

RI Txt Anthology 2015

Session A – Tempe: 29 submissions

Session B- Tempe: 26 Submissions

West Campus: 20 submissions

Poly Campus: 24 submissions

Thank you to all the students.

Enjoy reading these.

Keep on writing!

Poly Campus

1. Arora, Vatsal
2. Chalasani, Vivek
3. Chondhri, Arjun
4. Chondhri, Sahil
5. Chunduru, Ankith
6. Chunduru, Rishi
7. Diaz, Julian
8. Foresman, Abby
9. Hoffman, Valerie
10. Julian, Hannah
11. Kahlon, Nikhil
12. Kahlon, Sohil
13. Kantala, Saanvi
14. Kantala, Shrika
15. McGouldrick, Amber
16. Mosur, Aadith
17. Nieto, Cheyenne
18. Nishtala, Meena
19. Nishtala, Rohan
20. Potocnjak, Bela
21. Potturu, Aishwarya
22. Rascon, Andre
23. Vallambhatla, Ritvik
24. White, Caitlyn



Bath-Tub Trouble

by Vatsal Arora

One day I was giving my brother a bath. It was the first time I was giving him a bath, so I really didn't know what to do. My mom gave me a list. I tried to follow it, but I really didn't know what anything was so I was scared that I might kill my brother in the first days that he was born.

After a while I figured out where the soap was, so I put it on my brother. My brother kept opening his eyes so he kept getting soap in his eyes. I wanted a drink of water, so I left my brother alone for a few minutes. When I came back from my drink of water, I was shocked to see that I had accidentally left the water running and the water was up to his throat. I turned off the water and started to panic. I didn't know what to do, so I called my mom.

My mom came running in and saw that the water was up to my brother's throat. She took him out immediately. She asked me what happened, and I told her that I had gone to go and get a drink of water and when I came back, I saw the water half way to his throat. Then I called you to come and take him out. She told me if I needed help next time to come and tell her before I go wondering off and get water and leave my brother alone. I have learned from this to always tell my parents if I have an issue and to never give my brother a bath.

THE ADVENTURES OF BILL

A short story by Vivek Chalasani

Chapter One

One day Bill was sitting in his cottage as usual, with nothing to do and nowhere to be. There was only one abnormality about his cottage; it had a portal. Bill did not know about the existence of the portal until one sunny morning day. Strange noises were coming from the attic. Bill, who was unsuspecting at the time, thought that the noises were being caused by the mice scurrying on the creaky floor boards. So he ignored it. Creak! Creak! But the noises just kept on coming. Bill tried to contain his anger but he could not hold it any longer. And so he jumped out of bed, promising himself he could punish the rascal who made him get out of bed at 5:20 in the morning. What Bill saw when he climbed up the stairs to the attic was no rat or mouse, but a fully functional portal.

Bill was amazed by the portal! It was the size of an average television set with a green frame. A red swirl was rotating inside the portal. Behind the swirl was a sheet of darkness. The swirl seemed to be spinning as fast as a hurricane, and yet as slow as a turbine on a windless day. Just the sight of the portal made Bill want to run back to his bed and hide. But the portal attracted him towards it with its magical aura and enchanting sight. Eventually Bill was so close to the portal that it absorbed him into its seemingly never endless darkness and that was for a long time, the end of Bill.

Bill woke up on a hard mattress to a lot of commotion. He saw creatures that looked like no monster or alien he had ever imagined. They had 200 eyes that were evenly distributed amongst their perfectly spherical heads. Rather than having a body to connect their body parts, they used their head as a main base to attach to their 20 arms. They were similar to spiders, but they preferred to spin to move around. Bill tried to hide from the creatures, but immediately stopped when the leader said in a deep voice, "You cannot hide from us, human. We are the Sills, masters of seeing the unseen." Bill gulped and asked nervously, "Why have you brought me here?" The leader of the Sills replied, "We need you to help us with our dilemma. Our enemy, the Bers, stole our main life source, the emerald jewel. Without it we are depressed and face the possibility of extinction. We believe the Bers want to use the emerald jewel to achieve their ultimate goal, destroying our entire planet. Will you help us get back the emerald jewel and restore peace?" With a firm nod, Bill said, "Yes, I will."

Chapter Two

The next morning Bill woke up in a grand room. A bed with a soft mattress resided in the center. On either side of the bed were wooden cabinets with elegant swirl designs. The floor was made of blue flawless marble that had no cracks running through it. Golden chandeliers hung from the ceiling giving the large room a sense of warmth and comfort. As Bill got ready to leave his room, he was greeted by two Sill maids. The older maid said, "We will escort you to the Launch Room. You will then enter the portal to the planet of the Bers." So the Sills led Bill

to the Launch Room and bade him best of luck. The leader of the Sills said in a grave voice, "We cannot give you much, but we can give you our sacred sword, the Sen. It helped defeat our enemies many times in the past." Bill walked into the portal and teleported into the planet of the Bers.

Bill was teleported straight to the courtyard of the palace of the Bers. The Bers' planet was beautiful. Large oak trees filled the skylines. Large mountains could be seen in the distance. Around the palace were tall, brown redwood trees that cast shadows on the palace. Immediately after Bill teleported to the surface of the planet, a robotic voice said, "Come in."

Bill entered the palace clutching his sword tightly ready to attack any enemy that opposed him. As he walked through the halls of the Bers, he noticed one particularity; there were no people at all in the palace. Not even the occasional janitor was seen sweeping dust from the ground. "Probably getting ready to destroy the planet of the Sills," Bill thought in an unmerciful way. "Is there anybody here?" he shouted. Then came the reply, "Yes, there is. Come in to the conference room and we can talk about why you have come here and what you seek." Even though Bill had never been to the palace before, the location of the conference room suddenly came to his head. Bill wasn't in control of his body any longer. His legs just drew him in a direction...into a room...and then Bam! Suddenly his consciousness came back to him and he found himself in front of a middle aged man with dark black hair that hung around his neck.

Chapter Three

The man said, "I know why you have come. The Sills have told you to come to avenge them of our apparent "treachery". What you do not know is that we did not steal the emerald jewel from them. Through our advanced technology, we have found that the jewel has become radioactively unstable. If we had not taken the jewel, it would have exploded, destroying the entire Sill kind." Bill replied in a shocked tone, "Then why did the Sills suspect you of using the jewel for evil purposes? "Because the Sills have always been suspicious creatures. I'm sure you heard them referring to themselves as "masters of seeing the unseen". They have been attacked by other creatures for many eons. The Sills have gone into hiding on their own planet. Every time, they send an ambassador from your planet to fight their enemies, but they fail to realize their one mistake; not standing up for themselves and dealing with their own affairs. Don't go back to the Sills planet like all the other ambassadors did. Let the Sills learn from all the mistakes they have made in the past. Go back to your home planet and continue to live the life you lived before." Taking a deep breath, bill walked into the portal and teleported home.

When Bill returned home, he was a changed person. Instead of the "nothing to do and nowhere to be" person he was, he became an adventurer. He explored the woods that he lived in and searched for new adventures. He made many friends and had fun at parties and other events. Through his final years he always wondered what happened to the Sills. Then one day, as he was walking through the woods on an evening stroll, he found out.

Vegetable Thief with a Paintball Gun

By Arjun Choudhri

My name is Derpy, and I'm a thief. A vegetable thief. I don't like wasting money and time buying vegetables from the grocery store. The stores are two hours away from our house, and our neighbors have nothing to do, so they go out to the grocery stores, and they buy vegetables.

I steal their vegetables at night when they are asleep. My mom helps me steal juicy, colorful, great-tasting vegetables like broccoli and carrots and cucumbers and red, green, and yellow bell peppers. Then my mom just helps me cook them.

Sometimes we shoot our neighbors if they catch us. We shoot with a paintball gun, but they don't know who we are because we wear black ski masks. We use paintball guns because we don't want to really hurt anyone. And because I am professional paintballer. I got first place in my first shooting paintball competition. My trophy was heavy and thick and made out of GOLD!

I have trained my mom in paintballing, so she can be as good as I am. So when we sneak into a house and get caught, we shoot them with our paintball guns. If you are a kid and get shot by a paintball, it hurts. You most likely start crying.

The neighbors think they should start calling the cops because of the vegetable thefts and because the inside of their house are a monster of colors, like clown throw up. My neighbor's son goes to the same school as I do. He always talks about this vegetable thief with his friends. He notices that the carrots and potatoes are always missing from his house. Those are my favorite vegetables.

You might think I should stop. But I am the Vegetable Thief; I have been on 46 missions. I have had three close calls, but I shot their bellies with a blue paintball. I love vegetables; I love paintball. I will never stop until I'm too old to shoot my paintball gun.

Monster Invasion

By: Sahil Choudhri

National aeronautics and space administration, also known as NASA, was thinking of sending somebody to Mars, and they asked for volunteers. So, I had volunteered. After I had volunteered, I got some extra training down, and I was off to Mars.

On the way to Mars, I saw asteroids. The asteroids were dusty and gigantic with big holes. I had also noticed that the asteroids left a trail of dust.

