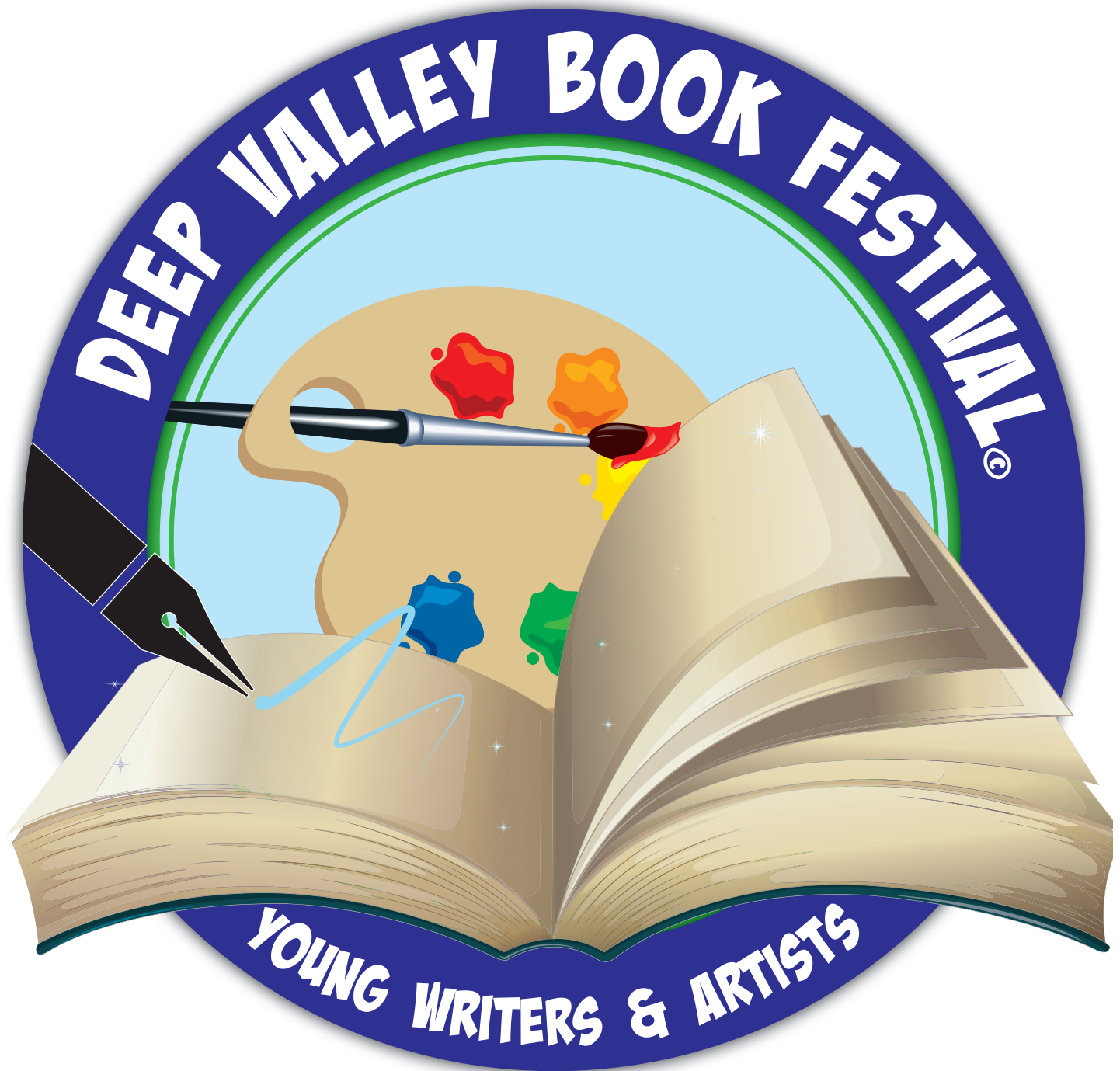


**DEEP VALLEY VIRTUAL BOOK FESTIVAL  
YOUNG WRITERS & ARTISTS COMPETITION**



**2020 ANTHOLOGY**

**The Deep Valley Book Festival (DVBF)** is organized by an all-volunteer committee of writers, publishers, and book lovers! The festival gets its name from the setting of the beloved Betsy-Tacy children's books written by Mankato-born author Maud Hart Lovelace.

The DVBF seeks to encourage young people to express themselves through writing or art. An authentic audience is so powerful for students. The DVBF Young Writer and Artist Competition (YWAC) is an easy and inspiring way to give kids an authentic audience. The more a child writes or draws the more confidence they will have in their abilities. Not only are they writing or drawing for a real panel of professional judges, but there are awards to strive for!

The Rules of Entry for the 2020 YWAC were: Young writers (ages 7-18): Write a story in 1500 words or less using the theme Forgiveness. Young artists (ages 7-18): Create an original illustration of a scene from a favorite book and provide a quote from the book that describes your illustration.

---

## **Young Writer Judges:**

### **Rachael Hanel**

Author and associate professor  
of mass media in Mankato, Minnesota.

### **Melanie Cashin**

Advisor at Carleton College and MFA degree  
from Minnesota State University, Mankato

### **Kirstin Cronn-Mills**

Writes fiction and nonfiction for young adults.

## **Young Artist Judges:**

### **Ann Rosenquist Fee**

Executive Director, Arts Center of St. Peter

### **John David Paul**

Scene design professor at  
Minnesota State University, Mankato

### **Megan Theis**

Graphic designer and teaches art classes for kids

# YOUNG WRITER AWARD

## AGE 7-8



**PAGE 3**  
1st:  
A Sick Friend  
Newman  
MacPherson



**PAGE 11**  
3rd:  
The Old Man  
Price MacPherson



**PAGE 22**  
2nd:  
Through Death  
Grace MacPherson

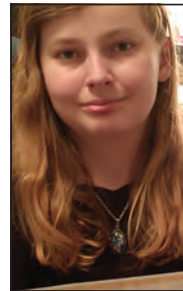
## AGE 11-12



**PAGE 4**  
2nd:  
The Make  
Believe Monster  
Ruby Morison



**PAGE 14**  
1st:  
One word  
can change  
someone's life  
Kira Ulman



**PAGE 25**  
3rd:  
A THOUSAND  
WISHES  
Reagan Isom



**PAGE 6**  
3rd:  
Football  
Forgiveness  
Everett Greisen



**PAGE 15**  
2nd:  
Phoebe's Story  
Rose MacPherson



**PAGE 28**  
1st:  
Broken Harp  
Ethan Oldenburg

## AGE 9-10



**PAGE 7**  
1st:  
Corona Rage  
Sophia Ulrich



**PAGE 18**  
3rd:  
Forgiveness  
is a Talent  
Owen Greisen



**PAGE 31**  
2nd:  
A Troubled Road  
Maria Dembouski

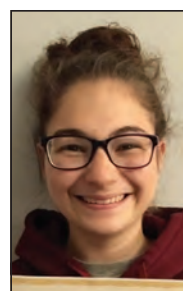
## AGE 13-14



**PAGE 8**  
2nd:  
Switched  
Averil Blair



**PAGE 19**  
1st:  
Darkness  
and Light  
Jenna Starkey



**PAGE 34**  
3rd:  
Nightmare  
Sabrina Seiwert

# A Sick Friend

The sun shines on me, as my friend Luke throws the ball to me; I miss the ball, and we both laugh, falling down on the warm green grass.

“Gabriel,” my mom calls.

“Oh, I’d better go now,” I mutter. “I hope you throw the ball better next time,” I joke.

“Okay. See you next time,” Luke replies, sadly. He slowly walks across the street back to his house, with a confused look on his face.

Later that week, I sit down to lunch, with a hot bowl of soup steaming at me. My mom tells me, “Luke’s mom called to say that Luke isn’t feeling well.” Is he sick? I am scared. Maybe when I when I was joking about the ball, I hurt his feelings. What would I do without my best friend?

The next day my mom says, “I’m very sorry, Gabriel. .. “ I know it will be something about Luke, something terrible! “ ... but Luke’s mom called again, and Luke is in the hospital!” For the rest of the day, I can’t get my mind off of it. I can’t even do my schoolwork! I am desperate to hear from him.

A couple of days later, I finally get the confidence to call him. I hastily pick up the phone and dial the number for his hospital room. I hear it ring and ring. Nobody is answering! I feel my heart beating-fast! In the pit of my stomach, I have a bad feeling. My hand is shaking as I hang up the phone. I ask myself, again and again, “What happened? What happened?” Why doesn’t Luke answer the phone? Is he mad at me? Can we still be friends? Did he die?

Immediately after I hang up the phone, I turn around and look out the living room window. I see a blue car driving down the street. It slows down and pulls into Luke’s driveway. My mouth falls wide open in shock as I see my best friend step out of the car. He’s alive! He didn’t die! He is well enough to come home! I am so relieved!

Luke turns around and sees me through my window. He waves at me, and I wave back! I’m so thankful he forgave me for my teasing! We’re still best friends! I can’t wait until we play again soon!

# The Make Believe Monster

Once in a little town called Dewfell there were two boys who loved adventures and skiing one was Carter the other was Anthony. They did everything together, especially adventures. One day Carter was looking on the internet to find a new skiing place to go to with Anthony, just then something popped up on the screen, it was the newest skiing place up in The Mountains. "Anthony," Carter called

"C'mere there's a new ski place in town!"

Anthony quickly hurried over, examining the new ski lodge. "Cool, we should go!"

And with that they packed up their ski stuff and went to the lodge. "This. Is. Awesome!!!" Carter said when they got there.

In front of them was a giant mountain covered with deep powder that seemed to never end, and it was ten times bigger than the other mountains he and Anthony had ever skied or saw.

"Sup guys?" A voice said, which startled the boys.

They turned around and then they saw a boy maybe sixteen or seventeen, and he towered over Carter and Anthony. The boy's mess of brown hair was high above them.

"The name's Max, want me to show you around? Max said "This place is really big:"

"Sure, we would love that," Anthony said.

So, the boys went up the lift and saw the beautiful mountains in front of them. When they got off the lift Carter yelled "Let's go in the trees!" Carter always loved the trees, because the trees were covered with snow making it easy to dump snow on Anthony. Well only if Anthony was behind him. Carter and Anthony slipped in front of the trees gazing at them, full of excitement but Carter was too eager and he slid into the fenced off area that said, 'DO NOT ENTER DANGEROUS WOODS. " Oh jeez, leave it to Carter to make things scary all the time," Anthony said "Well I better go in, Carter's probably going to be wrestling a monster soon:" He chuckled. With that he took off his snowboard and walked in the woods scared but trying to hide it. Meanwhile, in the woods Carter was slipping down the mountain screaming like it was the end of the world hoping someone would find him. Then he skidded to a stop, he wasn't dumb, he was in the middle of the woods and no one would hear him calling for help. So he decided to text or call one of his friends to get help but there was no cell-service so he couldn't call them. Meanwhile, Anthony was falling down into the snow and the snow was balling up onto him, Anthony finally hit a tree and all the snow flew off him.

Surprised by the snow incident Anthony continued on the snowy path. At about the same time Carter was walking when something rustled in the rusty green forest Carter accidentally dropped his phone in fear and it fell in the snow he stumbled to pick it up, then, something grabbed his phone, "Hey!" Carter yelled his phone was so important! And then the same thing, grabbed Carter. A scream echoed through the forest. Thankfully Anthony heard it. Anthony knew Carter's scream, he heard it all the time, but this scream, this scream was a million times worse and only one scaredy cat could have screamed that scream, Carter. Anthony ran, he ran so fast hoping to find his friend. Anthony had followed the scream, and ended up right where Carter was. "Carter!" Anthony yelled, desperate to find him, "Say something, please;" Anthony words got quieter and quieter until to his surprise Carter



responded “ Keep moving forward” Carter said in a strangely deep voice “ I’m still here” Anthony followed the voice and found himself at the foot of what looked like a cave. He walked in and was amazed at what he saw, what looked like a rusty hole outside, was a beautiful bejeweled cave on the inside there were rubies, sapphires, diamonds, and emeralds.

