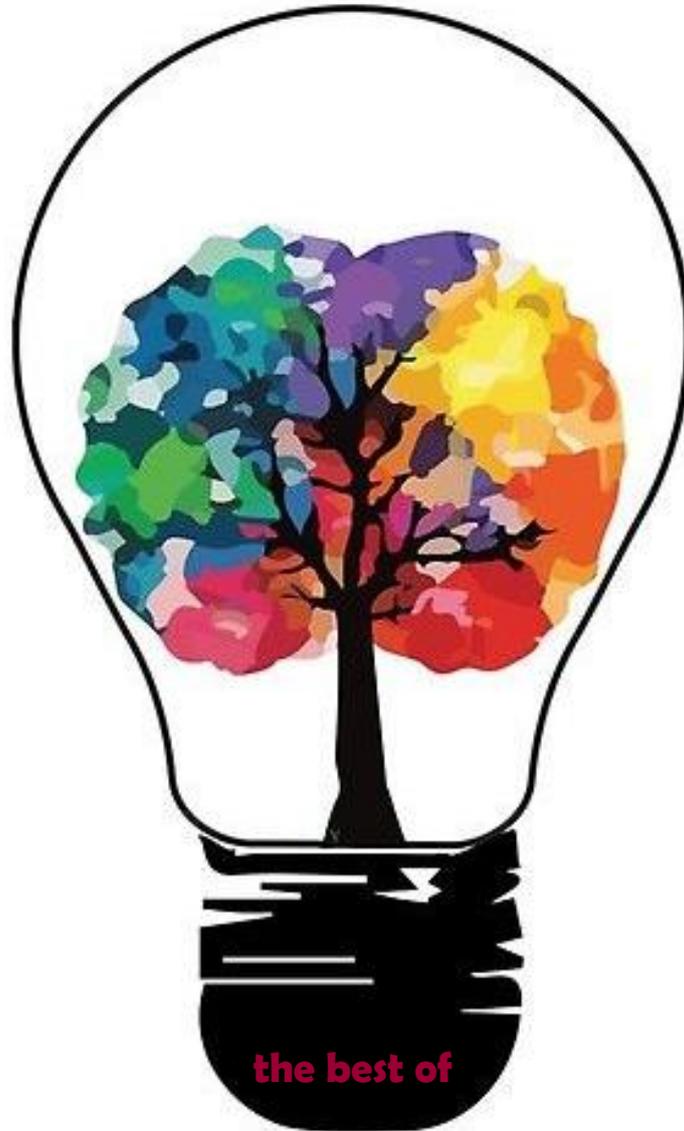


2018 – 2019



**CREATIVE
WRITING
CLUB**

INTRODUCTION

Whenever I tell people I am the Writer in Residence at East Barnet School, I feel a burst of pride. From speaking to other writers, I'm aware just how unusual this is, and in a time when schools have to justify every penny they spend, I am full of admiration for an establishment that places creativity among its students so very highly.

And what creative students they are! Running this after-school writing club is still one of the very best parts of my working life, seven years on.

I have been honoured to see some of my very first students - who joined the club in Year 7 - finish Year 13. It's a bittersweet milestone for me and I wonder whether teachers ever become entirely used to the feeling.

But there is always fresh blood coming along to the club and this year a group of Year 7 and 8's have become regulars, each week producing interesting work and usually making me laugh in the process.

I would like to thank Ms Swaine for the honour of letting me be your Writer in Residence for another year and I hope you will enjoy reading the work from my brilliant, talented students.

Caroline Green, Writer in Residence



Walking in Another's Shoes

This is how I like to think about characterisation in fiction: as a way of walking in the shoes of others. As a fun exercise, I asked the class to imagine a food they loved or hated, then to write about it with the opposite focus.

John Pritchard (Year 7) is a big fan of Chinese food...but you wouldn't think so after reading his piece!

I shudder at the thought of dinner. Chinese cooking is so wet and slippery that the food covers your tongue, spreading the unsettling taste even more. As always, the dish needed spicing up and slipped like a snake down my fragile throat and the cake was way too soggy and dark for me. These grotesque plates were worsened by the mango that seems to make the unsettling taste stay even longer! Who would ever like these horrors?

