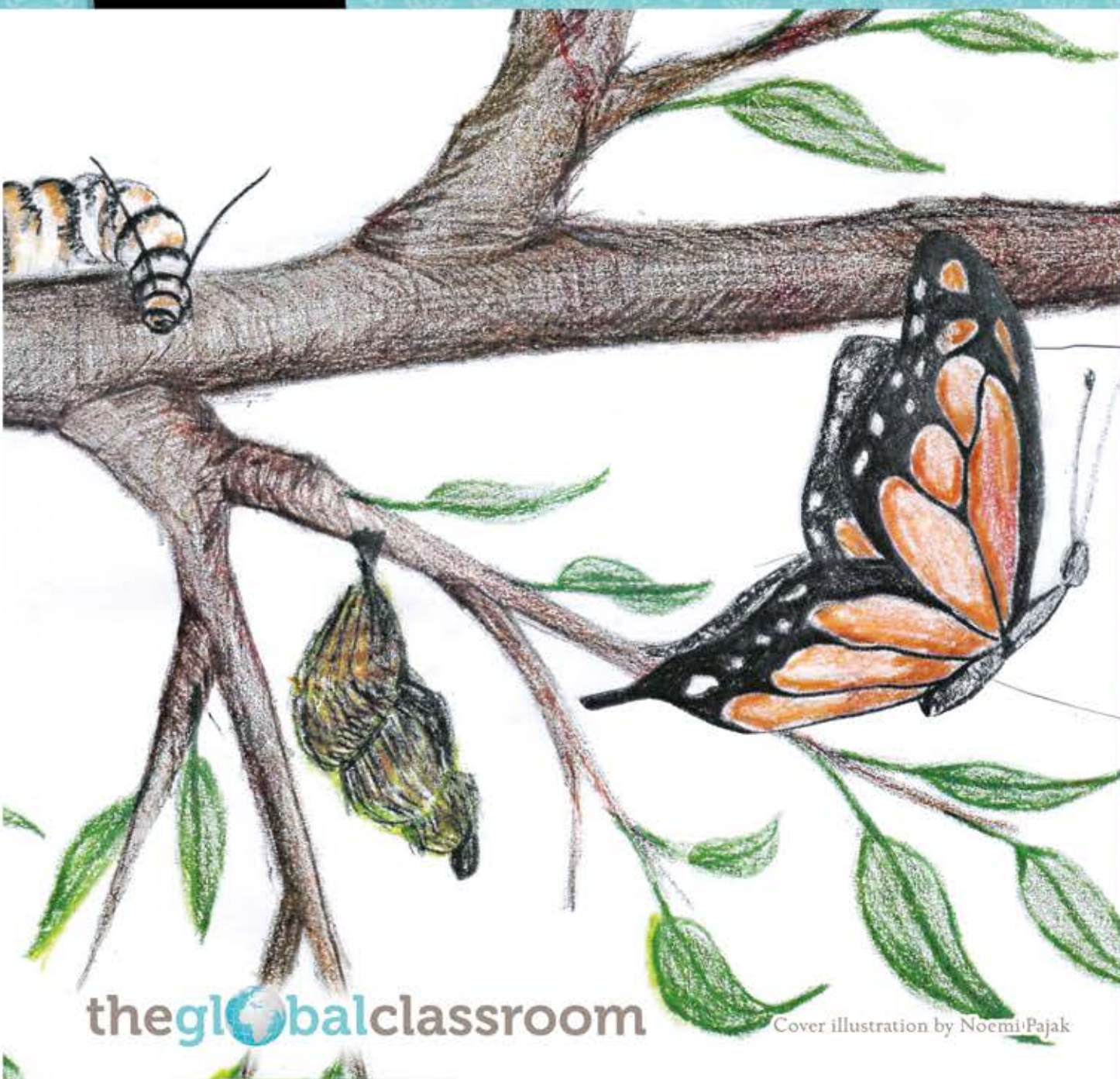




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'Changes' short story anthology 2014



theglobalclassroom

Cover illustration by Noemi Pajak



**‘CHANGES’
SHORT STORY ANTHOLOGY 2014**

This collection of stories and illustrations is a result of ‘Changes,’ a Global Classroom competition designed to develop and showcase our talented writers and artists.

Over 1500 students from 24 schools entered the short story competition and nearly 200 illustrations were submitted, so being selected for this book is a great achievement.

We would like to thank authors Tony Bradman and Sally Nicholls for judging the stories and choosing the overall competition winners.

Nord Anglia Education’s Global Classroom is an innovative, contemporary and distinctive educational programme which develops our students’ confidence and ability as learners by enabling them to collaborate, inquire, create, innovate and lead.



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FOREWORD

BY PROFESSOR DEBORAH EYRE



This year the theme of our short story competition was 'Changes', a theme that aptly reflects both our dynamic student population and Nord Anglia Education itself. Over 1500 students from 24 schools entered the competition (twice as many as last year); an indication of how much our family of schools has grown over the past 12 months and of how popular our unique Global Classroom programme is.

Many of our students are not native English speakers, so the achievement of creating a short story in their second, third or fourth language is one to be celebrated. I believe that our High Performance Learning approach enables our students to achieve more, and that the Global Classroom encourages them to both excel academically and develop key values, attitudes and attributes such as imagination, confidence and perseverance.

To provide additional challenge, secondary students wrote their stories in the Gothic genre. Online workshops outlined key features of the Gothic story, allowing students the opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding and apply it to their work. I don't recommend reading some of these stories at bed time; they show true mastery of the genre and are genuinely frightening!

Authors Tony Bradman and Sally Nicholls have supported the competition by providing writing hints and tips and answering students' questions, as well as judging the entries in this book. The students relished the opportunity to engage with professionals as they crafted their stories.

The illustrations you will find throughout this book were also created by our students and they show great creativity. The cover illustration was chosen as a wonderful example of artwork that demonstrates high quality and clearly illustrates the competition theme.

Congratulations to all the students whose work has been chosen for this book, it is a significant achievement. It is a pleasure for me to present to you this collection of short stories and illustrations and I hope you enjoy it very much.

Professor Deborah Eyre



AUTHOR'S THOUGHTS

TONY BRADMAN



I have spent most of my life lost in stories. It started when I was very young - a wonderful teacher spent a year reading my class a fantastic tale called *The Hobbit*, and from then on I was absolutely hooked. I read as many stories as I could lay my hands on, sometimes going to the library twice a day, and spending any pocket money I was given on books too. It wasn't long before I'd decided that I wanted to write stories myself. The two things - reading and writing stories - seemed to me to belong together.

I'm lucky enough to have made a career out of being a writer of stories, but I'm still a reader - and sometimes a reader of a special kind, an editor. I've edited a lot of story collections, which means I've spent a great deal of time thinking about what makes a great story. A terrific opening helps, those first few lines that draw you in. Characters you want to spend time with are essential too, and a plot that keeps you desperate to

know what's going to happen next. A satisfying - but surprising - ending rounds the whole thing off.

But there's something else that's even more important, something it took me a while to work out. A great story gives you a chance to encounter the mind of another person, the writer who created the story. We're all different, and that's why every story is different. But we're also all human, so we have plenty in common too, and in reading stories we find out what makes people behave the way they do. I sometimes think reading a new story is like meeting someone really interesting and finding out what they think about life.

So I'm really glad I had the chance to be a judge in the competition that produced these great stories. But I didn't think of myself as a judge - I thought of myself as someone who was meeting other minds, finding out how they saw the world. It was therefore a great privilege to meet all these young minds through their wonderful stories. I've been a writer for a long time, and they're only just starting out. But they're writers just the same as me, and this is their book. I'm sure that anyone meeting them will enjoy it just as much as me.

Tony Bradman

Tony Bradman is author of over 100 books, including the popular *Dilly the Dinosaur* series. His latest books include *Viking Boy*, the story of Gunnar whose home is destroyed by raiders and *Stories of WWI*, a collection of short stories edited by Tony chronicling the events of World War I.



CHANGES

JOSEPH KEATING, YEAR 6
BRITISH SCHOOL OF HOUSTON

Joseph Keating actually makes you feel what it's like to be a tadpole growing into a frog, which is a great achievement!

The first thing I remember was trying to pull my way out of some sort of bitter-tasting, translucent jelly. I didn't know it then, but apparently I was a tadpole. It took me three long days of pain and anguish until I managed to rip my prison walls down. I think it was instinct that made me clamp myself to a waterweed. It was a good feeling, no responsibilities, and no reason to do anything. I stuck on to it for about a week, although after a couple of days I got bored senseless by the simplicity of its flavour. A week after I escaped 'jail', I felt pain in my stomach. It was later what I found out to be hunger. It was probably instinct again, and in this newly found 'hunger', I started ripping a waterweed to pieces. Then I let it roll down the back of my throat. After a few minutes of doing so, I felt satisfied. Then I decided to embark on a little adventure. It didn't take long for me to find something a little strange: hundreds of little identical versions of me! When I got closer I realised they were actually about the same size as me. All of the waterweeds in the nearby vicinity were coated by clones of myself. The shoal was slowly drifting through a clearing in the body of water. It was a little unnerving, so I carried on swimming to see what else there was. It was much the same, algae everywhere, reeds invading the surface area, more clones of me and some other living organisms. Talk about chaotic! The pond, which was what I came to know it as, was very wide, but even at its deepest point it couldn't quite clip two metres. Then it began to get dark. I just went to lie on a folded waterweed. It made a reasonable bed.

The next day I felt hungry, so I went to satisfy myself with some helpings of waterweed. As I was doing so, I felt it suddenly lurch downwards. I nearly went down with it. I looked down angrily at whatever had stolen my lunch. It was rather strange. It had two claws, eight legs, a paddle for a tail and a long face with two elongated sticks protruding from just over its eyes. It was also at least fifteen times longer than me and it had a nasty looking mouth which I could probably fit in. I didn't want test that theory. Rather than picking a fight with it, I went to look elsewhere for lunch. Later, I found out that it was called a crayfish. After eating, I saw some more creatures. At least these ones looked more normal. They were roughly the same shape as me but they were slightly larger and their coloration was totally different. I wasn't actually sure what colour they were. It was sort of a shiny bluish colour, but their heads were a darker shade of colour, a little like black. Their tails were totally different though. They were forked out and were much shorter. They were fathead minnows. I left them alone. I spent the rest of the day swimming around in a shoal with some clones of me. I'd gotten used to them by then.



Four weeks later and almost nothing had changed. Every day that had gone by seemed the same. I was growing though. There were also these creepy stubby things attached just in front of my tail. I wasn't really sure what they were for. After a while I just ignored them. Then, as me and the rest of the shoal grazed on the algae lying on the bottom, I realised that something was wrong. I looked up and saw a long yellow thing dipping down into the water slowly ... a split second later it lurched forwards at a tremendous speed, plucking a tadpole as it opened and then it was gone. That was probably just the egret's beak. The occupants of the shoal fled for cover, but what'd taken the tadpole wasn't coming back.

Soon, attacks like that were becoming frequent and the shoal was being depleted. Worse still, larger fish had found their way into the pond, such as northern pike and channel catfish. They swam around, sucking tadpoles into their Hoover-like mouths. I also found that the stubs on my legs were getting bigger. They were very annoying as they slowed me down and they did absolutely nothing at all. That night I hid under a waterweed in shallow water. I was too big to lie on a leaf anymore.

Two weeks later I found out that the stubby things were actually growing legs and also that now I could control them. I could swim faster than ever before with them, even if only for a few seconds. They were also good for kicking off annoying visitors, such as leeches. Now I also had another pair of stubby things at the front of my body, which I assumed would also turn into legs. I couldn't control those yet though.

The next day I saw something really strange. It was a tadpole, with his arms fully grown, climbing out of the water! I'd never thought I'd ever be able to escape the pond. I decided to give it a try as my arms seemed long enough. I swam to the side and hauled myself out. The moment I got out I was overwhelmed by how much space there was. The next thing I noticed was that all I could do was crawl. Unless ... I pushed downwards with my legs, as strongly as I could, and for a second I flew through the air before landing. I saw a large log lying on the ground. It looked like a nice place to live, and there was probably lots of food there. One thing was for sure, however: I wasn't going back to live in the pond.



‘DISASTER’

CLAUDIA FAN,
YEAR 4, THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF BEIJING,
SANLITUN

*This picture represents the changes that can happen
to people and places as a result of natural disasters. I
decided to split my image in two to show the before
and after.*





DESTINY

ABIGAIL HIGGINS, YEAR 6

THE BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL ABU DHABI

'Honey, honey. Time to get up,' mum uttered enthusiastically, 'or you'll be late for your last day of school! You definitely don't want to be, Penelope, not today!'

Slowly I lifted myself upright and stared at my blank, cream-white walls, which had used to be navy blue with wavy purple stripes. My room had never looked so empty. It always used to be filled with wood-brown dusty old cupboards and an ancient-looking dresser, which had stood on three legs for years!

Carefully, I lifted off my black duvet and shifted my shivering legs to the right of my cosy wooden bed. I changed into my scarlet red and leaf-green uniform, ready for grammar school. Hurriedly, I rushed down the stairs into the bathroom and brushed my teeth with my new travel toothbrush and Colgate toothpaste.

'Let's go! You're going to be late!' mum shouted.

'What about breakfast?' I moaned.

'You can get some at school! Now let's go!' mum screamed.

Quickly, my mum and I rushed out of the front door and onto the bustling streets of London! There were shops everywhere you looked and huge crowds hurrying into each and every colourful doorway. Dark, moody rainclouds hovered above the city centre, filling the air with frosty moisture and a crisp breeze, feeling like ice on my soft delicate fingertips! We approached the light grey Land Rover and clambered in with my turquoise school bag; we quickly escaped from all of the mid-morning madness. The school day went as fast as the blink of an eye and all my friends came to say goodbye at the end of the day. I really was going to miss the navy blue building with the grey iron gates sitting in front of the neatly cut emerald grass!

As soon as my dad got home from his last day of work at the Gasco Industries building on the outskirts of town, he strode in from across the busy road in his casual home clothes and called impatiently 'Come on. Time to go. Let's get a move on!'

'Is everyone ready to go? Derek, Penelope?' mum enquired.

'Yes!' dad and I cried in unison. The drive was three hours long but it felt like eight! Everyone was quiet on the way there, probably thinking about what lay ahead and what the new house would be like.



Everything happened so fast. One minute I was in the same dusty old house I had been in for the last eight years, and the next I was out in the Yorkshire Moors in a completely different house and school. Everything had changed! In my new school the teachers were extremely strict and the girls there were nice, but not my kind of people; they were always immaculately dressed with pink ribbons in their hair and annoyed me with their incessant giggling!

Our new, gigantic house was in the northern Yorkshire Moors near the coast. It was ancient and dingy; the spookiness of the place was unreal and it seemed as if it was built in the 1800s. I needed to get away; somewhere where I could be myself and escape into my own universe for just a couple of hours. I decided to explore the never-ending shades of brown and green that went on and on for miles on end.

On Saturday morning I began to scout around the beautiful woods at the back of the emerald-green luscious garden with fluffy lime bushes everywhere you looked. As I took my first steps into the land of moss green leaves, I noticed a baby bluebird tweeting melodically to its mother, who was scouring the mud-brown floor below for insects. Carefully I scrambled my way through the outstretched branches, which resembled fingers trying to grab me. Suddenly, out of nowhere I saw, with the corner of my eye, something move! I heard twigs cracking. What was it? It was probably just a rabbit or a fox running around the dark brown tree trunks. Quickly I scanned my surroundings: something was hiding behind a bush. Hesitantly, I sauntered to the prickly fern, wondering if I should look or not. By the time I could make up my mind I was already one step away from the mysterious person or animal. One, two, three: 'Who are you?' I yelled!

There was a boy and a black Friesian horse hiding in the shadows of the bush! 'My name is Peter,' he whispered shyly.

'What are you doing here? Why do you have a horse with you?' I demanded.

'I live in the woods, and I quite like it here too. So please don't tell anyone!'

'Why can't I tell anyone?' I asked curiously.

He didn't answer. Peter had long, wavy, dark brown hair and penetrating, ocean-blue eyes. His clothes were dirty and ragged; they looked as if they hadn't been washed in months! Instead of being white, they were yellowy-brownish. He had long, baggy, dark trousers and a navy blue waistcoat. 'Can we be friends? I haven't had anyone to talk to except Destiny here,' Peter asked, worriedly.

'Sure, why not?' I smiled at him comfortingly.

Destiny had a long, flowing, pitch-black mane, which fell all the way down to her fetlocks, which were just below her furry knees. Destiny's back had soft-brushed black hairs covering her body. She had a long, plaited tail falling right down to her hooves!

