



2025-2026

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Sisterhood

Brianna Redenbo

Joscelyn, Jos, Jo. March 24, 2012. She was born. I was 4, and I always wanted to be around her, and hold her, and feed her. We shared a room which brought us very close. We moved houses in 2018. She stayed in my room for a while, since we both struggle with anxiety and being away from each other. She's always been able to help me when it got super bad. I wouldn't be able to eat or even move, but she was always there. We make sure that our anxiety hasn't taken over. She's forever my little sissy.

A Tiny Love Story

Colton Rogers

Early on it was just me and my mom against the world. Which definitely shaped me into who I am today. In the beginning I did go see my dad every weekend or every other. But recently I have not spoken to my dad in years. So my whole life growing up was with my mom. It was just us against the world. But then she met a pretty good guy 10+ years ago. They got married 5 years back. Now looking back I'm glad he could step up when my father could not.

Birth and Early Childhood

By Kiley Koch

I was born in Beaumont Texas , June 16 of 2007. Thankfully my sun sign is a Gemini and my big three houses make me a power for energetic energy and social working . From a kiddo I've had the same witty personality, always doing something silly. When I was first born in the scorching hot of Texas I was my mom's first baby. She didn't really know what to do, how to act, our trailer had no AC and her postpartum was rough on her being only 18 when she had me

I lived in central Texas, specifically Noam and Beaumont, small towns until I was around 2 years old. Then I moved to Illinois and hoped to live around up here for a bit. I didn't live in Texas long enough to know anything about it or have any memories, but I lived there long enough to say I'm not from here.

I got my first tooth, well, if you mean as a baby, I was probably around 6 months. My mom wouldn't be able to tell me because she had passed me off to my grandma around 6 months because of drug use and postpartum and being only 18 which is my age now, and honestly I could not handle a child at my age.

The first word I said would have been papa. My mom said she was there for it and wasn't very happy because my dad wasn't around like he should have been. My favorite toy till I lost it was a monkey and that's what I called her monkey. It was a girl monkey from the Saint Louis Zoo.

Love Story

By Mercedes Furlong

Growing up my dad was in my life but was absent. I watched every little girl go to daddy-daughter dances wishing I could. When I needed a father figure Jeremy was there and has stayed ever since. Some adults in today's world won't step up and take care of someone else's kids since they aren't theirs. I thought with him he would be the same but he wasn't. Jeremy has given me everything someone could ever ask for. He may have not been my real dad or even adopted me, but in my eyes he's my dad.

Unfostered

By Ruth Baur

Chapter 1

Lucky Me... Right..?

I believe that every person put into your life is there for a reason. Whether it's your parental figure or the employee stocking the shelf in aisle seven. Some people are there to teach you a life lesson, while the others are to provide you with your daily needs such as food or supplies.

Unfortunately for me, I wasn't born in the best family. I was born in Columbia, Missouri on June 18, 2008. My bipolar mother, Cara Baur, was 36 and my psycho father, Chris Baur, was 38. I grew up with my bipolar mother working off and on and my psycho father, working, coming home and getting drunk or if we were lucky enough, he would just sleep.

On those nights that we weren't so lucky, we either get yelled at or abused. I unfortunately didn't get to have much escape either. In the state of Missouri, they don't require children to go to preschool. I didn't get to make friends until kindergarten, and even then I didn't make many friends. I lived out in the middle of nowhere so I didn't get to have any neighbors to have play dates with.

One of my biggest supporters growing up were my grandparents (my dad's parents). When my parents got divorced, they stayed together for a little while after (I don't think it was a good idea since all they did was scream and argue all the time). Then, after a long custody battle, my dad unfortunately got full custody over me. He packed up all our things one early morning and we moved to Salem, Illinois in 2013. The problem was, he didn't even tell my mother that we were leaving, he just took me and left. Like it was nothing. Like my mom was nothing to me.

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He took me like I was just some... object- a trophy to be exact. Then that's how it started, the fight between my mother and father to keep me like a trophy.

Chapter 2

Well This Sucks... Real Bad...

As a child, I never really was able to make friends and keep them. I mean, I really had no problem making them, but I couldn't keep them to stay. It was like no one wanted to stay and play with me. To make things worse, I had moved a lot since I had moved to Illinois. Originally when I came to Salem, I lived with my nana and father. Then my father and I moved out to a house near my nana's and that was it... or so I thought. My father was a drug addicted, alcoholic, dead beat man. So he couldn't keep a job down and when he had money in his hands, they went towards drugs and alcohol. Not his child that was trying to make sense of everything.

A horrible situation happened and I went into my nana's care from the ages six through eight. I don't remember much during this time, just bits and pieces of memories. I had visits with my parents every weekend. Sometimes, my mom would just show up because my dad would be working. I started to notice that kids at school would go on vacation with THEIR parents and siblings. I got jealous. I wanted what they had. I wanted to be a normal kid and live with my parents. My nana and I got into a huge argument over the situation. She wanted to keep me safe like any normal grandparent would want to do for their young grandchild. Ultimately, she chose to let me go back. If someone were to ask me if I regret my decision, I would simply say no. I believe I wouldn't be the strong, caring, knowledgeable person I am today. Without the unfortunate trauma I've experienced, I wouldn't be Ruth. I just wouldn't be me.

After many more times of moving back and forth between my mother, father, and nana, I was put into foster care. I entered the system when I was 11. I was so young and unaware of my surroundings. At first, I was placed with my nana. I lived with her until I was 13 and then I moved with a set of foster parents in Springfield, IL. Their names were Ramona and John. Ramona was an older, short, assertive Hispanic woman and John was an older, tall, skinny, soft spoken white man. They were quite the couple. We got along great in the beginning, but then, my mental health declined significantly. We got into several arguments about my weight and school. They took me out of the school marching band and choir because I needed to “earn it back.” I had started music when I was six and I didn’t believe that I should’ve had to earn it back. It was a coping mechanism that helped me escape from reality. After a while, I became more depressed, and I was always anxious. I ultimately was displaced and spent an unnecessary amount of time in Lincoln Prairie Behavioral Hospital in Springfield, IL.

Chapter 3

Toughen Up Buttercup

After four months of being in grippy sock paradise, I was put into a group home called Spero Family Services. It was located in Mount Vernon, IL. Mount Vernon wasn’t far from Salem, so I visited my nana a few times. My relationship with my mother grew stronger and I was doing wonderful at the group home. Although I was the only youth there that wasn’t vaping or drinking or smoking weed, I heard I was considered everyone's favorite youth. That proved that you didn’t need to do harmful things to yourself in order to be accepted by others. I tried to make an example for other youth in my group home to show them that. I was there for a little while before I decided I wanted to go back to my mother. I had visits with her for a while and

then something started to happen in the beginning of April in 2024. She was constantly going to the ER and in pain all the time. But although she was in pain, she would still drive the 3 hours to come get me and then drive me back to her trailer.

We then learned my mother had kidney failure in May of 2024. It wasn't the easiest conversation to hear... I remember it almost word for word.

"Hey doodle-bug! How was work today?" my mom said over the phone. She sounded worse than yesterday, but she still had a little pep in her voice.

"Hey mama frog, work was good, but super long. How was your day?"

My mom hesitates before admitting, "I went to the ER again today--"

"Mom, you should've called me!! You know I could've gotten a ride arranged with the group home to come help out."

"I know, I know... but they figured out what was wrong with me."

I don't say anything at first, I let her words sink in before continuing the conversation.

"What did they say...?"

My mom is quiet and then she takes a deep breath and says "I have acute kidney failure."

I don't remember the rest of the conversation because I had several panic attacks and I learned that my mom was still in the hospital. I packed a suitcase and I arranged an emergency ride to Jacksonville, IL. I didn't know how much time I had left with my mother... I didn't care about work or about anyone else or my plans that weekend with my best friends, Kiro and Victoria. I got a ride from my caseworker's supervisor and the whole time, I stayed quiet. Not a word came out of my mouth. I was too shocked, too afraid of the unknown. I didn't know what was going to happen to her. She was the only family I had left that actually wanted me. She tried to be there when she could... Now I had to be there for her.

Chapter 4

Things Started To Look Up... Or So I Thought...

On June 18, 2024, I met up with my childhood friend Destiny and had dinner with her. She gave me updates on her life and I gave her a life update on my mother. My mother was still alive, but she was doing dialysis to keep her alive. I had to figure out a different living arrangement. I couldn't live with my mother because if she were to die, I wouldn't have anywhere to go. I would go right back into the system. Destiny was also a foster youth and her foster mom was super awesome. I had only met her once at the time, but she was always so kind and helpful. Her name was Amber and her husband was Tim. They had an 11 year-old boy named Noah and a 2 year-old girl named Addison. They also had fostered other youth. Later on in my relationship with Amber and Tim, I got to meet a 24 year-old woman named Sabrina and her husband, Justin. We all instantly clicked and got along pretty great. I loved their family and they loved me.

After a while, I started to advocate for me to move in with Amber and Tim. I knew that with my mom only getting worse in her kidney failure, that I would never be able to live with her. I talked to Amber and Tim about it first. They said they would need to talk about it, but wouldn't see a problem in it. They had the room and we had a wonderful connection. After a week, Amber texted me the green light. I finally had a home again. I then talked to the group home staff about this and they weren't for it at first. They said they had advocated for me to go back to my mother and that was the plan. I gave them a long list of why I shouldn't go back. I told them that my mother was only getting worse. She was being reckless with her money and spending it on stuff she didn't need. She couldn't work much because of her health, so therefore,

she couldn't care for me like she would need too. They then realized I was right and they started to get the ball rolling. So far I talked to foster parents and the group home. Now I just had to talk to my mother. That was hard. It took my mother a long time to accept my decision, but she finally did.

On September 27, 2024, I moved in with Amber and Tim. We moved my stuff over several visits before then, but that was the day I finally lived there for good. My discharge meeting went wonderful, no problems at all. My mother attended and as always, made it about herself. She had a tendency to make things about herself; it was just her personality. I was used to it, so I kept calm and got through it. During that time, my mother and I hadn't been getting along. She had gotten back together with her toxic ex-boyfriend, Terry. He had abused the both of us and she refused to admit it. We had a huge argument over the whole situation. The last thing she said to me was "I love you and I'll text you tomorrow." I replied back with, "I love you too and okay, talk to you then mama." Then the call ended and I drove with Amber and Tim to my new home. Then on September 28, 2024, she died of a heart attack. "She was just fine yesterday, how could this have happened?!" I thought at first. She was supposed to text me this morning and she never did. I was hurt. I was angry. I was depressed. I feel a little bad about admitting this, but deep down, I also felt relieved. I had been taking care of my mother since April and I was trying to figure out how I'd continue to do it. After many months of figuring out how to grieve, I finally accepted my mothers' death recently. It will be a year since she's been gone on September 28, 2024. About a year ago, I didn't think I could make it without her, but now I'm thriving.

It's been a crazy 17 years so far, but I don't regret anything I've done so far. I've grown and learned from all my mistakes and successes. I have come from being a shy, confused,

frustrated child, to a blossoming, knowledgeable, observant young woman. I have many more years to go, so I look forward to all of them!

