would be dark soon and the predators would be more active. She didn't know what might be in this valley and had no intent to find out. She drew her second arrow and took aim repeating the steps from her first shot and let it fly this time with more confidence. The arrow slammed into the side of the deer it sputtered and fell to the ground, unmoving.

Sofia smiled to herself proudly. She removed herself from her hiding spot and picked through the brambles towards the doe. Sofia estimated that it was about 4 ft long and 160 pounds which from her knowledge of hunting would produce about 55 pounds of meat if she skinned it correctly. As she worked on skinning, preserving and, moving the meat to her shelter, on the last trip she heard rustle in the small patch of blackberries. She thought nothing of it; it was probably just some rodent, she hurried on to grab the last piece of meat because she was losing lightfast.

If the World Were to End!

By Emma

How do you think you would survive if you were one of the last to live?

This is what the luckiest people have to do.

It is not like a game where you always survive.

You have to be careful and smart about what you do.

There are zombies all around you.

How will you survive?

The Very Beginning

It was a normal day in the town of Middleton.

People were going out to eat breakfast, and enjoying themselves with family.

Some people were worried about a scientific discovery that was all over the news.

This discovery was made in Japan.

Their discovery was the ability to make someone into a Zombie!!

Tons of people were worried that someone was going to get this, then it would spread.

This can spread to the whole world too.

That is why people here are worried.

Scientist Sam Ford says " One day sooner or later this would spread around the whole world"...

" I don't know why someone would create this".

"The only reason that I could think of is if they would want to destroy our world and lives.

They are not allowed to have his statement on the news.

Bad things will happen.

1 year later...

Lyla is a 13-year old that survived.

She has short brown hair and green eyes.

Know one that she knows survived.

She has met a grown man with the name of Oscar.

He has brown hair like her.

He is very tall, and all of his friends and family have also died.

So both are very lucky to be alive
At first, he did not want to deal with her.
He left her for the Zombies to kill her.
But she did not die after she got bit by one.
So, he found out that she is the cure.
She didn't even know until Oscar found out also.
He decided to stay with her, only because she was the cure.
Before he decided this he had to think because people would want her, so they could
cure the Zombies.
And turn them back into people.
He knows that he would have been awful if he would have just told her to get lost.
So she stuck around with him.
They traveled to places with twists and turns.
Zombies, and people who wanted to kill Lyla, because of her being the cure.
But, this wasn't going to stop the two of them.
They are lucky that they survived, but have to be even luckier to win.

Untitled

By Everett

There I was in the middle of a forest not knowing which way to go running from a clown who was trying to bring me to the evil headquarters where all of the evil clowns meet.

Chapter 1

Hi, my name is Chase Brady and this my story of a time that happened to me when I was 12. Max, Brad, and I were all headed to get ice cream when we saw a poster of a clown festival and we were thinking about going. So later that day we asked our parents if we would go and they said yes so my friends and I got ready to go to the festival so we walked over to the festival but it was something totally different. What we saw was a clown who was looking at us like he wanted to kill us so my friends and I ran and the clown chased us with a knife in his hand then we finally escaped the killer clown. The next day we walked by the festival and saw the same clown but he looked happy and he didn't want to kill us or chase us he wanted to make us laugh. And my friends and I knew something was up because why would he not want to kill us now but last night he wanted to kill us so we keep wondering what is up with this clown and we gave the clown a name and we named him the mysterious clown.

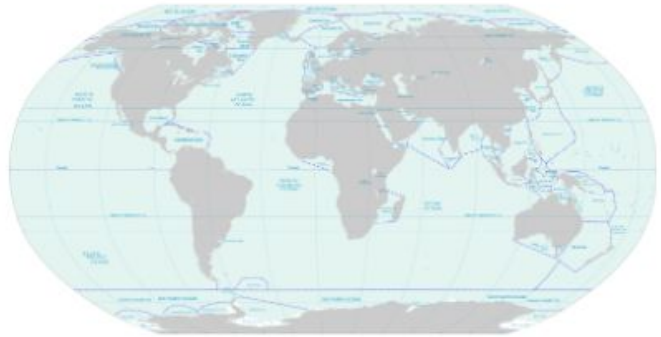
And after we named him we went to our houses. The next day was Wednesday the day we had to go to school but on the way there we saw the clown following us and when we saw him we started to run to school but he started running after us. And when we got to school, we told a teacher but the teacher didn't believe us. So after we got to my house, we told my mom and she said she would drop us off at school, but we told her to drive the way we walked and she did. When we got close we saw the clown, but he looked happy and my mom said, is that the clown and I said yes but we said he looks friendly sometimes.

Go Forward

By Gia

Chapter 1-Hello

It is the early morning. I am starving and I am searching for krill. I hit a swarm. I eat to my heart content. Then I go home. Will said, "how much krill did you eat? I ate a thousand krill." Will said, " You are a Blue whale, Jill. " How many jellyfish you eat?" 10, you are a sea turtle Will." I said, "Will, do you want to travel to five different oceans?" Will has always wanted to see the five oceans. Will says Yes! Right away Will said, " We should leave tomorrow.



Chapter 2-Atlantic Ocean

We set off on our journey. We decided to cover the Atlantic first. We swam and swam and swam, it took a long time. We finally made it to the open ocean. Will said, " It is really pretty out here, the waves, the fish, and the calmness." As we continued, I thought someone was following us so I kept turning around to see if anything was there. Next, I looked down and a Great white shark was right below us. We rose to the surface, to make it hard to see us while the waves were slapping our backs. Then I saw the shark come up, and it had spotted us! We swam as fast as we could but the shark was faster. We tried to zig-zag up and down and nothing worked. Then Will saw an island we swam as fast as we could to the island. We decided to go as close to the shore as we possibly could. The shark was gaining on us, and we swam to the shore. The sand started to grind against our stomachs. We kept going until we could not go any farther. The shark started to approach and made a large snap. Luckily, the shark missed, we took a sigh of relief. We back out and finish crossing the Atlantic

Chapter 3-Northern Ocean

We have reached the Northern Ocean. The beautiful ice narwhals swimming around. Blue crystal clear water sprinkling in the sun.

Will said, "Are you getting cold Jill." I am freezing. As we went farther, our faces started to turn blue then bluer until we looked like icicles. We froze, we were so cold, we could not move. We were frozen, for I have no idea how long.

Then a narwhal came up to us and started pushing us down, down, down. One said, "My name is Coco, I am the leader of the narwhals. Our group has pushed you down by a thermal vent, you should warm up soon." As soon as he said that, my tail started to move, my body next, and finally my head. I swam up to the surface, as fast as we could to get the air. The narwhals and Will followed. As soon as I made it up, I took a big gulp of air, then I went back down. Will said, "How can we ever repay you, for what you did? Coco said, "Don't worry about it." As we finish the arctic ocean. Will said, "I will never forget this place and hopefully, the Pacific doesn't get too deep."

Chapter 4-Pacific Ocean

As we crossed the ocean line, we entered the Pacific Ocean. This is the biggest ocean. I say it is also the deepest.

As we swam, we noticed lots of shipwrecks, from the 1500 century. Big mighty sailboats, all under us. We descended to explore one. The ship was named Fedora. This ship was magnificent, with so many rooms in it. My favorite room is the captain's room. It was filled with so much stuff, like a compass, globe, and books!!!

As we continued, I started feeling like something was pushing down on us. I said, "Will you feel the pressure pushing down on you? Will said, "I feel it too." As we continued, the pressure just got worse. Suddenly, we reached the bottom, so much pressure was on us, it was hard to breathe. Will said, "We should go up." As we started to go up, I started to run out of air. I swam faster, but it was no use. I had run out of air. Then I felt something pushing me. Will was pushing me up. He was pushing me to the surface. I took one long breath and I was better.

I thank Will for saving my life. He said no problem, it could not get much worse than this. Let's also try not to get bitten by a fish.

Chapter 5-Indian Ocean

As we crossed the oceans, the warm water hit us immediately. Hopely nothing bad happens. As we started, inwards the sun started beating down on us. It was hot, really hot. We decided to go a little deeper because it was colder down there, but it was hot still. We started to sweat. By the time we went to the surf for the air we were dripping in sweat. We dove back under to cool down and it was hot.

We reached the middle of the ocean and decided to check out a reef. There were fish and coral everywhere. All types of fish, like Red Snapper, Goldfish, Bass, and pufferfish right in the middle.

We went to go check out the pufferfish. It was massive, it was the biggest thing, I've ever seen and the spikes looked pointy. We swam a little closer and then it charged at us. We went in the opposite direction but it stung me right in the side. It started hurting instantly since it's one of the most poisonous fish in the ocean. I had no idea what to do so I started to panic up and down, left and right.

Then Will remembered, "my mom told me that you have to eat lots of coral. I mean lots of it will get rid of the poison." I eat every piece of coral near me. I ate about half the reef. Then it started not to hurt anymore. I was so surprised it worked. I asked him how did you know that? My grandma got stung by one before she was here before us. Wow, I never knew that. Hopefully, it doesn't get too cold when we visit the Arctic Ocean.

Taxation Without Representation

Book 1-Trouble with Law

By Greta



A Realistic Fiction Story About Colonial Times in Boston Harbor and the 13 Colonies

Chapter 1-Run Child, Run!

Anne is running as fast as she can, racing to get there before it is too late! Down the streets of Boston, she goes. Zooming past carriages and wagons, running at full speed. As she turns the corner she almost runs into a horse carriage that's moving by very quickly. Anne is very athletic and clever for a girl, so she rolls underneath the turning wheels to avoid being crushed. She scrambles up and begins running again, this time running into the dressmaker's door. As quickly as possible she straightens up and begins running again, this time with a bit more caution. The people of Boston watch her maneuver past the carriage and doors, and the buildings, like the market, and the butcher shop, and the saloon, until finally, she reaches the doctor's office. When she bursts inside the door she's out of breath.

The doctor, Dr. Patterson is behind his desk eyeing Anne. He says to her, "Hello, Anne Williams. What brings you here in such a rush today?"

She replies, " Good Afternoon Dr. Patterson. (sigh) It's... It's Granny Ruby. She... her, her sickness, it's... getting worse... Ma told me... to get you... to come... to help..."

With that, Anne faints from exhaustion. Quickly Dr. Patterson collects his things and has his assistant, Dr. Howards, help Anne up and into the carriage wagon. Then they

quickly begin the long drive to Anne's house to help Granny Ruby. Anne wakes up and thinks along the way as she passes the wood crafter's shop that it will be all her fault if Granny Ruby dies.

As the group of three speeds through the city Anne begins to cry. She is worried that it will be too late when they get there to help her dear Granny Ruby. Soon Anne cries herself to sleep for she had run a mile to get there and is very, very tired.

"Anne, listen carefully; I need you to run to Dr. Patterson's office and get him to come here. Do you understand? Granny Ruby needs help now. Go, Anne, go! Run child, RUN! Hurry, Hurry!"

"It may be too late! We need to go and help! They need you!"

What was happening? How could Ma send her again? This was when Ma had sent her to go get the doctors, and how scared everyone in the family was. Anne shivered in fear, seeing again and again how mad everyone would be if she didn't get help in time. She starts to cry. As she wakes up hearing the voice she thinks; "but now I am home and Dr. Howards is telling me to help." Knowing that she needs to help Granny Ruby, Anne gets up and out of the carriage as quickly as she can and runs inside without saying a word. As Anne gets a cloth drenched in cold water and brings it to Granny Ruby, Dr. Patterson is saying to Anne's parents, "I'm sorry, she has a terrible case of yellow fever. I'll give her some treatments, but... I need payment." Anne is devastated about her Granny's condition. "How would she ever get better in the state she's in;" thought Anne.

"Please, Dr. Patterson! Can't you help Granny Ruby without payment?" Anne cries.

"I'm not dear. My boss, Dr. Gregory, has said that I can't help anyone for free until our group of doctors can afford it. I wish I could..." Dr. Patterson says.

"What if we could pay you with work rather than money?" Anne asks.

"I don't see why not!" Dr. Patterson exclaims, "I can treat your Granny Ruby until she is better while someone helps me and my assistant."

"I'll help, I'm 13 already. I am almost 14, like cousin Johnny" Anne cries out,

"Everyone's always saying that I have the brains and creativeness to be a doctor!"

Untitled

By Isaac

One day as I was walking home from school I decided to take a shortcut through the creepy woods next to my house. As I was walking I spotted a mysterious object at the back of the woods, I thought to myself "what is that?" "I don't want to trespass, but I have to see what that is!" I walked towards the middle of the woods and saw that it was a train. "Why is there a train in the middle of the woods?" As I walked closer I could see how much rust there was on the train, meaning it had been there for a while. I could hear whispering from the train. All the sudden a dozen grown men with bags covering their faces jumped out of the train and grabbed me. "How much did you hear boy?" Said a man.

"Nothing, I swear!" I cried. One of the larger men pulled a knife out of his pocket and started to sharpen it. "You don't have to do this!" I cried.

"I swear I didn't hear anything!"

24 hours later

Local boy disappears on walk home from school

Last night 10-year-old Justin Barrett was taking a shortcut home through the woods and disappeared. The police have been searching for him and are yet to find anything. He was last seen wearing a blue shirt and khaki shorts. If you know anything about the disappearance call 911 and report it.

Traveling to the City Above

By Isabelle "Izzy"

Chapter 1: Traveling

The forest was dark, only having light from a torch and fireflies glowing in the dark. It had been raining a few hours ago, so the forest was filled with the scent of wet grass. The only sounds were birds chirping, bees and flies buzzing around, water splashing everywhere, and a fire sizzling nearby.

Near that fire, there was a path, made from stone, that led to an abandoned cabin. Until now, that cabin had been empty. Until now, there had been people in the woods, lost and looking for shelter. Until now, was a train sitting on a track that went toward a city, far away, beyond the clouds.

Crunch

Snap

"Why can't you be quieter, Mary?" Jennifer snapped.

"Sorry," Mary mumbled back.

The two were walking toward the middle of the continent, for their goal of discovering everything on the continent. They had supplies but were running out fast.

Rumble

The sky was getting darker.

"We better find shelter," Jennifer suggested.

They walked quicker, walking until they reached the fire. They looked around and found a path.

"Huh, we didn't see that before," said Mary, "are we going to follow it?"

Rumble

"Well, we better hurry, so yeah, let's go on the path," Jennifer replied, "I hope there is a shelter on the path."

So, they walked onto the path, until they reached a cabin. Mary looked at the cabin, accessing the structure. After the cabin got accessed, Mary told Jennifer that the cabin was used until a month ago.

Boom!

Since the storm was getting closer, they had no choice but to go into the cabin. Inside the cabin, they found survival supplies, like a hand-drawn map, food, and a gallon of water.

"Huh, interesting," Mary observed, "I wonder who it belongs to."

"Mary, don't touch anything," Jennifer warned, "we don't know if the cabin has any traps."

"Fine," Mary responded, "I don't understand why you need to worry so much."

"Well, " said Jennifer, "I don't want you to go trampling around, getting caught by simple traps that you can see."

Mary opened her mouth to say something, but after hearing Jennifer, she closed her mouth. She was quiet until Jennifer spoke again. While eating an apple from their backpack, they wandered around the cabin, making it more familiar to them.

Mary fell onto the bed, exhausted, and told Jennifer, "I'm going to rest until the storm is over."

"Okay, " Jennifer replied.

As Mary and Jennifer got ready to rest for a bit, a battle began outside.

The battle was between the storm and the forest. Lightning and thunder were the storm's weapons, along with rain pouring down.

When Jennifer woke up, Mary was still sleeping. So, Jennifer walked over to a table with their flasks, to refill their flasks of water, and grabbed the supplies as quietly as she could. When the storm was over, the sun peeked out of the clouds and a beautiful rainbow formed. Jennifer looked outside, thinking to look ahead as a scout. Before she left, she wrote a note to Mary and left it on the table nearest to the bed. Jennifer walked out of the door, walking straight out of the door. As Jennifer walked, there were birds that were sitting on branches of a tree that were near the cabin and were very curious about what she was doing. Bees buzzing by, and wolves wandering around.

As Jennifer wandered, she picked many berries that they could eat for a snack.

Zoom!

Jennifer groaned and looked toward her foot, which was hanging above her face. She looked around and saw many clues that were placed on the tree. She realized that she had fallen into an old trap. After realizing that, she thought of the berries. Luckily, Jennifer had put the berries safely into her backpack, with the top closed. Jennifer groaned, "Oh, why?"

Just as Jennifer got caught, Mary woke up. She walked toward the table, reading the note. After she was done reading, she walked over to the map on one of the tables and found where Jennifer was going. Then, she walked out of the door to where Jennifer had been trapped.

"See," Mary gloated, "it's not just me who gets caught and makes so much noise."

"Fine," Jennifer conceded. "Jennifer conceded. "Just help me get out of this thing.."

As Mary took out her knife and cut the rope, she told Jennifer, "I took everything that we need, we have no need to go back."

Jennifer fell down on the ground, groaning. Mary offered her hand, and Jennifer took it. They walked silently until they reached a train.

"Oh my god, what is that!?" Mary commented, "It's huge!"

Since Jennifer was the more educated of the two she was unsurprised, and said, and said, "It's a train, Mary. It's supposed to be huge."

They walked onto the platform, looking for clues about the place.

"Boo!" a voice shouted behind them.

Chapter 2: The Train Station

Jennifer and Mary jumped. Mary, overreacting, pulled out her knife and looked around to see where the sound had come from.

They saw that the person who'd scared them was a young man, with brown, short hair, and shining blue eyes as bright as a sapphire.

"Who are you?" Mary asked suspiciously.

"Jeeze, you don't have to get that serious," said the stranger.

As Mary took a step toward him, he said, "My name is Drew Anderson."

"Why did you do that?" Mary demanded.

Drew was about to answer, but Jennifer said, "Stop Mary, he didn't try to kill you. He just wanted to have fun, let him go."

Mary grumbled, she dropped her arm that held her knife. Drew asked what their names were, and how they got to the train station. After they were done introducing each other, Drew led Mary and Jennifer to the train station. Drew asked, "Did you look at the map?"

Mary and Jennifer nodded. So Drew looked at them, and asked, "Hey, if you are exploring, can I join you?"

Silence took over for a few seconds when Jennifer stared at Mary. Apparently, Jennifer won, so she said, "Sure, you can join."

They walked to the worn benches on the platform. When Mary sat down, she asked, "When should we board the train?"

Drew answered, "It's better to board at noon."

Afterward, they sat down, eating, and resting as much as they could without wasting their supplies. While they rested, the sun slowly crept up to the top of the clouds.

When noon arrived, it was sweltering hot. Bugs flew in and out of the station, biting whatever they could. As Jennifer, Mary, and Drew walked toward the train, a plump, pale man walked toward them.

"Hey," the man boomed. "Are y'all getting on the train?"

The three nodded. Then they walked toward the man, waiting for instructions from him. He said nothing, scanning their bodies for any weaknesses.

"Well, are y'all getting on?"

They jumped onto the train, surprised by the comforts on the train. The train was full of snacks and refreshments.

The compartment that they entered had two bunk beds, a kitchen, two tables, a sliding door on each of the short sides of the apartment, and the door they came from.

"Ah, I wish I could stay here forever!" Drew sighed.

"Yeah," Mary agreed, "This is good, you sh—"

Thump

... Mary froze when she realized that the loud noise was coming from behind her.

Thump

... Mary whipped her head around, to the door in front of her.

"What was that!?" Mary and Drew shouted.

While Mary and Drew were freaking out, Jennifer searched in her back for her three hunting knives. Once she found them, she tossed one of them to Drew. Jennifer was about to throw one to Mary, but Mary already had her knife in hand. Jennifer smiled for a split second, then got serious, getting ready for a fight.

Creak

Who was at the door?

Guardians

By Ivan

March 22nd, 2220

Hi. My name is Daniel. I don't know what my last name is, because I never knew my parents. It's the year 2220. The world came pretty darn close to permanently becoming a barren hunk of rock, like most of the other planets in our solar system. Here's how it happened.

Last century, the global disaster finally came. It wasn't Ragnarok, it wasn't total nuclear annihilation. Instead, the earth was crippled by human activity. That's right. Those environmentalists handing out flyers advocating the end of the world in the 21st century? They were right.

The ice caps melted, immediately extinguishing several dozen species. Every square inch left on the earth has been converted to shelter or feed us, killing off several hundred more. The jungles, forests, and plains all fell to chainsaws, bulldozers, and business tycoons. The global temperature rose by ten degrees, causing even more species to go extinct. We barely scratched the surface of renewable, sustainable energy, and what few advancements we made weren't enough to turn the tide. It just kept becoming worse and worse. Large spots of the earth were rendered inhabitable because of holes in the ozone layer, which let in dozens of types of ultraviolet rays, each one ten times as harsh as the ones people used to tan themselves with. Thousands of people died from skin cancers because of the UV rays, but that barely made a dent in the global population of twelve billion people. This trend continued for the next half-century. World leaders started pouring their country's resources into an international space program, WSP (World Space Program. Not very creative, right?), in the hopes of finding a habitable planet that humans could evacuate to. They did find something, but it sure wasn't another planet. Instead, it was several asteroids, hurtling towards earth. Fortunately for us, the asteroids weren't the dino-killer size. Instead, they were about the size of basketballs after they passed through our atmosphere.