“This bear is rich” though Anthony walked forward.

A huge figure swooped at him and Anthony ducked. Then out of the side of his eye he caught a glimpse of Carter scared and alone. And then before Anthony knew what he was doing he ran out of his hiding spot and started punching whatever was there in the cave. He kept punching the air until he got to Carter, who in fact, was surprisingly calm.

“What is this, this thing?” Anthony asked Carter

“Well;’ said Carter happily,

“His name is Maximilian” Carter said “and his favorite color is purple, he also;’

Anthony cut him off “ Where did you learn all this?” he asked

“Oh;’ Carter started “ a birdie told me”

“Really?” Anthony asked his eyes wide

“No genius I read it off his phone, a really good phone too, why won’t my parents buy me;’ Carter was cut off

“Wait, let me get this straight, the monster has a phone?” Anthony asked

“Yup” Carter said

“And you said his name is maximilian?” Anthony asked

“Uh Huh” Carter confirmed

“ What if’ Anthony said concerned

“No;’ Carter said “What if Max is Maximilian and ... “ Said Anthony in a scared voice. Then a voice spoke a deep voice “Correct”

Carter and Anthony turned around in front of them was the head of Max the helper and the body of a monster. “Yes I am Max” the Max monster said “But don’t get me wrong I did not mean for all this to happen you see, I just don’t want people coming to this ski resort” He explained” My boss said we had to open back up but I don’t want them to come here so I dressed up as a monster to scare people away and I am so sorry that I scared you so much I didn’t mean for you to be frightened

I am so sorry”

“Its okay” Carter said

“Yeah,” Anthony agreed

“I Would have done the same thing” Carter said

“Can you ever forgive me?” Max asked

“Of course” Carter and Anthony said

The End

Everett Greisen

Age 8

# Football Forgiveness

We were having fun playing football at recess. But my friend LeRoy and I got into an argument. Then my team did not pass the ball to him and he was sad. He just watched the rest of us play football. But then I said, "I forgive you." Then LeRoy played football again and we passed the ball to him. He scored the winning Touchdown and then he had SO much fun!!! Forgiveness makes football fun!

# Corona Rage

Raina clicked “Leave Meeting.” The Zoom meeting she just had with her friends, well, didn’t go as planned. One of her friends had said, “I think this is all for the best.”

Raina had screamed, “For the best? FOR THE BEST?! How can this be for the best? Well, you’re all just dummies if you believe her!!!” Still, her friends had already agreed. “Fine,” she huffed. “I’m leaving.”

“Raina, please sto—” one of her friends had begun to say, but it was too late. Raina had left. Raina had been like this ever since the stay-at-home order. She had used social media as her funnel, pouring out her anger to anyone who used it. Emails and comments were full of rage. Videos brimmed with hatred. Zoom meetings and Google Hangouts always had screams and tears. Why? Raina felt as if her life was horrible. The government said she couldn’t visit family and friends. Or go the playground at the local park. Or even play basketball by herself! With nobody else!!! She thought this was just stupid. Plus, distance learning was an added stress. She usually got it done just before bed. Life was hard.

Raina’s mom came in and said, “Is everything okay? I heard screaming.”

“I’m fine, Mom,” Raina said haughtily.

“Or is it?” Mom started to log into Raina’s email account.

“Mom, please don’t!” But it was too late. Mom was busy reading Raina’s every last mean email and reply.

“Why did you do this?” Mom asked. Suddenly, Raina’s story was poured out to Mom.

“Out of everyone in the world, I’m probably having the worst experience!” Raina finished.

“Oh sweetie, there are probably people who feel the same.” Mom hugged Raina and said, “Say sorry. People forgive and forget. Get some rest. That’ll do you some good.” So Raina went to bed, but she couldn’t sleep. She went downstairs and saw Mom, typing something.

“Strange,” she thought. *“What’s she doing?”*

The next day, when Raina checked her email, she saw she had a link to a Zoom meeting from her friend, Julie. The email also said, *“At 10:00, look outside your door and join this meeting!”* Later, Raina looked outside her door and saw a package. Inside was a gift card to her favorite boutique and a pair of earrings she’d always wanted. A wave of guilt washed over her. How could her friends be so kind when she’d been so mean to them? She thought of last night’s strange sighting. Could Mom have hacked into Julie’s Zoom account? That wasn’t possible. Or was it? “Anyhow, I’ll apologize at the meeting,” Raina said. She clicked the link and she was in.

“Guys, I’m really sorry,” Raina apologized. “I just—”

“It’s okay, Raina,” said Julie. “Your mom emailed us the whole story.” She shared her screen to prove it. “Don’t worry, we forgive you.”

“Thanks, guys,” Raina said. “But I need to see my mom.” She waved before leaving her friends’ Zoom meeting. Then, she went downstairs and gave Mom a sweet embrace. While they were hugging, Raina whispered, “Thanks,” into her mother’s ear.

*(Dedicated to my own mother, who helps me push through this hard time!)*



# Switched

Hello! My name is Carmen Bell. I live in a small town in Minnesota. I have one older sister named Amanda and my mom's name is Heidi. My dad died a year ago in a plane crash and it's been really hard on us lately. Tomorrow I start kindergarten. My mom says it will be fun and exciting, but I know that it's really scary. I know because my sister told me all about it. She told me about bullies and homework and it doesn't sound fun. I woke up this morning terrified! I almost had a fit. My sister is starting fifth grade and I can tell she is scared too. We made it to school and my teacher's name is Mrs. Enser. She seems nice and she showed me to my cubby and told me where to sit, but I don't like being told where to sit. This girl is coming towards me. I wonder why. "Move! Get out of my seat weirdo!" the girl said. "I don't want to move though," I said. "I don't care, now move." she said. "Ok I'll move, sorry." Well, now where should I sit? Oh I know! I'll ask Mrs. Enser. I told her about what that girl said and she said "show me who she was." When I did, she told her to move and say sorry. Apparently her name was Melissa. It was time to go to lunch. Melissa asked if I wanted to sit by her and of course I said yes. When we got our food she threw her food on my new cat dress and leggings. The teacher ran over and yelled at Melissa and called my mom to come and bring me more clothes. My mom brought me my favorite shirt, my Anna and Elsa shirt. I love this shirt. Melissa called it stupid, but I don't believe her. Finally it was time to go home. I got home and told my mom all about what happened and my mom contacted Melissa's mom and told her what happened.

One year later ...

I finished kindergarten and the bullying kept happening, but I don't care. My mom called us in the living room and said "because of Carmen getting bullied, we are moving." My sister said, "We can't move, I can't leave all my friends, this is so unfair." I don't really mind moving.

One week later ...

Well the move is happening today and we are moving to Estes Park, Colorado. It's a much bigger house though. I start first grade in a couple weeks. I am scared, but also excited. My sister is not happy about changing schools and moving still. She and mom have gotten into a lot of fights about it and she blames me for it. I try to ignore it, but it sometimes can get to my head. I don't like that feeling.

Couple weeks later ...

I start first grade tomorrow and I am so excited! Secretly I am scared I don't want to be bullied and I don't know what to do if I do get bullied. I woke up this morning happy and scared and I can't wait. I got to school and my teacher's name is Mrs. More. She's so strict and I don't know if I will like her. We get to pick our own spots at desks. That's so crazy! WOW! We get dum dum suckers in the afternoon too. I love first grade so much. I met this boy named Jack. I can tell we will be besties. I know it, but he doesn't know it, not yet anyway. I am going to ask if he wants to be my friend. He said yes! Yeaaaaaaah! I hope he likes weirdness. Jack called me to his desk and gave me a paper and told me to read it. "I don't know how to read though." I said. "That's ok you will learn." "I will tell

you what it says.” Jack said. “It says come and sit by my desk.” “Ok, I will move my stuff over here,” I said. “Lunch time kids” Mrs. More said. “Do you want to sit by me for lunch Jack?” “Sure. Carmen I would love to.” “I wonder what’s for lunch.” “I am pretty sure it’s mac and cheese.” I said “yummm I love mac and cheese.” Jack said “I love it too.” “Alright kids time to get your bags and line up.” Mrs. More told us. “Ahh time to go home. I don’t want to.” I said. “Me either.” Jack said. “Bye kids see you tomorrow.” Mrs. More said. “Bye Jack.” “Bye Carmen.” “Hi mom, guess what? I made a friend today.” “Good sweetie what’s her name?” “Mom, his name is Jack.” “oh he’s a boy” “Yea whats the problem?” “oh nothing what’s he like?” “He is really nice and sweet and funny.” “Good, did you have a good day?” “Yea it was really fun. We had mac and cheese for lunch.” “Nice. Why don’t you go get ready for dinner alright.” “Alright mom.”. “Carmen! Dinner Time!” “Amanda! Dinner!” “Coming!” “So how was everybody’s day?” “It was great.” I said. “Fine.” “What do you mean fine sweetie?” “It was fine, jeez just leave me alone.” “Hey you can not talk to me like that!” “Whatever.” “Go to your room now!” “Fine!” “Sorry pumpkin you had to see that. Can you finish supper alone? Well I will go talk to her.” “Sure mom.” “Thank you honey.” That happens all the time so I am kinda used to it by now. It even happened back in Minnesota at our old house.

Four years later. ..

Well I start fifth grade in a week and well to be honest, i’m really nervous. When I was in first and my sister was in fifth grade, she was a jerk and I don’t want to end up like her. I am meeting Jack later so we can find out if we are in the same class. There’s Jack. I really want to be in the same class as him. Yessssss! We are in the same class. We both have Mrs. Robinson’s class. She is super nice. I really wanted to be in Mrs. Cues’ class though, but at least I have Jack.

One week later ...

I start fifth Grade tomorrow!! I am sooooo excited I can’t wait. “Wake up, Wake up everybody, Wake up” My mom sang. She started doing that last year when my sister asked her to wake her up and now my mom does it every day. I like it though. My mom and sister have gotten a lot closer and don’t fight as much as they used to though. “Hello class I am so excited to be your teacher and I can’t wait for the rest of the year.” Mrs. Robinson said. “Psst carmen.” “Jack, what do you need?” I’m busy working.” “Yea I know, but read this.” Jack said. “Uhh fine.” meet me at 4:30 at the park. “Okay.”

**4:15**

“Mom I need to leave. I am going to the park.” “Okay sweetie but be back at 5:45.” “Alright mom.” “Oh and bring your watch with you and set a timer for 5:30 to come home.” My mom said. “Alright.”

**4:25**

“You made it.” Jack said. “Yea so what did you want to talk about.” “umm well I can’t stay at home so I was wondering if you would stay here with me tonight.” “Why can’t you stay at home?” My parents wont’ stop fighting and I can’t take it so I ran away.” “You ran away?!” “I had to!.” I can’t stay here but you can stay with us.” “We can tell my mom, but we better head to my house.” “It’s almost 5:30 and I have to be home by 5:45 so let’s go.” Thank you Carmen so much! This means the world to me.” “Your welcome.” \*hugging\* We explained everything to my mom and she said Jack could stay with us. Thank you so much Mrs. Bell.” “Oh it’s no big deal

and please call me Heidi.” “okay,” Jack said.

Four months later. ..

“Alright class we have a new student named Melissa from Minnesota Please say hello everybody. Melissa you can sit next to, um, lets see ah, carmen.” “wait what!” “Yes Carmen, is there something wrong?” “Um no sorry.” I got home later with Jack and he still lives with us. His parents got divorced and neither his mom nor dad wanted him so my mom adopted him two months ago. It’s amazing though. “Mom guess what? You remember in kindergarten at the old school, Melissa?” “Well she goes to our school now and she’s in my class and sits next to me, but she was really nice to me.” “Wow. Well maybe just see what happens and we will go off of that,” My mom said”Alright mom.”



