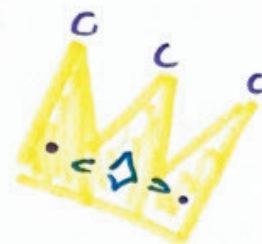


MIDDLE SCHOOL



# Historical Fiction



Grades 4-12

## YWYR

2025



## Fantasy



Art by Clare McInnis





# Bobby Rea



Welcome, brave scribes and spellbound storytellers, to the grand unveiling of our enchanted anthology: Twisted Fairytales - Tales from the Forgotten Realm!

Over the past two weeks, you have journeyed deep into the misty glens, cursed kingdoms, and eerie halls of imagination. Guided by the flickering lanternlight of forgotten legends, you've written not just tales—but testimonies—of magic gone awry, love turned venomous, and heroes who aren't quite what they seem.

Your quills danced through shadowy places like the wailing Wraithlight Mansion, where whispers echo from cracked nursery walls and bottled screams are locked away by alchemists of old. You wandered through Deadwharf's brine-slick alleys, listened to secrets hissed beneath Hollowmouth Well, and dared to enter the Vermin Crypt—where not all bones stay buried.

Each haunted haunt was more than just a setting. It was a writing forge. At every turn, your characters were tested: by riddles in the Thornmouth Conservatory, memories trapped in the Echoing Nursery, and the haunting call of the Dirgewood Kingdom, where a twisted wedding in the cursed halls of Thornhollow Keep loomed like a prophecy carved in bone.

And ah—the fashion! Let us not forget the dreadful delight of the Runway of Ruin, where you conjured costumes fit for corrupted royalty, cursed creatures, and villains cloaked in glamour and gloom. From glittering hexed veils to blood-spattered ballgowns stitched with secrets, your characters wore their stories as boldly as they spoke them.

You even faced the mercurial whims of Fortune's Fate, a game where fate's golden coins brought both peril and power, shaping the way your tales unfolded. And who could forget the Hexed Pair challenge, where you uncovered the tangled ties between unlikely allies, enemies, and soulbound strangers?

Every tale, every outfit, every inky whisper on the page has led to this: a collection of stories that shimmer with magic, menace, and mayhem.

Together, they form a tapestry of reimagined folklore, stitched together by your courage to twist the tales you thought you knew.

So draw back the velvet curtain, light a lantern, and step into the anthology. The Forgotten Realm awaits... and its stories remember you.

# Sarah Hyson

Greetings and Salutations!



Within this anthology you will discover the creative expression of the Historical Fiction Writers. Their words may transport you to Ancient Greece, the Tudor Period, the Victorian Era, the Mexican Civil War, Colonial America, the Westward Expansion, and the Gilded Age.

In our first week together, we worked on character development, genre requirements, research for creative writing, bending the rules, and historical fiction in game format. Our second week focused on feedback and revision. We explored some creative methods for identifying aspects of our writing to revise - tools that our students can continue to use with all of their writing! We played with organization and format, finishing our week with language games.

We hope you enjoy our tales,  
Professor Hyson, Annalise, and the Historic Fiction Writers

## Pandora

Sister, I know why you opened that box,  
just as I know it was not truly a box,  
as no vessel could  
contain all that you released  
into this world,  
and despite the myth, the stories  
of blame,  
evil existed long before you,  
and if that is so, that there was  
no box - what did you open,  
and what did you release,  
if not all the evils on humanity,  
or all the blessings  
(depending on which story you believe)?  
Could it be, that as your name implies,  
you opened yourself, your heart,  
and brought out of humanity  
all the evils, all the blessings,  
all that was already there,  
waiting.

For the pain in the world, you  
open your heart,  
as we may, too,  
and the question lingers,  
why did hope remain,  
once your heart was open,  
and the evils and blessings  
fled?

Did hope remain of its own accord,  
a comfort to humanity,  
or did you keep it behind,  
knowing that,  
with your heart open to the world,  
you must hold on to hope.

No matter which,  
we, too, can hold onto hope,  
as we see the evils and blessings  
of the world all around,  
and open our hearts to humanity.



## Six Pence for Dickens

The room was dimming as I squinted to see where I needed to place my needle to fix this button. I poked through the fabric quickly and nicked my finger, hissing in response. I studied my thumb looking for any signs of blood. When I found none, I let out a sigh of relief as I continued my work.

It was almost time for the reading, and I was anxious that I was going to be late. I read in the newspapers that the famous author Charles Dickens was going to perform a reading of his story, A Christmas Carol, and that the entry fee was 6 pence. It was a lot, however, I knew that it would be worth it. This stubborn button, though, was testing me; I could not see with the waning light. My head snapped up as I heard a knock on the door.

"Lizzie, Mrs. Wright wants you upstairs. She's having trouble putting the children to bed again."

"Okay, I'll be up in a minute," I said, quickly finishing up the button.

I put the sewing kit in my room and made my way up into the house. The home was elegant, and I always loved its polished floors, gilded frames, and velvet chairs. I was lucky to have landed a job as a housemaid; it provided me with food and a place to live. I was fortunate compared to others. As I walked down the hall, the sound of crying filled the air. The children missed their father terribly as he had been away on business and had not made it home for Christmas. Anna was a sensitive child and was the most quiet sibling, while Jacob, on the other hand, was full of energy. The children were very close and often reflected each other's emotions. Which led to moments like these. And with both under the age of 5, Mrs. Wright, due any day with another child, had her hands full. I opened the door to the room as I was hit by the sounds of amplified crying. Anna sat crying on the end of the bed, and Jacob was wiggling in his mother's arms, crying out.

"Papa! I want papa!" He screamed as tears fell down his face.

"I know, I know, honey. We all miss him." She said over their cries, struggling to hold him. I reached for Anna's stuffed animal and carefully scooped her up into my lap as I held her rocking her back and forth and started to sing.

"Silent Night, holy night. All is calm, all is bright, round you virgin mother and child, holy infant so tender and bright..." Their cries softened a bit in shock as I continued.

"Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace..." I kept singing until the second verse until the room was silent. Mrs. Wright, who was now seated on the other side of the bed, were all looking at me intently as I looked down at Anna, who was clutching the animal in her hands.

"I know you all miss your papa dearly. And I know it was hard without him on Christmas. I miss my Mother and Father too. He'll come home soon, and then you can tell him all your adventures. But for now, Jacob and Annie." I said as I playfully tickled them under each of their chins as they giggled in response. "You two are so lucky because you have a wonderful Mother who loves you so much, and you have me, and Mrs. Carlisle, and Mr. Banks. We will always be with you, and even when those we love are far, far away. They will always be with you, right? Here." I said as I used the stuffed animal to point to Annie's heart.

She let out a giggle as she snuggled up against the soft fabric. I smiled as I looked at Mrs. Wright, who had tears in her eyes, and nodded to me.



# Annalise DeVito

I helped put the children to bed as I walked out of the room and down the hall, as Mrs. Wright called out to me.

I turned, and she placed a hand on her back as she walked over. "Thank you so much. The children love you so much."

"As do I. I love spending time with them."

Mrs. Wright smiled. "I do hope he's coming home soon. He wrote to me after Christmas that he would return home soon."

"He will. I'm sure he's just busy with work, ma'ma."

She sighed and looked outside at the snow that was falling gently as it came down in big, flat flakes.

"I hope so. I'm going to turn in early tonight. I need to get off my feet."

I went ahead of her and opened the door to her room and placed the candle on a table as I lit a few more lanterns. "Do you need any assistance?"

"No, I'll call Mrs. Carlisle up, you're free to go. I know that you have that reading to get to."

I looked up at her, and she had a smile on her face. I had forgotten about the reading, and by looking at the clock, it was almost time for me to leave.

"Go. I wouldn't want you to be late." She said, undoing her hair as she pulled the tassel next to her bed to call up Mrs. Carlisle.

I did a quick curtsy before walking towards the door. "Thank you, Ma'ma. Have a good night." I ran down the main stairs and then down the servants' stairs as I grabbed my cloak, gloves, and bonnet, making sure the small bag of coins was in my pocket.