After a few hours, we realized we had more in common than we thought. It turned out he was from London too, except he didn't really like living there. While we were talking, Destiny was munching on some patches of grass near a huge oak tree about the size of a two-storey building. By lunch we were playing a handshake game, but when I high-fived him my hand went straight through his ...



DEVoured

COLLIN QUINLAN, YEAR 6

BRITISH AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CHARLOTTE

With its videogame setting and scary scenes, Collin Quinlan shows in 'Devoured' that he knows how to use his imagination very well indeed.

As soon as I snapped open my eyes, I saw a colossal staircase descending into the endless fog. Out of the dark mist spurted trees of tremendous size, blocking out all sunlight. I heard a step squeak behind me and I turned, terrified. Its perilous, beady eyes stared down at me hungrily while licking its bloody lips, sending a spine-chilling message. The creature's odour was putrid; it reeked of mold and rotting corpses. Its face was hideous, and about as eager to devour me as a hungry lion. It pounced. The creature dug its perilous claws deep into my left side. Almost as quickly as he attacked, I defended. I grabbed a rock and vigorously stabbed its coarse skin, leaving it sprawled across the floor writhing in pain. It did a final screech and shot off into the night. It left me alone, to think: where was I? How did I get here? And how do I get home?

Now I was left with a decision: to climb the never-ending staircase or climb down into the thick fog. The agony writhing away in my side was making this decision ten times harder. I needed help speedily and without it, it was certain death, which loomed nearer and nearer. I figured there was some kind of intelligent being up there to make the tree house. Once I reached the top of the staircase, I reached an elaborate string of treehouses that lined the sky like a flock of birds. The small structures had rope bridges that led from tree to tree connecting them. I shot across a rope bridge and searched the hut nearest to me. A scared squeak greeted me as I rushed through the door. That voice belonged to a small, green thing that was cowering on the other side of the room, hiding his large brown eyes with his tiny, hairy, clawed hands. He let out another terrified little squeak and tried to make himself disappear.

'Hello,' I stammered, and explained my case.

He murmured a little 'hi' after conjuring up courage to speak. Once he did, he announced 'Hello; my name is Mr. Bogglestemp; Boggles for short.' He finished his introduction with a long, deep bow. 'The infirmary is this way, but may I ask what your name is?'

This one really stumped me: I didn't even know where I came from, and definitely didn't know what my name was. 'I ... I ... I don't know.'

There was a short silence after this.



When we reached the infirmary, I laid down on the hospital bed because at this point I could barely walk. Boggles brought out some kind of uncut gem that was letting out some kind of smoke. I felt the pain of the stab slowly wither away as I sunk into a distant sleep.

My eyelids lazily opened as staggering sunrays burst through the infirmary door. I slowly sat up and, suddenly, I remembered everything. My name was Collin, I was from Charlotte, North Carolina; I had signed up for a new 3D hologram test that went horribly wrong and I was in a place called the Farlands, a digitally edited place that was made on a computer and had thousands of secrets that not even the creators of the place knew. I had to escape; I had to get back to my own world. I turned over to look at Boggles, who was biting down hard on a rock and beetle sandwich that looked as though, if I tried it, I would be back in the infirmary. 'Hello. Mr. Bogglestemp; my name is Collin,' I said, and I stood up out of the bed and gave him the same long deep bow.

'Well, hello my young friend. What, may I ask, has brought back your memory?'

'Just that sleep you put me through,' I said with a smile. I told him everything about my world, who I was and that I really needed to get back.

'I understand. I would not want to be stuck in another world without my family. I'll give you all you will need to go on your little journey of yours.'

We traveled across another rope bridge and went into another Boggle-sized hut to get my supplies. 'We don't get very many visitors here,' Mr. Bogglestemp announced. 'I'm glad you showed up — now, go and get back home.'

I must've woken up in the late afternoon because, as we were gathering supplies, the sun set and the fog rolled in. Everything went pitch black. The only exception to this was a small candle flickering in the lonely darkness. 'The food and water for your journey is in the kitchen,' announced Boggles. 'Follow me.' We left the supplies hut and went over to the kitchen, then set off onto the rope bridges. We had just walked onto one of the last bridges when: 'CCCCCCCCCCCCRRRRRRRRRAAAACCCCKKKKKKK!' The bridge suddenly split in two, leaving me and Boggles plummeting to the earth. Impact. We fell with a thud and a jolt of pain that rushed through my body like a lightning bolt. 'Boggles!!!!' I called out. 'Where are you?!' I frantically searched and hoped for the best. My heart skipped a beat when I saw a lifeless green corpse lying in front of me. As I looked into his dying brown eyes that I pitied so much, he took a deep gulp and told me, 'The last clue you need to get back home is.....' He coughed his final cough and his deep brown eyes closed for eternity.

I heard a howl and slowly turned to see a pack of creatures angrily growling at me, hoping to have a human dinner. I searched the pack for the angriest one of all, the one that had attacked me the night before. The pack howled in unison and started moving in as a wall. No escaping this advancing wall of teeth and claws and certain death. The line came closer and closer and closer. The end was here.



SHORT STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM | 2014

‘TREE OF LIFE’

JAE HEE YOO,
YEAR 6, THE BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
SHANGHAI, PUXI

“My illustration shows the changes of the seasons, the weather and how it affects nature. The environment is always changing.”





THE GREAT ESCAPE

ETHAN BAKER, YEAR 6
LA CÔTE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Julian sat up with a start, breathing heavily. 'Fred! Fred, are you there?'

Suddenly a tall boy with chocolate-coloured hair stumbled out of the bushes. 'What do you want?' he growled.

Julian sighed with relief. Then he remembered: the boat and the iceberg. Julian pictured the scene as if he was still there.

'Well,' demanded Fred, 'Let's go and look around.'

Julian had expected he would say that as he was extremely fastidious! But Julian couldn't stop thinking about that boat.

Finally, after hours of searching, Julian found the remains of a den and both of them went off to find moss and dead leaves to make it comfortable.

'I wonder what happened to everyone else on the boat?' whispered Julian.

'Well, they obviously aren't on this desolate island,' bellowed Fred.

In less than a minute they were snoring peacefully.

'Wake up!' bellowed Fred. Julian leapt up curiously, expecting something amazing, but was discombobulated to see Fred squatting up in a tree.

'What exactly are you doing up there?' asked Julian.

'Well, I can see a colossal boat out in the sea!' answered Fred.

Julian started climbing up the tree but accidentally grabbed a loose branch and plummeted back down to the ground.

Fred darted down the tree and helped Julian back up. Suddenly, he realized what he had done: Julian had tried to be kind to him and comfort him, when Fred hadn't even lifted a finger for him. Fred sprinted back to the den and searched around desperately, trying to find the medical bag. Fred nursed Julian back to health and told him to take it easy for a bit.



The next day Julian was bouncing around, full of energy. 'So, how do you feel?' asked Fred. Suddenly there was a faint 'BANG' in the distance, followed by someone shouting an order. The boys were already on their feet, desperately trying to keep their distance. Their pursuers were gaining on them quickly.

'Agghh!' The noise was deafening and made the boys stop in their tracks. Something was wrong: the hunters surely would have had metal armour, and would not have been so careless.

'Got you!'

Julian whipped around and found himself face to face with a bulky man towering above him. The man's colossal hand seized him. Julian began screaming for help, even though he knew it would be futile. POW! Julian was sent to the ground by a striking blow and the last thing he saw was Fred struggling helplessly.

'Wake up!' Fred sleepily looked around and saw Julian tied to a pillar. He had a sudden urge to save him and get out of there. 'Well!' said a gruff voice. Fred span around and saw a grumpy man wearing baggy clothes; his hair was in a crew cut. Fred understood that this man wasn't kidding, and he got up and out of the room surreptitiously. He walked into a room with loads of different weapons scattered across the floor. Then Fred suddenly realised he was going into the slave room!

'Fred!' Fred spun around, expecting to see Julian, but there was nothing but guns. 'In here,' grunted the man.

Fred cautiously followed him into the cold murky depths of the room. Fred was pushed and he stumbled into the everlasting darkness. 'Julian,' Fred called out, even though he knew it was going to be futile. Now he knew that he had changed his feelings for Julian. He was going to get out of that gloomy wreck of a house with Julian, and if he didn't he would die in the attempt ...



JUST A TYPICAL COLD

DREW KOERNER, YEAR 6
BRITISH SCHOOL OF CHICAGO

'RING!' My alarm clock obnoxiously forced me out of bed. The annoying noise wasn't the only thing that woke me up; my head was throbbing and I felt as cold as ice. It looked like it was going to be another absent mark at school ... for the sixth time this month! My mom had already taken me to the doctor and he said it was just a typical cold. I thought he was lying. Constant pounding headaches, uncontrollable fevers and churning stomach aches? Really? His name is Dr. Einstein. He sounds smart; however, he's kind of creepy. There is always an ominous-looking surgical mask covering his mouth; I know doctors are supposed to wear them, but not all the time! It may sound rude but he looks like a whale to me. His skin is blubbery yet strong and his voice is deep and raspy. He scares me.

I'd had some bad days lately, but this one seemed worse: my entire body was sore, my skin felt puffy and whenever I moved, my bones ached. I struggled out of bed to go tell my parents that something really felt wrong. I sluggishly made my way to the kitchen where they were having coffee and, before I could utter a word, my mother screamed 'You look so pale!' My dad came towards me and pressed his hand against my forehead ... 'You're burning up!' wailed dad, whipping away his hand. I suddenly began to feel very woozy, then: BANG! I was out.

My eyes slowly fluttered open and, to my surprise, I was no longer in our kitchen. I was in a room with plain white walls and medical equipment. Wait a minute! Medical equipment?! I was in the hospital!

'Katie?' I could hear my mom's voice very faintly. Her face was as pale as a ghost's and her voice as sweet as chocolate. 'Katie, are you alright?'

I slowly nodded my head.

'You passed out and we brought you to the hospital. The doctors ran some tests and they're coming in to talk to us.'

Without knocking, a tall, handsome man strode in, looking quite worried. I think he announced his name but I'm not sure; it was like everything both happened in a split second and moved in slow motion at the same time. 'I have news,' he said in a clear, deep voice. I was getting more and more worried by the second. I had a sense that what was coming would be big. 'Katie ... has cancer.' He looked down, knowing mom and dad's reactions would be too much. I guess I was in shock because I didn't cry or scream or say anything. I was vaguely aware of some sobs coming from the direction of my parents, but I felt like I was very far away. Nothing seemed real. There was no way I could have cancer. Yeah. Just a typical cold.

The next day I started receiving cards, stuffed animals, and chocolate boxes from my friends. The day after that, I woke and heard a lot of commotion outside my hospital room window. Despite all of the tubes and wires that restrained me, I managed to hobble over to the window and peer out. I was astonished at what I saw: a parade of people crowded around a banner that read GET WELL SOON KATIE!!!



I saw Emily, my best friend. It was a fundraiser ... for me! A teardrop spilled from my eye and rolled down my pale cheek. I asked the nurses to wheel me down to all the fun, but they solemnly told me that I was just too sick to be around crowds and that I was scheduled for tests ... more tests! It was great to know that so many people cared but it also made me angry somehow. Why were all of these people outside in the sunshine, leading their normal lives, when my whole world had been turned upside down?

Things moved very fast after my diagnosis. My team of doctors explained to me that my 'prognosis' was good because my cancer had been caught quickly. This time I believed the doctors: what else could I do? There was no giving up! I was put on a lot of different drugs but the one I hated the most was called mitoxantrone. That one made my hair fall out, and it made me so nauseous I sometimes felt like my stomach was swarming with angry bees. I quickly lost 10 pounds and was so weak that it was like torture just to get up and go to the bathroom.

It was surprisingly horrible being cooped up in my hospital room for so many weeks. It seems like it might be kind of a nice change: no getting up early for school, no homework, no chores. But in fact all I wanted to get to get my life back: my boring, predictable, awesome life. After a few weeks my fever subsided and the doctors said that was a big deal: a sign that the medicines were working. Just as quickly as things had changed for the worse a few weeks before, suddenly things were starting to go back to normal. I was discharged from the hospital exactly two months after my admission. It was a long road back into my 'normal' routine, but my family and friends were always there supporting me.

It's been almost a full year now since I heard those four glorious words: YOU ARE IN REMISSION. My doctors tell me my chances of relapsing are under 10%. Sometimes I can hardly believe what I have been through. It might sound cliché, but the phrase 'life can turn on a dime' really is true. I wouldn't want to re-live this last year for anything, but it did teach me to appreciate every single day. I know that's corny, but I don't care.



SHORT STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM | 2014

‘THE LOCKET’

GRACE DANON,
YEAR 6, BRITISH AMERICAN SCHOOL
OF CHARLOTTE

“It represents two sisters and how even though they’re completely different, they have a connection - the locket. It also shows how they change their attitude to each other and therefore change themselves.”





THE LEGEND OF THE ADRIATIC

LEONA GRISOGONO, YEAR 5

THE ENGLISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PRAGUE

In a small town on the Adriatic coast lived two boys, Dino and Tom, who were inseparable friends. They were neighbours, so their friendship began with their first steps. Since they had been small boys they had spent most of the day together, playing, running around and doing all sorts of things. The best friends did everything together. Their childhood was quite interesting and carefree.

Growing up, the connection between them became even stronger. They were like brothers. Very often, at dawn, Tom's grandpa would take them fishing. He was an old fisherman with a lot of experience at sea. Kids used to enjoy every moment they spent with him, listening carefully to his stories from early morning til night. They absorbed his every word like sponges absorb water. When the sun disappeared in the west, they sat by the fire and talked about pirates, their most fun topic. Nothing could replace the excitement they had while the old man was retelling them a well-known legend about the shore they were living on. Until then the boys had heard some rumours about Pirate Island but had never been told the whole story, so they listened curiously.

Legend said that, once upon a time, there were pirate ships sailing the Adriatic Sea, full of treasures stolen from sunken boats. One such ship grounded on a reef near Devil's Island during a storm. It was damaged and couldn't continue sailing. The pirates from the shattered boat were forced to dock by the nearest island. They hid the treasure on one of the many small islands which formed Devil's Island. This was a story that the old people loved to talk about, but they kept it secret from newcomers, sharing it only between local residents.

One beautiful summer morning Dino and Tom decided to go fishing alone. They jumped excitedly into grandpa's sailing ship, untied the ropes, raised anchor and left their peaceful harbour, planning to keep themselves on the western coast of the island. The day was sunny. The sun was frying hot and there was no wind from anywhere. There wasn't any sign of black clouds in the blue sky. The sea was calm. They were enjoying floating to their favourite spot for fishing, where they had been a million times before with Tom's grandpa. As they were pulling away from the starting point, they realized that the weather was getting worse. Suddenly, their lazy day of sailing was disrupted by something. Dark clouds covered the sky. A strong wind began to blow, causing larger and larger waves. As it strengthened, it crushed their sail. The sail was creaking and the boat was being carried, by giant waves, closer and closer to the coast of a nearby island. The huge waves were breaking over the deck, making the boys completely soaked.

Both boys were frozen and terrified by the unexpected situation they were in. Knowing that they weren't able to handle the situation, they did their best to arrive at the coastline before the damage would be even greater. But before they managed to reach the land, they were surprised by a strong gust of wind. The boat had crashed into something. There was a hole in the bottom of the boat and water started to come in. The darkness added to the confusion in their efforts to navigate. They were totally lost and scared.



The bright lightning, caused by thunder and followed by rain, illuminated them, and they saw the island in front of them. It was unknown to them. They had never been there. Without much thinking, they jumped into the cold sea and swam towards the island. Almost out of breath, they reached the beach. While trying to shelter from the rain and find a safe place until the morning, they noticed the entrance to a cave at the foot of a large rock. Exhausted from their big adventure, the boys entered the cave and quickly fell asleep.

At the same time, ashore, their families were gripped by great sorrow and panic. The strong storm was still raging outside, preventing the fishermen from setting sail in hope of finding the boys. The entire maritime patrol was waiting for the storm to calm so they could go look for Dino and Tom. Everybody was sad, thinking that the worst had happened.

Early in the morning the storm stopped and the sun rose again. After the boys woke up and realized where they were, a fear gripped them. The cave was in semi-darkness, so they could barely see around, and every word they exchanged echoed in the space. The kids were anxious inside the cave and wanted to get out of it as soon as possible. Just as they were about to leave the cave, Tom's attention was attracted by a ray of light which was coming through the hole at the top and illuminated a large, wooden casket in the middle of the cave. The casket was closed. The kids wondered what was inside. They came closer and noticed a big, gold pirate emblem gleaming in the sun. They wanted to open it, but it was locked and they needed a metal lever to open it. They decided to take it out, but when they caught the side handles, the casket broke and shiny, gold coins started to fall out. It was pirate treasure. They were both filled with joy. Their happiness knew no bounds. Finally, the legend that had been retold in their village for many years had become a reality.

