

LOYALSOCK TOWNSHIP MIDDLE SCHOOL'S
LITERARY MAGAZINE

Out of



Our Minds

INAUGURAL EDITION

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VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

A Message from Our Principal...

I am in amazement of these young authors and artists in the first edition of Loyalsock Township Middle School's Literary Magazine ***Out of Our Minds***. What a perfect title for so many reasons at this time of year (How many more days until June 9?)! ***Out of Our Minds*** brings together art, writing, publishing and design. With eleven members on this middle school staff, Advisor Mrs. Victoria Krout has found a way to showcase the minds and ideas of some talented middle school students.

The idea for this Literary Magazine grew out of our student body's exploratory period of IMPACT. IMPACT is a class period every Friday in which students make a long-lasting impact on the school by going above and beyond the daily school routine. Our IMPACT groups (19 in all) picked projects that stretched student learning beyond the classroom walls. One IMPACT group is digging a pond in the science courtyard. Another group began a recycling club. In addition, another group decided to develop a program to help new students feel welcomed to LTMS. Wow! That's just four of the nineteen groups!

The ***Out of Our Minds*** IMPACT group gives students the opportunity to make a difference in our school by allowing student writers and artists the opportunity to publish their crafts. Our eleven staff members include: Teegan Biichle, Abby Colone, Yuliia Meshcheriakova, Cadence Neely, Regan Oaks, Jett Pulizzi, Madison Rall, Victoria Roman, Gianna Rupert, Micah Sagar, and Michaela Wheeland.

Additionally, we are so lucky to have a Loyalsock Alumna share a written work of hers in this first edition. Guest author and Loyalsock grad, Dana Diehl, just published her first short story collection, ***Our Dreams Might Align***. This collection fits ***Minds*** perfectly because it is about thoughts and feelings and our place in the natural world, just like the stories and illustrations in our Literary Magazine. ***Our Dreams Might Align*** pokes at our senses and prods at our feelings. ***Out of Our Minds*** shows optimism (read "Dear Anonymous" by Mia Blas), sadness (read "Goodbye" by Abigail Colone), humor (read "Shoes" by Regan Oaks), loneliness (read ***Untitled*** by Elizabeth Hammond), dislikes (read "The Betrayal" by Mia Blas), the trials and tribulations of growing up (read "Popularity" by Jackson Emery) and other wonderfully crafted stories and poems that portray our students' senses, thoughts and feelings.

A **WELL DONE** goes out to our other authors: Adrianna Carr, Jett Pulizzi, Michaela Wheeland, Rylie French, Madison Rall, Mallory Rodarmel, Cadence Neeley, Micah Sagar, Gianna Rupert, and Victoria Roman. You all make me very proud to be your principal, but more so to be a reader of your words and a viewer of your art that brings so many feelings *out of my mind*.

Dr. Chad Greevy, Principal

Loyalsock Township Middle School

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Guest Author: Dana Diehl

The literary magazine staff interviewed our guest professional author, Dana Diehl, who graduated from Loyalsock and currently lives in Arizona. Dana recently published her first book entitled *Our Dreams Might Align*, which is a collection of her short stories. Read below to learn more about Dana.



What inspired you to write?

Other authors inspire me all the time. Ever since I was a kid, I've loved reading. I read as often as I can. Whenever I read something that surprises or moves me, I think, "Wow! I want to learn how to do that!"

Did you always know you wanted to be an author?

I think I always knew I wanted to be a writer, but I wasn't always sure what being a writer meant. When I was very young, before I could write, I would draw all the time. It felt like magic that by arranging lines and shapes and colors in just the right way, a scene or story would emerge. I wanted to be an artist when I grew up. But then, when I learned how to write, I felt a similar magic. When I was in fourth grade, one of my teachers suggested I enter a writing contest at the James V. Brown Library, and I won. My prize was that my story would be bound and placed on the library shelves. People could come to the library to read it. I loved knowing that at any moment someone could be reading my story and entering the world I had created.

What clicked when you knew that you wanted to be an author?

Writing feels like putting together a puzzle, except you don't know what the puzzle will look like when you're done. That can be really scary, but also really fun. Part of realizing I wanted to be an author was realizing how much fun it could be.

How did you feel when you got your first book published?

When I first learned that my book would be published, it didn't feel real. The publisher sent me the good news email late at night, and so I read it early in the morning while I was still half asleep. Most of my friends and family were still sleeping, so I couldn't call anyone to celebrate. It made the whole thing feel very surreal!

What was your inspiration for your writing?

I am inspired by nature and animals. I am really interested in how people interact with nature, so a lot of my stories start there. One of my stories, for example, is about a woman whose husband brings home two baby Komodo dragons. It was a lot of fun to imagine what it would be like to live with a couple of ferocious lizards.

How long did it take you to publish your first book?

It took me about four years to write my book. I wrote it while I was going to graduate school to earn an MFA in Creative Writing. Once the book was done, it only took a few months to get it accepted by a publisher. I was really lucky. Sometimes it takes years to get a book published, and those authors are the really admirable and brave ones.

What was your favorite subject when you were in school?

In middle school my favorite subject was Science, but in high school it was English. My first year of high school I had Mrs. Krout as a teacher. We read short stories and Shakespeare, and I realized that I didn't just love writing and reading books, but I also loved talking and thinking about them.

When you were young, what was your favorite book to read?

My favorite book was always changing. When I was in middle school, I loved the *Harry Potter* series (back then *Harry Potter* was still being written and I usually had to wait over a year between books!) and also novels by Diana Wynne Jones. Sharon Creech was another one of my favorite authors.

Did writing always come easily to you?

I have always been good at writing, but that doesn't mean it's easy! Writing is often very difficult for me, and other writers I know usually say the same thing. When you love writing and you love words, you are always trying to find new and unique ways to put sentences together--part of what makes writing fun is the challenge!

What is your favorite genre?

My favorite genre is magical realism. Magical realism is a cross between fantasy and realistic fiction. The story I sent you about the brothers being swallowed by a whale is an example of magical realism.

Swallowed
by Dana Diehl

It's been two days since we were swallowed by the loneliest whale in the world. Two days since we caught in its throat, and having nowhere else to go, crawled into its damp cave of a belly.

We are brothers. Our first night in the whale, we took turns sleeping, resting our heads against the other's knees. We used our headlamps to shine halos against the whale's ribcage. We cast shadow puppets against the vertebrae. We located and then avoided the whale's large intestines.

The whale's song vibrates through our bones, tickles our eardrums, and drowns out our voices. We try to read each other's lips and find we can't.

...

We first heard about the whale on the news—a whale with a fifty-two hertz song, too high-pitched to be understood by its brothers and sisters—and were seized by a desire to see it. We took to the sea in the masted ship we'd inherited from our father. For seventy-two days, we tracked the whale from Anchorage to Panama. But in the end, the whale found us. Off the coast of Central America, it was as though a hole had opened in the sea. The indigo waters spilled over themselves and seagulls screamed. Our ship tilted, and we slid between the whale's beaked lips. We clung to what we thought were our last minutes of life. We have no children or wives, so we tried to picture the face of our mother and the face of our beloved beagle, Blaze.

We waited for our worlds to go dark.

...

Before long, we're eating krill. They feel like onion skins in our mouths, and we have to eat handfuls to feel like we've eaten anything at all.

We wish our whale would swallow something more substantial. Ruby-fleshed tuna or tiny octopi with suckers like jelly rings. After a meal of krill, even the thought of manta ray makes us salivate.

We've just gotten used to the whale's eerie song, when it goes quiet. Except for the gentlest rise and fall of its stomach, the whale is still. We hear the slow beat of its heart and the crack of stored oxygen in its lungs.

We agree that the whale must be asleep, and so we crawl on our hands and knees to the space where the belly becomes throat. Here, the whale's heartbeat consumes us. We count eight beats in sixty seconds. We wonder if the whale knows if we're here, living inside the hollow of her stomach. When she sleeps, does she dream about us, us two brothers?

We turn onto our backs and slide back into the cradle of the belly. We hook arms as we fall.

...

In the belly of the whale, we invent similes to pass the time.

Sitting in a whale is like sitting in a tuba's spit valve.

Sitting in a whale is like sitting in a bowl of leftover ABC soup.

We cast shadow puppets on her ribcage, and we give our shadow puppets stories.

We trade quotes from the old black and white submarine movies our father would watch after dinner when we were children. On land, submarine men were tall with sharp suits, but in the depths of the ocean, they wore frayed, high-necked sweaters. They wore boots with puddles in the heels. In the tight, underwater corridors, they brushed shoulders and were not afraid to cry.

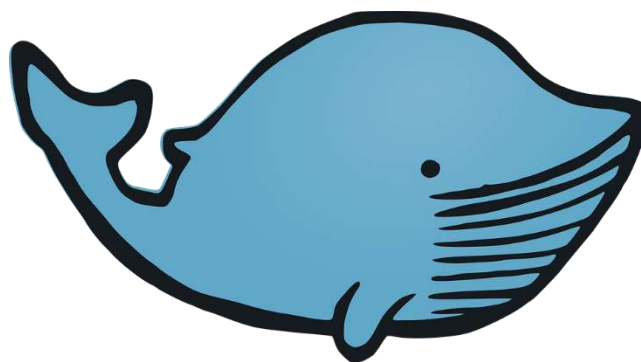
We decide a whale is kind of like a submarine. We sit back to back. Enclosed in the whale's loneliness, we feel like brothers again. We called each other brother, but it's the first time in years that it's been true.

...

The whale sings again. As she sings, her body shivers. She seems to be shaking herself awake. Her voice moves through us like we're nothing, and it feels impossible that other whales will never understand this song.

We don't know when we'll be able to speak again, so we raise our voices with the whale. We yell without words. We try to match our pitch to her hertz, we try to find her pitch in our guts. We were never singers. We used our voices only for shouting commands to our crewmates, for ordering second and third and fourth helpings at the inns. Now, our voices say, *We hear your loneliness. We have it too.*

The whale tilts into a dive. We tie our shoelaces together so if one of us falls into intestines, we both will.



The Hilltop House

by Gianna Rupert

In the year 1884, an old man by the name of Victor and his lovely wife Elizabeth lived within the state of Illinois. On Halloween night, a little child by the name of Suzanne (Suzy) walked up to the house, but to her surprise....BAM! She was gone.

A century later...

A group of friends was sitting outside the schoolyard, and then the Vipers came towards them. Everyone left, but one stayed.

"What are you doing without those sorry losers?" said Michelle in a mocking tone.

"They all left, but I'm staying. I'm tired of you idiotic Vipers bossing me and my friends around," said Mary.

"Was that a threat? Are you threatening me?"

"Maybe it was, and maybe it wasn't."