*In another exercise, this piece by **Lily Rachel (Year 13)** had a pleasing 'spy fiction' feel.*

He is standing on the platform. At the far end, near the tunnel, where red neon flickers in the darkness. He's almost alone, a few others are waiting, but far away enough for their faces to appear blurred to him, smudges against the tiled walls.

A breeze, lifted from the street above, plays across the platform, sends a newspaper skimming across the soot. He flinches.

At the woman. She appears from the nearest entrance and her shoes click, click, click in his ears as she walks towards him, this hunched, sunken man.

So, she says.

He shuffles.

I thought I'd find you here.

He won't talk. She flicks her hair, blonde, over her shoulder, smiles.

Back again.



Home and Away

Writing about settings is something we have tackled in all sorts of different ways in the writing club. We looked at the topic of 'home and away' early in the term and one of the tasks was to create an acrostic poem from the phrase 'home is where the heart is'.

*This is from **Alex Schwaller (Year 13)***

Home I sit to mull

On what is dull

My senses and

Emotions do ire

If only I knew what I knew now

Stop before they decide

Who I am and when

How do I know my head hasn't evaluated a falsehood to cover a truth

Remind me of what is truth

Even now I fail to grasp it

Time has passed as I look here

Here, where it got out of hand. I'll remember you

Evermore

Heat of the moment

Everything folds

All your morals and values, nothing upholds

Remorse or repeat isn't up to me

Time will only tell

If I knew then what I know now

Stop before they die.



Journeys

And on the topic of 'Journeys', Kaya Alexander (Year 10) wrote this compelling piece.

Sat in the passenger seat, I stare grumpily off at the seemingly endless stream of cars ahead, head in my hand as I let out a bored sigh. My dad snarls, gripping the wheel tighter "I told you we should have gone the other way!" he shouts at my mum, sat in the seat behind me. "Well, this way is quicker!" she screeches back. "Quicker, eh?" my brother says, a subtle growl in his throat. I grit my teeth as the tension rises, my entire family breaking into verbal war behind me. Oh, shut up will you!?" I shout, whipping around to look at them. "We're all stuck here for now and there's nothing we can do about it! There's no point blaming each other." I try my hardest not to yell but their futile argument is getting on my nerves.

But then I notice something. Something so peculiar that the continuation of the debate around me is completely blocked out.

"Jake?" I say quietly in confusion. "Jake!?" I repeat louder, my mum continuing on at my dad, not realizing the desperation of the situation. I turn back to my dad, panicked "Dad where's Jake-"

Dad's gone too.

My mum still shouting at him about the traffic, blinded by rage. I spin back around to her, vicious confusion and worry in my eyes "Mum, what's going o-"

"Don't you get involved now!" she shouts at me. I'm scared to look away, but as she continues on at my dad, not realizing the driver's seat is empty I give in to panic and fear and glue my eyes shut and scream "What's going on!!?"

And when I open them back up, she's gone. The car is gone. The traffic is gone. Everything is gone. And instead I'm sat on a lonely chair in a void of nothingness with a desk in front of me and a man, smiling, with a contract and quill in hand.



You Couldn't Make it Up

We used real-life news stories as inspiration for our writing around Christmas time and one that proved the old adage, 'truth is stranger than fiction' was about a monster crocodile that got onto a golf course in Florida.

*This is from **John Pritchard (Year 7)***

It took milliseconds for me to whip out my phone as the majestic animal passed me, its head whipping side to side. As more people were lured in some of us crept forward. Hoping to get a good shot for their WhatsApp statuses or even just to share it with their colleagues at work.

Soon it was the centre of attention and it looked like it was enjoying it. Its head was swishing so it could catch everyone's beady eyes...awe-struck eyes. It raised its tail up and down, left and right. Just as a dog would have been, being stroked by its owner. Its gleaming scales rebounded the sunlight, creating light in all directions.

Then, smoothly it began to trundle forward, having appreciated its small yet great reign.



‘Things in a Bag’

One of the most consistently popular themes for the workshop is the unimaginatively named ‘things in a bag’. This is where I bring in a cloth bag filled with all sorts of curiosities that I find in junk and charity shops, from old magazines to unusual ornaments. Lily Baker (Year Eight) wrote this interesting piece based on a tiny ship in a bottle with the word ‘Looe’ written in it.

