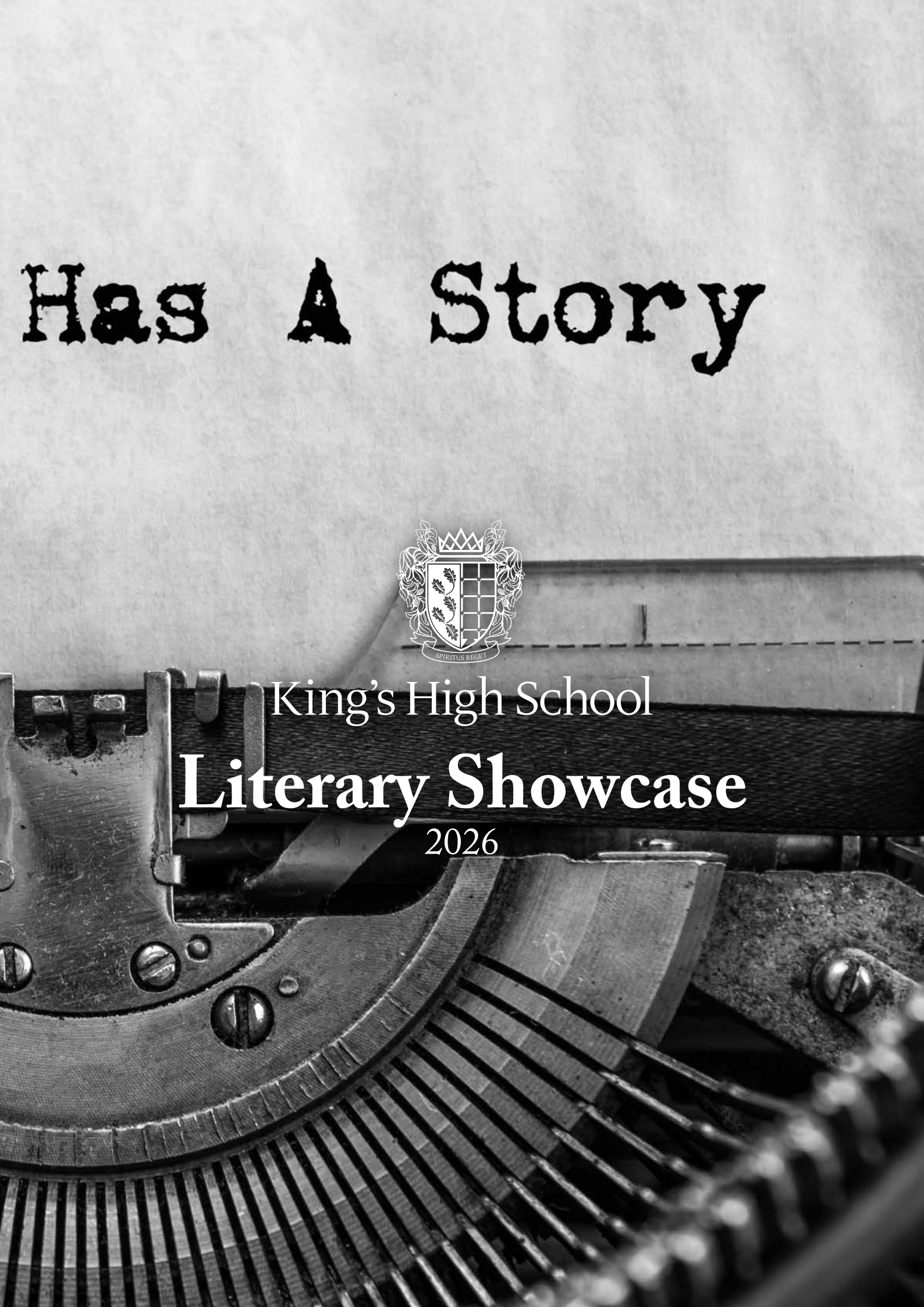


King's High School

# Literary Showcase

2026

# Under the Waves

by Dulcie-Bella (Year 7)

I am **light**.