Just then, the first fists started to fly. However, it wasn't either of the girls. A stranger came and started to fight while Mary ran in fear. She hid in a bush and right next to her were binoculars and potato chips. Someone was watching her. Mary noticed that there were footprints leading out to the blacktop. The only thing she could think was that it was stranger.

As Mary was in a state of confusion, Michelle and the rest of the Vipers started to run past her. Blood dripped down their noses, which caused them to cry a thunderous cry.

"Now that's done," said the stranger as he was wiping the blood off his hands.

"W-w-w-who are you?" stuttered Mary in fear.

"There is no need to be afraid; all I want to do is help you. Now, I've been watching you for quite some time. Why have you just waited now to stand up to her?" said the stranger.

"The truth is I don't know. I guess I've been scared too long, and I needed her to just leave me alone for once." The stranger started to grab his skateboard and skate off.

"Wait! I still don't know your name!" He turned around.

"It's Mike."

The next day..

"So, it looks like your boyfriend can't protect you today," snickered Michelle.

"Who?" said Martin, Margaret, and Matt in unison.

"It's nobody, and he is not my boyfriend," said Mary.

"Well then, prove it! Go inside the Hilltop House on Ghost Road," said Michelle.

"How is that going to prove anything?"

"If he doesn't show up to 'save the day,' then I'll know he's not your boyfriend, and if he does, he is."

"Okay."

Later that night...

Mary got home from school, and all she could hear was her parents fighting over who knows what anymore. She can remember that when she was little her parents would never fight; however, when she got older, things took a turn for the worse. Once a year they would fight; then that year turned into a month, then a week, then a day, and soon that day turned into every second of every moment. Her parents were so immersed in fighting that they didn't even hear or see their precious daughter come in. They both loved her dearly, but she was easily forgotten.

She went through her window and ran to the Hilltop House. She met Michelle and her gang there; however, they weren't alone.

Just then, Martin, Margaret, and Matt came charging towards the Vipers chanting, "Leave our friend alone! Leave our friend alone!"

To their surprise, the Vipers took them as prisoners until Mary would complete the task. Mary stepped forward and proceeded towards the house. She moved towards the rickety steps. With each step she took, you could hear a **SQUEAK!** She knocked on the door. It was open. She quickly and quietly walked in. She had goosebumps from her head to her toes.

Then, the door shut! The lights flickered on and off. When the lights were on, all she could see was a carcass. The carcass was in a princess Halloween costume. Next to her was a bag with the name Suzy.

Mary screamed from the top of her lungs. She ran to the door and started to pound on it, but it was too late.

When the Vipers didn't see Mary come out of the house, they ran in fear. Mary's friends were thrown to the curb. Martin, Margaret, and Matt ran inside the house.

"Mary! Where are you? Come on, Mary," shouted the friends.

In the back, they could see a creature feeding off Mary. Mary was gone. The creature turned around with its spider-like figure, a scraped away face, and two heads of a man and a woman from the 19th century.

"Hello, boys and girl. I'm Elizabeth, and I'm Victor," said the heads. "My son, Mike, is the one to blame. He was only following our orders."

"Yes, I'm the one that told the Vipers to send your deceased friend here since my parents and I are in a feeding frenzy," said Mike.

When the friends were distracted, Victor and Elizabeth started to feed off the three. They were dead.



The next day, the Vipers called the police and acted innocent by pretending that they didn't know what happened. As the police rushed, they saw four childlike dead bodies. When the neighbors saw the police, they confirmed some suspicions that the Vipers were the killers. They were arrested and accused of murder.

A funeral was held at Ghost Yard Graveyard Cemetery. The parents of the four children were crushed. Tears dripped down their faces upon seeing their little dears in a casket. To make matters worse, it was pouring down rain.

Some may ask what ever happened to the three. Well, Victor, Elizabeth, and Mike still remain in the house still feeding off the children's souls until they find another victim. So, if you ever see a house on a hill in Illinois, there's a chance you could be next.



Sadness

by Adrianna Carr

It comes from beneath the heart
The feeling is quite mysterious
But to others it is delicious
What happened can be serious
Sometimes it will worry us

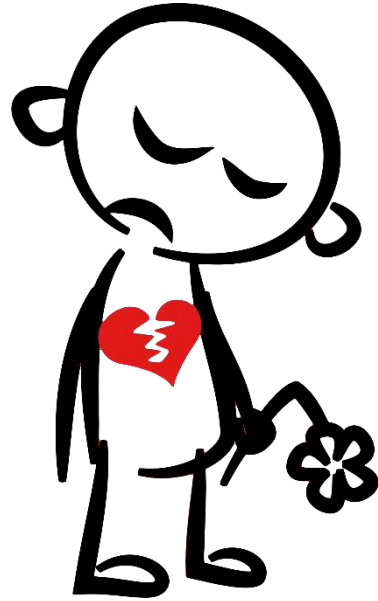
But we have to leave it behind
Get it out the state of mind
We wish we could press rewind
But sadness is what we find

Sometimes what you need is a friend
They will let you know it's not the end
But if you don't let it go, the feeling will extend
Forever your friend will defend

Although you feel pathetic
You wish Sadness was apologetic
Then you would feel authentic
Sadness allows no feeling of hectic

You will eventually feel heartbroken
And your happiness will never be awoken
You've let your feelings go unspoken
You feel only that one emotion

But soon you will be with me
Call me happiness if you please
I hope you fill up with glee
And I hope you are soon happy



Why Do People Lie?

by Adrianna Carr

As I fly across the sky
Wondering really who am I
I find it quite awfully strange
Why people don't really change
It's probably because they don't try
But I really wonder why
They say they will
Then you fill with thrill
Then they lie
And you want to cry
But why?

But you can't
You have to stay strong
No matter how long
You will fight and fight
You will fight for what is right
You will demand to know
Why they've let themselves go
You will do what it takes
To rise to the stakes
Because deep inside
With all of your pride
But all you want to know
Is why they've let themselves go

Then you ask why
And then they reply
"I love who I am
I am no scam
I am always me
And that's all I'll ever be"

Then you say
"Don't change who you are
Just change how you act
Because out of everything else
That's what's holding you back"



Popularity
by Jackson Emery

A little noun with five syllables
that determines our way of life.
A word with 10 letters
that cuts like a knife.

The word that moves airborne
like a ravage disease.
The word is pleasure for some
but will never be at ease.

This word makes you forget
about the pain in the world.
All this word cares about
is your dreamworld.

Popular is the root
the state of being, -ity.
Together the word has power
and will show no pity.



The Faraday Mystery

By Michaela Wheeland

Melchior Faraday rambled down the cobweb ridden stairs of the derelict Pruitt Manor, taking care to step gingerly over that gaping hole in the seventh step that surely housed some vermin that he would not care to encounter. The boy stopped at the foot of the stairwell and sat.

"MELCHIOR!"

Dandy.
Just dandy.

The manor's vacuous hallways echoed with the sound of thunderous, clanging footsteps. Mel winced with each step, bracing himself for verbal impact. Finally, the steps ceased just in front of him.

"Happy birthday, Lad!" The armor-clad codger shouted triumphantly. He noted how Mel's mouth donned a bit of a scowl, how he slumped over in his makeshift seat.

"Hello, Yancy," Melchior grumbled into his hands. He heard a "tut," and could feel the knowing, almost fatherly gaze.

"Now, Melchior... I understand that this isn't a good time. I suppose you'll be *waiting* for the Godfreys' surprise?" Yancy sighed, a mischievous lilt fighting its way into the old knight's voice. The Godfreys were their household attendants, remnants of a retinue that disbanded decades ago.

"Surprise?" Mel questioned, head shooting up out of his hands to reveal excited brown eyes. Yancy chuckled.

"Indeed, my boy," he confirmed, gesturing to the hallway that contained the kitchen. Melchior leapt up from his stoop and bounded for the area. Whatever was said about Melchior, it would just be lies if one were to say he didn't love surprises.

The kitchen was a mess of eggs, flour, and sugar. Mel breathed in the thick scent of batter as a gob of the stuff came rocketing toward his face. Wade Godfrey leapt up from behind the counter, a tub of batter in his hands. His yellow hair was mussed and dirty as he grinned wildly, a chipper, "Hi, Mel!" coming from his lips as he flung some batter behind Melchior. Mel looked back and saw Wade's father, Thatcher, theatrically crumble to the ground with an overly exaggerated cry of pain. Before he 'died', he took a finger, dipped it in the sugar-filled catalyst of his demise, and licked it with a satisfied sigh. Melchior looked back at Wade, who was now scouring the kitchen. He stood there rigidly for a few moments. With an air of resignation, Wade sat down the tub of batter, Thatcher rising from his metaphorical grave. Finally, Mel noticed something missing. "Wade, where might Lillian be?" Wade wore a look of befuddlement. His father pondered the question, then obtained an answer.

"Well, Master Melchior, Lilly is out at the square. Picking up some of the Bard's greatest works, I'd imagine. She really wishes you'd be interested, Mel," Thatcher reminded the boy, who groaned.

"Thatcher, I'm hardly literate. I don't know how I'd even be able to enjoy them," he complained. In truth, he'd told the Godfreys this almost daily. Of course, they'd tried to remedy that on numerous occasions, but he was intellectually unresponsive. Melchior had finally decided that there was no likelihood of him actually retaining any of it, so he commanded them to stop the lessons. Sir Yancy had tried. It didn't help. "Anyway, is there any excitement planned for this afternoon?" Mel inquired, looking over to Wade's pleased expression. The young cook looked to Thatcher and then to Melchior.

"Mel, we're going out and into the town. I'm getting you friends!" Wade exclaimed, seeming a bit too excited about that prospect. Melchior furrowed his brow in disappointment.

"Wade Godfrey, you know what type of reputation this house gives me. You know why I haven't had any friends for my entire life," he said, his tone almost criticizing as he glared at Wade. The latter shifted uncomfortably, then offering a sheepish smile.

"That's what I'm trying to fix, Mel. It's my gift to you. Now, come on," Wade finished, dragging Melchior out of the kitchen and into the foyer. It took him a minute to slip his shoes on (earning an irritated groan from Melchior), but then they were out.

They were walking the cobblestone streets of London for minutes before Wade broke the silence of their excursion (relative to the hustle and bustle of the market).

"Do you... Do you think about Ridley and Winona often?" Wade questioned without a look to Melchior. In turn, Mel stayed silent for a beat. The aforementioned names were the names of his parents, the very source of his status as an orphan and his unfortunate tenancy with Yancy Pruitt. Yancy had been acquainted with them, which, as Mel had gathered, did not turn favorably for anyone involved. Needless to say, they were dead.

