

Upper Hutt Libraries

SHORT STORY COMPETITION

Childrens



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Ngā Puna Mātauranga o
Te Awa Kairangi ki Uta
Upper Hutt Libraries

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Ages 4-7

*Shortlist
& Winners*



Princess Blaze and the Great Attack

by Luna Rama

Once upon a time there was a little dragon princess. Her name was Blaze and she loved reading. She had so many books. She read big books, small books, long books, chapter books, picture books, pop up books, noisy books and even telephone books.

One day when Blaze was reading in her room, her mother rushed in and tried to tell Blaze that they were under attack. A flight of evil dragons was circling above her family's castle. The evil dragons were swooping down, shooting out fire at the castle and trying to break in by crashing into the stone walls. Blaze didn't notice her mother because she was too fascinated with her book. Her mother took the book away and tried again.

"Blaze, the castle is under attack. Fly!"

Blaze leapt out her window and spread her strong, purple wings and flew in the direction of the enchanted forest where she could hide in the trees. Blaze curled up under the pink leaves of a magical Emplah tree and closed her eyes. The Emplah tree covered her with its leaves and used its power to take her to the secret waterfall.

A cold drop of water landed on the purple scales between Blaze's eyes, waking her up. She felt a bit dizzy. She stood up, wobbling a bit and tried to find her balance.

Slowly she stepped away from the magic Emplah Tree.

The waterfall was rainbow and sparkled in the sunlight. Blaze felt some kind of connection to the waterfall. She was really curious about what she had just found. She was so curious that she put her wing through the waterfall. She felt that there was a cave. She tested it again with one of her legs.

"There is a cave!" said Blaze excitedly.

Blaze stared at the waterfall, thinking about her family. She was really scared. She hoped they were winning against the evil dragons.

"Maybe this cave has something that will help me". Blaze entered the cave behind the waterfall.

The cave was made of beautiful crystals that were shining brightly, lighting up a path. Blaze went down the crystal path. She felt some excitement soaring through her. The path went two ways. One way was bright and beautiful with flowers and crystals. The other way was very dark, cold and muddy. A sign said:

“Don’t judge a book by its cover you’ve been told Remember, All that glitters is not gold.”

Blaze started to be scared that one way would lead to a trap. She thought very carefully. “Wait, I remember this from my Shakespeare book! The beautiful path is a trap!”

Blaze bravely walked down the dark, cold path.

Down the path Blaze found a little table with a bookshelf. She knew it wasn’t just some old table or some old bookshelf because it sparkled and glowed. On the table was a letter that said:

“For the secret wish, here’s the key, Separate numbers, odd and even, see?”

Blaze looked all around but she couldn’t see any numbers. The books had some strange letters written on them. “Wait, those aren’t letters. Those are roman numerals like in the chapters of my books this morning! Let me see.”

Blaze carefully arranged the books into one shelf with odd numbers and the other with even numbers. She closed her eyes and made her wish.

All the evil dragons disappeared. Blaze was back in her room with her books. Her mother and father rushed in. “Thank goodness you’re safe, Blaze”.

“Mother, I had the greatest adventure. I’ll tell you all about it”.

The Mystical Adventures of Chi and Chacha

by Atticus Briggs



Chi and Chacha are at home in Waterdrop Waterfall Village getting ready to go and visit Granny. Granny lives on the other side of the road and is really funny, they visit her lots. But today Granny wasn't very funny, she was serious, and she had a very important present for Chi and Chacha. She tells them to go to the cave beside the castle.

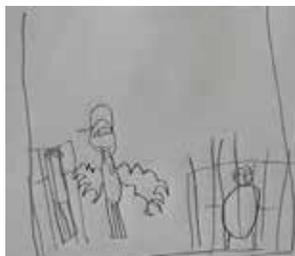
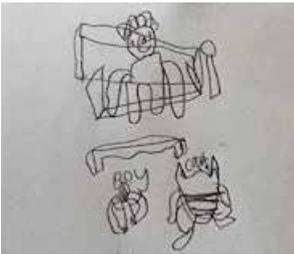
When they get there, they see it is surrounded by soldiers so they decide to sneak past them. When they find the present, they realise that it's a mech suit and fish for Chi, and a map for Chacha then Chacha realises the map is magic. On the back of the map there is writing, it tells them to go on a quest to capture robbers and save the villages.

Chi and Chacha go back to Granny's to ask how to spot the robbers. You have to jump off the top of the Waterfall said Granny. Then Chi and Chacha ask how to land safely, your sashes have fold out wings says Granny. Now Chi and Chacha are ready to go to save the villages.

They spot the robbers while they are gliding and then they swoop down into the trees and then jump down and attack the robbers. Since they are close to Sunshine Lake they put a portal under the robbers and Chi and Chacha run as quick as they can to Sunshine Lake.

When they get there and they grab the robbers and dive into the lake and swim to the prison to lock up the robbers in different cells so they don't scheme to get out.

Chi and Chacha have a big party that includes free pizza and swimming and they invite the whole village to celebrate their achievement.



Dolphin Daycare

by Samuel Johnson

Hi, my name is Bubbles.

I'm a 3-year-old spinner dolphin. My mum's name is Kelp and my dad's name is Finn. I live in a pod with about 20 other dolphins. I am the second youngest dolphin in our pod. My best friend is Sandy, she is only one week younger than me! Today is our first day at dolphin daycare and we are very nervous. We are going to learn how to hunt and do tricks like flips and blow ring bubbles. I have already learnt how to catch little fish like spotties. I am getting a ride to Dolphin Daycare in an octo-bus because my mum and dad are hunting for dinner. They are trying to catch salmon, but my favourite food is mackerel. I live on a kelp farm. My favourite job is herding the seahorses into Kelp Bay. I like it because sometimes I get to ride on them. Sandy is just old enough to help me. Dolphin Daycare is an old shipwreck. I race to the Octostation with Sandy. We are just in time! We hop onto the octo-bus and find a seat. I look out the porthole and I see Coral Town zooming by.

We arrive at Daycare and swim down the hall to our classroom. It is on the left side. As soon as we open the door Ms Shell greets us with a hug. She is a Green Sea Turtle. We put our bags away and swim around, exploring our new classroom. The principal swims in the door. He is a big manatee, Ms Shell introduces us to him. She says his name is Mr Coral. Then the bell goes. We all race to the mat. We look at Ms Shell and she says "Welcome to your new classroom" then a big speaker says "Hello, and welcome to Dolphin Daycare.

We all hope you have an awesome time learning to do flips and other cool tricks. Today we'll be teaching you to jump out of the water quite high and catch a few fish." Then Ms shell does the roll. When she calls my name I say "Here" then she calls Sandy's name. She says "Here". "Now we are going to learn how to catch fish with mud nets and swim fast so they don't get away." Ms Shell says. Then we swim outside and follow her to Fish Bay.

We begin to swim around in circles, mud nets start to form around a school of fish. We start to get closer and closer to them until we can't resist taking a bite out of one! They taste very sweet. We do the same with some other fish! These fish taste sour, "Yuck!" I say. "Now it is time to swim fast," says Ms Shell. "Yay!" we say. "I LOVE SWIMMING FAST!" I shout. Ms Shell smiles at me. I smile back at her. "Ok" she says, "let's see how fast you can swim." When it's my turn to swim I eagerly swim up to Ms Shell, and swim around and around and around, until I get dizzy. Then I swim back to the line, to watch Sandy's turn. She swims around and around and around. Ms Shell smiles and says "Well done everyone. I got dizzy watching you! Who wants to explore a shipwreck?"

“ME!” I shout. We follow her into an old ship. Something catches my eye. I slowly creep out of the line and up to a door, I look through the keyhole and see 4 boxes. I find a crack in the wall. I swim into the crack and swim over to the boxes. 3 of the boxes are open. I peer into the boxes and see old sheets of paper. Then I look at the remaining box and I try to open it but it’s locked. I swim up to the next level. I seem to be in a bedroom. I look out the window and see my classmates swimming outside.

Suddenly, a tremor starts. It makes a big chunk of wood fall off from the ceiling and traps me in the bedroom! I look up to where the big chunk of wood fell from, it’s just another old room. Then I see a drawer. I swim over to the drawer and open it. Inside is a gold key. I pick it up and thump onto the big bit of wood to try and break it. It doesn’t budge. Then I find a door, so I swim through it. It leads into a chamber with cooking items in it. I swim out of the chamber as fast as I can. I whack behind me to slam the door. Then, I hear Sandy’s voice, calling my name. I call her name back. She looks up through the window and sees me. She tells Ms Shell that I’m stuck there, everyone races inside the ship. I hear them swimming through the crack. They see the big chunk of wood that trapped me up there. I hear them thumping against the wood, trying to free me. Then I remember the room above me. I race up to the next room. There’s a bit of light streaming through a tiny crack but I can’t fit through the crack. Then I see Sandy. She is in the room below me. I call her name and she looks up and races to me. Then Ms Shell says “Why did you go off like that? We were worried about you until Sandy told me that you were stuck up here”

I told her about the locked box and she smiles and says “Okay let’s see if this key really works or not!”