An Untouched Womb

By Zoey Eastin

It's quite impossible for me to be pregnant, yet somehow it's the truth. "Who's the father?" I guess he's gone. I don't recall giving birth, but it's obvious I did. I'm holding my baby. Gazing at the greatest love I'll ever have. Taking her to school, everyone asking to hold my adorable daughter. I thought she'd be a burden, how could I ever have such a thought? She's everything happiness is, nothing else matters in this entire world. Without warning, my joy's ripped away. I wake up, cold sweat in my bed. I'm left grieving a daughter who never was.

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Sweet Return

Gracie Long

A package arrived at my door. I haven't ordered anything. The package isn't addressed to me. I sat it on my counter, with plans to take it to the post office the next day. I heard a sudden grumble in the middle of the night. What could it be? I walked into the kitchen; everything seemed normal. I went back to bed. The next morning, I took it to the post office. I got home, not even two minutes had passed. There's a knock at the door. I opened it, and there I found the same package upon my doorstep.

The Bookshelf

Devin Ruscher

My mom and I recently moved into a new house. This house is old. It's all made of wood, and it has a long driveway. We moved from New York. Mom said the bills were too much, but I think it's because her favorite pizza place closed down. We unpacked the car and started making the new house a new home. We got all the boxes inside and unpacked but then I saw mom freeze from the corner of my eye. It was the picture box. I asked her if she was ok and she said, "Yea." It was just a picture of her, me and dad. My dad died in war against Germany. We have been living in this house for a little over a month now, and I noticed this book shelf looked a little different than all the other ones did. The curious person I am decided to start feeling around on the book shelf, and I found a book that pulls back. I pulled the book back and this secret door opened to a staircase. I never went up the staircase because I've watched plenty of movies to know that whatever is on the top of those stairs can't be good. Mom then yelled out supper is ready so I ran downstairs to the kitchen and I never messed with the book shelf again.

Come Clean

By Amerie Schleuter

Blood slicks my suit again—warm, sticky, unforgiving. It dulls whatever empathy I have left for the vermin I erase from my city’s veins. The city knows me as a man of order and money; the violence is what keeps that illusion intact.

I’ve done this long enough that it feels routine, almost necessary. But tonight breaks the pattern. Tonight, I hunt the rot that birthed me, my father. He shattered my mother, deserted my brother. When I corner him, his fear feeds me. Another stain to scrub away... though some marks never truly come clean.

The Ghost Killer

By Gracie Burkett

There once was a car accident in Montana. Two teens rolled down the side of a mountain. Their names were Karissa and Kaylee. Karissa lived, but sadly Kaylee died. There have been theories that Kaylee is still alive though. Many bodies have been found near where the car accident was. People go missing there all the time, and she was known for wanting people dead. People also say that they can hear her talking at night and hear screams. Therefore, people think that she’s either still alive or her ghost is haunting people. The ghost killer.

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The Thirteenth Curse

By Alex Salvaggio

Every romantic fairytale starts and ends the same. There is a Prince and a Princess, the evil villain is defeated and all is well. This story isn't your regular story, instead we watch everything from Morwen's perspective.

Morwen, in the original Sleeping Beauty, was an evil fairy who wanted Briar Rose dead...but we were never told why. This story is the story of Morwen, the story of a forgotten soul who needed her own story...The story of The Thirteenth Curse.

Morwen walked through the Kingdom village with a woven wooden basket. She covered her identity with a black cloak, keeping her head down. The shops were closing up, and the bell ringer sat in the middle of town square. Nobody paid the man any mind.

“HEAR YE, HEAR YE! KING EDRIC AND QUEEN ANNELIESE HAVE GIVEN BIRTH TO A WONDERFUL DAUGHTER, PRINCESS BRIAR ROSE! THERE WILL BE A CELEBRATION TOMORROW, BRING GIFTS TO THE CASTLE!” The man was rather short and stout. His dirty blonde hair was pulled into a small ponytail; he waved his bell high.

Morwen approached, covering the lower half of her face so she was unrecognizable.

“A princess?” She asked, her voice low and hissing.

“Yes — Yes a princess!” The man sheepishly replied, masking his fear in fake enthusiasm.

“And they're having a celebration?”

“A big celebration, a *very* big one, miss. There are special guests—”

“Oh are there now?”

“Yes miss, the twelve fairies of—”

“THE *WHAT?!*”

Morwen’s eyes widened, the fairies were familiar to her. *Very* familiar. The memories flooded back to her, hitting her like a brick. The man held up his bell in front of him, squeezing his eyes shut tight, afraid. The mistress took a few breaths, gathering her composure.

“Thank you, young man.” She threw two coins in his bell and walked off, her cloak waving behind her. The Sun had set, and it was only a matter of time until our protagonist became the villain of our story.

Morwen sat in her overgrown castle, pacing back and forth. Her crow soldiers chirped loudly. The soldiers were crows, but had bodies like humans. They were repugnant — they were *her* magic blue birds that she sang (screamed) to.

“The fairies... The fairies, the fairies, THE FAIRIES! OF *COURSE* THOSE FAIRIES!” The fairies were her sisters — the real villains of her story. They bullied her, they tortured her. They had her arm branded with insults. They stole her dresses, tore her hair, ripped her wings clean off. They abandoned her, leaving her to die at the ripe age of 12. All because she couldn’t do normal magic.

There was nothing good about Morwen. She wasn’t kind; she was hideous. Her castle was on the verge of crumbling, and her magic was *evil*. It was easy to hurt people, and it was hard to love. She was unaware that if you stab someone in the heart, you can’t pull out a clean sword.

The celebration started, everyone brought presents and danced. Morwen entered the castle and stood in the corner, watching the baby from afar. Queen Anneliese cooed at her, the fairies patiently waited. Morwen recognized every one of them. She ran her fingers over her arm,

able to feel the words pressed on. *DASTARD*. That was the name of their horse — the sisters had a cruel, twisted sense of “humor.” The “ard” had slowly faded, leaving the word “DAST.”

The center of the ballroom cleared, and the twelve fairies lined up in front of the cradle. Briar Rose was blessed by the first eleven fairies with the common stuff every fairytale princess has.

Morwen had enough, and before the twelfth fairy could bless the baby, she exited the crowd and made her way to the front room, shouting, “HOLD IT! HOLD EVERYTHING!” The courtroom froze, everyone’s eyes turning to the screaming fairy.

“You bless the child with traits you do not possess?” asked Morwen, facing her sisters. They all looked ashamed. “She may be the prettiest lady in all of the Kingdom, but she is not a good one! Bless her with charm, and bless her with whatever else she needs to find a lonely prince, but she will NEVER be a good princess!”

Approaching the cradle, she grabbed the baby’s arm and poked her delicate finger with a crow feather. Briar wailed, the crowd gasped — the knights ran towards Morwen but were unfortunately met with thorned vines that snaked from the floor and wrapped around the men. Blood ran down the infant’s arm, and Morwen cleaned it with a cloth, holding it up with triumph. The audience gasped, quiet murmurs and mumbles swarming the air like wasps.

“AND THIS IS *MY* BLESSING TO YOUR LITTLE PRINCESS! ON HER SIXTEENTH BIRTHDAY SHE SHALL PRICK HER FINGER ON THE SPINDLE OF A SPINNING WHEEL AND DIE! IF SHE *REALLY* IS A PRINCESS, THEN SHE WILL BE KISSED BY THE LOVE OF HER LIFE AND WAKE UP. ANYONE WHO TRIES TO BREAK MY BLESSING WILL HAVE THEIR HEAD CHOPPED CLEAN OFF!”

Queen Anneliese teared up, hugging King Edric as he rubbed her back comfortingly.

Morwen laughed and laughed. Her cackles echoed through a quiet castle, as she walked out the big wooden doors. They slammed shut. The fairies lowered their heads, frightened. The twelfth fairy, Gwyneth, walked up to the cradle weeping, terrified of losing her head. She knew she couldn't let the kingdom feel fear.

“My blessing is that the princess does not die, but falls asleep for one hundred years...Every human in the kingdom will fall asleep once the princess does. Nobody will age in their sleep, and once those one hundred years are over everyone will wake up. The kingdom will resume its state.” Gwyneth bowed her head, the Queen still sobbing. King Edric still comforted her, but the tears were creeping up in his eyes.

The years passed and Morwen's crows stalked the baby over time, giving the aging woman feedback. There were twenty-four hours until the princess's birthday, and Briar Rose was ecstatic. The poor girl, unaware of the curse, had been sent to the woods to “hunt for berries.” She was given to an old farmer couple that were raising her.

Morwen rode through the forest on her horse, pulling a wagon. Briar Rose waved her fingers in a small creek, watching the fish pass by. Morwen immediately recognized the princess.

“Hello, my dearest! How are you?” Morwen got off her horse and hobbled towards the princess.

“I am fine, just...” The princess sighed. “Lonely.”

“Lonely? But why, my dear?” Asked the fairy.

“Today is my birthday, and my mother and father have sent me to do chores.”

“AH, AH AH! Don't be disgraceful my dear, I may have a gift for you...Do you like sewing?”

“I do not mind it...My mother enjoys it more than I do. She loves yarn—“

“Well, how about a free spinning wheel? Maybe you can make yourself a nice dress.”

Briar Rose paused and stared at the woman.

“I would like it...”

Morwen laughed and clapped her hands, walking to the carriage, taking out the spinning wheel.

“Now be careful, my dear, it is quite heavy...and quite *sharp!*”

Briar carried the wheel to her house, frowning. The old lady was an interesting figure...

“I’m home!” shouted Briar. Silence. The farmers must have been taking their midday nap. Briar set the wheel down in her house, admiring it. A crow perched on her window and stared intently...Poor Briar Rose was unaware that the crow wasn’t the only one watching her.

The wheel began to spin, a green hue emerged from it. Thoughts flowed through the princess’s head.

TOUCH IT. TOUCH IT. TOUCH IT. TOUCH IT. TOUCH IT. TOUCH IT.

And so, she grazed her finger against the spindle, pressing down a little too hard.

“What?...” Briar Rose stared at her finger, watching the red overflow the pale skin. The girl fell limp...

Morwen cackled, standing up from the bush. “YES!” The fairy ran to the window and opened it, picking up the princess.

“YOU’VE DIED! You’ve died, you’ve died, you’ve died, you’ve died — AND I HAVE WON!” Morwen laughed, setting the princess on her bed. Before Morwen left the room, she took one last look at the girl to only see her chest rise and fall.

“WHAT?!” The fairy stomped over, shaking Briar Rose.

“WHY AREN’T YOU DEAD! YOU’RE ASLEEP?! WAKE UP, WAKE UP!”

There was no response besides a quiet hum. Briar shifted slightly in her sleep. Morwen dropped the princess.

Now what? She hadn't thought this far. How could this have happened? She was supposed to be dead, not asleep! DEAD! Morwen walked into the house, noticing another bedroom with the door slightly cracked. She peeked inside, noticing the parents. Slowly approaching them and poking the mother. No response, she was asleep too. The crow that had followed Morwen pecked the lady on the head. Nothing.

She hitched her skirt and ran to the Kingdom, looking around. Everyone had fallen asleep and wouldn't wake up! Morwen paused. Everyone had fallen asleep and *wouldn't* wake up. This was GREAT! She could rule the empty kingdom, eat all the food, drink all the drinks — it was wonderful! She hadn't been affected because she lived outside the kingdom. Morwen laughed and laughed, her long black braid trailing behind her.

As she reached the castle, Morwen threw the King and Queen off their thrones. A murder of crows swarmed in, shattering the stained glass windows, and pecked at their unconscious bodies. The King and Queen didn't move or swat at them, and so the murder began to feast.