Of course, basketball-sized space rocks slamming into the earth were still enough to cause some major damage. The strangest thing? Each space rock passed through an area where there was a hole in the ozone—and after they passed, scientists discovered that the holes closed. But that wasn't even the biggest part. When the space rocks impacted, they created large craters in Australia, the northern part of the Middle East, the lower half of the United States, the middle of Africa, a chunk of

Brazil, China, and Europe. If you can't wrap your head around how much land was hit, here's an unfortunate side effect: huge numbers of people were in the way of those space rocks, so when they hit the earth's surface, they effectively reduced the earth's population back down to around two billion.

A major catastrophe, yes. However, a lot of people now see this as really lucky for us. A few days after the space rocks hit, jungles began hyper-growing in and around the craters. Inexplicably, previously extinct species began popping up again. Nobody's actually explored that deep into the jungle yet, but I've heard rumors about people seeing dodo birds. Plus, the ice caps refroze, and the global temperature went back down to how it was a couple of thousand years ago. People were calling it the new age. We restarted our year count and changed it to A.C. (After Collision). We kept the C.E. for what happened before the Collision, though.

However, the biggest effect of these asteroids hitting earth was that people started having superpowers. Of course, once world leaders found this out, they immediately began to try and recruit these superpowered people (we just call them Guardians). Soon enough, the world dissolved back into various city-states (13, to be exact), each with its own Guardian. The powers all varied, and so far, we haven't found any two people who have the same power. As you can probably guess, our world was plunged back into what it was like 2000 years ago—the whole cloak-and-dagger deal.

The city-state I live in, now called Primordium (I know; dumb name, right?) occupies the area that covers parts of what used to be Washington and British Columbia. Our Guardian is a guy who can control stone. Nobody knows the Guardian's name, except for the ruler of our city-state, Marvin Connor. People say he was the governor of Washington before the space rocks hit. As you can imagine, having a Guardian who can control stone makes a pretty handy defensive asset. We have walls around our city that are four feet thick of stone, interlaid with steel rods by our engineers. Luckily for the other city-states in our area, we're relatively peaceful people. We're perfectly content to sit behind our walls and watch all the other city-states try to kill each other on live TV. Of course, if we wanted to, we could march over to the nearest city-state, have our Guardian crumble their walls, and then take over the city-state. But we don't, because we're nice like that. In fact, Primordium's neutrality is one of the reasons why we are in charge of the IBN (International Broadcasting Network), among other things.

But that was before the war. A few years ago, a city-state called New Scythia went and invaded its neighboring city-state, Biblio. As can be gathered from the names, the New Scythians were just as aggressive as their namesakes, only with modern weaponry and a Guardian who could control pure energy, with a home base in Saudi Arabia, while Biblio was a small city in the former location of Egypt. The Biblians were entirely without means of defending themselves, as their Guardian's powers weren't particularly useful on the battlefield—she could understand, speak, and write every language, and had a prodigious memory. As a result, most of Biblio is a huge library, like the ancient Alexandria library. The library contains all sorts of knowledge from all over the world, which is why most people suspect New Scythia invaded Biblio—for information. That's what the leaders of the other city-states thought as well, but they couldn't really do anything. After all, they couldn't exactly tell the New Scythians to leave Biblio. If they wanted to free the Biblians, then they would have to fight for it. The other city-states knew this, so they left the New Scythians alone.

Then, the New Scythians invaded the city-states around them. Within a month, they'd gained complete control over the Middle East, and also taken over the top half of Africa, razing the newly grown jungle to make way for their troops. This was the last straw for the rest of the world. Almost every other city-state in the world (including mine, the supposedly neutral Primordium) has mobilized their troops, and we're going to launch attacks from all sides. The western half of the world (the Americas, city-states from the former country of Greenland, and the western half of Europe) is going to make landfall on the west coast of Africa, while the eastern side of the world (the eastern half of Europe, Asia, and city-states from where Russia was) is going to attack through the Middle East. Oceania is unable to contribute since its population has been mostly obliterated by a space rock. (As a result, there isn't a Guardian for Australia.) I want to enlist in Primordium's infantry, but my guardian (the kind who takes care of you, not an actual Guardian), whose name is Sergio Rallan, refuses to let me go. I suppose he has a point, considering that I'm thirteen, but I suspect part of the reason why he won't let me go is because he hates me. Seriously. He's what people call "abusive". The man has made me go without food for more than one night. I refuse to use his last name, which is also part of the reason why I'm just Daniel. Anyway, if he doesn't let me go, then I'll just go myself.

March 24th, 2220

Success! I managed to escape Sergio's house, along with \$100, which I figure is the least that that jerk owes me. Last night, I rode my bike over to the enlistment center and used part of the stolen money to bribe the guy at the enlistment center to let me sign up, then bought the standard soldier's outfit with the rest of my money. Then I

boarded the flight going to Africa along with my new comrades. All in all, it's been really exciting so far. I only wish I could've seen Sergio's reaction when he found out I'd run away.

March 26th, 2220

By the time I arrived in Africa, the New Scythians had already been driven back to the center of Africa, where I was in my first battle. Here's what happened.

I stood with the rest of my regiment, the 31st, behind some hill near Windfield, one of the city-states conquered by the New Scythians. (Our leaders speculated that Windfield was conquered for its energy resources.) This was going to be my first time in a major action, so I was jittery. True to its name, a brisk wind blew over the field, stirring the grass under our boots. An hour before, at camp, our officer explained what our role would be.

"Unfortunately for us, we drew the short straw," he said. "We're the reserves." A collective groan rose from the men around me.

Something occurred to me. I asked my friend, Carter, who was standing next to me: "Why is it bad that we're not fighting?" I asked. "After all, if we fight, there's a pretty high chance of us getting killed, right?"

I never heard Carter's reply, because our officer barked, "Get moving! We have to be on the field in twenty minutes!"

Carter was actually my only friend in my regiment (so, basically, in the whole army). He was a tall, blond, grey-eyed fellow from the city-state of Paleon, renowned for its large population of paleontologists, archaeologists, and neo-ntologists (paleo-ntologists, but neo as in new; people who study life in the Common Era).

Carter had been a paleontologist-in-training, but when he heard about the plan to liberate the Middle East from the New Scythians, he set aside his life as the apprentice to become one of the thousands of soldiers who made up this vast army. The reason why we're friends is mainly because when he first arrived and saw that there was a 13-year-old boy in his regiment, he didn't laugh, insult me, or otherwise display negativity to me. Instead, he became my best friend.

I was shaken out of my thoughts when our officer called, "Get ready, men! We're about to be sent down there!" The soldiers around me shifted nervously as they checked their guns.

"Let's go, over the hill, double time!" the officer shouted. We dutifully tromped over the crest of the hill. In front of us, a vast field lay, with huge, squat, and white buildings with gray parking lots jutting out a few yards from each covering most of

the field. On top of the buildings, spaced widely, windmills poked out, the blades whipping as fast as a boat's motor because of the strong wind. We jogged over to the nearest building, where we found an entrance and filed through.

Inside, we found ourselves in the midst of a battle. The interior was the size of a warehouse, extremely wide and with a high ceiling, and it was some sort of facility for harnessing the energy of the wind turbines. The poles of the wind turbines, which were as thick as the length of my forearm, snaked down to the floor and into steel boxes. Gunfire and explosions erupted around us, and our regiment immediately dissolved in every which way. After all, if we just stood there in our rows and shot at people, we'd just be asking for a grenade. Plus, we'd probably hit our own troops standing in front of us. So our troops went wherever they were needed in the battle. For my part, I made my way over to a group of ten of our soldiers crouched behind a wind turbine. When I joined them, one of them, clearly an officer, looked at me expectantly. This particular officer was like many others that I'd seen: a hard-eyed, proud sort of guy. His uniform was rumpled and dusty, indicating that he'd been serving for a while. A patch was stitched to his left breast, over his heart, showing that he belonged to the 27th regiment.

"Well?" the officer prompted, jolting me out of my observations. "What news from the general?"

The officer's question didn't register with me for a microsecond. It was one of those moments where you hear the words somebody says, but you don't understand them, even if the words are in English—they might as well be speaking in a different language. Then it clicked into my mind. Clearly he'd assumed that I was a messenger or something because of my age. Although the officer had been the one who made the mistake, heat still rose to my cheeks.

"I'm a soldier, not a messenger, sir."

The man blinked. He said, "Awfully young for a soldier, aren't ya?"

I shrugged, my face burning. Unable to think of a suitable response, I changed the subject. "Daniel of the 31st regiment, sir. We were in the reserves, but then we were told to come here and help out. How can I help?"

"Well, Daniel, as you can see, we're pinned down right now," he said. As if to accentuate this, gunfire sprayed the cement floor next to us. We scooted a bit closer to the steel box. "Twenty hostiles are on the other side of this box, laying down fire. If we move even an inch away from this box, they'll blow us all away. But they're not as likely to see you since you're not as big of a target. Sneak around to our left, to that control panel—" He pointed to the panel, about ten meters away. "—and use it as cover. Once you're in position, signal us, and we'll give you a distraction. While

they're looking at us, you pop up and throw this at them." The officer pressed a grenade into my hand. I gulped but nodded.

I took a deep breath and slowly let it out. My vision tunneled to focus on that control panel. I put one foot slightly in front of the other. Then I bolted.

Untitled

By Jessica

Crickets chirped from the bushes, filling the air with nature's music. A pair of bluebirds flew past, singing as if they had never sung before. Near a patch of green-leafed clovers, a bundle of buttercups lifted their heads to soak in the sun. Bees and ants hurried about, hasty to do their job, and return home. A deer poked its nose out of the safety of the trees to sniff the air, then bounded away. The roof of a barn peeked over the lush shade of the trees. Today was a flawless example of nature's beauty.

The barn belonged to a farm named Berry Ridge, which was located in Georgia. It was famous for its candy-sweet blueberries that were cheap and affordable. People from all overdrove to Georgia just to get a tiny nibble of the famous Ridge Pie, made from only the freshest blueberries. Berry Ridge also had livestock too. They owned all kinds of things, cows, pigs, chickens, horses, and not to mention sheep.

That morning, Fred the sheep walked out of the barn, where he had slept that night, with all the other livestock, on the comfortable hay. He trudged over sleepily to the grassy field, which was where they ate, just as Farmer Otis came over with the water trough.

"Hey there little fellow," Farmer Otis greeted happily, squatting down. "How's life been treating you?"

"Pretty great," Fred replied. "I know you can't understand me..."

"Baaa, Baaa, Baaa, to you too." Farmer Otis chuckled, getting back up. "I gotta milk the cows now. Later!"

"Ok..." Fred mumbled as he trotted away. "Whoa!" Just then, he spotted his favorite food, a forb. Fred raced forward toward the tasty plant before anyone else could take his favorite treat.

"Almost there!" a voiced bleated behind him. It was one of Fred's big brothers, Ace.

"I spotted it first!" Fred yelled, "The forb is MINE!"

"Game on," Ace challenged, dashing forward.

"No fair!" Fred whined as Ace quickly overtook him. "You're so much faster!"

Ace leaped toward the plant and quickly snarfed it down, saying, "Mmf, Dewichious!" His mouth was full of the yummy food.

"Wow! You were amazing out there, Ace." a ewe praised, "I picked you some legume plants. Here." The female sheep dropped the bundle of plants in front of Ace.

"Thanks, Rachel!"

"No, problem. Anytime." Rachel trotted away.

"Man, it's nice having a fan club," Ace said. "But, of course, I don't blame them for liking me. After all, they have a pretty good reason." He smooched his muscles.

"Yeah..." Fred agreed slowly. "I'm gonna leave you to it. I wouldn't want to, um, ruin your quality time with, er, um, your... you get it." Fred inched away.

Right then, Basil, Fred's other big brother appeared. Basil was very neat, and it was pretty obvious to everyone that he had gotten groomed that morning. He leaped onto a stone jutting out of the pasture. Everyone turned their heads to see and hear what he had to say.

"Citizens of Sheepville!" Basil declared. "I have found a new edible food!" Everyone gasped. They were speechless. New foods don't pop up very often, but when they do, they're always extremely tasty. Better than bland grass anyway. Fred avoided grass whenever possible.

"A new plant?" a ram asked, curious.

"Can you eat the flower?" a ewe questioned, "Flowers are tasty."

"How big is it?" a sheep from the crowd pondered, raising his hoof in the air.

"Is it tasty?" a tiny lamb requested in his tiny voice.

"What's it look like?" Rachel wondered, stepping forward so she would be seen.

"When does it grow?" Ace queried, as he said this, half the ewes in the crowd swooned.

"Where does it grow?" a male sheep inquired.

"What's the flavor?" a grumpy sheep asked. "I won't eat anything that doesn't have a tasty flavor."

"Citizens, quiet, please!" Basil shouted to be heard over the crowd. "I know you have many questions. But listen to what I have to say first, I may answer your question while I speak." All the sheep nodded.

"We all know that the mayor of this thriving farm, Farmer Otis, has a dog. A beagle to be precise. Well the other day, I was walking along, thinking about new foods, when I saw the dog sitting down. It had a red bowl in front of it and Farmer Otis was dumping food inside."

"The new food is what dogs eat?" a tiny lamb bleated.

"Exactly," Basil replied. "So yesterday, while the dog was asleep, I stole his food dish." As the sheep marveled at his braveness, Basil held up a red bowl. Inside there was still some food left. However, it didn't look too appetizing. It was filled with a brown, chunky substance.

"Behold!" Basil declared. "Dog food!" Everyone seemed interested at first, but once they had a taste test, barfed and quickly ran away, saying some random excuses like, "I have a dentist appointment, wouldn't want that brown paste in my molars." They obviously did not like dog food and avoided it even more than Fred

avoided grass. The rave was soon over, and all the sheep left. Basil looked sad at his failed attempt and sat down on the ground, frowning, and being miserable. Fred felt sorry for him and walked over.

"I think the dog food is pretty tasty..." Fred lied as he came over.

"Yeah, right. You're just saying that to make me feel better." Basil said bitterly, kicking a rock. The pebble soared through the air and landed on a sheep's head.

"Cheer up man!" Fred chirped happily, trying to make his positive mood more contagious.

"I'm not a man." Basil retorted, getting up.

"Ugh, fine. Cheer up sheep!" Fred groaned, "Do you want my sympathy or not?"

"Whatever." Basil walked away from Fred quickly. "I'll, um, see you at lunch..."

"Yeah, ok, bye," Fred said, waving goodbye with his hoof. Then he sat down, feeling bored, and a little lonely too. Basil might have failed, but he was still smart and brave. He was a good leader too. Everyone respected him. At least before today, they did.

Ace was no different. Everyone respected him too, for his sheer muscle and handsomeness. Ewes literally went crazy whenever they saw him pass by. Some even fainted. Tons of ewes go up to Ace every day, giving him gifts. Rachel gave Ace some snacks today, for example.

Fred wasn't the middle child, yet he felt the loneliest. No one really cared about what he thought. He didn't have a fan club. He wasn't smart or brave or any of that kind of stuff. He was just... himself. Fred's family must think of him as a disgrace to their noble lineage.

"Hello there," a polite voice greeted behind him. Fred turned around to see an animal he had never seen before, a wolf. He had long, sleek gray fur, a black nose, yellow eyes, and pointy little ears.

"Um, hello," Fred replied. "Can I help you?"

"I was just wondering where the rest of your friends are, you know, the rest of the sheep."

"Hm? They should still be outside-" Fred looked past the wolf's face. "It's night already?"

"Yes."

"Oh, well that explains why they aren't here, they're in the barn, by the way. It's where we sleep."

"Where in the barn?"

"Oh? Um, we just sleep in the hay piles."

"Excellent." The wolf licked his lips.

"What do you mean?" Fred asked, confused.

"Oh, I'm just saying that it's excellent you have such a nice place. I've been living in the forest for a while. I'm starving." Just then the wolf's belly growled as if to prove his point.

"Um, well, I can ask the other sheep what they think. Maybe if you're polite enough, they just might let you stay for the night."

"Really?" The wolf cried. "Thank you!"

That night, the sheep inspected the wolf.

"He just wants to stay for a night," Fred explained. "He's cold and starving and needs shelter immediately." The wolf was currently laying on a large pile of hay, looking pleased.

"Alright, alright," Basil agreed. "Only for one night. Ok?"

"Yes, yes. Thank you, again. I really am starving."

"Well, there's grass outside. Help yourself."

"I'll feast tonight, thank you!" The wolf smiled cruelly and said to himself very quietly, "I might not feast on grass though. I have something else in mind."

As soon as all the sheep were deeply asleep, the wolf leaped out of his resting place. Quickly and quietly he tiptoed to the very far corner of the barn, where a sheep named Curly slept. The next morning, Curly had disappeared into nowhere.

Fred yawned. It was a new day, full of new possibilities. Just when he was about to walk out of the barn for breakfast, he realized the wolf had slept in the barn and decided to show some hospitality.

When Fred made it to the place where the wolf had slept the night before, the wolf was already awake. His belly was bulging.

"Did you already eat breakfast?" Fred asked, eyeing the wolf's stomach.

"Hm? Oh, yeah!" the wolf replied hastily, "There's a lot of tasty things in the field."

"Did you try a forb yet? They are very tasty. Forbs have to be if they're my favorite food!"

"Uh, no? I just ate grass. I thought sheep liked grass a lot..."

"What?" Fred was shocked. "Grass is boring and bland!"

"Oh, really? I thought it tasted fine."

"Well, I guess you're not a sheep, so your tastes are different. What are you anyway?"

"Me? I'm a wolf."

"Which is?"

"A furry mammal related to dogs. Wolves are carnivores."

"Carnivores? What's that?"

"Animals that eat, um, er, how should I say this, carnivores are animals that, um, eat food."

"Some animals don't eat FOOD? How do they live?"

"Um, I don't know because I'm a carnivore."

"Reasonable, reasonable." Then Fred remembered something, and told the wolf, "Hey you're related to dogs, right?"

"Yes."

"Then you should try our newest discovery!" Fred handed the wolf a can of dog food. The can was red and it read "Dog Food!" in big yellow letters on the sides.

"Ok, I'll try it." The wolf was curious. "How bad can it be?" He ripped the can open with his jaws, and was about to dump the contents of the can inside into his mouth, when Ace dashed over.

"RED ALERT! RED ALERT!" Ace screamed, waving his arms back in forth while he ran in circles. "AAAAAAaaaa!" He was not making a good impression on the girls at that moment. The ewes stopped what they were doing, pointed, stared, and whispered to each other.

"What's happening?" Fred asked. He gripped Ace's shoulders to stop him.

Ace swallowed hard. "It's Curly. S-she's gone!" Then he continued to run in circles and shriek the message.

"Curly's gone?" Fred asked. "Maybe Farmer Otis took her inside for her yearly sheering."

"Nonono," Ace replied quickly, stopping. "Don't you remember? Curly got her shear in April. That's only two months ago!"

"What happened to her?" Fred yelled, "She was such an amazing sheep!"

"Did somebody kill her?" Ace screamed.

Meanwhile, behind the bickering pair, the wolf was watching guiltily. He tried to scoot away slowly, so the two wouldn't notice him, but he wasn't sneaky enough, for Ace spotted him.

"What about you?" Ace demanded suddenly, startling the wolf.

"Um, me?" the wolf pondered. "I'm innocent!"

"Where were you last night?" Ace questioned, his face growing dark.

"I was sleeping!" the wolf exclaimed.

"Ok," Ace decided. "He's not the killer."

'His mood changed fast...' the wolf thought to himself. 'Tricking these sheep into believing that I'm innocent will be easy! Just you wait, soon you'll all be in my tummy!'

News of the death spread fast like a wildfire, and soon all the sheep were trembling.

"C'mon guys!" Farmer Otis beckoned, holding open the barn door. "It's almost lunch!

Why won't you sheep just come on out?" The sheep shook and trembled so much that Otis reasoned that they might be sick. Farmer Otis was right, though, it was almost lunch, and the sheep inside was starving.

"I'm so hungry!" Ace sobbed. His fan group nodded along with him, agreeing with every word he said.

"What I wouldn't give for a nice, fresh forb!" Basil exclaimed drearily.

"What I wouldn't give for grass!" Fred cried, and that was saying a lot. Fred hated grass. In the meantime, the wolf was having a splendid time watching the sheep panic and starve.

'This is going well,' the wolf thought. 'Now I can't eat them without having to waste the energy to kill them!' You see, the wolf was of a lazy nature, and leaped at any opportunity to not have to do something.

As the wolf was thinking those lazy thoughts and daydreaming of sheep feasts, Fred noticed him.

