

Short stories written based on inspiration from stories read during the term.

Amber [REDACTED] Grade 7

Everything's Going Perfect... but Ends in Disaster!

By Amber [REDACTED]

Laura Brown woke up, and felt a gentle breeze that flowed past her cheek. She heard the birds singing, "Hello, hello, hello, hello," with their beautiful voices. She had woken up in the early hours because she was rippling with excitement, everything seemed pleasantly flavoured with her own exhilaration. The reason was the Christmas party in her cousin Kate's house was occurring that day! Laura adored Christmas parties. The delectable smell of warm gingerbread, the clamour of jubilant voices, the taste of Christmas puddings with their appetizing sweetness, and the fluffy feel of a warm Christmas jumper was lovely. The party was like the deliciousness of a massive cake.

The hours had slowly and painfully dragged by, and finally the time had come to go to the long anticipated party! Laura had a fabulous time, she ate delicious gingerbread, talked to her interesting cousins, and finished eating satisfying cookies with holly wreath icing. When the enjoyable party started to come to a close, Katie presented her guests with party bags. "I wonder what will be in mine", thought Laura. When her opportunity came she was presented with a rose scented package with beautiful butterfly wrapping paper.

Upon opening it, she discovered to her utmost delight that it was a miniature painting kit with three pocket sized tubes of gouache, a miniscule watercolour pallet, and a paint brush. Laura had always wanted to paint.

Laura immediately started to try her hand with a brush. To her relatives and friends surprise, her works of art were extremely professional looking, and she seemed to have natural talent.

One afternoon, when a family acquaintance came over to visit, she discovered one of Laura's paintings hanging on the wall in the hall, and mentioned that Laura should enter some of her artwork in a local competition in the city. Laura and her mother pondered about this, and decided she should make an attempt at it, even if it wasn't a success.

A week later, when the artwork competition results were announced, Laura won the title of 1st place. With added confidence she thought she might as well enter her artwork in the county competition for artwork. "Even if I don't get a single prize", she thought, "there's no harm in trying."

On a warm evening, the results were announced, and Laura achieved a shocking 1st place! By this time, her parents had invested in good quality paints and brushes. She was also excused from

some of her chores. When she used to have had to share a room with her younger sister Charlotte, she now received her own room by herself, because at dinner one evening she had whined, “Charlotte

is always being loud, and I can never concentrate enough to do my art!”

“Oh don’t worry at all,” rushed in Laura’s mother, “she will be moved right after dinner.”

“Yes she definitely will,” agreed her father.

Laura then chanced her luck and entered the highest level county competition. She knew it would be a step up, and maybe impossible to get a prize, but she gave it her best effort anyway. She had won again.

Because she had won many awards, her parents let her skip chores to practice her art. She got away with not doing a single chore. Her sister Charlotte was laden with all Laura’s chores.

“Why do I have to do all Laura’s chores?” Charlotte bitterly complained. “Because she is bringing in a lot of money with all of her prizes, and all you do is read and play,” replied their mother.

A few times for dinner, their mother spent ages cooking an elaborate meal to celebrate an important event. But Laura like she always did, intentionally left most of it on her plate, saying, “To much food in my belly disrupts my painting.”

Sadly for Laura though, her mother boasted about her a lot. One windy spring afternoon, her mother walked up to the mother of a new friend Laura had made, and smugly mentioned, “My daughter is the amazing artist Laura Brown.” Because of this her friend’s mother told her friend to stop playing with Laura, because she didn’t want her child playing with someone who might make her child stuck up and vain.

Laura really was becoming spoilt though, and Charlotte got more and more work until she never had a free moment to spare.

Life was carefree and enjoyable for Laura, her only problem was however, that wherever she went, her mother would boast...and boast...and BOAST about her! She found it excruciatingly embarrassing!

One stormy day, her mother had been particularly embarrassing, boasting, “My daughter’s Laura Brown, My daughter’s Laura Brown the famous artist,” and, “She’s won lots and lots and LOTS of prizes.” non- stop all day long! Laura eventually plucked up enough courage to ask her mother to discontinue her boasting, “If you want to boast all day long, do your own art!” Her mother gave her a cold glare.

Laura ran away from her mother, but in the process she bumped into an elderly lady, and spilled her shopping, “Stupid girl,” her mother and the lady screeched in anger.

Two hours later she was hungry, so decided to go back home. When she went home she met her sister Charlotte at the door. Her sister said, “Gosh, you are in big, big, trouble, and I will never have to do *any* of your chores again. At the table that evening no one spoke to her. And no one would meet her eye.

The End

Blast from the Future

By: H. F. Ellis Grade 8

Preface

Mr. Axelrod even wrote it on his computer that night. It was headed, "December, 7, 2056, Today we did the unimaginable."

"Are you sure this will work?" Said Mr. Callaway as he bent down to pick up the remote.

"Positive" said Mr. Axelrod, as the sliding cabinet revealed a small computer system. He had a look of worry on his face that said the exact opposite of what his mouth said.

"Just don't change anything," said Callaway again, pressing the small button.

"Bomb engaged, Bomb activated." the monotonic computer said

"Get ready for a blast from the future." whispered the man under his breath, as the bomb fell. Let us follow this bomb and see where or rather when, it goes.

A boy darted out of the house letting the door bang behind him, he rounded the corner and went right into a pile of laundry, soap suds, and snow.

"Good heavens child, you gave me a fright." scolded his mother.

"Sorry," said the boy, darting away.

"Walter Allen, where do you think you're going?"

"To...go sledding with my friends."

"Sledding? Really, where is your sled? his mother retorted,

"What's wrong?" asked Walter.

"I'm just tired," said the mother, "they started rationing coffee in early December and I'm all out for the week."

"So... how about those blankets that need a good scrub. I'll grab the water." said Walter quickly, trying to avoid unnecessary chores.

Walter kicked a hunk of snow in the middle of the road, "Ha, some excuse, really, I had nothing better, where am I going? Oh just to the bomb shelter. I can imagine what mother would say, probably "only for emergencies."Well I have an emergency: I'm hungry. When I grow up I'll work for a big company and have enough money to buy all the snacks I want," He said to himself. " Now I should go off to where I really was going, Eleanor is waiting for me."

The door of the bomb shelter fell behind Walter, as he and his sister sat down on the small cot in the corner.

"Well I guess mother took me quite literally because I had to scrub every single blanket", said Walter wallowing in self pity.

"You're sure we should be in the bomb shelter?" said Eleanor.

"Yep, plenty of snacks, and it is warm" said Walter, stuffing another piece of half stale cake in his mouth.

Eleanor looked quizzically at her brother, then walked over to the table that took up half the room, and turned on the radio.

"Snowy skies with no chance of Nazis... No bombing is expected in the next twenty four hours... American ships burned on the attack of Pearl Harbor, by the Japanese..." blared the radio

"Turn to the next station," said Walter.

"Ok." replied Eleanor, switching to a BBC broadcast.

"I'm tired of the same news every day, the Nazis did this, the Japanese did that, on and on and on. We get it, they are bad people doing bad things, I hope the war is over before I get drafted, mother said you no longer have to be twenty one but eighteen." continued Walter.

"I wish we lived in the future where no one hurt each other, but we won't be alive in 2056." said Eleanor, sighing. She was tired of all the air raids, the rations, the food that could hardly pass as food, at school. Yes and school, when it was closed because of bombs, it had been so long.

Eleanor sighed.

"It is funny to think that we were in here just yesterday, bombs were going off." said Walter.

As He was talking, almost as if on cue, the bomb sirens went off; loud and insistent, it came through the open door.