Finally I had approached Mars. The planet itself is red and orange with a variety of different rocks. The different rocks are sedimentary and igneous rocks. Sedimentary rocks are when rocks are layered. Igneous rocks are rocks that are formed when magma cools. THEN! I saw it. It was a gigantic green, eight tentacle monster. The tentacles shoot ink out to protect themselves from intruders like me. Don't ask how I figured that out. Let's just say that happened to me. I got so scared I fainted for about one hour. In that time I was tied to a pole made out of solid plutonium. When I woke up, there were more of these alien-like objects. I then got so mad.

Then the alien king came. One of the aliens said, call him Bob. Bob said, "Throw him into the volcano." I said, "If you throw me into the volcano, my distress signal will go off, and I will signal a backup team. The backup team would not like that. Then Bob let me go, and I was on my way back to earth. On the way back to earth, one comet started hurling at me so I used turbo boost, and I dogged it. Then more comets started hurling at me, and I got hit several times. Luckily I was OK because NASA built a very stable spaceship.

When I got home, I got many questions from scientist. For example, one scientist asked if there life on Mars. I said, "There was life on Mars." Also they asked, if there was life, how big was it? I said, "The aliens, or life on Mars, were about ten feet tall." After the questions, I got an escort home. At home I relaxed, and I was done with my mission.

The End

Excerpt from The Quest of Anskul

By: Ankith Chunduru

Chapter 1: The Kingdom of Dicinean

What was I thinking, what was I thinking? Why did I join this quest?

One word. Rinn. She asked me to come on this trip and what could I say to the Queen of Dicinean, No? Who would reject the heir to the throne, even if my family and hers had a huge rivalry in the past? After all, we are the two families of High Elves in the kingdom. I really don't care much for power or Wealth, but that is all my Father wants me to think that those things are all that matter.

Recently however, Rinn's Father, the king of Dicinean, passed away and Rinn's brother took over. That was around the time the mystery of Anskul began. People have begun to disappear and were taken to Anskul. The King has a feeling that the Orcs have something to do with this. He has sent many expeditions to try to find out what's going on at Anskul But no one has returned.

A couple weeks ago, my mother was kidnapped and taken to Anskul. MY father has looked everywhere, but with no luck. Last week the King issued another expedition to Anskul. The one thing different about this quest is that Rinn, the most powerful sorceress in Dicinean, found out that the Deserted Island Garensweil has something to do with the disappearances.

Even though I was completely Terrified, I volunteered to go on this quest today, not only to be able to save my mother, but also to prove my worth to the kingdom. Before this I have done absolutely nothing for the kingdom. After I volunteered Rinn pulled me aside and told me something that totally scared me, then wished me luck.

Only two other people were courageous enough to volunteer with me. Undine, a tiefling, brought a pony and her donkey with three baby Donkeys and Roland, a half-Elf, who I know absolutely nothing about. I was named the leader of the expedition. They gave us weapons, packs, and a small amount of food and fresh water.

We were about to set sail for the gnome land to replenish our supplies. Roland and I decided on this route for the gnomes are quite friendly unlike the Dragonborn south of us. We will sail around the Dragonborn and humans to the East side of Garenswell. We will explore the island and look for anything suspicious. Then we will stop what's going on at Anskul then return home. That is the Plan.

As all these thoughts sailed through my head as we raised the anchor and set off. A few seconds later, Roland cried, "I hate going on ships," and began to clutch his stomach as we bid farewell to the rest of the elves. Undine and I watched in disbelief and amusement as his face began to turn green. Just as he was about to throw up I threw him the barf box, fortunately.

"Thanks," he said. "I think I want to go down to my cabin and lie Down.

After that Undine said, "I think I'm going to go down and practice my Dark Magic thing. We might need it in the future."

I replied, "Fine, I'll tell you to come up before we reach." I was actually relieved that she left. Now I am able to dwell on my conversation with Rinn.

"You are the glue that will hold the group to fail. Without you the group will collapse. If you fail the quest will go to ruins," she warned. Her beautiful blue eyes full of worry and concern.

"Don't worry," I said. "I will not fail. I will do this for you , for my mother, for Dicinean, She hugged me and said, " Good luck," as I headed to the dock.

And now here I am, trying to save the world.

The Adventures of the Powerful Polar Bear and the Flying Penguin

By Rishi Chandana

One day in the North Pole, a bear named Paul was sleeping wistfully. A penguin named Jacob was teleported next to Paul by scientists and had cymbals. Jacob smashed the cymbals, waking up Paul. He kicked Jacob 500 miles. Desperately, Jacob flapped his flippers and flew to the North Pole in a flash. Paul and Jacob looked at each other. They knew they must use their powers for good. They introduced themselves and went to the bear tailor and got costumes. Paul got leotards that are white and gold. Jacob asked for the same outfit except it was smaller and it was black and blue. From then on they were known as the Powerful polar bear and the flying penguin.

First they went to Washington D.C. where they got translators so they could speak any language. Then they went to Moscow. Jacob flew above the city. When everyone was confused, Paul captured the leader and made Russia a democracy. After Russia's defeat, all Communists changed to democrats. Then 5 years later they went back in time to stop the terrorists from destroying the Twin Towers and the Pentagon by kicking the planes into the Atlantic Ocean. Then they saved the Malaysian planes that disappeared. Once they got to the present, they were awarded by the President and got statues all over the nation. They have kept protecting the world until now.

The Three Stones Of Equinox

Excerpt from Chapter 1 of a work in progress
Written by: Julian Diaz

Chapter 1: Equinox

Zeverin trudged along the uneven forest ground, nearly tripping several times over some uneven bits of earth. He managed to keep his feet under him by using his staff for support, but he still stumbled from time to time. He liked it though, the ruggedness of the woods, he found it charming. The trees grew high into the sky, their branches and leaves creating a canopy that cast shadows on the ground below. In some parts the light shone through, the entire beams were visible from the top of the trees to the dirt below. The light shimmered with the small insects that were caught in it for a split second and dust could be seen floating about within the rays.

As he continued forward, he happened upon a brook, the water moved along quietly, making only soft soothing sounds as the water passed by larger rocks. The space above it was not covered by trees, and light shone down on the stream, only now it was moonlight. Zeverin moved closer and stared up into the exposed sky. It was dark now, only the bright light of the full moon illuminated the earth. He decided he would sit for a bit; no one would miss him yet, he thought, I'll just have a quiet moment here before heading back.

And so he did, he set his staff down beside him and sat at the edge of the stream, watching the water flow by and listening to the soothing sounds of the night. He picked up his staff and held it high on the shaft, near the crystal nested atop the spire. He held the glowing stone over his hand and muttered a spell under his breath. The stone lit up and magic began to swirl around it and form into the shape of a sphere, floating down slowly into Zeverin's open palm.

He let it spin slowly in his palm, watching it. It was a golden sphere, shining bright in the dark night. He turned his hand over, the sphere sticking in the space above his palm. Then he moved his fingers, curling them into his palm to pull the ball onto his fingers and roll it onto the top of his hand.

Zeverin played with the little mote of light for a bit before he grew bored of his own tricks and dispelled it. He leaned over and placed his hands on his knees, looking back at the stream. The moon caught in the reflection of the stream and he looked up. It was such a beautiful moon, he thought, wishing his little mote could amount to such beauty. And the stars, thousands upon thousands of lights shone proudly in the sky around the moon. Zeverin chuckled to himself, the way the stars surrounded the moon reminded him of the candles held by the citizens of Ethridge on ascendance day eve, standing around the burning effigy of the demon lord Davros. Yes, what a fitting analogy, thought Zeverin. He would be sure to write than one down when next he finds himself in possession of quill and parchment.

Slowly, the moon began to move across the sky, like a mighty vessel sailing across the sea of stars. There are few sights as bewitching as a full Etheran moon. In fact, Zeverin found himself struggling to think of any sight as beautiful, until one presented itself a moment later.

The moon was soon directly above the clearing, and suddenly it froze. The moon stopped above the clearing as if held back by the hands of the gods themselves. Suddenly it began to shine, more brilliantly than before and growing steadily in intensity. Zeverin squinted as if staring into the sun itself; he averted his gaze and looked downward, only to be met with more light, from the stream this time. The stream too was aglow with moonlight, as if it had absorbed the powerful rays of the moon.

He stood up, astonished by the light. It pulsed, growing steadily brighter before dulling back down and then becoming brighter once more. Zeverin was speechless; he searched feverishly about for some explanation, but found none. He had to find one, he thought. This is clearly some sort of magic, but one he had never seen before.

His expression of confusion and awe quickly changed to one of excitement. This could be exactly what he was after, the discovery that would immortalize his name in history.

He followed the stream, walking at a quick pace, eager to see where it led. It brought him to a thick wall of stone, decorated with a thick curtain of vines and vegetation and standing at least twice the height of Zeverin. The water from the stream ran right into the rock and began to flow upward along the wall in a web of thin streams. It fit well into the existing networks of vines, creating a sort of spider web.

Still the water was aglow with moonlight, but Zeverin could see less and less of it as it hid behind the vines. He whispered another spell and tapped his staff on the ground. The vines responded to his magic and began to move, to shrink back away from the stone wall and into the brush. As they moved, they revealed more of the water. What the water was scaling was no natural formation, it was man-made. It was a flat wall of stone, carved with intricate designs and what appeared to be images of three figures holding hammers. Zeverin studied the images prudently for a few long seconds before a new detail caught his attention. There was a thin indent in the stone, running down the center of the wall. This was no mere wall, it was a door.

