

The background is a teal-colored door with a classic six-panel design. A decorative wreath of pink lilies with red spots and orange-brown leaves is draped across the door. The text is centered on the door.

House of Stories

Volume One
Part Five

House of Stories

Volume One
Part Five



BOGONG

First published by Bogong Books, 2024.
Copyright © 2024 Bogong Books.

All rights reserved. The copyright of each individual
entry remains with the authors.

Cover & design by Simon Howe.

Published by Bogong Books and
Story Studios Australia
170 Elgin Street
Carlton, VIC 3053

Bogong Books is an imprint of
Melbourne Young Writers' Studio Holdings Pty Ltd.

storystudiosaustralia.com.au

CONTENTS

Foreword	Bonnie McRae & Hannah Nixon	v
Mentor Advice	Writing Mentors	vii
<u>STORIES</u>		
Sally's Secret Spot	Hazel Jackson	2
The Cutthroats, Glory Hunters And Exiles	Mike Uren	2
Timewarper	Orlando Detering	6
Reading Is Magic	Poppy Jones	8
A Strange Day	Savannah Christensen	11
The Secret Of Oceans	Shivangi Kundu	14
The Spirit	Lulu Blythe	17
The Ritual	Zachary Cabacis	19
A Weird Life In This World	Zarish Awan	21
The Dad That Thought He Was A Bird	Leah Cook	24
Meat's Big Adventure	Art Cavanaugh	25
My New Life	Kaydence Hedges	27
The Space Cat Crew And The Fish Tornado	Odette Adeney	30
The Terrible Journey	Twisha Chandramouli	34
A Journey Beyond The Pages	Ava Berman	36

FOREWORD

Bonnie McRae

Welcome to the very first edition of House of Stories! We are so excited to share the mind-blowing talent and effort contained within these pages with you all.

Creation is the most marvellous thing in the world, is it not? One minute a thing doesn't exist, and then, after many, many, dare I say, many, minutes of imagination, exploration and concentration, there it is! This idea, this journey, this channel between writer and cosmos.

I've done my fair share of creating this year. Welcoming my second born into the world was just as magical, stunningly intense and profound as it was with my first. It's probably a weird comparison and I hesitate to write it, but I think you've seen where I'm going with this, so here goes... bringing something completely new into existence, whether it's a story, or a baby, is a huge achievement. It can be painful, exhausting and in the middle of it you just want to scream out 'WHY AM I DOING THIS (AGAIN)?' But it's so totally worth it. So congrats to all you young writers on your creations. And, sorry for my awkward foreword.

Hannah Nixon

House of Stories: A new anthology for our beloved studio, and a concept I'm delighted to see underpinning the work you see reflected here, from our wonderful community of young writers.

We have the imagery of doors, which is so beautifully reflected on each of the four covers that comprise this collection. Doorways give us the anticipation of discovery, the stepping over of thresholds and entering of new places. Creating stories gives us an endless array of doors, choices and opportunities to discover and create. Stories are portals into new worlds, and writing them can take us anywhere!

We also have the imagery of the house, an interior space that we can exist within, a place for our ideas to live and take shape. Stories also give us this, a place to rest and be ourselves.

It is my fervent desire that all of our young writers can hold this discovery close as they develop their craft. Stories take us beyond ourselves, and stories bring us home to ourselves. So, welcome to the very first Volume of House Of Stories, and the many imaginative explorations that have found a home within.

MENTOR ADVICE

Draw your readers in—make them care deeply about your characters. Build tension, raise the stakes, and always show rather than tell. Challenge minds, provoke thought, and above all, trust your unique voice. Most importantly, enjoy the journey of writing. Congratulations to our young writers on this incredible achievement! - *Katherine*

The human brain loves reading about struggles & dramas, so if you want to keep your readers engaged, try to make sure that every chapter has conflict or obstacles of some kind, whether they're big or small. - *Fabian*

Make your stories sweat. Make them stink and fester and ferment and thrum and rattle and sizzle and gallop and twirl and quake and belch until they vibrate off the shelf and into someone's lap. Then do it again! - *Lachy*

Mix it up. Move around. Write different ways, go different places, use different tools. Type, handwrite, sketch, roll dice. Write it, draw it, say it, sing it. Every time you change your scenery, you shake your brain up like a snow globe. Take note how the flakes fall. - *Scod*

First drafts are meant to be messy, wild, and full of magic you haven't fully tamed. That's normal! Write without stopping and without looking back. You'll have your chance to find the gems amidst the chaos. For now, you just need to write. - *Jason*

Just like in real life, stories aren't always linear. They spiral and swirl and loop back on themselves. Mirror this in your writing, and resist thinking in a straight line. You don't always have to start at the beginning! - *Lucinda*

Write the story that you would love to read. The stories that you already love to read. Write them, twist them, change them into something unique and glorious. Ideas do not need to start off as something life-changing. They can start small and end crazy. - *Tilde*

Storytelling can be as much about hospitality as it is about creativity - welcome your reader inside, pull up a chair, assure them of a fine evening of entertainment and then pull the rug out from underneath them when they least expect it. - *Elliot*

The best writers are good writers who revise A LOT. Take time to pause and reflect on what you can improve from each draft, each project. Have writing friends (& insightful mentors wink) whose advice you trust. - *Natasha*

Don't be afraid to be silly or weird with your writing! When you approach writing as a form of exploration and play, rather than a task, you'll uncover so many exciting possibilities. See where your imagination and creativity can take you! - *Kirsty*

Read your work aloud! You might find yourself very surprised by the tonal elements, rhythm, pacing and phrasing that you choose to edit once you've heard your prose (outside of your own head, that is). - *Jules*

House of Stories

Volume One

Part Five

SALLY'S SECRET SPOT

Hazel Jackson

Woosh! The wind blew as I walked up the pebble footpath and stepped onto the deck. I opened the door and shuffled inside.

BANG!!!!

I quickly turned around fast enough to see the lightning fade. I tried to turn on the light but it didn't work. I started to wonder why. Then I heard the lightning again, it was louder this time. A shiver went down my spine. I walked up the stairs and heard noises... *Thump, Bang, Squeak...* I looked around and found... ANIMALS! All sorts of animals. There were monkeys, mice, and even fish and porcupines.

"I love it here!" I exclaimed, bursting with excitement. Soon the house was messy with animals scurrying everywhere, but it was as beautiful as a jungle, with flowers, trees and vines on the inside. On the outside however, it remained gloomy and creepy.

Sally always goes there, she has the key.

Well it is Sally's Secret Spot.

THE CUTTHROATS, GLORY HUNTERS AND EXILES

Mike Uren

Sandar crawled through the dead shrubbery, trying to gain sight of the orcs they'd been pursuing for the last two weeks. He loaded his

rifle, poured the gunpowder in, and looked through the spyglass. He could barely see through an inconvenient bush, so he shimmied to the right. Somewhere down the canyon, he heard a dwarven war cry. Sandar cursed silently. He could hear blades below, but he couldn't get a damned shot. There. Finally. He could see his partner, swamped in orcs, an arrogant look in his eyes. He took quick aim and shot out an orcs brain onto his friend.