We swim down to the bottom level. I put the key into the small keyhole of the box. It clicks! Inside is gold coins and jewels and gold cups and diamonds and even green sapphire necklaces! And crystals have formed in the inside of the box. Then it is time to go home. I drag the big box with me. My mum and dad smile when they see what’s inside the box that I bring home. I give half of the treasure to Sandy. Her mum and dad smile when they see it. Then my mum and dad say, “Okay, it’s time to herd the sea horses.” When it is dinner time my mum and dad show me the salmon. After we have the scrumptious salmon my mum and dad bring krill out for dessert. I chomp down on my bit of krill. It tastes like paradise! I smile, and then it’s time for me to go to bed.

BYE!

Dog vs Cat vs Person

by Abigail Westrupp

There was a dog named Summer, and she was doing something in the garden.

Running in the garden and then a cat came, and a person came.

Sometimes when a cat and a dog are together, they fight.

Because they don't like each other.

They bite and chase each other. I don't know why.

And then the person made them become their pets.

And then the cat and dog behaved, and they got along.

Food vs Liquid

by Will van Baarle

Chapter 1: Food vs Liquid

This is the normalist chapter ever.

One day there was food and there was liquid. Someone drank liquid and someone ate food, it's so simple.

Chapter 2: That was easy

That was so easy because it was so simple. Just saying. It's not really even a chapter. It's just a thingymajig.

Chapter 3: The actual chapter this time

Food is way better than liquid people say. You can only survive a week without liquid and two months without food. I don't even know if that's real or not, I just made it up.

So anyway this happened. Pow-pow whip-ow pew pew ow.

"No not so fast"

"Hey your dumb"

"Don't call me dumb".

"Hey why?"

"Well because it's not nice"

"I don't mind if its not nice, because I'm not nice if I'm fighting".

Wow-pew-pew-kill-kill.

"I'm going to use my phone to help me learn valuable life skills. So I'm going to kill this baby duck over here" Kill kill kill.

"Now kill this thingy thing thingy thing thingy thing" kill kill kill.

"How does the game help?"

"Because I can just use it against you now" yay-ya kill kill kill.

Liquid is losing, but then liquid uses its fizzy power soda. And then it squirts everywhere. "oh no I'm wet... I'm about to turn into liquid!"

“But we are liquid “says the fruit, and food.

“Oh well, good for you, but not good for sandwiches, and monster cheese, and heaps of stuff like cheerios. But ice cream likes liquid the best, so ice cream can easily kill liquid. “Wa-chow-pew-pew-pew-pew.

Ice block comes in and helps ice cream. Ya-ya-bo-bo-bo-dead-dead-kill-kill.

“You’re dead now, and stay down liquid.”

“Yeah well fizzy power again” we-haa.

“I love this fizzy drink” says the human. “With ice cream, my favourite. I’m going to drink this!”

Oh no! So no-one won that battle. I’m going to see you in the next chapter.

Which is actually a few chapters away.

Chapter 7: the big bum fighter

Chapter.... I don’t know what I’m up to.

So I’m going to kill you - pew pew.

This is the best game ever I’ve played because it tells me how to kill people and that’s the easiest thing to do. Or is it?

Let’s see.

Staying still, reacting.

Oh man, kill-kill-kill-dead-dead-kill.

Oh no I’m dead. I’m only a tiny drip.

I need to go in a glass, with more of a fountain.

We are going into a fountain place and we are at a park. Because he said can we go into a park. So we are at a park right now. And that’s a picture of me when we went ice skating. Anyway, carrying on.

So the liquid got 100x stronger, and the food went there and saw a burger with chips.

The chips said “oh hi food, can I join your team?” and the fountain was like “no way”

Chips replied “I asked to join the other team.”

Fountain said “oh right, if they want.”

Which they probably don't even though they probably do, but they don't want their team to get weaker and weaker and weaker.

“So please don't go on anyone's team”

(and I don't like soggy chips by the way – but I like takeaways and cheeseburgers, they are my friends, and chicken nuggets)

They got chicken nuggets, burgers, and chips on their team.

The chips were like “food war!”

The burgers were like “mah”

The nuggets were like “chicken wing, chicken wing, chicken macaroni”

Chapter: something

It's called something because something happened

A bunch of stuff that happens next.

This is the complete violence chapter. Presented in food-o-rama.

You need to flip it not rip it.

Otherwise you will have nightmares about food punching liquid. (Flip flop)

off-off-off-off

Liquid is winning

The food is getting watered, and who likes soggy food?

Most people do if they eat carrots, but not chips.

Imagine if you had chips boiled in hot water with cold water over top that makes ice cubes, inside of the chips. You'd just be having ice cubes.

Let's carry on.

The water was winning. The food accidentally ate a bit of water. And the patty became bigger and bigger until it exploded with water and the water team was like “oh no, all of our water went everywhere.”

and the food team was like “that was a big explosion, let's do that again.”

So they made heaps of patties, and heaps of explosions.

The water was like “oh no we are losing”.

and then the food was like “oh yeah, you are losing, that’s so good for our team and not good for your team.”

“Let’s try to fight again”.

This is the chapter 7: which is a bunch of fight stuff that happened next – even though I was going to call it something else.

They were going to leave the park and go to the food factory to get heaps of food.

And food armour, like a train.

And the water went to the water fountain to bring out its buddies. And the soda went to the store to buy some soda. Which costs a \$1000, if you wanted to buy all that they had.

Luckily the water had money, left around at the parks. So they had enough money to afford all the soda bottles. And there was a cheap deal. 2 for 10cents. Otherwise 1 for \$1million.

I don’t know what happens next.

Now the computer is speaking... no me.

In the incredibly violent chapter in flip-o-rama the dog licks water, and then it wees out water, which is a good thing.

Now.. back to the author.

Sorry about that. That was the book. It wasn’t me.

The water got some power ups, same with the food.

The food got food trays, chips shields, and I don’t know.

And then there was this new crime fighter called objects. Which is actually the worst team in the book so far. But there is another team that’s worst, called the trees, which is in another book, but bye-bye that story. Now we are carrying on with this story.

Bye-bye said the water

Not so fast said the food.

Pew pew pew dead

Oh no

Splash splash – the humans are drinking up our soda.

The humans are eating our subway.

So they cried for hours, while they were fighting at the same time.

Pew-pew-pew- wa-wa-wa

Then the food made up a song that goes.

“Food is the best, water is the worst, food is the best, water is the worst” and you just repeat that all over again and again.

Chapter something: The big big big fight that stays on forever.

Pew-pew-pew-pew

Kill-kill-kill

pew-pew-pew

dead-dead

kill-kill...

that goes on forever...

“oh bugger, we are almost dead”

“Let’s go to the supermarket and buy the whole market, and throw out the bottles and cans.”

So they went to the supermarket and got pasta, and they got the hardest thing that you could ever chew on... Rock cake!

And then in another book, the rock cake made a rock team, from the rocks in the cake.

So the fight was almost done but the food went to the supermarket and they carried it all the way there.

And then they started toy shattering and magazine breaking.

They were like “oh no there is a big battle between food and liquid, good-bye”

pew-pew-pew-kill-kill-pew-ya-pew-ya-i’m dead...

Then the bottles of soda wrestled like that.

Then there was only one drip of water and one bite of food left.

And then the food won. But the water was wrapped around a chair.

Then the food ask “Where are all of your buddies? Otherwise I am going to kill you with this thing. I don’t even know how I will but I will somehow.”

Then they lit a firework and it lit up in the sky which was cool.

“Well then this” as he threw a hot sewer, and threw it down, and it crashed.

Chapter 9: Something happened

The food went to the sushi train and went on the sushi train and said “hey can I have a ticket”

And then the sushi person who drives the train was like “hey how many tickets”

“I said one ticket please”

“Ok, so how many tickets”

“I said one”

“Sorry we only have three”

“Ok then I’ll take three”

“but that’s unfair because everyone else only takes one, so you will be stealing”

“I’ll pay you extra money then”

“oh yeah well then you’re going to say goodbye to your little friends.”

“So what’s your phone number.”

“What do you need my phone number for?”

“The computer”

“What computer?”

“The computer”

“What computer I said?”

“The computer over there”

“What! That’s only cardboard with a bunch of sharp linings”

“No its a computer. I don’t know what to say but its a computer.
Is that good enough?”

“Ok its 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10.”

“Ok let me have a think, what comes first”...(time)(time)

“you need to hurry up or else”

“you need to be more patient”

1 hour and 50mins later....

“10- so now can I place your order, how many tickets?”

“You’ve already asked me that question.”

“I’m just hoping on, and you’re getting out.”

“Oh yeah! Well I am going to use my salmon power” (Salmon attack)

“Ok fine, I want one ticket”

“But we only have three.”

