

“If I’m not for myself,  
who will be for me? If  
I’m only for myself,  
what am I? And if not  
now, then when?”  
– Pirkei Avot



## Creative Writing Chapbook

Session One  
2019

*Notes from the Editor*

This summer, 6 Points Creative Arts Academy added a creative writing major comprised of passionate wordsmiths from both Bonim and Olim. These majors constructed narrative works, exploring dialogue, exposition, and scene, before crafting their final pieces all of which centered around the theme of the summer, which comes from Pirkei Avot: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, then when?” In a minor titled: Adapting Stories, campers from a variety of majors came together to read, write, and create fractured fairy tales and Torah stories. Some of those stories are included in this chapbook.

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Hello, I am the Omniscient Narrator of this tale, and here's how the following story of epicness connects to this camp session's theme. Moe represents a possible answer to the first question, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" Moe is decidedly not selfish and, if he is ever in dire need, the people he has helped throughout his life will return to help him. The same goes for Gabriela, Leo, and *possibly* Lucifer. Meanwhile, Rembrandt is an answer to the second question, "If I am only for myself, who am I?" He is selfish and cruel, and when he is in dire need, nobody will help him. Well, now that I've spoiled the main plot, go on and enter the amazing world of:

### **The Narrators of Life by Benjamin B. Age: 14**

Leonardo Landis' eyes darted around the room. There was a chair in front of him, at the opposite end of the table. It was empty, but it reeked of sincerity and compassion. It was not magical in the slightest, but the person who usually sat in it was... in a very non-literal sense, obviously. Of course, Agent Pointer had been sent out to go get the team some pizza. Personally, I prefer salad, but hey! What do I know? Oh, right: EVERYTHING, since I'm an Omniscient Narrator.

A second chair, on his left, was being sat on by his beautiful adoptive daughter, Gabriela Gonzalez. Back in his late thirties, Leo had stumbled upon a small(ish) capsule, a treasure trove of advanced technology. And inside that capsule was the best thing to ever happen to him. (Gabriela, in case you hadn't figured it out). Also, she had blue skin, which was always cool.

The third chair, the one on his right, was being occupied by Lucifer Worthington.

What? It's kind of self-explanatory, considering he was a mysterious figure with a dark and troubled past, and he knew way more than he let on. Plus, he had a black leather jacket, which meant he was definitely not to be trusted.

"Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Great. See ya." Lucifer hung up and turned back to his co-workers. "Sorry, what were you saying, Leo?"

The elder statesman cleared his throat. "As I was saying, HURT has the Orb of Avulason, a powerful MacGuffin crafted by a dark wizard who ensla- I'm sorry, *what* is it, Lucifer?"

"Oh, it's nothing. It's just... Why are you saying stuff we all already know?" It's not like you can live for millennia without noticing a

few things, and Lucifer had lived for billennia – Is that a thing? – so he noticed quite a bit.

Leo smiled. He had no reasonable answer. "Well, it's because... Um..."

Gabriela leaped to the rescue. Metaphorically, of course. It's pretty hard to leap when you're wearing a nice suit. "Well, this is all just in case one of us was compromised by a shape-shifter or a clone or a robo-duplicate or something." She caught her breath. Lucifer was giving her a weird look now. Or, at least she thought he was. You could never really tell what was on Lucifer Worthington's mind at any given moment, mostly because he didn't have eyes. Or a nose. Or a mouth. Well, they were there, but you couldn't quite see them; it was weird.

Wow, I really went off on a tangent there. Hah. Anyway!

Perhaps I should give some backstory on what exactly the Orb of Avulason, this super-powerful artifact of supremely-powerfulness, was. From what circumstantial evidence I have managed to scrounge up during my time as Omniscient Narrator, the Orb was crafted by Avulason, a dark wizard if there ever was one. Many who remember him drop into comas at the mere implication of his return, and even the mighty Eternians, personages so dangerous that even I could be executed for just confirming their existence, have tried in vain to erase all knowledge of him from the universe. But still, the myth of Avulason persists.

Now, I could go into detail about his tragic backstory, his constant doubts about the morality of his actions, and how he enjoyed musical theater and foosball. But I won't. Why? Because there *was* no tragic backstory, no constant doubts, no shred of goodness in him – though he did enjoy musical theater and foosball. Avulason was never a good person. He just disguised himself really well.

Wow, obvious foreshadowing! I really *am* an Omniscient Narrator!

Back to the briefing room. Moe had arrived by now, as he was always the one the other three sent out to get pizza. He was so nice and charming that the restaurant charged him half price, since his smile was infectious, his interest in what was going on with you genuine, and his motives sincere. I was fighting him in the middle of the Battle of Tragederia (which technically hasn't happened for *this* him yet) and halfway through he asked me where I purchased my magnificent blazer. He really is such a nice guy!

Moe sat down in the chair and began to look around. "Wow the base got a nice upgrade. So, who's got the Orb now? Some half-crazed

loon with half a battalion behind them?”

Leo gave him one of those penetrating stares. The ones that make you feel immensely guilty for something you haven't even come up with yet. “Rembrandt has it.”

Oh, yeah. Rembrandt. Cool dude. Held a Passover Seder each year, had pretty good taste in music, once brutally murdered the entire team (don't worry, they got better). Moe had given him a second chance a while back when the guy helped them catch a Gforgon – don't ask, it's *not* a typo - but old habits die very hard.

Gabriela's expression hardened. “Not *that* buffoon.”

“I'm afraid so.” Leo was cool, reserved, even peaceful if you didn't know him well enough, but the other three could almost smell his simmering rage at “that buffoon”. The two of them had...history. Which I won't go into yet because I've used up my daily exposition allotment.

They began to lay out a plan. Now, I can't reveal it now, since I do want to maintain an element of surprise, but the planning bit ended with Lucifer half-jokingly saying that, “Same time tomorrow, Rembrandt will be in a cell at Fairview Facility and the warden will swallow the key.”

This, of course, was not true. At Fairview Facility, the warden threw you in a cell, ground the key into a nice thin paste, placed it in a nice cheese soup at a fancy restaurant, watched as the people eating out of the soup nearly choked, and cackled maniacally all the way through.

So yes, Fairview Facility was a terrible place to be in, and the warden was an even more terrible individual. But on the other hand, you had to admire their style.

Back on track. They laid out a plan, suited up, and went out to defeat Rembrandt, who was holed up in the most wretched hive of scum and villainy he could find: Lucifer's house.

Now I *could* describe the sheer awesomeness of how our heroes mopped the floor with this jerk and his goons, washed their hands to clean off the dirt, and ate shawarma but forgot about the bill.

No, they did all that a bit later. But not at this point.

With the Orb of Avulason in his hands, Rembrandt single-handedly defeated them all, shouting terrible one-liners like “I'm going to assist you... to the afterlife!” and “Puny humans! Wait, I'm a human...” Honestly, it was brutal, but as my girlfriend put it, “The gore made it immensely entertaining. Besides, they all made it out OK by the end.”

Leo was struggling to get up. With his body trapped under heaps of rubble, he had little to no chance of getting out by himself. And nobody was coming - especially with the others unconscious around him

– and even if help was coming, it wouldn't arrive fast enough. Rembrandt was monologuing all this to him, but Leo wasn't listening. He was thinking about Gabriela. His beautiful daughter. He hoped she would be OK.

And then Rembrandt, for really no particular reason at all, tore the poor weeping man out of the rubble, fractured his spine, and left Leo on the floor, silent as the night.

Yeah, maybe my girlfriend was lying a bit when she said they all got out OK.

NEXT TIME ON “THE NARRATORS OF LIFE”:

Immensely painful surgery!

An unexpected kiss!

Shocking backstories!

The Gforgon Invasion of Earth!

And we finally meet the true heroes of this saga! You really thought these *fools* were our protagonists? Ha! They're just the mentor figures of our **actual** main characters... FOUR TEENAGERS (WITH ATTITUDE)! Good night, everybody!

This story connects to the theme of “If I am not for myself, who will be for me?” because Jessie only cares about others... and therefore does not take care of herself.