"Not unless I'm in the mood for an unquenchable thirst for despair," he quipped, taking in his surroundings. Not often had he traversed the main streets of the city, preferring the back alleys for transportation. When he thought about it, it made sense that he didn't have many (if any) friends. "Why do you ask?"

"Anyone who observes your relationship with Sir Pruitt would be curious as to what your ideal parental situation would be." His eyes lit up as he finished, a Brighton Rock stand in view. Mel breathed a sigh of relief for the candy stand's appearance, as Wade was sufficiently distracted when he dragged him over.

The stand was brightly colored in decoration, appropriate for a candy of the same coloration. Wade's utter awe was an irritation point for Mel, but he grit his teeth. "Excuse me, could I have two of those sticks?" Wade pointed at a miscellaneous flavor of the stick-shaped candy, the saleswoman grabbing that number and handing them to him. "How much would that be?"

"We've been waiting, Melchior," the woman behind the stand replied. Mel's eyebrows shot up. She wasn't even looking at him, and Wade hadn't reacted. The only friend he'd ever known was just fishing euros out of his pocket.

"I'm sorry, what?" he had chosen to inquire, drawing befuddled looks from Wade and the shopkeeper.

"She said it was four and a half euros..." Wade replied. Melchior turned his look of confusion into one of amusement, belying his inner crisis.

"Heh! Guess I misheard..." He nervously laughed out, not wanting to seem like more of an oddity than he already did. Mel followed Wade as he left the stand, more pep in both of their steps. They both rounded the corner and sat on the curb. Wade handed Mel one of the Rocks he purchased, and they both sat and enjoyed the candy. As Mel ate his candy, he pondered what he'd heard at the stand.

Who was "we"?

Why were they waiting for him?

What did that woman have to do with it?

Melchior's outward expression began to match with his inner monologue: distressed, confused, frustrated. He looked to Wade.

"I heard something back at the stand. Something that wasn't there," Mel said, his delivery choppy and terse. Wade, looking intrigued, signaled for him to continue. "Well, I thought that the woman said... 'We've been waiting for you, Melchior'? I know that it's completely implausible, as I don't know her and she isn't a 'we'. She wasn't talking to me. You even heard her! It was probably just a mistake," Melchior finished with a large degree of uncertainty. He couldn't shake the feeling that that simple quote, however minor (and likely fabricated), was somehow significant.

"I'll tell you what I think," Wade said after he swallowed his candy. Wade's reply was unintelligible to Melchior, who slowly lost control of all of his faculties before going unconscious.

His vision was black.

He "awoke" to an equally dark room, two others around him. The others were an unconscious man and woman, their intricate features indistinguishable in the abysmal lighting of the room. He struggled to bring himself to a standing position, but succeeded. His feet remained next to the leftmost of two mirror-laden chairs. A quick glance to the side revealed another chair, which made a triangular formation.

"Winnie."

Hearing the rough timbre of his voice surprised him, but did not discourage him from collapsing next to the fallen woman assumed to be "Winnie." He began to sob, gathering her in his arms.

"Winnie, oh, no, Winnie!" he exclaimed mournfully, looking up to the ceiling. "Why?!"

He awoke, back in bed. Wade sat in a chair next to him, preoccupied until he noticed Mel's awakening. He immediately bolted to Mel's bedside.

"Melchior! Immediately after you went unconscious, I brought you home. It's been hours! What happened?"

Still not fully sentient, Mel could only let out a weak, "Winnie?..."

Wade wore a look of utter perplexity. "Winnie? Your mother?"

Then it clicked.

"Wade," Melchior started, sitting up to face the young Godfrey.

"Yes?"

"I think I relived the memory of my mother's death through my father's eyes," Melchior explained, to the shock of Wade.

"Mel... I think you've gone mad," he replied with a chuckle just before Mel heard a voice.

So, you've unearthed a mystery. A mystery you may never be able to solve. Keep going and you'll find out.

"I may agree with you, Wade."





Rylie French
Loyalsock Township Middle School
2101 Loyalsock Drive
Williamsport, PA 17701

December 19, 2016

Dear Barbara Johnson,

Do you remember a few months ago when you were asked to give a speech in front of our church? Even though it was only about 15 minutes, each word made me look at the entire world with a whole different perspective. I realized that the crazy storm swirling around our thoughts and lives is not going to pass anytime soon, but to embrace it as a gift and to take notice in how people actually care about your situation. It was absolutely life changing.

Through all the tears and heart-shattering changes in my life, your speech "[What Love Is](#)" gave me another chance to be happy. I know that I could just go and talk to you in person because you're my grandmother, and we are close. I just wanted this to mean a lot and to not leave anything out. So, at one point I gave up on people. They only gave me the bad news and could do nothing to help us. "ALS has no cure, we can't help you"... Not even a month after that, they told me you had breast cancer. People say that crying will not solve your problems. That did not stop me. I sat in the seat in the front of the church, and I cried, but with a massive smile upon my face. It made me realize that we can use these tragedies and nightmares and turn them into happy memories to help future victims or to just to help others by doing things that you cannot do anymore. When all the neighbors came over to do the yard work and friends brought over food so you did not have to cook, it was so sweet and caring of them. All of the supporters somehow drew back some of my tears. The scars finally stopped hurting my brain, and slowly it took away most of my pain. Our lives have many more downfalls, most I can't say. When more uprise, I just sit in my room, alone as always, and read the little note card. Out of all the tears, finally spawns a smile.

I'm going through so much right now, and I realize you and Grandpa are too, probably even more than I am. Facing their own fate is what I think only the strongest people could ever. How are they able to go to sleep every night with that in the top of their mind, praying to wake up the next day. I pray to see you tomorrow every single night as I cry myself to sleep thinking about you and him. As I wake up, I can feel your heart's

beating with my own somehow, and I just know you are okay. Therefore, I see miracles every day, and that's what love is.

I know that right now it is really hard for us. Someone is trying to ruin our lives, and somehow already succeeded. It has cost all of our sanity to be questioned. That horrible person is stealing the last we have. Accusing my grandfather of something he could not do. *"Is it really worth it, this man is going to die and you're just taking away all the happiness left in him."* She lost my trust and my love. I again gave up on humanity; you can't trust anyone. I just don't understand how someone so close, can go so far in only one day's time. Sometimes I just question if the sadness will ever go away. *What is love?* I forgot because I felt like I had none of it, but you reminded me. Even though I am looking at a world full of despair and tears, I also see another side of people who have the one chance of helping not just me but all of us, finally giving us the experience of love.

"Everyone has an angel; you just need to find the right person. They are there; we just have yet to take notice." I found mine, and I thank you for that. I thank you for how you changed my overlook of everything and how I was able to get another chance. There is so much more in this world to look forward to, other than listening to the voices in my head just saying to ignore what I know I cannot! Sadness does have a cure; you discovered it. Not with medicine, but with words. That's what love is.

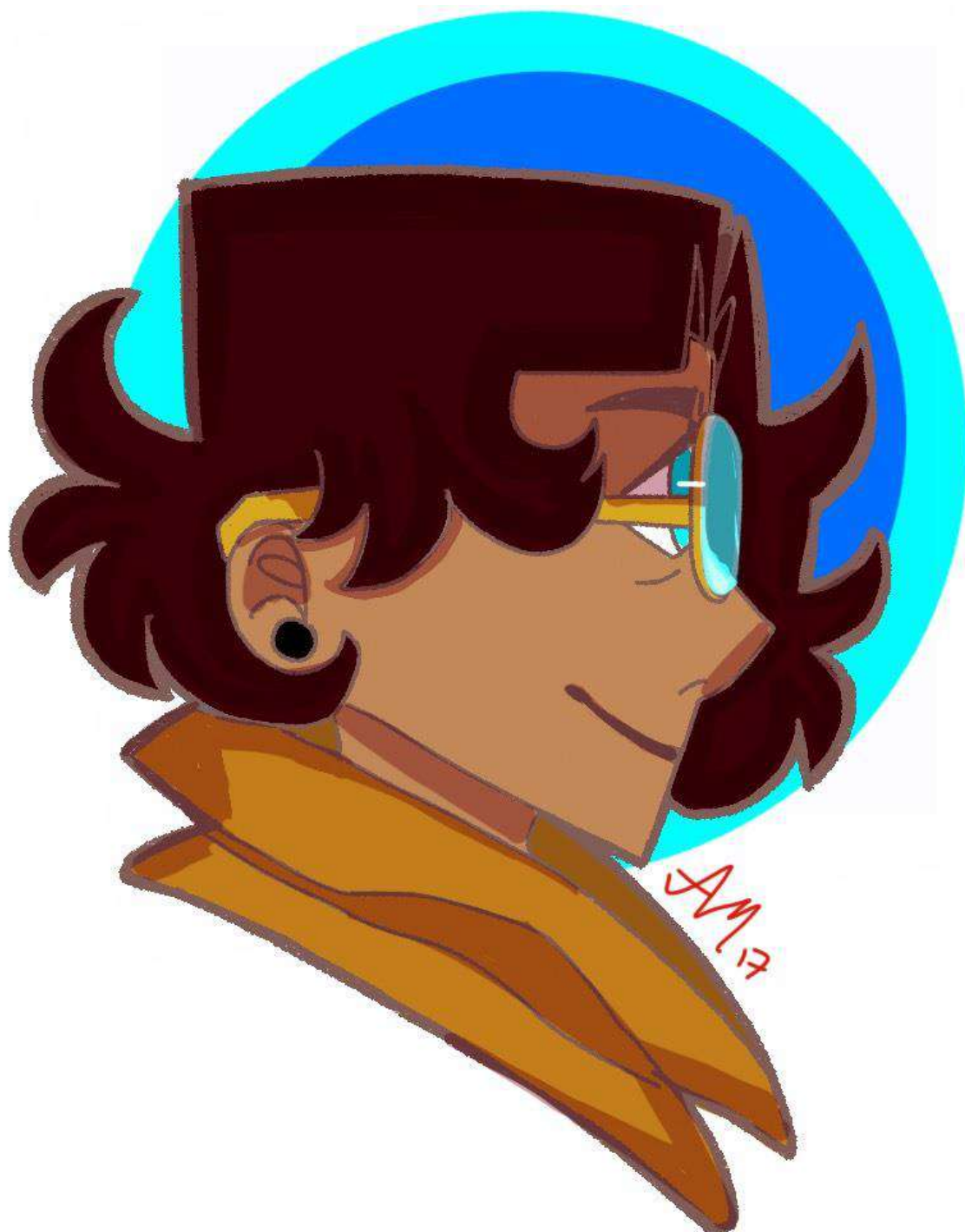
Sincerely,

Rylie French



Picture by Yuliia Meshcheriakova

Picture by Areesha Mian



Pig Killer

by Jett Pulizzi

Edited Version

Prologue: The Accident

"Poor old sap, plunged the knife right into his heart," said Mr. Wicks. "Never said another word after that."