In the meantime, the fishermen set sail from the port. They were looking for the boys on all the nearby islands. One of them saw the remains of a smashed boat on the beach. He used his binoculars to check if there was someone around. Finally, they observed the kids coming out from the cave. The fisherman returned them back home alive. They took the pirate treasure with them and surrendered it to the city archaeological museum.



SHORT STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM | 2014

‘DANDELION’

ALLY YU, YEAR 6,
THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF BEIJING,
SANLITUN

“My dandelion illustration represents change; as the wind blows the flower it spreads the seeds and changes the appearance of the flower. It also shows the change of the seed that will grow into a new plant.”





RAIN VALLEY

HANNAH YOON, YEAR 6

COMPASS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL DOHA, GHARAFFA

Writing great stories is always about using your imagination, and Hannah Yoon does that with terrific effect in 'Rain Valley.' I loved the strong descriptive writing that brought a world and a living creature into being – it felt like I was in the hands of a terrific storyteller!

The characters in my story come from Korean mythology. The main character is an I-mugi, a fish-scaled creature that resembles a giant snake. According to Korean folktales, an I-mugi starts his/her life – and afterwards lives five hundred years – as a snake. When the five hundred years end, the snake transforms into an I-mugi. He then lives another five hundred years in his new form. Once the thousand years are over, an I-mugi turns into a Yong – or, in other words, a dragon. These Korean dragons have the head of a camel, the eyes of a rabbit, and the antlers of a deer, and also have long, scaly bodies with short legs and feet. A dragon has the enormous power to control weather, often rain, typhoons, and thunderstorms. However, to harness so great a power the I-mugi must perform an incredible deed of kindness and earn a powerful and rare magical object called a yu-i-ju. Yu-i-jus look like pearls and are hoarded by the King of the Sea, who resides in his coral palace in the depths of the ocean.

I gazed down at the shiny, pearl-like globe I held in my hands and its radiance seemed to grow, lighting the dim underwater cavern with brilliance. 'At last!' I thought gleefully. 'I will become a mighty dragon and finally be able to control the forces of wind and sky!'

For last week, my friend had received a yu-i-ju. I had been terribly jealous then: how had he, my perfectly ordinary friend, been granted this? I had lived in rage for three days until the Clever Thought had struck me. Its ingenuity had appealed to me, and tonight I had swum silently into his home and just now had snatched the yu-i-ju from beside his bed of tender seaweed and underwater grass.

So here I was now, marveling at the gleaming sphere and my own cleverness. Grinning wickedly, I leered at my friend, sleeping peacefully and never even dreaming that he would probably stay as an I-mugi for the rest of his life. Without any warning, one of his eyes flicked open.



'HOW DARE YOU STEAL!' bellowed a voice painfully close to my ear. 'DO YOU KNOW WHAT A SIN THAT IS? TAKING SOMETHING THAT IS NOT YOURS!' Ropes cutting uncomfortably into my skin, I glared up defiantly at the King of the Sea, who did not look all that dignified while striding back and forth and thrashing his arms wildly.

But his words had no effect. I did not feel any regret or remorse for my actions. All I felt was burning, searing hate. I had done nothing wrong; I had simply used my wits to my advantage!

At that moment, my outrage overcame my self-control. Letting out an ear-splitting roar I thrashed forcefully, breaking free of my bonds. As I streaked out of the vast double doors, my fury grew, boiling and churning and wreaking havoc in my mind until it became a howling mass of terrible, blinding, red rage.

It was only after I was outside that I fully understood the words the King had shouted after me: 'You will never become a dragon!'

As the terrible realization that I would never hold a yu-i-ju again struck me, I was overwhelmed by a fresh, intense wave of anger – this time accompanied by a massive bank of rain clouds that rolled formidably towards me. My revenge had arrived.

Narrowing my eyes, I directed all my willpower at bringing the clouds closer and closer. With my every breath, their size and speed increased frighteningly, changing from a mere dot on the horizon into an oppressive, looming, grey mountain in a matter of minutes. The air, crackling with electricity, was damp and humid. Wrathfully, I declared that there would be no limits to the damage I would cause to this place, if only to prove that I would not be treated so scornfully, and all of a sudden, the rain began.

Huge, fist-sized raindrops splashed down and soon created a mighty, rushing torrent of water. The sound steadily swelled into a deafening roar until the ground trembled. The landscape – once green – was now a muddy, dirty, brown, and the swirling currents of murky water carried off anything and everything. Only the occasional debris, swept away by the water, could be seen. 'Behold the devastation I have caused!' I thought. 'I will never stop it!' The clouds gathered up, plunging the world into darkness. The rain beat down harder than ever, creating a throbbing curtain of noise that blocked out all else.

Suddenly, a sound pierced through the curtain. It was small and insignificant, yet it reached me unbelievably clearly. When I recognized the sound, it made my heart stop.

For the soft, wailing, lament was the cry of a newborn baby.

Heart thudding frantically, I peered through the pouring rain for the source of the sound. There! A tiny, helpless, baby, clinging desperately onto a piece of driftwood. The driftwood was wedged precariously into a mound of sand. Watching it dangling there, my first instinct was to rush to its aid, catch it, anything! But I then recalled my hatred for the King. What is it to me? I thought, turning away, but images of the baby drowning kept appearing before my eyes.

'Argh!' I grasped my head with both hands and twisted from side to side, unable to control the swirling storm of emotions inside me. Turning around, I caught a glimpse of the baby: three fingers feverishly clutched the board, which – my heart lurched – was about to break free of the island. Soon, the baby would be gone, swept away.



'Nooooo!' I dove into the water and was numbed by the freezing icy cold as I shot through the river.

One of the baby's fingers slipped ... I raced frantically toward it ... another finger ... I was almost there ... My arms and legs felt on fire, yet I swam on ... Then I grabbed the baby just as it plunged into the water!

Struggling against the current, I brought the baby onto the island, small but just high enough so the water only lapped against its shores. As I placed it there, I felt my life slipping away. The swim had exhausted me. I thought, 'I saved a life,' and then the world turned black ...

When I dazedly fluttered open my eyes, my first thought was, 'Blue.' Blue everywhere: a rich, beautiful, never-ending arch of sky-blue. I felt curiously light and buoyant. Puzzled, I peered down at myself and my jaw dropped.

Gone were my old, weatherworn scales, and stubby legs. In their place was a dazzling array of shimmering, turquoise scales and long, graceful feet that were clutching a pearly sphere! I could not see my head, but I knew what it would be.

The noble, wise, and whiskered face of a true dragon!!

I righted myself and spiraled upwards into the heavens, a brilliant turquoise stripe against the afternoon sky. With a feeling of great ecstasy, I let out a joyful roar like ten thousand bells ringing and, far below, heard many voices cheering.

And, quietly but distinctly, I heard the happy, gurgling sound of a baby laughing.



A SECOND CHANCE

DANIELLE FAITH CHAN, YEAR 5

THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF BEIJING, SHUNYI

In the small village of Nottingham there lived an orphan girl named Lia. She was twelve years old but very small for her age. She had dull grey eyes and dirty blonde hair, which she always wore in a braid. Other than being a very petite girl, Lia was also very weak and vulnerable, and became the target of the village and orphanage kids. This made her days miserable and lonely.

On one particular day, even though the sun was smiling and there was not a cloud in sight, the village girls and boys taunted and laughed at Lia. They preyed on her relentlessly until the poor girl could bear it no longer. She ran back to her small room in the orphanage, her eyes red and her face streaked with tears. That night, she sobbed herself to sleep.

At daybreak the next day, Lia grabbed her few possessions and some bread and ran away into the forest. She had been told there were fearsome creatures in the forest but she knew there was no turning back. She could hear the bushes and reeds rustle, and felt eyes watching her. Fear gripped her and she started to run. After some time, Lia came to a little clearing with a strange cottage which had swirls and clouds carved onto the door frame. On the front of the squealing wooden gate there was a sign covered with moss that said 'Victoria Stardust' in big, cursive letters. Lia cautiously pushed open the creaking gate and had taken a few steps toward the door before she heard a sweet voice saying 'Hello child, what are you doing here?'

Even though the voice was soft and calm, Lia almost leapt out of her skin! 'I have run away from my village and I am looking for shelter,' she timidly replied.

The sweet voice answered 'Well, do come in, dear. You may seek refuge here if you like!'

Lia pulled herself together, took a bold step, and gratefully pushed the door open. Inside, the house was warm and cozy. She looked around the fragrant-smelling room to thank whoever spoke and saw, sitting on the leather armchair, the most beautiful-looking woman she had ever seen! The lady had warm brown eyes, long, dark, auburn hair, slender fingers, and red lips that wore a permanent smile, and she smelled faintly of roses.

Victoria Stardust, or Mother Stardust (or Lia soon called her), took Lia under her caring wings. Lia soon found strength in her new environment, where she was taught skills, fed hearty food, read lovely stories each night (her favourite story was one about standing up), and where love and acceptance embraced her. One Sunday, Mother Stardust was having a peaceful sleep when her thoughts suddenly drifted to the time when Lia first arrived at her cottage. She sat up, gently beckoned Lia to her bedroom, and sat the girl down on her leather armchair. Mother Stardust then asked, 'Lia, why did you run away from your village?'



Lia did not reply. She stayed silent, not sure what she should say, as she was ashamed to reveal her sad past. But Mother Stardust's kind face slowly drew the words out of her. After Lia blurted out her story, Mother Stardust calmly enquired, 'Why didn't you just stand up to the bullies, Lia?'

Lia looked down, her face red with embarrassment, and then mumbled, 'I was petrified of them.'

Mother Stardust looked Lia in the eye and whispered, 'It is okay to be scared but remember this – you are a wonderful creation, unique and special. Be confident in who you are, stand up to what is wrong and never give up.'

Shortly afterwards, Lia decided it was time to return to her village. As much as Mother Stardust told her she was welcome to stay, Lia felt it was time to get back to her real life. She felt stronger emotionally and mentally and was confident she would be able to handle the bullies better than she had before. She was no longer Lia of the past, timid and unconfident, but a bold, self-assured young lady.

As she strode into her village, the bullies immediately sensed the dramatic change in her. Her shoulders were pulled back, her gaze was steady, and her face glowed with confidence. They gawped in amazement, and hesitated to lay a finger on her. One of the biggest bullies tried to insult Lia, making personal remarks about her looks and her abilities, but Lia boldly stood up to him. She gave him a hard lecture on being a bully and how damaging it is to a person's life. When she was finished, the bully realized that he had to change his mean ways and hurtful actions. He left ashamed, and made a decision to turn over a new leaf. He never bullied anyone ever again.

Lia spent the rest of her days peacefully and happily selling different types of buns in her new bakery, where no one bothered her. As for Mother Stardust, she now helps Lia out at her bakery, and is having a grand time giving free buns to good children every now and then!

These days, Lia finds whatever opportunity she has to relate her story to the village children as they come to buy buns. Bullying is unkind and needs to be put to an end. If you have been a bully, or have been mean to someone, think about this story and try to stop bullies instead of being one yourself. Always be kind to others and treat them the way you want them to treat you.



A STORY OF SURVIVAL

ORLANDO D. JEFFERY, YEAR 5

COMPASS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL DOHA, RAYYAN

This story is about my unexpected journey in the bush.

Before the age of 10, my life was very normal. My family was not that rich and I lived with my Mum and Dad and Jack, my twin brother. Jack and I looked the same and we also got on well. He was always very nice and calm; however, I could be a bit wild at times! We lived on the outskirts of Broome in the northwest part of Australia. Jack and I liked to trick other people by pretending that we were the other twin.

When Jack and I turned 10, our lives changed dramatically when our house was burnt down by a bushfire. Our family had built our house deep in the bush. This was a great experience when I was a kid, because Jack and I could run around everywhere, climb trees, chase birds and pretend we were playing Robin Hood! But, it wasn't great when the bushfire started to attack our property. Luckily, Jack and I woke in the night and heard the fire crackling. We tried to wake up our parents, but their room was on fire. We knew that we had to save our lives, so we ran as fast as we could to get away from the house.

Jack and I swam across a big billabong; the fire could not catch us because it could not cross the water. We were safe, but we were completely lost in the bush. We cuddled each other and rested under a tree. In the night we heard lots of footsteps around us and one time we woke up and saw a small kangaroo staring at us. We felt safer with the company of the animals around us, so we decided that we would live with the animals until someone came to rescue us.

We lived by walking to the billabong to drink the water with our hands and trained dingoes to hunt rabbits and mice for us to eat. We cooked the food by rubbing two stones together to make fire, and we were always careful because we didn't want to make another bushfire. Our life was like this for a few months until we decided we would try to find our house again.

Our dingoes came with us just in case any villains tried to attack us. After a few days of searching for the house we finally found it, burnt to the ground. We never found our parents though, so we took a few of the ashes and kept them safe in our pockets so that we had memories of our parents. Jack and I were crying for a long time that day. We decided that we would try to explore the bush to find our way to the city. We knew that it would take a long time to walk to the city and we were also worried that we might get lost. We asked the kangaroos to lead us to there, and amazingly they seemed to understand us because after about a week of walking we could see some flashing lights. We were very happy to see lights because that meant we were close to finishing our journey. A part of me was also miserable because we would probably never see our animal friends again. However, Jack wasn't unhappy at all, because he didn't want to walk any further! We said goodbye to our animal friends and promised that we would return to the bush again for a visit.

We ran straight towards the lights and saw shops and buildings that we recognized from before the bushfire. Jack remembered the way to his best friend's house and when we arrived they screamed in shock and hugged us as hard as they could, because they had thought we were dead. We lived with this family for the rest of our lives and every now and then we returned to the bush to see our animal friends. At night, if I listened closely, I could hear the faint cries from the dingoes, and I smile.



TRUTH OR DARE

NATARSHA YAN, YEAR 6

THE BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SHANGHAI, PUXI

I clenched my fists, my face pale. Dread and terror flooded over me. This was it. I had to face it. Now was the moment of doom.

'Emma Dawson, recite to me the first 9 numbers of pi,' Mr. Jones barked.

I sat up straight, my face flushed. 'Um, 3.141, uh ...'

'Miss Dawson, surely a 12-year-old can speak proper English by now, instead of that ridiculous baby talk?' Mr. Jones demanded. The class burst into laughter.

I blushed. 'I'm sorry, sir, I – I don't know.' My voice was barely audible.

'Well, you had better learn it, then, hadn't you? Well, Miss Connor, will you tell Miss Dawson here the answer?' Mr. Jones pointed a piece of chalk at Charisa Connor. Slimy, arrogant Charisa Connor.

'Yes, sir, of course; the first nine numbers are 3.14159265,' Charisa said, in a ridiculously posh voice, shooting a proud look at me.

Rich, snobby and posh. That is Charisa Connor. Queen of the World – or so she thinks. See, we were in an algebra lesson with Mr. Jones, my least favourite teacher, and as usual he was picking on me to answer all his stupid questions about pi and whatever. I know what pi is, and I know all the answers to his stupid questions, but, the thing is, I have this thing where I'm petrified about speaking in public and so end up saying 'I don't know' in classes instead. I know you're going to laugh; my older sister Anna did when she first knew. I'm not sure if there is even a phobia of speaking in public. My mum has been forever encouraging me to take part in social stuff, like Charisa, who is this incredibly popular person with tons of friends and no problem with speaking in front of people. I hate her. She makes my life miserable. I want to stand up for myself, but I can't.

'Very good, Charisa. And now, I've an important announcement to make. We will be choosing our School President soon and anyone who wishes to participate, get a letter from my desk. Class, you are dismissed.' Those words had changed my life upside down – yes, those very words. I stood still and staring as chairs scraped the floor and laughter filled the room. Soon only Charisa, a boy called Jonathon, and me were left.

'I am so going to enter, Mr. Jones. It'll be awesome!' I heard Charisa squeal, as she took a letter and put it in her bag. Jonathon took a letter as well and left the room with Charisa, the two of them chattering loudly about it.



'Well, Emma, I'll leave now. It is your choice whether to take it or not.' He stood up and left, leaving me staring into space. Me, take the letter? No way! I couldn't do it. No one would choose me to be School President. I stood there, like a deflated balloon, for about half an hour, and then, as if in a trance, I squeezed my eyes shut and quickly took the letter and put it in my bag. I walked home, feeling as if I had just climbed to the top of Mount Everest.

'I, uh, mum?' I mumbled, stuffing my mouth with lasagna two hours later.

'Yes, sweetie? Anything wrong?' Mum asked.

'Well, um, the School President voting is, er, open now and ...' I broke off.

'That's nice; who are you voting for?' Mum questioned, looking puzzled.

'No, mum, what I mean is that, well, if you wish to be School President you can, um, put yourself forward and everything, you know,' I said, and heaved a huge sigh, proud of myself for finally saying it.

