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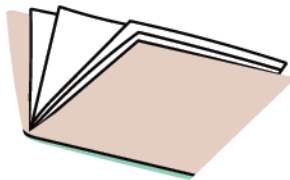
# A Winning Short Story Anthology

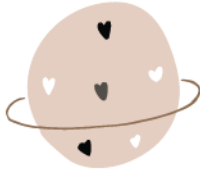


by the student authors of our  
2022 Story Challenge Contest



“This collection of stories is a gift, reminding us of the  
dazzling minds of our young writers.” — Education.com





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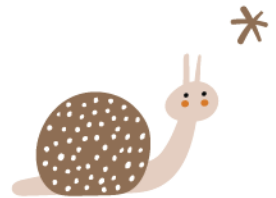
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# The Strange Zone-Out

By Avery G., Age 7

One day a man named Andy, who was a smart 11-year-old detective, went to John's house. John was an old friend of his.

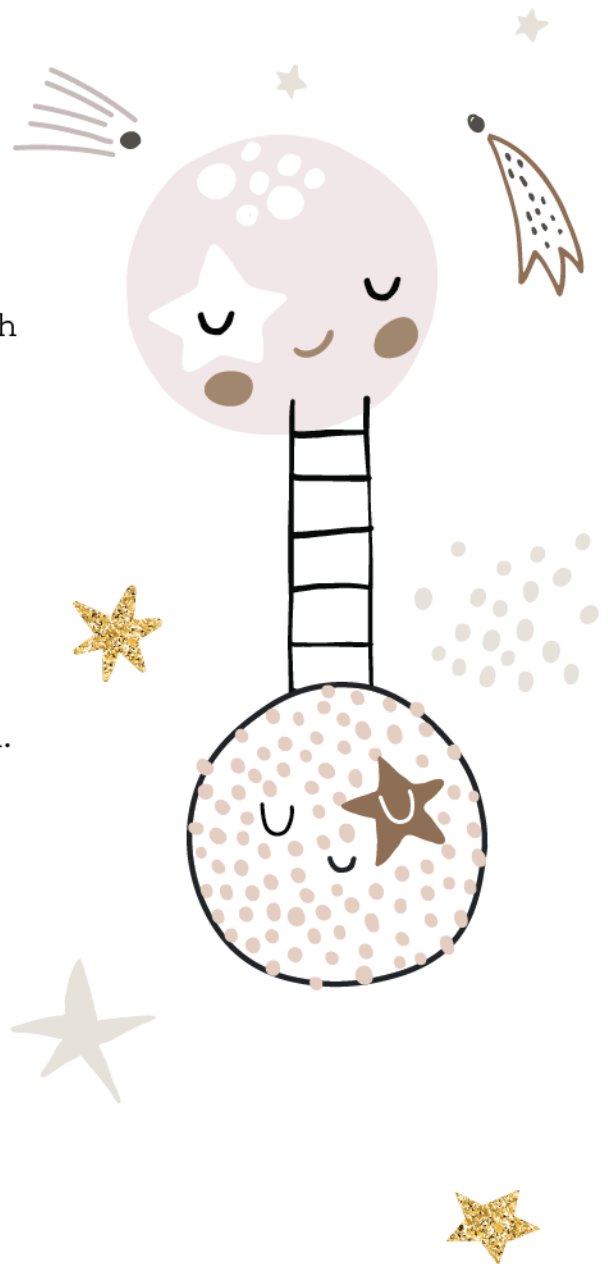
Before he got to the door, he slipped and fell into a secret passage. Then he fell into another area with another secret passage. He went through it and landed on the moon. After he took two small steps, he fell into the same secret passage!

He kept sliding down this passage until he arrived at a waterslide. He went down the long waterslide and splashed into the...secret passage! He slid up and up and up and then he arrived floating in outer space.

A red button suddenly appeared. He pushed the red button. After he pushed it, he disappeared. He heard his mom say, "What are you doing?"

He shakes his head and zones back in. Then he finished eating.

**The end.**



# The Adventure of the Three Warriors

Rishaan N., Age 6

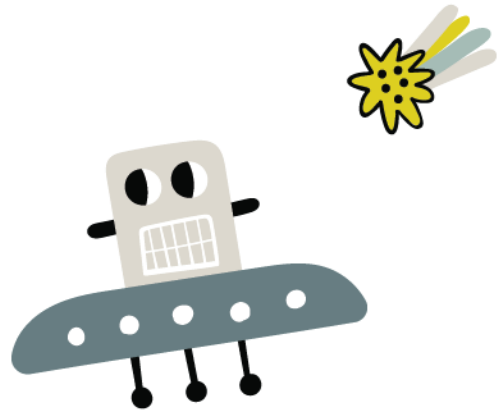
In a faraway desert, an alien ship crashed. Out came a grey alien, while a half-man, half-scorpion was scurrying through the sand. That half-man, half-scorpion was Scorpuman, and this is how Scorpuman and Grey Alien met.