Zeverin was hit with a wave of euphoria, he had finally found it. Whatever it was, he had found it. He wasted no time; he had to get the thing open. He did not bother attempting to use brute force. There were obviously more powerful forces than gravity at work here. He studied the door a moment, following the intricate network of water with his eyes. They seemed to circle around the center several times before eventually meeting at a point level with Zeverin's eyes. He reached out to touch it, breaking the first and most imperative rule of dealing with unknown arcane objects. If it glows... Don't touch it.

Zeverin felt a powerful pulse hit him and recoiled. He felt the forest behind him groan, as if it was fearful of what he had done. Birds and small creatures fled, even the evasive nymphs are known to avoid being spotted at all costs broke from their hiding places and took off in the other direction. Whatever he had done had worked. The water that ran up the door's face had reached the top, filling indents that were previously invisible to the naked eye. They were runes, old writings that Zeverin quickly recognized to be the forgotten language of the gods. Supposedly, the gods were actually once a mortal race of men, of which the few who were pure ascended to godliness while those who were wicked were damned to the underworld as demons and shades. Grateful for all those years he spent studying the old tomes and history records, Zeverin grinned widely and took a step back to read the runes. A simple translation, in fact it was only a single word, a name actually, "Equinox".

"Equinox..." Zeverin muttered aloud as he read it, jaw hanging open and eyes aglow with wonder like a child on ascendance day morning, and they grew wider as the stone began to shift and scrape as the door began to open. There would be no concealing of his excitement, his hands balled up into fists and he shook them in front of his face as he bit his lip and bounced up and down slightly. He caught himself, however, suddenly freezing and turning to the forest behind him checking for any watchful eyes that might have caught him in his moment of vulnerability. Seeing no one, he still felt self-conscious and straightened out, flattening his robes and clearing his throat. Watched or not, he would not allow himself to display such childish behavior.

Excerpt from The BGC (The Baby Gal Club)
By Abby Foresman

Chapter 1—The BGC

In the small town of Spinnersville, Rondi Benson was counting the money she had saved up for the latest Townclown magazine issue. “3....4....5.....6!” Rondi cheered, dashing for her parents’ room. Rondi was no older than 11, and she had brown hair with sparkling green eyes.

Hazel Benson spent most of her time at the mall with her friends, Celestia Stikes and Filip Parks. Hazel had just celebrated her fourteenth birthday. Hazel had flowing blonde hair and brown eyes.

Melody Benson sat in her room chewing on a teething ring waiting patiently for Annabelle Piper to show up. Melody was two and a half; she was a very stubborn girl with a big sense of humor. Melody had blue eyes with dirty blonde hair. Just then Melody heard footsteps. “Oh no, not nap time already!” Melody thought. “We have a very important meeting at the BGC tonight.”

The BGC: otherwise known as the Baby Gal Club, it was a club for girls 1-4 years old, and that night was the awards ceremony. Melody was the vice president of the entire program. Amy Chalani started the whole thing when she was three, nineteen years ago. Amy was already 22 and doesn’t remember any of it. Spinnersville’s babies believe once you’re over the age of 4, you forget your babyhood. Annabelle Piper had finished her last year as a BG.

In the BGC, the girls pulled pranks on boys, did fun crafts, and most importantly changed the lives of the people of Spinnersville. You think ADULTS made things like Google? Larry Page? Sergey Brin? Yeah, right. The people who invented those were babies! That was back in 1998, two years after the BGC was invented.

Melody’s naptime never got in the way, it was just more difficult to get to meetings, and she was extra cranky in the morning. Melody sighed as her mother escorted her to her bed, and three minutes later, there was a silent knock on the window; Annabelle P. was there, signaling her that it was time to go. Melody pulled her badge out from under her pillow, grabbed her life-sized doll and covered it up in the blankets to fool her mom. She climbed out the window and was off.

Chapter 2—The Awards Ceremony Preparation

This year’s ceremony was at Paige Oinolea’s house. Paige had tangerine hair and was about three. When Melody and Annabelle arrived, the BGC president and treasurer were already on the front door step. The president of the club is elected every two years. This year’s president was a girl named Megan Swift, and the Senator was a girl named Taylor Trainor. “Is Paige almost ready?” Taylor asked.

“She said she needed ten minutes before the meeting,” Megan replied.

“What’s Paige doing anyway?” Annabelle whispered.

“Her mom is finishing story time,” Megan said quietly as Paige motioned them inside.

“Beautiful house,” Melody commented to Paige.

“How was your first season as a BG, Melody?” Megan asked

“I’m glad I joined,” Melody replied. “I don’t have to spend my toddler days crying, nose picking, and diaper-”

“We’ve heard enough, Melody,” Megan scolded. “Are we going to un-stack the chairs, or are we going to wait for the chairs to grow legs and un-stack themselves?”

“Oh!!! Choose option B!!” Paige said.

“Paige, chairs don’t grow legs,” Annabelle groaned. Paige blushed.

“It’s getting dark; we should start now,” Megan said. As they un-stacked the chairs a few kids arrived. For instance Gracie Lusman (chairperson) and Selena Empsison (social chairperson). Within three minutes they were done.

“Taylor, you un-stack chairs so fast!” Gracie giggled. “The members should be here any moment.”

Taylor whispered, “Megan, why isn’t Jasmine here? She’s giving the speech!”

“Jasmine Opaki, right?” Megan asked.

Taylor nodded.

“Don’t worry, I’ll text her,” Megan looked up at the girls. “Well don’t just stare at me, go get changed. Hurry up!”

After the girls got changed, Megan rushed up to Melody. “Melody! Jasmine has a sore throat and can’t give the speech or announce the awards tonight.”

“Then why are you asking me—” Melody began.

“No, no way, Megan!” I am not—I repeat, I am NOT,” Melody cried.

“PLEASE,” Megan begged, “you have such a pretty voice!”

Melody moaned, “But I have stage fright.”

“Stage fight? So you fight stages?”

“No silly! Stage FRIGHT. It means I’m scared to perform,” Melody giggled.

“Oh well, my mom once told me to strip down to your underwear and. . .” Megan started, “you know, that doesn’t sound right out loud.” Melody rolled her eyes.

Jessie S'mores? (snores)

By Valerie Hoffman

The Tores

Jessie Tores was a lively teenager with two annoying brothers named Wolfgang and Ashton. Their father was a park ranger and always took them camping. Their mother was a member of the Caring for Injured or Sick Woodland Animals Program or the CISWA Program.

Jessie loved going camping because at the beautiful, colorful camping grounds, they always made delicious s'mores. Jessie made heavenly s'mores; as the chocolate melted on the hot marshmallow, it turned into a gooey chocolate marshmallow, squished in between Graham crackers.

Then one night at the dinner table, Mr. Tores announced that they were going camping tomorrow, the whole family started babbling about what to pack: water skis, cookies, and a frog? Ashton and Wolfgang's bullfrog to be exact. The family decided to bring Joey, their new dog. Joey exploded out of the couch with cotton flying everywhere! Ashton screamed, Wolfgang laughed, Mrs. Tores scowled, Mr. Tores had an idea "We are getting that dog a trainer and that is IT. I will make Joey an "On-Patrol-Dog!" Mrs. Tores smiled, but Jessie started to cry, "No, I earned money to get a dog. Joey is my dog, and he is not yours!" Jessie scooped up Joey and ran to her room.

The Camping Trip

Jessie was hiking with her family to the perfect camping spot. Jessie saw tulips and daisies, roses and sunflowers. It was just a lovely place. Jessie stopped to pick a rose. Then she skipped up to her family. She took deep breaths of the woodland air; it smelled better than anything. Joey pranced along with his furry little puppy head held up high as if he were King of Vine Woods.

There was a patch of flowers, and the flowers had been parted into a small pathway that went to a small circle with no flowers, just the soft dirt. This circle was ideal for holding their tent and small barbeque.

While her parents set up the tent and her brothers got the barbeque so that they could cook sausages for the main meal to accompany the beans, which was the side dish, Jessie was watching Joey. She sketched pictures of Joey barking at squirrels and birds. Then Mom announced that everyone had to put their stuff in their tent. Jessie pulled out her stuffed animal cat she had named Poppy. She got her sleeping bag covered in star designs and her with feather pillow.

Jessie put her backpack next to her sleeping bag and Joey's cage in the corner. Then she and her family went outside to enjoy some sausages and beans while Joey munched on his dog food.

When everyone was stuffed they decided to call it a day. Everyone got ready for bed and brushed their teeth. Joey was in his cage, dozing off.

Little S'mores, Jessie Snores

Whenever the Tores went camping, Jessie snored. Jessie stayed up thinking of a delicious s'more breakfast she'd have the next morning. Jessie's brothers snickered, "What a show watching little Miss Fashionista snoring! HA!" Wolfgang whispered to Ashton. Ashton snorted, "Go back to sleep, Wolfgang. We don't want to wake mom or dad." Wolfgang and Ashton both wiggled back into their sleeping bags and went to sleep.

Jessie woke with a start, and then she got ready for her day. She dragged herself out of her sleeping bag and combed her hair. Jessie took off her pajamas and put on her t-shirt and shorts. She walked outside and made herself a breakfast s'more. Jessie let the marshmallow and chocolate mix together in her mouth while she mixed in some Graham crackers with her tongue. She savored every last bit. Then Jessie told her mom she would be picking flowers for a bouquet.

