

# INSPIRED IN\_SYD STORIES

AN ANTHOLOGY OF SHORT WRITINGS  
FROM INNER SYDNEY HIGH SCHOOL



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# INNER SYDNEY HIGH SCHOOL

Inner Sydney High School is a world class educational facility that opened its doors in 2020. We are located in the heart of the city on the land of the Gadigal people and our school combines unique heritage buildings with a high-rise tower overlooking Prince Alfred Park. Our flexible learning spaces have been purpose-built to create an innovative and contemporary learning environment that fosters creativity and collaboration in both teaching and learning. The establishment of our learning precinct allows us to engage with our local community and partner with organisations, such as the Museum of Contemporary Art, providing rich and diverse learning experiences for students.

As a public, comprehensive and co-educational school, we are founded on values of inclusivity where every student is known, valued and cared

for. Our guiding principles of excellence, kindness and respect inspire all aspects of school life. At IN\_SYD, students are challenged through a rigorous academic curriculum as well as a wide range of extra-curricular activities in art, film, creative writing, coding, debating, dance, drama and music. Students also have opportunities to engage in project-based learning in their Pursue Your Passion (PYP) classes where they work on real-world projects. Our school has a strong focus on student wellbeing. During Touchdown sessions students learn about concepts, such as mindfulness and character strengths, that provide them with a holistic education that supports their individual growth and development.

With the support of our local community, students, staff and parents at IN\_SYD will continue to work together to build our school.



# THE EXPERIENCE

BY HANNAH GOLDSTEIN

At the beginning of this year, Inner Sydney High School opened its doors to a group of excited year seven students ready to begin their adventure into high school. Throughout the year, teachers, students, parents and our community have worked hard to build our school, using our guiding principals of excellence, kindness and respect to inspire us along the way.

The founding of the IN\_SYD Writers Club has been an important part of the development of our school. Every Monday afternoon, a group of students meet to practise their writing, enter competitions and share their work. At the beginning of the year, WestWords connected our school to the wonderful author, Tanya Vavilova, who ran workshops for students in semester one. It was such an exciting and valuable experience for students to work with a professional writer. Under Tanya's guidance, students explored character development, narrative structure, imagery, setting, voice and the drafting process. Throughout these workshops, students gained the skills and confidence to express their own personal voice in writing. As a result, this collection features fantastical works about ancient wolves, terrifying thrillers, abandoned theme parks, feminist poetry, time-travel, wizards, secret societies, chocolate cake, angry

neighbours, post-apocalyptic worlds, untimely deaths, fast-food robberies, forgotten identities, self-discovery, and, of course, angry shoppers fighting over toilet paper. Our partnership with WestWords and Tanya's workshops gave students opportunities to build their literacy and writing skills, develop their creative thinking and experience the joy and pride in publishing their work.

I would like to thank Tanya for sharing her expertise and passion for writing and being so generous with her time. I would also like to thank Michael, Christian and the whole team at WestWords for their passion and dedication. Not even a global pandemic could slow them down. As COVID-19 descended, Tanya's workshops went online so that IN\_SYD Writers Club could continue from lockdown. This was only made possible by the hard work and quick thinking of everyone at WestWords and I am so grateful.

I would also like to thank the Principal of Inner Sydney High School, Ms. Robyn Matthews, who has been incredibly supportive of this project from the very beginning. Special thanks also to Ms. Renee Lane, Ms. Stephanie Davies, Ms. Jessica Goldstein and the IN\_SYD Art Club for the beautiful illustrations in this book.



# WestWords

WestWords is Western Sydney's Literature Development Organisation.

We provide pathways of opportunity for the development of Western Sydney voices through innovative literature and related arts programs. We believe literacy, self-expression and creativity changes lives and communities. WestWords is committed to providing an environment where the stories of the communities of Western Sydney and the places they come from are celebrated. The guiding philosophy of WestWords is a belief that the unique perspectives and stories of the Western Sydney area deserve to be celebrated, developed in literature and shared with a wider audience.

We believe that engagement with reading and writing allows young people in particular to develop their imagination, gives voice to their stories and experiences, hones skills in written expression and illustration, and sets them on a trajectory for life. With a focus on literature, we deliver residencies, fellowships, workshops, performances, presentations and publications. Our partners include teachers, schools, universities, community and arts organisations.

The stories we tell ourselves and tell others create an understanding of the world and our place within it. Within the pages of this anthology

it is possible to see the beginnings of a journey for these young people towards adulthood, one that is aligned to the growth of the school itself. Despite the global pandemic sweeping the world we see the freedom of the imagination that transcends restriction. It is a testament to the students, their teachers, the school and to Tanya Vavilova who facilitated the workshops for WestWords that we adapted and continued - honing the skills of the students, channelling their creative expression, finding, and exercising, their voices.

WestWords would like to thank Inner City High School, its principal Robyn Matthews and in particular English and History teacher Hannah Goldstein who invited us to work with the inaugural Year 7 cohort. It was a privilege.

We would also like to thank: Professor Margot Hillel OAM, Chair of the Academic Board at Australian Catholic University who assisted with the editing; the Cultural Fund of the Copyright Agency who support our schools program; Australian Catholic University who support our publication program; Hayley Lam and Luke Beeton from Sailor Studio for bringing their creativity and expertise into the book's design, writer in residence Tanya Vavilova; and the students themselves who brought all their enthusiasm and inspiration to what you are about to read.

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ILLUSTRATION BY JESSICA

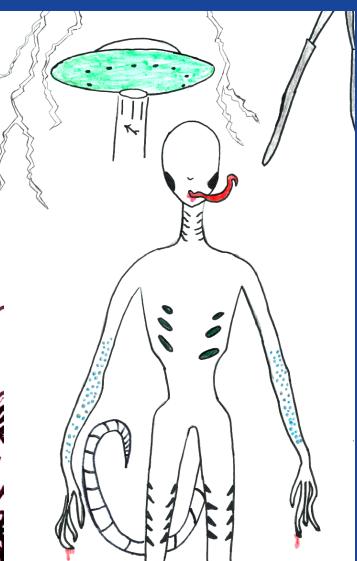


ILLUSTRATION BY IMOGEN

# FOREWORD

BY TANYA VAVILOVA

Storytelling has always been important - a way for us to share knowledge and experience, to understand ourselves and the world around us - but perhaps it is even more vital in challenging and unpredictable times like this one. Schools, workplaces, hospitals and homes have all been affected by Covid-19 and so has the texture of our everyday lives; we wear masks, we bump elbows to say hello, we squeeze goop on our hands to sanitise, we don't go out much, and we stand two big steps apart. While everything around them was changing, the students at Inner City High School took creative writing in their stride and told wild, strange and heartfelt tales about alien invasions, apocalypse, pets, unruly siblings, embalmers and cake.

When our writing workshop moved from the classroom to online, we had to adapt to new ways of learning and new routines, and set up classrooms in our homes. Through writing exercises and a hands-on approach, we learnt how to craft killer sentences, use the senses to build worlds, write compelling characters and dialogue, and how to structure and plot our stories. All of this while the world around us was changing. And sometimes the going was tough.

It seems fitting that the very first story we read was Ray Bradbury's All Summer in a Day about a school on Venus where the sun only comes out for one hour every seven years - that was a bit like the mood in Sydney at the end of March. I truly believe that stories will help us find our way

- along with good policy and government - and navigate the challenges of Covid-19. I admire the students at Inner Sydney High School for their strength, determination and enthusiasm. For turning up and telling stories no matter what.

I hope that we will all continue reading and writing stories for the joy of it, for escapism, for entertainment, for what we can learn or understand. WestWords has some excellent resources to help young writers find a community and practice their craft.

With the guidance of their excellent teacher Ms Goldstein, there is no limit to what the students at Inner City High can achieve. I look forward to reading the work of the budding writers in this anthology and seeing their names on the spines of books in the not-too-distant future.

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Tanya Vavilova is an emerging writer preoccupied with liminal spaces and outsider perspectives - by life on the margins. Her debut collection of essays, *We are Speaking in Code*, was published by Brio in March 2020. She recently won the Carmel Bird Digital Literary Award for her short story collection *Grub* and was shortlisted for the Seizure Viva La Novella prize for her manuscript *Sick Bay*. Her essays and stories have been published in journals and anthologies, including *Meanjin*, the *Mascara Literary Review*, *Westerly*, *The Lifted Brow* and *Slow Canoe*.

# CAKE STORY

WRITING BY VIOLET | ILLUSTRATION BY HANNAH

As I hold the warm fresh plate in my sticky messy hands,  
I carefully place it down onto the table looking at its delicate fine surface.  
In the corner of my eye I see bright Christmas tree lights sparkle up the room.  
As my family members gather to the table,  
I hear clicks and clunks of the cold metal cutlery clashing together,  
all of the voices talking translate to a mumble in my ear.  
The fork slowly cuts through the cake  
I see sweet grins on everyone's faces looking eager to have more.



# THE LAST TRIAL

WRITING BY JONAH | ILLUSTRATION BY HANNAH

"Orem Vendor, you are facing your last trial before you can graduate Serinian Academy and become the adventurer that you set out to be." I looked over to the crowd watching me and found my master, who had magically enhanced his voice to make it louder so that all the crowd could hear him. I knew what was coming. "This is the most dedicated hard working and all round amazing student ever, so I will match him with one of the most powerful beings I can give him." He paused. "Today the one and only Orem Vendor will be battling me."

The crowd went silent, this could not be; after all these years of learning I had to duel my master! This couldn't be right. "M-m-master Althorn, this can't be right, I am no match for you, you have fought with gods in your prime! How am I to come close to that?"

"Well Orem," Master Althorn said, "old age has withered me you may stand a chance."

"I am too proud to back down from a fight, Master, but you know I would never want to hurt you." The crowd was watching us like eagles about to catch their prey, never missing a beat. I looked

at my master not knowing what to do. People started to realise what was happening and burst out in protest, I looked into my master's eyes and a single tear ran down my face as I started to cast my first spell.

I drew my wand and aimed; I fired and a ball of fire flew out of my wand forcing my master to conjure a shield. I knew Master Althorn could beat me in any magical duel so I had to get up closer at melee range. I let my concentration leave the fire ball and came to the next spell I was casting. This time I was not so lucky with the aim forcing me to miss which gave my master a new opportunity. I quickly dived out of the way as a lightning bolt struck where I was a second ago. Hiding behind one of the larger rocks in the arena I cast my next spell, a barrier to stop myself from getting hit and ran to the next rock, slowly getting closer and closer until finally I was in melee range.

