

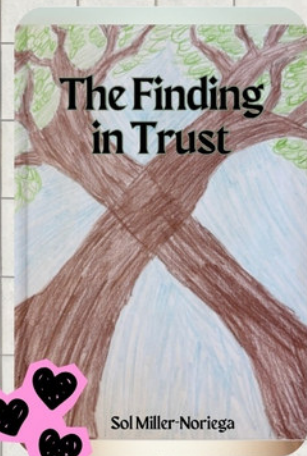
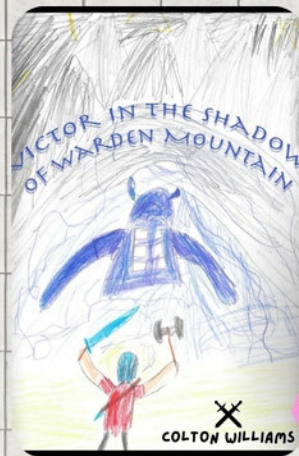
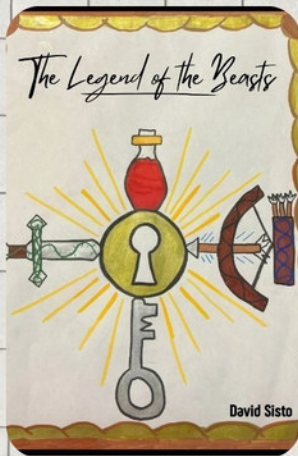
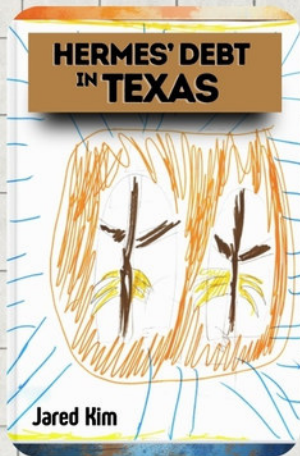
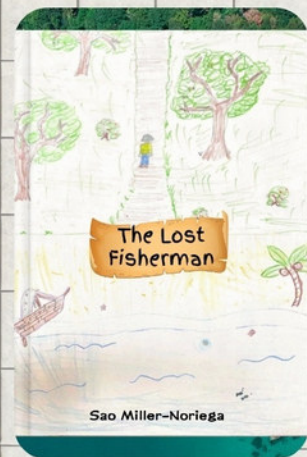
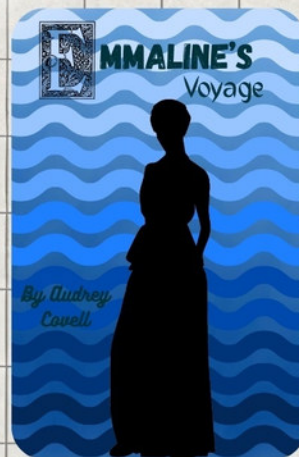
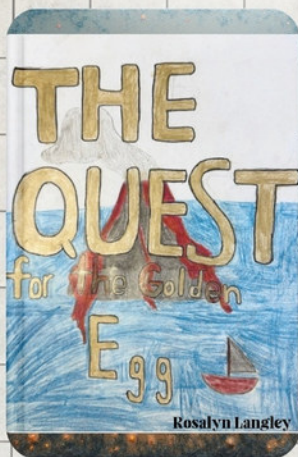
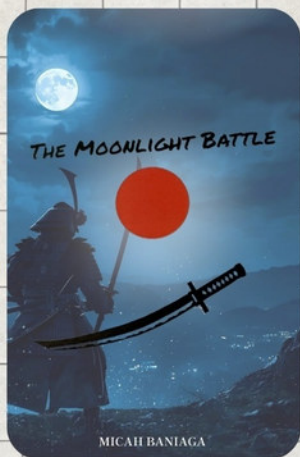
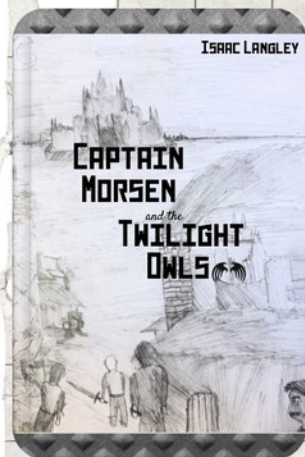
# RAD MAG

FUN TO READ,  
RAD TO REMEMBER

VOLUME 1  
FICTION  
EDITION  
ISSUE 2



HISTORY + TRAVEL + ANIMALS + DIY + SPORTS + TECH + COMICS + STORYTELLING





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# RAD MAG

FUN TO READ, RAD TO REMEMBER

If you zoom  
in close...

You can hear the  
sound of  
deadlines  
laughing at us.



**RAD MAG** was created and published by the Yokosuka Homeschool Literature + Writing Club Members.

SCAN the QR code to see a digital copy of **Rad Mag Zine** at the Yokosuka Lit Club Portfolio website.



\*References available upon request.

# In this edition of RAD MAG



## 3 Meet the Authors!

Get to know the writers behind Rad Mag.

## 7 Part 1: Departures and Destinations

*Stories about journeys:* Where characters pack up, set out, and discover how far courage and curiosity can take them.

## 24 Part 2: Monsters and Moments of Truth

*Stories about challenges:* From dragons and disasters to the everyday fears that test what we're made of.

## 61 Part 3: Metamorphosis

*Stories about change:* When something shifts, someone grows, and life is never quite the same again.

## 77 Part 4: The Spark

*Stories about passion:* When a person discovers a passion for something or makes a magical friendship.

## 88 Senior Editor's Corner

*Where the people behind the pages share their reflections, challenges, and the moments that made this issue come to life.*

# meet the AUTHORS



**AUDREY COVELL, YOKOSUKA**

Audrey mixes brains with creative energy—she's all about concocting yummy desserts, smiley faces, and snuggling up with her diary. Her talent for graphic designs and visual space makes things pop off the page.



**JARED KIM, YOKOSUKA**

Jared is all about friends, his cool cuddly cat Pepper, and a brand-new fascination with dragonflies. Equal parts kind and silly, he turns everyday moments into little adventures.



**ISAAC LANGLEY, YOKOSUKA**

Isaac is a clever kid who loves *Lord of the Rings*, soccer, and spinning stories of his own. When he's not writing plays or kicking goals, you can find him drawing his next epic adventure.



**ROSALYN LANGLEY, YOKOSUKA**

Rosalyn loves listening to audiobooks, playing with friends, and crafting alone. She enjoys eating sushi and anything sweet.



**JONAH BANIAGA, YOKOSUKA**

Jonah is kind and full of energy. A fisherman from the island of O'ahu, he likes sports and is a black belt in judo. He enjoys wearing slippers, studying Japanese, and eating durian.



**MICAH BANIAGA, YOKOSUKA**

Micah is funny, creative, and likes to draw. He loves God, his family, and fishing. When he's not reading a book, he's at the park with his friends or on the judo mats. And if it's 3am and he's not at home, he's fishing.

# *meet the* **AUTHORS**



**COLTON WILLIAMS, YOKOSUKA**

Colton is energetic and creative, always building with LEGOs or sketching new characters. When he's not making something, he's rolling on the jiu-jitsu mats. He winds down with graphic novels that make him laugh out loud.



**EMMA WILLIAMS, YOKOSUKA**

Bursting with energy and curiosity, Emma thrives on solving math puzzles, learning new dance moves, and exploring her artistic side. And when it's time to relax, nothing beats getting swept away by dragons and far-off adventures.



Kala is a free-spirited artist and dancer with a soft spot for her cute, cuddly dog. When she's not painting or twirling to music, she's probably cuddling up to her furry sidekick.

**KALA MILETTE-WINFREE, YOKOSUKA**



Sao is an animal lover who's equally obsessed with soccer and Harry Potter. When he's not on the field or in a wizarding world, he's probably imagining his next magical encounter.

**SAO MILLER-NORIEGA, YOKOSUKA**



**SOL MILLER-NORIEGA, YOKOSUKA**

Sol is a clever and kind soccer fan who loves Harry Potter almost as much as scoring goals. When he's not on the field or taking a deep dive into action fantasy books, he's ready to lend a helping hand.



**DAVID SISTO, YOKOSUKA**

David is full of curiosity and energy. He loves traveling, building in Minecraft, and swapping Pokémon cards. In his writing, he enjoys sharing imaginative ideas that reflect his adventurous spirit.



**ROY GUTIERREZ, YOKOSUKA**

Roy is thoughtful and enjoys playing outside with his friends. He can master any One Piece or Harry Potter trivia and will be found either in his room reading or on the field playing soccer with friends.



# *meet the* **AUTHORS**



**RYAN SISTO, YOKOSUKA**

Ryan finds her spark in theme parks, movies, and filling pages with her colorful drawings. She loves spending time with her friends, owls, unicorns, and all things sparkly—and if she had her way, she'd be living the Disney life every day.



**EMMA STILLER, YOKOSUKA**

Emma is a published author and senior editor with a secret superpower: binge-listening to Audible in every free moment. Between stories and deadlines, they're always plotting their next literary masterpiece.

# meet the AUTHORS



**MARIE STILLER, YOKOSUKA**

Marie is a pixel princess who can't resist cuuuute plushies and anything squeaky or squishy. When she's not creating colorful designs, she's sipping her favorite boba tea and cuddling her collection.



**SOPHIE STILLER, YOKOSUKA**

Sophie is an illustrator who can't resist manga, Monster High, or a good mystery. When she's not bringing cool characters to life with her pencil, she's busy hunting down salty snacks.

# Departures & Destinations

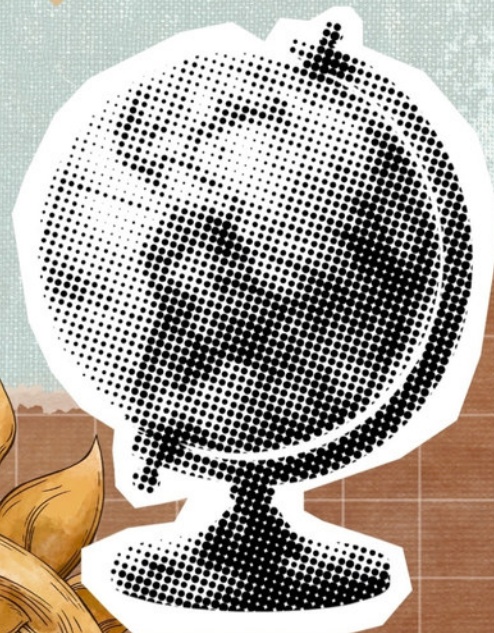
Stories about journeys:

Where characters pack up, set out, and discover how far courage and curiosity can take them.



TICKET

TICKET





# EMMALINE'S Voyage

*By Audrey  
Covell*



**E**mmaline watched sadly as her lovely vacation memories faded off into the distance, seemingly drowned in the Atlantic. What a beautiful time she'd had! Her holiday in the Old Country had been so carefree and pleasant, and now she was speeding away from it, back to her hum-drum life as Matilda Sloane's housekeeper. Old, kind, monotonous Tillie Sloane. Emmaline sighed inadvertently. Old Tillie wasn't all that bad, but if a girl lived in her house, she never had any amusement. Never mind, thought Emmaline, I still have five days or so of escape from the cares of life.

The first three of those days seemed gone all too soon, with fancy suppers and blissful hours passed in the library, reading, writing, and dreaming, broken up by walks on the large deck and long, comfortable slumbers through the nights. Then things, as they always do, started to happen.

Whispers ran about the second class on board the RMS Titanic. Rumors of suspicious activity in those miraculous hollow compartments that made the ship unsinkable began to circulate. Emmaline was a bit worried. After all, her life depended on the ship making it to New York City. And if there really was some new, unheard of weapon, or a gang of slimy, gray aliens secreted beneath her feet, well, didn't she have the right to know?

Emmaline skimmed down the grand stairs that afternoon with a determined face. Did the first class passengers know anything of those concerning rumors? If anyone would know, Caroline McCreedy would. Mrs. McCreedy, the wife of the famous millionaire William McCreedy, was a thin, brown-haired lady who had taken Emmaline into her heart immediately upon meeting her, and whom she always dined with. She was one of the talkative sort, and had drawn Emmaline right out of her shell. After several minutes of small talk, Emmaline brought out her question.

"Have you heard of the strange happenings in the hollow places, Mrs. McCreedy?"

Mrs. McCreedy answered quite loudly, "No, Miss Dodwin, I haven't. What strange things occur down there?"

Her husband attempted to quiet her down as many people at the surrounding tables turned and stared. Somehow Emmaline had never encountered a Caroline McCreedy performance in her three-day friendship with the lady. "There--there are only rumors, madam, but some have said there are German spies or African desert animals hidden in the watertight compartments."

"German spies, on an English ship!" exclaimed Mrs. McCreedy, beginning to violently wave her arms about in sheer rage.



Emmaline realized with a sinking sensation that she had accidentally created a scene. But it was too late; she was fairly in for it now. She stealthily moved the expensive dishes out of reach of those flailing arms as Mr. McCreedy tried to hush his wife again. The murmur of talk that had been surrounding them went dead silent, but that excitable Mrs. McCreedy took no notice.

“--the nerve, the impertinence! Those beastly Germans thought they could smuggle spies on the greatest ship that ever sailed? Well, they won't remain on this ship much longer, will they? Not as long as I can--” Her words faded away as the distinguished, fabulously rich William McCreedy quickly ushered his wife out of the crowded dining hall.

Emmaline, who had been shrinking down in her seat ever since the blustering began, took her chance and slipped away like a mouse darting to its hole. Why, oh why had she brought the wretched subject up? Emmaline's thoughts seized her and took all her attention. She pushed through a door labeled “Authorized personnel only,” not comprehending the meaning at all. How she hated dramatic scenes when she was mixed up in them! Her thoughts were rudely interrupted by a bang and a throbbing pain in her forehead. She had attempted to push through another door, but it stood firm and locked before her. A cold, grey, relentless, unknown door.

“Where am I?” She said aloud, suddenly realizing her predicament. Where had she come from? Where should she go? Poor Emmaline had no idea. She set off down the corridor she had come from. At least, she believed it was the corridor she had come from. She found herself in a hall with imposing metal doors running all along the right side. Wires came twisting out of small holes, and pipes the same dull gray as the wall snaked along the corridor. A whirring noise permeated the area, a sound that was much fainter in the part of the ship she had come from. The sound of the engine, probably, she thought. It was all so metallic and unknown that Emmaline felt that she would like to sit down and cry. A rattle sounded from the door nearest to her and echoed down the deserted hallway. Catching her breath, Emmaline decided she must do something. Anything.

The rusty door squeaked and screeched as she tentatively opened it. The dank room beyond was lit with a bare lightbulb, and the expensive furniture found on the rest of the great Titanic was replaced with dirty wooden crates and soiled pieces of cloth. That was all, Emmaline thought. Just a couple old crates. Somehow, she couldn't quite convince herself. Some dark, mysterious shape suddenly moved behind one of the decrepit crates, and Emmaline caught a glimpse of it just as she had been turning to leave. Her face drained of all color, leaving her as white as a sheet. As she edged backwards into the hallway, the black figure revealed itself.

“Pierre?!” She couldn't believe her eyes.

When she had spent a week in Paris during her holiday, Pierre had been her tour guide. And here he was, cowering in the belly of an English ship.

Pierre, being gagged, could not answer, except for muffled yells. His hands and feet were tied together, and his arms were tied to his sides. It was obvious he couldn't move, and there was no way or reason he could have trussed himself up like this. Before she thought, Emmaline went to work untying him. It took her several minutes, since the knots were large and complex, but she untied him nonetheless.

Pierre took a gasping breath once his mouth was free and was interrogated by Emmaline for quite some time. She found out how he had snuck onto the ship, how he and his partner had been hiding out in the belly of the ship so as not to be found. He had boarded with an accomplice, but he, Pierre, had been betrayed. His accomplice had foolishly told him the entire plan, supposing Pierre would perish when his plan was set in action. But by sheer coincidence, Emmaline had contrived to save him from an unknown death. But they couldn't stay there for much longer. Rumors had, for once, been almost true.

Pierre's partner, Jacques, had planted timed explosives on the ship in very specific places, with the intent of sinking the ship. He had not, however, told Pierre where, perhaps thinking that he had taunted his partner enough. Jacques had already made good his escape on a precious lifeboat in the dead of night.