“You already told me this,,, and then you are going to ask, what’s your number”

“no I’m not”

“but you already have”

“Ok”... 25mins later

“What’s your phone number for the computer?”

“You’ve already asked me that!!!”

50mins later

“Finally I get to go on the train.”

“Hey, why did you come in?”

“What do you mean? I wanted a train ticket.”

“We only have three. “

100 years later.

“I’m on the train YAY!... but I’m also very old so...bye-bye suckers.”

“Enjoy your trip, but don’t forget we are closed, so you can’t go on that.”

“Oh man, I need to tell the sushi army then.”

“I’ll need to buy a sushi army then.”

“Can I buy a sushi army”

1 year later.

“Here you go... and we are open, finally.”

“We get to go yay!”

Because then the sushi army joined the food army, and now its time for the water to get their tap.

So they went down to the sewer and got a lot of wee that took ages to get, because its so hard.

They had a big fight, and we will find out what happens next in our next book which is “Food v liquid – Book 2”

Very Nice Husband

by Millie van Baarle

She sees a very old person. And after she kills the very old person she sees a very nice husband.

She loved him the first day she met him. She kissed him on the lips. But after she kissed him on the lips he died, and she cried “Oh no I loved him, when would he come alive again?”

The Very Hungry Monster

by Dev Rama

There once was a monster who liked to eat lots of things but he was a friendly monster so he didn't eat important stuff.

When a person was being chased by something, he ate it up.

When a person started to have a bad dream, he ate the bad dream up. One day, a big meteor was about to hit the Earth, so he ate that too.

He nearly ate a house once but he remembered that he doesn't eat important stuff so he didn't.

One day a mouse was being chased by a cat and needed the monster's help. The monster wanted to be helpful, so he thought about eating the cat.

He didn't really want to but he did want to help the mouse.

Then while he was thinking, he got bitten by the cat. Which made him a bit sad.

But biting things made the monster happy so maybe the cat was biting the monster because the cat wanted to be happy.

He decided to make the cat his pet.

And together, they bit lots of things- but not important stuff.

Cat Story

by Surya Raghunandan

I got a new cat. With my new cat I will play with his toys.

After playing with his toys, I will play with his ball. Then the cat wanted to play with his bunny. Then the cat went to sleep.

Next morning the cat was eating breakfast then he went to work.



Ages 8-12

*Shortlist
& Winners*



Willow, the witch and the wand

by Alisa Oldengarm

Willow was nervous. Last week, they had packed up their things, sold their house, and moved halfway across the country, to a small town called Woodcrest. The main reason for this was because Willow had been bullied a lot at her previous school. She and her family hoped that the kids in Woodcrest would be nicer than those from her old school. She was nervous about starting a new school. She really didn't want to be bullied. Her parents had put a lot of work into giving her a second chance and she didn't want to waste it.

As Willow walked into the classroom, she was shocked to see another student getting teased horribly. A few students were pulling her beautiful long black hair, calling her names, and knocking all her stuff off her desk. What shocked her even more was the fact that nobody was trying to help her! Knowing how it feels when you're being teased and no one is helping, Willow decided to help. "Stop" was all she said, but it worked. Everyone turned around to stare at her.

Even the teacher, who seemed to have been so distracted by her book that she didn't pay attention to the teasing. Willow decided she didn't like this teacher one bit, if she could be so distracted she didn't notice bullying. "Why are you teasing her?" Willow asked.

"Wait, you seriously don't know?" One of the bullies asked, bewildered. "No," Willow replied.

"Can't you tell from her black hair and cloak? She's a witch. And witches are evil." Suddenly, the teacher noticed what was happening. "Hi Willow, I'm really sorry you had to witness this on your first day. Could everybody please sit down in their seats? Audrey, could you please take Cassandra to the sick bay. Tell Ms Violet what happened and then come straight back here."

As Audrey led Cassandra to the sick bay, the teacher started talking again.

"Hi Willow, my name is Ms Rose, and I will be your teacher this year. Class, this is Willow. She will be joining you this year. Willow, would you like to introduce yourself?"

"Sure Ms Rose. Hi class, as you heard, my name is Willow, and I am excited to be joining your class this year". With that, Miss Rose started the first lesson of the day.

When the bell rang for morning tea, everybody rushed to the door, eager to get outside. Well, everyone except Willow and Cassandra. Willow flashed a smile at Cassandra and Cassandra smiled back.

“Do you want to sit together?” Willow asked.

“Are you sure you want to be seen with me?” Cassandra asked..

“Ignore those bullies. I think witches are extraordinary. Maybe you could even teach me some magic.” Willow said.

Cassandra led Willow to her favourite spot to sit, behind the bike shed.

“I like this place because people don’t come here often so they don’t tease me as much.”

“Cool,” The girls started chatting about their hobbies while they ate their morning tea.

“Hey, Willow, do you want to come over to my house after school?” Cassandra asked.

“Sure Cassandra. Actually would it be okay for me to call you Cass?” Willow replied.

“Sure”.

That afternoon, Willow and Cass walked over to their mums, who were standing together chatting. They both asked their parents at once and both mums said the same thing: “Yes of course”. They were both glad their daughters had made a friend that day and that they wanted to hang out straight away.

When they got to Cass’s house, Cass suggested exploring the woods behind her house. Since Willow loved the woods, she agreed instantly. In the woods Cass showed Willow a special little path. As they neared the end of the main path, Cass branched off onto a smaller path which led to a small clearing, which had an even smaller path branching off. This path led them to a little hut deep in the forest. It was more of a treehouse than a hut, as it was nestled in the branches of one of the trees. Together, the girls climbed up the ladder and into the treehouse. Then, both Willow and Cass gasped in surprise. There, lying on the bench in the middle of the treehouse, glistening in the sun that shone through a skylight, was a wand. It wasn’t any ordinary wand. It was a beautiful wand made of an oak branch. The tip had been dipped in glitter, so it looked like a light whenever the sun was shining on it.

Cautiously, Willow moved to pick up the wand. “Stop!” Cass exclaimed.

“This wand is probably magical and it might hurt people who aren’t magical. I should do it because I am a witch, I have magical powers.” Grumbling, Willow agreed. As Cass’s fingers closed around the base of the wand, she screamed.

Fearing the worst, Willow attempted to rush over and grab the wand out of Cass’s hand. As soon as Willow’s fingertips brushed the wand, she understood why Cass

had screamed. When they touched the wand, they instantly felt its power course through them. It showed them just how powerful it was, and it also told them that if this wand fell into the wrong hands, something terrible would happen. Together, they gasped as the wand began to glow. Then, it started showing pictures. Pictures of its life. It started telling a story.

When Willow and Cass finally came out of the treehouse, the sun was setting. The story of the wand had been so captivating that neither of the girls noticed that the sun had started to set. Without discussing it, they both understood the potential of the wand but also its dangers. Cass had the wand tucked into the inside pocket of her jumper. When she got home, she would put it into the secret nook in her wall. No one knew of this spot except Cass, and now Willow. The two girls hurried home, knowing that their parents would be scared since neither of the girls had a phone and the parents had no way of knowing where the girls were.

When Willow and Cass got back to Cass's house, their parents were furious. They all said the same thing.

“Where were you?! What happened?!”

Of course, neither of the girls told them the full truth. Instead, they just said, “We're sorry. We just got caught up in the forest and didn't notice the time. We promise we will watch the time next time we go to the forest.”

Thankfully, the parents accepted the apology and Willow went home.

The next day, the girls met each other in their little space behind the bike shed before school started. As Willow sat on the grass, waiting for Cass, she had an idea. Desperate to tell Cass, Willow crept out of their hiding spot, and she walked toward the gate. As she was nearing the gate, some bullies popped out from behind a tree and started teasing Willow. They started doing normal bully things, like calling her names and pulling her hair. That type of bullying she was used to. The other type, she wasn't used to. They were punching and kicking her. Just as the biggest bully reared to knock her out, Cass appeared.

“STOP” is the only thing she said but it worked. The bullies were so surprised that they dropped Willow on the ground and turned to face Cass.

Knowing they would turn on her for standing up to them, Cass started retreating towards the classroom. Lucky for both girls, the bell rang right then. Since they knew Miss Rose doesn't like people being late, Cass turned and Willow got up and together they ran towards the classroom.

They ate their lunch in the library, browsing books about magic and wands. They didn't find any good information, just a whole bunch of fantasy stories. That didn't matter though. The biggest reason for them to stay in the library was the bullies.

The bullies wanted revenge. While the girls were looking for information, they were also talking. They decided they would ask their parents if Willow could come to Cass's house again today. They hatched plans about what to do with the wand. When they were in the woods, the first thing they would do is look around for signs of anything that had left the wand there. Then, they wanted to experiment with the wand to see what it could do. Willow also suggested that maybe they could find a place to hide the wand inside the treehouse.