"Bar it quick!" Eleanor yelled over the noise. The second the door was bared a rocketing bomb was heard right over them.

'What just happened."

After the sirens had gone off and the bombs had subsided Eleanor said, "Isn't that odd?"

"What?" asked Walter

"The only bomb was the one that landed on us."

"Interesting," said Walter trying to pry open the door.

"Look," said Eleanor pointing to a round ball the size of a soccer ball, made of some high technology, "Was that there before?"

"Probably dried beans or something," said Walter, still focused on his intention to open the door.

"You're not even looking," said Eleanor as she pulled him away from the door and showed him the 'thing'.

"Wow!" exclaimed Walter, "that's no can of beans," Walter walked over and poked it with his boot, it rolled into the corner.

"We really shouldn't touch it. It isn't ours," warned Eleanor cautiously.

"Oh, who cares, " said Walter, bending down to pick it up.

"I've never seen anything like it." said Eleanor, keeping a safe distance. "It looks like an Atomic bomb."

"How do you know about that, it was just invented?"

"The Radio"

"What's this button? " said Walter, pushing a small round button in the center of the ball.

"Great you broke it," sighed Eleanor.

"I don't think it's broken. look it's in two halves,"

"What's that box with little digits and that extra super smooth slate that looks like glass," said Eleanor edging closer to take a look.

"Don't know, but we could press this button." with that he pushed the most obvious button.

They looked around; everything was the same except for one thing that was out of place.

"Ahh! There is a person in here, how?" Eleanor screamed

"Hello young children." said the man, He was wearing a suit and had a smaller version of the smooth 'slate' if that's what it was.

"Don't try to come any nearer," threatened Walter. "and we will do this," he bent down and pulled off his boot, throwing it at the man."

"Ahhhh!" Eleanor screamed again.

"How...I...Through...you...What." Walter said, stumbling through his words, as he stood tongue tied at the boot on the other side of the man, it had gone right through!

"Young boy, this is called a hologram."

"A holo-who?" asked Eleanor.

"A hologram. It is a projected image of a person, a message on a beam of light. Now before your eyes pop out of your head, I need to tell you something." said the man lowering his voice to a whisper. The children just stared at the effable sight before them.

"Evidently Mr. Calloway was Fitinuous (Fi-teen-us)," said Mr. Axelrod to himself, "1942 is not the best time, he suggested 2020, Nope I said, too much covid. "What about 1942," sure I said, oh well. Now I'm loquinsuiading (lo-queen-swee-ading)."

Eleanor and Walter look at the man with questioning glances.

Walter spoke up "What does, Fitinu..."

"Fitinuos, means infadically right, and loquinsuiading means, talking to one self, and the word evidently means--"

"We know that word, we're not that old," said Eleanor, finally speaking.

"So you're from the future, is that right?" Walter asked.

"Maybe don't say that often, it might change the future." warned the man. Walter nodded.

"My name is Mr. Axelrod, perhaps you have heard of me, scientist, technician, billionaire? All Mr. Axelrod got was blank stares.

Walter picked up the 'tablet' and turned it over, there was a round circle on it like a logo.

"Other side," said Mr. Axelrod. Walter turned it to the black side and pushed the small button. When Walter pressed it there was a photo album. The children looked at the pictures, gadgets, and trees. food, flying cars, instant building houses, everything.

"Technically speaking you're not supposed to see this," Mr. Axelrod said, pulling the iPad out of his hands.

"Now I really wish I could live in the future," said Walter wistfully.

"Well each time has its pros and cons. Meaning good things and bad things. There is war this year, but life is fun and some people wish they lived now. In the future we have ways of communicating through video, and still we have war as well, and we are not perfect. Don't forget the 2020 pandemic that closed schools for a year. And 2047..."

"What happened then?" said Eleanor with enthusiasm.

"No, I've said too much. I should go before anything changes." replied Mr. Axelrod

"Bye, thank you, this was fun, and we won't tell anyone. Also could you tell me if my mother is ok?" Walter said. "Because time travel and stuff.

"Yes she is fine, in fact you guys were hit because of me. I needed a cover for the noise my hologram makes coming through. Well see you later children, and remember the grass isn't always greener on the other side.

The hologram closed and the children stared at each other.

"Walter, Eleanor, thank goodness you were in here when that one bomb fell." their mother yelled down the door, "It's time for dinner where we have tomato soup, and I made it on my new electric range. Oh the things they have these days."

"Coming!" they yelled up.

"I'm so glad mother canned the tomatoes for the winter." said Eleanor.

Back at home Eleanor washed the dishes in a sink, wondering if there would ever be an automatic washer. Walter washed the clothes wondering about automatic washers. They both wondered about what technology was next. Back in his room Walter wondered about the tablet, he began sketching the logo that he remembered on it, a circle with the letter N in it. Then he thought for a few seconds, sketched a quick image, shook his head and threw it all in a bin.

Years passed and they grew up, they got older and had children. Soon the thing that happened in the bomb shelter became a dream. Walter had children who grew up to invent wonderful technology.

One evening Walter went back home to visit his mother and father, he brought his two children, Scarlett and her little brother Teddy.

"What's this father? Asked Scarlett pointing outside to a door enclosed in an alcove.

"That my dear, where me and my family used to hide from bombs,"Teddy's eyes grew round with excitement.

"Let's go look at it." said Mr. Walter Allen.

They slowly walked towards the shelter and opened the creaky old door that had not been opened for 30 years. Inside was cobwebs and all manner of things, but what caught Walters eye was a bin with papers and things; he pulled out the paper on top, a sketch from when he was younger, a logo.

Later that week, Walter walked down his office building.

"Mr. Allen, the boss would like to see you." said a man brushing by.

"On it sir" Walter said. He opened the door into a mahogany furniture covered study "How would you like to see our newest computer company? Called Next," Said the Man, with a hand flare.

Walter looked skeptically at him and said, "I have a better name."

Meanwhile in the future,

"Axelrod, what did you do!" Mr. Calloway yelled just after Mr. Axelrod returned. Mr. Calloway was staring at his phone, it had an apple logo on it.

"So what if grown up Walter ended up segesting the Idea for the name of the new company, Apple." said Axelrod, "Not much of a drastic time changing event. He knew what the company would become if he didn't suggest it".

"A small event! Oh you are not time traveling again." yelled Mr. Calloway "I don't know why you didn't go with 1960. I'm shutting the project down." said Mr. Calloway as the electric door softly closed behind him.

"Oh, and tell Mr. Kohen to invent a slamming door, like the old days. I need some way to defuse my temper." yelled Calloway in the hall. Mr. Axelrod shook his head and sat in his floating chair.

"I do hope nothing else changed," he said.

"Sir," said a flustered girl, pointing to the window "I think you might want to see this"

"Miss. Ophelia, Why is the sky yellow? Call Odd Control sector 34B, Ordered Mr. Axelrod.

The End...

Ellie, grade 7

The Vintage School

Hello, my name is Emma. Today is September 1, 2157. Two years ago I opened the first-ever vintage school. By vintage school, I mean a school just like the schools when my great-great-grandpa was a child. Back then, they had real books with the words printed on paper! They didn't move on a television screen like they are supposed to. And back then, the teachers were men and women, and the kids all went to a school-house together. Now our teachers are robotic, and every kid has one in their house.

Anyway, back to the vintage school. It all started two years ago when I was twelve. My second-cousin Margie's friend Tommy found a real book in his attic. It was about the schools they had so long ago. Tommy shared it with Margie, and she wrote a long letter about it to me. I was very interested in the book, and after a few letters back and forth, I had learned all I needed to know. Her letters had inspired me to the point of longing to reenact this lovely time when children had congregated together to learn. You see, I never had many good friends, and Margie lived too far away for us to see each other very much. Sometimes it was quite lonely being an only child. Naturally, the idea of having a big community and lots of friends was almost overpowering. It was what I had always wanted.