After a few days, Scorpuman asked Grey Alien, "How did your ship crash in the first place?"

Grey Alien said, "A black storm crashed my ship!" Scorpuman said, "I saw the same storm, too!" That was evil Dark Storm.

So they went on a daring quest to stop the unusual storm.

They came to a dark part of the desert. A funnel cloud rose, two red eyes opened. Scorpuman put his venom into Grey Alien's goo-gun. Grey Alien shot it at Dark Storm's eye, and that was the end of Dark Storm.



**The end.**



# My Tiny Adventures

Sabrina N., Age 7



Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be tiny and explore the world yourself? As for me, I have always dreamed of being small and going on adventures to meet little people, ever since I read *The Borrowers*, by Mary Norton.

One day, after a long, tiring day of school, when I arrived home, I fell asleep quickly on the cozy, comfortable couch in the living room. Suddenly, a loud noise woke me up. To my surprise, everything was gigantic! I yelled like crazy for help, but no one came to my rescue.

“Anyone home? Help me!” I screamed.

No one responded, and I could only hear echoes of myself. Because I was the size of a jelly bean, everyone could not hear me. Things that I played with, like my Barbie dollhouse, mini-dolls, tiny legos, and stuffed animals, were enormous compared to me. Quickly, I slid down onto the wooden floor to look for help.

Carefully, trying not to get hurt or stepped on, I tiptoed around the house to look for help from my big sister. But it took me forever to move from one place to another around the house. As I was walking, I accidentally activated the robot vacuum cleaner. Then it started chasing me, and it almost sucked me up. Thankfully, my Hello Kitty doll came to my rescue. She rushed me into the dollhouse nearby to keep us safe from the robot and other scary things like bugs, which were the size of massive cars, from my view.

Inside the dollhouse, everything was a mess, so I began to help Hello Kitty and her other friends organize the place. Surprisingly, in the dollhouse’s kitchen, things like food became real and edible. Then, I heard my tummy roaring for snacks, so I cooked a delicious meal for myself and everyone to gobble up. I made some delectable fried eggs, meatballs, and hotdogs. At the same time, Hello Kitty made a flavorful chocolate cake for dessert. After eating, we talked and played some fun board games until everyone was tired. Soon, I fell asleep on the doll’s bunk bed as I was exhausted like everyone else.



Suddenly, I heard my sister calling my name and her footsteps running near the couch to find me.

“Sabrina, where are you?” yelled my sister. “I got you some mint ice cream and a new toy!”

I quickly opened my eyes, and to my amazement, I was not in the dollhouse anymore. I was on the couch where I had fallen asleep. My family asked me where I was, and they said they had searched for me everywhere except for the sofa. They were extremely nervous when they could not find me. They even thought I was playing hide-and-seek.

It was adventurous being tiny, but I did not miss anything because I did not meet any small people that I dreamed of meeting. I was mainly lonely and frightened. I am very grateful to be my normal size again and to be able to play with my sister and my family. Sometimes I wish to become tiny and have small adventures, but I want to be with someone, not by myself. Without a doubt, going on adventures alone without family is exceptionally frightening.

**The end.**







# Eli's Adventure

Jeremiah F., Age 9



## Introduction:

A teenager named Eli ventures deep into the Vezionian Forest, curious of what may be lurking beyond the forbidden gate, and encounters a gargantuan rock maze filled with nature's worst obstacles, from which he must escape!

## Story:

Eli stared at the gate. His heart pounded hard. He knew he shouldn't, but he wanted some adventure! Plus, who knows what's beyond the gate? Eli thought. He quickly made up his mind, but his heart was unsure. Eli raced towards the gate. When he reached it, he started opening the gate; it made a creaking sound as it opened.

But before Eli could finish opening the heavy iron gate, he suddenly found out it was guarded by a four-foot-long, three-foot-wide skunk that weighed 80 pounds! Eli backed away in fear. The skunk turned around, lifted its tail, and let out a putrid gas with an extremely bad stench. The gas went to Eli's face and made him cough, but Eli recovered and found a spear. Eli gripped the spear tight, and used it to drive the skunk away.