I’ve never told anyone before. And I might not be, now. Who knows if my parents will read this? They probably won’t even care.

It started two years ago. My beloved Granny gave it to me exactly a week before she passed away. I don’t know how she gave birth to such a monster. My father. One night he had one of his rages. I was in bed, crying, holding this tiny glass bottle with a miniature ship inside it. I took a second to look at it and imagined myself being on that ship...and then it happened. I’m not joking.

There was this tiny man, though I guess I was tiny too. He looked like he was made out of paper and seemed just as confused as I was.

‘Excuse me, miss, but...did you just fall out of the sky?’

‘Well, I suppose I did.’ I didn’t know how I came to be here, it felt like I just appeared. I tried to think of a question to break the silence.

‘So where are we going?’

‘To Looe, of course,’ he said, as if stating the obvious.

Looe turned out to be a tiny land and filled with volcanoes, rainbows, crystal-clear lakes and thick jungles...and my Granny. She explained that when our family died, they came here, to the land of Looe. And how she had skipped a generation.

‘Let’s just not talk about your father,’ she explained.

So, every day, I escaped to the land of Looe, imagining being on that ship and I suddenly appeared in the glass bottle.

So now I have decided to move there. Forever.



Genres

We spent a good part of this year exploring different genres of fiction and talking about what we enjoy reading and also watching in this vein.

*Because **DYSTOPIA** was so popular with the group, we covered it more than once and it produced some amazing writing from the students. One week we used an image that simply said, 'Fight for her' as a prompt.*

Kaya Alexander wrote this beautiful piece.

Wall to wall, it's been written. Coating every surface like leeches to flesh. The words etched into my surroundings like hymns and ballads written on scrolls of the most delicate paper and fine ink.

Songs of the outside hope.

For I am underground. The exit far too high on the inverted wall for one to reach. Sometimes the door would open, and a man would enter. White coat and clean shaven. Distorted and blankly staring, often he'd look down at me from his high-up perch, other times he'd speak. I could never quite understand what he was saying.

But he wasn't the only figure to ever enter. Unlike him, she'd bypass the doorway. Landing neatly on the ceiling she'd stare down and smile. A smile filled with warmth, purity and heart. I'd give anything for her. She speaks to me, her words clear in heartfelt gibberish.

I wish I could reach her. I've fought and screamed, all of it in vain. My constraints here have never wilted or given way. Not once and likely not ever. They hurt. The one to my ankle bites into the flesh and bone and the ones holding the rest of me hold me stiff, like a puppet on display. But...she sees me as something more. She sees me as living, even in her inverted world. The thought of her childish smiles fills me like no other. The hatred of him, the love for her nonsense words and heartfelt smile.

I'll fight for her. No matter what he does. I'll fight. Starting here. Blood to surface. Write myself a reminder, write everyone a reminder.
Fight for her.

Julia Zegar (Year 7)

I stared at the graffiti. 'Fight for her', it said. This message is appearing everywhere in the town. It has been going on for a few months now.

I sighed. Nobody understands what it really means- or who 'she' is. I started to walk home. It really freaks me out now. Every time I see those words, I just want to lock myself in my room and wait for them to magically disappear.

I turned the corner. Stopped. Opened the doors to my house. It is all ordinary stuff I do- but I felt something different. I glanced around, cautiously. I must be going crazy, I thought. I stepped into the kitchen, and nearly cried; the words 'Fight for your life' were written on the walls. Fight for my life? Does that mean I'm 'her'?

I don't know how long I stood there, but it felt like hours. The world became muted, and the only I could hear was my own heartbeat. Before I knew it, I was running. Running out of the house. I didn't care where my legs would take me- I just had to get away.

'Excuse me, young man!'

I turned to see a boy- about my age- staring at me. I stopped and hesitated. I usually hate it when people assume I'm a boy, but now, I didn't really care.

'Why are you running?'

He grabbed me by the arm gently, but I slapped his hand almost immediately.

'I have to get away!'

Those were the only words I could get out, and the next thing I knew, a stab of pain hit me and all I saw was a smear of white.

I opened my eyes: I was alive, but my vision was still all white. I tried to remember what exactly I saw last time... a lightning. I must have been struck and blinded.