Brother Trouble

Wolfgang and Ashton had some nasty plans for this week, not just for Jessie, but for Mom and Dad too.

"First, we should pick some poison ivy, shred it, and put it in the soap and in the shampoo," Wolfgang told Ashton.

Ashton replied in a sly voice, "Don't forget about the shaving cream."

"This will be awesome!" they said at the same time.

Jessie had been picking many flowers in the meadow and saw Wolfgang and Ashton leaning over a plant giggling. She couldn't hear exactly what they were saying, but Jessie could hear parts of it: "They are going to . . . ivy bumps all over . . . hands. Poison ivy . . . leaves, now . . . ? Three."

Jessie had heard "poison," "ivy," "three," "leaves," "bumps," "hands"; she didn't like the sound of it, so she walked up to the boys and said in a suspicious voice, "What are you two doing? Poison ivy leaves and something else, I suppose?" Wolfgang screamed at the top of his lungs, "Mom! Jessie was spying on us!"

"They were doing something with poison ivy!" Jessie yelled back.

"Boys, come here!" Mom yelled.

They ran together to Mom. Jessie smirked and thought, "Once again, I win."

THE END

The Good Win

By Hannah Olivia Mae Julian

Hi, I'm Kat Tate. I'm in a writing class just for kids. I told my teacher that I want to become a writer. My teacher announced, "We will be participating in a writing contest. The winner will get his or her book published!"

I pulled out my journal. I thought about who it should be about. I didn't know what to do.

When I got home I asked my dad he said, "Write a story about a monster."

I said, "Too scary."

I asked my mom. She said, "Write a story about kindness."

I said, "Too boring."

I asked my two little sisters. With their cute little voices, they chimed together, "Write a story about unicorns," then they giggled.

"Too babyish," I muttered to myself, so I wouldn't hurt their feelings.

I went to my bedroom and sat up on my bed. I opened my journal. I thought about it for a few minutes; nothing came to my mind, so I went to sleep.

I had an idea. I started to brainstorm. In three days my story was finished.

Today was the day we had to turn in our stories. I turned my story in and went back to my desk.

"Quiet down everyone," said my teacher. "Today we are going to turn in our stories, and next week, we will find out who won the contest."

I was so excited. A week always felt like a month, but a week finally passed. I sat down in my chair.

The teacher said, "All right everyone! We are going to an assembly to find out who is the winner of the writing contest. Line up everyone!"

We walked to the gym. It's where we have all our assemblies. We sat down. The principal came out from backstage.

She said "The winner of the contest is..." I crossed my fingers.

"Kat Tate!"

When I got in the car, I told my dad that I had won. He was so excited. When I got home, I told my mom that my story is getting published.

She said "We're going to go to the ice cream shop to celebrate your good win."

At the ice cream shop, I got three different flavors: chocolate, strawberry, and butterscotch. It was good. A few months later I saw my story "The Big Mix Up." It is a story about a mean monster who meets a nice unicorn, and they try to understand each other by acting like each other. But that doesn't work. At the end they learn that kindness is the thing everyone wants. They lived happily ever after.

THE END

Going To India

By: Nikhil Kahlon

India is a humid, high-industry, and busy country. It is located in southern Asia. It borders Sri Lanka and Nepal. That was most of what I knew before I went to India.

On the plane, I was very tired. My family and I had been traveling more than five hours. Luckily, it was an international flight meaning that we can sleep and recover from airsickness. We had finally arrived!!! I was so happy I could finally see where my dad had grown up.

When we arrived at New Delhi (the capital of India), we had a driver take us to our hotel. When we got to our hotel we met our cousins who will accompany us during our trip. The only bad thing was that I got jetlag. We took a train to Ludhiana, where my dad grew up. The train was another four hours. HOW EXHAUSTING!!!!!!!!!!!!!! We stayed at Ludhiana for two days. It was fun seeing what toys my dad had when he grew up. Let me tell you, that they were so different to the ones that we have today. Some of them were stuffed animals and wind-up toys, but one intrigued me; it was an airsoft shotgun!!! After that we went back to New Delhi.

After coming back to Delhi we took off to Jaipur. We went by airplane. It was cool because the plane was a propeller plane. The flight was only thirty minutes long. When we arrived at Jaipur, the driver took us to our hotel. The thing that my dad did not tell me was that our hotel used to be... a palace!!!! It was so cool and so big. We did not have the whole hotel to ourselves; the palace was turned into a hotel because they had added a lot of rooms. The scenery from the top of the palace was amazing. You could see almost the whole city of Jaipur from there. We stayed in Jaipur for four days. After our time in Jaipur we went back to New Delhi and stayed there for the rest of our trip.

When we flew back home, it was a little shorter flight, but still very exhausting. I thought it was nice to be home, but I still missed India a lot.

In conclusion, staying in India was a fun time. I got to see two of its most famous cities. I hope to go there again, except to some different places that India is famous for.

The Musician

By Sohil Kahlon

I am going to be a musician. Well, I already am a musician; I play the viola and violin. But some day, I will write music to entertain people on the radio, to entertain people through their ears. I will have a really big orchestra to play my music. It will have all the instrument families: brass, wood, and string.

I will play the clarinet and will have someone else be the conductor. I think it will be tricky to play and conduct at the same time – two things at once – that’s hard! Like walking and chewing gum or singing and doing cartwheels. The band will play together like all the colors coloring at once.

My first song will be “The Daft Plank.” I’m going to make up the score (all the parts everyone will play) when I get older. The idea for this song came from a boy in yoga who could not do good planks (not me! I can do really good planks, even the super hard side planks!). I am going to play “The Dafting Plank” for years.

Once Upon a Wish

By Sanni Kanta

Once upon a time there lived a nice, old witch that would grant anyone a wish. And there was a little girl named Mary. She was very sweet, kind, and beautiful. One day Mary took a walk and suddenly saw the witch's tower. She wanted to go in, but there was one problem. She didn't know how to get in!

Now, the witch doesn't like one thing, strangers getting into her tower! Mary didn't know that, so she kept on searching and found a tunnel with an elevator in it. Mary said, "I think the witch uses this elevator to get up and down her tower." There were only three floors. She tried the first and the second floor, and all she saw was chairs and tables. And then she went to the top floor. When Mary got there, it was cold and damp.

Suddenly Mary heard a rustling noise. Mary said, "Hello, anyone here?" Mary only heard the echo of her voice. Then she heard the rustling sound again. Then it was quiet. Mary was shaking so hard she almost collapsed and then out of nowhere the witch came out. Mary was so scared, she hid in a box.

The witch said, "I won't hurt you, dearie."

Mary got out of the box and asked, "Really?"

The witch nodded and said, "I'm a very nice witch."

"You're a witch?!" asked Mary

"Yes, I'm a witch that would grant anyone a wish," the witch said.

"You could do that?"

"Yes, I can, but why did you come into my house?"

"Oh, I like to . . . um . . . have adventures . . . and ," stammered Mary, "Oh, can you grant me a wish?"

"Of course I can!" said the witch. "What would be your wish?"

"Oh, I think I'll come back tomorrow," said Mary, walking towards the elevator.

"But—I can only grant a wish on this one day," said the witch.

Mary stopped, turned around and said, "Okay, change of plans: I'm going to wish for a, uh, a, um, a—A UNICORN!"

And without time to spare the witch zapped her wand to the unicorn picture and as soon as Mary opened her eyes, she saw a Pegasus! Mary was so happy; she hugged the witch. The witch never got hugs.

"Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you, Witch!" Mary thanked.

"You're welcome," said the witch

It was time for Mary to go. Mary said good bye to the witch. The witch said goodbye to Mary. And Mary flew happily on her Pegasus to her home.

The End

Excerpt from

Gone

Written by: Shrika Kantala

Papa approached the front door, cautiously. Of course my family and I were outside our rooms by this time. Papa unlocked the lock and opened up the door. Danny gritted his teeth. There was a tall man with a briefcase in his left arm. It was dented, so I assumed it was the object he was using to band on the door.

"Thank you kind sir," he said. He walked to our sitting area and plopped himself onto the couch, kicking his shiny shoes onto the small table. Danny stepped forward, Mama held him back. Abby and I hugged Danny, after all he was our elder brother. He tucked his hands around us keeping us warm. Mama held Billy, who was whimpering. And Papa stood at the front, his face full of rage.

"You see," the man began, "The government has been having some problems; we need more money, per say, and perhaps your farm, considering you don't have much money," he smirked looking around the house.

"We're fine with what we have," Papa said his teeth gritted.

The man smiled. "Oh that's fine," he said. Suddenly his face lit up. "Oh I forgot to mention, my men will be here any minute, so we shall get on with it," he remarked.

"We won't answer anything," Danny said with anger. The man chuckled.

He stepped over to Billy not considering Danny's words. Billy was frightened.

"How old are you, boy?" he questioned.

Billy held up four of his stubby fingers. "Very well," the man said moving on to Abby and Danny.

"15," Abby said.

"17," Danny followed still gritting his teeth.

The man then walked over to me. "You?" he asked.

"12, sir," I replied softly

He smiled oddly. We all just stood there for some time. The man was examining our house and us, his expression wasn't very pleasing. Suddenly, we heard voices outside.

"Oh, my men are here," he said, clapping his hands. We all went outside.

The breeze was cool; it was a gloomy day. The sun was hiding behind the army of grey clouds. The man walked up to two giant men. He whispered something into their ears. They nodded and walked towards Billy. Mama held on to him tighter.