I am the **earthquake** beneath the surface.

**I can't break it. I can't break it.**

I am your **imagination**. You hear me **whisper** through the everlasting darkness of night.

I am a flicker of fire through a hopeless circumstance, daring myself to burn **prouder** despite the ashes of yesterday.

But, like a **curse** or a **bad luck charm** or walking under a ladder, I fail. Sometimes, like an earthquake, I **break** things. Sometimes, like a fire, I can **burn** out and must be lit again.

It is loud where I am, in the sea of shattered hopes and dreams and futures. It is lonely, though I am one of many broken souls. I want to **speak**, I want to **shout**, I want to **scream** at the top of my lungs at the unfairness of it all.

So I do. I find **my voice** under the waves. It **hurts** to touch, and it is **weak and frail**, but I use it. It isn't **loud**, but relentless, so you may not hear it, but your **heart** will.

I watch them pick themselves up and shift their gaze from the **hazardous** tides to the **rising sun** sitting on the border of the ocean.

I don't think it needs a name. Some call it **change**, but change is permanent, and you'll always need someone to lift you up from **rock bottom** again.

Some call it unnatural, like a **superpower**, but all you need is a **song** you want to sing. A **heart** that will keep beating. **Eyes** that will keep seeing people that need to find their **spirit** once more.

***Just keep looking.***

# The Murder

by Gabrielle (Year 7)

The park was empty except from the dark, ominous trees. I shuffled forward, scared with what I might encounter with each step. In the distance, a wolf howled and I shivered at the thought that if anything or anyone came towards me, I would not see them until it was too late.

Suddenly, I heard an ear-splitting scream and instinctively I ran to get shelter. The scream was swiftly followed by the ground-shaking sound of a gunshot. I stifled my screams of terror and horror. I waited for what felt like hours before I ventured out of my hiding spot. When I saw what lay before me, I couldn't stop the scream from exploding out of my mouth. Before me was the body of a young man, lying crooked on the floor. I ventured closer only to see to my absolute horror a pool of dark liquid. Blood! He had been shot!

I ran as fast as I could back to my house, but when I got there the door was open and the glass had been shattered. I ventured in, terrified at what I might find. There was no one home and the ground was covered in blood.

I had to get away from here. I had to find my parents, before it's too late.

# The Autumn Walk

by Beatrix (Year 7)

He awoke in a pile of rubbish; a bin bag makes the bed that couldn't be comfortable but it's enough. One whiff of the morning air told him enough – Autumn was here, it meant no more unforgiving heat to bear down on his black pelt and making it heavy with sweat, but it did mean more hunger and frostbite. With a long yawn he wasted no time scrambling from his makeshift bed and sauntering away to start his day.

He wonders aimlessly through chilly alleys littered with rubbish and leaves. His soft paws make no sound on the cobblestone, but they still bleed from walking constantly on such harsh grounds. His tail swishes in the powerful breeze which bellows above his small head topped with a pair on pointed ears. His fur is meant to be glossy and thick, but due to it being unkept it couldn't be more ragged, he has much more important things on his mind then grooming after all, so the wind penetrates his pathetic fur and chills him to the bone.

Making a sharp turn around abuilding he came nose to nose with a house cat, it was a blinding white with electric blue eyes and a little overweight, it paid little too no mind toward him as it continued to groom its healthy fur. His eyes darted at this cat's collar that made strange clinking sounds in the wind and then to its full belly much larger than his own. He didn't care for the cat though at least that's what he told himself as he dragged his worn paws on.

He walked forward, blurring his surroundings out of habit-He had gotten quite good at it over these long years of blearing activity of people living their lives. He walked for a while longer, following the canal outside the main city as his tail dragging in the mud as Autumn leaves fell overhead when he comes across a small, thatched cottage. It looked warm and happy, and he couldn't resist approaching timidly. He stalked forward, toes light and ears pricked for the first sign of danger. He unsheathed his worn claws just in case as he rose onto his hind legs to stare through the warmly lit window. His keen yellow eyes, sharpened with age looked on into a perfect Autumn scene, a family surrounding a fire, hot chocolate in hand and an empty rug that looked just right to rest on in front of the fireplace.