Morwen had it all. She had an entire kingdom to herself, but as the years pass, she realized it's not as good as she had hoped for.

She and her birds had feasted on every crop. Morwen killed every animal in town and ate them. There were no awake farmers to help with the farms and breed the animals. Ninety-nine years. Ninety-nine years of torture.

Morwen rests upon her crumbling throne. Her hair was gray, the braid falling out of place. She was malnourished. Her dress was tattered, and the crows were the only ones keeping

her company. Disease infested the sleeping bodies since they haven't been awake to take care of themselves. She moved the miracle-princess, who had not a scratch on her, to the castle's bed.

"More water, my dear?" Morwen walked upstairs. Briar Rose was on the bed, still sleeping peacefully. Morwen sat the girl up and opened her mouth, pouring the goblet of water down her throat.

"Now, now...Don't be so picky. I'm here taking care of you, you're not dead..." Morwen smiled at the girl, which quickly turned into a frown. The lady was erratic.

"Not dead, OF COURSE YOU AREN'T DEAD!" Morwen picked up a piece of glass that had fallen out of the window during a bad storm, raising it to the beauty's face. She was overridden with guilt. Why, why did she ever do this? Suddenly, Morwen felt something sharp piercing through her back. Looking down and seeing a bloodied blade. Morwen touched the tip that had stuck through her.

A man with brown hair held the end, his blue eyes seemed to pierce through her more than the sword.

Why did this happen? She felt guilty! She felt bad!...Yet Morwen didn't know that if you stab someone in the heart, you can't pull out a clean sword.

The End.

Humpty Dumpty Broke Both Walls

By Ava Carter

This is the story of a young girl and her favorite book, that girl being me. That book being Humpty Dumpty. You could even say they are almost best friends but that's the mystery. How did they become BFFs if one was fictional and the other was non-fiction. This is the whimsical way of how this friendship came to be. Starting all in my cute little room filled with child-like decorations.

I sat in my room, only a small child, learning to read and write; there in my hands was the book called Humpty Dumpty with funny images and visions of Humpty being clumsy scattered the pages. I started to laugh with each moment as they became funnier, did silly things, and hilarious actions. The words and acting in between pages are more interesting as my eyes read them with joy.

The memories of Humpty Dumpty either tripping on the sidewalk and always saying a catchy line will always make me laugh. He became my friend as he would get happier each time that I laughed and felt joy after he would get put together. Although sometimes I would get worried and sad when Humpty would get hurt but as always he would get fixed and stand back up. "I'm okay my child, let's not worry about the past and focus on the goofy future," Humpty would say through the page to stop me from crying.

Finally, the end of the book approaches as Humpty is sitting on a wall. Suddenly he slips and falls! "Oh no Humpty!" I yelled in shock at the book in my small hands. "Humpty are you okay?" "You broke the wall and you're all in pieces!" I say in disappointment but in worry as well. I then turn the page once more and he had done something different than usual. His head

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turned as he looked me in the eyes with comfort gleaming through them. “It’s okay little one, just help me pick up the pieces?” Humpty asks me with a soft tone. I blink in shock and when I blink, my eyes open to a whole different world (quite familiar but different at first to my growing mind). I’m in the book and I don’t even hesitate for a second before walking over to Humpty and picking up the pieces.

Now with my help and Humpty Dumpty put back together we fixed the wall that he fell off of and our friendship began. Although we fixed that wall, we decided to leave the wall between my reality and the adventures of Humpty open. Moving forward we became BFFs and the wall will always be broken and open for me and Humpty Dumpty; sometimes I think of him and feel the need to open the book again and escape. I miss his silly little stories and adventures that we would have; this is the story not only of how Humpty Dumpty broke both walls but of how a childhood friendship appeared.

Not All Wheels Are Fast Enough

By Braxton Bryant

Hi, my name's Devin Ruscher, and I've been in veterinary school for 6 years. Some people are surprised to hear I got a job at the most prestigious safari in the world. Now you may be thinking, what's so surprising, "Are you dumb?" "Do you not belong?" Well to be honest, I probably shouldn't belong, but I somehow managed to finish top of my class and got this job... all while being in a wheelchair. Yup, you heard right. Devin Ruscher is paralysed. It's a little hard to do my job but yea, I got it done. My first day out on the safari was training day. I found it a little hard to get around in my wheelchair. I even kept getting a lot of weird looks. I started to get nervous that they might change their mind about me just because of my struggle due to the chair. I finally got through the training and made it to the club house for my final part of the interview. The safari keeper sat down and sighed. "Devin, the chair is a problem." I felt my heart beginning to stop as those words came out of his mouth. "And there's only one way I know to fix this problem." I just knew I was about to get fired before I was even hired. "We would like to give you the offroad wheelchair." A look of confusion struck my face.

"I'm sorry, sir, what?"

"The offroad wheelchair so you can get around the safari better."

I couldn't believe they had helped me keep the job by giving me an off road wheelchair. "Come on Devin lets go try it out." I climbed in it as fast as I could. We immediately headed out back to the safari to try it. We started to reach the lion area, and I spotted the safari's most famous lion of them all, Mufasa. He has always been a grumpy, easily agitated lion just because of how old he is. I called his name, kind of just like a sort of hello or greeting. He stood up, and I smiled with joy feeling alive. But my smile quickly faded into fear. Mufasa started to charge me. I tried

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to move, but my tire was stuck in some piled up sand in the road. My feelings of being so alive have quickly turned the other way. I'm not going to feel alive anymore. Mufasa jumped up and landed in my lap. These were my last memories.

Gone

By Emma Woods

During a very bad blizzard, there was a 17 year old with curly brown hair. She has hazel eyes. Her name is Dakota. She was staring out her window thinking about what it would be like to be stuck out in the blizzard, feeling like you're burning from the outside in but it's just the hypothermia trying to comfort you while you are dying from a slow cold death. She eventually got up and snuck into the kitchen where her mom was making dinner. She was humming a song she was listening to through her headphones. While her mom was making meatloaf she grabbed her big winter jacket and snuck out the front door. Dakota was walking on the side of the road on her way to her friend Dana's house. Dana only lived 3 blocks away from Dakota's house, so they often would walk to one another's house without parent supervision, that's why Dana's mom Kelly didn't question it when Dakota came in the house stomping her boots on the mat trying to get the snow off. Kelly welcomed Dakota in the house with a warm cup of coco. Kelly has only one rule in her house, and it's not to go into the closet by the bathroom, and if you look you won't ever be allowed back. Dakota runs upstairs to Dana's room after finishing off her hot coco. As Dakota gets closer to Dana's room, she hears a knock coming from the closet. She stops in her tracks and creeps closer to the closet. She put her hand on the door handle and was slowly turning the knob.

Dana came out of her room scaring Dakota while saying "Are you ready to play truth or dare!"

Dakota let the door knob go and ran in Dana's room with her. While playing truth or dare Dana dared Dakota to open the closet door. Dakota was hesitant but reluctantly agreed. She got up and slowly made her way to the door. She slung it open, but it was just filled with clothes and

old toys. The smell was rank. It smelt like an old tree when termites were eating it from the inside out. She starts digging in the closet when she notices a rusted hatch barely holding on to what looks like an old worn out piece of wood. She unlocked it and creaked the door open while trying to peep inside. When she opens the door she is able to see an old glass doll with a blue dress that had white puffer sleeves. It had little to no hair on its head, and pieces of its face were missing. The doll was in a dimly lit room with a light hanging over it swinging in a circle while it was flickering off for a few seconds. Dakota ran out of the closet crying when all of a sudden she realized the house was empty. It was abandoned, and she was all alone. She ran out of the house while a demonic little girl laughed in the distance. She got onto the street and looked back and saw the house had paint chipped off showing off the oak underneath. She ran home covered in sweat and dirt. When she went into her house her mom was making dinner and her back was turned to Dakota. When she turned her back facing Dakota her eyes lit up, and she dropped the glass bowl she was mixing cake batter in. She grabbed Dakota, picked her up and hugged her to the point where she couldn't breathe. Dakota had tears in her eyes but confusion washed over her face. Dakota asked her mom why she was so excited to see her since she was only gone for a few hours. Her mom now also having a confused face told Dakota. “ Honey, you have been missing for 3 weeks.”

The Three Little Pigs

By Jean Stadler

A long time ago, in a mystical land far away, there were three little pigs. Those three little pigs were leaving their home and starting their own lives. Each pig wanted to build a house independently, having their own space. To follow the traditional story, we are going to start with the first little pig, and his start at independent life.

The first little pig wanted to build his house out of hay and straw.

“I don’t ‘ave to spend all m’ money if I use ‘ay to make my ‘ouse.” He would say this out loud to himself—and for the benefit of you as the reader—in pride of his intelligent choice. Unfortunately for him, he is a bit—extremely—unintelligent. A complete pea-brain, nonsensical to the very definition.

“Are you dense? Stupid, even? Your house is made of hay and straw! A single stray ember and your house will combust. Oh, sorry, let me dumb it down for you. It’s flammable.” To no one’s surprise, at the sound of the narrator’s ‘lovely’—albeit, condescending—voice, the little bacon precursor whipped around. Obviously, there was no one there. I am just a voice. But regardless, he—the pig, if you were not able to follow along—felt the need to respond.

“Who said ‘at?” He yelled. “My ‘ouse ain’t flammable!” Stupid, stupid pig.

“Oh really? You know what? There was going to be a wolf in the story, but no. I changed my mind.” With a snap of my non-tangible fingers, the air around him fills with smoke. His hay house—which was poorly built anyway—had ‘magically’ caught fire. “What was that? ‘My ‘ouse ain’t flammable!”” The poor little pig yelled out in frustration, unable to handle a little teasing from yours truly—though, it may have been because I literally burnt his house down—and left for the second little pig's home.

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Now, as the narrator, of course I am going to follow him. When our dearest pig arrived at his brother's house, —I assume it will be no surprise to you— it was made of sticks! Like, the ones you pick up from the ground. The second pig was quick to gloat about his horrid house.

“Sticks are strong and easy to find! All I had to do was tie them together with rope!” Did you hear that, reader? Let us go take a look at those bindings on the sticks. He. . . He tied them like one would shoes. Welp, you know how it goes. With divine intervention —me, it was definitely me— one of the knots was pulled loose, making the entire house collapse.

“Hey, so- if you're going to build a house, maybe use better knots.” Good job me. That was good information. But, of course, the two pigs, one angry and the other exhausted —you can pick which is which— headed out to their last brother's house. Once again, we follow the pigs.

Upon arriving at the last house, the last little pig is placing the last brick of his lovely —I am being serious this time— house. The pig, tired from his work, was humble —a nice change of pace from his mind-numbing brothers— and did not brag about his house, but instead continued to work on other parts of the house! Woah! Alas, I —being the best narrator ever— leave him alone. I may be a jerk, but I can be nice when I want to be. *Totally*. Anyway, the moral of the story is to work hard and be respectful, just in case your teacher asks.

Lilli Pads

By Luci Schaubert

“Dalton! Dude! Lock in man, where is your head even at right now?”

“Sorry man, just tired,” Dalton sighs as he pulls his focus away from the stands and back into practice.

“Ohh, I get it. Lookin’ at Violet huh?”

“Yea, Violet, right.”