“Ma’am, please let go of the boy,” they said in union.

Mama said no, and still held on to Billy. The men looked back at the tall man. He motioned his arms telling them to go on. It looked to me that this was all a funny show to him, he was getting entertained. I stared at the man with complete disbelief. They grabbed on to Billy and pulled. Billy’s face as covered in tears. Billy’s body slowly pried out of Mama’s hands. They picked up Billy and threw him into a truck as if he was a sack of potatoes. Mama fell to the ground with her hands on her face, sobbing.

Papa stepped forward. “Give us our son back,” he hollered at the men. Two different men held Papa back. Papa tried to get free, but they were too strong for him.

I stood with Abby near the doorstep of my house, sobbing. The two men that took Billy walked towards me. They pushed me towards the truck.

“Papa,” Abby shrieked with absolute horror.

Danny tried to pull the men down, but they only pushed him out of the way. I kicked around helplessly as they threw me into a different truck. I pressed my hand on the back of the truck’s window, looking back. The man with the briefcase handed Papa a paper and hopped into a truck. The other men then disappeared into their trucks.

I stared back with complete sadness and anger. The event had gone by so quickly. The four of them stood there with shock as Billy and I were being pulled away from them.

Mama was standing up, crying. Bits of her brown hair escaped her bun and were flowing with the wind. Abby was crying in Mama’s shawl. I couldn’t see her face. Danny was arguing and yelling at Papa. He was pointing towards the trucks pulling away. Papa just stared at us with a hurt look on his face; he stood there not saying anything. The paper in his hand was wrinkling in the wind. I kept staring at them, crying. I watched them as they turned into four dots in the distance, then blurs, then nothing. The sky started to the fall and my surrounding turned black.

I was in the backseat of the truck, trying to make myself comfortable.

Many questions roamed through my mind. Will I see my family again? Where are these men taking me? Why are these men taking me anyway? I knew my mind was full of problems, but I drowsed off into a deep sleep forgetting all about them.

Excerpt from **Good Intentions Aren't Inherently Good**

By Amber McGouldrick

"Yeah, yeah, I'll be home," I said into my phone. "Yeah, okay, Mom, I'll get the bread. And the eggs." I was walking down the sidewalk only half paying attention to her voice. "Kay, bye." I hung up and hopped on the bus that was just coming into the station, creaking and groaning as the driver broke. The smoke from the exhaust pipe washed over me and I coughed it out of my lungs.

For the first time in a while, the bus was rather empty, so there was nobody sitting next to me. I stretched out and closed my eyes. I must have drifted off to sleep because suddenly there was commotion and two men standing in the front of the bus waving guns around. I didn't comprehend this at once, but soon I was panicking in full, just as much as all the other passengers around me.

"What's going on?" and "What's happening?" were the general shouts rising from the crowd. They were standing up and reaching for each other, falling over because the bus was still hurtling down the road, now free of any other cars.

"Shut up!" one of the men growled. "Everyone sit back down." The driver, who I could see in the rearview mirror, was old and scruffy, with a bristly mustache and thick glasses, which, I reflected in a moment of strange sanity and clear-headedness, was rather bad in case they were to break and he couldn't see the road ahead of us.

I remained calm, though inside my head alarms and sirens and screaming and all other kinds of manic noises were happening. I tapped the shoulder of the woman in front of me, who turned around with her eyes wide open. "Can you open the emergency door quickly?" I whispered into her ear. She looked at me, then at the door in question. "Can you?"

"You'll kill yourself," she whispered back flatly. I shook my head.

"No, there's a grassy patch up that way."

"I still say you're going to kill yourself." I saw the grass coming up quickly and knew I had little time if I wanted to make my escape.

"Just do it, on three," I said, preparing myself to make the jump. My legs bent and my breathing quickened. "One, two, three." She did open the door, much to my relief, and I jumped through, barely missing the bullets I heard being shot after me, making a rough, jolting, painful landing on the muddy grass, but ultimately a safe one. I didn't look back to see what had happened to the woman, my momentary accomplice, because, in the end, I cared a lot more for

myself than I did for her. I might have been selfish, but I think selfishness is a common trait among those fearing for their lives.

I ran away from the road and into a group of trees, keeping cover in the dark branches, afraid of a return. But they never did return. I pulled my phone out of my pocket and dialed an emergency number. The man on the line asked what was wrong.

"I was on a bus but I jumped out and it was being high jacked," I explained in as calm and non-breathless voice as I could manage. "I don't know where I am, but can you trace this call?"

The man said he could and that he would come to get me "as soon as we can," which meant in a while because they didn't quite believe me. I slumped on the ground and closed my eyes. However, they were soon forced open again by the sound of tires on the asphalt. I sat up and looked out to the road. A white car was slowly approaching, its windows rolled down. With three men looking out of them pointing guns in my direction. I turned around and ran further back into the trees.

There was a tall fence, an impossibly tall fence, rising high into the night sky and almost touched the stars. I looked back the way I had come and could still hear the car patrolling, looking for me. Sooner or later, I thought, they must either leave or come out on foot looking for me. I didn't like the latter of these two options, and, aside from the fact that I would just be a sitting duck while strung up on this fence, I began to climb it.

The first few feet were difficult, but as I went on and there were no bullets racing past me, I grew in confidence and skill. I could move my foot up two rows of wire on my right, push myself up, move my left foot up two, and pull myself up. Before I realized it, I was at the top, and forced to make the shift over the top. I realized that this would be the perfect place to shoot me, sitting atop the wire fence, because if the bullet didn't kill me, the fall was sure to.

But the other side went just as smoothly. Before a half hour had passed, I had made it to the other side and was walking further into the trees. I did this for many hours, the events of which were boring and tiresome. After the first hours, and the first two miles, I was thirsty and my legs were aching. Another two hours and five miles brought me to the small, white, nondescript building where I would end this story.

I didn't know this at the time, of course. I yelled at it, "Help! Can you hear me?" At first, nobody answered, and I had to try again. "Help! Help!" This time, a portion of the ground in front of me moved downwards and a man climbed up out of it, his clothes the uniform of a guard and face carrying an air of self-importance I found with most figures of authority.

"Who are you?" he barked. I stuttered out a reply.

"Sam Jones.

Excerpt from **THE WAFFLE BOOK:**
THE RISE OF THE WAFFLE FORCE

By Aadith Mosur

There was a hand in the darkness, and it held a knife.

-Neil Gaiman, The Graveyard Book

Chapter 1:
The Beginning of It

There was a hand in the darkness, and it held a pancake (Waffle people are not cannibals). Father Waffle (Agent 007) and Mother Waffle (Agent 005) were making pancakes. As they sat down to eat their dinner, the doorbell rang. "I'll get it," Father Waffle said wearily. He walked to the door of his mansion, and kept his wand at the ready, just in case. He opened the door, but no one was there. "Huh," said Father Waffle. He was about to close the door, when he heard a wail. He looked on the doorstep, and saw a basket with a note on the handle. Father Waffle read the letter, and it said,

DEAR AGENTS 007 AND 005,

I DO NOT HAVE MUCH TIME, SO LISTEN CAREFULLY. THIS BASKET HAS A BABY INSIDE IT, WHOSE NAME IS MAXIMILIAN SYRUP. HE IS THE CHOSEN WAFFLE, AND ALSO MY SON. REMEMBER THE PROPHECY.

AGENT 006

"So, he is the Chosen Waffle, eh?" Father Waffle said. As Father Waffle walked away, another letter flew into the mansion in the shape of a fork. "Oh no," said Father Waffle. He opened the letter, and it said,

DEAR AGENTS 007 AND 005,

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THAT THIS IS WRITTEN IN SYRUP, THE WAFFLE BLOOD. WELL, GUESS WHO'S BLOOD IT IS? AGENT 006'S. I'M COMING FOR THE CHOSEN WAFFLE NEXT. I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU LIVE, BUT I WILL FIND YOU.

FORK FROST ☺

Father Waffle gasped, and fell to his feet. Fork Frost, the most feared killer in all of Waffle Earth, had killed the legendary Agent 006. Everybody at the Order of the Waffle (see Chapter 2) thought that Agent 006 was the Chosen Waffle, but it seems like his son is the Chosen Waffle. Father Waffle took Maximilian Syrup out of the basket and ran to Mother Waffle to tell her the good news and bad news.

Fork Frost was mad. Really mad. Agent 006 had stained his favorite shirt! Oh, and also he didn't kill the Chosen Waffle. But, the shirt! "I can't believe it. After all the planning we have done, we didn't kill the Chosen Waffle!" grumbled Fork. As he walked past Mother and Father Waffle's mansion, he thought he could smell the Chosen Waffle's scent in the mansion. He shrugged it off, and walked to his castle and tried to make a plan that he could discuss with the rest of the Fork Association.

Mother Waffle had listened intently to Father Waffle about the event that occurred. She agreed with Father Waffle that they should raise Max as their own baby. If it had been Agent 006's final act to save his son from The Fork Association, then Max must really be the Chosen Waffle. "But wait," Mother Waffle said. "What is The Fork Association?" Father Waffle sighed, and said, "The Order of the Waffle was not created to stop all bad waffles from doing bad things. That was one of the purposes. But the main purpose of the Order of the Waffle was to stop The Fork Association."

