



King's High School

The Junior & Senior
Creative Writing Clubs'
Collaborative Spring Term Anthology:

Fantasy

Potions

by Mya

The position bubbled all different colours,
Reds and greens and gold like a dollar,
It smelt like chocolate,
And honey too,
And what colour now I didn't have a clue,
The texture now was thick and rich,
It seemed ready now, so I flipped the switch,
It was hot and yellow just like the sun,
Now off the hob it started to run,
It trickled down the glass,
The only thing now was to make the cast,
The spell went well, and the dragon came,
But more positions now,
Until we meet again...



The Snow Dragon

by Riddhi

Once there was a girl called Rosie and her best friend Rosetta (they were 11 years old) and they were on holiday in Korea. They were getting ready to go shopping to buy some beautiful outfits for their siblings.

As their taxi came to pick them up, they got a phone call.....

A mysterious voice came out the call and said, "come to the magical mountain". "You only have 1 week or else....." "I will be waiting at the top of the magical mountain and bring some food along the way (especially some rainbow drops)."

Rosie and Rosetta were fearless, so they decided to listen to the mysterious voice. It reminded them of the story Rainbow Magic! It was their favourite book, and they were pumped up when they realised that they will be experiencing something similar.

They kept it a secret until they came back from their journey, or will they come back....

As they were on the way to the mall, they knew that they would have no time to go shopping for their siblings, but it was their chance to get some food that the mysterious voice had requested. This was their first ever journey to be like this!

As they started their journey to the magical mountain, they realised that they didn't know where the magical mountain was! Suddenly.....

"Come towards the mountain full of snow and then you will realise that you know the way."

At least they knew where to go now!

The shopping mall was a long way from the magical mountain, so they called a private jet as it was free!

"We are heading to the magical mountain, are you able to take us there?"

Luckily, he said yes but there was a problem..... The man said that it would take 2 weeks. Rosetta and Rosie told him that they needed to reach in less than a week or it will be too late!

He said sure but he wanted a deal and the deal was he wanted a very special ring for his wife. The girls said sure even though it was a very hard decision but no one else would take them there, so they had no option but to find the ring when they reach to the magical mountains. The man somehow looked like he knew a lot about this.

As they started their journey, they saw beautiful greenery and there were festivals going on. As it was turning night, they got another call and they were wondering if it was the mysterious voice that kept calling them.

"Times ticking you only have a few days left to come!" As they suspected, it was the mysterious voice. They were wondering why the mysterious voice wanted them to come. "Girls it's getting late and I see a hotel so let's stop by there. As the girls finished checking in the hotel they went to bed.

The next morning, they were feeling so relaxed. John (the driver) knocked on their door, and they

were ready to head off to the magical mountains. As they got on the jet John said that it will only take three days due to no air traffic! The girls were so excited that they will find out what's happening. The days went by and it was the day! The day where they will reach the magical mountain. "Okay girls here you are the magical mountain." Rosetta and Rosie were shocked because it looked nothing like they expected! "Thank you for dropping us here", said the girls. "Don't worry, we will find the ring for your wife, and we promise that we will get it."

They climbed up the steep mountains, and they could just feel that they were close by! "It looks like you found me". "I have called you girls here for a very special reason"! The girls were very curious. It was a cute polar bear! The polar bear's name was Snowy. She needed help to go back to the arctic. The only way that was possible if Rosie and Rosetta find a ring! Now everything was making sense because they realised John and Snowy might have a connection together. Hours went by and they found nothing until.....

There was something sparkling in the corner and it was a beautiful diamond ring! They showed Snowy and then....

"Thank you so much girls for all your help you have been very kind to me, I must go now but I hope to see you again on your next journey."

The girls first adventure was a blast, and they hope to meet again.

A Night in Mr. Atrox's Escape Room

by Kashvi

Someone was in his room.

Ansel couldn't sleep properly- he was tossing and turning in bed. Suddenly, a beeping sound from his alarm rang in his ear. He quickly turned it off.

Then Ansel heard a faint growling sound.

His eyes snapped open and he lifted his head off the pillow, staring at the corner of the room where the noise had come from. Nothing was there. His eyes darted around the room. Still nothing.

He let his heartbeat slow down. Probably a nightmare.

Ansel got out of bed and walked towards the window. Outside, the garden seemed untouched by the snow. The sun was beaming, but the warmth was deceptive. He missed the coziness of his bed, but he had to get ready for school. Unwillingly, he dragged himself to the shower.

He dressed quickly and rushed downstairs to grab a slice of toast his mum had made.

"Thanks mum. Love you!" Ansel said.

His mother smiled, pointing at the clock.

"You're going to be late if you don't leave now!"

"Yep, just leaving. Bye!"

"Have a good day!" Her voice trailed off behind him.

Ansel pulled on his scarf and hat and walked down the street, feeling the chill in the air.

When he arrived at school, he pulled on the entrance door, but it didn't move.

Panic crept in. He was worried that he might be late again. Ansel knocked loudly, trying to grab

someone's attention. No one was visible in the corridor. He remembered the last warning he received:

'You will be issued detention if you are late again. We are a school of high standards and expect students to arrive promptly'- Mr. Lauren had said.

He made one last attempt and tugged sharply on the door. It suddenly gave way and swung open.

He stared at it. It seemed broken.

'Did I do that?' he wondered.

No teachers were wandering around, so Ansel slipped into his classroom unnoticed.

Suddenly, a pair of hands grabbed his collar from behind and pulled him backwards. He gave a muffled yell.

"Ow!"

"Shush! The teacher will hear if you're noisy, mate! You missed first period, but it was boring," Jacob whispered.

Ansel grinned at his friend, Jacob - the class clown.

Tess rolled her eyes and continued pretending to study, hiding her phone behind her books. She was the third friend in their group- a social media addict.

"Shush! You're interrupting my favourite lesson." Natasha hissed.

Natasha was a high achiever in every subject, except sports. She struggled with catching balls in netball and scoring in hockey.

"Why are you always looking for trouble,

wherever I find you?" She whispered.

Jacob and Ansel exchanged amused glances.

Together, they were **Club Weirdos**.

Ansel struggled to stay attentive during lessons. His teacher's monotonous tone didn't help. But the four were excited- they had booked an escape room after school.

After rushing off the bus, Club Weirdos arrived 'Mr. Atrox's Escape Rooms'.

They pushed the door open. The walls were scratched, and smudges stained the ceiling. They jumped as a loudspeaker crackled.

"Welcome, to our escape room," a deep voice said. "Make your way to the reception."

At the reception, stood a man with hair hanging over his eyes. He handed them keys and pointed to a screen showing instructions. As Ansel read them, he noticed the man's name tag: **Mr. Atrox**.

After the briefing, they followed him to a room.

Inside, fake fingers hung from the ceiling.

"You'll have sixty minutes to escape." The receptionist said, voice cracking. He left, locking the door behind him.

"Don't they unlock the door for safety?" Natasha questioned.

"Focus on escaping, Natasha, not safety!" Jacob joked.

Ansel began searching for clues. He found nothing – except wolf posters.

"Anyone else got anything?" Ansel called out.

"Nothing."

"Nada."

"I don't think...Wait- I've found something!" Natasha gushed.