Then, after a long period of silence, Eli remembered the half-opened gate, opened it further, and entered it instantly. Eli darted past the gate and started his adventure.

As Eli ventured further, he heard mysterious rolling sounds. Eli wondered what they could be. The sound increased in volume, and soon became a massive earthquake. The whole planet shook as Eli tried to find a place to hide and wait for the trembling to stop. But efforts were worthless; he found no hiding place. He ran faster, tracking down a place to settle, drifting farther from the gate.

He rustled through the thick leaves and ran quicker, but he didn't know a twig was there! He tripped on it, breaking the twig, and the next thing he heard was a loud volcanic BOOM!



A volcano in the distance had erupted as startled Eli struggled to get up. Eli cowered at the lava that sneaked up on him, as he wondered what kind of ominous thing he would encounter next. Little did he know that the twig he stepped on was also a trigger for something terrible.

Giant stone walls blocked the way to the gate. Other stone walls surrounded him, trapping Eli! A huge rock maze slowly came up from the underground, rumbling as it did so. Eli was trapped! He couldn't find a way out of the stone walls. He had no other choice but to enter the maze and see where it led him!

Then, Eli noticed a hole in one of the maze walls. A hole just the right size and shape for a spear to fit through! He pushed the spear in the hole. The stone walls began to crumble, and the maze tumbled again as it returned to the underground.

Eli felt joy and relief to see the gate again. He also couldn't believe the adventure he had! He fixed his eyes on the gate and wore a big smile on his face as he knelt, resting his elbow on his knee. He breathed in the air. It smelled fresher than before. He felt liberated, and savored the beautiful bird songs some cardinals were singing. He then focused on the gate as his treading turned to running. Petunias bloomed as he passed them. Panting heavily, he finally reached the gate.

When he stopped panting, he exited the gate and went home, where his family awaited. When he returned home, he gave an embrace to his family, and told them about the adventure he had.

The end.





# Eric and the Alien, Mr. Kasoogi

by Kendra T., Age 9

On a hot summer day, in a forest in California, a group of students were camping. In the middle of the night, there was a loud CRASH! Everybody came out of their tents to look around. But they found nothing. So, everybody returned to their tents, except Eric, a very KIND boy.

Eric just stood there, looking around. Then, he decided to go into the forest. He walked and walked, without realizing he had reached the edge of the forest. He took another step, and he went tumbling down a hill. He fell face-down onto the spaceship!

“Oh my God! I thought aliens don’t exist!” he said to himself.

Right at the same moment, an alien saw him! Eric was so shocked that he fainted.

When Eric woke up, he was inside the spaceship.

“Wow!” he said.

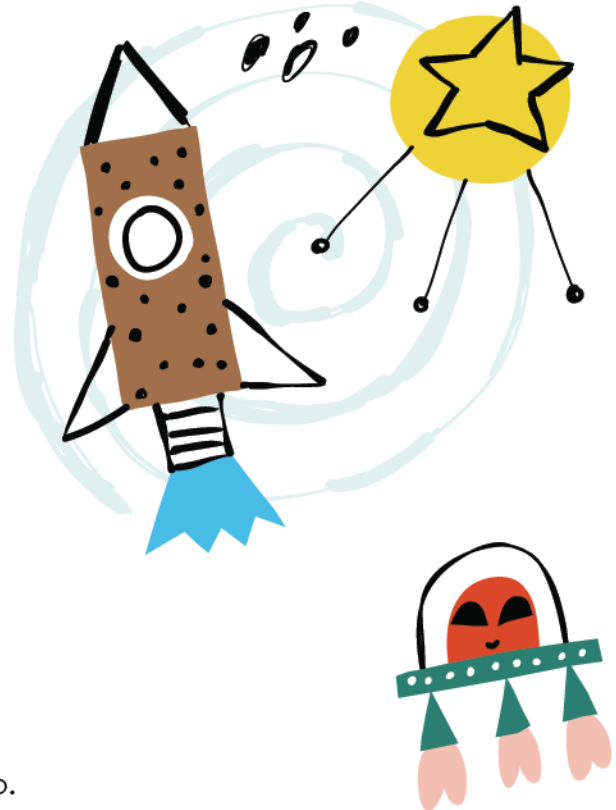
At that very moment, the same alien appeared. Eric was about to faint again, then the alien spoke.

“Don’t be scared! I’m not going to harm you.”

“What’s your name? My name is Eric,” he said.