'No, no. That is impossible. I don't believe it. You're joking, right?' Anna said from across the table, pretending to faint.

'Anna,' Mum said sharply, but she herself looked equally surprised. After all, it was I who was hinting that I might run for School President, I who have no friends at all and can't even say a word in school without nearly fainting. 'Emma, dear – so you are going to run for School President?'

'I don't know, mum, I really want to, but, but you have to write a speech and say it in front of the *entire* school!' I spluttered and started coughing, my face beetroot red.

My mum looked at me seriously and said after a moment, 'Emma, honey, no one's forcing you, okay? But, consider this: you remember the game Truth or Dare? Well, every choice you make, every step you take, is a game of Truth or Dare. Do you want to say that the truth is that you can't do it, or are you going to dare yourself to try? It is up to you, you alone.' And my mother stood up, placing a comforting hand on my shoulder, and left. Anna and dad followed suit, Anna coughing and spluttering and dad turning a weird shade of pink.

That night, I made my decision. I'd do it! I spent two hours writing my speech, my dad helping me, and the next day I signed my name on the nomination sheet. Mr. Jones smiled at me and whispered 'I knew you would do it.'

On the day, I felt like there were a thousand butterflies in my stomach. Charisa went first and, before she even walked up, the whole auditorium had erupted with cheers. Her speech was good, I admit it, but mine would be better – but only if I did it. Finally, when Jonathon had finished, I was called up. I squared my shoulders, ignoring the booing, and started. I spoke loudly and clearly. I couldn't believe it. I did it! And, guess what: I won! Really. Really truly.

So, readers, remember: every choice you make, every step you take, is a game of Truth or Dare.



SHORT STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM | 2014

‘NEW HOME, NEW WORLD’

SAFFRON GOGGINS,
YEAR 4, THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF BEIJING,
SANLITUN

“My illustration shows that when you move to a new home it is so different that it seems as if you are in a whole new world.”





AUTHOR'S THOUGHTS

SALLY NICHOLLS



Congratulations to all the writers of the shortlisted stories. What dark and twisted imaginations you all have! I love it.

When people say 'Gothic', they tend to think Victorian maidens, haunted mansions, and possibly a side-order of Dracula. But these young writers have proven that Gothic stories can take place in any place and time. We have orphanages, graveyards and mysterious abandoned houses, but we also have modern young people living ordinary lives which are touched by the supernatural.

All of these stories are wonderfully suspenseful. Several also managed to surprise me, which is brilliant. A twist should be grounded in the story which has gone before, but not be predictable, and my favourite stories all managed to pull this off.

One of the things beginner writers often struggle with when writing a short story is finding a plot that's the right size for their word limit. Sometimes the simplest stories are the most effective, and that's something all of the authors in this collection are well aware of. Gothic stories don't have to be graphic, gratuitous or even particularly violent. One of the classics of Gothic literature, *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is set entirely in a single room. It takes a powerful writer to make wallpaper frightening, but Perkins Gilman manages it. Could you?

My two highly commended stories are 'The Painted Lady' by Amy Wei and 'The Bird on the Perch' by Freya MacKenzie and my winner is 'Depths' by Ben Brown. Congratulations!

As for the rest of you, I'm just relieved that I don't live in any of your stories. That there's nothing supernatural to be scared of in this world. Right? I mean, that is right, isn't it? ... *Isn't it?*

Sally Nicholls

Sally Nicholls is an award-winning author whose first novel *Ways to Live Together*, written while she was at university, has also been made into a feature film. Her latest book is *Close Your Pretty Eyes*, featuring eleven-year-old Olivia Brown, who has been in care since she was five and is convinced her latest placement is haunted.



THE BIRD ON A PERCH

FREYA MACKENZIE, YEAR 9

THE BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SHANGHAI, PUXI

Freya didn't need any of the traditional Gothic trappings – she managed to make a man walking through an ordinary house looking for his wife genuinely creepy. And I love the twist at the end. Was James the next victim or the serial killer himself?

I believe that my story is an ideal example of a Gothic story because it is in a modern setting, which the reader can relate to, adding to the uncanny feeling of the story. Also, although there are no examples of the supernatural (which often add suspense), my story is a very possible scenario which really makes the reader feel uncomfortable as it could potentially happen to them.

It was a pleasant Tuesday evening in April and James was leisurely making his way home from work. James was an average-looking man of average height and average weight; he had neat brown hair and a clean-shaven face and today was wearing his usual city uniform of a smart, navy-blue pinstripe suit with a red tie. He worked as an accountant and, surprisingly (to everyone but James himself), enjoyed it. He worked from 8 to 5 every weekday and today was no different to any other.

He was following his regular route home, casually walking from the train stop near to his house, on his way home to see his darling wife Kate. They had been married for five years and were generally a very happy couple. Kate was a good-looking woman with long, blonde hair, which she usually wore in a long braid down her back, and bright, piercing blue eyes. She worked as a florist and had her own flower shop just down the street: she didn't usually wear fancy clothes or makeup, because of her work, but she was so naturally beautiful that she didn't need any of that, especially being framed by wonderful flowers all day. James loved this time of evening because they would sit and talk and eat dinner together; sometimes they would watch a movie, and it was just a very warm and loving environment to be in.

As he approached their large, modern house (which they were very proud to be able to afford because of their well-paying jobs), with its small garden at the front designed to perfection and just brimming with a huge array of beautiful plant life, he went up the few little stone steps to the door. He was a little startled to find it slightly ajar, as Kate was very particular about saving heat, but he decided that she must have not closed it properly on her way in. In his mind he pictured her laden down with shopping and a beautiful bunch of unusual flowers attentively selected from the large vases in the shop.



James stepped into the house and firmly shut the door behind him. He looked up and realised that there were no lights on, but when he turned round he saw the glow of a small neon light above the stove. He turned on the hall light and went to the kitchen, contemplating that perhaps Kate had already started cooking dinner, even though they usually cooked it together after James had come from work. But Kate wasn't there.

A little confused, but not yet worried, James went on walking around the house, looking for Kate and turning on lights in each room as he went. Room after room he went and, as he stepped into each empty space, his anxiety started to increase. Now he was quite worried and he called out for her, looking even in places that she would never be, such as the store cupboard and the wine cellar. He went through the large, glass sliding doors into the garden and looked everywhere, even though she would never go out while it was dark – she always said that it was sad to see plants at night as it looked like they were dead! He eventually found himself on the top floor with only the master bedroom that he hadn't checked yet. Of course, she had come in from work, tired after a long day due to that big hotel contract, and gone for a nap while it was still light so she hadn't needed to turn on any lights. A simple explanation. He had just gotten himself worked up for nothing.

With this thought in his mind, James walked to the door and gently pushed it open so as not to wake her up. He quietly crept into the dark room and went over to the great four-poster bed, where he could see her sleeping silhouette. He gently put his hands on her and gave her a little shake, saying 'Kate, Kate', but she didn't wake. He used one hand to turn on the bedside lamp, which cast an orange glow on the room, and when he looked back to her he could now see her eyes glinting in the gloom. She must have woken up when he turned on the light. 'Sorry to wake you, but it is quite late and I was getting worried about where you were; I couldn't find you', he said. But she didn't react at all: she didn't even blink. How odd. He took her face in his hands and immediately pulled them away, as she was ice cold. No. He shook her more vigorously this time, shouting 'Kate! Kate!', but still nothing. With a shaking hand he reached out to her neck with two fingers to check for a pulse. Not even a twitch.

The next few hours were quite a daze; he called the police frantically, telling them that his wife was dead, screaming down the receiver, then he just sat there waiting. Not long after he heard the wail of police sirens, they were banging at the door and he leapt from his daze and went to let them in. Then it was just questions, a barrage of never-ending questions that made him dizzy. Eventually he answered all their questions: 'When did you get home?' 'When did your wife get home?' 'Do you have a home security system?' 'Do you have any close neighbours?' and, worst of all, 'Do you or your wife have any enemies?' He answered them all as best he could and then they explained to them what they knew. His wife hadn't died of natural causes, which meant she was murdered; they suspected at around 4:30pm. And this was the work of a serial killer.

The detective's voice seemed, unbelievably, to be telling him that this was the work of a prolific serial killer who called himself 'The Blue Jay', who had, they believed, already killed 14 people. They said that all the signs were there: she was killed in her own home; she was killed by a blunt trauma to the head; and, most importantly, a blue feather was found in her shirt pocket, signify that it was the work of the so-called 'Blue Jay'. The police assured James, in calm and authoritative voices, that everything possible was being done to find the culprit of his wife's murder, but they were careful also to highlight that he was a slippery criminal and that it would take time. James took this all in, but only on a superficial level, because all he could think about was the fact that his wife was dead. His wonderful wife whom he loved with all his heart. Who would he come home to? Who would he talk about his day with? Crazy, he thought about the garden: who would look after the garden? That was something Kate always did. The only reason they bought a house with such a big garden was so that Kate could fulfil her lifelong dream to have her own amazing garden, something that she had always wanted.



All this was just too much for him. A lifetime passed, and James aged in his sorrow and realisation of loss as he perched on the end of the sofa while the police did their work and talked their talk.

And then he was alone. Sitting stunned into a silent and shivering state. The police had reluctantly left, telling him that he should spend the night somewhere else with friends around him. But he could not imagine having to describe what had happened or explain how he was feeling to anyone. This would make it seem too real. In his state of shock he really thought if he just closed his eyes and slept, it would all go away and his life would be back to how it was and should be. His norm. His delightful life with his beautiful Kate. So they had left him with the promise that they would be back early tomorrow to finish up the investigation and that he would have to answer some more questions.

Finally the door shut and, like a zombie, he slowly climbed upstairs to escape into a long hot bath. To wash away the events of tonight and allow himself to escape into the still and quiet of the deep water. Below the water his mind emptied, only to flood full of harsh reality when he was forced to come up for breath. After a long time he was forced by the cold of the bathwater to get out and, in a trance-like state, found himself in the spare room that was made up for him to sleep in. He was wearing his blue pinstriped pyjamas, but he must have been in such a daze that he had no recollection of dressing himself.

Heavily he climbed into bed and closed his eyes. He was so drained and utterly exhausted after today's horrific and surreal ordeal. Physically and emotionally, he was being pulled into a tortured sleep. He tossed and turned, periodically staring at the blank ceiling for who knows how many hours, until eventually he felt himself being enveloped by a heavy blanket of sleep, turning round to sleep on his front like he always did.

As he gave in to the enticing powers of Master Sleep, he was sharply brought to his senses by a sharp piercing pain in his chest. He rapidly patted his chest down to find what had caused him to be woken so suddenly. It was at this exact moment his heart seemed to stop and a deeper layer was added to his waking nightmare. There was something in his shirt pocket. He reached in and pulled out a single blue feather.



SHORT STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM | 2014

‘BLOOMING HOLLOWS’

REBECCA EGGELING,
YEAR 9, BRITISH SCHOOL OF HOUSTON,

*“The story behind my illustration is that one must
always look for positives in others because there is
always something light in the darkness.”*





DEPTHS

BENJAMIN BROWN, YEAR 12
LA CÔTE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

I loved that Ben decided to write a Gothic story set underwater. And that he managed to make a merman frightening! It was great to see Ben take risks with his setting and his narrator. The diving bell was a great detail, as was the spires filled with the merman's victims. Congratulations, Ben!

The goal of this short story was to take elements of Gothic fiction and place them in an unfamiliar setting (in this case, underwater), such as:

- *The feeling of unease and the narrator's terror*
- *The use of darkness and eerie beauty in the description*
- *The mysterious nature of the spires*
- *The dark romantic undertones*
- *The ambiguity of the antagonist*
- *The time period.*

There are also efforts to create empathy for the narrator: details, such as the gender and appearance of the narrator, aren't given; instead the description concentrates on the setting, thoughts, and feelings, eventually addressing the reader.

The tang of salt was in the air, and droplets of seawater itched wetly on my skin. It was early morning and the cold bit through the heavy coat I had pulled over my clothes, the sea spray adding to my discomfort by filling my eyes with glistening tears. The prow of our vessel was carving through the waves, splitting them into eddies of foam that swirled off into the murky gray of the water. The sails behind me flapped restlessly in the wind, the white cloth straining at the chords that held it taut. I was worn and hungry, but my mind was alert and enthused; despite the chilling mist that clung to the ocean, I was on this disquieting voyage by choice.

The small, awkwardly printed letter had been brief and to the point: 'Geologist needed'. A boat from the port of Gull had revealed a mysterious structure just under the surface, barely scratching the wooden hull. It was reported quickly to the local authorities and attracted several curious explorers and sensationalists. The most scientific description that had been given so far was enticingly improbable, describing the material as 'ocean glass'.

The Thracelin Academy of Research was eventually contacted, through a cryptic missive, and I was dispatched a week later to identify this natural anomaly for the glory of the Empire. Fieldwork was a step down from my position



as head of the Geomarine Institute, but the intrigue and mystery of it all made me feel like I had ten years ago, fresh from university with my head full of ambitions and my hands itching for anything more interesting than river gravel. My nostalgic reverie was interrupted by a hoarse cry from the wizened captain, ordering the crew to pull back the sails and drop the heavy iron anchor into the depths. I realized we must have arrived, and glanced curiously over the listless waters.

Sure enough, the dark gray contained a shade lighter than the rest, as if made from ghostly crystal. Ethereal and tantalizing, it thrust up from the abyssal black below, forming into a delicate, irregular spire that only barely broke the surface, the sharpened point slicing through the waves. As I prepared my equipment, I noticed with a combination of surprise and unease that there were several of the structures; dozens, if not hundreds of them glistened just below the water. It was unlike anything I had ever seen, both beautiful and eerie.

I shifted anxiously, knowing I would approach them soon. The bell was being prepared behind me, the wooden beam creaking as it strained to lower the ominous structure down to the surface of the sour ocean, and I forcefully quenched a bilious surge of adrenaline. The diving bell had been invented to permit humans to reach deep water alive. The brass structure was shaped like a bloated, reversed cup, designed to shield its occupant in a space full of trapped air, pressurized and supplied by a system of wheezing pumps and straining valves.

I was trembling slightly, from both anticipation and fear. No amount of reasoning could shake me from the dread of a watery grave, and my conviction almost faltered. As I approached the churning waters, I clutched the oiled leather sheath that contained my tools. After another tremulous breath, taking in the salty air, I closed my eyes and jumped.

It was as cold as death. Even though I had been expecting this, the shock forced me to pull taut, shuddering, exhaling a trail of silvery bubbles as I swam clumsily to the brass lip of the bell. My eyes burned, but I forced them open despite the pain. I slipped below the bell with trepidation, into the dark and cold womb of the depths, where I was both safe and unwelcome. The only light came from the water below me, as I dragged myself onto the bench that circled the inside of the chamber. The icy liquid shivered off of me as I drew in a breath of the metallic air, the taste of brass clinging oil-like to my tongue. My heart was throbbing in my chest, my lungs aching numbly from the cold, but I ignored them. Through the rippling surface beneath me I could see the first of the spires, graceful and unsettling.

I slipped a hand back into the water and seized the thin rope that allowed me to communicate with the surface, tugging sharply. With a rumbling moan of machinery, the bell started to descend, agonizingly slow. The ocean churned around me and my pulse became frantic. I forced myself to breathe regularly, calmly, despite the wheezing of the pumps that supplied me with air. Droplets of water fell sonorously from the slightly faulty seal above me.

One of the spires scraped across the outside of the bell, raking across it like the fang of some unfathomable monstrosity, echoing through the hollow darkness. A low moan escaped my lips. My hand was clenched around the cord, prepared to tug at it clumsily, to send a plea for help to the surface, but I tempered my panic to the best of my ability. I needed to retrieve a fragment from the depths.

I forced myself to stay calm, breathing deeply, and slipped a hand through my matted hair. The open water below me was darkening steadily, roiling as the nightmarish structure descended. The beauty of the glassy spines was more paralyzing than enticing now; each one gleamed with sharpened edges that could no doubt tear through flesh and skin with unsettling ease. The thought made me wince. I caught a glimmer of movement in the corner of my eyes, a shape slipping effortlessly between the glassy spines, and instinctively lurched away from the water.



The silvery shadow moved again, sinuously curling closer. Scientific curiosity and sheer terror battled within me as I glanced at it; terror won as it glanced back, through eyes as black and soulless as spheres of ink. I pulled the warning cord, sharply, as I thrust myself away from the glittering shadow and further into the bell.

I barely registered that I felt no resistance in the rope. I spent several seconds in incomprehension and terror before I noticed that my lifeline was hanging limply in my grasp, severed no doubt by the spire that had scraped across my metallic tomb. I was alone.