She pointed to a hole in the floorboard and pulled it open.

"There's a secret passageway!" Jacob squealed.

They climbed down into a tunnel bathed in artificial lighting. However, their excitement quickly turned into unease.

Ahead, fake bone walls formed a maze. Ansel gulped. Enclosed spaces weren't his best friends.

They walked in the maze until they reached a path splitting into four.

"Let's split up. We'll be quicker." Ansel's voice quivered.

Reluctantly, they murmured agreement.

"I'll go straight." Tess whispered.

"Dibs diagonal." Natasha whimpered.

"Right for me." Jacob swallowed.

"I'll go left." Ansel said.

"Meet back here in fifteen minutes." Natasha added.

As Ansel walked, he occasionally heard a growl-like the one from his bedroom that morning.

His watch beeped suddenly, making him jump out of his skin. He looked at it.

Midnight.

His stomach dropped. They were supposed to finish hours ago.

Why hadn't the game master come?

How had the time pass by so quickly, without them realizing?

Something was wrong.

Then something moved ahead of him.

Yellow eyes stared back.

Ansel ran. Behind him, heavy footsteps thundered.

He reached his friends and Natasha scolded him.

"Honestly-" Natasha started.

"RUN!" Ansel shouted.

Then they heard the growl.

They climbed back to main floor. Candle lights flickered around them. Ansel knew this all wasn't part of the game anymore.

He grabbed a chair, ready to batter the door down.

But, in front of him was a mirror, and with a sharp gasp, he realized.

There weren't four living things in the room.

There were five.

A huge wolf stood behind them. Its breath smelled rotten. Grey fur stuck out in patches, some areas had thinner tufts of hair.

It rose onto its hind legs.

Ansel connected the posters on the wall to the creature. How it only came out after midnight.

"It's a werewolf." He whispered with disbelief.

It advanced. Ansel threw the chair at it, but it only continued, angrier.

Then Tess held out a candle and the creature recoiled and ran.

"Candles?- Of course!" Ansel exclaimed. "The burnt fur -It's scared of fire!"

"If we gather enough candles..." Jacob said.

"We can scare it away." Tess and Natasha finished.

"I have a plan," Ansel whispered.

Wary of Mr. Atrox sabotaging their plan, Ansel explained in a hushed voice, hiding from the cameras. They each held a candle.

Soon, Mr. Atrox entered.

In the light, Ansel saw his bloodshot eyes and cracked lips. Ansel was disgusted by him. His man had so easily led them to what could have been their death without a second thought.

Looking at his friends, Ansel held up his finger to his mouth to suggest silence.

Then the four friends rushed behind Mr. Atrox, and he turned around, shocked. They forced him back to the corner of the room -towards the werewolf

Ansel risked a glance behind his shoulder. The door was open.

They could escape.

But suddenly, before the friends could escape,

Ansel felt a tug on his shoulder, pushing him to the ground, and making the air escape his lungs.

Mr. Atrox ran for the exit.

The werewolf turned to Ansel, and for a moment, his heart stopped. Ansel watched as its large eyes glazed over him, the creature dripping saliva. But instead of attacking him, it ran past.

Suddenly, screams echoed outside.

Ansel stood and looked out – instantly regretting doing so.

Outside was a bloodied battlefield. Blood was stained across the carpet, and the werewolf stood over Mr. Atrox's pale and lifeless body.

There was a gasp from Tess, and Ansel felt sick. Despite everything Mr. Atrox had done to them, they never wanted this.

Ansel already knew why the werewolf had chosen Mr. Atrox first- it wanted to get revenge for how long it had been trapped.

The werewolf suddenly lifted its head and turned around, the dark of its eyes laying on Ansel. His blood ran cold. There was no way past the beast. It was much more agile than them.

The werewolf raised its claws to attack, poised. Then it fell to the ground, a tranquilizer dart stuck in its neck.

"What the-" Jacob began.

Police officers rushed inside, shouting orders. Forensic scientists ran to Mr. Atrox's body.

Then Ansel felt arms wrap around him.

"Ansel!" His mum cried.

Tears pricked Ansel's eyes.

"I called the escape room but nobody answered. So I called the police-" She sobbed.

"Mum!" Ansel hugged her back. It felt so good to see her.

Eventually, Ansel turned back to his friends.

He looked at them now. They hadn't given up on fighting, and they had made it through alive. They had survived. That was the most important thing. Then they whooped and grinned.

"Club Weirdos for the win!" They shouted.

However, deep in his stomach, Ansel still had unanswered questions about the werewolf. About Mr. Atrox. Were those bones and fingers in the escape room real, from previous victims perhaps? And how had the werewolf been in his bedroom one second when he heard the growling sound, then mysteriously disappeared? Could it teleport? Was there was more to this mystery then it seemed?



Surviving Paradise

by Gabrielle

The sound of waves filled the air as we travelled across the seas in search of somewhere to find refuge from our pursuers. Okay, I will start from the beginning. My name is Draco Wilkins. My family, and I were travelling across the archipelago to go into hiding. We were being hunted down by the government's agents because my family were different and magical. This made the government scared that people like us are a danger to their power. However, unlike my family, I am not magic, but I decided to go into hiding with them. All right, back to the story.

We had been travelling for days, and we were tired and hungry. Suddenly, an island seemed to rise out of the ocean, and our hearts were full of joy at the sight of land. This sight gave us newfound strength, and we paddled faster than the dolphins who leapt out of the water.

We were on the island, there was land! We set off at once to make camp and explore our newfound hide out. Along my journey across our newfound island, I saw countless good things about the island such as the wide variety of fruits and the many springs of clean water to drink from. I thought that this would be a delightful place for us to stay until we were safe. On my way back from exploring, I saw the strangest sight of my life: what seemed to be a rabbit with a unicorn horn sprouting out of its forehead. I stared in dumbstruck disbelief as I had never seen anything like it. As soon as it saw me, it came closer to investigate, but when I reached out my hand, it sprinted to the safety of the trees. When I was about to set off again, it returned and this time approached closer. It stopped, as if contemplating whether it should leave. However, it kept coming until it was in touching distance. I reached out my hand in wonder and stroked its furry head.

After the encounter, I wandered back to the rest of my family. They had already found a sensible and what seemed like a safe place to make camp.

We were woken the next day by the sound of an earthquake: we were hungry. We split up into groups to search for food. I went with my little sister, Peg and my parents set off together. Peg and I travelled to the south of the island to fish. Neither of us were skilful fishers nor did we manage to catch any fish. When in the distance, we heard a far-off wailing roar. The rabbit-like creature exploded out of the bushes and leaped into the safety of my arms. He was trembling so much that it took all my willpower not to drop him. The roar echoed again and the creature in my arms shook like a leaf. We instantly dropped our fishing nets and bravely ventured into the unknown forest. We had to travel through a myriad of strange creatures and it was truly magical.

"I want to call him Snowcorn," exclaimed Peg.

"Snowcorn?" I questioned.

"He looks like snow and he has a unicorn horn! Okay?!" She replied angrily.

"Okay, Snowcorn it is." I conceded.