We both drew our swords and got ready for the melee combat, I attacked first, causing him to dodge and lose some time. I lunged at him again but he blocked with his sword, then he lifted his sword and struck; it was too fast and I got a gaping hole in my shoulder. Now I was confused,

Master Althorn would never do this to me; this was some trickery. I switched my dominant hand to the painless one and took a fresh swipe, this time Master Althorn was too slow to block it, but when I made contact something strange happened, Master Althorn had disappeared.

It has now been four weeks since my master disappeared in a blur. I cannot remember anything except that my master is gone. That is why I keep this diary, I think. Today the new Dean told me that I was going to go on a quest to go looking for Master Althorn and that I would meet up with my team on the marshall plain. Hopefully, meeting earthlings would take my mind off the events. I do not know how to prepare to meet these beings; should I give them a man-eating panther? Or a killer hamster? I had to make these decisions hastily because the departure dawned nearer.

The time of departure came and my fellow Eldrin came to see me off, some with love in their eyes, some with hate, but most with pity. The great wizards had set up a portal for me and they were here too, staves in hand, pity in eyes. Some Eldrin gave me gifts as I walked by and stepped through.



# CAMELLIAS

WRITING BY SORAYA | ILLUSTRATIONS BY BECKY + NIA

I stopped my bike and moved onto the front lawn. Panting heavily, I wiped sweat off my forehead. My dark auburn hair stuck determinedly to my helmet as I attempted to pry it off my head.

I think I broke the record for my longest bike ride ... I think I'm also going to break everyone's sense of smell too; I'm so sweaty.

A small laugh leaves my lips. My moment is cut short when Rowen Snoer slams his front door in outrage. "What have you been doing?" the grumpy old man asks disdainfully, his bushy brown eyebrows creasing heavily.

"Biking," I answered equally haughty, shooting a harsh glare at our pretentious neighbour.

Since when does he need to know anything about my schedule?

I hope that it will make him let me pass but no such luck. "Oh really?" he sneers, striding closer to me until he towers over me. "Then I suppose you wouldn't know what happened to

my camellias..." His voice is so condescending it almost physically hurts and I have to bite my lip to stop a cruel remark slipping past my lips. "Would you?" he growls, inspecting me and my bike as if that will give him back his oh-so-special roses.

"I do not know where your roses are, Mr Snoer," I curtly reply.

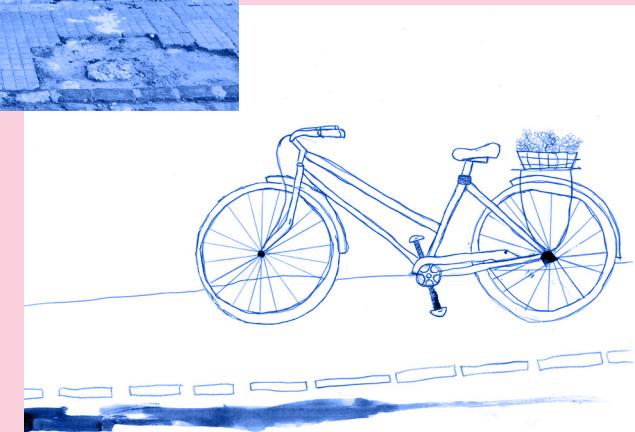
Save your annoyance for later. There are worse things than a grumpy old man.

"They are camellias, young lady," he snarls then takes a deep breath, carefully composing himself before he continues. "Where are they?!"

"Well if you would care to listen to me," I curl my lip downward, "then you will be asking your precious grandchild." Steam rises from his ears, and his face turns a violent red.

I refuse to utter another word to aid this man.

With that thought, I push off the ground, deciding to make my bike ride even longer.



# UNTITLED

WRITING BY EUGENE | ILLUSTRATION BY ESTELA

Panting from all the running, I slump to the wall with an entire sky weighing on my shoulders. The room is dark and cold like the eyes of an eagle. I hear the thud of my body, the look of shock, still echoing in my mind. I curl myself inwards as I shiver, despite the sweat dripping down my forehead. As I look around, I discover that the walls are glaring down at me, three tall windows loom over me like the glares of a spider. Three white tables. I gasp for air, stare at the blank white wall and the world goes black.

In the darkest corner of my head, I hear a croaky voice. My eyes slide into focus. I sit up. My hands are wet. I scream, running around the dark bare room where I'll have to escape. My hands are red, oozing onto the ground.

Where am I? The question bounces in my head. I am in a room but it isn't the one from before. It is a bright and sunny room with light blinking down

on me. The windows are small. I am in a hospital. Jumping out of my bed. I kick the door open, run out into the street and towards home.

My harsh breathing echoes through the dark hallway, panting from all the running, I slump to the wall with an entire sky weighing on my shoulders. The room is dark and cold like the eyes of an eagle. I hear the thud of my body, the look of shock, still echoing in my mind. I curl myself inwards as I shiver, despite the sweat dripping down my forehead. As I look around, I discover that the walls are glaring down at me, three tall windows loom over me like the glares of a spider. Three white tables. I gasp for air, stare at the blank white wall and the world goes black.

This is how my life goes, in a cycle. I have never been on another day, only the 25th of December 1998.



# A NEW DAWN

WRITING BY ANA | ILLUSTRATION BY HANNAH

A twinkle of light,  
Sparking hope,  
We are ready to fight,  
It's a miracle we've been able to cope.  
Standing tall, voices clear,  
Fists in the air,  
We won't be beaten by fear,  
Fighting for what's right, what's fair.  
They once loomed over us, like an owl stalking prey,  
They closed the door and threw away the key,  
But now the trees starting to sway,  
On top of that tree are millions of people including me.  
We all were the light, we started this all,  
Our voices will call until our message is clear,  
Men and Women are equal, Women shouldn't take the fall,  
We are so far yet so near.  
They won't drown us out again,  
We gather all together,  
Women. Children, Elders and Men,  
It's now or never.  
It's a new dawn,  
Times are changing,  
Book of women's rules have been torn,  
It's the future females we're saving.



# ALL FOR A THICKSHAKE

WRITING BY SORAYA | ILLUSTRATION BY LEA

"Can I get a small caramel thick shake please?" My hand reaches inside my jacket pocket eagerly.

"Sure!" The cashier grins, her fingers greedily tapping the bench. She stares down at me as I count out the three dollars. I push the money to her side of the bench. She pushes it back to me. "Umm you are aware that a small caramel thick shake is \$7... Right?"

"I believe you are wrong," I smugly gaze up to find that the display boards have changed to advertise a 'Mega Burger'. My pride deflates immediately. Here I thought that I would actually be right and have evidence!

"What? Is there something wrong?" She mocks me, her face feigning concern, her voice pretentious and condescending.

I scowl, putting my money back in my wallet and muttering. "Well I guess I'll go to KFC instead!" The arrogant cashier tosses an infuriating smirk my way.

I turn away but freeze as the room goes quiet and I follow everyone else's eyes to the centre of the room. A rather old-looking woman is pressing a thin, spindly finger to a buff, pompous young man's chest. The woman's grey hair is in a messy

bun with frayed ends spilling out of it. Her eyes are a startling dark brown, contrasting with the rest of her pale figure.

The man's head gleams as the sun hits it through the window. His eyes are a striking light blue unique to the rest of him. His chocolate coloured silhouette shadows the sun. His muscles are taut under his tight shirt.

The rest of the customers slowly go quiet, knowing this can only end one way. Badly. The women poke's the man's chest roughly, twice. "You! You are the one that stole my toilet paper, right out of my trolley at the store!" the old lady shrieks.

The man comes out of his slouch and towers over the woman. A few people let out soft gasps. I spot a person discreetly poised with their phone ready to call the police. I release a small breath I hadn't noticed I'd been holding. I almost subconsciously shuffle around the counter. Once I am behind it, I slump down against it, only to realise the rude cashier girl's form cowering next to me. Nothing had happened yet though... "What store?" A slow deep voice reverberates around the McDonald's.

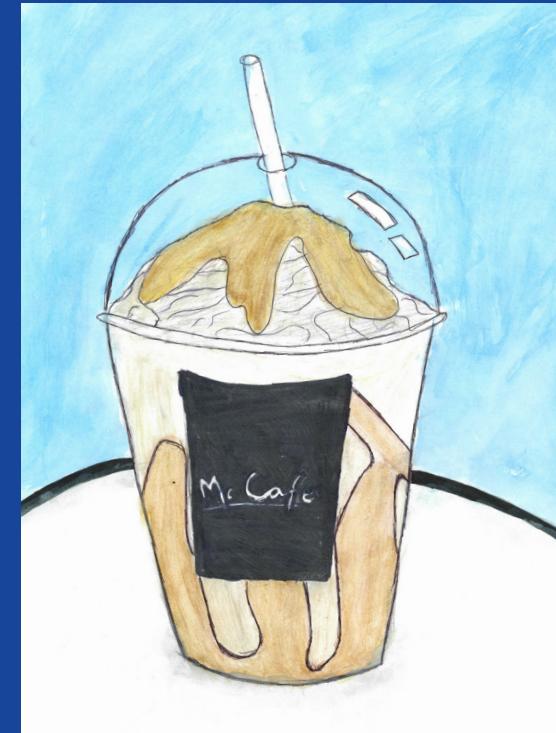
Something clicks.

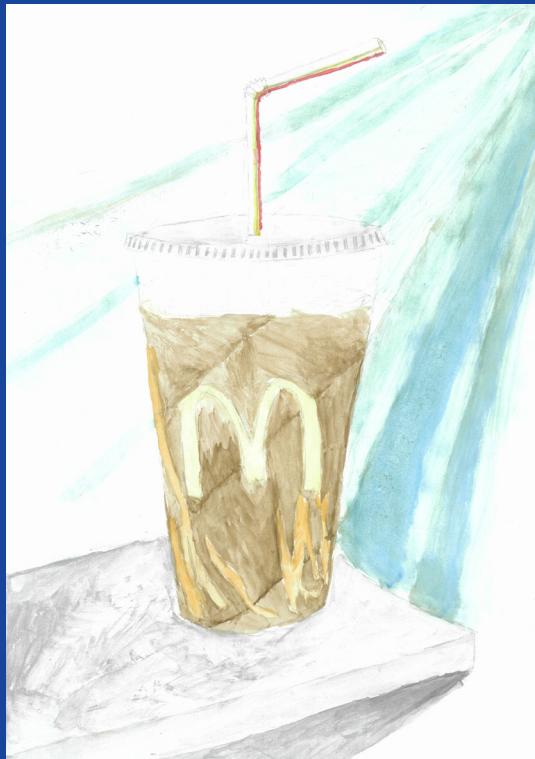
There is a thud and someone screams. I start to crawl away into the McDonald's kitchen but something catches my ankle. I turn around and give the cashier a murderous stare. She slowly retracts her arm from my ankle and I scramble away into the kitchen. "Don't call. Give phone." The man's voice is fainter now that I am further away. It takes a few seconds before I can process what he has said. I freeze, he must have noticed the guy positioned with his phone.