As I walked outside, I pulled my cloak closer as the snow whirled around me, sticking to my cloak and hair. I walked down the streets, my shadow formed on the tall buildings, and as I walked faster, my excitement and nervousness welling up inside of me as I willed my steps to go faster. Minutes later, the Town Hall came into view as I saw a line of people waiting outside. I joined the queue of people as we all chatted among ourselves, huddling close to provide warmth. After standing outside in the cold, the doors finally opened at the top of the hour as people filed in. I gave my entrance fee to the person at the door and went inside to find a seat. I took off my bonnet as I sat down in the 2nd row, and more and more people filed into the space. There were hundreds, maybe thousands, of people who were here. I looked to the stage as I saw a small wooden table with a miniature stand with a green velvet pillow with golden tassels resting on top. Beside it was a glass of water. After the meeting house was filled and people stopped coming in, the doors shut. A hush came over the audience as a tall man with a long grey beard stepped up onto the podium. The man took a drink of water and opened the book, his one hand resting on the green pillow. I watched in awe as he looked down at the book and began reading.



WC  
WP



MIDDLE SCHOOL



Young Readers Young Writers

2025





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# Raine Akins



My dearest, Teevie,

It has been too long since my eyes have graced your gentle figure, yet I know that I grow closer to you as every day draws by. I miss you dearly, and I cannot wait to be wed to you soon. In the town that I have lingered at for the past few days, I have heard murmurs and whispers of this mysterious place known as "Wrathlight Mansion." It

is said that it calls to people, draws them in, and the victims are never seen again. I fear the power of the old mansion, yet I feel my curiosity growing. I almost feel as if I must visit, if only briefly, to seek its secrets. I know what you would say, my dearest, so I shall not visit this dreaded mansion, as I do not wish to disappear so close to our nuptial hour. Perhaps on a bit more of a lighter note, this town,

Dreadwharf, is quite lovely. I often hear the sound of the waves running into the wall of a cliff as I fall into slumber. I would like to visit this beautiful place again with you, someday. I despise every painful second that I am without you, and I miss you very dearly. I eagerly await the day that we will be together, forever, at last.

Forever yours,

Noctra Duskwail

## About the author:

Raine Akins loves singing, acting, drawing, playing piano, writing, and making perhaps unwise decisions in D&D type settings. They enjoy spending time with their friends, family, and three dogs, and are currently very tired, as they have just come from a rehearsal and are writing this at 11:30. They mostly listen to Katseye, Aespa, Stray Kids, and Metal Pipe Falling on Spotify. Another hobby that they possess is bedazzling a sticky note holder that resembles a toaster. They have found this activity to be quite rewarding.





Jules Balisi

## Way Home

The northwest wind lifts strands of sticky hair across my forehead. Green shadows of oaks scramble under sunlight as the breeze dances over their leaves, nimble branches brushing shoulders and kicking feet. A piercing pain wraps around my fingers as barbed wire entangles with my wool gloves. I exclaim in frustration then quickly resolve, a warm throb sprouting in my hand. I throw off the gloves and wipe my hands on my linen shirt. I seem incapable of getting used to this.

Heavy feet on yellowed grass approach behind me. "That's nothing bad," says my father, yanking the wire from the discarded gloves. "Least we know the cows won't like it." He is still as he ties a knot around the wooden post. It's a real tight, survivalist knot, the kind every man should know. He often breathes down my neck in quiet but patent contempt, meaning to ask when I'm going to become like one. I watch as he handles the task like a burden. Aware of my idleness, I grab the shovel set against the fence.

"You still want that magnolia planted?" I ask. "Only thing I'll ever be good at." The rustle of trees fills the silence for him. "You need to give this a try," he replies.

"You've already quit the schoolhouse. I've been stretched so thin now that your future's not looking that bright—"

"I wasn't meaning to—"

"See, you don't know anything a normal boy your age would. And I woke snakes as a youngster, but all you keep talking about, and the only thing your actions reek of, Clancy, is New York. There is no going back. The business is building up for us. Californians want beef these days." He says his last sentence a little too quickly, perhaps more to convince himself than me. My chest swells with a nauseating resentment. Suddenly, I can't tolerate the sticky heat, the beads of sweat trailing down my back, the twitch in my eyebrow when a bee traces my ear, or the squeaky lowing of the cows. My boots trample dandelions as I walk to the shade, wishing my father could see my side of the coin.

The magnolia is a scrawny sapling: skinny at the trunk and stubborn with its leaves. It reminds me of my early teenage days, when my knees knocked with my steps and my skin was paler than flour. I cover the ground cavity with topsoil then stroll towards the house. My dirt caked fingers fumble with my laces as I change my boots to canvas. I wander upstairs, floorboards creaking under my feet.

Something in this town is growing too fast, and I can't stand that my father and I are falling behind. We get looks in the square, land shares keep shrinking, and he just can't seem to communicate right with investors. The time for supper arrives when I realize I've done nothing but lay sprawled on my cot. Supper may be an opportunity to speak to my father again, hopefully for the last time. Outside my window, the sky darkens to a numbing violet.



# Jules Balisi

Once again, he's cooked by himself. I've abandoned some of my responsibilities to protest against our rickety shelter. The smell of boiling potatoes invades my senses when I descend the stairs and draw back a dining table, scratching the planks. My father's calloused hands carry a steaming pot that clunks on the table. Dull utensils clink on our ceramic dishes. I observe stoically.

"Keep living in your room and you might turn into it," he attempts to joke. "The Joyce family down the road said that their son won't even—"

"Thanks for the food." I stab a potato with my fork, mashing it onto my plate. He sets down his knife.

"I don't really know what's wrong with you, but ever since those last sales at the market, you've been acting like the entire state's out to get you."

"Nothing's wrong."

"I think you need to explain yourself. You know, it's awfully hard for me to do everything by myself. You're occupied with something, somewhere, and I need all the hands I can get. Home's always going to be on this side of the mountains." He chews on his food, half complacent, half bitter.

"You can't start talking to me about where home is," I sputter. He looks up at me attentively. "Don't be acting like those listless sparrows and foxes in the backyard have been worth what we've been through. I can tell what you're missing. Not sales, not honor for your country, but my mother raising women's signs in Albany and our feet on the sand of the East Coast—don't you dare open your mouth. You wanted to be a part of something, to go west, and now you have it. But what are we doing here?"

Each winter, we have to board up the windows because all our money goes to those darn cows. We can't even afford vegetables anymore, pops. And you don't wanna tell me you're sick of starch every day of the week either, is that right? I can see right through you pops. Hasn't been for these three years. Neither is ranching." I watched as something inside him deflated and shrunk, his wrinkles lengthening with time. "You—we just chose the wrong time and the wrong darn place." He mumbles something quiet. I hold my breath just to hear him.

"You're right." I consider saying, I am?, but I hold my tongue. "Your mother left us for a reason where I was solely in the wrong. And I had thought there was no time to be sorry." I wished for all the lightning in the world to strike him at that very moment, as punishment for his delayed confession.

"So what are we even waiting for? Let's pack up and sell everything already," I refute.

"It's not that simple," he says. I slam down on the dining table. He steadies his tin mug from above while a pool of water circles its base. "We will be happy some day, don't you know it?"



The background of the entire page is a vintage-style map with muted colors like olive green, tan, and light blue. The map shows various landmasses and bodies of water. In the bottom right corner, there is a circular emblem with a red border and a blue center, featuring a white star. At the bottom of the page, there is a decorative horizontal border with a red background, featuring ornate scrollwork and a small illustration of a building.

# Jules Balisi

"I don't understand why we can't find jobs in New York."

"Unless you want to slave away for fifteen hours, we have more freedom here than there."