### Wongarts by Becca N. age: 9

There was once this girl who never cared for herself. She always gives anyone, anything, without question. She’s ten years old, her name is Jessie, and she goes to Wongarts Elementary school. Her eyes shine as bright as an emerald in the light. She is tall and has long dark brown hair that reaches her thigh.

One morning at school she hears that a new person was transferring to her school. *What does she look like? Is she nice? Is she like me?* Jessie thought.

While she was walking to her first class she noticed a new face. *That must be the new kid,* Jessie told herself.

She forged a “hey!” out of herself.

“Hey!” the new girl said back. No one ever talked to her that way. They always said, “Can you get me a piece of gum,” or “Go away!” This made Jessie feel sad and angry about who she was. Sometimes Jessie didn’t want to give or do those things. Like, when she gave away her last piece of gum that she had been saving for herself. And sometimes she’s listening to a really cool riddle, when someone says, “We don’t want you here!” But now, this might just be the beginning of a new friendship. Well, maybe her first friendship. Jessie now hopped to her first class!

The new girl wasn’t in this class, but she did have an exceptional time there. Only one person asked her a question; “can you get me a pink bouncing ball?” they said. The only pink bouncing ball she had was the one her grandma got her for her tenth birthday. She really didn’t want to give it away. Otherwise she had a really fun time learning about the first person to reach the moon.

In her next class, the new girl was there. Jessie didn’t know what to say. Her stomach was tingling like butterflies were rushing through her stomach. She wanted to speak but no words came out. This might be her only chance of making a friend and she didn’t want to blow it. She stumbled to her seat and sat down quietly while trying to think of what to say to the new girl. Maybe, “Hey, my name is Jessie, what’s your name?” Or, “Nice to meet you. I really like your eyes.” Well that one sounded dorky. That’s a no-no. She finally came to a conclusion of what to say

right before the class ended. In the halls her legs were shaking crazily, but she finally made it to the new girl. The words came out of her mouth slowly and weirdly.

“Hey. It’s really nice to meet you. My name’s Jessie.”

“My name is Carly,” the girl responded. Jessie felt her heart getting faster and faster. She was finally having positive interactions with a person. She actually might be friends with Carly.

“Do you want to come over to my house today? We can make Sundays,” Jessie said in an excited voice.

“Um, sure. Could we also go to the park?” Carly responded.

For the rest of the day, Jessie practically skipped through it. She was so excited for her playdate she blocked everything out, like no-sound headphones.

When the day eventually came to an end Jessie walked (although she felt like she was hopping) over to Carly and said, “My house is this way. Do you want to race?”

“Sure, I’m gonna beat you!” Carly said, getting ready.

“No you won’t!” she responded. People started to look around. Nobody ever saw Jessie having a friend. Jessie ran as fast as she could home but Carly beat her. She didn’t even know the way. When they got to Jessie’s house they made sundaes. At the end the sundaes looked like the water-fountains with sprinkles and gummy bears dripping down the side.

Jessie needed to get something for people so she started to go upstairs when Carly called out, “Why’re you going upstairs?”

“I need to grab some things for school,” Jessie responded.

“What things?” Carly asked.

“Some people asked me at school to get them my pink bouncy ball,” Jessie said.

“Okay. Well, can I come upstairs with you?” Carly questioned.

They went up to Jessie’s light purple room with shining stars up above. Jessie grabbed her last remaining bouncy ball.

Suddenly Carly asked, “It doesn’t look like you have any bouncy balls around here. Why are you giving one of your last ones to someone?”

“Because they asked me to, and I can’t say no,” Jessie responded.

“Well, I think you should say no. Anyways, let’s go to the park,” Carly said.

When they got back from the park, it was time for Carly to leave. Jessie had the best time of her life on this playdate.

At school the next day, Jessie was having a pretty good day. People still asked her for things that she didn't want to give, but now since she had a real friend she was fine.

When she was walking to her first class, Carly came up to her and hesitated a bit but said, "I have something that I want from you..."

Uh oh. Was she turning into one of them?

"I want you to care more about yourself," Carly finished.

"No," Jessie responded.

"Why?" Carly asked. Jessie didn't know what to say...

Jessie had finally learned her lesson. She did care for others, but more than that, she knew that it was okay to say "no" to others and to care for herself too.

The End

For me, the theme of this summer is all about standing up for yourself and others. "The Death Dance" is about a female who idolizes these people, the Guard, and gets a chance to meet them. At first when she is around them she is very shy but as time goes on, she becomes more confident in herself and speaks her desire of wanting to join them, who protect the universe and also each other. In the end, Katrina feels as if she truly belongs somewhere, relating to this summer's them "if not now, then when?"

### **The Death Dance by Naomi J. age 14**

As I walked into the grove, I surveyed my surroundings. With trees around it, this was the perfect place. Looking at the trees, I picked one with large branches stemming out from it and climbed up it. From my place on a large thick branch, I could see the whole of the grove, from the tall grasses to my left, the small pond to my right, the early morning sun reflecting on the water, and the short grasses that made up the rest of the area.

I waited and waited for several hours until the first one appeared. From my vantage point I couldn't see her features but I could see that she carried many weapons. She appeared out of a shining purple portal that I would see from far away.

Soon more people arrived, totaling six. I watched them, almost stalker-like, yearning to be like them, for they were the Guard a group of super-powerful females who protected the universe from immanent threats, like their leader Michaila's evil brother Jonathon and the invasion of the Lotorians. I knew this from the training cards I had stolen from a store, no one noticing the poor young girl suspiciously walking. The cards had everything that non-Guardians knew on them, from their names to their powers and where some of them were from and what species they were. They were my escape from reality and the troubles with being orphaned, as my mom and dad had died recently, killed by one of the gangs that infested the city of Ness on the planet Loch, where I live. Loch is one planet out of millions, maybe even billions, but it had the highest percentage of lower class people, totaling 98% of the population with the other 2% being the rich upper class with no middle class. You were either rich or poor on Loch, with nowhere in between. It was a problem, but not one that anyone dared or tried to fix, least of all King Alexander VII, ruler of Loch, who is a cruel tyrant, favoring only a select few.

As the Guard started training, I watched them. They moved

together, arms and legs flailing about in cool, crisp movements, as if in a dance. This dance was with swords, one in each of their hands, the blades gleaming beautifully; if beauty was deadly and death defying. When one was knocked down, they were helped up by the other, the other Guard members not moving a muscle.

On and on they danced, until the once high sun was slipping beneath the horizon and painted the sky an assortment of colors, from blue to orange and every color in between. Very rarely they paused, if only to take sips of a drink. Sometimes others joined them, fighting their own battles, moving like water.

I was entranced by them, with their sharp movements as fluid as water. I knew that they knew that they were being watched, as I had a burned a tree branch earlier and it collided with the ground in a loud boom, but they continued practicing anyway, never stopping from their death dance.

Eventually they came to a screeching halt, once the sun had fully set. They walked over towards me and one of them spoke, "We know you're up there. You can come out. We don't bite."

As soon as she said that, I could hear someone snapping their teeth, the sound hard and rhythmic. Their leader said something imperceptible to my hearing. Whatever she said must have worked as another person said, "It's okay. We won't hurt you. Promise."

"You promise?" I asked meekly.

"Promise," the same person replied.

In the dark of night it was hard to see their faces, but she sounded genuine. Maybe they would talk to me for a little bit and then kill me for intruding in on their practice, I had thought to myself. Hopefully not though, as with Mom and Dad dead Noah and Kara needed me more than ever, but I couldn't pass up on a chance to talk to the Guard, so I climbed down from my spot in my tree. When I got closer to them I could see that they were wearing loose comfortable looking clothes with dark clothes so that they blended in with the night.

"What's your name?" one of them asked.

"I'm...I'm...I'm Katrina. Katrina Berik," I said. I looked down at my feet, moving them as I felt awkward. Here was the Guard wearing some of the nicest clothes and there I was wearing little more than rags in my ratty white t-shirt and holey jeans.

The next thing I know I was staring into someone's eyes, the deep majestic looking red and saw how all knowing they were, as if she had seen the worst humanity had to offer and gotten through it. The other

Guard members had come up beside her, coming up close enough that I could feel their powers.

"What do you want with me?" I asked.