Dalton and Violet have pretty much been *the it* couple since they were freshmen. Two years spent fighting, breaking up, making up, making *out*, then doing it all again very publicly in the halls. Dalton is senior football captain at Westward High School, and Violet is senior cheer captain. It just makes sense for them to be together. At least to everyone else it does.

After practice, Dalton goes home, opting out of the hangout at Ben's house with some of the other football football boys. When he gets home, he walks by the living room, ignoring the shouting coming from his parents, and the crying from his younger sister, Bella, in her playpen. He goes up to his room, his only place of sanction, the only place he can be himself. No parents. No football. No teachers. No Violet.

He turns on his music, blasting through his head phones so he can't hear the screaming coming from downstairs. He turns over and over again and again. He can't sleep. He gets on his phone to scroll mindlessly for hours.

@Lilli.Vandercroff <3 liked your new story.

A post Violet insisted he make in honor of their senior homecoming.

Lilli Vandercroff was a sophomore at Westward High. She had transferred halfway through last year. Her beauty was effortless, never a hair on her head was out of place. Her

family had money, and you could tell by looking at her, but never when she spoke. She wasn't like the rest of the rich snobs in their godforsaken town who look down on the others for not having the newest model of iPhone every other week. She was kind and bubbly, but quiet and reserved. No one really knew much about Lilli Vandercroff. She just lived in her own peace. She was on the dance team, and she was good. Always front and center pulling off tricks nobody else could even imagine attempting.

Dalton can't help but look through her account, quickly though, not lingering for too long. He gets his fix, clears her name from his history, and rolls over and goes to bed.

The next day, Violet is yelling at Dalton in the halls. No one bats an eye. As she berates him for his forgetfulness of their plans the night before, Lilli passes by and shoots him a smile.

Crap. Dalton can feel his face getting red, and knows Violet will notice.

“Oh! So it's her? You're blowing me off for some sophomore? Are you kidding me? Seriously, this has to be a joke.” She doesn't listen when Dalton tries to shut down the accusation.

He goes home that night after floating through school and practice like the shell of a human, nothing inside. Back to his room. Alone. His favorite place to be. His phone is blowing up with messages and calls from Violet.

Violet: baby come over

Violet: Missed Call

Violet: please dalton

Violet: i miss you

Violet: Missed Call

Violet: dalton where are you?!

He shuts the phone off and looks out the window, and sees someone running down the road. She's running, but it's elegant. Her hair in a pony at the back of her head, each lunge graceful and precise, she keeps a steady pace. In a hoodie and spandex you can still see the girl's goddess-like physique. She sees the boy looking at her through the window; she gives a soft smile, and a gentle wave. Lilli Vandercroff.

Dalton bolts down the stairs and shouts to his parents that he's leaving. Of course their screaming is too much for him to be heard anyways. Not that they would care even if they could. He gets out the front door, and the girl is gone. He gets in his car and stops for a moment. *What are you doing?* He thinks of Lilli, then of Violet, then of Lilli again. And before he can think back to Violet, his foot is on the gas and he is driving down her road.

She's a good distance in front of him, and he watches her go inside. He sits in the road and waits till he sees a light upstairs flicker on. She looks around the window, and shuts the curtain. He leaves, his heart still racing, his mind still wondering why he would do that.

Dalton: Violet, I can't do this anymore. Seriously. I am miserable. YOU make me miserable...

He deletes it.

The next day at school Dalton had a very peaceful morning since he got to school. No yelling, no accusations, no stress... weird. It wasn't until lunch when he realized that he hadn't seen Violet at all. He didn't pass her in the halls, she didn't sit by him in class, she even avoided him in the cafeteria. No wonder he hadn't had a headache all day.

The calm before the storm.

Dalton stayed late after practice that night because of the big game coming up, he wanted to run his plays alone a few more times. Anything to stay out of the house. It was ten o'clock by the time he got off the field to check his phone.

Violet: 6 missed calls

Violet: 1 new message: dalton, im done. like idek what were doing anymore. clearly

**UR doing that little sophomore of urs. wtvr dalton idec. I'm
the captain of the cheer team, do you know how many guys
want me? I can't believe I wasted my whole hs career on you.
Have fun with ur little pet. bye.**

It was over. Like so many times before, but this time it felt different. This time it felt like it might stick. No more back and forth, no more walking on egg shells, no more stolen glances at the sophomore on the dance team.

Lilli checked instagram for the first time in about a week to see that Dalton's name was no longer in Violet's bio, and all the pictures were gone. Had they broken up? Was her phone just glitching? Just then, *@Dalton_football33 followed your account*. Lilli's heart skipped a beat. She thought there was no way that the senior football captain was following *her*. What possibly could have happened in the last few weeks? How could he go from barely knowing she existed, to trying to friend her so publicly on social media? Unsure of what to do, she shuts her phone off, rolls over, and goes to sleep. She can deal with it tomorrow.

At school, she doesn't see the couple together. She doesn't see Violet at all before lunch. When lunch begins and Lilli passes the football and cheer team table, Dalton smiles. His smile is kind of crooked, like he doesn't do it often enough to quite know how to do it right. But Lilli

feels this warm feeling wash over her entire body and she knows he can see her blushing. She turns away and pulls her phone out of her hoodie pocket.

Dalton managed to pull his eyes away from the girl for just a second when his phone went off. *@Lilli.Vandercroff<3 followed you back.* He smirks at his phone before shoving it back down in his pocket.

That night is the big game against the school's rivals, Eastbound High. Lilli never goes to those. She has practice, and she never misses. After practice she typically ends up going home to read, or write in her journal. But something was compelling her to go that night. She changed into jeans and a tight top, showing off her body that's always hidden under layers and matching sweat suits. Everyone knew Lilli was beautiful, and knew she had the body to match, but no one ever got to see it, except Dalton and whoever else was lucky enough to see her on her nightly runs. You see, she knew she was gorgeous, but she never liked the attention that came with it. She possessed the kind of beauty that some girls pray for every night before bed, the kind of beauty that would get her whatever or whoever she wanted. But none of that ever mattered to her. Baggy clothes, no makeup, messy buns, and it still drew attention. Tonight was different though. Light makeup, curled hair, she looked better than before, if that was even possible. She looked unreal.

She made it to the game just in time for the last quarter. Westward was winning, as usual. She found an empty spot by the fence and stood. She was looking for him, but met eyes with Violet instead. Violet quickly looked in Dalton's direction, just to catch him staring at Lilli, not her. Too bad Lilli didn't see what Violet saw. All she saw was the judging look coming from the most popular senior in the school. She turned away quickly. *This was a terrible idea. How could*

I be so stupid? What did I think was going to happen? She left the game feeling embarrassed, but glad she had gotten out before Dalton had seen her. At least she didn't think he had.

She needed to clear her head. All these thoughts about the last few weeks rushed through her mind in a way she could not stop. *He only got red when you smiled because of Violet. He was never looking at you; he was always looking at her. He didn't mean to follow you, Lilli. Why would the senior football captain want anything to do with you?* These thoughts ran through her head, so she ran too. Her normal route, weaving through several streets, watching people arrive home after the game.

She sees Dalton getting out of his car. She hesitates for a moment, slowing down and catching his eyes. They're dark and hide in the shadows of his face, but she can feel them on her. Lilli picks up her speed, moving faster than she was before. She just wants to get home.

He jumps back in his car. He can't imagine not going after her. For the last year and a half he has watched her from the sidelines. Staring from afar, from his bedroom window, from his car, staring every chance he got. Always there, but never seen. Longing for something more, that was always just out of reach. He's always been with Violet, but he never once looked at her the way he looks at Lilli. He never touched her the ways he *thought* of touching Lilli. He went to sleep and woke up thinking of Lilli, not Violet. He knew it was wrong but didn't think he had a choice. Violet was the perfect girl for him, that's what everyone always told him. But he knew it was Lilli. No one saw her the way he did.

He approaches her house and sees her perfect silhouette standing on the porch. She steps into the light, pulling her earbuds out. Dalton feels his knees get weak under his weight. He inches closer, unable to take his eyes off of the beautiful girl he had never seen so close. Her long

dark hair flowed down her body like a river, hugging every curve of her body. Her eyes shine like lily pads flowing down that river, everything about her just made sense in that moment.

“Hey”

“Hey”

THE END

The Colors Between Us

By Ruth Baur

The mirror wasn't helping.

Marisol adjusted her earrings for the third time, watching her reflection like it might tell her how to breathe normally. Her stomach twisted as she glanced at the clock— thirty minutes until the art show. Thirty minutes until a room full of strangers saw every piece of her heart pinned to white walls. Thirty minutes until critics would look closely at each of her paintings and decide if they were worthy enough to be bought for thousands. This was a big day; she couldn't mess this up.

After stepping out of the bathroom, Marisol stood at her podium as she watched all sorts of people come in and sit down, some talking since there's still some time till the show starts.

"God, I shouldn't have done this... I'm making a fool of myself," Marisol thinks quietly to herself. She masks her nervous, spiraling thoughts with a soft smile. As she begins to wonder if she should cancel, her art teacher, Mrs. Lopez places her hand on her shoulder gently, causing her to jump slightly.

"Good evening Mari. You seem deep in thought," Mrs. Lopez gently points out.

Marisol turns around and smiles shyly, "just a little, I've kinda been on edge all day... but it's nothing I can't handle!" She then thinks to herself, "I deeply doubt that."

Mrs. Lopez, oblivious to her internal conflict, chuckles quietly, "You're going to do just fine, hun." She leans in slightly, lowering her voice so only Marisol can hear, "Between you and me, you're my best student, and my favorite one too. You have a lot of great ideas, you'll do great, Mari."

Marisol looks at her with a light smile, "Thank you, Mrs. Lopez, that means a lot."

Mrs. Lopez nods, “Of course, hun. Anyways, let’s get this show started.” And with that, Marisol sits down and she lets Mrs. Lopez introduce her collection of art. As Mrs. Lopez speaks, Marisol finds herself looking in the crowd for someone she loves deeply, her boyfriend Elijah. The two have been together for about eight months, though it had already felt as if they had been together for a lifetime before their own. As Marisol looked around for him, she was saddened when she couldn’t find him within the large crowd of people. She began to second guess everything about herself— her talent, her worth, her story. She wondered if even referencing her father’s poems was a mistake when searching for inspiration in each painting.

At that moment her thoughts were interrupted by Mrs. Lopez, who was introducing her to the podium to speak.

“Now I would like to introduce the artist, Marisol Reyes.” Mrs. Lopez looks at Marisol and a quiet smile plays on her face. She steps to the side as Marisol goes up to the podium and adjusts the mic to her height.

Marisol looks around for a quick second, then at the note cards that were left on the podium for her usage. She then painted a smile as she began to speak, “Good evening and thank you all for coming. My name is Marisol Reyes, I’m a twenty-year-old artist at New York Academy of Arts and my collection of paintings consists of all sorts of oil paints.” She pauses for a quick second to adjust her grip on the note cards, her hands slightly shaking as she continues. “My collection is inspired by my late father, Juan Reyes and his poems. I hope you all enjoy it and please feel free to ask questions.” And with that, Marisol steps away from the podium, her legs shaking slightly as she walks to her station.

As Marisol watches the big crowd of people look around, she feels out of place with every aching second. She still finds herself looking for Elijah, hoping he'll show up. Marisol looks over at two art critics looking at one of her paintings.

A woman in her mid-fifties looks closely at the painting, scrunching her nose and whispering to the man beside her, "It's too personal, not universal enough."