I had thought this would be my win, our equilibrium, his awaited realization, but instead I can feel the rope lengthening between us just as it began to shorten. It's the truth that the cows aren't promising to us, but something inside my father keeps him facing the wind and then following it. I scoot back my chair and stomp to the front door. I untie the makeshift lock then look up to see dark clouds fading to black. They move slowly through the air as lonesome stars glint from behind. I've always noticed how nimbuses have the freedom to go wherever they please. Not tied down by ranches or marketing, just the sky. I wonder if they, too, hope to be happy, and hope to some day find a way home.

## About the author:

Jules Balisi is an incoming freshman at Garnet Valley High School. When he's not writing essays for English class or practicing for marching band, he enjoys drawing, reading classics, and playing volleyball. His first short narrative, "Again and Again," can be found in the KSLA: DC 2025 Young Authors' Project.



# Elliot Hyson

Journal log # 47981

Awakening in some places called The Blood Moon Inn, I look at what surrounds me. sI ma dressed to go to a ball but never remember attending. I hear music in the distance - some sort of waltz - inviting and somehow sinister at the same time. I see a mask in my hands. It has words etched into it saying "find your face before the moon bleeds dry." The crimson hollow is outside. Monsters wander the streets, masked and watching me, not dancing yet all of them are dressed for a ball. I suspect one of them brought me here. One of the trolls, perhaps. But it is unsettling that the monsters hide behind masks. I walk outside, wandering out of the inn. None of them are staring anymore Then I hear a voice. A whisper in my ear, telling me to run. A black and red fog closes in on me, coming from the inn. I can't escape. The fog has reached me. The moon is pure white. I can only call for he

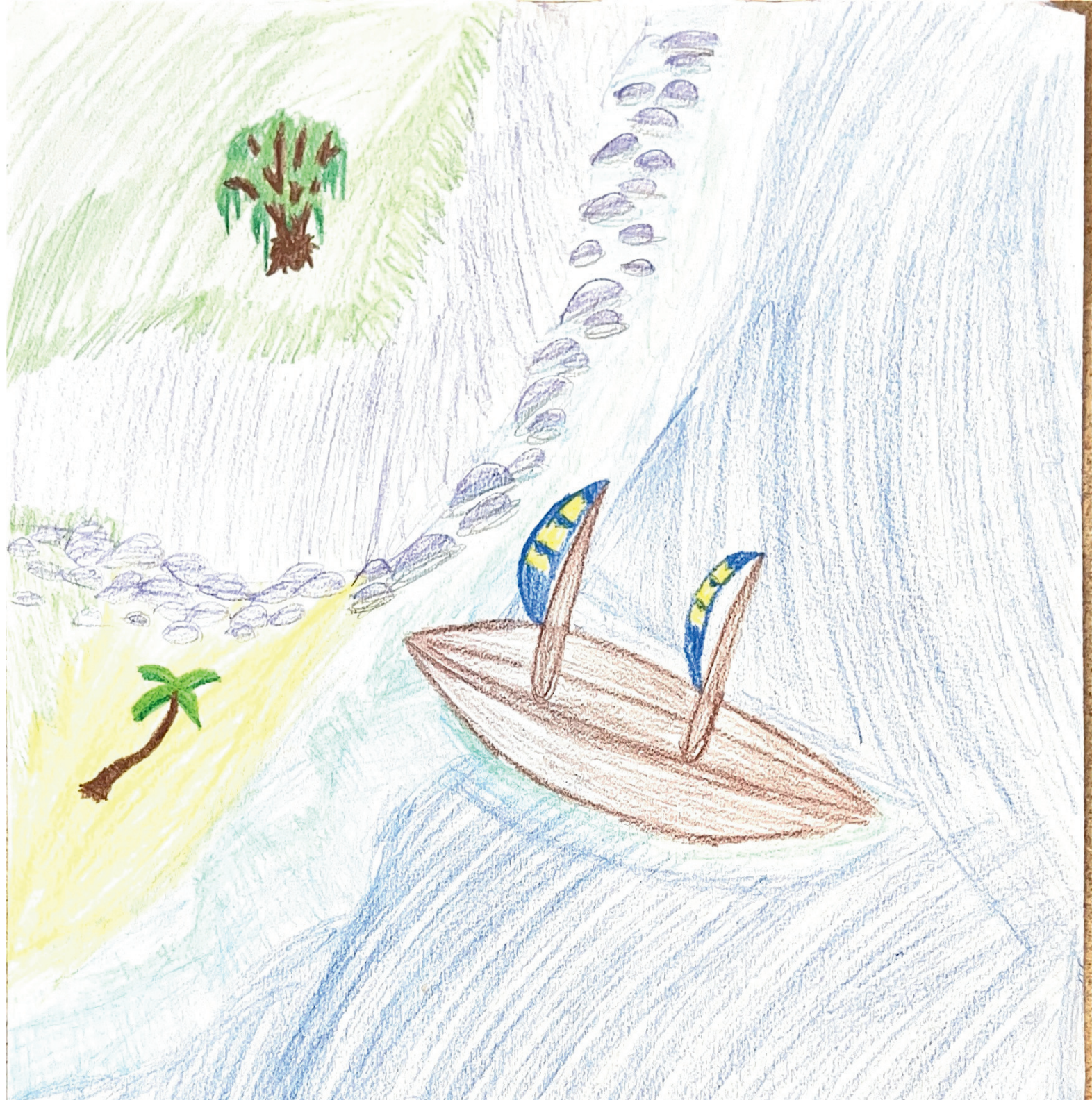
Why am I holding a notebook and a pencil? Where am I? I ask others but they do not answer. The just walk like me, unaware of anything. So I will just follow their lead. I see some humans, orcs, trolls, even a few dragonborn. But they all have something in common. Like me, they have no memory and a dark red tint.

Another person found their way into the inn today. We stare at them like we usually do, but this one is odd. He escapes.

## About the author:

A dark green and black dragonborn, zephiron mostly spends his time learning as much spells as possible, mainly getting familiar with the spells in which he has bad skills. A mage, he mainly finds himself casting the spells, so he learns as much as he can and constantly practices to not faint as much.





Y WYR MS/HS  
ANTHOLOGY



# Dylan Kerr

December 1964,

As I sat at the dinner table, I asked my dad a question. Dad, what's the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution? I know it's been a few months, but I still don't understand it". "Well, son," Dad replied "It basically gives old LBJ permission to send a \*\*\*\* ton of troops to Vietnam,". "Don't curse in front of your son, Micheal," Mom scolded. "That's outrageous!" I yelled "Well if you really feel that mad about it," my mom said, seeming a bit shaken "Maybe you should protest,". Maybe I will, diary.

Maybe I will...

April 7, 1965

I just walked out of the campus of the University of Michigan, sweating even though it's only about 60 degrees outside and kind of windy. The reason I'm so sweaty is because I just gave a presentation about how we're going to protest about the Vietnam War. This protest is going to be huge, it turns out that the march is gaining attention from 10,000 university students. The members have officially decided that we're going to protest on the 17th, because that's also when the blossom festival is happening. I'm so excited, this protest is gonna be outta sight (so cool you can't even describe it)

April 18th, 1965

The protest was even more swinging than I expected, man! The number of protesters that showed up must be at least 5 figures, man! First we went to Washington and picketed against that hawk (war supporter) LBJ at the White House. Then we heard after hearing some groovy folk music by Joan Baez and Phil Ochs, we listened to some anti-war speeches, some of which made me almost cry. Finally we marched down the mall and to the capitol to teach those fat cats a lesson by giving them a petition. We even got covered by the Nation. Afterwards, I got so stoned i'm still recovering sleep entire day until wears off so happy that protest went well.

## About the author:

Dylan Kerr is a 13 year old kid who has never written an actual book before. In his 4770+ days of his existence he has traveled over 94 billion miles around the Milky Way. Additionally he has a sister who has traveled around 10 billion miles around the sun, and a little brother who has spent 203 days of his life asleep.



## The Gilded Age

“Caroline, we must make haste—the Four Hundred awaits our arrival and you must give your speech!” exclaimed William, her husband, with urgency.