The females do not seem surprised at my question and the one with red eyes answers, "We're immortal. We need entertainment to spice up our lives."

She spoke this as if they didn't fight criminals and find justice for all as part of their jobs. With what she said, my mouth hung open and I started, paralyzed. With each passing second they looked more and more worried. The one who had spoken earlier, not the one with red eyes, walked up to me and snapped her fingers awakening me from my stupor.

"Yes?" I asked, not knowing what to say.

"Your mouth hung open wide enough that the entire planet of Loch could fit in it," she said.

"Oh. It's just...just...that I'm kind of in awe of you guys. You're my heroes."

"That's good to know," she smiled, the corners of her mouth twitching upwards. "I'm Cassie."

There was a silence after that before I blurted out, "I know. I know all your names. You're Isabella, Artemis, Scarlet, Michaila, Cassie, and Alberta. I also know all of your powers, but it's a lot to say so I want to say it, but I know them. I also know where some of you were born and spent some of your childhood."

The six of them looked taken aback, their mouths open, which I could see, as Cassie had created fires around us. I could now see the dark blue of Artemis' hair, the emerald green eyes of Cassie, along with her fiery red hair, the straw color of Bella's hair, the midnight colored skin of Alberta, the chocolate brown of Scarlet and Michaila's eyes, both the exact same shade of brown; they were siblings, the two of them, and what a powerhouse the two of them were. I could also see the purple of Michaila and that all of their hair was tightly drawn back.

Bella lumbered up to me, her hair shining gold in the firelight and said to me matter-of-factly, "Is there something wrong with you? You're staring at us."

I soon averted my gaze from them and instead focused on the night sky above them, the stars glimmering brightly.

"What's your story anyway?" Alberta asked. "Our training isn't that interesting."

"Wha...wha...what do you mean," I asked.

Alberta looked at me questioning what I said and said, "We know

your name but we don't know where you're from, if you have powers, what they are if you have them. You know, the usual."

I was a bit overwhelmed by the questions but said, "I'm a bit hesitant to share anything with you as five minutes ago I thought you were going to kill me."

"We were never going to kill you," Cassie said.

I nodded my head, despite not really believing them but said, "I'm from Loch, in the city of Ness. My parents were nobodies, killed by gangs a couple months ago. I do have powers, despite my parents not having power or my siblings." For some reason I felt myself compelled to answer them. Their power was just so great, mine felt like a candle compared to a furnace to their combined powers, though I knew I was powerful, but how I was when my parents were nobodies from a rundown planet in the middle of nowhere was as much a mystery to me as the Guard's intentions.

Soon my thoughts were interrupted by Alberta saying, "That's interesting. I wasn't aware that anyone from Loch had powers." She looked at me in the eyes while she spoke, so that I could see that she had knowledge of the subject, though I didn't know why.

At my confusion she said, "I was born on Loch, spent my first few millennia there till I reached maturity and then I moved to Xandria where Michaila is from and spent the rest of my life there until I joined the Guard." Like me it was almost as if she was being compelled to say things to me as if the Guard and I were meant to be together. It was weird. I had never felt this bond with anyone, let alone six people. It was like Lady Fate was along for the ride and rooting for us to be together.

"Yeah, all the sappy stuff is great and all, but what power do you have?" Cassie asked.

"Oh. I have fire powers," I said and lifted up my hand, now wreathed in golden flame. In answer to my hand, Bella held up a hand swathed in ice, Artemis held one up surrounded by shadows, Scarlet and Michaila held hands shipping brightly, Cassie also held up a hand wreathed in fire, and Alberta held up a hand with earth all around it. For the first time in forever, I felt as if I truly belonged somewhere.

The End

This is only the first chapter of the story. The rest of it will be Katrina being accepted as a novice in the Guard and training with them. It will take place over the course of many decades, and will focus on many

relationships with Katrina and the Guard, mostly about the relationship between Alberta and Katrina who will start a romantic relationship and Michaila will act like a new mother/cool aunt figure to Katrina. The "big bad" will be somewhat of a minor character in the story who will be Michaila's brother, briefly mentioned in "The Death Dance". He will try and turn Katrina to the dark side, but fail horribly. The end will be Katrina being accepted into the Guard as a full-fledged member and moving her family to Xandria, where her work would now focus.



This pertains to the theme because Luna is worrying about her kittens so much she doesn't think about the consequences. Because the first line of the theme is, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?"

### **Nine Lives by Natanya D. age: 12**

She slinked around the floor. It felt nice and cool on her fur. Her fur was hot because it was ninety degree weather that she was having in Florida. Out of her slightly blurry vision she could see one of her kittens walking towards her. Instead of sleeping she made sure her kittens were sleeping. Instead of eating she made sure her kittens were eating.

Her name was Luna. Luna heard her sparkly pink collar jingle as she attempted to share the static off of her back. When she was adopted her owner, Emma, called her a superstar because of the bright clothes she would dress Luna in. But now, barely able to hold on, Luna felt anything but.

Luna had nine lives. Just by taking care of her kittens she had taken up at *least* seven: sleepless nights, rarely eating, and never drinking the milk that Emma left out. However Luna never thought about the consequences of not taking care of herself. Obviously she would slowly start to perish (or go into "eternal sleep" because *that* is camp). But if she did die, her kittens would no longer be able to seek help from their mother.

It was suspiciously silent around her. Unusual...her kittens were always cold. Or sleeping. But they were about to eat dinner. She decided to go out back to see if her kittens were outside. Luna slid through the cat door. She gazed out at the large lawn. She loved how the morning dew glistened on the grass and how the sun shone on the big round pool that she never dared go into. As she continued searching she felt her left paw lose balance, followed by her right. And before Luna knew it she had been completely consumed by freezing water and was struggling for air.

About ten minutes later she felt a warm towel wrapped around her. Luna felt safe. She looked up. Emma had saved her. But instead of rosy cheeks and freckles, there were wrinkles. Instead of a toothy grin, there was a big frown plastered on her face. Instead of short, messy, brown hair, her hair was gray and stiff except for a few strands blowing in the wind. Luna was scared, where had the time gone? But more importantly, where had Emma gone? Luna moved her head to the ground motioning for Emma to put her down. Luna was lowered to the ground. She looked around. The house was still, including her kittens. She checked their bowls. They had

eaten their food. She checked their beds. They were asleep. Luna had spent so much time worried about her kittens that she had neglected herself. She thought that if she lost her kittens she would lose everything.

But here they are.

They are safe.

And thanks to Emma, so is Luna.

The End

This story connects to the theme because she only cares about others like in, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" Also at the end she gives others her stuff.

### **Time by Rebecca B. age: 10**

Hello, my story starts here on the streets of New York City.

"BoBo, I don't know what we're gonna do. We haven't eaten in days. I know BoBo, I shouldn't give my money to other people, I should save it. Well, goodnight BoBo."

The next morning:

"Good morning BoBo, I'm going to take a walk. See you later BoBo-gater, oh ya! You're a cat. La too de La too de la...whoa! What just happened? Wait, what's happening? Aaaaaahhh!"

As soon as I refresh my mind I wake up in a tunnel.

I say, "What just happened?" Then I stood up, brushed some dirt off my overalls, then I noticed something in my hair. I grabbed some of it, it was sparkly turquoise dust.

I say, "What the what?" Then I notice a deck of cards and a coin purse filled with an Alice in Wonderland charm bracelet, pearls, jewels, gems, and pearls.

I say again, "What the what?" Then I look around for my surroundings. I see a case that looks kind of like a coffin but wasn't. It was like the case from Snow White's tale but it smelled like ash! Then I realized my ballet shoe was untied so I tied the beautiful red shoes from the nutcracker. Then I looked around again.

This time I saw a bed. The bed looked like this: it was a canopy bed and the curtains were purple blue with silver and gold outlines and waves. Then I realized what does this all have in common so I looked around again, then I noticed a clock. The clock looked weird. It was cedar but the hands did not move so I grabbed one and it moved. I screamed.

Then the dust on my head started moving and swirling around, the dust was moving so fast it looked like swirls from the mixing of cake batter. Then it went through my head, then I fell asleep!

When I woke up I was in a big ball that was made of sapphire and gold, it was moving so fast!