The realization shook me to the core, and I fell against the wooden bench, trembling. I couldn't see the shadow in the water any longer, but I could hear it sing; a low moaning howl echoed around me, an almost plaintive, whimpering melody. As it sang it was swimming lazily around the bell, sometimes brushing against the surface with a scaly rasp, and I shuddered as the brass hollow magnified the sound. I closed my eyes and waited as it toyed with me, pressing my face into my palms, my very breath choking me as the stygian darkness closed in. With a threatening murmur the unseen predator slipped lazily under the lip of the bell, breaking the surface and curling above me.

The creature brought with it a sinister light. A faint, silvery sheen that I somehow perceived even through my closed eyelids, a cold and foreign glow that chilled me to the bone. I could feel it approaching as the gleam intensified, leaning over me, a low harmonic hiss escaping from it. A slithering, menacing hum filled the bell, a melodic and melancholy sound, closing in on me in waves of oneiric music that lapped hungrily at my senses. I stiffened and opened my eyes.

The sight took my breath away. The monstrous being was a young man, with dark hair and coal black eyes, his pale skin glistening like marble and sculpted like an ancient statue. His beauty was paralyzing, otherworldly. His form seemed to glow with a soft pale light. His smile was eerily enticing, despite his teeth that ended in sharpened, needle-like points. Below the waist, his fair skin turned into a glimmering layer of silver scales, coating his eel-like tail, his membranous fins ending in sharpened quills.

I came back to my senses fast enough to lash at him with my chisel, tearing a thin gash in the ivory skin over his heart. He hissed in pain, blood welling from the wound, and tightened his webbed fingers around my wrist. The serpent-like tail curled threateningly from the water and darted, entrapping and constricting my waist, sharp spines piercing the skin. I howled in silent pain as toxins trickled into my blood. Dangerously soft notes began to pour from the merman's lips, trapping me in a sluggish lethargy. I struggled violently at first and then could only twitch helplessly, becoming no better than a moth trapped in a jar of lethal poisons.

Somehow the hypnotic melody slipped its murky claws into my mind and clenched around my heart, filling me with distorted empathy. It was hungry, so terribly hungry; a soulless being in a world of inky depths, aching for a taste of the surface that only human flesh could give it. The creature was lifeless, abyssal, a forgotten being with a dead and clammy heart. He yearned to feel the richness and color of the world under the sun. What monster was I to deny his desperate request? I had lived my life. It was a happy one. If I could share warmth with a creature so desperately cold, it was worth accepting the inevitable end. Wasn't it?

I fell limp and lifeless as he pulled me from the bell and into my watery grave, his silver tail curling serpent-like around me. He swam closer and pressed his lips to mine in a chilling kiss that pierced my heart with shards of glass. I felt the lethal blades blossom in my chest, causing my frantic pulse to pump blood into the water around us.



My vision started to darken as I fell through the abyss, the merman releasing me and uncoiling fluidly, his dark eyes watching my descent.

As I reached the sea floor, lifting a swirl of silt that mingled with the ruby haze of my blood, a last stream of bubbles slipped from my lips. My lethargic gaze drifted to the spires around me and hollow, empty sockets looked back. Through the milky glass I saw vitrified bone, a human skeleton curled in a fetal position, glistening palely in the darkness. Every spire was built over a cadaver; each glassy thorn was a twisted monument the merman created from the remains of his victims, a tribute to the surface he worshipped. My last, numbing thought was that I would be one of them. The merman swam over me, gleaming silver, and his pale lips spread into a smile. His sharp teeth gleamed in the fading light.

The ebb and flow of the waves was what woke me. Rushing over my body, pushing me onto the gray sand, almost toying with me. Tensing, I drew in a rasping breath, shivering as a cold wind whistled over the beach. I wiped the crust of salt from my eyes, shielding them from the pale sunlight, and looked over the sea. It had no answers for me. Was I spared, or forgotten? Had the creature taken pity on me, or had the ocean spat me out, and abandoned me on the unfeeling sands?

To this day I remain unsure. I know only that, since then, the richness of life means nothing to me. The most exquisite tastes are nothing more than salt and sand; the brightest colors are shades of gray.

I write you this because the spires have returned. The surface is not where I belong, and I need answers to the questions that torment me day and night.

I am sorry, but the burden of telling this story is yours. You must prevent others from making my mistake, and succumbing to the hungering abyss.

Warn them of the call of the Depths.



THE LOST SOULS

ANDREEA JACOB, YEAR 8

COMPASS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL DOHA, MADINAT KHALIFA

The story has a descriptive introduction which gradually evolves from a quasi-idyllic, relaxed atmosphere to a less-predictable, threatening, noir one that slowly gathers more and more creepy details suiting the Gothic genre. For instance: 'haunted mansion, scary creaks and moans are brought to life ...' are a few images used to create the special effect of terror. After exploring the Gothic style the story introduces some characters, in the shape of captive souls who crave for freedom and are ready to share with an unknown 'redeemer' their secrets, an image that stimulates a large amount of emotions in the reader's heart.

It is a stunning spring afternoon in this village in Transylvania where we are passing by on our trip home. A variety of vivid-coloured flowers are spreading a magic perfume. I am sitting in the rear of my parents' car. The window from the left side is half-open, letting the fresh air from the restless woods play with my hair.

We are travelling to our new house and my father has just found a shortcut down a country road, which appears to be rough and a bit muddy from place to place. The trees have odd shapes, many of them being twisted and some bonded together like Siamese twins. The time is passing fast and dusk is approaching. I can sense how my mother is getting restive. The sweet songs of the birds become a little showy as the deep blue sky, obscured by soft, pinky clouds, starts turning darker, while the reddish sun is leaving the scene. After a while we find ourselves in front of this tall and shabby house. Its decayed appearance suggests that the building was abandoned a long time ago. The garden is overgrown and sticky green weeds are creeping over the path; the small garden pond is covered in slime. The building seems to be studying us through the bloodshot eyes of an evil old man. As I stand, gazing at this odd establishment that looks like a haunted mansion, I begin shivering in the cold air of the evening. The walkway leading to the house is randomly cracked and some red roses grow wildly in thick batches like spots of blood emerging from the scars.

After minutes of continuous knocking, anxious and intrigued, my father realizes that the door is unlocked. We sneak inside, one by one, like ghosts drifting in the night. The moonlight casts a silent glow on the cracked walls. Cobwebs cover the corners of the doors, tiny black spiders threading towards their helpless prey. The house is fit for the kings and the queens of the supernatural. A dusty, dank odour creeps into my nose. The house is dead silent until scary creaks and moans are brought to life by our steps. Cautiously, I enter the dark living-room and start gazing around. The windows are covered by grime and dirt, but this doesn't stop the calm moonlight from passing through the darkness, milky and thread-like. I make my way back into the hallway: a sliver of light unveils itself from behind a massive door. I open it and arrive at the foot of the staircase. I summon strength and prowl up the stairs. I turn to the right and meet another door. I guess a forceful push is needed, as the door is not making the way easier. The wind intensifies outside; the rustling of leaves and branches is disturbing. In the corner a little chair begins to move slowly. I see my mother passing by ... and I ask her where dad is, but she keeps walking, ignoring my question. I hear myself trying one more time to get her attention. I run after her shadow, but somehow she's gone.



Then I suddenly find my father abandoned in an old armchair, staring at me and through me ... and then it happens! I hear my mother's voice calling me from the courtyard. I look through the window and see my parents standing in front of the house. I gaze at the armchair again and see a weird old man, staring at me with unreal and scaring eyes. I feel like I am losing my mind and almost fainting when he suddenly stands up and drifts out of the room, shouting in a rough voice, 'FOLLOW ME ...' Like a victim hypnotized by a huge snake I follow him, wondering what other creepy things will happen next.

The man approaches a dowdy bookshelf and pulls out a little drawer. The shelf opens, revealing the entrance to a long and dark corridor. I hear a piercing voice coming from the other end of the corridor: 'Over here! Over here!' Thousands of needles are passing through my spine and I literally start crawling onwards ... The old man waves his hand, encouraging me to carry on, and exits the corridor. I follow him into what appears to be a small atrium full of withered bushes and weeds surrounding anthropomorphic statues of hobbits and witches. In a corner an enormous chest is lying, covered by a thin layer of moss. The man is standing in front of it without any gesture. His eyes are now closed and he seems to meditate with intensity. I wonder what's going on. Then the lid of the chest magically unleashes. A yellowish steam pops out like a puffy cloud and I am able to see odd human bodies taking shape from this mist. I calculate four boys and two girls of the same age, wearing old scholars' uniforms. The decor changes and they appear to be sitting in class, reading from their notebooks. The next image shows them walking through the same class during a fire alarm. A flame of fire can be seen emerging from a corner. When the fire is about to extinguish itself a window is smashed in the wall by a strong gale of wind. The air current eventually intensifies the fire, which now expands vividly. One of the boys jumps towards the window and closes it with firm gestures – but it's too late. A new image arises, showing the boys and girls lying on the floor. When this last image goes away I hear the voice of a boy asking me for help. Not knowing what to do I look for the old man, but cannot see him anywhere. I believe in God and the Hereafter but have never been ready to accept ghost stories and rumours about ghosts, so I am having a hard time understanding what's going on.

'What is it about these images?' I hear myself speaking out loud. 'Can someone tell me what's happening?' I continue, with the voice of a stranger. No answer ...

After several attempts to communicate I hear one of the girls whispering: 'We were all good, getting busy for a new boring test, when the alarm rang. We were quickly surrounded by smoke and I suppose we fainted. Later we found ourselves trapped in the classroom with the windows and door locked. We tried to break them so many times but no results. We screamed and knocked the door but nobody responded. We desperately need to understand what was going on ...'

I look at them with bewilderment. 'Who are you?'

A boy turns his face towards me, explaining 'We are students in this school and also friends who hang out after lessons.'

'So this building was serving as a school?' I ask them with astonishment.

'Don't you know? This is the first Romanian School built in the neighbourhood of Bran Castle. It's an ancient one, and the old man who led you here is nobody less than the Conte de Saint Germaine,' explains the ghost with joy. And then, changing the mood: 'We don't really understand what is wrong with us. We feel like we have been in this room for ages.'



I hesitate for a while and eventually decide to talk: 'It looks like you all have passed away, my dears,' I say, with a trembling voice. 'Perhaps it was the smoke if not the fire ... you have to accept now that you don't belong to this world anymore.' I continue, feeling my eyes wet: 'You need to find your way through to the other world and find peace for your tormented souls.'

They are stunned. They cannot believe my words. They look at themselves, and slowly but surely come to understand. That is why they cannot exit the room. This explains why nobody was able to hear them ... They do not sleep, do not eat ... there is no TIME to measure ... 'But how? What are we supposed to do to set ourselves free?' asks one of the boys, after a long break.

'You must tell me something you regret from your past, something that affects your peace of mind.'

Eventually, talking with them, I start finding out that I am in the presence of persons who used to be called Roberta, Evelyn, Mark, Blake, Christopher, and Andrew. They are all of the same age, sixteen years old. Five of them are ready to share with me secrets hidden from all of the others. I attempt to find out what kept them pinned here. Andrew tells me that he stole his best friend's homework and pretended it was his own work to the teacher. Evelyn explains that she had three boyfriends at the same time; Mark says that his younger sister broke her leg when he was supposed to take care of her and he left her to play outside with his friends. Roberta spells out her terrible guilt about the death of the neighbourhood cat when she was riding her bike. Blake admits that he put bugs into his cousin's soup while the latter was visiting his family. With these five souls it is quite easy to find out their problems, but the struggle starts with Christopher, who is refusing to speak.

'All your friends depend on your confession; you must open your heart and bring to light the shadows that keep your soul in this prison,' are my first words to him. But he remains silent in mute anger that is visible on his teenage face. I try again: 'What are Mark, Roberta, Andrew, Blake and Evelyn to you?'

'They are my colleagues and my friends!'

'Do you really care about them?'

'Yes, I do!'

'Then you have to understand that their freedom and happiness depend also on your confession. Be selfless and help them out, if you really care about them.'

I can see how his face is changing its colour from red to pale. 'I'm so sorry; it's all because of me ... I'll tell everything ... I had a silly argument with Blake and Evelyn about their relationship. I was jealous, as I wanted Evelyn for myself. But both of them bullied me with their words and this drove me mad. I decided to give them a prank to remember, so before we all gathered in the classroom that day I set a little fire underneath the teacher's desk. After everybody arrived I locked the door to prevent them from escaping. I was risking a lot but I was too angry. My plan was to have them scared enough until the firefighters would eventually break the door and let them out. Unfortunately the firefighters arrived too late. I am so sorry!' he says, bursting in tears. 'Please forgive me ... please forgive me ... please forgive me Please ...' he continues, falling to his knees. His friends start approaching him, one by one, touching him gently to suggest their forgiveness. In a matter of seconds I see their shapes fading into a spot of light that becomes increasingly luminous ... the kingdom of heaven is in our hearts, I say to myself with joy.



The idea that it is time to leave is crossing my mind, after I regain consciousness thinking that all of this might have been just a dream. I close the door behind me as I carefully walk down the stairs. I make my way outside to where my parents are standing. They are asking me what took so long; I reply, with a smiley face, that freeing the ghosts was not that easy peasy ... but after entering the car I look once more at the school and hear myself whispering 'Farewell my dear friends ... R.I.P.'

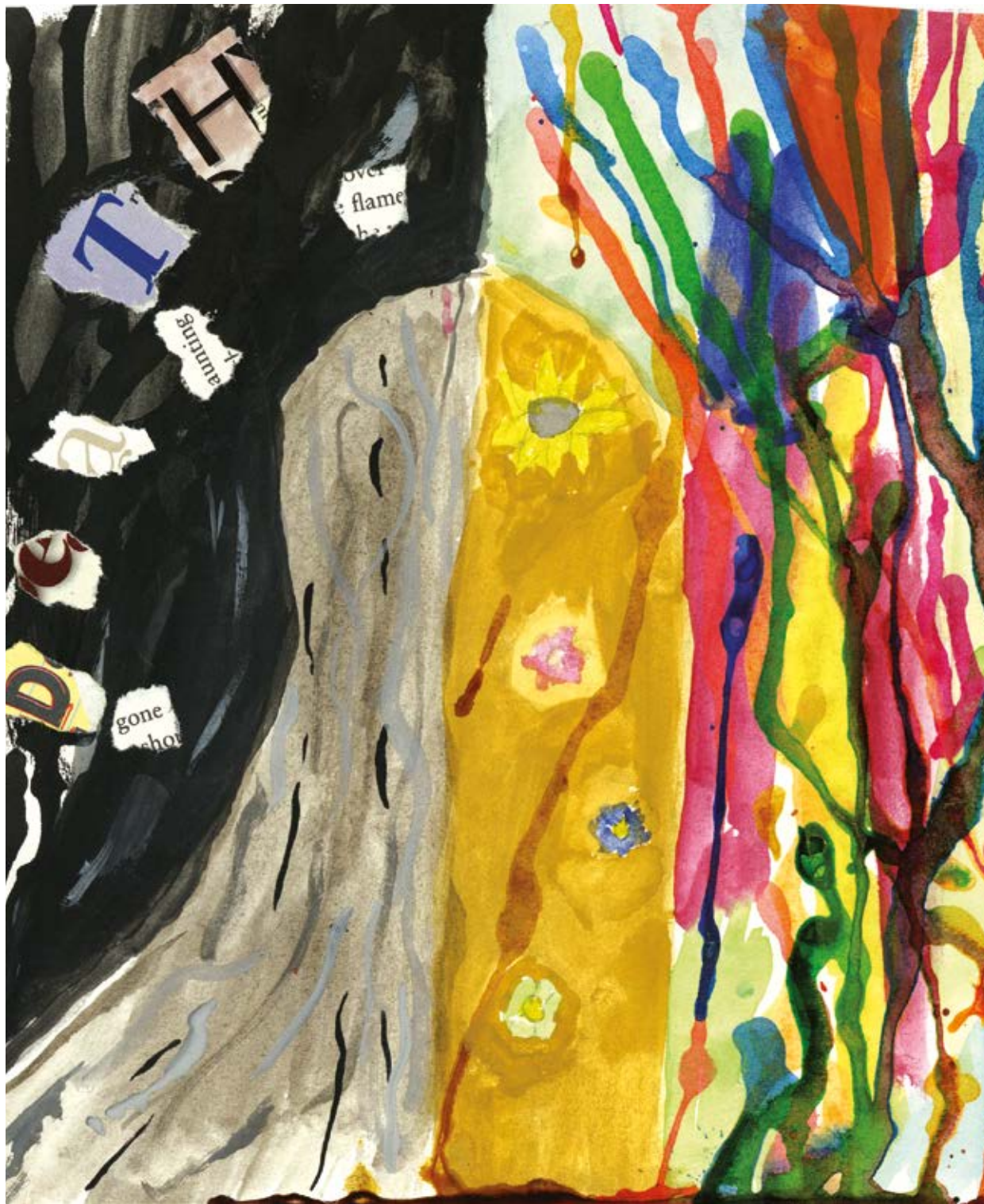


SHORT STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM | 2014

‘SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS’

BRYONY SCHNELL,
YEAR 7, BRITISH SCHOOL OF HOUSTON

*“I based my illustration on how you can be so happy
and joyful with your friends, but then sometimes you
can feel lonely.”*





THE PAINTED LADY

AMY WEI, YEAR 11

THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF BEIJING, SHUNYI

'The Painted Lady' is more graphic. But it was the reversals that I liked in this story - the serial killer wasn't just a monster, she was also a lonely young girl. And the ending neatly tied the detective inspector and the father and the girl's need for attention together – which was great, and something I definitely didn't expect.