So now, the seemingly impossible task of diffusing an unknown number of bombs, before they went off at an equally unknown time, now belonged to Emmaline and Pierre. They began right away.

After an hour of sprinting from room to room, hurried examinations, and having nothing to show for it, the pair stopped to consort. Emmaline was wild-eyed with stress and rising fright. Her hair was mussed and her face was bright red from exertion. Pierre was breathing hard and his eyes were wide and desperate.

"Did you find any?" He huffed, with his heavy French accent. "Zere were none where I looked." The knot in Emmaline's stomach tightened.

"No, it was the same with me," she made herself say through trembling lips. "Oh, Pierre, what can we do? It is hopeless!" Pierre shook his head with determined finality.

"It ez never hopeless, Mees Emmaline. Never."

Just then, they heard a most terrifying noise. The sounds of destruction ripped through that grim corridor, and made known where Jacques had secreted his explosives. They instinctively ran in the opposite direction, and found themselves back onto the main deck. Without even glancing at each other, Emmaline and Pierre both started off, full speed, toward the captain's cabin, leaving bewilderment and surprise in their wake.

"Goodness!" Exclaimed Caroline McCreedy to no one in particular, "What is dear Miss Dodwin up to now?"

The pair had found the captain muttering to himself, "Dear me, what was that noise down in the hull? There was an iceberg on the radar, but it couldn't have been anywhere near enough to damage the ship..."

"Captain Smith, sir, there is something we must tell you!" Emmaline gasped.

o o o o o

Emmaline threw herself into Old Tillie's arms.

"Oh, my dear, I'm so glad you've come home to me!" Old Tillie had not realized how much she needed her housekeeper until she had had to go without one for a month. Emmaline shivered.

"Miss Sloane, it was awful. The dark night, the cold water, the cries of desperation ringing through the air, the hours of waiting—"

"Don't talk of it, dear. I know all about it. The newspapers have been full of it since the news came a week ago."

Emmaline thought she could never return to normal life after the horror of that night, when the great *RMS Titanic* had been sinking and the pitifully few lifeboats had floated on the freezing water in the bitter cold air. So many had died that night, yet she had lived. How could she go on with normal life with such awful things to remember? Emmaline thought she would never be free of those memories. But time is always ticking away, and by and by Emmaline began to think of other things. Life, as it is designed to, went on. Time was kind to Emmaline. The nightmares, at first, came often, then they grew less and less frequent. However, they would reassert themselves periodically for the rest of Emmaline's life.

She had survived the fateful sinking of the unsinkable *RMS Titanic*. Mr. and Mrs. McCreedy had escaped death, as had Pierre. But Captain Smith had gone down with his ship. The world had always thought an iceberg had scraped against the side of the ill-fated *RMS Titanic*. Only two living souls, Emmaline and Pierre, knew the truth. But nobody ever knew what happened to the perpetrator. Jacques was never seen again.

The  
End



# The Finding in Trust

Sol Miller-Noriega

# N

## OVEMBER 1455

Puerto de Santa Maria Andalucia, Spain

I was searching for any food I could find with my big brother Diego when I heard my mom calling us in for dinner. Well, I hope that's what she was calling us for. We quickly headed back to the cottage. You're probably wondering what's going on. I'll explain.

My name is Pablo, age 15, and at one point my family had money to buy us clothes and food. One day my greedy Uncle Juan wanted just a little bit more, or as he says, "borrowing without permission." He kept stealing from friends and neighbors, and he even had the nerve to move to Barcelona. He left the rest of the family with tons of enemies, and they kept stealing from us.

One day, a thief entered our house only to find there was nothing worth stealing. After a while, he left, and that's where I am now. My family and I are in extreme poverty.

On the way to the cottage I had an idea. What if I just left home for a day or two and looked for the gold in the Bosque forest? There is a legend of hidden gold at the tallest tree in the Bosque forest known by all in my pueblo. We reached the cottage and my mom greeted us at the front door.

She said, "What took you guys so long?"

We replied in unison, "Sorry, Mom."

I headed upstairs and went straight to my room to start packing. I was going to look for that gold and bring fortune back to my family. I would wait until evening and sneak off into the forest. I waited and finally it was time. This is what I packed: a knife, a piece of bread and some butter. I checked if anyone was awake and then I started my adventure.

I was walking to the Bosque when I heard a growl and some howls in the forest. I thought then that maybe this wasn't such a good idea, then I remembered that this was for the family.

I took my first step in the forest, and it was dark and I trembled in fear. I kept walking until I was deep enough, and I found a cozyish spot and fell asleep.

The next morning I awoke and looked all over for my bag. I screamed in frustration and kicked the tree closest to me, and a pine cone fell on my head.

I started my journey again in frustration, then the thought dawned on me. What had taken my bag?

I ignored this thought and kept going.

I heard a howl and more growls the same as last night. I could hear dozens of footsteps coming, more like paw steps. I tried to climb up the nearest trees, but it was too difficult to climb. I found a tree I could climb and scurried up it.



I could see the wolves and one of them had my satchel in his mouth.

It was the alpha, and he dug through it to find my bread and butter. I was already starving, and it didn't help that the wolf was eating my food in front of me. I put my hand inside my shoe and found two rocks, and I tried to make a spark with them. I kept trying until I created a spark and lit a pine cone.

I quickly threw it at the alpha and he howled in pain and ran away. The rest of the wolf pack followed him. I noticed that the tree I was in was taller than the others. I climbed until I reached the top. I took a step and realized the branch below me was not strong enough to hold my weight. I tumbled down the tree and hit branch after branch.

I finally reached the ground and couldn't move my right arm. I believe I broke it. The last thing I saw was the tree before I fell unconscious.

I woke up to a world of pain on my right side. I then pushed through the pain and tried to climb up the tree again.

Then I noticed the knife on the ground. I grabbed it and stabbed it into the tree. I started to climb with only my left arm, using the branches when I could and my knife as a substitute. I finally reached the top and saw that not far away, there were two trees that formed an "X." I then climbed back down the tree and headed towards the direction of the "X."

It only took a few minutes to reach the trees, and I looked all around the trees to see if there was any gold. I found a weird patch of grass that was unnaturally taller than the rest. I pulled at it, and it opened up to a trap door. I opened the door and saw a huge treasure chest. My eyes were enlarged from surprise.

At that exact moment, I heard my brother Diego calling my name. So much was happening, I felt my brain spinning.

We reunited and hugged each other with relief. He saw the condition of my arm, and his face had so much concern in it. I explained everything to him.

We began to drag the chest back home. I wouldn't have been able to do it alone with my broken arm. When we gathered with our family, they were happy to see us safe, and some almost fainted after seeing the gold.

We set out to visit every family my uncle owed money to. We apologized on his behalf and repaid our debt. We threw a big celebration rekindling our families honor.



# *The Mystery of the Missing Magic*



**Ryan Sisto**



**D**eep in a kelp forest is a busy Trident City. It's full of all kinds of magical, colorful creatures. Swimming down the street you might see a dolphin flipping in excitement, a crab dancing, or even a shark singing.

One of the citizens of Trident City is a beautiful mer-unicorn named Lucky. She has a long, flowy mane like a lavender waterfall, and she's very kind and pretty. Her eyes sparkle in the sun like bright sapphires and her smile can make anyone happy!

The most special thing about Lucky is that she was born with magical powers! She can levitate things with her mind and even make herself invisible. These powers are really handy when she wants to sneak some midnight sea snacks!

In her free time, she loves planting blue flowers and growing fruit in her neighborhood garden. Her favorite thing is sharing treats made with fruit from the garden with her friends at school. Everyone loves her strawberry muffins the most!

Lucky has lots of friends but her best friend is her pet, Mr. Crab. He is a sassy little guy, but he's not so bad once you get to know him. Lucky's favorite thing to do with Mr. Crab is dance all night in her room under the twinkly lights of her glittering disco ball.

Every morning, Lucky makes her clothes float to the bed with her magic so she doesn't have to get up. But one day nothing happens.

At first, she thinks maybe she was just tired and tries again, but still nothing happens. Lucky starts to freak out. Her magic has never gone away before!

Lucky remembers a story her grandma told her about a sea fairy witch named Mufilda who lives in a hidden cave deep in the kelp forest. She likes to steal and keep magic all for herself! Lucky always thought it was just a fairy tale but maybe it was real. Maybe her magic was trapped there!

She wanted to use her invisibility to sneak into the restricted section of the library at her school to learn more about where Mufilda lived, but she couldn't. Her powers were gone! So she had to find the cave all by herself.

Lucky packed her backpack with sea snacks and a compass. She waved goodbye to Mr. Crab, gave her parents hugs and kisses and set off on her adventure. On the edge of town she ran into a patch of icebergs. Before, she could just levitate them out of her way, but now she had to try something new. She used her horn to smash through the icebergs. It worked! But on the last hit, her horn broke!

She looked around but she couldn't find the shattered pieces of her horn. She sat down crying and feeling like she wanted to give up. All of a sudden she saw Mr. Crab crawling toward her holding all the missing pieces of her horn.

He had been following her the whole time! Lucky was so happy she gave him a big hug and promised she would never leave him behind again. Together they kept searching for



the cave.

After 2 days of swimming, climbing, and looking everywhere, Lucky finally saw a dark cave hidden behind black kelp. Her heart was beating very fast. Inside the cave, she saw Mufilda! Mufilda was flying around her cave trying to levitate all of her stolen stuff with Lucky's magic!

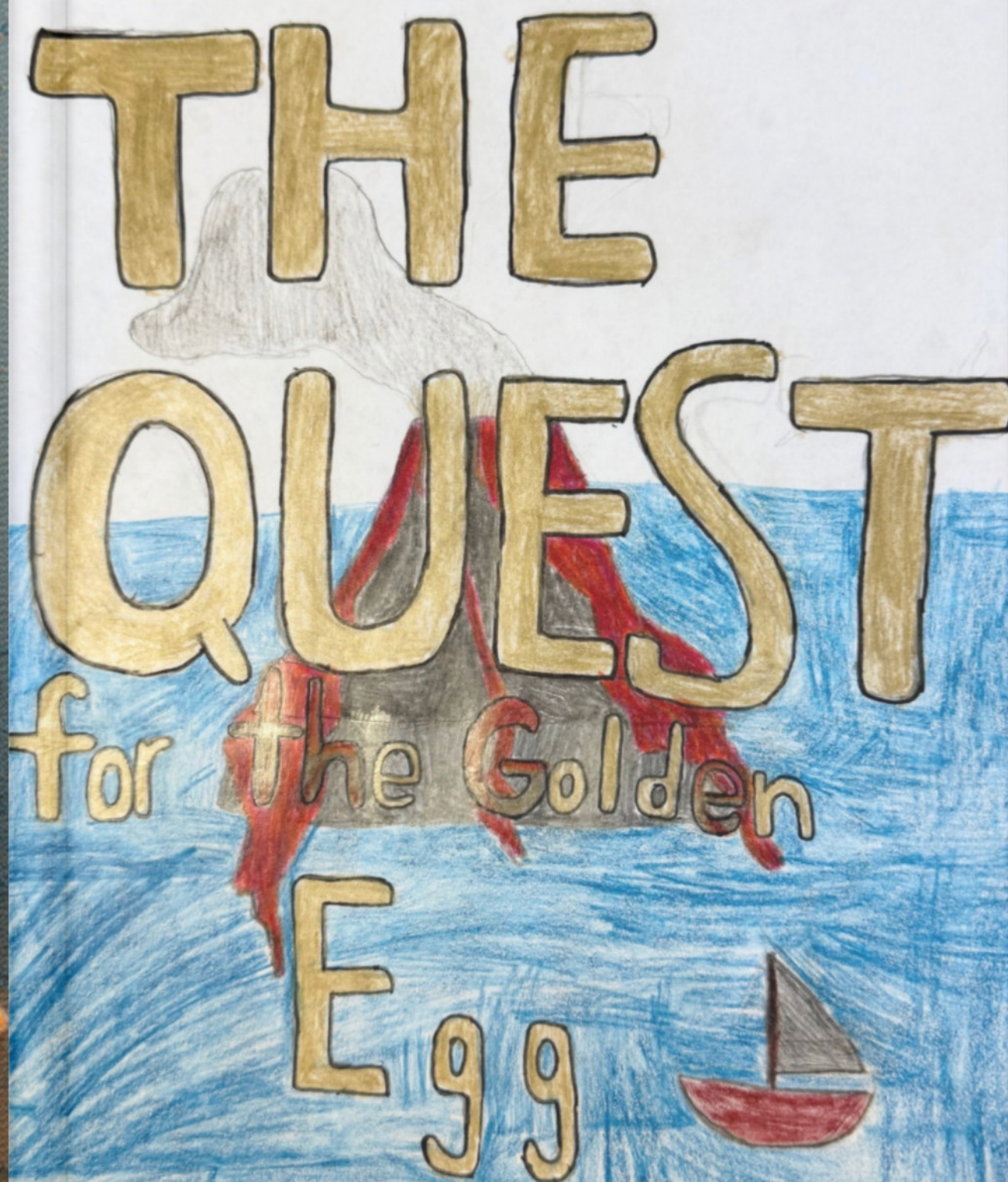
Lucky grabbed some shells and threw them at Mufilda, using all the courage and strength she had. Mufilda tried to go invisible but she wasn't very good at it yet.

Finally, Lucky beat Mufilda and her magic and her horn came back! Mr. Crab cheered!

Before they left, Lucky grabbed all of the things Mufilda had stolen so she could return them to the citizens of Trident City! Lucky and Mr. Crab celebrated all the way home!

The next day, when Lucky went to school everyone surprised her with a huge party! News had spread all over Trident City about Lucky beating Mufilda and returning everyone's stolen items. There was cake and everyone danced and cheered! Lucky couldn't stop smiling as she told all her friends about her amazing adventure!

THE  
END



# THE QUEST for the Golden EGG

**Rosalyn Langley**



nce upon a time in a peaceful village called Melandia, there lived an elf girl named Charlotte, her wizard friend Luca, and her talking cat, Lou.

One day evil dwarves invaded the village, and after a few days of Charlotte watching the dwarves steal all the villagers' food, she decided to go on a quest to stop them.

The dwarves are controlled by the evil Villain, who lives in the Dark Lands where the Golden Egg lies. He used the Golden Egg to cast a spell over the dwarves, and the only way to break the spell is to destroy the Golden Egg. Once the egg is destroyed, the evil Villain will lose his power and the dwarves along with all the creatures under his spell will be free.

Charlotte is the only one who wants to go because all the other villagers think it's too dangerous. She wants to save her village so her friends and family no longer have to live in fear.

So Charlotte, her friend Luca, and her cat, Lou, packed their bags and walked cautiously out of the village. After a few hours of trudging through endless cornfields, they finally got to a town on the bay and asked an old man if they could rent a boat from him. They started to walk toward the boat, but Luca started whining.

"Why can't we buy food before we go on the boat ride? I'm starving! We're going to be on the sea for days and I can't go days without food. Can't even go hours without food!" He cried.

"I'm hungry, too!" Lou agreed.

"Fine, we can get food." Charlotte answered.

After an hour of eating and packing food for the boat ride, they finally got onto the boat, rowed for a couple of hours, and eventually Charlotte spotted some land.

"We can sleep there for the night," she said as she pointed to a small island dotted with trees that were covered with vines.

They arrived at the island and could not find a clear spot to set up camp because trees and bushes were everywhere. So Luca began to cut through the branches and trees to find an open space for them to sleep since they were getting very tired. Charlotte, who didn't hear Lou talking at all, looked around for him, but he was nowhere to be seen.

"Hey, do you know where Lou is?" She asked Luca.

"No, I don't know where he is. I haven't seen him in a long time and he hasn't been talking.

That's not usual for him," Luca replied.

They looked around for a while when suddenly, they heard shouting.

"Help! Help!"

They followed the shouting and ran into the jungle in the middle of the island. They stopped because Lou's voice was now coming from above their heads.



They looked up and there was Lou hanging from a vine, screaming,

"Help me! Help me! This vine has got me!" yelled Lou.

"Hang on! I'll help you," shouted Charlotte. She took out her bow and shot an arrow at the tree. It hit the vine, and Lou fell to the ground.

"What happened?" asked Charlotte.

"I was walking behind you guys and a vine grabbed my ankle and pulled me up and then another vine started squeezing me," Lou replied.

"Hey, have you ever heard of those legends about the island that has the grabbing vines?" Luca asked. "I think this is the island."