Then I noticed my clothes, they changed, they looked like this: it was a dress made of silk, and there was a feather skirt that went down to my ankle. Also under the skirt there were boots that went up to my thigh made of different colored scales. Also a rope belt with hanging potions.

Going up higher, my sleeves were long and had blue and red waves going up about an inch, then the rest of the dress was gold. Oh ya, the skirt feathers were white. Then came a hoodie, oh and the collar went up about two inches then went down in a V shape. Oh and the hoodie was gold and I had a piece of rope going around my head that had an ace card connected to it and an emerald that was round.

Also, my hair style changed to this: it was cut short and it looked like it was cut by a flaming rock. My bangs were around across my eyes and down the other way.

Then, the crystal started shaking. Then it started to fall. Then it crashed!

I climbed out of the broken crystal and looked around. I was on a cliff top. When I looked down I saw a village made of clay. Around that, the trees were oak. Then I realized where am I? So I started to go back to my history, then I said, "I'm in Texas! During the Pueblos time, whoa! Did I just time travel?! This is amazing! Wait, how do I get back?" So I examined the crystal.

I said, "There's a note on here. It says take care of yourself and you may go home. Okay, I can do that! All I need to do is take care of myself. But first I want to see the village. Oh, but my clothes. I'll just borrow someone's."

Down in the village I grabbed someone's clothes. Also I changed into them and placed the other clothes in the crystal. Then a girl my age walked up to me and somehow we could speak the same language.

She said, "Hi do you want to be friends?"

I said, "Sure."

After that I ran through the village and I went to the river and grabbed some clay. Also I made a pot. Then a person asked for the pot so of course I gave it to them. After they left I realized I can't give them anything or I can't get home. So I thought, how am I gonna eat?

I can hunt, I bet there's rabbit. So I grabbed some flint and a stick and put them together and I found a rabbit grazing and threw the arrow at it and it fell. Then I made a fire and cooked the rabbit.

When I was about to eat someone asked for the rabbit and I said, "No."

Then suddenly the crystal started to fix.

The next day the little girl appeared but this time she was with her parents.

"You hurt my daughter I hurt you."

So I started walking backwards then I noticed the cliff so I

jumped and grabbed a tree branch. Just then I realized it's good to help yourself.

The End...for now

What's gonna happen next...well she'll get up off the cliff with the girl's help and it turns out she lied to her parents. Also they turn out to time travel together.

As a writer I am told to write what I know. While my story simply pulled inspiration from my life and not specific events, this is exactly what I did. I've always been an anxious person, but as I grew older I began to struggle more and more with anxiety and depression. I wrote this with the intentions of sharing the struggles of mental health disorders and showing that no time is better than the present to get help. If not now, when?

### **Butterfly Room by Olivia S. age: 17**

My feet dug into the dirt road, leaning against my bike. *Today's the day*, I thought. While most kids learn to ride a bike at the age of five, this was not the case for me, already seventeen. However, this wasn't due to a lack of effort. Every few weeks I pull out my old bike from the shed and walk it over to the street. I swing my legs over the bike, hesitating with every muscle's movement. Scooting down the street, I balance with my feet like an uneasy toddler. Once I pick up momentum, I quickly move my feet to the pedals. But as I begin to tilt, my face feels hot, my throat burning as my breakfast makes its way up into my mouth...and another attempt failed.

My anxiety holds me back like a seat belt when it locks up after being stretched too much. But riding a bike wasn't the only thing my anxiety held me back from. I also never learned to drive, unlike every other kid who hops into the driver's seat the moment they turn sixteen. Social interactions also left me feeling like I was being chased by a pack of wolves, as my throat closed anytime I was called on in class or had to socialize with peers. Over time my constant anxiety left me feeling alone – morphing into a severe depression.

That night, after my failed attempt on the bike, I couldn't sleep. My thoughts raced all night, leaving me feeling like a shattered piece of fine china, my pieces scattered.

*Why couldn't I just be normal like everyone else?* I thought. *Ride a bike, drive a car, talk to people without melting into a puddle.*

My hands twitched with nerves jumping off of me.

*Just try to be normal, you're worthless, stop trying to be normal, you're not,* the thoughts swarming around in my head said to me.

*Why should I even live anymore if I can't function?* I thought.

But this final thought terrified me. Dragging myself out of bed, I made my way to my parent's room, my blanket wrapped around me as if the tighter I held it, the more confidence I gained.

I shook awake my sleeping dragon of a mother. She flashed open her eyes as an overly aggressive, “WHAT?” escaped her lips. She sat up at attention once she noticed my tear stained, puffy cheeks.

“Brooke, what’s wrong? Bad thoughts again?” she asked. This routine wasn’t new, it played out at least a few times a week. But this time felt different. I nodded, confirming my mother’s questions and fell into the safety net that her arms offered. We were both afraid.

Tears dripped down her face as she said, “I don’t know how to help you anymore, Brooke. I’m taking you somewhere they can.”

I knew from the cracks in her voice this hurt her as much as it hurt me, which only felt like the twist of a knife in my heart.

Less than twenty minutes later I stood in front of the infamous Butterfly Room with a small duffle bag in tow. The Butterfly Room was the psychological ward at the Children’s Hospital. I gave it that name because of the giant pastel butterflies plastered on the walls with the purpose of uplifting the mood of the sterile hallway. As we waited, I shook my mother’s hand from my shoulder when she only tried to comfort me.

“You’re leaving me,” I said without considering how this might throw her off the edge.

“I don’t want to do this, Brooke,” my mother snapped. “Do you think I enjoy trusting others with your life? I don’t want to be saying this at your funeral,” she said in between sobs.

Moments later I was left alone in the waiting room, the pastel painted butterflies glaring at me with their large antenna and flared wings mocking me as they attempted to make the situation lighter, which only made me angrier.

*This isn’t a happy place, stop trying to make it that way,* I thought.

After being shown to my bright room filled with none other but the pastel butterflies staring at me with their constant blaring positivity I sat through hours of intensive therapy, like a little lab rat. The sharp smelling office reeked of hand sanitizer so badly it hurt my nose. The rest of my time there was spent between that office and my room.

Three days later my mom picked me up. I swung my arms around her like a soldier coming home from battle. With my medication regulated and feeling in control of my thoughts for once, I left behind my pastel friends who I actually grew to like as they became a reminder of my progress and recovery.

When I arrived home I went straight to the shed, pulled out that rusted old bike, and walked it out to the street once again. Swinging my

legs over the bike, I no longer felt the heat on my face or the lumps in my throat. Pushing off the ground my feet hit the pedals at top speed as if my legs were pumping away my anxiety and depression.

Speeding down the street, I thought, *You’ve got this Brooke! You can do this thing.*

The End

This story connects to “If I am not for myself, who will be for me?” This story is about a girl who doesn’t care as much for herself as she cares for other people and she comes to realize that she must be for herself and other people. Nobody can be there for her other than herself and she can only truly help others if she is there for herself.

### Speechless by Sunny C. age: 12

I sat in my usual seat, biting my lips and feeling the tension rise between Liana and Maya. The two never really got along and I had to practically beg Liana to sit with Maya and the rest of our crew. Maya sat on one end of the table, with her clinking bracelets and expensive earrings, and Liana on the other end, wearing a ratty sweatshirt and jeans. They were just staring, aggressive, and waiting to see which would speak first.

“I’ve been thinking,” Liana muttered through gritted teeth. “I’ve had...fun...sitting with you guys. But...I don’t think it’s gonna work out. I’ll be eating somewhere else for lunch.”

I was speechless. Sure, Maya had her fair share of arguments with Liana, but this felt like it came out of nowhere.

I was about to say something when the bell rang and Liana slipped through the door. I called after her, and as I ran to catch up, anger bubbled up in my chest.

She had known how important this was to me, and she hadn’t even told me!

I stood behind her in the hallway, heaving and tossing insults her way.

Finally, I called her a coward. She froze for a moment and time froze with her. She let out a bitter laugh.