"Yeah, I feel bad for him, always supplied meat to the butcher," commented the gravedigger. "That was a really nice knife, too."

"Speaking of the knife, do you know what they did with it? After all, it is a murder weapon."

"I heard that they put it in some desk and hid it away from the public. It could be anywhere."



With that, the gravedigger and Mr. Wicks tossed the old man's body into the improvised grave they had dug and walked away—Mr. Wicks back to the library, the gravedigger back to his shed.

The Knife

It had been a gray, depressing, pouring-rain day in Rochester. The depression part of the day had mainly struck the Daniel's household. The family cat, Mr. Fluffles, had had a hot iron drop from the hand of Mrs. Daniel, to eventually land on his head. This accident had resulted in his sudden death.

A funeral had been put together in order to honor the late Mr. Fluffles. A small bucket, which acted as the coffin, was slowly lowered into the family's well, which was no longer in use. That would be Mr. Fluffles' final resting place. Mr. Daniel, a tall, thin man who wore a tuxedo accompanied by a thin mustache, gingerly pulled out his pocket knife and cut the rope, which held the bucket aloft. The bucket made a small splash when it hit the rainwater that had gathered at the bottom.

With the funeral over, the Daniels returned to their normal lives. Mrs. Daniel resumed ironing, for she had stopped immediately after Mr. Fluffles' abrupt mishap. Mr. Daniel, on the other hand, took his two children, Sidney and Charles, up to the attic where they began to sort through the ancient records. The records were actually a collection of personal notes that had been neatly hand-written in black ink by the family's forebears, who had obviously devoted many hours to documenting their lives.

Charles, a plump boy with jet-black hair, had been organizing records that dated back to almost the 16th century. He read aloud in his deep voice, "'Thy dost now declare that we are all doomed.' What's that supposed to mean?"

Mr. Daniel peered over a bookshelf and answered, "It means that the person who

wrote that document had believed that the world was coming to an end. However, that person was incorrect."

Charles shrugged and went back to organizing. Then, something shiny caught his eye. The gleam came from a metal drawer handle on an old oak desk near the other end of the attic. Charles had never noticed the drawer before, or, if he had, he couldn't recall. He slowly walked over and carefully opened the drawer. As it creakily opened, his eyes began to grow and his mouth formed into an "O" as he stared at an old pearl-handled butcher's knife. The odd thing about the knife was that it had what appeared to be dried blood on the blade.

Charles wondered how the knife got in the drawer. "Dad, has anyone ever died in this house?"

"Well now, there have been multiple deaths. Your Great Aunt Betty fell down the stairs and, wump, dead. But I've heard that a few others have passed away here, but they were from the previous owner's family."

"Thanks, Dad. Do you mind if I go downstairs for a while to lie on the couch? I'm feeling a little under the weather."

"Be my guest. But while you're down there, look out the window and pay your respects to Mr. Fluffles, okay?"

"Got it, Dad. See you soon."

Fletcherwood

And with that Charles was out of the attic like a bolt, racing downstairs and out the door. With one mighty heave, he thrust himself up and over the wooden fence that surrounded the lawn. He landed with a thud on the hard sidewalk. He got up slowly, then after making sure he hadn't broken anything, continued to run down the street towards his best friend's house. Gordon Fletcherwood was not the smartest boy. Nor was he the handsomest, nicest, quietest, daintiest or most energetic. He was probably the rudest and most repulsive young man that had ever set foot in Rochester Middle School.

When Charles reached the Fletcherwood household, he rapped three times upon the gray door and waited.

"Go away, you monger. You are interrupting my train of thought."

"Open the door, Gordon."

The door opened to reveal a boy wearing dark blue trousers, which were much too small for his immense bulk. A huge, red sweater covered his large potbelly.

"Charles," Gordon said in his squeaky way, "why are you here and most importantly, when do you leave?"

"I'm here because I found something in my attic, something a little bit odd," Charles said, forgetting the second question.



"One of these again?" Gordon sighed. "Okay, what was it this time?"

"Well, let's just say that I found a bloody knife in an attic drawer. I believe that someone was murdered."

"Oh, my God! Someone was slaughtered in your house? What a depressing way to die. I can't imagine some bloody body just lying on the ground in my living room."

"Well, you've never had that experience. Anyhow, I believe that the murderer might still be out there. After all, that's what happens in all the books I've read."

"But this isn't a book."

"Well, we can at least look in the local records. They might have some important information."

"Where do you plan on finding these records?"

"Where else but the library? So off to the library we go!"

And with that they began their long walk to the library. They were about halfway there when it began to pour. The rain came down in heavy sheets with the occasional thunder. Rochester became drenched. "Boy, ain't this fun," Gordon squeaked. "You know, I've always wanted to be caught in a horrid storm. It's been my lifelong dream to have every part of my body soaked."

"Shut up!" Charles barked. "We're almost to the library, so suck it up and trudge on."

"Oh, my God! Please stop your onslaught of orders."

"Okay, let's just get to the library."

A few minutes later, Charles and Gordon opened the heavy door to the library and stepped into the warmth.

The Library

The library was a small, square building that had only one employee, ever. John Wicks had worked at the library for seventy-two years and had read almost every book there. He was smart as a tack, slim as a pencil and quiet as a mouse. Overall, a perfect librarian. That day, there had been no one at the library besides himself until 4:32, when two pudgy boys entered.

"Okay, so where are these records gonna be?" the librarian heard a squeaky voice ask.

"How am I supposed to know?" came a deep voice. "All I know is that they're in this library." And with that the squeaky voiced boy wobbled towards Mr. Wicks.

"Excuse me, Sir, but do you have any records in this place?"

"What year would you be looking for?"

"I'm not sure."

"I have an idea. How about you tell me what happened and maybe I can help you."

"Fine," the deep-voiced boy said, staggering into view. "What happened was murder. And it happened at the Daniel's house. We know this, for I found a bloody knife."

"Well, lucky for you I already know what that is," the librarian said. "About thirty years ago, there was this crazy old guy, and he liked to raise pigs. Now, he used to gut his pigs when they became fat enough. That is where your knife comes in, that is probably his knife. But around ten years ago, the old man made a mistake with his knife, and he accidentally cut into his heart. He is now buried at some old graveyard outside of town."

The Tale

Charles and Gordon staggered into the Daniel's house. They had felt that the need to share their story was more important than the fact that Gordon had to be home for dinner. Charles bolted up the stairs to the attic, ran across the room, opened the drawer, and extracted the knife. He then came downstairs to join Gordon, who had assembled the family in the living room, and they began to relate the tale, in their own way.

"When I first saw the knife," Charles began, feeling as if the truth could be stretched a little bit, "I immediately recognized it as pig blood that was smeared on it. I then quickly dashed over to Gordon's house to tell him of my discovery."

"Yeah," Gordon squeaked, agreeing with Charles, "then we began the long journey to the library."

"Isn't the library only four blocks from here?" Sidney piped up.

"Of course not," Charles stated, "it is obviously much longer than four blocks. Go on, Gordon."

"Thank you. Anyway, when we finally arrived at the library, there was this terrifying guard at the front desk. The guard had these hawkish eyes, and he stared into my soul."

"And then he began to chase us around with a chair. But obviously, we outran him and in a last effort, he threw the chair at us. But he missed, and we lived to see another day."

"Then we snuck into a closet and found some records. And it turns out that this knife belonged to this guy called the Pig Butcher."

"Well, that's a very nice story boys," Mr. Daniel said, "but I believe that it is time for Gordon to go home and for Charles to go to bed." And with that Mr. Daniel pushed Gordon Fletchwood out of the house and put Charles and Sidney to bed.

The Girl in the Woods

by Madison Rall

The day was March 16, 1965; a little girl named Coraline was sitting on a tree with her father. Then all of a sudden, Coraline fell and disappeared. Her father was screaming for her... he heard nothing. When Coraline woke up from a long sleep, she didn't know where she was. Then, she heard a scream. She looked back and saw thousands of trees. She didn't know where the scream came from. Coraline finally realized that she fell. But how... her father got off the tree and walked for hours looking for her. Finally, three days passed and he finally made the call.

"911, what's your emergency?"

Her father teared up and then started talking. "It's my daughter; she has been missing for three days, and I just can't find her." Silence broke out..

"The police are on their way." When the police drove up, her mom followed behind them and asked, "What is happening?"

"It's Coraline, she has been missing."

She got in her car and drove off. RING, RING, RING! It was her, "WHERE is my daughter?!"

Her dad didn't talk until he caught his breath. "We were sitting on the tree in the front yard, and she fell and disappeared." Her mom hung up on him.

Coraline was sitting and listening to her mother and father talking, but she didn't know how. She was sitting there for a while thinking about what in the world is happening to her.

RING...RING...RING..."Hello. Hello. Helloooo."

"Oh, I'm sorry miss, is this Coraline's mom, Rebecca?"

"Yes, why?"

"Umm, well, your daughter is in the hospital."

"Oh my. Okay, I'll be right there."

When Rebecca got off the phone with the hospital, she called Christopher.

"Christopher, Coraline is in the hospital!"

"Okay, I'll be right over!"

When they both got to the hospital, Rebecca and Christopher ran to her room. When they walked in, doctors were surrounding her and one of them crying.

"Are you Rebecca and Christopher, Coraline's parents?"

"Yes," they both said.

The doctor let them walk in and look at their daughter, Coraline. When they saw her, they saw a broken leg and a broken arm.

"Maa'm," the doctor said to Rebecca.

"Your daughter is too young for this coma."

"So, what are you going to do?"

When the doctor walked up to her, they saw her take a deep breath and all of a sudden, the doctor pulled the plug. They walked the mom and dad out with the daughter on the bed and put her into a new room. That was their last time they saw Coraline.

The World Changes

by Mallory Rodarmel

The weirdest things about the world
Are things we do not know.
It's about the things we do in life,
The places we dare not go.

It all exists in a place
That we call our home.
It is full of crazy realms
That people love to roam.

No one understands the change
In ways the world is altered.
Humans change the nature
To all things that are slaughtered.

Change by human can be nice
But the rude part is what is revealed.
The changes that every person makes
Cannot be easily healed.

The revolving Earth is on the move
To places we've already been.
It brings us back to the people we know,
The ones we call our kin.