Now, of course there are a few problems. Firstly, where was I going to make a school? There wasn't any room in the house. And where was I going to get the books and materials for the students? And most importantly, who were the students and teacher going to be? There weren't more than a couple of kids for at least twelve miles around.

But I had an even bigger problem. When I told my mom that I wanted to make an old-fashioned school that kids could go to regularly, she put her foot down.

"What a ridiculous idea! Children must each have their very own teacher adjusted to their own mind. That's why we don't do it that way anymore." When I heard her response, I was a little disappointed, but knowing my dad, maybe he would be better? I was right, he was better.

"Hmm... that's an interesting idea. Have you talked to Mom yet?" I told him about my conversation with her. "OK, that won't make it easier. If you're worried about not having enough kids for a school, you could try making a news advertisement. Same goes for books".

I was delighted. I had someone that believed in my idea! So I wrote to Margie right away. She liked it, too! Now, for the newspaper ads... they went something like this:

VINTAGE BOOKS WANTED

Emma Elden wants real books and school materials to start a Vintage school. Any old school books or materials dating

STARTING A VINTAGE SCHOOL

Emma Elden wishes to start a vintage school. She would like participants and a teacher for her school. Any children

back to the 1900's are acceptable. Emma from ages 6-13 are welcome to attend. will for sure accept free, and, possibly, some As for a teacher, she wants a man or Low-price materials. Anyone who is willing woman capable of teaching subjects to contribute please call (573)-493-0928 normally taught at a school. Anyone or send a letter to 3049 Mable Way, Kellmill, who is interested please call (573)-493-0928 or send a letter to 3049 Mable Way, Kellmill, KR 59302.

You see, my parents got the paper every day, and if my ad was accepted, my mom would see it. So my Dad told her everything after I went to bed, and convinced her to let me continue with my plan. She still wasn't happy about it, but at least she didn't bother me.

Now, there was the question of where I was going to set up a school. When I told my dad about it, he called some of his friends, and we decided that if we got enough people to start a school, we would start building a schoolhouse on a field that belonged to nobody. Now that that was settled, I just needed to wait to see if anyone was interested in my school.

It wasn't until a few days later that the phone calls came. Funny thing, no one sent a letter. I was sitting on the couch when the home phone rang. After that, I was practically on the phone all day. Three people offered to be teachers, at least fifty kids wanted to attend, and I had more than enough offers of school materials. Everyone wanted to know the same thing: where the school was going to be, and when it would open. I told everyone that the school would probably open by early September, and that it would be on the west side of Laurel field.

I told my dad everything, and he said that I should have a try-out day where all the kids and teachers came and I could figure out which teacher fits in best. We decided on a date early in August. I called the teachers and students and told them of the arrangements. I also told the people with materials that they could bring their stuff then, and I wrote a letter to Margie. Now, for the building...

That Sunday me and my dad drove to the sight we had chose with some building materials. Every Sunday we worked on the schoolhouse with my dad's friends. By the date of the try-out, it was finished.

The try-out went very smoothly. The teachers where two men and a woman. One of the men was a little too harsh, the other always got too distracted. The woman, who was named Laura Evans, was kind, well-focused, and fit in well with all the students. She got the job.

Lots of people turned up with school materials. I collected all the free ones, but I still was missing some things, so I bought what I needed from the people who were only willing to sell their materials. Now I only had to wait till the semester started...

The first day of the semester dawned bright and clear. When I got to the schoolhouse, there were already kids on the porch, like a nervous swarm of bees, waiting for the bell to ring. They smiled and waved when they saw me. I smiled and waved back. Some of these kids would later be my best friends. We talked until the bell rang, then went inside with the other kids that had gathered. Miss Evans asked us to introduce ourselves, and everyone thanked me for starting the school.

The days and months went by, and my school was a great success. We had some problems with bullies, but otherwise everything went well. Eventually, even my mom started to like my school. Soon she would be baking pies for the special events, and helping in any way possible. Everyone learned a lot, and history was always a big subject, seeing as we were practically living in it!

Everyone's favorite event was the pioneer dance night. We would dress like the pioneers, and dance late into the night like happy butterflies, often inviting each other over for sleepovers.

I was always living in the moment, having lots of fun. I wasn't very good at writing at the time, and if you had told me that I would be writing a true story about it a year and a half later, I probably wouldn't believe you.

THE END

FROM RAGS TO RICHES

It was a windy fall day, about evening, and no one was walking down the frequently toured street, or sitting in the benches under the willow trees. There was no one at all. It was surprising for Paris, whose streets were usually crowded. The wind gave a lonely moan as it whistled through the tree branches, calling up the red and yellow leaves to make miniature tornados of bright colors.

A child, no more than ten, dashed through one of these “tornados,” scattering the leaves across the sidewalk. The wind rippled through her short brown hair, blowing it into her face. She climbed up a flight of steep steps, up to a tall, bleak building. She hurried under a large, gray sign with the words: MISS HUMMEL’S HOME FOR CHILDREN. She skidded to a stop, brown eyes darting in every direction, and quickly slipped around the corner of The Children’s Home. No one saw her. No one knew who she was.

The girl, after rounding the corner, stopped in the safety of the large building, gasping for breath. She leaned up against the brick wall and let herself slide down onto the hard cement. She wiped at her nose with the back of her hand, shrunk into a little ball, and wished the hard times this fall had brought would go away.

The wind picked up, blowing hard and fierce, like it was angry at her. She shivered. The night was creeping upon her. How long could she stay like this? Would she die of cold, or hunger? How many hours until morning? She had never been taught these things. Then again, she had never been taught anything. All she knew was how to stay alive for another day.

She closed her eyes and thought about her dream. It was a simple, sweet one that most children have. A cheery fire, a cozy bed, a warm meal, and a mother, to tuck you in at night, hold you close when thunderstorms come, love you no matter what. A tear trickled down her cheek. It was not a happy tear, nor a sad tear, but a wishing tear. A tear that held a child’s wish. It felt like it held her wish, for as soon as it hit the ground, she became aware of it and sat up straight, wiping her blurry eyes with determination. She would never find her parents. All that the future held for her was a miserable life at Miss Hummel’s Children Home. She knew it.

Instead of going the way she had come, she continued walking down the passageway next to The Children’s Home, until she came to the back of the building. There was another door, less extravagant than the front door. She sighed. Then she knocked.

Knock, knock, knock. Her little taps seemed to echo through the alleyway. She heard footsteps coming to the door, and had the brief thought of running away right now. The door started to open. It was too late.

A boy stood in the doorway, his face downcast, dirty, and grave. “Mirette, where have you been? Miss Hummel’s gonna kill you.”

The boy stood back and let her pass through the doorway. The inside of the building was even more bleak. It was also dirty, too. Brooms, mops, scrubs, and pails were sitting around.

The boy walked over and opened another door. Behind it, about ten more miserable children stood around, flopped over hard beds or sitting on the floor.

“Where have you been?” One older girl, Ines, asked.

Just then they heard the sound of Miss Hummel storming down the hall, slamming doors left and right.

“Mirette! Where is Mirette?! I swear, I’ll make her stay up all night cleaning once I find her!”

It was silent. Completely silent.

“Boy,” one older girl said, shaking her head, “are you in trouble.”

“Listen, kids,” Mirette whispered, scampering to a corner of the room, “you can’t tell her where I am, you hear?”