“You’re calling me a coward?” Liana said, smiling. “That’s rich! If anyone’s a coward here, Dani, that would be you. You sold your soul to that Maya kid and are too scared to do what you want. What you’re doing is hiding behind that girl in a desperate attempt to feel like you belong there!” Her voice broke then. “I guess I never was enough for you, was I?”

I was rendered speechless again as she ran off to her next class. I wanted to call after her, but what would I say? I’d known Liana since we were in diapers and she’d never left me so stumped before.

Hours later, I lay restless in bed. Usually on Friday I was exchanging sarcastic texts with Li or listening to my playlist. But my brain

was going far too fast for anything and all I could do was think.

I wasn’t hiding behind Maya. Sure, I’d done her homework a couple of times, but those were just favors. The worse part was that every time I wrote off my behaviors, there was still a small nagging voice in the back of my head that told me I was wrong. Deep down, I knew it. I knew Li was right. I just didn’t know what to do about it.

I woke to a buzzing in my ears. I thought I was just going deaf and then I realized that it was my phone. I lunged for it, hoping that it was Liana.

“Hey Dani! It’s Maya.”

I blinked through my confusion and asked what was going on. “H-hey. I didn’t get much sleep last-”

“So, I have this project due on Monday, and I totally forgot about it. Could you start it for me?”

I stayed silent for a moment.

“Dani? Hellooooo?” Her voice went cold and her tone shifted.

“You’re not hanging out with that Lana kid, right?”

“It’s Liana. And no, I haven’t-”

“Thank God! She was such a bore! Plus, I know she knows dirt on Sophia’s crush, but she just wouldn’t spill! Anyway, you’re gonna help me out with my project right?”

Silence.

“No,” I said quietly.

“Excuse me?”

“Finish your own project.”

Maya’s voice turned to ice. “I don’t think you-”

I tapped the red hang up button the screen and fell back on my bed. I felt...better. I closed my eyes and sighed. I needed to rest. After all, I had a lot of apologizing to do.

The End

My story connects to the theme of, “If I am only for myself, who am I?” because Marissa didn’t really have a full personality until she cared about more than just herself.

### Beaut-evil by Hanna P. age: 12

I am evil. That’s what they tell me. That I’m despicable. That I’m disgustingly cruel. I prefer to call myself *self-absorbed*. It sounds less like I’m a witch and more like *me*. And it’s true. I love to absorb my gorgeousness. I soak it up and drench myself in it like a sponge. I am perfect. I don’t need anyone else. I live alone in a mansion. I really only stay in one room. The mirror room. I primp and plush and admire twenty-four-seven. I only leave for sleep and meals. See, I’m not evil am I? What do you think?

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My head aches. RING! BING! RI-SLAP! My alarm clock is the most annoying thing. I groan, pull myself out of bed, and slump downstairs to get breakfast. Then, like normal, I go back upstairs to the mirror room. Just as I find a particularly beautiful pose to admire myself in, I hear a high-pitched feminine voice. I *NEVER* ever hear voices.

The voice calls out, “Hello? Witch? I’m not afraid of you and I’m here to talk to you!”

The girl’s cry reminds me of a long time ago, long before witches and beauty and vanity...

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I was a cute, smart little seven year old when my life was turned upside down. Before, I had had loving parents. Before I wasn’t vain. Before, I went to school. Then, it all changed. One morning, I had woken up and felt different. Instead of smelling cooking bacon, I smelled ash. Instead of my mother’s lingering scent of lavender and honey, there was only my bland scent of peppermint deodorant. Smoke filled my lungs and made me cough. Worst of all, though, I had a feeling that something had gone terribly wrong. My limbs felt heavy instead of light, and my eyeballs felt liquid brimming up next to them. I climbed out of bed and opened my bedroom door to find my worst nightmare greeting me.

My house was almost gone. Instead, ash surrounded me, not the protective walls of home. Where my parent’s bedroom should’ve been, there was nothing. I knew what that meant. I knelt down, covering myself with ash and surrounding myself with smoke. In that moment, I vowed to only care for myself to make up for what my parents would’ve provided in the future. I had been broken, but I made sure that I got back up.

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Suddenly I’m awakened from my trance by footsteps. The girl’s I presume. I don’t know what to do. Before I can make up my mind, the girl walks into the room, looking scared but determined. She doesn’t see me, and stares at the room in wonder. No wall is actually shown in that room. They’re all covered up by thousands upon thousands of mirrors. In the center is a huge golden plush throne, which I sit upon now. It’s turned away from the stranger.

I decide to take a chance and say, “it’s lovely isn’t it”

The girl jumps. “A-a-are you in here?” she asks.

“Yes, my dearie, I am! Now I bet you are wondering where I am and what I look like, right dearie?”

“Y-y-yeah!” she shakily replies.

I turn my chair around to reveal myself to her.

“Witch,” she says, more confident. “My name is Emma. I am here to talk to you, as I said before, I need you to be willing to talk to me.”

“First of all, my names not *Witch*. I have a name and it’s Marissa. Second of all, if it’ll get you to leave, yes I’m willing to talk to you. I want to get back to looking at myself. Oh, and also, when we talk, I reserve the right to plead the fifth,” I state.

“Oh, sorry. I’ve always thought of you and heard of you as a witch. But you don’t even look like one. You look normal.”

*Normal?* I am appalled.

I shoot back, “Normal?!?! No. I’m the most beautiful person alive!”

She starts to quiver and says, “Sorry. So onto the talk. First question: What brought you to become an apparently self-obsessed introvert?”

Emma’s words insult me. At least I think they do. To the shell that I’ve put around myself that is the only thing I let show these days, I am insulted. But to me, the real me, and the old me – no, I’ve got to suppress that. Yes, her words insulted me.

“I plead the fifth. I won’t answer that,” I firmly say.

“Oh, come on! Please? It’s the most important question! Please?!?!?” she pleads.

“No,” I repeat.

“Fine. We’ll come back to that one. Next question: it’s told that this mansion burned down fifteen years ago. And that you rebuilt it. How did you do it and are these rumors true?” she asks. My thought of an answer brings me back in time...

-26-

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It was a little after the destruction of my home. I had gone to stay with one of my friends until the authorities could find a home for me. One day I was told that my parents will said that I could live alone once they died. I didn't know what to think. I was happy, but at the same time nervous. Hearing this news, the friend that I was staying with told me that their dad was a carpenter and a home renovator and they could help me build what is now my mansion. That day, we set off to the ruins of my old home. I will never forget that moment when I moved on. Over time, additions were put onto the new house. And over time, I grieved and lost touch with the friends. And over time, I became who I am now.

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I don't want to admit it. But it's true. Deep down, in the buried-under-layers-of-lies part of me, I know that it's true. I like Emma. Not like-like of course. Just like. She brings out the old me. Which part of me thinks it's a bad thing and the other thinks it's a good thing. I'm torn. But since I truly like her, I decide to answer her question truthfully. I tell Emma about the old me, the fire, my promise to myself, the building process of this mansion, and my evolution into who I am now. It all just comes pouring out. Things I've never told anyone. Things I've walled up inside of me, trying to forget the past.

"Wow," Emma says when I'm finally done. "I never knew. I'm *soooo* sorry. Wait, actually, I might've known. My cousin had the exact same thing happen to her, but once her new house was built, no one ever heard from her again. Her name was Marissa too."

My heart pumps faster. I try to ignore the curiosity and excitement bubbling up inside me, but I don't think I can. It's just so crazy!

"Emma, you don't think we're..." I start but can't finish the sentence.

"Cousins?!?" Emma finishes for me.

"Wow...oh my gosh! Wow!" I exclaim, the fake shell I've had on me for so long finally loosening its grip.

"Marissa, I know this is a lot to ask, but if you were willing to bring back that old you and destroy the you right now, you could come live with me! I can tell that you had on a mask when I first came and that it's becoming broken. I trust you, Marissa."

My heart is soaring. In this moment, I finally am becoming not the old me, but not the new me, either. I am me right here and now. And I only have to say one word.

"Yes."

\*\*\*

Much time has gone by. Now, I live with Emma. Now, I'm not vain. Now, my mansion has been destroyed. Now, I have friends. Now, I am happy. *Now* what do you think? Am I still **evil**?

Fin

My story is connected to the sentence “If not now, when?” Because Prudence thinks she can be the same forever but then she knows she can change.