Marisol overheard this, feeling as if her heart was shattered into a million pieces. She had made that painting of her father's condo in Havana. It was the first painting of the collection she made, and this woman, a very important woman, had thought it was "too personal."

Marisol stands up and heads to the back exit. Her thoughts ran wild, but the loudest thought was screaming, "I can't do this anymore, I knew I wasn't ready for this."

As soon as she opened the door, cold fall rain hit her instantly. She always liked the rain, it calmed her down. Rain reminded her of the times that her father would bring sweet tea and buñuelos to her when she would sit at the bay window. She remembered how her mother would shape the dough into an infinity sign and then deep fry it. The taste of the cinnamon sugar syrup on top of the buñuelos would linger in her mouth as her father would write in his journal at the dining table. Marisol closes her eyes and she takes a deep breath, enjoying the memory of her childhood in Cuba.

"Well, I figured you'd be out here at some point, but not right now," a familiar voice says to her right. She opens her eyes and she smiles as she sees Elijah. His usual curly brown hair, now wet, sticks to his face. His clothes were completely soaked from head to toe, but his olive green eyes beam slightly as he looks at her, completely smitten. He stands there holding a bouquet of all white mariposa's; he knows it's Cuba's national flower.

Marisol's heart fluttered as she took him in— soaked, breathless and standing in the rain just for her. She smiled as if she was falling for him all over again. She takes a step into the rain and she looks up at him, the height difference obvious.

She looked into his eyes as she whispered, "You came... I thought you were busy or maybe you had something going on." Elijah hands her the flowers and cups her cheeks in his hands gently to rest his forehead against hers.

"I wouldn't miss this for the world, Marisol. This is just as important to me as it is to you. I'm sorry that I wasn't here sooner," he whispers back. He pulls back and looks at her with a slight upset expression, but not directed at her. He then explains, "I had left on time, but I had to go to eight different flower shops. I wanted to get you the mariposa's, but no flower shop had those specifically. I knew I had seen them somewhere, but I couldn't remember exactly where," he pauses and he sighs in slight defeat. "Then between store six and store seven, it started to pour."

Marisol shakes her head in disbelief, her heart feeling warm and fluttery. Her laughter built slowly, a tiny sparkle in her eyes growing brighter until it spilled out a soft giggle.

They stand there for a few minutes in the rain, as they laugh together. Elijah reaches out for her hand, intertwining his fingers between hers. He looks up at her, giving her a small, tender smile that softened his whole face.

"We should go in before they start to wonder where you went," he suggests. Marisol nods her head in agreement and they both walk back to her station. She takes a deep breath before sitting down and she looks up at Elijah, with an appreciative expression as if to say "thank you" for calming her down. She then begins engaging with the art critics, but during the whole time, she's holding his hand under the table, a small reminder that he was there to support her.

The End of Here

By Adereza Duke

The jury room was old and plain with a large ornate hardwood table in the somewhat middle of it that did not match the slightly decayed, sad room. The sorry, faded and stained ecru walls gave off the impression that anyone who came in was ecstatic to get out. I was sitting in a hardwood chair that matched the heavy ornate carving of the table. I was wearing a shirt dress the color of bright salmon that in no way reflected my mood. The dress matched the bright and oppressively hot August day outside the dirty, old unwashed window of the third story. Despite the warmth outside, I could feel the cold dampness from the concrete walls that made up the old courthouse, seeping into the very depths of my skin. A mood of melancholy weight had been growing in my chest all day. Now that same mood seemed to be cooling the air of the breaths I took as I inhaled and exhaled with an effort. The torturous waiting for the verdict was unbearable. I ran my hand over the polished yet scathed old table. It seemed to reflect my own worn hope for a better verdict than the one I felt we were doomed to get. I looked over at my two sisters and little brother. Their faces reflected my own. My face was a mask of barely concealed despair.

We were at court because my mom— after the last twelve years of my life—had decided to pass a motion to put me and my other three siblings in public school. She had been a physically abusive and threatening woman who only thought in her best interest. My Dad, who had done everything he could to help her become a better person than she had been acting, had finally filed to divorce her two years ago when he told her that that was enough. No one in the world loved her more than my Dad and no one in the world hated him more than my mom. She had never understood love, and as I fixated my vision on the grains of the wood I mused if she

ever would. On impulse, I glanced at the still dark and predominant scar on my left upper arm—it was made by my mom’s thumb nail while I ripped my arm away from her hand while she was trying to rake my whole arm with her entire set of finger nails—that image seemed to help make up my mind about that subject.

We had been homeschooled for a long time. My Dad had taught me everything I knew. I loved him more than the world could ever know. He had given me all the resources I needed to be successful in life. Since I was in 4th grade I was writing limericks and essays at least twice a month. In my freshman year of homeschool I wrote one every week. I read the college version of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* my 7th grade year. In 8th grade my Dad started teaching me about investing and how compound interest works. I was learning how to pay taxes my freshman year as well. I was supposed to start attending college next year—it didn’t matter.

I stared out the tainted and unwashed window of the third story down at the slightly cleaner avenue below. I watched a finch fly by the window. “Up high, but free to rule over your own life. Unlike me,” I muttered at the delicate bird gliding on the breeze.

It was then that the door gave a loud and unwilling click, and my Dad walked into the jury room. The moisture in my mouth dissolved leaving a bitter taste of dry tin. I could see the strain on my Dad’s face to remain steady. I rose swiftly from the chair. He looked around the room. He looked like he wished that he could change the way this sorrowful and depressed room looked. With halting words he looked at each one of us. He looked on the verge of an emotional brink.

“I am sorry guys. The judge said no. We didn’t have a chance. He said he didn’t like home schooling at the very beginning. I am so sorry.” The coldness I had been feeling turned

into a cold hollowness that engulfed my body. Despair seemed to be the only emotion I could register.

As I was processing this my younger sister cried out in a pain-laden voice. My youngest sister had icy anger gleaming in her eyes. I then realized the gleam was unshed tears. The shock registered on my little brother's face as he didn't know how else to respond. I had to hold the chair harder. We were going to be put in school that Friday. In a flash all the happy things that homeschool provided ran through my head all swirled in anguished torrents of shredded thoughts and grieving emotions. The end of my home was finally here. I would be taken away from my Dad, my home and the only people on earth who I knew actually loved me.

Then my body tensed. I then realized all these feelings of despair had been drowned out in something else. Anger. Overwhelming anger at the injustice that had been given not just to me, but to my Dad and siblings as well. My Dad could do nothing about the verdict. Me and my siblings had to live it.

And no one cares, I thought.

My Dad motioned to us for a hug. "I love you guys and we will still do this together"

I love you too. You care, but now I won't have you either.

The power of speech seemed to have escaped my tongue. My ability to hear delicate and sweet sounds had done the same as my voice.

My home as I knew it was gone. My life as I knew it was gone. All the people I loved were to be taken away from me for most of everyday. At fifteen my world — which was far from perfect to begin with—had crashed down around me and I had no control over the aftermath. This was caused by one person. The only person I had known to harm me. This person — my own mother— had, against everything we had stood for, changed my life for the worse.

The Last of That Wolf

By Laci Harrell

Before cell phones and square concrete homes, a young hopeful woman skipped beyond the veil of protection and into this story. She was not dumb per se, but she moved with an ease that only someone ignorant to the dangers of the world could. Her brown hair floated in the wind along with her red cloak as she gleefully made her way through the dark forest. Her grandma's house was built of greying wet stones and engulfed in trailing ivy. It sat surrounded by dark trees that seemed to curl at the invitation of death.

Of course—Little Red didn't know this. She just kept on going, straight through those gnarled, twisted trees and right to her grandma's. She skipped, and skipped, and skipped...and skipped some more. Until she finally arrived, past the death seeking pines. The house smelled of apple pie, and the smile plastered on Little Red's face was blissful. Her basket was filled with cranberries and blueberries. She was here to give her grandma a gift. She stopped to admire the cozy house. A light came to her eyes.

“Grandma you've always worked wonders with pie,” she stated. She called out to her grandmother, moving slowly towards the door. Her smile never left her face. The wood door creaked as it swung open.

“Grandma?” she asked. Only the whistling tea kettle replied. The pie smell wafted throughout the small cottage. The plaid towels sat on the counter neatly folded. The woman moved slowly, curious as to where her grandma could be. She was always in the kitchen. Little Red searched the house, her feet tapping slowly on the wooden floor. She was frightened. She made her way through the quilted living room, past the first bedroom and to her grandma's room. The door was shut and the brass handle glistened in the low light of the hallway. Her

sweaty palm grasped the door and just before she decided to enter—she thought better of it. She walked back to the kitchen and grabbed a large cast iron pan. She crept back to her grandmother's room. As she swung the door open it made a loud creak.

There, on her grandmother's handmade comforter, laid the old woman. Sleeping peacefully.

“Silly me,” Little Red said. She couldn't fathom why she hadn't realized her grandma was OLD; of course she took naps.

Little Red crept up to her ready to surprise her with the basket of fruits. Her blissful smile reached her ears. She tapped her grandma's shoulder and at about that time she realized something wasn't quite right. Little Red's nose reached into the air, it smelled like—wet dog? She put her head back down to wake her grandma. Except her grandma was now staring at her...with big yellow canine eyes.

“YOU ARE NOT MY GRANDMA!” she shrieked. The canine figure lunged, and Little Red swung the cast iron pan. She bashed the canine's head and arms. Her swings grew more violent.

“WHERE,” smack “IS,” thud “MY.....GRANDMA?” splat. The wolf was...still alive, but running. He was running fast—his feet didn't move for five seconds, his body staying in place. Until finally he made a mad dash for the front door with Little Red close behind still swinging her pan. He slammed the door and Little Red's face hit the old wooden plank. She stood quickly, getting her bearings before she FINALLY looked up at me.

“Did you do this?” She said accusingly at me—the writer. So yes I obviously did do it, but I had a good reason.

“Why yes I did and what a wonderful—” Then her pan was crashing at me, (me being a nondescript cloud of air to others, but to her I was the one who summoned the big bad wolf), as she flung it up and down and everywhere. I stopped writing, waiting for her to calm—and then her grandmother was at the front door. Which thankfully saved me from a vicious woman with some major anger issues.

“Darling what are you doing? There's nobody there,” her grandma said. She had a basket full of tall metal spikes.

“What are those for grandma?” Little Red asked.

“Real big predator problem around here,” her grandma replied

“And apparently an author problem too.”

“What was that sweetie?”

“Oh nothing,” Little Red said as her eye twitched in my direction and her smile obviously crooked and fake. I winked at her.

Not So Imaginary

By Mady Arnold

“Mommy, mommy, there's a treehouse! Does it come with our new house?” the child says with joy.

“Yes, bubba, it comes with the house,” his mother replies.

“The land is kinda creepy though, are you sure we're going to be ok here?” the father asked, kinda worried.

“Yes, Alix. Now let's not freak him out on his first day here.”

We are deep inside the bloody hollow wilderness. There are trees everywhere *to keep the shade in* according to the new tenants moving in today. There is a small treehouse located at the tippy top of the tallest tree in the yard. The sky is as dark as the darkest coal, so dark you can barely see the house from the driveway. If it wasn't for the warm inviting light coming from the window you couldn't tell where the doors are. When you enter the old two story home you find a seven year old boy playing with his imaginary friend in the corner. They're playing hide and seek.

“Five, four, three, two, one! Ready or not, here I come!” screams the little boy.