There was an immense variety of sounds that travelled through the mythical forest. The trees turned us around multiple times, but the wailing roar kept us on track until we came to a massive cave with a gaping mouth. Peg whimpered at the sight of it and squeezed Snowcorn with all her might as if she would never let go. I inhaled a deep breath and taking one last look at the outside world, I ventured in with Peg and Snowcorn.

The cave was pitch black and I could not see a

thing. I gripped Peg's hand tightly as we shuffled through the dark, moist cave. After what felt like hours of walking, we came towards a clearing, where we heard noises. Peeking in, I could see the cause of all the commotion: a dragon. A real-life dragon. Right in front of us, but something was wrong. There were men surrounding it and since it was only a baby, it could not defend itself. It was shoved in a bag as well as all the other unhatched eggs. They were stealing the eggs! In another cave we heard the mother dragon roar. The men made a quick escape, and we were about to follow when the mother appeared. We snuck away quietly: there was only one option, get the eggs back and return them to the mother dragon. We just had to catch the thieves before they got on their ship.

The men already had a huge headstart, so to catch up with them would mean sprinting. Peg and I didn't waste a minute; we were off like missiles. Snowcorn bounded in front of us, leading the way.

It was only a matter of time before we were at the beach. We needed a plan. Snowcorn would distract them with Peg, and I would free every animal I saw. It was a simple, but what seemed like an effective strategy.

It was all going to plan, and I was halfway through freeing the animals when the men returned with Peg and Snowcorn. They had been captured! I sprinted to the safety of the trees. Snowcorn somehow managed to wriggle out of the man's grasp and sprinted away. The mysterious men packed all the animals that they had stolen into the boat, and they locked Peg in one of the rooms. Then they left, probably to find more magical animals. I felt something rubbing against my hand and I started. However, it was just Snowcorn. We ventured out into the open. Snowcorn in the lead with incredible senses to



Extract from Centuries Ago

by Dulcie

notice the smallest of movements or sounds. I stood in front of the door, my heart pounding.

“Peg! Peg are you there?” I whispered urgently.

“I’m here! Get me out!” She replied.

I could hear the fear in her voice, but the door was locked and I couldn’t open it without the key. I looked around desperately for anything useful. My eyes fell on Snowcorn, his careful, watchful eyes told me that everything was going to be okay. I stepped back and as Snowcorn watched the door intently, he started to glow! I watched in awe but didn’t make a sound. As suddenly as it started, it stopped and the door opened with a pop. Peg! She fell into my arms, but the reunion was short lived.

“The animals!” Peg hissed.

One by one the latches popped open until we were surrounded by a swarm of animals escaping the boat. The last cage contained the dragons. The hatched one was shivering in the back of its cage, wailing pitifully. The unhatched eggs lay coldly on the floor of the cage. We knew that we had little time as dragon eggs can’t survive more than two hours away from their warm nest and we had already used up one hour. We each grasped two eggs and the baby dragon (after lots of persuasion) attached itself to my back.

We had only just entered the forest when we heard a shout of frustration from behind us. We kept up the pace, and the forest flew past us and there we were, back at the mouth of the cave. We ventured in cautiously, before breaking into a run until we arrived at the clearing. We placed the eggs and baby dragon down, escaping to avoid the mother dragon.

We still had business to deal with. We needed to stop the men before they captured more creatures. After a long thought process, we had a plan. We were going to make it seem like there were no animals on the island. Snowcorn ran to the rest of his species and collectively they managed to gather every animal on the island (including the dragons) to a hidden cave. At the same time, Peg and I gathered our family in the same place. The men searched the whole island but left the island the next day empty handed. After that, Peg and I had a lot of explaining to do to our family as to what was happening.

After we had been on the island for around a year, we decided that it was time to go home. There were many heartfelt goodbyes (especially to Snowcorn) and then we departed. As we sailed away on the boat that we first arrived on, I looked back at what had been our home for a year and I took a mental picture so that I could remember it forever.

When we arrived back to the city, we were met with incredible news: the old government was overthrown, the new government removed all the prejudiced rules, and governed the country fairly. This was how a country should be led.

But before her stood whom she originally thought long dead – her father, with his wheelbarrow in tow, laden with dirt and compost and other paraphernalia. His teeth were as clean as they’d ever been – tinted yellow at the gum – and his hooded eyes still gazed upon everything and nothing at all. Indeed, he could not see, but he could feel, and when he reached out his callused, bony fingers and brushed her cheek, he let out a pleased breath. She was still young and tender, with curls that bounced like a spring and hydrated, full lips. She had wonderfully green eyes, like her departed mother, but her father did not know that, and neither did she. She recalled how he used to smile at her when he came back home, no matter how bad the work that day was. It was the same smile he had on now.

And then he was fading into the darkness, fading, fading, and waving goodbye just as he did on her first day of school. He was blending into the background, but she wasn’t ready for him to be background noise, and if he did end up so, she would follow. But then he was gone, gone without a trace, gone and she was left alone, alone in the darkness

once

again.

I awoke with a start, jerking forwards into the dirt. Oh, the headache! My first thought related to the splitting pain in my temple. I pressed my callused hands hard into them and when I pulled

them back, a tinted red liquid outlined my nails. *Blood...but why is it red?*

Red blood was for mortal humans, so it should certainly not be in my body. But then again...my wings would not retract, and my talons were split through the middle. When I brushed my fingers along my shoulder blade, the same red blood stained the tips of them. Was I bleeding? Was I human? Or was I the inflictor? I prayed for the second, as if the first was indeed true, my worst fear would have come to life.

Once I gathered enough strength to stand, I came to the realisation that I hadn’t an inkling of where I was. I decided not to panic, not yet, as panic never helped anybody. I was patting myself down hastily, when I felt a slight bump in the back pocket of my overcoat. A letter. It was in a beautifully crafted envelope with a crimson wax seal. I could barely keep my hands still, they were shaking crazily, but I somehow managed to rip apart the intricately detailed paper.

We regret to inform you of your termination.

No.

No, no, no.

It had to be a mistake. Right? They couldn’t have found out. I hid the evidence. I hid it. I did, I’m certain! It was centuries ago. Centuries...

I realised then. It was not a mistake.

They wanted me gone.

Extract from *The L*

by Rhiannon

The sea roars at the cliff, thrashing against the sturdy rock. I waddle out of my muddy burrow and peer over the edge of the cliff face. I see many gannets and other sea birds making a large racket over the sea's ferocious attacks. The rain pours over our heads just to make sure we all get wet one way or another. The sea bashes against the rocks again. It feels like the heart of the earth is pounding. As I waddle, my small brown foot slips in the mud and off the cliff. I tumble down towards the sea along the side of the cliff. Eventually, the water engulfs me, and I swirl around in the water over and over again until I end up being pushed away from the cliff. Away from my burrow. Away from my home.

I bob up and down on the surface of the water, soaked to the skin. My downy fluff will never dry here. Other seabirds fly overhead calling to each other and diving for fish. Other puffins are swimming about ready for a shoal to approach. I wish I was old enough to fly. A wave looms over my head and crashes down on top of me, pushing me below the water's surface. This keeps happening repeatedly for hours. I begin to tire of struggling to the surface and there are no cliffs in sight. Then the fog begins to settle.