“My name is Mr. Kasoogi, the alien that travels around space,” the alien replied.

“Oh...okay...Are you alright?” Eric asked.



“Oh, I am fine. It’s just that my spaceship is busted,” replied Mr. Kasoogi.

At that very moment, Eric’s school friends came to look for him. A lot of police came, too. When Eric wanted to present Mr. Kasoogi to everyone, Mr. Kasoogi ran away. From that day on, Eric never saw Mr. Kasoogi again.

Days passed, and Eric grew up, turning into a handsome teenager. Every day he thought about Mr. Kasoogi.

\* \* \*

Eric kept the secret about Mr. Kasoogi from everyone: his parents, his sibling, and friends. One day, he finally decided to tell everyone about Mr. Kasoogi.

One spring day, Eric went for a walk in the forest. It was a beautiful day. The birds were singing and dancing around. Suddenly, he heard a little voice calling for him. Eric walked towards the sound until he came to a cave. It had a black nose and a pair of white eyes. Eric did not realize it was Mr. Kasoogi until Mr. Kasoogi came to give a hug.

Eric said, “Is it really you, Mr. Kasoogi?”

“Yes, it is me, Eric!” responded Mr. Kasoogi.

“Come, let me show you my new house,” said Mr. Kasoogi.

“Huh? Your new house?” Eric was shocked to hear that.

Mr. Kasoogi opened the door behind him. It was very big inside, full of strange objects. Furniture was flying around. The kitchen stuff was upside down. There was even a spaceship inside the cave, and it was upside down. When Mr. Kasoogi snapped his fingers, both Eric and Mr. Kasoogi floated in the air.

“Wow! This is so cool, Mr. Kasoogi!”

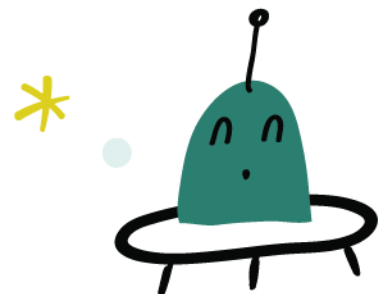
“It gets even better,” said Mr. Kasoogi as he clapped his hands twice.

The door of the cave closed, and the house went upside down.

Eric was shocked. “This is super cool! How did you do that?”

“Easy, Eric. I just needed to get 100 stars from space, grind them, splash all the ground stars into my house. I waited for one day, and there I have my magical home.”

“What happened to you after you ran away, Mr. Kasoogi?”



“After you were gone, I used my emergency phone to call my parents in space to rescue me. Once we were back at my planet, I asked my parents if I could live with you forever. They said yes, but I must visit them every year,” explained Mr. Kasoogi.

“But...but...Why did you take so long to reach here, Mr. Kasoogi?”

“Hmmm...That is a long story. How about coming back tomorrow?” asked Mr. Kasoogi.

“Okay then. See you tomorrow, Mr. Kasoogi!”

“Bye, Eric!”

The next day, Mr. Kasoogi heard a knock on his door. When he opened the door, it was not Eric, but a boy with a letter in his hand.

“Hi, Mr. Kasoogi. I am Tom, Eric’s brother. I would like to pass this letter to you.”

“Thank you, Tom.”

Tom left after that. Mr. Kasoogi was very excited, and opened the letter there and then. However, the letter was just a piece of blank paper!

“This is strange,” mumbled Mr. Kasoogi, as he went back into his house.

The house was now pitch black. Suddenly, he heard three claps. Then, the light lit and Eric’s entire family shouted “Taa-daa!”

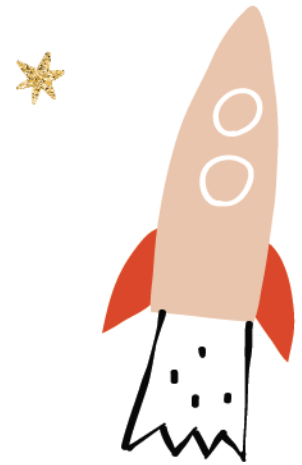
Eric ran towards Mr. Kasoogi and hugged him tightly.

“How did all of you come in here?” Mr. Kasoogi asked.

“We sneaked in when Tom passed you the letter!”

“That was a super pleasant surprise!” They then had a big party, eating and dancing all night long. From then on, everyone lived happily ever after.