I'm far away enough though, I grab my phone from my jacket pocket and dial 000 but just as I am about to press the call button my screen goes black. I try to turn it on again but it is dead.

I crawl further into the deserted kitchen until I'm sure no one can see me and stand up. I need to get out of here. A breeze blows from the other side of the kitchen and the drive-through window catches my attention. I walk over to it and see a large caramel thick shake resting there.

I squeeze myself through the window then reach back inside, grab the thick shake and I take off running.





ALL FOR A THICKSHAKE | ILLUSTRATIONS BY LIAM, IMOGEN, SORAYA + ROSE

# THE LADY'S GAMBIT

WRITING BY OSCAR | ILLUSTRATION BY GRIFFIN

There I stood in the middle of the street, tall, fair, with a defined body, hair as black as coal and completely naked if you didn't count the blood polluting my skin.

Their eyes skimmed over me, some screamed, others looked away quickly with a look of disgust on their faces. The sirens wailed; I didn't know what to do. I did not know how I got here. So, I did not move when the ambulance pulled up. I just stared at them. They burst out of the van, guns out without a care in the world, lasers pointed at my skull. My primal instincts kicked in, and I ducked like a scared little rabbit, and began running.

They grabbed me and dragged me towards the vehicle. I thrashed about for a moment, before one whipped me with the butt of their gun. I winced as pain darted through my skull. I gave up after that. Limply, I watched as children screamed and mothers cradled their young. They had their guns aimed at goddamn children. I was thrown in the van, they climbed in after me, the others backed up, slowly stepping into the ambulance. Their guns aimed at the heads of the innocent. They stepped in, then slammed the doors. The daylight vanished.

The ambulance slowed. Then turned, we stopped.

They threw a bag over my head and pushed me out the door. The ambulance was elevated off the ground a lot more than I realised, and I plummeted to the floor. I skinned my knees and the palms of my hands on the asphalt. A strong arm pulled me to my feet then shoved me forward again. I was held there, making myself look small as I listened to the muffled voices of an exchange.

"We have the target..." A soothing voice, but the rest of the sentence was lost.

"Show me," said a female voice.

And the bag was ripped off my head. Momentarily

stunned from the sun, I stumbled away, raising my hands in defence from the sun's wrath. I was grabbed and pushed forward again. After covering my body, I looked at my surroundings, we were in the middle of nowhere. The sand rolled on endlessly from the road to the horizon. My vision focused; two black cars relaxed in the sunlight in front of me. I stared blankly at the woman standing just four feet away. She was dressed in a suit, the jacket black, and the shirt the colour of clotted blood. She had a sweet face, long hair. She was a brunette, but her eyes were a vivid gold and green. She was flanked by two

men, whose faces were hidden by tactical masks. They were stockily built, at least that was clear.

"Excellent."

She raised a pistol to the man with a soothing voice, and I hid my face with my hands. She jerked her hand to the right, and fired twice, killing two of his crew. The man stood in shock for a moment, and the woman signalled her men. They raised their weapons and fired, gunning down the rest of them. All but me. Four people lay dead on the ground as she gestured to the car and a boy, no older than twelve, jumped out like a loyal dog. He handed her a suitcase, which she placed on the floor and kicked over towards me and the man with the soothing voice. The woman took my hand and guided me to the car, it was beautiful, sleek and black with red-tinted windows. She opened the door and gestured for me to enter. I slid onto the leather, the chill immediately hit me, the car was freezing in contrast to the desert outside. The boy handed the lady a set of clothes.

"For you," she said gently.

I reached up and took the clothes with nervous thanks. I was not sure what to think of my unusual new captor. I was not sure what to think at all. She shut the car door and entered the front seat. The boy ran around the back. I had climbed into the gray sweatpants and had started putting on the rough blue shirt when the boy hopped in next to me. "I hope you don't mind the clothes" she said, "I had to guess your size." I stayed silent, unsure

of what to say. The cars began to move. I felt my pockets and pulled out a thick leather wallet. I looked at it for a moment, confused. Then opened it. Inside were three credit cards, an ID card, and three hundred dollars. I pulled out the ID card. It had a picture of me. James Codsworth, born 1991. No company logo, nothing else. Just that.

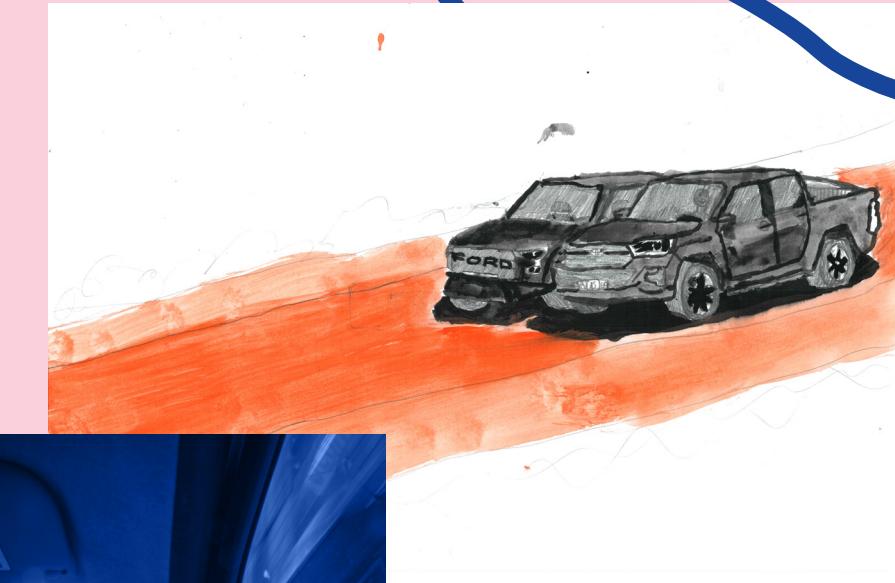
"That's not my name" I said, confused.

She looked back. "Oh," she said with a laugh. "No, it wasn't. But it is now."

"What?" I questioned.

"You don't belong to you," she smiled. "Your name doesn't belong to you, in fact, technically, it never existed." Her smile broadened. "You belong to us, now. We did buy you at just below the market price. In fact, we organised for you to be there with no memory of how you got there, covered in blood, and completely naked" She chuckled. "We had you kidnapped, not even the kidnappers know that. But that's for the better. You are valuable to us. We need someone of your cowardice for our plan. We are going to have our competition disappear, and you are going to do it for us." She smiled sadly. "The Cold War never came to an end. But now we will never have to think about those Soviet bastards ever again."

The boy pulled out a medical injector, brandishing it with his right hand. I looked to my right, noticing the movement, but before I could react, he stuck me with it, and the world went black.



# THE PACKAGE

WRITING BY SORAYA | ILLUSTRATION BY ZANE

"That is mine!" Cressida snarled viscously, snatching the packet from Joanna and hiding it in her leather jacket. "I saw it first, finders keepers, losers weepers!" Her crazed laugh echoed through the store.

"But you're being ridiculous!" Joanna splayed her arms out to represent how preposterous she thought this stranger was. "You've already got ten in your trolley!!!"

"It's tough times, and I know that this is what I must do," Cressida said. Pride coated her voice.

"What?! Raid the shops for toilet paper?!?"

Cressida paused. "Well at least I'll be prepared."

"You people are crazy! In Singapore it's instant noodles. In Australia it's toilet paper," Joanna ranted, unaware of the audience gathering around her and Cressida.

"Woah, woah, chill mate," Cressida mocked Joanna in a cartoon-ish 'Australian' accent. She too, was clueless of the crowd.

"Hey, does that lady have toilet paper? I need

that!" A buff man from the crowd spoke out. "I have a family I need to stock up for!"

That comment alone set off multiple shouts and for every yell there were three more desperate cries. Joanna looked to her left: people. Joanna looked to her right: strangers. Joanna looked back over her shoulder: the wall.

Cressida, still oblivious and gloating, held the toilet paper up like a trophy. Joanna didn't know exactly what happened, but she heard someone say... "Hey, that woman has ten packages of 24 rolls of toilet paper!" Then the crowd closed in on Cressida and her trolley of toilet paper.

Joanna ran with her groceries as fast as she could, all the way back to her car. She drove out of the supermarket and back to her home. She parked her car, sprinted inside her house and plopped down on her couch resting the bag of groceries down next to her.

"Hi sis. Bad day?"

"You wouldn't believe it!"



# WRITING PLACE

WRITING BY ELLA | ILLUSTRATION BY HAZEL

I watched the trees blur out of my window, letting the breeze brush over my face. I wondered what had happened to this place. It felt like only yesterday that I had driven down this very road with my family bursting with excitement, gaping at all the colourful houses. I looked around now and saw only grey and black. As I turned the next corner I could hardly keep myself from gasping. I pulled over and slowly got out. Looming over me was the saddest skeleton of a theme park that I had ever seen. The grounds, which were once filled with laughter and joy, were empty. The cafés which used to hold the delicious smells of hot dogs and burgers and hundreds of people lining up were deserted. Even the skies, which were always so blue, stretched grey for as far as I could see. I walked towards the gates and ran my hands over the rusty locks. I heard a shout behind me.

"Hey April!"

I turned to see my best friends, Katlyn and Eve walking toward me.

"Huh," said Katlyn, "I don't remember it being this empty."

We all laughed.

