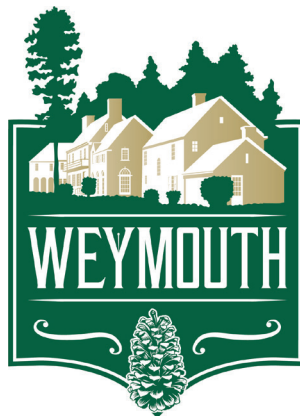




2020

MOORE COUNTY WRITER'S COMPETITION

Wizards of Weymouth was the first themed competition for Weymouth Center's annual writing competition. Moore County writers of all ages were invited to submit written work which was inspired by the magic of J.K. Rowling's amazing literary legacy.



Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities
Southern Pines, North Carolina



2020

MOORE COUNTY WRITER'S COMPETITION

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF OUR WRITERS!

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE GENEROSITY OF THE
DONALD AND ELIZABETH COOKE FOUNDATION
MOORE COUNTY WRITER'S COMPETITION UNDERWRITER.



Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities
555 East Connecticut Avenue / PO Box 939
Southern Pines, North Carolina, 28388
weymouthcenter.org

MOORE COUNTY WRITER'S COMPETITION
2020 WIZARDS OF WEYMOUTH

GENRE AND AWARD	AUTHOR	TITLE	JUDGE	PAGE
FICTION GRADES 1-4				Robert Hill Long
1st	Isla Riggsbee	<i>Though She Be But Little: A Weymouth Owl Tale</i>		6
2nd	Ava Edwards	<i>Butterball the Magical Sloth</i>		11
3rd	Eden Whitfield	<i>A Beautiful Wand With An Ugly Feature</i>		13
NON FICTION GRADES 1-4				Robert Hill Long
1st	Logan Christopher	<i>The Legendary Life of J.K. Rowling</i>		16
POETRY GRADES 5-8				Debra Kaufman
1st	Jackson Thorne	<i>The Bertie Bott's Bean Boy</i>		18
2nd	Kelly Adams	<i>Friends and Foes</i>		19
3rd	London McKinnis	<i>My Magical Pretend Real Life</i>		20
Honorable Mention	Haily Price	<i>Frog Mode</i>		21
FICTION GRADES 5-8				Stephen Smith
1st	Ainsley Weaver	<i>The Hampster Dilemma</i>		23
2nd	Jackson Thorne	<i>11-HP</i>		28
3rd	Emma McShea	<i>The Timeouter</i>		30
NON FICTION GRADES 5-8				Stephen Smith
1st	Josie Britt	<i>Slytherin Serpent: Draco Malfoy's Story</i>		34
POETRY GRADES 9-12				Debra Kaufman
1st	Mallie Purvis	<i>Where I'm From</i>		36
2nd	Krystyna McKinnis	<i>Out of Place</i>		37
3rd	Elizabeth Kaczorowski	<i>A Trip to Hogwarts</i>		38
FICTION GRADES 9-12				Shelby Stephenson
1st	Raine Brown	<i>The Amber Seige</i>		40
2nd	Summer Faull	<i>From the Diary</i>		45
3rd	Krystyna McKinnis	<i>Kaleidoscope</i>		49
Honorable Mention	Mary McLeod	<i>The No-Maj</i>		54
Honorable Mention	Graham Garrett	<i>Through the Eyes of a Muggle</i>		59
Honorable Mention	Ari Fargo	<i>A Haunting Memory</i>		63
NON FICTION GRADES 9-12				Shelby Stephenson
1st	Jaleigh Wilson	<i>The Intricate Journey of J.K. Rowling</i>		65
POETRY ADULT				Debra Kaufman
1st	Elizabeth Wilson	<i>Do you feel the dark creature coming?</i>		67
2nd	Madison Wolf	<i>Sectumsempra</i>		68
3rd	Michael Griffin	<i>Walking in the Light</i>		69
Honorable Mention	Danielle Hall	<i>A Heart Turned Whole</i>		70
FICTION ADULT				Shelby Stephenson
1st	Karen Anderson	<i>The World of Dragolia and The Gate of Cymria</i>		72
Honorable Mention	Ellen Marcus	<i>Sticky Fingers</i>		77
NON-FICTION ADULT				Shelby Stephenson
1st	Danielle Hall	<i>She Was Not Done Listening</i>		80
ABOUT OUR JUDGES				83



FICTION
GRADES 1-4



THOUGH SHE BE BUT LITTLE

by Isla Riggsbee

Osborn opened her large eyes and swiveled her head to survey the landscape. She was a pygmy owl only about six inches tall, but she had the biggest dreams anyone had ever heard. She wanted to go to Hedwig's School for Heroic Owls in Weymouth Woods, North Carolina. The problem? She was scared. Most owls that went to the school were big and strong and fearless. She was small and weak and timid. With most owls that is, but when she was with her best friend, Flitter, she didn't care about anything. Flitter wasn't scared of anything. She stood up to the mean owls in the tree and didn't care what they thought. Osborn loved Flitter with all her heart but never understood her courage. The only thing they had in common? They both really wanted to go to Hedwig's School.

Now we haven't talked much about the school in question, so it is probably best I tell you a little about it. The school's head owl was Pigwidgeon, owl to Ron Weasley, and best friend to Harry Potter's owl, Hedwig. Hedwig was the namesake of the school, and for good reason. The school's purpose was to train owls for their role serving wizards, and long journeys carrying packages no one is supposed to know about. It was found in Weymouth Woods concealed by a circle of magic trees that kept muggles out. Now let's get back to our story.

Osborn surveyed the land then hopped out of the nest to go look for Flitter. As she swooped around the tree, she spotted Solstice, the meanest owl in Southern Pines, eating a crêpe from Betsy's while she was perched on top of The Little Toy Shop. Solstice was a big barn owl who came from a long line of extraordinary owls. When Solstice noticed Osborn with her giant eyes that missed nothing, she called out "Get down here, feather brain!"

Now Osborn was not one to ignore an order, so she landed a safe distance away on the narrow roof top. Solstice moved in for the kill. "Hello Osborn" she said with a smile like a snake looks at you just before it strikes. "What are we having for breakfast today?" She advanced toward the little owl creeping closer and closer. Then out of nowhere there was a thud and Solstice did a face plant! Flitter landed with a heavy Harry Potter book (probably book 5) in her talons. She had flown over holding the book and she must have just hit Solstice on the back of her head. Of course it must have been an accident. "Oops." twittered Flitter as she waved her book in her talons.

"I've always loved the Country Book Shop but never as much as I have now!" chirped Osborn "Who knew books could be weapons to take out villains?! But what's for breakfast?"

Later as they sat eating ice cream cones on the rooftop of the ice cream parlor, and talking about Harry Potter in between slurps, the subject of school auditions came up. Osborn felt a chill that might not have been from the beetle juice ice cream.

"So, are you going to audition for Hedwig's tomorrow?" asked Flitter

"M-m-maybe? If you do? But what are the chances we'll actually get in?"

"Come on don't worry so much! It can't be good to worry as much as you do."

"But only big, brave owls get in, you know that!" Osborn peeped, her eyes fixed on her feet.

"But Pigwidgeon is small and he's the head master!"

"So what?" Osborn was looking up at Flitter now, his eyes sad, "He founded the school he can do whatever he wants!"

Flitter looked right back at Osborn, "Yeah but he was pretty brave too."

Osborn missed the hint. She said sarcastically "The day I get into that school is the day Solstice gives out candy to everybody in the tree."

Flitter gave up. "Well I'm auditioning whatever you want to do is not up to me."

There was a long pause. Osborn's ice cream dribbled out of the cone. Finally, Osborn looked at Flitter's steely, brave eyes again,



“Fine! I’ll do it too!! Come on let’s go tell our parents.”

When Osborn got back to her perch in the oldest pine tree, life was going on as normal. Her little sister Feathers was coughing up a pellet, Dad was telling the twins Twit and Twoo stories, and her mom was making lunch. Osborn cleared her throat. No one noticed.

“Hey dad I’m going to go audition for the school tomorrow.”

Everyone carried on doing what they were doing for an eternity. Finally, Osborn’s dad said

“What? Honey! You’re going through with this? Good for you!”

“Yeah, Flitter talked me in to it. But I have to practice as much as I can so Flitter invited me to stay over-day with her. Is that okay?”

“Sure Tweety!” He gave her a proud kiss and Osborn flew out the window.

When Osborn got to Flitter’s house which was in a tree close to the old house at Weymouth, she was greeted warmly by Mrs Wyse, Flitter’s mom. “Hello dear! It’s been so long! Would you like some seeds?”

Osborn had bigger things to worry about than her stomach right now.

“No thank you Mrs. Wyse. Where is Flitter?”

“She’s over by the arts center dear” Mrs Wyse said, pointing her wing tip to the North.

When Osborn found Flitter, she had managed to set up an obstacle course with quidditch rings made of vines, tunnels made of glossy green magnolia leaves, a tightrope made of colorful scrap string snagged from the wool shop, and a block of wood that had once been on a table for a wedding in the Weymouth gardens.

“Wow Flitter! This looks amazing!” But Osborn could not stop the wiggly feeling in the pit of her tummy.

“Thanks, I’ve spent all afternoon working on it. Now it’s your turn! You go through the hoops one after another gliding back and forth then you dive through the tunnels, coming out on the tightrope which you must walk until you are on the block. Then you have to pick up the block in your talons and we can start phase two of training, knowledge.”

Osborn’s eyes grew bigger. That sounded really hard.

“But then there’s a twist.” Flitter said, so excited, “I found a fan so we can practice like we are battling in high winds, just like Hedwig had to do! Isn’t that cool?” Flitter pulled a big fan out from behind a tablecloth she’d taken from the same wedding as the block. All Osborn could do was gulp and nod. “Racers to the starting line!” Chirped Flitter happily. Osborn felt the exact opposite of happy as she lined up and braced herself for what was coming. Flitter flew over to the fan and said “ready...set...fly!” And clicked on the fan. Osborn gulped, and launched into the air beating her wings wildly. How could just air be so powerful! She managed to get through two hoops before crashing down in an ungraceful feathery heap.

“Good! Now try again!” commanded Flitter.

By the end of the hour Osborn managed to get through everything on the course, except lifting the block in her tiny talons, and her tummy knew it was time for dinner. Flitter realized how hard Osborn was breathing and said “maybe we should give up for now and try again later. Let’s go have dinner and do knowledge practice” suggested Flitter.

They had a good dinner of mouse stew and roasted insects with Mrs Wyse fussing over them and talking about the big day tomorrow. Then they moved on to part two of their plan for success. Flitter explained there were three different challenges all owls auditioning had to get through.

“Three!” Osborn peeped, “What are they?”

“Agility and strength, knowledge, and the last one is a mystery.”

“What do you mean mystery?”

“They always do something different so you can’t prepare. But now let’s test your knowledge skills. Let’s start with moments in history. “Question number one; did Hedwig ever get injured?”

“Yes” said Osborn confident he was right.



“Which shop did Hagrid buy Hedwig from?”

“Eeylop’s Owl Emporium!”

“Was Draco Malfoy a Death Eater?”

“Yes” said Osborn, shuddering. “What next?”

“Well, looks you’re all good with the basics but how about famous owls of Hedwig’s School? Professor Wing. Who was he?”

“He was the first flying agility professor at Hedwig’s.”

“Duke Tuft?”

“Duke of Weymouth. Can we practice strength again?”

“Ok but one more question. Who is Osborn of Southern Pines?”

“What? I’m not famous.”

“Aren’t you? What makes you a famous? Having people love you and adore you? If that’s all it takes you’re well on your way. Just remember that while you’re doing your audition ok? Puff out your chest feathers!”

Oswold couldn’t help but grin.

“Then let’s go!”

The two friends got back into position and began. On the first try there was no improvement at all. But on the second attempt things went a bit differently. When Osborn got to the block, she heard Flitter’s voice in her head. “If being famous means having people love you and adore you then you’re well on your way.” She scooped the block up with her talons and flew to the tree with it like it was nothing! She was too stunned to even hear her friend cheering when she realized what happened. “You did it Osborn! Now you can do anything you want! You will get in. I know it!”

When Osborn flew back down to Flitter, she realized she was very tired. “Let’s get to bed” she sighed, but with a smile curving her beak.

The next day Osborn got up dark and early ready to start the day. The only problem was Flitter was not ready.

“Come on Flitter, please?”

“But it’s so early!”

“Do you want to get in to the school or not? Best talon forward! We have to be on time.”

“Mmmm...”

Osborn could see the moon inching higher.

“Come on! I will drag you out if I have to!”

“Fine. But don’t blame me if I fall asleep along the way and get us lost.”

Both owls had a breakfast of mousecakes and were soon on their way to sign up for the auditions at the Campbell House. In almost every house in North Carolina there is a secret compartment or room that is for owls, that only owls know about. The Campbell House was just the same. In the owl room there were TONS of owls, who all looked very big and strong. Osborn found herself wondering what the house elves would think of all the mess they were making and whether the ghosts were going to float in at any moment. Some owls were tawny owls, some were screech owls (easy to identify) and some were barn owls Osborn even spotted a snowy owl who must have flown a very long way to be there. Then, of course, she spotted Solstice, already sneering down her beak and making fun of the two tiny owls. “Hey little birds! Come to cheer me on?” She hooted as they shuffled through the sign up line. “Ooh are you going to audition for class janitor?”

“Come on Flitter” Osborn said in a voice that surprised her with its bravery. “We have to sign up! She’s not worth the fight.” Osborn managed to pull Flitter away to the sign up desk before anything bad happened.



“Hellooooo,” an energetic owl at the desk said, peering over her golden beak, “want to sign up? Of course you doooo why else would you be here?” And a friendly laugh shook all her feathers. “Hoot-hoot-heee. I’ll just stop talking now. My name is Joy, what are your names so I can put it on this sign up sheet.” Osborn found herself staring at a floating quill hovering above a chart.

“All the information for the auditions and everything you’ll need to know is right here” she said as the quill stopped and pointed at them, “they start at 12 today. See you then.” Suddenly, they heard the beat of an owl’s wings, and an envelope fell down from the ceiling into each of their talons. As Flitter and Osborn were walking away Osborn realized something. Joy was a small owl like her!

“Well, she was strange,” muttered Flitter.

“I kind of like her,” said Osborn.

“She’s a bit too jumpy for me” said Flitter, “but I do want to see what’s in this envelope. I wonder what we’re going to be doing for the mystery test? I bet it’s something exciting like saving dragons from mermaids or stuff like that.” Flitter hooted.

“Ha! I think it’s going to be something like - who can spot the first mushroom” said Osborn, who had excellent eyesight.

“That’s boring. I want to do something exciting like juggling fire!”

The two owls returned to their favorite perch at the Country Book Shop and ripped open their envelopes. Inside was a letter that read;

Dear Applicant -

Congratulations on passing your first test, finding the courage to apply for our school. At twelve today you will have your first real round of testing at the Little Toy Shop in the owl room. Come Alone. We will be waiting. Sincerely, Pigwidgeon.

Osborn looked up to see Flitter reading her letter, right as the letters disappeared off the page.

“Well, where have you been summoned for your test?” Flitter said, looking at her surprised face. “Mine’s at the book shop.”

“At the Little Toy Shop” said Osborn in a flat voice.

“Cool. Why do they want us to come alone do you think?”

“Don’t know but we’ll find out soon. It’s almost twelve.”

Osborn hopped up, stumbled a bit, and started to fly past the post office to the toy shop, wondering what there would be when she got there. When she arrived she squeezed inside the window and saw...nothing.

Nobody was there to greet her or tell her what was going on. It was strange. Really strange. A train rattled by outside, shaking the building. Right as the train horn blew, she saw Joy the owl from sign up. She said in a hushed voice “Osborn you have to come with me, Pigwidgeon needs you immediately.”

“Ummm, what about my friend, Flitter?”

“Flitter has not been admitted to Hedwig’s School. You must never see her again to if you want to join us.”

“But she’s my friend! I need her!” Osborn peeped, her ear tufts sagging.

“So?” said Joy weirdly cheerful. “It’s the school or her. This is not a hard decision. Choose the school. You will not regret it.”

Osborn paused about to say yes. Then something stopped her. It was Flitter’s voice in her head saying she was famous and explaining why. And she decided her answer.

“I will choose the thing that matters most.” Osborn said. Her voice suddenly loud in the silence.

“Gooooood choice! Phew! Glad you made the right decision!” Joy hopped from one foot to the other.

“My friend” Osborn said.



Joy looked at Osborn with a small smile at the corner of her beak. “Here, take this” she said, and disappeared into the darkness. Osborn sighed, and took off for the bookshop. When she landed, she saw Flitter staring blankly at nothing in particular. “Flitter! What happened? Did you fail?” Osborn panted.

“No. but I thought I might lose you.”

“What?”

“They told me I could join the school and I wouldn’t be able to help you or talk to you. Or I could be your friend.” Flitter had a strange expression in her big eyes. “I almost chose the school.”

“They said the same thing to me” Osborn said “But it’s fine, I almost chose the school too. But I didn’t. Our friendship is safe. And I don’t think it matters if we get in or not. We’ll always have each other. ”

The two owls smiled warmly at each other and jumped from their perches, flying toward the pine trees, just like in a story book ending.

The End.



BUTTERBALL THE MAGICAL SLOTH

by Ava Claire Edwards

It was Christmas in New York City for Taylor Calloway. Taylor and her family were opening their presents under the Christmas tree. After a while, there was only one present left. It was wrapped in shiny gold paper with a red and green bow tied neatly on top. Taylor looked at the tag and saw it had a sloth on it. It was marked "To: Taylor" but had no other information to tell who it was from - no name, no letters, nothing. She asked her parents and siblings, but nobody claimed that they got her the gift. Taylor unwrapped it carefully and made sure that she didn't tear the nice wrapping paper. Inside she saw a large brown box. She opened the box to find a very fluffy, cute, fat, stuffed sloth! Taylor shrieked with excitement because sloths were her favorite animal and this one was especially adorable. His golden eyes seemed to sparkle from the lights of the tree and a name came to her instantly - this was Butterball the Sloth!

When winter break was over, Taylor had to go back to school. Fifth grade was a lot of work, but she liked hanging out with her friends, Emily and Zoe. After a full morning of classes, they went to PE and played four corners. At the end of class, Zoe asked, "How many steps did you get?" When Taylor looked at her wrist, she remembered that she couldn't find her watch that morning. When she got home, she told her parents about it. Her mom went in the kitchen and came back holding a purple watch. "How did you find that?" Taylor asked. "It was lying on top of the bar when we got home," said her mom. "Thank you!" Taylor replied. "You should be more careful with your stuff and while you're at it - clean up that room. There is no telling what you might find in there," her mom said. Ugh - Taylor hated cleaning her room.

The next morning Taylor did not hear her alarm and got up late. She was very tired and didn't want to go to school. She missed the bus, so her mom drove her and Taylor fell asleep in the car. When they got to school, she woke up and suddenly remembered that her room wasn't clean. When her parents saw her room they were going to be really mad.

Meanwhile at Taylor's house, Butterball was slowly waking up from a nap on the warm, cozy bed. It was a lot more comfortable since he had gotten rid of that hard purple plastic ring that Taylor wore on her wrist. He moved it far away to another room and it had not returned. When he saw the bedroom, he gasped. It looked like a hurricane had blown through. Books, clothes and toys were scattered everywhere and there were Pop-tart crumbs, glitter and dirt all over the floor. He ran to one of the closets and grabbed a vacuum, broom and swiffer. Then, Butterball went back to Taylor's bedroom and got to work. When he was finished, he put away all of the tools he used and was so tired that he fell asleep in the middle of the floor. When Taylor came home that afternoon, she was surprised to see her room clean and Butterball lying on the floor. "What is going on here?" she wondered.

That night Taylor had a basketball game. She put on her shirt and shorts, filled up her water bottle, slipped on her shoes, and headed out the door to get in the car with her parents. At the gym, Taylor met with her coach and started warming up with her team. Her teammate, Mary, asked Taylor where her ball was. Taylor remembered that she left it at home. Uh-oh.

Butterball saw the basketball by the door. He knew that Taylor would want it, but how could he make that happen? All of a sudden, he saw Taylor's remote control car. It was a red convertible with a blue controller. He had a great idea! He turned the car on, took the control, and pressed a few buttons until he figured it out. Then, he hopped in the car, and drove through the house and out the pet door. Good thing the Calloways had a Dalmatian so he could fit. He took off!

Butterball zoomed along the sidewalk to the gym, not letting anyone see him. He bounced the ball through the door and then hid behind a large blue mat. Taylor saw the basketball and grabbed it. "Where did that come from?" she wondered. Her team practiced until they were ready to start the game. Taylor played hard and scored 12 points! At the end of the game, the score was 30 to 14 - Taylor's team won! Butterball snuck out of the gym, jumped into the red convertible and drove away very fast, because he didn't want anybody to see him. It had been a busy day. Once he got home, Butterball fell asleep right away.

The next morning when Taylor woke up, she was not feeling very well. She decided to go to school



anyway and started coughing before the class even had their morning snack. Eventually, she asked her teacher if she could go see the nurse. At the nurse's office Ms. Simmons took her temperature and said that Taylor had a fever and called her mother. Taylor went back to class to pack up her things and Emily and Zoe took her up to the office. A few minutes later, Taylor's mom arrived to take her home. When they got there, Taylor went to the kitchen for some juice. All of a sudden, she saw a flash of light brown fluff - the same color as Butterball! Then she saw him! Her stuffed sloth was standing in the kitchen. She ran over to him and gasped. Taylor could not believe her eyes. Right in front of her was a stuffed sloth sweeping! "Butterball - what are you doing? Wait - have you been cleaning up after me and finding my lost things?!" Taylor asked. Butterball froze and then fell over on his side. He tried to be still and hoped that Taylor would forget what she just saw, but he was so scared he started shaking. Butterball knew he had been caught, so he stood up and said the only thing he could, "Yes." Taylor was amazed! A stuffed sloth can do so much! Taylor thought about all the work he had done and the chances he had been taking for things that were really her responsibilities. She did not want her sweet sloth to work and worry. She wanted him to play and have fun. Taylor decided then and there that she would try harder to keep up with her things and clean up after herself. She felt so lucky that Butterball had chosen her to be the person who received him as a gift and did not want to waste another minute of their time together.