I tried to get up, using a chair next to me for support. I then realised that the chair felt familiar. I was... home?

I felt something hot form in my hand. It felt like I was holding fire... it that's humanly possible. My head started to feel dizzy. I don't understand...

I made my way to where I was pretty sure the table was and tried to find... here it is! My pen! I picked it up and started to blindly write on the walls. I feel like I'm going to die soon... but I want my story to live on. I scribbled and scribbled, every letter in Chinese. I started from my birth, then wrote about my first day at school, then when I graduated... and finished with the present. It must have taken me hours, but I would rather die known than forgotten.



*When I suggested doing **HORROR** as a topic, the group responded with alacrity!*

*Everyone in the group was impressed with this dark, creepy piece by **Julia Zegar**.*

'When I die, I want everyone to wear white at my funeral,' he used to say. He was scared of the colour black for some reason. He said it looked too much like 'him'.

Nobody noticed the one man in black. They must have thought he didn't know about the young Night's request. Nobody knew who he was, or why he wore a black mask and hoodie.

The drama began when the boy went missing. He wasn't in his coffin. The only thing that was there was water and blood. It was strange, as the boy was dried after being found bleeding in the river. His older sister (who was wearing a white dress) was too paranoid to look for her brother's body. Instead, she walked over to the nearest table, the one with the feather. She suddenly gasped, and was unable to speak. Her brother's skull was there, with some writing on it. The man in black appeared next to her and peered in at what she found. She knew it was Chinese and before she could ask the man answered her question. 'You're next,' he simply said and then all she could see was darkness.

Rhianna Lewis (Year 8)

Some would call me Snow White's Evil Twin. Some call me Death Doll. Some call me Satan's Puppet. Others call me ordinary. Others call me average. Others call me, 'Oh, you know the girl with the3 shiny black hair and bright blue eyes, and cheeks the colour of roses. You know, she reminds me of those Dutch dolls.' Well, they're not wrong. It's a pity he only got to tell two people. The truth is, I'm only half human. Yep, no build-up, no surprise way of saying it. I'm half human. The other half of me... well, it's already been discovered. Yep, a doll. Just a doll. But not an average doll. Maybe an Anabelle doll, possessed by evil herself. To fall asleep, so peacefully, so happily, to wake up.

Rhianna Lewis

I've done it. I've done it. They fall from the lightning clouds, little hailstones of piercing fire, scorching through the concrete tiles on the ground. In a way, they look like beautiful fireflies, coming to say 'hello'. Sad that these little fireflies are a lot more lethal. I stand up to peer over the stone wall at my horrific destruction. I see men, yelling and running in all groups. At least four of them fall over on account of how low their Adidas sweatpants were. Oh, how I despise these people. Sparks flew in my eyes as I re-directed the fireflies to throw themselves down on this hideous group of people. Four less wannabe roadmen in the world.

Julia Zegar

'Since it's Sunday and it's stopped raining, I think I'll take a bouquet of roses to my grave.'
I see her once a year. She always wears a black dress and holds a bouquet of blood-red roses. When I ask her anything, she always replied with the same thing. She is extremely confusing. The thing that confuses me even more is her 'curse'. She always buys two bouquets- one which she places outside someone's house, and one that she places on the same nameless grave. The person's house is always different, but the same thing happens to them; they die. The woman herself disappears and doesn't come back till next year.

The way the person dies is the same as well; their body is found in the same forest, burned and hanged. Because if this, the forest was nicknamed the 'Home of The Devil'. Nobody knows if it was suicide, or did someone try to frame suicide. Nobody knows if it's because of her, or is it just a strange coincidence. Nobody knows, but me.

Today I noticed an old man, standing next to the nameless grave. I decided to ask him whose was it. He looked at me and simply said 'Rachel Linddman'.

That is my name.

Christopher Chobanov (Year 8)

Delicious

Cold and silent.

That's all I remember this world being, it's mean, unforgiving and has no room for failures like me.

I was given a chance, but I failed.

I was given a life, but I lost it.

But most importantly, I was given a job and I refused.

How could I accept?

I try to fit in but my mind refuses.

It makes it hard to fit in with humans when they're so delicious.

We also challenged ourselves to write a horror story in just one or two lines.

Tym Pecherzewski (Year 11)

My friend screamed, then his shadow did too.