“Lunch time kids pick a buddy and today I will let you have three people in your group today.” “Nobody wants to be in Melissa’s group so she has to eat alone haha,” the kids said. “Hey Melissa, do you want to be in our group?” Jack asked. “Um sure,” Melissa said.

#### **After lunch**

“Jack, I need to tell you something. Melissa went to my old school back in Minnesota and she was a huge bully to me.” “Really? She was really nice at lunch though?” “I know.” “Maybe you should try to ignore that memory and be her friend.” Jack said. “Yea, your right ok, hey when did you get so good at giving advice?” “I don’t know.” Jack said.



“Hey Melissa, nobody likes you and nobody will ever like you.” the kids said. “Why can’t you just be nice to her? Jeez! Have you ever heard of manners?!” I said. “Actually we have, so stay out of it.” The kids said. “Why should I? You’re such jerks to her when she hasn’t done anything to you.” “Hey I said stay out of it!” the kids said. “And I said NO!” \*kid punches carmen carmen goes unchosen\* “CARMEN” Jack yelled. The teacher ran over and asked what happened and Jack explained everything. The kid who punched me got suspended and I’m ok. “Hey carmen thank you for standing up for me! I know I was really mean to you in kindergarten and I’m super sorry for what I did. You don’t have to forgive me, but thank you for standing up for me.” Melissa said. “Your welcome and I do forgive you and I hope we can be friends.” I said. “Yes absolutely! I would love to be your friend.” Melissa said. “Carmen are you ok? I was super worried about you and that’s really cool of how you stood up for Melissa.” Jack said. “It’s no big deal.” “Yes it is Carmen! You stood up for your old bully. That’s really hard to do and you forgave her! That’s super duper hard to do. “You are such a brave person.” I am so happy to be your friend.” ‘Thank you Jack I am happy to have you too.”

Well, sometimes, when things go wrong you can make them better and I learned that the hard way. Now Melissa, and Jack, and I are all besties and things turned out good for all of us. My mom and sister now love each other and barely rarely ever fight. That experience changed my life forever. Sometimes it takes a little forgiveness to change someone’s life!

# The Old Man

“Brrriingaringbring!” School was over. Leaves fell from trees and gathered on the ground as a crowd of excited children ran out of the building. Among them a blond-haired boy, followed by another boy who looked like him, but younger, both carrying schoolbooks, could be seen.

“Hey, Cale, Nate!” the first boy called to his friends. “D’you want to come over to Albert’s and my house after you finish your homework? Mom says it’s alright if it is with your mom.”

“Yeah, that sounds great, James,” said Caleb.

“Sure,” responded Nathan. The three 12-year-olds ran alongside each other, along with Albert and Lily, James’s siblings, and Anna, Caleb’s sister. For part of the way, their homes were in the same direction, so they didn’t split up yet

They were still close to Water Valley Grade School.

Then suddenly as they rounded the corner, smack! They hit an elderly man holding a cane and a briefcase. And then four of them fell down on the grass and pavement: James, Caleb, Nathan, and the old man himself.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m so, so sorry,” said James, picking himself up. He tried to lift the old man. He found he could not. “Guys, help me!”

Anna and Albert, followed by Nathan and Caleb who quickly lifted themselves off the ground, hastened to help James. A few other students looked concerned, but the majority, including Jared Jordanson, the bully, sneered and laughed.

“We’re really sorry-We didn’t see you- I am sooo sorry-Are you okay, Mr.-” James and his friends said, lifting the man, who looked slightly dazed, up.

“Anderson,” replied the elderly man weakly, pointing to a pin on his black suitcoat. “Jakob Anderson, Chair of the Department of Religious Affairs, Water Valley Lutheran College.

“Huh? What chair?” asked James.

“I’m a retired pastor and missionary. I teach people about Jesus at a college.”

“Who?” wondered Albert.

“Perhaps you could come to my weekly bible study. It’s Friday, 4:00. Here’s my phone number and address.” Jakob handed James a card.

“Thanks.”

“Here’s your cane, sir. Honestly, I’m really sorry I bumped into you.”

The old man smiled. It was a warm, friendly smile.

“You’re not mad at us?”

“No, my boy. God forgives you, so I forgive you, too.”

Jakob Anderson smiled at all of them once more. Picking up his briefcase, he began walking down the street once again. He paused. “Maybe it was for God’s greater glory you bumped into me!” he called to them. And then the old man continued his stroll until he disappeared into the city.

*Ten Days Later*

“It’s Friday!” shouted James, running out of Water Valley Grade School with Albert. “That last bible study was awesome! Hope this one’s the same!”

James slowed down, and his phone out of his pocket. He dialed a number and called his mom. A minute or two later he finished:

“Okay.”

“Yep.”

“Sounds good, then I’ll meet you there.”

“Uh-ha.”

“Okay, bye.” James pressed some buttons on the device, then shoved it back in his pocket. He turned to Albert and Lily. “She says we can go! Dad’s not coming, but she says she’ll be there. Come on!” James grabbed Lily’s hand, and ran with Albert to the end of the block where they met Caleb and Nathan, waiting for them. Anna, Caleb said, were already at the Anderson Place, an old but beautiful at 1254 Mulberry Lane.

They ran on, past the post office, past the library, past the hardware shop. As they neared the grocery store, the automatic doors opened and a lady carrying a large bag of food and holding a cane hobbled out. And James and his friends collided again.

Thankfully nobody fell or got hurt this time, but the old woman stumbled and dropped her bag, spilling half of her groceries. Caleb and Nathan made a frantic effort to quickly help clean them up as James and Albert steadied the elderly lady and Lily watched, excited, scared, and transfixed at the scene. Though he had not hurt the old woman, James felt more guilty and worse than he had felt with Mr. Anderson.

“I’m really sorry!”

“Me too!”

“I didn’t mean to!”

“It’s alright.” The woman gave a weak smile. “God forgives you, so I forgive you, too.”

“That’s what Mr. Anderson said,” exclaimed Caleb.

“Ah, yes, my good friend Jakob Anderson. So you know him, too?”

“Yes,” replied Caleb. “In fact, all of us are going to see him today.”

“What a coincidence,” said the lady. The group started to continue to walk down the sidewalk. “That is the same place that I am headed! I always shop for groceries every week before stopping by the professor’s house on the way home. I only live a block away from him, you see.”

“Well, then we can keep walking together,” concluded Caleb.

“I suppose so,” replied the elderly woman.

“Would you like me to take your bag, Ms.-” said James.

“Please call me Mrs. Grant,” she said. “Yes that would be very kind,-” she said as he took the groceries.

“I’m James Harrison. This is Albert, my brother, and my friends, Caleb and Nathan.”

“Well hello, Mr. Harrison. How nice to meet you- and you, and you, and you, and you,” Mrs. Grant said, nodding to each of the five.

“Hi,” said Albert, Caleb, and Nathan in unison.

The Anderson Place came in sight. The group walked across the street. They could be seen from above like this: Caleb leading the way, followed by Mrs. Grant, holding a cane, escorted by James, bearing a bag of groceries, and

Albert. Behind them walked Nathan, closely dragged by Lily. Then they came to the house.

The Anderson Place was an old brick building. Jakob said it had belonged to his great-great-grand father, but even he was not the first to buy it. The door was surrounded by three windows on each side. Caleb opened the small gate of 1254 Mulberry Lane. The others walked through and up toward the door. The six climbed up three stairs(Mrs. Grant had a bit of trouble), and Caleb rang the golden doorbell.

“Come in, come in,” spoke an elderly voice, and Jakob Anderson opened the door. “Make yourself at home,” said the old man, gesturing to the couch, on which were sitting Anna and his mother. There was other furniture, too, including Jakob’s great old armchair and a table with snacks he gestured to.

“Would you like some refreshments while we wait for the others to join us?” Jakob asked. “Some water, lemonade, or coffee-But you don’t drink that yet, hmm?”

Albert stared hungrily at the cookies.

“Water’s fine, thank you,” said James.

Mr. Anderson handed each of them a cup, ending with Albert and Mrs. Grant, giving one a cookie and the other some coffee as a young couple walked in.

“Hello, Mr. and Mrs. Goldilocks,” said Jakob.

“Good afternoon, Jakob,” replied Mrs. Goldilocks, taking a seat on a sofa. Her husband did the same.

A few minutes later, another elderly couple, the Lincolns, were seated, and so was a man, Mr. Mason.

“Since we’re all here, let’s start,” said the professor. He began talking about two virtues found in the Bible, grace and forgiveness,s. When he reached forgiveness, James grew excited. He wanted to learn more about “God forgives you, so I forgive you, too.”

“Forgiveness is found several places in the Bible,” said Mr. Anderson, gesturing to his old, leather-backed copy. “Today we shall look at Matthew 6, Matthew 18, John 20, and 2 Corinthians 2.”

He read each chosen passage aloud. After this, the professor talked about each of these biblical verses, and finally ended with a closing prayer.

“Goodbye! I hope you had a good time! Take care!” said Jakob, holding open the door open for each participant of the Bible study. “And Mrs. Harrison, my church is a few blocks away. Services are nine and ten o’clock. I hope to see you there. Come by any time; I’ll always have cookies.” The old man winked at Albert, and with a hearty smile, closed the door.

### *Four years later*

James, older, in a black suit, and holding a cane and a brief case, slowly walked down the street. He shot a glance behind him. A familiar teenager wearing a tie-dye T-shirt and ripped jeans ran up behind him.

“Hey, old man!” shouted the dorky youth. He pushed the other, and tried to knock him down, thinking it would be easy to overpower this guy.

But the man didn’t stumble. He turned to his opponent The teen stared back, unable to speak. Facing him was not an elderly gentleman as he had expected. It was his old rival from school, James Harrison.

“God forgives you, so I forgive you, too.”

Jared Jordanson stared for another second, then ran off, with a high-pitched, girlish, screech.

James chuckled. And then the ‘old man’ continued his stroll until he disappeared into the city.



# One word can change someone's life

My dad commied suicied. This is my true story on how I forgave my dad for what he did. This is my dad's suicied story. It started when my dad was in his 20's and was working with his uncle on fixing up or painting bridges. Dad was walking across the bridge when a car hit him, dad end on the top of the car. Dad stayed alived because he was wearing a construction helment. Dad was unconscious for three weeks. 12% of his brain was damage. Dad had to relearn all most everything. Dad took therapy, but he didn't open up. A few years later dad did something amazing he married my mom Tracy on September 17, 2005. Then he has his first son Blake on March 31, 2000. (He is mom's step son). 8 years later on November 2, 2008 Kira, me was born. Four years later on October 15, 2012 McKenna was born. Two years later dad went on a work trip then on March 28, 2014 on the work trip he did it he killed himself. Dad and mom was 38, Blake was 14, I was 5 and McKenna was 2 and barely meet him. Mom and the rest of dads family said "He got in a car crash." Five years later and having on year of therapy my mom said "girls I want to talk." I was 10 and McKenna was 6. Mom tells us that killed himself and that we where to young to under stand. That he had a brain injury and he though he would make everyone's life easery. I was mad, sad and lied. A month later I relized he choose to do what he did and that he was extremely happy with his family, he wasn't happy with his injury. It's been a year since that talk. That's my story on how forgiveness help me grive throught the lost of dad. I forgave him because what is the point of being mad at someone you love because if you are mad at someone and they did you will have a hole in you'r heart. So forgive and forget. That's my forgiveness story.

# Phoebe's Story

"Tell us a thtowy, Grandmother!" begged the little boy and his sister.

"Alright." she said and began.