Chapter 2:

The Story of The Order of the Waffle

Father Waffle began his story, "In the beginning of the time of the Golden Waffle, there were two forces, The Order of the Waffle and the Fork Association. The Fork Association consists of twelve immortal Forks, who can only be killed in battle. The leader and founder of the Fork Association is Fork Frost. Each Fork specializes in one branch of Dark Magic. The founder of the Order of the Waffle is the Golden Waffle, a powerful wizard who did his best to ensure that the waffle universe was safe. But, he knew he could not do it alone. So, he created the Order of the Waffle. The Golden Waffle prophesized that the Chosen Waffle, who is a waffle that has inherited the power of the Golden Waffle, and two of his closest friends, would be the only ones that would be able to kill the 12 immortal Forks at the age of 15. The Chosen Waffle that is spoken about in the prophecy is Maximilian Syrup."

Excerpt from Brothers By Cheyenne Nieto

Later that night while I lay in bed, I thought about my friendship with Noah and Jordon, then decided to call them my brothers. I always went to them for help or when I was down. They were always there too. They'd talk to me until I calmed down, made sure I was calm, then continued on to what they had been up to before. Whenever they needed help, I was there as well. When Jordon had crashed his van, I helped calm him down and tell him he'll be able to pay it off. Then I finally noticed I hadn't seen either of them in quite some time.

The next morning, a Sunday morning I asked my mom if Noah could come over in the afternoon to hang out for a bit. "I'll think about it," she answered, walking away into the living room. I ran upstairs and booted up the Xbox again. "Gooooood morning!" I giggled when Noah joined my Xbox live party. "Mornin' Sis, how did you sleep?" Noah yawned tiredly. "Pretty good, did you not get any?" "Oh me? Nah, I just haven't waken up entirely. I slept about 12 hours so I think I'm good." "You're more like a sleeping beauty than a giant," I muttered playfully. "Oh be quiet," Noah growled, trying not to laugh. I giggled, starting a game of Call of Duty Black Ops 2 with my big brother. "Yeah?" I heard Noah say, but he wasn't speaking to me. I barely heard his mother say, "Do you want to go over to Cheyenne's house for the afternoon to hang out for awhile?" I fell silent, surprised my mom even asked Mrs. Bailey. "Sure, when do we leave?" Noah replied, trying to hold his excitement back. "5 minutes," Mrs. Bailey concluded, leaving his room. I pretended my attention was focused on the game. "Hey Sissy." "Yeps?" I snapped back to reality. "Looks like I'm comin' over!" My heart began to race; I hadn't seen Noah since his birthday, which was about 3 months ago. "Sweet! What time?" I squealed happily. "I leave right now," he answered, immediately shutting down.

I ran to my room and instantly got dressed into my red basketball shorts and a blue T-shirt that said, "You miss 100% of the shots you never take." I dashed down the stairs, nearly tripping. My heart was pounding with excitement. "Finally I can see him again!" Patiently I waited at the kitchen counter, glancing at the stove clock every 3-4 minutes. The sound of something banging on metal caught my attention. Swiftly sliding out of my chair, I trotted over to the door, unlocked it, then opened it. There stood my 6'1 best friend with his mom and 9 year old brother. My mom walked out of the hallway to greet them. I disappeared behind the wall and grabbed the gate key so I could let them in.

"So how's life?" I inquired as Noah and I walked down the grass hill towards the neighborhood basketball court. "Pretty good, but I've missed my little sis," Noah laughed, gently

swatting at my ponytail. I glared up at him, my eyes silently growling, "Don't touch my hair..." He held his hands up, looking down at me as we walked through the freshly cut dark green grass. I couldn't help but glance up at his dark bluish gray eyes. I loved them. They seemed so calm and friendly. Something inside me told me, "Don't ever let someone like him just leave." It felt like nothing could keep me from leaving his side. Whenever he smiled down at me, I'd instantly smile back happily. "Hey giant, guess what?" I giggled. "What's up, Midget?" Noah looked over his shoulder at me. "Vi khess dos..." I smiled, then stole the basketball from him, running to the court. "Hey! What does that even mean?! I-I forgot...!" Noah sputtered, chasing after me with a confused tone to his voice. Laughing continuously, I ran from him, knowing he wanted to tickle me. "Get back here, Shorty!" Noah laughed.

After approximately an hour at the basketball court, I wondered what would happen if I took Noah to the large neighborhood park in the development beside ours. "Wanna go to the Power Ranch park? It has a lake, so you can defiantly push me in," I spoke with sarcasm. "Uh, sure?" Noah raised his eyebrow. "I'm not going to push you in though, I'm gonna throw you!" I began to run down the pavement shouting, "If you can catch me!"

The Power Ranch park was quite crowded near the play equipment. We found a shady spot under a tree by the lake that wasn't so packed. In sync with each other, Noah and I both took a seat in the fully grown green grass. I glanced at Noah, thinking about scooting over and hugging him, but I held back, knowing that would make the entire rest of the day awkward and uncomfortable. To my surprise it was Noah who came over and hugged me. "Love you, Sis," he sighed happily, squeezing me tight. "Love you too big bro," I smiled, my heart filled with joy as I hugged him back. To tease me, Noah yanked my ponytail lightly. "Nu tugging for chu," my eyebrows met and I pulled my ponytail out, ruffling my hair so it wouldn't knot. "Fuine, Shorty," Noah teased. "I'm still growing you know..." I growled at him, however not letting go. "Yeah I know, but you're always gonna be my midget." When he said that, my cheeks flushed and I began to tear up. My shoulders began to tremble and Noah pulled away, holding my shoulders still and looking into my eyes. "What's wrong, Sis? Did I say something I wasn't supposed to?" I shook my head, wiping my eyes while sniffing. "No, you didn't. I just don't want you to leave my side..." Noah sighed then spoke with a serious honest tone, "I am never going to leave you Cheyenne, got that?" I nodded, "Yeah, got it." We sat in the grass shoulder to shoulder for awhile longer while enjoying our conversation about skateboarding and video games.

Sadly, that was the last time I ever saw Noah; the last time I ever saw Jordon was at a teen game night. I remember it clearly.

Excerpt from *The Plan*

By: Meena Nishtala

“Pop quiz!” barked Mr. Meaner, filling Room 2 of McHale Middle school with his creaky voice. Groaning and complaining, the kids in the class took out their pencils. The whole class was ready except Michele Williams, who was happily snoring away. She was oblivious to the situation around her in the history classroom.

“Ms. Williams, I’m so very sorry to interrupt your slumber, but we are taking a pop quiz!” scolded Mr. Meaner. Indeed 13-year-old Michele’s slumber was interrupted, but that was the least of her worries. “Oh no! He caught me sleeping, which is surprising, because he’s, what, 90 something?” Michele thought. “Get out a freshly sharpened pencil,” Mr. Meaner ordered, showering Michele in spit. Spitting was common in history, due to Mr. Meaner’s unfortunate teeth. They were oddly spaced, yellow, and the front two looked like that of a rabbit.

Like Mr. Meaner’s teeth, his face was just as—if not even more—unfortunate. His skin was thin on his head, and looked like it had a bad sunburn, then was laminated. His mouth naturally curved into a cruel smile, and his eyebrows curved upwards at a nearly 40 degree angle, barely visible. His eyes were small, beady, and set far back in his head, which was shaped like an abstract pentagon. All in all, he had the expression and demeanor of an angry prison guard. For all Michele knew, he could’ve been one. The only problem with that theory was that he had way too much flab and way too little muscle.

Mr. Meaner slapped down a piece of paper on Michele’s desk, and strutted to the front of the classroom. “All right, you can begin the quiz!” he declared, “and I hope that the average is higher than the last quiz average!” Michele stared at the first question on the quiz

Who was Ashurbanipal the first and how did he impact the Assyrian Empire? Use 5-8 sentences.

This went on for about 30 more minutes, and Michele wished that she was still asleep, dreaming about things more pleasant than this quiz. She scribbled down the answer to the last problem just as the bell rang. Judging from the groans of the class, most of her classmates didn’t finish the quiz in time. That didn’t mean that Michele did better than them though. Mr. Meaner would probably find some lame excuse to dock points off of her grade. Like once, she forgot to capitalize King Henry the Fourth, and that resulted in ten points docked off!

Michele hurriedly packed up her things and left as Billy Jones and Dan Zilinsky broke out into a spirited argument. “I *told* you not to tell her!” Billy insisted. Michele had no intention of finding out what *that* was all about, so instead she went to her locker.

12-16-32. Her locker was hopelessly messy. She looked at herself in the small, plastic mirror that was stuck to her locker. Two green eyes stared back at her. Freckles dotted her pale skin. Shoulder-length, brown hair hung loose. That was Michele for you.

Just as she was about to leave, her BFF Samantha Reeds stopped at her locker. “Hey, how was history?” Sam (her nickname) asked.

"Is it possible to give too many pop quizzes? 'Cause if it is, then Mr. Meaner definitely takes the 'pop' element out of 'pop quiz'" Michele wondered. Twirling her blonde hair, laughed, which made her blue eyes get bigger.

"So it wasn't good, then?" Sam guessed. Michele just looked at her

"What do you think," she said.

"Shoot! I have him next," Sam exclaimed. Michele glanced at the clock.

"You mean his class that started a minute ago?" Michele asked.

"Darn!" Sam shouted, making the hallway monitor give her a dirty look.