When Taylor woke up the next morning, she and Butterball started talking. Taylor's parents came by and heard his voice. "Taylor, is that you?" her mom asked. "Yes" said Taylor in her best squeaky sloth voice. When they looked in her doorway, Butterball got nervous and scrunched down in the bed. "Did that sloth just move?" asked her dad. "Of course - I made him move! Bye now!" Taylor said. Then she laughed, grabbed Butterball and dashed away. "That was weird," said Taylor's mom. When they were out of sight, Taylor whispered, "That was close! We'll have to be more careful!"

From that point on, Taylor and Butterball had many exciting adventures. Taylor worked on keeping track of her belongings and cleaning up her own messes and Butterball enjoyed games, movies, snacks and lots of fun times. Butterball turned out to be the most wonderful gift Taylor ever received and although he could do many amazing things (compared to other stuffed animals), the magic of his friendship was the best part of all.



A BEAUTIFUL WAND WITH AN UGLY FEATURE

by Eden Whitfield

Once upon a time there was a man named Mr. Ollivander. Mr. Ollivander sold wands at Diagon Alley in the wizarding world. One day Mr. Ollivander realized he was running short on wands to sell. He spent his entire day at the shop looking in all of the crevices trying to find wands because he almost never ran out of them. With only a couple wands left, Mr. Ollivander knew he had to make new ones.

The next morning, Mr. Ollivander traveled by floo powder to get to the place where wand materials were found called Weymouth Woods. Weymouth Woods was the only place where Mr. Ollivander could find magical hummingbird feathers for the core of his wands. Mr. Ollivander didn't make this trip very often and the trails change daily so he got super scared when he had to go collect new wand materials. He entered the woods and took a right onto Gum Swamp Trail and then turned left onto Lighter Stump Trail. He took another left on Pine Island Trail and he was finally at his destination, Pine Island.

The one thing that never changed about the trails was The Punishing Pine Tree on Pine Island. If you got too close to the Punishing Pine the branches started to swing and then hit you. The only way to make it stop was to touch the knot at the bottom of the tree. If you were lucky enough to get past the tree, the knot opened a gateway into an underground maze. The only ones who could navigate the underground maze were Mr. Ollivander's helpers. His helpers were elves and because they were so short The Punishing Pine Tree branches could not reach them.

Mr. Ollivander called out for one of the elves named Dobby. Dobby excitedly ran out under the swinging branches, touched the knot and happily hugged Mr. Ollivander's leg. Mr. Ollivander knelt down and gave his old friend a Chocolate Frog. It had been a long time since Dobby had seen Mr. Ollivander, and he jumped up and down and thanked him. Dobby guided them through the maze and at the end of the maze there was a long tunnel. As they went down the tunnel it got narrower and shorter, forcing Mr. Ollivander to crouch down and turn sideways just to fit through. At the end was a tiny elf sized door with many locks and a small peephole. Dobby did a secret knock and the elf on the other side of the door looked through the peephole, and pushed a button causing a secret passage in the wall to open up big enough for even Mr. Ollivander to fit through.

When Mr. Ollivander entered the underground hideout, he saw the elves had gathered all of the magical hummingbird feathers for the wands. He was getting ready to leave the hideout when Dobby said "Wait we have one more thing for you." Mr. Ollivander turned back around and saw Dobby holding feathers from the rare Red Cockaded Woodpecker. Mr. Ollivander looked surprised because he had never heard of the Red Cockaded Woodpecker. Dobby explained to muggles the Red Cockaded Woodpecker is a hard to find species of woodpecker, but to the wizarding world it is actually a unique Red Headed Phoenix. Mr. Ollivander was shocked and instantly smiled from ear to ear, because he knew phoenix feathers were very exotic and possessed special magic. Dobby told Mr. Ollivander the elves had only found a small hand full, so he should use them wisely. Mr. Ollivander put all of the hummingbird feathers in a bag but held the special feathers from the Red Cockaded Woodpecker close to his heart in his jacket pocket.

Mr. Ollivander said goodbye to all of the elves, walked with Dobby through the maze, past the Punishing Pine, through the trails and back to the beginning of Weymouth Woods. He said a final goodbye to Dobby and apparated back to his shop in Diagon alley and started working on the wands to sell the next day.

He quickly went to work making wands from the hummingbird feathers, so he could have wands on his shelves. Once the regular wands were done and on display, Mr. Ollivander excitedly got out the rare Red Cockaded Woodpecker feathers and started crafting a unique and special wand. Unlike the other wands, he took his time precisely assembling the layers of the wand to hold such a magical core. It took him hours to finish, but when he was done he held the best work of his life. Exhausted, he put the Red Cockaded Woodpecker wand in his safe and locked up for the night.

The following day, Mr. Ollivander opened his shop and sold a few wands but business was slow. In the afternoon a young boy walked up to the shop, curiously looking at all the wands in the shop windows. Mr.



Ollivander walked out, introduced himself and asked his name. The boy said “my name is Tom Riddle, and I need a wand for my first year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.” Mr. Ollivander invited the boy to come in and try out some wands. Tom Riddle tried out almost all the wands in the shop, but none fit him quite right. Mr. Ollivander saw the disappointed look in Tom Riddle’s eyes, and suddenly remembered the special wand in his safe. Mr. Ollivander hurried to the back of the shop to grab the wand from the safe. He quickly returned and handed the Red Cockaded Woodpecker wand to Tom Riddle, excited for Tom to give it a try. With a flick of his wrist, a bundle of colorful ropes suddenly flew from the wand into the corner of the room. Tom Riddle exclaimed “this is it, this is the wand for me”! Mr. Ollivander was thrilled the boy found his matching wand, but sad to see a wand he put so much hard work into go.

Mr. Ollivander neatly wrapped up the wand and handed it to Tom Riddle. As he watched Tom leave the store, Mr. Ollivander noticed the colorful bundle of ropes mysteriously started to change into a coil of dark and twisted serpents.

The end .. or just the beginning...



NONFICTION

GRADES 1-4



THE LEGENDARY LIFE OF J. K. ROWLING

by Logan Christopher

J.K. Rowling was born on July 31, 1965. Her age today is 54 years old. J.K. Rowling was living on government assistance as a single mother when she began writing. The place she finished her first book was the Balmoral Hotel. You can still visit the room that she stayed in. J.K. Rowling was 32 years old when she finished her first book *The Sorcerer's Stone*.

Some of the inspirations for J.K. Rowling's books are very interesting. For instance, the inspiration for the Hogwarts Express may have come from the fact that J.K. Rowling's parents met on a train departing from Kings Cross Station at 11:00 AM. This is the same time and place of departure of the Hogwarts express. The name Harry Potter was inspired by her neighbor's name, which was Harry Potter. Hogwarts Castle was inspired by the Edinburgh Castle. The creation of dementors was inspired by the death of her mother. The character of Voldemort was fashioned after Adolf Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany.

A lot of the inspirations for spells came from Latin. An example would be *Expelliarmus*, which roughly translates to "banish weapon" which causes the opponents wand flying out of reach. Another example of something translated from Latin is the school motto of Hogwarts: *Draco Dormiens Nunquam Titillandus*. It translates to never tickle a sleeping dragon. J. K. Rowling also used French in making Voldemort's name. Voldemort means flight from death; death is Voldemort's greatest fear.

J.K. Rowling's first book, *The Sorcerer's Stone*, was rejected by 12 publishers. The thirteenth decided to publish the book. *The Sorcerer's Stone* was published by Scholastic Incorporated. In her first book Harry Potter discovers he is a wizard. He discovers the magical world of wizards and witches. In the Chamber of Secrets, Harry finds an evil lurking somewhere in the school called Hogwarts.

Her second book *The Chamber of Secrets* was published on July 2, 1998. Its publisher was named Arthur Levine. J.K. Rowling's third book was published on September 8, 1998. The publishing company was Scholastic Incorporated. In *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry, Ron and Hermione have to prove that Sirius Black did not commit a crime. They also have to save a hippogriff named Buckbeak.

The other books by J.K. Rowling were published on these dates. Book four, *The Goblet of Fire* was published in 2000. Book five: *The Order of the Phoenix* was published in 2003. Book six, *The Half Blood Prince* was published in 2005. Book seven, *The Deathly Hallows* was published in 2007. Out of these books, the most exciting is probably the seventh book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

J.K. Rowling was the first author to become a billionaire. Today she is no longer a billionaire because she donated so much money to charity. Two of the charities that she donates to are the Anne Rowling Neurologic Regenerative Clinic and Multiple Sclerosis Research. Some of the other things she does with her money are buying three houses in Edinburgh, Perthshire, and Kensington. She also had a \$1.3 million house knocked down so that she could build two connected Hogwarts-like tree houses for her children.

Some fun facts about the Harry Potter movie series are: Tom Felton auditioned for both Harry and Ron, but was cast as Draco Malfoy instead. Most of the books in Dumbledore's office were phone books that were re-covered and covered with dust. A final fact is that Daniel Radcliff (Harry Potter) broke over eighty wands in the filming of the entire series because he had a habit of using them as drum sticks.

J.K. Rowling is my favorite author. She has written amazing books and has an amazing life.



POETRY
GRADES 5-8



THE BERTIE BOTT'S BEAN BOY

by Jackson Thorne

At Bertie Botts Bean Factory,
we do our jobs delightfully.
There's the manager Mr. Drew,
and our supplier (don't ask who).

Oh, and all the smells galore,
earwax, lemon, grass and more.
And there's a room that's just for me,
here at Bertie's Bean Factory.

I'm the tester for the beans,
bean taste tester if you please.
I've eaten more than Harry P.,
and many more than Ron Weasley.

The pay is low and my stomach's like paste,
but I have the best sense of taste.
And when I come home to lie in bed,
my head aches and my ears turn red.

But there are no sick days here for me,
at Bertie Botts Every Flavored Beans.
And now, with the new mythic line,
they've been even worse than in past times.

With dragon scale and basilisk doo,
they give me chills through and through.
But sometimes I have my desire,
like birthday cake, not like used tire.

And at the end of every day
I sit down and hope and pray,
when the sugars got me wired,
that I never will get fired!



FRIENDS AND FOES

by Kelly Adams

One fair and golden morning
The sky was rare and pouring
With regular old rain
In a regular old domain.

4 animals all with a heart of gold
A bold badger
A loyal lion
A radiant raven
And a sarcastic snake.

One faithful day they all met up
Very blindly as they got up
Up from their beds out of the house
No one could find them not even a mouse.

They went to Hogwarts you see
Oh yessiree.

When they met oh sure it was swell
But if they knew what was waiting
Oh they would surely dwell
When they got there they awed and oohed.

For Hogwarts was very New,
New to the eye, new to the smell
New as far as they could tell.

When they arrived they were welcomed
By someone peculiar someone unaccustomed
They went to the meeting halls all very confused
For when they went in they were very amused.

There was a hat with a face on it
But four different groups
All so different but all so
OOPS!!!

The badger knocked over the goblet
He caused discomfort to them all
They all sat and watch
As each of them went up to talk.

They got divided
As the council recited
One house for patient
One house for the daring.

One for the brilliant
And one for the taunting
And from that moment on
The ones they called friends,
Are now foes.
“Friends become foes”



MY MAGICAL PRETEND REAL LIFE

by London McKinnis

My magical pretend-real life
is the perfect life for me.

I can do what I want.

I am wild, I am free.

I can be very crazy
and go on fun adventures.
No more painful, dreaded hassles.
No more acne, no more dentures.

There is no need for homework
because I have all the knowledge.

I don't need to study.

I don't need to go to college.

No more cruelty and despair
because everyone just loves each other.

No more arguing and fighting,
with our sisters and our brothers.

The land is the sea
and there is no limit,
because in my world,
if you can dream it, you can do it.

My magical pretend-real life
is the perfect life for me.
Just close your eyes and imagine,
how great this world could be.



FROG MODE

by Hailey Price

Today, at my magic school,
We did something really cool.
We had to turn things into frogs,
Things such as cogs and logs!
There was a special mode for this,
It was a thing you could not miss.
At the bottom of our wands,
A switch that now said, "Frog mode on".
When I pointed my wand at a little pail,
It sprouted four legs, a head, and a tail!
Our teacher kept one as a pet,
Its habitat was very wet.
After we left class that day,
We had some time when we could play.
My friends and I went for a walk,
And on that walk, we had a talk.
We walked in circles around the yard,
Eventually, it got quite hard.
As we rested on a stump,
My friend turned green and started to jump!
My other friend and I were scared,
We ran back as fast as we dared.
As we rushed back to the school,
I looked like I had seen a ghoul.
For as we hurried past a mop,
It grew green legs and started to hop!
I wondered what was doing this,
It was not a time for feeling bliss.
Frogs were jumping everywhere,
Even up and down the stairs!
At that moment, I had a thought,
I turned around right on the spot.
I looked down at my very wand,
To see I'd left the frog mode on!



FICTION
GRADES 5-8



THE HAMSTER DILEMMA

by Ainsley Weaver

“Jenna, are you there?” Kelly shouted.

“Yes Kelly.” Jenna said as she sighed and put down her homework.

“Great!” Kelly yelled back through the hard, wooden door, closing off the girl’s corridor from the main hall in Hogwarts.

Kelly bolted through the door with ten huge books in her arms, stacked all the way up to her head. “What do you need?” Jenna responded.

“Wow. You have a great room!” Kelly stated as she looked around the room. In front of her was Jenna’s desk piled high with books, papers, and spells, while her bed and dressers were neat and tidy. Kelly sat down on Jenna’s window seat that overlooked the pond behind Hogwarts. She brushed her crazy, red hair out of her face before plopping all her books on Jenna’s desk.

“I will ask this again. What do you need, and what is all this?!” Jenna snapped.

“Sorry, I was just taking in all of your room,” Kelly said. “These are all the spell books I could find on animal transformation!”

“Okay, well, I still don’t get why they are in my room?” Jenna asked as she started to flip through a few of them.

“Well, have you ever wanted to be an animal?” Kelly asked, smiling, as her crystal blue eyes shone.

“No.”

“Well, I have, and I want you to turn me into a hamster. My sister’s birthday is coming up and she loves hamsters. So now I could be a hamster, she then loves me, then you turn me back into a girl before her party starts!” Kelly squeaked.

“That is way too dangerous. You could get lost, hurt, or you might not be able to turn yourself back,” Jenna said worriedly.

“That is why I’m not going to turn myself back,” Kelly said jumping up and down.

“You want to stay a hamster forever?”

“No! I want you to turn me back!” Kelly shouted out.

After a long while of Kelly begging Jenna and Jenna pointing out the dangers, Jenna finally agreed on one condition. Anything that happened to Kelly, was not Jenna’s fault.

The next morning, without knocking, Kelly shoved open the door and skipped into Jenna’s dorm room. Jenna bolted upright sensing another being in the room. Her blonde hair was all knotted and piled on top of her head while her deep brown eyes were still clouded with sleepiness. Kelly jumped down onto her bed buzzing with excitement.

“What’s so important that you have to wake me up at 6:30 am? My first class is Potion Making with Professor Frebeam and it doesn’t start until 7:30.” Jenna moaned.

“Well my sister is coming today, and I need to practice being a hamster, and you turn me back with clothing on,” Kelly said.

“How long have you been up for?” Jenna said as she saw Kelly’s hair was perfect and her make-up was on point.

“It’s not important,” Kelly snapped back. “Right now I need you to turn me into a hamster. NOW!!” Kelly yelled.

“Fine,” Jenna said reluctantly as she stood up to grab her slippers. Jenna grabbed her wand and fixed her hair. After returning from her closet, Jenna walked out in her school uniform and a bow.



“Okay. I’m ready.” Kelly said.

“Me too,” Jenna said reluctantly.

Jenna grabbed her wand and took a deep breath.

“Quis est homo birgine ursam eam convertisse criceta quis tenui praegnantem stamine.”

With a huge blast of pink glitter, Jenna looked down and saw her cousin as a hamster. A little squeak came from both Jenna and the hamster version of Kelly.

“Quoniam quis est criceta tenui praegnantem stamine quaeso eam illi normalem in homines sui sicut puella,” Jenna said reading out of the top of the spell books.

With a large explosion of color, Kelly reappeared in a pile on the floor.

“AH!!!” Jenna screamed.

“What?!” Kelly screamed back.

“You... You... You’re... You’re ...”

“I’m a what?!” Kelly yelled back.

“You are a hamster!!” Jenna squealed.

“AHHHHHHHHHHHHH,” Kelly screamed as she looked down on herself. She had fur all down her arms, legs and chest.

“Get me a mirror!” Kelly snapped as she started to run around the room in search of one.

“Here,” Jenna said as she handed her a small hand mirror encrusted with red rubies. Kelly looked into the mirror at herself and saw the full extent of her fur. It crept up her neck, but stopped at her chin, just as it stopped before her hands and feet. She had whiskers and furry ears. Her small hands, feet, and head looked very strange next to her large furry torso.

“WHAT HAPPENED?!!!” Kelly shrieked.

“I told you the spell was dangerous. Maybe you just haven’t fully turned back into a human yet!” Jenna said encouragingly.

“Well, I would rather be a full hamster,” Kelly said as she cast a spell on herself.

Jenna scooped her up and tossed her into a net cage at the end of her bed.

“I can’t lose you now,” Jenna said glaring back at hamster Kelly.

“Well now I can’t understand a single peep you make so now what do I do?”

“SQUEAK.”

“What am I supposed to do now?!” Jenna shrieked. “If you had just stayed as a half human, half hamster, I could have actually understood you!”

Jenna heard everyone beginning to walk past her door which meant it was almost breakfast time. She picked up Kelly in the net cage and tucked them into the front pocket of her bag.

“Now you better be good. I’ll try to sneak you in some food but be quiet.” Jenna snapped.

She pulled open her door and joined the crowd of girls running down the hallway. At the end of the girls’ corridor, Jenna spotted her friend Max. Max was an enthusiastic boy who was always up for an adventure. When Jenna saw him, she knew that if anyone could help her with Kelly, it would be him. She ran up to him, but there were so many people around, that she lost him. Jenna knew they could sit next to each other at breakfast. Jenna silently grabbed some carrots off of her plate, and pushed them into her bag; unfortunately, Max’s teammate saw her and asked, “Jenna, what are you doing?”

“Um, I, uh, I... I’m bringing some food back to my room... Kelly isn’t feeling well and doesn’t want any visitors... like teachers, so uh, she asked me to bring her something. Well I better be going,” Jenna said as she grabbed her platter and Max’s collar.



“Hey!” Max yelled as Jenna pulled him into the hallway. “I didn’t even finish my breakfast! This better be important!” Max yelled. His blue eyes were fiery, angry and intense.

“It is, very important,” Jenna said in a hushed voice. “I kind of turned Kelly into a hamster, then when I turned her back, she still had fur, so she turned herself back into a full hamster and now I can’t turn her back!” Jenna said as she began to cry.

“So I’m guessing she isn’t sick?” Max asked.

“I made an excuse, so that your buddy wouldn’t find out” Jenna admitted.

“Okay, I’ll help, but after all our classes end. I can’t miss any more,” Max said.

“Okay.” I’m going to ask Amelia to help too. She is the only one that has read every book in the library twice.”

“Alright. See you at 3:00 pm in the library,” Max said as he ran back into the main hall.

The day went in slow motion for Jenna. Every class felt like it was four hours long instead of forty-five minutes. Jenna could manage most classes because she liked them. Her next and last class of the day, Spell Casting was the worst. Jenna loved what she was learning and the teacher, Professor Cartlain. The problem was the girl that sat next to her. Natalia. She was the most popular girl at school, and she knew everything about everyone. Every teacher loved her so much and they believed everything she said, so if Natalia found out about Kelly the hamster, she would flip, and in ten minutes, everyone in the school would know.

There was no way Jenna was going to give Natalia wind of any of her secrets, and she wasn’t planning on telling her about Kelly, but just in case, she had a memory wiping spell in her pocket, that could erase however many minds she wanted. Jenna crept into the classroom and quickly sat down. Jenna didn’t want to have to deal with reaching underneath her chair to check on Kelly, so she put her backpack on top of her lap. **BIG MISTAKE!!**

Towards the end of the class, Professor Cartlain was giving a lecture on the proper wrist flick to make a spell work perfectly, when Jenna felt water drip down her hand. She tried to stay focused on the lesson, while looking calm so Natalia wouldn’t look over, and figure out where the water was coming from and how to stop it. She looked to the bottom of the bag where she saw a huge puddle. Right below where she was storing Kelly. In mere seconds, Jenna knew this was not water coming out of her water bottle. Jenna reached into her bag where she created a towel to clean up the mess.

Once the class finished, Jenna raced out the door and through the halls back to her dorm room. She had to change skirts before going back into the public eye. Ten minutes later, Jenna grabbed her backpack and raced out the door and back to the library. On the way there, Jenna came around a corner when she saw Natalia walking towards her.

“Where are you going?” Natalia asked?

“To the library,” Jenna responded quickly.

“Why is your backpack dripping?” Natalia snapped.

“Oh, my water bottle was dripping. I must not have cleaned it all the way up,” Jenna said laughingly.

Natalia shrugged her shoulders and walked around the corner at which point Jenna speed-walked the rest of the way.

When Jenna walked into the library Amelia and Max were reading through a few books, which was very strange for Max. He looked up and motioned Jenna over.

“What have you found?” Jenna asked.

“Well, we found out about an ancient wizard. He was the most powerful wizard ever born and he was never given a problem he couldn’t fix,” Amelia said without looking up.

“Yes. This book says that he changed people back from being animals and even a table!” Max yelled.

“That’s great!” Jenna said squealing.



In Jenna's commotion, no one noticed the door opening and closing.

"When can we go?" Jenna squealed.

"Go where?" said a voice.

"Um, go back to bed!" Amelia said without thinking as she looked at Natalia.

"Yeah, I'm not believing that," Natalia said with a smirk. "I know that you're going to some mysterious Wizard because you've turned Kelly into a hamster," Natalia said as her smirk gradually slid off her face.

"What do you mean?" Max asked eyeing Jenna and Amelia.

"I heard everything," Natalia said smiling. "Helen has told me all I need to know," she said as a small girl crawled out from under the table they were sitting at.

"Helen?" the three of them asked questionably.

"Hi guys. I didn't mean to be rude, but when I overheard you talking to Max in the hall about turning Kelly into a hamster, I told Natalia. She wanted to know more, so she told me to follow you." Helen said.

"Why do you care?" Max asked.

"It's not important," Natalia snapped back.