*Phoebe sat in her prison cell. Bitter, angry thoughts overwhelmed her. She was upset, to be imprisoned innocently. Well, she had broken the Jaw, but it was not a fair Jaw, so that didn't really count.*

*Phoebe had been giving away an (illegal) book: the Bible.*

*Why the king didn't want this book to be distributed Phoebe couldn't understand. It was the Bible, where forgiveness was revealed.*

*But most of all, Phoebe was angry at the man who had betrayed her. He had pretending to be a Christian, and he had come to the secret church meetings that Phoebe's father held once a week. In reality, he had been a spy and was only gathering names of Christians. Phoebe was the first he had turned in. and she suspected that there would be many more soon.*

*Then Phoebe remembered that in the Bible it said that all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord. She knew that somehow, everything would be alright. She prayed a silent prayer of thanksgiving for this one consolation.*

*Phoebe had been told that it would be three days until she was brought before the king. He would decide whether she would be confined for life after that, or if she would be released. Phoebe knew that she would only be released if she promised that she would never distribute Bibles or anything of the sort, and she would never lie in order to be free.*

*Two more days passed and early that afternoon, a guard came to Phoebe's cell door and unlocked it. He beckoned for her to come and firmly led her by the shoulder through the echoing stone hallways of the prison. past the strong iron gate that marked the exit of the jail, and out into the courtyard. Then Phoebe was led into the palace through a side door, up the huge, beautiful, marble staircase, and to an intricately carved wooden door with large brass knob. The doors look old, but strong, Phoebe decided, as the guard who had brought her here knocked.*

*'Enter.' a commanding voice sounded from within, and they did so.*

*The room was large and elegant, but empty except for the king on his throne and a servant seated at a low desk with some papers. 'Read for us of what she is accused' the king commanded the servant when Phoebe and her guard had reached the center of the room.*

*The servant cleared his throat and began the list, sounding quite bored. 'Charged with distributing stringently verboten documents . . . and perturbing the repose hereby and herewith . . . ' the list continued a bit further of the crimes that Phoebe had supposedly committed. She didn't think that she had done most of those things, but she wasn't sure, for she didn't even know what most of those things meant. Then the servant had finished, and the king spoke.*

*'Do you have anything to say?' he asked her.*

*Phoebe hesitated for only a moment. 'Yes, your majesty.' she said, curtsying, 'only it isn't to you. I have something to say to my accuser, Lamech Mirlezan, if I may. please, sir.'*

*'Veiy well.' said the king. He called in another servant, to whom he spoke in low tones for a few minutes and then sent out.*

*A short while later, the servant returned with the requested man. 'You're Majesty, Lamech Mirlezan,' he said with a bow.*

*'Well, what is it?' Lamech asked Phoebe gruffly.*

*I - I forgive you, Lamech. 'Phoebe whispered.*

*'You are dismissed,' the king announced hastily to Lamech. and the man exited. 'You as well,' he said to the servant. The servant bowed again and followed Lamech out.*

*After several moments had passed, the king spoke. 'You . . . forgave him. Tell me . . . why? Why would you forgive the one who had betrayed you, who had been the cause for your imprisonment?'*

*'Because, Your Majesty,' Phoebe replied, I have been forgiven.' She pulled out, from where it was hidden in a deep pocket from the folds of her dress, a small leather-bound book and handed it to the king.*

*"What wuz duh book, a Bible?" the little boy interrupted.*

*"Yeah, wuth it?" his sister chimed in.*

*Their grandmother smiled, the lines around her eyes crinkling. "That's right. It was the Bible: the story of how Jesus died to take away all of our sins. And then, on Easter, He came back to life, so when we die, we'll go to heaven! Do you want to hear what happened after that in Phoebe's story? Or, is it time for bed?"*

*"More, please!" the children said together.*

*"I was hoping you would want to hear the end," she said.*

*Then, the king angrily sent her back to the prison, but he began to read that Bible. He stayed up late into the night, read it through the next day. and by the time it had been three days, the king had finished the book. He called in his servant.*

*'Go and get Phoebe. and bring her here. And release all of the prisoners under the same charge as she. Change the law, so that Bibles are allowed, and make them available to everyone,' he told him.*

*The servant was surprised, but he did as he was told.*

*'Yes. Your Majesty?' Phoebe said when she had again been brought before the king from the cold stone prison, nervous all the while.*

*"I have read the book that you have given me, and I now know that God has forgiven me for all of my mistakes and for forbidding Bibles. I am now going to change the law, and have Bibles made available to everyone.' the king replied. 'You, and the other prisoners imprisoned for the same thing. are released. You are to return to your home and inform your father that he shall no longer hold secret church services. He will come here and we will set up a room of the palace as a church until arrangements can be made for a real church to be built.'*

*'Oh, thank you, Your Majesty!' Phoebe exclaimed, and, remembering that all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord, she hurried home to spread the good news.*

“And,” the old woman finished, “The people of that land were very happy after that. Of course, sometimes they still got upset with each other, but they forgave each other, just like Jesus forgave them. The end.”

The children smiled sleepily. “Dat wuth a wonduhfle thtowy, Grandmother,” the little girl said.

The boy nodded. “Wis a wonduhble ending.”

“Alright, time for our bedtime prayer,” Grandmother Phoebe said.

The End

# Forgiveness is a Talent

On a hot summer day on the 22nd of March, 2019, my friend Brock and I were swinging on a tire swing in the woods. My name is Reese, I am 9 years old, tall, and skinny. I also have dark hair I got from my mom. Brock is 8 and a half, average sized, skinny, he has blond hair like his parents. We both live in Spicer, MN. Not in the same house though, that would be weird.

Anyway, while Brock and I were swinging, we were thinking about our entry to the Spicer Elementary talent show. We knew we could only get in if we thought of something amazing. So we thought of a good number of ideas; most were either too weird or just bad. Then Brock came up with the amazing idea of...drumroll please ... COMEDY. We both agreed because we knew that we could both do something funny. But I bet you are thinking, "Reese, why would you do comedy? I bet a million dollars other people are doing comedy."

You're right, but we aren't just doing knock knock jokes or telling Gouda cheese puns. We would master the art of stand up comedy. The talent show was on April 10th, so we had time to practice. So that's what we did; we practiced every day, even on weekends. But one day Brock and I were hanging out and Brock dared me to climb up the tree and untie a knot that was in the rope that hung the tire swing. I have a big fear of heights so of course I told him no. He said that he wanted me to conquer my fears and untie the knot. I knew he was going to keep bugging me about it, so I started climbing and Brock was cheering me on and it was going great. I was about 14 feet up when I lost my balance and fell on my left arm. Brock started to freak out and run back towards my house. He got my mom and she drove me to the ER and I got my cast.

Now I am super mad at Brock for making me climb up the tree. I barely talk to him when he comes in and I don't let him sign my cast. When we get home, I just lie in bed. Then my mom comes in, she starts to talk about why I didn't let Brock sign my cast and why I didn't talk to him. I tell her everything. She just smiles and says, "Brock was just trying to help you, he wanted to help you face your fear."

The next day is April 4th. I rush over to Brock's house to see if he wants to practice comedy. When he sees me at the door. His face lights up and he says sorry for making me climb. I tell him thanks for trying to help me conquer my fear. After that conversation, we started practicing comedy with no hard feelings between us.

After practicing for weeks, the day of the talent show finally came. I think that we did great. We got second place and we made the judges laugh ... most of the time. The lesson I learned is that even though we got second in the talent show we got first in forgiveness.

# Darkness and Light

My phone blares an alarm from across the compact room, barely loud enough to push the blockage from my ears. *It's time to get up*, I tell myself. *Your life awaits*. But it doesn't. Nothing awaits me, because she's gone. Gone forever. ..

When you lose someone you love, time stops. The shock consumes you momentarily; your brain desperately tries to eliminate the bad. No matter how difficult reality is, you convince yourself that everything is simply alright. *Everything is alright*.

And it works. You walk down the stairs and expect her warm smile that sparks fireworks in your belly. You feel her soft hands graze the back of your neck ever so slightly. You smell her fresh perfume that radiates off her in waves. *Everything is alright*.

The repetitive alarm overpowers my thoughts. Ugh. Peeling off the thin sheets, I force the hesitation from my joints. A small sigh escapes my lips in return.

Now, the bellowing sound around me becomes background noise and I contemplate crawling back to bed. *You already made it this far*, I remind myself.

Another sigh. I kick away the dirty clothes that scatter the floor, creating a path to my antique dresser. My bare skin is shocked with a frosty coat of wind that sends chills down my spine. I groan and roll my eyes, promising to switch that fan off when my energy returns.

My feet-still tingling from lack of movement-carry my sluggish posture over to my phone. My fingers graze the glowing screen, tapping away the sound. *Oh Mother, if only you were here to sing me awake. This alarm wouldn't be necessary*.

The thought of my mother sends off firecracker flashbacks across my vision. Between the totaled car, stark white gravestone, and police cars circling our house, I can't help but gag in horror.

My newfound fear forces me to break out into a sprint, escaping to my father's room.

I evaluate the plain room. Blankets cover the large bed, his intense snoring the only clue to his existence.

"Hey, Dad." I get no response, besides the continued snoring. With a groan, I trot over to his side. "*Dad ...*" My voice trails desperately.

He mutters something indistinguishable, so I clear my throat and carry on.

"I'm not going to school today."

A small chuckle emerges immediately. "Kriss ... we agreed that today was the day." His groggy voice barely gets the words out.

I scoff while keeping my eyes trained on the tan carpet. My sweaty toe sinks itself into the rough texture. They never did find time to replace this. A smile forms on my face as I remember Mother's airy voice.

*"This carpet could use some freshening up! I hear a crunch every time I walk!"*

The smile retreats almost as fast as it arrived. "Give me a few more days. I'll get there," I assure him. I want to mention *his* lack of motivation lately, but decide that will only result in his anger.

When I get no answer, I suck my teeth and leave the room, wanting no more dreary interaction for the day.



Though, I find my room isn't much better. Standing is pointless; sitting isn't comfortable. The only things calling my name are the pillows and blankets.

Somehow, I drift my thoughts away from my mother, but the accident itself sticks like glue. It's become prominent that any sunny memory living in my head, lost its light thanks to one, imprudent individual.

In an instant, his face is the star of the show. His horrifying, selfish face. How is it possible for one person to strip me from every source of love in the world? What have I done to deserve the agonizing pain? Why aren't I strong enough to move on?

I roll over, massaging the questions out of my head. My heart pounds against my ribcage like a drum, creating music with the low hum of the room. I'm surprised the darkness hasn't burned it to ashes yet.



The next few days come and go like never before. I've become accustomed to my bed; the battle of getting up isn't worth fighting anymore. I don't particularly mind; at least the nightmares found someone else to haunt.

Father comes to 'have a talk' with me. He claims that the wounds will heal with time. I don't tell him, but my fiery insides just burn them even more.

Today, my mood lifts when the immaculate sun peeks out my curtains, blinding me with the most light I've seen in days. It being mid-spring in Washington state, something other than rain is a rarity. A burst of curiosity consumes me, a feeling I've missed. *If only I could see it better.*

It takes me a second to realize I *can* see it better.

I go slow, being mindful of the ache I've built up in my joints: Starting with my arms, I twist each elbow. A piercing pop arises victorious, satisfaction tickling my bones. With each new sensation, I'm able to prop myself up in a sitting position.

Next I stand, taking deep, focused breaths. My tangled hair falls over my face, and I get lightheaded from swooping it away. A pang of nausea hits me hard, almost knocking me back to bed. I steady myself and stride towards the sunrise.

And then, I see it. The entwined colors float under clouds; playful birds take turns circling the area. I can imagine a grin plastered across the sun as it sits high in the sky. Below me, the grass is long, in serious need of a trim. I take the unexpected weather as a sign-beauty *does* exist.

I press my cracked fingertips against the fogged glass, wishing for a clearer perspective. I rack my brain for the best view in the house.

Mother's favorite bay window.

I'm skeptical about going back to her room. My state of mind probably wouldn't be considered stable, and I haven't dared to leave my room recently. But something inside me pushes the worry aside. Because if I can get even a sliver of hope, it's worth it.

Once my warm toes hit the smooth wood flooring, a sense of relief travels up my veins. The different texture is refreshing to my skin. I lose myself for a moment as I explore further.