The door swung open on its creaky hinges, revealing Miss Hummel. Her eyes were slits, and she stood, looking at the children in utter detest. She had light, dirty blonde hair, and a round face. She was not anybody you would want as a parent.

“Which one of you rotten orphans is Mirette?” She barked. Almost everyone pointed at Mirette, standing in the corner.

Her eyes immediately locked on the little girl. She marched forward in three great strides to the end of the room, the kids scurrying out of the giant’s way. She went right up to Mirette and stood over her. Mirette, flat against the wall, looked up into the hideous face of Miss Hummel and could feel the breath hitting against her cheek.

After a second of pure silence, she surveyed the room, obviously searching for someone. Then she turned back to Mirette.

“What did you do with Renee?”

Mirette thought about her actions. She had left him on the sidewalk where they were supposed to be scavenging and had bolted away from him, all the while listening to his screams and cries. Sure, it was hard to leave somebody that was pouring their heart out in screaming, but she had left him for the better. She hoped he knew the way back. A pang of guilt hit her as she realized he didn’t.

In one fluid movement she reached out and seized a handful of Mirette’s clothing. “You left him, didn’t you? And tried to run away? But you had to come back here, see.” She let go of her and turned to face the rest of the poor children, huddled away from the giant tempest that was brewing in the room. “Look at you!” She continued, “Flabby! Disgusting! You wouldn’t be alive if it weren’t for me. None of you ungrateful brats would.” She pointed at Ines and another girl and yelled, “You two! Go get the maggot known as Renee.” The girls sped off. Then she turned to Mirette, who had inched away from her. “I’ll have you for your crime. You’ll stay up cleaning all night long!” Again she grabbed Mirette and dragged her out of the room into the hallway.

But then she stopped, turned around to face the little child in her grasp. “Where is your keep?”

Everyday, Miss Hummel would send them out in pairs of two to find or steal money or edible food from vendors and shops. This particular day Mirette had been paired with Renee, the youngest. She knew this was her lucky chance to get away because Renee couldn’t stop her even if he wanted to. Renee was five, and Mirette was older at nine. Well, they didn’t know their exact ages, but it wasn’t hard to guess.

Mirette looked up at Miss Hummel and barely managed to whimper out, “I gave it to Renee.”

Unfortunately for Mirette, Miss Hummel saw right past the lie. “Fool!” She cried. “No one would give their keep to another child! I know you didn’t, you thick-headed twit brain!” She

dropped Mirette on the ground next to the cleaning supplies. "Now, clean this dump till it shines like a piece of fine silver!"

With that she slammed the door, leaving Mirette alone.

Three or so hours later, it was about midnight. It was completely silent, except for the scraping sounds of Mirette cleaning. No matter how hard she tried, the dirt wouldn't get off the grubby floor. Eventually, she gave up really trying, and scrubbed slowly, her mind ablaze with plans of escape.

Mirette knew very well that it would be a long time before she would be sent again, and when she finally did, it would be with one of the big kids, who had hearts of stone.

The big kids ranged from ages eleven to fourteen - all the fifteen year olds had escaped or been sent to different Children's Home, probably better than the one they were living in now. But Mirette knew she couldn't stand six more years in this prison - she would go insane. So the only other way? To run away. Now.

When everything had been silent for hours, Mirette slipped back into the bedroom. She stepped over dirty orphans whose lives had crumbled into a heap of misery, past the bunks of children who risked falling out of them, and to the back of the room, where she kept her little pile of belongings.

There weren't many. Just a thin sweater and a small little picture of a young man with his arm around a beautiful lady, who was holding a crying baby girl. Her hands gently went over their faces, smoothing any crinkles the night might have brought.

After she had made sure she was ready, Mirette started for the door. With every step she took, the floorboards creaked dangerously. She cringed at every tiny noise they made.

"Mirette, are you trying to run away again?" a voice asked.

Mirette turned around to face a pair of pretty blue eyes. "I'll come back for you, Desiree. I'll come back for all of you."

"Promise?"

"I promise." Then she left.

She crept through the hallway, past Bernard, who was supposed to be keeping her from leaving but had fallen asleep hours ago, and finally out the back door.

It was a chilly night. The cold air blew across her face and stung her eyes. The full moon shone down on her, this little, pale figure standing in a huge world full of dangers. With nothing but the clothes on her back and the faded photograph, Mirette set out to find the one thing that mattered most: A family. And after she had done that, she promised she would find Desiree's, too.

Late the next day, Mirette awoke to hear the sounds of thousands of people's lives. The night before, she had found a dark alleyway to stay the night in. To her knowledge, no one had passed through or seen the pathetic sight: a little girl curled up in a tight ball, trying to keep warm. But now it was morning, and she had decided she would never risk it again and would sleep somewhere where no one could find her.

The first thing to do was to find food. Mirette was a sensible little girl, and knew that she couldn't get through the day without eating something. So she slowly crept out of the alleyway and darted into the street, where she was caught up in the flow of people. After buying some roasted peanuts at a fruit stand, she mingled with the crowd. It felt wonderful to be free in the

world. She felt alive. She smiled and looked around her, but what she saw made her sick. Peering out of an alleyway was thirteen year old Benard, looking mean and angry.

Her heart almost stopped beating. How could they have known she would go this way? How many others were out there? She looked to the left. Another one, Ines, was dashing through the crowd, searching. For her.

She bolted. Darting and weaving around people, running for her life. She didn't stop running. She heard a shout behind her, but couldn't tell if it was Bernard or Ines. Faster and faster, her legs were unstoppable as she flew across the pavement, gaining speed every second, heart racing. She kept running, looking behind her every so often. Finally, when she had run her heart out, she stopped and sat on a bench, heart pounding.

As she gasped for breath, she looked around her. She had gone to more of a rural part of Paris, where the crowds were lessened, like somebody had put them in a sifter, and all the rich people fell through, leaving only the poor families and the shabby businessmen who were scrounging for a penny, trying to milk the people of their money like they were some sort of cow.

"Now hiring!" A voice cried, "calling all talented performers!"

Mirette looked to her left. A man was sitting at a colorful booth, wearing a professional suit. There were humongous letters on a sign next to the booth that looked as if you read them, you would have to speak in a deep, booming voice. Mirette wondered what they said.

She stood up on creaking legs and took a step towards the sign. The man hadn't noticed her. He seemed desperate. She took another step, and felt the hole in her shabby boots. The ground was cold. Only when she crossed over to the sign, did the man notice her.

"Good day," he said gloomily, looking like there was never such a bad day.

"Good day," Mirette repeated curtly. She turned back to the sign and pretended to be reading it. There was no way she would tell him that she couldn't read.

"It is good to see a person, even if they are a child," he continued.

Mirette looked up at him. "You haven't had any business today?"

He gave a short, sad laugh. "No one has come up to this booth except you." He looked her over and raised an eyebrow. "And you are only - let me see, seven?"

"Nine, sir." Mirette said. "I am small for my age."

"Ah," he sighed, "That is the way most people are. Not enough food to go around."

Mirette nodded.

"Do you like my sign?" He asked. "I know, it is interesting wording." Mirette looked at the sign, then back at him. She gave a short nod. "Forgive me, you do not know how to read, do you?" he asked apologetically.

"No, sir."

The man sighed. "I should have known. Well, I suppose you want to hear what it says, don't you?" Without waiting for a response, he leaned forward and read the sign in a clear voice, like he had been reading for his whole life. "Now Hiring! Acrobats and Tight-rope Walkers needed!"

"Tight-rope walkers? What are those?" Mirette asked.