"Aren't you hungry?" Fred asked him, walking up.

"Uh, no," the wolf replied, "Not at all."

"Wow!" Fred exclaimed. "You must've had a big meal yesterday!"

"Haha," the wolf nervously laughed. "Yeah..." He wiped a few beads of sweat off his forehead.

"Yeah, ok," Fred told the wolf. "See ya later!" Then he trudged hungrily away.

'That was a close one!' the wolf thought, exhaling the breath that he had been holding.

Suddenly, the barn door opened, letting in some golden rays of sunshine.

"Here!" Farmer Otis declared, coming inside. "You looked starving in there, and I can't let me dear sheep die!" He had emptied the water trough and in its place, filled it with a variety of forbs, flowers, grasses, legumes, and other things.

"YUM!" all the sheep cried simultaneously. They all rushed forward and gorged on the plants. Soon, they were all full.

'Darn it!' the wolf thought. 'Now they won't starve to death!'

"This is a mighty nice place! Maybe I spoil you too much!" Farmer Otis laughed, looking around the cozy barn.

"Eep!" the wolf yipped as he dove under a hay bale. 'I can't be discovered by the farmer now! Not with all the tasty sheep still alive! The last farmer that found me chased me with a shotgun! Luckily, I ran away and wasn't hurt, but who knows what'll happen this time!'

As Farmer Otis scanned the room, he spotted a pair of pointy poking out behind a hay bale, and said, "Hm? What's this?"

'NONONONONONO!' the wolf screamed inside his head as he heard the farmers footsteps. Otis walked over, to see...

"Oh, it's just you," Farmer Otis told the shy lamb who was hiding behind a hay bale just inches away from the wolf's hiding place. "Hey, where's Curly?" The sheep replied with sobs and screams, but all the farmer heard was "Baaa, Baaaa, Baaaa."

"Hm," Farmer Otis said, scratching his chin, "She's probably outside."

"Farmer!" Fred yelled. "Please! Curly is dead!"

"Baaa, Baaaa, Baaa." The farmer repeated Fred's words. Just as Otis was about to leave, he muttered to himself, "Wonder if the wolves got to her." Fred was shocked. Were wolves dangerous to sheep? If so, then why was a wolf here?

Fred's eyes widened. He had cracked the case. He had broken the nut. He had solved the mystery. There was evidence, Farmer Otis knew all there was to know.

"Wonder if the wolves got to her," he had said. Now Fred knew exactly what he meant. The wolf had murdered Curly. He knew the murderer had been caught, yet no one would believe him, but he had to make them. And he knew just how to do the trick.

A Choice To Make

By Johanna

Jasper didn't know how he got onto the train. Usually, if you wake up on an old-fashioned steam locomotive in the Captain America tank top and light blue sweatpants you fell asleep in, you would freak out. Jasper wasn't totally sure why he wasn't freaking out. He looked around to see that the majority of the seats were taken.

He stood and looked around at the men around him. Behind him was a little kid, curled up in the seat, fast asleep. He couldn't be much older than ten years old. Behind the child was a college kid, wide-eyed and confused. He looked to have just been at a party, a red solo cup of a carbonated beverage pressed to his worn band t-shirt. Across the aisle from Jasper was an old man who was conked out, snoring quietly. Behind the old man was a man who had to be ten years older than Jasper, quietly observing the other occupants from where he sat on the velvet train seat, clad head to toe in a prison jumpsuit. Every single man on the train compartment had the same curly auburn hair and grey-blue eyes

"Hello?" Jasper ventured.

"Who are you?" the college kid asked pointedly. "Who are all of you? How did I get here? Where is here?"

"Jasper?" the man in the prison uniform asked. It wasn't clear which of the two men the question was directed at, but they both answered "yes?" in the same impatient tone.

"Me too." the man said. "I'm Jasper and so are you-" he pointed at Jasper. "And you-" he pointed at the college kid. "And him, too." he pointed at the little kid, who was waking up very slowly and blinking blearily at them. "I don't know about him-" the old man. "But I recognize you guys." His eyes widened at the first Jasper. "And you are about to make a terrible mistake."

"Wait." college kid Jasper asked, shaking his head and stepping into the aisle. "Are you telling me you're me from the future? And you - I - we go to prison?"

"It's his fault." old man Jasper said, standing up painfully and pointing at thirty-something Jasper.

Jasper knew what they were talking about. He chose to ignore it and examine the other Jaspers. Old man Jasper looked a lot like his- their (?) dad, with the same well-intentioned scowl and receding hairline. He recognized the little kid and college kid as spitting images of himself when, well, he had been those kids. He smiled at the little kid, in what he remembered had been his favorite pajamas.

"You ruined our life, kid!" the middle-aged Jasper shouted at thirty-something Jasper. "You're the one that put me behind bars!"

"Sorry, old man." Jasper said, trying to remain smooth. "You did that to yourself."

"Yeah, when I was you." he hissed. "You did this to us!"

"What did you do?" the ten-year-old asked, looking up at Jasper with curious eyes. "Did you, like, kill someone?"

"I haven't done anything," Jasper said calmly. If anyone was going to level-headed in this compartment, it had to be some sort of sick joke that it was him.

"Yet." the college kid added darkly. He didn't even know what was going on, to be perfectly honest, but he was already allying himself with middle-aged and old man Jasper.

"You wanna tell them what you do to ruin our collective life or should I?" Old Man Jasper asked bitterly, arms crossed.

"Really, dude what'd you do?" little kid Jasper asked, his arms crossed in the same way the old man's arms were, scowling at Jasper. "I don't wanna go to prison."

"It's Marcus's fault!" Jasper shouted, throwing his hands up into the air. "You guys all know Marcus, right?"

"Marcus?" little kid Jasper asked, furrowing his brow. "I just had him over after school for the first time. He's a good kid." the older Jaspers had to smile at how grown up they'd tried to sound at that age.

"Yeah, he is." college-kid Jasper said slowly. He drank from the cup and said "It's Pepsi." to no one in particular before continuing, "He invited me to the party I just came from. We just moved in together. Roommates."

"Is he a good roommate?" little kid Jasper asked.

"What did he do?" the college kid asked, ignoring the kid. Jasper could tell he instantly felt guilty and he nodded awkwardly at the kid. "He is a good roommate. So far hasn't come home too late or played music too loud."

"Did we all come from the same day?" Old Man Jasper asked.

"Halloween 2010." the college kid said.

"Halloween 2000." the little kid said.

"2020," Jasper said.

"2050." Old Man Jasper confirmed.

"2030." the middle-aged man put in unwillingly. "Anyway, you wanna tell them what you do tomorrow because I've been in prison for almost ten years at this point."

"Marcus said it was foolproof." His voice broke, and he avoided the accusatory gazes of himself. "He said all I have to do is sit in the car and wait for him to come running out, we'd split the cash 50-50."

"So you didn't kill anyone?" little kid Jasper asked for confirmation.

"I haven't done it yet!" he shouted frantically. They didn't understand the kind of pressure he was under, how bad he needed the money.

"It was so simple!" the middle-aged man shouted. "All you had to do was sit in the running car and take off when he got out of the bank!"

"What did I do?" Jasper shouted back, advancing on the older men. "I haven't done anything yet!"

Old man and middle-aged Jasper took a deep breath and stepped back to converse with each other. The tension swept out of the compartment and Jasper flopped down onto one of the red velvet seats, wearily covering his eyes with his hands.

"Why's you do it?" little kid Jasper asked, coming to his side and looking at him with those deep inquisitive eyes.

Jasper found it funny that this little ten-year-old, him, was talking to him, trying to find the good in him. College-aged Jasper tiredly sat down in the seat next to Jasper. He sipped Pepsi and offered the little kid some.

"I know we never got a soda," he said with a weary smile. "Now, you," he said, referring to the thirty-something slumped in the chair next to him. "Why'd you do it, man?"

"You don't understand. You won't understand until you're my age." his voice was muffled beneath his hands. He laughed. "I know people say that all the time, but this time it's actually true."

"I guess so." little kid Jasper said. "You could try to explain it. We'd probably understand. 'Cause we're you."

"I'm desperate," Jasper said, letting his hands slide off his face and thump to his chest. The train rattled down the tracks beneath him, and he found that curious. He hadn't noticed the train moving before. He turned to look out the condensation-slick window, but it was too dark to see anything outside. "That degree you worked so hard for?" he said. "Didn't amount for much, just ten grand in debt."

"Ten grand?" the college kid asked in shock. He frowned at the little kid and tugged the cup out of his hand. "Hey, don't drink all of it."

Jasper nodded. "You get a job, but it's not as fruitful as you hoped, and we, uh, get mixed up with the wrong sort of people."

"Marcus?" the little kid asked, tugging the cup of soda back out of the college kid's hands. He tried to get it back and they began to play a strange game of tug-of-war with the cup. Jasper gently took the cup from both of them and drained it, the bubbly soda still making him smile after all these years.

"Yes, Marcus," Jasper said. "He tells you that there's a easier way, and then you take out a loan with some bad people, and you're out of debt with the bank but in debt with -"

"The mafia." college-aged Jasper said, mouth falling open slightly and dragging a hand through his hair. "Oh my God he was serious."

Jasper nodded. "Sorry, kid. Marcus tells you the boss wants the money. Everyday, 'the boss wants the money, J, he's gonna come for you'. Until, one muggy summer night-"

"He sits you down and tells you, again, that there's an easier way." old man Jasper said, gently smacking the college kid on the knee until he let the old man sit down where he had been sitting. "He says all you have to do is sit in the running car, wait for him to come running out of the bank, and make a break for it. You'd split the cash 50-50."

"But no, you just had to be a hero." the middle-aged man said bitterly. "You heard gunshots and had to run in and save your old friend."

"What else was I supposed to do?" the college kid asked. He searched the faces of the other versions of himself, evidently forgetting that these accusations were not leveled at him. "I can't just let him die!"

"You burst into the bank, gun drawn, shouting for everyone to get down." the middle-aged Jasper said, leaning on the back of the set of chairs in front of where Jasper was sitting, all tough. "You didn't see Marcus and assumed the worst."

"He dies?" ten-year-old Jasper asked, eyes wide, engulfed in the story.

"No.," the middle-aged man said, his gruff exterior breaking as he eased himself to a seated position next to the kid. "He doesn't. But you do the thing."

"Oh," Jasper said. "That's bad."

"Oh, and we pay the price alright." Old man Jasper muttered. "Ten years in prison and a fine that leaves us in more debt than before. Listen, kid." he searched his younger self's face. "You can't do the job. When you wake up tomorrow, you have to leave your apartment. Go straight to the police station and tell them about the mafia. You probably have enough names to get off scot-free."

"But the money."

"But my future." college kid Jasper said forcefully. "C'mon, man. I want to get married to my soulmate and have kids and raise those kids and become a grandparent."

Old man Jasper smiled at that, the corners of his eyes crinkling. "I wish I could've become a grandfather."

"Don't do it, JJ." middle-aged Jasper said pleadingly, slipping and using the nickname their father had used for them. "For me. For gramps over here. For the kids. For you."

"I don't want to go to jail." little kid Jasper said, coming up to him and looking at him seriously. "I wanna be an astronaut or a scientist. Or a doctor."

Jasper didn't know what to say. The edges of his vision began to fade, the clacking of the wheels on the tracks getting louder and louder.

"Don't do it." the college kid said. "I want a future."

"Don't do it." the old man said. "Prison's not a very place."

"Don't do it." the little kid said. "I don't want to go to jail."

"Don't do it." the middle-aged man said. "Go to the police and give the names of your contacts."

The train faded to black, the voices of the other versions of himself still echoing around his brain.

The sound of a fake klaxon made Jasper jerk bolt upright, just like it did every morning. In that way, it was a great tone for an alarm. His hands flew to his chest as he recalled the dream (?) he had had.

Jasper swung his legs around to the side of the bed and muted the alarm. He gently picked up the ski mask that was sitting on his bedside table and stared at it. He remembered the gruff voice of himself at sixty years old, the distrustful gaze of his college-aged self, the disdain lacing the voice of his imprisoned self like poison, the curiosity and confusion in the serious grey-blue eyes of him as a little kid. He remembered each of their final pleas for him not to do the job with Marcus.

His phone vibrated. It was Marcus. Be ready in 15 minutes. Shuddering, Jasper clicked his phone off without replying. He looked down. A Captain America tank top and light blue sweats. No matter what he was going to do, he was going to have to change.

It was early in the morning, the sun just peeking over the horizon on the edge of the city. Jasper gazed at the light. Completely on autopilot, he got dressed in a soft white sweater and dark wash jeans. He looked good. He smiled rustily and grabbed his phone, keys, wallet, and a pair of earbuds. He left his apartment, locking the door behind him.

He left the ski mask behind and hailed a taxi.

"Where are you headed?" the driver asked in a gruff voice that reminded Jasper of himself.

"The police station," he said certainly.

Celebrity in Disguise

By Jrya

Hi, people of the world, famous singer Sona Star here telling a story from one time I was a celebrity in disguise, not a spy, a celebrity.

DAD: " Sona you're so dumb."

ME: " OMG dad why would you say that?!!!"

DAD: " You need knowledge, you need school."

ME: "Eww school, school, dad, never in my life."

DAD: " If you want your singing career to get better you definitely need to go to school."

ME: "Ugh fine."

DAD: " But you're gonna have to go to a public school, so you're gonna be a celebrity in disguise.

ME: " How am I gonna do that?"

DAD: " Diego will bring security and you'll go to the mall and buy a wig and their school uniform."

Well, I knew that was gonna take a lot of work but it was totally worth it. I went to the mall but security was doing their thing by keeping the fans back, I took pictures and gave autographs, then I got back to what I am supposed to be doing. When I got home I tried on my clothes.

ME: " Eww, I look like a total dork!"

DAD: " You look, wonderful sweetie"

ME: " Dad stop trying to make me feel better!"

DAD: " Whatever Sona, you should get to bed now because your first day is tomorrow.

ME: " TOMORROW?!, you know what, whatever good night,"

DAD: " Good night Sona"

ME: " *snore*, *snore*, aaahh Good Morning world."

This next part took too long to write down so I basically just got up, put my wig on, my uniform, my glasses, my make up. Then I went down for breakfast and Diego and my chauffeur took me to school.

DIEGO: " Ok, here we are Miss. Sona"

ME: " Why are we at the back of the school?"
DIEGO: " So no one sees me dropping you off "
ME: " Oh ok!"

So I went into the school and everyone was looking at me. I got my schedule and I went to my first class. The teacher stop the class for 20 seconds and said:

TEACHER: "Hello class, today we have a new student. What's your name honey?"
ME: "Ummm, My name is.... Sally!"
Well welcome Sally, how about you have a seat over there by Rebecca."
REBECCA: " Actually Hannah sits there"
TEACHER: " Oh, Ummm Sally you can go sit in the back by Carter he's the one with the red hair."
ME: " Oh ok"

So when the class was over this cute gray-haired boy/student came over to me.

TONY: "Hey nerd do my homework for me."
ME: First of all, I'm not a nerd and second no
TONY: "Do it or i'll kiss you."
ME: "Ok, ok fine."
TONY: " Have it done by Monday"
ZACH: " Are you alright?"
ME; " Yea I'm fine"
ZACH: ` My name is Zach by the way"
ME:" My name is Sally so nice to meet you, oh I gotta go see you."
ZACH: " Oh ok bye"

I get home and fall asleep for a nap. After my nap, I look at my Instagram.
" Rebecca is hosting a party Wednesday, and you're required to bring a date?!, but I don't have one yet! Ugh whatever I'll get back to my nap.

-At Zach's house-

ZACH: I know she is Sona Star. I have to ask her to that party tomorrow.

-At Tony's house-

TONY: " That nerd was kinda cute, to be honest, ugh I'm kinda tired, I'ma turn on my music."

Turns on Sona Stars Music

Blushes

Next week at school

ZACH: " Hey sally I need you to ask you something."

ME: "Oh hi, Zach, What's up?"

blushes

ZACH: "I was wondering if you would be my date to Rebecca's party on Wednesday."

ME: " Omg, I would love that."

ZACH: " Umm ok, come over on Wednesday at 6:30?"

ME: " Yea that totally works"

TONY: Hey, nerd where is my homework?

ME: "I AM NOT A NERD!! Omg, I forgot I fell asleep and forgot I'm so sorry!!"

TONY: "No excuses."

kisses

both blush

ME: Um, I have to get going um bye!

Runs off

TONY: "Darn, I wanted to ask her to the party!!!".

REBECCA: " No one takes Rebbeca's crush, like omg, he kissed her and not me, like she is totally gonna pay for that. Hey Zach??!!!. Can you be my date to my party?!!"

TONY: " Umm sure I guess".

REBECCA: " Yay see you then byeee!"

-Wednesday-

ME: " Omg thank you for the kimchi. It's my favorite Zach!!."

ZACH: " Yea totally anytime. *gets flashback from Sona Star's reality tv show

ME: She said: "Kimchi is my fav. food."

ZACH: " Well we are about to be late for the party, let's go!!! "

Arrives at the party

* Zach and Sona (Sally) dance together*

Sona(Sally) walks to the pool

Rebecca comes behind her and pushes her in

REBECCA: " Never kiss my crush again hahaha hahaha!!!!."

Tony gets flashback from Sona's reality tv show

ME: " I'm a terrible swimmer!!!!"

tony dives in to save Sally

"ZACH: Ok wow I give up, I'm done."

Zach leaves

REBECCA: " Omg Sona Star??!!!"

TONY: " Omg Sona I'm so sorry for how I've treated you, I've been in love with you for a while."

ME: " It's ok Tony but I have t tell you I feel the same way"

They hug, blush, then Tony calls 911

Sona goes to the hospital and her mom shows up there. They have a talk about how her mom always wanted to use her for money but her mom said she loves her and she's sorry and they hug it out. When Sona was better her mom came back home and spent time with Sona and her dad and Sona continued her singing career.

Chocolate Labs

By Katie

Introduction

I decided to write this nonfiction article about chocolate labs because in my family we have had 3 different chocolate labs. I love chocolate labs so much because they love to run, swim, play, and be a person's best friend. This article will cover the description, diet, habitat, life cycle, parts of a chocolate lab, and the adaptations of chocolate labs. I hope you learn along the way of all the important facts of chocolate labs.

Description

Chocolate labs are around 21.5 to 24.5 inches long from the tip of their nose to the end of their tail. Chocolate labs are usually 21–22 inches high, and the average weight is 55 to 88 pounds when they grow up.

Source: <https://www.akc.org/dog-breeds/labrador-retriever/#:~:text=About%20the%20Labrador%20Retriever,black%2C%20and%20a%20luscious%20chocolate.>

Chocolate labs' fur is decently soft and brown. The color of a chocolate lab could end up being really light brown or really dark brown. Either way, a chocolate lab can hold in a lot of their body heat from their fur if needed in the winter times.

Chocolate labs also have 4 paws and 4 legs. They have 2 front legs and two rear legs, giving them the ability to balance. All four of the legs are used for standing, walking, running, doing tricks, etc. The paws on a chocolate lab are webbed, which means they are all almost stuck together. But they have webbing in their feet so that they are not stuck together closely. They are also not far apart like a human's hand or foot either. If you know what a duck's webbed feet look like then that's pretty much what dogs' feet look like. Chocolate Labs' webbed feet can be used in many different ways. But one thing is certain, this dog's webbed feet can help it swim!

Diet

Chomp! Chomp! Mmmm delicious! That dog food really hit the spot. I don't know about you but I am a domestic dog, which means I am a pet. I get dog food from my humans. Sometimes the different types of dog food I get will give me an upset stomach because of the different ingredients and flavors. Human food will also

give me an upset stomach sometimes too. The human food I can eat without getting sick is; corn, eggs, honey, ham, peanut butter, milk-(if the dog is lactose intolerant then don't feed it to them), popcorn, salmon, and more!

<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/nutrition/human-foods-dogs-can-and-cant-eat/>

But sometimes human food should not get fed to a dog because it could be toxic to them. Do you know how my breed name is chocolate lab? Well, even if my name says it, chocolate is actually toxic to me because it could increase my heart rate, along with other human foods like grapes, cinnamon, raisins, onions, and more. If you're a domestic dog, I would stick to eating you dog food and dog treats for now so you don't get sick.

Habitat

Since chocolate labs are often domestic pets, they can live in any type of home, shelter, or certain type of trailer. Chocolate labs originally came from Labrador, a North-Eastern part of North America.

Chocolate labs are often friendly dogs, so they are great pets. These dogs, when bought by humans, can live outdoors or indoors, in a kennel or a fenced-in area.

Life Cycle

A chocolate lab has the same life cycle as any other dog, except these dogs might not live as long as other dogs. The dogs start out as puppies, then adolescents. After those two stages, they become adults, then seniors. The average lifespan of a chocolate lab is around 9-12 years old. Each dog year is approximately 6 human years in one. Since the chocolate lab will live about 9-12 years and each year is 6 human years, that means an average chocolate lab will live to be 54-78 years old in human years.