### **The Art of Trying by Maya F. age: 11**

I tap my pencil on my hand. Looking for a way to escape the blandness of the classroom. I start to imagine flying above the clouds with a flock of geese-

“PRUDENCE PARWICK!” I sink down into my chair.

“Y-yes Ms. Locke?” I managed to squeak out, the words barely surviving my startled breath. “I asked you a question.” Ms. Locke inches forward to me. I watch as she wraps her boney, wrinkled fingers around the chalk.

I swallow. “May I please go to the bathroom?” I say, sliding my chair away from my desk.

“Not until you have answered this question!” Ms. Locke scowls at me. She points to the chalkboard. I look at the green sea of strange material that’s nailed to the wall. It says  $E^{\pi}+=?$ . I bite my nails and look around the classroom. Everyone’s staring at me. Ms. Locke’s arms are crossed and she is tapping her foot on the floor.

“I-I don’t know.” I lower my head toward the top of my desk. Ms. Locke sighs and walks over to her desk. She pulls out a piece of yellow paper, writes something down on it, and extends her arm to me. I get up from my chair and gingerly walk to the front of the classroom, my head hanging low in disappointment. I can feel other kids eyes following me as I walk to her desk. Without looking at her, I take the paper out of her hand and walk to the door.

I hear the class bullies whisper something to each other and snicker. I turn my head to glare at them but I stop myself before I do. I walk out the door and into the hallway and start making my way to the office.

“Stupid math. Stupid geese!,” I say, under my breath.

I soon reach my guidance counselor’s door. I take a breath and knock. I hear his footsteps coming towards the door. He opens the door and looks down at me. Stare. He sighs, and motions for me to come into his office. I walk in and bask in the familiar scent of the room. The walls are covered in a bunch of cheesy posters. They always reminded me of the posters in my basement. I sit down on the wooden stool in front of his desk. He sits down in his chair and starts tapping his fingers on the desk.

“Prudence... This is the third time you’ve been here this week!” he says with disappointment.

“I know Mr. Palmer! And I’m very sorry-”

“No, no Prudence just... tell me what happened.”

I look down at the floor. “I wasn’t paying attention again...” My voice drifts off from my mouth.

Mr. Palmer sighs. “When are you going to start learning and not getting your head stuck up in the clouds?”

I struggle to think of an answer. “I-I don’t know,” I say regretfully. “Not now.” I realize that wasn’t the right answer.

Mr. Palmer widens his eyes. “Well, if not now, then when will it be, Prudence?”

The last bell rings, startling me.

“I have to go,” I say, annoyed. I get off of the stool and walk to the door.

“Prudence?” I turn to face Mr. Palmer. “Think about it, okay?”

I turn and leave the room without a word. I stomp to my locker, angrily. Mr. Palmer’s sentence fills my mind. I grab my backpack and slam the locker shut. People turn to face me. I run to the exit door in embarrassment. I hopped on my bike and pedaled as fast as I could, all the way home. I park my bike in the garage, and go up to my room.

The floor is cluttered. Books, clothes, crumbs, papers. I throw my backpack on the floor and dive into my bed, my face down in my pillow. Mr. Palmer’s words replay in my head. “Well, if not now, then when will it be, Prudence?” I try to shake off the memory, but it won’t leave, it’s stuck like glue.

“Prudence?” my mom’s voice calls from outside my door.

“Go away!” I say with a muffled voice.

“But dinner’s here!”

“Bring it to my room, I have a ton of homework,” I lie. I hear my mom walk away from my door. I sigh and take my phone out of my pocket. I have fifteen texts from Emily.

“Hey Em.”

“Finally!”

“I heard that you got sent to Mr. Palmer again.”

“Yeah.”



“Let me guess, you were not paying attention again.”

“Yeah.”

“You’re gonna fail math!”

“A C+ is not a failing grade.”

“True, but it’s low.”

“So?”

“So, you need to try harder.”

“Look, I’m just saying you’re capable of doing more than you think.”

“GTG”

“Bye.”

I turn off my phone and think about what Emily said. I can change. Tomorrow, I’ll be a new person!

The End

### **The Ransacking – adapted from Goldilocks by Charlie R. age: 16 (Musical Theater)**

One day a girl was frolicking in the woods behind her house. After wandering for an hour, she discovered a snug cabin. Curious, she entered. The door opened to a small kitchen where she found three steaming plates of tacos. Instinctively, she grabbed one and took a bite but found it too spicy. Disgusted, she threw the plate on the floor, shattering it into a hundred pieces. She tried a different one, but found the shell stale. Gleefully, she flung it across the room like a frisbee. The next one, however, was the perfect taco. It had beef, cheese, and guac. She ate it all ravenously. Then threw the plate on the floor.

She continued her ransackery into the living room and found an array of electronics. Her face twisted and she said, “I have all of these.” But she went through them anyway. She grabbed the laptop, but it was too clunky for her. She picked up the tablet, but couldn’t log in. She then found an unlocked phone and started to play games to her heart’s desire. When she got bored, she got a drink of water, (accidentally) spilling some on to a plugged in computer. Thinking nothing of it, she went upstairs. But unbeknownst to her, the water travelled into the socket and a flame began to glow.

Upstairs, she found three cushioned chairs. She thought that it would be a good time to sit down and play some more games on the phone. She sat down, but the chair was too hard for her. The next chair was much too weak for her – it broke as soon as she shifted her weight. The final chair was perfect for her comfort and she settled in and played on the phone.

“This, officer, is where I found her. I had heard the commotion of the chair and was quite frightened. This was my first time home alone – my parents were out at the grocery store. They taught me that if I heard anything suspicious to call 911 so that’s what I did. When she heard me, she ran downstairs, past the fire she started, and out the door with my phone.”

“Well, son, you did the right thing,” the officer said. “We think we have the suspect in custody. Based on your description, she had yellow, curly hair and was around sixteen years old?”

I nodded, “Yeah.”

“Well, we’d like to just review the charges with you.”

Mom and Dad leaned over my shoulder to listen to the officer in the dimly lit room.

“Alright: breaking and entering, theft, breaking property, and arson.”

Mom and Dad nodded and leaned back in their chairs.

“Alright son, we need you to identify who you think the suspect is in the lineup. We think we know the one, but we just want to make sure, okay?” said the officer.

I nodded and we walked into a different room. I recognized her immediately. Short, golden hair, and one corner of her mouth curled into a smug smile.

When the officer asked her name, she said, “Brittany Goldilocks.”

The End

## **The Man of Iron – adapted from The Man of Iron by Jonathon N. age: 11 (Culinary and Visual Arts)**

“Once upon a time there was a King that possessed a great wood” then one day the troops that got sent to patrol the borders of the forest came back injured. One had his head cracked open. One had a deep cut in his leg and one had two black eyes and a bruise on his elbow. They said that a man made of iron did it. At first the King did not believe the young patrolling guards but as more people got hurt he had to do something about it. He got five of his best knights and warriors and sent them into the forest. They captured the iron man and trapped him in a metal cage and locked it and the key was hidden under the Queen’s pillow.

One day the young prince was playing with a ball and it rolled into the cage. The boy asked politely for his ball back. The iron man said the boy would get the ball if he unlocked the cage. The boy knew he would be in big trouble if he unlocked the cage but even so he did not know so it wouldn’t matter.

The boy came back the next day and asked for the ball. The iron man said the boy would get the ball if he unlocked the cage. So the boy said that he did not know where the key was anyway so the iron man said that it was under the Queen’s pillow and the boy extinguishing all thought of how much trouble he would be in, looked under the Queen’s pillow and sure enough there was an old metal key and so he walked back to the cage by the edge of the wood and unlocked it.

The iron man stood up, walked over to the boy and gave him the ball. He walked around him, went into the King’s palace and ate and drank three glasses of wine and five full seasoned and stuffed turkeys. Then he wiped his mouth, stood up, pushed back in his chair and then walked out of the palace and into the forest and the boy called after him and said thank you, you beautiful iron man.