The Painted Lady is a short story of Gothic crime revolving around the theme of 'changes.' I think any major shift, new start, or big event in a narrative character's life is a huge change, and this story harbors all three.

The Gothic genre is also reflected thoroughly throughout this piece, from the macabre killing ritual to the mysterious old Gothic building the story is set in. It has a creepy, nightmarish quality, and the strange, psychotic relationships the narrator has with the men in her life are a twisted parallel to the Gothic's traditional romances.

The fresh blood traces a dozen rivers' paths across my hands.

I like its sweetness, its tang of iron and brine; I like the feeling of it trailing down my skin, hot with the life it thinks it still holds within its saccharine viscosity.

This time, though, it is different. This time it is special. I have rewritten the line that defines 'too far.' I want to laugh, bathe in the glory of my daring, in all that I have conquered with this one, fatal act.

But I mustn't tarry. I have a lot of work to do before the blood congeals and cools. Charily, I rise and cross the room to where I had left the oil lamp to glow dimly beneath the maid's staircase. The shadows dance as I lift it higher, revolving in a nightmarish parody of a child's carousel as my eyes dart across the walls and the floor. It's extensive, a larger canvas than I have ever played with before.

My fingers brush against the wall, feel the surface crumble at my touch. Lifting my hand to my nose, I smell the malodorous stench of aged plaster, then attempt to wipe the powder away. It clings, though, fusing into a cloying, gritty paste with the blood, and I slather it frustratedly on the wall.

I turn back to the room at large, taking in the unadorned cellar, clean angles cut as if specifically for this moment. Red drag marks lead away from the body, pooling thickly in cracks and hollows in the limestone. A thick horsehair



brush lies crooked where I'd spat it out next to the crumpled, bloody heap.

The sight of the corpse makes me smile. It is an achievement, beyond the dull amusements the others had served, purely to rouse the thrilling mirth of the chase. Tonight, I will cast the last link in the chain, create my final masterpiece. Too long have the stories ended without us getting the chance to make our final mark, to leave at our own behest; far better to leave early a winner than to stay long enough to become the loser.

I drop heavily to my knees beside the body. Deftly, I ease a hand beneath the taut sinews of its neck, and use the other to force the chin back, leaving exposed the raw red smile drawn across its throat. At the pressure, it gapes into a derisive grin, a stream of heavy ichor seeping out. I lay hold of the paintbrush and tenderly brush it back. Smirking, I sweep the brush across my palm, finding the blood thin and still tepid: I have at least three more hours yet.

The first brushstroke is pathetic: although straight, reaching from the low ceiling down along the plaster to the bottom corner of the wall, its consistency is uneven, the blood clumping with the plaster, and the tint of deep wine fades away early on. I snarl in frustration, then head back to the body for another try.

By the time I have half a side coated in a smooth sheen, my watch declares it almost dawn. My pace quickens, and I begin to fall into a familiar rhythm: painting stroke after stroke, wall after wall, until the red envelops the entire room; making delicate incisions with my dive knife when the flow peters out, from wrist to clavicle, from ankle to hip; my heels clicking briskly as I stride back and forth and back and forth across the dark marble.

Jesper does not even know that I own these heels. As far as he is concerned, I am still a picture of pure, unadulterated innocence, prancing around in a frilly white frock with a garland of flowers around my tiny little head.

Then again, he is not concerned with much.

Jesper, regrettably, is my father. We have been estranged for so long that I have begun to refer to him by his first name, and he by my last. I think he is more comfortable imagining me as a faceless entity, another mindless cog in the rotting, defective machine that is his life.

It started when my mother died. After that, he grew uninterested in life and absorbed in his work. Whole days would go by when neither of us would even acknowledge each other's presence; if we did talk, conversations would be stilted and over as immediately as we could allow.

'Hey. Sanderson! You the one who left the front door unlocked?' This was undoubtedly our most common topic of conversation.

'Yes.'

'You sure?'

'Yes.' At this point, he would squint at me suspiciously, then grunt and turn his back on me for the rest of the day. But I do not need his attention anymore. I am no longer that petty little girl, and besides, I have the Detective Inspector. He gives me attention; enough attention to border on obsession. I have seen him up late at night, lights on and curtains drawn, a dark silhouette hunched over a labyrinthine murder board. He thinks he is in my psyche, and I his. A connection deeper than any daughter could ever find with her father anyway.



The Detective calls me the Painted Lady, an anonymous pair of bloody heel prints in a bloody room, killing her way through Edinburgh. I like the moniker, and its allusion that my creations compare to the bright red beauty of the butterfly. It brings me a satisfaction after every killing, watching all those people pour their lives into the search for mine.

I feel a touch of regret that I have to end it like this. It's a shame, that it had to be him. But there is a certain singular beauty in it, is there not? Something poetic? In having the end take us all the way back to the beginning, in finishing this together?

When I am finished, I lift my brush and my oil lamp, and sweep the room with my gaze. It's exquisite. Smiling, I turn on my heels and head back up the maid's rickety staircase towards the old oak door, behind which lies the dawn.

I stop halfway up. I hesitate for a moment, then pinch the oil lamp into blackness and drop it on the floor with the paintbrush.

Then, just before I am enveloped by the shadows' dark curtains, I turn one last time and kiss goodbye to Detective Inspector Jesper Sanderson.

‘THE PAINTED LADY’

“As well as believable plot and characters, I believe that the best stories have an experiential aspect: that is, the reader experiences a reaction when reading. For me, an illustration is a wonderful medium to evoke a reaction in the reader – they enhance the message of any story.”





RED HOOD AND THE WOLF

MICHAEL MILLER, YEAR 8
BRITISH SCHOOL OF CHICAGO

In this story, I have used an isolated location – the woods – and a lonely, isolated girl named Eztli. There are supernatural elements and an animal associated with the Gothic genre (the wolf), as well as an unnerving atmosphere. There is an unexpected twist to the story, but I have left clues so you can try and figure it out. There are unexplained reactions and events (the father's death, the ritual with the needle, and Bacia's reaction to blood) as well as imagery. Because of the sentences above, I believe my story fits the Gothic genre.

1.

The little girl opened her eyes. In front of her was her father, in a wooden coffin with white padding. A single tear rolled down the girl's cheek. A woman with curly white hair slowly hobbled over to the girl. 'It's okay, Eztli, Grandma Frigga's got you. Let all those tears out.' She patted the red hood on the girl's head.

Just then, a woman with short blonde hair walked over to the grandmother–granddaughter embrace and pulled them apart. 'Frigga,' the woman said, 'I would appreciate if you left my daughter alone right now. Can't you see she's sad?'

'And THAT is why I am being kind to her. Oh Eztli! There, there. There, there. It's all going to be all right, okay?' The young woman sneered. 'Stop that. She needs to learn to be a lady. Abbott's death is just a small ... um ... predicament. We can't do anything now, can we, Frigga?'

'I guess not, Bacia. But she is not a lady yet.'

'Just do the ritual and get it over with.'

Frigga nodded. She took a sewing pin from her pocket and pricked her thumb. Bacia sniffed in the air. Frigga slowly swiped the blood onto Abbott's forehead. Bacia stared at the blood. The cushion on which Abbott's head was resting slowly stained red. She sniffed at it, and then abruptly turned around. 'Come on Eztli! We are going home. Say goodbye to Grandma.'

'Bye-bye, Gramma ...'

'Good-bye, sweetie,' Frigga said, smiling a sad smile.



2.

'Here,' said Bacia, 'take this to Grandma Frigga. She is sick and can't move.'

'Okay, mother. What is it?' Bacia held out a cross-hatched wicker picnic basket. She flipped open one side and revealed an apple, a sandwich, a muffin, and a bottle of wine.

'Mother?' asked Eztli, pointing to the bottle, 'Are you sure it's okay if Grandma drinks this while she is sick?' 'Um ...' Bacia looked at the ham sandwich inside the basket, temptation in her eyes. She quickly looked away. 'Yes. Yes, yes. Yes, yes, yes. It's fine. Help her forget about being sick. Yes. Yes, yes.'

'Okay, mother! Right away!' Eztli smiled, took the basket, and skipped out the door, toward the forest.

Bacia turned away and started heading for the kitchen when she turned around, opened the window and shouted: 'Don't talk to strangers!'

3.

Eztli skipped down the path, her red hood bouncing along with her. She could barely hear what her mother said; it sounded like: 'Doe ta oo ranger!' She hoped it wasn't *too* important.

Happy, she decided she had some time before she had to get to her grandmother's. 'Maybe Grandma Frigga would like some flowers?' she thought. 'Yes. Flowers will be lovely.'

She strayed off the path until she found a clearing full of flowers; red, blue, yellow, white, purple, orange; all the colours she could imagine. She sat down and started picking out the best-looking, best-scented flowers she could find. They all had to be absolutely perfect. When she was content with the ones from this area, she went further on, picking up the prettiest flowers she saw. When she had almost got back to the path, she heard a noise. She couldn't decipher what it was, but she got a little scared. Suddenly, a wolf darted out of the thick brush. Eztli jumped, her hood jumping with her.

The wolf, too, seemed startled by the girl's presence. 'Well, then, hi. Just passing through. What you got in that basket?' the wolf asked, in a surprisingly female voice. Little Eztli was too scared for words. 'I said, what have you got in that basket? It's rude not to answer one's questions. I am pretty sure your mother has taught you that. Right?' The girl nodded. She opened the basket slowly, shaking with every move. 'Oooh. You have ham? Can I have some?' The wolf asked; a gleam in its eye.

'No,' Eztli said, mustering up enough courage, 'it is all for my Grandma. You can't have any.'

'Well that's not very nice,' the wolf said. It reminded Eztli of someone, maybe someone from town.

'Well, I am taking this to my Grandma's. Maybe if you come and ask *nice enough*, you can have some.' With that, she turned around and toward her Grandma's house, leaving the wolf on the side of the trail. The wolf then walked back into the darkness, muttering, 'All right, Eztli. I'll come and ask *nicely*'.



4.

Frigga laid in her bed, waiting for the knock on the door and the 'Hi Gramma! It's Eztli!' Eztli should have been here by now. She hoped nothing bad had happened to her. She called Bacia; maybe Eztli hadn't left yet. Maybe. The phone rang once. Twice. Three times. But no one answered. 'Weird,' she thought, 'Maybe Bacia is in town, shopping, or maybe Bacia came with Eztli – unlikely, but still possible.'

Deciding that she would get news if something happened, or that Eztli would get there soon, she lay back down and went to sleep.

5.

The wolf knocked on the wooden door with its snout three times, trying to match the little girl's voice as well as it could, calling 'Hello Gramma Frigga! May I come in, *please?*'

'Of course! Of course! The door is open; I am in the bedroom! Oh Eztli! I am so glad to see you!' 'Me too, Gramma!'

'Oh, good. Now, why don't we eat all that lovely food you brought!'

The wolf turned the corner, revealing itself to Frigga. 'No, Frigga,' its voice normal again, 'You are the food. Oh, and this is for Eztli: *please!* And with that, the wolf pounced.

6.

Eztli skipped along the path, holding a bouquet of at least twenty multi-coloured flowers. She entered the view of the petite house and ran at full speed, shouting, '*Hi Gramma! Gramma, Gramma, Gramma! I'm here! I'm here! Can I come in? Huh, huh, huh? I am here!*'

'Oh yes, dear, here I am. I am in the bedroom, come in! Come in!' replied a voice.

Eztli, completely fooled by the voice, entered the house, and then the bedroom. The wolf lay in the bed, covered by layers of blankets and sheets.

'Gramma, you look different. What happened?'

'Oh, I am just sick, and old age does this to people.'

'Gramma, your eyes look different.'

'Old age, as I said before.'

'And your ears are misshapen.'



'The sickness I have, it does that. Very annoying.'

'You are all very hairy too.'

'Sickness, all sickness.'

'An' your nose looks different.'

By this time the wolf was getting very tired of the girl's excessive questions, so it decided to change the subject.

'How about we eat that ham sandwich that looks so tempting?'

'But Gramma, I haven't shown you what I brought. How did you know about the sandwich?'

'My nose, yep, not only does the sickness make things worse, it does enhance some senses, yes, and so can we eat now?'

'Okay, one ham sandwich for you, Gramma.'

The wolf looked cunningly at the child, 'Oh, that's not the only thing I'll be eating today.'

'Oh, yeah; you have a muffin, and an apple, and a bottle of ...' and suddenly her world went black, the last she remembered being a wolf lunging at her.

7.

The wolf, full, started to walk back to the front door, part of its hair falling off, its legs growing longer, and its snout shrinking smaller. Soon, in place of the wolf, stood Bacía, smiling.



REFLECTION

YASMIN BURROWS, YEAR 7

THE BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SHANGHAI, PUDONG

This story is about a girl who has witnessed her parents die in a car crash. After that tragic day, she has been suffering with depression and won't let go of the memory. Will she ever escape her misery?

Rain thundered against the window in a rhythmic pattern. A sliver of light tore through the frosty glass, reflecting against the antique mirror in front of me.

My fingers lightly ran down the tinted glass as I looked myself up and down. I wasn't surprised to see what I had become. My hair was dishevelled and my clothes were creased from last night's tossing; my cheeks were gaunt from the refusal of food and when I looked deep into the pupils of my eyes, they were tediously emotionless. But I wasn't surprised. Not at all. Why should I be surprised? My fear had already gotten past me by now.

I managed to force my eyes away and slowly headed downstairs.

My feet clumped.

The floorboards groaned in reply.

It was unusual to be the only person in the orphanage. Commonly, at this time of day, the hallways would be bustling with children of all ages. Some would be chatting to other orphans. Some would be texting on phones and some (like me) would just stay quiet and walk around in boredom. Many people hated types like me and would ignore us whenever we'd start a conversation. It was as if they couldn't see us. Like we were invisible.

That sudden thought reminded me of how long I'd been in the house, and I decided to get some fresh air. My eyes flicked towards the door and I changed direction. I then changed into a pair of dusty boots, accompanied by a leather trench coat. My mind studied the other coats crumpled in a pile next to the door. Vivid neon colours made the coats stand out from all the old furniture in the house, when mine just seemed to blend in. But then again, it did stand out because it was the only one that looked dull. But that didn't bother me. I never cared about how I looked, nor how I acted or how people thought of me. Why would I reveal my true side to somebody when they could just look at me and instantly know? My mind then suddenly couldn't help but think of one thing. What is my purpose in life? I should have been dead along with my parents.

Tears started to well up in my eyes but I forced them back. Shut up!, my ego seemed to scream, but my depression had already taken control of my mind. I watched in dread as thoughts flashed over me.

The memory of my parents before the car crash, the look of dread on their faces as I watched appalled. Then all that faded, replaced by an event after the car crash. Me wailing in despair next to my mother and father's deathbed, as relatives whispered in concern about where I would go. The last event was me, moving to Lalndach Orphanage,



sluggishly pulling along a suitcase, my eyes rimmed red from crying.

And leaving everything behind was painful enough ...

I couldn't take it anymore. I hated this place. I hated myself. I hated everything! I slammed the door open and dashed out of the house, tears and rain running down my face. I hadn't a clue where I was going. My boots pounded against the flooded pavement. My feet screamed to rest. But I knew I couldn't. Cars streamed past me, their lights blaring through the thick fog that shrouded everything.

Seconds passed.

Minutes passed.

I started to think about my surroundings. *'This fog seemed endless. What if I get lost-'* I halted.

This wasn't fog. This was something else. It was too thick to be fog. The sound of cars and rain faded to a whisper and then gradually became silent.

My anger turned to curiosity as I walked around for a bit. Still nobody seemed to be about, and I couldn't see any way for me to navigate my way back to the orphanage. Once again I halted. There was a girl a couple of metres away from me; her face turned down out of eyesight. As I walked towards her, I tried reaching out to her, but she pulled away.

There was something strange about her. Then I noticed her figure. She was pale, skinny, and almost seemed ... Ghostly. 'Who are you?' I tried to say, but my voice seemed to be concealed in my throat. As if she read my mind the empathy turned her face towards me, and only then did I realise who she was. Same black hair, same black eyes, same dull features.