I looked at my reflection, tears flowing down my face. It smiled and told me to cheer up.

Every night I hear the train tracks outside. Tonight, they sounded closer.

Dylan Hickey Extra (Year 11)

I turn back to see if I am being followed. It doesn't matter, because I know they are.

Someone is calling my name downstairs. There is no downstairs.

I look at people's faces. They don't look at mine.



CRIME

As I now write crime fiction for a living, I couldn't resist doing this as a topic! It turned out there were a few students who could give me a run for my money.

Muneeb Alam (Year 10)

They don't know what happened. To be honest, I'm surprised they miss me at all, seeing as I never came out of my room. They all claim to know me but just as I feared, they didn't know me well enough. Some people say, 'I don't agree with that. Your family know you better than yourself.' That. Is. Wrong. That is wrong in so many ways. Nobody knows me. The real me. The one. The true. I am an assassin...wait, no, that's a lie. I was an assassin. You see I'm just slightly, a little bit...dead.

And I blame it all on him.

Dion Hagen-Gee (Year 7)

A body bag. White, with black stripes. It was inside the lock-up, almost part of the furniture. If Daniel hadn't known there was a body in there, he would have taken his war tools and left to fix that shelf at home. He grabbed a saw from the toolbox and sawed at the tight, leathery bag until there was a split in the face part.

It was Nathan.

His face pale.

His eyes grey.

Wait! Daniel heard a sound. He turned around and the started to disappear. The door came down, a figure slowly pushing it. *I've been set up!* he thought. 'Wait, no!' he shouted. The door slammed in his face. He was left with Nathan's dead body and the spiders in the dark.

Paul Truhans (Year 8)

"It's time." He smiled, for he did not come here to create, like in other places. Checking his book vigorously, he stops at a page and a line written in it glows bright blue.

"Good grief..." he closed the book and headed in the direction of the door.

"God damn it, I'm late again!" Said Icarus, correcting his tie, running into the office. "I'm really sorry! Please, I-"

"Your seat is forfeit, Ike. There's already somebody sitting there, a new guy. We thought that you wouldn't come, and there were no other free seats. If you want it back, show him around, got it? Now then, where was I..." as helpful as always, Jamie went back to his work, and left Icarus stumbled. This is the most disorganised thing he ever saw his office do. New guy? No free seats? But nobody's been...

Ah, whatever.

So, he decided to do the reasonable thing that he could do to get rid of his doubts.

He went to this new guy and spectated.

After half an hour, Ike concluded, that
THIS GUY KNEW NOTHING!

"Hey, uh...-"

"Ike, right? I've heard of you. My name is Dale, nice to meet you. Show me around?"

"Sure!"

Well, that was a long day for Icarus. He went home, tired, and a bit angry, as usual on Mondays.

But as soon as he went towards the door, the lights that, for some reason, were on, turned off. That's when he noticed the unusual appearance of the house when he went inside. The door to the kitchen was closed, unlike when he went out, to add, he never closes it.

"I wonder..."

He went upstairs, the sink was on.

Suddenly, a figure grabbed him from behind.

My, my, he will be quite the material.

Foolish of you, dear Ike, to assume that...

You can't escape me.



FANTASY FICTION

This is another perennial topic that is always wildly popular. There's something about writing other worlds that really sends my students' imaginations soaring.

Christopher Chobanov

7:13 am, My mum comes in and wakes me up. The sunlight seeps through the blinds and the rays of light wake me from my slumber.

I know this happens, and I know that my mum would have made an omelette for breakfast. How do I know this?

Well I've already lived this day 47 times already. I'm lost in time, no way out. I think I'll try jumping off the roof today, or have I already tried that?

My memory is fuzzy, I want to leave, yet I can't. I want to die, yet I won't. I want July 4th, yet it won't come.

I'm lost in a world in my head, between life and death, an abyss. I'm in limbo...

Muneeb Alam

'The Fine Game of Nil'.

There's a monster upstairs. It's kind of my fault. Well, everything is always someone's fault. In this case, it was mine. It all started with a bottle of dehydrated water and a key, that was more rust, than key.