Source: Foster, Bethany. "Dog Life Cycles."

<https://pets.thenest.com/dog-life-cycles-5026.html>

Adaptations

Chocolate labs use their adaptations to eat, hunt, blend in (camouflage), and swim. The adaptations that help them eat are their jaws, teeth, and tongue. These body parts help them swallow, crush, slurp, and chew. When chocolate labs hunt, their strong sense of smell helps them quickly find their prey. Chocolate labs also

have a very keen sense of hearing, which helps them quickly stalk the game animals they are hunting for.

The adaptation that helps chocolate labs blend in (camouflage) is their fur. Since their fur is brown they can blend in with the woods or just in nature. Their fur also keeps them warm in the winter. The adaptations that help chocolate labs swim are their webbed feet, four strong legs, and an otter-like tail. Their webbed feet and strong legs help them swim faster. Their otter-like tail will help the dog steer when swimming. The tail is shaped like a rudder on a boat, which makes it easier for the lab to turn quickly in the water.

Source:

<https://petmaven.io/whydogs/breeds/did-you-know-the-labrador-retriever-is-known-for-having-an-otter-tail-according-to-the-american-4lzgGUA0oUak-v3MXUm3UA>

Parts of a Chocolate Lab

There are many body parts in a chocolate lab. They have similar body structures to humans as well as many differences. Body parts that humans and chocolate labs both have are: feet, elbow, forearm, shoulder, skull, back, and neck. The body parts that humans don't have but chocolate labs do are croup, hock, stifle, pastern, muzzle, stop, crest, withers, and loin. You can see that chocolate lab bodies have many differences and similarities to human bodies.

Conclusion

After all this learning and searching you and I have done, now we know the basic description of a chocolate lab, their diet, their habitat, their life cycle, adaptations, and body structure. Pheww. That was a lot of learning from one little article!

Now that you know so much about these dogs, you could get one for yourself. These dogs love humans, and some of them even love to cuddle or just see you from a long day of work. If you are tired of coming home to an empty, lonely house, you can go get a chocolate lab. They are an amazing adventurous pet to own in your life.

I Spy

By Layla

Dear Diary,

Today I found out my whole life is a lie. That my parents aren't really who they say they are. And that everything I ever knew was a lie. My family are spies. And all those karate classes were to train me to be a spy too. Here's how I found out.

14 years ago on January 20

Wahhhh! Congratulations it's a boy. "I was born in Detroit, Michigan." What's his name? Said the nurse. His name is Henry Dean Lenovo. My mother said while crying. I was named after my great-grandpa Henry Dean Lenovo. He had jet black hair with a huge light birthmark going from the middle of his stomach to the middle of his back just like me. He was a carpenter for Marilyn Monroe. They were close; she even left his son some money for him. So now we are rich.

2 weeks before I found out

My family had been out late this past couple of days. It was really weird because they would tell me that they were going to Buddy's Pizza but every time I would call Buddy's they said my family hadn't been there all day. I knew something was wrong but I couldn't put my finger on it. But every time I let it go cause I thought they were putting together my grandma's 60th Birthday. Because every time they would drop me off to her.

The day of

What are y'all doing? Why do y'all have on those black suits? And why didn't y'all go to Buddy's? I have a lot of questions. All they could do was stand there looking at each other. Then they all started to talk at the same time. They were making different excuses for why they were wearing the suits and why they didn't go to Buddy's. I told them that I want the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. So then my older brother Sam with his curly jet black hair stepped forward and then he said "Henry you're ready now to know so here goes nothing we are a family of spies. WHATTTT! You've got to be kidding me. You are just making more excuses," I said.

“He said I’m not, I’m totally serious. Meg helps out” Ok Henry we are spies and all those Karate classes you take aren’t for bullies it was to help you get ready to become a spy. Meg with her long dirty blonde hair told me in a calm voice. Meg, you’re serious? Yes, I am Henry. Ok. Why didn’t you guys tell me sooner? Because Henry we were going to tell you on your 16th birthday, said, my Dad. I ran out the door with frustration as my family all yelled my name but I wasn’t listening to them.

3 hours later

I was scared and hungry then I remembered that my cash app card is connected to my phone. Then I saw that I was next to a Qdoba. I went inside and got a kids meal with applesauce and a Strawberry Fanta. It was really good. After that, I went home because I knew that my family was out looking for me. So when I walked inside the door they weren’t there. And our car was gone so I called my mom and told her that I was home and safe and that I went to Qdoba and got food so I was fine. She said that they were on their way home. Once they were home they all hugged me and told me that I scared them and never do that again. Ok I won’t, I say. Then I say when can I start training for this spy thing. Then my mom says once you pass the test it will be a surprise so ALWAYS be ready. And when you pass the test we will come out from hiding.

The day of the test

Today I feel like the test is going to be today. I’ve been waiting for two weeks for this test and I know I’m ready to be a spy. I’d be really good. I know 5 different types of Karate. And 9 different languages and 3 different ways to break a bone. I’m a lethal weapon. As I’m walking I feel a man’s arm around my neck. I grab his arm then I flip him and kick him and twist his arm and chokehold him until he falls asleep. Then the other man comes up and tries to kick me but he misses and I grab his leg and then I twist him around and he just lays on the ground. Then there’s one last man and he’s huge so I got to be ready. He tries to run and kick so I grab his leg and drop him then I break his arm so he won’t try to get up and try to fight me again. Then I hear clapping and my sister yelling my name. They said I passed my test. Then I cheer and hit a backflip twist because I can.

2 days later

After a couple of days, I get my first mission. It’s to stop this billionaire villain. He’s planning to release a gas that turns people into his mindless minions. As I’m

getting a drop off to his lair I have to wear a gas mask so I can't get turned. As I'm sneaking up to the lair I see the guards. I take them out and my parents take them to jail. Now I'm up to his lair and he's working on the machine. I yell you'll never get it out. He asked how did you get past the guards? I took them out. He laughed. Do you think I can't take you out? He said I wouldn't even make it 2 seconds with him. So I told him to bring it on! He runs towards me and I duck and kick him and he does a flip and I run and hit him in the face and he knocks out. He didn't even last a minute! I did it, I completed my mission and I didn't even need help. I called my parents in to take him away and grab the machine.

Untitled

By Lucy

Chapter One-The Sunset Curse

Liam ran downstairs, jumping every three stairs. His backpack flopped against his back, his dark black hair in a frenzy. He reached the ground level and sprinted past the kitchen. He stopped for a second to haphazardly slip on his navy-blue shoes. Liam pushed open the front door with one hand, pulling out his key with his other. He closed the door, proceeding to lock it quickly and jog down the driveway.

I'm gonna be late, I'm gonna be late, Liam chanted in his head as he sprinted down the sidewalk. It would be really embarrassing to be late on his first day of school after winter break. Especially considering he had already made a reputation as 'Ocean Boy' and the weird kid. People called him Ocean Boy for two reasons: One, he had a striking resemblance to a character in a book who loved the ocean (like him), and two, he had deep blue eyes that faded to a lighter shade around the outside. Despite the fact that 'Ocean Boy' was supposed to be a rude nickname, Liam didn't mind. After all, he had much more important things to worry about, like not being late for school.

He finally reached the crosswalk to his high school. It was a large brick building, with metal frames for the windows lining the sides. There was a small upstairs section for the offices of the principal, Mr. Leslie, and other staff members. The bus loop was situated in front of the school, with the drop-off/pick-up circle just behind the school. The building itself was shaped like a five-pronged fork, with no handle. The first four wings of the school were for each grade: ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth. The last wing was for all of the elective classes and the other various rooms, such as the cafeteria and the auditorium.

Liam waited patiently for the lights to change color, then sprinted across, running for the front doors. At about twenty feet away, he watched a girl with dark brown hair enter the building. To his horror, the doors began to close right after she entered. He pushed himself faster; fifteen feet, ten feet, five feet-

Liam snatched the handle of the door half of a second before it shut, which would lock him out and count him as tardy. Nice going, Miller, he thought, silently scolding himself for forgetting to set his alarm clock. He pulled open the heavy doors and jogged inside. He glanced at the busy hallways, full of ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders. He sighed.

"Hey, Liam!"

Liam turned towards a boy with wavy, dirty-blond hair and mischievous emerald eyes: a boy named Ethan Wilson, his best friend since sixth grade. They had

met when sent to detention for having too many tardies and soon became quick friends. They were ecstatic when both realized they would be going to the same high school, and here they were. Luckily, neither boy had gotten detention. Yet.

"Hey, Ethan!" Liam greeted Ethan with a big hug and a smile. "How was your winter break?"

"It was awesome!" Ethan said excitedly as they turned and began walking to their first period: ELA. "I got to go visit my mom's parents in Toronto, Canada, and we visited Niagara Falls on our way back! The second really awesome thing was I got my brother's bedroom since he moved into the college dorms this year. Now, I don't have to share a room with Noah!"

"Nice!" Liam said. He had heard many horror stories about Noah, Ethan's younger brother, who had just started middle school this year. Apparently, he was an extraverted, hyperactive twelve-year-old who liked computers and tech, with a diagnosis of anxiety and ADHD. Extremely scary.

By the time they reached the classroom, Ethan had described every aspect of his winter break. He had just finished telling Liam about the faded bruise from a sledding accident when they stepped inside Ms. Meyer's class. Ms. Meyer was a veteran teacher, and had taught for over forty years. She had gray hair which people thought looked bad, but it was different on Ms. Meyer. Her hair was practically silver, pulled up in a neat little bun on the crest of her neck. She had dark brown eyes, and she held a book titled, *The Sunset Curse, Book 1: The Ghost of Harkson Lake*. She had another one on her desk, titled *The Sunset Curse, Book 2: Where the Shadows Lurk*. Strange. Looks like someone based the books off of their own town - Liam had heard of a small lake called Harkson Lake on the east side of the town, and the forest around it did have a lot of creepy-looking shadows. Weird...

"Good morning class, and welcome back from winter break!" Ms. Meyers said cheerfully after they all sat down. Liam had hoped for a seat closer to the front at the beginning of the year, so he didn't have one of the two seats labeled 'protagonist seats' in the back two corners. However, Liam always joked that he had an unlucky charm somewhere hidden, and it gave him bad luck. This proved to be true when Ms. Meyers gave him the back right seat. He saw the brown-haired girl from earlier in the other corner. Well, Liam thought, if we ever become friends, we can be weirdos together! Ethan was lucky enough to get the seat in front of Liam, but he had to sit next to Jake Burkson, one of Liam and Ethan's many terrorists. He was teasing them on a constant basis, which was stupid, but Liam managed to stay quiet and wait for the immature boy to be done each day.

"For the second half of this year, I thought we could do a group project on a book series," Ms. Meyers continued. "The series is called *The Sunset Curse*. It is about a boy named James, and his three best friends: Kai, Mark, and Faelynn." A few girls

in the front snickered and glanced at Liam for some reason. "They are normal tenth graders like you all, until mysterious disappearances begin to happen, all around Harkson Lake. One of them is even Kai's younger brother, Leo. This is set in our town, so I think you all will be able to enjoy recognizing places they travel to." Ms. Meyers droned on and on about how the kids thought they knew what was happening, and then there was a big twist. She kept talking about the assignment, but Liam has zoned out at this point. He had been thinking about the main character, James, and his friends, Kai and Faelynn. Minus the Faelynn character, James and Kai kind of sounded like him and Ethan. Now that was weird...

"...20th," Ms. Meyers finished. "I will start forming groups now."

"Aw, shoot," Liam muttered. He had missed when the project was due! Was it on January 20th, February 20th, or longer?

"Psst! Ethan!"

Ethan leaned his head backward, so Liam appears upside-down. "Yeah?"

"When's it due?"

"I dunno," he said, grinning like a madman. He gave Liam a slanted shrug as he turned to face Liam normally. "Sorry. I didn't pay all that much attention."

Liam shook his head, smiling to himself. If only one of them could be a bit more responsible. He focused on Ms. Meyers assigning students to their groups. Since there were thirty-two students, there would be eight groups of four. Liam was bored out of his mind waiting for his name to be called until he did hear it.

"Liam Miller, Jake Burkson, Harmony Taylor-Garcia, and..." Ms. Meyers paused. "Can I trust you two working together, Liam and Ethan?"

Ethan glanced excitedly behind him at Liam. Their thoughts were the same.

"Yes, Ms. Meyers," Liam responded calmly, masking his giddiness. "We can work together fine."

"Alright," she said warily, "you two, Jake, and Harmony can work together for this project. Okay, everyone form a line in front of my desk, and come get your books!"

The brown-haired girl looked at them. She had deep amber eyes, but there was also a glint of annoyance in them like she was tired of getting stuck with gross boys for her assignments. Liam assumed she was Harmony.

To weird kids, 'form a line' means make a nice line and wait patiently for your turn. To normal kids, 'form a line' means run-up to the front and push others out of your way to grab the wrong book or not both of them instead of waiting their turn, causing chaos and more kids doing the same so they can escape the chaos. Thankfully, Liam and Ethan were smart enough to be the weird kids.

"I said make a line!" Ms. Meyers raised her voice over the noise of the students. Nobody listened. After a while, Ms. Meyers gave up, and let the students

cause chaos while everyone got their books. Liam and Ethan just waited at the back, along with Jake. Liam scanned the line and realized that Harmony wasn't waiting to get a book. He looked to her desk, and saw she was reading a hardcover copy of the books. They were to get paperbacks.

When everyone had finally gotten their books, Ms. Meyers announced that everyone could move in the classroom to start their project. Her final comment, "Remember, it's due on February 20th! Have fun!" made Liam sigh with relief. He was planning on getting it done by January 20th, just to be careful.

"So, you three are my partners?"

Liam was pulled back to reality when Harmony announced her presence in one of the most disgusting voices Liam thought a human could make. One hand was on her hip, the other holding the first two books of The Sunset Curse series.

"I sure hope not," Ethan said, matching her tone. "Well, duh, princess! Pull up a chair."

Harmony glared at Ethan, who was smirking and stole a chair from a nearby table.

"We should move the tables closer to each other, so it's easier for us to have our work in front of us," Harmony said.

"Good idea," Jake said. He and Harmony slid the desks together, turning it so each person had on the side. Liam stayed put, while Ethan moved to his left and Harmony to his right, Jake directly across from him.

"So, I'm guessing we should read the books first," Liam ventured, "then write some kind of report?"

Harmony rolled her eyes. "Were any of you listening?"

The three boys glanced at each other.

"No," they said in unison. For once, the enemies had agreed on something against a common enemy: the female.

"Oh my gosh," Harmony muttered. "You three are so dense-" Ethan nodded enthusiastically at this, "-but yes, our assignment was to read the first two books in The Sunset Curse series, then write a report on it."

"Wait, the first two books?" Jake asked.

"Yeah, the first two," Harmony said like it was obvious. "Weren't you listening- oh, nevermind. Yes, the author Kadie Brook said she was going to make the third book, but it comes out February 1st. Then, the school's going to order enough for us, and we'll have to read it. Then, we finish the report."

Liam nodded. "I guess that makes sense. Before we start reading, are there any ground rules we need to set?"

Ethan raised his hand. "No feeding each other to the wolves, even if we get really annoyed at each other!"

"At first I thought you were going to say something really weird Wilson, and then it turned out to be a fair point," Jake said. "That's a good rule to have."

"Everyone pays better attention in class?" Harmony suggested. "I hate having to do most of the work and have all the answers."

"Oh fine," Ethan complained. "But just because it makes sense, Princess. Kind of."

"Stop calling me that!"

"Hmm, how about no."

"Fine. If I'm a princess, then you must be my minion," Harmony retorted. She grinned.

"Well-" Ethan started.

"Okay, okay!" Liam said, afraid that any more smack-talk would become a full-out roast battle. "Let's try not to do that kind of thing, deal?"

"Yes, none of that!" Jake agreed. Maybe he wasn't as bad as he seemed.

"Fine," Harmony said. "But please tell your troublemaking friend here to stop messing with me!"

"Oh, fine," Ethan said, still grinning. "And thanks for the compliment."

"What compliment?" Harmony asked, furious. "I didn't compliment you!"

Ethan sighed. "If I told you, I don't know if you'd ever get it."

"Oh, fine," she finally muttered. "Let's just focus on our project."

The boys started the first book, *The Ghost of Harkson Lake*, but Harmony skipped halfway through the second.

"Uh, Harmony?" Liam asked.

"Hm?"

"That's the second book."

"I know."

After that, Liam decided not to talk to her about it. If she wanted to miss the first half of the series, that's on her.

As Liam read, he realized that this was the book that started his nickname: Ocean Boy. The main character, James, had the same blue eyes like Liam. His hair was also black and wild, and he had that same personality of calm and friendly, with a bit of mischief. Kai was scarily close to Ethan; the book practically described who Ethan was. Faelynn was Harmony's twin, and Mark was Jake's doppelganger. It was really freaky.

Untitled

By Lyla

Once upon a time there was a set of twins with the names of Luke and Lucy. The twins thought they had normal lives because their parents were normal human beings and so were their grandparents. But Luke and Lucy have the unknown gift as their great grandparents.

One day, Luke and Luke's best friend DJ were playing football when Lucy and her best friend Bailey walked in and asked, "Do you want to see what is in the attic?" "Sure," Luke replied. "Ok let's go," DJ replied.

A few minutes later they were in the dusty old attic. Their particular attic was not scary... They spend a few minutes looking through stuff when Bailey finds an old blank piece of paper. "Guys why is there a blank piece of paper?" Bailey asked. Lucy looked over and said, "Stop joking, that old letter from 1923." "How about the boys see it," Bailey replied. Luke says, "I can see it and it is an old letter." "Well I can't see it either," DJ replied. Lucy said, "I will just read it ok so it says that if you can see this you are related to Jenna and Ham Anderson. You have magical powers that allow them to time travel that you can use for good. We had the powers enclosed you need to use your powers and how to use them." "Wait so let me get this straight we have powers and our great grandparents had them too is what the letter says," said Luke.

They spent a little while discussing when DJ said, "Just look at the other letter." So they looked at it and it showed them that they had to use their powers for anything but bad they must be careful. "So basically we have powers and you guys do too and we must use them for good or we will die?" Lucy replied. Luke says, "I guess we should try to time travel I think." Bailey says, "let's go back to my birthday party last year."

Whoosh. "We did not get anywhere," Bailey said. "How about we try again? Let's go to the graduation two years back," DJ suggested. Lucy said, "Sure."

A big whoosh sound came in as they arrived at the graduation. "I can't believe we are here," Luke says. Lucy replies, "Yeah maybe if we are really good this time the powers will reward us next time we try to travel. So let's cheer loud." And Lucy was

right. They had a safe travel home and slept in their beds at night thinking I can make a difference in this world and I will do it.

The next day all four kids met back at Lucys and Lukes's house to discuss what happened yesterday. DJ the brains of the group said, " I thought long and hard about what happened yesterday and I think we should go back to the day of the leams party to go and bring him a gift because you know how he said no one came. We could make a big difference in people's lives with something quick like that."

Bailey replied, " we can all go to different people's birthday parties and help make a difference and do something nice. You guys in."

"Were in," Everyone replied.

So Bailey went to Liam's party, Dj went to JJ's party because DJ JJ get it, Lucy went to a nursing home to celebrate, and Luke went to Jenny's sweet 16. He's the ladies man.

At the end of the day, they all felt so good and would do this more often. It made them happy and they did not lose a second of their time. These friends are so happy that they found that letter.

The Adventure Through the Disney Worlds

By Max

In space, "Beep, Beep, Beep, Beep," the satellite Astro was holding was beeping louder as he got closer to the jail. "I'm almost there," Astro said into the walkie-talkie, "it's time to break you guys out."
"Good," said Anonymous. "Very good."

Meanwhile, in New Orleans... Tiana was running her restaurant with Prince Naveen and their new friend John, John is a young 12-year-old with dirty blonde hair, he met Tiana when he was eating at the restaurant and wanted to work here. But the main reason they're friends is that he gave a lot of compliments and tips to the waiters and waitresses every time.
But then out of nowhere a deck of cards appeared on the tray she was carrying. "What's this?" Tiana said in her southern accent and held the cards up to Prince Naveen and John. Prince Naveen took the cards out of the deck. When he took the cards out he immediately dropped them, "Those are Dr. Facilier cards," he said with a scared/strong voice.
"Whose Dr. Facilier?" John asked Prince Naveen.
"Dr. Facilier made me turn into a frog and almost took over all of New Orleans," he said. Then the cards started to glow and opened a portal that sucked Tiana, Prince Naveen, and John into it.