"That's ridiculous," Charlotte said, and then she screamed because one of the vines had grabbed her ankle and was pulling her up.

"It got me! It got me!" She yelled.

"Hold on, I'll get you!" Luca replied. He took out his wand and cast a spell that put the tree to sleep and the vines dropped Charlotte to the ground.

"Run!" He shouted, and they all sprinted to the boat. They started paddling furiously and after a few minutes, they couldn't see the island anymore. They were far away in the opposite direction of the town.

"Well, I guess we'll have to find somewhere else to sleep tonight. Look! I see land!" Lou exclaimed.

Indeed, he did. As they approached the shoreline, they noticed a towering volcano spitting out lava.

"We have reached the Dark Lands!" Charlotte said as she pointed at the monstrous volcano.

Luca bit his lip and started to tremble and for good reason. Little did they know, the ocean near the Dark Lands had a spell cast over it. Whenever someone had a bad thought, it would come true. No one in the crew knew this, but Luca was thinking very bad thoughts at that present moment.

There could be a sea monster in the ocean and that would be horrible! He thought. And just like that, a big rumble came from under the water.

"What was that?" Luca asked nervously, his heart pounding in his ears.

All of a sudden, a colossal tentacle came out of the water, followed by eight more gigantic tentacles.

"Oh no! It's a sea monster!" Charlotte gasped.

The tentacles wrapped around their boat and it snapped in half. They fell off the boat into the water.

"Swim!" She shouted. They swam as fast as they could, but it was not fast enough. The sea monster swam under them, opened his mouth, and gobbled them up. He dived back into the

water and fell instantly asleep.

"We're gonna die!" Luca cried.

"Well lucky for us, sea monsters digest slowly and carefully, so we'll have a slow but painful death," Lou unhelpfully commented as they sat inside the monster's mouth.

Charlotte put her hand over his mouth, and said, "I'm going to think of a plan. You be quiet or else!" She glared at Lou and finally came up with an idea.

"Let's tickle him!" shouted Charlotte.

"OK!" Lou and Luca said in unison.

They all got on their hands and knees and started to tickle the monster's tongue and throat. Then the sea monster lifted his head and spat them onto the land next to the fiery volcano.

Charlotte, Luca, and Lou landed with a thud and looked up to see the sea monster dive back into the ocean. Then they turned and saw the huge volcano. Charlotte put her head in her hands and felt it was an impossible quest. *How will we ever find the Golden Egg? We have no idea where it is in the Dark Lands*, she thought.

"Charlotte, come see this," Luca said.

Charlotte got up and looked to where Luca was pointing. He was pointing at a sign stuck in the sand. It read, "Caution: The Golden Egg lies in the middle of the volcano."

After Charlotte read the sign she said, "This is impossible! How are we going to get the Golden Egg out of the volcano?" She groaned with frustration, but Lou reminded her of all that they had already been through and all the people back home who were counting on them. So Charlotte gathered up her courage and her last bit of energy, and together they came up with a plan.

Luca grabbed his wand and made an ice tunnel out of the lava to lead them to the Golden Egg safely. The three friends carefully walked through the tunnel that went directly through the volcano wall, where they finally reached a golden pedestal that held the bright Golden Egg.

"Luca, break the egg! Quickly! With your wand!" Charlotte yelled.

Luca immediately put a spell on the egg that made it break into a million pieces. Then Lou threw all the pieces into the lava, and they all watched it melt away.

And just when they all thought it was over, the evil Villain appeared out of nowhere. He was a short, bald man with a small goatee. Before he could say anything, he started to shrink very quickly.

"You haven't seen the last of me!" He squeaked in a tiny voice.

"Hey Luca! Do you have an empty bottle I could use?" Charlotte asked.

Luca handed her an empty bottle, and she picked up the evil Villain and dropped him in it.

"Let's go home," she said as she walked back through the tunnel with the bottle in her hands.

As they reached the shore, she threw the bottle into the ocean and they all watched the Sea Monster gobble it up.

Later back in Melandia, all the villagers celebrated the return of Charlotte, Luca, and Lou. The dwarves lived peacefully with everyone and vowed to protect them forever. Charlotte and her friends learned that no matter what situation they faced, they would always have each other.

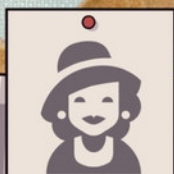


AMAZING



# Monsters & Moments of Truth

Stories about challenges:  
From dragons and disasters to the everyday  
fears that test what we're made of.





# THE MOONLIGHT BATTLE

MICAH BANIAGA

**J**apan is in a time of turmoil and war; samurai fight each other for land, ninjas roam and kill. It's a cloudless night with an eerie, full moon and two samurai gear up for a duel. Only one will return to their home town tonight.

Tanaka and his closest friend Asahi grew up together in a minuscule town, deep in the Japanese countryside and were both trained from an early age as samurai.

However, they came from very different backgrounds; Asahi was the son of a high ranking samurai, while Tanaka's dad was a low class samurai. When they were both fifteen, the boys separated ways and never saw each other again. Asahi was sent to a samurai academy known for its skilled fighters. Meanwhile Tanaka went to work for a daimyo, a powerful feudal lord, to help protect the daimyo's land and earn money for himself and his family.

Even though he didn't get the highest samurai training, Tanaka wanted to prove that he was as capable as any other samurai. So he trained rigorously for long, strenuous hours everyday and he became very skilled with a katana.

Tanaka's life dramatically changes when a high-ranking official is murdered. Tanaka's father, Sato, is accused of the murder because he was present when the attack happened. Nevertheless Tanaka believes his father would never commit a terrible act like this, but two weeks after the mysterious murder, Sato goes missing. His father's last words to his son were:

"It didn't do it, I was there when he was murdered, and the killer was a samurai whose armour was all black except a golden triangle on his helmet."

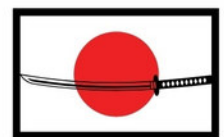
A week later, Tanaka receives an anonymous summons that challenges him to a duel. Tanaka decides that this is his only chance to prove his skill as a warrior and avenge his father, so he accepts. There is only one rule: they fight to the death. They also decide to battle at night in a secluded forest clearing.

Tanaka gasps when he sees the other samurai's armor; it is completely black complete with a gold triangle, a clan emblem, on his helmet!

Tanaka yells, "It was you! You killed the official! What have you done to my father?"

The other samurai can't look Tanaka straight in the eyes but says in a strangely familiar voice, "It was the only way, I killed the official so my father could become more powerful and blamed the only person there, your father."

After both warriors put on the rest of their armor, they stand apart and bow before the fight begins. The two warriors lunge, twist, and expertly maneuver to try and land the killing blow. They move like graceful dancers circling, waiting for the perfect chance, and striking with a powerful combination of speed and strength.



The battle rages on with no one getting the upper hand; their skill is matched and mirrored almost exactly in the other.

Eventually, Tanaka sees his opportunity and lands a crippling blow to his opponent's belly. His opponent falls to the ground gasping and tries to stand up, but the effort is too much and he collapses on the solid, freezing ground.

Tanaka rushes at his opponent to land the last blow, but he stops mid swing when the other samurai takes off his mask. It is none other than his best friend, Asahi!

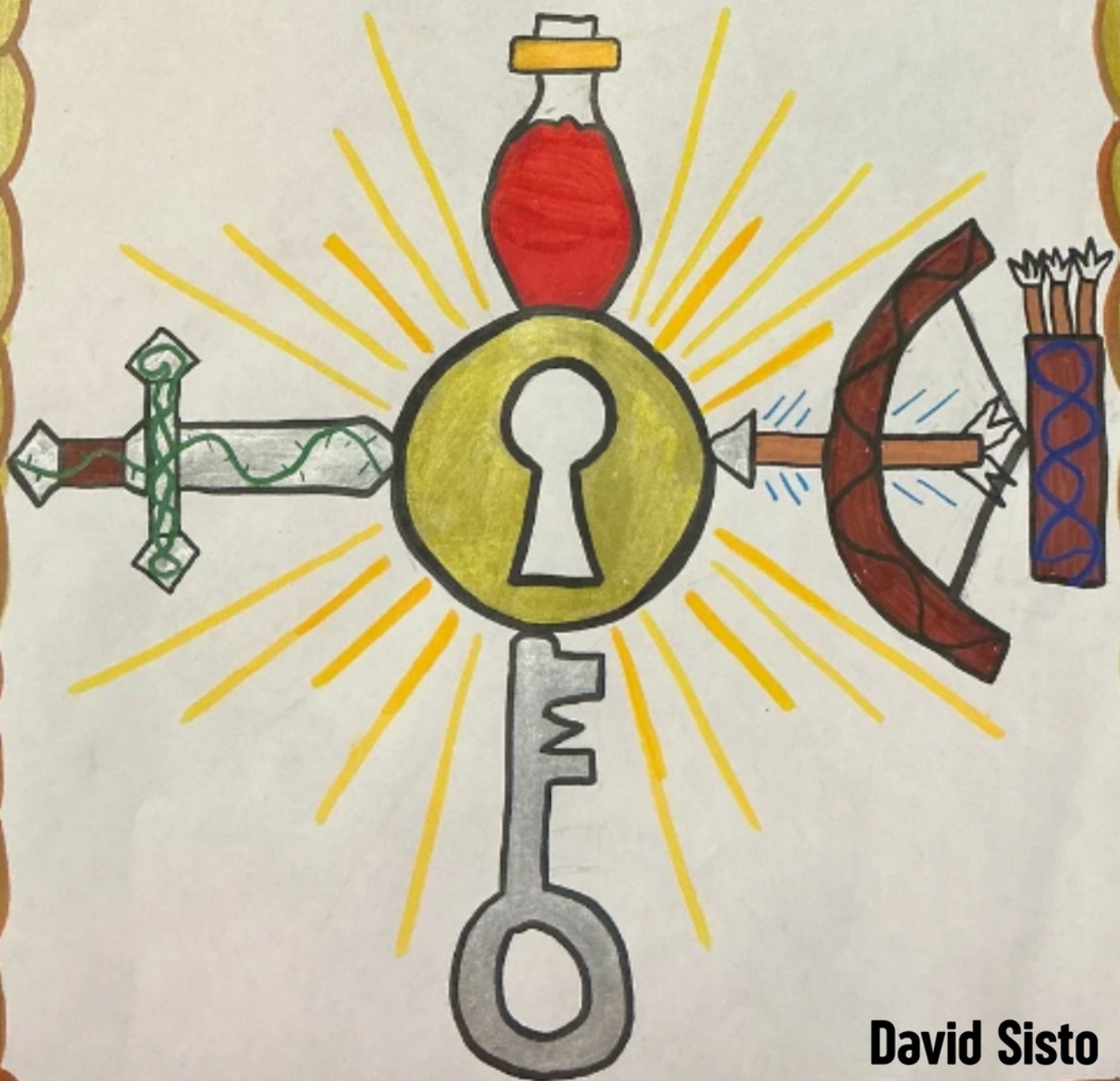
Tanaka falls next to his friend, weeps uncontrollably, and chokes out, "It didn't have to be this way!"

But Asahi is already dead.

Tanaka knows he has proven his skill as a samurai by defeating Asahi, and he has cleared his family name; but it is at the high cost of his closest childhood friend. After mourning his friend, he carefully paints a golden triangle onto his own helmet so he can always remember Asahi, and then sets out to find his father.

**THE END**

# *The Legend of the Beasts*



**David Sisto**



ong ago, heroes protected the land for eons... but one day an ancient evil grew in power in the darkness undetected, and once strong enough, attacked and the heroes could not stop it. To this day this evil torments the world...

In the village of Krattapi, life is peaceful, and some people like a peaceful life, but Rayne is not one of those people. Rayne and her best friends, Jake and Ashton, love a good adventure, but those don't come around too often in Krattapi.

Jake is a big, serious guy, whose strength and stature sometimes even scares Ashton. Ashton loves magic and potions more than anything. His family is the biggest mining family in the village, and because they do not see magic as a beneficial subject, he usually gets teased.

One day, in the village of Krattapi, the village bell rang. When Rayne heard the bell ring she was surprised, because the bell only rang when there were dangers nearby, and life in Krattapi is peaceful. Rayne immediately went to Jake and Ashton's houses to check if they were home, and thankfully they were.

It was at this moment Rayne heard a scream outside. When she looked out the window, she could see that the whole village was aflame! Skeletons and zombies were everywhere and attacking anything and everything in their path. Rayne knew when this raid was over, there would probably be no survivors.

Rayne realized that the only house not burning was the Elder's house because it was made of stone. The trio of friends decided to sneak to the Elder's house and ask what to do. Narrowly escaping the hands of death multiple times, they finally entered the house and the Elder told them to follow him to his underground library.

Once there, he turned to them and said, "Hello, Rayne, Jake, and Ashton. We are the only survivors. It is up to you to save the world from the evil that controls the mobs of skeletons and zombies. In order to do this, you each must complete a trial. Then together, venture to the kingdom of Aetheria and defeat the ancient evil. The trials begin when you step foot through this door. The door will read you and pick a trial based on what it sees. Hurry, there's no time to waste!"

Before he left, he handed Rayne a strange iron key and said she might find it handy.

Jake went first. As he stepped through the door, it read him and saw bravery and strength but also a great fear of heights. He was immediately teleported to a tall tower. A sign read, "You must jump down to complete this trial."

Jake was terrified when he read this, but the fear of the world being destroyed was greater. So he jumped off the tower with no idea that, waiting for him at the bottom, was a feather-padded cushion. His bravery was rewarded, and he was teleported away with a new sense of pride.



When Rayne stepped through the door, it read her and it saw skill with a bow and leadership, but also a great fear of the dark. She was teleported to an underground ancient city. Everything was dim and shadowy, and most of the buildings were broken, like nobody had lived there in forever. A sign read, "You must find the exit to this city to complete this trial."

Rayne was terrified. The darkness made every sound creepier, and she almost gave up right there.

But then she remembered all the times she and her friends stuck together, even when things were tough. Thinking about that helped her feel a little braver. She took a deep breath and started exploring the ruins, checking alleyways and old doorways. After a while, she found a small door hidden behind a fallen pillar.

When she opened it, she was teleported away somewhere.

When Ashton stepped through the door, it read him and saw passion and determination but also great fear of the unknown. He was teleported to an alchemist lab with a potion on a table. A sign nearby read "You must drink this bottle of unknown properties to complete this trial."

Ashton was terrified. The potion bubbled like it was alive, and he had no idea what it would do. But he was determined to finish this quest, so he grabbed the bottle, shut his eyes, and drank it. Instantly he was teleported away.

When the trio of friends reappeared, they were all together again in the middle of nowhere.

Rayne reminded them that their next and final step was to defeat the evil that lurks in the Western kingdom of Aetheria. They traveled past oceans, past rivers and lakes, past villages and towns, and past mountains and valleys until finally they arrived in the fallen kingdom of Aetheria.

When they reached the gates, the grandness of the kingdom stunned them all. When they entered, they appeared in a market filled to the brim with stalls and carts and shops, but no people, just the howling wind and strange silence.

The trio continued walking through the kingdom until they found the great castle of Aetheria. The giant castle looked eerie in the dark, with torn flags blowing in the wind. When they entered the grand castle, they came into a large room filled with tables and chairs, and a huge staircase that led upstairs. The staircase led to a throne room with sixteen large and grand chairs, dead bodies on the ground, a huge hole in the roof, and scorched walls.

They looked around and found multiple suits of armor and weapons in a closet. They were all looking shabby and rough, so they decided to take the armor.

Ashton took a long robe, which didn't provide a lot of protection, but it was light, heavily enchanted, and he also grabbed a handful of potions. Jake took a thick set of armor covered in carvings. It gave huge protection but made him extremely slow. He also took a sword

covered in vines which would entangle its target in vines when struck.

Rayne took a durable cloak and thin armor, which gave her some protection but was light and heavily enchanted. She also nabbed a bow covered in skulk vines and arrows imbued with sonic energy, which would fire arrows surrounded in sonic waves when shot.

The trio explored the castle some more until they found a door with a keyhole. Jake tried to open it, but it was locked.

Then Rayne remembered she had the key the Elder gave her! She placed the key in the hole, and it fit perfectly.

When they entered through the doors, they found a big room with a large hole in the middle of the roof and glass all over the floor. The friends were confused. Their master said the ancient evil lurked in the kingdom, but it wasn't here. Where could it be?