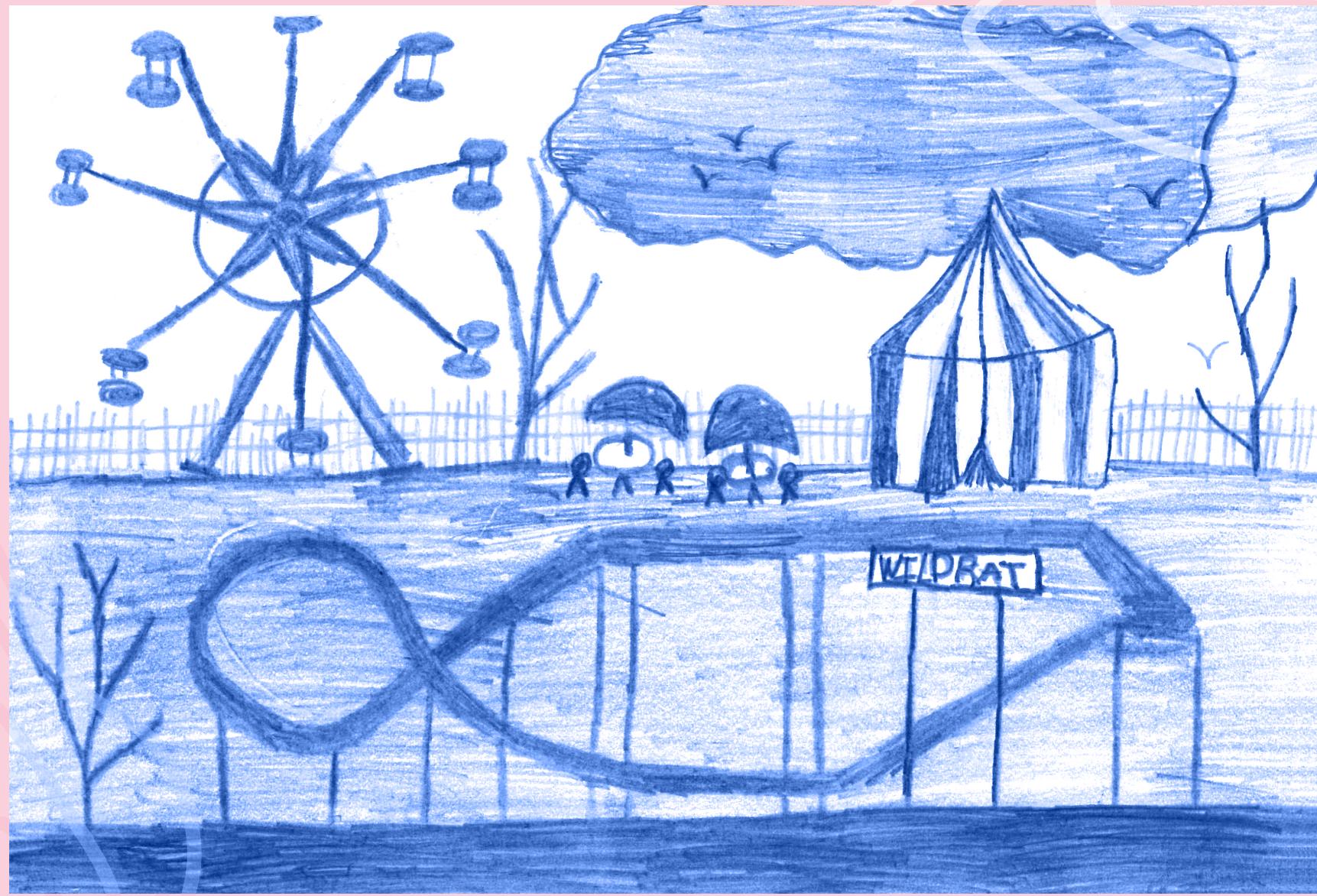
"You guys ready to go in?" I asked.

They nodded, and Eve smashed the lock.

I looked around, trying to take it all in, so that I could remember it, the bright lights of the ferris wheel, the soft music from the carousel, the delicious smell coming from the hot dog cart. This place was where I spent most of my childhood, all eleven years of it and now I was moving away never to see the colourful crowds of the fun park again.

A tear rolled down my face. I quickly brushed it away.





WRITING PLACE | ILLUSTRATION BY ANA

# UNTITLED

WRITING BY SOPHIE | ILLUSTRATION BY CARMEN

"Billie! Over here!" my best friend Tina calls out across the cafeteria. I walk over to her and our other friends and I sit with them. I pull out my lunch bag and grab my banana; I take a large bite out of it.

"Wassup, Billie?" Tina says. We've been best friends for six years straight. We met on the first day of Grade Four and the only reason we met was because we were both new kids at our school, we hung out every day and eventually every afternoon.

"Not much, I just had science, we did theory," I say, while eating my banana, so it comes out a bit funny. I'm not very interested in "smart people" stuff, I'm more interested in music. I have been playing guitar since I was three years of age and I am severely committed to anything that has to do with music, which is why I don't pay attention in any other class, because I don't really care much.

"Cool!" Tina flashes me a bright smile, "I had art." Tina is such an art freak, she produces the most beautiful masterpieces in, like, ten seconds flat, and with no effort.

"That's great, T!" I reply, yawning widely. I hardly slept last night, there's so much homework to do! And I barely started it!!

I finish my banana and grab a pack of chips out of my bag. We're running out of food and Mum keeps saying that she's going to buy some but she hasn't, probably because she keeps spending her money on things we don't need, like all her expensive bags and shoes, so for now my lunch has become a pack of chips every day and we're even starting to run out of chips.

"And this is what we call quadratic equations, last year you would have learnt simultaneous

equations and with quadratic equations, we are going to build on what you already know...." the teacher rambles, we've moved on to whatever a "quadratic equation" is. I don't listen to what she says because I'm busy thinking about how badly I want some new thing that just came out in the stores. But I can't afford it because I don't have the money. Maybe I should get a job. I'm old enough, I'm 16, I could write my resume tonight and then tomorrow after school I could go around and hand it out to some places, maybe cafes or small clothing stores, that would be a good way to make money, or maybe I could...

"Billie?" the teacher says. Oh no what have I done; did I do something while I was lost in thought?

"Yes?" I say faintly

"Can you answer this equation for me?" she says to me, crossing her arms in annoyance. The room starts to spin, and I get dizzy even though I'm sitting down and I'm going to vomit, or faint, or both. I think both.

I jolt awake to a light being shone in my eyes, I try to tell the person to stop and that it hurts but all that comes out is a groan.

"Good, you're awake. I have some serious news for you, Billie and I need you to process it carefully and precisely. My name is Dr Scott." The doctor has a stern expression on his face.

"Okay," I moan in pain; my head is aching. The doctor takes a deep breath.

"You've been unconscious for three days, do you understand?" I sit straight up and look at him with wide eyes.

"After you fainted, your teacher called and told us that you were unconscious so we sent an

ambulance and we got you here as quick as possible. We did a CT scan and ..." Dr Scott is interrupted by a hiccuping cry, I look over and realise that my mother is in the room. She's crying.

"...and you seem to have a tumour growth on your brain. We can prescribe a medication that will contribute to slowing the tumour down, and chemotherapy is recommended for you." He continues in his calm doctor voice. I start tearing up. How can this be happening? Dammit, I'm not even seventeen!

"Can I... Can I see the X-ray?" I ask tentatively.

"Yes, of course!" Dr Scott says brightly, "Give me one second, I'll just go grab them."

He leaves the hospital room and I try and get out of bed. It's not until I stand up that I see the vicious tube trailing from a stand and into my hand. I gasp and my knees buckle at the shock.

"Honey?" my mother says, wiping the tears from her cheeks, "It's all going to be alright; they'll fix you."

We both know she's lying.

The hospital keeps me overnight for observation. It is horrible. I can't sleep because of the beeping from the machines in my room and all the rooms



around me.

I open my eyes. I look up at the white analogue clock mounted on the wall, just next to the door, to find that it's already six o'clock. Mum is snoring away, fast asleep. She has been there all night.

A knock on the door catches my attention.

"Tina is here to see you," a nurse says.

"Okay," I reply, the nurse leaves and in walks Tina.

"Hey," Tina croaks. She's crying.

"Hi," I sniff, my eyes tearing up. Tina runs over to my bed and engulfs me in the biggest hug ever.

"Don't ever leave me!" she replies, still buried in my hair.

"I can't promise that," I respond sadly, tears running down my cheek. "Sorry."

"But, you'll always be here with me right?" she asks, hopeful.

"Of course!" I pull away and look her straight in the eyes, my hands on her shoulders, "I will always be there for you ... In one way or another."

And it's in that moment that I realise, we will always be there for the ones we love. Always and no matter what.

# THE TWO EMBALMERS

WRITING BY HUGO | ILLUSTRATION BY HANNAH

**SETTING:** Ancient Egypt, a mummification workshop.

## CHARACTERS:

Amen- skilled, experienced embalmer, a perfectionist with a short temper.

Akil- a nervous apprentice embalmer, a bit cheeky.

## ACT 1, SCENE 1:

**Amen:** (Walks over to Akil.) Akil, do you have the mask of Anubis? (raising eyebrow in a quizzical manner.)

**Akil:** Y... yes (picks up mask from table and hands it to Amen) Here you go Amen.

**Amen:** Good boy, now get me the sacred water. (Points to the table with water on it.)

**Akil:** This one (pointing at the table with water), Amen? (proceeds to pick up liquid)

**Amen:** No! You will displease the gods by doing this! (His eye twitches in anger.)

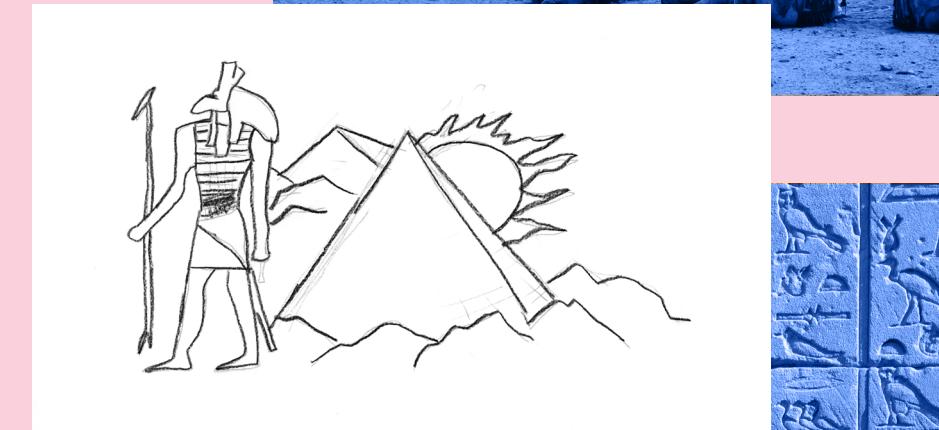
**Akil:** (Cowers away) (quietly) Sorry Amen...

**Amen:** Get over here boy, I will do this! (Picks up mask of Anubis from other table and walks over to table with water, muttering.)

**Akil:** (Gestures at water) What is so important in the mixture of the water, Amen?

**Amen:** (Screams) Do you want to get this done or not?! Get the bandages! (furiously pointing at the bandages.)

**Akil:** (Smugly) Shouldn't we wait until after you have put the water on? It would ruin the bandages and the god wouldn't be pleased with you doing the process incorrectly. (smiles and then starts to run from Amen, escaping trouble.)



# FALLEN WORLD

WRITING BY SORAYA | ILLUSTRATION BY FYNN

I step outside, shivering even as I pull my soft warm jacket closer. The wind wrestles with my hair, blowing some of the black faded strands into my mouth. I hopelessly but desperately try to spit out the dry split ends.