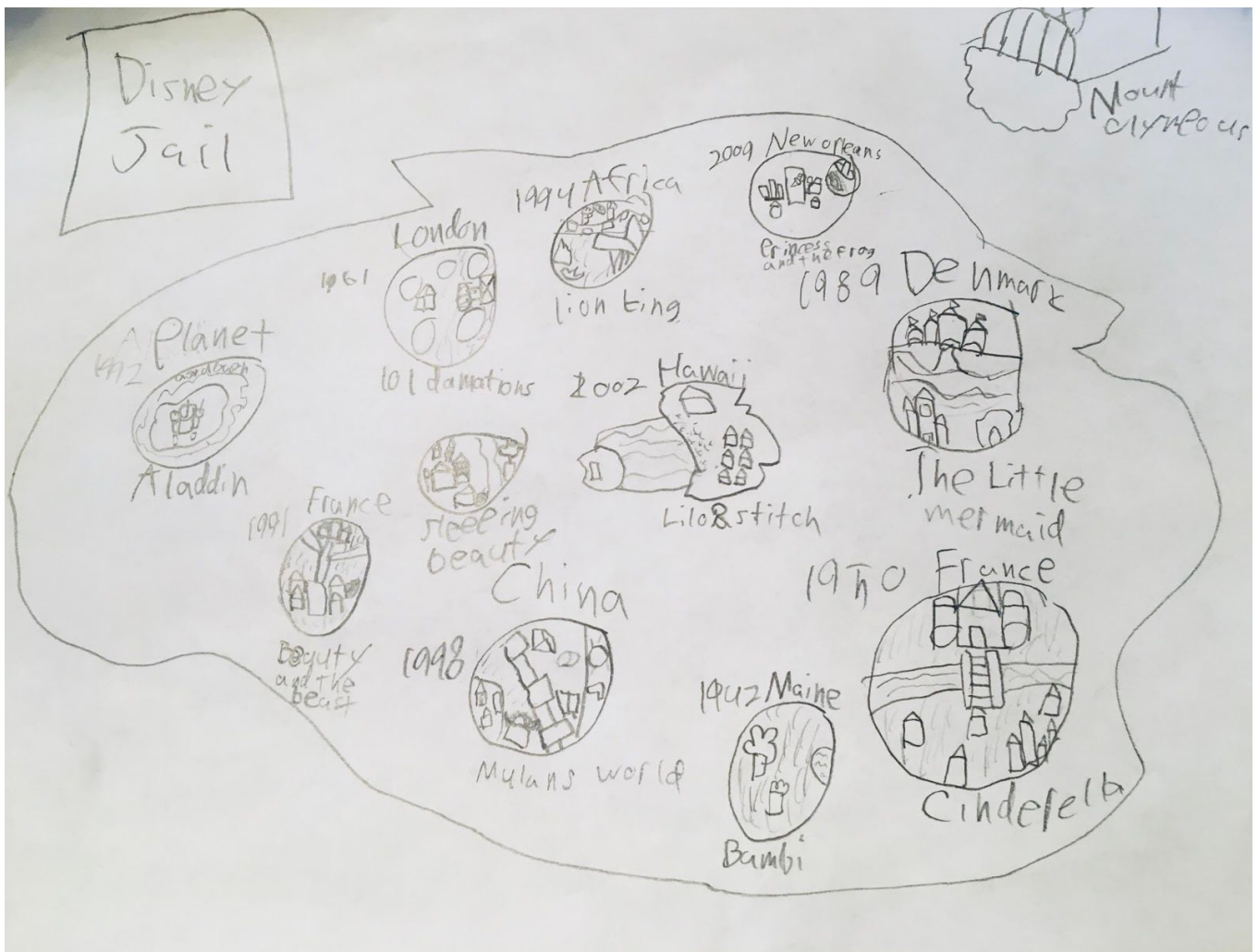
Back in space, Astro the 15-year-old with dark brown hair and crystal eyes could smell the gross food from the jail wafting around him. He could see the humongous prison in front of him and felt it's hard, cold, bricks as he snuck inside to find all the villains in jail cells. He noticed a guard that was patrolling and went over to him.
"Hello," Astro said to the guard. The guard turned around, and when he did Astro stared into his eyes and said that he needed the key and he was another guard! The guard handed the keys to him. "Perfect," he said, "my hypnotism gets them every time." So he took the keys and went to unlock the cell of Dr. Facilier.
When Astro got to the cell Dr. Facilier was already doing evil magic and when he saw Astro he said "Ah you're finally here Astro, I've already started doing magic with that package you sent me."
"Well I'm happy that it came to good use," Astro said, "and I think you know how to break everyone out."
"Yes I do, but I think we should start off little by little," he said.

"Where are we?" John asked when he didn't see anyone else around. It was all tiny houses when suddenly someone was yelling John's name. "Hello?" John asked.

"John there you are," Tiana said, followed by Prince Naveen. "We wondered where you were." They looked ahead and heard music coming from a large castle. "Maybe they know where we are," Tiana said. So they started walking towards the castle, and when they got inside it was like a party with a lot of people. So they walked over to a pretty girl with a bright yellow dress. "Hi, do you know where we are," Prince Naveen asked her.

"You're in France," she answered him, "and my name is Belle."

"Thank you, it's a pleasure to meet you, Belle," Prince Naveen said, "my name is Naveen."



The Lost African Princess

By Maya

Long ago in BC times, there was a princess born she had beautiful long black hair and pretty eyes, she was the most fashionable baby in Africa! Each and every day the queen taught her how to be a princess she started her early with stuff and she started to get her daughter into helping other people.

One day another princess was jealous because the princess diamond had all the attention. She had so much jealousy in her she told her wizard that the princess diamond threatens the king and the wizard protects the king. So while the princess was about to become a queen the wizard came and zapped her with a spell that locks her up for eternity and since then Africa was doomed because of the wizard and the king. Both kingdoms declared war and they had many wars, and a lot of people died for the princess diamond but princess Kala was guilty and she said she will never ever do that again.

People tried to recast the spell and let her out for hundreds of years but everybody quit and stopped trying and soon the legend wasn't passed down so now nobody knows about the princess legend, this legend will be unknown until somebody unlocks the spell and brings the princess and sets everyone free.

Untitled

By Meredith

Hannah ran out of school as soon as she heard the bell.

"HANNAH!" yelled Mrs. Kali, "YOUR HOMEWORK!"

"Right," Hannah whispered to herself. She ran back down the hall and grabbed the papers. Hannah ran back down the hall and out the main doors, pushing classmates out of the way. She looked around for her best friend Luca.

"MYLES!" she yelled. She sighed and got on her bike.

"Parker's" she whispered. Hannah pushed her kickstand up and pedaled as fast and aggressive as she could with tears in her eyes.

Myles had been her best friend since they were two years old. Their mom's were best friends. Luca moved away when they were nine. Luca and Hannah would spend hours texting and video chatting. He finally moved back after three years.

Hannah saw the big red sign that read "Parker's" She parked her bike and ran inside the modern cafe.

"Hey, Hannah! I can get you over here!" called Issac.

Issac was Hannah's older brother. He was a college student who worked at Parker's Cafe to earn money.

"Hey Issac...," said Hannah.

"Where's Myles? I thought he was coming."

"Oh, he um.." Hannah didn't want Issac to get involved, "He had Football."

"Darn it. I was looking forward to seeing him."

"Yeah me too"

"Well I'll get your favorite drink ready. You can go sit down." Hannah walked away and sat at her favorite table, right next to the window. She turned and saw Myles walking with about five other kids. Hannah couldn't believe what she saw.

Hannah felt a tap on her shoulder.

"Are you okay?"

Hannah turned. There was a boy there. She didn't recognize him.

"Yeah. I'm fine. Why do you ask?" Hannah replied, wiping tears off her face.

"You looked sad."

"Oh"

"I'm Luca."

"Hannah!" she exclaimed, "That's my name."

"Can I sit here?"

"Sure."

They sat there and talked until Luca had to go home. Hannah almost forgot about Myles and his new friends.

The next day Hannah woke up in her blue bedroom on her teal bed. She looked at the clock and realized she was late.

"ISSAC!!!" she yelled. "HELLO!!!?" Hannah pulled out her phone and texted Issac. He didn't answer. Isaac was supposed to drive her to school today.

Hannah ran to the kitchen and found a note on the table.

"I'm at work. Ride your bike to school like usual."

"UGH!" She screamed.

Hannah ran back to her room and pulled on a t-shirt and some jean shorts. Then she grabbed a hair tie and put it in a ponytail as fast as she could.

As soon as she got out the front door, she tripped over a wet package. "Great, it's raining" she mumbled. She sighed and got up. Her purple bike with a white basket was waiting for her in front of the garage. Hannah hopped on and pedaled like crazy.

When she got there, Luca was waiting for her in front of the school.

"Why are you waiting!? I'm so late!"

"I just got here too. I saw you coming." he pushed his wet, blonde hair to the side. "Now hurry! Get inside!" They rushed to class and sat down like nothing happened.

After school Hannah stopped Luca.

"Do you wanna go to Parker's with me?" asked Hannah.

"Sure!" replied Luca.

"Great." Hannah smiled.

They walked outside and Hannah saw Myles waving her over. She froze.

"Uhh give me one sec Luca." Hannah exclaimed.

"Uh okay." he leaned against the side of the school.

Hannah sprinted over to Myles.

"What are you doing here!?"

"I was gonna ask if you wanted to go to Parker's"

"I have plans! Hannah blurted out quickly.

A Fairy Tale

By Mia

Chapter One: The Awakening

I ran through the woods. My heart, pounding a million miles an hour. My feet hit the ground hard, kicking up dirt and dead leaves. Weaving around trees, my breath started to get faster and harder, creating swirls in the air. I heard a howl behind me in the distance.

I ran faster, the night air cool on my skin. I found a huge tree, good enough to climb up and started climbing.

I took out my bow and arrows, placed them perfectly and looked around in the darkness for my prey. When finally I heard movement in the darkness, I pointed my arrow at the place where I'd heard the noise.

A bunny appeared out of the darkness and my arrow went flying. Unfortunately at that moment, another howl spooked me so much I fell out of my tree and flat on my back.

"Uhhhhh" I moaned, which immediately I knew was a mistake when I heard a growl and a set of paws on my shoulders.

"Times up!! You failed again Mahalia!!!" Shouted a woman. She materialized out of the darkness in jeans, silver boots, a long-sleeved shirt, and vest. Her coal-black hair was pulled up in a tight bun. I looked down at my own clothes. My brown boots were practically black with dirt, my light brown hair had twigs and leaves in it. All in all I was not making a very good impression.

"Mahalia, what happened out there?" Said the woman as she took out a clipboard.

"I fell?" I said as I stood up. Looking down at the wolf I saw she no longer looked like she wanted to kill me. Instead, she was nuzzling my hand contentedly.

"Mahalia your hunting exam is in two days!! You have to work harder than this if you want to pass!" The woman started taking notes on her clipboard.

"The Judges don't take just anyone down to earth you know."

"Trust me I know." For years I had been watching kids my age go into the forest in front of the judges and try to shoot down fireballs with whatever weapons they wanted to use. If they did pass they could go down to earth and try to find the children of the sun. If they found a child of the sun they were to bring them back to our island. We called the children of the sun, Sun children.

"Well, I suppose it is Sabatoa tonight so we will have to stop training for today. I will see you at the bonfire tonight, bye!!

"Bye" I mumbled, not feeling like celebrating Sabatoa tonight after just failing my training. Nevertheless, I dropped my bow and arrows and walked away into the woods. I fingered my brown hair nervously, what would I tell my mother? I thought. I

looked down at my hands, they had scratches and dirt but I knew the minute I washed them in a stream nearby

Outside The Gate

By Miya

"Go away, Jackie"

"I'm not in anyone's way."

"You're in our way so go."

"I'm literally just walking and you and Ardin can just go around me"

"How could anyone ever want Jackie as a princess?"

"Exactly Ally, she's too stuck up and stubborn"

"Leave me alone guys. Please."

Hi, I'm Jackie and I'm a princess and I'm fourteen years old. Ardin and Ally are my stepsisters and they're twins. I'm the only princess in the city because my dad is the King and my mom was the Queen but she died in a horrible plane crash. Ardin and Ally aren't princesses because they aren't related to my mom or dad by blood. My stepmom, Petunia isn't the Queen because she isn't related to my Grandma or Grandpa by blood.

Our "castle" which is really just a palace made of glass and metal and other shiny stuff, sits in the very middle of a very modern city. All the houses in the city are giant. And when I say giant, I mean they're all at least four stories tall plus a basement. Our palace is at least the size of five of the biggest houses in the city put together.

But just because I'm very privileged and live in a rich city, doesn't mean I'm happy this way. I mean, I love my dad and I love Petunia and my dad and Petunia love me. Ardin and Ally on the other hand, absolutely hate me. I think they hate me because I'm a princess and they aren't princesses but being a princess really isn't great. There is a giant glass gate around the palace and I've only been outside the gate three times in my life while Ardin, Ally, Petunia, my dad, and everyone else in the palace can go out of the gate whenever they want to.

"Dad? Why can't I go outside the palace gate?"

"Jackie, I've already explained this to you. For hundreds of years in our city, none of the princesses or princes left the palace gate unless they were visiting another palace. And when they arrive at the other palace, they still can't go outside the gate."

"We can go outside the gate." Ally said with a smirk.

"That's really great for you isn't it," I said, obviously annoyed.

"She didn't ask you, Jackie, so shut up and leave us alone for once oh my god," Ardin said.

"Ardin, Ally go to your room! Jackie was talking to dad and not you guys." Petunia exclaimed.

"You say that like Jordan is our dad too." Ally mumbled.

"Yea, Jordan is just the guy you married because you felt bad that his stupid wife died." Ardin giggled.

"I told you two to go to your room! You will not disrespect Jordan or his resting wife! Now you will stay in your room without your phones until I say you can come out." Petunia yelled.

"Fine..." Ally and Ardin mumbled and then stomped up to their room.

Then Petunia apologized to my dad and then she went to her room too. My dad followed her up so they could talk about Ardin and Ally's behavior.

That left me all alone in the throne room so I went outside to talk to my dog, Delilah. I mean, who else am I supposed to talk to? Ardin, Ally, one of the maid's newborn babies, and I are the only children in the palace. Ardin and Ally hate me, and I've only met the baby once and all she does is eat, sleep, and cry. So that makes it very easy to say that I have no friends other than Delilah. After a little bit of brushing Delilah's long, Shih Tzu fur, and talking to her about my day, I had an idea on how to make some friends.

I took out my phone and downloaded some social media apps such as ClickClock, Instafam, and Snoopchat. Then I made logins for all of them and on ClickClock and Instafam, I went to direct messages and I messaged some kids my age. Then I went on Snoopchat and then my friend requested some other kids my age.

A few hours later, I already had a few replies and some granted friend requests. Some people were even from my city and knew that I am the princess! Even people that aren't from my city knew I'm the princess. I was messaging people all through the night and I was quickly becoming friends with three other people from my city. Kelsy, Vicktor, and Shannon. I got their numbers and made a group chat with them.

Me: Hey guys it's Jackie.

Vicktor: Hi

Kelsy: What's up?

Shannon: Hi Jackie. Who are the other two people?

Me: The people in this group chat are Vicktor, Kelsy, and Shannon. They're all from this city.

Kelsy: Wait what's Shannon's last name?

Shannon: Rose

Kelsy: I'm Kelsy from school!

Shannon: Oh! Hey!

Me: Cool!
Vicktor: We should all meet up later.
Kelsy: Yea
Shannon: Definitely!

I didn't know what to say. Of course, I wanted to meet up with them, I just didn't know how. Guards are on duty at the castle gate openings 24/7 and they know that I can't go outside the gates. I needed to meet them. I needed an idea.

Kelsy: What about you Jackie?
Me: Yea of course! I think nighttime works better for me. We can get into the details later.

I had the perfect plan. One of the night shift guards loves Delilah and he'll do whatever he can to protect her. I would pretend Delilah got hurt, he would run over to make sure she's ok, then while he's still checking on her, I'll tell him I'm going to bed and I'll ask him to take Delilah inside once he knows that she's ok. But because it'll be dark out, he won't see that I'm not going to bed, I'm opening the gate and meeting my friends.

Me: Hey guys, can we meet at the North gate of the palace at nine o'clock tonight?
Shannon: That works for me
Vicktor: Sure
Kelsy: Yup!
Me: Great! I'll see you guys later!
Kelsy: See ya!

The rest of the day seemed to drag on forever. I came out of my room for a snack and while I was getting one, Ardin and Ally kept saying things like, "Real princesses don't eat as much food as you, Jackie."

"Ew. You're so fat."

"You eat too much food"

"Go on a diet Jackie"

I didn't listen to them though. I'm used to them insulting me and it doesn't affect me.

After I got my snack, I went to the throne room to confirm with my dad that the right guard was on duty at the North gate that night. Luckily, he said yes.

And then before I knew it, it was eight forty-five. About time for me to start. I went to my room to grab Dalilah, and then I ran downstairs and outside. I was sitting on the side of one of the fountains for a few minutes while playing with Dalilah. And then,

"Dalilah! Are you ok! Oh my gosh, your foot!" I exclaimed.

"What's wrong with Dalilah?" The guard asked.

"I think she's hurt. Do you think you can help her?" I asked.

"I have to stay at my post. Can you bring her over to me?" He said.

"No she's too heavy and I don't know if she can walk." I lied.

"Ok, I'll come over to you but it has to be quick because I'm not allowed to leave my post. Especially when it's dark like this." The guard said while walking over to Dalilah and me.

"Thank you so much. I'm very tired so do you think after checking on Dalilah, you can bring her inside? I need to go to bed." I said.

"Um... of course... princess." The guard said.

"Thank you so much." I yawned.

I could tell he thought something fishy was going on so I made it look like I was going inside my walking calmly to the door inside, then take a slight left, I started sprinting as fast as I could all the way around the palace which took at least ten minutes. Once I neared the north gate exit, I didn't see any guards at that post so I started tiptoeing as fast but as quietly as possible. I also didn't see the guard or Dalilah where I left them so I thought that he was taking Dalilah inside.

As soon as I made it out of the gate, I saw my friends!

"Where were you, Jackie? It's already nine-fifteen!" Kelsy said.

"Yeah, sorry about that guys. I had to do a few things before this."

"It's ok. Where do you guys want to go?" Shannon asked.

"There's a super cool train track just a half-mile away that I like to go to. No trains go on it anymore so it's safe for us to go to it." Viktor suggested.

We all thought that was a great place to go to so we started on our way. We walked past some shops and restaurants on the way that I had

obviously never been to because it was my first time outside of the gates so we stopped there to buy some stuff. Outside the gates, the city looked so shiny! The towers stood high and all the houses reflected the light from the moon and stars. Lots of people came up to me and asked why I was outside the gate but I just denied that I was the princess.

When we got to the train track, I was mesmerized. The sky was so clear and there were no buildings around us. It felt like I was in a movie.

"Oh my gosh. It's beautiful." Shannon said.

"I know right," Kelsy said.

"Your welcome guys. Your welcome." Vicktor said with a grin.

I was just too stunned for words. You can't see nearly any sky at night in the palace gate. And when you do, it's certainly not as beautiful as this.

"Wow this is ju-" I couldn't even finish what I was saying.

"Jackie!" A booming voice yelled. It was my dad.

"Guys... That's my dad" I whispered to my friends.

"What should we do?" Vicktor asked.

"Just don't say a word and stay still," I said.

I wasn't sure what to do. My dad was walking closer and closer to us along with three guards. I knew I was in trouble and I had no clue how to get out of this.

"H-Hi dad." I whimpered.

"Who are these people!?" My dad yelled.

"My friends," I said quietly,

"Your what?!" My dad boomed.

"MY FRIENDS" I screamed. "All I wanted to do is have a normal night for once! Outside of the castle gates!" I exclaimed.

"Well, you know the rules, Jackie!" My dad said.

"Can't you change the rules? Don't you have the power to do that?" I asked.

Somehow, my dad got me to come back to the palace and he sent Vicktor, Shannon, and Kelsy home. He told me to go to bed and he said he was going to keep my phone for a week because I snuck out and broke a rule.

The next morning, I woke up to a surprise. No one was in the palace. I went outside and saw that everyone was outside of the gate. I thought they were just trying to tease me but then all of them told me to come out of the exit. My dad explained to me that last night he lifted a rule. Now, anyone can go outside the gate.

"Oh my gosh! Thank you so much, dad!" I said while hugging him.

"I knew how much you wanted your freedom and I realized that I was keeping it from you. I'm sorry Jackie." My dad said.

"It's ok. Now every prince and princess can have freedom because of you. Thank you!" I said excitedly.

There was a huge celebration later in the day but I didn't attend it. Instead, Kelsy, Shannon, Vicktor, and I explored the city.

Keith and the Storyteller

By Mya

Chapter One

Once upon a time, in a cave deep in the dark, scary woods, stories lived. Billions of them.

“What are stories, Abuela?”

“Stories are what I’ve told you all your life, Little Darling. You know it’s a story because it starts with the words “Once Upon a Time” and ends with “The End”

“Why were the stories in a cave?”

“Because long, long ago, stories were forbidden. Even if you mentioned the word “story”, you would go to jail. At the time, the government destroyed the stories. But the stories used their magic to ask the Storytellers, who are the people that tell the stories, to hide them somewhere far away.”