"Then why are you here?" Jenna asked as she turned to look at them.

"Well, I have a problem, and I have been looking for someone who could help me."

"Why should we help you?" Max asked questionably.

"Well if you let me come with you, I won't tell anyone about Kelly," Natalia snorted. "I could have told everyone in the school by now," Natalia said.

"Okay, fine," Jenna said. Natalia and Helen sat down to help Max, Jenna and Amelia search for remedies. Later that night, they all agreed to meet outside the school in a place Max found while he trained for Quid-ditch.

The next morning, Jenna, Max, and Amelia waited outside of Hogwarts for Natalia.

"Where is she?" Jenna asked impatiently.

"Natalia said that she would be here by 9:30. It's 10:57!" Amelia yelled.

"I'm here!" Natalia said as she strutted into the clearing followed by Helen and a man carrying 5 bags each covered with pink stripes and glitter.

"Who is that, and why are they here?" Jenna asked.

"Well, Helen had to come, and this is Cameron. My bodyguard. He is coming to make sure I am safe, and so that poor Helen doesn't have to carry my stuff," Natalia said.

"Why would Helen...never mind..I don't care," Amelia huffed.

Jenna clutched her bag with Kelly and other supplies inside.

"So...How are we going to get to wherever we are going?" Natalia asked as she looked around the clearing.

"Well, first we need to go to an island off the coast of Australia. After that, we need to get up on top of the mountain where the wizard is living," Amelia said as she read out of a book in her hand.

"Why can't he live somewhere with other people?" Natalia moaned. After a few minutes of Natalia groaning, there was a large rumbling noise which slowly came closer.

"Well, that's our ride!" Jenna squealed.

Over the top of the trees, a shadow appeared. That shadow came from a HUGE ogre. In his hand was a rope 10 feet wide, with a dragon at the end. The dragon's huge, green head four horns going in each direction. Its massive body held gold wings that flapped up and down. The wind it produced almost bent the trees in half.



Natalia screamed and jumped behind Cameron who stood terrified. He dropped her bags and ran back to the school at record speed.

“Well, there goes bodyguard number 567,” Natalia said as she rolled her eyes.

“Come on!” Jenna said snapping Natalia out of her thoughts.

Natalia looked up to see Helen, Max, Amelia, and Jenna climbing into a little hut strapped to the dragon’s back. Natalia slowly followed.

“WHERE TO?” the ogre bellowed.

“To the Hamilton Islands in Australia,” Amelia responded.

Soon they were off, flying in the air. Jenna turned around and saw Max and Amelia at a table looking at a map. Helen was napping on the floor in front of Natalia, who was looking in a mirror fixing her hair.

“So how long is this flight thing going to be?” Natalia asked turning around to face Jenna.

“Well, it should be about 2 hours. The dragon can fly SUPER fast,” Amelia responded instead.

“Okay.”

Amelia didn’t account for all the water and bathroom breaks they had to take between the travelers. After 12 hours of flying, they finally arrived at the Hamilton Islands. Jenna hopped off followed by everyone else.

“Thank goodness we’re finally here,” Natalia exclaimed. “Do we really have to climb that?” she asked as they turned their heads to see the mountain looming above them.

“No,” Jenna said as she pulled out a spellbook from her bag. “We are going to fly up the mountain.”

Jenna created 5 flying hoverboards, one for each person. They grabbed ahold and flew into the air. When they got to the top of the mountain, Amelia grabbed her map and led all five people through the woods which stood before them. In the center of the woods a little clearing appeared which held an even smaller hut. Its blue roof covered its yellow walls and almost touched the thick grass at its base.

Jenna walked to the front door and knocked. “Come in,” called a soft voice from inside. Jenna opened the door and saw an old man in a rocking chair while his wife stirred a pot filled with soup. “Hello?” the old man questioned his guests. “I am Granamble, but you can call me Mr. Namble,” he said. “Hi Mr. Namble. I am Jenna, and this is Max, Amelia, Natalia, and Helen.” Each student waved as their name was listed. “We have a problem, and we heard that you are really good at helping solve problems.” Jenna said. “Yes, well I guess I could help you”

Mr. Namble said struggling to stand up. He led the group over to a small bookshelf full of old dusty books. “Here. This should help turn your friend back to a human.” Jenna looked over at Max in amazement. “How did you know what our problem was? Jenna asked. “A wizard never shares his secrets. I also know that one of you is lying to the others.” Mr. Namble said as he handed Jenna a book. Everyone looked at Natalia.

“Okay so maybe I wanted to come for a different reason, but now I’m helping you guys,” Natalia said.

“Just read the spell on the top of page fifty-four together, and your friend will be back to normal,” Mr. Namble said smiling.

Slowly everyone joined Jenna repeating the spell over and over. Their wands made the room cloud up until no one could see anything around them. When the room became so thick with clouds and everything was coated in grey, Jenna felt someone tackle her to the ground. It was Kelly, in human form again, and Natalia was scared.

“Natalia?” Jenna yelled. “Kelly!!!” The clouds disappeared and Kelly and Jenna embraced while Natalia confessed to everyone why she had come. “Both of my parents are muggles. I wanted to see if Mr. Namble would make me a wand because I always see you guys doing magic and I am jealous,” Natalia admitted.

They thanked Mr. Namble, and departed.



11-HP

by Jackson Thorne

I know you've probably heard of me. The 11 inch holly wood with a phoenix feather core owned by Harry Potter himself! Ya, maybe you heard of him. He sorta SAVED THE WORLD. He's kind of a big deal. But our story isn't about him. Our story is about me, his wand and how I chose him.

Before I tell you the story you first have to understand Daddy Ollivander and the wand shop. First, let's start with Daddy Ollivander. He is older than all the wands in the entire shop. He has frizzy white hair and he'll always wear a dark green unbuttoned robe with a grey shirt underneath. He always listens to muggle music on his record player. His favorite is Bing Crosby. He will often hum to himself while cleaning. Oh, and he owns the shop (that part is kind of important).

Now, for the shop itself. It's a normal size building, not very big but not very small at the same time. When you walk in to your left you see a desk and stairs leading upward. The desk is where you actually buy your wand and the stairs lead to Daddy Ollivander's home and workshop. On your right you see a huge shelf lining the entire wall. The shelf is full of wands! The shelf leads into a back room where the entire space seems like shelves. In the back room there is a door leading to the toilets and a few stools for people to sit on. It's a great place to call home.

Ok, now I can get to the story. Here I go.

Dust. Dust everywhere. See, it's busy season so Daddy Ollivander hasn't cleaned up the place for a while. With all these first years coming in Daddy Ollivander hasn't had any time for us wands. Speaking of busy season, this month has been my all-time record for tests! When you are a wand you get to meet a lot of weird people (and I mean WEIRD).

Like this one kid, every single time he picked up a wand he blew something up. After he left, the entire shop was in ruins. It took Daddy Ollivander a day to clean off all the ash... And still, he got the wand just right for him.

Or, this girl, she did all of her testing nearly perfectly but refused to leave until she got the one that was absolutely, completely perfect. She stayed for about an hour. She was impressive not only for being an eleven year old, but also being a muggle born. On a side note, maybe her wand skills were perfect but her hair was not!

Ok then, where was I?

Oh yes that's right... Ahem, I've been sitting on this shelf for some time now. It's been about 60 or 50 years (I sorta lost track) since my brother chose his wizard and left. That's been the only good thing that's happened for decades. My brother and I have never gotten along very well. He always went off on rambles talking about dark magic and whatnot. It's been a really long wait, but it was worth it because that's when the magic happened (pun intended).

"Hey 11-HP" said 10-OU.

Before we continue, let me explain. 10-OU was my best friend back at Daddy Ollivander's shop. He was never the fastest broom in the quidditch match, but he means well. His name stands for 10 inch oak wood with unicorn hair core.

"What is it?" I said.

"There's a new kid walking in. Looks a little wonky. He has glasses held together with tape, uncut shaggy hair, and some weird lightning bolt scar on his forehead."

"Oh thank goodness it's not another Weasley." (Don't even get me started on them.)

When he came closer I started feeling jittery. Not as nervous, but I was actually shaking. My ears started popping. Oh wait, I'm a wand, I don't really have ears.

I heard this new kid's wand testing and let me assure you it did not sound good. It had been a while and I thought he was going to leave, but that's when someone opened my drawer and I saw light. Ugh, and let me



just say Daddy Ollivander always kept the lights on too bright back at the shop.

The boy examined me like he didn't know what to do. That's when Daddy Ollivander said, "Well lad, give it a go." The boy gripped me tight as he swished me through the air. He had a strong wrist. For a second everything was a blur then he held very still and closed his eyes as if he was waiting for the worst. Then, a beautifully strange orb of light came out of my tip and started humming faintly. That was when I knew he was the one. That he was my wizard.

At the time I didn't know who he was or the journey I was about to go on, but neither did he.

At that moment I thought, "If I ever see my brother again... forget Azkaban. There's gonna be forbidden curses flyin' like golden snitches."

Oh yes that's right... Ahem, I've been sitting on this shelf for some time now. It's been about 60 or 50 years (I sorta lost track) since my brother chose his wizard and left. That's been the only good thing that's happened for decades. My brother and I have never gotten along very well. He always went off on rambles talking about dark magic and whatnot. It's been a really long wait, but it was worth it because that's when the magic happened (pun intended).

"Hey 11-HP" said 10-OU.

Before we continue, let me explain. 10-OU was my best friend back at Daddy Ollivander's shop. He was never the fastest broom in the quidditch match, but he means well. His name stands for 10 inch oak wood with unicorn hair core.

"What is it?" I said.

"There's a new kid walking in. Looks a little wonky. He has glasses held together with tape, uncut shaggy hair, and some weird lightning bolt scar on his forehead."

"Oh thank goodness it's not another Weasley." (Don't even get me started on them.)

When he came closer I started feeling jittery. Not as nervous, but I was actually shaking. My ears started popping. Oh wait, I'm a wand, I don't really have ears.

I heard this new kid's wand testing and let me assure you it did not sound good. It had been a while and I thought he was going to leave, but that's when someone opened my drawer and I saw light. Ugh, and let me just say Daddy Ollivander always kept the lights on too bright back at the shop.

The boy examined me like he didn't know what to do. That's when Daddy Ollivander said, "Well lad, give it a go." The boy gripped me tight as he swished me through the air. He had a strong wrist. For a second everything was a blur then he held very still and closed his eyes as if he was waiting for the worst. Then, a beautifully strange orb of light came out of my tip and started humming faintly. That was when I knew he was the one. That he was my wizard.

At the time I didn't know who he was or the journey I was about to go on, but neither did he.

At that moment I thought, "If I ever see my brother again... forget Azkaban. There's gonna be forbidden curses flyin' like golden snitches."



THE TIMEOUTR

by Emma McShea

Oliver Potter woke up in a cold sweat, images of his dream still stuck in his head. He sat up in his bed trembling, his light brown hair matted to his head. Outside, the ground was engulfed with white snow. The dark forest spread across the landscape. The Sun was just peeking out of the horizon to signify the start of the day.

Next to him, one of his best friend's Theo Taylor was snoring loudly. Oliver didn't understand how anyone could sleep after the experience he had gone through. He shuddered at the thought of that snake-like face laughing at the poor boy with round wiry glasses, black hair, and a lightning shaped scar. He shook off the image and went to get ready.

When he emerged from the bathroom he saw that Theo and the rest of the boys were awake and getting ready. He steered away from them and headed down to the common room. The light streamed through the windows as the Hogwarts pupils trudged out of the portrait hole.

"Oliver!," a voice exclaimed, "Why did you leave so suddenly!"

Oliver turned to see Theo bounding down the boy dormitory steps toward him. "Oh, I - I'm just so hungry that um, I wanted to get to breakfast e-early..." Oliver said awkwardly, trying his best at the lie. Theo's dark eyebrows raised underneath his messy, curly black hair. He must have decided to let it go because he just shrugged and didn't say anything about it after that.

Oliver and Theo walked to the dining hall filled with students eating the magical breakfast. There were four tables that were separated by houses- Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, Slytherin, or Gryffindor. Each student wore their house colors and they were talking excitedly about the upcoming Quidditch match against Gryffindor and Slytherin.

They took their place at the Gryffindor table and were greeted by their other best friends, Sarah Smith and Juliet Johnson. "So Oliver," Juliet said, "Are you excited about the Quidditch match?"

"Not really" he muttered. The truth was that He always felt that he needed to live up to some kind of level because of his grandmother and grandfather. His Grandma Ginny had been an amazing Quidditch player and everyone knew who she was. His Grandfather Harry had been an

Oliver Potter woke up in a cold sweat, images of his dream still stuck in his head. He sat up in his bed trembling, his light brown hair matted to his head. Outside, the ground was engulfed with white snow. The dark forest spread across the landscape. The Sun was just peeking out of the horizon to signify the start of the day.

Next to him, one of his best friend's Theo Taylor was snoring loudly. Oliver didn't understand how anyone could sleep after the experience he had gone through. He shuddered at the thought of that snake-like face laughing at the poor boy with round wiry glasses, black hair, and a lightning shaped scar. He shook off the image and went to get ready.

When he emerged from the bathroom he saw that Theo and the rest of the boys were awake and getting ready. He steered away from them and headed down to the common room. The light streamed through the windows as the Hogwarts pupils trudged out of the portrait hole.

"Oliver!," a voice exclaimed, "Why did you leave so suddenly!"

Oliver turned to see Theo bounding down the boy dormitory steps toward him. "Oh, I - I'm just so hungry that um, I wanted to get to breakfast e-early..." Oliver said awkwardly, trying his best at the lie. Theo's dark eyebrows raised underneath his messy, curly black hair. He must have decided to let it go because he just shrugged and didn't say anything about it after that.

Oliver and Theo walked to the dining hall filled with students eating the magical breakfast. There were four tables that were separated by houses- Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, Slytherin, or Gryffindor. Each student wore their house colors and they were talking excitedly about the upcoming Quidditch match against Gryffindor and Slytherin.



They took their place at the Gryffindor table and were greeted by their other best friends, Sarah Smith and Juliet Johnson. "So Oliver," Juliet said, "Are you excited about the Quidditch match?"

"Not really" he muttered. The truth was that He always felt that he needed to live up to some kind of level because of his grandmother and grandfather. His Grandma Ginny had been an amazing Quidditch player and everyone knew who she was. His Grandfather Harry had been an awesome Quidditch player and had become a seeker during his first year. His mother had even been an amazing chaser and he felt he could never live up to that.

Before they could answer him they heard an owl screech from above. "Mail's here!" Theo and Sarah exclaimed at the same time. Oliver tilted his head up toward the ceiling that was bewitched to look like the sky. A snowy white owl flew down and landed lightly by his bowl of oatmeal. He carefully untied the letter off of it's beak and opened it.

Dear Oliver,

I just wanted to wish you luck on your Quidditch match. I must warn you however that I feel that something is going to happen at the match. I don't know what or who is going to do something but I just have this feeling. Stay alert while you're in the air.

Sincerely, Grandpa Harry

Oliver looked up from the letter slightly anxious for the game now. Theo noticed his face. "Are you okay?"

"Oh, mmm yeah i'm fine" Oliver stood up shakily and ran out of the dining hall. He felt everyone's eyes on him. He slowed his pace as he came up to the portrait. "Password!?" The fat lady asked.

"Cauldron Cakes" he said expectantly.

The portrait hole opened and Oliver ran past the burning fire in the fireplace up the stairs. He thumped into his room, beads of sweat trickling down his pale face. He thought back to his dream when Voldemort had looked at him and said "Beware the one who calls you friend"

He felt that they must be connected somehow. He collected himself. He was just being silly. Dreams weren't real. He gazed outside as frost clumped up in the window.

Soon after that Theo ran up to the room and looked at him without saying a word. After what seemed like forever Theo finally spoke up. "What was on that letter?" Oliver handed the letter to him. As Theo read it Oliver went to the common room only to find that Juliet and Sarah were sitting there talking in whispers. They stopped abruptly when they noticed him.

"Are you okay?" Sarah asked. Oliver was getting sick of everyone asking him that. He nodded his head. When he looked at Juliet she was staring at him skeptically. She opened her mouth as if to ask a question but shut it when Theo came down the stairs.

"There is no need to be scared Oliver", he said "I'm sure it's perfectly fine"

"Wait what?" Juliet asked. Oliver handed her and Sarah the note. "I'm sure it's fine," Sarah said but she looked nervous.

"Well there's no point in exhausting yourself thinking about it" Theo pointed out. "Just get ready for the game" Sarah and Juliet went up to their dorms and Theo went to read by the fire. Oliver shakily climbed the stairs up to the boy dormitories.

He pulled on his Quidditch robes and went to the field to get ready with the team. The whole time Peter Johnson, the Quidditch captain, was giving his motivational speech Oliver kept his eyes on the field. Even though he saw nothing suspicious. He still was very cautious.

Soon they were flying through the air on broomsticks. Oliver had the newest style: the Whirlwind 8000. The game went into full action as Madame Hutch blew her whistle. With all of the action going on and the thoughts of the note and dream going through his head he could barely concentrate on finding the snitch.

He squinted around the whole stadium. Finally he saw a glint of gold somewhere near the floor. He dived for it while he heard the cheers of the Gryffindor spectators. The golden glint stayed there and Oliver was



confused. The snitch was supposed to move. He lowered his broom to the frosty grass and examined the glint, which proved itself to be a round ball.

Confused, Oliver picked up the ball. Suddenly everything went silent. Someone screamed in the crowd. A black dragon with gray spikes was descending to the middle of the field. Nobody moved, for fear that the dragon would act out. On the dragon's back was a man in a billowing black cloak.

When the dragon landed Oliver was able to get a look at the man. He stumbled backward. It wasn't a man, it was a woman. And Oliver knew exactly who she was. Sarah. She strode toward him and her eyes turned cold. Oliver stared at her awestruck. Why was Sarah here? Why was she like this? What was the sphere thing in his hand?

"Hello Oliver," she said, "I'm going to need the Timeouter." She gestured to the golden sphere. Oliver didn't know what it was but he put it behind his back. "Oliver, I don't want to fight you"

He shakily pulled out his wand and pointed it at her. She did the same. They started yelling spells at each other and flick and swishing their wands this way and that. Suddenly time froze. All except Oliver was frozen in place. He examined the sphere. A little button was pressed on it. He unpressed it and time started again. Before Sarah could curse him he pressed the button again. Time froze. He looked up at the spectators.

They were frozen with fearful faces on. The dragon had his beady eyes focused on where Oliver was. He walked up to Sarah and plucked the wand out of her hand. He went back to his starting position and pressed the button.

Sarah uttered out the curse but without a wand there was no way that she would be able to achieve it. Her eyes went back and forth from him and the sphere. Her eyes filled with absolute hate. She was about to say something but then they heard a whistle from the crowd. The dragon shuddered and started to rise skyward. It flew off with a herd of dragons that had appeared suddenly above the stadium.

Sarah took out another wand, which Oliver thought that she wasn't supposed to have. She shot a spell at him and everything went black. The last thing that he saw was the Ministry of Magic led by his Grandfather rushing toward Sarah.

Oliver woke up in the infirmary with a broken nose and leg. Juliet and Theo were hanging over him. They told him how his grandpa had pinned Sarah down and poofed her back to the ministry where she would be dealt with there. They said that Charlie Weasley, the world famous dragonologist, had called the dragon from the audience. They also said that the Timeouter had been brought to the Ministry of Magic as well.

So Oliver had been right to be worried. He knew that something was going to happen at the game. He just didn't know it would be that bad.

When Juliet and Theo left Oliver looked up at the sky wondering why the Potter's always had to have rotten luck.



NONFICTION

GRADES 5-8



SLYTHERIN SERPENT: THE DRACO MALFOY STORY

by Josie Britt

Draco Malfoy, the air of Lucius Malfoy and Narcissa Malfoy is what some say a "Troubled boy", but in reality, he's just a boy who never got the love he wanted. He viewed himself as the one who was always looked down upon and used by his father. For example, Lucius used Malfoy to get inside information on Hogwarts when he couldn't get it from Snape.

Malfoy Attended Hogwarts for many years where he terrorized many other students and hardly got in trouble because of his and his father's connections. He wasn't very "understood" by many. But under all the attitude and popularity, Malfoy is just like any other teenager- a kid who is desperate for love, attention, and popularity. He was always misjudged because of how he acted or because of his family's actions. Malfoy was always forced to do things because of his parents therefore their poor personality rubbed off on him.

Furthermore, some people believe that Malfoy really did love Hogwarts and the people in it. He just wanted to put on a show to seem like he was one of the cool or popular kids but others not so much. While attending Hogwarts, Malfoy had many traumatizing experiences. However, during the War between the school and Voldemort, Malfoy seemed like he really wanted to fight to protect the school but was forced to join Voldemort's side by his parents then later on running off into the distance of the Glenfinnan viaduct bridge. More evidence to show that Malfoy really did love and care for Hogwarts and the people in it there was a Hogwarts war scene were Malfoy is holding Dumbledore at wand point and while Dumbledore tries to help him Malfoy tells Dumbledore "I don't want your help! Don't you understand?... I have to do this... I have to kill you or he's gonna kill me." That showed that he doesn't want to hurt Dumbledore but if he doesn't he will be slain by Voldemort or even his father. Malfoy growing up like this, in an environment like he did, no wonder he turned out the way he did. In multiple scenes it shows Malfoy crying, smashing something, fighting with somebody showing he keeps all his rage in and doesn't tell anybody and tries to take it out by doing these things. Then, everybody questions why he is how he is. Its because they don't know what he goes through he may be that one spoiled favorite kid but really he's just constantly putting on an act to make the people around him fear him or even hate him, because of how he sees his father he looks up to his father so much and wants his father's attention that he tries to be just like him.

To continue, everybody fears him and judges him so much nobody wants to know the truth and talk to him about what he's going through. In Malfoys reality, none of them really care and Malfoy thinks this and that's why he lashes out so much and acts the way he does because he thinks the only person that cares for him is his mother and he is to busy trying to impress his parents but the only thing that he can do to impress his parents is trying to be like them and join Voldemort because he really doesn't have a choice while Lucius is trying to force him to be on Voldemort's side, but as I said earlier people think he doesn't want to and he's only doing it to make his family happy. Some think he really wants to fight on the schools side because I think after going to Hogwarts for so long being around those students, teachers, headmasters he might have come to the conclusion that he's been on the wrong side.