As if on cue, a large staircase made of darkness appeared, leading up into the clouds. The trio went up, up, up the staircase until they reached the stormy clouds. And that's when they found a huge castle, and inside was a massive throne with a giant hydra sitting upon it. The hydra's name was Wukatong.

When Wukatong saw them, he roared, "Who are you, and why are you in my kingdom?!"

"We are the Masters of the Art of the Beast, and we are here to save the world!" they shouted in unison.

Then the hydra sat up and roared again. He shot a quintuple of fireballs at them. They all dodged perfectly. Jake yelled a battle cry and rushed toward the hydra. Ashton fired positive potions at Jake and Rayne and negative ones at Wukatong. Jake slashed the hydra furiously, dealing enormous damage and trapping him in vines. With Wukatong restrained, Rayne fired a flurry of arrows, each surrounded by sonic energy. The hydra wailed in pain and roared furiously.

The heroes thought they had him, but a glowing purple fog began to surround Wukatong and when the fog disappeared, the hydra was imbued with mystical energy. His speed, strength, defense, and health were all boosted. With this power, the hydra swung his five huge heads at them. The heroes were forced to release him and dive away but not before the hydra launched a flurry of fireballs, and this time each one hit!

They were bashed, beaten up, and tired, so they gathered around Ashton. They thought all hope was lost until Ashton tossed a regeneration potion at their feet, healing all of them instantly. Fighting together, they dodged, weaved and attacked. They were winning!

But at that moment, Wukatong summoned an army of mobs to come to his aid. They knew that this was their last chance. If they couldn't beat the mobs, all would be lost. They lept into action. Rayne fired so many arrows that the mobs were coated in them! At the same time, Ashton launched poison potions bringing their health to nil. Jake delivered the finishing blow by bombarding them with furious slashes.

With the mobs gone, the hydra was vulnerable, and they wasted no time taking him down. Wukatong had no other tricks up his scaly sleeve and couldn't stand against the trio. Ryane loaded her bow and ended it all with an arrow to the heart. Wukatong evaporated into a puff of smoke and was gone.

They almost couldn't believe it. They looked around at each other weary but proud, knowing they had just saved the world.

Even in the darkness, great heroes will always rise.



# The K-pop Killer



2ophia E. 2tiller

Do you ever feel like you're  
Trapped in an alternate  
universe?

Like all you've ever wanted  
is to escape reality?

I've learned the hard way that  
everything you want comes at  
a price.

I ♥  
K-POP

And sometimes you have to  
pay it with your life.

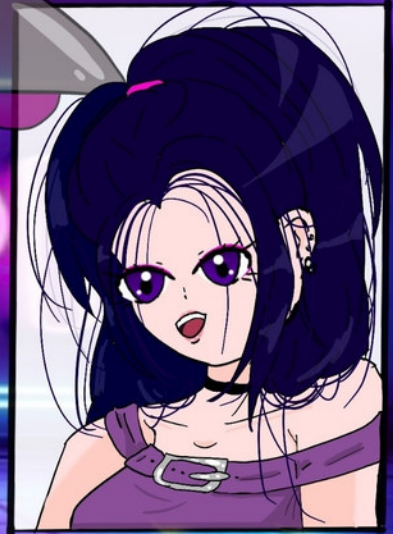


These special effects are so killer! It slays!

Love the fog, but it's so hard to breathe!

Throwing knives? Over the top awesome!

Ivy is the best singer, like, ever!





When my mother was killed, all I could feel was pain and suffering. And a need for vengeance.

My mother died when I was young. She was a part of the cancelled idol group "Darkness Duo", along with Celina Killya.

I was alone. I didn't know who to believe.

But Celina rescued me from the constant rejection and pain.

Do you ever feel like you're trapped in an alternate universe?

Like, no matter how hard you try, you'll never be free?



But I'm  
done  
hiding.

I will avenge  
my mother no  
matter what the  
cost.

Celina then began training  
me to be an idol, along  
with Aminita and Jennie.



We're finally becoming  
who we're meant to be.





## Breaking news!

Top band, The Rolling Fruitloops, found dead mysteriously and with extremely grousome injuries and a lot of blood. Accident? Murder? Who knows?

## Breaking news!


New top band, Wicked Shadow and manager found at the crime scene, the Weekly Death Star Idol Awards. Coincidence? Guilty? Who knows?

I mean, it's a little sus that the bands competing are dying so close to the Death Star Idol Awards.

I'm just glad that Wicked Shadow is still around and competing! They're the best!

Meanwhile, backstage...

Your onstage in 2 minutes !



Now it's practically guaranteed that we'll win the Death Star Idol Awards this year!

Ummm, can I tell you guys something?

It's just that...I spent years trying to make people laugh, sing, and to just notice me. But this band? You actually see me. You make me feel like I belong somewhere for once.

I get it. For a long time I thought I was just too weird. I was always the one no one laughed with, the one who wrote songs nobody wanted to hear. But now... now I've got a band who gets it. You make the noise in my head make sense.

Me too. You know, are we really sure that we want to do this? I mean, killing the other bands for vengeance is a little too far.

No! Wait, we can still get what I deserve, I mean, what you deserve! You must eliminate the competition! You made a promise! To me, to you're mother!

But did I?

My whole life you've been telling me to get vengeance, but is that what I really want?

No! No, I killed your mother because she canceled my idol career, but I promised to make yours thrive!

What? You, no...  
that isn't  
possible...



No... that can't  
be true... can it?

No, no! Wait, I  
can still fix this! I  
can still get what  
I deserve!

You're such a traitor!  
Killer. Liar. Wait. No. I  
think there's a cuter  
word for it.

Backstabber.

You're gonna pay for  
everything you did to my  
mother, everything that you  
did to me, for lying to me my  
entire life. For everything.

Twenty seconds  
till you're onstage!

We're up next!



# Epilogue

Meanwhile, Ivy feels like she's living her best life, until...





Name: Ivy Falsenmorel  
 Age: 16  
 Eye color: Purple  
 Personality traits: Serious, a leader, focused  
 Occupation: Idol/ former serial killer

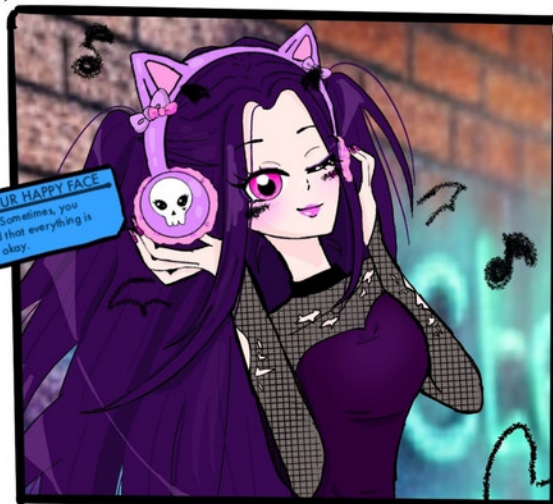
Name: Aminita N. Shade

Age: 16

Eye color: Pink

Personality traits: Serious, comic relief, and sometimes a bit grumpy

Occupation: Idol, duhhh



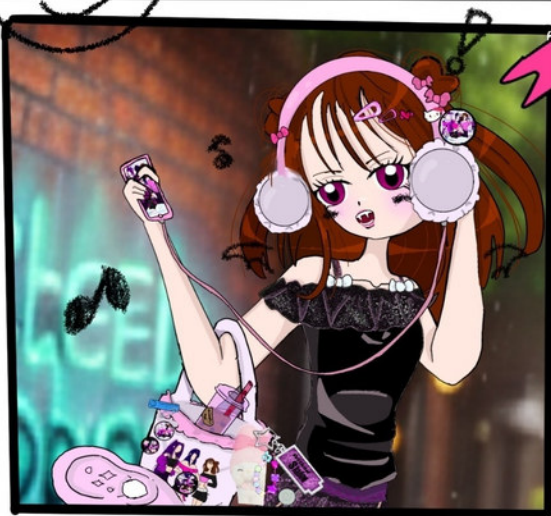
Name: Jennie Babysbreath

Age: 15

Eye color: Magenta

Personality traits: Funnnnn!

Occupation: Idol!



ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

# THE LAND OF WONDER

book 1  
Emma and Maya  
and the Secret Tree



KALA MILETTE-WINFREE



## Part 1

Emma raced to her bike after school. She was going to the park with her best friend Maya to practice their flute composition for the school talent show. When she arrived, she saw her friend looking at something under a bush.

Maya turned around and said, "Come see this."

Emma walked to see what Maya was pointing at. Under the bush there was a ragged and shaggy stray black cat.

"That's weird," Maya said, "I swear I saw a black top hat on his head."

Then the cat suddenly leapt up and ran away! As the cat scurried towards a clump of trees in the distance, a black top hat reappeared on its head, followed by a black bow tie on its neck, and its fur turned all shiny and smooth like a silk coat.

Emma and Maya stared in astonishment at the cat, then looked at each other, held onto their flutes tightly, and quickly followed it. Suddenly it paused, looked back, and tipped its top hat, then disappeared into a deep-looking hole in a tree at the edge of the playground. Just as the cat vanished, the tree seemed to shimmer purple and yellow.

Impulsively, Maya ran right into the hole. Emma froze. She could go home--or she could go after her friend.



## Part 2

Emma saw the hole in the tree fading, so she took a deep breath and jumped into the hole with her eyes scrunched shut! When she opened her eyes, she saw she was surrounded by green and yellow seaweed-like plants that waved in the breeze. They towered twenty feet above her and when she looked up, she saw the sky was white and the clouds were blue.

Suddenly, out of the corner of her eye she saw Maya running to her. Maya's eyes were wide, and her face was pale! Emma realized her own heart was beating fast too. Just when they started to panic, they were distracted by strange singing close by. From where they stood, they could see a clearing with something peculiar and unfamiliar. Its shape resembled an ox, but it was bigger than an elephant. They couldn't believe their eyes or their ears! It was crooning an odd song.

*I am putting a spell on you  
I am putting a spell on you  
So the creatures of this world will fight and bicker until this world is poo  
I am putting a spell on you  
I am putting a spell on you  
So the creatures of this world will fight and bicker until this world is poo*

That's when the black cat with the top hat appeared out of nowhere and smugly said, "I was right! You are immune to the song! Sorry---my name is Tom, and I need you to save our world."

"What are you talking about?!" Emma and Maya said in unison.

Tom replied, still speaking smugly, "The queen sent me on this very important mission, and that is why I am dressed so nicely. May I please continue my speaking?"

"Sure?" Maya said, confused.

"So that ox you just saw is destroying our community. The song that he just sang cast a spell on all the people of this world. The spell makes the people of this world turn against each other. For two whole weeks, the people have been destroying each other's homes and possessions. You are the only ones who can break the spell."

Maya said, "How do we do that?"

"You have to see the Queen," commanded Tom.

"The Queen?" Emma asked.

"Yes, the Queen," Tom repeated.

"OK, how do we get to the Queen, Tom?" Maya asked.

"Well, we walk there, of course."

"Tom!" Maya and Emma said in unison.

"Fine," Tom said, "Follow me."

About 20 minutes later, Tom said, "We're here."



Before them was a great castle made of diamonds with a sparkling emerald door. When they entered the palace, they saw a huge throne made of diamonds that sparkled in the sunlight. On the throne was the most beautiful woman they had ever seen.

Then Tom spoke up. "Your arrogancy, your majesty, your absolutely perfect Queen-ness--"

"Ok, ok, ok Tom, what do you have to say?" said the Queen as she rolled her eyes.

"I found the heroes you requested, and they agreed to come with me," announced Tom.

Emma said, "No, we did not! We just chased you into a tree!"

"Tom, you weren't supposed to trick them!" The queen didn't sound happy about it.

"Oh, sorry your majesty," Tom said with cutie eyes.

"Don't give me those eyes – you are in big trouble Tom." The queen glared at him.

The queen turned her head from Tom and said, "I am sorry, Tom has made a very bad mistake, he should not have done what he did. He was supposed to come out of this world and ask if you would come with him to the portal. But instead, he tricked you, and now you are trapped in this world, because the Black Ox has blocked all the portals from appearing. To make the portals reappear, the Black Ox must be distracted enough to lose control over them."

"Why can't you do it?!" Maya shouted.

The queen responded quietly, "Because if I leave this palace, I will be put under the spell that the Black Ox has cast on the people of this world to make them fight each other. The reason I must stay here is because the Black Ox's weakness is diamonds. Long ago there was a prophecy that said that two girls from the other world would come and defeat the Black Ox. Those two girls are you."

Emma said, "Why did you choose us out of a gazillion other people?"

"The prophecy said that two young girls who were best friends would break the spell of the Black Ox's song with their music," remarked the Queen.

"I guess we have no choice," said Emma.

"Yeah, I guess we have to help," agreed Maya.

"Well, if you want to undo the spell, you have to go outside and play a song as loudly as you can," said the Queen.

Emma asked, "What song should we play?"

"Whichever song makes you feel the most connected to each other," instructed the Queen.

"Then we should do the one that we were going to do for the talent show!" said Maya. Emma nodded.

The Queen declared, "I have an idea to make your song louder! We can use the royal announcement loudspeaker!"

"Where'd you get a loudspeaker?" Emma asked.

The Queen replied, “Well, a long time ago, I thought it would be helpful to have a loudspeaker to make announcements, because it was very hard to send a messenger out to tell every single person in this land the news. I sent Tom to the other world with some cash and Tom reported that when he tried to buy a speaker, a few people screamed in astonishment. Eventually, he just put the money on the counter and walked away with a full PA system. Microphones included.”

Emma and Maya giggled, imagining the scene.

The Queen said, “Well, it takes some time to set it up, so let’s get started.”



#### Part 4

Emma and Maya walked onto the roof of the castle, flutes in hand. They positioned their microphones and began to play. The music drifted through the breeze and everyone in the magical world could hear it. Suddenly, it seemed like a big wave washed over the whole entire world.

The spell was broken.

Emma and Maya heard something. At first, it was a small faint whisper. But then it got louder and louder and louder. When they looked over the castle wall, they began to see a crowd of people getting closer until it seemed to be a huge parade of chanting creatures. Some were exotic animals like kangaroos and peacocks and parrots that they had only seen in pictures. Some were animals that they had never seen anywhere. And some were human-like figures, either with big noses, big ears, or big eyes—big enough to notice from the palace roof. All of them, even the animals, were chanting the same thing.

“KILL THE BLACK OX! KILL THE BLACK OX! KILL THE BLACK OX!”

The Queen stepped out onto the roof and declared into one of the microphones, “Go home and fetch all the diamond weapons you have. Then meet me back here in one hour.”



#### Part 5

Once everyone had gathered with their diamond weapons (apparently everyone in this world had diamond weapons), the Queen asked Emma and Maya where they saw the Black Ox.

Emma said, "In a meadow that is surrounded by a bunch of seaweed trees."

The Queen replied, "That must be the seaweed meadow. Let's go."

When they arrived, they saw the Black Ox in the same clearing just lounging around. The people of the world approached him from all sides and Emma and Maya stayed off to the side and waited for the portal to open in the same tree they came from. The hole had vanished, though.

So, they watched all the people in the world surrounding the Black Ox who finally jumped up and started fighting. The hole appeared very small and started getting bigger and bigger.

The Queen ran up and exclaimed, "Go out now while you still have a chance!"

They looked one more time at the clearing, and wishing the others good luck, they said, "Thank you your majesty--and say goodbye to Tom for us."

"And I'll make him send a message that he is sorry for tricking you," she replied.

Then they rushed into the hole.

When they came out to the other side, they looked at the nearest clock next to the playground. It had been exactly one hour. Then they saw their parents' cars drive up.

The next time they came back to the park there was a little black cat under the same exact bush that they saw Tom in.

The cat whispered to them, "I am sorry about the tricky part. I will visit you every time you go to the park."

They smiled, and petting the cat gingerly, said, "We forgive you—mostly."



# VICTOR IN THE SHADOW OF WARDEN MOUNTAIN



COLTON WILLIAMS

**I**t was 1:00 am in the year 1866, and the village was quiet. Victor and his fluffy sidekick, Squishy, were on patrol.

Suddenly, the ground started shaking, and a figure rose up from the ground. It was the Megawarden, a ruthless enemy of Victor's, and they killed his family a few years ago. The Megawarden was going to attack the village. Victor had to do something about it and fast.