Giving up, I ignore the incessant tickle in the back of my throat. I walk forwards, treading lightly, ready to sprint back inside if I have to. The hairs on the back of my neck stand up straight. My eyes dart across the lonely, abandoned street, tension building in my chest as I am greeted by the sight of no-one. I strain my ears, my breathing getting faster as I am welcomed by the loud silence.

I give the old dilapidated bus stop on the other side of the road a determined glare. Opening my front gates cautiously, I rush out as quickly and quietly as I can. I double check that the gates are locked. When I'm sure that they are, I fling myself across the road not bothering to check for the non-existent cars.

Pausing to catch my breath, I observe the fallen world around me. A thin layer of dust coats the deserted neighbourhood that the wind refuses to blow away. The road is cracked and fragile; it doesn't matter though, because nobody will be using it. The air is thick, making me cough and sputter. The smell of dust; taste of dust; everything is dust.

Yet today it carries the hopeful but alarming scent of a fire. Slowly, I check the air again. I am not disappointed. Still, there is no use in deceiving myself; I snap my head back as far as I can and scrutinise the sky.

Sure enough, dark grey, billowing streaks paint the dark orange sky of dusk, announcing the presence of survivors. I slowly bring my gaze back to the road. I sluggishly pull myself away. These people are not my problem, they are asking to be caught. Bit by bit I turn around. I pause – there is a nagging ache in my chest, a searing thought that torments the back of my mind. They are strangers, unknown to me; intentions, unknown to me; capabilities, unknown to me. Anything could happen and all I know is that if I pursue these people then my life will change. I don't know how it will change but it will change!

Taking a deep breath, I swivel around until I'm facing the smoke again. I jog slowly, conscious of my breathing. My knees are slightly bent, my arms drag at my sides and I never stray into the direct light of the slowly setting sun.

~

I stop behind the corner of a former IGA. I become conscious of my loud, wheezing breaths. Panicking, I hold my breath and forcefully release it in a painfully slow but silent sputter. I slump

down against the wall behind; it suddenly seems like the comfiest bed in the world. My knees sear, relentlessly punishing me for running that far. My arms tingle and I make sure to stay conscious of where they are as I begin to lose feeling in them. I stretch my back, it replies with multiple loud cracks.

"Are you sure you saw one?" A gruff male's voice penetrates the silence.

I stifle a gasp. I swiftly jump up. I am soundless as I slip into the stance I have practised so many times. I do not plan on running into anything completely blind. I slink into the shadows, hiding from the moon's light.

"Look, it doesn't matter – let's just go back to camp. It's not safe at night. Heck, it's not safe in the daytime either. You know what? Whatever, I just want to sleep!" a tired sounding female complains, a bit too loudly.

"Shh!" the male hushes. Tiredness has not yet fogged his mind, he still remembers the danger. He must be the one keeping the group alive.

"Look, a kitty cat!" the female whispers in an almost hysterical, high pitched trill that gives me a headache.

As if on cue, Zoe prances past the corner, her fluffy black tail swaying in the naïve delight of having new people around. Nope! My cat is my cat! That isn't changing! I stalk around the corner in a low crouch.

Two screams stab the quiet. A streak of black flies down the street.

"RUN, FIONA!" When the female doesn't budge the male warns, "You are unarmed! Don't be an idiot!"

Fiona's silhouette sprints away in the general direction of the now fading smoke. I creep forward, my footsteps soundless, my breathing silent. My eyes empty and my face void of emotion.

The male has short black hair, brown eyes that mirror mine and slightly tanned skin. As far as I can tell he isn't very athletic but he seems confident enough. His hand slips into a sheath I hadn't noticed before. Woah, he really thinks I'm one of them.

The male looks me in the eye. "So, you've noticed my sword? Doesn't it just reek of your companions?"

He doesn't expect me to answer so I don't.

"That's what I thought," he says cockily.

His movements are smooth and I am unprepared. Everyone aims for the legs but not him. His index finger flies at my forehead. I am too slow to react; excruciating pain erupts from my forehead.

Black spots dance in my vision. Bells ring in my ears. My eyelids become heavy.

~

Ringing, ringing, ringing... Loud bells, big bells, funeral bells.

"What on Earth possessed you to bring it back here!?" an outraged, female's voice screams.

Dancing, black dots swirl and tumble in my vision but the spaces the dots vacate are getting lighter.

"You told me I had to prove myself!" I recognise the male's accusatory voice.

A warm finger swipes across my cheek.

"You will be the end of us!"

"Guys? Guys!?" A different voice this time; the woman, Fiona. "I don't think she is one. There is some kind of white paint on her skin."

I move my fingers weakly, feeling a lot like a squashed fly or a spider that Zoe caught. I try to open my eyes, but they are stuck shut. They are wet and sticky. I put my tingly arms next to my back and push myself up to sitting position. I lean

against something squishy that smells bad and I hope I don't find out what it is.

I brush off my hands. By now these people would know I'm not one. I put my hands near my eyes and try to pry them open with no success. I feel multiple sets of eyes on me. "Well if you're done staring, I could really use a bit of help or maybe water?" I ask, my voice dripping with sarcasm though I still cannot manage to get my eyes open.

"Here's some water..." Fiona says hesitantly, I feel a glass shoved in my lap. "Hey, you don't have to be rude Jamie!"

"Sword boy?" I ask curiously.

"Well he does wield a sword..." Fiona replies.

"I am not a boy! I am a man! A manly man!"

"Nah, I think that's the perfect nickname. Accurate too," the high-pitched voice chimes in. "Selena, by the way."

"And I am the one and only Fiona!"

"I know, I heard you and sword boy squealing."

"Oh..." Fiona remembers, her voice is tinged with embarrassment.

I finally compel my eyes open. The light of the full moon is brighter than I can ever remember it. The colours are more vivid than I can ever recall. There are three darker shadows crouching over me. The shortest one, a girl, has light brown hair, slightly tanned skin and dark green eyes. The other girl is very tall, she has dark brown hair, pale skin and

light greenish yellow eyes the colour of autumn leaves. Finally, Jamie stands behind the girls, the same person who knocked me out before.

"Are you alone here? Surely you must have a companion." Fiona mutters the last part to herself and tilts her head in curiosity.

"You've already met her..." I tease.

"Me and Jamie?" Fiona looks at me, confusion swirling in her dark green eyes.

I nod in confirmation. "Yep." Selena and Jamie must have sensed that this will go on for a while, because they both get up and start setting up their stuff so they can sleep. "The cat."

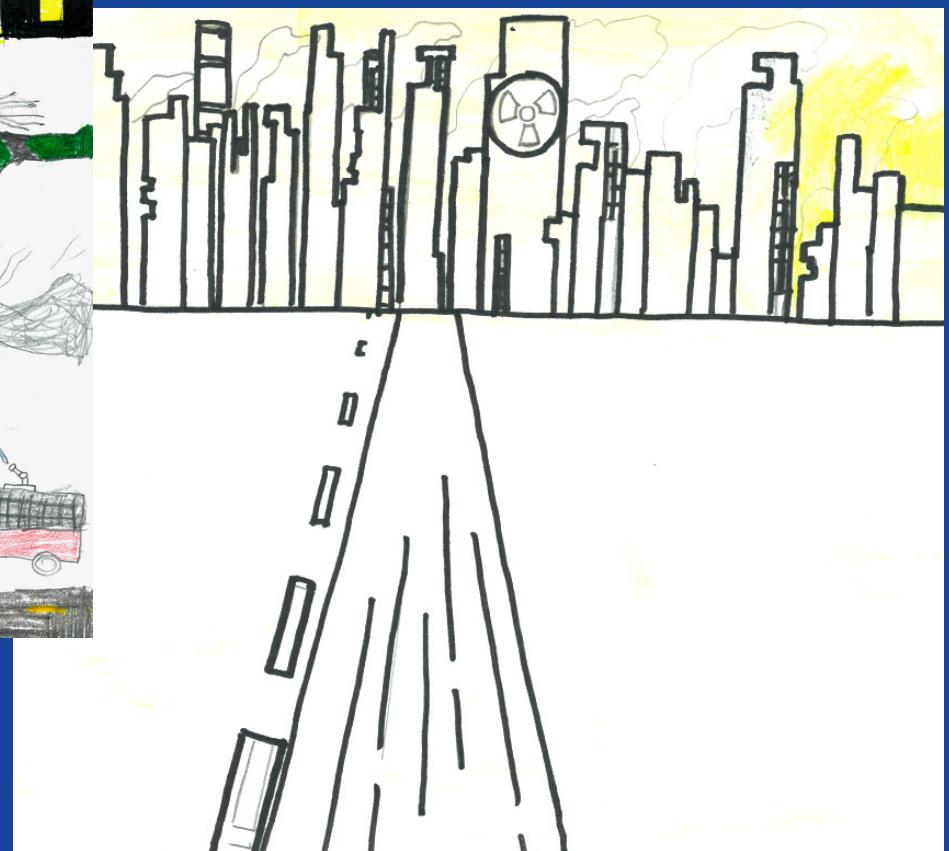
"That must have been... Lonely."

"Hang on, that was past tense!"

"Well...we're headed to the Central Human Refuge and we could really use someone like you to help us get there... I mean us three!" Fiona points to herself, then gestures to Jamie and Selena's sleeping forms. "As you could probably tell, we have no idea how to deal with the infected. We have a map. Would you like to go to the fortress with us?"

Inside I smile, I jump for joy, I cry with happiness. "Sure, why not? Just remember I am only doing this so you morons don't get yourselves killed." Peaceful resolve settles over my heart and I know my life will change, that my entire existence will change but I also know that I have made the right decision.





FALLEN WORLD | ILLUSTRATIONS BY NICHOLAS + ALEC

# TIGER POEM

WRITING BY ANA | ILLUSTRATION BY AYESHA

In the jungle, near a creek  
Lay two tiger cubs soundly asleep  
Their small and delicate heads resting on one another  
But where on earth is their mother?

Over on the other side of the creek lay a deer  
But unknown somethings watching from the shadows, smelling fear  
Claws are sharp spears upon four huge feet  
Emerging from the undergrowth, smelling deer meat

A fur coloured orange with black stripes  
Whiskers as white as snow, stripes as black as night  
Getting ready for a pounce, tail swishing she does the jump  
Down, down, down goes the deer with a loud thump

Walking home in her mouth was the deer  
She could hear her cubs, she was near  
Placing the deer in her den  
The cubs were hungry so she went out to do it again.