“Look at that! That'll take hours to clean out of my pants!” joked Thenir, completely oblivious of the danger he was in.

In that moment, an orc's crude axe connected with his chest, his breastplate saved him, but he was sent reeling. Sandar drew his pistol, and started running down the steep canyon, orc arrows thudding around him. He discharged his pistol, only managing to wound one of the beasts, and drew his short sword. A second blow hit Thenir, this time drawing a spurt of blood.

But as the orc withdrew, an arrow exploded through his chest, shot by a forest dweller. Another small group of orcs roared as they were consumed by a magic inferno. The remaining orcs either turned and bolted like startled sheep, or were cut to shreds by a skillful moon elf.

Sandar reached out a hand, and pulled Thenir up.

“Thank you,” said Sandar awkwardly, dusting off his clothes.

The moon elf asked, “What the hell are you doing in the wasteland?”

Suddenly, an orc came running from a wagon whose horses had broken free when the fire had started near them. It took an arrow to the thigh and dropped to the ground. The moon elf ran at it, drawing her sword.

“Tell me why your here,” she said, pressing a sword to its throat.

The orc chuckled, and Sandar noticed that he was decorated with trophies of gold.

“You cant stop the horde!” it gloated.

Sandar’s stomach turned. The last time he had heard an orc gloating about ‘the horde’, an entire kingdom had been burned down.

“First Oligath will fall, and then the rest of the wall will follow.”

Aralina pressed her sword into the orcs throat.

“So what are you doing here?” asked Sandar, chewing on a piece of cooked orc.

“Hunting warboss Garnic,” replied Valoran. “Before he can get through the wall.”

Aralina shot him a look that could kill.

“What was that orc on about, with that Oligarth, or whatever?” asked Thenir.

“The orcs are headed to Oligath, and if not stopped will burn the last city of the wasteland down,” replied Ghalgar, one of the last wizards.

“Then they need to be warned,” decided Sandar. “The wall needs to stand.”

“And how are you going to do that?” asked Aralina

Sandar paused for a second. “We’ll figure it out.”

“Oligath is here, if the other orc warbands are the same distance away it’ll take them eight hours to get there, knowing how they sleep. If we go on horseback we could get there in six, if things go our way,” said Aralina, pointing to a old map.

“Then lets go.” stated Sandar, swinging onto his horse.

The party made good headway, riding at a trot through the land,

and the orc tracks in the ground grew closer and closer. Despite their aching rears, they rode uninterrupted, and were beginning to think they could just make it.

Until the sixth hour.

Sandar stopped his horse. There was a plume of dust on the horizon, but unlike the ones they'd seen before, this one was getting closer.

"They're trying to delay us," said Aralina. "How do they know we're following them?"

"We probably shouldn't have let half of them go," said Sandar

The warband marched into view. A few dozen orcs brandishing crude weapons and an ogre.

"Nothing hard," said Thenir readying his axe.

The orcs, seeing their quarry raised their weapons and charged.

"We can't waste time" said Aralina, swinging through the orc horde.

Sandar raised his rifle, shooting the ogre in the shoulder, drawing a pistol and gunning down an orc. The ogre staggered back, blood pouring out his ears as the wizard waved his hands and muttered.

Sandar noticed an orc standing out from the rest. He was bigger and more bejewelled. Their warboss. Sandar ran towards him, shortsword in hand, but each blow the orc made jarred him, and soon he was losing. Before the orc could get a killing blow on Sandar, Thenir landed a slash from behind.

The orc dropped to his knees, and the others ran. But there was already thick, black smoke coming from Oligath.

They were too late.

TIMEWARP

Orlando Detering

Prologue

In a large building on a quiet alleyway in New Zealand, lived a scientist hidden away from humanity. He had studied many complicated theories and created many amazing inventions, but had hidden them away from the rest of the world. One day, he was going to test if he could bring two extinct New Zealand wattlebirds to life, a Huia and a South Island Kokako. He had prepared a small bottle especially for them; he called it Living Gas. He had also added a few little...well, big adjustments to the bottle, so they would speak English—so he could communicate with them. They would also read English (he didn't know why he added that, but he thought it could come in handy), and be a little bit smarter than most other birds. It was the moment of truth... but unfortunately, he accidentally tripped, slamming his head against his desk, knocking himself out, and shattering the bottle against the floor. The foul smelling gas wafted through the air.

I tiredly opened my eyes after many years of deep slumber, waking to a dusty old human nest with many curious objects messily lined up on the shelves. I ruffled and cleaned my dusty black feathers. I am Ahurewa (Ah-hu-reh-wah) a Huia, a wattlebird of Aotearoa. As I looked around the room, I noticed that there was a dead human body on the floor (which frightened me) and a fellow bird in the room. I had never seen a bird like this one before; they had wattles like me, but instead of being red they were blue! He also

had a short and stubby beak, which he probably used for cracking open tough seeds and nuts to get the juicy insides.

“Hello, what’s your name, and what species of bird are you?” I asked him.

He responded and said, “My name is Tanemahuta. I am a south island Kōkako of Aotearoa.” We introduced ourselves to each other, and found out that we were both from different parts of Aotearoa. We decided that we needed to figure out where we are, and how to get out of here, but something caught my eye on a human bookshelf, a book labeled: ‘Lost wonders, vanished creatures of Aotearoa’. I could READ! But LOST wonders, VANISHED creatures of AOTEAROA! I immediately launched off, and flapped my wings (ah, how good it felt to reach to the skies), grabbed the book, and immediately flipped my beak through the pages. It said on the first page that it was written on 3/3/2020. That was in the future! Wait, does that mean I could be dead, that the dead body on the floor sacrificed his life to bring me back from the dead? Stop making up crazy theories, I told myself. But that didn’t stop me from checking the book. There were saddlebacks, moas, azdebills, piopios, laughing owls, South island kōkakos (Tanemahuta should know about that) , South island snipes, no, no, no. Then it hit me, realization ripping through my chest like a bullet. Huia became extinct in 1907 , it said in the book. Then it all pieced together in my mind. I was shot and then brought back to life by that dead body and that’s why all I remembered was a sharp burst of pain and everything going black. I called Tanemahuta over and showed him that we were both extinct. Tanemahuta was shocked, firstly because he was extinct and secondly because he could read humanoid writing (you

couldn't blame him).

“We need to get out of here as quickly as possible and somehow de-extinct our species,” I crowed. He agreed and we searched around the lab for an exit. At last we found a cloth covering something. Tanemahuta flew up, pulled the cloth and revealed a large rectangular machine labeled ‘The Timewarper’. It said it could reverse and forward time.

“If we go into it and reverse time to around 1905,” said Tanemahuta excitedly, “We could maybe stop the people who made us extinct and de-extinct our species!”