“Must we truly depart with such haste? Surely they can endure our absence for a few minutes more,” Caroline remarked as they hurried down the stairs. She put on her flower pot hat, and together they scurried out the door. Caroline and William had to take the carriage due to their desire to get there on time. As they arrived, Caroline spotted Alva Vanderbilt walking through the doors. Alva was more than just unpleasant; she was a threat, always trying to climb higher in society and disturb the leadership Caroline had in the Four Hundred. Caroline was the leader of the Four Hundred, which was an exclusive social circle that only included people from the upper class and the wealthy. As the couple arrived at the Four Hundred, Caroline's eyes immediately flickered to Alva Vanderbilt, while others were on her.

“Alva Vanderbilt is flitting about as though she commands this entire circle,” Caroline whispered sharply to her husband. “I want her removed—gracefully, but unmistakably.”

“Her family owns many other exquisite buildings around town. We mustn’t kick her out and cause a scene.” William whispered back.

Alva catches Caroline’s eye for a split moment and walks over.

“Ah! Mrs. Astor! I see you are wearing your favorite dress,” mocked Alva.

“Mrs. Vanderbilt, it is surprising to see you here, seeing as you were not invited,” remarked Caroline snidely and calmly.

As Caroline walked away from Alva, she climbed a grand staircase, looking down on the people below her.

Ching Ching!

Caroline tapped her glass and started to make a toast.

“Friends and family, we are gathered here today to celebrate me defining and maintaining social exclusivity!” Caroline snobbily exclaimed.

Applause immediately broke out, and everyone clapped except Alva. She looked at Caroline with an air of profound annoyance and disapproval. She slowly made her way out of the door as she stumbled on her 4 layer dress, already planning what she was going to do next to get Caroline to include her in the Four Hundred. Alva planned to exclude Caroline Astor’s daughter, Carrie, from the ball she was hosting. This was a big problem for both Caroline and Carrie.



The background of the entire page is a vintage-style map with green landmasses and blue oceans. A light blue banner with a purple border is at the top left. The text is centered in a white box with rounded corners. At the bottom, there is a decorative border featuring a red carpet, a blue building, and a gold star.

# Sana Mahendran

They knew that exclusion could potentially affect her reputation and chances of making a desirable marriage, seeing as she could meet many bachelors at the ball, which was extremely important for women like them. Alva did this knowing that Caroline would have to speak to her. The main problem between them was that Alva was new money, while Caroline was old money.

Caroline found herself in the unfortunate position of having to approach Alva. “Mrs. Vanderbilt, I do not appreciate you excluding my daughter from your ball. What must I do to ensure her spot?” Caroline commanded.

“You must let me into your social circle at once,” Alva replied. Being accepted into the inner social circle, led by important figures like Caroline Astor, was very important for gaining the social validation and recognition that Alva craved and desired. From then on, as Alva was accepted into Caroline Astor’s social circle, Caroline never forgot what Alva had to do to get in. In her head, the underlying tension between old money and new money remained.

## About the author:

Sana Mahendran is an incoming 8th grader at Lionville Middle School. She enjoys playing volleyball in her free time and going outside. She loves traveling to sunny places and beaches. She also enjoys writing and reading.



## The Ballroom of Monsters

When I open my eyes, I am alerted by my surroundings: a beautiful ballroom with high ceilings and low-hanging chandeliers. Bows and ribbons strung merrily around the great room are unsettling to my eyes, considering I do not remember when or how I got here. The ballroom is perfectly decorated, everything in its place. But then, I noticed the floor, made of cold, hard cobblestone. Something doesn't feel right. I grasp the fabric of my velvet, blood red gown, and begin to run. Although I don't run. I cannot move myself. So I stand there, all alone, wearing a ball gown I don't remember dressing in. Then suddenly I'm not sure that I'm still alone. Monsters in disguise masquerade around me, wearing fabrics of lush beauty. I realize I, as well, am wearing a mask. A mask I did not choose for myself. I take it off and find that etched into its matching, crushed crimson red velvet is a message. It recites: "Find your face before the moon bleeds dry." Whatever this means, I do not have time to decipher it before I realize the monsters are closing in on me, silently whispering their secrets. This time, when I try to run, I awake, sweating and frightened, in my quiet, cold bedroom. The one thing that remains is the crimson mask on my face, with a message that will haunt me for the rest of my life.

THE END.

## Dreaming

When I arrive at camp I notice two things. Number one: It is awfully cold here. Number two: I am completely alone. I see nothing besides the empty grounds and I hear nothing besides the whistling of the wind and the branches rustling loudly. But suddenly, a strange object catches my eye. A sign. Not the metaphorical type but a real, physical sign with gold letters etched into the dark wood. It reads "Beware of the one who sings out in dreams. Do not trust the flowers. The stars lie." A shock of nostalgia courses through me as I remember my mother whispering this very lullaby in her silky sweet voice. How did this get here? The two of us made it up. It is ours and is not meant to be put on display to the whole world. When my thoughts clear, I'm not sure if this is real. I am worn out and energetic at the same time. I feel restless and wide awake. The only question that remains is: am I awake?

THE END.

## About the author:

Madeline Manzoni lives in New Jersey with her mother, step dad, and three siblings. She is currently studying at Holy Angels Catholic Schools, while also working on a variety of books and short stories. While she is not writing, Madeline enjoys reading, dancing, watching netflix shows, or listening to her favorite band. She thanks you for deciding to pick up this book and also for being interested enough to read the About The Author section.



## The Enchanted Tales: Book 1: The Tales of Two Witches Prologue: A Tale of Two Sisters

There is a magical forest, filled with magic from majestic unicorns running through the woods, to the very forest's planetary itself. This forest is called the Enchanted Forest. And in this forest lived two sisters. An elder sister with hair as black as coal, and eyes as bright as the night sky. And a younger sister with dark brown hair, and amethyst purple eyes. These sisters were the best of friends, always adventuring and exploring the land they called home. Not only were they close, but they were also royalty. Heirs to one of the two kingdoms of the Enchanted Forest: the Kingdom of Light. They were also the daughters of the King and Queen of the Enchanted forest: Queen Daylight, and King Moonnight.

These sisters always had each other's back. Until one adventure in their home, when they stumbled upon a cave filled with prophecies changed everything in their royal lives.

The two sisters were exploring a part of the Forest, which was overgrown with vines climbing up the trees and rocks, or hanging from the branches majestically. Giant and small rocks, sometimes stacked against each other laid at the roots of the tall oak trees. Flowers such as; orchids, water lilies, daisies, dandelions, wildflowers, lavenders, littered the grassy grounds, and upon bushes of flowers, such as roses, carnations, chrysanthemum, irises, and tree peonies. There were also scrubs, and other bushes of plants. The trees in the forest were the size of mountains. Not only were the trees as tall as mountains, but there were mountains in this forest. Mountains that reached the sky, covered in little blankets of snow at the top, that shimmered when the lights of the sun and moon light.

This forest contained two kingdoms. The first kingdom was to the south, and was called the Kingdom of Light, and to the north was the second kingdom: The Kingdom of Darkness. These kingdoms were formed when a single drop of sunlight, and a single drop of moonlight fell from the sun and moon, and from these two drops formed two majestic kingdoms, each brimming with magic and mystery.

The two sisters had been out together, atop their horses, the elder sister's horse was a black horse named Crescent, and the younger sister's horse was a white horse named Dawn.

The elder sister wore an ankle length dark purple gown, with cape-like sleeves. Around the waist of her dress was a small black belt, with a singular tear dropped shaped opal stone in the center. She had jet black hair that was in a small bun with a silver tiara with a crescent shaped top, and silver flats. She had light blue eyes, and pale skin.



# Mia Meyers

he younger sister also wore an ankle length dress, but hers was a much brighter dress. The dress was light pink, with a yellow center, her dress also had a belt, but her gem was bright yellow topaz in the shape of a teardrop, and golden flats. Her hair was blonde, and she had purple eyes and light skin. Her tiara was a golden one, with a small sun in the center.

"Sister, do you see that?" The elder sister asked, pulling the reins of Crescent to a stop. The two princesses stood in front of a cave built into a mountain. The entrance to the cave was covered by thick vines that made it almost impossible to see through the entrance. But underneath the vines was a glowing white light.