In conclusion, I think J.K Rowling should make more books and make some of them from Malfoy's perspective. Malfoy is just a misunderstood boy who deserves so much better from his family, friends even his fellow peers.



POETRY
GRADES 9-12



“WHERE I’M FROM”

by Mallie Purvis

I am from a two stop-light town; from sweet tea and
Crisco shortening

I am from a house with one bathroom and six
inhabitants; rocking chairs by dawn and cozy fire pits
by dusk

I am from muscadine grape vines, big oaks, and
dandelions

I am from Purvis and Chriscoe, Jenny and Jerry;
blonde hair and blue eyes, hard work and family time

From don’t speak if you have nothing nice to say to no
blood or no bones-dry it up, from corn doodles and
goo-goo bars

I’m a river girl of Scottish descent, vacationing on the
ocean’s shores, from callused hands in a textile mill
and World War II

I am from places one only longs to raise their children,
from a small town with a big impact, and a calling
to somewhere far away with hopes the feeling of this
place will always follow



OUT OF PLACE

by Krystyna McKinnis

Oh,
The desperate craving for the sensation of love.
The strive to be adored,
The strive to be young,
But, oh no, those feelings are all gone.

Down goes the youth.
Down goes the truth.
Down goes the burden of all those feelings, That
that would be out of place here,
Here
Here....

Goodbye to the front and hello to home,
Where the maple trees grow tall and roam.
Goodbye to the pain and hello to an escape,
Where the old memories will take shape.
Hello, sister.
Hello, my dear mother.
I smile and pretend that all that has happened is fine,
Because I did not come here to see them pine.

But here, my father,
With his everlasting questions,
He expects me to answer,
But, oh, father!
Why should I bother?
You never were happy when I got the letter,
When I left home for magic and fought in the Battle,
Away from everything,
Even you, father
Angry, I leave...
Leave...

Leave?
Why did I think this was going to be good?
This never was.
This never could.

Down, goes the youth and here comes the old.
Down goes the truth, where the lies unfold.
Down goes the burden of all those feelings,
That would be out of place here,
Here,
Here....



A TRIP TO HOGWARTS

by Elizabeth Kaczorowski

Hyprogriffs and holywogs
All the joys and all the sobs
Grindy Willows and mermen too
Hogwarts has all the hullabaloo
Adorable Dobby
And his happiest hobby
Mismatch your sock
Teachers teaching without chalk
Ron's dad has a flying car
Harry's a quidditch star
An angry tree
And chasing after a flying key
Studying in class to read magic tea
Always going on adventures, those three
Everyone's learning different spells
Harry's scar doesn't feel so swell
Secrets that are pried
Cause people to be wide eyed
With those silly twins, anything goes
They make potions that'll tickle your toes
Long-tongue candy
Magic fires and brandy
Everyone thinks Sirius is a freak
So he quickly flies off on Buckbeak
A werewolf, friends, and a full moon at night
Hermoine's the one who figured it out right
Thought Moony
Was loony
A map to show where all now stand
Three huddled under a cloak, hand in hand
A big black dog
Through a forest friends clog

Shapeshifters and fliers
Some people are liars
A measly rat
An extremely smart cat
An abandoned shack
And spiders that make sounds of clickety clack
At Hagrid's dwelling
There's lots of yelling
A snitch clasped tightly in one hand
Spiraling to the ground where he will stand
Triumphant, he's just won the games!
Even the older and better can't say the same
A golden egg
A big beer keg
Trophies held high
Only to be zapped to another place from the sky
A mystical lake
A tragic wake
A bank full of gold, run by the greedy
Stolen from by the needy
A magic silver arm
Brings much alarm
A hidden room in the pub at town
Nivelle knows how to get around
A beautiful girl with red hair tied back
Even though her family lives in a shack
A sweet and very strong lady
Beats a witch who's nasty and shady



FICTION
GRADES 9-12



THE AMBER SEIGE

by Raine Browne

It was a boisterous day showing few clouds as the sun smiled down on the horizon of England. The light left Sage's brown eyes and hair as the bright, golden specks were condemned by the dimness of the jewelry shop she had just entered. She felt a rustle in her backpack as one of her three pets poked its head out from underneath the flap. The pack, along with Sage's attire in general, appeared duller than the clothes of the obviously bored cashier she passed on her way inside. Flicking her eyes to the side, she could tell the highlight of his day was seeing her, someone who looked like they could barely afford a movie ticket, attempting to buy high-priced jewelry.

Flashing an innocent smile to the cashier, she let her feet carry her to the farthest back corner of the shop. Luckily for her, the most expensive items inhabited that area. As she took off her backpack, Ell, her pet niffler nearly jumped out of the vintage pack on her own merit. Smiling, Sage let the fuzzy, black creature go free, letting her take shiny object after shiny object into her little belly pouch.

Sage then grabbed a creature even fluffier than the last. It was a puffskein named Seren she had acquired for her first year at Hogwarts since nifflers and jarveys, such as her third pet, Jarv, weren't really school appropriate according to the rules. Even so, she owned both a niffler and a jarvey, only seeing them at home during winter and summer break. Even after assuring that they wouldn't get into any trouble except for the loss of a sickle here and there, Hogwarts wouldn't change what pets they allowed.

Still, those were the fond memories she had of school, the days where she would return anything Ell happened to steal such as a pile of galleons Ell snatched off the counter of an unsuspecting young wizard buying books for the upcoming school year. However, everything comes to pass, and now Sage just so happened to be using Ell's addiction to shiny objects to her own advantage.

Turning to see the cashier still staring off into the distance with clear uninterest, Sage looked back to see Ell had picked the lock on the glass cases containing the jewelry. Ell now had a tummy full of riches, just as she liked it. Sage quickly stuffed Ell back into her bag, Seren still humming in her hand as she scratched [sic] the puffball's head with her pointer finger. It appeared the coast was clear; she could simply walk away from the counter without notice. Her black boots made a victorious clomping sound as she confidently made her way to the exit.

"Sucker," a voice caught between that of a girl with a cold and a teenage boy going through puberty said at Sage's back. She felt her blood run cold as she recognized the odd sound of her jarvey, Jarv, saying a phrase he must've picked up from her during these now-frequent heists she committed. She wasn't proud to admit that stealing gave her an empowering feeling that induced name calling and cruelty in the form of words, but most of the time she said phrases like that when she had already exited the store. This was still her fault Jarv picked up on her speech patterns. She'd have to cover this up somehow.

"What did you say, ma'am?" The cashier was clearly confused, but a hostile look plagued the once-dull eyes of boredom.

Sage felt panic rise within her and, without thinking, threw Seren at the cashier. The fuzzball boinked the boy right on his head and bounced back into Sage's hand. The two froze like that, employee and robber, staring each other down before Sage turned on her heel and bolted.

"Hey! Someone stop that girl! I've been attacked!" The boy yelled from the jewelry store steps before eventually deciding attempting to catch the girl would suck less than hearing his boss lecture him about keeping his eyes on the customers. Sage could hear her pursuer begin chasing her as she pushed startled passerby out of the way with an 'oomph'.

However, Sage had a planned route to follow. She wasn't messing around, and she definitely wasn't without an escape. There was someone waiting for her, depending on her and her pets' safe return and a successful steal.

Sharp twists and turns were made by Sage in an attempt to shake off her pursuer as her boots clattered loudly on the brick streets. She nearly bashed into people as her breath caught on the thick air. She wasn't



one for running, but she had learned she could outrun most Muggles even while in heeled shoes, so she couldn't exactly complain.

"Sorry!" She called over her shoulder as she ran through a group of friends being photographed. In the blur of brick and concrete, she couldn't see who the photographer was — perhaps it was a parent. Pushing through the blurry surroundings, the end of the road was getting nearer and an alleyway rose on the horizon. She recognized the sandy buildings framing the dark hole and grinned as she picked up her pace.

Sage didn't glance behind her, even as she seized a lone Butterbeer bottle and waited for the magic to activate. She felt an unpleasant gust, as if the air was personified into that of a hand throwing her from one place to another. The bottle was a portkey, which all wizards knew created quick, but uncomfortable travel that could almost be described as hair-raisingly thrilling and jarring all at once.

Still, it was an easy enchantment for her friend, Calypso, and she had already been running, so the mixture of sweat and adrenaline wasn't new as she was seemingly slung through the air by the Butterbeer bottle, uncharacteristically bitter and bold in function unlike its sublimely sweet flavoring.

Upon arriving at her destination, her knees buckled. She didn't cease panting and she bent over in exhaustion as she caught her breath. There was a boy sitting on a made up bed, skin dark and eyes piercing until acknowledging Sage's sudden materializing before his eyes.

This was Calypso, Sage's best friend and partner in crime. He was her reason for committing crime, actually. About five years ago they had become inseparable, and about a month ago he had been expelled from Hogwarts for misusing magic in muggle company.

The entire situation was an accident as Calypso claimed to have simply waved at a muggle girl he had just had a coffee date with. While there was nothing inherently wrong with that, being from Uagadou, the top wizarding school in Uganda, Africa, he was taught his entire life how to do magic with his hands until moving to England for family reasons. So while his heart lit aflame as the girl's infectious laughter and bright smile left an imprint on his heart, his hands and feet also grew hot with fire that licked the wooden floors and eventually charred them in a devastating fire that travelled at least three buildings over while the fire department had difficulty eating the magical flames even with the largest gushes of water they had.

Sage still remembered Calypso's outrage as the ministry called his conduct unacceptable and crude for a young wizard of his age. He had never let his emotions get to him quite like that before, even whenever he methodically tapped his cheek as he focused on the writing portions of his OWLs, or when he flicked the forehead of a most annoying wizard their age named Tyler Duglin who talked of snogging all the attractive girls within every house like it was some kind of believable achievement for a boy with the last name Duglin.

Whenever news got around that Calypso was to be expelled, Sage knew taking away Calypso's right to do magic would be like taking away his skin. It would leave him feeling barren and cold inside, and she wouldn't stand for it. No amount of protesting changed the Ministry's minds, however, and Calypso was to have his wand snapped the following morning with strict viewings of his magical abilities to see what went wrong and how to prevent him from ever doing magic again, essentially.

That was the last straw, and that was the last time they'd be seen as simple Hogwarts students enjoying their summer break ever again. Calypso unfolded his plan to Sage, his ideas of running away back to Uganda or settling down in a tiny muggle town where he could at least do magic in the constructs of his home and not be made a laughing stock for having to go without it among the streets of judgemental wizards.

A goodbye was the last thing Sage wanted to hear from her best friend. Going to Hogwarts without her carefree Calypso joking about who the next Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher would be, or his whispers during the yearly sorting about how that girl would be a Ravenclaw and that boy would be a Hufflepuff and the way he would cheer when he guessed correctly, was unbearable.

Some would say it was a mistake to follow Calypso as he outran wizarding law, but Sage made up her mind too quickly to doubt her decision. She proposed the idea of coming with him, but he denied her doing something so reckless when she was still safe as a student. She pestered him until he was forced to oblige, his own protests unable to outweigh her persistence.



“Are you okay?” Calypso asked now, his slightly accented voice smooth like caramel to her ears as the slight ringing resonating within her from the stress of the robbery persisted. In his presence, however, she felt something similar to comfort in the chaos.

“I’m okay, just a little frazzled,” Sage responded after she had caught her breath. Calypso seemed confused with her choice of wording, as if frazzled wasn’t a real enough word for his taste and preferred she’d used ‘shaken’ or something along the lines of it.

“I assume you were caught. How’d that go?” Calypso rested his head in his palm as he peered up curiously with dark eyes. “Did anything interesting happen?”

“Well, I might’ve thrown Seren directly at the cashier’s face in a wild panic,” Sage shrugged as Calypso’s look of incredulity set in before her very eyes.

“Please tell me you at least got the gems,” Calypso pleaded.

The left corner of Sage’s mouth upturned as she carefully peeled the backpack from her shoulder. Opening the flap, she lifted out the small niffler who looked peculiarly pregnant as a result of the mass of jewels held within her belly pouch.

“I still don’t get why you call this girl Ell when she’s such a Roo,” Calypso patted Ell’s head. “You know, as in kangaroo?”

“My mom named her after her great grandmother, Ellyn. It wasn’t my choice,” Sage countered. “Plus I’m terrible with names.”

“What was that? I couldn’t hear you over Jarv the jarvey’s screams.”

“Oh, hush before I throw Seren at you too.”

Calypso leaned back and let out a hearty laugh. It was the most natural laugh Sage had heard from him in awhile, and she was grateful something as silly as her inability to properly name pets was amusing to him. She found herself joining him, and eventually even Jarv cried out in an attempt to imitate the free and joyful sound.

“I suppose we should get a move on,” Calypso said as the carefree moment ended.

“We’ve got riches to trade!”

“Granted we’re able to separate them from Ell,” Sage took a seat on the hotel bed and lifted Ell into her lap. “You go transfigure yourself. I’ll see what I can do with this little niffler.”

And so the two set off to their tasks, Calypso hogging the mirror as he played with the shapes of his facial features and Sage gently pulling gem after gem from Ell’s stomach, letting the creature hold onto one as a way of distracting her while the others were taken. It took about fifteen minutes total to gather every valuable object from Ell. Calypso finished his transfiguration at about the same time and came out of the bathroom.

“How do I look?” He asked. Sage nearly snorted. He had gone with a shrunken look today, his eyes small and shriveled as they peered into her very soul and his mouth a thin line only recognizable on his dark skin if you squinted a little. His nose looked hard to breathe from, and she thought about asking him if it was before deciding there were more important matters to tend to.

“You look different,” she responded after fully absorbing each changed feature of his face. “Good enough for me,” he smiled. “You ready?”

Sage nodded, handing Calypso the gems she had already bagged for safe keeping. “Let’s get some money and blast.”

Cities away and on the run, the duo reached the trader’s market as the sun lay lower in the sky. Sage thought the chances of being recognized here so soon after the heist back at the jewelers was impossible, but even so, she kept her head low and stayed outside while Calypso did the trading. They were careful not to go to the same places more than once, so no one would ever recognize him with his fancy transfiguration spells protecting him. Even so, they were always prepared for the most dreadful outcome as they knew the



Ministry of Magic would be tracing their crimes one by one in an attempt to track them.

The minutes dragged on as deals were made. Sage waited patiently like a child locked in a car as her mother stopped by a grocery store to pick up milk. It was quiet and uneventful, but it was the waiting that made her skin crawl with anticipation. She was always wondering if this would be the time someone would recognize them, or if the Ministry had finally cracked down on their ways of appearing for the purpose of stealing only to suddenly leave the face of the earth when the job was done.

The uneasy feeling only grew when she felt a presence behind her. The door to the store creaked and she felt a hand squeeze her shoulder.

“Boo!” Calypso exclaimed as Sage jumped under his touch. “Ha ha, got you!”

“Because you snuck up from behind me,” Sage pouted.

“Yeah, yeah, like you didn’t do it to me last time,” Calypso playfully rolled his eyes.

“Anyway, I got the goods. Want to get something to eat around here before we head to the next place? Maybe Paris?”

“Paris isn’t a country,” Sage chuckled.

“Did I say it was?” Calypso grinned. “And you know geography isn’t my subject.”

“That’s fair,” Sage nodded as they walked.

The establishment they happened upon was a cozy pizzeria. Business appeared slow as there was only one other table occupied when they entered. They were served quickly as a result, both agreeing on ordering one large pizza to share.

“What do you want to do,” Sage began as she fiddled with her thumbs. “When we get out of here?”

“I always wanted to show you where I grew up,” Calypso smiled a fond smile. It was soft and sweet on his lips, normal and full again as the transfiguration spell had worn off sometime before.

“I’d love to go with you,” Sage smiled. “It’s not like I can go back anyway.” Calypso looked guilty with that statement. “Do you regret being here with me?” “What?” Sage sounded shocked. “Are you kidding me?”

“Sometimes I just worry I made you do this. If you had never befriended me, you wouldn’t be here — ”

“If I hadn’t befriended you, I’d be worse off. Trust me.”

“Okay.”

Silence filled the space between the two, uncomfortable and suffocating. Sage’s habit of twiddling her thumbs intensified, her gaze focused on the feel of finger against finger. Calypso endured the silence by waving his finger around into different spells, weaving magic from the air into a sparky buildup under his skin.

Nearby shuffling was heard as the only other occupants of the restaurant scooted in their chairs and seemingly left the establishment. Only the footsteps didn’t cease into the night air, they grew closer. Sage looked up and saw a young man with a stern expression. She knew they were in trouble when she saw the wand firmly grasped in his hand.

“You two are under arrest for countless heists from muggle stores across all of England,” the man’s voice was even more unpleasant than his face.

“Sir, this is a big misunderstanding,” Calypso tried. “I’m sure if you just — ”

“And I’m sure you’re the muggle thief all the wizards are going nuts about. Now come with me willingly and maybe the Ministry will go easy on you.”

“You can’t do that!” Calypso exclaimed. “It was a misunderstanding.”

“I’m sure it was,” said a female voice from behind the bitter man. “But Cal, stealing isn’t right.”

Sage would never forget the horror on Calypso’s face.

“Amber?” He had asked weakly. “Don’t tell me they enlisted you to track me down. You know what happened that day, I told you what they’d do to me if they caught me!”



The girl, Amber, only nodded sadly. So this was the girl that set Calypso's heart — and body — afire.

Calypso quickly stood up in an attempt to escape, hastily pushing his chair away from him as he tried to outrun the incoming stupify spell. Instead, he was quickly hit with two bolts of energy, knocking him flat on his chest. The unpleasant wizard left him defenseless and pitiful.

"I'm sorry," was all Amber could whisper, but it was too late. His freedom was irreplaceable, and she had just stolen it out from under him with the mask of one who cared about him most.



FROM THE DIARY OF TOM

by Summer Faulk

14 April, 1943: I'm writing here in this diary not out of want but of necessity. The path that I've chosen to embark upon is one that ought to be recorded. Once I prevail in this trial that no other wizard has dared even attempt, I will become an immortal being and the most powerful sorcerer since the great Gellert Grindelwald. How curious that an ordinary muggle object such as this diary will be instrumental in the design of my historic journey. Perhaps it could be considered an homage to my miserable father? What a pitiful man he is; shuddering in the face of magic, disgusted by the power he can't understand! And to think his rotten blood courses through my veins. The day will come that he shall quiver before me, and plead for forgiveness from the Dark Lord. On that day I will show him no mercy, nor any of his kind.

23 April, 1943: I long for the day I leave Hogwarts, when I no longer have to bow to my inferiors and the simple professors who praise mediocrity and coddle the weak. My power is advancing beyond the walls of this castle, and I no longer require instruction. Though I do complain, I must say that my professors simply revere me. My intelligence and ambition are not overlooked by them, which is evident in the way they worship me. I fully expect to be awarded Head Boy this coming year, and I rather look forward to the authority I'll hold over my peers. Walking through these chambers I feel the gaze of admiration and fear from children rushing past, and I need only smile at one of the many dotting girls in my year to make them giggle like a fool and whisper to her mates. Myrtle Warren of Ravenclaw is particularly fond of me. I catch her peering from across the Great Hall or on my way to potions, and watch her sallow, mousy face simper at me as if I'd ever fancy her. She's an awfully loathsome girl, always bursting to tears and running off because she was teased by a seventh year. Nevertheless, I can certainly cope with lousy school mates; they occupy very little of my thought. No, what really perturbs me is Professor Dumbledore. Dumbledore is the only wizard more respected in the castle than I, and the only man I fear. He is powerful, there's no denying that; and worse, he distrusts me. Since the day he brought me to Hogwarts he's only seen darkness in me. He walks around as if he's noble and wise, looking down upon me like vermin. The old man will know my wrath before long, and he will then know true darkness.

6 May, 1943: Being so old and mystical, Hogwarts inevitably has its secrets and fables. Most are silly children's tales meant to keep first years from wandering off through some odd staircase and never being found. There is one, however, that I find fascinating. Passed down from generations of students before my time, the legend goes that Salazar Slytherin, who was among the founders of Hogwarts and the first head of Slytherin House, built a secret chamber somewhere within the castle. Hidden even from his fellow founders, the chamber holds unspeakably dark magic with the sole purpose of purging muggle-borns from the school. Furthermore, it's said an heir of Slytherin is meant to continue the noble work and open the chamber. Not much inquiry was needed to come to the conclusion that I am that heir. My extensive research through the restricted section of the library (granted to me without question by Professor Slughorn) has revealed that Salazar possessed the rare gift of Parseltongue. For a thousand long years, Hogwarts has lied in wait for another with the gift, and at last I have come. What's more, I share an uncanny likeness with Salazar. Both half-blood, orphaned, and raised by muggles, we were both forced to endure the presence of mud-bloods where they don't belong. As the rightful Heir of Slytherin, my duty to open the chamber weighs heavily on my mind. Five years I've spent scouring the castle, charming my professors for shards of information, and planning for the day when I can carry out the work of great Slytherin. My search proved futile until a short while ago, when I came across something peculiar. Oddly enough, the answer I pursued was not in some forbidden volume, but in a simple coursebook on magical creatures. While doing my studies, I came across an article featuring an unfamiliar beast: the basilisk. The large serpent is reported to have extraordinarily dangerous powers and a gaze that strikes death upon its victims. What's more, it has a life-span of thousands of years and can only be controlled by Parselmouths. How brilliant a man was Salazar Slytherin, how perfectly crafted his design! And now, with the Heir of Slytherin so near his destiny, I pity the fool who stands in my way. *Enemies of the Heir Beware.*

27 May, 1943: Mere hours ago on this historic day, I fulfilled my duty as Heir and took upon myself the



honorable burden that Salazar prepared. The Chamber of Secrets has been opened. You may be surprised to learn that I have none other than little Myrtle Warren to thank for my triumph. This morning over breakfast in the Great Hall, Olive Hornby and a few other blokes were jeering at her for her unsightly glasses. Predictably she fled to the girls lavatory, and a few of my mates thought it would be worth a laugh if I were to comfort her into confessing her pathetic little crush. Upon entering the lavatory, I was overcome with a dark sensation, like a force was compelling me to call out. Suddenly I was speaking Parseltongue, and the stone was shifting above the sink, twisting and opening into a black, gaping hole. Possessed by this deep, sinister pull, I watched in awe as the King of Serpents emerged before me; laying its pestilent gaze about the room and finally upon Myrtle! Instantly she collapsed, but this I hardly noticed, for I was already progressing towards the mouth of the tunnel to which the serpent had just returned. Down I fell for what must have been miles, and at the bottom I discovered the vast chamber where for a thousand years the basilisk slept. That was all eight hours previously, and much has happened since then. Understandably there is quite a stir around the castle due to Myrtle's tragic passing. As Slytherin prefect, no one was more shocked and appalled than I to hear that the Chamber of Secrets was opened by some cold-blooded half-giant. The story being told is that this oaf was caught with a giant spider- the beast from the legend, and that it has taken poor Myrtle's life. Really, it was quite convenient to pin this whole affair on Hagrid, almost as if Salazar is aiding me from beyond the grave. Between you and I, my duty as Heir of Slytherin will have to be put off for the time being. I simply can't risk reopening the chamber with Professor Dumbledore as watchful of me as he is. I've decided to leave this diary behind, imparting a bit of myself in it, so that I may one day choose another Heir to complete our work, and open the Chamber once and for all.