"People who walk on rope that has been stretched from two high things, like buildings or poles. It is a dangerous job, one that you could die from -" He stopped and looked at Mirette, who was looking at him with high interest. "I'm afraid you are too young...besides, I could not stand being blamed for an innocent child's death."

"I wouldn't die, sir, I promise!" Mirette begged him, her face earnest. "Please, just let me try!"

"Well, now..." the man began, but he looked at the sign and sighed - again. "You aren't afraid of anything, are you?" Mirette shook her head and he continued. "You will be, if not today, well, then tomorrow."

"Oh, sir, I promise I'll be better than anybody you've ever hired!"

"I know you will," the man laughed, "because I've never hired anybody." Then, "I'm Mr. Yevs, spelled Y-e-v-s." He held out his hand. Mirette looked at it, not knowing if she should tell him her name. "Don't you know how to shake hands?" Mr. Yevs asked.

Mirette nodded and shook his hand, finally deciding that she could trust him. "I'm Mirette."

"Mirette, huh? Mirette who?"

"Just Mirette."

He nodded and stood up. "Well, Mirette, you've got the job, as long as you can walk on the wire."

Twenty minutes later, Mr. Yevs led her into the back of his house. There was laundry hanging up on cords and flowers knitted themselves around the fence. But in the back of the yard, a wire was stretched between two posts, each about four feet off the ground. Mirette stared.

"This is it." Mr. Yevs said, "are you ready to walk on the wire?"

She nodded and Mr. Yevs helped her climb to the top of one of the posts.

The world seemed different from up there. As soon as she straightened a feeling of familiarity seemed to wash over her. It was like she had been up there all her life. She looked down and saw Mr. Yevs, holding out his hand to her. She took it. Then, she stepped onto the wire.

As soon as she stepped on the wire, she wobbled and almost fell, wildly throwing out one arm to regain balance. Slowly, Mirette began to cross the backyard, from above. Her eyes were locked on her shoes that went up and down in some sort of rhythmic rhyme. She almost fell two more times, but Mr. Yevs held her up, and she made it to the other pole.

"Bravo," Mr. Yevs said, "again?" Mirette took his hand and again she crossed to the other side. She repeated this action seven more times, before Mr. Yevs took his hand away. "I think you are ready to walk by yourself," he declared.

Mirette nodded and tried to walk. It was harder than before, and after she had taken two steps, tumbled off the wire and landed on the ground.

"That is alright," Mr. Yevs said, "we all fall. Believe it or not, this is where all famous tightrope walkers begin. The important thing is that you get back up."

After about an hour of practice, Mr. Yevs said that the lesson was over; it was time to go home. "I suspect you do not have a home. So, In return for you walking on the wire, I will provide you all that you need."

That night, she slept in Mr. Yevs' basement. The next day, she could stand on the wire for five seconds. The day after that, she could walk seven steps without falling. Two weeks later, she could walk the whole wire.

"I will never fall again!" Mirette cried.

"Do not boast," Mr. Yevs warned so sternly that Mirette almost fell.

After a month of practice, Mirette had learned how to cartwheel and do a forward and backward handspring on the wire. Mr. Yevs often said he had never had a student so diligent and eager to learn as she was. Then, as Mirette had just cartwheeled across the wire for Mr. Yevs, he decided the time was right.

"Mirette," he said, "you are good - very good. I mean, you have enough talent to be performing. I think it's time you stepped up and performed for Paris."

"You really mean it?" Mirette gasped.

"Of course I do. I wouldn't have told you if I didn't mean it. Well, do you want to do it?"

"Yes! Yes I do!"

So Mirette, with new hope, began practicing ever harder. For hours at end she walked, cartwheeled, and did various tricks across the wire. She was never content with the ground anymore, and when she told Mr. Yevs that, he said it was the price of a tight-rope walker. Mr. Yevs set up a time for when she would go across from one high building to the other. As much as she was nervous, her heart was beating with excitement.

Finally, after a month and a half of training, the big night finally came. Mirette was standing up on one of the high buildings, listening to Mr. Yevs announce her. His voice boomed through the night. "Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls, Welcome to The Girl On The High Wire, Doing Cartwheels and Other Various Tricks!"

The crowd applauded. The spotlight zoomed up and fell on the rope, stretched between the two buildings. Everyone went silent. Mirette stood on the edge of the building, staring down at the ground fifty feet below her. A rush of nervousness, fear and excitement hit her. She took a deep breath... and stepped out onto the wire. The crowd went wild. Mirette took another step, looking below her. The world was swaying from side to side. She felt dizzy. The crowd waited, anxiously. Another step. *What if she fell?* For a moment, she was paralyzed with fear. Mr. Yevs' voice rang out through her head: "*We all fall. But the important thing is that you get back up.*" But this time, if she fell, it would be the end. Another of Mr. Yevs' sayings came to mind: *You're not afraid of anything, are you? You will be, if not today, well, tomorrow...*" Today was that tomorrow. She thought of Desiree, Renee, Ines, Bernard, and all the other kids who still suffered under Miss Hummel's rule. Another defiant voice said: "*You are the one who can change their stories. You are the one who can do this. All it takes...is a leap of faith....*"

Mirette's eyes flashed. In a blink of an eye she had cartwheeled and leapt to the other side. The crowd roared in appreciation! It seemed like the applause went on for over an hour!

As soon as she crossed to the other building, Mr. Yevs ran up to her, his face eager.

"Mirette!" he cried, "That was wonderful! How did you do that?"

"I don't know..." Mirette said slowly, "I guess I just practiced a lot."

"So many people came! I got rich in one night! Mirette," he continued, "how can I pay you for a show so spectacular?"

"I know what you can do," Mirette told him

"What?"

"You can find new homes for the children living in Miss Hummel's Children's Home."

Mr. Yevs laughed. "You know, somebody once said: 'all's well that ends well.'" He smiled down at her. Mirette smiled back. Their silhouettes stood together, created by the big moon that hung in the sky. It was full, just like their hearts. They had found each other.

One Last Time

Down a peculiar paved street, hardly seen as different from the rest except by the people who live there and know the truth, sat a colony of homes. We enter their world at one of the most perfect times when everyone is calm, serene, and pleasant because of a beautiful night.

That evening was the one you would rush from work to be able to take a lovable walk; breathing in the night air, and practically glowing from the sun's last rays. Everyone would go out.

But the odd thing was that the streets weren't crowded. Actually, they were quite empty, which made it even more wonderful to go out on an evening. It was odd because the neighborhood was quite small, but with plenty of people. And you would think that with many people it would be miserable.

And so, to have to go and work on a rare but usual night like this was a default, and so was forbidden. You see, this neighborhood was different from all the rest. There were rules, many rules. But no leader. The people were one people, and thought little of the outside world where there was so much strife and war.

Everyone, at exactly 7:00 pm, left their house and took a walk. If someone wanted to find someone else, they would find them in no time. Children would never get lost and would come skipping with courses of singing to delight themselves and their elders. But never too loud nor too soft, nor off tune nor too low nor too high. They seemed to know each other, and would sing together as in a choir. Never a note off, nor would someone special get a solo part. The law said they were all special, and not one of them should be higher than the other.

The children were all brought up the same way, and were as respectable and responsible as you could imagine. And what if they did something wrong? Why, that would be terrible. They were required by the rules to stay at home, dejected and sad for their wrong doing. But the next day, it would be all forgotten and life would go on as simple and pleasant as ever.

By now, I'm sure you're all thinking this is a fairy tale Disney movie where everything is wonderful and perfect. I will tell you differently; not everything is perfect, but... in a way, it is. For this place, like I said, is unique. Do not ask me where it is or if it is real. Few people ever find it, though if they do, they never return to the real world.