"Yes, I do." The younger sister answered, a smirk appearing on her lips. "Let's go check it out." She suggested.

"Sister, I caution you against it. We have no idea what could be in that cave. We don't know if a dangerous beast has made it its home, nor if it is even safe to enter." The elder sister cautioned. "That cave looks old and ancient."

"Oh, Helda, my sister. Stop worrying so much. It'll be an adventure." The younger one insisted teasingly.

"Ally, please." Helda begged.

Ally rolled her eyes at her sister's nicknames. Ally had been her childhood nickname since she could first speak, and couldn't pronounce her real name properly. Ally ignored her sister, and got off Dawn, quickly tying her to a nearby tree, before walking inside the cave.

"Sister, wait!" Helda called. "Ally!" She sighed as she felt water touch her forehead. She glanced up, and saw dewdrops glistening from the leaves of the ever beautiful trees that grew in this forest. She sighed again before tying Crescent to the same tree, and followed Ally inside the cave.

The cave was dark, and like most ancient structures in the Forest was filled with tall, white ionic pillars, and dome like roofs that were built high into the cave. Across the cave were images with writing written below them, and in the center of the cave, across a cavern with waterfalls falling down them, and light shone into the center of the cave where two podiums stood across a bridge made of black and yellow rocks that seemed to glow brightly.

Ally and Helda stared at the two podiums, atop them were two necklace stands, and on each stand was a necklace. The first one had a simple chain that was silver, with a singular gem in the center in the shape of an oval. The gem was a turquoise-blue with small white moonstones surrounding it. The second necklace had a similar chain, the only difference was it was gold instead of silver and its gem was also oval, but instead of it being turquoise-blue, it was bright yellow like the sun with sunstone gems surrounding it.

Neither of them spoke for a moment, until Ally broke the silence. "Why are there two necklaces here?" She asked.

"I don't know." Helda answered, calmly. "Maybe someone left them here long ago? Maybe pirates?"

"But wouldn't pirates have hidden them in a chest, or a cove?" Ally asked. "I mean that is what all our old history and nautical stories say."



# Mia Meyers

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"Ally, my sister, you can believe the stereotypes of a band of sailors from eras past."

Helda pointed out.

Ally sighed at her sister. "Anyways... if someone left them here, then why in eclipse's light are they glowing?" She inquired, gesturing to the fact that the necklace was glowing. "I'm going to go check it out." She declared quickly, and began to walk closer to the bridge that led to the necklaces.



# Mia Meyers

"Sister, I don't think you should do that." Helda cautioned as she walked forward, trying to grab Ally by the shoulder and yanked her back quickly. "Ally, if someone or whatever left these here, they might be in danger. We shouldn't just grab them!" She scolded. But just then she heard a voice. A voice that whispered her name...

'Helda...'

"Who's there?" Helda asked, aloud as she looked around the cave, but saw nothing but shadows, drawings, and pillars. No one was there but her and Ally. Helda then looked at Ally intently.

"Sister, did you speak my name?"

"No." Ally answered, with a shake of her head. But that was when she went silent for a moment.

"Ally?" Helda asked, walking up, and bending down to be eye level with her sister while putting a hand on her sister's shoulder.

"They're calling us..." Ally muttered. And just then her eyes started to glow a brilliant, bright violet purple, and Helda jumped back in shock.

"Sister, your eyes!" Helda warned, but at that very moment her eyes started to glow a dark blue. They each took a step forward. Then another, and another. Their hands reached forwards and wrapped their fingers around the chains of the necklaces. The necklace's glow grew brighter and brighter before becoming a blinding white light.

"AHH!!" Helda and Ally both screamed, as they were thrown back hard into the nearest walls, before sliding to the ground with a small grunt.

"Ugh..." Helda groaned, placing her hand against her forehead. Helda then looked down, and around her neck was the purple necklace. "Um... sister..." she started, now looking down at Ally who was now waking up.

"Ugh, what was that?" Ally asked, pushing herself up with a small groan.

"I don't know." Helda answered.

"Look." Ally said as she pointed towards the center wall of the cavern.

The center wall had a drawing of some sort. It detailed two witches, one shooting purple magic, and the other shooting yellow magic.

"Is that us?" Ally asked, worriedly.

"I don't know, sister." Helda answered.

The two sisters exchanged worried looks.

"Whatever this is, let's hope it doesn't come true." Ally decided quickly and hopefully.

"Yeah." Helda agreed. "We should head back.. Mother and father will be furious if we're not back by curfew." She suggested, and they quickly left the cave, hopping back on their horses and riding back home before something else could happen.

## About the author:

This is a revamp of my original chapter, edited, and updated for your reading pleasures. For those of you who don't know, I'm a 14 year old girl who dreams of writing fantasy (and maybe some more emotional, less fantastical) stories when I'm older. I originally started writing the Enchanted Tales when I was in 5th grade, but now that I've grown, I've decided to come back, re-edit, and make it better after over three years worth of practice. This is the prologue for the first book, and I hope it hooks you in. (Also the prologue is actually longer than this, but I took the scene from where I felt ending it would sound right).



# Ella Nelson

One day in the Whitehouse neighborhood, me, Sam, and my so-called friends were talking after school. "Did you hear about the people who went into the Moonlight Inn?" Caleb said. "Yeah, I heard they never came out, I bet the evil ghosts got them." Daneil answered. "Evil?" I asked as I jumped back from the howl of wind. "Yeah scaredy cat, evil, what else would they be? Good?" Caleb snapped. "I mean yeah, would you be scared of me if I were a ghost?" I said. "Of course! You'd haunt me until I'd die, then you'd haunt me in the afterlife." He said, throwing his hands up in the air. "All ghosts are evil." No they aren't!" I protested. "Then how about you spend the night in the Moonlight Inn." Daniel suggested, "Then, when you might come out, you can prove us wrong. Before I could say no, Daniel said, "Maybe you'll get popular if you come out alive." I've always been bullied at my school whether it was my own friends, or stupid kids at my school. Being popular would mean everything to me. "I'll do it. Now." I said. Caleb, and Daniel's mouths dropped to the floor in shock. "Now? In this weather?" Caleb said. I shivered as another clap of thunder boomed. It felt as though the entire ground shook. "Yes, you really thought I wouldn't do it?" I boast. And that is how I got here, staring at the eerie building towering over me. With no hesitation, I proudly stepped forward. If I am going to survive, I need to act powerful. I thought. Then, an owl gave a bloodcurling screech and swooped down in front of my face. "Ahhh!" I screamed and dropped to the unstable, wood planks with my face between my knees. With my heart pounding, I slowly stood up and wobbled to the front door. I might stick with being careful. I thought, rolling my eyes. I stopped in front of the door peering up to see where it stopped. It was purple with overgrown vines and spiders. Carefully avoiding them, I grabbed the handle and creaked it open. I peered in with one eye and saw nothing but a front desk. "Good," I said smiling, "No one here." But I spoke too soon. "Hello." A curious creature asked. Swinging my head in all directions, I finally saw it, sort of perching on a ledge. "What are you?" I asked, without stopping to think. "I? Manta." It said. "Your'e a manta?". "No no, name is Manta.". Then, the creature jumped down to reveal itself as...a human? "You're a human!" I said, surprised. They looked at me up and down and said, "Room key, go." "What?" I asked. "I said go rascal!" They yelled, shooing me away with their crumpled hands, which ghostly enough, had a missing finger. "Yes yes, I'm leaving." I managed to get out and ran to the grand staircase. It had a crimson carpet with dark grey patterns flowing down it like water. "Move along!" They yelled, still shooing me away. "Eep!" I let out and quickly scrambled up the stairs. Room 303, this should be it. Slowly, I opened the door and staggered back from the smell. It smelled of dead souls and dry blood. When I looked around, I saw a lamp with a ripped shade, a harrowing wallpaper, and thousands of fancy picture frames of old men in fancy clothing. The whole room gave me a macrabare feeling.