Before they knew it, the bell had rung again to tell them to go back to class. Quickly, the girls grabbed their bags and rushed to class. That afternoon, they weren't paying attention to their teacher at all. All they could think about was the wand, and what they would do that afternoon. It was lucky that the teacher didn't call on them to answer a question because they definitely wouldn't have known the answer. As soon as the bell rang for school to end, Cass and Willow jumped out of their seats, grabbed their bags, and were out the door, sprinting towards their parents. As soon as they reached their parents, they were asking the question. Of course, their parents said yes, as long as they watched the time. Assuring their parents they wouldn't forget, they sprinted to Cass's house. When they got there, they dumped their school bags on the front porch, grabbed the wand from the hiding spot and rushed to the woods.

As they neared the treehouse, they started seeing some weird things. It seemed as if there were a whole bunch of magical creatures hiding in the trees. Even weirder, they seemed to all be staring at the treehouse. Sensing something was wrong, the two girls rushed towards the treehouse and climbed up the ladder. Once inside, they grabbed the wand and walked out to sit on the tiny porch they had made. Suddenly, all of the creatures charged menacingly towards the treehouse. In the chaos Cass pointed the wand at the creatures, and tried one of the few spells she knew, hoping this would work. There was a flash, and surprisingly, all of the creatures were gone. They had known the wand was wanted, just not this much. Together they talked through the things they could do with it. Then, they decided to choose the safest option.

Since it was winter, the fire was burning brightly in the hearth. With heavy hearts, they opened it and laid the wand inside, watching as it turned to ashes. They knew this was the safest option but were still sad as they watched the wand burn, wishing it was safer so they could've enjoyed it. Just as the wand burnt completely, the girls heard a car pull into the driveway. Together the girls walked towards the front door. Willow walked onto the porch and grabbed her bag. As she walked to her car, she turned back and smiled at Cass.

"See you tomorrow!" Willow called. With that, her mum helped her into the car and they drove away.

The Soldier in the Snow

by Nathan Jaskiewicz

“Stanislaw Nikolla to your station fall out.”

I walked over to the Haglund: a type of all-terrain tank used by the Slovenkan army. When my squad came over, I started driving. My squad was six men including Anderson, Hansson, Eriksson, Berg, Nilsson, and myself. I was driving to Sornuk, Sornuk was on the border of Voornuk. Slovenka and Voornuk had been at war for two years.

Driving to Sornuk was hard being that there was a snowstorm, so I was following a compass. The Haglund suddenly jolted. I heard a cry from the back “we’re crossing a lake.” I was puzzled. If we were going in the right direction the only lake this big would be at the border. But we hadn’t traveled enough miles to be there.

I kept on driving in case of getting further lost. After an hour we saw lights ahead. Had we finally reached Sornuk? I grabbed my gun and got out of the truck. Wind and snow blew in my face. After crawling around in the storm, I managed to find a building. On the desk there was a map. Then I looked up, on the wall was the Voornuk flag.

Back in the Haglund, Anderson and the others were waiting for me. Suddenly a loud roar of a jet engine filled the air. A plane soared overhead, after a few circuits the plane landed. Anderson knew something was wrong. He was a Colonel in the army. He knew that no plane of the Slovenkan air force would be here. He grabbed his gun and got out of the truck.

I looked over the map on the desk. On the left side I found some numbers 54.4417285, 18.8567501 and 55.1083500, 19.3803427. They must be coordinates for something but since I didn’t have a GPS, I couldn’t tell what they were for. I heard a roar overhead, the sound of a jet engine. I opened the door and ran into the storm. Snow and ice blew in my face, I could see the lights of the Haglund ahead and could hear machine guns blaring into the storm. Believe me when I say trudging through a snowstorm is not an easy task. What feels like hours was only mere minutes. But after what felt like eight hours of walking, I made it. But had I made it? Had I just passed out in the snow? Was I was merely dreaming? For when I looked up, my squad was nowhere to be seen. Had they been captured by the Voornuks?

I tried to head back to the building. My fingers were numb with cold. It must have been a miracle that I ever found my way back to one the shacks. And as I walked in, I saw a sign that said CELL BLOCK 8. Cell block, this might be where my squad was. But then I noticed the guard, and I was too late. His fist sent me sprawling to the ground. I jumped up and knocked his jaw. The guard stumbled backwards. I gave him a final jab to his head; the guard fell. I checked through his pockets I found a wallet, ID card, and a key.

I tried the key on the door, it was a bit rusty, but it worked. Inside I found Anderson, Eriksson (who was overjoyed to see my face again), Berg, and Hansson. But where was Nilsson? Anderson told me he was in the interrogation room. Hansson was about to bust in, but I stopped him. "There's no point getting caught twice," I said. We would have to go for a more careful approach. I put my ear to the door and thought I could hear laughing. I know I told Hansson not to bust in, but before I knew it, I was holding a Voornish General at gunpoint. Berg grabbed Nilsson by the arm and pulled him out of the room. I grabbed all the guns on the General's desk and passed them back. Then I realised my gun had no magazine, I realised too late. And boy did that General pack a punch. But as I fell to the ground the crack of Anderson's gun whizzed past the General's arm.

I made a dash for the door; my squad wasn't far behind. But when I made it to the door I looked back. Berg had barely made a step, then I noticed he had blood coming from his leg. He must have been wounded in the fight. I went back to help; he leaned all his weight on my shoulders. I managed to get Berg back to the door. But how would we escape? There was no possible way of getting back to the Haglund. "Follow me" said Nilsson, he opened the door into the cold. With Berg still leaning on my shoulders, we pushed our way through the storm. After walking, walking and walking till it seemed we could go no more we managed to find another shack. Nilsson pushed open the door. Inside were three Eagle 612 airplanes. Since they were two-man planes, we would have to take them all.

Berg and I got in the first one, Anderson and Hansson in the next. Nilsson and Eriksson got in the third. I drove the plane down the runway, it had been ages since I had flown one of these. The plane started going up until we were above the clouds, soon the other two planes joined me. We had been flying for half an hour when things started to go wrong. Nilsson's plane started to lose control. It started to lose height and speed until it fell beneath the cloud. I tried calling him on the radio. . . no answer. I kept flying to base, it was only another ten kilometres, we could send out a search party once we got back. I radioed into base: "Nikolla to base, we are flying two Eagle 612's with Voornish markings, do we have permission to land?"

"Base to Nikolla, permission granted." The plane roared down the runway and came to a halt. I helped Berg out of the plane, they took him to the MTF. They sent out a search party for Nilsson and Eriksson.

Meanwhile Anderson, Hansson and I went to the mess hall, the food was good. Around an hour later the search party came back, I saw Nilsson, but I couldn't spot Eriksson. Soon Nilsson came to our table. "Where's Eriksson?" I asked.

Nilsson replied: "he didn't survive the crash, poor soul." "You mean he's gone?"

"I'm sorry to say so but yes he's gone."

I stood up, I didn't care what happened I would avenge Eriksson's death. As soon as Nilsson finished eating, we got in a Haglund and set off. Too many people had died in this war, it had to end. More Haglunds followed behind us. The roar of planes filled the sky. Anderson and Hansson got out and ran to the border. Just as I got out, I heard the crack of a gun, pain flowed through my shoulder. I fell.

Then I looked at my shoulder, I hadn't been shot from the front, I had been shot from the back. "Nilsson you dirty traitor."

Nilsson replied: "I would kill you right now Nikolla, but I am sure you want to hear the full story. So here goes: I was a spy the whole time until I reached the rank of Corporal, then I made sure I got into your squad. I earned your trust and approval, but then I had to act. When you were driving the hagglund and it went off course, you were following a compass. I was holding a high frequency magnet. It was pure luck you found the Voornish's secret base. When you found me in the interrogation room, I was just having a chat with my boss. And yes, I caused the plane crash with Eriksson. Oh, and another thing, we have the coordinates that lead to your base and an oil rig. One message from me and this war will be over."

I was lying on the ground in pain. My muscles barely able to move, he was right this war would be over. But I would make sure that my side won. With all the remaining strength in me I got up and sent Nilsson down. I grabbed his radio and sent it flying. I yelled at the top of my lungs "Anderson stop the missiles from launching!" I blacked out. Next thing I knew I was in a hospital bed.

Anderson and Hansson walked in: "you've been out for three days," said Anderson. I groaned.

"But the destruction has ended, the war is over."

The war is over, those were the best four words I had ever heard.

Nightmares Untold

by Payton Taurua

In the quiet city of Willowbrook, where streetlights cast small shadows on the pavement and the moon peeked through the branches of ancient trees, two boys, Jack and Wilson, embarked on an adventure they would never forget.

Jack, with his unruly mop of chestnut hair and mischievous grin, and Wilson, with his glasses perched precariously on his nose and a book always in hand, were inseparable friends. One chilly autumn evening, they stumbled upon an old, dusty bookstore tucked away in a forgotten corner of their neighborhood. Its sign read: “page turning books” curios, they pushed open the creaky door, and a musty scent filled their noses. Rows upon rows of books lined the walls, some with cracked spines and faded covers. But one book stood out—a huge book bound in black leather with a title written in golden letters: “Nightmares Untold.”