Suddenly, I hear a loud bell dingy away in the distance. I twist my head round to my left and stare for a good few seconds. A shape starts to appear, first a darkening of the fog, then lines gradually appear, giving it a crisp outline. As it inches ever so closer, realisation takes hold as my brain floods with the thought of what I've found. Or more accurately what found me. Pirates!

The boat continues its steady pace as it glides past me along the water's surface. Then out of the blue, a ladder comes hurtling towards me from above, nearly taking me out and then landing next to me. I put my wing onto the ladder and began climbing. It was my only chance. I would probably drown otherwise. I clamber up the ladder, my foot slipping on every other rung. When I eventually reach the top of the ladder, I look around the deck of the boat. It's crammed full of a variety of bird life. There are gannets and pigeons and extremely colourful birds that I've never even seen before. I stare in awe at their vibrant feathers until I hear a deafening caw from my right which makes me bolt upright, my feathers on edge.

Then there are footsteps, but every other step made a slightly different noise. I felt intimidated and concerned about what was going to happen to me. A large crow then appears and steps in front of all the other birds on deck. He towers over me and lets out a jolly caw.

"Arrrr! What ye be doing on my boat?" queried the crow.

"I'm lost," I squeaked, "do you know where home is?"

"Home? Well surely here be you're home now then" the crow told me, "My boat the Marine Crane picks up all sorts of strays from all over the feathered seas."

"I'm not a stray" I commented, defensively.

"Well, if ye be not a stray, then we have no need to rescue ye."

"Ok, maybe I am a stray I don't know. All I know is I'm lost and I'm cold and I'm wet and I'm tired!"

"Ah, well that be expected if ye been floating about on the glorious sea for a long, long time" the crow stated understandingly, "does ye have a name?"

"I'm Puff"

"Arrrrr, Puff, I be Captain Jack. Welcome to the crew!"

I step forward with vague pride brimming up inside of me. I get to work straight away. Mopping the floor and sitting in the crow's nest. I learn how to navigate using the stars and how to catch fish. It was a very big day!

Catching fish was always a favourite being a seabird. I end up staying a long time on the Marine Crane with Captain Jack and his crew. I grew up on the boat and sailed most of the way around the world. The crew who at first were intimidating became my closest family and friends. Every day, I went out diving with Gordon the gannet, then I helped navigate with Luna the Macaw and at every dinner time, I would help the chef Dobby the dodo to make amazing food and every night I curled up on my hammock and rocked to sleep. I loved my life on that ship, and I never wanted it to end. However, all good things come to an end.

The rain poured creating a sound like thunder on deck. My hammock jumped up and down like a dolphin when it leaps out of the water just more violent. I leap out of my hammock with a bruised wing, but I can still fly so I'll be fine. The marine crane suddenly turns violently to the right, knocking me over as I lose my balance. The rain gets heavier. Noises start appearing through the rain. Shouts and squawks start to flood through the deafening cacophony of a thunderstorm. I fly up the stairs and out onto deck. The visibility is low and the noises are louder. One of the voices is Captain Jack.

"We be nearly at the North Pole at this rate. There be no land for a long while yet." He crowed.

A blinding light shoots down from the sky immediately followed by the clouds rumbling with hunger. The Marine Crane bursts into flames. I slip and slide across deck as all control disappears and we crash into a large block of ice, cracking her in half right through the middle. I tumble down into the icy waters and the current sweeps me away. I get dragged through ice and taken to open water where I spot creatures I've never seen before. Large creatures some white with big heads others mainly looking like a gathering of colourful lights. I start to struggle to hold my breath. I bash and thrash to escape the current and gradually drift to the surface where I erupt out like lava from a volcano.



Untitled

by Eva

The knight walked slowly up the steep, craggy hillside; rocks jutted out of the verdant grass like a giant breaking free of its cage. She carefully wound her way through the boggy ground, avoiding the puddles of black mud, her armor creaking slightly as she walked. She paused in the shadow of a cliff, and high above; she saw the pale beige of the crumbled wall of the castle, nestled securely on the cliffside. Securing her sword in its sheath at her hip, she approached the cliff; she eyed the dark rock for a moment, working out the best route. Before with a small hop that made her armor clank, she began clambering up with swift, sure movements.

The cliff wasn't quite as easy to climb as she'd thought, full of loose rocks and uneven cracks, but she persevered until she scrambled ungainly over the edge. With a soft sigh, she stood, drawing her sword, eyes darting around for signs of movement. Then her gaze rose to the imposing castle before her. It's bricks' a mixture of grey stone and beige concrete, from where restorations had been attempted. She approached slowly, before pausing at the very edge of the wall. She glanced down at the fallen, crumbled rock beneath her feet, then up. This was one of the few castle walls that was mostly intact, though the cracks and dips in the wall undermined the attempt at discouraging intruders to climb over to enter. She didn't particularly want to put her weapon away, so as she sheathed it, she shifted the knife in her belt so she could grab it easily if it was needed during the climb.

The climb up the castle wall was easier than the cliff, and as she swung over crenellated ramparts onto the chem de ronde. She immediately drew her sword once more and drew her knife in her

off hand. She walked quickly to the edge of the chem de ronde, where it met a wooden door leading up to the only standing tower remaining. She stood silently in the shadows; there was no movement. She considered briefly entering the castle in earnest, exploring the dark, crumbling rooms and hallways that made up the ancient fortress. She quickly disposed of that idea, well aware of the dangers of exploring the unknown, deigning instead to wait in the shadows, still and silent, watching the darkness creep across the stone. She did not know precisely how long she waited, only that the sun, that had once risen so high in the azure sky, now only just crested the peaks of the mountains in the distance. But her patience was rewarded as she saw a spark of movement, a flicker of fire at the far west corner of the castle, within the courtyard.

Her eyes were scratchy from tiredness, and she blinked a few times before focusing on the disturbance. She quickly realized it was not fire, but a reflection of the waning sun off a shiny object that had since stilled. She shifted ever so slightly and noticed a certain shimmer where the reflection had been. What appeared to be plain, roughened stone was just a bit smoother, just a bit shinier than it should be. She cast her eyes around the area, noting the continuing smoothness that stretched out to form a shape that spanned across what she had assumed to be the far west wall next to the tower. Excitement glimmered in her chest, and she shifted her hand on the hilt of her sword, where it had stiffened from the stillness. Her eyes strained as she squinted, trying to discern more details; she took a step closer, ducking beneath the castellations.

Briefly wishing for eyes higher on her head, she rose slightly so she could peer down at what she

was sure had to be the creature she had been searching for. She slowly sheathed her knife in favor of resting a hand between the castellations and leaning forwards slightly in an attempt at bettering her vision. She failed. Her hand slipped on some loose rock; she had been too focused on the creature to notice, and it dropped onto the rocks below. She froze, all sense leaving her, her stiff limbs unable to bend her away from the clear gap, her head in the open. She saw the large, amber eyes open, and grey ears pricked. She watched, eyes wide in amazement as the creature she'd been straining to find revealed itself with dreadful ease.