**The end.**





# Life as a Pencil

Reidar J., Age 10



## Chapter 1

Singing the alphabet, nap time, and counting don't seem like dangerous activities... unless, however, you are a pencil. And in that case, they seem very dangerous. To be a pencil, you have to be practically bulletproof. Let's just say I didn't learn this the easy way. You know how in the movies, a common theme is that you can be whatever you want to be? While this is a good storyline for a movie, it isn't one hundred percent true. Many jobs require a lot of work.

My name is Ticonderoga. At least that's what the green lettering on top of the ocean of yellow on my stomach says. My owner's name is Jason. Every day, he takes me to school. Each day surprises me with a new threat to my survival.

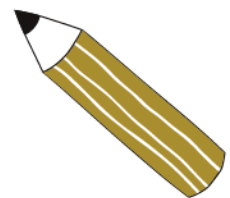
One day, as Mrs. Smith reminded us what single file meant for about the millionth time that day, Jason's grip let loose and he released me. And although I was only rolling for a few seconds, it felt like an eternity. I rolled across the tile floor, accepting my fate. I stopped at Mrs. Smith's feet.

She picked me up and examined me before asking, "Whose pencil is this?"

Twenty sets of eyes turned my way. The silence that answered her question was so heavy it hurt my shoulders. Finally, Jason's eyes widened, and, to my relief, he walked over, reached for me, missed me by a half inch, switched to tip toes, and then tried again, this time getting the height he needed to grab me.

The only good thing about that day was that it was a Friday, and Fridays are the days before the weekend, and I had the weekend off. At least I thought I did.

That day, instead of leaving me at school, Jason brought me home.



## Chapter 2

Jason owned a dog. His name was Max. Max did not like me, and I did not like Max. He lay there above me, in a dog-food coma, a string of drool coming from his mouth and settling on me. I realized that if this continued, I'd start to drown. If looks could kill and I had eyes, Max would have been dead. Speaking of death, if it weren't for Jason's mom I'd be dead, too. She picked me up and placed me on the dinner table. Sigh.

## Chapter 3

The weekend was over, and I was back to work. That day, Jason took a test. It was a difficult test, but I knew that he could do it. He had been studying all week. He picked me up and squeezed me tight. Then, he started writing.

After the test was nap time. I took this time to snooze a bit myself. It felt like I had been out for only a few seconds when Mrs. Smith woke us. On Jason's desk, there was a paper with "100%" written in black ink. Next to the writing was a smiley-face sticker. Jason took the sticker off and put it on me. Then, he pulled it off again and centered it.

## Chapter 4

As you can see, I've dodged a few bullets in my time as a pencil. But nothing compares to what happened earlier this week. Jason was on his bike, riding to school. I sat in his backpack, shaking with every tiny bump. I could feel the bike slowing, and I knew we had made it. As Jason was getting off his bike, he scraped a tree. His bag ripped open. It was just a small hole, but when he started walking, I slipped right through it.

A minute later, I heard another bike coming toward me, so I turned and looked. It was McCarron. McCarron was in Jason's preschool class. She was pedaling quickly, heading to the wrong side of the bike rack. She hit the rack, flew over the handlebars, and somersaulted over to me.

"Oooh, pencil."

## Chapter 5

McCarron picked me up and ran into the building without locking the bike up. The next few hours were miserable. When McCarron was hovering above me, I noticed teeth marks on another pencil nearby, and I shivered.

When school was over, McCarron carried me outside. The bike had been stolen.

"WHAT?!?" said McCarron. "OMG! The bike, like, totally disappeared."

I missed Jason. I missed Jason a lot. I missed his desk, his house. I missed how he didn't forget to lock his bike up and have to go back into the building to call his parents.





## Chapter 6

Today was day three of torture. My favorite part of the day was nap time, because this was the one time when McCarron wasn't making noises and comments or chewing on me. But today I didn't get that time off. McCarron kept me in the pocket of her ketchup-stained jacket. She snored loudly. Ugh. More snoring.

## Chapter 7

Finally, nap time was over. Mrs. Smith was giving us new assigned seats. "Carson, you are going to sit here," she was saying. "McCarron, you are going to sit here."

"Humph," said McCarron. "I want to sit where I am now." She pounded the desk, and miraculously, I rolled off the desk and all the way to Jason's feet, with the sticker side up. I prayed that he would look down and pick me up. He looked down, and I could tell he recognized me.

And then, he picked me up.

**The end.**







# Echo and Electra



by Portland R., Age 11

## PART 1

Once, two dragons, Echo and Electra, met the Worm Queen, who asked them a question.

“Would you mind helping me with my queenly chores?” the Worm Queen asked.