Jack and Wilson exchanged nervous glances, their curiosity at sky level. Without a word, they reached for the book, their fingers trembling with fear. As they opened its pages, a gust of wind swept through the store, extinguishing the flickering candles that lit the room. Before they could react, a hand reached out and grabbed them from the collar, pulling them into the crumpled pages of the book.

When they finally opened their eyes, Jack and Wilson found themselves standing in a sad looking landscape. The sky above was a swirling mass of darkness, and twisted trees looked gloomy in every direction. They were no longer in Willowbrook but were sucked within the pages of “Nightmares untold.”

Panic surged through Jack and Wilson as they realized the size of their situation. But they knew they had to find a way out. With determination in their hearts, they set off to look around for a way out of this horrible book, their footsteps echoing against the bare floor.

As they walked deeper and deeper into the nightmarish realm, they encountered all manner of horrors— deformed shadows with glowing eyes, animals with 5 feet and 7 heads things you only find in the darkest part of your imagination and Jack and Wilson keep walking they didn’t know that days had passed, and still, they found no escape from the pages of this monsterish book. Exhausted and losing hope, they stumbled upon a small house with ivy wrapping around every inch of it. With nowhere else to go, they cautiously approached, the creaking hinges of the old doors sending shivers down their spines. Inside, the house was a labyrinth of corridors lined with portraits that seemed to watch their every move. It was huge compared to what it looked like from the outside. But against all this gloom, they discovered a glimmer of hope—a library filled with books, each containing fragments of forgotten tales, as they opened nearly all the books half the pages were either torn out, burnt or scribbled all over. Jack and Wilson searched the

shelves, looking for answers, until they stumbled upon a small dusty book hidden beneath a pile of ancient maps. Its title read: “The Key to Freedom.” With trembling hands, Jack opened the book and found a passage describing a mythical artifact—the Dreamcatcher—that had the power to banish nightmares and set its prisoners free.

Determined to find the Dreamcatcher and escape the clutches of “Nightmares Unbound,” Jack and Wilson embarked on a quest through the treacherous landscape. They both decided that they would wait in the house for the night and start trying to search for the dreamcatcher tomorrow when the sun comes up, but before the sun could come up there was a knock on the door. They turned to look at each other with caution in their eyes. As they walked towards the door they heard a low grunt from the other side of the door when they reached out to open the door it came crashing down nearly knocking them down to the ground. On the other side of the door was something straight out a horror movie, a huge ball of fur and spikes with huge red eyes with pitch black pupils and wearing a small dreamcatcher on a rope around his neck, growling in the distance was thousands of this creature as far as the eye could see they freaked out “runnnn” Wilson yelled in a high-pitched voice unlike his usual voice. As they sprinted out of that house as fast as they could they noticed that the monster that was standing near the door was wearing the dreamcatcher, the book had described that would set the prisoners of nightmare untold free. They had to get that dream catcher!

But as they searched deeper into the darkness to look for the monster with the dream catcher on his neck, they discovered that the true power of the Dreamcatcher lay not in its ability to banish nightmares, but in the strength of their friendship. With each step they took together, their bond grew stronger, until finally, they stood before the Dreamcatcher itself—a radiant orb pulsating with otherworldly energy but it was still around the monster’s neck but luckily the monster was asleep which would make it easier to take without being noticed. As Wilson walked forward to yank it off the monster’s neck, Jack grabbed a branch from the floor in case the monster woke up and tried to attack them. Luckily the monster was way too far asleep and didn’t even notice the dreamcatcher was gone. They ran back to the house to find out how to use the dreamcatcher and got back home, but when they got to the house the book was gone as was every other book that was in the library when they first went in the house a few hours ago. When they finally lost hope the ground underneath their feet disappeared and they fell into a rabbit hole that seemed to go on forever. As they collapsed onto the pavement, gasping for breath, Jack and Wilson knew that they had faced their fears and emerged victorious.

The Art of Story Writing

by Samuel Jaskiewicz

I am writing a short story for the library. But alas I do not know what to write. I could write about the beautiful world we live in. Or about spaceships. As I do not know what to write I decide to look on the internet. The internet tells me to write about kids finding a dead body. That's gross and disturbing. I am still out of ideas. Sigh, it's two days till the short story competition closes.

I don't know if I'll ever write a short story. It's so hard to think of ideas and today is Sunday so the shops shut early. So even if I do write a story, I can't get it printed. Oh, this is so stressful, I'm going to go play Lego. It will help me relax.

Ahh I'm back from playing Lego.

Wait... why did I not think of this before?

I should just write a short story about me trying to write a short story. Sigh, so much to write in such a small space of time. I'm so thirsty I am going to get a drink. Ahhh, milky milo gives me so much energy. But it probably kills my cholesterol. Oh, now my brother is calling me.

I am back. My little brother wanted help with his Lego build. I had better check my spelling. Oh, now my other brother is calling me. Man, everyone seems to be calling me today. I probably should check my punctuation. My brother is making a model plane from World War I. I'm going to go look at it. It's a Fokker E.111 Ein decker. It's only one day till the end of the competition!

Tickety tackaty tick went the computer keys as I softly pressed them. Time to check the word count I said. Two hundred and ninety-nine words! Another seven hundred and one to go. Staying optimistic here!

Ooops, I just found out my younger brother has Walking Pneumonia. It's not as serious as real Pneumonia. But it explains his short temper. Then again, he always has a short temper. Better stay clear of him for a while!

It's the last day of the competition and I still haven't finished writing my story. Maybe I should have written about something else. Maybe I should have written about kids finding a dead body. Or about spaceships. In fact, I'll just take what I've written here and give it to the library. Who knows, maybe I'll win. Only time will tell.

Skye

by Alicia Johnson

“HAYLEY!!!!!!” my mum calls. “DID YOU FORGET TO FEED THE CHICKENS AGAIN?”

Whoops.

“Um, maybe?” I yell back.

I sigh as I trudge over to the chicken coop, rattling the bucket full of food scraps and pellets. The chickens come running at the sound. As I scatter the food around, I think about our farm. It’s on the outskirts of Featherston. My mum is a professional dog trainer, and my dad is a stay at home, farmer sort of guy. We have a flock of about 20 sheep, 10 chickens, and one rooster. My dad also has a sheep dog named Ace.

By the way, I’m Hayley. I’m 10 years old and when I’m older I want to be a dog photographer. Or maybe a dog groomer. Or maybe I could even be a professional dog trainer like mum. Anyway, back to the chickens. While they are pecking around, I sneak over to their nesting boxes and start digging around in the straw in search of eggs. I find 7, nestled snugly in the middle of the boxes. As I am walking back to the house, I spot dad and Ace herding the sheep down from One Tree Hill and into Chestnut Corner. We keep the sheep in Chestnut Corner a lot in the summer because it is nice and shady and there’s a small stream running along the edge of it. The stream runs out of the paddock and all the way to the lake. The lake is my favourite place. It’s surrounded by native trees and bushes. On warm days I sometimes swim in it. Suddenly, my daydream is interrupted by mum calling to me. “Hayley! I’m just going to drive into town to pick up a new dog. Dad and Ace are moving the sheep. You can watch some TV if you want. There’s a new show called ‘Keeping Up With The Kaimanawas’ that I thought you might like.” “Okay, yay! I know, thanks, sounds good. Bye!” I yell back. I skip back to the house and place the eggs in a basket before walking into the lounge and flopping onto the couch with the remote. I switch on the TV and find ‘Keeping Up With The Kaimanawas’. Mums right, it is a good show. But I’m kind of zoned out, on Planet Hayley, zooming through the stars. Just kidding, I’m thinking about the new dog that mum’s bringing back. I always get super excited when we get new dogs, even though we never keep them. I’ve wanted a dog for ages, but mum and dad aren’t sure about it.

Suddenly I hear an engine in the distance. Not many cars drive along this road because it kinda leads to nowhere, so I’m guessing it’s mum! I race out of the house just in time to see mum’s van turn into our dirt driveway. I start jumping up and down and waving my arms at her. She returns the gesture with a much more dignified wave. Dad and Ace arrive just as she is pulling up. “Hello, what’s happening here?” he asks. “Mum brought home a new dog!” I reply excitedly. “Not again!” he jokes.