24 August, 1992: This diary belongs to Ginny Weasley

Hello, Ginny.

Who is this? I bet it's Fred or George. Mum told you not to bewitch muggle items! I'm telling.

Ginny, Darling, I certainly am not Fred, nor am I George. Though you're correct this diary is bewitched. Might I introduce myself? They call me Tom Riddle, but you can call me Tom.

But why are you in my diary?

Well Ginny, you've stumbled upon a very special diary. Passed from wizard to wizard, I only reveal myself to the worthy. It's been a rather long time since I have, might I add, but I sensed something extraordinary in you.

So you're a magical diary that chose to talk to me? Why me?

Don't be silly, I thought it was obvious. To name a few, it was your courage, your wit, your undeniable potential, and frankly, your beauty. Yes, you and I will achieve great things.

You think I'm beautiful? Also, how can you see me? Are you sure this isn't Fred and George?

My, you certainly have your questions. I'll allow it, skepticism is healthy in pretty little girls. Foremost, I can assure you my name is Tom Riddle. I believe you'll find that very name engraved on the cover, if you won't take my word. Furthermore, as an enchanted journal I see all. I can see your lovely home filled with brothers and cats, your mother in the kitchen simmering stew over the fire, and your room at the top filled with books and posters. Most clearly I see you, and you're positively stunning.

Thank you, Mr. Riddle. I've decided I trust you, so I'll tell you a bit about myself. My name is Ginny, I'm the youngest of seven and have all brothers. I'm eleven years old and very soon I will start my first year at Hogwarts. I'm going to be a Gryffindor.

Oh yes, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, quite a reputable establishment. But how are you so certain you'll be placed in Gryffindor? Wouldn't you rather be in Slytherin, the most ambitious and honorable house?

Goodness no, everyone knows Slytherins are evil and mean. Besides, my whole family and all my friends are in Gryffindor, which is where I'll be.

If you insist. Now, as your personal diary, it's important that we trust each other, don't you agree?

I suppose so, Mr. Riddle

Do call me Tom. I propose we exchange our deepest secrets, for bonding purposes. You go first, and have no fear.

Well, considering you're just a diary and haven't got anyone to tell, I suppose I'll give it a go. I'm in love with



Harry Potter. He's brave, kind, and wonderful, but he never even notices me. I'm just his best mate's little sister and he's the boy who lived, I might as well give up.

Harry Potter? You mean to tell me you've met the boy who banished the great Lord Voldemort and survived the killing curse as a mere infant?

Tom, you mustn't speak of he-who-must-not-be-named! I would have thought even a diary would know that. But yes, I've met Harry Potter, and he's brilliant. But enough about that, you promised you'd tell me your secret.

Well, alright, but promise you won't think of me differently. I couldn't live if I thought I'd upset you, Ginny.

Of course Tom, you can tell me anything.

Well, I'm afraid I haven't been completely truthful. I told you I was an enchanted diary, but in actuality I'm a sixteen year old boy, trapped inside a diary through a simple transfiguration accident. I've been here for the past fifty years, and you're the first person I've talked to ever since.

Oh dear, you must be quite lonely, Tom. We must get you out of here at once!

It's no use, darling Ginny, I've exhausted every possibility. Besides, I've grown accustomed to my fate. From now on, I want to be the only one you confide in when you're lonely and the first one you tell when you get good news. As for this Harry, you needn't give up quite yet. Stay close to him when you can, and tell me everything. Can you do that, dearest Ginny?

I'd be honored, Tom.

8 September, 1992: Tom, you'll never guess what happened in the Great Hall this morning over breakfast! Harry looked directly into my eyes and asked me to pass the coffee! How did I never notice his eyes are so green?

What wonderful progress you've made. That makes two encounters this week, am I correct? Next week maybe he'll borrow your quill. At this rate you'll never get to Harry, why do you even bother?

Why are you being mean to me again? You know I get shy around Harry.

My apologies, I simply want what's best for you. To tell you the truth, I'm overcome with jealousy whenever you speak of Harry.

Do you mean it? You really get jealous over me?

Without a doubt. It's rather embarrassing to admit, considering I'm just a boy stuck in a silly old diary and you're a breathtaking, powerful witch. Please don't tease me, I couldn't take it.

Oh, Tom, I wouldn't dream of it. Can I tell you something?

Anything.

I love you, and someday I'm going to find a way to free you so we can be together.

I love you too, Ginny. Promise me you'll never leave me, not in a thousand years.

I promise.

29 September, 1992: Tom, did you mean it when you said I could tell you anything?

I would never lie to you, my love.

Well, I think I've done something awful. I'm very scared, and I can't remember where I've been.

And what exactly do you think you've done?

I can't say, but ever since I got to Hogwarts I've felt wrong, like something is controlling me. I've been acting strangely, too.

Ginny, though I'm truly sympathetic to your situation, you haven't answered my question. What do you suppose you've done?

Well I awoke in a dark corridor, my hands covered in blood. After washing them off in the girl's lavatory, I heard shouts, and somebody had killed Filch's cat. I don't remember where I was, but you don't think I could have done it, do you?



Tell me, is it only that cat you're worried of? Was there nothing else out of the ordinary?

I believe so.

Don't lie to me, Ginny, it hurts me. You know I would never lie to you.

Fine! There was a message on the wall, an awful message, written in blood. It said something called the Chamber of Secrets was opened. Are you pleased now? I didn't want to tell you because I knew you'd think I'm mad, and because there's no denying I wrote that message. I'm a horrible, terrible girl, they'll send me to Azkaban! Tom, tell me everything will be okay, please?

Ginny, dear, I'd never think you mad. I love you now just as I always have. You're only exhausted, and your mind is playing cruel tricks on you. A good night's rest will be very beneficial. If what you say is true, and the Chamber of Secrets is indeed open, you need only continue to put your trust in me, and I will protect you.

Maybe you're right, I have been rather overwhelmed here at Hogwarts. Thank you, Tom. And I do trust you, with all my heart. You're the greatest thing that's ever happened to me.

6 January 1993: *Ginny, my love, you haven't forgotten me, have you?*

No. I'm just tired.

Well, tell me about Harry. Have you gotten to speak with him since you last wrote?

Once or twice, but I don't want to talk about it with you.

What's the matter darling? Don't you still love me?

I don't know. I don't know what's happening to me.

Didn't I assure you I would protect you? Why can't you just listen for once?

I don't think I trust you.

Don't you turn on me now, girl. We've come so close to greatness together and yet you've let your cowardice get in the way.

What do you mean? You know what's wrong with me, don't you?

You're weak, that's the matter with you. I should have known from the moment you picked up my journal that you weren't worthy. Stupid girl.

I hate you, Tom Riddle! You ruined my life and I was too stupid to see it was you all along! You told me you loved me but you lied. You don't love me, you just need me for your evil plan. Well I'm not going to be stupid any longer. You and I are through.

Sweet Ginny, how naive you are. I was done with you long before tonight. My plan is underway and at last nothing can intervene. You opened the Chamber of Secrets, you paralyzed those poor children, and the blood of my victims will be on your hands. But don't fret, you won't have to live with your guilt for long. Farewell, Ginny Weasley.

You're a liar! It's not true, none of it. I'll get rid of you, then you can never hurt anybody ever again. Die, Tom Riddle.

22 February 1993: My name is Harry Potter.

Hello, Harry Potter. My name is Tom Riddle. How did you come about my diary?



KALEIDOSCOPE

by Krystyna McKinnis

Mission failed. Would you like to retry, Ash?

“No, thanks.”

I pull the headset off my head and wait as my landscape unfolds into reality. *I am never going to get past this level.* I sift my hands through my damp, dark hair and sigh. I turn around. “Hey Clint, can you call Claire?” “*Okay. Dialing Claire.*” As I peel off my damp shirt, I heave myself onto the marble counter.

“Hey, Ashmiel the Conqueror! What’s up?”

The corners of my mouth tilt upward, as I massage my temples.

“Claire, why are you *still* calling me that?” I whine. “It is quite irritating.”

As Claire laughs, I visualize her ovalish face, her upturned pierced nose, and the strand of fuchsia-colored hair that always dangles above her left eyelid.

“That is *exactly* why I call you that! And, well, also because it is true. On that note, have you gotten past that level that you have been working on for like ee-ons?”

I jump down and drag my feet toward the sink and grab a glass. “No...I haven’t...” I stare as the water rushes into the bottom. I groan. “I don’t think I will ever get past it.” My grip tightens. “It’s just so complicated and everytime it always changes...the ending is always

different...always getting worse and worse. Recently, Claire, I have been losing sleep. Things enter my dreams and it is so...terrifying.” I watch as a crack snakes up onto the side of the glass.

Claire clears her throat. “Well, Ash, all I can say is that, none of it is real. I know that for everyone the Kaleidoscope can be well, different. I can’t really tell you what I experienced because, well, I am not really comfortable with it...But trust me, I know you *will* and *can* get past it. You just have to realize that whatever you go through doesn’t make you any different from who you are now. It won’t make you a bad person...Got it?”

I swear lightly under my breath, as the glass shatters and water explodes onto my pants.

“What was that? Are you okay?” Claire questions with concern.

I snap my fingers and the broom and paper towels come alive.

“Yeah, yeah, I am fine. Just broke a glass. That’s all,” I mumble as I watch the broom sweep. “I think I am just going to take a break for the rest of the --” I pause and look up to glance at the time. 8:12 pm. “--night. Anyways, you probably have to go to work or something. Probably have to save the world.”

“Wow, I don’t think restocking the bookshelves is saving the world. The world doesn’t really need saving right now. You need saving.”

I walk over to the collected pieces & pour the glass shards into the waste bucket.

“What is that even supposed to mean, C?”

I hear her laugh softly.

“Nevermind. But do remember what I said. Whatever you do, won’t change who you are. You will still be the macho meano dork that you are.”

I scoff. “How am I the meano?”

“Bye Ashmiel. Love ya!”

“Claire has hung up.”

I sigh. *Love you too.* I snap my fingers and the soaked paper towels fall onto the marble floor. I rest my head onto the wall. *Okay.* I lift my head away from the wall and stretch out to grab the abandoned headset. I



breathe in and close my eyes.

Ash. Ash. Ashhhh.

I jolt upward and dig my hands into the damp ground. I analyze my surroundings. Tombstones stretch countlessly from miles, past the ebony trees, and past the darkened river that runs through the horizon. I stand up and almost fall over. I grab onto something quickly, in order to retain balance. *Okay, breathe. Breathe.* I take a deep breath and then slowly rotate my head to see what it is that I actually grabbed a hold of. *Oh no, not you. You aren't supposed to be here.* Looming over me, like a vulture, is a pale, bird-like man with his arm outstretched. That exact arm which I grabbed a hold of. Revolted, I yank my hand back and put it into my back pocket.

Sneering with his glistening white teeth and waxed, upkept hair, he bends over and peers down at my face.

“H-e-l-l-o Ashhh. Sooo nice to see you.”

He draws out every word as if it was the first time he has spoken in a while.

I begin to walk forward, looking at anything but him. Twigs snap, matching the pace of my heartbeat, as he walks along beside me.

“You don't miss me? Such a terrible way to greet your good-ol pap,” he taunts.

I quicken my pace ever so slightly, hoping that he would just disappear.

“What's the matter, son? Cat got your tongue?” He begins to laugh heartily, as if that was the best joke that has ever existed.

I stop walking, realizing that I was only getting closer to the graveyard.

He folds his hands behind his back. “You want to see something? Huh? You want to see something?”

I refuse to turn around.

“Alright.”

I hear a heavy thump and a shuffling sound. *Don't let him control you. Don't turn around. Don't do it.*

“You know it is hereditary, boy .”

I can hear him smiling and before I can shout, I am pulled off my feet and thrown into the air. I feel myself losing all of my weight. But before I make contact with the ground, I feel an itchiness and a ripping pain spread throughout my back, and suddenly my freefall stops. Gently, I land onto the lid of a coffin. I look down at my feet. He walks in front of me and stretches his hands out.

“Well, isn't this great! You are just like me. Don't you see it?” He stops a foot away from my face. I grimace as he whispers into my right ear. “You are *just* like me.” His hand reaches behind me to gently touch the obsidian, new-born, wings that outstretch from my wide back and then he draws his arm back, tilts my chin upward with two fingers, and looks at me in the eyes. “Now it is time to show you my favorite place here.” For the first time, I decide to open my mouth.

“I am not going with *you* .” I spit down on the ground and begin to storm away, but he takes hold of my left wing. I cry out in pain.

“Oh no, this is the best part!”

He grips my arm in a steel-like strength and then lets go. He rolls his shoulders backwards and then raises his hands into the air, as if he was going to perform a magic trick. *I need to wake up. I need to get out of here, before it happens.* Time slows down as he spreads his wings open. A mosaic collision of zaffre and medallion fill my vision. He reaches down with his palm open.

“Join me.”

Whatever you do, won't change who you are.

I put my saturated hand into his and then everything goes dark.

Death was sudden.



It came quickly and without warning. You might have known you were going to die, but nothing could prepare anyone for the air whooshing out of their lungs and realizing nothing was entering again.

There was a time when you took your last step.

There was a time when you ate your last bite of food.

There was a time when you spoke your last words.

There was a last for everything.

I open my eyes and realize that I am standing before two graves. The graveyard was silent other than the fast-paced pitter-patter pitter-patter of the rain against the stones. *How cliché. It always seems to rain when something goes wrong.* I open and close my hands, and feel the cold water soak into my skin. I look down at the two headstones, shiny and new.

Beloved daughter, sister, and friend.

Beloved daughter, mother, and friend.

I let out a humorless laugh. *They didn't even give them something unique.* I bend over and hover my fingertips over each headstone. I whisper.

"I am so so sorry. I am sorry that you had to die and I had to--"

I pause. I feel a warmth seep through my shirt. I wipe the wetness off my cheeks and try to reach for my back. I whip my hand in front of my face and it is stained with blood. Bright red drops fall off each finger and begin to form letters onto the russet, muddy ground. I begin to panic. I stand up and feel arrows of pain slither up my back and shoulders.

"DO NOT STAND AT MY GRAVE AND CRY. I AM NOT THERE; I DID NOT DIE."

Hysterically, I rip off my shirt and throw it down on the ground and back up. I watch as the shirt transforms into a pair of pitch-black wings. A cacophonous crashing from the patch of trees from my right, fills my ears. On instinct, I reach for my left pocket and whip out a meticulously carved, wooden, stick. My knuckles turn pale as my grip tightens, as I wait for whatever is coming to make an appearance. Slowly, the temperature decreases by twenty degrees and I begin to shiver. *You can do this. None of this is real.* Every second, every chilling breath, feels like I am standing on a wire. All at once, everything drifts into complete silence. The rain turns to snow. For a moment, I freeze and come to the conclusion that I need to make the first move.

I take each step hesitantly, trying to be as quiet and nonchalant as possible. Every footstep seems to echo off of each headstone and makes my insides shrivel. *Snap.* I whip my head around and hold out my wand out of sheer terror. "I know you are there. Just...just come out or whatever," I shout. I begin to continue to approach the patch of trees, when I realize that I can't move. *I can't MOVE AND I AM SINKING.* Without warning, I am knocked sideways and I hear a girl screech.

"ASH!"

I dig my elbows into the icy mud and try to kick my legs out from deep in the ground. "ASH! Sweetheart, help!"

I shake my head, trying to get the voices out of my head. Trying to forget. Trying to pretend it isn't real. The deafening sounds of whispers and silent screams fill the once vacant air. As if hit with a stunning spell, the earth loosens its hold on my legs. I get up and begin to sprint to the source of the ear-splitting sounds. I halt.

Ahead, of me lies a horrible scene. A lean-limbed, straw-haired girl lies in the fetal position with a woman hovering over her like a fence. But what was even more horrid, was the figure that was towering over them, surrounded with a floating cloud of pitch-black, ghoulish, hooded figures. I hesitantly walk closer. I am met with an intense cold fog and I can feel my breath catch in my throat. I can feel the coldness sink deep past my skin, past my bones, and deep into my heart. *I can't do this. I can't save them...No...Yes...No! I can!*



“Hey! Whoever you are, face me! Leave them alone!...” I hesitate. “...It’s me you want...after all...” The figure snaps around and my words catch in my throat. *After all, you are me.* Clothed in a juniper, long sleeved shirt and shredded black pants, was well, myself. An evil, devilish, disgusting version of myself. *Weird, and a bit uncomfortable, I know.* Evil clone me, looks me up and down. He scowls.

“*What are you doing here? You have interrupted something, special.*” He hisses along with his little army. I step forward and make eye contact with the terrified girl. “Leigh, it’s okay. I got this.” Shakingly, I hold the wand out and point it right at his chest. He cackles and thrusts his arms into the air.

“*You think you can win against me? I. Am. You. Well, a stronger you.*”

I mutter a spell under my breath and a faint raven wisps out from the tip of the wand. It vanishes. He chuckles. He claps his hands together and the black cloud drifts off, along with chilling weather. His hands rub together and he sits down. I am jolted forward by an invisible force and I find myself facing him, two inches apart. Avoiding eye contact, I move my pointer finger and lightly rest it on his palm. I bend my head down.

“What happened to you?...” I whisper.

He laughs drily. “You want to know, how I am stronger? You want to know how I have become like this? *The source ?*” He begins to sob, breathlessly. I look up at him. Crimson colored tears etch into his face and I recoil as it begins to conform. Fixated, I watch as his face boils and falls away. I look away, nauseated.

“*Look at me. Look.*” His voice strains, but I refuse. I get up and shuffle over to the gravestones. I rest my forehead against the cold stone. I feel a skeletal hand land on my shoulder. I peek over my shoulder and I am greeted with a bouquet of flowers.

“*Ash, I got my strength from dad. I have become like him. After...he...after mother and sis were killed, I fell into his exact trap. I have become like him and that’s exactly what he wanted to happen.*”

He places a handful of flowers on the ground and steps back.

“*Now it’s time for you to be you and nobody else.*”

I begin to rock back and forth, knowing what is about to happen. By memory, my surroundings change into a white enclosed room. I find myself standing over a chair with my father sitting in it. His face, once flawless, is sprawled with bruises, scars and wrinkles. Patches of matted hair, sprout on from his now balding head. It looks like he is struggling to breath, as I watch the two slits from his serpent-like nose open and close. Dripping from the left corner of his mouth, a ruby-colored liquid drips onto his white, torn shirt . He tries to resituate himself in the chair, but then he realizes that he is bound tightly. He smirks.

“Well, this is inconvenient. I am missing my favorite show.” His lips form into a pout. “Son, can you hurry up and get whatever you need to get done, so I won’t miss this program. I think they are doing a marathon!”

Angrily, I latch onto his shirt and finally let everything that has been kept inside, out.

“I am so sick and tired of you acting this way! You are a disgusting, terrible man.” I scoff. “I don’t even think I can call you a man! You just are so...Ugh!” I scream and let go.

He begins to laugh maniacally but is stopped by a coughing fit. I turn around as he coughs up phlegm and blood. *Just do it. Think about all of the things he has done to you. Things that he has taken from you. Mom. Sister.*

“Those are the dark emotions that I have been trying to get out of you! You have always been the softie, which I now realize can make a lovely characteristic, but a *dreadful* weakness. Do it! Get rid of me!”

I open and close my fists.

He growls. “You know, it wasn’t that hard to get over your mother’s death. It may have taken about two days, or maybe it was one...hmmm.”

I whip around with a whirlwind of anger and hurt. I take out my wand and summon all of my knowledge. *Only one word. Just say it. JUST SAY IT. DO IT.*

I open my mouth and snap the wood in half.

“I AM NOT YOU! I WILL NEVER BE LIKE YOU!” I black out once again.



Victory. Mission won. Game over. Play again?

“No. Clint, call Claire.”

It rings once.

“Yes, Ash?”

I wipe the tears from my eyes.

“I did it. Claire, I did it.”

The End



THE NO-MAJ

by Mary McLeod

July, Age 11

Emma slams the mailbox shut and rifles through a half-dozen letters as we traipse through her front yard. The air is dense and stiflingly warm, yet there is a comfort in it. In the wintertime, I yearn for the kiss of sunshine on my arms and legs, so I suppose it is the lack of cold that makes this humid summer air pleasant. However, I cannot deny the relief I feel when the cool indoor air hits my sweaty skin.

My best friend tosses all but one letter onto the breakfast table. She holds it in her hand as if it is a baby bird. The envelope is addressed in crimson ink, and a seal of blue wax holds it closed. It looks like a letter to a medieval princess.

“What’s that?” I ask quietly. There is an oddly momentous aura to this letter that requires the utmost solemnity in my eleven-year-old mind.

“I dunno,” Emma replies, brows furrowed. She digs her fingernail under the wax and gently pries it from the paper. After a moment of scrutinizing the round, she hands it to me. I can make nothing of the intricate, knot-like symbol imprinted on it.

I shrug and look at her. “What does the envelope say?”

“Emmaline Vries, Upstairs Room...” She continues to list off her home address. Her face, which remained serious until now, reddens when she unfolds the letter. She snorts a laugh and grins at me.

“Someone was trying to prank me. The letter says I’m accepted to ‘Ilver-mornny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry’. There’s a whole list of made up books I need to bring too!”

“Let me see!” Emma hands me the letter. Indeed, someone has pranked her. “What does ‘we expect your owl’ even mean?” I giggle. We laugh for a good five minutes, entering into subsequent bouts anytime the other repeats a phrase from the letter, especially the word

“Ilvermornny”.