Michele chuckled as Sam ran to class. After history, she had what their middle school called a 'free period'. It was really imprisonment in a stuffy class classroom. The only difference between this and detention is that in here, you get to work on homework. Yay! Still, it was better than history!

She headed to wing B, and walked to Room 7. Michele reached into her book bag and pulled out her math homework. She was on question 8: Factor completely— $ac + at + bt + bc$. Michele sighed. "Math is soooooo boring," she thought. After ten minutes of pure torture, she put away her math homework,

She stared at the Clock behind her. It was only fifth period? It felt like school should be over now! First period, she had Mr. Cullum, who taught Physics. Second period was Math with Ms. Leslie. After that, she took Spanish with Mrs. Ramirez. Fourth period was Mr. Meaner. After free period, she had lunch, then Biology with Mr. Smith. Her last class was English, her favorite subject, with her favorite teacher, Mr. Greenburg.

With nothing left to do, she lay her head down and closed her eyes. She was allowed to sleep during free period, unlike history. Today she had no day dreams, just peace. Before she knew it, the bell rang. "Wow, 40 minutes have passed already?" she thought.

The reason Michele was so sleepy today was because yesterday her parents decided to go out for a dinner date on a Sunday. She was stuck babysitting her five-year-old brother Calvin, who insisted she stay up all night until her parents came home so that she could protect him zombies. (He recently watched a horror movie, even though their parents specifically told him *not* to.) Well, her parents ended up coming home at one o'clock am!

Her class was herded into the cafeteria, which was actually called the 'multi-purpose room'. Basically the school was too cheap to buy a separate area for a gym, so now it was a gym, a cafeteria, an assembly area, and the place where detention kids go.

No matter what you called that place, it was equally unpleasant. The whole place was designed to amplify sound. If you heard a footstep, it was amplified by 10 times. So naturally, lunch was deafening. Michele, Sam, and their other friends Abby and Tiana sat at their usual table. It was at the corner of the room, where the sound was most bearable.

They watched in horror as Bobby Nelson tripped over Ted Jordan's foot. As he fell, his mashed potatoes doused Tiffany Roosevelt with a shower of chunky, white goop. She responded by hurling her pizza at Bobby and Ted. She missed both of them and hit Maggie Paulette and Liam Darling. And thus, a food fight was born.

Excerpt from The Castle in the Sand

Rohan Nishtala

For the ninth time, Steve Gates wondered what he was doing in the middle of a strange desert. For starters, the sand was bright red and seemed to be vibrating. The sky was also red and was raining something that (you guessed it) was also red. The sun blasted him with scorching rays making him feel like he came like KFC because he felt like a fried chicken. Once again he went through his inventory. He had a small sack with a canteen of water three fourths full, some rope, a pocketknife, a compass, which was completely haywire, and a toothbrush. Seriously, oral hygiene was not exactly the most pressing of the matters. Steve was wearing some big floppy hat, gloves, running shoes, and weird, tattered, beige hiking clothes. At least he was properly equipped for wherever the heck he was.

The last thing Steve remembered was reading a book in his cozy home in Raleigh, North Carolina. Steve's parents were into extreme adventures and dangerous activities that made Steve queasy when he thought of them. Last week, his parents went river rafting in the choppy Colorado waters. Before that, they trekked up the Appalachian Mountains, which were some of the highest mountains on the East Coast. Steve's sister Lucy was a soccer prodigy and lead UNC to two Women's college soccer championships. Some said she was the greatest thing to happen to UNC's soccer program since Mia Hamm. Lucy's next goal was to make the US soccer team. Steve was somewhat of a disappointment to his family even though he was the valedictorian for his high school in eleventh grade. If he kept up his hard work, he would get a scholarship anywhere and have a bright future. If you thought that would impress any parent, you haven't met Steve's parents. So far everyone in Steve's family had gone to college on scholarships, but in his parents' and sister's cases, they were sports. Sports were everything in the Gates family, and Steve couldn't play football without getting knocked out, play basketball without tripping over himself, or play baseball without breaking his arm. Steve wondered if his current situation in this desert was some attempt by his family to toughen him up, but "toughening up" usually meant a trip to the emergency room. Steve would never be a muscular jock that his parents dreamed of. He would always be a small skinny kid who couldn't bench 20 pounds.

Anyway, Steve was in the middle of an engaging Sci-Fi novel, then BAM! HE woke up in the middle of a red desert. For a while, Steve laid there confused and scared out of his mind. Steve then surveyed his location and saw glistening sand covering everything in all directions.

By now, Steve had started walking. Where? He didn't know, but it was the only action he could pursue. Questions flooded Steve's baffled mind as he trudged across the red sand. For what seemed like a year, Steve kept walking, but soon he was unable to keep going. Steve also lost his will to stand, and he collapsed in the sand in a heap.

Steve woke up as a camel licked him. Wow! How many people could say that? Still, when Steve opened his eyes and saw a gigantic camel looming over him, inspecting him with an intrigued expression, Steve yelped, and jumped up backtracking as fast as his short legs would carry him.

The camel was about ten feet tall, which Steve doubted was normal, and that wasn't even including the camel's hump or elongated neck. Its eyes were as black as obsidian and were attached to a copper colored, furry face. The rest of the animal's fur was dusky brown with grains of the strange, red sand scattered throughout its body.

Steve kept backtracking slowly, trying not to startle the beast. Unfortunately he was gifted with extreme clumsiness, and he felt his legs interlock as he fell back wards on the sand. The beast calmly advanced, making deep indentations in the sand. In desperation, Steve started scuttling away on the sand like a drunken crab. It wasn't fast enough as the beast snarled and charged. All Steve's logic vanished as he jumped to his feet and sprinted away. The camel ran after him, and Steve was overtaken so quickly he felt slightly embarrassed. He dived to the ground and curled up in a ball knowing that his death probably wouldn't be pleasant. The beast stretched its neck and licked Steve in the face. A long, slimy tongue moistened Steve's face, and he squirmed away. This camel was embarrassing him more than the time when he was nominated (forced) into the one on one basketball tournament." Another time I failed my parents," Steve thought bitterly.

After the camel licked Steve, it left, and now Steve was all alone in the sand. Steve, in despair, started calculating the probability of his survival. It really wasn't looking good. Suddenly, Steve felt a big face palm coming. The answer to his solution was right in front his face. It even licked him! He had to find the not-killer camel!

After Steve found the camel's footprints, he was able to track down the camel fairly quickly. The camel had even lead him to a little stream with bright sparkling water. "Well," Steve thought, "something was bound to go right." The camel stood around the stream staring into the distance. Part of Steve regarded this as suspicious, but ultimately his thirst got the better of him, and he dropped to his knees and scooped up some water. Steve greedily lapped up as much water as his mouth could hold before he realized whatever the heck he drank was NOT water. Steve rolled around on the ground upchucking red sand and scraping sand off his tongue. A mirage! Steve was familiar with these, but he had never actually been in a desert before. North Carolina was a peaceful forested state that bordered the Atlantic Ocean. Steve solemnly realized that he was much more dehydrated than his body let on. Steve chugged the rest of his water quenching his thirst, and expelling the remaining sand out of his throat.

While Steve was having a sand seizure, the camel had been watching him with an amused expression. Steve thought, "If this camel had a camera, I would have been on AMFV, by now." Steve looked at the camel, and it stared back at him waiting for him to embarrass himself further. Steve awkwardly began, "So, can you by any chance let me ride you, and take me somewhere other than this place?" The camel could have simply replied, "No," but clearly today was not Steve's day. The camel snorted and exhaled on Steve. Except, this was a fire breathing exhalation. Hot flames scorched Steve's faced, and he felt his eyebrows singed. Steve gasped in horror, and waited to be eaten (again). But the camel licked Steve in the face (again). Then it grunted and left, trekking through the sand.



AFTER

by: Bela Potocnjak

We all know Cinderella; her dad marries an evil step mom with evil step kids; then, after her dad dies, they treat Cinderella poorly and won't let her go to the ball. She does go to the ball and the prince falls in love with her. Happily-ever-AFTER. We have all heard that; however we don't know what happens to Cinderella after. Where does she live? Is her life good? Is her life happy? I will tell you.

"Good morning castle," I say every morning, before I start the day. After living in this castle for over a year, I can safely say, I like it here. It still has taken me some time to remember where some of the rooms are. I always smile when the maids and butlers say, "Good morning Cinderella." I love it when they say that. My room is on the second floor, with bright pink walls, a white bed stand, red wood floors and a closet that is bigger than my old room, with the wicked step sisters. The living room is bigger than any other room in this house, with 10 chandeliers towering over it, tile floors, and 2 big doors that are made of wood, leading to the outdoors. There is a kitchen to one side of the living room and a staircase at the other side. The bathrooms are ginormous, I could run around in them all day, a sparkly silver bath tub, a black and white marble shower, a sink that's white with gold faucets, and a silver and white toilet. As big as the house is, I feel lonely, and miss having the prince around. He has meetings and helps the towns people once and in while, so he's not around very often

"For dinner lobster and crab," said the butler, Mr. Green. The whole family sat down to have dinner together; Me, Prince Charming, King George (the prince's father) and Queen Rose (the prince's mother). At the dinner table, Prince Charming asks how my day was, "Okay" I said sadly, "what do you mean?" the Prince said with a confused look on his face. "It's lonely here by myself, I need some friends" I said with a frown. "I have an idea," said the King "A party!"