Mum hops out of the van and hugs me. “You’re going to love her.” she says as she walks round to the back of the van and opens the boot. I gasp. Inside, curled up in a ball of cuteness is a tiny springer spaniel puppy. I squeal and it looks up, disturbed by the loud noise. It has big blue eyes and huge floppy ears. It’s got patches of golden-brown fur around its eyes and ears and a splodge on its back too. She is the cutest dog that I have ever seen. “What’s her name?” I ask. “She doesn’t have one, I thought you might like to name her.” mum answers. “Yay! I’m naming her Skye then,” I say quickly, “because of her eyes”. Isn’t that the name that you were saving for your dog?” She asks. I give her my biggest smile and say nothing. She rolls her eyes and walks away to chat with dad. I look back at Skye. She is splayed out on the blankets fast asleep, her ears twitching. Then I walk over to listen to their conversation. “She was left in a box outside the animal shelter, but they didn’t have enough room to keep her, so they called me.” “Aw, poor little thing.” Dad says, “what are we gonna do with her?” Mum sighs. “I don’t know. Spaniels are sometimes used at airports as sniffer dogs...” “Or I’ve heard they can be great family dogs!” I interrupt. They both turn to look at me. “Hayley, we’ve talked about this.” Mum says “Anyway, let’s get Skye comfy. We’ll keep her inside until she’s about 5 months old, then we’ll move her to the barn.” “Okay.” I sigh. Dad lifts Skye’s crate and brings it inside while mum carries Skye in her arms. I follow them inside to make sure they do everything right, (and so that I can see Skye!) They set her crate up in the corner of the kitchen and leave her to settle in while they make dinner. We’re having sausages on the BBQ. My favourite!

After dinner dad reads me a chapter from Charlotte’s Web, then I go to bed. I wake up at about 2 in the morning to the sound of whining. I’m guessing it’s Skye. I feel so bad for her. It can’t hurt too much if I just go downstairs and give her a quick pat, can it? I silently get out of bed and sneak to the kitchen. Skye is in her crate, with her muzzle sticking through the bars, whining quietly. When she sees me, her tail starts banging against the side of the crate. “Skye! Be quiet.” I crouch down and unlatch the door of the crate. Skye pushes it open and darts out and into my arms. She shoves her head into my PJs, asking for a pat. I laugh. I love her so much already.

After about 20 minutes of snuggling, I gently lift her into her crate and shut the door. As I am walking back up the stairs I look back and see her lying in her crate, fast asleep.

In the morning, I rush downstairs as soon as I wake up. I am so excited to see Skye! Dad is already up and is making pancakes for breakfast. Skye is ambling around the kitchen and getting in the way, but as soon as she sees me, she scampers over. “Looks like she already has a firm favourite!” Dad laughs. I smile proudly as I pick her up for a snuggle. Mum comes downstairs just as dad is serving the pancakes.

“Wait for me!” she jokes. As we are having breakfast mum suggests that we start Skye’s training today. She also says that I can help her! I’m super excited! We head outside with Skye and bring her to the obstacle course. “Let’s see how confident she is.” Mum suggests. She clips a lead onto her collar and hands the end to me “Do you want to lead her?” she asks. That’s a silly question, of course I do! First, I bring her over to the tunnel. I hand her lead to mum and run over to the other end of it, holding out treats for Skye. Mum lets go and she cautiously starts edging her way through the tunnel. “Yes, good girl Skye!” I cheer. The next obstacle is a ramp, which she scampers over eagerly.

Now for the seesaw. Skye starts to gamble confidently along it but as soon as it starts to tip, she yelps, and starts to panic. “Hey, it’s okay Skye.” I say as I gently lift her down. She snuggles into me. Mum comes over, “Well that was weird.” she says. “I think it’s time for a break. Why don’t you take her for a walk?” “Okay!” I say. “I’ll take her down to the lake,” “Sounds good, just be careful.” “I will!” I yell over my shoulder as I walk across the field towards the trees.

Skye prances around in front of me, pulling on the lead. I start running beside her and soon we are bounding through the forest together. When we get to the lake I stop to catch my breath. Skye jumps up and starts licking my face. “Skye!” I laugh. Then I take off my shoes and socks and slowly wade into the water with her. She’s a bit unsure at first but she gets used to it pretty quickly. Soon she’s swimming around confidently in the shallows. I watch her proudly. She is definitely my favourite dog ever. After about an hour of splashing around we head back to the farm. When we walk into the kitchen mum is cooking dinner. Dad is out in the fields with Ace. After dinner we watch a movie. “Can Skye please sit on the couch with us?” I beg. Mum looks at dad “Okay.” she says. I squeal and lift her up for a snuggle. After the movie I go to bed.

The next morning, I wake up to find Skye sitting beside my bed, whining loudly. “Hey,” I groan groggily. “You’re not supposed to be in here!” I lift her up for a cuddle just as dad rushes into the room, “Whoops,” he says, “she slipped out of the kitchen before I could catch her!” Then we go down for breakfast. After breakfast mum and I take Skye out for some more training. Just like yesterday she is fine on the ramp and tunnel, but as soon as she is on the seesaw she starts to panic. “Why doesn’t she like it?” I ask mum. “Well, some dogs don’t like things moving under their paws, and others can even have a fear of heights!” She explains. “That is so weird!” I say. “Anyway, the best way to cure it is just to keep trying and do a little bit each day. First just get her to put her front paws on it.” Mum instructs. I place a treat on the seesaw and Skye cautiously places a paw on it, before snatching the treat and wolfing it down. “Yay! Good girl Skye!” I cheer. “That’s enough for today,” Mum

decides. That afternoon I take Skye up to watch dad and Ace herd the sheep. She sits quietly beside me, her eyes fixed on them. Once they are done, we walk down with them for dinner. Mum has made some delicious nachos and mince. My second favourite! We are in the middle of dinner when I say, "Can we please keep Skye?" "Yes," Dad announces. "Wait, what?!" I say. I am so confused. "Yup, we can keep Skye" mum says, "We think you've been working really hard with her, and we are very impressed, so we've decided you can keep her!" I squeal. I am so excited that I abandon my dinner and race out to see Skye. I pick her up and shout "You hear that, Skye? YOU'RE STAYING!!!!!!!"

Pansy and Bennet

by Vida Kyle

Cookie the tabby cat was owned by a poor shop keeper. Every day, Cookie loved to see customers walk into the shop, look around, and at least buy one thing. But most of all, she loved to see Grace and William walk politely into the shop. They were two loving children who never fought over toys or quarrelled at any time. As they walked silently into the shop Cookie could hear them whispering happily. “Hey, I can get you the cute doll in the corner!”, whispered William. “And I’ll get you that shiny red firetruck on the second shelf in the shop!” said Grace. As they went up to the counter with the cute doll and the shiny red firetruck, Grace noticed the tabby cat wasn’t at her usual place on the counter, pawing at the bell like she usually did. Grace asked Mrs Asper where Cookie was. Mrs Asper led them to a small room which was lit by the warm light of the orange fire. To one side of the room, a small, comfortable looking chair sat with a little reading lamp and a book. On the other side, a small metal framed bed sat with a glass of milk and a packet of cookies. William peeked cautiously into the tiny room and started for the floral covered chair. “William, watch out!” cried Grace. “Why?” “The cats are underneath you!” “Wait, cats?”, thought Grace. She took another look down at the cat basket and her eyes nearly popped out of her head! “Kitties!”, she squealed. Two beautiful little kittens lay sleeping soundly next to their mother.

One was a deep orange and the other jet black, which was strange because their mother was clearly a beautiful orange blonde. Grace adored the little orange one, and William was in love with the black one.

Pansy and Bennet, as the children liked to call the kittens, were playful and never departed from their mother or each other. “What will happen to them?”, asked Grace. “Well”, said Mrs Asper, “I am planning to sell them to earn enough money to make renovations and still have money to buy more furniture to replace these tatty pieces of junk and take care of Cookie and me.” “Sell them?”, gasped Grace. “You can’t sell them!” “Well, I might have to” said Mrs Asper as she led William and Grace back to the shop. “Yes, I just need to sell them”, whispered Mrs Asper to herself.

The next day William walked into the shop. Mrs Asper was standing behind the paint chipped counter trying to talk customers into getting a kitten. Unlike most of the times he came to the shop, William hadn’t forgotten his money. As Mrs Asper led him to the room with the kittens in it, William realised that he could buy Pansy for Grace, and he would still be able to play with the coal black kitty. As he walked out of the shop, William bumped into Grace. “I’m going to get that new picnic basket that is on sale, and we can go on a picnic in Daisy Park”, Grace said sounding just as lively as she was that morning.

As she walked into the shop, William let out a sigh of relief, “Phew, that was a close one! I mean to keep it a secret and surprise for Grace, and I will.” Little did William know that Grace had money in her hand for Bennet, the inky black kitty. “Oh Grace, have you come for the beautiful ginger kitty? Because, well, somebody already bought her,” said Mrs Asper sounding happier than ever as she could buy more healthy food. “Um, well, actually Mrs Asper I’ve come for the jet black kitten.”

As Grace walked up the path to her door, William walked out holding something behind his back. “Hey, um Grace, there’s something I need to tell you.” “Really? Because there is something I need to tell you!”, Grace said.

As they lifted their hands in front of their bodies, they realised they had bought each other a kitten!

Pansy and Bennet were very happy to be together again. Grace, William, Pansy and Bennet each lived a long and happy life together.