# Ella Nelson

Soon after I settled in, I thought. If I'm going to come out alive, I'm going to need a good story. As much as I wanted to stay in the room until I had a chance to escape, I did need to do something interesting. While I was thinking, I heard a high pitched hiss coming from the nightstand drawer. I slowly slumped over to it and opened it up. It was a map! Perfect. On the map there were 8 icons. The first a star, for popular places, second, a man and a woman indicating restrooms, third, a book for a library, fifth, a cup for the bar, sixth, a plate for food, seventh, a wave for a pool, and lastly, a gravestone with a cross on it. I assumed it was a graveyard at first but then thought about the cross, was there a church too? After a while I chose to go to the library, maybe there is a book I could bring back as proof. When I got there, I was stunned. There were towers of books on the floor about to fly through the ceiling, and thousands of shelves creating an endless maze. When I walked up to the first shelf, all I saw were autobiographies. I picked one up and flipped through it. I, Joe Paole, was a worker in the Diamondwrath Express train station in the 1800s. I was happy, I had a beautiful wife and kids, and I was wealthy. Although, after thirteen years, I got severely sick and passed in 1821. When I passed, others did too. I assumed it was just a disease, but my village took it as vampire doings. I was accused and hated, and my entire family line was poor and shamed from then on. I would do anything to change it. I gently closed the book and put it back. Poor man. I thought, that would be horrible. After I skimmed through a few books, I noticed that they were all men, also, they were all talking about their deaths. How would they write them if they were dead? I didn't think ghosts have hands, do they? Quickly, I searched through every shelf of books and at least two piles of books and nothing. Only after an hour did I find one book about a woman, Ezra Dire. I opened up the book and nothing, It was empty. Taken by surprise, I put Joe's book back and took this one, it's...more...interesting in a way. When I got back to my room, I was too scared to go anywhere, and thought. I never had a real conversation with anyone yet. Then it hit me, a restaurant! The perfect place to start a conversation, the bar is close too. Soon enough I mustered up the courage to walk down to the restaurant, the most normal one I found was the bloody barbeque. I know, very normal, but the others were something like, ghoulish garden, and like, vegetables? Ew, no. There was also The Screaming scorn if someone would rather go there. I always saw the elevator when I passed by and it made me think of how badly my legs hurt but I always passed by it. What if it stopped working? What if I got stuck in there? I had been sitting on the rough carpet in my room because there was no way I was going to sleep on the queen sized bed with skulls on the headboard and mysterious red liquid. Walking there was a scene because I had lots to see.



# Ella Nelson

I was expecting to see old pictures of Dracula or something, although, soon remembering that he isn't real. Instead there were hanging candles emitting light though it had no flame. Creepy, I thought. The pictures were framed in gold and silver trimming, and decorated with various complicated designs. Using the candle light as a guide I eventually made it to the Bloody barbeque to find many people laughing, clinking their drinks, talking, and playing games. Excited, I decided to look at the menu. I was surprised to see that it was normal. It had lots of everyday barbeque foods. Even pork ribs! Eventually I chose my dinner, the classic cheeseburger. "One cheeseburger please." I said happily. "That will be 6 moon crests." He grumbled back. "Oh, what are those?" I asked "You must be new" A different voice said and tossed six silver coins with a blood red moon to the bartender. I turned around and he smiled at me. "I'm Joe, what's your name?" "First of all thanks." I said "And the name is Sam." "Cool, want to talk?" He said. I said yes and we walked over to an empty table. "So, I've been wondering about the library. How many books are in there?" I asked enthusiastically. "2,437 to be exact." He responded. "Wow! How do you know?" I asked curiously. "Son, If you've been here as long as me, you'd have enough time on your hands to count every brick in this building at least 18 times." "How many people live in this building?" I ask. Some visit, but including them, 2,436. Then, a man ran across the ceiling above us. "Ahh!" I yell. "It's okay, I get scared sometimes too, it's his power." Joe said. What! They have powers? That means they have to be ghosts. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I see the bartender walk through the desk carrying a plate of food. Oh my gosh they are! What should I do? Just play along Sam act normal. "Hello?" Joe said. "Huh?" I shot out. "I said ,my power is floating, it's weak but useful. What is yours?" "Oh, um." I stuttered, "Mine is telakanesis, also weak." "Your food." The bartender plopped the plate on the table and floated away. "Thanks." I managed to say. I stared at the food in fright. Is there a different way that ghosts eat their food? Will they figure out I'm not one of them? What will happen to me if they do? "I'm going to get a cheeseburger too." Joe said, getting up from his seat. "No," I said. He looked back at me and waited. "I mean, we can share, you bought mine anyway." He smiled, said thanks, and sat back down. I got a fry and brought it up to my mouth as slowly as possible so I could see how he ate. As he swallowed a fry, I sighed. Good, I can eat normally. Later, Joe and I split up so he could talk with his friends. I learned a lot from him while we talked though. He died at age 44 from a fatal poisoning effect. He had a wife and two daughters which he loved very much. He also worked at that Dimondwrath station...My thoughts trailed off. He was the guy in the book. He was Joe Paole. And the amount of auto biographies just almost matched up with the number of people staying here.





# Ella Nelson

Which must mean someone is missing. Wait, the woman! The one girl, it must be her. I didn't tell Joe about the book because it felt too weird, but now I want to. But now I have a whisper in my head saying "don't do it" over and over. I soon decided I wouldn't. It's too risky. Suddenly, a loud crash awaked me out of my thoughts. The man sitting beside me at the bar muttered, "She's back again" with wide eyes and a fearful face. Oh no, it's Ezra. "Take cover!" Some yelled, others shouted, "Run for your lives!" Then right before me, a cloaked figure with long, flowy, red hair with a staff approached me. You bloody monster took my book. I stood there, as pale as the other ghosts and quickly said, "Oh! It's in my room! I had no idea, I'll get it right now, I promise. You could come with me if you want. "No." She said, her voice echoed around the silent room. Then, in one swish of her staff, all the ghosts behind me burst into a cloud of smoke and flew towards me. They swirled around me until I was gasping for air. "I beg of you! Please stop!" The figure chuckled "You beg? What will you do for me if I stop?" "Anything! Anything you want!" I shout back, not knowing what I had just gotten myself into. "She tapped her staff twice and I was suddenly lifted off the ground whirled into the night by the smoke cloud. "Stop! Please!" I begged. "You said anything," She said with an evil smirk. And we both disappeared into the night with the trees muffling my desperate screams. Never to be seen again.

## About the author:

My name is Ella Nelson, I live in a 4 person family, and I have a beautiful dog named Charly. I have always loved writing when I was a kid and entered poem and art contests. I have also just started writing an adventure book, it has been fun and I am so excited to finish it.



# Faith Oexner

## Twisted Fairytales: Emberlynn Darkroot (Rapunzel)

My team of Twisted Disney Fairytales people and I begin our journey with 25 gold coins each - not 4,000 we hoped for. We begin at the Wishing Well Inn, where two, three or four cloaked beings lurk and leave only purple petals as footprints.

Wishing Well Inn: I suspected that the two cloaked beings were on the side of Good, but disguised as Evil. The fortune-telling witch in the cottage across town was murdered last night, and shrieking was heard. We investigate the crime scene - a dead witch, six dead crows and one crow flying away and dropping a glittery pink potion. We head to the hatchery and other stores to ask questions and find possible witnesses to the crime. In the Hatchery, three people on my team purchase a pet - an electric dog, an ice cream dog and a dragon named Bubbles. From the hatchery, we hear that the shrieking from last night was from bubbles popping - coming from the dragon. Then we enter the forest.

WitchLight Refuge: We continue our investigation. I wake up - even though I have no memory of sleeping - with a blue-glittering potion, its purpose remains unknown, I never had this to begin with. The sun rises - though it never seems to set. The flowers of this forest are not to be trusted, nor are the stars. I can feel something is coming - the witch's curse? I was invited to a wedding taking place here in the forest - and also to find the living-dead body of the fortune-telling witch. This witch has created a curse, and it will be enacted in two days' time. No one knows who murdered the witch - it could have been her six crows! A group of crows is called a murder. The Murmuring Grotto is near.