He runs around the corner to find the imaginary friend.

“Boo! I found you. Your turn to count, Azazel.”

“Fine,” growled the friend. “Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, here I come.”

The parents witness this, but choose to ignore it. They couldn't hear the friend that their son was talking to. So they thought he was just playing in his new space.

“Found you!” Azazel screamed in this horrible high pitched scratch.

And the parents watched their kid be lifted off the ground and have all of his bones broken one by one. While he was screaming from the pain, the parents bolt out of the house and leave their son behind, never returning to their new home.

Years later a new family moves in. This family also has a child, a girl, at the age of 16. Like most teens she decides that she doesn't need her parents, and she's ready to leave the nest for good. Of course her parents don't approve of that and tell her that she has to wait until she's 18 to officially move out. Her parents decide that if she wants space then the three of them can fix up the treehouse outside so she can have her own space outside of her parents house. Roughly five weeks later they finally finished fixing the treehouse. She loves it. She's always outside in the treehouse. Only managing to come inside when she needed to use the bathroom, or when she was scavenging food from the kitchen. Then gradually she just stopped coming inside. She spent days only coming inside once or twice all day. The school had been calling saying she never made it, and her car stayed in the drive. After days of not seeing the daughter she finally came back in.

She said, "Sorry bathroom," in a dark almost growl of a voice.

She had dark black circles under her eyes, much worse than what would happen if she didn't sleep. This was different. This was wrong.

"Hey honey. Can we talk for a sec?" Mom asked. "It's nothing bad I promise."

"Bye," she said in that same voice as before, not even trying to hide it anymore.

She almost looked dead, unlikelike, as pale as vanilla ice cream on a summer day. She had cold air following her everywhere she went as cold as the air on a snowy Christmas day. After another three days of the school calling and not seeing their daughter, even for her

bathroom breaks, they decide they have to go see her. They're going into the treehouse. Once outside they see blood on the ground surrounding the base of the treehouse. They look to the sky to find the dark, crimson red even worse on the bottom of the house. Dripping onto the cold dark ground. They climb the ladder, noticing a horrible stench. Opening the door they see what was making that blood red on the bottom of the house. It was their daughter. Broken and almost crumbled. Her eyes wide and unseeing. Like she was mocking her parents by just staring at them. The stench is even worse up here in the book corner. Azazel got her too. The parents were so devastated. They burned the house down along with the damned treehouse. Then left never to be seen again.

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Rivalry

By Valerie Collier

Cast of Characters:

Ryder: A teenage boy who has caramel skin, his hair black and brown, average height, he had orange tattoo accents along his body, his hair down to his shoulders and shaggy. Part of the Oman Tribe

Xavier: A teenage boy who has black skin, his hair is dreadlocks that are black with strands of orange, and has white tattoo accents trailing along his body. Very tall compared to others, Otto tribe. Sebastian's younger brother.

Sebastian: A young adult who's always stuck with his brother for everything. Usually tired and not the happiest. Xavier's older brother.

Scene 1

[Going back hundreds of years the Oman tribe and Otto tribe never got along, and the feud goes onto the modern day. Territories with jagged borders and simply being at the river at the same time could lead to unwanted death.]

(Ryder enter from stage left as the lights come up and curtains open)

Ryder: *(He's carrying a bucket or something to gather water)* "Why am I the one going to get the water? I'm above this. *(Beat)* I'M THE CHIEF'S KID!!! Should've made one of the elders do this since they can't do anything anymore." *(mumbled)*

(He continues to walk and reaches the river and looks around cautiously)

Ryder: Good none of those heathens from the Otto tribe around.

(Lights go down and curtains close)

Scene 2

[The Otto tribe is on patrol of their area and their side of the river. Sebastian is leaning on a rock.]

(Xavier enters, walks around, and notices somebody by the river bank.)

Xavier:*(shocked)* What the- Dude, someone's heading toward the river!

Sebastian: *(exhausted)* Must be a kid. Everyone knows the deal when you get close to the river—calm down.

Xavier: That's not a kid! That's a teen not a stupid kid! He knows better!

Sebastian: Why are you so worried? You act like this is the end of the world...it's just another person.

(Sebastian stands up slowly and groggy.)

Xavier: THE RULE OF THE RIVER!!! ANYONE WHO GETS CLOSE IS KILLED!

Sebastian: *(annoyed)* No one follows that rule. That was ancient history. You're getting yourself worked up.

Xavier: This is why dad favors me. I actually take these kinds of things seriously.

Sebastian: He favors you because you're the youngest—don't get it twisted kid.

(Sebastian walks off stage right and Xavier sits on the rock watching the said person get closer.)

Xavier: I know what is right. He's just jealous because I'm better... *(mumbled to himself)*

Scene 3

(Ryder gets up to the river bank to fill up the bucket. Still annoyed he's having to do this. Suddenly he feels a bayonet touch the top of his head...it is Xavier)

Xavier: *(flat)* Don't move...

(Ryder didn't think twice before quickly jumping up and backing away staring down Xavier)

Xavier: *(getting a little upset)* I said don't move...

Ryder: Or what...you gonna shoot me over a stupid feud? All I need is water.

Xavier: But you're too close to the bank....

Ryder: *(Furious)* OH FOR GOD'S SAKE LET ME GET SOME WATER AND GO BACK!!!

(Sebastian comes running on after hearing commotion.)

Sebastian: Why are you ye-! *(Beat)* Put. The. Gun. Down

Xavier: No, there's somebody from the rival tribe!

Sebastian:*(cold)* Put it down! You're being irrational!

Xavier: How would you know? You never do anything!

(Sebastian tries to take the gun wanting to calm the situation causing the gun to misfire shooting him in his lung.)

Sebastian: *(Clutches his chest, color draining from his face.)*

(Xavier looks around, and his eyes landed on Ryder.)

Xavier: This is your fault...you killed my brother

Ryder: No I didn't—you were the one with the gun!

Xavier: If you weren't here none of this would've happened!

Ryder: If you weren't so stuck up on tradition, none of this would've happened.

(They continue staring at each other with hatred as lights go down.)

The Intervention

By Ava Carter

Cast of Characters:

Gabriella: A teenage girl, has a more aggressive humor, not the best at reading the room, and is friends with Mary and Alice.

Mary: A teenage girl, very funny, very weird humor, charismatic personality, and is friends with Gabriella and Alice.

Alice: A teenage girl, usually quite loud, weird personality, and friends with Gabriella and Mary.

Scene 1

[In a high school hallway, there stands Gabriella and Mary by Alice's locker.]

(Alice walks towards Gabriella and Mary, coming from the left of them.)

Alice: *(She waves at Gabriella and Mary from the end of the hall. She walks closer to them and her locker.)* Thanks for waiting on me again guys. I'm sorry the teacher wouldn't stop talking to me after the bell rang.

Mary: *(she hugs Alice)* We always have to wait on you, it's fine. We are used to it by now and that teacher always talks way too much, in or out of class.

Gabriella: *(She looks at Alice and smiles)* Of course stinky!

Alice: *(Her smile slowly fades, and she gives Mary a slightly annoyed look)* Gabriella could you please stop calling me that? You know how much I hate being called that. I genuinely have a fear of smelling bad, bro.

Mary: *(She looks back and forth between Alice and Gabriella)* Yeahhh I feel like it might be time to stop. Like it was funny at first but not much anymore.

Gabriella: *(She looks at Mary and gives a joking sad pouty face)* Okay I guess, I'm sorry, Alice.

Alice: Well thank you for apologizing. Anyways though, are you both still coming over tonight for a sleepover?

Gabriella and Mary: Yes!

Mary: We wouldn't miss it!

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Scene 2

[It is night time at Alice's house. Gabriella, Mary, and Alice are sitting in Alice's room with snacks and they are all just talking about drama.]

Mary: *(She suddenly goes quiet and looks at Alice)* Hey Alice? What was it that you were wanting to talk to Gabriella about?

Alice: Oh yeah, ummm Gabriella I know you apologized about today and called me stinky, but you have been kind of mean a lot lately.

Gabriella: You both know I'm not actually trying to be mean, right? I really am just joking, like y'all, really?

Mary: I mean yes we both know that you think that you are joking, but it just comes off actually mean sometimes, especially when it gets to repetitive jokes that you make.

Gabriella: *(She crosses her arms and looks at them both still with a smile on her face)* Guys, what is this, some kind of intervention?

Alice: Yeah kind of. *(She and Mary look at each other and nod.)*

Gabriella: Okay that's it! I'm leaving! *(She gets up from the bed and walks out the door, slamming it shut behind her.)*

(Only 10 seconds go by before Gabriella enters the room again and sits with Alice and Mary in silence.)

Gabriella: Okay I am actually sorry and I will stop okay?

Alice: You promise?

Gabriella: Yes I promise, I'm really sorry guys.

(Then the curtain closes as all three girls have a group hug.)

One-Act Play

By Gavin Smith

Cast of Characters:

Ren

Morgan Freeman

Scene 1

Setting: Black, absolute black. Utter darkness and void, except for a single and faint, shimmering orb of light, hanging in the darkness.

(The orb slowly lowers and takes human form, REN, a ghostly version of his past self transparent and pale.)

REN:*(to the void)* Hello. How long have I been here?

(He paces the vast darkness, nothing but the light from his own body illuminating the infinite dark.)

REN: If I could get out of here, maybe get some food, that'd be great. Is this some sort of afterlife punishment before hell? Or—

(A sudden, booming voice fills the void, the sound shaking the air around him.)

Morgan Freeman: NO (booming offstage) you know very well what this is “REN.”

(REN stops pacing, looking upward into the darkness.)

REN: Naw, not at all, brother. Last time I checked, I was on my third whiskey and contemplating a nap. This setup is new.

Voice Morgan: Will this jog your memory, boy?

Scene 2

[the same dark void]

(A second orb of light appears far in the distance, it rushes towards REN. Stopping abruptly a few feet away, it starts to take the shape of MORGAN FREEMAN. He is solid and real.)

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REN (*staring, bewildered*) Morgan Freeman. Omg is this a Morgan Freeman movie...you look real.. tho. More real than I feel.

Morgan: (*walks calmly around rens transparent form*) You're not real, Ren. Not right now anyways. And I'm not here with you. I'm here for you.

REN: (*Laughing nervously*) For me? Is this the part where you tell me you're god and give me powers like Jim Carrey?

Morgan: (*Stopping, looking Ren directly in the eye, his voice low and calm.*) You were on your third whiskey. You reached for the fourth, and you had a choice: another drink or go apologize to the kid you mistreat every day.

Ren: Wait so I'm dead—

Morgan: LET!..me finish, boy. Tell him you love him every once in a while. Your heart skipped a beat, is all. A warning shot.

REN: A warning? So I'm... not dead, all riiight.

Morgan: (*Shakes his head slowly.*) Not if you choose not to be. This void...this is the pause button you kept wishing for. A moment of clarity between the path you were on and the one you could take.

REN: The path? I was just living my life, man. It wasn't perfect, but it was mine.

MORGAN: You lived in the present tense... which is a fine thing, mostly. But you forgot to plant any seeds for tomorrow. You have a chance to change that. To go back. You still have a purpose in this world...your kid.

REN: Go back? To the whisky? All right let's go.

Morgan: (*Sighs*) To your kid, Ren, don't you get it? Are you this stupid?

REN: Okay okay... I get you. But seriously, no review the tape. No judgement?