But let's zoom in on one person in particular.

She strides slowly, smiling at no one, really, as we catch the time on her watch: 7:09. Let me meet someone new today, she thinks, and knows it will happen.

On her nametag it says: Brielle Felis Pax. Everyone has that last name. No one minds, but it's required. Everyone knows it's latin and means peace. No one minds being called peace either. Like I told you, this is a maddeningly strange and wonderful town.

Brielle trods lightly while gazing around her with an unshakable happiness. Ahead of her appears another person. Her smile expanded, if that is even possible, as she approached.

"Pleasant evening." It is the other woman who speaks first. Not as a question, simply just as a statement that they both inwardly agree on. They stand in peaceful silence, with glazed eyes gazing at the vanishing sun one last time. It is a moment that everyone cherishes.

Finally, when the whole sky is on fire, and it seems as if the world could go on that way forever, the sun, giving one last hopeful ray, dips below the horizon.

The first star has already appeared when Brielle turns back to her partner. She notes that her name tag says: Mara Denis Pax.

"The sun, such a magnificent part it has in this play."

Mara turns, "and so well done."

"And the moon," quotes Brielle, barely a whisper. "As it glues us together, with our gratitude." No more is needed to be said. They exchange a sigh, a smile, a laugh, a remarkable yet common moment.

The bells chime: 7:30.

"Till we may meet again," are the words echoed across the land from children and adults alike.

They part and hurry home before the clock strikes eight. No one dares to be out later than that. It's against the law, and everyone respects the law.

At the break of dawn, when the sun dares to gleam its morning light, the people stand on their porches with steaming cups of coffee, and warm tea for the little ones to watch the grand performance. But as the sun gains its usual fury, they hurry inside.

"Must get the gardening done today before it's too hot," Brielle murmurs. She wrestles on her morning gear, then fiddles with the buttons, before pulling on gloves like elephant skin.

The sun rears its head higher to soak up the morning dew, and shine across the plain. Everyone is up and about. Chores are taken care of first thing; another rule, of course. For who wants to play before they work?

Mara comes from the farmer with her two little ones to carry all the goods needed for that day. There is no paying, nor is there any money to pay with. Everyone is as willing and generous as you can imagine. She waves to Brielle, and sets the precious goods down at home to come and help.

The two work side by side in the garden; yanking up determined weeds, and fertilizing the ground soil. Brielle checks on her peonies.

“They're beautiful.”

“Thank you. I try my best.” She hands three to her friend, smiling.

Mara dares not hesitate to take it. That's considered rude and against the rules.

“No, thank you.” She also smiles, laughing.

For breakfast, everyone gathers together in the square. But it's not the square you might expect. It's lush with green grass for the children to play. Beautiful chairs and tables, all the same as the rules require; never getting too hot nor ever wet from the morning dew. The chairs surround a large cooking pot for all, and a one foot stage presents itself on one side for the children's choir.

In the early morning light, mothers are putting together the meal; everyone contributes. The fathers work on farms with their sons, the daughters set the tables while the older ones are taught by their mothers to make food. And the littlest ones help with odd jobs here and there.

When the meal is ready, everyone gathers around. Soft and crunchy loaves of perfectly tanned bread are passed around by the bushel, and mouth watering eggs; one for each person, are served to go on top. Then there's homemade jam, cooked squash with butter and sugar, and sliced tomatoes, cucumbers, and carrots straight from the garden after being washed.

After that, the children get up and sing. They stand on the stage, in an exact line so as to not specialize someone else. Their voices harmonize together in a perfect melody, until the clock strikes nine. Then they romp and run, skip and hop about the square in sheer joy with each other. Their elders talk and smile, nodding their heads and communing as any old friends would.

Finally, the clock strikes 9:30, but wait. I must first tell you, if you are wondering, why the clock strikes between the hour as well as the hour itself. In the real world, clocks only strike the hour. So why does it strike in between? There is only one answer that I can give you; the rules.

So when the clock strikes 9:30, everyone is cleaning up again. There are many dishes to be washed, and much labor in the fields to be finished. But no one minds. It's a part of their everyday life. They hum while they work, or talk, or think, and sometimes have the grandest of times.

When chores are finished, and the sun is directly overhead, meals are prepared inside. Brielle is invited by Mara, along with a good friend; Sue Lane Pax. There is always enough to eat, and plenty left over too.

After the noon day meal, everyone rests for an hour, inside or out. Brielle relaxes on a hammock stretched beneath shady trees with a cold glass of lemonade in hand. While Mara whispers stories to her kids as they dip their feet in an ever flowing stream not far from her.

Later, as the sun hangs low, the children play sports without any competition, as the law says that all should be equal, and the parents flock to watch. Then everyone scurries around; finishing the abandoned chores, and preparing a meal for their family.

And, at exactly 7pm, everyone takes a stroll to watch the sunset.

Brielle meets Mara with a smile.

“Pleasant evening,” this time it’s Brielle.

Then they stand, hand in hand, and watch the sun's spectacular performance. A unique, yet common, yet memorable moment; one last time.

Two Catnappers

By Carolina, Grade 9

One May day, as the tabby cat Ginger and her three kittens walked across the lawn on evening parade, Jenny, the daughter of the village dentist, sauntered up to the house. Quickly looking around to see if anyone was at home, she surreptitiously grabbed Ginger and the kittens. As Jenny slipped the cats in a cardboard box, Ginger violently scratched her across the face.

“Come on Ginger, it’s just me,” Jenny said soothingly.

She did not let go of the box even though blood was running into her eyes. She stubbornly wrestled with the box until the cats were subdued. Taking the box, she casually walked out of the gate, trying to look as if she did this every day of her life.

“Look out for the tabby, Fred, she’s a fighter,” said Jenny, setting the box on a stool.

“I think I’ll be alright. You know I was a dog trainer,” replied Fred skeptically.

“Then you have no idea about cats,” Jenny remarked, touching her face with a wince.

“Trust me. I’ll be okay. How long should we wait for the ransom note?”

“I think Mrs. Jones gets back tonight, so let’s say deliver the note tomorrow afternoon and give her until midnight to pay up. I have to learn how to put a crown on a tooth tomorrow so you’ll be in charge of the cats. I wish my parents didn’t want me to be a dentist. I hate it!”

The next day Fred walked in the room and headed towards the cat box. He thought, *Jenny just doesn’t know about animals. If I could deal with ferocious dogs I can deal with a pussy cat.*

“Kkkkkkkkkkkkaaaaaaaaaa!” yelled Fred.

The cat sprang out of the box the second the lid opened. She hurtled towards the bureau. In the nick of time she twisted in mid air, catapulted off the bureau and, with style, flew onto Fred’s head with claws extended. A blood-curdling shriek was heard all over town as Fred hit the floor with a thud.

As Fred got to his feet, he glowered menacingly at Ginger and growled, “You cat! If you weren’t going to make me rich I would hang you by the tail until you meowed for mercy. In fact, I think I will do a little hanging right now.” Just as he was lunging for the cat, she daintily stepped aside and Fred fell flat on his face. As he sat up, Jenny walked in the door.

“Was that you yelling a second ago? If it was, I can guess the cause,” said Jenny, as she scratched Ginger behind the ears, who immediately began to purr. “She is cute. I wish I could keep her. She just stands up for herself, I respect that.”

Fred grouchily tried to pat Ginger on the head, but she hissed and scratched his hand.

“You don’t pat cats, you scratch them.” Jenny said, patiently.