TIGER POEM | ILLUSTRATION BY NIA

# I AM ME

WRITING BY ESTELA | ILLUSTRATION BY JESSICA

The feeling of happiness faded as the sun started shining. Another day and I have to keep up this overachiever facade. The footsteps I could hear far from my room were a warning with no words. I rushed out of bed and got ready in a hurry. My mum barged into my room with no remorse. "Abigale, your father is expecting you in the dining room."

"Alright," I replied.

"Don't talk to me like that, I am your step-mother," she continued. "This move from London to Beverly Hills has irritated me."

She left my room in a fuss with her arms crossed. I trembled over to the girl in the mirror. "You're fine, it'll all pay off when you get his attention." I have repeated these words every day for nine years. I took the elevator from my room to the ground floor, into the white marble kitchen. At the head of the table, sat my father and Stanley. They must have been discussing law. I walked towards them and, halfway through, I was stopped by my father. "Sweetie, this is men's business. Stanley is getting a degree soon and we wouldn't want any disturbances." I simply shook my head, turned around, and left for school.

"How does he think he can do that to you!" Tina was my best and only friend at Melvin High. She made me feel hopeful. "Anyway, talk to you at lunch. I've got band." Tina turned around and

disappeared into the distance. I walked alone to class, feeling judged by every look. "Miss Class President," someone yelled, "why don't you bake Mr. Wheeler another cookie?"

I shrunk into my books and quickly walked to class. I chose a seat and waited for the class to start. As we got further into the session, the teacher posed a question to the students.

"What does K stand for in the periodic table?" she asked.

I didn't move, neither did anyone else. A kid from the back finally broke the awkward silence. "Why don't you ask brainy?" he shouted. The class laughed unbearably. I could barely contain my anger. I tried my best to keep calm.

The door made a big bang as I shut it. I ran to the elevator in a hurry. I noticed my dad sitting in the living-room. Of course, he didn't care that I was sobbing my eyes out. I slammed the door to my room closed. How can people be so mean? I thought, sinking to the floor. "I'll make them like me," I said softly to myself. "I'll turn into what they want me to be." I got up quickly and went downstairs, wiping away my tears. "Dad, I need your credit card." He didn't even ask what for; he tossed it across the table as if it didn't have millions of dollars inside.

I took it for a little spin around the stores of

Beverley Hills. I bought everything short and tight from every store. The shops were empty when I left them. I knew that the next day I would become the girl others wanted me to be. But that wasn't my goal. I hoped my dad would become mad at my 'intolerable behaviour.'

The next day I dressed myself in a short pink plaid skirt with a midriff white top. I pulled my hair into a slick ponytail and pulled on my black Doc Marten boots. I felt confident as I walked downstairs. I strolled to the dining-room for breakfast, holding my head up high. Whilst I was taking my morning 'on the go' toast, my father noticed me. "What are you wearing? That is inappropriate for a young lady!" he shouted.

"So, you noticed... finally." I left the living room with father's mouth on the floor and a smirk on my face.

The hallway fell silent as I roamed through the way. People stared in desire, and I strutted with positivity. Tina pushed through the crowd behind me.

"Damn girl, I honestly didn't know you had it in you." Tina was pushed out of the way by the blonde 5ft 5 princess of Melvin High, Jessica Albems. "The show's over, geek." Once she had said this, girls began to throw eggs at me. Everyone was laughing. I felt so stupid, I ran past the crowd towards the bathroom. I wiped my face



down with water, and scrubbed all the makeup off with soap. Tina barged into the room in a panic. "Aww girl. This isn't you," she said.

"I don't know who is me, Tina. The me you know isn't me." And I ran out of the bathroom towards the office.

The next morning, I slid out of bed and went straight downstairs without changing. My eyes still teary, I walked into the dining-room. "That behaviour of yours yesterday was inappropriate. So not like yourself these days," my dad stated, picking up his newspaper. I couldn't handle this feeling anymore. I had to be honest with him.

"It wasn't me. But neither is the preppy kid. I tried being what you would want me to be so you would finally care for me as much as much as Stanley. I have tried so hard for your hopeless attention that even I'm confused about who I am!" I stormed out of the room and into my bedroom.

I started to develop who I was from there. I tried multiple activities, such as yoga and ear piercings. I didn't let anybody control or determine who I was or wanted to be. I made these my personal decisions. By the end, I found myself and who I am. I am a 5-ft 6 brunette who loves yoga, lives in Beverly Hills, has a vintage-glam style and gets good grades without perusing attention. I am Me.

# THE LONE SHARK

WRITING BY ANA | ILLUSTRATION BY JESSICA

I breathe in and out,  
the dice in my hands heavier than they should be.  
I look at the loan shark sitting opposite me.  
They know, just like I do, that if I lose this roll, they will have the power.  
This situation is all too similar to my father's.  
It reminds me, reminds me of him dead. Loan sharks looming over him.  
There's no chance I will roll higher than his 11, I might as well give up.  
I roll the dice anyway; time stops as I look at the number.  
I only got two.

*Note, for this story, Ana was tasked with the following challenge: write a story in 100 words or less that explores the theme of power, includes the action of rolling a dice and contains the word "reminds" in it.*



# SECRET SOCIETY

WRITING BY ELLA | ILLUSTRATION BY HANNAH

'The hot air was blasting my face but I couldn't worry about that, the balloon was going down. The basket was rapidly getting closer and closer to the ground when the wind suddenly stopped..'

I put down the book, I was not ready for it to end. I slowly made my way down the stairs, when I was hit with the smell of cookies. I headed towards the kitchen and saw a plate, fresh out of the oven, practically calling my name. But I resisted, choosing instead to look for my mother in the mess that was our house. You see, we moved to Seattle almost five months ago but between me going to school and my mother working (and the sadness it brought us to open the boxes that reminded us of our old life) we hadn't got around to unpacking fully. I liked it here in Seattle, I mean it wasn't Chicago but we could live with that. I turned a corner and almost crashed into my mother who seemed to be carrying a large bag of flour. She seemed frazzled. We went into the kitchen and had some cookies. "Your trip to grandma is next Tuesday," she said.

"I know." I replied. "Just know this, I don't want to go."

When Tuesday arrived, I reluctantly got out of bed, but the alarm clock persisted so eventually

I hauled myself out of bed and downstairs. "Morning Sunshine!" my mother said as I sat at the table. She served me my favourite breakfast, but even that couldn't shake me out of my grumpy mood.

We pulled up to the airport and mother turned to me to say goodbye. We hugged and then I watched the pale blue car disappear into the distance.

The plane was very small and not very full. As I settled into my seat I noticed a hostess staring at me with a grim look on her face. I smiled at her and she hastily turned and scurried away. After the meal I checked the in-flight map and realised that we were taking a detour. Interesting, I thought. For the first time, I looked around the plane and noticed a girl about my age, sitting three seats away from me reading. "Hi," I said (there was no one else in our compartment so it didn't matter how loud I said it). She shut her book and, to my surprise, came to sit in the empty seat next to me.

I stuck out my hand. "I'm Julie, Julie Fisher."

"I'm Elizabeth, Lizzie to my friends. You can call me Elizabeth."

I rolled my eyes ever so slightly. "So you're going to England?"

"Yeah I'm meeting my parents there." She sighed. "They left me back in Seattle so they could go and watch a horse race."

"O-h..." before I finished speaking, we heard a deafening explosion. The plane shook, the windows shattered, it's an engine! I felt my stomach lurch, the plane was falling...

I turned around breathing heavily, think Julie, I heard screaming and saw Elizabeth, white as a sheet, eyes wide with fear, handing me the safety booklet. I took it. My hands were shaking. I scanned over the card, looking for what to do, shouldn't the crew be assisting us? I continued reading the card. "Okay," I said as I turned toward Elizabeth. "First we needed to figure out where we were so we could work out what to do." By the look on Elizabeth's face made me think that she wasn't moving anytime soon, so I tapped the screen in front of me. Elizabeth looked confused until I found what I was looking for, the flight map. We looked at each other at the same time, we were nowhere near England, we were flying over the Amazon!

"No, no, no, no," I started, "if the impact from the crash doesn't kill us, one of the deadly animals definitely will." I realised that we still had to get out of the crash alive, so I read over the booklet one more time. Surprisingly it didn't say what to do if you crash over the Amazon, so I went in search of something to break the fall, when, aha! Parachutes.

As we slipped the straps over our shoulders, I was terrified but I pushed those thoughts out of my head and let the question of when to jump

consume me. When I finally thought that it was time, I grabbed Elizabeth and we stood in front of the (closed) emergency exit. I turned to Elizabeth and asked "You ready?" She gave me a nod and in one swift motion I threw open the door (those chin-ups paid off) and we leapt into the unknown.

The first thing I was aware of was the deafening noise and the air pummelling my face. I tried not to get distracted and prepared to pull my chute, then I looked around for Elizabeth. After about sixty seconds I gave her a thumbs up and we both tugged hard on the handle hanging from our 'backpacks'. We careened in with a thud! I have never been so grateful to have the ground beneath my feet.

I unbuckled my 'backpack' and let it slide to the ground. I looked around and saw Elizabeth doing the same thing. I walked over and flopped down beside her, we sat in silence for a bit, catching our breaths. I heard her say, "So what do we do now?" Huh, I hadn't thought about that. My thoughts were consumed with not being on the plane when it crashed. I wracked my brain, my mind is swirling. We had to make our way to the plane wreckage, we needed to get supplies (whatever hadn't been destroyed), and see if anyone else survived. Maybe we could even try to use the WiFi from the plane to call for help.

I turned and saw Elizabeth hastily scaling the nearest tree. "Look!" she said, "There's the plane!" I looked to where she was pointing and could see and smell the acrid smoke and estimate that it was about a day's walk away. If we started now, hopefully we'd get there by nightfall. Wearily we headed off toward the wreckage.

I pushed a vine out of my face and sighed, "It's so hot I swear I'm going to melt."

"Can you please just admit that we're lost?" Elizabeth said, clearly annoyed.

"But we're not lost."

"We've walked past that palm tree almost three times."

"It's the Amazon, Elizabeth, there's plenty of palm trees."

I said, "I think we have to rest, maybe we can find some water and even something to eat."

We were so close to the plane that the smoke filled our nostrils, we were almost there, I thought. I turned around and before I could stop her Elizabeth shoved a handful of berries in her mouth. I ran over and yelled "Spit them out, spit them out!" She gave me a toothy grin.

"They're fine. I took a course in edible berries and nuts and leaves, these are perfectly fine to eat." She handed me a few and then popped the rest in her mouth. I looked at the berries in my hand, they were each about an inch long and were a reddish-purple colour. I carefully put one in my mouth, then another and another. "Wow," I said "These are really good! Like sherbet."