When I finally get there, my gaze doesn't immediately go to the breathtaking landscape out the window, or the fact that Father's nowhere in sight. Instead, I see the old vanity my mother used to apply her lovely fragrances.

I'm curious, though terrified. Every emotion plays across my face when I see it because Father pulled it into their closet the day she passed. It's a painful reminder that she is gone. It smells just like her.

Suddenly, nothing else matters. Just this short, scratched up block of wood that belonged to my mother. My legs seem to have a mind of their own; they pull me forward, stopping right in front of her prized possession. I stare at the rusted mirror, revealing my horrid reflection. And for the first time in forever, the tears slide out like honey.

The sobs are controlled; the hole in my heart feels deflated. It wasn't an awful dream, she's gone.

My fingers admire the brass handle as it glitters against the drab wood. A choked sigh presses out my lips as I pull the drawer forward with care. *Maybe she left her perfume behind.*

It isn't empty, but the contents aren't as suspected. My tears stop instantly when I see the unfamiliar object.

A cerulean notebook with 'Kriss' written on it. My mother's handwriting.

I snatch it, slamming the drawer closed with a whack. My first instinct is to open it, but a small piece of paper slips out instead.

I set the book aside and bend down, grabbing the thin sheet.

Mother's cursive covers the page in a sloppy manner. My dry eyes squint while trying to make out the words.

*'Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.'*

My breath catches. Why did Mother decide to write this down? And why was it in a journal labeled for me?

More questions. This new revelation forces me to sit, taking in the words. My eyes scan over them repeatedly; I try desperately to see the hate behind it. But there isn't. It's simply a lighthearted bible verse, destined for me to see.

Is this darkness inside me bitterness? Rage? Anger? I'm not sure. But the message is clear ... forgiveness will heal your wounds. Forgiveness is the light overpowering the darkness.

I know there isn't anyone left to apologize to me. But perhaps forgiveness can be given out without an apology. Maybe forgiveness can save you from yourself.

One last question fills my clear head.

*If God is willing to forgive, can I?*

Yes, I'm certain I can.

# Through Death

The night was dark. The dim moon revealed a tunic-clad girl kneeling in the garden. She worked quickly, plucking off flowers low on the stem and gathering them into a cluster.

Laying before the cottage, the dog raised his head. Who was this intruder? He rose silently, a soft growl exploding into a snarl.

As the dog sprang forward at her, the girl gave a low shriek. “No!” She stumbled backward, falling, and screamed as the dog let out a sharp bark.

“What is going on out there?” The man’s voice shot from the house. “Khelev?”

Khelev barked.

A candle sputtered in the darkness as a man came forward. A cloak hung around his shoulders, and his grey hair was disheveled from sleep. “Khelev?” He held the candle to the girl’s face. “Back, Khelev. There’s a good boy.” He frowned at the girl, seeming to slowly recognize her. “You are Flora?”

She nodded sheepishly.

“I knew your grandfather.” He frowned at the flowers she held in one hand. She slowly moved her fist behind her back. “It serves no purpose to hide something once it’s been seen,” he said sternly. He looked at her and his face softened abruptly. “Very well. Go home. ‘Tis late.”

Flora rose warily. “Aren’t you cross about the flowers?”

“Go home.”

“But-”

“I would prefer to be sleeping right now.”

“But I took your flowers.”

He turned toward the cottage, muttering, “Go home.”

“You’re not cross - why?” She folded her arms.

His eyes flashed. “Unless you wish to spend the whole night listening to my story?”

Flora raised her chin. “I certainly would!”

He let out a soft sigh. “You’re not going till you’ve heard it all, are you?”

She shook her head.

“All right. Fair enough.” He seated himself on the dirt next to her, setting the candle between them. “Someone once forgave me.”

*As a child, I never gave a thought to others’ feelings. It was always about me. The village children merely became victims of the pranks I played for my own entertainment. Certainly this sent a good deal of trouble my way, but I was usually clever enough to avoid it.*

*There was one child, though, who never attempted retaliation. Whatever I did to him, whatever I said to him, he only smiled and brushed it off. This infuriated me. I was desperate for attention, and hectoring my peers seemed to be the only way to achieve this. But that one boy never reacted.*

*His name was David.*

*Together we grew into young men. My maturity did not lessen my malicious treatment of him. Finally, desperate for a reaction, I told David a far-fetched story of how there was a girl down by the river who needed help. It was early spring, you know ... the river was swollen over its banks. I told him she would be swept away by the waters ... that she was tangled in the bushes and I could not free her.*

*He never doubted me.*

*He went down to the roaring river ... and he didn't return.*

*A search party was sent out for him, but found nothing. The village waited for the seven days and mourned him as dead. On the eighth day two men of a neighboring village brought him back. He had been washed downriver, they said; a boy had found him in the rock pools.*

*His leg had been broken and healed improperly as he lay in the pools. But by some miracle he was still alive. When he woke, the first thing he asked was, "Where is she? What happened to the girl by the river?"*

*"You're raving," they told him. "Go to sleep."*

*So he slept. He regained his strength. There was nothing to be done for his leg, but before long we could tell he would live.*

*It was a week after he had been found that I went to see him, driven by my guilt.*

*He sat up when I entered. "Thomas! The girl, what happened to the girl? Surely you must know .... " His voice faded.*

*"There was no girl," I said dully.*

*"No girl? But Thomas, you told me ... "*

*"I lied! I lied because I hated you and I wanted to see you hurt! I wanted you to react, to retaliate! And you never would - so I lied!"*

*His eyes were wounded, but without anger. "Thomas? But. .. I thought you were my friend." He never told anyone of my confession. His injury was believed accidental. Over time his leg healed enough that he could hobble around, and he would often go on long walks in the woods. Because of his injury, he could never be a warrior, but he learned to use a sling with great skill.*

*The months passed, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, but it trudged on nonetheless. Five years after the day David fallen into the river, I went quietly into the woods on the pretense of repairing a snare I had set. I needed a walk of my own.*

*I was bending over an empty snare when there was a light tickle on my bare arm. I swatted it away, absently knotting the sinew of the snare. I heard the sound of a small body tumbling down, and I turned to see a baby bear cheerfully rolling down a slope. The baby bear stopped rolling and scrambled up, ready to do it again.*

*A branch snapped behind me with the painfully slow creak of wet wood. I heard heavy breathing. I turned slowly ... very slowly. ... Above me stood another bear, a full-grown bear, a mother bear. And I crouched on the ground, defenseless, with nowhere to go, nowhere to run.*

*It hit me like a bolt of lightning that I had never confronted danger. I had avoided it, run from it, squirmed out of it. Never had I defeated it. And now I must, or the price would be my life. And so I slowly reached to my right and grasped the shaft of my spear. I swung the spear up and at the bear. The tip glanced off her jaw. She swatted at me with a heavy paw, knocking the spear out of my hand. She advanced, and I heard a crack. My spear, broken beneath her paw. And she seemed not to notice.*

*I realized I was backed against a tree. As the bear took the last step between us, there was a soft sound like a stone hitting fur. The bear turned and I ran. My only thought was to get away. But once at a safe distance, I turned to watch. Then I saw who had thrown the stone.*

*David.*

*It was too late then for me to act. David was knocked to the ground by the bear, and I was too far away to intervene. But ... his arms were free ... maybe ....*

*"David!" I cried, turning towards them as the bear struck him on the head.*

*David's eyes met mine for an instant and he gave a slight nod. He slipped a stone into his sling and whirled the sling to release the stone. The stone buried itself between the bear's eyes, and the bear fell to the side. Dead.*

*"David!" I ran to him. I had no knowledge of healing, but I could see he would not live more than a few moments. Tears fell from my face onto his and mingled with blood and sweat. "Why? Why would you do that? You're going to ...." I turned my face away. Mustering my composure, I took his bow and quiver and put them into his hands so he could die a warrior. "Why?" I whispered again.*

*David's eyes shone with a strange joy. "I forgave you." He seemed distant, his face lit as if he saw something very beautiful. The light went out of his eyes, and I rose. The spirit had gone from his body. He was dead.*

*But he had forgiven me.*

Thomas shook his head. "I still don't really understand," he admitted. "I'm an old man now ... and I still don't understand."

Flora tilted her head thoughtfully. "I think I do."

Thomas looked at her with interest "Do you?"

"'Twas because of love. Love's how he forgave you, and love's what gave him the courage to die."

"Love," Thomas scoffed.

Flora looked indignant. "'Tisn't silly! Love's not just being in love, or a mother loving her baby. Love is in those things, but it's deeper too. Love is caring about someone enough to die for them ... or to forgive them ... or maybe both. To forgive through death. That's all David really wanted. To forgive you and to have you know it." She rose abruptly. "I should go home. Oh, and sorry about. .." She offered the flowers to him.

Thomas shook his head, patting Khelev. "Keep them." She nodded and ran off, laughing. He watched as she faded into the darkness, and suddenly called after her: "Flora?"

"Yes?"

"Next time ask for flowers!"

# A THOUSAND WISHES

## Chapter 1

### Neighbors

Once upon a time in the year 2100 society collapsed. Every family was left to fend for themselves. Diseases and fights became so common that no one was shocked by them. Everyday families lost a loved one. Hospitals were filled with immigrants and immigrants seemed intrusive. Which is why Maria Garcia, Carlos's mother, craved vengeance. Her mother was an illegal immigrant who had just wanted to escape poverty. American society never gave her the chance to live a comfortable life. Her dear madre was forced to hide because of violence against immigrants. Maria now lived in the house which her mother chose and because of that Maria loved it dearly. Unfortunately, the Jones family was now trying to take that away.

Two months later Naomi, Donald's not so humble wife, yelled to Maria to get off their land. Maria screamed to Naomi, "It's my land and you have your own area that's even better than mine. You get out!" Donald was watching and decided to approach Maria with the same unfriendliness which Maria had given him. "Listen here, woman! Don't you know that your family is a line of illegal immigrants. Go back to Mexico where you belong"! Maria returned the shout, "I will when you go back to Europe"!

Fifteen years later Carlos walked out that same door to help his mother tend to their garden consisting of beans, broccoli, peas, lettuce, and blueberries. Weeds grew daily and they needed to get rid of them. Maria was picking the sunny and fiery spirited yellow dandelions next to the lettuce. She tossed them aside where no crops were being grown. Carlos watched when something caught his eye. He picked the only white dandelion out of the grass. It was a soft, fragile, snowy dandelion in a patch of thorns. He picked it up carefully and blew it into a thousand pieces while making a wish. After his wish he gently separated it from the rest of the dandelions while he picked the rest of the weeds up. "I've got it from here" Carlos said to the 35-year-old tired and weary mother. He carried the patch of yellow dandelions to the trash pile near the dead, rotten trees that were going to be chopped down for firewood soon. He walked between a worm-infested tree and mushrooms and then tossed the dandelions into the pile of junk where trash laid. The dandelions danced softly in the wind as the air started to run around. Carlos sighed and let the dandelions scatter themselves. As Carlos started to walk back to the house, he heard the sounds of birds chirping. Carlos commented to himself, well, I guess I have to add to my list of good things that come out of an apocalypse. He thought about the wildlife coming back. He walked to the garden and picked the ripe bush beans and put them in what was left of his mother's basket, which was as ancient as everything else around Maria and Carlos. "Thank you, hijo", Maria muttered.