She was *me*. Only older.

I gasped in shock and gazed down to what she was looking at. It seemed to be two graves. I read the inscription and my eyes widened. *My parents' graves*. Then I looked back to the 'older' me. I was surprised to see that I would still look the same. To still suffer under misery and pain; to still walk down the same path of loneliness.

Then it hit me. This is not the person I want to grow up to be. I had to let it all go. Leave the past behind me, and enter a new world. A world full of happiness.

The 'older' me stared up at me and, ever so slightly, smiled and faded into the mist. Not knowing what to do, I wandered around. Then something caught my attention. I stood still and listened carefully. It wasn't much; barely a whisper, but I could just about hear the sound of cars in the distance. Slowly, I tracked which way the sound was coming from and, at that instant, a car whizzed past me, the tires sending puddles of water flying onto the drying pavement. I jumped in surprise and at that same moment the (so-called) fog seemed to diminish, and all realism came back to life.

No more misery. No more pain. The thought of that made a small smile play at the edge of my lips.

I couldn't wait to get back home.



SHORT STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM | 2014

‘THE BEAUTIFUL DREAM CATCHER SEEKS OUT EVIL’

TOOSJE PRINS,
YEAR 7, BRITISH SCHOOL OF HOUSTON

*“The idea behind my illustration is that beautiful things
like the dream catcher can change to evil.”*





THIS WON'T HURT A BIT

ABIGAIL BANKS-HEHENBERGER, YEAR 8

THE BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SHANGHAI, PUXI

My story fits into the Gothic genre because it has many of the conventions a Gothic story would have, such as a 'damsel in distress,' a madwoman, and a demon. The demon possesses her, even after she is warned away by someone who knows better. The person is actually the madwoman, who everyone thinks is crazy, but who is actually the only one who knows what's going on: a common occurrence in the Gothic genre. She is more of a hero in the end, sacrificing herself to stop the demon. Unexplained phenomena are also used, a frequent thing to happen in Gothic, horror, and ghost stories.

Charcoal walls created the first dismal view of the mansion. The windows' details looked more like bars on a prison cell, and she wasn't sure if they were meant to keep others out or maybe to keep us in. Steeples and turrets gave the effect of a cathedral, all dark, ominous beauty. The sprawling layout of the grounds had the effect of a castle. The only thing that wasn't gray and bleak was the garden, thriving from the constant rain. But even that looked like something out of a fairy tale, overgrown and seemingly deserted. Rain had recently fallen, and the pavement was wet and luminescent. Slanting roofs that sloped sharply up into archways had rain still dripping off of them. Dreary clouds hung low over the spires.

'What do you think?' Jasmine's mother asked.

'It's fine,' she replied, unenthusiastically.

Her mother shook her head, sighing. 'Jasmine, you're going to have to say something other than that eventually.'

Jasmine didn't reply, but stared out of the window darkly.

Unlocking the large, imposing door to the mansion, her mother stepped inside, rushing to the kitchen to see what it was like. She loved to cook. Jasmine walked along at a more leisurely pace, gawking at the photos that lined the walls. The corridor seemed to lead on and on, endless, a faint lamp near the entry way giving the only light, shadows threatening to consume the entire passageway. Dark curtains hung along the sides, allowing no light to reach through.

An abrupt gust of wind ripped the windows open. The rims beat against the walls, and the curtains flew out, billowing in the howling gale.

'Why, hello.' A soft voice emanated from the shadows. Jasmine whirled around in fright, startled on two fronts, already jumpy from the sudden wind. 'Are you a dancer too?' Stepping into the light, a willowy, middle-aged woman emerged from the corner.

'Y-Y-Yes,' Jasmine stammered. 'You're, you're--'



'I am.' Smiling warmly, the dancer didn't at all seem like the insane ex-dancer that Jasmine had been told of. 'And you are?'

'Jasmine,' she managed to get out. 'Jasmine Estelle.'

Visibly paling, Lisette backed away slowly, muttering to herself.

'No. No, not her. No. This can't be happening!' Hitting the wall behind her, she slowly sank to the ground, curling into a ball.

'Um, Miss Westra?' Jasmine asked, worried slightly. 'What's happening?'

'It can't be her. No. No.' She murmured, clutching at her temples and rocking back and forth on the floor. Jasmine leaned in closer, worried. What was going on? The older woman looked crazy, yes, but desperate.

'Listen to me.' Grabbing Jasmine's wrists Lisette yanked her in, so they were face to face. 'Get out of here. Don't listen to the voices. When they come for you, and they will come for you, you leave. Run fast and run far. Before it's too late!' With that, Lisette leaped to her feet and dashed down the corridor.

Jasmine was scared out of her skin, but curiosity got the better of her. She followed Lisette. Sprinting through the halls, she often caught glimpses of the older dancer's skirt swishing behind her. As she followed the woman through the twisting corridors, she ventured deeper and deeper into the house.

Jasmine finally ran out of breath, surprised at the dancer's endurance. Lisette disappeared around the corner. When she finally took a moment to realize her surroundings, she was shocked. She was standing on a stage, spotlights shining on her, their glaring lights making her feel like she was under harsh scrutiny. A deserted row of seats for performances was located directly on the edge of the stage. Turning around to take in her full environment, she looked up, mouth gaping. The backdrop for the final act of Swan Lake was hanging from the ceiling, props set up so as to replicate the death scene. Except this backdrop was covered in spider webs.

Twisting in a circle, planning to get as far away as possible from this, she caught sight of a face. It was terrifying, uncanny. It looked human, but it wasn't. All emotion was gone. It was void of life, the face of death itself, pale as a moon. The eyes were completely red, iris, whites, and pupil, all gone, left with a shade of scarlet that looked like they were filled with pure blood. Black hair hung around its gaunt shoulders in oily locks. Hollow cheekbones made it look almost starved, bony shoulder jutting out, but the muscles that ran along its lithe frame looked strong.

'Who are you?' she said, freezing where she was. Though she was trying to sound indignant, terror was evident in her voice. 'What do you want?'

What do I want? Its voice was everywhere and nowhere at once, a cacophony of whispers and a single voice. It dripped with scorn, surrounding her and making her feel as if the air itself was closing in on her. *What I have always wanted. My life. My world. I want to be a human again.*

'What?' The double meaning hit Jasmine almost immediately afterwards. 'No, I, no. I have my own life. You can't just take that from me,' she replied, her voice shaking.



You think I care about some puny human scum? I am immortal. I can wait forever. But I will return, and I will get my life back and the only one able to host me is you, Jasmine Estelle. I thought it was Lisette, but her performance put a stop to that.

'Lisette?' Jasmine's mind was whirling.

Ah yes, the creature smirked facetiously. Poor thing, she's quite mad now. One would think she's being haunted by, I don't know, demons?

Pieces clicked together. Lisette hadn't fallen. She'd faked it to be rid of the demon, but it was too late. They locked her up in an old mansion to live with the monsters inside her head, with medication that only drew them closer, until she came to the breaking point. Lisette was on the verge. Jasmine had been the catalyst.

I have waited many eons for one as powerful as you. The monstrous being grinned, approaching and holding its palms up in a ritualistic way. *Don't worry, this won't hurt a bit.*

The first thing Jasmine felt was cold. Ice seemed to cover her body, coating her in frost. She felt numb, her mind slowly separating from her body. The demon's thoughts became her own, but the real Jasmine was trapped, trapped in the back of her mind, unable to move or escape or breathe. The maliciousness took over; she wanted to kill, to destroy, to make those venal mortals cower before her.

Ahhh. The demon seemed to draw the words out of her, her voice rasping and rattling, millions of whispers speaking in tandem. *Let's start with your mother shall we?*

'Jasmine?' Gasping, Jasmine's mother stared in shock. 'What's going on? Why are your eyes like that? They're red!'

Hello, Mother Dearest. The demon approached her slowly, grinning sadistically.

Inside, Jasmine was screaming at her mother to run, run fast, run far, get out of here, furiously trying to break free of her mental imprisonment. But, as they say, curiosity killed the cat. Her mother drew closer, studying her.

'What are you doing?'

Don't worry. This won't hurt a bit.

This won't hurt a bit. Exactly what it had said to Jasmine, herself. Drawing on her last reserves she broke free.

'Mother! Go! Run for it!' Reaching out, she gestured urgently for her to go. The demon inside of her grimaced, trying to rein her back in.

It's fine, Mother. Just come a little closer. The demon almost fell over trying to grasp her mother. Staggering around, Jasmine escaped her psychic cage one last time.

'Go!' Sinking to the floor, Jasmine felt like her head was splitting apart as the internal battle raged.



The demon's hand shot out, twisting in a circle. The necklace her mother wore coiled, spiraling from the command given, until it choked her. Her eyes bulged, and watching her struggling for breath, Jasmine felt a sick sense of pleasure. She jerked her hand, and the chain yanked backwards, cutting deep into her mother's neck. She collapsed on the ground, dead.

Foolish girl. You think you can withstand me? Me? The voice shrieked in her head. *Your small willpower won't last forever!*

It wouldn't, Jasmine realized. There was only one way to stop the demon. It would never stop unless it had absolutely no chance. She reached for a knife that lay on the counter, knowing it was her only shot at destroying it.

Don't worry, *Jasmine*, she told herself weakly. *This won't hurt a bit.* And with a deep breath, she plunged the knife in, jerking it out with her last bits of strength, watching as blood gushed from the wound. Her hand went limp, letting the knife clatter to the floor. She felt the darkness closing in, only to be chased away by a blinding white light. And then there was nothing.

It didn't hurt a bit.



SHORT STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM | 2014

‘DARKNESS’

EMMIE DRUMMOND,
YEAR 7, BRITISH SCHOOL OF HOUSTON

*“My illustration is based on the idea that over time
people start to fade away, a representation of death.”*





TODAY I WILL DIE

ISOBEL WALTON, YEAR 9

REGENTS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, PATTAYA

The structure is designed to add tension by getting shorter and shorter as my character gets scared. It is written in both 1st person (italics) and 3rd person. My character has been greatly affected by the fact he knows when he'll die. In a way he's had to grow up fast; this is reflected when he tells his part of the story. The theme of change is his point of view. He goes from being very calm about his death to terrified, as if all that missed youth has finally caught up with him.

Today I will die.

He dragged his way through the undergrowth. Thorny hands clawed at his ankles, now running red with blood. Brambles grew everywhere, obscuring the little light of the near twilight, shrouding the ground in half darkness. He toiled on.

Today is the day that I will die. I've known it – well, I've known it all my life. I don't know how as a child you could understand such things, but I did – I do.

Around him day was turning to night. Light gave way to darkness. Cold winds sliced through the soft summer air. The birdsong was replaced with the wail of the crickets, their mournful tune as painful as silence. The trees seemed to grow in the darkness, disfigured until they could just as easily have been men, statues in the night.

I'm not scared. Not of shadows, not of death. I used to be scared, I used to cry in the night; my parents never heard. But death did. He used to sit by my bedside and cradle me to sleep. As I grew older we would talk. Talk about anything and everything. He never questioned me like the psychiatrists or talked down to me like my parents. He didn't judge me nor I him. He was my friend and I was his. He's always there when I need him and even when I don't. He taught me to embrace the shadows, because that's where he would be; waiting, just the other side of the light.

Surrounded in darkness he strained to make out the path, which was quickly giving way to undergrowth and shrubs. Trying to feel his way along he only succeeded in getting stung by one of the millions of nettles that always seemed to be there. This only got worse when he met a root and fell, head over heels, into yet another bush of nettles. By the time he stood up again, a rash was crawling from his eye down to his arm, his bare feet torn apart by thorns, his body a palette of colourful bruises. He smiled.

I don't mind pain. When you know you're going to die, you learn to embrace everything that makes you feel alive. Pain is one of them; the spike in senses, the adrenaline. I'm not one of those people who go to find pain, intentionally hurt myself, but when I get stung by a bee, scrape my knee, stub my toe, I don't complain; I take it in. I move on



As he neared the edge of the woods, the trees began to thin and the ground began to even. In the distance he could just make out the crumbling silhouettes of the gravestones. Row upon row stood solidly, unmoving, between the shadows. Stepping over the threshold he let out a sigh.

I've never really liked gravestones. Pieces of rock that are meant to represent a life. They are meant to be proof that someone existed even when they are long forgotten. A little piece of them left on earth. But they will crumble and break and your existence will wither away. I don't mind if I am forgotten as so many others have been. Some say that the fewer ties you have to this life, the easier it will be to move onto the next. All I can hope for now is a swift transition.

As he walked through the maze of rock, the starlight beamed down, illuminating each stone. Some were so weathered that they were all but collapsed, others so smooth and polished that you could see the glassy reflection of the moon as you walked past. All had names. Names of mothers, fathers, children, siblings; friends mourned for, strangers forgotten. Though flowers withered next to a few, most only hosted weeds.

Dying isn't just about ceasing to exist; it's about the people you leave behind. I will leave behind only my parents. In a way I am comforted by the fact that they will be better off without me. They will feel upset, guilty, but at least they won't have to live with the pain that I see in their eyes every time they look at me, the pain of having an 'odd' child. My parents have always been strong – well, at least appeared to be – but I've heard them late at night talking to each other: 'Where did we go wrong?' 'How will we get through this?' When I first told them that I knew when I was going to die, they passed it off as nonsense; who wouldn't? I was only three. As I grew older, they grew more worried. I never told them the day of my death, just that I would die at ten – it was the truth. They started with doctors, then psychologists and eventually specialists. They all asked me the same questions and I always told them the same thing: I will die at the age of ten; I don't know how I know this; it is inevitable; there is nothing you can do about it. Eventually they just gave up.

The church sat cradled between a large oak and the graveyard. On its left stood a small bell tower, ivy climbing almost to the top. Gruesome gargoyles seemed to hover above, teeth bared in warning. It overlooked a dainty little lawn that was half dark where the large silhouette of the building blocked out the sky. Daisies and dandelions bent over as if sleeping. He stood there, gazing at building.

There's something beautiful about the way –

Something was there. He could see a shadow coming round the edge of the building. It was long and thin. Suddenly he felt small. Vulnerable. Sweat was collecting on the back of his neck. His heart was beating so loud he was scared the shadow would hear it.

I'm scared. I'm scared of the shadow.

He backed up. It was coming towards him now. He couldn't make out what it was, because of the darkness. He felt something hit his back and realized he had walked into the tree.

I don't know what it is. Is it here to take me, to hurt me? Where's my mummy? Where's my daddy?

He struggled to hold back sobs as he made his way round the tree. He crouched down and curled himself into a ball.



I don't want to die. I don't want to die.

He couldn't hold them back. The tears came pouring down. He could hear footsteps. Sneaking a glance round the side of the tree he saw feet only a few paces away. The shadow stepped closer, now only a few feet away. He counted the steps between the shadow and himself.

Five.

He could hear his heart beating out of his chest. Then another rhythm, the shadow's heavy breathing.

Four.

The world darkened as the moon slipped behind a cloud. He shut his eyes and curled even tighter.

Three.

Suddenly the air became cold. The breathing got closer and his heart beat faster.

Two.

He could hear his blood moving in his veins.

One.

The last step came.

I will look it in the eye.

He did. Tears welling, he lifted his face and stared into the shadow's eyes.

My oldest friend.

Death took his hand. It felt like it always had; made him sleepy.

Death smiled. 'We're going home.'

Together they walked into oblivion.



UNDER THE STAIRS

RYLAN JOENK, YEAR 8

BRITISH SCHOOL OF CHICAGO

In my narrative, I have incorporated features of the Gothic genre such as ambiguous language and contrast between light and dark. For example, at one point in my story, I mention shadows and menacing figures along with supernatural elements and diseased beings. I also establish a Gothic atmosphere by opening the story with dark and sinister weather and location. To add to the Gothic ambiance, I use a multitude of different noises and sounds such as squealing/screaming and laughter. To add a sense of ambiguity, I sometimes do not mention character names or place names, allowing the reader to infer.

Drip. Drip. Drip. Water descended from the small puncture hole in the roof of the car. It soaked her sweater as it fell. She took no notice, for her mind was clouded with dread. She sat frozen with her dark eyes fixated on the raindrops, which were clinging onto the cracked window next to her. They dragged themselves downward, leaving trails of miniscule droplets of water behind. The wind roared as it shook the vehicle she was caged in.

‘Terrible weather, huh?’ stated her mother, taking her eyes off the road to glance at her distraught daughter. Her long blonde curls bounced with excitement as she attempted to make conversation. Becca shrugged. She longed to shriek like the wind. Talking to her mother was the last thing she wanted to do at the moment.

‘Look, I know you’re not so ... keen ... on the move, but we couldn’t afford the old place since your father—.’ She paused with a pained look in her eye.