"You've just had an Açaiberry" she replied.

The sun set over the trees. I looked out to oranges and pinks and purples, all blending to make the most incredible painting in the sky and considered how thankful I was to be alive. I heard

Elizabeth mumble, "You can call me Lizzie." Then she lifted and peered under a leaf and straight away I saw it, the Poison Dart Frog. "Lizzie, you may have a knowledge of berries, but I have a knowledge of frogs." Calmly, I said, "so step away from that frog." Lizzie stepped away, and then the frog leapt. "Run!" I shouted.

We started crashing through the trees and plants, getting closer and closer to the plane and putting more and more distance between us and the frog. Finally, we crashed into a wing of the plane, huffing and puffing and dripping with sweat. "That frog has enough poison," I gasped, "to kill twenty men."

She turned to me wide eyed. We caught our breath and then started to rummage through the wreckage. We found a couple of charred water bottles when I heard someone clear their throat behind me. I turned around, shocked. "Grandma?"

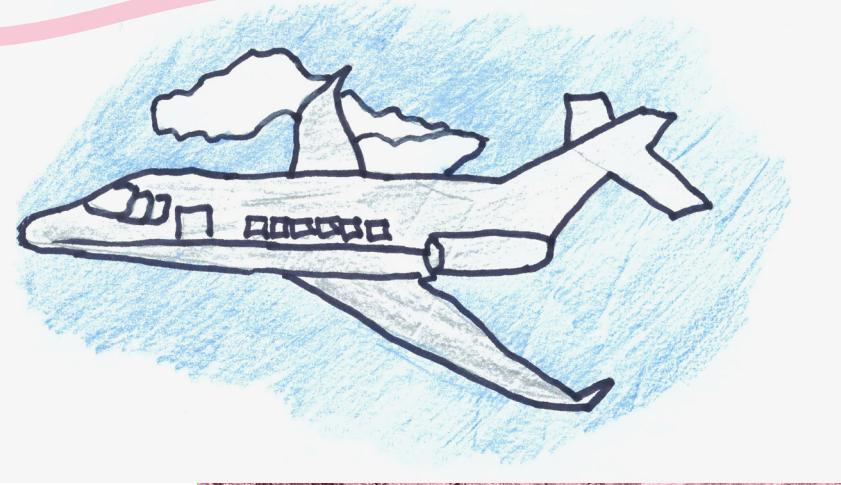
At the same time Lizzie said, "Mum? Dad?"

"Hello sweetie."

I looked behind and realised that there was a whole group of people standing behind them including the grim hostess from our flight. "You passed the initiation." Grandma said, "Every single person here has passed this test."

Lizzie and I looked at her in awe.

"Welcome to our Secret Society."



# LULU

WRITING BY ROSE | ILLUSTRATION BY JESSICA

## Before

"SHUT UP I DON'T CARE!" I scream at my mother who is trying to tell me about all the people who don't have a home because of the fires. Like I care. It's not my problem and not my fault. Yes, yes I know it might happen to me because I live near the fires too, but it's hard to imagine anything bad happening to me.

I live in Australia and there are some fires going on, but it doesn't matter. What matters is that my mother is annoying me by nagging me to be prepared. She's a doctor so she's used to telling everyone what to do. It's so dumb! All my other friends are going out and having fun while I'm stuck at home packing an emergency bag. It's not fair; their parents actually care about their happiness. My mum couldn't care less about what I think.

The fact that my mother is packing to leave as soon as the fires come is hysterical. I can't believe her. She is trying to make me pack too, but I simply refuse. My house is quite big. It has four bedrooms, six bathrooms, a pool and one hot tub. I'm trying to think about what might actually happen if the fires do come .... I admit I'm a little scared just thinking about it ... maybe I should pack.

## After

Everything was gone. I realised what was happening far too late. My house, my mum, my dad, even my dog had been engulfed in the scarlet flames. It had always seemed so far away, like it would never happen, but the fire had reached my home and burnt it to the ground. I could still hear my mother's voice telling me to pack and leave with her. She had promised that she would never leave without me I had made her wait a little too long. If there was one thing I could change about the past it would be the last thing that I had said to my mother. I had told her that she was dumb and that I hated her, even though I still loved her. Now, I didn't know where to go or what to do. The fire-fighters were putting out the fire as best they could. They had even made it inside to search for my parents but when they came out, one of them was crying. They looked like they had seen the most terrifying thing. It was all my fault.



# AMAZON, NEW YORK

WRITING BY ETHAN | ILLUSTRATIONS BY HANNAH

There was a thudding as red paint from the fire-escape stairs peeled away, like petals coming off flowers, exposing the rust underneath. Bits of paint fell like leaves blown on the streets of New York. Jordan was sitting down outside on the red stairs reading the news on his iPhone 11. His eyes quickly stopped and caught sight of something interesting. The news article read: A daily company that lots of shoppers use in everyday lives, Amazon invented time travel and also have preemptive shipping. His mouth dropped, he had always wanted time travel to exist as he was interested in a movie from 1985 called Back To The Future which his parents watched as children. This was an interesting topic to him because he really loved science. It fascinated him how different things happened and he had many questions about the world, for example why a teaspoon of a neutron star would weigh 6 billion tons.

Jordan went to Xavier High School and Science was his favourite subject.

The next day, Jordan was riding his new skateboard to school and listening to music on his new red and black Beats studio 4. It took approximately five minutes. He lived on the corner of W 15th street and only had to go straight

and turn right and go down the street. Jordan was waiting at traffic lights, when he heard a muffled shout of his name because only half of his left ear was covered by the headphones. He slowly turned around and spotted his best friend and neighbour, Archie, who was really nice but had a fear of heights. Though when you needed him, he always helped. He had blonde hair and pale skin.

"Hey Archie did you see the news?" Jordan asked his best friend.

"You mean about Amazon?" Archie questioned.

"Yeah!" Jordan said excitedly.

When they arrived at school the following morning, they had a talk and while they were talking, more information appeared online with a notification from the news app. Jordan and Archie watched live news. Two news reporters were talking:

"Hello everybody, this is Jane and Andy reporting from Fox News, people are getting notes, letters and more from their future selves through preemptive shipping. Be prepared."

Jordan and Archie watched in excitement and intrigue.

When class started Jordan was getting distracted

because he couldn't get time travel out of his head and he also wanted to be in science rather than maths.

"Jordan, what is the answer to Question 5?" Miss Robinson, Jordan's math teacher asked him. Quickly Jordan stopped staring into the distance and looked at the teacher, blankly.

"Sorry Miss," Jordan said and quickly brought out his Maths book. "ABC squared," Jordan quickly answered.

"Correct Mr Martin," Miss Robinson replied, disappointed.

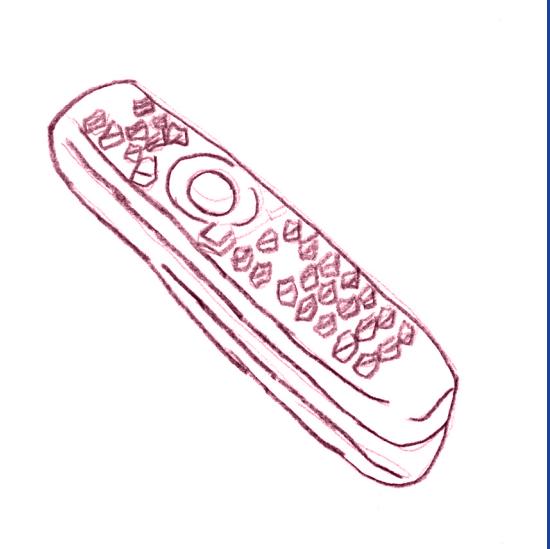
After school Jordan went back home and sat on the fire stairs and looked at his phone. Then swiftly a notification popped up which said:

*Hello Jordan,*

*You have a package from the future which will come in approximately 10 days. The portal is still creating your package.*

*Selling A to Z, Amazon*

Jordan quickly skipped up to the top level of his apartment, where Archie lived. Then he knocked on the window, and in the blink of an eye Archie greeted him. Jordan and Archie read the



notification over and over again smiling at each other.

Ten days later Jordan skated back from school and casually walked up the fire stairs into his apartment when he found a small package next to his door. Excitedly, he opened up the package in his bedroom, he knew this was the package from Amazon, from his future self.

"What, a TV Remote?"

Jordan pressed the on switch and, for some reason, imagined about the Mona Lisa. In less than a second, it appeared in his arms and quickly disappeared when he wished it to.

"Woah!" Jordan thought.

Inside was also a little projector that projected a hologram of someone that looked like him but older. The hologram was a little metal disk that was as round as a small plate but shaped differently. It looked like two plates put together.

"Hello young Jordan, This is you from the future and I get murdered. Please help me and change the future. I have given you something we call an Imagination which can turn into anything you can imagine. Goodbye."

Jordan was nervous and felt pressured and



shocked and knew he had to save himself.

"Archie, will you come with me?" Jordan questioned.

"Sure," Archie smiled.

The next day was Saturday and he told his mum he was going out with Archie to the cinema. They skated towards Amazon headquarters. They walked around the three big domes and eventually found the vent entrance. They crawled through the vents sneakily and swiftly and eventually found the right room. It was covered with a thick layer of glass which was bullet proof and some men who were wearing radioactive suits were outside, taking off their helmets and suits and holding brown sustainable Uber-eats bags. Archie and Jordan decided that they would hold their breaths and sprint. On the way Archie lost his breath as he looked down an elevator shaft. He started choking. They sprinted as fast as they could and made it.

"Okay, Archie, from my imagine machine it says we are in the year 2055, 35 years in the future,"

"WHAT? THIS LOOKS AMAZING!" Archie said as they looked around at all the buildings. Skyscrapers were twice as tall, cars hovered and

floated in the air with traffic lights in the sky. The World Trade Centre was also rebuilt and could now hold more people. The new one was the tallest building in the world with a height of 2 kilometres.

"Let's go to my house now, the imagination showed me where it is," Jordan said. "We have to get there fast. My future self told me that I had until 10.30pm tonight."

When they got to Jordan's apartment, they went up in the power lift but were denied access. They decided that Archie would have to wait outside. Jordan felt lonely as if he were a hermit crab. He went upstairs to explain to himself everything. Jordan's future self recognised him straight away and they prepared for the murderer.

While Present Jordan was sitting down he slowly closed his eyes. Quickly a vision appeared in his head.

"Bye!" A figure laughed as he saw Future Jordan suffering and shot him in the head. Blood piles and stains came on Future Jordan's Turkish Carpet.

Present Jordan quickly woke up startled.