## **Chapter 2:**

### **Milk and Cookies**

Carlos put his ripped leather jacket over his white T-shirt. He had to convince his neighbors that they needed a cow for milk. He knew Mrs. Naomi and Mr. Donald had plenty to spare. Why couldn't they hand over a cow? Carlos grabbed the baseball cap his grandmother left behind for her future grandson. It had a bit of dirt on it but was otherwise spotless. "I'm so sorry, mad re, but I have to secure our family heritage. This is what you wanted, right? Carlos thought to himself. He let a tear roll down his face as he whispered, I wish I could have met you, abuela. Carlos opened his room door and started out of the house. When he approached the Jones's house, he stopped himself and thought out loud, "What am I doing, they will not listen to us". Then Carlos commented under his breath, "No! I won't give up! I have to do this!". Carlos stubbornly forced himself to knock on his rich neighbors' door. A man with smooth black hair and green eyes opened the door. "Mr. Donald, I've come to make a bargain, my family heirloom for a cow". Donald laughed as he replied, A family heirloom for a cow, boy, you must really despise that family heirloom". Carlos begged, "Please, we need milk, we are about to run out". Then Donald asked, "Let me see this heirloom". Carlos handed Donald the cap. "What's so special about this thing?" Donald curiously posed the question to Carlos. Carlos answered, "It was my abuela's. When she came here, she came across the cap next to the baseball field. She took it to give to me, her future grandson, as a sign of hope. At least that's what mother says." Donald examined the cap again. Donald questioned to himself how a teenager could just leave behind a family heirloom for a cow but he knew it was out of necessity. He was sure that they would barter something else but he knew they lived in such a poor state of circumstances. It wasn't forced upon him and yet it was forced upon them.

Donald commanded Carlos to come with him and keep the cap as he told him, "You deserve it". Carlos put the cap on but remained silent out of confusion. Donald led Carlos to their fridge and got out a jug of fresh milk. "Here, take that to your mother. Tell her to keep quiet about it. Naomi might get angry if she found out why we lose a jug of milk every two weeks". Donald winked as he handed Carlos the jug of milk. He then told Carlos to come again some other time when Naomi would not be at home because he thought they could chat a bit more and clear things up between the families. "Perhaps we could bake some cookies to symbolize our friendship", Donald articulated friendly to Carlos. Carlos took that as a sign to leave and he did so as he replied to Donald, "Thank you".

## **Chapter 3:**

### **The Second Cookie**

Carlos and Maria woke up to the sound of soft knocking on their door. "I'll get it, Carlos." Maria sleepily told Carlos. Maria opened the door to see their blonde hair and green-eyed enemy Naomi. Naomi stated, "I would like to talk to you and your son". Carlos walked to the door. "I saw you with my husband and I heard every word that was said. I just wanted you to know I've always felt sorry for you two, but I never wanted to admit it." Naomi said sorrowfully. "I also want you to know that I am not in the best condition and that my time to live may be short. My husband spotted lice in my hair today." Naomi quickly informed the mother and teenager. "Lice? Well, I can fix that! Just sit down". Naomi obeyed and sat down in a nearby wooden chair made out of sticks and rope. Maria left to go get scissors and shampoo while Carlos and Naomi engaged in a conversation. Carlos was in the kitchen while

Naomi remained in the chair next to the front door of the living room. “So, you saw us, but you didn’t say a word? Why?” Carlos queried Naomi. “I didn’t say anything because I didn’t want to harm a possible mending between our families. I also thought that I should come to you alone to try to resolve my issues”, Naomi affirmed. “Well, I forgive you. I’m sure my mother does too, she did say that she would help cure your lice. Why do you think your time is running out, anyways?”, Carlos questioned Naomi. “Well, head lice can bring diseases if left untreated.” Naomi nervously explained to Carlos. “I’ve got the materials. Naomi, put your hair up.”, Maria stated. Naomi put her hair up and Maria poured the shampoo her grandmother had told her about that could get rid of lice. Next Maria drenched Naomi’s hair in water which came from the stream in their garden. Finally, Maria repeated this process five times. “It never hurts to be sure.”, Maria informed Naomi and Carlos. When she was done washing Naomi’s hair, she cut it short. “Lice looks for long hair so that they can reach their host more easily.”, Maria uttered to Naomi. “Thank you”, Naomi expressed gratefully when the process was finished. “You’re welcome. Anything for a friend” Maria replied. Carlos smiled. His wishes had finally been fulfilled that he blew into that dandelion. The wishes that the two families would forgive each other, that Donald would understand what it’s like to be poor, and that Naomi would come to accept immigrants in America. That his family’s thousands of wishes concerning love and forgiveness in this world would be fulfilled.-

# Broken Harp

Skree-Ter let go of the music, let it roam through the cave, released it from her harp. It came back to her, whispering what it found.

The song was an ancient Bludklaw lullaby. Skree-Ter loved that song, learning to play it on every instrument before she could fly. With her self-made harp, Skree-Ter spent stolen moments playing that song, trying to perfect every note.

She readjusted her tail's grip on the stalactite and dug her hind claws into the rocks. Tucking her wings and flicking the massive ears atop her head, Skree-Ter resumed the lullaby. But this time, the notes came back differently: something skulked just outside the cave.

Pointing her ears in the direction of the anomaly, she screeched softly. Her echolocation revealed that the something was another dragon. Its steps were heavier than a Bludklaw's step; it smelled faintly like water. Screeching again, her echolocation told her the dragon's head resembled the shape of an alligator's. That sounded like a Thundoram dragon, but Skree-Ter had never met one.

Curious, she walked across the ceiling, keeping a careful grip on the rocks. She could hear claws clicking on the floor and wondered why the stranger acted like they hadn't noticed her. Pausing as the clicking stopped, she remembered Thundorams are half-deaf and shout when they speak.

"HELLO?!"

The sound ripped through Skree-Ter's ears and compromised her grip. She plummeted to the cave floor, landing awkwardly on the Thundoram.

The Thundoram screamed, threw her off, and screamed again. His voice crushed Skree-Ter's eardrums. Standing up with a hiss, she felt the remains of her harp, still clutched in her claws.

"OH, HEY!" the Thundoram roared cheerfully. "YOU MUST BE SKREE-TERI I'M BOLTDE! SITHE WAS WONDERING IF YOU COULD HELP HIM WITH-"

"You broke it!" Skree-Ter shrieked and flung harp scraps at him.

"WHAT?!" Boltde shoutied, as Skree-Ter heard the harp remains hit scales.

"You bellowing buffoon!"

"YOU SEEM PRETTY ANGRY AT ME. ARE YOU THE WRONG DRAGON, BECAUSE SITHE SAID TO LOOK FOR A BLUDKLAW WITH DARKER SCALE COLORS RESEMBLING A-OOOH, UH ... "

Skree-Ter's ears crinkled. Boltde was so loud she could almost hear his brain screaming, "DON'T TALK ABOUT COLORS TO A BLUDKLAW, THEY'RE BLIND!"

Skree-Ter strode angrily out of the cave, the volume of his words still echoing. She expected Boltde to follow or shout after her, but no sound emanated from him.

Once away she stopped to rub her moist eyes. Frustrated tears. That's all her eyes were good for, weren't they?



Boltde locked down his entire being. He hunched and tucked in his wings. It seemed his every action hurt Skree-Ter. Well, he was fairly sure that was Skree-Ter.

He opened his eyes cautiously and moved his head slightly. Boltde was alone now, no angry bat-dragons nearby, just a Thundoram with blue and yellow zig-zagging scales. Then he looked at the broken scraps with misery.

How had that encounter gone so wrong? Rubbing his eyes, Boltde ran through it again in his head. He had walked to the cave Sithe had told him to go to, heard some whispery sound, asked “Hello?” and an angry dragon fell on him.

He had tried speaking, she angrily threw something at him, and then his mention of colors only made it worse. Boltde had definitely done something else to upset her that much. Did Skree-Ter think he had broken the wood-string-thing? It wasn’t his fault; she fell on him. Unless it broke when he threw her ... but that was an accident.

Staring outside, Boltde muttered, “What did I do wrong?”

“There’s quite a few things, actually.”

Whipping around he saw a Bludklaw dragon with darker scale colors resembling flint with brown stripes down the wings and grey rings inside the ears, nearly identical to Skree-Ter. Except this one was twice Boltde’s size.

“Apologies if I startled you.” The stranger gently tilted his head down in some greeting. “I’m Ashka-Ter, Skree-Ter’s father.”

Boltde gulped. “Uh-hi?”

Ashka-Ter chuckled. “I’m guessing I’m the second Bludklaw you’ve ever met.”

“listen, I-I don’t ... “

“You don’t understand us.” Ashka-Ter finished and started walking slowly towards Boltde. “You don’t understand how much we love our peace. You don’t understand our affinity for music. You don’t understand our sensitive ears.”

Ashka-Ter was standing feet from Boltde, who expected execution for his “crimes” against the Ter family. However, Ashka-Ter gently placed a claw on his shoulder.

“And that’s okay.” Ashka-Ter smiled slightly. “For your first meeting with a young Bludklaw to go smoothly is inconceivable.”

The whispery sounds came back to Boltde’s mind and he picked up the scraps.

“This made music?” he asked.

Ashka-Ter sighed. “So, it did break. Skree-Ter loved that harp.”

Again, Boltde looked down at it in misery, but this time he noticed one of the breaks mimicked another. Lining the pieces together, he slid them into place until they embraced each other.

Ashka-Ter scratched his chin. “I know it’s not your preferred abode, but why don’t you come into our cave? We can light torches so you can use your sight properly.”

Boltde was about to speak when he saw Ashka-Ter’s large oval ears looking at him like a pair of eyes.

As quietly as possible, Boltde replied with a cautious, “Sure.”



Skree-Ter, still angry, arrived at Sithe’s garden, her wings held close. She had come here so often that she didn’t even bother using echolocation when passing through the gate. The stupidly cheerful smell of plants welcomed her with the familiar rusty smell of an Edgeragon

hidden underneath.

“Uh oh.” Sithe said. “Something happened?”

“Don’t you have berries you need me to pick?!” she shot at him.

There was a pause accompanied by the shifting of Sithe’s metallic scales. “Yes, I do. We need the ones near the edge of the fence.”

They made their way through the tangle of plants, Skree-Ter sniffing for the ripe berries and pointing them out while Sithe deposited them into his leather pouch. It required all of Skree-Ter’s concentration to smell the ripe berries; she had to siphon energy from her anger to focus. Once Sithe’s pouch was full they walked back out of the garden.

“Thank you again Skree-Ter,” Sithe said. “I’ll send these to Soard so he can make medicine with them. Now, why don’t you tell me about what happened?”

Skree-Ter sighed. Of course, he knew she was calm now. Sithe was training to be a doctor and he always said part of that job was knowing about others. She explained to him her encounter with Boltde.

Sithe flinched. “I realize now that I should’ve sent someone else to get you. Boltde can be disruptive. However, I also know that he’d never try to hurt anyone.”

“My harp is destroyed because of him.” She protested.

“I know, and I bet he knows it, too. It sounds like it went equally bad for both of you.”

Skree-Ter sighed. Sithe was right. She left for the long trek home.

Nearing her home Skree-Ter felt the cold of night, but also sensed the unexpected aroma of water. The steps she heard from the cave were too heavy to be her family. Skree-Ter knew to whom they belonged but echolocated anyway.

Boltde exited the cave.

“OH!” she heard Boltde yell then clear his throat. “Uh, hi Skree-Ter.”

He was still speaking loudly, but it tolerable. “Boltde.” Skree-Ter replied.

“I...” Boltde said, “I’m truly sorry. I didn’t mean to spook you and break your harp and-”

“It’s okay.” Skree-Ter interrupted as loudly as she could without screaming. She sighed. “I shouldn’t have stormed off like that. I can build another harp.”

“About that.” The sound of Boltde’s steps cautiously drew closer until he was standing in front of her. A movement of air told Skree-Ter he was holding something out to her. She reached and felt her claws drift over a familiar shape.

She lifted the harp and ran her claws around it. There were scars and dents, but it was still the same. “You fixed it.” She said in awe.

“I mean,” Boltde said, “your father had a bunch of sticky stuff to hold it together and the strings aren’t perfect.”

“Thank you.” Skree-Ter breathed, remembered Boltde was half-deaf, then repeated it louder.

“Um, yeah,” Boltde said, starting to sound more relaxed, “no problem. Anyway, it’s getting late, I should probably get back home.”