The villagers ran screaming in their teddy bear pajamas as the Megawarden started smashing the houses. Victor launched counterattacks. He fired arrows and threw dynamite sticks. Squishy fired catapults loaded with TNT (because he loved explosions) at the Megawarden, hurting it badly. The Megawarden let out an ear piercing roar, getting so mad it looked like it was going to breathe fire and began attacking more wildly than ever. They battled until the Megawarden screamed.

"The alpha will arise in a month's time and the army will attack," it said with its last breath. Those were the last words Victor heard it speak. Turns out that was just a scout for the army. It took a minute to register what that meant. Victor realized that he had to evacuate the village and stop the alpha to avenge his parents.

Victor was thinking about what he should bring with him on his quest. Squishy tried to help by diving head first into a chest full of weapons. The items they had collected were a torch, food, water, a sword, armor, and a horse. As he was packing, the village elder came by to tell him that the Megawardens had destroyed another village. The elder announced to the frightened villagers it was time for Victor and Squishy to leave.

Victor said goodbye to all the villagers and set off.

Days passed as they walked and walked. They were two weeks into their trip and were getting tired, and Victor's weapons were so dull he could not defend himself. Then Victor heard a call for help, and he went to see what it was about.

It was a weapon dealer surrounded by vicious wolves. Victor raced to save him from the wolves. He scared them off by throwing a lit torch at them. The dealer thanked him and said, "Thanks for saving me. I would like to give you these weapons to help you on your journey."

Victor nodded. He picked out a battle axe, a spear, and a diamond sword. The dealer said goodbye, and Victor set off yet again. It was getting late so Victor and Squishy stopped to make supper and set up camp.

It was a quiet, peaceful night and the moon was up. Victor was ready to fall asleep when he heard rustling in the woods nearby, it sounded like heavy foot falls. He got up and looked around, but he could not see anything because it was so dark.

Then his tent flew 20 feet in the air. To his surprise, it was an ogre with lots of hair and two big horns that was trying to rip him open with razor sharp claws.

"You're going to have to try harder than that," said Victor, pulling out his diamond sword.





The ogre lunged at him and Victor dodged left and right then he got a few hits on the ogre. It roared, jumped in the air, and stomped on the ground knocking Victor off his feet. The racket woke up Squishy.

Seeing Victor on the ground, Squishy grabbed Victor's battle axe and took it to him. As Victor got up he grabbed his battle axe from Squishy and swung it at the ogre with all his might. He landed a hit in his side that fatally wounded him. Then the Ogre fell on the ground and went limp. The ogre faded away like steam coming out of a pot.

Shocked at what just happened, he whispered to Squishy, "What just happened?" It was not normal for monsters to fade away, and that had never happened before. Feeling very perplexed and exhausted from the battle he went to bed wondering what that could possibly mean.

When they woke up that morning still wondering what happened last night they packed up and went to find Warden Mountain. After days and days of searching they finally found Warden Mountain. As they entered the mountain the Megawardens surprised them and trapped Victory and Squishy in a cage covered in spikes. They dangled them over lava.

Victor thought all hope was lost and that he would die to the Megawardens like his family did.

It was at that moment he felt a wave of energy through his body. He felt so powerful, like he could destroy the moon. He broke out of their prison and punched one of the Megawardens so hard in the face that he flew out of the mountain. Then Squishy jumped into the fight and he started to grow. He grew and grew until he was taller than the Megawardens. He grew into a giant cuddle monster. He grabbed one of the Megawardens and began to squeeze so hard its eyes popped out. They both fought until all the Megawardens were defeated.

As they were about to leave, the mountain started shaking and the alpha Megawarden emerged from a cavern. As it stood up, it roared and demolished the entire mountain. Victor and Squishy were ready to fight! They charged! Victor jumped and punched the alpha Megawarden and it stumbled back. Squishy tackled the alpha knocking it to the ground. Victor jumped in the air and sliced it open with his battle axe. He had defeated the alpha and doing that caused all the Megawardens to fall.

The war between his village and the Megawardens was over. They came home as heroes to humanity, and the world was safe from the Megawardens forever.

**THE END** ...for now

# THE MINOTAUR

**Roy Gutierrez**



Once there was a boy named Jacob. He was born into a poor family and had seven siblings. He couldn't go to school after ten years old due to his parents lack of riches. His days were filled with manual labor such as chopping wood, getting water from the well, and selling things at the market.

He was going to the well to fetch some water but then an old woman appeared, her garments torn. She had short stubby legs and a barely visible head with wrinkles and grey hair coming from the hood. She stepped out of the bushes.

"Hello," she said, "I require your help"

"Okay," he replied. She took him far, and his legs started aching.

Finally, he asked, "Where are we going?"

She stopped short. "Don't you know? I'm going to eat you and just for the record, it's not cannibalism 'cause I'm not human," she said while licking her lips.

Worry flooded him, and he tried to run, but she was right behind him. Jacob felt tired and crashed down. Then he knew it was the end, or so he thought.

He woke up to being tied to a chain close to a fire.

"Please spare me, I'll do anything," he begged.

"Really...anything?" the old woman asked.

Yeah I guess..." he sighed.

"Then kill the minotaur, take the bell around his neck, and escape the maze," the old woman said.

"How am I supposed to do that?" he answered.

"How would I know?" the woman asked with frustration.

He didn't know what she had against the minotaur, but he was too afraid to ask. He wondered, what should I do? He knew not and was still trembling from the heavy chain and the thought of dying. He realized he had the same amount of chances to kill the minotaur as to escape. He thought hard then he knew what to do. Jacob went back to the old lady and asked her for a bag and some stones. The next morning he woke up, and the old lady had everything he needed.

He walked to the cave, pulled out his bag, and steadied his hand on a rock. Knowing he had to find his way home, he left stones on the trail for the way back. Then suddenly everything went black, and he couldn't hear anything. He got nervous and started questioning himself, but then he heard something. He threw a stone and suddenly, he heard a bull grunting. He barely saw the horns before they went up his leg. Pain seared up his body

"Agh!" he shouted. It felt like 10,000,000 tiny needles had gone up his leg.

"Splash!" he heard the spilling of his blood on the floor.

"Wham!" He threw a stone and made contact with the strap around the neck of the minotaur. The bell fell to the ground. The pain in his leg was so great that he could not walk and began to crawl along the ground feeling for the stones he left in place earlier. He finally made it out, but the dent in his leg was huge.

"I did it!" he said.

"That is impossible!" the old woman said in astonishment.

"Oh really?" he replied, pulling out the minotaur's bell.

The woman gasped, "How?"

That evening he explained everything that happened and asked, "What's so special about this bell?"

She began with, "Well, it's a long story, but I suppose I will tell you. I was living with my family when a thief came in the night, murdered everyone, and stole the bell. But little did he know, the bell not only had magical healing properties, but also whoever wears the bell will turn into a minotaur."

"But you said you weren't human?"

"Well I am a knorkershies, who is a type of magical creature that can talk and can turn into a lizard," she said. "Thank you, I will give you a reward of 7.8 billion dollars. I will also use this bell as a memory of you," she remarked, twinkling the bell between her fingers.

"Good-bye," she said.

He waved, and for some reason he felt more brave. Finally he made it home to see happy faces, and at last he lived happily ever after.





# The Lost Fisherman

Sao Miller-Noriega

**M**ichael is a nineteen-year-old young man who has been waiting for a free day to catch salmon in his favorite fishing spot. He sets off to have a fishing day. What begins as a regular day quickly takes a turn!

Unfortunately, his ship gets damaged from shallow coral, and he is now stranded on an island he has called Green Island. Stranded on the island, he discovers new friends, but these are not ordinary friends, they are talking animals. The squirrels, foxes, rabbits, birds, wild boar and deer all speak in a language he understands. One particular squirrel named Nutty was very interested in the new mysterious human he found.

As night approaches, his new friend Nutty tries to keep him alive by giving warnings of an unknown creature that is dangerous. Nutty informed him that he can hear the creature far in advance as it breaks twigs, snarls really loud, and roars.

Michael is worried the creature might hurt them while sleeping, but he feels safe with his friends nearby. He is also worried his boat won't get repaired, and he will be stuck on the island forever. His new friends say they will help in any way they can as they are skilled in gathering supplies to help repair the boat.

As the days pass, he uses the island's many resources: wood, amber, and tree vines to help repair his ship. His new friends make it easy for him to find coconuts, pineapple and bananas to eat.

One night he adventures off and looks for vines he needs to tie up the sail for his ship. He doesn't notice how late it's gotten or how dark it's become. His body is full of fright. He hears the roar of the mysterious creature. He realizes the creature sets eyes on him, and Michael runs in the opposite direction as he zooms away.

He gets to the beach and right behind him is a large animal with the body of a bear, head of a lion and tail of a snake. Michael feels doomed until all of his friends emerge bravely out from the trees. All of them band together side by side to scare off the mythical creature, and there are too many for the creature to fight off. The animals all had smiles up to their eyes.

Michael puts his hands on his hips with his chin trembling saying, "I wasn't afraid at all."

All the animals looked at Michael and giggled.

On his way to his sleeping grounds he finds the tree vines he needs to repair his sail on his ship. Michael returns to rest for the night and feels as if he is floating in a lazy river.

Morning comes and after hours of grueling repairs, his ship is repaired. He says goodbye to all his new friends and is thankful for all their help.

He finally sails off into the horizon and has the perfect fishing day he set out for.



# **HERMES' DEBT IN TEXAS**



**Jared Kim**



ermes, who is the Greek god of merchants, thieves, and travelers, loved to eat meat.

One day, while flying over Texas, he spotted a massive, juicy cow lazily grazing at the Western Moonback Ranch. Hermes led one cattle away from the ranch. He brought it to a cave and made beef stew.

Robert the rancher had finished giving a large beast fresh water when he realized one of his cattle was missing. He set out to find the missing cattle after carefully locking the paddock. The rancher had encountered cattle rustlers before, but he knew his fence was too high for the rustlers to climb. The rancher searched the perimeter of his ranch. He did not see any breaks in the fence.

Hermes was sound asleep after eating a hearty meal of beef stew. While Robert searched, the smell of beef stew lingered in the air. He followed the scent and came upon a cave where he found Hermes fast asleep with stew stains on his toga.

Robert immediately realized that the man wearing the woven fabric had stolen his cattle. He also noticed a delicate pair of winged sandals at the entrance of the cave. He grabbed them and hollered to wake Hermes, who startled awake. Hermes, who recognized the Moonback Ranch shirt that Robert was wearing, reached for his sandals to flee.

Oh no! Hermes panicked, realizing he was not fast enough to flee on foot.

Robert made a deal with Hermes, "I do not agree with getting even by stealing, even though these are a fine pair of solid gold sandals."

Hermes smiled and thought, *wonderful, a nice guy whom I can easily trick.*

The rancher continued, "I will stow your sandals in a guarded place until you can work off the cost of the cattle you looted from me."

Hermes headed over to the sheep to give them water while Robert headed over to a paddock. Hermes decided to wait until nighttime to get his sandals back.

Nighttime arrived, and Hermes crept into the paddock.

After several failed attempts, he finally figured out how to turn on the flashlight, but was immediately met by the gaze of a fierce-looking creature. The creature had features similar to the minotaur that the legendary Theseus fought.

Hermes knew he was no fighter, and his trickery would not work on a beast like this. He decided it was best to work off his debt.

**THE  
END**





**KEEP  
BELIEVING  
YOURSELF**

# Metamorphosis

Stories about change:  
When something shifts, someone grows,  
and life is never quite the same again.



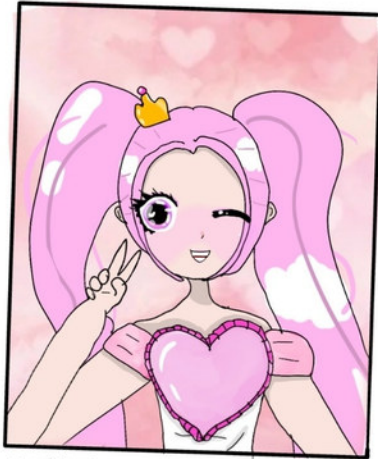
# CHANGE



# CYBORG SINGERZ

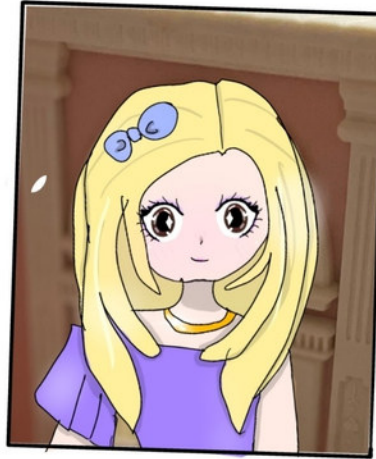


MARIE I. STILLER



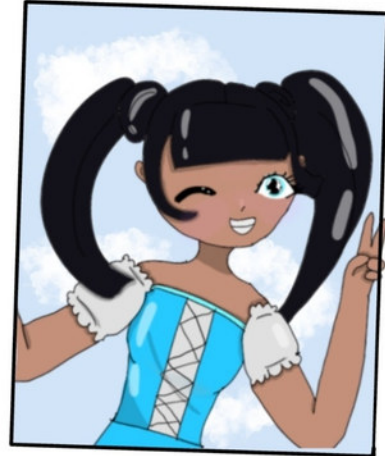
### **Kikiinu, age 11**

Kiki is a cyborg, who wants to be a human, and likes dangerous adventures, sports, singing, and pancakes.



### **Iris, age 11**

Iris is a cyborg, likes to sing and draw. She's usually shy, but with her friends, she's always talking.



### **Aisha, age 12**

Ai is Japanese American, and also a cyborg. She can be a little grumpy, but when they all sing, she's happy.



### **Dr. Hato, age 20,000**

He wanted to save humanity, but instead fame came when he turned everyone into robots.