“Um, sorry Your Highness, but Echo and I just want a normal life,” Electra said.

Inside, the Worm Queen was fuming, but she tried to make it seem like she was okay.

“Oh, it’s all good! TA TA!” With that, the Worm Queen slithered back into the ground.

“Well, that was strange,” Echo remarked.

The next morning, Echo went out to hunt for food. He found a group of wild boars. Echo caught two, for himself and Electra.

When they finished eating, Electra had an idea.

“Maybe, since it’s such a nice day, we can fly around.”

Echo liked the idea, so they took off.

All of a sudden, the Worm Queen shot a spike with a slingshot. The spike hit Echo in his right thigh, and he fell with a roar of agony.

Electra gasped and tried to catch Echo, but another spike hit her shoulder. She fell in pain as well. They both flopped onto the ground, but alive.

The Worm Queen started slinking over to them. Electra removed her spike, then walked towards Echo and removed his.

When the Worm Queen got to the clearing, Echo and Electra took off towards the grassy plains across the gigantic lake that bordered their home forest.



When the two dragons were over the lake, Electra realized: “Wait, doesn’t a Leviathan Sea Dragon live in this lake?” she asked Echo.

“Uh, I think so,” Echo said.

## **PART 2**

All of a sudden, the LEVIATHAN jumped onto the water. The dragons sped more quickly to the plains.

When they arrived, the Worm Queen jumped out of the ground.

“I got you now, you fire-spitting lizards!” she said confidently.

“We have to fight her, there’s no other way!”

“You’re right,” Electra said sadly.

The Worm Queen brought out her superpowered subjects. Then, the dragons and the worms charged at each other.

All of a sudden, the Leviathan jumped out of the water and landed on the worms. The subjects slithered back underground, and the Worm Queen went flying into the water. The dragons were shocked, but thanked the Leviathan and flew back to their den.

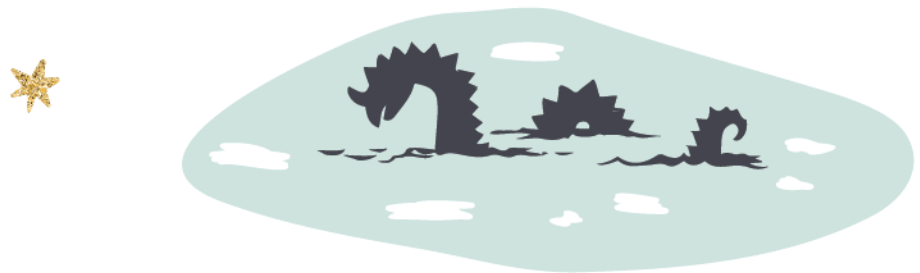
## **EPILOGUE**

The giant Leviathan made its way back into the water. Once it got in, it realized something was off. There were no fish in sight. Then, out of nowhere, a giant fish swam up to the Leviathan and said, “It is I, the Worm — I mean FISH Queen!”

The Leviathan was curious, but swam away.

“Wait, aren’t you afraid?”

**The end.**





# A Beautiful Mistake

by Karma K., Age 11

My name is Maggie, and I am a big red maple tree in the center of Central Park in New York. I am as happy as I can be. I have a beautiful home and view. From my spot, I can see the Empire State building and the Central Park Zoo. Most of all, I love seeing all the people stop and stare at me. People come from all around to see Central Park and when they walk up to me, they always stop and stare. When they walk by they say, “Ooh, look at that giant red maple tree. It’s beautiful!” Those words make me feel great, like I am more special than all of the other trees.

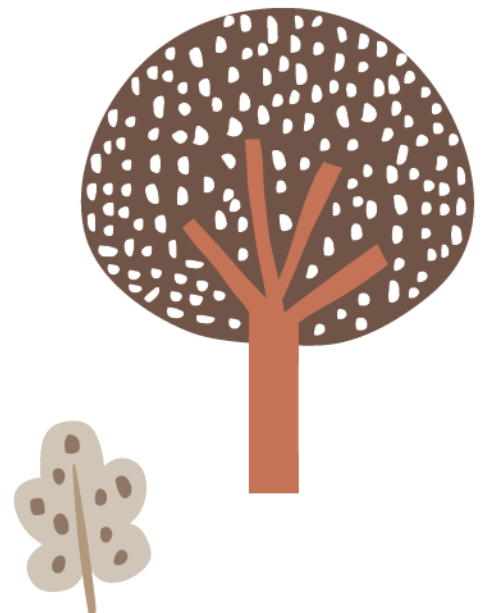
I have no flaws, my leaves are perfectly shaped, my stems aren’t too long nor too short. Best of all, my bark is perfect: no scratches or holes. That’s what every tree wants. It’s the same feeling as achieving your life-long goal.