The line of rocks at the bottom of the wall flicked out into a lashing tail. The rough serrated edge at about the middle of the wall pulled away into spikes along the back of the creature, the rocks in front stretching out into a pair of vast, claw-tipped wings. Finally, a neck and head unfolded from the shadows of the tower, where darker rock merged with light. The head was separated from the long, muscular neck by a crest of spikes behind the ears, which were diamond shaped and pricked in her direction. Dread pumped her heart and fear made her shiver as the creature, the dragon, took it's time to stretch out that neck; it's oval-shaped head tilted sideways as it yawned, revealing a gaping maw filled with at least three rows of sharp, serrated teeth, before it finally turned in her direction. Sense finally came to her, but she stumbled in ducking, and her eyes met the amber that turned gold as the last remnants of the sunlight reflected against them.

She froze once more, but not from fear. She marveled at the magnificence of the creature before her as it watched her with age-old eyes

filled with wisdom. It gave a quiet huff, identical puffs of smoke mushrooming from its slitted nostrils. Its wings stretched out as its gaze flicked away from her, launching herself into the sky, graceful despite it's great size. She watched it fly away, still in awe of the beauty, and sheathed her sword. The bulking shape of the dragon soared smoothly over the mountains, ducking beneath the peaks as the final rays of sun disappeared beyond the rocks.

Stories in the Letters

by Jess

A select few letters written by Corrie Mascher to Tanya Mascher on the famous expedition to the Chocenj Islands during the 3rd reinvention of the world, evenzaq.

5th of September 4075

Dear Tanya,

I am writing from base. Grandfather sends his regards. I don't have much time to write. We are going unicorn hunting today. My first time! They are calling me; I must go.

Love from

Corrie

12th of December 4075

Dear Tanya,

Sorry I haven't written in a few months, but I have some news. Grandfather is dead. He was killed by a unicorn. He was stabbed by the poisonous horn through the chest. I have left base now and me and the others are on our way to the saleas island to slay and eat the banner dragon. You know, the one from our old story book father used to read us. the most powerful dragon possible... that can eat an army of trolls in an afternoon. Yes well, with that lovely thought I shall have to go, we are plan making.

Love from

Corrie

3rd of January 4076

Dear Tanya,

We have arrived on dragon's island. Do you remember the story about the banner dragon eating the lion, the warrior? he was a warrior, but the people said he wasn't brave, so he went to sleigh the dragon and eat it because it has magic flesh that makes anyone 10000 times as brave as they were before. I never believed this story, but it was grandfathers dying wish that I prove this tall tale true. I personally think that we shall all die on this mission, but the lads are insistent that I take it seriously for grandfathers' sake. I miss you Tanya, ever so much. Write back to me sometime, will you?

Love from

Corrie

30th of January 4076

Dear Tanya,

I have so far met two dragons in my lifetime. Sam, when we were 6 and... the banner dragon. We have not sleighed him yet, but my dreams are forever haunted by the screeches of unicorns, even serpentine unicorns! It catches its prey while they sleep and devourers then slowly while they still live. Why, only yesterday I saw the half-eaten leg of a shrapnel deer rotting on the floor. We are next.

Love from

Corrie

8th of March 4076

Dear Tanya,

We are going slowly mad out here. How I wish we were in base. There is no proper food out here. Instead, we have been surviving on a diet of squirmers eggs and... grass. I can see you laughing but I'm not joking! There is nothing else to eat in this wretched place. In other news, Soden mysteriously disappeared yesterday. He said he was going to find food but- hang on. Oh, my lord. I just found Sodens body on the ground. Must have been a berswar. He has marks all down his side. I must go tell the others. We must leave at once if there are berswars inhabiting the area. You may think it strange that my first instinct when I find a body is to write to you, but, though you live all the way across the kraken sea, I love you more than anything else. You are my sister after all. And I know you must be bored out of your mind now that you have finished all the books mother bought you. If anything happened to you... let's not go down that path in this letter. We are scheduled to find and end the beast tomorrow. Wish me luck!

Love from

Corrie

PS, why did you not reply to my earlier letters? Please do, I need to know that we are not the only creatures here. I am sending the messenger phoenix almost every week now, but perhaps he has the wrong address. I shall have a word with him.

9th of March 4076

Dear Tanya,

We have done it! We have sleighed the beast! But it was not without sacrifice. We lost many noble warriors to the monster, and I am lucky to be alive. I stood before it as it flapped its terrible indestructible wings at me, its skin is impenetrable and its roar is deafening, but this immortal thing has an Achilles heal, water. I battled the dragon, and though my finest sword flung of off it like a toothpick, I managed to ease it away from its Lear and into the kraken sea, where I watched as it turned to dust and was carried away to be devoured by krakens. I can see you dancing around the room and yelling the news up to father excitedly. How is father by the way? Last I saw of him he was in bed, sick. Has he gotten better? Anyways, we are heading back to base tomorrow and maybe, when this quest to find another land for our species is over... we can meet again. I saw you in a dream I had last night. You were 10 again, killing imaginary beasts with your wooden sword. Dorsenv says that females can't be soldiers, but he is wrong. You trump me in every aspect on the battlefield. Tonight, however, we shall feast on banner dragon flesh!

Love from

Corrie

23rd of June 4076

Dear Tanya,

We have arrived in base again. It was a long treacherous journey through the rushing river of Gorik and the forbidden Forrest of galensaq, but we made it. And let me tell you, I have never been so happy to see proper food in my life! And it was delicious. Though, it was no match for banner dragon flesh. Oh, and it does not make you 10000 times braver. That's just an old wife's tale. But it has made me stronger. I can lift the strongest in our group with ease and he me now. But Tanya, this letter does not come without sorrow. Due to some... issues with the boat (namely it was eaten by mermaids) we are unable to return home for 3 full moons, so I shall not see you or father for 3 full moons. I assume nothing interesting will happen between then and now, and I am running out of paper, so I shall not write during that time.

Love from

Corrie

1st of November 4076

Dear Tanya,

We are off! The boat set sail this morning! I shall be with you before the week is out! I must say, I am a little curios as to why that you have not replied yet. Perhaps you have run out of phoenix stamps. Oh well, I shall have something better than a letter soon. Oh, that rhymes! Everything is wonderful on the good ship corrie, and it shall only get better Once we have arrived!

Love from

Corrie

Dear Corrie,

We regret to tell you that your sister Tanya perished in an earthquake on the 20th of June 4075. We are sincerely sorry for your loss.

Kind regards

The Kasfun earthquake society.

Dear Tanya,

This is my last letter to you. I have just received news that you are dead, so I have been sending my letters to no one all this time. I can't believe it. It's been 2 years since you perished and I haven't noticed. Goodbye Tanya.

Love from

Corrie



Extract from The Girl on Thin Ice

by Isabelle

MONDAY

Today was miserable. I had been strictly told that my necklace was not part of my pristine school uniform. I had even been sent to the headmistress, who told me this was my last warning until I got a detention. No one knew the power of this necklace, only me. Right now, I don't think I can continue to lie. It is like having a bag of rocks balanced on your back. It will topple any minute.

TUESDAY

I got a detention. I expected it, but it still stung. Apparently, I was on thin ice. I mean, I always have been, but still, did she have to say that? My dad didn't really care his reaction was exactly this "just keep up the hard work, uh, don't skip school and all the rest of it."