Time passed quickly and 10:30pm came in what felt like five minutes. Both Jordans turned their heads and looked at each other and nodded. Faster than light, a bullet shot up from the balcony. Both Jordans dodged it and reached for kitchen knives. A figure quickly came up and was holding two guns at both Jordan's heads.

"Why are you doing this Tim?" Future Jordan questioned.

"I need the money," the figure said.

"Remember all the nice times we had together," Future Jordan said.

Tim sighed and dropped the guns. He was in Jordan's friend group at school.

"Sorry Jordan," Tim frowned and shook his head.

Jordan and Archie went downstairs and skated back to the Amazon headquarters on new hovering skateboards that Future Jordan gave them. Then they went back to the present and snuck past their past selves when the younger present Archie looked into the elevator shaft.

"Archie, thanks for being there for me, I couldn't have done this and fixed this without your support," Jordan smiled.



Archie smiled back and both boys went to the cinema. The cinema was Antarctica, freezing air blowing quickly out of the dusty air vents. As the projector turned on, something washed over Jordan, something didn't feel right. His eyes dropped closed, quickly visions appeared in his head, a man with long hair, blue eyes and several scars on his face appeared. He was in a room with white walls and had chains around his arms. This man was laughing insanely so loud that Jordan's eyes burst open, tears filled Jordan's eyes in shock.

"What happened Jordan?" Archie spoke in shock.

# UNTITLED

WRITING BY HAMISH | ILLUSTRATIONS BY HAZEL, STANLEY + RACHAEL

"They are coming," the wolf said to a small girl, her mouth not moving. The girl nodded stepping out of her small cottage.

"How long?" the girl asked, rallying her magic.

"They were quite sneaky for humans but we saw them. They're surrounding us right now." The wolf yawned, its fur rippling in an unnatural way.

"Let them! The girl stared at the bushes. "Come and get me, humans!"

"We have been sent to capture you," a voice boomed from one of the bushes surrounding her cottage.

"And did they tell you your chances of returning home?" the girl asked. But the only answer she got was the whisper of arrows.

Alistair watched as The Luna dodged his arrows, faster than anything he'd seen.

"Charge!" screamed another knight. Alistair stood and watched as his team of knights were knocked back again and again until they could no longer stand. Finally, The Luna spotted Alistair

and he accepted his fate as a rock of infinite darkness was blasted at him, only for the stone to morph into a ram just before it hit his shield sending Alistair flying backwards. He barely screamed as his head collided with a stone.

"Why?" she screamed as she fell to her knees tears streaming down her cheeks. Why did they have to burn it? She cried as she watched as the one thing that her parents had left her, burn away. The cottage had been her sanctuary and now it was on fire. "Can I trust you with my pups?" moaned the wolf. The girl turned to find the huge wolf bleeding out.

"No don't die!" the girl cried, shaking her head.

"I will not die, only leave for some time and I will return, but for now you will be on your own." The wolf shuddered.

"Is there any name I can honour you with?" the girl asked

"I am nameless. My creation was before names existed." The ancient hound took one last breath. The girl watched as the wolf spirit faded into

nothing. She could feel her anger bubbling up. She noticed that one of the knights had an axe, the exact size needed to damage the wolf spirit and before she could think, black magic whipped out and sent the knight across the clearing. She screamed and all trees near her were obliterated. Finally, she called the pups to her and left before others came.

Alistair woke up the next day to havoc. All knights but he were dead, one even lying against a splintered tree. He tried to stand only to find that his arms were mangled. The impact of the ram was worse than he had thought. But he could manage. He just needed to get to the horses that were left on the edge of the forest. He hobbled over to the terrain for what felt like years but when he made it out of the forest he found it had only been an hour, judging by the sun. The neighing of horses was the only greeting Alistair received as he neared the horses. After a few attempts, he managed to manoeuvre himself onto one of the horses. As he made for home, he thought over the attack on The Luna and the death of his friends. He would avenge them and would destroy that

girl for what she did.

She awoke to the licks of the pups. "Get off," she grumbled sleepily.

"F-food?" the pups mumbled. After an hour of cooking, she had breakfast ready for the pups and her. She then spent the rest of the day hunting so she could feed the pups tomorrow. Finally, she sat down, wishing this had never happened. Wishing that the burden of The Luna Moon had been bestowed on someone else so that the knights would have no reason to destroy her parents or bring her to a king and force her into slavery. If only she was human. But she wasn't and she'd have to deal with it for a bit longer.

Alistair, they said, had come back from the dead. He had escaped death, they said. He did not care what they said, he just grieved for the others. They had been stunned to see him and the horses galloping home. They had wanted to question him, but the nurses had shooed the guards away. He had spent the next few days asleep and, in that time, rumours had formed about how he had survived the attack when the other knights hadn't.

But when he stirred he found the cruel faces of the king and his men. 'How?' was all they asked. And Alistair knew that he could tell the truth but that would get him no closer to avenging his friends so instead he lied. He twisted a tale where his friends sacrificed themselves so that he could get close enough to wound The Luna. She was weakened but her anger had been infinite and he spoke of The Luna launching him backwards and his dogged attacks. He told them that The Luna would not win so she sent one last blast of power before disappearing.

The girl had spent days wandering the forest, but now she stood at the edge of the tree line watching the merchants who had no clue that they were been watched. The poor merchants had no idea that the stray wolves they fed were the pups of the ancient spirit wolf. They didn't even know that the girl who appeared occasionally was not a wolf tamer, or that the scarf she wore was there to hide her canines. One day, the girl overheard that a man named Alistair had been given the trust of the King to guard all the gifted and that he was using them as bait to lure in The Luna. The merchants cheered as they said humans will rule. This Alistair had The Terra, The Aqua, The Ignis even The Caeli and The Solis. The fact that they had the power of earth, water, fire, air and sun in captivity angered her and she knew she must help them.

Alistair was not the king, no, he was more. He was the trusted saviour of humans and he would not fail. He was in charge of armies preparing to take down The Luna. He was not even sure if it was war for it was one against thousands... more like a hunt, come to think of it. But no matter, he would win the hunt and be remembered as the

warrior who had saved the humans. "Alistair, the soldiers are ready to hunt," a voice spoke behind him.

Alistair didn't even turn as he nodded. "Then let them." That was all he said before the hunt for The Luna began. The army could be heard all over the kingdom as they flowed out of the castle gates in search of the moon sorcerer.

She had been hunting for the other sorcerers for weeks. Knowing that so many knights were hunting her, she nearly killed the ancient wolf that snuck up on her. "How?" The Luna asked as the wolf appeared.

"I told you I don't die," the spirit wolf nodded.

"B-but still I," the girl shook her head.

"Don't stutter, it's a sign of weakness." The wolf nearly smiled as she spotted her pups.

The Luna smiled. "I need to get to the other sorcerers."

"Yes, you do." The wolf turned from the pups.

"And what will you do?" She looked at the wolf.

"I will gather the spirits and remind the humans that no army has ever defeated the spirits." Finally, The Luna looked towards the kingdom in the distance, the same kingdom that had killed her parents. The kingdom that had forced her into a slavery that she had only just escaped and might be returning too soon. She nodded to herself before marching forward, her dark hair flowing in the wind. Her smile revealed sharp fangs that were barely visible in the darkness surrounding her. She would avenge her parents and free the sorcerers.



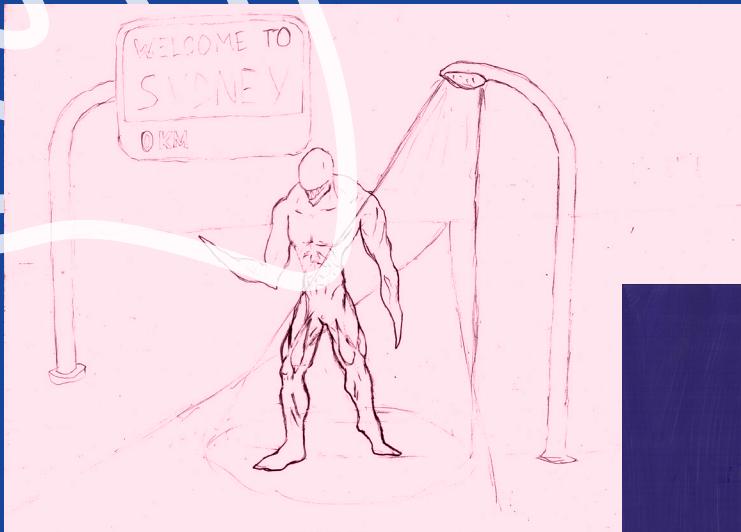


ILLUSTRATION BY HARVEY

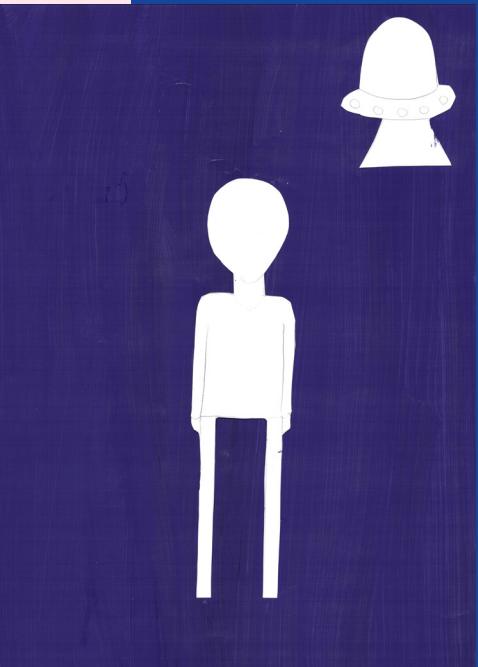


ILLUSTRATION BY PENNY

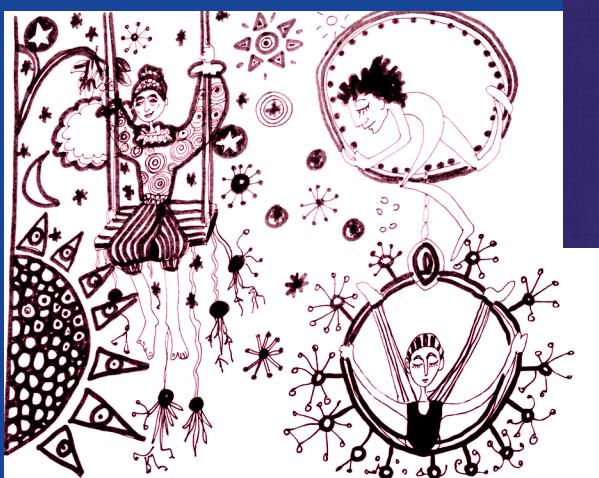


ILLUSTRATION BY JESSICA