“You’re a genius” I said as we flew into the timewarper, got all the dials ready and pressed the ‘GO’ button. The timewarper started rumbling, tumbling, jumbling, then spinning and wheezing, gradually getting faster and faster. It felt like we were spinning at the speed of light, my head buzzing like a bees nest. Suddenly everything jerked backwards and the timewarper finally stopped. I dizzily wandered over to the door and gently headbutted it open. My head cleared up slightly and I looked up at the tall Pohutukawas and red pines proudly reaching high up and the delicate bracken growing in the undergrowth. It smelled of life. It smelled of home.

READING IS MAGIC

Poppy Jones

I walked across the bustling path to a little, crowded grass patch outside of a small, brick building. People squealed and jumped up and down. I wondered what was going on, until I looked up

above to see a sign on the building. ‘FIRST MAGICAL LIBRARY’ it stated. I noticed it twinkled a gradient of blue, purple and yellow. I pushed my way to the front of the crowd to see a pastel yellow stage, shining in the morning sunlight. I nudged my round, olive green glasses and saw two figures. There was an old woman with a beautiful, pistachio petticoat on, and a tall, young man in a blue suit. The lady smiled sweetly at me and looked back at the man, I believed her grandson.

“Good morning, everyone, I’m so glad you all could make it to the grand opening of ‘Sparks’ Magical Library!’” the man grinned, nervously. The lady nodded as he went on. “Now, get ready to enter a whole new realm of your favourite books, and take a step into a land of reading!” he put his hands in the air, excitedly. I raised my eyebrows as a loud silence filled the air. “Okay...um...let’s get started!” the guy stuttered, reaching into his small pocket and pulling out a giant pair of gold and purple scissors, angling them to a lavender coloured ribbon in front of the library.

I wondered how he could fit them in such a little space. Screeches and claps started, startling me slightly as the crowd cheered. I was suspicious.

‘What do they mean by a ‘realm’?’ I snapped back to time as people pushed past me, I realised the man had already cut the purple ribbon. I rushed into the building. As soon as I stepped in the once small building, it stretched as far as the eye could see. The hallways were lined with rainbow swirls. I quickly found out that they were portals. The portals were outlined with ivy and had a gold pedestal close in front. I wandered over to one of the portals that didn’t have a long queue, and immediately noticed a glossy plaque above the

swirls. I pushed my toffee-coloured hair back and squinted, reading the sign. ‘HARRY POTTER’, I felt a rush of excitement. I looked at the pedestal again and there was a book, the pages had a thin electric-blue glow. I pressed one of my fingers against the page and walked through the portal. I felt my body go numb as I immediately travelled into a red room.

“Hello?” my voice wobbled. I suddenly fell forward, my glasses falling off. I scavenged for them until I finally grasped them, I placed them on and looked up to see a young boy. He had dark, wispy hair and round glasses like me. He was looking to the side, and I saw a little line of red on his forehead. I got up and looked around, I was in a beige house. My eyes trailed over to a couch with a rather plump man on top, as well as a woman, glaring at the boy and a child next to her, also rather big.

I rubbed my eyes and looked at the boy before, on his forehead was a lighting scar. I gasped; my cheeks felt hot as I remembered who this boy was. It was Harry Potter.

I heard a loud clicking sort of noise and turned around to see letters flying rapidly around the room. The family went wild, screeching at Harry and trying to catch a letter.

“Good luck Harry,” I whispered. He didn’t reply. *‘Of course he couldn’t hear me, what was I thinking!’* I strolled back over to a little red swirl and walked in; a burst of light shone as I entered back into the library.

“So, how was it?” the old lady from before appeared, she smiled.

“Very cool, thank you.” I reassured.

“That’s fabulous! Would you like to buy the book?” She pulled a thick book from behind her back.

“I’d love to!” I nodded.

“Great! Come over with me.” She pulled me to a small desk, dodging the children coming out of the portals. “Now, you’re able to click on a page and transport into that scene. Just be careful, right?” she raised her left eyebrow, her icy blue eyes sparkled. I nodded. ‘*I have a feeling I won’t be very careful*’.

A STRANGE DAY

Savannah Christensen

I woke up to the sound of voices and sat up abruptly in bed.

“Hello?” I called out. “Who’s there?”

It took me a moment to realise that the voices weren’t coming from my bedroom, but from outside. Cautiously, I walked over to my window and realised the window wasn’t there. I cried out in alarm before spotting something above my head that looked like a windowsill. In fact, it *was* a windowsill.

‘I’ve shrunk! How is this possible?’ A million questions raced through my head, but I had no time to think of what the answers might be, because the voices had started up again. They were strange voices; they sounded rather like squawks. I jumped up to get a closer look and hovered in the air for a few seconds before coming slowly back down. I tried again. This time, I stayed in the air for a full minute. ‘I wasn’t actually flying... was I?’ I decided that this must be a strange sort of dream. I *felt* wide awake, but there was no other explanation. So, satisfied with this conclusion, I decided to continue my day as I normally would and see what would happen.

I arrived at school and wandered into the classroom. Emily, one of my peers, screamed as I flew past her into my seat. Her scream attracted the attention of the others in the room, and they all surrounded me. Ashley, another classmate, stared at me in awe. She was an expert on animals and started muttering in what seemed to be foreign language. I couldn't understand her. I realised I was having trouble understanding anyone. She seemed to be saying something about a major discovery, and that she should call the shoesh laper demarktent? Oh, the newspaper department! 'Why would she call them? What could I be?'

When Mrs Baker walked into the classroom, Ashley snatched the teacher's phone out of her dress pocket. The flustered teacher looked confused until Ashely whispered something that nobody could hear. Mrs Baker's blank expression changed to one of disbelief and she started muttering,

"Unbelievable," and "Been extinct for centuries," whilst Ashley made a call.

I rather liked where this dream was going. Soon enough, the people from the newspaper arrived. They were armed with cameras and notebooks. They poked and prodded and photographed me then interviewed my classmates. They took special interest in Ashley and her knowledge of animals. I couldn't understand exactly what she was saying, but a few words here and there seemed familiar. She was telling them all about the history of a creature using a lot of long and complicated words. Then, suddenly, I started growing taller. Everyone gasped as I morphed back into a human being.

"Tom?!" they all exclaimed in unison.

"Hello everyone!" I replied, suddenly understanding them. "This

sure is a weird dream!”

“Um... you’re not dreaming, mate,” my friend John told me. “I can pinch you if you want.”

“Ouch!” I cried. I looked down at my red arm, then back up at the staring students. That’s when I fainted, thinking ‘If my consciousness is really this crazy, I just hope my dreams are sane.’

Twenty-five years later

“What was that!?” I bolted upright in my bed and looked around.

‘That’s strange. I could’ve sworn I heard voices.’

I groped around my bedside table until I felt my glass of water. I tried picking it up, but instead knocked it over.