“That scratch is going to cost Mrs. Jones another one hundred. I’m sick of cats. The sooner we get rid of this tiger in cat form, the happier I’ll be.”

“How much do you think the ransom should be?” wondered Jenny. “I think it should be pretty high considering all the trouble Ginger has caused us.”

“I think it should be at least eight thousand. What I have suffered at the paws of that cat will be one of the great survival stories of the world. But don’t think about me,” replied Fred, striking a noble pose.

“Good advice, I won’t,” Jenny said shortly. “Listen to this poem I made up while I was trying not to watch my Dad drilling a hole in the Mayor’s tooth.” Jenny cleared her throat and began:

The Trouble with Teeth

By Jenny Wendle

*The trouble with teeth is that
They do not always go with your new hat
Your New hat might be Fuschia or as black as a bat
Now your teeth cannot change color
If they are dirty they might be yellow or you could cover
Them with some Dr. Jake’s Pink Teeth Tonic
But in the grand scheme of things sonic
tonic is not the best solution
Just think when you get a new hat
that is a different color
and have all the bother over again.*

“What do you think of it, Fred?”

“Um, er, it’s deeply affecting?” stammered Fred.

“Thank you, now let’s get down to business. How much will the ransom be? I think your suggestion is a little high. What do you say to seven thousand?”

“I think that is completely reasonable,” Fred muttered, still unnerved by the poem. “I can’t wait for tonight.”

“What is so special about tonight?” Jenny asked slyly.

“We can get rid of that cat and I will be rich!” Fred softly shouted.

“You mean we will be rich, right?”

“Well that’s what I meant, of course” said Fred hastily.

Jenny replied, “Okay, good. Now what should the ransom note say? I think It should be along the lines of: ‘Dear Mrs. Jones,’”

“Are you serious? You are going to start a ransom note with ‘Dear Mrs. Jones?’” Fred cut in.

“Well, my mother told me to always be polite,” responded Jenny. “How do you think it should go?”

“I think it should go something along the lines of:

Mrs. Jones,

Have you noticed anything missing? Well if you haven't, we will tell you. Your cats are missing and we are the catnappers! If you want to see your cats alive you must leave \$7,000 under the white birch tree by midnight tonight. If you do, we can assure you of the safe return of your four cats. If you do not choose to leave the money, you have our promise that you will never ever see your cats again.

Sincerely, Two Catnappers

What do you think, Jenny?”

“A bit dramatic, but I think it will be fine. I can deliver it after you write it.”

As Fred added the last flourish to the note, Jenny jumped up, snatched the note, and ran to Mrs. Jones’ house. As soon as Jenny was gone, Fred walked to the telephone and spoke into the receiver,

“Alright, she’ll be here in ten minutes; get the gang together.”

As Jenny ran up to Mrs. Jones’ house she discarded the note, which fell into the ditch. She ran up the steps and dashed into the house and blurted out, “The Infamous Frederick Green is at the Grayson house! Come on, let’s get him and lock him up.” The police, who had been on the alert all day waiting for the summons, jumped to their feet and, with Jenny, bolted to the Grayson house. Just as Jenny and the police arrived, Fred and his gang arrived.

“Sorry Fred, thanks for listening to my poem but I had to do this,” yelled Jenny as the police surrounded Fred and his gang. “I trusted you one too many times. I knew you would try to betray me so I had to betray you first. It turns out I was lucky. I have to admire you as a master criminal who is crafty, but that is the only thing I respect about you.”

“But I trusted you, for a while. You made such a good member of our gang. You were honestly the smartest one,” Fred shouted over the din.

“I trusted you once too, but you betrayed me once before and I never believed you again. I pretended to trust you so I could get my revenge. Have a good time in prison.”

“Nooooooooo!” screamed the Infamous Frederick Green, as the police dragged him to jail.

Serena, Grade 7

The Mimic.

It was late at night, in the June of 2030. Global warming had made Summer evenings always so humid, and the fact that it was raining hard made it worse. If somebody were to squint, they would hardly be able to see a thing through the downpour. But perhaps, if it was the right person, someone who was not supposed to be listening, they would be able to make out two distinct forms – one hunched over in the rain, beleaguered, carrying something; the other tall, and sheltered by the rain under a bridge.

If the imaginary watching person didn't mind getting wet, they could have walked toward the scene, and could have seen that the first man's luggage was a human skeleton – no, not human. A machine. Its whole battered form looked haphazard and unfinished; a legless robotic skeleton with a frightening face occasionally illuminated by lightning to show milky white, bulging eyes.

The bearer of this skeleton frame came to a halt underneath the low bridge, nodding a greeting to the other form, the tall man, who was dressed all in purple. The tall, purple man spoke, and the imaginary person would have had to strain their ears to hear his dialogue:

“Is that it?”

A simple inquiry, usually, but never simple here. The purple man seemed to radiate raw disapproval, asking without words ‘how dare the world have the audacity to exist in my presence? I can squash everyone like a bug, you know that well.’

These unspoken phrases were there in his tone of voice; the other man cringed.

“Yes. The Mimic.”

The purple man made a motion to take the robotic skeleton, lifting it easily and studying the head curiously. He looked entranced with the thing, like it wasn't the most terrible thing on earth. That, the first man could tell, even through the rain, and he felt nervousness crawl up his spine like spiders; he didn't like this man in purple, not at all.

He turned to leave, wanting to get away and seeing no reason to stay, but the purple man called him back. “Remind me of the functions of this wonderful program, sir?”

The first man sighed, hating the tone of the other; it was like a parent speaking to a young child, patronizing. But he, the maker of the Mimic, turned around and began reciting what he had programmed into the metal beast.

“Mimic1 is a program designed to learn from its environment, equipped with technology that allows it to mimic voices and human behavior. Its arms are able to retract and extend to fit the size of any costume, for entertainment purposes.” He paused, considering, and ventured, “I should warn you though. It has exhibited some violent tendencies, especially towards unfamiliar humans– could be dangerous–” “Brilliant. Just

what I need.” The purple man wasn’t looking at the other, still examining the Mimic, so he didn’t see the brief horrified expression that flitted across the face of his acquaintance, and nobody saw the purple man fiddling with the Mimic’s wires and switches, plugging something into it and letting it upload.

“You say it mimics behavior, yes? Then I suppose it should react correctly if I were to plug into it a record, a digital database that contains my very consciousness? You’d better hope so.”

The other remained bitterly and obstinately silent, and the purple man grinned dementedly, seeing that the whatever he had plugged into the Mimic had finished uploading. The Mimic began to move but he restrained it, still speaking, “But the thing is, old friend, I am not a lovely person. You don’t need me to tell you that. Can you imagine what my consciousness would do in a beast such as this? I imagine it would be perfectly destructive. I even installed a voice command system, with my voice.”

The other man was getting tired of the purple one, but should he be concerned about...whatever was being plotted?

“What are you—”

Then the man dressed in purple finally used his inexplicably added voice commands.

“You shouldn’t have angered me there in the past, Edwin Henry. Time for a little test.

Mimic, attack on. Mimic, maim.”

He released his restraints on the Mimic, and it flew forward despite its lack of legs, using its arms to propel itself towards the now running man.

Now, it just so happened that there was a lone teenager, biking around the old bridge that night. He was curious, he had heard whispers of a reluctant, unfair trade that would be taking place there that night. He had heard that there had even had to be threats issued to one of the people involved to make it happen, so the teen was curious as to what would be so valuable. He parked his bike on top of the bridge and stiffened with surprise when he heard voices coming from below.

“...Time for a little test...”