Goodbye

by Abigail Colone

Beeeeeeeeeeeeeep...beeeeeeeeeeeep...the numbers are going higher and higher every second. I look up, and the numbers are different 120, 121, 122. I look over my shoulder just to see my Grampie with tears in his eyes. I gently place my hand on his shoulder; then he slowly walks out of the room with streams pouring down his cheeks. I turn around and look at Mimi in her hospital bed, then it hits me like a big yellow bus. She is always there for me: She tucks me in at night, she says a prayer with me before dinner, and most importantly, she gave me my dad. I can't give up. Slowly I approach my Mimi. My cold, sticky knees hit the hospital floor that had just been cleaned. I cross my fingers one after the other, then bend my arms to a 180 degree angle and place them on her baby blue covers and bend my head. Drip, drop; tears are falling. I don't even realize that there is a puddle underneath me because I am too focused on the fact that my Mimi's days are vanishing away, one memory by another. Beeeeeeeep... there it is; she is gone. She will still be in our hearts though.

What will my Grampie do? After work, he will go home to an empty house. He won't smell dinner the first step he takes into the kitchen. I mean yeah, it will be hard for my family and I, but at least we'll walk into a house that smells like fresh cut veggies and pasta. At least every step we take into our house won't be a bad memory.

Don't you think that would be difficult? I can tell you right now that if you're not saying it, it would be hard. Just put yourself in my Grampie's shoes, and then think about my question. Anyway, from that day on, I've been visiting my Grampie and we've enjoyed being together. We've become very fond of each other.

So, I guess what I'm saying is, anybody who has experienced this (having somebody close to you die) has had their heart broken, but don't let that get in the way of helping others; be a bigger Person.

(My mimi died on July 9, 2016)

A family's
LoveTM
is forever

The Betrayal

by Mia Blas

There are many places I strongly dislike going; such as caves, holes, under my brother's bed, the attic, the middle of the woods, and the basement. However, above all, I particularly dislike going to the doctors. Going to the doctors lost its fun when I was "too old" for Bugs Bunny and glittery Band aids. I don't see what the nurses and my mom are talking about when they say "too old." Maybe it is an inside joke.

It was a Monday, November 21st, the day I was welcomed into this world. This date also marks when my own mom betrayed me. She had asked for volunteers to accompany her on this "special trip." No one else stepped up, so I volunteered to go along; like the hero that I am. Actually, I was told, "Get in the car." Then, when we were two minutes past my driveway, my mom informed me of our destination. I never agreed to that, and I would have hopped out of the car and sprinted home, but that whole jumping out of cars, and running don't mix well with me. I could probably make it seem graceful, but skinned knees, heavy breathing, and broken nails don't fit the definition of graceful. However, if I had known where the special trip was, I'd like to say that I would still volunteer. Well, actually I'm no liar, so in all honesty, if I had known, I would have kindly rejected the offer and suggested we go to the mall.

Not only was I betrayed this day by my mom, but by my nurse. She's one of those nurses who coax you into believing that she's the good guy. However, her true colors shone through when she opened the box with the shots. I stalled as long as I could until the nurse, fed up with my story about a donkey, said, "Honey, on the count of three, okay?"

I nodded. little did Mrs. Nurse know, I had a plan up my sleeve. Before she said three, I was going to jump off the bed and run down the halls screaming. Then, I



remembered that I don't do the whole jumping and running thing, so instead, my plan was when she got to two I was going to scream really loudly. "One," the nurse sang out holding up one finger. I never knew what people meant when they say butterflies in their tummy, but as soon as the nurse opened her mouth again, I felt that fluttery sensation. However, this nurse had other ideas, "Three!" She sang out and injected the needle into my arm. My mom cupped her hand around my mouth probably sensing me about to scream. A minute went by before she released my mouth.

I glare at the nurse, "Two comes after one," I muttered angrily.

She smiled as she disposed of needle and got ready for the next victim, "It is better when you least expect it."

I prepared to fire a retort, but then she handed me the best birthday present; a Bugs Bunny happy birthday Band aid. I gave a smug smile to my mom as if to say, "Haha, I was right, I'm not too old." She just shrugged, then said, "Your aunt was right; it doesn't take much to make you happy." No, it really doesn't, but I was still feeling half betrayed, so I chose not to reply.

The day was still not over. My sister likes to give me those birthday presents that billions of people do as well because it is on Pinterest. Apparently, Pinterest perfect presents involve going into the woods on a "scavenger hunt." Another place I strongly dislike, a coincidence? I think not. Anyway, my phone was dead, my flip flop was broken, I was hungry, and my arm was sore from earlier, to paraphrase my situation; I was miserable. My sister tried to make light of my misery by cracking jokes, but "Why did the chicken cross the road?" on repeat made me want to personally run over the chicken. Ten minutes or ten hours (I wouldn't know, remember my phone was dead), I sat down next to a tree, "Please don't tell me we are lost."

She studies the tree for a second, "Okay, but that doesn't change the fact that we are."

I threw my hands up in frustration. Then as sweetly as I could muster, I said, "Marie, dear, if a wild animal attacks us, I want you to know that I will push you so that you die first." Now usually, I'm a pretty peaceful, happy, and a generally good sister. Today was just an exception to that. That's when it hit me, quite literally actually. A soccer ball hit me in the head, and I turn towards where it came from. I screamed in pure joy, "I SEE THE LIGHT!" We speed walked towards the entrance to the woods, and I left my broken flip flop because it was slowing me down. My other sister was at the end, "So did you get it?"

"Huh, get what? Lost? Then yes, I got it, or the soccer ball?" I asked perplexed.

"Uh no, the Carvels gift card," she replied.

I turned to Marie, "Carvels gift card, we spent three hours in there lost and confused looking for a Carvels gift card?" My voice went up at least thirty octaves.

"And a box of Oreos with a teddy bear," she adds unhelpfully. A surge of adrenaline rushed through me as I ran back into the woods. I made it past a row of trees before I turn around, "Wait, where exactly is it?"



Both of my sisters exchange a glance while I tap my foot impatiently. My older sister, apparently losing the silent argument between the two scratches her neck. "About thattttt, I don't really know." I face palm. My sisters are loony tunes.

"If it makes you feel better, we were only lost for five minutes, which is nowhere close to three hours," Marie added in.

Deflated, I just headed inside while they trailed behind me. However, like my aunt said, "It doesn't take much to make me happy." Once we went out for dinner, my mood lifted significantly. According to therapists, normal people don't get shots on their birthday or get lost in the woods because of social media, but when have I ever been normal? Additionally by the events, it was clear that my birthday wasn't Pinterest perfect, or Kardashian perfect, or any type of perfect, but it was memory worthy. Furthermore, my family made up for it because on my thirteenth birthday, I met my idol, Baymax. Nothing screams idol like a talking marshmallow. To live a balanced life, you have to have both the weird/sort of bad birthdays and the straight up best birthdays.

Mia Blas' writing below placed in the top 10 in the state in the Library of Congress Letters about Literature Writing Competition. Congratulations Mia!

Mia Blas
Loyalsock Township Middle School
2101 Loyalsock Drive
Williamsport, PA 17701

December 20, 2016

Dear Anonymous,

"Dad, You're a Man of Few Words" is the kind of poem you read on Donut Day with Dad, or one of those read because your parents said you need to read more, so you pick the shortest poem online. However, this poem is more than just simple words because I can relate. I can easily visualize my own dad sitting across from me, giving me multiple versions of "the look," and believe me when I say, I've seen them all. Although the poem is short, I'm overwhelmed with memories and reminders that my dad is constantly there even when physically he could be five states away. Your words don't always tame the greedy half of me that wants my dad all to myself, but I'm beyond grateful that I have this poem to fall back on.

"With just one look, my dad said all I needed to hear..." began a wave of moments of my life when I was at the end of receiving this specific look. One that stuck out the most was when I was younger, my dad and I were on a water slide and when in the middle of it, our tube flipped. He held onto me as I screamed and gave meaning to the words hearing loss. However, through it all, he had that look on his face that was a mixture of comfort and pain. It was the kind of look that said, "I got you now. Please release the nails digging into my skin."

Skip over the next set of lines to, "With just one look, my dad let us kids know just who was boss..." The upcoming look is one that you could probably guess and have probably seen many times, but it's one that sticks out. From fighting over the TV remote and fighting over the final fries, my dad always comes and intervenes. My dad has never been one of those "sit back and let your children battle until the death," people so to solve the problem, he flashes us his "break it up; I'm the boss, now let's get ice cream" look. He also ends up taking the remote and turning on the news or just eating the fries. However, when we complain about that method, he reminds us that he was just letting us borrow his

money, and he wanted it back. My dad then proceeds to remind us that we are getting ice cream and immediately our argument is swept away and long forgotten.

Additionally, I remember those times when I was a lot younger and would be running into his office, laughing and dancing about something. People always act as if they hate saying, "I told you so," but I bathed in the glory of always being right and he knew it. With a simple glimpse at my face, my dad knew that he would have to put on his, "I'm proud of you kiddo" look or his "I don't really care, but I want to win best dad award for caring, so lay it on me" look. I would sit on his lap, and he'd put down everything he was holding, and then I would begin my story. The stories were completely exaggerated and always started with, "Guess what, Daddy. I was very good today because the teacher gave me a lollipop and a sticker." While only twelve percent of the time I was actually good that day, I enjoyed seeing him proud of me and giving me his undivided attention. Also, the way the nurses who were working in his office would act busy just to eavesdrop and pay attention to little me was worth it.

So many different memories fill my mind with each triggering word, the good, the bad, my overly done tantrums and more. "Dad, You're a Man of Few Words" is a poem I will always fall back on when I need the reminders that my dad is always there. And even when I don't need the reminders, the memories that flow like a continuous wave with each word are enough to lift my mood. The only people I have to thank for this treasure is the old man who introduced this poem to me at Donut Day with Dad several years ago and you, the creator of this poem.



Thank you,

Mia F. Blas

Imperfectly Perfect

by Mia Blas

At the beginning of the new year, I was one of those people who stayed up at midnight writing a long list of resolutions. I was also one of those people who lost the list not even half an hour later, so I sat down to do what every logical person does; write a new list. It took me nearly two hours to write this one list because I would write something like this, "1) eat healthy," then I would scribble it out because I had no intentions of actually sticking to my resolution. So, my new list ended up with me saying something, but then scribbling it out to the point that my once neat paper was a tangible piece of chaos. The only legible words were "1) Use pencils not pens" and I think it was the number forty-five that I had written. I couldn't tell for sure, but this resolution was to "stop making mistakes and always be happy." Maybe I had meant for that to be two resolutions; nonetheless, I broke them in a simple span of an hour. I remember beating myself up about how hopeless it was before I eventually got tired of making myself feel bad. What I'm trying to say is, you are always going to make mistakes because life isn't an easy road. I'm also trying to say resolution lists are hard, so stick to something reasonable like, "Do Membean without complaining." Wait, scratch that, in no way is that reasonable (for me at least). Let's redo that, resolution lists are hard, so stick to something reasonable like, "flush the toilet."