Morgan: The judgement is yours. The tape is the father you need to be. Time to wake up. Make a better ending. I'll be watching.

(REN looks at the path and slowly advances, his ghostly form becoming solid again.)

Killer Corn

By Jacob Landert

Cast of Characters:

JJ: Jock

Grayson: Nerd

Stacy: Popular

Gavin: Loner

Jason: Stoner

Scene 1

[Year 3048. At school finding out some weird news.]

(Enter Stacy, Jason, Grayson, JJ, and Gavin on stage.)

Stacy: *(Sitting in math class, telling everyone the news she heard)* Hey guys, have you heard about the cornfield and what happened there?

Jason: *(In his own world)* Uhhhhh... What happened?

Stacy: *(bends down a little and gets really quiet)* There was something that hit the ground and everyone is saying it's *(Looks around to see if anyone is trying to see what they are talking about)* Aliens!

JJ: *(Gets up and is yelling)* We are having a party there this weekend!

Grayson: *(Rubbing his head)* I don't think that this will be a very good idea!

JJ: We are having this party!

Gavin: Where is this party at?

Jason: We are having this party at the cornfield and we are finding these "Aliens!"

Scene 2

[At a party]

Stacy: *(Looking around)* I don't see anything.

Jason: *(Looking around)* Keep looking.

JJ: *(Walking to the woods)* Let's go farther in the woods and see if they are in there.

(Gavin pulls Stacy to the side)

Gavin: *(Talking really quietly)* Are you sure they are here?

Stacy: *(Talking really quietly)* That's what it said on the news.

Gavin: *(Still talking really quietly)* What else did they say? I did some research on them and it said that they can be really harmful.

Stacy: *(Still talking really quietly)* I don't know—I didn't listen to it all the way.

Jason: *(Looking back and yelling)* Come on guys! What are you guys doing all the way back there? Are you guys scared?

JJ: *(Looking back and yelling)* Come on guys! I know you guys aren't scared. You're the one that told us about it, you should've known that we were gonna wanna come see it!

Stacy: *(Talking in a worried tone)* No we are coming, we were just talking.

Gavin: *(Talking in a worried tone)* We are coming.

Jason: *(Started running to the woods)* We are going to find them TONIGHT!

(All get together and are talking)

Grayson: Guys, I don't think we are going to find them!

(They were walking for about an hour or so and went back together.)

Gavin: I don't think they are here guys. Why don't we come back in a couple days?

Scene 3

[On their way home]

(Walking back to the car)

JJ: You guys can just ride back with me instead of walking.

(Everyone says okay and gets in the car.)

Jason: *(Looking out the window and starting to yell)* OH MY GOD GUYS LOOK OUT THE WINDOW!

Stacy: *(Lays her head on the door)* Jason you're just seeing things.

Jason: *(Still yelling)* "GUYS, I'M BEING FOR REAL LOOK AT THE WINDOW!"

(Everyone starts yelling and trying to take their phones out to take a photo.)

JJ: OH MY GOD GUYS LOOK THERE IS AN ALIEN!!!!!!

(The Aliens dropped down in the middle of the road and dropped a NITROGLYCERIN BOMB.)

From Bully to Lover

By Robert Ramos

Cast of Characters:

Devin Furlong: A Highschool bully who mainly bullies because he feels alone and wants someone to talk to and to be friends with.

Mercedes Ruscher: A very friendly gal who met someone in need and decided to help him out.

Scene 1

[School Cafeteria, bell rings and everyone goes in to eat.]

Enter characters on stage.

Devin: (walks up towards the lunch line and shoves Mercedes out of line) Watch it, nerd.

Mercedes: Sorry Devin.

Devin: Yeah whatever, just don't let it happen again.

(They go to grab their trays and cups and Devin dumps his cup of water onto Mercedes's hair)

Mercedes: What the hell was that for! I apologized and everything.

Devin: Well I didn't like your attitude.

(Mercedes runs out of the cafeteria and eats lunch in her counselor's office)

Mercedes: I can't believe the counselor told me to talk to Devin and try to make a connection with him. (Mercedes, to audience, about her counselor).

Scene 2

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[Lunch is over and Devin and Mercedes go to their 6th hour English Class.]

Devin: You again, Nerd?

Mercedes: Yes, we've had this class together for 2 months already, you should know this.

Devin: I would if you were important to me but I hardly even know you.

Mercedes: Yeah okay.

Devin: What's your problem?

Mercedes: I just want to know why you feel as if you have the authority to belittle people. What makes you so special and allows you to do that?

Devin: I don't really know but you know what it doesn't even matter.

Mercedes: It does too, it can really affect someone's mental well being. What about this? If you go to homecoming with me and we have a good time then you can't bully people anymore.

Devin: Okay deal but I'm not too sure you know what a "good time" is.

Mercedes: Trust me I'll show you the best time of your life.

Devin: Okay, I guess we'll just have to wait and see.

Mercedes: Yeah, I guess you're right.

Collided Worlds

By Emma Jones

Cast of Characters:

Vivian Yillnats: 17 year old girl, curious, who has an appending feeling of doom.

Pixie: fairy who just wants to protect her home

Darlene Yillnats: Vivian's mom- helicopterly, caring, just wants the best for her child

Scene 1

Neighborhood house with one vegetable garden and a half dead tree.

(Darlene enters the room)

Darlene: Go finish watering the vegetables in the garden.

(As you would think, she does it with a do-I-have-to attitude. As Vivian is picking around in her garden she spots a faint glow underneath some vines. So as any totally bored brainrotted kid would do... she starts digging around and before she even has the chance to think, the ground collapses out from under her and she's stuck falling into an abyss.)

Vivian: This can not be happening in this town! TO ME?!?! Nothing ever happens in this town, and I mean NEVER. So why now, why when I've gotten comfortable with my life, why after all the time I've wished for something interesting to happen, it happens now.

(Vivian appears in a world that is unlike anything she had ever seen...)

Scene 2

(Sun shining through the trees to the point it looks magical. Unknown creatures flying and roaming all around)

Vivian: Wow... this place is unlike any I've seen before. So much color! SO MUCH LIFE!

(A small fairy appears)

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Pixie: Hello my name is Pixie. What brings you to our world?

Vivian: I came through some sort of portal!! Your world has so much life!

Pixie: We try our best to take care of it. Do you not have much life where you're from?

Vivian: Not really... we don't get a whole lot of sunlight, or rain. So we work with what we have.

Pixie: Well you're just in luck because we have way too much. Our board was just talking about a way to disperse some.

Vivian: Is there a way we could open that portal permanently and make it bigger so more life can seep through?

Pixie: Actually there is. I just need to sprinkle some of my fairy dust over the area and it will do just that.

Scene 3

Happy ending

(several months pass)

(Vivian and Pixie show up to the portal.)

Vivian: Pixie, look how peaceful both worlds look!

Pixie: I know! This was such a good idea; I wonder what we could accomplish next.

(Vivian's mom enters the room)

Darlene: I am so proud of the both of you! Now our worlds can live happily ever after!

The One

By Annaleigh Dodson

Cast of Characters:

Riley: She has a crush on Harry and is Stella's best friend

Harry: He is going to ask to be Riley's boyfriend

Stella: Bff and the one who dies

Scene 1

[One regular summer night 3 best friends snuck out and were hanging out in the park, which was their spot they would all sneak out and go to. 2 of them were on the swings and one was on the slide.]

Harry: I don't know if I should do it. I'm really scared. (Harry says looking at Stella with a nervous face.)

Stella: You guys have clicked since the start and I'm sure she'll say yes. After all, you guys are always flirting.

Harry:(rolling his eyes) I guess you're right and the least she can do is say no..... But I sure hope she doesn't.

Stella: But at the end of the day you'll still have me no matter where I am.

Harry: Yeah your right "Ella." (This is something that only Harry called her.)

(Harry and Stella laugh as Riley approaches the swingset with rocks in her hand.)

Riley: Guys look what I found!! (Riley says throwing the rocks at Harry)

Stella :Exactly my point. (Stella says looking at Harry)

(Soon the three of them begin playing tag running after each other one by one when they all decide they are thirsty and go sit back down on the swings.)

Harry: This is my chance. I'm gonna ask her. (He says to Stella as they walk toward the swings.)

Stella: I don't know why you're stressing; she is gonna say yes.

(They are all sitting at the swings and Harry grabs Riley's hands and starts guiding her towards this little path in the woods the opposite direction of the park.)

Riley: It's quite hot out here, isn't it?

Harry: Yes it is, but I wanted to ask you something. (At this point Harry's face is bright red.)

Riley: Of course! What's up!?

Harry : Well I've been meaning to ask you this for a while and I know that we are really good friends. Would you like to be my-

(Harry gets cut off by a huge scream.)

Riley: I know that scream. That's Stella!!

(Riley and Harry start running back to the park to look for Stella and she's nowhere in sight.)

Harry: She was right here!!

(Riley and Harry, freaking out, start looking around for any signs of Stella.)

Riley: We should call someone and tell them.

Harry: Riley it's 3 am who are we gonna call and how are we going to explain this to our parents. Let's try and go find her. We don't have an option. She's my best friend; I don't know what I am supposed to do without her.

(They both start walking into the woods and they see a shoe.)

Riley: It's Stella's shoe. She's gotta be out here somewhere.

Harry: Picks up the shoe and there's a note inside from Stella.

Riley: (Reading the note aloud) "Dear Harry, you were my last hope and I realize that at the end of the day, I will never be your first option like Riley is yours. This is not your fault but I just wish the best for you and Riley but at the end of the day you'll still have me no matter where I am. Please tell my parents I loved them more than anything, and it's no one's fault but I can't, I can't keep living a life I don't want to, especially if it is not with you. No matter if it's me

watching you from above or right by your side you'll see me just the same as your best friend. I just couldn't take it anymore, Sincerely Ella.”

Harry:(Harry falls to the ground and puts his head in his hands, screaming out hysterically) Why does it have to be her?!

Riley:(very upset and confused) What did she mean by, “I will never be your first option like Riley is yours,” and “ I just wish the best for you and Riley. “

Harry: It doesn't matter. She should have been the one on this walk with me.....

Lesson Learned

By Caitlynnne Bryan

Cast of Characters:

Cassy: 4th grader

Rye: 5th grader

Alli: 4th grader

Announcer: the announcer

Miss. Lily: Teacher

Scene 1

[The school's courtyard for their annual field day.]

Cassy is racing her potato for the potato parade.

Rye: *(Pointing and laughing at Cassy)* Your potato sucks! Mine is going to win and get ahead of all of yours! Why is it pink?!

Cassy: *(Angry)* Pink is prettier than yucky blue! Why do you have to be a bully, Rye?

[Alli runs over to join Cassy to try and back her up]

Alli: Go kick rocks Rye! Just cus youre older doesnt mean you needa be a weenie!

[Cassy and Alli go to the start line with their purple and pink potatoes]

Rye: I think you guys need to sit down and watch and learn.

[The announcer walks to the podium holding the starting pistol]

Announcer: Alright. You kids set your potatoes on the line.

[Callie, Rye, and Alli all set their potatoes on the line along with all the other children. Rye moves his potato about 3 inches ahead of everyone else's]

[The potatoes slowly roll down the hill. Rye is stomping next to Cassy and Alli's potatoes to make them slower]

Cassy: RYE! You can't do that!!!! That's cheating!!!!

Rye: No it's not. I'm not touching them.