One day, I see a big storm heading my way. That storm has been on the city’s radar for a while. It is big; bigger than me. I can see houses collapsing and landlines snapping. I can hear all the terrifying sounds, whisshhhh, woooooop, and rumble, but the most terrifying sound is a particularly loud CRACK! This sound changes my perspective on everything for the rest of my life. That CRACK is the sound of almost half of my bark tearing off. I panic. What will people think when they walk up to a big, ratty, and worn-down tree in the middle of Central Park? Will they chop me down? Will they move in one of those snot-nosed Norway maples in my place? This thought made my branches ache. I didn’t know at the time, but all those problems will change.

A couple hours later, when the storm dies down, a nice opossum family crawls over to me and asks, “Would you mind if we stayed tonight in that hole you have there? We are so tired of playing dead and running from the storm.”

Well, I have never heard of such a thing. Who would want to stay in this embarrassing hole? But the baby opossum is so cute that I can’t refuse.

Soon, round two of the storm comes. It is mostly wind, but still the wind is rough. It rips off another section of my bark, but it doesn’t bother me as much because I have a distraction: the opossum family.



I have to admit, I am beginning to feel very fond of the family. The mother's name is Mildred, the father's name is Alfred, the oldest child's name is Emma, the middle child's name is Charlotte, and the cute youngest child's name is Lolly. We play "I Spy" and "What That Human's Doing," all fun games. In the middle of playing "I Spy" comes a strong wind, and it knocks Lolly straight out of the hole and into the bike path. Lolly's parents, thankfully, pull Lolly back into the hole. Lolly's leg is bleeding pretty bad, so I give Alfred a leaf to wrap around it. Emma then asks, "What happened out there?"



Lolly replies, "I snagged my leg on a rock." I feel bad for Lolly, so I offer my hole for as long as the family needs it.

Other animals saw this friendly act of mine and word spread. Now, I'm sheltering animals in need from all over Central Park. When the storm ends, I have over 70 animals living in my holes. I have rats, birds, raccoons, owls, squirrels, and many more. Even though I feel great, and I felt like a leader and helper for all animals, I unfortunately still haven't completely forgotten about what people might think about my looks. I don't have to worry long because it is almost morning and people will be coming to the park.

I am absolutely terrified when the first group of people come. It is a big group, with babies, adults, and lots of children. My worst nightmare has come true. They hated me!

"That storm did a job on that red maple," a big man with a blue shirt said.

"Why does Central Park have a big, ratty, old tree in the center of it?" a woman with glasses asks.

"That's the ugliest thing I've ever seen. If I were those animals, I'd move out!" another lady said with a laugh.

Then, the greatest thing happens. A small boy from the back of the crowd shouts, "Well, I think the tree is beautiful for sheltering all those animals from the terrible storm. Think about it. Be truthful. Would you let all those animals stay in your home? No, you wouldn't. Someone has to help out these animals! Beautiful doesn't always refer to looks!"

"Now that you say something, I was thinking the same thing. I think this tree is a beautiful example of how nature helps each other," a tall and skinny old man said. "I just didn't want to speak out, so thank you."

"Yeah, I mean, I wouldn't have helped that many of my own friends. I agree with that kid!" said a young lady with red hair.



Everyone joins in. Even the people who thought I was ugly to begin with now believe that I'm beautiful.

### Three Weeks Later

All my silly worries never came true, and the people love me even more now! They adore me. There have been news trucks in front of me and reporters dressed up talking about me. I even heard that one couple came all the way from California just to see me. I might be famous! Now, life is great. I will never let another small flaw bring me down because other perspectives could see it another way. From now on, I will forever remember that "beautiful" doesn't always refer to looks.

**The end.**







# Amber's Tunnels

an excerpt from a story by Samuel R., Age 13

Amber was pale. The voice...her voice... It had insisted that she must go into the tunnels that had just spoken to her. What was she supposed to do now that the tunnels had said they had Jake? Was Jake lost in the tunnels? She didn't know. Amber right then made a decision. "Maybe I hate the twins, but I don't want one of them to die." Hand shaking, she lifted the cover and lowered her feet into the steel shaft.

As soon as she closed the cover, it occurred to her panicked mind to get a flashlight. She reached up to the cover, but it wouldn't budge. Amber was trapped in her own nightmare in pitch black.