‘Huh?’ I thought. I wasn’t usually clumsy. I looked down at my hand and gasped. It was covered in feathers! I heard the voices again, more vividly this time and realised they were coming from the window. The voices were strange and sounded like... I couldn’t quite put my finger on it. I tried getting out of bed, but noticed it seemed higher up than before. I cautiously scrambled away from the edge, crushing something in the process. I noticed my bed was covered in gooey yellow and white stuff.

“Yuck.” This was *very* strange, but then again, everything was strange this morning, and I hadn’t even gotten out of bed yet. I took a running jump off the edge of my bed and was surprised to find that I floated down onto the floor. I saw a peculiar object. It was round and had a crack down the middle - things just kept getting weirder and weirder. I walked over to my mirror to look at my reflection and had to look twice to believe what I saw. People always say they do a double take when things surprise them, but

I did a *triple* take. My dad had always told me stories about him changing into some kind of extinct animal, but I had never believed him. That is, until now...

THE SECRET OF OCEANS

Shivangi Kundu

“In the deep dark ocean everything will be so dark and creepy!” Everyone says. But that’s not true. Even deeper than anyone knows, land lies like no other. All the creatures glowed like the sun. The queen of the land was a jellyfish that had yellow tentacles which shone brighter than any other creatures. Her name was Star. The jellyfish ruled fairly and everybody was happy until something life changing happened...

THUD!

The clam of life closed. As soon as its lids touched, the colour drained from every single plant. The animals became see-through. As soon as Star woke up she felt down. She stepped down the stairs all gloomy. All the things she saw were boring, even if she found them interesting before. The food was cooked by the best chefs there were in her palace, and it was her favourite plankton, but she still found the food revolting. The chefs had bought her tender sea cherries but she noticed they were sour.

“This is strange. The fruits are always juicy,” Star muttered to herself. She just had a horrible thought. Star opened the coral handle and slipped through the door. She ran down the stairs two at a time. Star entered the safety room that guarded the most special treasure

of the whole ocean. Star dodged lava balls that protected the clam.

“Oh no!” The yellow as sunshine coloured shell of the clam had been sealed shut, as if it had been closed with the strongest glue in the world. She pulled at it trying to open the giant shell of life. She called out to the guards and all the people in her palace and told them the surprising news.

“So that’s why you found the food disgusting. If you didn’t find it bad, would you have eaten it?” Asked the chef.

“Do you have to know now in an important situation?” Star retorted. “I’m going to Ms. Fish’s library to find a book about how to open the clam again.” She disappeared into a carriage with seahorses pulling it. Star looked out the window. It was dark outside even though it was morning. A few minutes later the carriage came to a halt in front of a shipwreck. Vines wrapped around the historical ship. It was in ruins. As Star stepped inside she saw that the outside was completely different to the inside. A carpet was laid on the ground. There were walls covered with green, blue, pink and purple dots. Along with the shelves of books there were potted rainbow coloured corals. She sighed at the calming sight. Suddenly, all the creatures bowed at the queen.

“Your highness, I didn’t see you come in! May I help you?” Ms. Fish asked.

“Well, you might have noticed that you aren’t that shiny any more. That’s because the clam of life is closed. This is why I’m here to find a book about how to open the clam again,” Star said, which earned few gasps.

“Oh my, what news! I will get a book straight for you,” Ms Fish said. The librarian swam toward a shelf, and then held up an old

book. The cover was torn and its pages were yellow. The queen skimmed the pages and announced that she needed a scale from the octopus guardian and started her way to its lair. The currents there were holding her back. Just then a turtle appeared and showed her how to swim through currents. Armed with the trick, she passed it. She thanked the creature and started diving to the cave she could see far away. Star soon reached the cave, everything silent. She plucked out a scale and started swimming back. But then, the black octopus woke up. The octopus noticed the jellyfish swimming away with his scale! He became outraged. Even if it was the queen, she couldn't take away his scale!

“Hey there, why do you have my scale?”

“Umm the clam of life closed and I need this to open again,” Star avoided eye contact.

“Is that so? Well, let's make a deal. Give me something shiny and you can take the scale. I noticed that everything is sooooo dull. Nothing is shiny,” The octopus sighed. Star reluctantly slipped off her diamond necklace and handed it to the black octopus. The octopus let her go, not even looking at her when Star said goodbye. The octopus was busy looking at the necklace.

A few hours later she reached her castle. Star slipped through the door and into where the clam is. She excitedly put the scale on the shell. With a burst of colours, the city's colour was restored! Star beamed. Star saved her city! She knew what to do if this ever happened again - bring something shiny.

THE SPIRIT

Lulu Blythe

As the chilly winds gushed across the sand dunes of a small beach in Chile, there lived a tiny girl named Elle who lived in an abandoned shack on the end of the coastline. She was thinking about her perished grandmother, and the scarf she'd left Elle. You see, Elle has always wanted to go to Hollywood, but ever since her grandmother got sick, she sort of gave up on the whole idea.

It was a patched, frayed scarf that Elle hadn't laid a finger on her whole life. She sat in her bed, eyeing the scarf cautiously. Suddenly, Elle caught a glimpse of a faint, low light shining on the dust covered scarf. Elle carefully got out of the hefty mattress she slept on every night and, as if she was in slow motion, crept towards the glimmering scarf.

The eerie light shone brighter, illuminating Elle's bedroom. Elle felt a creeping sensation up her back. Things were getting quite peculiar. Was the scarf haunted? Elle had heard myths of people rising from the underworld, but she never thought it could happen in reality! Was this the scene of her grandma coming back from the dead?

Elle reached out her hand to touch the scarf. She felt a cool, fragile feeling going up her back, through her veins, up to her brain. She suddenly felt that the scarf had some connection to her, the kind that won't ever be broken. But before she could think another thought, the scarf started to rise in the air, and Elle gasped dryly. There, standing in front of her, was Elle's (apparently see-through) grandmother. Elle was astonished.

“What are you staring at?” demanded the grandma.

“I - I - I don’t,” stuttered Elle.

“Oh stop that nonsense this instant!” said the grandmother acidly.

“Sorry,” muttered Elle.

“I accept your apology,” declared the grandma.

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart,” said Elle with a little curtsy to make it tip-top. “Now, I have a question for you: How did you get here exactly?” wondered Elle.

“Well, I was sent here of course,” said the grandmother frightfully.

“But why exactly?” said Elle impatiently.

“To give you this, of course,” said the grandma.

The grandmother handed Elle a ticket. She couldn’t believe her eyes! It was a plane ticket to Hollywood! Elle was lost for words. All she could think to do was wrap her hands around her perfectly stubborn ghost-of-a-grandma.

“Well, you need to get to the airport,” said the grandmother in a rush.

Instantly, she took Elle’s hand and dragged her into a tiny, baby-blue car.

“This is our ride,” said the grandma proudly.

“Oo-kay?” said Elle unsurely.

They hopped in the car (Elle rather reluctantly), and drove off into the sunset, starting their adventure to Hollywood, the place where dreams come true.