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Miss Lily: [Walking over to the kids] I'm gonna disqualify all of you if you don't get along.

All kids in union: NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Miss Lily: Yes you all are disqualified. You all can't get along so none of you are going to win. Until you learn how to be friends, you will not race your potatoes.

Rye: I'm sorry Miss Lily. I was just messing around.

Cassy: WE DIDN'T EVEN DO ANYTHING!

Miss Lily: I understand Rye that you were just messing around, but it's only fair.

[Cassy and Alli run away to the playground to pout while Rye starts crying out of guilt]

Rye: I'm really sorry Miss Lily. Can I please get back into the race?

Miss Lily: Now Rye, how are you going to learn your lesson if I just let you back in?

[Rye continues to cry and pout. Miss Lily goes to find Cassy and Alli]

[At the playground]

Cassy: Well I guess Miss Lily was right. I guess we were being kinda mean.

Alli: You're right. Maybe we should apologize.

Miss Lily: Now do you understand why I had to disqualify you all?

Cassy and Alli: Yes we do Miss Lily. We're sorry.

Miss Lily: Now you all apologize to each other. You're all friends here. Now make up.

[All of the kids give each other a hug and apologize]

Announcer: FINISH LINE IN 5,4,3,2,1! DONE!!!!!!

Cosmos Lover

By Colten Jackson

Cast of Characters

Cosmo: lower class male, respectful, caring

Allison: preppy fashion girl and somewhat upperclass

Scene 1

[New York]

Enter Cosmo on stage.

Cosmo: [*He walks up the stairs on stage left. He is camped out with his stuff and about to start playing the guitar.]*

Cosm: (happily singing) Take me home, to a place where I belong, West Virginia.

Allison: [entering stage “walking out to the balcony”] Nice singing, Cosmo.

Cosmo: Thanks, Allison, lovely day isn't it?

Allison: Yes, yes it is, I'm going on a picnic date today!

Cosmo: That's good, is he a good guy and are you gonna visit before I pack up for the night?

Allison: Yes he's very sweet and caring and you know I always do, I hope you have a great day I'll see you later! [She leaves the stage.]

[Day passes and night starts to fall and Cosmo has seen no sight of Allison anywhere so he starts to get nervous.]

Cosmo: [talking to himself] I'm getting really worried for her, she always visits and it's already 7:30, night's falling and I know she's scared of the dark.

Allison:[crying stumbling, entering stage again]

Cosmo: Allison, what's wrong?

Allison: Please just help me up to my room and I'll explain.

Scene 2

[Allison's apartment]

[Allison and cosmo both make up and are getting ready to talk]

Allison: So it was all going nice and, well, we had the picnic, got done, went on a drive, watched a movie, and then he was acting really weird and like kept getting on his phone being sneaky, you know?

Cosmo: Yeah, then what?

Allison: Then he put his phone down and all I saw was a ton of notifications from a bunch of different girls so obviously I asked, I was like, “Who are all those girls?” and he goes “ all of my friends are girls but people dont like that so I try and hide it a bit before I ease them into knowing.”

Cosmo: Yeah that’s weird and I wouldn't like that if I were in this position.

Allison: Exactly, like I don't really wanna be involved with all that drama and like if they are all his friends like how much attention and when will he have to see them and everything?

Cosmo: Yes, yes, I agree, so what is your plan?

Allison: You know I really don't know, I’ll probably just sleep on it and figure something out.

Cosmo: Okay, I’ll get out of your hair and let you get some rest.

Allison: Okay thank you for helping me out. I really appreciate you, sleep well and be safe
Cosmo.

Scene 3

[Cosmo wakes up to someone yelling his name]

Allison: COSMO, COME UP HERE!

Cosmo: (walks up to her apartment and knocks)

Allison: Come in.

Cosmo: What's up, are you okay?

Allison: Yes, I'm great actually, we are gonna hang out today.

Cosmo: Uhmm, well what do you mean we are gonna hang out?

Allison: I mean me and you are gonna go for a picnic later, I already have everything planned and and ready so if you want you can take a shower here and get ready and we can leave, only if you are wanting to?

Cosmo: I mean, yes, I would absolutely love to.

The End

No Longer My Sister

By Natalie Burgess

Cast of Characters:

Emma: She is a 19 year old girl, she was an only child for 7 years. She hates her sister but her parents make her include Anna, her younger sister.

Anna: She is Emma's younger sister and she loves to annoy her older sister. Anna is 12 years old.
The parents

Scene 1

[At their house packing bags. Both girls are in separate rooms with lots of bags.]
Enter characters on stage.

Emma: *(loudly)* Anna are you almost done packing?

Anna: Yes, just go get in the car and wait.

Emma: Ugh fine but hurry up.

Anna: *(Gets in car excitedly)* I am so excited!

Emma: *(Ignores Anna the whole ride to the airport)*

Parents: *(At airport)* Bye girls we love you! Have fun!

Emma: *(To herself)* Thank goodness we're not sitting close to each other.

(Exit Characters)

(End Scene)

Scene 2

[Getting off the plane in Puerto Rico. The girls are getting their bags and meeting up]
Enter Characters on stage.

Anna: Emma I found you!

Emma: Come on we have an uber waiting for us outside.

Anna: Yay! We're going to our condo!

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(At the condo)

Emma: I get the biggest room and you better not bother me the whole time were here

Anna: I won't. I promise!

Emma: I'm going to the beach to meet people. Here's \$100 keep yourself busy.

(Exit Emma and Anna)

(End Scene)

Scene 3

[After two days of Emma being gone she finally comes back]

Enter Characters on stage.

Anna: Emma where have you been?

Emma: Just shut up and get in the car I am taking you somewhere for a little while.

Anna: Okay.

(They get to a big nice house)

Anna: What is this place?

Emma: Just go inside Anna.

(Anna goes inside while Emma drives away)

Emma: *(To herself)* Finally, I got her out of my way.

(Emma arrives at airport to leave Puerto Rico)

(Emma's phone started to explode with messages and calls from her sister)

Emma: *(To herself)* I can't wait to get back home and never talk to any of my family again.

(Exit Emma)

(End Scene)

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Missing Her Daily

By Saade Emniser

Drowning like I'm in deep water
Crazy,
everything in deep cravings
Heart aching,
drowning in my thoughts
No saving, just waiting
Missing her daily like it's my baby
Washing out the walls in my room
Like it's empty
Heart beating like it's a new entry
I'm waiting
Waiting for a day to see her again
I'm crazy
Tears in my mind can't show it
Big man self mowing down my
Feelings, making my moves to show her
My feelings, baby
Come back to me so I can feel it
Those lost days have me weaning
My love for you can't be explained
This hole in my heart has me leaning
Every day to myself has to be torture
More so, for me but not for you
Please give me the chance to prove
That I love you like
A swimming pool full of love
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Diet Coke Poem

By Amyrah Newcomer

Dark bubbles rising to the top of a silver can
Freezing cold with condensation dripping down the sides
A crisp sharp hit of carbonation hits my nose
A hiss from opening the can is all I hear
Zero-calorie spark of life
Diet Coke

The Invisible Love String

By Cassy Osborne

Love is the color of a trapped lion in a cage
It's the sound of a full river flowing downstream
It tastes like a full stomach still craving to eat
It smells sweet like sugar
It looks like a dandelion being blown by the wind
It makes me feel seen

Love is red like blood that runs in my veins
It sounds like someone humming a song
It tastes like passion that never stops
It smells like fresh petals on a grave
Love is strong faith

Love is orange burning sunsets
It sounds like a child laughing
It tastes like melted chocolate
It smells like a fire
Love looks like broken down walls;
Makes me feel addicted

Love is an invisible string.

Rain on the Road

By Amerie Schleuter

(Verse One)

Streetlight on the dashboard glow
Your sweater on the passenger seat
I drive in circles round this town
Just to feel your ghost beside me

Rain tapping little sad songs
On the glass like it knows my name
I touch your number on my phone
Then lock the screen and look away

(Chorus)

I miss you in the rain on the road
Every drop spelling out what I know
If I turn back
I won't come home
So I keep on going
Keep on going
Heart pulling like a tide to your door
But I've burned that bridge before
I love you like a storm I can't hold
So I miss you in the rain on the road

(Verse Two)

Your picture in a cracked frame
Facedown in my bedroom drawer
I tell my friends I'm doing fine
But I still sit talking to the floor

You were a house on a fault line
Beautiful and always shaking
Every kiss a quiet goodbye
Every touch another breaking

(Chorus)

Bridge

I could take that exit

I could drive till the pain lets up (oh)

But I know how this movie ends

Same Lines

Same cuts

So I pull my hands from the wheel

Just long enough to pray

Let the rain wash you from me

Or wash me far away

(End Chorus)

I miss you in the rain on the road

Every drop spelling out what I know

If I turn back

I won't come home

So I keep on going

Keep on going

Heart pulling like a tide to your door

But I've closed that fragile door

I love you like a storm I can't hold

So I miss you in the rain on the road

Sun Beaming Down

By Gracelynn East and Amerie Schleuter

Sun beaming down

In my memories I drown

The smell of sunscreen all around

Laughter surrounding the merry-go-round

Down the slide to the ground

A small secluded place in my town

Where all my memories are bound

Pilcher

By Leo Pilcher III

Sitting solitarily in the corner

the dark wooden frame cutting through the soft light colors of the covers

Slipping under the covers at night is bliss

Getting out in the morning is torture

The smell of the detergent on the covers is calming

The blankets and pillows rustle as I toss and turn

All I want after a long day

All I want after a short day

It's my bed.

Under the Rock

By Ellianna Blackburn

I don't like society. I don't like these
strange people we idolize and call
exceptional.

Everyone is strange. The best are the
worst, and the worst only have so little.

Almost every action is an underrated art,
but that's just what comes from the
beauty of the mind.

How can we judge those who express
themselves so deeply when we only
show the tip on the iceberg. That
disgusting expression of pain, of reality,
maybe that's more beautiful than
happiness could ever be.

I feel my lungs expanding, I'm drowning
in guilt, in flaws, in sins, but all I can do
from this point on is keep swimming,
because if I don't I'll drown and once you
drown you're dead. I choose to take this

bloody water and carve it into these long

standing sandy rocks we call our
foundation.

It's only crumbling. Day by day, I don't
know how long anyone has left but
what's the harm in trying? Better to have
tried and failed than to have done
nothing and live in regret.

Dear Old Sun

By Kaia Mitchell

Dear old sun,

With warm hands you bless the leaves,

And green grass stains my knees.

As birds and bees rush before me,

Careless and free I shall be.

Sincerely,

Me

A Letter to Archosaurs

Date: 9/1/15

I have lived long enough to
see your progeny.

It chirps;
It whistles calls and sang
melodies.

They kept the sheen in your
feathers

And shine like stained glass
windows.

They still rule land and sky
And demand respect from all
who came before and after.

I saw you in the vulture
Bowing their head to the dead.

I saw you in the peacock
Splaying a hypnotic fan of colours.

I saw you in the lyrebird
Dancing to an elaborate song in
the name of passion.

A Letter to Archosaurs

Date:

(cont.)
9/18/25

And I see your progeny in
your bones.



I see your progeny in the
preserved scene of a relative
guarding eggs.

I see your progeny in the preserved
scene of two different animals
pressed together.

I see your progeny in your claws,
Your jaws, nose, and hips;

And that sprinx you too sing with.

If I could have
Lived long enough to see you too.