Thank you said the iron man to the boy. The boy yelled why? The iron man ran back and said because you showed a very kind act today, you helped a rejected iron man who had to sleep on the floor of a locked metal cage, which hurt my spine and I only had two water bottles a day and a slice of pizza for breakfast lunch and dinner and most of all the King tonight was going to transport me to prison but because of your beautiful act and I will always love you for that. The boy was so overwhelmed with emotion he took twelve minutes to comfort him but even then his throat was so dry from crying all that came out of his mouth

that he could manage was, thank you iron man, before he once more dissolved into tears.

The End

\*\*\*all spelling and grammar left as written at the writers' request

**The Lady and the Prince adapted from Beauty and the Beast by  
Sophia I. and Ciera R. age: 15 (Culinary Arts)**

Once upon a time in a castle not so far from a small town, lived a naughty prince. He treated his servants not the kindly and took care for no one other than um himself. One spooky dooky night, an old smelly lady came a-knocking on the palace front door, where there was a 'no solicitor' sign.

The doors swing open as the prince points and yells, "Who's at the door?"

"Me," says the old lady in a squeaky voice.

"No, seriously. Who's there?" asks the prince again.

"I am old and sick. Please let me inside," pleads the old lady.

"No, close the door, the cold air is going to get out," the prince continues.

The old lady, who is actually a spookedy bookedy sorceress, slams the doors shut and says, "You have been beanboozled! Im gonna turn you into an ugleee beast till you learn to be a nice prince."

"Wait, hold up....."questioned the prince. With no answer the old witch lady takes out her bipity bopity stick and \*poof\*, the prince was turned into a beast. He was cursed to never be able to leave his castle anymore. Unlike his servants who yeeted out the castle and never came back the beast roamed the halls a lonely man for many many many years.

Not too far from the spellbound castle lived a girl. She was what they called in a common village, a beauty. And everyone in the town thought she was odd because she pet the goats at the unscheduled time. Her name was Belle. One day she decided to take the goats for a long walk through the tree filled forest. As she was walking, the goats were frightened by a tree falling, that they "baaaaaa-d" and "sk-yeeeeeeted" away from Belle. Belle chases after the goats for seventeen minutes before she sees a castle. The beast's castle. Being a curious beauty, she walked inside.

She yells, "hello!" and the doors slam behind her, now locked. Thinking the situation couldn't get any worse, she continues to explore the house. She walks into the kitchen and begins to make an insta mac & cheese. She stirs the insta mac and puts it in the microwave.

In walks the beast and he says, "you left the fork in," in a deep demented voice. Fearing for her life, she quickly grabbed the uncooked

insta mac and ran. He quickly caught up to her STOMP... STOMP... STOMP...the beast grabs her and she drops the insta mac, with the fork still in it...

The next morning she wakes in a dungeon that looked a lot like a bathroom with a blow up mattress in the middle. She realized she had been bandersnatched. The beast visited her every so often to feed her stale bread and lots of vegan butter. One night she over hears a convo the beast was having with the wall.

The beast speaks to the wall and says, “oh wall, how I wish for the bliss of a kiss on me lips. From someone I wed. So I can go back to being the most handsome prince of the land.”

Belle thinks to herself, If I were to marry the beast, I might inherit his fortunes and become a rich beauty. She made a bird noise to get the beast’s attention. The beast waddles to the cell.

She says, “Beast, I love you. I wish to kiss you!!”

Thinking it will get his good looks back he says, “I love you too,” and opens her cell.

The two kiss. In a magical \*poof\* it was revealed that the beast was not changed. But Belle did change. She was now a lady beast. Because of their vain attempts they were both cursed to roam the castle as beasts for as long as they lived. And they lived unhappily ever after.

The End

**Grandmother adapted from Little Red Riding Hood by Isabel S. age: 15 (Visual Arts), Hannah W. age: 14 (Visual Arts), and Brandon S. age: 14 (Musical Theater)**

In the years since her parents died, Red had been keeping a major secret from her grandmother – who her best friend was. She could only visit her friend when her grandma was asleep or away for the day, for fear of her and her friend’s safety.

One day, however, in early autumn, when describing her day outdoors to her grandmother, Red slipped up and mentioned her friend, the wolf.

Immediately, her grandmother flew into a rage spitting, “Are you seriously referring to that wolf?! The one who has the audacity to saunter around, fur flailing without shame, always singing in that weird language and reading those backwards books?!”

Red gave only the slightest nod of her head in response, her face burning as red as her cloak.

Her grandmother’s anger increased, although that seemed impossible.

She shook with fury as she decreed, “If I ever catch you fraternizing with that filthy wolf you shall both pay dearly.” At this, Red could barely conceal her tears and fled from the dinner table.

That night, Red’s grandma was still fuming in bed, when she decided the best way to prevent her granddaughter from becoming like the wolf was to stop him from polluting Red’s malleable mind any further. So, at the crack of dawn the next morning the old lady got up silently and snuck off to find the wolf with a dagger in her hand and calm, murderous rage in her heart.

She came upon him in a clearing, a funny hat between his furry ears and soundlessly mouthing words from his books. The grandmother snuck up behind him, ready to strike, but she could not contain herself.

“This is for Red – for what you’ve done to her,” she shouted. The wolf whirled around, just dodging the swinging blade.

A fight ensued and finally, the wolf had no choice but to eat Red’s grandma or die.

Many hours later, Red was wandering the woods in search of both the wolf and her grandmother when she came upon her friend. He was still kneeling in the clearing, sobbing, and surrounded by evidence of the fight – the dagger, the blood splatters, and the shreds of Red’s grandma’s floral dress.

Tears fell down Red's face before she even realized what had happened.

"Trust me. I had no choice," the wolf murmured in a voice lower than she ever heard.

It was obvious she was guilty. Red pieced together that her grandma attempted to murder the wolf.

"I forgive you she whispered back, wrapping her pale arms around the wolf's matted fur. She pulled away quickly though. It felt wrong to linger in the presence of someone who had murdered her family, no matter if he was a friend. Her feet moved faster than her mind and she rushed away, leaving the wolf behind. He called after her, but she did not listen, deciding it best to abandon a mournful past as soon as possible. The wolf himself sensed quite a few droplets descending onto his chin, tears marring his view of an unnerved young girl only her red coat visible through his tears.

The End

### **Theadora adapted from Rumpelstiltskin by Ellis S. age: 14 (Musical Theater)**

Once upon a time there was a queen giving birth to a pair of twin boys. The first was named Rumpelstiltskin and the second was named Cadence. Sadly, though, after giving birth to the boys, Queen Theadora died leaving her sons with the grieving king. After looking at the love of his life's soulless emerald eyes he threw himself into his work, leaving the two boys with nannies, staying as far as he could from the reminders of his dear wife.

As Rumpelstiltskin and Cadence grew up, surrounded by nannies and tutors, they began to look like their parents. Cadence for instance was a spitting image of their father with ebony hair, sky blue eyes, and alabaster white skin. Rumpelstiltskin took after their mother with emerald green eyes, brunette hair, and sun kissed skin. This caused the king great pain. While Rumpelstiltskin walked the earth with Theadora's emerald eyes, his wife, the love of his life, was six feet under, encased in a tomb of gold. So, the king stayed away, since it pained him to be near the boys - especially Rumpelstiltskin.

The only time the boys saw their father was during dinner and formal events. During the dinners when it was just the king and his sons, they sat on opposite sides of the table. The boys were on one side and the king on the other side of a table that could easily fit fifty people.

One night, as dinner was nearly over, the king looked over at Rumpelstiltskin and became so angry. He was so angry that he stood up from the table.

He slammed his hands down and said, "Rumpelstiltskin, I want you to leave. I want you to leave and never return, and if you ever show your face again you shall be killed."

Rumpelstiltskin was just fourteen years old, not even an adult, walking through the forest with only the moon and stars above to light his path through the dark forest. Suddenly an old lady with grey hair appeared ahead and called out, "Where are you going young man this late at night?"

Young Rumpelstiltskin replied, "I have been cast out of my home and am heading to the next town to find a place to stay."

"Well, you are in luck young man," the old lady exclaims. "I live in the town just over and am in need of someone to help me collect my potion ingredients. I am old and find that once I am on the ground I tend

to stay there a while. If you can help me, then I shall let you stay in the extra room my daughter used to stay in before she got married and moved away.”