“Perfect,” said the queen happily. The news about the party started spreading quickly. It was time to get ready.

I woke up and as rushed out the door, listening to Queen Rose list the things we needed to do. Get a dress, get shoes, get nails done, get hair done, and get makeup done. Hand in hand, with the Queen we went to get everything done. The dress had a gold sparkly top that ended at hip height, then turned into a blue poofy bottom down to the knee. It was strapless and the gold top had sparkles put into it. I loved it so much, I was speechless. The shoes I got were ocean blue heels that had a strap on the back that slipped onto my heel. The make was a blue smoky eye, blush pink cheeks, and beautiful bright pink glossy lips. My hair was carefully braided sideways, that just looked amazing. It was time to go back to the castle for the party.

When I walked into the room, my jaw dropped/ Red, blue, and gold were the colors of the room. Ribbons all around the staircases, balloons floated everywhere and everyone looked perfect, Then, the spot light hit me, followed by a cheer from the crowd. The light hit hot, I could feel the heat from the light on me as I walked in. I was there for about two hours, and already, everyone wanted to talk about me. I thought, am I the only interesting thing to talk about, is there anything else that happens in this kingdom that we can talk about? I did not want to talk about me, I wanted to talk about everything that was happening, I wanted to hear the gossip, the news, the happenings, the things I didn't experience sitting in the castle. Finally, I met this tall brown haired girl, with straight white teeth and a purple dress, named Rebecca. We talked about the town gossip, and minutes turned into hours, laughing, talking, and having a ball. I really liked my new friend Rebecca.

After that we hung out every week it was wonderful, she was so nice. “See I told you that you would make a friend.” smiled Prince Charming, “Thanks” I said, as I smiled back.

Excerpt from

Reflected

By: Aishwarya Potturu

CHAPTER 1

What is the difference between good and evil? Could evil just be people with different opinions from the good? Could all the story book characters we know as evil such as Maleficent, the Evil Queen, or Cruella, be good but had different opinions compared to those such as Snow White or Cinderella. Maybe those who are considered evil were changed and might have been good once. This not a story where those who appear to be good always win; instead this a story of what really happened in the fairytales we know and love.

It all starts with a little girl that had a dream. Not a dream to be a princess or a fairy, but a dream so that one day in the future if some were to look up at the stars, they would know that they could be free and live a happy life. This girl was special and there were none others like her; her name was Lauren Smith. Lauren had a picture-perfect life except that at the time, no one got along and everyone was constantly fighting, well everyone except for her and her parents. Now you can see why her dream makes sense. She wished everyone was happy, not just her and her family.

Lauren lived in a time that you might think of as evil, but she thought of it as a different type of good. Lauren saw the best in everyone, till one day...

"Lauren, can you fetch me a pail of water from the well?" cried her mother. Lauren's mother had long brown hair that ran down to her knees which she usually tied up into a messy bun

pinned by a jeweled clip. The clip was handed down to her when she got married. Each gemstone was a diamond in the shape of a heart. She had green eyes the color of seaweed that had some kind of special sparkle to them, a special sparkle known as hope.

"And some nails from the town," asked her father. He had black shaggy hair that looked as if he never combed it. His hair did not look messy, but it did not look neat either. He had chocolate brown eyes that were always looking around as if he was going to be attacked any second.

Lauren and her family loved each other very much and they had a very strong bond. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same about their house. Just standing in it would make it creak and something might fall. There were cracks in the wood, and it had a weak foundation. It was not bad since they got used to it. They lived on the edge of town, and it was kind of peaceful since it was only the three of them. No riots and no yelling; well, now there are no riots and no yelling. They used to live in the town before they got kicked out and moved here.

"Yes mother; yes father," replied Lauren," Just give me one moment." Before leaving, Lauren glanced at her reflection in the mirror. She had a river of hair the color of the night sky that flowed down her back. Eyes the color of sapphires that twinkled under the light of the sun. Lauren had small dimples and a smile that lights up the sky. She looked like neither her mother nor her father; she was never sure about whom she looked like. She was wearing something similar to that of Cinderella when she was her stepmother's servant. They had some sort of rag-like look to them. Lauren was beautiful on the inside and the outside. She was kind to everyone, well everyone except herself. She had a fear that one day she would enjoy watching others suffer and day by day she was getting more engulfed in this fear.

Sunsets

By Andre Rascon

Sunsets are beautiful
With light colors—pink, orange
And more.
The cold fluffy
White Cloud
Floats away
A rainy day with a rainy cloud and
When it stops, it
Moves away.
Nature.
A heart is what you need
For love.
The sunset.
Many nature
Creatures
Flowers are nature.
A warm
Sun.
And now a
Bright sun.

Excerpt from Wrath of the Vampire

By Ritvik Vallambhatla

Part I

Once upon time there was a small village newly christened in Sherksville, England. Head of the village was Governor Williams and the council of elders. A village entirely made of stone, when this area was found by settlers, it was a barren land full of strange superstitions and crude pagan tribes who fiercely guarded their lands. However, with wits and work, the villagers managed to make peace with the pagans, grow crops, and build a wonderful village out of nothing.

As the villagers had a tiring weekend working on the finishing touches of the village they were all ready for a nice feast coming from their own colorful field of barley and wheat which the villagers worked so hard to cultivate. After the sumptuous feast, Governor Williams started to drawl about the business and economy of the new village and then presented the building everyone was waiting for; the church of Tribus. Made entirely out of diamond and housing the four statues of Gabriel the archangel who defeated Lucifer the evil which may have been carrying protective enchantments, it offered assurance to those who believed the strange dark rumors about Sherksville, as if evil itself had fallen from the heavens to the dark underworld. However...

Excerpt from **Beauty & the Beast**
A Queer Fairy Tale by Caitlyn White

A long time ago, there lived a young man who had recently inherited a kingdom from his deceased parents. One day, he decided to take a walk, as he rarely left his family's castle. He was talking to his gardener when he found a woman whom he had recently befriended walking nearby. They found a place to sit and began to talk.

His friend told him that she had recently accepted a marriage proposal from someone that she had known for a very long time. "Congratulations! So who's the lucky man?" he asked. His friend's face formed a nervous smile. She opened her mouth to say something, but was interrupted. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have made that assumption" he said. "What's her name?" His land was small, and most in its community at least knew each other's name. "Her name is Lily, but I don't expect you to have heard of her. She only started going by Lily last week." Her friend frowned, and shifted a little in his chair. "What was wrong with her birth name?" he asked, now a little confused.

"Oh, I don't think she liked it very much. It reminded her of the person her parents wanted her to be. They'd always wanted a son, and they got angry when she told them she'd started transitioning." Her friend's face now showed his confusion much clearer than before.

"Isn't there a name for that?" he asked "When you can like more than one gender." "Yes, there are quite a few names for that. One of them I can resonate with; it's called panromantic." The young king laughed, for he had rarely heard such a strange word. "What's so funny?" his friend asked. The king slowed his laughing and spoke. "I thought that panromantic was a word given to cooks who started kissing their frying pans!" He continued to laugh and squirm in his chair like a child until he noticed the stern look on his friend's face. "Someone who is panromantic may enjoy a frying pan, even kiss it if they choose to, but humans cannot love a pan like they might another human. Humans may show a pan affection like they would a child, or their favorite pet, but they wouldn't love the pan enough to marry it and enjoy it for the rest of their life."

“All right then. But what is it then if it doesn’t have to do with pans?” His friend sighed, relieved that their dispute over pans had ended. “If someone is panromantic, then they could be romantically attracted to a person of any gender. Their partner could be either male, female, transgender, or a non-binary gender. The attraction is mostly based off of a person’s personality and not what type of body they have.”

Her friend’s face was blank, as if he were deep in thought. Perhaps he was confused, or perhaps he was processing a thought, it was unclear. “What do you mean when you say transgender? I’ve heard it before but I’ve never quite understood it.” The king’s friend paused, so as to gather her thoughts. “A person is transgender if their gender identity is opposite of their body type. Take my girlfriend, Lily, for example. She was born with a boy body but identifies as a girl. Her gender is just a part of her personality. Like how you pick at your food, or the fact that I feel comfortable wearing pants.”

“I thought that it was called something else when you can like either boys or girls.” The king was now beginning to think that running his kingdom was not all the fun that his father had made it out to be. It involved far too many confusing terms and too many friends getting upset. “As I said before, a panromantic relationship could include one or more people of any gender. They could be male, female, or non-binary. “Non-binary?” the king asked. “It refers to genders that are not strictly male or female.” The king’s laughing resumed with much more intensity since he’d asked his friend about pans. But she had since tired of his habit for laughing at things that make no apparent sense.

“Non-binary genders exist. Gender is like a rainbow. It’s a spectrum.” But her friend’s laughter only increased. “But it doesn’t make any sense!” he exclaimed. “Almost none of it does. Sure, that transgender thing and liking people for their personality sounds logical, but are you sure? Genders that aren’t male or female. It’s ridiculous!”

“Your confusion about this topic isn’t an excuse to be ignorant to others when talking about it.”

“I’m not being ignorant. I’m just trying to see sense in some things that you seem to have made up this morning.” His friend could now see that his ignorance would only interrupt their conversation. And probably many future conversations. If only there were a way to make him see his own ignorance.....