Setting goals shouldn't be a chore because we unconsciously do it every day. However, sometimes we set our goals too high. The moon shouldn't always be our landing point. Saying that, we should reach high, aim high, and take the win, but sometimes we overwhelm ourselves trying to be...perfect. Stop making mistakes? I think I had drank too much sparkling grape juice when I had written that one down. That was mistake number three billion; letting myself think I could be insanely perfect. Life is about making mistakes and learning from them, and I know this is true because my mom always said it, along with every successful adult I have met. Sometimes I find myself wishing I was the same person I was eight years ago when I thought McDonald's chicken was real, authentic chicken, or the same person I was five years ago before watching how hotdogs were made. Why? I wish I were that same person because that person back then could make mistakes all she wanted without every one haunting her. As we grow older, the sad truth is we let our mistakes define us. People could drill it in our heads, write on every billboard, post on every social media that mistakes are okay, but once we make a simple mistake, we let ourselves suffer. That's our four billionth mistake. My New Year's resolution should've been, "Make mistakes and be OKAY with it." My New Years resolution should've been, "Everyday realize, Mia, you are human, and that's okay." However, that wasn't my resolution; my resolution had ended up as one of the many mistakes I've made. I've said the word "mistake (s)" at least twenty times already, and I know you're reading this like, "We get it lady, you can't follow your own resolution, great sob story," but, we live on this world only to



die asking ourselves, "Did I change someone's life? Whose life did I change? Did I live a good life? Who's going to remember me or even care?" There are also those people who die asking for forgiveness or asking for a chance to right a wrong. There is yet another group of people who die already knowing they lived a good life and are looking forward to Heaven's version of McDonald's, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell. Out of all these kind of people, I want to die knowing I could make mistakes and move on and that someone else out there can do the same.

.....

Complaining

by Regan Oaks

Mindy Molly Lolly Loo.
Doesn't want to tie her shoe.

Faria Fallon Frao Fay.
Doesn't want to go to school today.

Nina Nara Noris No.
Doesn't want to wear the bow.

Becky Bernal Barten Bowside.
Doesn't want to play outside.

Ticket Tara Tina Tunch.
Doesn't want to drink the punch.

Hidy Hima Hity Hair.
Doesn't want to go there.

Zella Zip Zeria Zemplain.
Doesn't want to hear you complain.

Shoes



by Regan Oaks



Molly Mindy Lolly Loo,
Was told she had mixed up shoes,

Her friend Kelly Kia Kerr Kleft,
Said her right shoe was on her left,

But Molly Mindy Lolly Loo,
Said she doesn't have mixed up shoes

She told her friend that last night,
She forgot put her feet on tight,
And now her left foot was on her right.

Untitled

by Elizabeth Hammond

Don't say you will love me forever,
I know in time that promise will go away.
My body will not always be the same it is today,
And I don't want you to be in dismay.
Don't say you will love me forever,
My flaws are going to show,
I don't want you to borrow another's
Because I'm not what you want anymore,
So I will stop being your little chore,
And you won't have to lie.

I knew that promise was going to go away,
I guess this is goodbye.



Athens

by Cadence Neely

Athena was the goddess of wisdom. She could get angry, but usually she was wise, kind, and understanding. Athena was born very oddly. Her father was the mighty Zeus, but she did not have a mother. Instead, as the myth goes, she was born directly out of Zeus' brain, full-grown and in battle armor. Zeus loved all his children, but one of his favorites was Athena.

Athena held a powerful position in the ancient Greek god world. She was an Olympian, one of the council of 12, who held a seat on Mount Olympus, the home of the gods. Nearly every town in ancient Greece had a god that looked after the townspeople. Towns rarely had more than one god to keep an eye on their best interests. Most gods did not share well, so usually it was one town, and if the town was lucky, one god to watch over it.

Poseidon loved watching over towns. He usually picked coastal towns since he was the Lord of the Sea. Poseidon was a very powerful god. His brothers were Zeus, god of the sky, and Hades, god of the underworld. Poseidon was a moody fellow, but he loved his wife and children, and he loved attention. He liked having people build temples in his honor and bring him gifts. As Greece grew and developed, new towns sprang up all the time. Poseidon was always on the lookout for new coastal towns.

He was not the only god who loved to be in charge. Athena, along with other gods, enjoyed that role as well. One day, both Athena and Poseidon claimed a new village. Most of the time, humans were grateful when they were selected to be under the care of a god. But two gods? That was one too many. Poseidon wanted them to choose which god they wanted, but the people did not want to choose. They could see only trouble ahead if they did. Athena, goddess of wisdom, daughter of Zeus, understood their worry. She challenged her uncle Poseidon to a contest. Both gods would give the town a gift. The townspeople could decide which gift was the more useful.

Poseidon slapped his specter against the side of the mountain. A stream appeared. The people were excited. A source of fresh water was so important! However, when they tried to drink the water, they discovered it was not fresh at all. It was salt water!

Athena waved her arm and an olive tree appeared. The people nibbled at the delicious olives and were excited. The olive tree would provide wood for building homes. Branches would provide kindling for kitchen stoves and fireplaces. The olives could be used

for food. The fruit could be pressed to release cooking oil. It was wonderful.

Yet, theirs was a coastal village. The people could not risk angering the Lord of the Sea, the mighty Poseidon. As it turned out, they did not have to choose. Poseidon chose for them. He laughed, sending waves crashing against the shoreline. Poseidon proclaimed his niece the winner!

That's how a small village gained a most powerful and wise guardian, the goddess Athena, a guardian who helped them rise to fame. In her honor, they named their village Athens.

The Kite by The Fancies

It all started with a kite. Madam Kaley, Madam Arabella, and Madam Ella, known as the fancies, saw it as it flew past the window at tea time. Though the kite was full of color and beauty, Madam Kaley was disgusted.

"What a terrible piece of junk!" she snarled.

Though Madam Ella and Madam Arabella nodded in agreement, Madam Ella secretly thought the kite was beautiful, being the youngest of the three. Telling the others she had to leave for a doctor's appointment, she sought out the kite. She didn't want to tell them what she was really doing. Madam Kaley would disapprove, and Madam Arabella is going through tough times, with the death of her father and all.

As Madam Ella hurried away from Madam Arabella's mansion, she saw it. The kite, the beautiful kite, hanging in a tree, just in reach. She took the opportunity and took the kite, hurrying off before anyone saw her. But little did she know, as Madam Arabella was passing by a window, she indeed saw Madam Ella take the kite. But why? She did not know.

"Mmmm. Who knew flying kites could look so fun?" Madam Arabella exclaimed as she thought to herself.

Ella was lifting the kite into the air as a peasant walked by, "Ah you found my kite," he exclaimed.

"How much for it?" she asked.

"Thirty dollars," he responded.

"Thirty thousand?" she asked, confused.

"No, just thirty," he responded.

"Here, have a million," she said as he pulled out the money and handed it to him.

A smile stretched across his face as he ran off.

She gracefully lifted the kite into the air and flew it. Then Madam Ella did something no one would expect. She ran into her mansion and came out with shorts and a t-shirt instead of her gown.

"Oh my!" Madam Arabella exclaimed in shock.

"What is that?" Madam Kaley exclaimed.

Ella was gliding the kite through the air gracefully as it soared through the sky. It looked as if diamonds were glaring down onto the earth.

"Brilliant," Arabella gasped.



"You're impressed by that? It's a commoner's toy," Kaley said, horrified.

"Whatever," she said under her breath.

"Come, come, her foolishness will not ruin our tea time," Kaley urged as she strutted off to the keeping room.

As they walked off, Arabella longed to fly the beautiful kite. She took one last look at the kite, then back at Madam Kaley, strutting off. She knew what she had to do.

"Hmm!" she puffed, spinning around towards the door.

"What are you doing?" Madam Kaley said, turning around to see Arabella careening towards the exit.

"What I should have done a long time ago," she yelled back, stopping only for a moment to turn direction.

She dashed upstairs towards her room and came back down minutes later in a tank top and shorts. She ran outside, joining Ella.

"Hey," Arabella said to Ella as she joined her.

"Hi, nice outfit," Ella chuckled.

About five minutes passed before, "Wait up!" Kaley said as she ran outside, gown and all.

"KALEY?" Both Arabella and Ella said at the same time.

"What? This is our last month of freedom before school starts," Kaley said.

Arabella and Ella nodded in agreement as the thought dawned on them. Kaley, seeing their troubled faces tried to reassure them.

"It's okay," she smiled. "Wanna fly a kite?"

Ella smiled, "I've wanted to do that since the beginning."

"It's definitely something long overdue," Arabella stated as Kaley started to laugh.

"What?"

"It's just that, you seemed to not want to fly a kite a little bit ago," Kaley remarked.

"It's called deceiving, I do it a lot you know," Arabella quipped with a smile on her face.

They all laughed and flew the kite until sundown, and every day for a month, they went back out to fly the kite.

After school every day, they met up at the tree and flew kites. Eventually, they donated all their money to charity (after buying more kites of course), changed their names, and sold their mansions to move back in with their families. Rumor has it, the fancies still attend the same school of Loyalsock to this day. In fact, they are in the sixth grade. Do you know who they are?



The Abandoned House

by Micah Sagar

It was a nice summer shining day in my neighborhood, Kendall Point. I'm going to take a walk today, I thought. I put my shoes on and scrambled outside. I was walking and admiring the beautiful landscape when I noticed a house I'd never seen before. The house was rusty, with broken windows and had a red brick wall. The house look abandoned and beat down.

I grew curious, so I decided to take a look for myself. I rang the doorbell on the brick wall. No answer. I opened the door and crept inside. I peeked through. No one around. I walked through the dark, silent house, as my fingers trembled, and my teeth chattered in fear. My limbs shook uncontrollably. My gut told me to run, but I was curious.

I walked towards an old, rusty room with a refrigerator that didn't look like it worked. I kept walking until I heard a door gradually creek open. I started to hear footsteps from the upstairs floor that sounded like someone was walking on clouds. I felt as if I were being watched. I continued to walk toward an old kitchen, but suddenly I heard them again, the footsteps. This time they were louder and faster.

"I probably should call someone," I said to myself. I started to dial my parents' number, then stopped and thought, *What if I was just being paranoid?* I didn't want my parents to think I couldn't handle it, so I just continued to look around.

I started to head upstairs to look around at the rooms. I entered a dusty, empty room and opened the closet to reveal a tall, pitch-black silhouette figure that was foggy and hard to see. The figure showed a grim face like a carved mask.