I had to admit, that was the answer I was expecting. He wasn't the 'you should try harder and get those grades up' type of dad. He was the type of dad who said, 'it's okay you'll do better next time'. I won't have to deal with my mum; she was on some sort of business trip. But she wouldn't care anyway, so now I just have to wait to see what happens. I am really starting to struggle with the whole necklace thing. People keep on asking me why I wear it all the time, where it came from, and even more questions. It is like being in front of the high court. When will I crack?



Flight

by Ellie

Flight:

I remember a story my mother used to tell, about the day, a while after I was born, that she dropped me. Most mother's stories of dropping children include trips to A&E but not mine. Mine included a mother who thought she was crazy and a magical child.

She carried me for a short amount of time, eight months. She told me that she saw the midwife's eyes widen and that she watched as she me rushed from the room. My mother told me I had always been special, since the day I was born (but you cannot ask a mother to be objective about her own child). I was born different and will always be different.

The hospital told my mother I had not developed properly and that I would not survive more than a few hours. But I am right here, writing this. I am something of a miracle you could say.

I have the battle scars from being premature. I cannot walk. Not without aid. A wheelchair is how I move around. People stare at a wheelchair, even when they know why, people bully a wheelchair. Even when we are friends for years. People think I am fragile or something to hide from the world. But I am just as capable as anyone else, anyone else who can run and climb and jump and dance. Because I have something they do not. I have flight.

Flight is a beautiful thing, crazy as it may seem. That one day, the one day a mother dropped her child and that child was me. My mother, tired and weary with the exhaustion of childbirth and the awful guilt that had been keeping her up at night. The thought that her baby, her miracle

child, was anything but perfect had been walking down the stairs when she tripped and fell, she told me she had looked down to find me, but I was nowhere to be seen. Then she looked up.

With modern technology you would have thought they would have known I would come out wrong, but they had no idea until the day I decided I wanted to come into this harsh, judging world, full of bullies who love to hurt people like me.

There are some things I have not done or had that other people do. I have never had a boyfriend or a first kiss or even a crush. To be honest, I am not sure I want to have any of those things. Although my legs do not cause me pain, people staring does. You would think that I would have got used to it by now but no, it still hurts, and I think it always will. People stare all too much already and I do not need any more. Coming to school with a boy at my side would be a death trap.

On the contrary, I can do and have things they cannot. As I have mentioned, I can fly. I am quite proud of the fact. I cannot fly in public, that is one of the many non-loophole-able rules my mother and I agreed on years ago. I have a father, but he is barely worth mentioning. He thought my mother was mad and was fantasising me being better than I was. He left before I could make my first memory of him.

I have attempted to fly in front of a friend before, but it didn't end well for me or them. I try not to think about it. She could not deal with the knowledge of magic, and my best friend's mind broke under the pressure of knowing.

I think that is enough backstory and it is time to get to the reason I am here writing this. It is all because of one day. The day that lasted a lifetime. The day I met the beast-like creature with a loving heart. The creature just like me.

I found the egg on the tenth day of the tenth month, nestled in a pile of fallen leaves. I woke that day with a feeling of joy – I had, had another dream of flying – and then I was on my way to school. A fifteen-minute wheel. But I knew that the bullies would be around the corner waiting for the sound of my wheels. I was alone that day, or so I thought. I unclipped my muscle-less legs from my chair and rose, the brilliant feeling alone was enough to sustain a grown man for a day, but the movement was something else entirely. The wind in your hair and the joy on your face. I flew into that pile of leaves that day only to find a headache and something else. I had always loved flying into piles of leaves and other such things. Now it earned its keep in my heart as something I will always wonder about. If I had not the love for that sensation, who would have found him. Who would have taken him and assumingly thrown him into a museum or zoo. But it was me. I crashed into his eggshell. I picked his egg up (his embryo inside, just a millimetre from my fingertips. I rushed back to my chair; still airborne, I reached for something to rap the egg in, something to keep it warm. A scarf my mother used to use. Perfect, I thought as I wrapped the egg in the cloth. And wheeled as fast as my chair could back home.

My mother was in the kitchen when I arrived, her bread knife glinting in the light. I sped over to her; my wheels wet from the soaking ramp – soggy after another autumn downpour. I said, "I need a lamp, box and a towel!"

"Slow down! What for? Dry your wheels before you go on the carpet!" she replied. As I flew from my seat and into the living room. I found what I needed and with the egg still close to my chest, set up for it. Explaining to my mother all the while. She said once we were done, "I know what is in that egg." And I asked her what she meant. She told me she studied mythology as a young adult but never thought to tell me. She said it was a griffin.

The creature took three long days until it cracked, three days of explaining and waiting and worrying. The first crack was small, barely bigger than a paperclip but soon, hour by hour turned into minute by minute and then we could see fur. Fur and feathers. Fur, feathers and little green eyes. Those eyes were piercing and raw with primal emotion. The griffin hatched that evening, he was wet and dishevelled with wing held close for warmth. We knew from the moment he pulled his way out using only his little beak. He was like me. No legs, only wings.

His name was Leo. Leo grew faster than anything I had seen and anything I will see. We made an unbreakable bond that would last a lifetime. He had the tail and legs of a lion, the beak and wings of a bird and a heart and soul of gold.

But Leo's gift was also a curse.

I found myself wondering why he had no legs, why he was like me, if it was me. Could I have held his shell and hurt him, disturbed him at an important point? Or was it luck, fate bringing the two of us together the only two who would understand each other.

Sometime later:

The thing is, I know now Leo wasn't a griffin. The egg only ever housed a bird that never breathed. Leo didn't exist. He never did and I never flew; it was how I coped with everything. My best friend who "I told about my gift, and she went crazy" really moved away because that is what she thought of me – crazy. My mother thought it was just a phase and that it was normal (I made up her story of dropping me too). The bullies thought I was weak and strange.

And my father thought me a failure. I think that I am human and that everyone knows that when hurt we do, say, or make up silly things like having a pet griffin to make ourselves feel better or more normal.

Let me tell you now as someone who experienced hate and unkindness because of my chair, you can make up whatever you want but don't get lost in it. Don't lose who you really are for something you imagined.

The Ravens and Doves

by Vinudi

I ran across the border of Raven with an army of charging soldiers behind me. I ran across the charcoal black ground, the palace – my home – growing smaller as I ran further. How did I end up here, you might ask? Well, my name is Damian Crimson, the prince of the vampires, and the former heir to the throne. Our world is different to yours; there are two sections of our land. One called the Doves and the other the Ravens. The doves consist of fairies, merfolk, mortals and the witches and wizards; in short, they're the innocents of this realm. There used to be phoenixes, but they are now long extinct due to the Ravens. The ravens include; vampires, demons, sirens, sorcerers, and werewolves. No one likes them because they're evil. My father, Noir Crimson – is the king of the vampires and my stepmother Eden Crimson rules beside him. They have a plan; to open the portal of dove and raven so the Ravens can attack the Doves so our land can expand. I always wanted peace, so I spoke about this horrible plan. My father responded with "We will attack the Doves whether you like it or not,". So, I left, wanting to warn the Dove kingdoms about my father's wicked plan – so let's see how it goes.

After hours of walking and muttering spells, I ended up on the dove side. It was happier here, the towering bright blue sky, luscious green grass, the glimmering yellow sun without a cloud in sight. There were trees with pastel pink leaves and streaks of gold running through the bark. It was beautiful. While walking, I saw a stable full of Pegasus with white skin and golden manes. I was exhausted so I lied there; the Pegasus watching me closely. My eyes felt heavy and drenched with fatigue and before I knew it, I closed my eyes.