“Abuela, why are you telling me this story now?”

“ Because we are Storytellers, and I want you to know your history, Nieto. You must always remember the stories I tell you. Always.”

BEEP BEEP BEEP

Keith woke up with a start. Ugh. Where was that awful sound coming from? It’s not the Pizza Man, that would be nice though, some pizza... It’s not my phone since I don’t have one. Oh yeah, He thought. That’s my alarm. But something was off. His house was normally very quiet in the mornings. The only reason an alarm would go off is because of...

School! He sat up quickly. Oh gosh, he totally forgot about school. He stumbled out of bed. Oh gosh. The warm comforts of his homemade him forget about school. And the worst part? He forgot to change his clock! The time change happened last night. And he forgot to set it for an hour behind. He was late! He rushed into the bathroom and grabbed the toothbrush! Oh gosh, where was the toothpaste when you needed it? He yanked open a new toothpaste and began to brush his teeth. I gotta get in the shower... I gotta get dressed... I gotta find my backpack... oh gosh, I’m in trouble. As he hopped out of the shower and grabbed his towel, he thought, I don’t know what I’m going to wear! He shrugged. He didn’t care what he looked like anyway. He



raced back to his bedroom and hopped into his jeans. He took one second to look in the mirror, knowing one mistake when getting an earful from his mom when he got home. Did he comb out his short black hair? Yep. Did he remember to lotion his skin so it can have its natural Caramel skin tone? Check. Did he remember to put in a contact? Nope. Keith had two different colored eyes, therefore he needed one contact so that one of his eyes would match the other. He looked around and found one contact to make his eye dark chocolate and one to make his eye dark green. Which one did he normally wear? Dark chocolate. He was sure. He popped that one in his right eye so that his eyes were the same color. "Okay," He said to himself. "We're good."

Then he chucked his school books into his backpack and sped down the stairs. His mother and father always leave for work early in the morning so he didn't see them at all. He grabbed an apple and bit into it. To his horror, it was plastic.

Where did they put the real apples?

Unfortunately, he did not find the real apples no matter where he looked.

After ten minutes of a useless search around the kitchen, he stepped out of the house. It. Was. Raining. He sighed. He was in for a rough day.

Logicona city was pretty peaceful before 8 AM hit, but then, the city came alive. The city was as normal as can be in 2002. Okay, maybe not so normal. Keith's version of normal would be a world where things called movies were created. He even dreamed that in another universe there was a movie called Spider-Man, a movie called Men In Black 2, and even more. But still, normal as you can get in this world.

This city's type of normal is where cars honked down Reasonable Ave. Where people stopped in cafes and stores over on Rational Rd, and they had a Monarchy Government, where the President could make rules without the approval of others. The whole city was surrounded by woods. Only businessmen and travelers went into those woods to get to the outer cities. Other than those people, others were too scared to go in. Because of that, there were rarely any family reunions.

Keith went to a school called "School for the Smart". Yep. If he'd had a choice he would've gone with a school with a better name. There was no "School For The Overachievers". No "School for the Cool". No, his only option was "School for Succeeders". He would've chosen that, it was the closest he'd get to be in a neat school. But no, his parents decided they wanted to be smarter rather than to succeed.

As Keith walked to school he got lost in thought.

Once upon a time, there was a kid named Turtle Bro...

HONK HONK

He crossed the street just in time before that car hit him.

Turtle Bro was a superhero. He was "The Protector Of The Turtles"...

"Ahhh!" Keith tripped on a rock. He got up, dusted himself off, and continued on his way.

He saved the turtles from humans who wanted turtles to go extinct and dumped toxic items in the water the turtles swam in.

"Oof- Sorry ma'am." He apologized as he bumped into an older woman. And in this way, he continued. Bumping and tripping and almost getting killed. Basically the usual day when he missed the bus. But nevertheless, by the time he reached school Turtle Bro succeeded in saving the turtles from being sold. He ended the story as he entered the class.

But as Turtle Bro ate his pizza, he knew more turtles would need his help all over the world. He smiled. He was ready to be a hero.

The end.

"Keith Summerson! You're late!" His teacher, Mrs. Remund, growled.

"I-I'm sorry Mrs. Remund. M-my a-alarm, it-"

"There's no excuse! Detention after school!" She glared at him. "Now sit down! You've disrupted my classroom with your lack of responsibility!"

He crumpled into his chair. It was normal to be yelled at by at least one teacher per school day, but it still stung. Plus, it would hurt to explain to his parents why he had a third detention this week, and it was only Wednesday. He was hated by almost everyone. Mainly because everyone was left-brained except for him. They didn't know he was right-brained, thank goodness.

Chapter Two

Long before his time all right-brained people were killed. In his world, the right-brained were enemies with the left. The Right-Brained didn't try to be enemies, but the Left-Brained just couldn't stand their creativity. The Left-Brained had the upper advantage, seeing as those high in power were of their kind, and there had been a major drop in the world's population. From then on any remaining Right-Brained people were to be killed upon sight. You knew they were right-brained because their two eyes were different colors. But then contacts came to be.

Keith clenched his fist. They killed his grandmother. "It wasn't an accident!" He'd tried to tell his parents, but they didn't believe him. They thought nothing of the fact that the driver wasn't convicted for the murder, or how that driver was dressed like he was apart of the Men In Black movie Keith had dreamed about. Nobody cared. It made him angry!

That is when he learned that life was unfair. She'd told him a story that day. About where the stories lived, and about his history. He was only 9, yet he'd been able to

develop burning hate for the Government. They had known she was telling stories. The question was, how? Had she forgotten to wear a contact that day? Had someone overheard them? That was the question that sat in Keith's mind all during class.

Chapter Three

In detention, Keith got lost in thought. Everything he had learned today barely made any sense, or at least now that he actually thought about them. It was much easier to just let the knowledge flow into your brain without really listening than to actually try to interpret it. Before he knew it, his mind flowed back to a story his grandmother had told him long ago.

Once upon a time, there was a man named Albion. Albion was the ruler of the tribe of the Storytellers. He was the first Storyteller ever.

One day, one of the wise men, whose name was Aakil, in the tribe prophesied that one day, the generations of the tribe would be attacked by others, who did not understand creativity. The Tribe would be killed and destroyed. But one boy will live, and he will find the stories. He will unleash the power of the stories and restore the souls of those who lost their lives for telling stories and become the new ruler of the Storytellers. That boy will unleash them on the night of a lunar eclipse. And peace will be restored to the ancestors in their graves.

Albion showed the Storytellers where to hide the most important stories, and when it came time, where to hide the others. It was in a cave that was foretold to be surrounded and hidden by trees centuries later. But another wise man, Aldo, prophesied that Albion would become jealous, and fearful of the boy destined to become the new leader and that he would lead the enemy in destroying Storytellers. He prophesied Albion would forget the location of the cave in his hate for the unborn child, and he would die from his poisonous jealousy and evil heart before he turned 100,000 years old.

Albion struck Aldo down and killed him. He ordered the tribe never to speak of this prophecy again. He then planted two trees in front of the cave that were magical and would surround the cave, and no one at all would be able to get past. That is when the last wise man made his prophecy. That the trees would make room for the future leader of the tribe of the Storytellers.

Albion was deeply frightened and he stayed in his tent for many, many weeks. When he came out, he was a new man. He looked stronger, except in a bad way. He looked way meaner. He was never the same again.

The End.

"B-but, did Albion get better? Did the boy save the day?" Little Keith had asked. He wasn't used to a story not having a good ending.

His Abuela shook her head. "I do not know, Nieto. It's up to the boy to finish the story."

Keith sat up with a start. It's up to the little boy to finish the story. That was it! He should find the boy! He could find the boy, and the boy could restore his grandmother's soul and all the others! The boy could fix things, and Keith could tell stories aloud to actual humans, instead of Molly, his pet cat. He made up his mind. He would find this boy. No matter what.

Chapter Four

The following night, Keith had a dream.

"My Nieto." A familiar voice called out to him.

Keith opened his eyes to see his grandmother. No, it couldn't be, could it?

"Grandma!" He shouted. It echoed.

His grandmother frowned. "What is this? No more Abuela?"

He smiled. "Abuela." He whispered.

She smiled softly, then said. "Save us, Nieto. You can do it. I believe in you."

And then, Keith woke up.

I will save you, Abuela. He thought, I will find the boy, and save you.

Bitter to Sweet Life: Diary of Maya Burningham (1621)

By Nainiha

Jan.1,1621 Sun.

Dear Diary,

My name is Maya Burningham. My life is bitter. What I mean by that is that I have three big problems that make my life bitter. Let me list them:

- My 14-year-old twin sisters tease me. Their names are Kate and Alice.
- My 17-year-old twin brothers tease me, too. Their names are John and Edward.
- I have to do all the chores.

Anyway, Mary Nottingham, or Mary, my best friend, and I have been doing weird things. Lemme give you some examples.

- When I put my shoes in the shoe rack I find it in the outhouse.
- When pouring tea in a teacup it disappears.
- When opening you my diary the words are jumbled and then unjumbled.

Mary's Examples:

- After smoothing her dress it turns black to sky blue to sea green then back to normal.
- Flowers wilt when she touches them.
- When picking leaves off the trees the trees bend to the ground.

I told this to Papa and now my family is acting strange around me.

Diary, I have to go now. I shall write to you once a week or so, Maya Burningham
P.S. My siblings stay in their rooms and at school for almost the whole day, so I really do not know very much about them.

Jan.10, 1621 Wed.

Dear Diary,

Yesterday was the day my whole family told me the truth about me. It all started when I found out Kate and Alice have a diary that they both write in. On the first page, it read that Kate and Alice have been selected to go to Ilvermorny, the

North American school of wizardry and witchcraft. Papa is a real-life wizard and my mum was a talented witch and Rosemine is a squib. Squib means a non-magical child born from at least a wizarding parent. My family thinks I'm a squib so they have me many things that muggles do because that's what wizards and witches do to squibs. Muggles are non-magical born from two non-magical parents. Anyway, Papa has an extra wand under my cot. In order to get it out, I've got to say, "The ham is burning." Also in the diary, it had some spells like the wand lighting charm, the knockback jinx, and the killing curse.

Now I am angry at my family because they have never told me I was a squib, I meant a witch.

While reading the diary I came upon fifty blank pages. I took out quill and ink and wrote down my magical signs on it in different handwriting so that Kate and Alice won't know it's me. Signed, THE ONLY WITCH IN DOOM OF HER FAMILY. Then I put it back where it was and fled the room. While exiting the room I bumped into John and Edward. They started to tease me. Accidentally, I blurted out, "You're only teasing me because I am a squib when I'm really not." I turned red and ran to Papa's call for lunch. At lunch, John and Edward were quiet and only talked to Kate and Alice.

That night I was crying because nobody in my family ever told me our family is a wizarding family. While crying I heard a panting noise initially I thought it was John and Edward doing it, but the panting noise was louder than what John and Edward do to me sometimes to Kate and Alice. I got scared by it that I got Papa's extra wand out.

The first charm I did to protect me was the Wand-lighting charm so I can see in the dark. In the dark, I saw my first magical monster called a Hidebehind. It was about to jump on me so I shouted "Flipendo!" the knockback jinx. For some time I did it on the Hidebehind. When it was about to strike at me with its claws I called out, "Avada Kedavra!" the killing curse. The Hidebehind died instantly when the curse touched its leg.

Rosemine, who was coming downstairs to wake me up, screamed for Papa and my siblings when she saw the Hidebehind and me clutching the wand with my life. Papa, Kate, John, Edward, and Alice came downstairs thinking it was time for breakfast, but when they saw the Hidebehind, and me clutching Papa's extra wand they were stunned and said nothing till Papa asked, "How did you know where my extra wand was, Maya?" I narrated the story about finding Kate and Alice's diary to the death of

the Hidebehind. Kate and Alice were about to shout at me reading their diary, when Papa stopped them saying, " You should be happy Maya is alive, if she never read your diary she would be dead." Then papa added, "You're a squib Maya do you know what that means?" " Yes, Papa I know what a squib is, but I've been doing great sufficient magic like when I pour tea in a teacup it disappears or when I open my diary, the words are jumbled then unjumbled. These two signs must mean I'm a witch, right?" "Yes, you are a witch, Maya," said Alice.

Rosemine had everyone sit down and tell about themselves. "You don't have to do that, Rosemine, I know where Kate, Alice, John, and Edward go to learn magic, but I don't know what Papa does for a living or the newspaper he gets from owls?" " I'm a magizoologist. That means I study magical animals. The newspaper is called Dragon's Tales a-" THUMP THUMP THUMP " MR. BURNINGHAM I NEED YOUR HELP, MY WIFE IS DYING FROM AN ATTACK OF A HIDEBEHIND. BY THE WAY, THE HIDEBEHIND IS KILLED BY MARY!" shouted Mary's dad. Papa ran out with his wand. My siblings, Rosemine, and I followed Papa. I ran toward Mary. She said the whole story about doing curses to the Hidebehind. I told her my story about defeating a Hidebehind. By the time Mrs. Nottingham was up on her feet. There was a rapping noise in the kitchen window. Mary came back with four letters.

The first two letters contained Mary's and my letters to go to Ilvermony. Our parents and our siblings were so pleased that Mary and I were admitted to Ilvermony that they decided we shall have a feast. The other two letters said that Mary and I are rewarded the Order of Merlin first class and we have to go to the Ministry of Magic. (Readers go and search up about the Order of Merlin awards if you want to know more about these awards.) Mary's and my parents and our siblings were shocked.

Diary, I've got to go to the Ministry of Magic along with Mary to get our awards.
Maya Burningham

Jan. 20,1621 Sat.

Dear Diary,

Mary and I got our rewards from the Ministry of Magic. What is shocking for wizarding families is that Mary and I are the youngest witches to get Order of Merlin first class and we never went to Ilvermorny until it's Sept.1,1621 and we are in Dragon's Tales (the American wizarding newspaper).

Nowadays, people want Mary's and my autographs. Diary I've got to sleep now, Bon nuit. That's a good night in french. Maya Burningham

Jan.23,1621 Tue.

Dear Diary,

Autographs, more autographs, nothing. Maya Burningham

Feb.1,1621 Fri.

Dear Diary,

John and Edward are in LOVE! John is in love with Elizabeth Nottingham, a smart witch. Mary's eldest sister. Edward is in love with Isobel Thomas, a brilliant witch. Hearing this I told Mary. She was happy to learn that she said, "You'll be my sister-in-law an-" " You'll be my sister-in-law." I added. "Yes," she replied. Then changed the topic to Ilvermorny.

Diary, time to spy on Edward and Isobel. Maya Burningham

P.S. Isobel and Edward are both in love.

P.P.S. I think Elizabeth isn't in love with John.

Feb.5,1621 Wed.

Dear Diary,

Today, Mary and I saw Isobel good-night kiss on Edward's cheek. Edward blushed and bade her good night. After Isobel left, Edward spotted Mary and me. He came to us and said, " I want both of you to help me build a cabin and other things for Isobel and me, so will you help me?." "Ok, I shall help you." Mary and I replied at the same time. " The cabin will be further up next to Mcdoggel's cabin. I told him I'll be building a cabin for my future wife next to theirs and he's fine with me and you all helping me build the cabin.

Bon Nuit, diary, it's time for me to sleep. Maya Burningham

Feb.11,1621 Tue.

Dear Diary,

Edward, Mary, and I are almost finished with the cabin. We need to paint dull brown on the corner of the cabin. Also, Mary and I saw Elizabeth hug and kiss John's forehead. John just blushed, waved goodbye to Elizabeth and ran to an almost built cabin next to Edward's, and started to patch up a corner of his almost built cabin. Mary and I came out of our hiding place and started to help John. John didn't mind us helping him. In thirty minutes we finished John's and Edward's cabin.

It's time for me to clean John's and Edward's cabin, Au revoir. That's goodbye in french. Maya Burningham

P.S. Feb.14 is John's and Edward's wedding day!

P.P.S. I need a lovely dress to wear at the wedding. Hmm, I think gold and a sky blue dress would be fine on me.

P.P.P.S. Mary's, Isobel's, and my family and our siblings know John's, Elizabeth's, Isobel's, and Edward's wedding plans.

Feb.14,1621 Thur. Valentine's Day

Dear Diary,

The wedding was wonderful. All the girls in our family (I meant all the girls in Mary's, Isobel's, and my family) sat and talked and ate. While the men did the same, too.

Sleeping time for me now, Maya Burningham

P.S. I shall become a magizoologist just like Papa.

P.P.S. Now Mary is my new family member along with Elizabeth, Isobel, Peter (Isobel's only sibling), and Jane (Mary's little sister).

P.P.P.S. Weddings on Valentine's Day is a good idea to wed because Valentine's Day is the day of love.

Aug.31,1621

Dear Diary,

Sorry if I could not write to you those months ago. So busy. Anyway, tomorrow is the first day of Ilvermony. I cannot wait for the Potions class and Herbology class. Mary cannot wait for the History of Magic class and Charms class. I've already packed my bags for school. Since Ilvermony is one mile away from our house, Mary and I do not have to stay there. I can come back home every evening. I can bring my wand here and back to Ilvermorny for special reasons because I will have homework using my wand, but using it in my room with the windows slightly open. Do not want to have muggles screaming in terror and wanting us and behead us.

Bon Nuit diary, it is time for me to go to sleep and rise and shine for the first day of Ilvermony. I've filled you to the end and it's time for me to close you and open you for only necessary things. One day you shall be opened again.

Au revoir,

Maya Burningham.

It's The Beginning.

A WEEK UP NORTH

By Nate

Take your foot off the gas, push down the clutch and downshift. Put your foot back on the gas, and you go on, feeling the breeze on your face. There is a freedom to driving an open-top Jeep in the country. It feels like you're almost flying, but you haven't fully left the ground yet. You can feel the bump of the dirt road beneath your wheels, and you can hear the roar of the engine beneath the hood. As you pull onto the paved road, you don't feel as free. You feel like the Jeep belongs off-road. It's almost like the jeep doesn't want to leave the dirt. You feel like you are being pulled to the field next to you. You decide to turn left into the field, and you finally feel free again.

There is a thrill to driving fast. I experience this while my uncle bushes the BMW to go faster. Even at high speeds, my body feels calm. Going sixty around a corner may feel scary to some, but to me, it is very relaxing. As you drive through town you see a beautiful piece of art, at least that's what it is to you, but to other people, it's just a red sports car, but to me, it's a piece of art. The Lamborghini Countach. You hear the musical symphony of the engine as it drives past. You suddenly feel the urge to turn around and follow it, because the roar of the engine sounds so good.

Lake Michigan is very cold in early June. It seems that it only feels nice once you are numb. At the rocky beach that you have gone to, you find a pillar of concrete, on its side, and going out into the lake. You walk out until the water is above your head. You break the surface and start treading water. You are getting to the point, where it feels so cold that it burns. You look back at the shore, and see your uncle chasing his dog around the beach. You laugh to yourself, and suddenly you feel warmer, and also you feel hungry. You decide to go back to shore so you can eat.

You go outside to see if the steaks are ready, after cooking on the grill for a little bit. You walk out and see that there is smoke coming from under the lid. You lift the lid, and in the process, burn your hand. You see that the grill has lit on fire. You quickly get the steaks off and pour salt on the flames. They have died down, but are not gone. You turn off the burners, but it still takes a few minutes to fully die down. The steaks we're almost cooked, so you finish them off in the oven, and they are perfect.

The Magic in You and Me

By Reign

A Black woman notices that all the Black girls in her community were not comfortable in their skin, so she walks around and spreads her Black girl magic to get them to love themselves.

Looking in the mirror I see all my magic flowing through me
The melanin in my skin
The curly pattern of my hair
The intelligence in my mind
The curviness of my hips
And the love in my heart

Looking through the streets of my neighborhood
I see so many many girls like me
But it makes me sad because they don't seem to know their magic
I don't see their skin glowing
Their hair puff poppin'
Where is their rhythm and beat
To how they carry themselves
Where is there confidence
Why do they doubt themselves
I know Black girl magic can change that in a snap

The Magicons

By Shaylan

Chapter 1 **Fresh Start**

WAKE UP, IT'S 8:00 AM! WAKE UP, IT'S 8:00 AM! The sound of my alarm woke me up quickly, and I sat up. It's times like this when I wish that I didn't have a talking alarm clock. I slipped my sock-covered feet out of the comfy covers of my bed. Walking over to the window and looking out, I could see the tops of all the other buildings on Delcom Street, the street that I'm living on. The sounds of cars passing by and people walking to and from local businesses filled the humid New York summer air.

"Breakfast is ready, Colten! I made your favorite, blueberry waffles with strawberries and whipped cream!"

"Yes, I'm coming mom!"

"Oh, Colten can you wake up Ripley and get her ready for today on your way down?"

"Okay."