My heart sunk to my stomach. I fell to the floor paralyzed with fear. I got back up shaking, trying not to eye the shadowy figure that was behind me. As soon as I got back up, I ran to the basement as fast as my feet could take me. I locked myself in the closet and began to dial my parents' number. No service....I was doomed.

It seemed hours passed before I felt the confidence to get out of the closet. I sighed, "Here we go." I pushed the door open and scanned the basement for anything unusual. I knew I had to get upstairs to get service to be able to call my parents. I took another deep breath and slowly slithered out of the closet upstairs to the kitchen.

Once I reached the kitchen, I examined the room from the left to the right, then looked down at my phone, and once again, dialed my mom's number. The phone rang for a second until there was a faint "hello" from my mom. I told her what happened, and I could tell she thought I was crazy, but she told me she was on her way to come and get me.

Once I heard she was coming, I sighed in relief. I hung up the phone. I thought about staying in the house until my mom came, but I didn't think it was a good idea, so I decided to go outside. I reached for the doorknob and pulled. It wouldn't budge. It couldn't be locked. How? I thought. I was only gone for a couple minutes; how could this happen? I pulled harder and harder, but it would not open. It's no use, I thought. I turned around and started to walk back to the kitchen, but was stopped by the same figure I saw in the room. I couldn't grasp anything to say. I felt like my voice was gone. I started to back up and ran the other direction towards the basement door.

I sprinted as fast as I could until I tripped on the leg of a chair and fell to the floor. "Ouch!" I screamed. The figure moved closer towards me, and I got back up with my vision still blurry. I tumbled down the stairs, barely making it down. I could see my parents car through the glass back door. I had to make it. I pulled the door even though I knew it would not budge. The figure was coming down the stairs and was almost by me. I grabbed the nearest chair and threw it at the door with force, like it was something I deeply hated. I ducked as the glass shattered everywhere on the floor almost cutting me. I jumped through the window without looking back to see what was behind me.

I ran with everything I had toward the car. I jumped in and yelled, "Drive!" My parents didn't bother to ask why I was screaming; they just did what I asked of them. As they drove off, I watched the house disappear. That was the day I knew I wouldn't ever walk by that house again.

Picture by Yuliia Meshcheriakova



Kierra Cantymagli
Loyalsock Township Middle School
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12/19/16

Dear Doe Zantamata,

Your poem "Tell Yourself," has really influenced me to change many different actions. When I was reading it, I felt like it set my confidence a lot higher. For example, it stated, "You can be who you really are," and as I read this, I suddenly thought that this is a very inspirational quote for many girls around the world. The poem "Tell Yourself," is giving me an important lesson, which is to be myself and not let anybody change the way I am.

As I previously stated, this poem has taught me to be myself. How you typed the words really moved me and made me think in ways I have never thought before. When I was younger and I felt insecure, I would feel like I wanted to hide. Now I feel like I should embrace who I really am. For example, I feel like my nose looks weird from the side, and I didn't feel comfortable with it. Now, I accept it because it is what makes me who I am. As I was reading your poem, I was thinking about how many people in the world aren't very comfortable with who they are. I feel like this message is something that everybody should consider. This is truly a poem that is inspirational.

In the poem, I also understood that you shouldn't let anybody change who you are. As I was thinking about the quote "you are worthy of great things," this was a point when I felt something for your words. "Tell Yourself" has made me a better person. When I was younger, I didn't really look at everybody the same, but the poem has told me to not judge people by how they look, but by how they act. How you inspired me is unbelievable. You are teaching many people valuable lessons. For example, I need to be myself, not let people change me, and I should realize I can do many things.

How did it affect me you may ask; it affected my personal decisions and how I live my life. There's another quote that really moved me, and that is, "you are strong," and "you can do this." These two quotes taught me that I need to think positively to be positive. What you wrote in this poem takes the words out of my mouth and took me to a different world with my thoughts. Somethings that this poem inspired me to do are, trying new outfits I may not have been comfortable in before and speaking in front of crowds more than I ever used to. An example is that I now wear skirts or dresses, and I can comfortably speak in front of some larger groups. Lastly, it is important not to let people

tell me who I am. When people say that they don't really like my outfit or they don't think it matches, their words don't bother me.

To conclude, this poem has an important lesson, and that is to be yourself, and not let anybody change who you are. This poem has really inspired me to try different things that I never would have tried before.

Sincerely,

Kierra Cantymagli



Daughter of Ash

by Victoria Roman

With beads of sweat running down her face, her breathing ragged, she realized it was just a horrible dream. She looked at her alarm clock. 3:57 am. As she looked back up at the ceiling, she saw a beam of light coming from the hallway. She slowly crawled out of bed and shuffled to the door. When she opened it, she was momentarily blinded, but when Kassie started to focus, she couldn't believe her eyes. Right across the hallway from her room was what looked like a doorway glowing with beams of purple and gold. It looked like something she has seen in a book. A portal. What she was looking at was a portal. She started heading towards it. No. She was dragged toward it. It was as if her legs had a mind of their own. She tried to stop but, at the same time, she wanted to see what was inside. Therefore, she let the force take her into the abyss that lay on the other side.

When she arrived at the other end moments later, she couldn't believe her eyes once again. She was on the edge of a cliff. No, it wasn't a cliff. It was an island in the sky. It was filled with massive cliffs and waterfalls and beautiful flowers she had never seen before. Then she saw one that she could never forget. Wildfire. The most beautiful flower in her favorite book. It was created by the main character, Athaliah, to attract the monsters to its bright light and incredible appearance. It's a rose made out of a fire that doesn't burn unless put into the hands of the monsters. Magic is the only way to kill them, and it needs to be trained and controlled for it to work. She started to head towards it.

"You might not want to touch that," said a deep voice. "It's made of fire. You'll burst into flames in a second."

"Where are you?" she asked.

"Wouldn't the better question be who I am? Didn't your parents tell you not to talk to strangers?"

"Fine, who are you?" Magically, someone wearing a cloak appeared right in front of her. She jumped back and let out a little screech. The stranger pulled back his hood to show the handsome face underneath, his jet-black hair and sun-kissed skin glowing in the sunlight. And his eyes were the most amazing emerald eyes she's ever seen. It was as if they were portals to another dimension.

"I'm Zalan," he replied with an outstretched hand. She reached out to shake it then returned her attention to the Wildfire. "You know when you ask someone their name, and they tell you, you're supposed to tell them yours."

"Sorry, I just...." She went back to the flower. She felt this energy, this power, coming from the Wildfire. She built up the courage to reach down and touch it. It didn't burn. Then the flower's petals flew off in a gust of wind that she felt coming before it arrived. The petals start circling her, and she felt something coursing through her veins. She looked down at her wrists and saw her veins look like they had lava instead of blood flowing through them. She managed to control the energy, and a sphere of flame and sparks of ash appear above her hand. She looked back to Zalan; fear was the only emotion on her pale face.

"Well, looks like I found you without even knowing it, Kassie," said Zalan.

"How do you know my name? What's happening to me?" asked Kassie.

"Calm down. If you start to fear your magic, it could consume you."

"What's that supposed to mean!?"

"Magic has a mind of its own. If you fear it, it will take control and, in your case, burn you alive."

"Wow, you're magnificent at calming people down, aren't you?" Kassie started slowly backing away as she looked back down at the flames in her shaking hands. Out of nowhere, a thin layer of ice surrounds the flames causing them to fizzle out.

"You feeling okay?" asked Zalan.

"I guess," Kassie replied in a shaky voice.

"Come on. We need your help." Zalan turned away and started walking toward a tall hill. Hesitantly, Kassie followed him. Zalan reached the top, Kassie a bit behind. He stood there, staring down at whatever lies below. When Kassie was up there next to him, she realized why he stopped. On the other side of the hill was a castle she couldn't even imagine existed. It had a giant bridge lined with aquamarine waterfalls that flowed down into a moat. The castle was made of white bricks with a dark gray roof. There are guards stationed at every corner and red banners with a symbol that resembles a Wildflower.

"Whoa," Kassie said, her mouth open in amazement. Out of nowhere, a tall, thin figure appeared, one of its long claws was pointed at Kassie's throat.

"If you try anything girl, you won't see another sunrise," the creature growled in a raspy voice. Kassie felt that unfamiliar pulsing through her veins. Another sphere of fire formed above her hand hidden behind her back. She felt Zalan's presence. He wasn't moving. Everything was a test to see if she could control her magic. She quickly thought of a plan and put it into action. Kassie slowly slid her foot beside the creature's ankle. She quickly fell back to the ground and tripped it. When it fell, she threw her fireball at it and watched it burst into flames.

"Vetala," Kassie said between breaths.

"How do you know what they are?" Zalan asked.

"I have had nightmares about them lately. I had no idea they were real." Kassie ran a hand through her long, auburn hair and closed her eyes. She let out a sigh, her body shaking. When Kassie opened them, she saw Zalan standing in front of her with an outstretched hand. She took it, and he pulled her up. When Kassie stood, she felt faint. Zalan grabbed her elbow to keep her from falling. "Thanks."

"We better go. There's never just one vetala," said Zalan.

"Uh, yeah. I've noticed..." On the other side of the valley beyond the hill, they were standing on, she saw about half a dozen more sprinting in their direction. They covered half the valley in a moment. She was frozen in fear. Zalan grabbed her wrist and started pulling her down the hill. As he hauled Kassie down the hill, she finally snapped out of it. She never ran so fast in her life. When they reached the bottom of the hill, they sprinted for the castle. Kassie could feel the vetala gaining up on them. They were nearly at the end of the bridge. One of the vetalas jumped in front of her, and she fell back. The others

circled her. One of them grabbed Kassie's arm and forcefully picked her up off the ground. It pulled her up to its face, its face cold and hard, but its eyes, they were full of emotion. She managed to shape her fire into a dagger and drove it into its eye. It roared in pain, letting her free. The others started crowding around her when they just froze, a layer of ice gleaming in the sunlight around each one. Kassie ran for the castle.

When Kassie and Zalan entered the castle, she couldn't believe her eyes. They were standing on a balcony overlooking the throne room laced with red and gold. Enormous chandeliers hang overhead; each candle lit with a glistening flame. On the other side of the room was a throne with a woman sitting in it. Her long, blond hair was in a braid draped around her left shoulder laced with tiny pink roses. Her amethyst eyes, her dress swirls of red and orange, her crown made of fire. Zalan started walking down the stairs toward the throne, Kassie following close behind. When they're merely ten feet away, Zalan bowed to the woman. Kassie just stood there. She didn't know what to do. The woman rose from her throne.

"Rise," she commanded. Zalan did as she asked. Then, she looked toward Kassie. "Welcome to Aurani."

"Thank you," Kassie responded.