When I awoke, I saw a girl with glistening blonde hair, bright blue eyes, white wings and wore a pink and green dress. A fairy. She looked at me

in alarm and then pointed a twig at my face.

"Who are you?" She asked curiously.

"My name is Damian," I told her foolishly.

"Damian? Damian Crimson?" She whispered worriedly, "Oh lord he is the prince of the vampires!"

"Quiet!" I ordered, "I'm here for an important reason,"

"To eat us?" She pondered.

"No," I replied offended, "My father – and the rest of the ravens- have a plan to; to kill the doves,"

"And why should I believe that?" She questioned me.

"Because if you do not; the world will erupt in chaos," I told her.

Then a man came in. He had blonde hair, a pink and green suit and cape, blue eyes and a dagger in his hand.

"Vampire," He muttered in distaste.

He then attempted to stab me until a thorn emerged from the ground and a voice said, "This young man has good intentions; if you don't want to die listen to him,"

The thorn disappeared and the dagger disintegrated into dust. The man bowed and said "I apologize for trying to kill you, it is not the fairy way; my name is Merlin and this my daughter Esmerelda; I am the king of the fairies.

I then arose and bowed "My name is Damain Crimson; I've come to warn you that my father has plans to invade the doves,"

"Wouldn't you want that?" King Merlin asked.

"I've always been soft-hearted because my mother is a fair- never mind; the point is that we need to stop them," I replied.

"Okay how do they plan to invade us?" Esmerelda asked.

"Well, they plan to break the portal and kill the doves – just like they did with the phoenixes," I informed "I know the spell which is how I managed to get here,"

"We need the lotus of hope to strengthen the portal to the point where it cannot be destroyed," I continued. "It is in the dove area, where I do not know,"

"The lotus of hope," King Merlin said to himself. "I've heard legends of it,"

"The mortals might know," Esmerelda stated. "They are the smartest,"

"Excellent," King Merlin said. "Daughter, you will go with Damian to the mortals and find where the lotus is and place it at the border,"

"But why-"

"You must," He ordered, "You may take a Pegasus with you;"

He then clapped his hands, and a sack of supplies appeared at his feet.

"This will include everything you need for your journey," King Merlin announced, "Good luck!"

"Bur father-" Esmerelda began to say.

"Go!" He insisted.

Esmerelda sighed, picking up the sack of food and climbing on a Pegasus; gesturing me to climb aboard. So, I did. The Pegasus trotted out the stables and flew out into the bright blue sky as King Merlin waved happily at us.

"I cannot believe my father has sent me on a quest with a stupid, wretched evil, crazy psychotic-" Esmerelda said.

"Uh," I tried to interrupt.

"- Ugly, scary, weird, ravenous, blood-thirsty

vampire-" Esmerelda continued.

"Ok I get it; Vampires are all those things- but could you shut up for once!" I yelled at her.

"My father's curse is how gullible he is. If I die it's his fault," Esmerelda muttered. "Right let's look at these supplies, shall we?"

She opened the sack as she scavenged through it. There were a few things; two loafs of bread, a map, gold dust (Pegasus food), and a small bottle of blood. Sure; this is totally enough for probably a month's journey. Esmerelda handed me the blood with a distasteful look on her face. Fairies were so full of themselves- not as much as mermaids but still.

"I see the mortal kingdom!" Esmerelda yelled in delight.

And she was right, there as a piece of land embedded between the blue sea. It had a bunch of houses that weren't properly built and a bunch of workshops. The mortals were known for their intelligence and wit. The wind whirled as the Pegasus rushed towards the land. People gawped at the sight of us and yelled "Vampire! Vampire!"

We landed as the others screeched in fear. I should have expected this. A girl came out the crowd, she had a mechanic's uniform, dirty blonde hair and pale skin with brown eyes.

"Why does a vampire cross our land?" She asked me, pulling out a dagger, ready to stab me.

"He's good! Surprisingly," Esmerelda shouted, going in front of the knife. "And besides, you house a werewolf,"

"They what?" I asked.

Then another girl came out of the crowd; she had yellow eyes, bronze skin, tattered clothes, with brown hair and fur near her hands. A werewolf.



Extract from The Dragon War

by Beatrix

“So, you can’t stand a vampire, but you can house a werewolf?” I questioned the girl.

“The girl lost her home,” she told me, “We had to take her in,”

The werewolf girl didn’t look older than 15. She looked lost, sad, helpless; I pitied her.

“Don’t pity me vampire,” She cursed. Never mind; she was not helpless.

“What are you doing here you soulless creature?” The mortal asked me.

“The world is in danger!” I announced. “My father announced that he will be attacking the doves and getting rid of your kind completely!”

The crowd gasped in fear and outrage as the mortal girl said, “Liar!”

“Unless you all want to die, listen to the boy, no matter what kind he is,” Esmerelda told everyone, “We need to go find the lotus of hope, which you guys know the location of, and it will strengthen the boarder and make sure the King doesn’t attack,”

The shouts of anger from the crowd melted into a deafening silence which the mortal girl broke, “Fine, we may go with you, but kill us and this won’t be the end,”

The mortal girl introduced herself as Kamaria Goldendale, and the werewolf was Tia Creswell. They agreed to come with us on the deal that I don’t kill them. I agreed and they went away while we were placed in a workshop. There

were tables full of knives and saws and all sorts of equipment. They came back with a scroll as we set off on the Pegasus. Kamaria said that the lotus of hope is in the land of magic – where the wizards and witches live – and it is guarded by a troll called Ivan. The plan was to steal the lotus rush back to the border and we win! Easier said than done.

After a long time, we reached the cave. There were gems all around us with a Lotus on the pedestal. The Lotus of hope....

“It’s the lotus!” Kamaria yelled, “It’s beautiful, quickly grab it!”

“That won’t be happening,” A voice said.

It was my father with his army of vampires dressed in black and red armor behind him. Next to him was my stepbrother – Alan Ruth.

“Ah brother, you weakling, you betrayed us, now you may die.” He grimaced.

My throat suddenly felt dry as my body started to heat up.

“The blood that you were given wasn’t actual blood, it was poison” Alan said, “You’re going to meet your end now,”

The others were tightened into cuffs as my vision felt blurry.

“Damian!” Esmerelda yelled but it was too late. My vision went black. The Ravens won....

Sparrow clutched his spear, sweat drenching his soft, lighter than pure mud scales, seeping through their cracks that are few. Few ways of protection and few ways to stay alive. Queen Macaw had declared war from her treetop palace, sipping her leaf tea as she formally declared violence upon the Beetles, a powerful tribe who live in the depths of the dessert, where the weak are eliminated and only the strongest remain. Our Queen had recently sighted an ex-beetle scurrying around our rainforests, desperately searching for food, Queen Macaw misinterpreted this as a purposeful act of hostility and stealing that originated from their Queen themselves, Queen Sandstorm. She quickly sent guards to kill the poor scavenger in cold blood before returning, pointedly confused at why such a harmless being deserved such a punishment. As Queen Macaw explained her, plainly incorrect, beliefs that obviously left no room for doubt in her phrasing, a senior knight spoke up. “It is quite clear to see, even in my old eyes, that such a pathetic excuse of a dragon shouldn’t be such a threat to us, we have thousands of feathered dragons that fly at your command! This is absurd and unnecessary; you will cause an outburst between tribes!” That soldier was discovered dead later that same day, assassins are practically shadows in the night. But obviously, he was correct, the following events of war have been foreshadowed by a brave old dragon with muddy green scales. My father.