THE RITUAL

Zachary Cabacis

“It’s finally time.”

I stretch out of my resistant bed, wash my frigid face and head towards my sister’s room. As I push open her door ready to give her a comforting hug, I see my four year old sister standing out on her balcony, her hair fluttering in the breeze as she tightly squishes her teddy.

“Hi big bro,” Katy utters in her squeaky voice as she rushes over to me. “It’s finally time for the annual ritual. It’s celebrated every year on this day to acknowledge the centuries the world has been living!”

“Yeah, yeah, I know Katy, I study this for my project at school.” I reply, affectionately rubbing her head with my palm. “How about we change now and leave early before the area gets too crowded.” I suggest.

“Good idea, bro.”

Twenty minutes later, Katy and I arrive at our destination: The Central Park.

“Wow! Look at this open field Larry, spring really did its job well this year.” Katy states as she spins around in the daisies.

“I know right,” I assure her. “But, you should be focusing on that.”

I point in a certain direction while Katy’s eyes follow my finger movement. In the distance a stone statue stands around a three meter pond filled with beautiful lilies.

“That’s the god, Taizama. He made the world we’re standing on. Legends say the beast, Yudui, is secretly concealed in the statue. If you listen close enough you will be able to hear his roar echoing

through the world. But I don't believe that."

Suddenly, an ear piercing noise breaks the silence. As Katy and I swiftly turn with caution, we spot a three meter line of citizens hoisting flags and crowding around a bongo drum player. "Oh, so that's what's making that noise. But you know what that means, it's starting."

As we crowd around the statue the air starts getting humid and the blood moon creeps out of the clouds. Candles are placed down and we all sing our national anthem. But just as we began the synchronised chanting, an ominous sound echoes through the ground. *ROAR!*

"What was that?" I say to Katy, holding her hand tightly. As I squint my eyes tightly, I see a picture a silhouette of a four legged creature standing in the shadows surrounded by broken pieces of stone. Its pointed teeth grazing against each other and its maroon eyes glowing in the distance. "RUN!" I call out, but it's too late.

Have you ever been to a ritual that goes terribly wrong unleashing an ancient beast named Yudui that leaps onto you swinging its sharp claws at your face leaving you left to bleed?

Well that's what's happening to Katy, an innocent four year old girl living with me, her brother, still experiencing the world. "KATY!" I shout out, rocking her side to side as she lays on sharp ground. As I look back up with tears in my eyes, I notice a vivid, red ruby laying in the ashy dust glistening in the candle lights.

While I hoist up the valuable gem that sits on my palm, I see that Yudui has locked still in the shadows before he slightly backs away from me and Katy. I look at the ruby, then at Yudui who is now been two more feet away from me.

“Huh,” I say to myself, quite puzzled. “It’s like, he’s allergic to it.” I stand up on my two numb legs, wipe Katy’s blood off my hands and stare into death’s eyes.

“It’s all for them, for everyone who lives here, for the citizens, for Katy!” I charge towards the beast; not regretting any of my actions and pounce onto his gruffed fur, releasing all my anger within, slamming the gem into his back....

The next thing I see is a stone figure under me and red haze securing the area. As I hop down off the rocky solid I manage to hear a voice quite familiar, a squeaky voice. “Larry.” My eyes widened. I turn around to see Katy in her bright pink dress with no scars or blood imprinted on her face.

“Katy, is it actually you?” I ask.

“Yeah, big bro. It’s me, your younger sister.”

A WEIRD LIFE IN THIS WORLD

Zarish Awan

Prologue

On a random summer solstice in a dark, misty forest, there was a vampire man and a human woman. They had a baby girl. Her name was Mere Mortals. Her parents had no money. All they had was captivity and a baby. A baby who couldn’t be cared for. They had no idea why they had this damn baby, so they just left the baby alone in the prickly woods. “Vlad, we can’t look after this baby, we have work to do,” the mum said.

“Chelsea, I know we can’t look after this weird baby, so ignore

it and STOP COMPLAINING TO ME!” the father said.

The mother wept in tears.

“Oh, Chelsea I didn’t mean that. It just gave me a headache, you complaining about this baby.” Vlad said apologetically.

Then, in the dark of that summer solstice, after a sudden, the dad died. The mother was flooded in tears. “Oh Mere, please be like your father. Be brave.” the mother said while crying, “these are my last words to you.” Then she sacrificed herself to death.

Chapter One

Then this girl grew to be ten years old. She grew up alone in the jungle with the animals. Mere thought it was fun but others thought that it was scary. Mere didn’t know about her captive parents.

She was half human and half vampire but didn’t know why. She was teased by all folk. She was born with a bad omen. She never remembered the last words her mum said as she was forgetful about her past. She will never know that last talk with her dramatic mum. She never will.

Chapter Two

One day, she went inside a castle. It had two storeys. It was a castle that had belonged to her parents when they were alive.

She went up the stairs and saw a monster. Mere always understood animals having grown up with them.

“It’s okay, it’s okay.” said Mere calmly. The animal let Mere onto the next level which was the lucky last level. One step and she was flying. Mere was flabbergasted and anxious.

Chapter Three

“AAAAAHHHHHHHHH!” screamed Mere as she flew up and up into the sky! She was getting more anxious and anxious. People were cheering for Mere to be gone. “YESSSSSS! THE VAMP IS GONE!” said someone.

Mere got more furious and furious, but she had to be like her dad. Brave and prepared to fight. But Mere felt left out. How would she fight the gang of citizens? She had a way. She mumbled to herself, “Grr, maybe one day I’ll teach them a lesson. Then they will stop being mean to me.”

Chapter Four

“WHY ARE YOU TREATING ME LIKE A JERK?” Mere cried angrily, and the sky crackled with her fury. “I HATE IT! HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF YOU WERE TREATED LIKE A JERK? SAD. SO DON’T DO IT TO ME! I AM TIRED OF BEING CALLED A JERK AND THE VAMP SO STOP!”

After Mere said that big lot in her balloon full of anger, she lost her voice. Everyone felt bad for Mere, so hey apologised to her.

Chapter Five

Mere was quiet as she lost her voice. She really wanted to scream more but she couldn’t.

While she was quiet, she went lower and lower. Once she landed on the ground, she stood up and then fainted. Everyone huddled around Mere. The adults picked Mere up from the ground and took her to the hospital. Mere woke up a few minutes later. “Huh where am I?” she groaned. She finally got her voice back. Everyone told Mere the story...

THE DAD THAT THOUGHT HE WAS A BIRD

Leah Cook

When you think about a weird Dad you would think he was funny, crazy and maybe even liked to dance with you. But my Dad was different, he thought he was a bird.

He never ate with his knife and fork, or even his hands. When he played cricket he tried to fly instead of running, so he always got out. Sometimes he would be outside digging a hole with his feet and trying to find a worm, squawking if he didn't, and eating it if he did.