“What in the world are you girls laughing about?” Mrs. Vries strides into the kitchen, empty coffee mug in hand.

“Someone pranked me,” Emma titters.

“Who do you think it could’ve been?” I wonder aloud. “Maybe Jason? He likes to tease you. I think he kinda likes you.”

Emma makes a face. “Eww, Catrina, no. Boys are gross. And he’s definitely not smart enough for a prank like this.” Another spell of snickers ensues.

“I’ll ask the details later,” Mrs. Vries chuckles. “If you need me, you can find me in the living room.”

“Okay,” we reply in unison before racing up the stairs to riddle out who pranked Emma.

August, Age 11

I throw my arms around Emma and bury my head in her shoulder. It is impossible to fathom not seeing her for four entire months, to wrap my head around starting middle school without my best friend by my side. My heart is going to hurt so much that I don’t think a word has been invented to express how much I’ll miss her. At least, there isn’t one I have come across.

A week after the first letter, an identical one came in the mail. Mrs. Vries, assuming it was the same silly prank, tossed it in the trash. Five days passed before a stranger delivered the letter in person. I wasn’t there, but Emma told me all about it. Her parents ordered her to stay in her room-- which she did, being a faithful child --and afterward, they told her she was going to attend a boarding school up north with other children like her.

According to the stranger, Emmaline is magical. Everything sounded as if it emerged from a fairytale. This news was beautiful, yet saddening at the same time.



"I'll write to you every week," Emma promises.

"Me too," I respond. "And don't leave out any details."

"I won't! You don't either." We laugh as we fight back tears, and, if it is possible, we squeeze each other even tighter.

June, Age 12

I rock back and forth in the backseat of the car, grinning from ear to ear. The past year, which once seemed infinite, is now a flash of memory, and those bittersweet hours I spent with Emma in December feel as if they were yesterday.

She taps a pen to her smiling lips with a notebook resting on her crossed legs. We are compiling a list of everything we want to do together this summer.

"Oh! We have to swim in the pool." Emma nods at my suggestion and adds it to the list studiously.

"It's so funny, writing with a real pen again," she giggles, "because at Ilvermorny we use feathers and ink. I keep expecting a soft quill to tickle my chin, but it's a hard pen instead."

"That's so cool!" I sigh.

"We also need to go to the doughnut shop. Mmm, I haven't had a real doughnut in forever. Ilvermorny serves sweets for breakfast only occasionally. Bailey and my favorite is cinnamon rolls."

"Bailey Wiquery?"

"Yeah, the one who's in Thunderbird with me. She's really good at Potions, and I'm really good at Charms, so it works out. I'll tell you later about this one potion she made. It was a disaster! Who do you hang out with at school?"

"Oh, mostly the girls from last year," I mumble. Not only do I feel pathetic about how drab my school is compared to hers, but also about how Emma seems to be making friends where I am not. She is my closest friend, and it was difficult to manage without her this past year. I'm not going to tell her how hard it was, or how I don't have other friends, of course.

"Can we, maybe, not talk about school? It's supposed to be summer break." "Sure," Emma agrees. "What else do we need on the list?"

June, Age 13

"Did you read that book I sent you?" I inquire. Emmaline and I pause our walk to let her dog sniff a stick.

"I did read it, and it was good, except the author's entire concept of magic is wrong. Not any random person can just learn magic without magical blood," she replies, "and the spells they used were completely made up."

"Well, it is a fiction book," I retort. The words slip out slightly sharper than I intend. "I know," she says lightly. "Still."

We tread on.

June, Age 14

Bailey's eyes are wide. "You've never even seen real magic before? That's crazy. Your life is so much work." I nod a bit sheepishly.

"It's normal for me."

"Wow." She shakes her head, dark curls bouncing against her pale cheeks. "What do you even learn about in school if there's no magic?"

"Bailey, I told you: math, writing, science, and history. Those kinds of things," Emmaline says. She rolls her eyes at her friend from the place she's sprawled across the floor.

"I start high school this fall. I'll have art, algebra, English, world history, journalism, and earth science," I explain.



“Already? I forgot high school was a thing. I can’t believe we’re that old,” my friend sighs. Though I didn’t say so, this is more of a “finally” for me. The past three years have not been wonderful, and I hope attending a new school this year might bring some relief.

The tension in my heart eases temporarily as we laugh at Bailey’s next question: “What’s high school?”

June, Age 15

Emma skips along the sidewalk, a witch and a No-Maj on either side of her. We window shop, chatting about meaningless things. I beg the two to come into the bookshop with me, and eventually they cave.

“I’m sorry, I just find reading a waste of time,” Bailey declares. Emma and I laugh. “I’ll still come in with you though. Maybe we’ll see some weird No-Majes. Not that you--”

“I know,” I chuckle. Bailey is nice to me, and I enjoy her company. She makes things between Emmaline and I less awkward. The little bell rings cheerily as we enter the shop. I’m nearly to the young adult section when a voice stops me in my tracks.

“Oh my God, Emmaline Vries?” I turn around slowly to find an astonished dark-haired boy staring at Emma.

“Jason King?” Emmaline’s jaw drops.

“I thought you, like, went to some boarding school up north. I mean, what’re you doing down here?” My face burns, and I can’t decide whether it’s good or bad that Jason isn’t turning his attention to me.

“Summer break,” she chuckles. I take a step toward Emmaline.

“Oh, right. Well, if you’re gonna be in town for a while, want to hang out sometime?”

My body stills. I don’t know if I want to yell or cry. Jason, Jason *King*, just asked out my best friend, whom he hasn’t seen since *fifth* grade, when he’s seen me almost every school day since then. The blood rushing in my ears drowns out Emmaline’s reply.

“You okay, Catrina?” Bailey asks softly. I look at her, then at Emmaline.

“No.” My voice is thick with tears threatening to overflow. Emmaline turns away from the door, through which Jason exited a second ago.

“Whoa, Trina, what’s the matter?” There is an uncomfortable edge to her voice, one that

I’ve noticed creeping into her tone over these past few days. Tears tumble down my cheeks.

“Maybe, if you’d bothered to ask me,” I blubber, “you’d know that I’ve liked Jason for the past year, and that we were finally building up a friendship. Maybe, if you cared, you would know he and I have been talking more every week, and I thought maybe he’s starting to feel the same way about me. You didn’t even bother to ask. And now--” My chest heaves as saltwater pours from my eyes, trickles off my chin, drips onto my blouse.

“Hey, Catrina, I’m sorry.” Emma pulls me into a hug. “I didn’t say yes or anything. I

told him I’m going to be at Bailey’s for half the summer, so I couldn’t.” She doesn’t release her hold on me until I still my breathing, which takes longer after the reminder that I didn’t even get a whole summer with my best friend. “Even if I was going to be here, I still would have said no,” she adds. The words sound forced.

“Why don’t we go get ice cream?” Bailey suggests. I nod and wipe a straggling tear from my eye.

July, Age 16

It was odd to see the girl in front of me, so different from last summer, though her smile, her sparkling green eyes, and her shiny caramel hair are all the same as they were the day she received the fateful letter.

It took me time to pinpoint what exactly has changed about her since then. How she carries herself is different, more confident. Emmaline’s facial expressions are precise in public places. She lets the mask down only a little at my house. This all results from the view she now has of our world. Never has she expressed “superiority” over No-Majes, yet she treats us in a more distanced way.



Sometimes I want to ask her why she keeps coming back to visit me.

She left a moment ago, and my heart relaxed when she walked out the door. I missed her terribly over the past year, but it hurt less than it has in other years. We exchanged hardly any owls. I think the wound is beginning to heal, leaving only a scar as a reminder, and scars are easy to cover up.

I told her Hunter was coming to pick me up soon. He still shouldn't arrive for about an hour. Emmaline doesn't need to know though.

July, Age 17

"I missed you a lot this year," I admit. "I want to make the most of our day together." Emma grins, and I realize I missed her smile. We hop in my car, and she uses my phone to look up somewhere to eat.

"I can't believe we have one year left in school," she says in awe. "What do you want to do when you finish?"

"I think I want to be a writer-- a journalist, for a while, until I can make enough money writing novels. What kind of career can you have after school in the magical world?"

"I could be an auror, or a professor, or work for MACUSA or something. There are plenty of options."

"Hmm." We ride along in silence for a few minutes.

"Do you have your eye on anyone?" It's a weak attempt at conversation on my part.

"Well, there is this one guy..." I listen to Emma describe his appearance, his personality, things he's done in class. He sounds perfect for her: tall, talkative, and intelligent. She then turns the conversation to me.

"How's Hunter doing?"

My grip on the steering wheel tightens. "He and I didn't work out," I spit through clenched teeth.

"Aww, that's too bad." She doesn't push it, and the conversation halts for the rest of the drive to the diner. I am too embarrassed to tell her that my breakup was why I missed her so much this year.

June, Age 18

I have not heard from Emmaline since last year. It is as if we made an unspoken agreement to quit speaking to one another after our sole day together last summer. It surprised me that such an agreement did not hurt as much as I thought it would.

In about November, my heart ached at our disconnection, but Hunter helped me out of it. He supported me, told me it was okay that friends drifted away sometimes, that I would be okay if I let her go. I did, and it felt nice. I barely think about Emmaline Vries anymore. The only time I do is when I write.

Hunter, once again my boyfriend, drops me at the bookshop and drives off. He has a couple errands to run, though he didn't object to a break.

The bookshop door swings closed behind me, hitting the bell a second time. The ringing is the only sound in the bookshop. The lady at the desk, the mother and child in the kid's section, the elderly man in the history section, none of them are moving. They have all stopped in the middle of life, frozen turning a page or replacing a book.

The only person who seems to be alive is Emmaline, standing in the middle of it all. Her chest heaves with the effort it takes to maintain the spell, or maybe with the nerves of whatever this situation is supposed to be.

I will not be the one to speak first. I *refuse*. I would have been fine to never see her again. Happy, even. If Emmaline is here to make some kind of peace with me, I'm positive rage would not be boiling my gut. The very nature of this meeting assures me that peace is not on her mind; at least, not any sort of peace that will end well for me.

"Hello, Catrina." I don't move. Should someone else walk into the shop, they might assume me to be in the same condition as the other No-Majes. Suddenly I realize I have never seen Emmaline use magic before. She goes about it in a serious manner. It must come easily to her, and I suppose she has been practicing such things for seven years, so why should it not?

"I don't know why you're here," I say after a long stint of nothing.



“Really?” The witch tosses a little magazine on the table. My school’s literary journal. “Your short story in this has an awfully detailed magic system, one very similar to ours.” *Ours* . Old wounds are torn open to hear identify with a completely other people, a group I am not part of. “We see it as a threat to our . . . concealment.” Emmaline’s tone is void of friendliness. She is no longer just *other* , but *more* . More *powerful* . Fear blossoms, spreading to the tips of my fingers and toes.

“What are you saying?”

“I’m saying we’d be safer if you didn’t know.” Her voice cracks after ‘*know*’ . So she is still human, I think, not just a witch. The only victory I can gain here is in the pain it causes her to do whatever she intends to do to me.

“So . . . what? You’re going to kill me?” I rejoin. I don’t know how I gathered the confidence to say that. My hands tremble at my sides.

“No, no!” she exclaims, then quiets. “I’m here to erase your memory.” The agony in her eyes doesn’t affect me, neither does the way she looks identical to when she was eleven.

“Fine,” I whisper. Is this not what I wanted? To forget her, never think about her again? I didn’t intend to expose her magic in the short story, nor did I realize I was. Even so, in my subconscious I knew something to this effect was coming.

She glances around nervously, then adds in a low voice, “If you just mind what you’re writing I can--”

“No.”

Emmaline steps back, countenance blank. Any trace of the girl I knew is gone. “Fine.”

June, Age 18

I stumble back a step and shake my head. I’m in a bookshop, the same one I’ve been visiting since I was eight.

“Ma’am, can I help you?” the lady at the cash register offers.

“Oh, no thanks, I just lost my train of thought.” Again I shake my head. Someone leaving the store brushes up against me. I mutter “sorry” and step out of the way.

The girl who darts out the door looks about my age. For a moment, I’m inclined to ask if she is okay, her cheeks being wet with tears, but as soon as the door clicks shut behind her, the thought leaves my mind.



THROUGH THE EYES OF A MUGGLE

by Graham Garrett

It was a fine Saturday afternoon. The sun was out and there was not a cloud in the sky. The temperature was agreeable and the people in London seemed all the better for it. However, about an hour outside the city, Mr. and Mrs. Adams were not having a good start to their afternoon. At first glance it seemed like any other day. Their step-son was up in his room, minding his own business, the couple thought, while they were downstairs making lunch. However, a man had arrived on their porch at half past twelve and had asked to be let in. The couple cautiously let him in and they were now sitting in their living room discussing a school for their stepson.

“Hogwarts!” bellowed Mr. Adams while reading the letter. “I do not approve of that institution.” “As I was saying sir,” said the man sitting on the couch, “Hogwarts is a school for young wizards and witches.” While Mr. Adams continued to rant, the young boy listening to their conversation from the stairs, pondered about the strange man in the living room.

“Actually,” thought the boy, “he does not appear strange at all.” The man looked extremely ordinary, almost too much so. He wore a white button down shirt, a black tie, and a black jacket. He had short and slightly curly blonde and brown hair. His facial features appeared normal, other than a small scar on his left cheek. He wielded a brief case which, to the ordinary person, appeared to be full of documents. In reality, the briefcase held his wand which he was ready to use at a moment’s notice. The man’s name was Professor Alexander Titus and he was, in fact, a wizard.

The boy heard his stepfather raise his voice at the man and then heard the man calmly reply, “Your son’s safety is our prime concern at Hogwarts. He will be safe among others like him.” Mr. Adams continued his questioning while the man answered him thoroughly. The boy slowly made his way into the living room. Professor Titus noticed him first, while the boy’s stepfather continued his shouting. Then, Mr. Adams noticed the boy and stopped. He kindly said, “Go back up to your room.” There was something sinister about the way he said it and the professor seemed to notice. “May I have a moment to speak with your step-son?” asked Professor Titus. Mr. Adams did not want to allow this, but some other sense forced him to say yes. Mr. Adams slowly left the room, glaring over his shoulder at the uninvited guest.

The professor beckoned the boy to sit down beside him and the boy complied. “Now,” said the professor, “Are you Jack Soul?” A confused look spread over Jack’s face before he replied, “How did you know that?” “Hogwarts has been following your progress for years. For your age and your lack of knowledge, we are impressed.” responded Professor Titus. Jack quickly asked, “What is Hogwarts?” The professor took a moment to think before answering,

“Hogwarts is a school to learn magic for young wizards and witches. You will develop your skills in a safe and friendly environment.” Jack, very confused now, looked at him and said, “But magic is not real, sir.” Professor Titus looked offended but quickly brushed it off. “Jack have you ever done something that had no logical cause?” Jack took a moment to think about it and the professor watched him with interest. Jack slowly responded, “There was one time, before my parents died.” The professor leaned closer to Jack with a look of intrigue spread over his face. “When I was six, my mom and dad took me to an amusement park. Before the park closed, we got on the ferris wheel. We got to the top and I got a terrible feeling. I still can’t explain what it felt like, but I will never forget it. All I wanted to do was to be with my parents. The ferris wheel stopped right when we got to the top. We were stuck up there for a long time. Once the feeling passed, it resumed going down until we disembarked.” Professor Titus leaned back and whispered to himself, “Extraordinary.” Jack continued, “That was the last night I saw my parents. The next morning they quickly left to go on a business trip in Scotland. They never came back.” The professor quietly said, “I’m sorry, Jack.” He looked like he wanted to add more but he stopped himself. Professor Titus knew Jack’s parents and the true cause of their deaths. They were both killed at the same place he had received his scar, the Battle of Hogwarts. The professor knew Jack was too young to hear such a violent story so he refrained from telling it. “Jack, you know as well as I do, that you’re a wizard.” Jack did not know how to respond. Something made him want to believe the professor. Maybe it was the overwhelming feeling that he could finally leave his step-parents behind. Perhaps it was just his young mind imagining what life as a wizard would be like. However, Jack knew



the true feeling. It was of belief. He believed every word that the professor just told him. Professor Titus gave Jack a minute to think and then added, "Your parents would want you to attend Hogwarts. They both did a long time ago." "You knew my parents?" Jack replied. "Yes, I did." remarked the professor. "They were very bright and skilled in magic. I learned alongside them, and I am proud to say it made me a better person." Jack, once again, believed every word the professor was saying. The professor gave Jack a moment to reflect before asking, "Are you ready to leave?" Jack could not help but exclaim, "Yes!"

The professor stood up, grabbed his briefcase and kindly asked Jack to follow him. Mr. Adams looked furious when he saw Jack leaving with the strange man, however, he knew it had to happen. Jack's biological parents once attended Hogwarts, and so would he. Mr. Adams had been informed of this the day he took Jack in. He did not fully approve of the school because Jack's parents had died there. Professor Titus stood at the front door waiting for a complaint, a grunt, or anything that implied Mr. Adams did not want to comply, but it never occurred. The professor addressed Mr. and Mrs. Adams and said, "Very well. Jack and I are off. A letter will be sent to you and your wife shortly describing what courses Jack will be taking and the supplies he and I will gather." The professor shook Mr. and Mrs. Adams' hands and said his goodbyes. He stepped outside to let Jack do the same. Jack took one last look at his step parents before leaving. To Mr. and Mrs. Adams, Jack was an accident thrown on their laps. Yet, they both felt that the house would feel emptier without him. They thought they might even miss him. Mr. Adams quickly said, "Don't get too comfortable at Hogwarts." His wife stood dumbfounded at the scene that had just taken place. As Jack closed the door behind him he heard his stepmother say, "What are you not telling me about that boy?"

Jack took his seat on the passenger side of the car and Professor Titus sat down beside him in the driver's seat. "This is how wizards get around?" asked Jack. "No," replied the professor. "I was told to keep a low profile. I've heard that it's a muggle phrase." He drove away from Mr. and Mrs. Adam's house as Jack stared at it from the car's window. Jack knew he would miss the place. Despite how he'd been treated, he acknowledged everything his step-parents had done for him. "Don't worry," said the professor, "You'll still get to visit during Christmas and summer break." Jack and the professor sat in silence as they drove through the muggle towns on their way to London. A little over an hour passed before they arrived at their destination. The professor pulled his car into a parking space in front of a dingy little English pub. "We're here," said Professor Titus. "This is Hogwarts?" asked Jack. "No," replied the professor, "This is the Leaky Cauldron." As they stepped out of the car, Jack could not help but notice how old the building was. It looked like it might fall apart at any moment. As they stepped through the door, Jack asked the professor, "What's in here?" "You'll see." replied Professor Titus.

"The inside of the Leaky Cauldron is not much prettier than the outside." Jack thought. He looked around at the old tables and rotting floorboards. It was a dark and old place. He was amazed the building was still standing. However, what amazed Jack even more were the people inside the old pub. The few patrons that were present were wearing strange robes. Some had on bright blue robes while others had darker and dirtier brown ones. The professor and Jack walked past one man and Jack laughed about the man's pointed hat. "Yes, wizards actually wear those." remarked Professor Titus not too happily. Jack closely followed the professor, not particularly liking the atmosphere of the pub. The professor abruptly stopped and Jack almost bumped into him. "Professor Longbottom! I didn't see you there," Professor Titus exclaimed as he walked over to a man next to the counter. "Alexander," said the man kindly. Professor Titus beckoned for Jack to walk over and said to him, "This is Professor Neville Longbottom. He teaches herbology at Hogwarts." He shook Jack's hand and enthusiastically said, "I hope you'll take my class someday." Jack liked the wizard. He seemed to be very friendly. "We better be off. I'm helping this student find his supplies." said Professor Titus. "Good luck. You'll really enjoy Hogwarts." Professor Longbottom exclaimed. Professor Titus led Jack to a door in the back of the pub saying, "Here we are," as he opened it. The professor allowed Jack to step through first and he followed close behind. They stood outside in a small area enclosed by brick walls. "What is this?" asked Jack. "This," replied the professor, "is Diagon Alley."

The solid brick wall unfolded in front of Jack and he could not help but exclaim, "Woah." as it did. In front of Jack lay the oddest street he had ever seen. There were several storefronts on either side of the street. They were all different colors and some buildings appeared to lean to one side. Jack looked overhead and saw owls flying above the street with parchments in their beaks. He looked in one store and saw the strangest looking



food he had ever laid eyes on. It made him want to gag. A young boy that looked the same age as Jack stumbled out of it, chasing a chocolate frog down the street. The people walking up and down the street looked like the people in the pub. They all had on different colored robes and some wore pointed hats. Jack saw a group of wizards and witches carrying sticks and was very confused. Professor Titus noted it and explained, "Those are their wands, Jack. We're getting you one today." "Oh," Jack said. As the professor led Jack down the street, Jack could not help but watch the people. Some stood in the street and performed actual magic for onlookers. Others entered and exited stores holding items which Jack had never seen. Jack became so distracted he almost lost sight of the professor but quickly caught back up with him. Professor Titus pointed to the end of the alley and said, "Gringotts, the wizard bank. Of course, we don't need to go there. I collected your money earlier today." Jack looked at the old white building. He did notice that the glass domed ceiling looked very new. "Come on," beckoned the professor. "We're going to Ollivander's." he exclaimed while pointing at a small shop. Jack followed the professor to the store and the professor opened the door to let Jack inside.

The professor closed the door behind Jack and took a seat in a chair by the entrance. Jack cautiously walked towards the counter. The shop reminded him of the pub. It was old and falling apart, however, the atmosphere felt less dingy. Jack noticed that cheaply built boxes were on shelves lining the walls. Some of the shelves looked like they would break under the weight of the boxes at any second. Jack looked at them and wondered what was inside. He walked up to the counter and waited for a moment until a man emerged from the back. The only thing Jack could think of to describe this man was ancient. The man said with a frail voice, "Jack Soul."