I flap my large feather strewn wings anxiously as I spot the Beetle tribe marching toward us from a distance, clearing the hills mere miles away.

This was it; this was my guaranteed end. I glance over to my best friend, Magpie, her eyes were staring straight ahead with terrifyingly small pupils, by the force at which she was shaking you would have thought there was an earthquake taking place beneath her sleek silver claws. But when her Onyx eyes met mine, they diluted as she blinked at me reassuringly, her own fear was still potent in the air that surrounded her, but the realisation that we would most probably die claw-in-claw seemed to have strongly reassured her. A sudden pang of something unexplainable hits me in the chest, my own brown eyes linger on her black feathers, splashed with a brilliant, blinding white. My heart seems to pound against my ribcage, but not because of fear this time, no something more powerful.

Love

I have always loved Magpie, just never realised it. But now, I realise that this is my final chance to voice my feelings. I extent a gentle, tentative claw toward her as she watches with large, curious eyes, fear eradicated from her body now. But as I open my jaw to speak a fearsome battle cry rocks my skull and what seems like a stampede of elephants stomp down the hill, some taking to the air with spears. The front line on our side is flying right now but my heart has now been retaken by fear as I see friend after friend be taken down by the armed Beetle dragon army.

Magpie relents in her own battle cry as I realise that one of the recent dead is unfortunately her own brother. As I listen to her cries of grief and



anger it mirrors in my own heart. How dare they do this to her! The rival army is pushing through our lines of defences and rapidly approaching where me and Magpie currently stand with our shields and blunt swords. We are also a poor tribe in the ways of gold.

And I had soon lost her. She was one moment at my side and the next melting away in the throng of battle that quickly engulfed us both a writhing mass of bodies, strong with the tang of blood that floated through the air. “Magpie!” I screeched but it was no use, she was nowhere to be found. Is she ok? Is she dead? None of those questions could be answered right now and I barely have time to mentally ask them before an armoured, muscular and scarred dragon of the beetle tribe in snarling at me, his nose practically pressed against my nose, smoke billowing from nostrils, eyes cutting through me like the sharp sword that’s buckled to his hindquarters, attached by a scrap.

I barely have time to take to the sky before a great blast of flames scorched the patch of earth I had been crouching on just moments before. But the sky is just as vicious and bloody as the ground. I spot, just metres away a bird dragon is being practically ripped apart by a trio of enemy beetle-dragon soldiers, the rest of the victim’s quadrant is flying away with shrieks, abandoning her for dead. I wanted to gouge out my own eyes, I could not bear witness to such tragedy, I could not see up close, but it could have been my teacher, my builder, my family. But there was no time to mourn just yet, I had to tear my gaze away from her fearful and pleading eyes, as my opponent has now become my pursuer. I curse

the queen under my breath for her arrogance and lack of foresight at what bloodshed might follow such a war before allowing my claws to dig into the handle of my sword.

He was nearly twice my size, big and burly with a scar running across his rough face the colour of sand, he flew at me at such a ferocity that my heart threatened to collapse from pure fear, his claws lay outstretched in wait to forcefully do just that. I met those menacing claws with my meagre wooden sword that looked like a joke in comparison to our enemies. I swerved from his reach, if there was something that the Beetle dragons didn’t have, it was agility and speed. It was an easy move, my wings flapped fast and easily, batting my opponent in the face with its feathers. He unleashed a snarl of frustration as they caught in his eyes. I grabbed my sword, slick with sweat, and reared it so that it came down crashing into his shoulder. I smirked in satisfaction and then a ball of flame erupted in my face.

Flesh singed and sizzled under my left eye and I squealed in pain, but it was drowned out by the powerful beating of wings whipping past my own feathers. Falcon. Our squadron leader descended forward with authority, claws, sharp as knives, outstretched and clawing relentlessly at my attacker’s scales.

“Sparrow! Fly to the queen, backup!” He wheezed with effort, but his message was understood.

So, he flew, flew all the way to the Queen’s castle with burn wounds that would never truly heal without a gruesome scar. Was Magpie even

alive? There was no time to mope or worry as he spluttered and panted, crashing through the palace doors without bothering to explain himself to the dozy guards.

But what he saw next caused him to wish he had been killed by that Beetle tribe dragon. Our queen, Queen Macaw was sitting with poise at a treatable, cup in hand and laughing at something someone sitting opposite her had said. It was Queen Sandstorm.

In that moment of sickening confusion and internal distraught the monarchs noticed me and Queen Macaw’s lips formed a smile that resembled one of a snake instead of dragon.

“Don’t look so upset soldier, the forest is running out of trees for our kin, and this fight is turning out to be quite entertaining, why not kill two birds with one stone?” We are birds. And our queen has killed us.

A Pinch of Cloud Fluff

by Lola

Friday afternoon, the last day before the holidays, with one hour until the end of her shift, Dr Molly Smith was experimenting with another new concept; mixing variations of sea grasses with cloud fluff. This was part of a funded organisation, just to 'see what would happen'. Nothing ever did of course, but some people were ever so keen to find out whatever may happen - if something really did.

As the clock chimed for 5 o'clock, she packed up her equipment and went home, leaving the mixture on her table. As the days went on, this mixture began to come to life! It turned bright blue and if you looked closely at it, you could see all sorts of sea life swimming around, with beautiful coral reefs inside. After some time, the once-so-small volume of liquid had grown into something pond sized. As the water kept growing, so did its colour! Golden strokes shot out of the lake; and splashes of water and segments of glitter started ferociously jumping out, like it desperately wanted to take you somewhere.

Monday morning after the holidays, Dr Molly Smith returned back to work. She searched for the key in her pocket, shoved it through the door lock, grabbed the handle, and slowly started turning the door. As it opened, a tsunami sized wave swept her off her feet and took her under the ocean of a room. The gold flickering lights glistened even brighter than before, and she felt herself slowly dissolving into the water.

The more faded she became, the more her eyes opened. She wasn't in danger. She was ever so confused but, still she felt safe and protected somehow. Dr Smith discovered she was laying on a rock, with no sign of any other people around for miles. Beneath her was a crystal-clear blue reef with all sorts of fish, dolphins and turtles swimming around. This isn't earth she told herself; it couldn't be, could it?

The more she awakened from her confused daze, the more she came to fully realise where she had ended up. 'Let me get this straight, I made a potion, it grew, then I stepped in it, and now I'm here' she was repeatedly drilling into her head, even though she could hardly believe it.

'Ring ring', 'Ring ring', her phone buzzed. She jumped awake with a jolt, only to realise she was still at her desk and the conical flask with the potion in was sitting right where it had been all along. 'Hmm, what a strange dream!' she thought as she shrugged her shoulders and went home. And the glitter glinted once again.





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