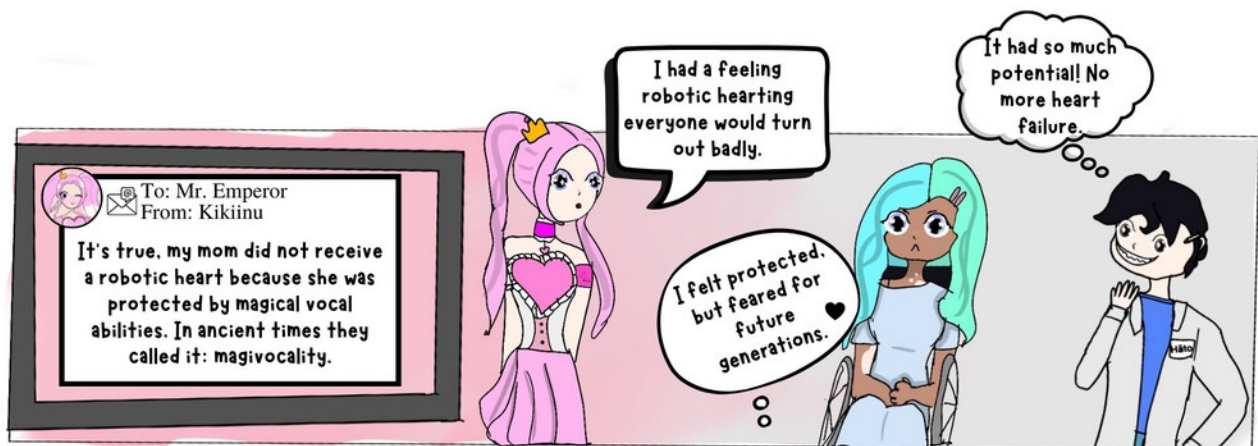
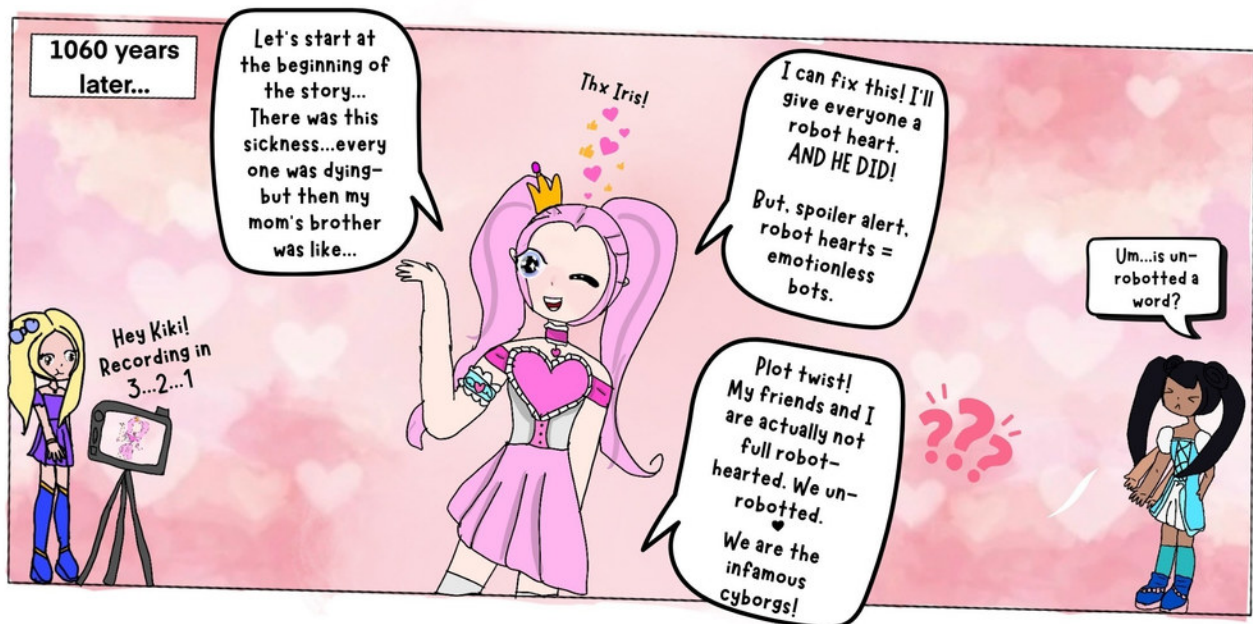
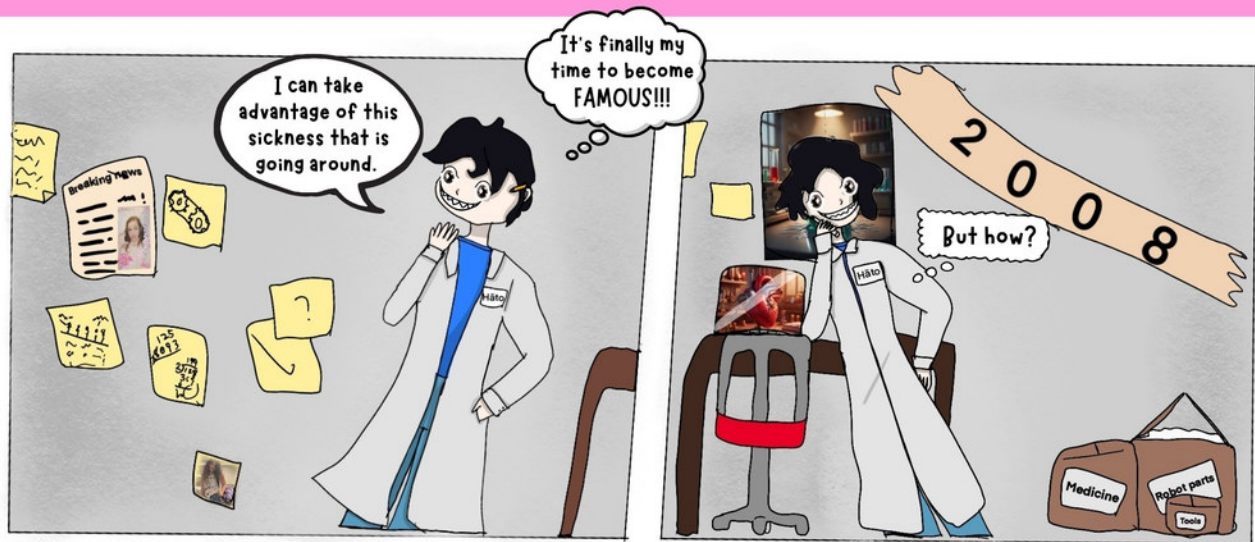
### **Ariana, age 49**

Ariana is Kiki's mom. She had a musical soul, but never received a robot heart.



### **Emperor, age 30,000**

The emperor is rich and powerful, but dislikes music.





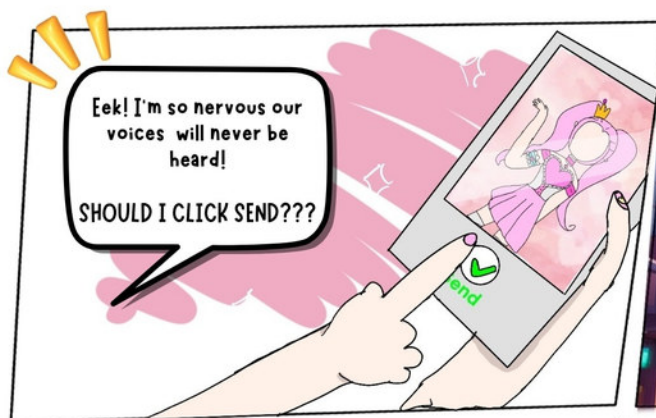
I'm totes excited to send the vid to the emperor! This opportunity only comes around ONCE A YEAR! And, it's not like he accepts proposals from everyone, right?

Right! I heard he collects them all and goes full public announcement with his so-called good intentions.



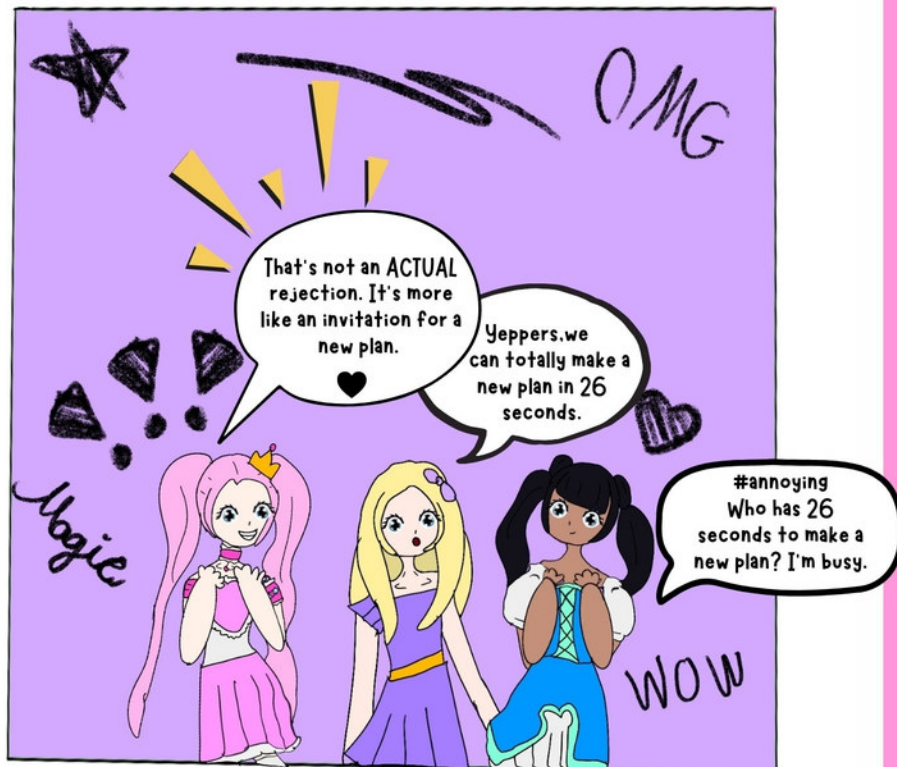
What if he never even watches our video??? Our message will never get out and everyone will remain emotionless robots forever!

For evah-evah? That's a mighty long time.



We are...THE CYBORG SINGERZ!







The background of the entire image is a misty, atmospheric forest scene. Two soldiers in World War I-era uniforms are walking away from the viewer down a muddy, reflective path. The path is flanked by tall grass and leads towards a bright, hazy sun in the distance, which creates a strong backlighting effect. Bare trees are visible on either side of the path, and the overall color palette is dominated by muted greens, blues, and greys, with the bright yellow of the sun providing a focal point.

# Heart of a soldier

By Jonah Banioga

**C**aptain Smith loathes Justin.

Justin Cruz is a young local boy from a strong family on Maui who is a quick thinker. Justin was planning to study at MIT and become an engineer on the mainland. However, his plans fell to pieces when the war started, and he was drafted into the army. He is an inexperienced soldier who wants to be respected by his senior officer, Gregory Smith. His army life is miserable because of his heartless officer. Smith had a traumatic childhood without much parenting, and he is bitter that Justin had a great upbringing.

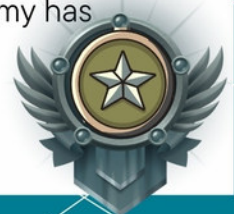
The army wants to make a special regiment to complete a highly dangerous mission of spying on the enemy. Justin is eager to prove himself, so he signs up. For this mission one thousand men are chosen and Justin is one of them because of his intelligence.

The plan is to slip past the enemy lines during the night. But first, they have to cross eight miles of dense foliage. The enemy never patrols the jungle because of ghosts and other horrible creatures who prowl the jungle. Huge unknown insects crawl on the wet floor, biting them. The men step into the jungle and they are immediately engulfed in a thick fog. Even worse, it is pitch black like being in a black hole that sucks the world void of light. The men can barely see the next man in front of them. Justin is having second thoughts about signing up for special OPS. Even though it is night, the men are drenched in sweat and water. It feels like being in a suffocating coffin of clothes and equipment. The men slog through the jungle which seems to stretch forever and the troop finally make it out alive.

The special regiment slowly spies on the enemy's front. The men see trenches upon trenches of enemies as far as the eye can see. Machine guns and heavy artillery dot the landscape like wasps ready to sting. Luckily, the men scout out several weak positions that are not well protected.

After this, their objective is to ambush a small communications camp. They begin bombarding the camp as disorganized and bewildered enemy soldiers try to fight back but are easily beaten. Justin has to shoot into the camp but secretly hopes of not killing a fellow human being. Hearts thumping, the men run into the installation and destroy all the vital communications. They also find dead bodies strewn helter skelter across the ground. Now Justin understands the horror of war, even though he has only scratched the surface. He may look like a man, but he is still a kid at heart.

Later they set up camp for the night, and all is quiet until two in the morning. Suddenly, Justin and the other men wake up to screams and the sound of gunfire. The enemy has found them.



The men are in disarray, but they regroup and fight back. Justin is immediately jumped on by a huge man who slashes at him with a huge machete. Justin barely dodges the slash, and he uses the back of his rifle to smash at the burly man's head. The man easily dodges the blow and grabs the gun and rips it away from Justin. While the man fumbles with the rifle, Justin pulls out his trusty butterfly knife (a gift from his uncle who served in The Great War), jumps on the man, and delivers a deadly blow. He doesn't have time to process the last few seconds before he gets ready for another fight.

Justin looks around and sees his commanding officer getting pinned down by two enemies. Even though his life would be easier without Captain Smith, Justin does the right thing. He aims and shoots one of the enemies, then he helps Smith with the other one. Smith begrudgingly thanks him, and Justin hears a slight change in his voice. Justin feels his approval and recognises that these split second decisions are the difference between life and death. He is not that kid shooting airsoft guns on Maui; he is using real guns against real people. After this, the two of them fight back to back as enemies fall before them. For the next few days, this will be the life of Justin, Captain Smith and the other men as the regiment moves deeper into enemy territory to mask their location.



Throughout the rest of the mission, Justin is known as a brave veteran who is respected by all. Justin helps Captain Smith come to peace about his childhood, and in turn Captain Smith becomes a mentor to Justin. At the end of the six day mission, the one thousand men dwindled to only six hundred or so. At the moment, the enemy has cornered the team against the entrenchments, and they are ready to blow the special regiment to smithierins.

Justin uses some of his engineering genius to form a plan with a couple of other men to dig a tunnel under the weakest part of the enemy line and fill it with explosives. After the explosion, they will run through the gaping hole in the enemy line and escape. There are no safe alternatives because of the enemy guns. Making the situation more perilous is the enemy advancing in front and behind them.

The tunnel is immediately dug and packed with tons of explosives. The fuse is lit and the team escapes through the gaping hole in the enemy line. Against all odds, they reach friendly lines. However, Justin is hit in the leg by shrapnel. He is whisked away to a hospital by his fellow troopers, then shipped back to the United States. Justin's leg heals in a year, and the war is over by then.

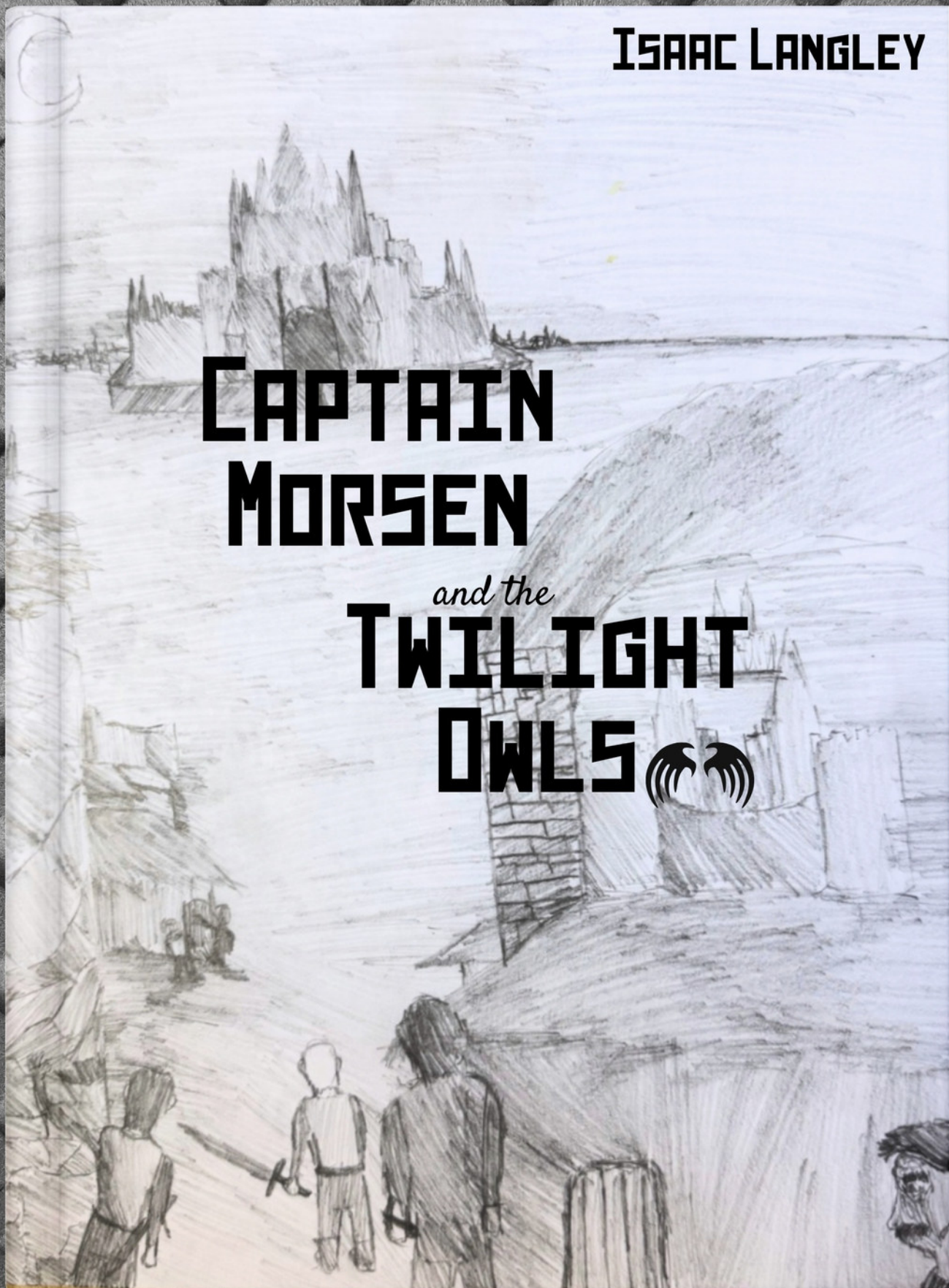
Now Justin, who has a slight limp, and lives his dream of being an engineer. Even though he fought more than twenty years ago, the days of war still remain with him. One day out of nowhere, men in black suits come to his work place and bring him to the airport. He and his family are flown to D.C. and are escorted to the Pentagon without an explanation of what is happening. In a prestigious ceremony, Justin is awarded the U.S. Army Distinguished Service Medal by Major General Gegory Smith. Although his military career was cut short, receiving the medal makes him feel like a true soldier.