He would refuse to sleep in a bed and then go outside, find some logs, putting them in a tree and sleep there instead. He thought he was small so he always tried to go through or into small things, but of course he would always get stuck! But worst of all he only wore a weird skirt that looked like a lion's mane and a weird head dress. But nothing on his chest or belly and he never wore shoes or socks, never!

One day I was riding my bike and saw him up a tree, he was a great climber. I got off my bike to see what he was up to now. He tried to fly out of the tree but he just crashed to the ground. He then went over to another tree and climbed it. And then he tried to fly out of that tree, and of course, he crashed. This happened a few more times and then he gave up and went home. I went back home to find mum cooking and Dad outside digging a hole with his feet. We ate dinner and Mum and I got into bed and Dad went outside and slept in a tree.

The next morning Dad was gone, which was sad, but kind of wasn't... Maybe now things can finally be normal around here!

MEAT'S BIG ADVENTURE

Art Cavanaugh

Chapter 1: A Bad Start.

One day, Meat was on board a wooden ship, but he fell off his ship into the freezing ocean. Then his ship sailed off into the fog, leaving him behind. Meat called to a dragon flying over his head to come down and pick him up. When he got onto the dragon he dozed off because he was exhausted.

When Meat woke up, he realised he was not on his ship. So he began an adventure to find his way back to his wooden ship.

Chapter 2: No Way Home.

The dragon dropped Meat at the top of a mountain. Meat decided it would be fun to roll all the way to the bottom. As he was rolling down the mountain, he saw a creepy cave. He was so happy that a rainbow appeared out of the top of his head. He decided to go into the creepy cave and see what he could find.

Inside the cave, he saw a broken down train. Once again, he was so happy. He began to explore the train, when suddenly all of the train doors slammed shut. He tried to open the doors but no matter how hard he tried he couldn't get them to budge.

Meat turned around and saw a skull on the train seat. Meat was paralysed — he felt a bit freaked out.

Chapter 3: Still No Way Home.

When Meat saw the skull, he decided he really needed to get out of there. He started banging on the door, hoping that someone would help him. When nobody came to help, Meat started to look

for another way out.

Chapter 4: You Know...

Meat found a grubby donut lying on the floor and he decided to eat it, because it was the only source of food and he was starving. Then his neck felt really sore, and he fell onto the floor in pain. He felt like he was dying.

Chapter 5: Life or Death.

He woke up, and he looked at the door of the train and it had become huge! He found a little gap where he could try to squeeze through, and he could. He was finally out of the train.

He looked at his arm, and then up at the train, and realised that he was the tiny one, and the train was normal. But he felt fine.

Meat felt the magic from the donut wearing off, and discovered that he was back to his normal size. He walked out of the creepy cave back onto the mountainside.

Chapter 6: Bears.

Two bears were hiding next to the mouth of the cave, and they jumped out at Meat as he emerged. They grabbed him by his hands, and pulled him very tight. He fell unconscious from the pain. When he woke up, he saw the Queen of the Bears and a few more bears. He had no choice but to run for his life.

The bears chased him back up the mountain. Meat didn't know where to hide, or how to get away. He ran all the way to the edge of a very high cliff, and jumped off. He remembered that he jumped off a cliff before, and survived. So he thought he could do it again.

Chapter 7: No More Bears

Meat realised that there were rocks at the bottom of the cliff, and he would not survive this time if he hit the ground. Meat looked around as he was falling and saw a giant crow. He called out to the giant crow to catch him, and it did. The crow's name was Steve. Steve was very fast...too fast...Meat nearly fell off and had to cling on for his life.

Steve found Meat's ship and Meat jumped off his back onto the ship, not knowing how much it would hurt when he landed on the hard wooden deck. Meat got up and hopped all the way to his bed, and fell asleep.

The end.

MY NEW LIFE

Kaydence Hedges

One eerie night, on a full moon's watch, a young boy read a beautiful, ornate book. A candle was lit, bathing the room with a soft yellow glow. A stark contrast to the dark thunder clouds, that unbeknownst to him, were rolling towards the little cottage...though he soon found out. A crack of lightning punched the little home. The devastating blow made the cottage explode, leaving the poor people in it unconscious. In the morning, the little boy, who was reading, came to. He was surprised that he was still alive, lying in the ashes of his black, burnt house.

He looked down at his legs. Were they more pale than before?

He touched his cheeks. Ow! His jaw throbbed in pain. He must've been hit in the face in the explosion. He lightly felt his teeth, just to make sure he didn't lose any. Then he came to his canines. They were long and pointy!

As the sun shifted, a ray of light hit him and it burned his soft pale skin. He rolled to the side of the ray and he felt much better. Suddenly it came to him. He was a vampire!! He waited until night time. Every now and again he would check up on his burn to make sure that it was healing properly. Once it was dark, he tried to turn into a bat, like in the movies. He failed miserably. So he walked to the only place he could think of...the Haunted Mansion.

Now, the Haunted Mansion has that name for a reason. There was once a rich old man, he was the richest in the town actually. He died in his mansion mysteriously. But, to make it weirder, there were three boys who went into that same mansion and never came out. No one found their bodies.

He was standing in front of the towering mansion, reluctant to enter, but he was a vampire now, not a human, so he pulled himself together and entered. As soon as he walked in, he could feel that something was wrong. There was a chill that made him believe this.

Suddenly, a cold, rough hand touched his shoulder. He froze, slowly turning his head...then...

"AAAAaaaAAaaRRrrRrrrRRRrrrGggggggGGGHhhhhH!!" he screamed

"No need to scream, I'm a friend," something said. The figure looked like Frankenstein's monster.

"W-what do you mean, you're a m-m-monster," he said shakily.

"Oh!! You...you're...never mind that." She held out her hand and

he grabbed it. “Well, my name is Arithia,” she said, with a warm smile on her face.

“M-my name is William,” he said.

She took him through a door into a chamber where a giant chandelier swung. The light shone so that he could see there were so many more monsters...it was a monster campout!

There were zombies, werewolves, deep sea creatures, frankenstein monsters, ghosts, and even dragons. It was a home of monsters! But there were no vampires? He did not have long to admire the sight, because Arithia pulled him along swiftly. They rushed up long curving steps into a dimly lit room. A deep, ominous voice rang out.

“You will perish without my protection. You do know that, right? I could help you, but why should I?! Hahaha! You threaten my lifestyle. I am the only vampire. You. Are. A. DISGRACE. You must leave now! Or else, I’ll make you leave!”

“But, he is new,” Arithia said, stammering.

“Oh, a new one. I have not seen one of those in ages. We will keep him, but only until he knows how to protect himself and use his powers...chop-chop, we have work to do.

Now, of course, William had zero idea of what was going on, because he had a crush on Arithia! Arithia led William into a small chamber filled with dummies and punching bags. Torches lined the walls, giving the room a soft glow.

“Go on, show me what you can do. We have the room to ourselves. You’re the only vampire, besides Jacob...I know, I know. He can be a bit...agitated.”