A Different Frog

by Ingrid Wintle

Once upon a time, in a pond full of water, lived a Maud Island frog named Fred. Fred wasn't like the other frogs. He wasn't brown, he was purple! All the other frogs were just plain old brown.

"Why are you like us, Fred?" they said.

One day a Tui landed next to Fred.

"Wow!" said the Tui, its wings flapping like a hawk. "You are the coolest frog I've ever seen!"

"Thanks, you're one of the only ones who like my purpleness," said Fred sadly. "Everyone else makes fun of me,"

"Oh, people make fun of me for being different too, but we are all different!" said the Tui. "Wanna fly with me?"

Fred's eyes twinkled. "Fly? But I'm a frog! Frogs can't fly!"

"Hold on tight!" said the Tui.

Before Fred could say something, the Tui picked him up, put him on her back and took off! They flew over the pond, past the forest and over a field full of flowers. They saw a lot of different animals, big ones, small ones and all different colours.

"There's not one thing in the world that's the same." Said the Tui.

The wind blew in Fred's face and the world looked so cool! They landed on a giant sunflower. Fred had never seen anything so amazing.

"See?" The Tui said. "Being different isn't weird, it is normal."

Fred smiled. Maybe being different wasn't so bad after all. In fact it was cool!

The Quail Society

by Corey Hall

One day I was sitting on the deck watching quail, there was something strange about the quail. I crept closer and started to listen to the quail. It looked like they were organising something. And I could understand what they were saying. Suddenly, they noticed me listening. They ran away into a deep hole in the bushes. I decided to follow them. They were too fast for me, and I couldn't keep up. So I took a rest, before continuing on. I turned on my torch and came to a fork in the path. So I went back home because I didn't know which way they went.

The next day I saw the same quail looking in our mailbox. To get into the mailbox they went on top of each other, one of them reached in and grabbed out a small box. They were super excited. They went back down to their hole. I knew this was my chance to follow them, I didn't want to lose them again. They didn't notice me because I was being quiet and staying in the shadow in the path. I saw them take the path to the left of the fork. Then I came to a little tunnel with steps going down. The little tunnel was narrow and a bit dark. The little tunnel was well worn. I could tell the quail had been here many times before. Then the quail disappeared through a door. It was weird that there was a door there. The door was very dark, the handle was golden.

I opened the door to see an underground quail city. The houses were made of clay shaped like houses. There was a big tank of purified water that they could drink. They had lots of shops around, there was lamp shops, drink bottle shops, decoration shops, ice cream shops, dairies, and any other kind of shop. They had an airport. They had some roads leading to different places. They had pathways you could walk on. There were food shops, playgrounds, schools, labs, libraries, bookshops. The underground city was full of quail going on about their business. There was even a quail army.

After a while I saw the quail open the box and it had a machine in it but i couldn't tell what the machine was. Suddenly the quail saw me because I accidentally snapped a stick on the ground. I ran off back to my house but luckily I could remember the path I took to the quail city. Back home, I made a map while I could remember the way to the quail city.

When I came back the next day I saw what they were making, and I also saw that there was a gourd vine with gourds on it. Then I saw a quail harvest one of the gourds and make it into a lamp to sell. The quail noticed me and chatted to another quail. Pretty soon all the quail knew I was there.

An important looking quail came up to me. He said “I will tell you how we got so smart, and built our quail society, if you can keep it a secret. So, first, we found a barrel of toxic waste at the rubbish dump. Then we drank it thinking it was water. Other animals drank it too but it didn’t affect them.

Then, we felt sick for about a week. Then our brains felt a bit weird. After that we found we could speak in human language and could do complex hard things like coding, building and cooking.

Then we found a hole in the ground and then we built a city underground and overground. We like to throw parties to celebrate special days like the Quail New Year. Then we found some old parts from the rubbish dump to build a computer. The machine in the box is a disco laser for our next party. To help us keep our secret please destroy the map you made.”

I said “Okay, I will destroy the map, and keep your secret. But on one condition, you invite me to some of your parties you have.”

“Yes” they said, “it’s a deal.”

One week later it was the Quail New Year. I checked the mailbox and found a little party invitation with my name on it. At the time on the invitation I ran to the little tunnel, remembering to take the left turn. The tunnel was lit up with gourd lamps. I could hear party music and smell hot buttered caramel popcorn. I opened the door and saw lots of quail partying under laser lights and wearing sunglasses from the rubbish dump. When the party was over, I went back home to sleep. I knew it was the best secret ever and couldn’t wait for the next party.

(This is based on a true story.)

Nevada

by Bernardt Britz

There is a planet hidden far away in the Milky Way, where four biomes make up a wonderland called Nevada. Nevada is a majestic place filled with displays of vibrant, vivid lights, colours, a matrix of stars and beautiful satyrs. The spectacular world's four biomes are inhabited by four separate nations who live in harmony with each other while caring for and protecting the unique fauna and flora.

The four biomes are each in a constant state of a specific season, similar to Earth's summer, winter, spring, and autumn. The nations are named according to what their biome is; the biome similar to summer so their nation is called Thermia, the biome closest to winter their nation is called Glacia, and the biome closest to spring their nation is called Equinox, and the autumn's nation is called Amber.

Unfortunately, a long time ago, Nevada was different; it was dead, had no nature, and no more than a few hundred animals left; until the last four mages came together and used all their power to create four crystals for each of them.

The mages created the civilizations without using any wood from nature because everybody vowed never to damage or hurt nature and to keep the wonderful nature intact. The mages are called the gifted ones because only certain satyrs can become mages.

The four crystals were created by using the essence of the stars which have magic powers to restore life to the dead plants and nature, and can create eternal life for what used to be dead; As long as they stay where they are.

Ten thousand years after the mages had made the stones, everybody had forgotten about them and didn't know where the rocks were. People made their own beliefs because none knew the truth.

Except for one day plants began rotting and dying in the centre connecting the four biomes. The terrifying darkness was slowly spreading; People didn't know what to do, mages arrived and used all their powers except nothing worked.

Mages were able to create a barrier to trap the darkness from spreading, it worked except to their horror, portals opened, and Dark humanoid creatures came out of the portal and destroyed the barrier.

The skies turn dark. The darkness slowly grew but the same could not be said for the creatures, they sprinted and attacked the forest, and the mages fought back. They were overwhelmed and suddenly, the dark spirits fell to the ground, and slowly the bodies of the dark creatures evaporated into ashes. Everybody was puzzled and confused, how did this happen and how was this possible?

Silence reigned; nobody knew what would happen next.

A sudden echo of energy blasted across the field of mages. The portals began shaking and becoming larger, the ground trembled as a dark, large, and horned beast charged out of the biggest portal. The beast had a sword attached to his left hip. That beast was made only for destruction. The roar of thunder was enough to violently shake the ground forcing the mages to fall to their knees, unable to move, stuck in fear. Others scrambled to their feet trying to run away.

The large, powerful beast drew his sword swiftly and let out a mighty beastly roar. He dropped to one knee and struck the ground creating a deep crater. He destroyed everything in his path leaving only broken and dead branches. He screamed again even louder than before, as he raised his sword a large bubble of dark void began growing from the tip of his sword. The void grew bigger and bigger rapidly expanding. The beast stepped forward and slashed his sword through the air throwing the now giant dark void ball at the ground. The ball burst into multiple circular waves of darkness spreading dread across all of Nevada, turning nature into darkness.

A slither of light broke through the air next to the portals! The beast focused on the light, he ran towards it but suddenly with an explosion of blinding white light, it was gone. What seemed to be a lion, stood forward from the light and showed itself to everybody. The beast lifted his huge foot preparing to crush the lion with one stomp. The lion roared and as the beast heard it he dropped his sword and fell to the ground. Like the others, he had slowly turned to ash. The portals turned to smoke, slowly wafted through the air, disappearing and the skies cleared.

The lion looked up and opened his mouth, showing a crystal inside it. He slowly lowered his head softly placing the crystal on the ground. Where it slowly absorbed into the dusty ground. The skies cleared, and the vibrant, vivid lights and colours were restored to Nevada again. The unique nature regained its beauty and strength. Harmony and peace were brought back to Nevada, and everybody was filled with joy, excitement, and happiness. They lived on for generations to come.

Artemis the Assassin

by Aoife Raggett

I groan. “How did I let this happen?” I whisper. I was sitting in a dark, damp dungeon, lit by torches along the walls. I felt my pockets and sleeves, no weapons. I felt inside my boots. Still no weapons. I reached up to my ear and found my hair pin. I smiled. At least I had a way of getting out. Then I heard the clanking of boots. I narrowed my eyes.

“Guards...” I think, annoyed. That’s when the Lord of the City walked in front of my cell. I stood and glared at him.

“Has no one taught you manners? You bow to me.” he says. I look at him with my eyebrows raised.