ISAAC LANGLEY

# CAPTAIN MORSEN

*and the*  
**TWILIGHT  
OWLS** 





It was exactly midnight when Captain Morsen spotted the first two guards. The red helmeted guards were immersed in a close Fellieon match in front of the castle gates. (Fellieon is a complicated boardgame that is mostly strategy). Morsen is a captain for an underground organization called the Twilight Owls, whose purpose is to take back the human city of Kire from Lord Brimlone and his growing army of soldiers and criminals. Lord Brimlone is a corrupt duke who ruled in a little town outside Kire. A few months back, he formed a great army that consisted of his own soldiers as well as mercenaries and assassins, and with this mighty army, he easily overthrew Kire and all surrounding dukedoms.

The leaders of the Twilight Owls had been planning an attack for weeks and now they finally put into motion. The complex plan was to infiltrate the far right watch tower of the castle grounds, get their best archers to the tower, and let them fire arrows at soldiers standing watch at the main gate. That would allow the bulk force of the Owls' army to open the main gate and assault the fortress. Captain Morsen and his loyal lieutenant and best friend Finsher were in charge of the right wing of the invasion army along with General Onar, a Dwarfan ambassador who joined the Twilight Owls when the city was overthrown by Lord Brimlone. He is an outstanding warrior.

"Captain?" Morsen turned his focus from the watch guards to Finsher beside him.

"Yes, Lieutenant?" replied Morsen.

"Captain, what of the guards?" inquired Finsher.

"Take them out quickly."

"Sir?"

"Yes, Finsher?"

"They won't know what hit them."



"Hey, Corley?" said one of the guards as he looked up from the Fellieon board.

"Yeah, I know it's my turn, Henry. I heard you the first trillion times you told me," replied Corley without looking up from his tiles.

"Corley, I'm serious. Did you hear that?"

"Hear what?"

"That sound. It sounded like foot--" Henry's voice was suddenly cut off and he collapsed onto the ground. He was dead.

Corley drew his sword and jumped up from his chair, but it was too late. Three cloaked figures converged on him and he fell next to his comrade, blood oozing and seeping onto the fallen tiles surrounding him.



"Open the gate!" cried Captain Morsen as he jumped down from the roof on which he had been perched.

"You heard the captain! Open the gate!" repeated one of Morsen's high ranking officials. Crashing through the gates, the full body of the Twilight Owl's army marched toward the center of the enormous city. Up ahead, the stone castle loomed over the cloaked figures who charged through the courtyard. Then Morsen heard the screams. On the right side of the charging army, a fleet of soldiers had appeared out of nowhere and started slashing their swords against the members of the Twilight Owls' armor. Soldiers suddenly appeared and did the same on the left. They had walked right into an ambush, and they were outnumbered thirty to one. The captain's panicked men began to fall.

Morsen soon found himself locked in combat with a young soldier who had a bright red plume on his gleaming helmet. The young man swung relentlessly at Morsen's chest, intent on gaining the kill. But Morsen easily dodged and blocked his swings, finally striking the plumed figure down with a swift cut at the stomach.

"Nice one, Captain."

Morsen recognized the strong British accent as Finsher sidled up beside him, dispatching his own opponent who he had been fighting.

"Thanks, Lieutenant," Morsen replied. "Take some troops to the outermost room of the castle and destroy the watch tower before anyone can send reinforcements."

"Yes, sir." Finsher started to walk away.

"Hey, Finsher!" The young man with the dirty blonde hair turned.

"Good luck," Morsen said.

Finsher smiled and opened his mouth, about to say something.

"You, too, si--- AHHHHH!" Finsher suddenly cried out and his armor clanged against the floor. The man was clearly dead.

Pulling a spear out of the lieutenant's back, Finsher's murderer took off his helmet, revealing his identity. It was Onar, Morsen's General and once a loyal member of the Twilight Owls. So if this is true, why did he just kill Finsher, Morsen's best friend?

"Why, Onar? Why have you done this?" Morsen cried.

Onar laughed at Morsen's distraught face, taking pleasure in Morsen's misery.

"I am a dwarf, as you well know, Captain. I didn't even need to get involved with the humans' toil. I did it for gold. Dwarves love gold."

"We gave you gold, Onar. Much of it in fact. So why did you betray us?" Morsen faintly heard the battle around him raging on, but little mattered to him now.

"I had gotten cornered by some of Brimlone's men, and the only way I could have escaped with my life is if I switched sides. This war isn't personal to dwarves, and now my mission is to kill you and every man in the rebellion," Onar replied.

"This is treachery, Onar! You know that!" Morsen exclaimed angrily as he raised his sword.

"Like I said, little matters to me except gold. This conversation is now intolerable, so no more talking, just fighting," Onar said as he placed his helmet on his head.

Suddenly, Morsen whipped around, quickly dispatching two warriors who had been trying to sneak up from behind. Onar used the moment of distraction to his advantage, charging and swinging his double-sided axe at Morsen. At the last second, Morsen turned back around, ducked, and rolled to the side, narrowly dodging a blow that would have been fatal. Dodging another swing that could have sent his legs flying, the brave captain got to his feet and started a death match with the greedy dwarf. It was a close fight.

After a few minutes that felt like hours to Morsen, both fighters slumped to the ground, wounded with great gauges and cuts. The blades of grass around the figures were soaked in red. Bleeding from several injuries, Morsen used all his strength to grab his sword with his bloodstained and shaking hand. Staggering to his feet, Morsen approached his new nemesis, who was on his knees, trying to reach for his blood-stained axe. Morsen kicked it away, and the axe thumped against the stone castle wall. Morsen's head throbbed from the blood loss, but the furious captain ignored the dizziness, for he was intent on vengeance.

"Yield!" Morsen spoke in a raspy voice, trying to keep the blood in his throat from dripping out his mouth.

"Never!" said the ruthless figure at Morsen's feet.

"Then DIE!" said the captain, whose last swing at Onar came from a bottomless pit of rage and sadness stemming from the loss of his friend.

His sword made a thumping sound as the steel weapon collided with the dwarf, who instantly fell to the ground, lifeless. Hunched over, Morsen scrambled into the newly breached fortress, barely thinking about the guards who he fought and killed as he stormed up stairways and down hallways. Morsen thought about his best friend who was newly dead and of the agonizing wounds that will surely kill him. Finally, the wounded soldier reached the huge, wooden doors with two burly men guarding them. In this shape Morsen had no chance against them. Bracing for his demise, the heroic captain raised his sword. Then Morsen heard a loud war cry from behind and a team of three young soldiers from his army charged the guards and engaged them in fierce combat. Morsen rushed to help and by the time he got there, one of his men was already sprawled on the floor, a red puddle of blood forming around him.

As Morsen joined the fight, another young man with a blonde mustache, looking too much like Finsher, lay next to his comrade. The two men on the floor reminded Morsen of his late friend, and the reminder brought tears to his eyes. Another man came to help, and the huge guards were outnumbered.

"Hey, kid!" Morsen said to the last of the original reinforcements who fought beside him.

"Yes, Captain?" He was extraordinarily young, about nineteen, and had short black hair. He was breathing really hard.

"What's your name?"

"My name is Calirad," he said as Morsen dealt a vicious blow to one of the guards' arm.

"Go, Calirad. Find Brimlone. I'll buy you some time."

Worry flashed across Calirad's face. He was way too young to be involved in something like this.

"But, sir! You'll be killed!"

"Then avenge my death," Morsen declared.

Calirad hesitated and one of the guards tried to swipe at his head, but Calirad swiftly dodged it.

"Go now!"

Calirad and the other man ran between the guards while Morsen struck down one of the burly men. At the door, Calirad looked back at his captain who was about to sacrifice his life.

"Good luck, Captain." Calirad whispered to himself, as he and his fellow soldier fled through the door, leaving Morsen to die.

As Calirad slammed the door behind him, he took in the new room that he had entered. Jewels adorned the walls and a solid gold throne sat in the center of the room on a raised platform. Calirad only had a few seconds to think before two knights in shining armor attacked and immediately sent the man beside him to the floor.

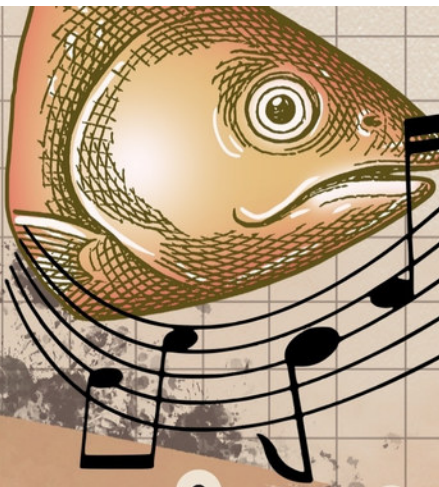
It took a long while, but finally Calirad stood over his vanquished adversaries, panting. The young hero looked up at the man who sat on the glimmering throne, who sat there laughing at him.

"Well," the man said as his chuckle subsided. "I guess this is the end."

"Yes," Calirad replied as he lifted his sword. "Yes, it is."

And then it was over. The moment had passed, and Calirad the Great (as he would be called in the near future), looked down upon the dead corpse of Lord Brimlone, who had Calirad's sword imbedded in his chest. The Twilight Owls had won. At Brimlone's defeat, Calirad wept with joy. He had taken back the great city of Kire.

✂ THE END ✂



# The Spark

Stories about passion:  
When a person discovers a love for something  
or makes a magical friendship.



buzzing with life



FROM THE AUTHOR OF 'IF I WAS A TREE'  $\frac{\tan x}{\csc x}$   
EMMA G. STILLER  $\times$

$\cos^{-1}(7-\sqrt{2})$

# THE GRAVITY OF FALLING

What do  
you do  
when  
no one  
is coming to  
save you?

$\cos \theta$

$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$

$70 + 11 + 25 = x$

$\frac{15}{25}$

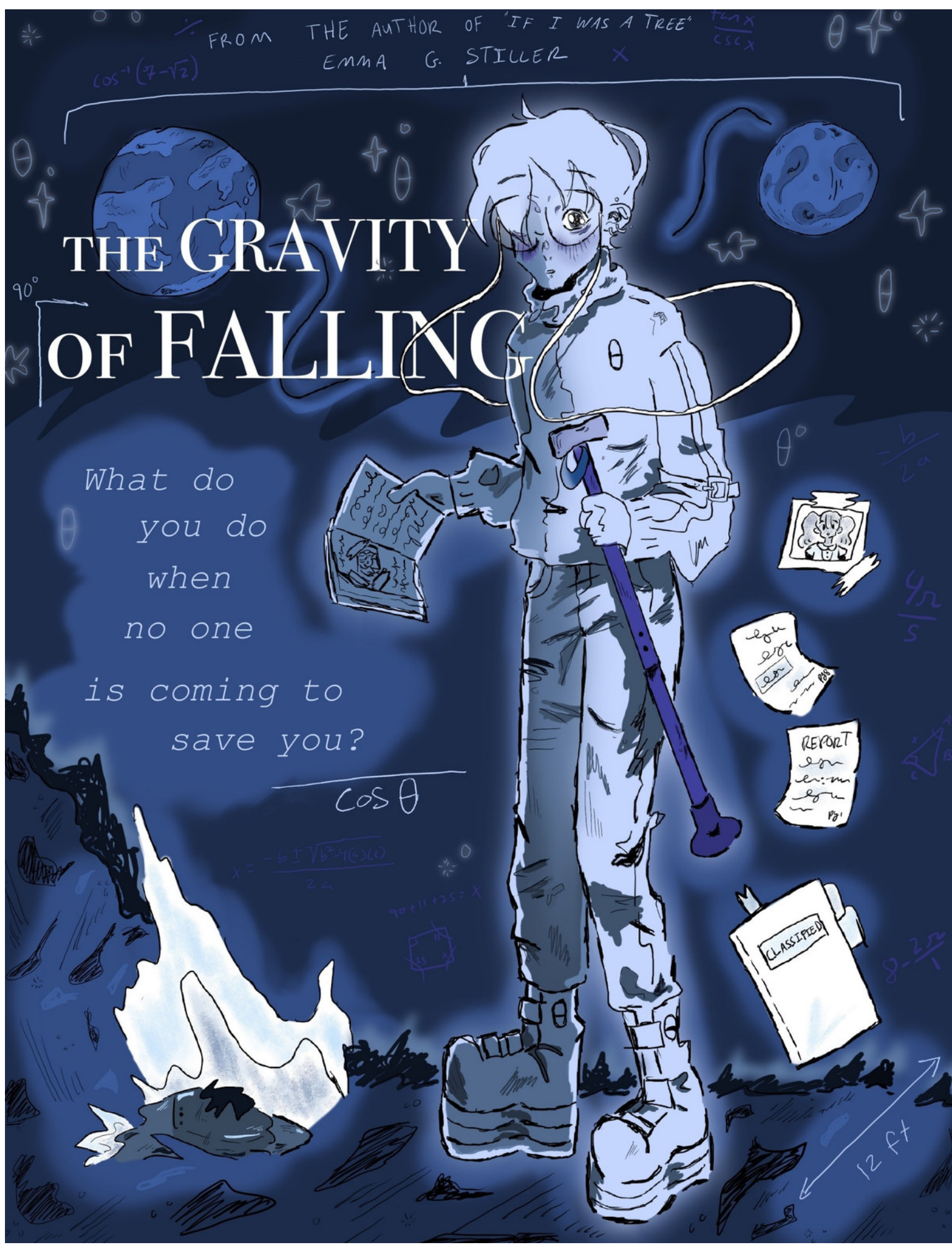
$\frac{b}{2a}$

$\frac{4\sqrt{2}}{5}$

$\frac{A}{B}$

$8 - \frac{2\sqrt{2}}{1}$

12 ft  $\nearrow$



No one's coming to save us.

That was the last line in the journal. That was the last time I felt really alone. It was the fall of my last year of high school that I discovered the journals in the back of the library, their covers creased and worn down, brown from years of handling. Their placement was in deep contrast to the pristine condition of the digital scrolls shelved neatly along either side.

I spent a lot of time in the library back then. I'm more of the silent yet thoughtful type. My futuristic academia attire seamlessly blended with the dapper spines of distinguished digital scrolls around me. A delicate chain stemmed from my glasses, hovering in a Saturn-like orbit around me. I consider this my trademark flair.

The building's walls are lined with metal beams that diminish the effects of being a Gravitan. For someone like me, who feels the rotation of the earth and senses gravity with every step, these spaces are the only time my head stops spinning.

The truth is I didn't always know why I was drawn there. A magnetic force drew me to that library. What began as curiosity evolved into a weekly habitual stop and search for knowledge. Had I not given in to the pull, the critical information would never have fallen into my hands.

Now I have it, for better, or worse.

I made my way towards the back of the library, the *click-thud* refrain of my cane making an entrance before I did. Steading myself during a dizzy spell the *click-thud* pauses as I regain my position.

I can't explain why I picked up the old books in the first place, but there's no question about why I kept reading dusty page after dusty page. The pages, heartbreaking memoirs of people known as Gravitans. Each entry revealed the lived experiences of those who could feel the effects of gravity so intensely that their legs shook and wobbled as the Earth orbited the sun. The earth's rotation had side effects like dizziness, exhaustion, and shortness of breath. These people could feel the weight of it all pushing against their sternum, submergence under gravity.

But then, one by one, they disappeared.

In one of the journals, there was an old black and white photo excessively secured with tape, yellowed from time. Smudged edges reveal the wear of a loved one's endearing touch. There in that single photo, I saw my own eyes reflected in the face of a child with what appeared to be two different colored eyes. The sepia tones could not hide this powerful characteristic that we share.



The connection I experienced grew with every volume read. Despite never meeting them, I knew them. I walked their pain, my head spun like theirs. My whole life, they told me this was all due to a childhood illness, a devastating middle ear infection. The weakness in my legs was explained as a side effect of indoor-itis. Endure the pain in silence, they said, for better or for worse.

From this day forward, I pledged my future to unlocking the mystery of the Gravitans. I'm the person who's going to tell you a story you'll never forget. This is the promise I made to you and every Graviton I never met.