How do you like to spend your Sunday's? Do you like to sleep in, or go to the beach, have a picnic with your family? I'd like that too but there I was, crack of dawn Sunday morning, a beautiful day, and I was pulling weeds at the back of my garden with my only company being my thoughts and the small, hard-shelled woodlice that lived in the cracks between the paving.

My throat was parched, my knees hurt, my back hurt, my everything hurt when, as if a saint, my brother came out and threw a large metal flask of water to me. I opened it and tried to drink. It was then I realised that the bottle was empty, and he was laughing hysterically, and he waltzed straight inside and yelled, "Dad says you can't come in till the whole garden is spotless". A saint, huh, more like Satan. In my seething rage, I threw the metal canister at the door but me being me, I missed and hit the abandoned beehive at the corner of the garden.
'Clunk.'

That's odd I thought. Beehives. Don't. Go. Clunk.

I dived straight into the wheelbarrow and started thinking about all the things I would never get to do and all the thanks I never got around to saying when I realised, "nothing is happening". No army of bees are coming, nothing at all is happening".

I slowly emerged from the wheelbarrow to check what was going on and a glint caught from the newly formed hole in the hive caught my eye. I cautiously crept over to investigate when a small yellow orb and a misshapen lump of brown fell out. I tried to move away but something about that orb pulled me in.

Hypnotised even. I tried to move but it was too late. I had both in my hands when suddenly I was thrown back off my feet and into the air. I braced myself to land on the hard concrete, but I found myself sinking, into the ground. I tried to pull myself back up, but it pulled me down further and starting choking me around the neck. I tried to call out for help, but this was a mistake, the floor blocked out all my sound and I realised I had depleted all the oxygen in my cocoon. I was blacking out to put it in simpler terms. As I lay, falling, my eyes slowly closed as the ground, closed on top of me.

Lily Baker (Year 8)

Trimming your nails at night. Birds flying into your home. I added more to my list of superstitions. You see, I'm the thirteenth child. Thirteen. The unlucky number. And I'm not just worried because of the idea that I'm, you know, cursed.

To start off with I was born with a missing leg and I'm deaf. Clumsiness and embarrassment follows me wherever I go. I've been expelled twice for things I've not done. I was just there at the time.

As I said, I'm the youngest of thirteen kids. Which is also bad because I have to live up to all my siblings' standards and they're very smart. Just my luck.

I decided to start following old-fashioned rules like opening your umbrella up inside and all that...and it's worked. Kind of. I'm even more nervous than usual because I'm going to do my GCSEs soon. I've revised and revised but I have a feeling I won't pass. I'll probably get chicken pox again. By the way, I've had it twice. Once on my birthday, once on Christmas. That was the one year I actually had my birthday. 29th of February. Once every four years.

Naina Pryse (Year 8)

Tiger stood in front of the executioner. How many times had she been in this exact position? Too many to count. She sighed. Hetty wouldn't like this. She could imagine her now, shaking her fair head, pale pink hairs falling in curls framing her small face, purple eyes downcast.

"Any last words, sweetheart?" He asked, evidently bored.

"Not particularly." Tiger said, nonchalant.

He rolled his eyes and drew his hands back in a fashion that showed he had done it a million times before and made her breath disappear. She choked for a split second, and wondered, maybe, if this was it.

But it wasn't. She twisted her hands behind her back and the wind stirred, and she was carried away with the wind. Her black hair blew out of her face in waves around her head. Her pointed nose was spattered with freckles on her dark skin. Her sharp orange eyes pierced through the darkness, looking like stars in the sky, if you could see them like many years before. It was too polluted now, and their so-called great leader, Helen Oxford, has never done anything about it.

Tiger had learned years before you could never trust the Magpie, as they called her. It was meant to symbolise a new era, but Tiger had always thought of her as that because her black eyes were sharp as her namesake. Sometimes she looked as if she could just fly away, taking anything, she wanted.

Julia Zegar

I looked around. Nobody here. I took off the hat that had been covering my ears. 'I'm never wearing this hat again,' I thought. Then I remembered what Mum and Dad told me.

'If you take off your hat, everyone will know that we're half foxes and we don't want to get caught again,' muttered Mum before I went to school.

We used to live in New York but then the humans found out, so we had to move to England. My ears drooped. Every time I thought of America, I remembered Dad, but he got caught. I didn't know what they were going to do with him, but it would be nothing good.