I slip on my red and white striped shirt and my blue jeans then I head to Ripley's room. Ripley is my little sister; she's five-years-old and starts her first day of kindergarten today. I start my first day of sixth grade today too. We're going to the same school, Candle Town Elementary, and grades kindergarten through sixth grade attend there, so it's pretty big. I'm pretty excited about my first day of school.

Now, at Ripley's room, I open the door slowly and quietly just in case she's still asleep. When I see that she is, I head to her closet and get out her pink dress and her jean jacket. Then, I went to her My Little Pony themed bed to wake her up.

"Ripley, it's time to get up. It's your first day of school!"

"Yay, the first day of school!"

"You get dressed then go downstairs and get some breakfast, okay?"

"Okay, Colten!"

After I woke up Ripley, I went to the bathroom to fix my messy hair. I decided to use my comb and swish my dirty blond hair to the right. After all, this is my signature hairstyle. Now that I was done with my hair, I ran downstairs to eat my breakfast.

"Morning, Mom!"

"Good morning, Sweetheart! Are you excited for your first day of school?"

Yeah, I'm pretty excited; I'm just a little nervous since this is a new school and all."

"I know it might be a little nerve-racking going to a new school all the time and having your dad gone in the Army, but--"

"It will be a growing experience," I mimicked in my best mom voice. "And you will make friends so quickly."

Luckily, Ripley ran down the stairs bounding around the corner for breakfast before Mom and I could go any deeper into this conversation. I walked over to the dinner table to mow down my delicious breakfast when I saw a letter from Candle Town Elementary to my parents.

"Mom, can I read this letter?"

Sure, honey. Go ahead."

I opened the letter carefully to not damage the letter inside. When I saw the letter, I pulled it out and read it in my head.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hardwell,

We are so excited that your kids are going to our school, Candle Town Elementary! The school will start at 8:30 every day unless there is a delay, cancellation, or a change of plans. Ripley's kindergarten teacher is Ms. Amy, and her classroom is at the end of the kindergarten hallway on the right. Colten's teacher is Mr. Carmichael, and his classroom is at the end of the sixth -grade hallway on the left. We are very excited to have your kids going to our school this year! Have a great day!

Sincerely,

Jim Bino

School Superintendent

"Well, that letter was more boring than I thought it would be," I mumbled.

"What did it say, Colten?" Mom asked excitedly.

"It basically just told us where our classrooms are located."

"Oh, Okay. The bus that you and your sister will ride should be here soon, so hurry and get your--" Mom began.

"Mommy, mommy! The bus is here!" shouted my sister.

"What?! Oh, my goodness! Hurry out to the bus guys! I love you guys. Have a great first day of school!"

Chapter 2

First Day at Candle Town

After what felt like an eternity of yelling, fighting, and screaming on the bus we finally made it to Candle Town Elementary. As we walk up to the white

moss-covered school, we see a nicely dressed man with a red name tag that reads Mr. Cargo.

"Hello and good morning!" the man says to us kindly. "I am Mr. Cargo, and I am your principal here at Candle Town."

"Hi! I'm Ripley!" My sister excitedly offers up.

"And I'm Colten. Ripley is my little sister. I have to take her to her kindergarten classroom."

"Oh, not necessary, Colten. I'm here to help. I'll take her for you, so you can make it to your class on time." stated Mr. Cargo.

"You would do that? Thank you!" I am actually thankful for the offer since I really want to get a good seat in my new classroom this morning.

"You're welcome. Now, hurry and get to class!" Mr. Cargo enthusiastically announced.

"Bye bye, Colten." squealed Ripley.

It took me a while to find where my classroom was, but when I finally found it, it was nice and everyone was so welcoming. The morning flew by in a flurry of introducing ourselves, games, and easy worksheets. Then, we got a worksheet that was called: What to Do When a Bully Comes Near. For some reason, that worksheet gave me an uneasy feeling about Ripley.

"May I use the restroom, please? I asked my teacher frantically.

"Sure Colten. Go ahead and take the hall pass."

Running down the hallway to get to where I somehow thought I knew where Ripley was. I felt like I could hear her crying. Then, I heard another voice. It sounded like a kid from my grade.

"Ripley!" I shouted hoping she was alright. "Ripley are you okay?"

When I got to the bathrooms, I heard louder crying and the kid's voice again. I ran around the corner and in the entryway to the empty computer room. I saw Ripley sitting on the floor crying and a boy standing above her smirking.

"Who are you?" the kid asked, stepping towards me.

"Leave her alone, Henry." I yelled.

I don't know how I knew his name because I had never even met him before.

"Oh, standing up for the little twit, aren't you?" Henry sneered as he kicked my sister.

"Don't touch her!" I screamed.

"Make me!" Henry said, kicking her again. Ripley started crying harder.

"Stop now." I said through clenched teeth.

"No!" Henry yelled back.

Suddenly, a shiny yellow and grey beam of light shot from my hand hitting Henry and sending him flying down the hallway. I suddenly felt extremely weak and fell to

the floor. I heard Henry getting up and running away screaming. Ripley got up slowly and ran to me.

"Colten. Colten, are you okay?" said asked. "Colten!"

Then everything went dark.

Chapter 3

The Magicons

"Colten." I heard someone say. "Colten wake up."

My eyes slowly opened, and I realized that I was in the counselor's office. I blinked then sat up slowly.

"W-what happened?" I asked, confused.

"I found you in the hallway and brought you here. What happened?" the counselor inquired.

"I-I found my little sister, Ripley, getting bullied by...Henry and I got mad and then...and then some weird beam of light shot out of my hand and hit him shooting him backward! I think I'm crazy. I mean that's impossible, right? I must've just fallen aslee="

"Colten, has this ever happened before?" the counselor interrupted.

"No, this is the first time. Wait, why are you asking me that?"

"Come with me," he said calmly.

Following him down a long dark corridor which I'd never seen before, I wondered where he was taking me.

"Wait! Hold on, why are you taking me somewhere? Hello? Where are we going?" I was starting to become anxious with each step.

"Keep up." was all the counselor said in return.

He took out his keys and unlocked a large white door. We went in the room behind the white door, and inside was a large room with objects on pedestals. On the first pedestal, there was an apple. On the second spot, where a pedestal should have been, there was a boy sitting in a chair. He looked to be about my age with brown curly hair. On the third pedestal, there was a TV. We went to the pedestal with the apple on it first.

"Can you move this apple for me without touching it?" the counselor asked me.

"How do I do that?" I asked.

"Just try it." the counselor said straight-faced.

I closed my eyes and concentrated on the apple. Without hesitation, the apple slowly and steadily began to rise off the pedestal. What is happening right now? I have to be dreaming! I thought to myself.

I heard the counselor counting how long it was in the air. He got to five seconds before the apple dropped. I felt tired and sat down on the floor abruptly.

"Great job, Colten." the counselor said while pulling out a notepad and writing my time down.

"What just happened?" I wondered out loud.

"We will have time for questions later. Come over here next."

We went to the chair with the boy on it next.

"Colten, I would like you to meet Grayson."

"Hi, nice to meet you," Grayson said, shaking my hand.

"Nice to meet you too."

"Okay, Colten what I need you to do now is tell me what Grayson is thinking right now." the counselor announced.

I closed my eyes and pictured Grayson's face in my mind.

"He's thinking.... That a burrito is just a sleeping bag for meat?" I questioned my answer because who thinks about burritos in this way.

"That's right! I just thought of the dumbest, yet smartest, idea I could think of!" Grayson said smiling.

"Nice job, Colten! Time for the last test. This one is harder." the counselor stated.

Lastly, we went to the pedestal with a TV on it. He turned it on and on the screen a recording of Ripley getting bullied. I was immediately angry that the counselor would make me watch this.

"What do I do this time?" I asked with a high level of annoyance.

"Just watch the TV." the counselor redirected me back to the screen.

I kept watching the TV and every time someone would say something mean to Ripley, I got angrier and angrier. I could feel my anger rising to the point where I couldn't contain my anger anymore. Another yellow and grey beam of light shot from my hand hitting the TV and pushing it forcefully off the table and onto the floor. It felt like energy was coursing through my body when the intense beam shot from my hand. It felt like I could do anything. For a moment, I felt like I was extremely powerful...but then, that moment ended. I fell to the floor with a thud and for the second time on my first day of sixth grade, everything went dark.

I woke up in a different room with the counselor over me again. The room was well lit and appeared to be part of a big house. From where I was laying, I could only see a kitchen, den filled with books, and a living room that we were in.

"I never properly introduced myself to you when we first met," announced the counselor. "So, let me do that now. Before I tell you more about what's going on, I am Mr. Farmer, but you can call me Barnaby."

The Hunt

By Sophia

"Don't say that, I'll be on TV. Plus I am smart enough to think of a way out myself." This definitely brightens her spirit. Briar gives me a forced smile and lets go of my now soaked shoulders. I suppose she's still having a lot of mood swings. I never can tell if she's genuinely happy about something or just acting that way. Like my mother always said, assume the worst of people. It's kind of a dumb fraise.

"Yeah but only when I'm giving you all the numbers." Briar gives a little snort which is a way of telling me this time she actually isn't faking it. Around most people, she just pretends to laugh but she snorts just like my dad used to. My mother told us he decided to leave and make a new family in the Metropolis but I knew she was lying. My papa would never leave us for someone else. Though to be honest I don't think he liked Tilsee plenty. They had an arranged marriage which meant their parents had it set up before they were even born. Neither of them had their own choices in life. My papa was only 18, Tilsee was 22. I'm glad that will never happen to me.

The purr of an engine sounds outside. "Tilsee!" Briar and I exclaim as one. Quickly she digs her nose back into the paper and begins working again. I reach back to my side of the room and open up my school bag. It's filled with torn and crumpled papers. One of them had to be my test for math, if it wasn't there I was sure to get a beating from Tilsee.

The one thing I would change about our house was giving it more windows. The upstairs had none so I had no time to tell if she was going to come in soon or if she was still unloading the car. The door swings open revealing my mother's wrinkled tired face. She's carrying a small grocery bag and a bottle of wine. I can tell by the label it's one of the fancy kinds from the fresh markets. She's been an alcoholic as long as I can remember, if she bought food we actually needed we wouldn't be in financial debt for years on end. Either way, I couldn't argue with her about it. Tilsee opens up our small fridge popping the wine in on the drink shelf, only to pause and look at the little TV screen mounted on the side of it. "Hello, Imperium!" Ferric Slinch's cherrie voice wafts its way around the house. "Today is the volunteering, so I hope you're ready to sign some papers and do a good one for your country!" How he makes the dullest situations seem pleasant I will never

understand. Tilsee gives the screen a twisted look before slamming the fridge door and powering off the TV. Something about the Volunteering made her more upset than every other person in our town.

"Briar! Clemensia! Get down here!" She can barely even cough out the last words. Sometimes I feel bad for her until I remember what a terrible mother she is. Briars the first to get up, taking her time to make sure her face is completely calm before showing it to Tilsee. Once she's down the stairs I follow. Just one step after another until I have to lie my way out of another problem. Tilsee looks at me then Briar. There's a new bruise on her face, circling around the edge of her lips and curling up to her nose. Probably another bar fight. I tell myself as reassuringly as I can. "Did you two brats finish your school work yet?" Fighting myself from tearing up I let Briar go first.

"Yes Ma'am, all ready for tomorrow." Tilsee gives her a satisfied nod.

"Clemensia!?" I duck my head from her stare, not wanting to give in to her 'magical' powers of intimidation.

"Y-yes Ma'am." My reply comes out like a mouse's squeak, barely loud enough for her to hear. For a minute I think she's ready to give me a beating, but the wine must be rubbing away at her.

"Good, I wouldn't want to get another letter from the school saying your failing class. You know you're lucky you get to go to school so take this opportunity and actually do something with it." Her speech is...less than inspiring. I shy away from them, leaving the tension behind me. I had almost forgotten I left my journal out! Quickly I stuff it under a couch cushion and take my position to watch the news. It takes a minute but eventually, Briar finds her way next to me.

"Are you still going to volunteer?" She whispers in my ear. "Because you better ask if you can go now while Tilsee isn't in her more angry state." Briar had a point. I let the steam from the cushions sink into my skin one last time before pushing off the couch and getting back to my feet. Before I spin the corner I catch a glimpse of Briar giving me the famous 'good luck' look we give each other whenever we ask a favor of Tilsee. The older woman was incredulously known for shutting us down. When I make it back to the kitchen she already has the wine bottle popped open and is suckling out of it like an overgrown toddler. It's a hard sight not to gag at. As usual, she doesn't even acknowledge that I'm there but goes out of her way to look the other direction and pretend I don't exist.

Shoving my feelings deep down inside of me I turn to face her. "Is it okay if I take Frigg, Caelus, and Persephone to the Volunteering? I don't believe they've ever gone." Frigg, Caelus, and Persephone were my cousins. Tilsee's younger sister died shortly after Persephone was born and her husband (my uncle) died in the war. I

don't think Tilsee had enough love in her heart to care for them so she dumped them off at The Spatz general orphanage and called it good.

"Why would I care, just get out of my face!" Tilsee rested the wine bottle on the counter and teetered back and forth, clearly, she had one too many sips of the old jugger. But at least she didn't say no. I give her a grateful nod and scurry out the front door.

It's summer now so all the trees were in bloom, birds were singing and usually, kids would've been happy. Not today though. I peel off my old sneakers and hold them by the laces, I slide down the dirt hill our house rests on. My feet rub up against a few loose stones or pebbles but it was mostly a smooth ride. In the street ahead a large patrol of F.O.R.C.E.S. soldiers dressed in black uniforms covering everything but their chins march in an orderly fashion guardian that looks like a limo. The windows are plated with heavy grey glass, bulletproof to defend it against rioters. Through it all, I can just barely make out the pale bald head of Mayor Everett Woodfield, the highest commander in Sector 1A. His daughter Esmine is visible in the front passenger seat chatting the ear off of some poor driver. Waiting for the last few straggling soldiers to pass I slip my shoes back on not bothering to tie the laces. With the orphanage now in my range of sight, it's clear now what a horrible place my cousins live in.

The roof of the building looks like it might fly off if the wind is too strong, the windows are bashed in and there's a few holes along the side of the building. My mother is a horrid creature to let her own family rot to death in it. One step at a time I hobble across the smooth paved road and come to a stop at the door. Sometimes I like to pretend that Imperium isn't that bad and by giving us less there helping but really my imagination isn't that big. Rapping my hand across the splintering wood door I catch the sight of something in the corner of my eye.

"Clemensia!" I clench my mouth shut hoping if I stand still long enough they'll go away.

"Oh!" I try my hardest to act surprised. "Mesqi, I didn't see you there." Again 'he's' here, with his tan Latino skin, dark hair and charming grin. It's obvious why my sister picked him. Mesqi props himself up against the wall of the orphanage staring me directly in the eyes, it's hard not to feel uncomfortable. "Do you need anything?" I ask, still having slight urges to nail him right across his stupid face. Mesqi scratches the fuzz growing on his chin and blinks.

"Why yes," He takes a minute to dig down into his pocket and then shoves whatever it was into my hands. "Could you give that to Briar for me?" Finally aware he didn't care at all what I was doing I opened up my hands to reveal a handful of shiny silver disks. That's a lot of credits! I thought, staring down into my palm.

"Mesqi how did you get all of this?" The Latino boy gives me a concerned look and glances over his shoulder. Getting the idea I grin and jingle the coins around in my fist. "You didn't steal it, did you?" I ask in a sing-song voice feeling the heaviness of despair lift off of my shoulders. Mesqi grabs at my hands shoving one of his in my face to get me to shut up.

"Pipe down Clem! The F.O.R.C.E.S. could hear you." He snatched my wrist to get me from shaking the coins around and then handed me a little brown pouch. I examine it to find a tag sticking off the side. Made in the Metropolis. More stealing. I assume stuffing the coins down into the fabric. Mesqi pats me on the head and smiles, revealing his shiny gold tooth. "That's a good girl, now whenever you're done here could you bring that to your sis for me?"

"It pains me to say this but, yes of course Mesqi." With one final eye roll, the boy disappears back around the corner leaving me alone again with the door. I don't know why Mesqi thought it would be smart to steal at this day and age, then again I don't know a lot of things.

"What is it now?" A familiar voice calls behind me. It's just now I'm noticing the open orphanage door. A slim girl stands in the doorway. She has dark skin and her frizzy hair looks dirty and unbrushed. The reek from the orphanage fills my nose, rotten fish and cow manure is the only thing I can smell. The younger woman doesn't seem to mind the stench. Then again she's probably been living in it for a couple of years. Her hands move under her chin and she points first at me then to her mouth. If she was trying to confuse me it was working.

"Um, I'm sorry I don't know what that means," I say as politely as I can. Closer up she looks about my age, maybe a few years older. Dark bags showed under her eyes, signs indicating she hadn't gotten good sleep in the past few days. Her hands shook furiously and she pulled them up to her then pointed to her ears. Of course! I half face palmed half slapped myself for not noticing before. The girl was deaf, when she was using her hands it was sign language. I tried my best to apologize to her but I couldn't tell if she understood or not.

"Looking. For. Someone?" She signed and spoke along with each other.

"Um, yes. Oh! I mean," I give her a thumbs up just ready to have this awkward situation over with. The girl nods at me and walks back over to where a sign reading 'occupants' was. She pulled open the door and waved her hands in a sweeping motion into the room. I took this as a 'go and look for them' type gesture and did just that.

I didn't expect that many kids in the orphanage. Half of the room had about a dozen girls while the other half had a dozen boys. The room itself stretched on for what looked like 30 feet or so. All of the other children's eyes followed me as I wove my way around the tight clusters of bunk beds and cots. To my left, I saw a

boy who didn't look much younger than me. He was lying on his side in the fetal position rocking himself slowly back and forth. When I got to the other side of the bed I noticed his face was pale and sickly. Were all the kids here that bad? The boy gave me a desperate look before launching himself off the side of the bed and hurling onto the floor. A few of the other boys laughed while a girl across the room whimpered quite loudly. The boy now whipped his chin and rolled himself back onto the bed. It didn't seem like anyone here was well taken care of, the deaf girl could have had hearing aids and be just fine still she was forced to do it the old fashioned way.

A few more rows of beds before I finally found who I was looking for. Surprisingly they looked much better than the other kids there. Frigg was sitting on the side of a green army cot bouncing Persephone on her lap. The cherie toddler giggled with delight, squeezing Friggs thumb until it looked purple. Caelus was directly across the room from them chatting with a handful of boys his age, technically my age as well. I was careful to avoid him first.

"Clemmie!" Frigg exclaimed, dropping Persephone to the floor as gently as she could. She wrapped her arms around my waist beaming up at me. "Are you enjoying your stay?" She said sarcastically waving at the depressed children. I laughed and tussled her curly dark hair.

"Well, it wasn't exactly the party I was expecting." Persephone hobbled over and wrapped her chubby arms around my legs. I lift her off the floor and rest her in the crook of my arm. It was my hope of getting them out that kept me in the dreadful building. Persephone and Frigg were easy to persuade, now my only fear. Boys my age. I strolled up behind Caelus catching the eye of the other boys. A few of them just ignore me but the others whisper what I assume is something about me. Sometimes I feel like Caelus is deaf or blind like he doesn't pay attention to what other people are doing. He's very self-centered. As he goes on and on about allegedly hunting a deer I continue to keep my mouth shut, it could be possible that these kids actually believe him. Caelus wraps up his story by saying he 'nearly escaped' the F.O.R.C.E.S. with his deer.

"Woah really?" A kid in the back exclaims pushing his way through the small crowd gathering. Caelus crosses his arms looking bored of his new friends.

"Yea really that's unbelievable, seriously." I laugh aloud tapping Caelus on the shoulder in the process. The blonde boy spins around on his cot with a hurt expression.

"Oh, It's just you." His voice is stale like he's run out of lying. Like most people, he ignores me and turns back to his group. To him, it's like I wasn't even there.

"I was going to ask you if you wanted to go to the volunteering but I can just take Frigg and Persephone if you don't care." No one listens to me. In a huff a stomp around pulling his two sisters behind me, it feels like they're both dragging their heels into the boards to get me to stop walking. Either that or they're just very heavy. I slip past the beds again, careful not to touch anything or anyone, who knows if they have an easily spread disease. Strangely the deaf girl is still waiting at the door for me. She smiles at Persephone and Frigg, who I'm now guessing know her.

"Bye Alyssum, thank you for letting us go." Frigg signs fluently to the girl, while adding in real talking so I know what she's saying. And now I remember how I know the girl. Alyssum Pennyfield. She was two years older than me and used to go to my school until what I thought was her moving away was apparently going to the orphanage. For a minute the little voice in my head tells me to catch up with Alyssum and ask her why she now is deaf or at the orphanage, but then I remember I was actually trying to get somewhere on time and stopping to talk with everyone I see wasn't going to get me there faster. I smile and nod to Alyssum using every muscle in my body to get my cousins out of this rotting building. Persephone waves bye to Alyssum by making a little duck face on her hands. The dark-skinned girl gives her a curt nod and disappears back into the stinky occupant room.