It wasn't long after the start of my second year at university that the hopelessness set in. Pursuing a degree in galactic gravitronic research was the key to fulfilling the promise I made 4 years ago. Nothing could stop me, but the exhaustion and rejection of my hypotheses were wearing me down. My symptoms progressed leaving me dizzy than ever. To make matters worse, I could feel the earth's rotational movements in my stomach, making me feel as though I was sea sick on dry land.

There has to be a scientific explanation for what's happening. What has always been happening. My research on the effects of rotational and gravitronic movement on humans is relevant and I have over 145 participants in my most recent study. But no one is hearing me. No professor will take my results seriously. Every thesis project is denied. My emotional pain and rejection rivaled my physical pain, but still two things remain true. One, the gravitans exist. And two, I made a promise to prove it.

At a low point, without support from my professors and increasing doubt, I went off script and posted a message where I knew I shouldn't have. No second year galactic gravitronic student would be caught dead posting messages on discord in 2065. But there I was, desperate for engagement and validation. It was written as a joke – I never expected anyone to really connect with gravidemicgoul25's desperate tangent through an info-dump post rambling on about gravity related dizziness and rotational distress. It was like a page out of some 2025 old self-help book on self diagnosis and multivitamins weren't going to cut it.

But then I heard from someone. Gravitysux007.

And we were the same.



Everything fell in place my third year of university. People were finally interested in what my studies could offer and encouraged me to keep following my scientific passion. The local academic community often drew from my findings for their own work, yet I was rarely given much credit.

However, I felt like the attention and recognition was a step in the right direction. People were finally recognizing the experiences of the gravitans as scientifically valid.

I was keeping my promise.

I lost touch with the person I connected with during my second year – they seemed to just drop off the map. But that was okay, because I felt like I'd finally had a place to belong and share my work with other people there. All around me, people shared their thoughts and ideas. It was exhilarating.

That day, it was a rare occasion where I didn't bring my cane with me, and my steps were light and silent, for a change. When I walked into the auditorium, I didn't realize then that the discussions were about me.

"Did you hear about the genetic results? Blood type G. The head of the department was right."

The *swish* of a window being slid closed interrupts the familiar voices of Professor Vector and cosmo lab specialist Doctor Geodesic. Their words echoed in the auditorium from where they meet each other behind the podium, their backs to me.

Prof. Vector continued urgently, "There isn't much time – they're going to put the pieces together soon. We need to remove them as soon as possible."

Dr. Geodesic hesitated before he said, "But after last year's..."

"Purposful disposal? This one is targeted for the same outcome."

As I made my way to the front of the auditorium, the professor and Dr. Geodesic hurriedly shuffled papers and packed up files into a bag labeled *Classified*.

I was offered an opportunity a few days later to be a part of a pilot program, called Project Ascendant, by the department head. It was an opportunity to explore and document areas of another planet. I was surprised, but my heart pounded like I was already racing to the other planet.

This was finally my opportunity to keep the promise I had made to resurface the story of the Gravitans with all who walk under the sky.

So, I said yes to the pilot program, with no idea what the agreement truly meant.

I had no idea that I was sold a lie disguised as opportunity and recognition.



Despite our high-tech space travel methods, it takes traveling at the speed of light for weeks to arrive at the planetary destination. Sightings of celestial bodies and neighboring moons never disappoint, but the thrill of the adventure begins to deteriorate over time. With nothing else to do, I began to poke around the space ship. That was my first regret.

What I uncovered inside one of the nano storage slots was almost unimaginable. Document after document I flipped through, pages of detailed descriptions describing other Gravitans.

Document 47b2 - pg 5

Subject description: 5.9 ft, with short, brown hair, and heterochromia. Works in Specialties Dept. at [REDACTED] University.

It was like looking in a mirror.

Document 47b2 - pg 7

Subject number: 256J.

Birth name: [REDACTED]

Testing duration: 3 years 5 months.

After testing for DNA, the abnormal blood type G was detected. Irregular gait, uses cane chronically for support.

As I read on, I felt a sense of belonging that they were so close all this time - maybe we'd even worked together. I'd felt a renewed sense of exhilaration to continue on with *Project Ascendant* as I approached the planet.

Document 47b2 - pg 12

Subject displays symptoms such as: dizziness, shortness of breath, nausea, etc.

Operation FreeFall: Books planted at [REDACTED] City Library in [REDACTED], Rat 256J successfully finds journals on 9/1/62.

Status: unaware.

The second regret should have been that I didn't check the false gravity assessment gear before preparing for landing. The emotional overwhelm distracted me from following the protocols I had been trained to implement. Instead of following my training, my instincts forced my attention on the documents. I hyperfocused on the last page.

Document 47b2 - pg 46

Operation FallFaster: Rat 256J accepts proposal for interplanetary communication support operations mission.

Mission objective: Eliminate Rat 256J

Status: unaware.

After passing through the atmosphere, my reading was abruptly interrupted as the artificial gravity that I had helped create let go of me. Within a breath, I fell so fast that even the sound of my hammering heart hadn't caught up to my ears yet. The ship made a warping, metallic sound as my untethered body slammed against the ceiling from the force of the free fall. The ship was hurdling toward the planet of Orlyn, my head was spinning uncontrollably and neither of us could stop. Everything that happened next brought me to where I am now, where I write this.

I drag myself out of the broken mess of metal and smoke, the taste of blood staining my mouth, and unsure whether I will have the strength to walk when I get out. A surge of adrenaline hits me and I find the strength to pull the rest of my body out from under the fractured ship.

I sit just outside the crop circle of my little alien craft, holding it. The file. My hands shake with a combination of shock and the unexpected cold of the planet. A corner of the burning file in one hand is taken away by the wind, clutched in my other hand are the remains of my dented cane, the handle broken off.

*I wasn't meant to survive, but I did.*

I wasn't meant to speak out, but I did.

Shakily, leaning heavily against what's left of my cane, I stand, trying to put some distance between me and the broken mess of metal and smoke. I collapsed after only a few steps.

Lying on the cold ground, the realization that all I have left are the two things that have always kept me steady, my cane and my promise to bring the gravitans story to life. The documents revealed the truth. I was sent here to fulfill a death mission.

The people who sent me here were wrong.

I look back at the ship. The dismantled wreck of a ship tells me there's no way it will make it back to Earth. A wave of despair surges through me.

Then, my gaze finds the supplemental emergency shuttle - the SES 2,000 - it appears to be intact, spared from the crash due to the slanted collision with the ground.

The convergence of hope, fear, and adrenaline are more powerful than any space ship fuel. Their force compelled me to haul my heavy body upward to hands and knees and crawl to the SES 2000.

So many things I believed to be true came crashing down with that ship, and I had to start making new choices if I wanted to survive. Staying here was not one of them. No one's coming to help, the shuttle is my only way back home.



I was falling through space and time for a promise that I wondered if I could still keep.

Free falling. Darkness surrounded me and silence enveloped me.

Free falling. There was nowhere for the truth to hide now.

I started this mission with the intent of bringing other people's stories to life. The gravitational pull of my own story brought me to this moment.

I'm not free falling, I'm moving with gravity, no longer against.

No one was coming to save me and I no longer needed them to.

And if you're reading this now, that means...

End of Journal #256J



# Liza's Journey to Make Friends



by: Emma Williams



"Hey look! It's the new girl who doesn't have any friends," Max said loud enough for Liza to hear over the voices in the hallway. All the kids in the hallway looked at her as she walked away slowly with her head down. Max had been at this school for a long time. Liza, on the other hand, had just moved into town a week ago because her dad got a job there. That was awesome, but it didn't change how hard making friends still felt. Kids whispered and stared whenever she walked by, unsure what to think of her. Liza walked through the hallway doors into the park, with her eyes watering and her face red from crying.

A girl sitting on a bench asked her what was wrong and Liza cried, "Everyone is making fun of me." Liza was crying and finished saying, "because I am different."

The kind girl replied, "Just because they see you as different doesn't mean I see you as different. I am Emily; I am part cobra. Are you part dragon?"

Liza stopped crying and whispered, "Yes."

Emily asked, "Do you want to be friends?"

Liza replied, "Yes."

Liza and Emily spent all their time together. They especially enjoyed lunch. While Liza and Emily were sitting down at the lunch table, Liza made a terrible discovery. "Eww, my burger bun is moldy!" She got up to throw it away as Max walked in. Just then, Max took one look at Emily and darted off quickly.

"Why did Max run off like that, Emily?" Liza asked.

"It turns out that Max is afraid of snakes, and I am part cobra," Emily shared, "And before you moved here, Max saw me transform for the first time."

Liza's eyes opened wide. "You can transform? You never told me that!"

Emily said, "I can teach you how to transform tomorrow."



The sun was setting as Liza and Emily were entering the park. The flowers were closing and the crickets were chirping. They were walking down the dirt path and once they got to a big opening in the field, Emily sat down. Liza sat down across from her. Then Emily explained that for her to transform she had to do a whimsical chant. As Liza performed the chant, dark clouds covered the sky and there was smoke all around her.

In a blink of an eye, she was a dragon! Liza was a beautiful cyan, pink, and purple dragon with massive blue wings and a very long, strong, and magical tail. The magic shimmered through her scales, filling her with new energy and a strength she never new she had. She felt more confident to stand up to people who pick on her because she is different.

Emily's eyes were glistening and she had a happy smile on her face and told Liza, "The dragon isn't who you are, it is just one part of you." She gently added, "To transform back, all you have to do is say, 'myself.'"

Liza thanked Emily for showing her how to transform. "I felt myself getting stronger and braver to stand up bullies." she said through tears.



It was getting late and Liza and Emily ran home so they wouldn't get in trouble. Max's voice echoed through the hallway as he stepped in front of Liza and Emily blocking their way to class. Instead of backing away, Liza planted her feet and lifted her chin. She built up a lot of confidence and stood up strongly to Max. "I am not scared," she said. "I'm brave enough to stand up to you, but having a friend beside me makes me even stronger."



THE  
END

KIDS!

## YOUR TURN

Love this month's issue?  
Be a part of the next one!

We'd love to see pictures of you reading our magazine and fan art! Have an adult email them to us at [yokosukahomeschoolers@gmail.com](mailto:yokosukahomeschoolers@gmail.com), along with anything you would like us to know about what's happening in the photo.



Carys age 11 and Fox age 9  
from Georgia, USA



"We may live on the other side of the world, but reading Rad Mag makes us feel connected to homeschoolers everywhere.

Each article is inspiring, informative, and enjoyable.

We can't wait to read the next issue!"



## The Alumni Corner

As a homeschool graduate, the one thing I really enjoyed throughout my schooling time was the Lit Clubs! Each session brought me so much joy, and the activities were always so much fun. Thanks to Ms. Genny, I was able to get published in the newspaper twice, write my own four-voiced poem (with an interpretive dance alongside it), read multiple novels, debate my classmates, and more! I'm so thankful that I had the opportunity to attend the Yokosuka Homeschoolers Lit Club!

Ft. Emme Rae  
Bingaman  
Age 18

## From the Senior Editor's Notebook

Dear Rad Readers,

Thanks for reading to the end of the second issue of Rad Mag... a magazine written by homeschoolers, but made for every kid who loves to read, laugh, and learn. This month's theme was flash fiction! There was everything from daring tales of adventure to powerful k-pop comics, but that's just the tip of the iceberg. You traveled to whole new worlds - some under water - by space ship, through a hole in a tree, and even a fishing boat. Plus, don't get me started on the high levels creativity. Believe me when I tell you: with a team like us, we've got an exciting new chapter planned for our next issue!

Stay Rad and see you in 2026!

Emma G. Stiller  
EMMA G. STILLER,  
Senior Editor



“Rad Joke of the Month”  
Why did the kid author take  
their story to the doctor...  
Because it had a sick plot.”

We'd love to hear from you! Share your letters, photos, nominations, recommendations, or ideas with us for a chance to be featured in the magazine. Be sure to include your first name, age, and city, state, or country with your submission. By emailing us, you're giving **Rad Mag** permission to publish your work in print and online. And don't forget—please ask a parent or guardian before sending anything our way.

# THIS MONTH'S HOMESCHOOL HEROES

Honoring the remarkable grown-ups who turn kitchen tables into classrooms and everyday moments into learning magic.



## HOMESCHOOL TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Homeschool Teacher's Name:  
**Dani**

Homeschool Name:  
**Gutierrez Explorers Academy**

Nominated For:



**Community Cheer Leader:**  
Builds others up faster than a  
LEGO tower.



## HOMESCHOOL TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Homeschool Teacher's Name:  
**Ms. Genny**

Homeschool Name:  
**Pencil Case Eraser Jared**

Nominated For:



**Community Cheer Leader**  
**Teamwork Titan**  
**Leadership Legend**



## HOMESCHOOL TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Homeschool Teacher's Name:  
**Melissa**

Homeschool Name:  
**William's School of Wit & Wisdom**

Highlighted Moment:

**"An unforgettable moment  
was when my mom helped me  
through 1<sup>st</sup> grade.  
It is when I got to dissect a  
flower."**



## HOMESCHOOL TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Homeschool Teacher's Name:  
**Mommy**

Homeschool Name:  
**Kindred International Academy**

Highlighted Moment:

**"Whenever my mom tries to make a  
perfect number line but it has a  
bunch of errors. It's funny."**



## HOMESCHOOL TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Homeschool Teacher's Name:  
**Boss**

Homeschool Name:  
**Hook, Line, and Learning**

Highlighted Moment:

**"My teacher supported my love for  
fishing and incorporated it into  
school."**

**Nominate your  
Awesome Parent for  
Mentor for Homeschool  
Teacher of the Month!**

Send the nomination, a  
photo of your teacher, and  
your school's name to:  
[yokosukahomeschoolers@  
gmail.com](mailto:yokosukahomeschoolers@gmail.com)



**"WRITE, WRITE, WRITE."**

**-COLTON**

What part of the story  
are you most proud of?

*"All of it."*

*-Jared*

*"[Make] every part  
good."*

*-ROY*

*"It is easy to start...but it  
is hard to finish...."*

*-Isaac*

What's one thing you learned about  
yourself as a writer?

*"...I have a good imagination."*

*-Emma W.*

**"ONE TIP FOR THE NEXT GROUP  
OF WRITERS IS TO KEEP  
REVISING & EDITING...BECAUSE  
IT WILL ONLY GET BETTER!"**

**-EMMA S.**

**"IT BECAME A STORY  
THAT I WOULD ACTUALLY  
WANT TO READ."**

**-MICAH**

*"Set goals for yourself."*

*-Kala*

*Words are powerful.  
-Mrs. Joanna*

**"I LIKE TYPING BETTER  
THAN WRITING"**

**-DAVID, 10**

*"Be creative!!!"*

*-Ryan*

What was the  
hardest part about  
writing flash fiction?

*"writing!!!"*

*-Sophie*

*Finish the plan before the  
fun part!*  
*Marie*

*"keep writing!"*

*-Ms. Benny*

**"Be patient  
with your  
story."**

**-Sol**

**"NO PAIN NO GAIN."**

**-JONAH**

*What's one tip you'd  
give to the next group of  
flash fiction writers?*


*"...write a good story."*

*-Rosalyn*

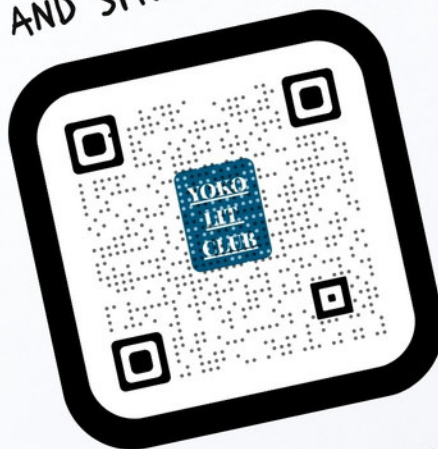
*What's one tip you'd  
give to the next  
group of flash  
fiction writers?*

*"It's easy."*

*-Sao*



😊 DEAR RAD READER,  
THANKS FOR BEING HERE! IF YOU LOVED THIS  
ISSUE, THE DIGITAL VERSION IS JUST A CLICK AWAY—  
COMPLETE WITH EXTRA SPARKLE, ZERO PAPER CUTS,  
AND EASY SHARING SUPERPOWERS.  
SEND IT TO A FRIEND AND SPREAD THE CREATIVITY!



✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧

**P.S.** RAD MAG was created and published by  
the Yokosuka Homeschool Literature +  
Writing Club Members.



# RAD MAG

**FUN TO READ, RAD TO REMEMBER**