'Fawn?' It was my twin sister, Winter. The strange thing about us is that she is an Arctic fox, whilst I'm a red fox. 'Are you okay?'

'Course I am,' I laughed, trying to sound as positive as I could.

'Mum says to go home.'

'I don't want to.'

'But Ma said...'

'I don't care what she said. I'm half fox and foxes are wild.'

Suddenly we heard footsteps. Winter squealed, putting on my hat to cover her ears.

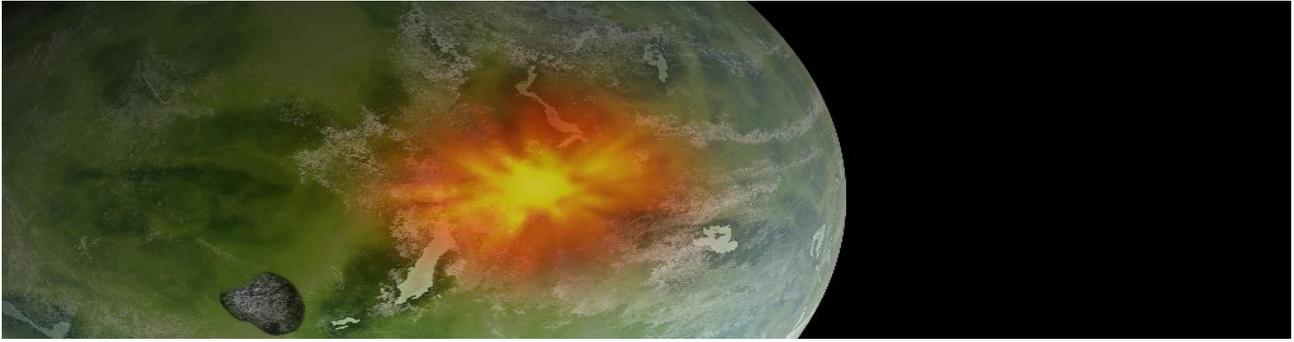
Then I saw what it was. It was a young boy about my age. His hair looked like a bird's nest, his brown button eyes stared at me and he had wolf ears and a tail. We stared at each other for a while.

'Who are you?' my sister blurted out, slowly taking her hat off.

'I'm... Midnight,' he replied shyly.

'I'm Winter, and that's my sister Fawn,' Winter muttered. Suddenly someone shoved her.

'Get away from my brother!' It was a girl, about a year older than us. Her pitch-black hair covered half her face. Her wolf tail shivered a little and her chocolate-coloured eyes were filled with rage.



TO BOLDLY GO...

That Star Trek reference shows my age but as a fan of sci-fi I couldn't resist it! Science Fiction was another popular genre, and everyone got stuck into my writing prompts about times and places that may be far, far away from our own.

Muneeb Alam

I haven't eaten since Monday now. Exactly 4 days- can you imagine that? I can't disconnect myself from the tube, as there's no more oxygen on Earth, apart from the one tiny tree which produces the air I breathe. I'm now stuck here in this lab forever. The mankind is all dead apart from me- though I know I won't live very long.

Ok, I'm not exactly the last human, not in the universe. All the survivors went on a rocket named Discovery and flew to Mars, as they've finally found life there, and it seems friendly. They've left me behind though. I can't contact anyone as I don't have access to technology. All I have is hope; hope that I will survive.

John Pritchard (Year 7)

I heard the ringing coming out of the speakers so suddenly that I dropped my morning coffee. 'We are witnessing a circuit brea...break-' Suddenly it was cut off. Soon, all was chaos and the room was full of frantic people. (It was impossible for our computer to have a break down.) I ran, trying to reach the escape pods. I don't make it. The door is shut, bolted shut! I turn, frantically searching through my brain. All I see is the robot coming towards me. The once blue eyes red...

Dion Hagen-Gee (Year 7)

'What's next?' I ask Captain, my pilot trainer. I'm just a medic working for the Militia. We fight against the IMC, an international group who take our land and savagely kill us off if we try to fight back. We don't know what they game is, well, at least, I don't. Jack Cooper, my trainer's full name, was just like me. He was a rifleman picked by Tai Lastimososa, the previous pilot of his jump kit.