“Agitated is not the right word, no. The right word is mean.” He walked up to a punching bag and gave a sloppy, half-hearted,

wobbly punch.

“Um...that’s...um...well...that was great.” Then, she showed him her punch. She punched it and the whole bag exploded. She looked back at him, a wisp of hair falling over her patched blue face. His jaw dropped.

They went on to train him; Arithia helped him walk up walls, and turn into a bat. Sadly, once William’s training was finished, he needed to leave.

“I must leave!! Bye bye!” he chuckled.

“I will go too,” she said.

“No!”

“Yes.”

“Fine, leave.”

“Bye bye.” They were never seen again.

THE SPACE CAT CREW AND THE FISH TORNADO

Odette Adeney

“Hissssssss!”

“Stop clawing me!”

“Owch!”

“STOP FIGHTING!” Captain Spats cried. Spats was the Space Cat Crew’s fearless leader. Spats was just what a leader should be: tough, full of ideas, dignified, bossy, and brave. The members of the Space Cat Crew were:

Tigerlily. Tigerlily was fun loving, and best friends with Felix.

Cheeno. Cheeno was smart and was always the cat who would come up with clever plans for their missions.

Felix. Felix was mischievous, and best friends with Tigerlily. Whiskers. Whiskers was fat and adored sleeping.

They all lived in space together in a wonderful tower, in the Milky Way star constellation. Ever since they were kittens, they had wanted to protect others and live in space, and that's just what they did!

Now...back to the fight!

"I SAID STOP FIGHTING!" Captain Spats screeched. "Firstly, I'd like to know why you were clawing Whiskers, Tigerlily?!"

"Whiskers ate all the fish flakes!" Tigerlily explained furiously. "Now they're all gone!"

"That's still no reason to attack Whiskers!" Spats replied angrily. "Secondly," the Captain continued, "It's time for your training session, everyone. Get to the gym...NOW!"

As they walked to the basement, where the gym was, Felix got an idea.

"Hey, guys," Felix exclaimed, "why are we doing this?"

"Um...because Spats told us to?" Whiskers asked, looking very confused.

"You're absolutely right, Whiskers," Felix gushed, "BUT he's not here right now! So he's not here to get us in trouble if we skipped our training session. We'll quickly hide and wait 'till the training session is over!"

The cats grinned at each other before racing off to find where to hide.

Whiskers raced off last, accidentally tripping over her own feet in the process, before quickly diving under a chair, knowing that

Spats could come over any minute.

CRASH!

Whiskers jumped higher than a kangaroo on springs and accidentally knocked over the chair.

‘What was that!’ she thought.

WHAM!

CRASH!

BAM!

‘And that!’ Whiskers added, as she quickly ran to a window and looked out.... only to find an asteroid hurtling towards her! She leapt to the ground, dodging the asteroid by centimeters and watched in horror as it plowed through the wall behind her. Whiskers got up and ran to Spats, who was already on the scene with the rest of the cats helping.

“Get into your spaceships, and meet me above headquarters,” Spats ordered calmly.

The cats wasted no time getting into their spaceships, and flew above their cat shaped home...only to find a raging tornado, flinging asteroids it had picked up, absolutely everywhere! WOW!

“This is—this is NOT POSSIBLE!” Cheeno stammered. “This isn’t a tornado from space! This is a tornado from EARTH!”

“Whatever kind of tornado this is...WE’LL STOP IT!” the captain yelled.

“Take that, tornado!” Tigerlily shouted. She pressed a red star-shaped button in her spaceship, and a laser gun sprouted on top of her ship. She pressed another button and a laser shot out! It shot from the gun like a blazing arrow, missed the tornado, and hit a stray asteroid exploding it into a thousand pieces.

“What. Was. THAT!” Felix asked, amazed.

“THAT,” Cheeno explained, “is a new weapon I’ve built into all our spaceships.”

“Well, it’s a good thing we have them!” Spats replied. “We’ll need them to destroy all these asteroids!”

The Space Cats did a good job blasting the asteroids, but it was no use against the tornado, which they discovered was now flinging fish (to the cat’s delight).

‘It must have started at an aquarium down on Earth,’ Cheeno thought. Luckily Spats had a plan.

“Get as many fans as you can and bring them back here,” Spats shouted, “we’ll use them to blow the tornado away!”

The cats wasted no time going back to their HQ and retrieving fans from the wreckage, bringing them back outside, turning them on and aiming them at the tornado.

“I think it’s working!” Felix exclaimed excitedly, as the tornado began to move away. All the cats turned their fans on full power and it moved away quite a lot, before finally colliding into a group of asteroids and dispersing.

The Space Cats cheered loudly.

“I can’t believe we did it!” Cheeno exclaimed joyfully.

“I can,” Tigerlily said, “we ARE a pretty awesome bunch!”

For the rest of the day the space cats played a game Felix had invented, called ‘Catch The Fish’, where they would throw fish the tornado had left behind and try to catch them in their mouths.

“This is great!” Whiskers exclaimed. “If it weren’t for that tornado I would never have been able to eat all these fish!”

THE TERRIBLE JOURNEY

Twisha Chandramouli

“*Beep beep*”. Camper friends Collet, Scarlet and Kate heard the horn of the ship. The ship was loaded with people. Onboard, there were so many cool things like a dinosaur exhibition, and a petting zoo you could pet a grizzly bear or a lion!

Later the girls went to the second floor where there was a basketball court and a swimming pool, with a glass wall which reached up to the roof separating both sides. They played lots of sports such as soccer basket ball and cricket . They also had activities like clay pottery, swimming, comic book making archaeology obstacle courses and 3d printing a self portrait .

Everybody was happy and enjoying their time until there was a big crash.

“Sorry crew we would bumped into something small like a rock.” The co-captin announced. When Collet came out of her room the sunset was mesmerising, but suddenly the boat was sinking! She rushed to the top of the boat and warned everyone on the boat, but it was too late. So many people drowned in the water. Kate saw a familiar face in the water— her Aunty was drowning!

Nearby a fin slid by as the water wrinkles roughly. Kate didn't have much time to make a decision so she just shut her eyes and first thing that came to her mind was her favourite family photo. Her mother Amila, and her father Chris, and her twin sister Charlotte and her older brother Ashtin. Finally she made a decision. She dove in the freezing salty water and grabbed on to her aunt. Sadly, her aunty couldn't make it back. Kate started to weep. Colette swam

to her, grabbing her hand and pulling her on to the lifeboat.

“Are you okay?” Colette asked.

“I’m fine.” Kate said. “What about you?” Before Colette could answer they saw the shark aiming towards the life boat. All of the sudden Colette a helicopter! It let down a ladder for Kate, Collete and the other kid with the to climb. The kid was just five years old and his mother was eaten by the shark. More helicopters started to appear.

In the helicopter, Collete asked the boy his name.

“My name is Bently Saddler.”

Suddenly helicopter hit a tree and crash landed. They got out, but Bentley was terribly injured. There was sudden burst as the helicopter caught on fire. They ran as far as they could. Soon enough they all where pretty far from the crash site. Kate saw light that looked like it could be from a building.