The next thing he heard was the screams of the Mimic’s victim, the one who knew he wouldn’t be the last. He heard the inhuman laughs that echoed from the purple man, and the metallic screeches of the Mimic as it fought off rust in the heavy, lashing rain. And he felt, too, he felt fear as the blood streamed away, felt disgust and horror as the Mimic finished, leaving something that the lone teenager did not want to look at. He ran, utterly horrified.

The night was turning into dawn, and the rain was letting up. The mess on the ground was still there. The police were called by the traumatized discoverers, and an investigation was started. They couldn’t identify the body. But soon, another report of a missing person came around, with a maimed body found bearing the same injuries of

the first. And another one was found. And another one. Don't you know? The purple man will always come back with his destruction and his Mimic, the one that puts his own darkest thoughts into a reality.

Kidnappers of Tennessee

By Eli, Grade 7

November 3, 2017

It all began just a few days after the solar eclipse when my family and I started the journey home from Tennessee. After dark, we stopped at a gas station, where I went inside to look for candy. My mother called me and told me it was time to go.

"Just a minute longer, Mom," I said, and approached the most gigantic lollipop in the world! It must have been a foot wide! What I didn't see, however, was the hand holding the stick from behind a nearby shelf. I reached for the lollipop, but all of a sudden two men grabbed me, raced out the back door, and shoved me into their car! I wasn't scared, because surely, I told myself, someone had seen what had happened and would rescue me. But no one came along, no one except a small jackrabbit that looked up at me, and then hopped into the woods.

The two men tied me up, then jumped into their car and drove for miles and miles, far away from that gas station. I was gagged, tied, and lying uncomfortably at the bottom of the car.

November 4, 2017

Today, the thugs drove over a pothole which jolted me awake. Shocked by the change of landscape; ready for the whole thing to be a bad dream, and expecting to be in my bed, I jumped half a foot into the air and was about to scream, but was quickly subdued by a hard grip on my arm. The stronger of the two men yanked me out of the car.

After staying quiet the whole time, the man wearing a black jacket spoke to the other, "Now what are we gonna do with this kid, Hank?"

"I told you before," the other replied, as he yanked off my gag, "We're gonna charge a ton of money to his rich parents while we keep him hostage in the Rockies."

"The Rockies," I gasped.

Then the man called Hank hit me in the stomach, and said, "Now you jest keep quiet, and nothin' will happen, ya see?" I nodded my head, and we moved on to a rough trail on one of the smaller mountains.

After a laborious climb, they made camp and cooked some canned beans. I was given nothing but a raw carrot, which they threw at me. They laughed when I failed to catch it as it fell into the creek. I was not amused and failed to see anything amusing. Discouraged of help ever coming, I started to wander away from camp, in the hope to find some wild blueberries or fruit, but stopped when I heard the click of a revolver from behind me.

"Now you stay here, and no one gets hurt," Hank declared. "I say you can go fifty feet from this here campfire, but no further." Again, I nodded my head and walked back, crestfallen. He lowered his gun and said to the other man, "Now Bill, keep an eye on that young'un, he might run." He nodded and commanded me to sit down. "Now I'm goin' to go back to the car and write a ransom note," Hank said, "I think I'll say ten thousand dollars for that kid." Bill agreed, and Hank left.

"Keep the fire goin', kid, Bill said, and get wood where I can see ya." I noticed Bill was the less bright of the two, so I instantly formed in my mind a trick I could play on him. I would gather sticks, but I would only gather green ones to throw on the fire. I knew this would put out the fire, while also making a gigantic cloud of black smoke. Hopefully, someone would rescue me. But more likely, I could escape.

I quickly executed my plan, and just as I had guessed, a big ball of black smoke rose into the air. I ran with Bill still coughing behind me. Foolishly, I made fun of him, calling him names as I ran away, not looking where I was going, which was my mistake. I ran into Hank.

I meekly looked up. "That was a very bad idea," he declared, "And you'll pay." Within five minutes, they had me strapped to a tree, and they did the worst torture possible. A pink belly and an Indian burn, all at the same time. I was thrown into a cave, still tied, and I slept for what little remained of that day.

November 5, 2017

I had decided to be as crazy as I could. No matter how ruthless these men were, I knew they just wanted money, so maybe if I annoyed them in the right way, they would let me go without any trouble. As soon as they untied me to eat the next morning, I ran around the campfire running and whooping like a schizophrenic.

"The kid's gone crazy!" Hank exclaimed; for he had returned the night before. "Well, if it's some kind of mental or brain problem, I don't want him dying on us, and neither do you," Bill said. That was a small victory, and I spent the next five hours pretending not to understand, calling their bluffs when they threatened, and faking constant mood swings while uttering gibberish.

At last, they both agreed to let me go, so they strapped me to the top of the car, and drove back to my parent's house in the dead of night. I was asleep but awakened when they untied me from the car and pushed me onto my lawn. They quickly turned around and fled into the night, for I had scared the kidnapers so much that they would never kidnap a child again, or at least

to my knowledge. I turned and went inside, where I told of all my adventures.

Roguen Wheatley

September 22, 2023

Harrison Bergeron

A loud beep was what woke me up at five thirty a.m. I went downstairs, and made a protein shake filled with all sorts of healthy items such as kale, spinach, apples, protein powder, bananas, strawberries, blackberries, and oranges. Then I stepped into the freezing and powdery snow. As I started my jog to the gym I began to shiver and thought if I didn't get there soon I would get a cold. When I got to the gym, I started my workout. While I lift I should probably tell you who I am. My name is Harrison Bergeron. I play for the minor league club Sporting Lisbon but today that might all change. I was invited to a tryout for one of the most elite clubs of all time, Manchester United. Manchester has had some of the greatest players of all time such as David Beckham, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Wayne Rooney. Five and a half hours later I pulled up to Old Trafford. I went into the locker room to lace up my boots and I saw some other players that were very very intimidating. After a few drills, we were ready to do a scrimmage (which is a practice game with your team or another team that does not give you rankings or any benefits of a win or loss). The manager split us up into two groups: offense and defense. I don't know what he told the defense group but he told the offense group that the person who scores the most makes the team.

Eighty-nine minutes later we got a free kick outside of the box. I lined up like I had seen Ronaldo do hundreds of times. When I struck the ball it seemed like it was in slo-mo. It curved

around the wall and knifed its way toward the top corner. I saw the keeper take off and I didn't know if it would make it, but I was praying he didn't save it. An hour later I was sitting on my bed thinking about it. I missed the free kicks and we lost to PKS. I had been outscored and I had not made the team. My entire life's work had gone down the drain in seconds. I decided that if I wanted to have any chance at going pro I better get back out of my sad sap story and start training. Two years later I'm back at the stadium where I missed the freekick that would have gotten me into the Manchester team. I had done a lot in those two years, signing a multi-million dollar deal with Real Madrid. And I had not stopped scoring since then dropping 3 minute hat tricks. Now here I was in the UEFA Final a chance to give the USA its first international title. Against the loaded powerhouse that was Africa with star strikers and the best goalie of all time on the team, I had to get lucky. We went into a Penalty kick shootout after extra time. When I shot that ball I knew it was going in and I turned the other way before it even went in and the roar of the crowd confirmed it.

A couple days later I was back at my house. After I hit the freekick the fans stormed the field and we had to be rushed to the locker room before someone got injured. We had gone crazy in the locker room for about an hour. Then I had showered and drove two hours back to the airport with the rest of my team. The shock of the shower shook me to my core. I hadn't realized how hot it was outside. On the flight back home I sat by my window thinking about the past three years. A lot had happened. My life had gone from awful to awesome back to awful and back to awesome. If anything this experience has taught me that with hard work and dedication, you could become great.