When we faced an attack from IMC, he was sent to protect the base, but he was hit by three bullets. When Lastimososa tried to save him he was killed, and his titan, BT-7274, became Jack's because of the extreme conditions. BT and Jack came together and fought the IMC.

Their bond grew greater and greater together. That's what a pilot is: they fight inside titans, robots who protect and attack. Together they defeated the IMC and for years there was once again peace. But from their ashes a spark set up, and bounty hunter after bounty hunter was hired. And from those grew troops. They built stronger, better weapons. Star ships, two of their own cities, and more. They have out done is in their amount of power, military and technology.

But the Militia survived. We are surviving. We always will. They're built on power, we're built on hope. As for me, Joe Freeman, I'm just a medic, helping those in need. But I dream that one day soon, I'll be able to fight in a titan, just like my family.

Naina Pryse

I am a murderer. Wow, that was good to get out. I've never told anyone, for obvious reasons. Well, it's not exactly telling anyone, just writing it down. I should probably start from the beginning.

Humanity is dying, and so is the Earth. Sea levels are rising, nuclear bombs are exploding, killing an ungodly amount of people. Not that anyone believes in any God now. How could anyone with infinite power and knowledge let this happen?

Basically, the human race is collectively trying to kill itself. So, they've sent a ship.

The Discovery, they've called it. How fitting. We're going to Mars, to save the humans. Not that they deserve it. So, naturally I volunteered. There are eight of us in all, and they so obviously want to save our race. Why? We will just keep ruining all the planets we find. A planet killing spree. We never learn from our mistakes, and we need to.

Or we should just die out.

Which will be simpler? The latter. So now you know why I'm a murderer. Except I'm not a murderer yet. I'm going to be one, there's no doubt about that. I know that I will not hesitate when it comes to it. I know what I have to do. It is quite simple really.

We have spent months on this ship. It is a luxury one, they wanted their saviours to go out in style. Survey the atmosphere and see if we will die or not. If they don't get word they'll stay there. I thought maybe that I would just kill the others, and drift meaninglessly through space until water, oxygen or food ran out. Depends on what went first.

Now I've had done thought, I realise they will just send another mission. I have to stop them coming out here. I think of all the little children who will never grow up, all the parents who know this. All the soulmates who will never meet, all those who will have no time.

I will tell them how dangerous it is. I will have to be convincing. But I can do that, it's simple. I hope it's simple.

Funny, I think to myself, how sure of this I am. It's not fair, that I have to do this. Why am I the only one brave enough to save the rest of the universe? I gulp and settle down further into my bed. It is extravagant, and I've had trouble sleeping in it.

I know I don't deserve it. It's not fair. So, I've slept on the floor, in odd nooks and crannies, often curled up with an old, crumpled book from the old days. Back when things were easy, not that I was around then.

I am young, you see. But not so young that I don't know what is going on around me. They are trying to hide it from us, save themselves. But I won't let them. They have to die. I won't let our universe, our beautiful, beautiful universe die for them.

I sit up and walk slowly towards the window. I put a shaky hand on the cool glass as I gaze out at blue and purple swirls, light that streaks across the sky, swearing that I will make sure it is preserved forever.

Julia Zegar

I used to live in ordinary life as an ordinary girl. That's what I thought, anyway. Truth hurts, at least I think that's what being hurt feels like. I'm not an actual human being after all. I'm just a robot. Dad created me because he couldn't have a daughter of his own. When I found out he was lying to me all this time, I was furious. Dad never let me go to the beach and now I understand why. I wanted

to show him a lesson and ran to the water. I was paralysed and saw darkness. Now I'm awake. And alive. I can't move, but at least I didn't die. I was mad at myself. Why did I go in the water? Why did I run away? I stared at the golden sand, surrounding me. I was on an island. Suddenly my face was covered in water and the waves swallowed me whole. I feel dizzy and switched off again.

'That's my story,' I said emotionlessly.

'So, you believed you are a robot?' asked my patient.

'Yes,' I replied. Eventually got rescued but was very violent. I got sent to an orphanage then I started going to therapy like you are now.

Sarah frowned at me. 'And you decided to become a therapist?'

'Exactly.'

I've been programmed to tell the story to others even if it isn't true. I hate lying but robots to do as they're told.

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Caroline x