"I can't even imagine how confused you are. A portal was randomly opening in your home taking you to a place no mortal has ever seen. Allow me to explain and introduce myself. My name is Queen Athaliah of Aurani. I've been looking for you for a while now. I can tell you've found out about your magic. But your magic is an entirely different realm. It's raw, in its purest form. It's some of the most powerful magic that ever existed," explained the Queen.

"With all due respect, why am I here exactly?" Kassie asked.

"As you saw outside, the vetala have been around for a while. We've been dealing with the beasts, but they're getting stronger. They're growing in numbers and are slowly picking us off. We need someone with your magic to help us defeat them."

"But I don't know how to control it half the time, and I can't fight."

"That's why I sent Zalan to find you. He's captain of the guard and commands Aurani's army. He's the best warrior we have and can train you to use your magic and can help you with combat."

"Will I ever go back home?"

"We were hoping that your stay here would encourage you to stay, but if you choose to go back, you may after you help us defeat the vetala." The queen looked toward Zalan. "Take her to her room and make sure she has everything she needs. You will begin her training tomorrow morning."

"Yes, your Majesty." Zalan looked at Kassie and nodded his head into the hallway to the right. As he leads the way, Kassie was trying to take everything in. In a time span of about thirty minutes, she had figured out that she wasn't human. She had raw fire magic, and she was going to be training to help a kingdom in an entirely different realm fight the monsters that haunt her nightmares. She was in trouble. Zalan stopped at the end of the hall and opened a door. "Here's your room. If you need anything, ask the servants. I'll be

waking you up bright and early tomorrow for a run then to help you control your magic. Make sure you get a good night's sleep because it's going to be a long day."

"Okay," Kassie said as she took in yet another incredible room. The only thing she disliked was the fact that there were two guards in her room. She grabbed Zalan's arm and whispered, "Um, so they have to be in my room? Can't they just guard outside the doors?"

"If you want it that way, yes," Zalan looked at the others. "Kane, Dorrion, give Kassie some space to settle in. Go out on the balcony."

"Yes sir," Kane and Elvara said in unison. As they walked out onto the balcony, Kassie went and sat on her bed.

"Hey, Zalan?" she asked. "Queen Athaliah said no mortal has ever been here, so does that mean I'm not a mortal?"

"Yes, it does. If you were a mortal, then you wouldn't have been able to see the portal we sent for you. It was the only way we knew it was you," Zalan answered.

"Well, if I'm not a mortal, what am I?" Kassie asked, sounding a bit worried.

"You're a fawnaus. And before you ask what that is, it's an immortal being that can shift into his or her spirit animal. They can also control their specific element, which in your case is fire."

"Okay," she said, "so tomorrow am I learning to shift?"

"Well first, to get your magic controlled, but when we get that down, I'll help you with shifting." Kassie nodded and lay down on her bed. She heard the door open and close and assumed Zalan left. She looked out the balcony glass doors and slowly got out of bed. Kassie saw the two figures of the guards, but then a third and fourth came into view. She slowly walked to the doors and turned the knob.

When Kassie was outside, she saw the guards pinned to the wall by two vetala. Kassie picked up one of the swords that the guards dropped and drove it into the head of one of the vetala. When it started swinging at her, she managed to throw it off the balcony. The second one lunged at her, but she dodged it, sending it off the balcony with the first. When she looked over the railing, both of the vetala were gone.

"You two okay?" Kassie said turning around.

"Yeah, those things come out of nowhere," Elvara said. Kassie gave her a hand up. Elvara looked over the balcony and saw that they were gone. "Well, you scared them off. You just might be a better guard than us," she said with a laugh.

"Yeah, a guard that doesn't even know how to fight," Kane said.

"Well, judging by what she just did, you know, saving us from being brutally murdered, I don't think she needs as much training as we thought she did," said Elvara with a smile.

"Well, if you two are okay, I'm going back to bed," Kassie said as she walked back inside. She crawled back into bed and laid down on her back. She looked toward the balcony doors and let out a relieved sigh. After a few hours of her mind racing, Kassie finally fell asleep.

The next morning, Kassie woke up the loud pounding on her door. She jumped out of bed and opened the door. It was Zalan.

"Get dressed and meet me downstairs in five minutes," he said handing Kassie a new set of clothes. She closed the door to her room and put on her new clothes. As she started walking out of her room, she looked at herself in her full-length mirror. Her white shirt partly tucked into her new black leather pants. Her brown jacket complementing her thigh high boots.

On her way down to meet Zalan, Kassie braided her hair out of her eyes. She met up with him at the castle doors.

"So," Kassie started, "what are we doing first?"

"We're going to run a few laps around the castle to build up your stamina," Zalan replied.

"Oh jeez," she said. Zalan opened the door for them both, and after about four laps, Kassie nearly passed out. She was completely out of breath. "Can we stop now?" she said sitting down.

"Sure, I don't you to die on me," Zalan said with a smile.

"Oh look, it has a sense of humor," Kassie said with a smirk.

"Ha ha, very funny."

"So, now what?"

"Have you see the garden?"

"No."

"Come on. I'll show you."

"But I just sat down," Kassie whined. Zalan just rolled his eyes and gave her a hand up. Together they made their way to the garden. On the way, Zalan made Kassie practice controlling her magic. She honestly didn't need to work on it. Combat, on the other hand, needed work. A lot of work.

After a couple of hours of training, Kassie was about to collapse again. Zalan took her to the middle of the garden so they could sit down on the edge of the fountain.

"In your realm," Zalan said, "do humans know the legend of Vesta?"

"Not that I know of," Kassie replied.

"Well, the legend starts off with a woman named Vesta who grew up in the land of humans. She had no idea she had magic. She thought she was just an ordinary person. One day she was doing housework, and she discovered her magic and freaked out even more that you did. She ended up burning down the apartment entire building. The thing is, magic doesn't work where she was from. Later that day a portal opened where Vesta was staying, and she entered it. She was told that she was the daughter of the two gods Atticus and Thea, both of which have fire magic. She was sent to rule over this realm until Athaliah came to take her place. Most think that it's just a story, but others believe that it's real, and she'll one day return to take her place back on the throne," Zalan said.

"Why are you telling me this?" Kassie asked.

"I don't know. It just came to mind." Kassie looked out toward the sunset, the mountains an orange color. Then she saw a couple of little dots running toward the castle. She looked closer. A couple turned into a few dozen in a heartbeat.

"Zalan," she whispered, "do you see what I'm seeing?" He looked toward the mountains. Zalan grabbed Kassie's arm, and they ran for the castle. When she looked behind them to see how close they had gotten, there were thousands.

Zalan and Kassie burst through the castle doors and told everyone who could fight to help them hold off the army of vetala. Everyone was running around getting gear on and defenses up. Kassie was going to have to compete with a single day of training.

"Here," Zalan said handing her a belt. When she put it on, he gave her sword, a dagger, a bow, and a quiver of arrows. Kassie slid the sword and dagger onto the belt and threw the bow and arrows over her shoulder. Some of the others who were already in their gear were rushing outside to hold them off while the others got ready. Kassie wasn't going to leave without Zalan. He finally got all his gear on. "Come on," he said at last, "we need to help them. This is why we brought you here. You can do this. I'll never leave your side."

"Okay," Kassie said letting out a shaky breath. Together they walked outside into the destruction. Only a few minutes had passed since they spotted the vetala on the hill, and it was already a bloodbath. Kassie and Zalan both drew their swords and entered the chaos. Both fawnaus and vetala were falling around them, but they stuck together guarding each other's backs. Neither one of them knew how it happened, but they were separated. Kassie looked for Zalan, but he was nowhere to be found. A heartbeat later, she was surrounded. One of the vetala knocked the sword out of her hand. She reached for the dagger, but it was gone too. Kassie formed a sword out of her magic and killed the few surrounding her, but she missed one. The next moment there was a stabbing pain in her abdomen. The next thing she knew, she was engulfed in flames. Kassie had never felt more pain in her life. Kassie could feel her flesh melting. She screamed until she ran out of air. Through the flames, she saw a silhouette. At first, she thought it was Zalan, but it was a woman. Then everything went black.

After what felt like hours, Kassie awoke. She was still in flames, the pulsing in her veins was back. The fire wasn't burning her anymore. It was giving her power. She absorbed the energy of the flames, and she rose from the ground. She walked out of the flames and put all the power she could manage to burn the vetala to ash. Everything was on fire. It was as if the entire island were dropped into a volcano. The next moment, the flames were gone. Kassie turned around to the crowd of warriors behind her. Then a woman appeared. She had the same figure of the silhouette that was in the flames. The woman's body was glowing.

"Hello Kassie," the woman said. "I am Vesta, Goddess of Fire and Ash. I've been watching over this realm for thousands of years, waiting for the right time to take my rightful place on the throne. When I first saw you, I never would have imagined the power you possess. Since the day I was born, I've never seen someone with your power. You may be fearful, but that's what makes you stronger. I've come not only to take back my crown, but to give it to someone who deserves it. I've found that person in you. You will not only

take my place on the throne, but my replace me as the goddess of fire as well." Vesta put a light hand on Kassie's shoulder. She could feel the magic pulsing not only through her veins but Vesta's as well. When Vesta took her hand off Kassie's shoulder, the light that was once around her vanished. A crown of flame was placed upon Kassie's head. "I trust you will take good care of these people. I wish you the best of luck." Then, Vesta was gone.

Kassie, still in shock of what just happened, went into the crowd to find Zalan. She felt a hand on her shoulder and turned around to find Zalan on the verge of tears. He embraced her in a hug.

"I'm so sorry," he cried. "I heard you scream and went to find you but it was too late. There were so many of them, and the last thing I saw was you in the middle of the flames." When he let go of Kassie, he noticed the blood at her stomach. "Holy gods, are you okay?"

"Calm down; I'm fine. I was just gutted before engulfed in flames," Kassie said with a smile.

"Wow, you're magnificent at calming people down, aren't you?" Zalan laughed.

"So, did you see what just happened with, you know, the old goddess of fire and ash?" Kassie said acting like no one saw it.

"I'm pretty sure everyone saw it, Your Majesty," Zalan said with an over exaggerated bow. Kassie nudged him with her elbow and laughed. For the first time since she got to Aurani, she felt safe. She was Kassie Nicole Fastanlaura, and she would no longer be afraid.





***Out of Our Minds* Editorial Staff, pictured from left to right: Regan Oaks, Cadence Neely, Gianna Rupert, Madison Rall, Abigail Colone, Micah Sagar, Yuliia Meshcheriakova, Teegan Biichle, Victoria Roman, and Jett Pulizzi. Missing from the photo—Michaela Wheeland.**

Picture by Areesha Mian