He flew into the air but paused, still flapping his wings. “Talk to you later!” he called.

Skree-Ter smiled. “Talk to you later!” she repeated. Boltde flew off, the scent of water still floating through the air.

# A Troubled Road

“Look Out!” Clara jolted at her daughter’s voice and gasped as a rusty pickup truck hurled towards their Honda Civic. She yanked the wheel hard to the right but it was too late and the pickup rammed into the side of their car. Glass shattered and the smell of burning leather hung heavy in the air as the pickup sent up waves of black smoke into the clear, blue sky. Her Civic was a twisted, half-demolished mess and Clara’s hands were shaking uncontrollably as she lifted her head from the airbag that had exploded into her face on impact. Something warm trickled down from her forehead and as she swiped a hand over her face, she saw it was blood. She turned to look into the passenger seat. “Madeline, are you ... ?” she trailed off as she saw the slumped figure of her daughter leaning against the dash. Panic squeezed its merciless hand around her heart as she realized Madeline’s airbag hadn’t gone off. She wanted to snatch Madeline and hold her to her chest but she knew if she moved her, she could cause far more damage to her daughter. Several cars had stopped as people rushed over to her Civic and the old pickup.

“Call 911!” she screamed. “Hurry!” A faint wailing of sirens sounded from a distance and she knew someone already had. A teenage boy tried to open her door but it had been forced inwards by the impact of the pickup and wouldn’t open.

“Ma’am?! Ma’am, I’m so sorry! I wasn’t paying attention, are you alright?” The boy’s eyes were frantic with worry and she could see multiple cuts along his face. In that moment, Clara wanted to reach through the hole in her window and strangle him but she forced herself to keep her hands down.

“My daughter is unconscious!” she shouted, rage evident as it spilled from her lips in a string of profanities.

The boy lowered his gaze and she could see tears sliding down his bloody cheeks. “I ... I’m so sorry.”

The sirens grew louder until they were blaring in her ears as an ambulance, several police cars, and a firetruck pulled up alongside her car. The next few minutes felt like hours as the firemen sawed through her jammed door and all the while she watched her daughter’s unmoving form. She watched her as she was lifted from the car, as she was examined by the paramedics, as she was placed on a stretcher, as her body was rolled up into an ambulance, and as the cruel doors were shut behind her, blocking her from Clara’s desperate eyes. She snapped at the paramedic at her side and he calmly explained that her daughter’s injuries needed to be tended to immediately. Head injuries were very serious. He continued examining her and asking her questions she found remarkably stupid. She snapped at him again, angrily declaring she wanted to see her daughter. He gave her a sympathetic glance.

“We’re almost done. It’s just part of the test to make sure you’re alright. You’ll see her soon.” He then proceeded to wrap her head and treat her cuts.

Her test was soon finished and she was put into a different ambulance. As soon as it screeched to a halt in front of the hospital’s emergency room and the doors opened, she rushed out, attacking the nearest paramedic with questions. “Where is she? Is she okay? Can you bring me to her?”

He brought her inside and started speaking with a doctor. She waited anxiously and as the doctor turned to face



her, she searched his eyes and found that the news he would share would not be good.

“Your daughter is currently being tended to for her wounds but I’m afraid, because of her head injury, she’s gone into a coma.”

Clara’s heart shattered and tears spilled down her cheeks. “No.”

“I’ll take you to her.” He gave her a sad smile and as she hesitated, he took her arm and gently guided her down a hallway. Tears blurred her vision and turned the paramedics and doctors they passed into unrecognizable blobs. They stopped in front of a room halfway down the hallway and she rushed in to see her daughter lying motionless on the bed with her eyes closed. Her heart monitor was the only sound in the room. Clara eyed it solemnly. It was the only thing that told her Madeline was still alive. She sat beside her bed and gazed at her face for any quiver or flick of her eyelids as the doctor spoke to her. She didn’t listen. His words were just a faint drone in her ears and she was glad when they finally stopped and assumed that he had left the room. For days she sat by her daughter’s bed, scarcely eating, and ignoring all the hospital staff that came to check on Madeline. Her daughter didn’t move. She waited. Nothing.

As she sat, keeping a silent vigil, her rage burned deep inside of her. It enveloped her heart and wrapped her brain in a suffocating hold. One thought pierced her mind continuously. The boy did this. Her fury felt no bounds as she pictured the boy in her mind. He did this to her.

After five days a visitor arrived. Him. Clara leaped out of her chair so fast it crashed to the floor. The boy averted her gaze and held out a bouquet of flowers. “I’m sorry ma’am. Truly I am.”

Clara seethed with anger. “Get out,” she snarled through gritted teeth. The boy bit his lip and set his bouquet on the floor before backing out of the room and retreating down the hallway. Clara snatched the bouquet and threw it into the trash bin with such force, it tipped over, spilling its contents onto the tiled floor. She considered running out of the room and tackling him but she restrained herself and sat back down. After another two days, the doctor she had previously met came into the room.

“Miss, it’d be best if you went home and got some rest. We’ll inform you immediately if anything happens.”

She argued with him for ten minutes before finally relenting and making him promise to call her the second anything changed. She called a cab and was driven to a local car shop. Her car had been totaled and her insurance company had given her a check but it wasn’t enough to actually replace her car so she’d have to pay about half of the price for a new one. After talking with the dealer for a while and filling out the proper papers, she bought a new car. She stood next to it for a few minutes before taking a deep breath and getting in. She needed a car and was not going to let an accident scare her forever. Her hands trembled but she forced them to steady and drove onto the highway. As she drove, she felt the familiar rage at the boy bubble up inside of her and tears filled her eyes as she thought of her daughter. Her daughter all alone in a hospital room. In a coma. Because of him.

A loud honk snapped her attention back to the road and she realized with horror, she had drifted into the wrong lane. She swerved back to her lane and pulled into the nearest parking lot, shaking and trembling. She could’ve killed someone!

Her mind traveled back to the boy’s panic-stricken face and instead of anger, she felt guilt. He was so young and she knew he was truly sorry but she had refused to listen to him. Clara sobbed into her hands for a moment. She had nearly caused the same thing that had been done to her to happen to someone else. It wasn’t right. She dug into her purse for the information she had gotten from the boy after the crash and found a crumpled piece of paper with insurance information and a phone number written on the bottom in pen. She took a deep breath, entered the

digits into her phone, and waited.

“Hello?” A voice answered.

“Yes, hello. Um, you’re the boy from the crash, right?”

There was a pause. “Yes.”

She could hear the tremor in his voice. “I’m sorry.” Tears poured down her cheeks. “I’m so sorry! I forgive you! It was an accident!”

She could tell the boy was crying too as his throaty voice answered, “Thank you. Oh, thank you.”

Together they sobbed for a while before exchanging well wishes and hanging up. She sat with her head resting back on the headrest and it felt as if a weight had been lifted from her shoulders. Her phone began ringing and she curiously picked it up, wondering if it was the boy again. “Hello?” She asked.

“Ma’am, this is Country Ridge Hospital. Your daughter is awake.”

# Nightmare

Silvery-blue moonlight cascaded through a large, bedroom window and illuminated Violet, a small, nine-year-old girl. She had just had a horrific nightmare, which left her in a teary, shaking heap on her bed. Violet desperately wanted to be comforted, but was afraid to leave the safety of her room, lest some terrifying beast in the night decided to finish her off.

So Violet decided to try the next best thing: She gathered her stuffed animals around her and hugged them tightly to herself. Violet buried her head into the soft, plushy forms, but... something was missing.

*It's just not the same*, she thought dejectedly, more tears seeping out of her eyes and slipping down her cheeks.

A soft knock resounded on her bedroom door and Violet's head jerked up, fear and apprehension washing over her.

The door opened and Violet saw the dark form of her father standing just outside the doorway. She rubbed her swollen, puffy eyes, a couple of tears dripping off her chin.

"D-dad .. ?" she asked pitifully, her voice small.

He eased himself into her room and blinked, taking in the sight of his daughter in obvious distress. Concern bled into his eyes, and he swept towards her; kneeling down beside her bed.

"Violet, what's wrong?"

Violet rolled over and straightened up a bit, sniffing noisily. "I... I..." she stammered, trying to put into words what she was thinking, what she had just seen and heard in her dreams. "I... I had a nightmare ... " she mumbled shamefacedly, her head drooping.

Her father's head tilted to the side, ever so slightly. ".fl.nd .. ? What did this one entail?"

Violet looked up at that, a frown appearing between her brows. "You mean ... what was it about..?"

"Mm."

"Well.. I dreamed ... that you left me. 'Cos I wasn't good enough, 'cos I was a failure, and ... and ... " Her voice became higher with every word, and tears pooled in her eyes once more.

He sighed. "Oh, child ... I would never leave you-" He stopped, and gazed at Violet with dawning comprehension. "... Is this the result of what occurred earlier today?"

Violet shook her head in instant denial. "No!"

Her father raised an eyebrow, clearly not believing her.

".... Maybe .... " Violet paused, then sighed. "I guess ... " she muttered, twisting her hands in the bed covers. Abruptly, she jerked her head up before her dad could say anything else. "I didn't mean it! I promise I didn't mean those awful things I said to you! I was just so *mad*, and ... " Her voice trailed off due to a lump in her throat and she screwed her eyes up tight.

"I'm such a terrible daughter," Violet whispered, and buried her face in her hands. "I am," she muffled into her hands before her father could get a word in edgewise. "You can't deny it-"

But Violet couldn't get anything else out because she was suddenly being held very tightly against her father. Her breath hitched in her chest and she had to struggle against the urge to cry again.

“... Contrary to your foolish belief, I absolutely can,” Violet’s father rumbled, his voice vibrating through her. He tipped her chin up with his fingertips so that their eyes met. “You are a *child* that made quite a few mistakes today. Granted, they were hurtful mistakes-”

Violet’s eyes fell, but her father nudged her so that she was looking at him once more.

“-but you will grow and learn from them, will you not?”

Violet nodded as best as she could with her dad’s fingers underneath her chin. She was rewarded a rare half-smile from him in return.

“Excellent. Regardless, however, you needn’t feel this degree of remorse.”

“Huh? I’m sad ‘cos of my nightmare!” Violet corrected, confused.

“You obviously feel quite a degree of, ah, *regret* regarding how you treated me, otherwise you wouldn’t have a nightmare entailing me abandoning you because you “were a failure,” as you put it,” her father lectured. “Am I wrong?”

Violet opened her mouth, then shut it and looked away.

Her father smirked ever so slightly. “I see I am not,” he said, half to himself.

“But..!”

“Hmm?” Violet’s father looked over at her questioningly.

“But... why did you say I shouldn’t feel.. uhh ... remorseful..?”

“Ah. Well, that would be because I forgive you. I had already, in fact, before you had slammed your door shut earlier this evening.”

Violet froze. “W-what .. ?” her voice quivered tremulously.

Her father’s eyes softened. “Yes, child, you heard me correctly. Need I repeat myself? I forgive you, little one.”

Violet was shell-shocked. *Even. .. even after I treated him so horribly, still ... still ... !*

She leaned forward and buried her head into his chest, her arms snaking around his torso tightly, so very tightly. *I don’t. ... I don’t deserve this ...*

“I’m sorry,” Violet whimpered. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m so sorry,” she repeated, muffling her apologies into her father’s shirt.

She was vaguely aware of him maneuvering himself onto the bed beside her and pulling her into a more comfortable position against himself. Her father rubbed slow, soothing circles on her back, murmuring soft words of comfort to his daughter. Violet responded by nestling even closer against him. She hated being at odds with her father; the only family she had, and was so, so relieved it was over.

After what seemed like a long, long time, Violet’s sobs eventually dwindled out, except for the occasional snuffle.

All was quiet in the room, except for the sound of Violet’s breathing and her father’s quiet, steady heartbeat under her ear. She broke the silence with her whispered declaration of, “I love you, Daddy.”