“I bow to people that are above the age of 30,” I say calmly, “not people that are a few years older than me. I apologise for what I have been taught.” He clenched his fists, with annoyance. I smiled trying VERY hard not to laugh at him. “You know, when you’re annoyed, you look like you’re 15? Maybe even 14!”

“So, this is your sense of humor? Pretty good for an Assassin.”

“Why thank you.”

“That was not a compliment.”

“I know, I took it as a compliment though, you can’t stop me.”

“Tomorrow, you go to court.”

“Yayyyyyy..!”

I sat in my cell and meditated until I heard footsteps again. I opened one eye and saw a girl around my age in maid clothes. I raised an eyebrow.

“H-hello..” The girl stammered, and I closed my eyes again.

“I don’t bite.” I say calmly.

“Yeah, well you look like you might.” the girl answered evenly. I opened my eyes and looked her up and down.

“Who are you?”

“I’m Athena?”

“Athena Ortiz, yes?”

“Why in the world do you know my name?” Athena asked, staring at me, her eyes wide.

“Oh, no reason, buuut, I have a question for you.” I say standing up.

“Ask away.” Athena said, sliding my food into my cell.

“Your brother is the Lord, yes?” I say. Athena fumbles for a second then stands up straight.

“Who are you? And how in the name of god, do you know that?”

“Oh, just a lucky guess...does no one know?”

“Apollo doesn’t want a sister like me, so he forced me to keep quiet and made me a maid. I don’t really care though. He’s rude and ignorant. He thinks women shouldn’t fight. But he has been acting a little weird lately,” Athena spat, “but, on a brighter note, why are you here?” I look at her.

“I, uhh, did something bad?” I say. Athena looks at me.

“What did you do?” she asks. I look at the ground.

“I killed a commander...” I mumble.

“Sorry, didn’t catch that!” Athena said cheerfully.

“I killed a commander, it was an accident!” I say. Athena blinked at me.

“Which one?”

“Big bulky bald one?”

“Commander Anders...probably the most powerful...you’re in BIG trouble. Like BIGGGG trouble.”

“Yayyyyyy...” I say sarcastically.

“Well, I should be going, see you tomorrow!”

“See ya Athena.”

“Wait, what’s your name?” Athena asks.

“Artemis,” I say.

“Well, see you soon, Artemis,” Athena says, smiling. I look at her.

“Yeah, see you soon...” I say trying not to show my fear that I would not be here when she comes back.

The next day the guards came to pick me up. For some weird reason they were all quiet and secretive. They kept looking at each other weirdly, and they were very gentle. That's when I realised.

"Ya know, you two are VERY bad spies." I say smiling. One of the 'guards' stumbled slightly.

"How the heck did you figure that out?" Nonstumbling guard asked.

"You guys are too gentle. I suggest you look forward, no where else. Oh, and don't let any emotions show. They give you away hella fast!" I say looking at them happily.

"Thanks?" Stumbling guard said, looking at me curiously.

"No problem. Just one thing, names?"

"Oh, I'm Azlyn, and this is my cousin, Alex." Azlyn (Stumbling guard) said. "You've already met Athena, and then the guard you will get in the courtroom is August."

"Anyway, good luck!" Alex said.

"Yeah...This will be fun".

They pushed me into the courtroom, and the guard that I presumed was August winked at me, before grabbing my wrists and pinning them behind my back. She shoved me forward. I mean, this girl was a very good actor! She forced me into a chair. The whole courtroom stared at me. I looked around, the room was lit by lanterns, and was gold and orange.

"Let's begin!!" said a man with a funny wig in a chair elevated from everyone else. "Lord Apollo, what is your case?" Apollo stood up.

"This girl killed Commander Anders!" he yelled. The court judge, or Wiggy as I shall call him, looked at me and made a gesture for me to defend myself.

"Yeah, I killed him, but this is not the correct topic we should be focusing on."

"So you're just gonna say you killed him?"

"Should I be saying something different?" I shot back. Wiggy smacked his hammer and looked at me.

"What is the topic we should focus on?" he asks. I smile, and look at Apollo.

"Glad you asked!" I stood up. "Apollo, may I ask, what are your family names?" Apollo stared at me confused, then it seemed to hit him.

“YOU- How do you know?” he shouted.

“Oh, lucky guess,” I say grinning devilishly. Wiggy looks from Apollo to me.

“Care to explain what she is talking about, Lord Apollo?” he asks, confused.

“Yes,” I say, “please do, ‘Lord Apollo!’” Apollo narrows his eyes at me.

“You think you know so much, when really, you know nothing!”

“I mean.. Nothing is more than you know... soo, I’ll take it!” I say giving him a ‘come on, just say it!’ sort of look.

“No, I will not speak” he growled. I sigh.

“His name is actually Armas. He is a very talented mimic. He is supposedly my target for the real Lord Apollo. It was devastatingly obvious, I mean, the real Apollo cares about his sister, and he values men and women equally. This child doesn’t care for anyone! Not even for his biological sister!”

“God, you really are much better than last time I saw you, Artemis.”

“Thanks, Armas, even if you are a traitor, and a horrid brother” I say. Wiggy looks back and forth between us.

“Lord Apo- Armas, unfortunately, what you are doing is illegal, and we will have to arrest you.” Wiggy says. Armas was taken by guards. My guards reached for me to put me in the dungeon, but August stopped them. She raised her mask and stared at me with shining eyes,

“Okay. Athena was right. That was MAD, you totally just ruined his life!” she said happily. I smiled.

“Yeah.” I say, “I guess I did...I have never felt so proud of myself!” Athena then ran into the room.

“GIRL POWER! Oh and thank you! How is my brother?”

“Dark and gloomy, but other than that, awesome!” I grin. Athena smiles.

“I knew something was up! How did you figure out that he was an infiltrator?”

“Heh, uhh... Armas is uhh, my brother?”

“You’re joking right?”

“No, he’s my brother, and he’s so ANNOYING! Oh, he’s older, just for the clarification.”

“Oh my god, I feel so bad for you. It must be so annoying being brothers with him!”

“Yeah.. he wasn’t always so... power hungry. There was a point in life where we were inseparable. And then our father left and it just went downhill from there. He became hateful and mean... blaming everyone for Dad leaving. Then one day he just disappeared. No note. Just a knife on my bed. I still have the knife.”

“Damn, I’m sorry” Athena said, looking at me sympathetically.

“Don’t be,” I say. Just as I say that people burst into the room, dressed in all black and holding hook swords.

“GET ON THE GROUND!” one of them yelled. The guards ran at them but the people dressed in black easily knocked them down. They used Armas’ fighting style. I smile and crack my knuckles and my neck.

“Well brother, two can play that game.” The people in black noticed me walking towards them and all their attention went to me. I could feel the whole room looking at me.

“Artemis, get out of there!” Athena yelled. I smiled. One of the people in black leapt at me and aimed a roundhouse kick to my head. I ducked and grabbed their leg. I could see when the realisation hit them, their eyes went wide. I ducked under their legs and threw them to the ground. Another one leaped at me wrapping their arms around my neck. I threw them up and over my head. They smashed into the far wall and I wince.

“Sorry!” I called, then one tried to kick me in the belly. I moved to the side and they tried to kick me in the belly again, but I kept moving.

“It’s like we’re dancing!” I laughed. The person in black growled in annoyance and completely forgot about training and leapt at me. I hit their pressure points and they fell to the ground. “Sorry buddy, but you had this coming. You’ll be fine in about a week, my deepest apologies.” I stand up and look at the rest. I point to the door.

“The exit is over there” I say, smiling kindly. They all ran fearfully for the door. I then turned to see the whole courtroom looking at me like I was mad.

“What?” I ask. Athena stood up

“That was...AWESOME!! I didn’t know that you fight!” she said, jumping up and down. I shrug.

“That was nothing.”

“You threw a guy ACROSS A ROOM! Oh my god, what else can you do?”

As the chaos in the courtroom settled down, August, Alex and Azlyn stared at me with shock, only just realising the extent of my abilities. I look around at the courtroom. It was in tatters. The seats had tipped over as everyone struggled to get to the ground, guards were knocked out on the floor. I look up at Wiggy. His wig was lopsided. I bowed.

“My work is done here.” I grin. I turn and walk towards the door. Athena narrowed her eyes, as if making up her mind, before she walked behind me.

“I’m coming,” she said. I smiled. When we exited the building, the sun was setting, and the sky was orange. As we walked out, I spotted Armas in the shadows.

“You ruin everything good,” he growled. I shake my head,

“I’m not oblivious anymore, Ara. You brought this on yourself. I didn’t do nothing” I said firmly. I then walked out of the gates, knowing that my journey as an Assassin was not done. As a matter of fact, it had only just started. Athena then ran forward and did a cartwheel into a side flip, and looked at me like, ‘Top that’, I grin, I then ran forward, did a double front flip, into a commander roll, when I stood up, I turned around and did a backflip and landed in a T-pose. Athena looked at me shocked, I laughed before I ran off, into the hills, into the only life I have ever known, and will ever know.