Murmuring Grotto: Pagatoa believes that some of us are a threat and some of us are a sign - except me, I seem to be both, but I don't know why.

WitchTongue Falls: The FrozenTime Guard controlled the Hourglass of Stolen Time. Whatever report on how it worked I had later written actually explained that the Guard was chosen - but not her choice.

BloodPrice Wish: So far, I have not spent any of my gold coins - I gained some - nor did I get any potions or curses - unlike the rest of my team. I made no wishes, but other team members did - asking for Steve, the hatchery owner, to come back.



# Faith Oexner

Rot & Remedy: Blues, yellows, and pinks - still not buying any potions. There is a singular green potion bottle, which, when used, turns the user into a plant - the side effect being forever - and to get this particular one, a person must trade a secret or memory.

After visiting a few other stores, we go to the wedding - which ends in the bride going missing.

BloodMoon Inn, Crimson Hollow Kingdom: Dressed in Ruby Red and Midnight Black dress, a mask in my hand etched with "Find your face before the moon bleeds dry," I suspect some being brought me here to find my older sister - who vanished into the veil. I recognized the mask I was holding as one of the Crimson Hollow Kingdom Palace Guard's!

The Masked Monsters continued to watch and lurk outside whatever tower I was in.

There was no entrance to this tower except the window. The window! With my Waterfall-Blue hair tumbling to the ground, I escaped the tower and headed towards a dark tunnel.

BloodVault Catacombs: Several portraits of Crimson Hollow kings, queens, and royals blinked at me. One royal room contained a prophecy being repeated by a voice only I could hear - though its language was foreign to me.

I leave the Catacombs and enter the Crimson Hollow Castle.

Crimson Hollow Castle: Here begins the Banquet of Betrayal and the Crimson Masque Ball - intended to make forgotten beings become memorable, for the side of Good. But if they fail, they may become a servant in this kingdom until the end of time. According to the message on the door when I entered, those who enter may be guests, or prey.

HollowWharf Inn - WraithLight Mansion area: I've heard that the Mansion shows people something in their dreams - what might happen to them, or not happen to them.

By fate, I came here - DreadWharf - to find my sister, who was seen in or near the Mansion one year from this day.

Barnacle & Bane Apothecary: Someone by the name of Tideborn is in DreadWharf to awaken the WraithLight Mansion - they cannot be trusted. Based on my teammates having curses on them, no one can be trusted at this point - the entire team has a third eye!

# Faith Oexner

WraithLight Mansion: The gates creak open - those who enter never return! I enter and later leave a letter that read: "Dear whoever may read this, please don't go any farther, turn back while you still can. Ever since the first explorer to enter this Mansion, none have ever returned, some may have passed here or while trying to leave, some may still be alive. No one knows because the rooms - not just the order of them - change every time someone enters, as well as the locations of any secret staircases. - Emberlynn Darkroot." The letter remains in the hands of the statue just outside the Mansion's gates.

Never Leaving: Frostbite Fable - some new ability awakens within me - I can see previous explorers that have entered the Mansion! Or at least their ghosts, which disappear just as suddenly as they had appeared.

Echoing Nursery: The cradle holds an old music box of lullabies from my past - but in a different shape than what I remembered. An ocean waves lullaby - my sister always listened to this one - startles me as the doll on the corner shelf moves with every blink of my eyes. My sister was last seen entering the Mansion - a year from this day - did she have this with her when she disappeared? This may be the start of her breadcrumb trail if this is true.

Vermin Crypt: The half-eaten journal lying on the perpetually silent piano had my name on one of the pages as well as my sister's nickname. So she is here - or was. A trail of torn journal paper leads me to another room - one that probably hasn't been dusted for centuries because the walls are decorated with cobwebs.

The Widow's Web: I hear a whisper of someone's voice somewhere around me - and it sounds oddly familiar. The only relative that has disappeared into the WraithLight Mansion was my older sister - so she is here! Or just her voice, but I hear footsteps too. So either she is here or it's only her voice, just in someone else's body. My sister!

To be continued...

## About the author:

My name is Faith and I am entering 9th grade at Unionville High School. I love to write mysteries, fan-fiction and fantasy. If I'm not writing, I'm probably building and rebuilding my LEGO sets or playing video games.



## I want to Read

I want to read,  
Until I am lost between pages,  
between worlds,  
between realities,  
because this reality squeezes my heart,  
My Chest,  
My ribs,  
My Stomach  
Pokes holes in my neck.  
Squeezes everything out of me  
even though I hang on tight  
I can not hold it all.  
So I get lost in the pain  
and joy  
of people who don't exist  
I want to read.

### About the author:

Marisol Mireviel is cursed with DewDrop Lullaby, which causes her to forget the events of the day come nightfall. She also has a hole where her heart should be, pandas for feet (she cut them off bc she was accused of animal abuse) and a third eye.

## A Perfectly Normal Road Trip

The moon shines above, as if staring at you. As you look around, the back of your neck tingles as if someone is watching you. Your car is parked on the side of the road, nothing around you for miles. Nobody is here. You meant to stop to see the moon, which is still staring. Not even a tree surrounding you, just the moon and a few brave stars watching you pull over in the dead of night. Nobody is here but you, at least not that you can see anymore. You rub your neck, and the feeling goes away, nothing but tiredness. You remember the town you saw earlier in your drive. Small, few people living there and fewer stopping there. You needed gas, and pulled over to the one station you saw. A woman with long blonde hair, standing on the sidewalk, is staring as you entered the store for a snack. The store was empty too, rows on rows of candies and toys that are half empty as the light flickered above the aisle. You get a snickers, and notice a man in the corner looking at beer. He turned, but didn't seem to see you wave. Or hear you. There is another man at the counter now. His eyes are empty, and he holds eye contact for too long. But doesn't speak-nobody speaks and you don't ask why.

The woman is still there when you exit, brown hair flickering in the wind. Across the street, a drugstore door creaks open and closes, but nobody is there. The lights flicker out for a moment and then turn back on. You fill the gas tank of your car, and it's surprisingly expensive. But you pay, and the wind ruffles your hair in thanks. Looking down, one weed from between the cracked granite has wrapped around your foot. You yank it free, but the vine holds it's shape, even without your shoe. It feels strange, and now the smell of mothballs and something else that's impossible to name hits you. It's inside your car too, from leaving the door open. The woman is staring, and there is no hair to ruffle her blonde hair. The entrance you took to the gas station is gone, curb surrounding you. The exit is on the other side, and you quickly leave. You can see the end of the small town, and drive down the road. But townhouses surround you, and people are everywhere. Walking up and down the streets, glancing at you passing them. The end is just ahead, and you go faster. The people and houses are left behind, but a man is standing there.

He is holding an empty beer bottle, and you swear he's the same one as the man you saw in the gas station. He still doesn't look at you, but sets the bottle down by you at a red light. You glance down, and see the liquid inside slosh around. The light is green, and your car takes a minute to start. The end is just ahead, you swear as you fall behind another red light. This one takes longer, even though there is no other cars. Another glance tells you there is no other road to cross yours. You are waiting for nothing. The light never turns green, and you go anyways. Nobody stops you, even if you swear your car is now twice as slow and making strange sounds.





# Emma Tidwell

The end is behind you, and within seconds it's gone. In front of you, the small town appears on the horizon. Your gas tank is low, but this time you swerve around the stores. Nobody is inside this ghost town. The drive continues, and you hope to reach a hotel by nightfall. As late afternoon approaches, farms begin to roll towards you, without barns or hay bails. One has a sign with the words 'FREE FRUITS' on it. They smell sweet, sweeter than the smell inside your car, one of mothballs and something else impossible to name. And your stomach rumbles, so you get a packet of strawberries. They taste even sweeter, clearly fresh picked blueberries from the farm. And you enjoy the strawberries. The small packet holds a lot of them, and the stall could make a lot of money selling the blueberries.