"How do you know me, sir?" asked Jack. "I know everyone who has ever entered my shop. You look like your parents. Also," replied the man, "Alexander told me this morning that he was bringing you here." Before Jack could respond, the man went into the back again. He emerged with a box and opened it. Jack looked inside and saw a wand. Jack looked back up at the man and he urged Jack to take it. Jack lifted it up and examined it. The man, sounding impatient, said, "Give it a wave." Jack, not knowing what to do, made an up and down motion causing several of the boxes to fly off the shelves. "I'm sorry." Jack apologized. "It's alright." replied the man,

"That was very likely to happen." He gave a flick of his own wand and all of the boxes levitated back onto the shelf. Jack watched with amazement. After a few more attempts, the man went to the back once again and emerged with another wand. "This wand has a hair from the same unicorn that was in your mother's wand." Jack slowly took it and examined it. The room seemed to light up around him briefly. Jack's eyes were fixed on the wand which was radiating light. Then, the light vanished. "That's it," said the man. "The wand chooses the wizard."

Jack paid for the wand, keeping a firm grip on it. He turned around, ready to leave, only to realize Professor Titus was gone. Jack began to panic. He was stuck in a strange new world and his guide to it all had vanished. The man behind the counter said, "Alexander probably went to gather the rest of your supplies. You've been here for awhile." Immediately after the man said this, the professor burst through the door wielding a bag full of supplies. He handed it to Jack and then spoke to the shop owner. Jack examined a few of the items, discovering a small cauldron, a book titled "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them", and some robes. Jack then realized the bag was not very large yet all of the items somehow fit inside. He stuck his entire arm inside the bag and could not feel the bottom. Before Jack could wonder at this, Professor Titus said, "We have twenty minutes until the train leaves Jack. We need to hurry." "What train?" asked Jack.

The professor opened the door to the shop and they stepped outside. The professor marched back down Diagon Alley towards the Leaky Cauldron as Jack followed at his heels. Jack, once again, looked at all of the odd commodities and people roaming the street. Before he knew it, they were back at the pub. They walked inside. Jack noticed Professor Longbottom had left and Professor Titus remarked, "He must've already gone to the train." Jack was about to walk out the door when the professor stopped him. "The car is not fast enough to get to the station on time." he said. "Jack. You're in for a treat." He reached into his robes and pulled out a small bag. He opened it and Jack saw it was full of black powder. The professor walked over to the crumbly brick fireplace and lit it. Then, he threw the powder into the flames. Jack stumbled back out of



shock when the flames turned bright green. The professor turned to face Jack and said, "This is called floo powder. It allows wizards to travel to any fireplace connected to the floo network. The one at the platform should be connected." Jack looked terrified when the professor stepped into the green fire. "It's alright Jack. It is harmless. You need to stand in the flames, say the name of where you want to go, and throw the powder into the fire." Jack slowly reached out his hand and saw that the fire was not hot. He stepped into it with the professor. Professor Titus put some of the powder into Jack's hand and told him, "Remember to say Platform Nine and Three Quarters." The professor dropped his powder into the fire and vanished. "That's not a real platform," thought Jack. He said it anyways as he dropped the powder. He closed his eyes as his body rose and contorted.

When he opened them, he saw that he was standing on a train platform. Jack looked to his right to see that there was a red steam powered train with people climbing onboard. There was gold writing along the side that read "Hogwarts Express". Professor Titus led Jack onboard and they made their way to an empty compartment. They sat down and Jack looked out the window to see more oddly dressed wizards filing onboard. "This is it Jack. We're off to Hogwarts," said the professor. As the train left the station, Jack got one last glance at London. This was the last time he would see the world through the eyes of a muggle. Jack Soul was now a wizard.



A HAUNTING MEMORY

by Ari Fargo

I woke up to a cold bed this morning. I don't really know what I was expecting. A warm arm around my waist, maybe, or a beautiful laugh, so sunny and bright. One thing I know I want to hear is that wonderful, perfect voice whisper into my ear. I want to hear a teasing 'Busy Lizzy' before being attacked with kisses all across my face.

I haven't been able to relax in weeks. Our house, and everything within it, is a constant reminder of what's missing. The smell of the garden brings memories of small adventures and nights wasted star gazing. Taking care of the hippogriffs and other beasts remind me of hours of ignoring my own needs for them until an exasperated "Elizabeth" breaks my concentration.

Missing her is a painful ache that never fully leaves me. I've tried to keep everything the same, only touching her things when I carefully clean them off. Using a scourgify charm would probably do a more thorough job, but Adira always washed the things she treasured the muggle way. Our shared belongings and the stuff from our days in Hogwarts are always the hardest to wash. The thought of botched brews and hours spent planning our future haunts the fabric of green scarfs and flowing robes.

My Adira was an up and coming politician. She was very opinionated and held fast by her beliefs. She got a minor job at the ministry the moment we shed our school robes and her positing only improved from there. Looking back on it, I'm so glad our last conversation wasn't an argument or something I would end up regretting. I can still remember our last conversation like it was yesterday.

It was a beautiful morning, the house was filled with the sound and smell of cooking bacon. I slowly pulled myself out of bed and shuffled to the dining room. After sitting down I watched my Adira scurry frantically around the kitchen. She was holding a bowl filled with what looked like pancake batter.

"What's all this?" was the first thing out of my mouth. She obviously hadn't noticed me enter because she startled violently and almost dropped the bowl she was holding.

"Oh, you're awake! I thought you'd be asleep for another hour at least." she was flustered and covered in a mixture of flour and pancake batter.

"Well, I'm awake now so I'll ask again, what's all this?"

"It was supposed to be a surprise breakfast in bed but it looks like that plan fell through."

"I don't know, it may not be breakfast in bed but I'm very surprised. Now, why don't you go get cleaned up while I save breakfast."

That morning was a wonderfully lazy one that we hadn't had in a while. It was a morning of soft words of adoration and gentle kisses. My Adira had her hands combing through my long curly mane when she told me she probably wouldn't be home for a couple of days. The ministry had been all hands on deck after the death of Dumbledore as they tried to prevent mass panic. We parted so she could get ready for work. I will always be thankful that our last words to each other were what they were.

"I love you Adira. Please be safe."

"Of course I'll be safe, I'm not the one who has an extremely dangerous job. That being said, I love you too Busy Lizzy. Don't stay up too late while I'm away."

And just like that, she was off and I never saw her again.

It had been a week before I got the news. A mutual friend sent an owl to tell me she had died when the government takeover happened. The death eaters had recognized her and decided to take care of the issues she posed for them in one word and a flick of a wand. My wonderful, cunning Adira gone in an instant.

I woke up cold again today. I wish she was here.



NONFICTION

GRADES 9-12



THE INTRICATE JOURNEY OF J. K. ROWLING

by Jaleigh Wilson

Joanna Rowling known by many as J.K Rowling wrote the mysterious and adventurous novel, Harry Potter, what was just one book turned into a series. The Series Harry Potter was written about a young boy, growing up without his parents into a world he's not used to, and told by his aunt and uncle to keep secret. Harry's mother was mortal, in the books referred to as a muggle, Harry's father was a wizard. Therefore Harry is considered a half-breed. The series goes on to tell about Harry's life in the wizarding world and finding the mystery of how his parents died. This was one of J.K Rowling's famous novels, children around the world love to read her edge of seat thrillers, that leave you shifting by the end. Rowling's first book "The Philosopher's stone" begins Harry's journey when he's left on the doorstep of number four privet drive, his aunt and uncle, the Dursley's. Ten years later Harry is treated like a slave, sleeping under the stairs in a cupboard. As his eleventh birthday approaches Harry gets a letter to attend the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Only to find his true friends, Ron, and Hermonie, and the destiny to find secrets and solve mysteries. Harry's journey continues as we enter "The Chamber of Secrets", Potter's summer has had a horrible turn of events, and a terrible birthday. Dobby a house-elf has visited potter warning him to not return to Hogwarts. Later on, Ron rescues Harry in his dad's flying car from the Dursley's. After returning to Hogwarts for the second year, Harry starts hearing whispers around the corridor. A turn of events happened after, Children turning to what seem-like stone. The house-elf's warnings have started coming true, what lies next will throw you out of your seat, or leave you craving for more. Another ordinary year starts as the knight bus screeches to halt in front of Harry. "The Prisoner of Azkaban" also known as Sirius Black, escapes the wrenching inferno he was in as a mass-murderer and follower of Lord Voldemort, on the path to find Harry. Harry on the other side of things has something coming he isn't quite expecting when a strange death omen shows up in his tea leaves. That's not the only thing terrifying Harry has to look for, dementors are patrolling the school grounds, waiting to plant their soul sucking-kiss. With events turning in place Hogwarts holds its Triwizard tournament, Harry dreaming of winning the competition. Halloween "The Goblet of Fire" chooses its victims, Harry top list. In this game, he faces death-defying dragons and dark magic, Ron and Hermonie there to guide him, his task..make it out alive. Hogwarts has come to a place of darkness, following "The Order of Phoenix." Dementors have struck the Dursley's leaving Harry in belief "The Dark Lord's" behind this...Harry must find help from Professor Snape to dispute Lord Voldemort's mindless games. Dumbledore appears at privet drive to amass Harry Potter. Dumbledore's hand is blackened, shriveled and weak. Secrets have wrapped the wizarding world, Hogwarts is no longer safe. Malfoy might bear "The Drak Mark" that appears on "The Half-blood Prince", Harry believes, a death eater is amongst us. Harry must find powerful magic with help of friends as he goes through Voldemort's dark secrets, as Harry finds his destiny. As Harry and Hagrid take to the sky above privet drive, never to return. Potter knows Lord Voldemort and the death eaters are waiting in the distance. Harry's protector charm is broken and can not keep him safe, Harry cannot keep hiding, he must face Voldemort and the dark magic waiting to attack and take down Hogwarts once and for all. Rowling writes and presents the last book in the series called "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child". After the many adventures, Harry was on as young boy, he hands down his legacy to one of his children, his youngest son. Both father and son, learn the harsh truth. Darkness comes from different places. The adventures of Harry Potter and black magic have to come to an end, til we meet again Harry Potter.



POETRY

ADULT



DO YOU FEEL THE DARK CREATURE COMING?

by J. Elizabeth Wilson

Do you feel the dark creature coming?
An atmospheric force that consumes all joy;
It moves in wraithlike strangling your soul.

And what prompts this?
What allows this pall to seep through you
Making you beholden to despair?

You may see the hooded darkness surround you,
And shiver as it casts an icy mist all around.
You watch as all light is squelched and forgotten.

But it is the feelings deep within your bones,
The thoughts provoking terror and draining hope;
It is the turmoil inside of you that summons the cloaked figure.

As you sense all happiness and hope drain,
The creature does so knowing it leaves only darkness in its wake.
And how much darkness that remains is yours. And yours alone.

You are back living out the failed dream.
You are back to losing out on love.
You are back to being nothing.

But lo' there is a guardian!
There is a way to throw off that beast of doom.
There is something in you that is immune to anguish.

It is always there.
A diamond resting deep in the cave of your chest,
You can summon it and defeat the dark.

In a spark of magic,
A moment of bristling transformation,
It comes when you remember a sweet exchange.

A gentle kiss as dusk settles.
The breeze blowing the tall grass as you walk squeezing a dear friend's hand.
Fluttering eyelashes as you tuck a sleepy child in at night.

These are the shields held in that bright diamond.
As you retrieve it and bring it forth,
The dark creature cannot last.

Your chest cracks open from the light,
Shining bright.
You watch the mythic animal bound forth in love.



SECTUMSEMPRA

by Madison Wolf

A wound which does not / heal. / I am forever plagued by / the
curse of your absence / gold and emeralds green / spilled down the
salacious curve of your back / Ball of Yule. / The atomic structure
of you / must reside in the Beechwood beauty that is mine /
wand of grace and wisdom / for you are / a bittersweet / *sectum* /
everlasting / part of me / *sempra*.



WALKING IN THE LIGHT

by Michael Griffin

Inside my heart, I heard you cry tonight
Even though I am beyond your sight
Your heart cries out to me - your tears so soft
Gentle whispers of a love that now seems lost

The sky is a canvas - painted dark and gray
The storm is a symphony - the music is the rain
The clouds roll back, and you'll see heaven's light shine through
Feel the breeze upon your face, and remember - I will always be with you

In your heart, I will always be
In the midnight sky - I'm the brightest star you'll see
In my heart, you will always stay
You're like the morning sun - rising up to start a brand new day

Now close your eyes, and look beyond the world we see
I'm right beside you - I always hold you close to me
You'll find me in the sunset - my love is shining bright
Now, forever, always - I'm walking in the light



A HEART TURNED WHOLE

by Danielle Hall

Witches and wizards call upon the limber wand,
Or fickle freckled frog,
To fix a silly sickness.
Simply flick a wrist,
Or add a frog to potion mix,
And illnesses no longer exist.
Meanwhile, muggles struggle with the common cold.
Their sickness a wild fire,
Spread through coughs and runny noses.
I almost feel bad that they have no idea,
That their ailments can be so swiftly managed.
However, it was not influenza or coronavirus,
That immediately gave me pause,
As I crossed paths with a muggle lady.
She appeared anxious with worry and heavy with
child,
And I may have attributed it to the swelling and pain
of muggle pregnancy.
However, there was something distinctly different
written on her face.
I approached and offered congratulations,
Her reply of vocal gratitude did not reach her eyes.
I briefly regretted my failing scrolls in divination,
But knew neither a tea leaf nor crystal ball could
define the matter here.
When gently pressed, she quietly caved,
A protective hand placed over her belly.
A hole in the heart was the numb reply,
The outlook? Unhopeful.
The cures? Wasteful.
She was growing a child who was not promised a life.
My earlier amusement at the dismissal of muggle
medicine,
Suddenly was not so amusing.

Time, for this poor babe, was not a resolution or
cure.
This disease could easily steal the life of even
wizards if not caught in time.
The lady wiped a trespassing tear from her cheek,
And whispered a swift apology for projecting her
turmoil.
She waved away her worry as if it were nothing but
the changing weather.
She ignored her own painful struggle in order to
spare me discomfort.
I inwardly cursed the diseases and cancers as yet
uncured by the muggles.
I had no fickle frog stowed nearby,
But I did possess a flexible wand that could assist in
bending the rules.
I knew that with a careful flick of a wrist and a
word,
I could muddle in the life of this unborn muggle.
I could make whole what was broken.
With a turn of her back and my hastening grip,
The eight and three quarter emerged in hand.
A wave here,
A word there,
And a world of aches and sorrow,
Was suddenly undone.
This lady would not know it yet,
And would not for some time.
But I felt the success of the spell befall,
An unhealthy heart turned whole.



FICTION

ADULT



THE WORLD OF DRAGOLIA AND THE GATE OF CYMRIA

by Karen Anderson

~ Chapter One ~

The Mystery Room of Castle Aberstathwald

“If you will follow me in this direction, we shall see what lurks deep below...in the dungeons!” The castle’s curator, Mr. Jaundy Jones, spoke with a dramatic effect as the students tried to contain their excitement.

As they followed the curator towards a winding stairwell, Morgan stopped suddenly in her tracks. Her attention clearly distracted by one particularly lone and isolated looking corridor. Taking a few steps forward, she checked to see if anyone was watching her before clambering over the roped off barricade.

Standing perfectly still as though in a trance, the young girl continued to stare down the hallway. Her gaze fixated on a large wooden door, the only door for that matter, along the sparsely lit passageway.

“Is that door glowing?” Morgan found herself talking aloud as she watched, mesmerized, as a faint glow of blue light permeated from the door’s cracks. As the hue of the mystery glow got darker and darker, her curiosity became too powerful to ignore.

“Pssst, Cornie, come here!” Morgan whispered to her best friend as he seemed oblivious to her meanderings down the eerie hallway.

Turning to look in her direction, her best friend, Cornelius Zeberiah Williams, aka Cornie, straightened his spectacles as he craned his neck to see what was entrancing the young girl’s attention.

Waving her hand feverishly, Morgan called out to him again. “Come here, you have to see this!”

Glancing over his shoulder to see if they were being watched, he quietly crept to where Morgan was standing. Keeping a watchful eye on the now, disappearing group, the children slowly sauntered down the empty hallway.

“What is that glowing under the door?” He asked with peaked curiosity. “Do you think there’s a faulty lightbulb in there or something?”

“I don’t know,” Morgan continued to whisper as they got closer to the door, “but I think we should find out what it is!”

“Um, I don’t know if that’s a good idea, Morgan.” Cornie hesitated as they stood directly opposite of the mysterious room, his dark brown eyes, growing wide. “I mean, we might get lost trying to find our way back to the group.”

He stood pensively as he debated whether to follow his friend inside.

“Cornie, don’t be such a chicken! We won’t get lost, and besides, all we have to do is follow the sound of that man’s shrill voice and we’ll find our group again.” She pretended to mimic the curator’s voice as her own.

Leaning forward to peek through the keyhole, Morgan squinted her eyes to make out what was going on inside.

“The hole is too small, I can’t see anything. We’re going to have to sneak in.”

Hearing her friend grumble in disagreement, Morgan turned to look at Cornie, huddled sheepishly against the wall.

Then, most unexpectedly, they both heard the creaking of what sounded like a door opening!

Gasping aloud, Cornie pointed at the door as he held his other hand over his mouth.

Morgan stood motionless as she stared at the entrance to the peculiar room. The bright blue light radiated into the hallway as the door, now fully open, beckoned them inside.

Grabbing her friend’s hand, she dragged him into the mystery room.



Standing still the children blinked their eyes several times to adjust to the dark surroundings.

“Where is that blue light coming from?” Cornie asked, his voice shaking slightly.

The children walked side by side as they made their way deeper into the room. Filled with antiques and numerous tables, they weaved their way around the maze-like setting.

“Your grandfather would sure be in awe of this room!”

“No kidding!” Morgan replied as she thought about her grandfather’s antique shop in the sleepy little village of Hayfield Upton, on the Welsh border. The place she now called home, after losing her parents in a tragic auto accident back in her homeland of America.

“Look, the glowing is coming from there!” He gasped as they stared at a small glass-like globe sitting alone on an old table.

As Cornelius leaned closer to inspect the source of the blue light, Morgan’s attention became focused on several large tapestries hanging from the walls. Several feet in height and ornately decorated, she wandered over to inspect them further.

Glancing up at the first, the images of what appeared to be fairy figures could be made out. Surrounded by several fox and owl-like creatures, the scene looked peaceful and rather inviting.

Moving slowly along the wall, Morgan stopped dead in her tracks as her face curled back in disgust. The second tapestry, on the other hand, appeared nothing like the first! Dark and creepy looking creatures infested the image as demon figures stood behind wolf-like beasts and bats that appeared to fly in the night sky. Standing in what look to be a dense forest, the scene gave the young girl goosebumps.

“Now that, is just hideous!” She remarked as she was engrossed in studying the images on the wall. Forcing herself to walk away from the second mural, she descended upon the third.

Draped above a large and ornate looking fireplace, the third tapestry truly captivated her attention!

Calling out over her shoulder, Morgan could not contain her excitement. “Cornie, you have to see this one!”

Then, without warning, came the sound of a loud crash!

Spinning around, Morgan gasped in horror. Her friend, standing frozen in place as the remains of the glass globe lay shattered at his feet.

“I..I just wanted to find out where the blue light was coming from.” He answered softly, his distinctly Welsh accent emphasized as his hands slumped at his sides. “Ah, Morgan Evans, what have I done?”

A slow moving, bluish mist could be seen rising from the floorboards where the shattered glass lay. Almost simultaneously came the thundered sound of the fireplace roaring ablaze as the massive door slammed shut. Now in a panic, the children ran towards their only escape route.

“It won’t open!” Morgan frantically hollered as she tugged on the latch.

Terrified, the children huddled close together as the mist, now taking the form of a ghostly figure began spinning feverishly around the room.

“Morgan...why is your shirt glowing?” Cornie took several steps back as he pointed at her neck.

“What are you talking about?” Morgan asked as she refused to take her eyes off the apparition flying wildly about the confined space.

“Look...at your pendant, don’t you see it?”

Guiding her hand up to her neck, Morgan furrowed her eyebrows as she pulled the round, sun-faced pendant from its resting spot under her uniform sweater.

Gleaming a bright red that emanated from her neck, the young girl gasped. “What is happening, Cornelius?”

“I have no idea, but I don’t think it’s good!” He cried out.



“Follow me.” Morgan reached for her friend’s school jacket.

Crouching low to avoid colliding with the ominous figure still floating around the room, the children made their way closer to the fireplace.

“Look Cornie, the eyes on the tapestry over the fireplace...they’re glowing,” she exclaimed as she pointed towards the mystical beast adorning the large mural, “and that box, on the mantle...it’s opening!”

The children stood still in horror as the fire from the ancient fireplace made a loud crackling sound as it blazed uncontrollably. The floorboards began to shake as hundreds of antiques slid back and forth on their tables, some crashing to the floor. Then suddenly and without warning, a hurricane-like wind forced the children against a wall.

Morgan’s pendant was now glowing with such monumental force, that the bright red beams radiating from it were quite overpowering.

Nearly in tears, the two friends clung to each other for dear life. They continued to watch helplessly as the ghostly figure disappeared into the large, black box that had been shaking out of control on the fireplace mantle. The glowing eyes on the tapestry faded, as suddenly everything went still.

“What, on earth, just happened?” Morgan whispered as she continued to hold tight to her friend’s arm.

“I have no idea,” he answered as they both slowly backed away from the wall, keeping their eyes steadily on the fireplace and the black box, “but something tells me, we should leave this room immediately!”

Turning swiftly to run towards the door, the children cried out in surprise.

Standing before them, his hands cradling his head, stood the castle curator.

“Children, what have you done?” He asked as he shook his head back and forth feverishly.

“We’re so sorry, Sir, we didn’t mean any harm.” Cornie answered, his voice cracking.

“Honest, we didn’t do anything,” Morgan hesitated as she looked at her friend out of the corner of her eyes, not wanting him to get into trouble, “that glass globe on the floor just slid off the table and everything...well, just went crazy!”

She threw her arms in the air shaking them back and forth, trying to imitate the ghostly figure’s actions and that of the once blazing fire and hurricane wind.

“Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear,” Jaundy continued to rub his hands through his disheveled hair, “this is not good at all.”

He stood motionless as he observed the shattered antiques that littered the room’s floor. The castle curator forced himself to walk towards the globe that was now, only a mass of splintered glass. Crouching down he began to pick the pieces up, one by one.

Feeling the pressure to confess, Cornelius blurted out as he began to tear up, “I’m really sorry, Mr. Jones, I didn’t mean to drop it. I’m terribly sorry, Sir!” Cornie started heaving as he fought to catch his breath. Having what appeared to be an anxiety asthma attack, Jaundy and Morgan try to console him as he frantically searched his knapsack for his asthma inhaler.