"So where are we going?" Frigg asks, breaking free of my grip. Her hair, as usual, is brushed out perfectly in a bob. Her bangs cover up her eyebrows and come close to her eyes. She pulls Persephone out of line with her halting just as I was about to make it around the corner. My body does it's the best impersonation of a silent groan before turning over to look at Frigg.

"The Volunteering." I explain half ready to grab them both up and carry them to town, but I know Frigg won't complain. The dark-haired girl gives me a confused look but thankfully doesn't ask another question. As I speed down the sidewalk I can hear the thud of their feet on the concrete almost exactly lined up with my steps. Nearing the parade my heart rate quickens, the blaring of trumpets and drums fill the square, the only people enjoying it are the people playing it. The rest of the town stands in the shadows with their faces dull and arms crossed. Persephone bops her body along to the beat looking less concerned than everyone else. I keep an eye out for the registry table where I would have to sign up but so far I can't see past the F.O.R.C.E.S.

Smack dab in the middle of town is a stage with bright lights surrounding it. A small runway juts out into the crowd making this seem more like a fashion show. The town is divided into three groups, the adults, the kids, and the volunteers. In the midst of it all, I start thinking I lost Persephone until I notice she's in front of me. A handful of soldiers are positioned at the entrance to the town square, large guns are

strapped to their backs and they don't even look the slightest bit alive. As the long line to get in pushes us closer to the door my panic spreads. I grab Persephone and Frigg by the wrists and pull them into a little huddle. "Listen, guys, I'm volunteering this year okay? It's going to be okay you guys just keep going this way and when I'm finished I'll meet you back in the crowd." I say it in a way I hope is easy for them to understand. Although Frigg is the only one who seems to get the point. She clutches my hand and gives me a sad look, just in time for one of the soldiers to pry her away from me and to the scanning machines.

I nudge Persephone after her watching as the emotionless guard slams Frigg's delicate body into the human recognition booth. With my fists clenched into a tight ball, I step out of line and weave through the crowds my mind still gathering information about where the registry table should be. A small little desk catches my eye. A few kids about my age are waiting around at it while an older looking woman writes information down on a clipboard. Not waiting for more proof that this is the right place I jump to the back of the line only to find six more kids come up behind me. The kid in the front is finally called up, the elderly lady takes his arm in her hands and pulls out a sharp needle.

The boy immediately jumps back in defense grabbing at his arm. It's only now when I'm trapped in line that I realize this wasn't a good choice.

The Dark Men

By Tucker "Turtle"

Chapter 2

Forrest was tired from running and pushing the stranger away. He grabbed a teen and made a plant swing the bat into his stomach and push him into the other. He got punched in the face from the other teenager. He then saw the teenager rise and start to choke. He looked back at the stranger. His eyes were bright white and were reaching out to the teen with his hands in a fist. He looked back at the teen and he found him dead. The teenager then fell onto the ground. The stranger's eyes turned normal again and he got up.

"Names Alec." He said.

"Huh?" Forrest said, confused.

"My name is Alec." Alec said once again.

"Oh. I'm Forrest." He told him.

A bell rang, coming from a school.

"I gotta go." Alec claimed.

"Same with me." Forrest pointed out.

"Wait...What school do you go to?" Alec asked.

"Pennsylvania highschool. Why?" Forrest asked.

"I go to that school." Alec pointed out.

They both started walking to school.

"What subject do you have first?" Forrest asked.

"English. What about you?" Alec said.

"I have social studies." Forrest said.

The next day Forrest picked up the phone.

"Who is this?" Forrest asked

"It's me, Alec." Alec explained. "Have you seen the news yet?"



"No..." Forrest said. "Why?"

"The police found the teenager. His name was Jarome Brian." Alec said.

"And the other?" Forrest asked.

"Dylan Brown. He says it was random people...or us, knocked him out and killed Jarome. But the police see no marks on the guy because...you know." Alec explained.

"What about the kid?" Forrest asked.

"He says he was rescued by a stranger who told them to stop and run and then he just ran away," Alec said. "Then they just ditched the case."

"Wow, some police." Forrest stated.

"Wait...GO ON CHANNEL 42 NOW!!" Alec yelled.

Forrest hung up and went to the TV and changed the channel to channel 42. He saw two people. One person was punching policemen and sending them crashing into walls. The other was changing into different shapes and eating police men's heads off.

"Who are you?" Forrest asked the figures on TV.

Chapter 3

"Day 2, Still locked up," Kyle said, sighing while marking a line on the wall.

He turned around and sat on his bed.

"I hate being in a high-security prison," Dan stated.

"I know," Kyle said.

BOOM!

"What was that?" Dan asked sitting up.

He saw police fly across the hall and hit the wall. Two strangers walked to the bar.

"Stand back." One of them said.

Dan and Kyle walked to the back of the room. The bars started to bend. The bars eventually fell off. Dan seemed amazed.

"Who are you?" Kyle asked.

"Alec, and this is Forrest." The stranger said. "Let's go."

They all started to float except Forrest was on a huge sunflower and the two inmates were terrified. The wall behind them exploded and they flew out of the hole. Kyle started hearing voices.

"Great. Another pair to deal with." One voice said.

"Shocking!" Another said.

"No time for puns Shocker!" The first one said.

Then the voices faded.

"Shocker?" Kyle thought.

"Were here," Alec said, tossing them into a house. "Follow me."

The house was filthy and the wallpapers were torn into pieces. Alec started walking toward a wall and pushed painting into it and it came back out. The floor started to open and made stairs. They walked into a dark room and Alec pressed a button and the stairway closed up.

"Welcome, to the dark men," Alec said.

There were suits in cases of glass. There were titles above them. Alec walked to a case.

"This is yours," Alec said, pointing at Kyle.

"And this is yours," said Forrest standing in front of another pointing at Dan.

"I'm Crusher? Cool!" Kyle said.

"And I'm Shifter. I like it!" Dan said.

"I'm Ghost and Forrest is Thorn," Alec stated.

"Put your suits over your clothes." Forrest said

Kyle put on his suit. He saw that he had a skull for the mask and a skull on the chest plate. He looked at Forrest's suit. It had live plants in a camouflage robe. He looked at Dan's. It was all white except an infinity symbol on his chest plate. He looked at Alec's. It was all white, including the mask but the eyes were black.

"Let's go kill a hero!" Kyle said.

Chapter 4

Dan was sitting on a ledge with Forrest for a patrol when he saw three heroes talking. One of their suits had a reverse sign on it and the other two had a lightning bolt and a mountain that has a ravine. The heroes were chatting to each other if there was any crime at all in the sector.

"Up there!" the one with the mountain said, pointing up at Dan.

"I'll handle this!" the one with lightning said.

The others ran away to safety. Then he saw Forrest jump down from the roof.

"Scaredy cats!" Dan yelled.

"Well something is growing," Forrest said, making a giant stem rise under him, making him stand 12 feet in the air. "Me!"

Dan jumped and transformed into an eagle swooping down and transformed back to a human.

The hero threw a lightning bolt at him and Dan jumped up in the air, dodging the bolt and kicking the hero. The hero stumbled back and got up, standing in an attacking form.

"This will be shocking!" He said while charging his hands up with lightning. The anonymous then threw a ball made out of electricity. Then the ball just stopped in midair just floating.

"Well, that's just paranormal," Alec said, jumping down off of a wall.

He turned the ball toward him.

"Or is it?" He said.

He released the ball and it flew back to the hero electrocuting him instead. As he was getting shocked, Dan morphed into a grizzly bear and grabbed the anonymous and threw him into a nearby brick wall, and heard the smash of rocks breaking apart. He saw that Kyle had broken the wall and he was holding the hero. Suddenly the bricks collapsed on Kyle making a small mound, then they saw a hero with rocks floating around him. Kyle bursts out of the rocks and sees the hero wrapped in vines with a huge venus flytrap next to him. Forrest then helped Dan up so he could drop the hero with electricity powers.

"I heard this guy's name was Shocker," Kyle said, tossing him onto the cement.

"You can't just jump down from position and attack, Thorn," Alec said.

"He saw us! What am I supposed to do?" Forrest asked, yelling.

Shocker groaned, holding his head, which hit the bricks. Everyone jumped back. Kyle panicked, grabbing him and threw him up, and punched the hero through the wall, breaking it more. Dan picked him up, looking at him.

"He's unconscious." He said, looking at Kyle.

"What? I acted appropriately." He said.

"If appropriately means knocking someone out, then yeah you did." Forrest said, snickering.

"Guys, guys! We have to go before the police come!" Alec reminded them.

They ran to the house and Dan pressed in the painting and the staircase opened up and they ran down the stairs and put their suits back in the cases. When they went back up there were policemen at the door.

"Open up the door!" the policemen yelled.

"Guys get down to the cases, I can handle this." Forrest commanded.

Dan and Kyle went down into the cases gallery but Forrest quickly put Alec in an empty but huge pot and made a bunch of plants grow in it.

"What are you doing?" Alec asked confused

"Hiding you, make sure you use your powers to knock anyone still outside when they come in and close the door and lock it, okay?" Forrest explained.

"Okay." Alec replied.

"Hey! Who is in there!" The police yelled.

Forrest opened the door.

"Just me, this is my home. Come in!" Forrest said letting them in.

They walked into the house and looked around.

"Nice house..." one policeman said.

"Oh, I just moved in sorry for the mess. The only thing that I put up was that painting and the plant." Forrest explained.

"Do you mind if we look around?" The second asked.

"No, not at all sir," Forrest said.

The policemen looked around. One walked up to the plant. The other went to the painting.

"Please do not touch that it is from a dear friend," Forrest said.

He walked to the other policeman.

"That is a very old painting. Please do not touch it." Forrest said to the other.

"Welp, you better get to work. We will now leave." one said.

"Okay. Bye officers!" Forrest said.

Alec jumped out of the plant and walked to the painting and pushed it in.

Alphabet People

By Violet

Molly Floreen took her seat behind the desk and smiled into the camera as she waited for her cue, she saw a head nod and began

“Hello, My name is Molly Floreen and you’re watching the 8am news. Today is the Boston Pride Parade,” A video showing thousands of people forming a sea of rainbow played on the monitor behind her. “As you can see there was a large turnout this year, the route is about two miles and will end at city hall for the Pride festival.” The camera started panning the crowd and zoomed in on a woman dressed as a southern belle with the sign “Pride and no Prejudice”. “There are many creative costumes used to show people’s support and well- Pride.” Molly flashed a brighter smile. “ Unfortunately as always, there are protesters.” The camera showed a group of people holding signs proclaiming “Gays are going to hell” and “Marriage is between a man and a woman”. “We would like to celebrate the bravery of everyone marching today, may you stay safe and Have A Great Pride from all of us at the studio” Molly smiled at the cameras cut off.

Chapter 1

Ivy-

The three of us smiled at the news camera panning through the crowd, ha-Pan. I was proud of our outfits, Hami, Imani, and I had spent weeks making sure they were perfect. I was dressed in black short-overalls over a nonbinary flag t-shirt with Docs with rainbow stitching, I had a rainbow flag tied like a cape around my shoulders, and It matched with the yellow, white, purple, and black of my shirt.

Hami was dressed more laid back in a t-shirt that said, “I’m not gay, but my boyfriend is” which apparently he found hilarious, he wore basketball shorts with

rainbow stripes on the sides and his trusty air force 1s. I highly doubt he even brushed his hair. It was a shaggy black mess. He wore a pair of aviators over his eyes which smudged the small rainbow on his cheek. His mom waved at us from the barrier, her hijab a beautiful rainbow color.

Imani had spent the most time on her outfit, she wore a black t-shirt tucked into a purple and gray pleated skirt. The shirt was decorated with an ace in the colors of gray, white, and purple and she wore her favorite shoes, a pair of high-top Vans. She had spent over half-an-hour on her makeup, one eye was decorated with a rainbow and the other in blues, pinks, and whites. On both eyes, she had eyeliner sharp enough to kill. Her chocolatey face was practically glowing with excitement as she scanned the crowd, her tight curls bouncing as she hopped up and down in excitement.

Imani grabbed both of us in a tight hug and refused to let go until we hugged her back, making it a long hug as Hami hated hugs and refused to hug back for a few seconds.

"I can't believe we're at Pride" Imani was smiling so hard I was afraid she would pull some muscle.

"Well, believe it" Hami deadpanned, but I could see the smile in his eyes.

"We'll have to find you a boyfriend here" I joked, poking Hami, which ended in us having a slap fight as Imani rolled her eyes.

"Let's go ask someone to take our picture before it gets too hot and we get too sweaty," Imani asked, scanning the crowd.

"Fine," Hami said using the distraction to slap my arm.

I gave him a palm to the back of the head and answered Imani with an okay.

She decided on a blond boy about our age standing with a shorter pale boy, the two were smiling and accepted.

"Say cheese!" the blond said holding the phone, we smiled and put our arms around each other. The blond handed Imani her phone back and turned to the other boy,

“let’s go find Beantown, my significant annoyance” while chuckling. They walked away and the three of us admired the pictures.

“Send those to me please,” I asked as I pulled out my phone, a few seconds later I got a message from Imani. I added them to my camera roll and favorited them all.

I heard the song Girls/Girls/Boys by Panic! At The Disco began to play and grabbed Hami and Imani to dance, the term dance used loosely.

I couldn’t help but think, “This is the perfect day I want this to last forever,”.

Ch 2

Vera-

My parents suck, I know that’s not a very original line, but they do. Trust me, whatever your parents are like mine are worse, well there’s an exception for murders and abusers but that’s only fair. I did not expect to spend Saturday standing at a pride parade with my conservative Christian family holding a sign that says “Homosexuality is a sin”, but here we are. Maybe you are thinking, “that’s not that bad, it could be worse” let me spell it out for you, real slow-

- 1-They, and by force, I, am protesting something that people have no choice over
- 2-I’ve known since 6th grade I like girls, I’m 17 now
- 3-I had plans with my friends to go to the mall
- 4-It’s hot out
- 5-Everyone is looking at me like I hate them, I want to scream “I have no choice, I have to”
- 6-I have to watch everyone be happy being them, it’s like everyone having a Ferrari and you have a Prius.

At least I have Matt, my brother, he’s a year older than me, we’re pretty close, I came out to him and he accepted me, so that’s good, unfortunately, my Christian high school has something against gays so I can be myself in front of exactly one person, fun. Sometimes I feel like Laine from Gilmore Girls, I literally have books hidden under my floorboards. Rick Riordan, Adam Silvera, Becky Alibertalli, the works.

It’s funny, I can listen to pretty much any music, wear pretty much anything I want, have a boyfriend, but I can’t be gay, that’s pretty much the only thing they don’t like.

Why I don't know and I've never gotten a straight answer, well all their answers have been st-you know that I mean.

A news camera points at our church group, great, not only am I forced to be here it's being recorded, I can say goodbye to getting any decent job now, perfect. I finger the bottom of my t-shirt, something I do when I'm nervous. Matt notices and gives me a pitying look,

"Hey sis, I'm sorry, I know this sucks and it must suck for you." Matt gives me a little side hug

"Thanks," I respond, my words filled with malice. "I feel queasy, tell mom and dad I went to find a bathroom."

"Ok, let me know if you need anything"

I walked away fighting back tears, this is the worst day of my life.

Llamavill: NEXT GENERATION

By Wynstan

One day in Lamavill there were llamas called Justin Lark and Oti; they were leaders of each side of the wall. This all started out in 1th grade. Back then Lark was shy, and Oti didn't like a lot of attention. We became friends. Then a few years later me and my friends were separated into three walls because the ferrets invaded the village, but we stopped them and became the three leaders of each side. They all adopted kids named Ivan, Lee, and Jon. Jon was Justin's son. Oti's son was Lee and Lark's son was Ivan.

MY Starry Night

By Zola

A relative of mine attended an Art show in Brussels, Belgium 131 years ago and she “bought” one of Van Gough’s other 5 paintings, but somehow the record of its purchase was lost and forgotten until NOW.

I got up into the attic. It looks old and raggedy like usual. Old spider carcasses are covering most of the floor. It even smells old in the attic too. It smells like old leather and memories. . . I love going into the attic to look for old treasures. I always look at them and think of what I would’ve done with them. It’s quite interesting to me. But, many kids (and even my parents) think that I’m just a weird little girl! Little do they know that there are real treasures in my great-great grandma’s old trunk of old memorabilia. The trunk is always dusty. No matter how much I dust it, it always ends up even more dusty! It’s a beautiful wooden pirate trunk that great-great-grandma Flo’s mom gave to her. Don’t worry, we aren’t pirates. I don’t really know where the trunk came from though.

As I’m looking in my great-great grandma’s old trunk of old memorabilia. I take out this beautiful painting I love to look at and make stories about. I imagine a superhero flying in and saving the day. While the villain is pulling stars closer to earth! The stars are soaring and gliding closer and CLOSER!!! But, usually in the end the superhero wins. Happy endings are my favorite. I’ve always wanted to know where this painting is from though. Did my great-great-grandma Flo paint it? If not, who did? Today all those questions will be answered by my parents!!!

I’m walking through the hallway to get to my parents room. Their room is the best in the house. It’s like a suite. A giant bathroom with a jacuzzi tub, a big balcony, they even have a little common area! I get to my parents’ awesome room and ask them questions about the painting. But, after every question they give each other weird looks. Like they didn’t know the painting even existed. Then suddenly my mom said,

"Where'd you find that painting, little lady?" So, I responded, "great-great-grandma Flo's trunk of treasures!". I quickly regret it though because my dad started fussing about how I shouldn't be in the trunk of treasures or the attic and blah, blah and blah blah blah! I ask them when great-great-grandma Flo got the painting and who made it. They are still acting like they don't know. Yet, they know who made it. They say that this dude named Vincent Van Gogh painted it.

Did I mention that they also said that they didn't know that they had the painting and that it's worth over 1 million dollars! Also, they didn't know that great-great-grandma Flo even purchased this incredible Van Gogh painting! She must have kept this a big secret.

Great-great grandma Flo attended the art show in Brussels, Belgium in 1889 when she bought or shall I say acquired maybe even stole the painting 131 years ago:

I got into the auction for The Starry Night painting. Armed if I must take dangerous measures. I would unquestionably hurt someone to get this painting. And that is just what I'm planning to do *maniacal laughter*. I love going on these heists! They're so exciting and fun. Although, I really need to stop doing my maniacal laugh in public. I got into the auctioning area. I already know that I've won though. Feels so funny being here looking at all these people who think they've got enough money and smarts to win this auction. Little do they know that Florence Williams is here to win the whole darned thing.

I've made it into the room with the secured painting. Did I ever tell you what I'm even getting it for? Well, I think I may just put it in my trunk of treasures for my future relatives. Anyways, it's time to get this painting!!! As I'm making my way backstage, a giant man whose security badge says Charles said, "Ma'am the restroom isn't back there!" I say the first thing that pops into my head, "Oh, I know." Which I instantly regretted it because as soon as he got a clue, he stampeded toward me. Great. But, that's when I got a nifty idea. . . I grab Charles's left wrist and twist it behind his back. When I hear his shriek of pain I feel bad for the man and start to loosen my grip on his arm. Then I hear the auctioneer start jabbering to the audience. Oh gosh, it's starting. . . I grab my pepper spray from my fanny pack and spray all over his face. In an instant, he falls to his knees with his hands on his face rubbing vigorously.

Once I get to the stage I realize that I don't have a plan. So, I just improvise by using a carbon dioxide bomb to make everyone unconscious. Then I get a genius

idea to grab a random man's hand and rub it all over the glass so that they'll think he did it all! I also may or may not have taken a few wallets, rings and watches. Now, excuse me while I take my painting and ride my Corvette (which perhaps I may have stolen from another VIP.) out into the sunset.

Heist accomplished.

Part Two of MY Starry Night

The thing Flo didn't know was that one man, one man named Haedon Ballencia witnessed the whole thing.

I must be dreaming. This can be happening. I've gotta retrace my steps or something. Do I call the police? Do I just go home like usual? I mean, a woman just put everyone in a deep sleep and stole the most sought after painting in the world! What I see right now are hundreds, thousands of unconscious people. This is horrendous. Disgusting why would someone ever do this. I'd better go to the police station.

Okay. I've made it to the station. The police officers don't believe me. One says, " So, a woman came in. . . Stole a painting? Somehow made everyone unconscious. And then she got away with it. Sir, I don't think she could've done that all by herself. How do you perhaps think she carried the painting out of the building?". And as crazy as it may seem, I did NOT think about that.

After a few hours at the Police station I left. I can tell that they don't believe me. They literally started questioning me! Then I get a brilliant idea. I'll go to the auctioning building and see if anyone woke up and ask anyone if they remember anything. If they remember the same woman I saw, I'll take them to the police department with me. If they don't remember I'll just tell them that nothing ever happened and that they fell asleep or something. I'll have to work on that one. Either way, I'll clear my name and I'll prove that she has committed this crime. I will find this woman and bring justice!