You eat them now, too. The snickers bar left in the glove box with those scratchy brown napkins and band-aids. You look up again, and your neck prickles. You rub it again but the feeling doesn't fade. You at least hope now the smell is gone from the car, which you have left to clear it out. It's late, night even, and with no hotel in sight you might have to stay here or at least drive a bit more. Your gas tank is full enough to keep driving into the night, even if it's unsafe. The strawberries are gone now, and the memorable taste of blueberries fills your mouth. Looking down at the packet, you can faintly read the word 'CHERRIES' printed on the sides. You sigh, having eaten the last food in your car, and hop back in to drive again. The smell is mostly gone, but so is the fresh fruit taste in your mouth. You feel tired, exhausted even, but your gas tank is completely full and there is nowhere to stop for the night, so you keep driving. You see a tree, the first one for hours, and smile as more start to dot the roads. Soon enough, you are driving through a small forest, which almost blocks out the storm clouds that have been hanging over you the entire day.

## About the author:

Emma Tidwell is a 14 year old camper who enjoys both writing and theatre. She is learning the piano with her mother and also sings for fun. Recently, astronomy and geology have both gained her interest in school and over the summer.



# Katy Wu

## The Beckoning

The Hollow Wharf Inn overlooks the massive gloom of the Empty Sea, docked on the port of Saltwater City. Locals have warned about its hazardous location in hushed, muttered whispers, but it's the only hotel for miles. The storm's horrid thunder of waves and lightning echos through battered, salty windows, its miserable cries washing out towards the hollow expanse of endless ocean. A weathered man wearing an ironed linen shirt mutters incoherently behind the massive, fancy wooden bar of the inn. His words are lost to me under the crash of the storm, though I can make out some "calling" he speaks of. Whatever he's concerned about seems dire.

Retreating to Room #555, I step up creaky flooring and onto deep turquoise carpet. This fancy hallway seems nearly spotless, and is meticulously furnished. I turn the lock of the dark wooden entrance to my temporary lodging--the bronze room key exhibits a golden luster, "seek no wrath by daylight" etched pristinely on the back of it.

A large golden window greets me, clearly weathered from years of service. I'm glad I booked a sea-view, even as the rabid torrents of uncontrollable downpour threaten to shatter the framework of the entire inn.

Shrouded in a faint layer of cascading mist, an incredibly distant pearlescent beige manor settled on a small island can be seen from here. It seems serene, blissfully untouched by the horrors of nature's sporadic fury. Without a doubt in my mind, I am sure that this villa is the notorious "Wrathlight Mansion."

Setting my scarce belongings down, I recall the events of earlier happenings. For one thing, it seems a place of mystery to all; every unfortunate, insignificant soul who entered has not yet come out.

Lost in overcast thought, I watch the cold winds blow further into the Empty Sea. The ominous whispers of false truths tip-toe around, muffling the dissonant echo of those lost in the hollow depths.

### About the author:

Hi! I'm Katy Wu, the author of this short (unfinished) story. I'm 13, I have a black cat, and I enjoy doing nothing on rainy days. I hope you enjoy!



WC  
WP



Young Readers Young Writers

2025



The background of the page is a collage. At the top left, a blue banner with a purple outline contains the text 'Table of Contents' in a white, cursive font. The background features a night sky with a large, bright full moon on the left, a small red object (possibly a planet or a bird) in the upper right, and a map of the world at the bottom. The map shows continents in green and brown and oceans in blue. A compass rose is visible in the bottom right corner of the map.

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## THE GODS OF SPRING

The God of Flowers and the Goddess of Fruits have always been known to humans as simply "spring". Frankly, the gods saw it as an insult to their craft and reason for their playful bickering.

"There would be no fruit without its flowers," the God of Flowers mused, fragrant tulips budding beneath his fingertips.

"And yet humans would go hungry without my fruits," the Goddess of Fruits replied, dangling her legs from the branches of bountiful apple trees. This would be their game.

The gods had their higher purposes-tending to the humans and their world-but found their favorite pastime to be surpassing one another through their creations. The cherry blossoms were a favorite of the God of Flowers. Humans would travel great distances to see these blooming, pink petals gently sway among the branches and swirl on gusts of wind. The Goddess of Fruits could bear a stroll through the blushing forests alongside the God of Flowers. Even she could appreciate their fleeting beauty.

The fields of strawberries were the finest creation to the Goddess of Fruits. She would find the humans' obsession with the sweet red berries amusing, but would herself marvel at their own strawberry creations. The God of Flowers never failed to take pleasure in the fruit, indulging in foods from jams and jellies to pies and tarts. Even he failed to ignore their deliciousness.

"I must say," the God of Flowers began, strolling behind the Goddess of Fruits.

"These 'strawberries' are becoming a favorite of mine."

"That's only because they flower," the Goddess laughed, the bushes beneath her hands sprouting ripe strawberries. "You were just in these fields."

"While my work is often unrivaled-" the God stooped down and gently plucked a small white flower from a strawberry bush- "I much prefer your creations." The Goddess knelt to pick a berry from its bunch.

"Well, there would be no fruit without its flowers," the Goddess of Fruits sighed, feeding the strawberry to the God.

"And yet humans would go hungry without your fruits," the God of Fruits agreed, tucking the small flower behind the Goddess' ear.

### About the author:

Alexandra Han is a high schooler who's closer to college than she'd like! She's loved reading and writing from a young age and hopes to pursue an English or film major/minor to continue. Her other interests include zoology, music, art, and video games!

## Curse of the Vanishing Voice

As I walk through the enchanted forest I see something shining a brilliant blue. I run towards it spotting the little blue candy. It's still in the wrapper. It's called "The sharrowed shard". I want to eat it. It's still in the package. I feel it's safe to eat but yet it was on the ground. Should I eat it? I suppose. It tastes so good until I realize my throat feels weird and starts to hurt so I spit it out and say, "ew!" but nothing comes out but my mouth moves. No sound. So I run home to find my mom but I can't speak so I grab my white board and explain. My mom grabs a very old looking book and says, "There is an old tale that a witch casts a spell on a candy to take someone's voice." She pauses then continues in a worried voice, "The only way to get your voice back is to..... find the witch." I suddenly get a bit worried I have to go back in the enchanted forest and find a voice stealing witch. I wrote I will find the witch. I walk back into the forest. When I get to the spot I had spit out the candy, it was smoking a white smoke filling the area. This worries me. I start running in fear not looking back. As I get deeper into the forest it gets quiet and there's a dark red mist lingering on the ground. Is it from someone or something? I don't know all I know is to keep running. Then up ahead I see a dark bright red boiling from a pot. There's a dark shadowy figure coming from the back of the cottage next to the pot. I quickly hide behind a few giant rocks. I hear a creepy crackle and scream but thankfully you can't hear me. I try to get a good look and realize it's the witch. THE WITCH! Now I can sneak into the cottage to get my voice. When the witch turns I run and hide behind one of the flower pots by the front door. I think the witch saw me because her eyes darted over to the pot but she looks away. As the witch starts heading to the back of the cottage I slowly open the door as I'm crawling on the ground. When I get inside I see shelves of bottles with names. They are all voices. Once I find mine I open the bottle and that same brilliant blue color is the color of the cloud. The cloud circles around me. Until it enters my throat I gasp hearing myself. Before I go and run away I find a dragon blocking the door. It breathes fire. Did the witch try to stop me with a dragon? Does she know I'm here? I don't know. As the dragon approaches I back away faster. Then I run into another door. I open the door and run. The witch sees me and starts running after me. I lost the witch. Now I'm walking and I'm all out of breath. I walk again past the place where I spit out the candy and this time it's all gone: the wrapper, the half eaten candy, and the smoke. As soon as I got home my mom was relieved and happy. I don't know why she was as relieved as she was but I might know why maybe she was worried the witch would find me and eat me or turn me into a frog?! Well I'm happy to be home. And after this I will never ever I mean like NEVER eat another candy of the enchanted forest ground ever again.