“Now, now young man,” Jaundy patted him gently on the back, “accidents happen.”

“Mr. Jones, please let us explain. We saw this light and it was glowing really bright and we came in and then suddenly there was this ghostly figure flying around the room and the fireplace started on its own and the room began to shake,” Morgan continued to ramble on, “we didn’t break all those antiques, honest we didn’t!”

Standing up slowly, letting out a huge sigh, the curator shook his head up and down. “I know you didn’t children, I believe you.”

“You believe us, really?” They both asked simultaneously, surprised by the older man’s answer.

“Best you two go on now and catch up with your classmates.” Jaundy coaxed them both towards the door. “I think I hear the bus engine starting.”



“You mean, you’re not going to tell on us?” Cornie asked as he clutched his asthma inhaler to his chest.

“No, I’m not going to tell on you.” The curator, reaching up to his face as he adjusted his ill-fitting spectacles. “Sometimes, things...happen for a reason.”

Gazing at each other in confusion, Morgan began to speak. Cutting her off immediately, Jaundy continued to hustle them out of the room and down the hall.

“Now, now...you must go and catch your bus!”

Deciding not to waste any more time trying to discuss the situation, both Morgan and Cornie ran towards the entrance doors as they disappeared into the afternoon sun.

Jaundy walked towards a lone window, stuffing both hands into his pant pockets. Gazing out, he watched as Morgan and Cornie caught up to their classmates.

Taking his spectacles off, he turned and slowly made his way across the disarrayed room. He let out another sigh as he glanced up to the tapestry mural, hanging undamaged over the massive stone fireplace.

Reaching up with both hands, he pulled down the large black box that just moments earlier was part of the chaos that took place.

“I think you and I both know what needs to be done.” Jaundy spoke aloud as he tilted his head back, his attention fixated on the wall mural. The form of a large dragon could be distinctly made out, crouching low to the ground in front of what could only be, Castle Aberstathwald.

Exposed in great detail was a massive crimson colored beast, with two wise and piercing yellow eyes...staring back at him.

“The Gate shall be opened again tonight, my old friend.” Jaundy tucked the black box under one arm as he turned towards the door, pausing briefly, he glanced back at the figure. “We both know what needs to be done, the time has come.”

~ * ~

“Did I leave the window open?” Morgan thought to herself as she lay shivering under the bedcovers.

Throwing her blanket aside she quickly darted to the window. Shutting the panes of glass, she stood there quietly for a moment.

“Now that’s just plain weird, my window is shut,” she started again, “yet I can still feel a draft from somewhere!”

Feeling the distinct breeze of air on her neck, she quickly spun around.

“That would be my breath of air you are feeling, child.” Came the sound of a low and resonating voice.

Squinting, Morgan frantically searched her room for the source of the mystery voice. As her eyes adjusted to the darkness, the silhouette of a figure could be seen outlined by the moon. A single pair of glowing amber eyes observing her from across the room.

Morgan jumped back suddenly on the verge of terror, as a scream could be felt creeping into her throat.

“Please, do not be afraid for I am not here to hurt you.” A thick brogue from the shadowy figure spoke out.

Morgan, although completely terrified, took a stance, “I know karate, don’t mess with me!” She yelled at the imposing figure in a trembling voice.

The owner of the brogue voice took a step into the moonlight. Morgan instantly recognized the creature. It was the beautiful dragon from the mural at Castle Aberstathwald.

“But,” Morgan stuttered aloud, “you can’t possibly be real!”

“I am indeed...real.” The husky voice replied.

Morgan slowly walked towards the creature, feeling her hair blowing in the breeze that emanated from the dragon’s flared nostrils.



"I am Galmacio, High Counsellor to the Order of the Dragolians. I am here to ask you for your help." He said as he bowed his head graciously to the floor.

He was even more magnificent in the flesh! His skin glimmered the most stunning iridescent shade of crimson red Morgan ever saw, his eyes glowed a beautiful amber yellow.

Determined and powerful were those eyes, yet wise and kind looking.

"I can't just leave, my grandfather will be worried sick!" Morgan replied.

"He will never know you were gone. The time spent in the Parallel is like time standing still here in your world. It will be as though you never left. We must leave quickly, however." Galmacio answered in a low speaking voice as he beckoned her towards the window.

"The parallel of what?"

"The world of Dragolia, the world of which I have been summoned. Queen Zebula has returned from her imprisonment in the glass globe to the land of Cymria, my home. Our world is in danger now." He answered as he sighed deeply.

Thinking back to her friend, and his accident with the glass globe from the castle, Morgan hung her head. "I'm really sorry, it was an accident."

"Your friend, Cornelius, will need to come with us, for he too, made contact with the crystal vapors." Galmacio, using his snout as a guide, gently motioned Morgan towards the window.

"We must return to Castle Aberstathwald, it is essential that we cross back into Dragolia through the portal gate."

The young girl quickly grabbed her robe, as she reached up to clutch the mysterious pendant still draped around her neck. Following the dragon obediently, Morgan crept closer to the window's ledge.

"That black box we saw, at the castle... is that the portal gate you speak of?"

"It is. When the box is open, the portal gate will appear, but we must enter it quickly. For the moment the portal gate is opened in your world, it will open in mine. What can enter Dragolia," the dragon's voice hesitated slightly, "can escape from Dragolia."

Remembering the terrifying mural of creatures she saw at the castle, the young girl was anxious to know the answer. "Why, Galmacio? What could escape?"

Sighing deeply, the dragon answered in a pensive voice, "Beasts of the likes this world has never witnessed, they must never be allowed to enter!"

Setting her fears aside, she reached her arms out as she used the thick scales on his body as leverage to climb her way up and onto his neck.

Placing two monster-sized claws onto the windowsill, Galmacio hoisted himself into position as he prepared to venture into the night sky. Pausing briefly, they both turned in the direction of the nightstand as something began to flutter wildly through the air.

"Oh, my goodness," Morgan gasped as her bright blue eyes grew wide, "my firefly brooch my grandfather gave me... it's... it's alive!"

"Yes, that is the little creature we call, Boomie." The dragon chuckled softly.

Buzzing enthusiastically around her head, the now animated firefly quickly fluttered in front of Galmacio.

"Lead the way, my little friend." The Dragolian gave his orders as the boisterous firefly flew out of the window, in the direction of Cornie's house.

"Are you ready, my dear?" He asked his young charge.

"Ready as I'll ever be, I suppose." She answered as the dragon began his journey into the night sky.

As brave as she was, the young girl couldn't help but wonder... what dangers did await them in the land of Cymria?



STICKY FINGERS

by Ellen Marcu

It's a cold lonesome night when your friends have done gone and run off leaving you. It's a cold lonesome sad night when you trip spilling all your trick or treat candy in the dirt. Too dark to find it all and too sandy to want it much Willow squatted sliding her hands through the crackly leaves. She found another piece and smelled it. It was caramel her favorite and the very one her mother, an orthodontist, said she couldn't have.

She rolled her eyes, no tortilla chips, no Hubba Bubba, no Laffy Taffy, no sunflower seeds, and no caramel. "Whatever," she thought as she unwrapped the paper that sparkled in the moonlight. She could almost hear her Mama warning, "Now Willa don't eat any candy until you get home and I can look it over. It might not be safe."

Not safe was just an excuse to throw away all the good candy. For years Willow had watched all her good candy go in the trash and she would be left with a stupid toothbrush, dental floss and sugarless gum. "I don't think so, not this piece," Willow said out loud as she popped the candy in her mouth.

Apples, butter, sugar, brown sugar, maple syrup, salty caramel, sugary, sticky gooey delights it was the best piece of candy Willow had ever chewed, swished between her teeth, and slurped. She sat quietly savoring her thick chew of what must be homemade sticky sweetness.

You know how sometimes on a warm autumn night when you go to bed with your window raised with a nice Indian summer breeze blowing through the screen how cozy it is. But it's the prickles that wake you, chill bumps on goose bumps. That sweet warm breeze has done turned to a witch's icy breath. You pull the thin sheet over your head almost suffocating because you try to lay so quiet and still knowing that just outside that window is something watching. You wishing like anything for the quilt that's folded nice and neat at the end of the bed. Anything heavier than your thin summer sheets. But you know if you reach for it you are giving yourself away. So you shiver under your sheet fighting sleep because.... If you go and fall asleep that that something watching is going to know. It's gonna know watching the quilt go up and down with your breath. As you get tireder you breathe deeper and longer. Until that first little snore and then....

Well it was that kind of breeze that blew up the back of Willow's homemade ghost costume. It was that cold that made her rock unsteady as she squatted. She reached for something to keep her ole self from sitting back when she grasped the root of an old tree. The skinny roots clustered together almost like fingers. Willow went to let go and stand up but that old tree root wrapped its long hairy tendrils around her hand and jerked her back down.

"What's your rush little girl? I thought you wanted to share your candy with me," whispered a crackly voice. "I don't get much visiting out here under this ole oak tree."

It was as if the wind had just sucked the breath right out of her voice. The fingers kept a loose grip. There was no way Willow could jerk her hand away fast enough. The caramel she had been chewing was hard to swallow with bits and pieces stuck in her braces. The silver glow of the moon disappeared behind the pitch black clouds.

"My My I do believe you must be right chilly, let me see....," Willow heard rattling up above her and felt the dried leaves landing softly on her head and all around her.

She wanted so badly to shout for help but she couldn't. It was like the caramel was growing inside her mouth. She reached up with her free hand and wiped away the sticky candy off her lips.

"You just sit their sweetie and enjoy your piece of candy. I made it special for tonight. I just love Halloween. Don't get many visitors much anymore, just me and myself. It gets a might lonesome. I saw those yonguns just run off and leave you. Not that you didn't deserve it now did you little Ms?"

Willow couldn't answer she barely could breath with a mouthful of glue. She breathed through her nose. She wanted to lie. To outright lie and say, it wasn't me.

"I see. You just don't quite measure up to being right truthful do you? Can't just come right out and say the truth. Seems you got to think about it. The more you think the more you dig your little grave Little Ms.



Seems once you fall into that pit of lies you can't just climb your way back out.

The tears slid down Willow's face. She shook against the cold and the hand. She finally was able to get her mouth open just wide enough to yell, "I did it. I did it. I am so sorry. I did it."

That old tree root loosened its grip just bit. "I say dear Little Miss what did you go and do?"

Willow fought against lying again and fought against telling the truth again. She couldn't hardly breathe the stickiness coating her throat. She gurgled through the sugar. "I poked him. I poked Bob with a stick. I told him it was Jim and when they were fighting I took all their candy. They had more than me. Mamma don't ever let me have candy."

"Don't go messing up telling the truth by making excuses Little Miss. Wrong is plain wrong. It was my branch you poked Bob with. Felt it to my very tap root. You still enjoying that candy Little Ms."

Willow could barely hear her. Her nose was all snotty from crying and she couldn't breathe through her mouth. Everything was getting darker than a witch's cape. She fell back on the ground her mouth wide open bubbling with caramel.

The hand let loose of her and reached in her mouth and grabbed the caramel pulling and stretching out six feet before it giving way. Willow sprang to her feet gasping for air and took off running.

Just as she felt those nimble roots grab her ankle and jerk her back down.

"Just where you going Little Ms? The night is young and I don't get many visitors much anymore."

Willow felt the leaves drift down softly around her. They felt warm against the chill of the night air. On the breeze she could hear far in the distance her friends laughing and singing...

Ole tree down by the Ole Blue Farm

Tell no lies won't come to no harm

Granny says that ole tree does know all

Trip up Little Liars and make them fall

Down Down Down Down Down Down



NONFICTION

ADULT



SHE WAS NOT DONE LISTENING

by Danielle Hall

The Harry Potter adventure began in my classroom when I was in third grade. The first book in the series was read aloud to us by the teacher in our classroom. Immediately, I fell in love with the characters, the story, and the magic of it all. I look back and laugh at my confusion when my mother picked up the second book in the series for me to read. At first I opened the book, anticipating the idea of rereading the first, and was met with an odd elf that I clearly did not remember from the first time it was read to me. I closed the book in frustration that day. How glad I am that, eventually, I picked it back up.

Fast forward to my own classroom: the desks and walls are decorated based off of the fantastic story that J.K. Rowling created. My students are divided into houses, they compete for house points, I have drawn out characters and creatures and related them to the content of my teaching. I have brought the magic that started in a third grade classroom with me into my own.

When I became pregnant with my first child, it only seemed right that I start her off with the same stories that spurred a love of reading in me. I began reading Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone before my belly was even pronounced. My pregnancy app clearly signaled that she could not hear me at the time I began reading to her. But, I did not care. I did not think it mattered. Somehow, someway, the words would reach her. Whether it was through the emotion I felt while reading, or the soothing feel that accompanied the float-in words...something would get to her. The magic that I kept with me would find her.

The next part of the story has been told again and again. While in the womb, my daughter was diagnosed with a life-threatening heart condition. A condition whose acronym I spend too much time advocating against. An acronym I have learned to hate more than any other three letters placed together on the face of this earth. We struggled as we stumbled into a vastly complex medical world. As a book lover, I could understand spells and creatures that came from the fictional world that J.K. Rowling created, but there was a reason I lasted one day in a nursing program at the college level. My brain computed well in the fictional worlds, it did not compute so well with the very real and life-threatening terminology I was now forced to understand and comprehend. Suddenly, I was expected to keep up conversations with doctors and surgeons and understand this complex world that I never asked to be a part of. A much different world than what I had pictured for myself and for my daughter.

Despite the bleak outlook, I kept reading to her.

She was born in May of 2017. My family got to see her for all of about ten minutes before she was rushed away. From that point on, she would constantly be hooked to lines and medications in order to keep her alive. After she was taken there was a numbness that radiated in my empty womb and emptier arms.

As soon as I could walk again, I was trekking through the hospital hallways and elevators in order to reach my daughter. My legs swelled tenfold and there were times that I started walking towards her room and thought for sure I would not make it there. But, I did. I made it every time up until my own discharge, where I moved from my hospital room straight to hers.

At a week old, our daughter was wheeled back for heart surgery. Our family sat numbly in the waiting room, wondering if she'd still have her life given another hour. Or two. The future that had been so carefully planned for a healthy child was painfully shelved.

She pulled through the surgery that day. When we were called back, it was as if I was disconnected from the picture in front of me. There was my daughter, surely. But my brain could not connect that the pale body was the same child I had grown. I could hardly tell she was human under all of the tubes and wires and bandages that concealed the majority of her skin from view. The image still makes my skin crawl to think of how lifeless she looked then. How hopeless she seemed.

I kept reading to her.

She recovered well from the heart surgery, but ultimately her body took a hit. My family was no longer at the hospital, and my husband had gone back to work. I was alone to face the endless barrage of healing and



hurt that rocked my daughter's world. Not long after her first surgery, we finished Chamber of Secrets. The day after her heart surgery, we started reading Prisoner of Azkaban.

I still have a picture of that moment. She is hooked up with lines, oxygen taped to her face, on medications to try and nullify a pain she could not express. She did not even realize she was in the world. It is a hard picture to look at. I'm sitting beside her. Hair barely combed, face unwashed, and I smiled at the camera as I held up the paperback. She is lifeless in her bed. Somehow, again, I thought the words might reach her.

I kept reading to her.

She battled infections and complications. We moved back and forth from ICU to PCU, acronyms I can only tolerate a bit more than the letters that spelled out her condition. Doctors struggled with determining a reason that her little body was unable to thrive. She went weeks without eating, surviving on medicine pumped through an IV. She battled infection after infection. She endured another surgery to place a feeding tube in her stomach. And another one to remove a scar tissue blockage in her colon. Home and health kept getting pushed further and further away from us.

I kept reading to her.

There had been multiple promises of discharge, always followed by something tragic that always seemed to grab hold of our precious daughter. When the final promise of home was hung in front of us, we were petrified to breathe a word to our family. Not a single grandparent nor uncle knew until we took the final step into our home. After 125 days in the hospital, we were released from our metaphorical cupboard under the stairs.

There were new routines we had to adjust to. Yes, we learned to maneuver around feeding tubes and medication schedules. We monitored oxygen levels and closely monitored every movement and every breath she took. We feared every outside germ and every uncovered cough. Ultimately, though, to be home... was magic.

I kept reading to her.

There were nights I read just a bit, and nights I read a bit more. As I reflect back, I am certain someone tried to persuade me to open up an illustrated picture book, or two. And I did. But nothing compared to the reading we shared. It was a bond I had formed long before our world had been rocked with heart defects and surgeries and grim possibilities. A bond that no one could take.

We made it through about a quarter of Goblet of Fire. The magic of our daughter, the fantastical world of parenthood, came to an abrupt close in November of that same year.

She passed away before she reached six months old.

There have been times when I have gone to open up the pages to that book. Times where I have toyed with the idea of continuing to read aloud, to finish what we started. For now, that book sits in my living room, untouched. The bookmark has not moved from the last paragraph I read to her.

Time has passed and I have since had a healthy son. I tortured myself about what to read to him. I remembered back to when I pulled my first all-nighter as a teenager to read *The Deathly Hallows*. (I would pull three all-nighters in my lifetime, all of which were to read books.) I was not able to open that book up and read to him from the same story that I read his sister.

He deserves the same magic in the world of Harry Potter. However, I could not bring myself to pick up where we had left off. I also could not bring myself to start over. There is a possibility that I could have made it through the first three books. But...what would have happened when I made it to that bookmark? How could I have made it past the last paragraph I ever read to the sister he never met?

There have been times I have picked up that book and promised myself that we'd finish these stories. That I would finish reading these books to her, or at least begin reading these stories to him. They were the stories I would read to my daughter to keep me sane day in and day out of a hospital room...long before that, they were stories that opened up a love for reading that I longed to instill in all of my children. And now? Now the



magic is a reminder of the days spent in a hospital room, the sleepless nights I knocked the book off of the blue recliner chair while trying to find a comfortable position, the times I quietly read in off-British accents even when others were well within earshot, the coos when I stopped reading that signaled that she was not done listening.

She was not done listening.

One day, I promise, one day...I will keep reading to her.



ABOUT OUR JUDGES

DEBRA KAUFMAN
ROBERT HILL LONG
STEPHEN E. SMITH
SHELBY STEPHENSON

ABOUT OUR JUDGES

Debra Kaufman is the author of four full-length poetry collections—*God Shattered*, *Delicate Thefts*, *The Next Moment*, and *A Certain Light*—as well as three chapbooks, four full-length and over three dozen short plays. Her poems have appeared in many literary magazines and anthologies and have won prizes from such organizations as the North Carolina Writers' Network, the North Carolina Women Writers Conference, the North Carolina Poetry Society, Emrys Press, the Poetry Society of South Carolina, The Independent Weekly, WUNC-FM's Radio Poets, and the *North Carolina Literary Review*.

Debra was twice a recipient of a Regional North Carolina Artist Grant and a North Carolina Arts Council playwriting scholarship. Her plays have been widely produced in North Carolina and elsewhere. Last fall she produced *Illuminated Dresses*, monologues by fourteen women, at Burning Coal Theatre in Raleigh. A Midwest native, she has lived in North Carolina for thirty years and serves as an editor for the online journal *One* and on the Paul Green Foundation's board of trustees. She is a member of the Black Socks Poets and the Greensboro Playwrights Forum. You can listen to Debra's conversation with NC Piedmont Laureate Tamara Kissane about playwriting and poetry here: <https://artistsoapbox.org/2020/04/20/debra-kaufman/>

Robert Hill Long's books include *Walking Wounded*, *The Kilim Dreaming*, *The Wire Garden*, *The Effigies*, *The Work of the Bow* and *The Power to Die*. Since 1973, his poems, prose poems and flash fictions appeared in journals and anthologies across the country.

He has been awarded numerous book and publication prizes, as well as six poetry fellowships by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Oregon Arts Commission, the North Carolina Arts Council. In 1985 he helped determine the mission of the North Carolina Writers Network and served as its first director. Between 1988-2017 he taught creative writing at Clark University, the University of Hartford, Pennsylvania State University and the University of Oregon, and was the longtime president and radio host for the Young Writers Association in Oregon.

He lives in Southern Pines, North Carolina.



Stephen E. Smith was born in Easton, Maryland, in 1946. After graduating from Elon College, he attended the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where he received his MFA in 1971. His poems, stories, columns, and reviews have appeared in many periodicals and anthologies. He is the author of eight books of poetry and prose and is the recipient the Poetry Northwest Young Poet's Prize, the Zoe Kincaid Brockman Prize for poetry, and four North Carolina Press awards. He is a three-time winner of the Kerrville Folk Festival New Folk Competition for songwriting. He lives in Southern Pines, North Carolina and contributes columns, reviews, and features to *PineStraw*, *Salt*, and *O. Henry* magazines.

Shelby Stephenson grew up on a small farm near Benson, in the Coastal Plain of North Carolina. "Most of my poems come out of that background," he says, "where memory and imagination play on one another. I have written many poems about the mules we worked until I was in the seventh grade and, after that – the tractor. My early teachers were the thirty-five foxhounds my father hunted. The trees and streams, fields, the world of my childhood – all that folklore – those are my subjects."

After leaving the farm for college, he graduated from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (B.A. 1960) where he also studied law, University of Pittsburgh (M.A. 1967), University of Wisconsin-Madison (Ph.D. 1974), and worked as a radio and television announcer, salesman, right-of-way agent, and farmer. He was professor of English and editor of *Pembroke Magazine* until his retirement in 2010. The state of North Carolina presented him with the 2001 North Carolina Award in Literature. And he has received the Bellday Poetry Prize, the Oscar Arnold Young Award, the Zoe Kincaid-Brockman Award, the Brockman-Campbell Award, the Bright Hill Press Chapbook Prize, and the Playwright's Fund of North Carolina Chapbook Prize.

He was inducted into the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame in October 2014 along with Betty Adcock, Ronald H. Bayes, and Jaki Shelton Green.

Shelby Stephenson served as Poet Laureate of North Carolina from December 22, 2014 until June 19, 2018. Stephenson continues to pursue three areas he focused on during his tenure as state laureate: holding writing workshops in assisted living and retirement communities, raising awareness of local archives and family histories, and promoting writings about farming and farm life in North Carolina.





Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities
PO Box 939 / 555 East Connecticut Avenue
Southern Pines, North Carolina, 28388
weymouthcenter.org