As her eyes adjusted to the dark, she got her thumping heart under control. Amber looked down the dark shaft. There were rungs going down into the eternal darkness. She was crouched on the top rung looking down, her back pressed to the metal cover. Swallowing her fear, Amber climbed down the shaft. The first thing Amber sensed was the smell, a rotting kind of smell. As she climbed to the bottom, she felt a thud as her feet connected with the floor; an eerie bong echoed through the ancient walls. A moment later, Amber thought she heard something, but dismissed it to avoid her growing fear.

Amber was in a passage intersection; she was surprised at the almost sewer-like size of the tunnel. Not knowing what else to do, she set off in a random direction. The bong bong bong of her feet on the metal floor reverberated through the tunnels. She thought that she sometimes heard similar bongs in far-off passages, but no matter how she hurried they never got closer. This continued for Amber knew not how long until she came to a door, which now that she thought about it was probably very far from her house. She stopped walking and so did the far-off foot steps. Her fear quickly ramping up again, she reached for the knob, but before she could open the door, it flew open.

"Welcome," said her own voice.

Amber was shocked to see her own mouth moving, not out of her own power. The room was dingy. There was a seat with someone in it. Amber, who was now panicking as her legs carried her towards the person, tried to break free from the unseeable power but couldn't. She stopped right in front of the person.





Amber stuttered out, “Who are you?”

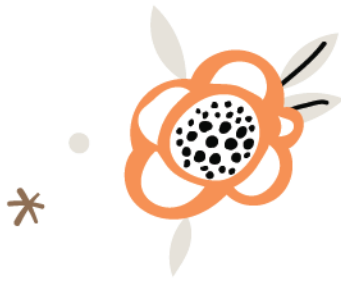
The figure lifted her head to reveal glowing eyes. “Why, I’m you of course” said the figure.

Amber was sucked towards the look-alike, then there was a blinding flash. Amber woke up with a start. She had fallen asleep with her face in her book. There was drool on the book. Blearily she walked downstairs for dinner. She sat down, her face pointed down at the tofu. Then Amber heard her mother ask, “Jack, where’s Jake?”



**To be continued ...**





# Ours Alone

by Aionna H., Age 15

It was not Seth's idea to do an interview a week after getting engaged. It's his public relation agent's idea. He hired her, on Noah's recommendation, a couple of years ago, to help him connect better with people. He's not the best at that, and wants everyone to know he's here to help. He doesn't want his blunt remarks to put them off of that fact. It's worked out okay.

When Seth let her know he got engaged, she insisted he go out and do this. So it's fine. He's here. He's ready to do this. He's waiting to go live, and not sure which camera to look in, but that's also okay. All he really cares about is wrapping this up and going home to Ava, his fiancé. It feels good just to think about it. He sends a quick text from under the table while he's waiting.

Make Zaru Soba, please?

No, not a third time in a week.

Not even for your future husband?

He likes to try his luck sometimes. Maybe this can be new leverage. Anything for soba.

[Image attached.]

It's a picture of their cat, Ava holding up his face to the screen.

He says to go away.

Don't bring our child into this.

"Seth, we're about to go live soon." A man behind the camera waves for his attention.

"I am ready," he confirms. Then he hears a countdown, and watches his interviewer straighten her skirt and adjust her earrings.



He thinks he remembers the name of this show, too. Morning at 7. It's all been kind of a blur though recently; he just got into a car and went to the studio he was told to go to. Since before the engagement, with all his nerves, and now, after, all his brain has room for is Ava, Ava, Ava.

He has a one-track mind. What about it?

Most of the initial questions she asks are to warm him up, and he gets asked, politely enough, about the incidents that happened in the past week that he was working. He knows, though, that this is not what the interview is really about.

"Now, to the big news—congratulations to you, Seth, for your engagement," the interviewer smiles warmly. Seth wonders idly if it's a requirement of their job to have such white teeth.

"Thanks," he nods.

"Women and men across the country were devastated, of course, when they heard." She shakes her head sadly, expecting him to understand what she means. When, of course, he does not, at all.

Were they? He wonders. Nobody knew, other than him and Ava, for several hours afterward. He also isn't really sure why him being engaged is a cause of devastation. It could have to do with him no longer being available. He can't think of anything else.

Devastated. Hm. To be continued ...

**The end.**





**Thank you!**

Education.com would like to thank  
all of the writers who contributed  
their work to this contest.

Please don't ever stop writing!