He swallowed and tightened his arms around her in response. Her father didn’t usually declare his love for his daughter with words, but that was alright. That made his worded declarations all the more special, and through his everyday actions, Violet knew and was content.

Violet faintly smiled and drifted off into a peaceful slumber; curled up in her father’s embrace.

---

# YOUNG ARTIST AWARD

Create an original illustration of a scene from a favorite book and provide a quote from the book that describes your illustration.

---

## AGE 7-8



### PAGE 38

1st:

Newman MacPherson

Book: *The Green Ember* by S.D. Smith

Quote: "He was short, but glorious, wearing a crown wreathed in flames, a bright emerald in its center."

Pg. 318



### PAGE 41

3rd:

Price MacPherson

Book: *The Green Ember: Book IV: Ember's End* by S.D. Smith

Quote: "The claws cut deep trenches in Picket's fur and skin, and he cried out

in pain. The force of the blow flung Picket far up and away. He flipped, then leveled off in mid air, looking back in agony at the scene behind. But Smalls leapt then, from sixth to seventh stone now. He seemed to veer right, then correct-somehow in mid air-as the star sword shined black in the sunlight. Morbin, blinded on that side, saw too late the leaping form of Jupiter's son." Pg. 375

## AGE 9-10



### PAGE 39

1st:

Elsa Schrader

Book: *A Night Divided* by Jennifer A. Nielsen

Quote: "We lived on the fourth floor of a drab apartment building that looked more or less like all the other

apartment buildings. That wasn't an accident." Pg. 29  
"A choice between Communist gray and Communist grayer." Pg. 151



### PAGE 40

2nd:

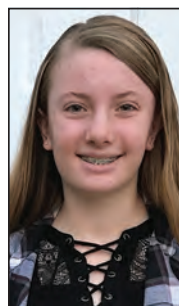
Elise Arentson

Book: *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate

Quote: "Mack gives me a fresh crayon, a yellow one, and ten pieces of paper.

"Time to earn your keep, Picasso," he mutters. I wonder who this Picasso is. Does he have a tire swing like me? Does he ever eat his crayons?"

Pg. 38



### PAGE 42

1st:

Jadyann Meerbeek

Book: *Wings of Fire: The Poison Jungle* by Tui T. Sutherland

Quote: "The group fell silent as they drew closer to the edge of the Poison

Jungle. The Snarling River, dark and swift, marked the boundary, but the jungle was always prowling across the line. Pitcher plants and cobra lilies grew thick along the shores on both sides, and every time Sundew flew this way she saw more plants extending their tendrils across the river." Pg. 6





## PAGE 43

2nd:

Rose MacPherson

Book: *The Green Ember*

by S.D. Smith

Quote: "...The tenth window, partially finished, was uncovered...a half-completed vision of the mended wood.

In the top-most panel, above the half-done image, she saw picture of a...crown...a bright emerald in its center." Pg. 318



## PAGE 47

3rd:

Jayda Schewe

Book: *Matilda* by Roald Dahl

Quote: "What if they said yes, I can stay with you? Would you let me stay with you then?" Miss Honey said softly, "Yes, that would be heaven."

Pg. 236

## AGE 15-17



## PAGE 44

3rd: Addison Koterba

Book: *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*

by J.K. Rowling

Quote: "The little flock of birds was spreading like a hail of golden bullets toward Ron, who yelped and covered

his face with his hands, but the birds attacked, pecking and clawing at every bit of flesh they could reach."

Pg. 302



## PAGE 48

1st:

Mara Kolars

Book: *Beauty, a Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast*

by Robin McKinley

Quote: "He stepped forwards again, and I backed up until I reached the

balcony. I wrapped my fingers around the railing and stood; cornered, with the hunter's lantern shining in my eyes." Pg. 116

## AGE 13-14



## PAGE 45

1st:

Grace MacPherson

Book: *The Return of the King*

by J.R.R. Tolkien

Quote: "Orcs, and talking trees, and leagues of grass, and galloping riders, and glittering caves, and white towers,

and golden halls, and battle, and tall ships sailing, all these passed before Sam's eyes." Pg. 934



## PAGE 49

2nd:

Kira Sims

Book: *Cold Cold Heart* by Tami Hoag

Quote: "You're gonna be a star, Dana," he called back to her. "That's what you've always wanted, right?"

Pg. 3



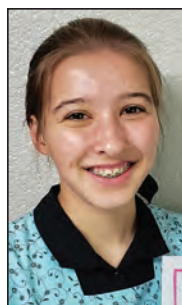
## PAGE 46

2nd: Macey Carlson

Book: *Frozen Charlotte* by Alex Bell

Quote: "Who's your friend?" Liliasked. "What friend?" "The girl that came here with you." I stared at her. "No one came with me." "Yes, she did." Liliasked. She pointed at

Rebecca's closed door and added, "she just went in there. She said it was her room but that's not true. That's my sisters room." Pg. 82



## PAGE 50

3rd:

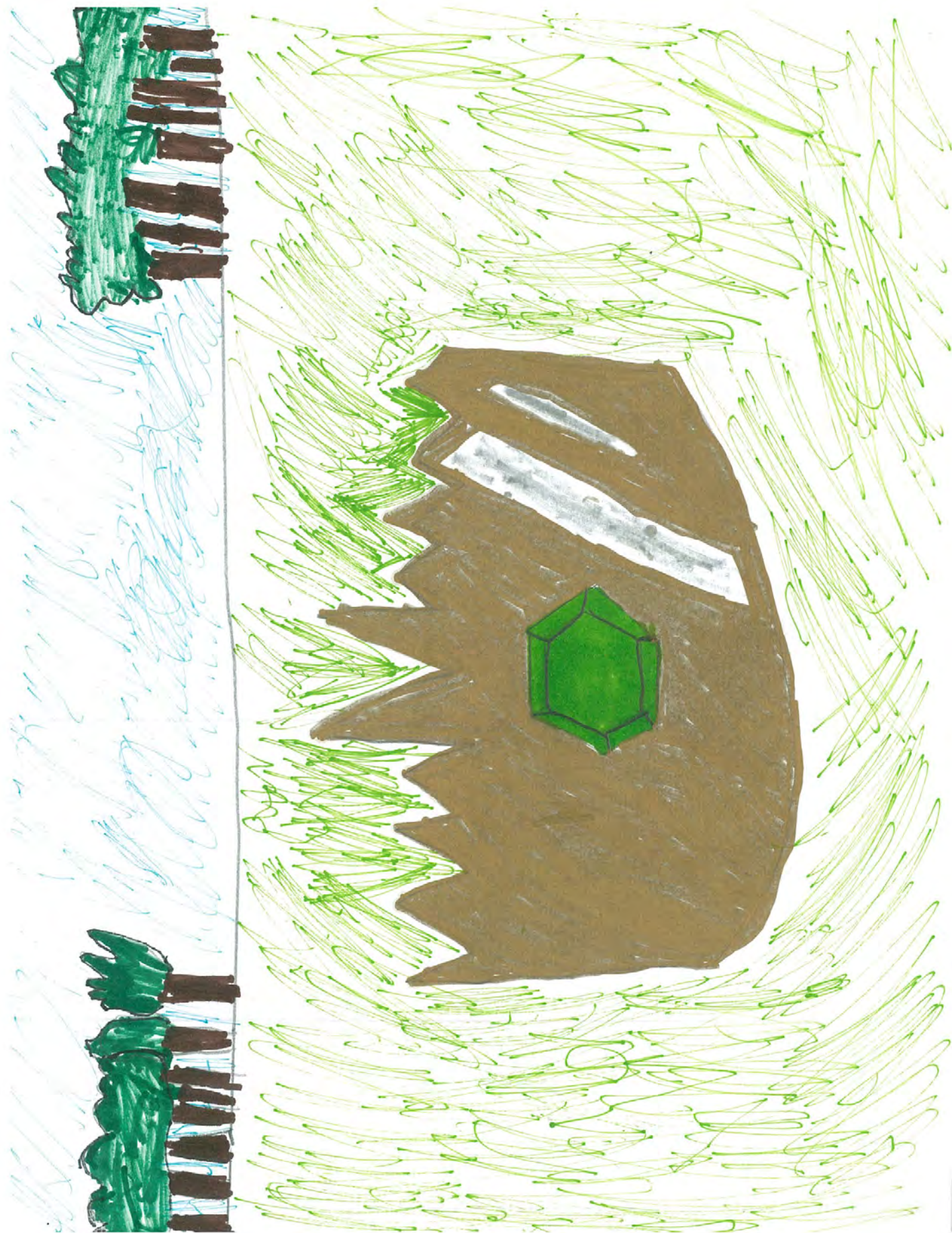
Charity Rose Wollman

Book: *The Eighty Dollar Champion* by Elizabeth Letts

Quote: "But there was something about this horse. Harry turned back and the horse was still watching him

intently, he was wise, an old soul, a horse who's steady demeanor seemed to cover hidden depths. Man or beast, Harry did not like to see a proud soul in captivity. "Might make a lesson horse if we can fatten him up." He handed over the eighty dollars and never looked back." Pg. 8









By  
Elsa





Elise Arentson • Age 9













Rose MacPherson • Age 12









Grace MacPherson • Age 14



[illegible]

# CHARLOTTE

Macey Carlson • Age 14









Mara Kolars • Age 16





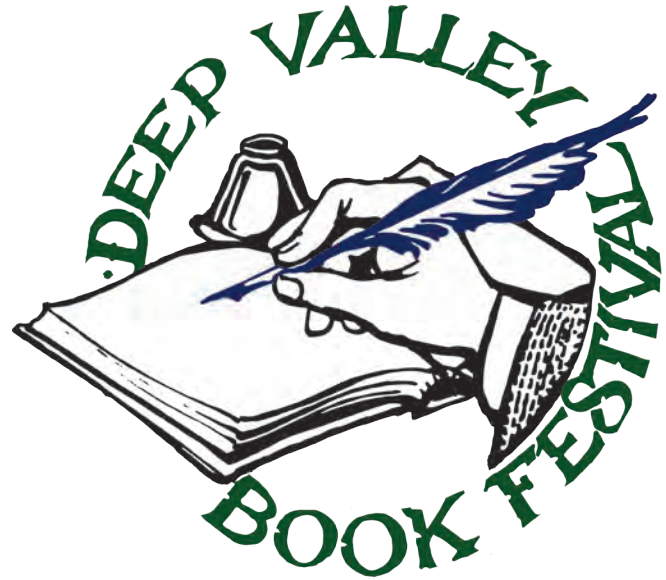
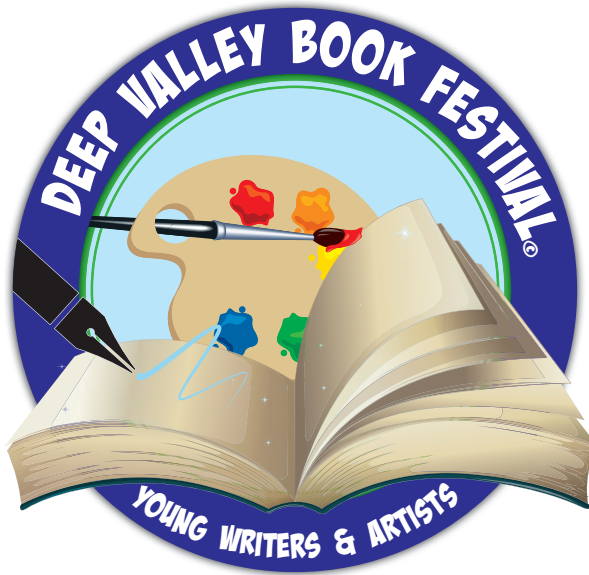
Kira Sims • Age 18





Charity Rose Wollman • Age 15

# BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



## SPONSORED BY



Minnesota Heritage Publishing

The Free Press  
MEDIA

## PRINTED BY:



Corporate Graphics  
*Your Printing Solutions Company*

[www.deepvalleybookfestival.com](http://www.deepvalleybookfestival.com)