And with that, they struck a deal where Rumpelstiltskin would help with the old lady’s potions and she would give him a room to stay in with three meals a day.

Rumpelstiltskin stayed with the old lady for many years and eventually learned magic and the art of trickery. He even bought a horse after the lady passed away. It was also there that Rumpelstiltskin made his plan for revenge. Sadly though, he couldn’t place his revenge on his father, if he could even call the king his father, because he had died four years after kicking Rumpelstiltskin out of the house. He could place his revenge on his brother who had stolen Rumpelstiltskin’s most precious treasure, the crown, for that was what he had been raised to do. The plan was to take his brother’s most prized possession, but all his brother saw was money. Cadence had no great treasure, so Rumpelstiltskin would have to create one. It was then he struck gold. What was more precious than a child? But first, Rumpelstiltskin would have to find someone for Cadence to marry. Someone who would appeal to Cadence’s pettiness and greed.

So, Rumpelstiltskin began his search for a beautiful girl, around the age of twenty with a father who is dumb or desperate enough to fall for his tricks. Rumpelstiltskin searched all of the towns surrounding the castle until he came upon Anna Miller’s home. Anna Miller was mostly the prettiest girl in the world. She was the prettiest girl with hair the color of sunflowers and eyes as blue as the ocean. She also had just lost her mother the year before last, making it very hard for her father to feed his six children; four girls and two boys. Rumpelstiltskin had heard that Anna’s father would do anything for money, so Rumpelstiltskin pounced.

“Hello, good sir,” he said walking over. “I overheard you have money problems and I think I can help.” This made Annie’s father very interested. He stopped what he was doing and turned around.

“How could you help? You wear clothes only a little better than mine,” Anna’s father retorted.

“My dear man,” Rumpelstiltskin started. “I have traveled around the world and have heard of a trick used many times to make people rich if you wish to hear it.”

“Yes, I do,” Anna’s father replied.

“Alright, here’s what you do...Tomorrow you will take your eldest daughter Anna to the castle where the soon to be king, Prince Cadence

resides. Then you shall request a visit with him. When you do, you shall leave sweet Anna behind the door as you talk to your highness. You will declare that your daughter can spin hay into gold, then you shall lead your daughter into the room and leave,” Rumpelstiltskin explained.

This confused Anna’s father. Anna couldn’t even spin hay. How could she spin it into gold? Seeing Anna’s father’s questioning look, he further explained.

“Turning hay into gold is just a saying. You must trust me. For I promise your daughter will be married by the end of the year and you shall live a wonderful life.”

They shook hands and agreed to go to the castle tomorrow.

So at the castle Anna’s father was declaring before the king that his daughter could spin hay into gold. Then, just as he planned, he opened the door, guided his daughter in and left, leaving her alone with the king in total fear. For she did not know what was going on.

“So, your father tells me you can spin hay into gold,” the king said leaning forward in his throne, eager to hear the girl’s response.

But to the disappointment of the soon to be king she replied, “I am sorry my king. For I have no idea why my father would say this. For I am just a normal girl.”

“Guards take the man. He has lied to his king,” Cadence shouted.

But Anna stopped the guards by shouting, “Wait, I will do what you ask. Just please don’t kill my father. He is all my siblings and I have.”

“How dare you lie to your king. But, since you came to your senses and told the truth, you shall be spared. Guards, be gone,” the King commands them.

He stands up from his royal throne and walks to the door just to the right, beckoning for Anna to follow. They walked through a dark hallway where all light was hidden by thick purple curtains. The hallway went on forever, or at least until Anna thought her feet would fall off. Then, suddenly, they reached an oak wood door with golden latches on it – to hold something or someone in. The soon to be king pulled out a small silver key and put it in the key hole.

Then, he pushed Anna in and said, “You shall stay here and spin all of the hay that is in this room into gold. And if you don’t by first morning light tomorrow, you shall be killed.”

And with that, the king was gone, slamming the door behind him. Once he left, Anna started banging on the door.

“Please let me out,” she cried. “Someone help me, please. I don’t want to die.” Then she fell to the floor in a heap of sobs.

Later that night the door swung open and the man Anna had seen talking to her father the day before walked in and said, "Do not cry sweet Anna. For I have come to help. All I ask is for something in return."

"Why should I trust you when you are the reason I am in this mess to begin with? For I saw you talking to my father," Anna asked.

Rumpelstiltskin, after giving it thought replied, "I apologize Anna. I had no idea this would happen and be dangerous to your life. Please let me help you. All I need is something in return."

"I...I can give you my necklace," Anna said, as she clutched her mother's necklace to her chest.

"That is all I ask for. Anna, give me the necklace and I shall make this hay into gold," Rumpelstiltskin said in a kind voice.

So, with tears falling down her face she unclasped her mother's necklace from her neck and handed it to Rumpelstiltskin, who snapped his fingers and was gone, leaving seventeen barrels of golden thread behind.

When the first light came, just like Cadence said, he unlocked the door, looked at the gold and grabbed Anna's arm, leading her up the hallway where she was pushed into another room filled with hay.

He said, "Spin this hay into gold or you shall be killed." Then, he slammed the door, leaving her to her own thoughts until late in the night, when the man appeared again.

"What do you have to give me for my help?"

"I can give you the ring that I wear on my finger," Anna replied, taking it off and giving it to Rumpelstiltskin. Rumpelstiltskin, just like before, snapped his fingers and disappeared, leaving behind seventeen barrels of golden thread. Just like before, the king walked in and looked at the thread.

Then he grabbed Anna's hand and dragged her to a room next to the throne room and left her there alone until Rumpelstiltskin showed up for the third time and asked, "What shall you give me for my service tonight?"

Anna responded sadly, "I have nothing left to give."

This caused Rumpelstiltskin to think of an answer to the problem and he said, "Then promise me if you become queen you shall give me your firstborn child."

Anna replied, "I promise. Though I do not know why you ask. For what king would wish to marry a commoner like me?"

"So we have a deal?" Rumpelstiltskin asks, taking out his hand for Anna to shake.

Anna shakes his hand while asking, "What is your name?" But sadly, he disappeared before he could give an answer.

The next day, Cadence appeared.

He saw the gold and asked, "Fair maiden, what is your name?" "Anna Miller, my king."

Cadence went down on one knee and said, "Anna, I am sorry for all I have put you through. Please let me make it up to you and your family. Anna, will you be my queen? Will you marry me?"

Anna, not seeing another way, said, "Yes."

And they were married not a week later. Anna's family was then moved into the castle and everything about Rumpelstiltskin was forgotten, until a year later when he reappeared after Anna had given birth to a little girl who she had yet to name. For she was waiting for her husband to return from his travels.

Rumpelstiltskin came through the door after everyone had left the new queen and princess alone.

He said, "You made your promise. Now it's time to pay."

Then he reached out for the baby who Anna was holding to her chest to keep close.

"Please take anything else. I am queen. I can give you money or jewels. Please, let's make a new bargain. For she is my deepest treasure."

Anna begged but Rumpelstiltskin just shook his head.

Anna cried, "Anything else."

Rumpelstiltskin gave in, taking pity on her and said, "I will make you one last deal. You have three days to guess my name, and if you don't the child is mine."

Rumpelstiltskin took out his hand, which Anna shook immediately in hopes of keeping her beloved daughter. Once she shook his hand he disappeared into a light of gold, just like before, only this time no gold was left behind, only sadness and tears as the mother clung to her newborn daughter.

The next day Rumpelstiltskin showed up and asked, "What is my name?"

Anna replied, "Casper. Melchior. Balthasar." But none prevailed.

Anna replied, "Conner. Mike. Ian." But alas, none were correct.

On the final day Anna guessed as tears formed in her eyes. For she had lost hope. She had searched and searched, sent guard after guard, but no one knew – only the man with eyes like emeralds and shoulder-length brunette hair.

She guessed, "Roman. Dylan. Ronald." But none were correct.

Rumpelstiltskin pried the child out of the sobbing mother's arms. And, just as he was to leave, Anna called out, "What are you going to name her?"

"Theadora," And with that he disappeared.

The End