“Are we still in Sydney or somewhere else? Does this place look familiar to anybody?” Kate said. As they walked towards the light they saw some more building and they rejoiced.

Bently spotted a sign that said *Welcome to Perth*. “My aunty lives in perth.” He said. “How about we explore the city and if we have enough luck we might find my aunty house.”

“Sounds great.” Collette said.

As they wandered around the city. Bentley stepped on something, it was a wallet, and it had over thousand dollars inside!

“Wait a minute.” Bently said. “That’s my Aunty’s wallet, the ID matches. Hey, we can find her house by following the address on this card.”

Finally, they found the house. It looked old and rusty, but it

was in good shape. Bently rang the door bell. His aunty opened the door. “Bently what are you doing here? You and your mom are supposed to be on the ship?” his Aunty said. He told her what happened on the boat.

His Aunty was not willing to take care of Colette and Bently all by herself so she decided to get rid of them. So a week went by at Aunty’s house and she came up with a great plan to get rid of them. She took them to a real haunted house. She told Bently and Colette to wait, and she took kate with her. Collette and bently waited for hours together. Kate and Bently’s Aunt went shopping and they had a lot of fun. Then kate asked about Collette and Bently.

“Oh I’m sure they are in good hands.” Replied Aunty.

As time passed Bently got hungry, so they looked for a restaurant, since they had Bently’s Aunt’s wallet to use to pay. After they waited for some time outside the restaurant, until suddenly a rich man walked up to them and asked if they needed help.

“Yes please!” Replied Collette. He took them to his home and contacted his parents and sent them all home and all was well.

A JOURNEY BEYOND THE PAGES

Ava Berman

Lily stretched her legs and yawned. Suddenly, a purple light flew out of a book and surrounded Lily and immediately...she disappeared. Lily took a look around, there were fairy floss clouds and giant blocks of chocolate dirt.

“Bark!” Was that a dog? Lily froze. Behind her she could hear

footsteps, coming closer and closer. Lily gulped. She turned around slowly, and noticed a gingerbread girl. ‘Wait, perhaps this girl could help me get home?’ Lily peered at the girl, she didn’t look too dangerous?

“Miss...Gingerbread?” Lily muttered.

“Call me Grace!” Grace beamed.

“Well...I’m stuck in this crazy world and I’m not sure how to get ou-”

Grace cut in. “To the human world, right? Can I help?”

“Do you know how to get out?” Lily asked.

“I have an idea! Let’s go!” Grace skipped off, Lily stumbling behind her. They walked down the chocolate path.

“Where are we going?” Lily asked.

“To my house, of course! Where else would we get a map?” Grace replied, stopping in front of a gingerbread house.

“A map? For the island?”

“Yes,” Grace replied. Grace walked into a room and unravelled a huge map. “This is the island,” Grace explained, “and this is where we need to go.” She pointed at a corner of the map. “Pop-rock portal?” Lily read out. “Yes, past the chocolate river and candy cane forest. But before that, we need to go through the bubblegum jungle. Let’s go!” Grace announced, strutting out of the gingerbread house, Lily racing behind her.

Grace stopped in front of a huge towering pink jungle “Now, we have to be careful, because in here are the caramel cats” “Caramel cats? That doesn’t sound so bad” Lily wondered “Anyways..” Grace stepped forward into the pink jungle and Lily did the same.

Together they walked through the pink place. A few minutes later, Lily stopped. “Do you hear that?” Lily whispered. “It’s the caramel cats” Grace muttered “Or - the caramel cheetahs.” “CHEETAHS?!” Lily almost screeched. “I thought they were cats!” Lily had a *big* problem with cheetahs. Abruptly the beast pounced at Lily and she *screamed*, running until she could see the end of the jungle! She dashed through it to find herself nearly toppling over a huge river of thick, dark liquid. A few minutes later, Grace ran through, panting. “What’s this stuff?” Lily asked. Grace smiled. “Welcome to the chocolate river!”

“Well, how do we get across?” Lily asked. “How about those?” Grace asked, pointing at a pile of giant marshmallows. “We could put them on the river. I’m sure that they could hold us up!” Grace was already trying to pick up one that was as big as a boat. Lily scurried over, pushing the giant food towards the river. Together Lily and Grace pushed to try and get the marshmallow towards the river. Suddenly, with a PLOP, the marshmallow fell into the deep chocolatey goo and immediately... sank. “Well that didn’t work” Grace said, but Lily had an idea. “Those!” She exclaimed, pointing towards a huge wafer. Grace picked up the huge crumbly wafer. SPLASH! “It worked!” Lily exclaimed and hopped on. “Come on!” She said to Grace. Grace did so and together they drifted away, into a new place.

“We’re here!” Grace said. Lily sat up to a towering view of ginormous candy canes reaching above her. “This is the candy cane forest!” Grace exclaimed. “Come on, let’s go!” She stormed into the forest and Lily followed. “Is there anything bad about this forest?” She

asked. “Well, people do tend to get lost, but don’t worry, I’ve memorised this place!” “Left! No, right!” Grace muttered. “Actually? Just keep walking” This continued for several hours before “Okay, stop for a second, we need to do SOMETHING. Draw a map maybe?” Grace pulled out a piece of paper and a pencil. A few minutes later, she was done. “Okay...” Lily said. “So, this says to go... that way!” They marched off, Lily in the lead until she stopped. “There!” She exclaimed. “I see light! Quick, let’s go!” They sprinted towards the light until they came to a clearing, a purple glow from afar. “We made it out!” Grace cheered. “Now, to that purple light!”

Off Grace and Lily went, walking and talking about everything. Soon they were at a big purple portal. “This is the pop rock portal.” Grace said. “I guess... this is our goodbyes?” Lily was tearing up. So was Grace. Then, she had an idea. “Wait! What if I come with you?” Lily gasped. “Yes, let’s go!” Lily and Grace jumped through the portal and Lily ended back in her room. ‘Wait.. it didn’t work?’ “Hey” Grace exclaimed. “I *cannot* wait to go to school!” Lily smiled, she could only think about the adventures that lay before them.



Exploration. Education. Story.

Story Studios Australia run innovative and fun filled creative writing courses and workshops for children and adults.

Based in a beautiful writing studio in Carlton, our kids programs are aimed at equipping and inspiring young writers with the skills they need to get writing and to develop their storytelling craft. Our creative writing courses are a journey into story, an insight into character and an exploration of ideas and creativity.



Welcome to the House of Stories! Knock three times and step inside. No need to take off your shoes, for behind each door are worlds waiting to be traversed. From tales of the fantastical, dystopian and strange, to stories of action, mystery and more; this four part volume is a portal into imagination, dedication and passion.

The House of Stories is an annual anthology featuring fiction by more than 300 young writers aged 7-18 at Story Studios Australia.

Complete your House of Stories, Volume One, collection with all four parts!