‘Died,’ her daughter snapped. Whipping her head around, she shot a menacing look at her mother into the rear-view mirror.

Suddenly, the car lurched to a halt.

‘We’re ... we’re here. Get your things out the trunk.’

They had stopped in front of what looked like a prison. The red bricks used to construct the building were coated with congruous scars. A single, dust-covered window could be seen above the front door. The screeching of the ancient mailbox flag wiggling in the wind pierced Becca’s ears as she climbed out of the car, gravel crunching under her feet. Vines pulsated with life as they hugged the house, clawing at the window like desperate inmates reaching their arms through steel bars.

‘It’s beautiful,’ she mumbled sarcastically, as she trudged toward the door after retrieving her bags from the trunk.

Grasping the spherical surface of the door handle, she slowly began to twist, hesitating to do so. The rusted knob squealed in a similar way to the mailbox as she cautiously opened the door ...



The interior of the house burned her eyes as she entered. A hideous chandelier hung swinging on a purple ceiling above her, coated in deceased flies and moths. It was built from what appeared to be rotten sticks and leaves that occasionally fluttered to the floor. The paint on each wall was chipping away, revealing bright yellow under a faded pitch-black. The house conveyed that it had been neglected for years.

'It needs a little work, but I believe it could be great, don't you?' Her mother stood beside her. There was no response. She merely gaped at the ghastly sight before her.

'You'll begin to like it.' Her mother nudged past her, ruffling her dark brown hair as she went into the kitchen ahead. Finally, after about five minutes of motionless staring, she allowed herself to move. As she slid her toes forward, she heard a booming thud that reverberated off the repellent walls, causing her to cease her movements once again. The noise lingered in the air, pounding in her ears, consequently making her head throb violently. It was as if the booming noise shook the whole structure of the house.

'What was that sound? Are you okay? Did you hurt yourself? What happened?' Alice, her mother, charged into the room and began inspecting Becca for any injuries while clutching her arm.

'I'm fine.' She shook herself free of her panicked mother's grip. In response to this, the paranoia was swept from Alice's face and replaced with confusion. What could have made that booming noise?

Just then, a blood-curdling howl, like the squealing of a boiling teapot, poured out of the cupboard under the stairs. The girl dropped to the floor, her hands clenching her ears. The scream made every light on the ceiling flicker ferociously until they blew sparks, making it as black as pitch inside the house. The only source of light was the eerie glow that illuminated from under the door of the cupboard that the squeal had come from. But not only was there a light, but an ominous shadow also protruded from the cupboard ... It resembled the sinister shape of a hunched figure; contorted and misshapen. Then, it started. Soft, menacing laughter.

As it echoed throughout the house, the shadow began to grow larger and larger until it consumed the entire residence.

'Mom,' her mother heard her daughter's voice, however it was not the voice she recognized. It was as if her daughter had struggled for air, for she had called for her mother in a whisper. In response to this, Alice tilted her chin down to the floor where her daughter had collapsed.

'Becca!' Her mother crumbled to the ground next to her daughter, who was fighting for breath. She was choking. The silhouette had engulfed the child, winding its black tendrils around her fragile neck.

As Becca's mother strived to wrench the wicked shadow off her helpless daughter, the groaning of an opening door caused it to release its grip on its own. Gagging and panting, Becca and her mother watched in bewilderment and fear as the shadow slithered back through the cupboard door like a cowardly snake.

'What. Was. That?' questioned Becca, filling her lungs in between each word. Her mother simply shook her head, gazing in the direction in which the silhouette had crawled.

Once she caught her breath, attentively, Becca pulled herself to her feet and began to tiptoe towards the door so as to reduce the risk of the frail floorboards complaining under her weight.



'No, Becca. Get back here ... Please,' her mother pleaded, softly whispering, so as not to disturb what lay in the cupboard.

'I can't lose you like I lost your father. I don't know what's in there and I do not want to find out!' Her tone now a rasping hiss. Yet, her daughter disobeyed this instruction. She continued to advance towards the cupboard.

When she was about two yards away, what seemed like an invisible force hauled her upwards. Tugging at her waist, it caused her back to curve like the hunched shadow had when it first appeared. Squirming and wiggling, Becca attempted to free herself from the merciless grasp of the air around her, but the air seemed to be thickening with every second it held her up.

'BECCA!' her mother cried, for the force had then thrown her daughter in the direction of the cupboard with such power, the intensity of the landing made her unconscious.

Before her mother could shoot to her feet and rush over to her unresponsive child, a black, claw-like figure snuck out of the cupboard. Grimy, grey fingernails sprouted out of the tips of its fingers in serpentine arcs and twists, each one a different length. Worming down the side of the cupboard door, it reached the arm of the helpless Becca and wrapped its reptilian fingers around her wrist ...

Petrified with panic, her mother did not dart towards the cupboard to save Becca from the sinister talon that threatened to harm her daughter. As the distorted hand tightened its grip it drew the poor, senseless girl under the stairs.

Becca's mother's legs finally allowed her to move. When she reached her destination, the cupboard door swung open violently, crashing into her shins and making her collapse on herself. The arrival on the floor caused her to wince slightly but she refused to let the fall slow her down. She was determined to get her beloved daughter back in her arms.

As she pushed her torso off the dusty floorboards, Alice's eyes pointed in the way of her daughter as well as the creature that possessed the retched hand.

The sight was absolutely vile. The beast that stole Becca had the body of an extremely underfed girl. Each vertebra on her back was visible, along with the exposed ribcage under the skin of her chest due to starvation. Every limb looked to be only bone. Her disgusting nest of hair sat on her shoulders, layered with dead leaves and bugs, as black as the space around them.

Although her body had the appearance of just a child, the face on her head was truly atrocious. It was etched with lines and wrinkles, like that of an ancient woman on the brink of death. However, this was not what sent horrid chills down Alice's spine. Right below its forehead, vast, black holes were carved replacing its eyes. The ghastly crevices peered downwards—at what, the mother could not see. The light that was radiating from the cupboard before was now sucked out of the small compartment, leaving only the monster to be visible.

Becca's mother found herself surprisingly calm as she forced herself onto her feet. Then, lifting her foot with extreme circumspection, she began her descent into the darkness.

Instantaneously, the head of the revolting creature faced Becca's mother as she lowered her foot into the cupboard.



The beast jerked its head, its chin now tilting to the side. In this position it opened its mouth, revealing blackened teeth, and slowly began to sing.

'Ring-a-round a rosie,'

The mother took two more steps, swallowing the immense amount of fear she knew she now felt.

'A pocket full of posies.'

Only three feet away now, she could see the faint outline of a hand hanging next to the creature.

'Ashes. Ashes.'

She could now see the whole body of her daughter lying in the lap of the monster. Becca's chest, motionless. The vicious claw that thieved her now gently caressing her face. 'No.'

'We all'

'Becca.'

'Fall'

Becca's mother launched herself in the direction of her daughter.

'Down.'

Her eyes flicker open, however the darkness around her is no different to the light that she sees when her eyes are closed. Lifting her hands in front of her face, she feels the walls for a light switch but then finds herself grasping a round doorknob. Aggressively, she viciously twists and twists the handle but the door refuses to open. Instead, she hears another door open, along with footsteps entering a room. She presses her ear against the door that is trapping her. Suddenly, she hears more footsteps (these louder than the others). Then the voices begin. Yet the only thing she can make out is:

'You'll begin to like it.'

In an attempt to get the speaker's attention, she bangs her fist on the wood of the door, thereby accidentally making a deafening booming noise.



WOUNDED

ALIISA NUMMELA, YEAR 8

THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF BEIJING, SHUNYI

My story is Gothic because it has characters with twists, confusion between reality and human imagination, and a monster. I wrote my story because I find the genre to be fascinating as well as confusing: Gothic stories with twists end in questions. I like to write stories that allow the reader to, in fact, come up with their own ending. My story is dark and therefore fits into the Gothic genre. At the end of the story you don't actually find out what was real and what wasn't – that, in my opinion, is quite a common factor in Gothic stories.

The vile smell hit me before the pain did – my life slowly rotting away. My wound was worse than ever: the blood had dried and formed an expanding bubble around the claw marks. It had my scent and it wouldn't be long before it caught up again. Though I did slow it down; I lost my knife. Defenceless in the middle of the forest, I could still see the moon but the trees were leaning and closing in on me. That large pale moon followed me, watched me ... haunted me.

I clutched the side of a tall oak tree, my other hand wiping my forehead. Sweat had stained and soaked my clothes. Taking deep, painful breaths I felt it. It was like something was in my head, clawing at the inside of my skull. My leg was on fire, or so it felt. Desperate to end the pain I rubbed my wound hopelessly, dabbing my torn fabric on the red skin.

A shadow. The distorted figure of a wolf-like figure appeared on my side. I turned, only to face the glowing silver eyes of an abomination that walks the earth. 'Werewolf', I growled. My skin tingled and my eyes dropped to my hands. Fur crawled out from beneath my skin, growing longer and thicker by the second. 'No. NOT ME!' I screamed.

I woke with a start.

I tug on my blanket and pull it up over my face. Another nightmare. Abruptly my eyes open and I roll out of bed: the front door has been opened. Every time, I can recognise the light creak of the wooden frame. I take heavy, sluggish steps downstairs. 'Mom?' I groan, my throat crackling.

Something flashes in the corner of my eye, but once I turn there is nothing. I can feel my heartbeat in my head and my fingers curl into fists. I slip into the kitchen and I smash into another person: 'AAH!'

'Ah!'

'Mom?'

'Honey!'



'Sorry.'

'I didn't see you there, sweetie.'

'You scared me.'

'Sorry, can you help me with the groceries?'

My hands grab two bags and I place them gently onto the kitchen table. I notice a small package in the plastic bag, neatly packed in brown paper. Before I can resist I slide it into my pyjama pocket. I quickly stuff everything in the fridge. 'Done. I'm going to go back to bed ...' I feel shaky; I've never had to hide anything from my mom before. We've gotten closer ever since dad left us. I always say 'us', to make my mom feel better – I still hear her crying at night.

I feel a spark run through my body and I toss the package onto my bed. 'Ouch.' I sit on my bed for a while, merely staring at the odd thing, trying to decide whether to open it or take it back. Restlessly I rip open the wrapping paper, and my eyes widen in shock.

I see nothing but I can feel it. Not physically; mentally. It's so strange that I almost feel afraid of it. I place it in my drawer in between my math books.

Then my mom walks in, furious, with her face red. 'You took it, didn't you?' She roars.

'Took what?' I try to make myself look confused by raising my eyebrows. She slaps me. Right across the face. I feel her warmth as it vibrates through my cheek in painful waves.

'I'm sorry, honey. I didn't mean to ... I am ...' I can see it hurt her more than it hurt me, yet I can feel the tear drops slithering out of my eyes. I don't hold them back; I don't want to.

'You hit me?' I mumble, glancing at her face and then at the ground in shame. Her hands brush through her tangled hair; she does this when she is stressed.

'Please go.'

'You're my son.'

'Mom, just go.'

She takes a long pause and then walks out of the room.

For hours I stay wide awake, my eyes fixed on the ceiling. The paint has turned from a bright shade of blue to a dark gray and my wallpaper is peeling, yet I've always insisted on not repainting it ... it was a part of me, from childhood. I try to think of other things but my mind replays my mother and her hand slamming against my face. She's never been violent, ever. What could make her be someone she never should have become?



In the morning I don't speak to her: we just nod at each other once I leave for school.

The bus is late. I stand at the sign, my fingers tightly hidden in the sleeves of my coat. That's when I notice them: those eyes. Silver eyes. I blink. They're gone. I crane my head and look down the road: the bus is nowhere to be seen. Shrugging, I drop my bag onto the sidewalk and run across the street and onto the opposite one. Now I am facing the forest, scenes from my dream clouding my mind.

I step onto the drying grass and slide in between two trees.

I'm lost before I know how long I've been walking. 'Hello? I know you're out here!' I shout, my hands around my mouth. In rage I snap a branch and send a bird soaring into the sky.

My feet feel heavy and I lean against a log, sweating and coughing.

Before I can react a large shadow is cast upon my face and I feel a large figure pressing me down. All I feel is endless pain. Claws sink into my shoulders and I am immobilized. I force myself to speak: 'What do you want!'

'You,' a deep voice whispers into my ears, and I black out.

I wake up in the same place but I have no injuries. I pull off my jacket and examine my shoulders. Nothing.

When I get home my mom is in the kitchen, crying. I rush in. There are two police officers seated at the table, with mugs in their hands, opposite my mom. 'What happened?' I panic, 'Is it dad?' My heartbeat rises dramatically. To my surprise my mom smiles in joy and jumps up to hug me. 'What's going on?'

'Honey, you were gone for two days!' My mom bursts into tears and grabs a tissue off the table.

'Sir, we must ask. Where were you? Did you run away?' The police officer with the bulging stomach steps forward.

'No. I was ...'

I tell them the whole story.

'My poor baby ...' My mom falls into her chair. 'He needs help.'

'What?! No! Mom! This really happened!' I grab onto her arm and squeeze it too tightly – she cries out in pain and I release my grasp, my entire body shivering. 'No ... no ... no ... This isn't real! You have got to believe me!' My face is red and my cheeks are stained by my tears.



'Ma'am. We called an ambulance. They will take your son ...' The officer steps in between us. I feel my heart shatter and my body becomes limp from shock. Face first I faint and fall to the ground.

The room is completely white and padded. I'm strapped to a hard metal bed. I notice a small table beside me and on it a large grey needle.

A man in a white suit steps inside and pulls on a pair of rubber gloves. He is odd in the way he walks; his shoulders open wide and his feet taking short, subtle steps, 'Now. It's going to be alright, son. We are here to help you.' An awkward smile spreads onto his lips.

'Am I insane?' I whimper, trying to break free.

'Not at all.'

'What?' My eyes widen and before me flickers the image of a wolf. The man leans in closer to my ear: 'Now, hold on tight. This is going to hurt.' When he stands back up his eyes are glowing silver.

I scream as he sinks his razor teeth into my flesh and I feel my mind float into oblivion.

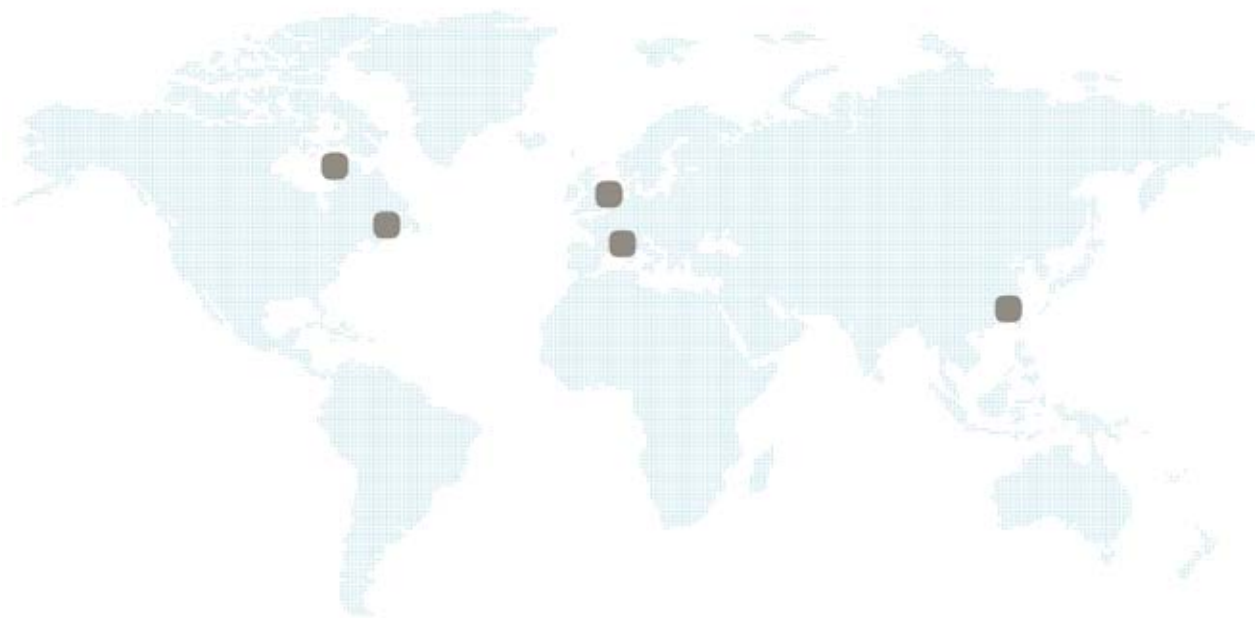


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‘THE CYCLE OF LIFE’

NOEMI PAJAK
YEAR 6, COMPASS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL DOHA,
MADINAT KHALIFA

*“Nature inspired me. I thought about the topic and
the last thing I chose was the perfect idea.”*