His stomach rumbled, growling like one of those fierce terriers he had fought of that later summer- not without wounds I am afraid – He released a frustrated hiss, and he tore his gaze from the dreamy scene. How could he have gotten so distracted; survival was the only thing that mattered! He listened to the birds chirping above and saliva formed in his mouth in anticipation for such a meal, he hadn't eaten something fresh in ages! Usually, he resorted to mouldy pizza crusts and then must lie in a bin for a few days to recover from the inevitable sickness that arrived with a half full belly. The bird had landed, it was pecking at the acorns near one of the countless leaves' piles, unaware of the looming danger. He flexed my claws as he stalked forward in a hunting crouch, deadest on my prey.

The ear-splitting noise of a dog's repeated bark, not a yap, a bark. The bird flew away in a panicked flurry of feathers, squawking the alarm to its friends in the trees. He released a hiss of annoyance, baring his teeth to teach whoever had scared away my meal a lesson, unable to take anything other than his frustration and hunger into account. He turned around to meet a thundering of great paws, large pools of drool dripped from a large mouth laden with sharp fangs. He whipped around, lashing his tail for balance as he was suddenly stood in front of the half Belgian Malinois, quarter German Shepard, quarter Dutch herder, its lean yet muscular body cast his skinny one in a looming shadow that complimented her big black face. They stared at each other for a moment, any sudden movements would mean possible death for him.

He had to risk it, after close inspection it seemed this dog was more puppy than adult-maybe one and a half years old, it will get bored within the minute and test out its new cheap squeak toy that's only going to squeak once. He bolted for the tree his lost dinner had lived in.

A flash of movement,

a flurry of fur,

a flood of noise.

He was in the tree but a chunk of fur from his back wasn't, the dog had snapped its jaws around him to catch him between sharp jaws. A lucky escape. Peering down from the branch he was now crouched on, the tree was now a soft orange and a leaf fell onto his back, he shook it off. The people he had seen through the window earlier had now emerged to see what the fuss was about, the dogs tail began to wag uncontrollably, tongue lolling around happily as she rolled onto her belly, inviting them to pet her. The rug was taken after all.

He stayed crouched in that tree, completely motionless for maybe an hour longer to make sure the danger had passed. Tentatively he made his way down, claws digging into the soggy Autumn bark. Shoulders slumped and pride revoked he continued down the canal in his hope for a meal. He toyed with the idea of turning back and living with the upset stomach which arrived when eating month old spaghetti when a large gust of wind battered his side without remorse.

He was standing to close to the canal. The wind pushed his weak body to the side, sending him flailing mid-air toward the water. Time seemed to slow as he was submerged under the water, the cold penetrated his body like spikes of ice into the heart, pins and needles overtook him. The corners of his vison blurred and darkened as his body clenched up and he could no longer move. Soon after all he could feel was his hollow stomach, hollow dreams and hollow heart. He let his eyelids close over.

He awoke warm, his belly fuller than he could have ever dreamt it to be. The warm sensation beneath his fur an old friend. His eyes were slits against the blinding light peering through the windows. Windows, were was he? He blinked his eyes open further, surprised and curious. His now wide eyes were met with the kind pair of an old man whose lap he was now laying on. He knew this man. This was his owner, when he was a kitten he would play with this man endlessly, He had felt as though he truly belonged, then a sour smell befell him, and he disappeared from his bed. He had never forgotten this old man. He had always wished to see him again. He purred in time to the gentle rocking of the place they were inside. Out of the corner of hid eye he saw water, but he didn't care about any of that now. All that mattered to him was his human and the bliss that came with the blinding light.

Death is not the greatest loss in life, the greatest loss is what dies in us while we live.

# The Scarecrow

by Jess (Year 7)

The scarecrow watches in the autumn breeze,
Forever listening to falling leaves,
He watches where children once played,
In a field now filled with endless hay,
'if only' he thinks 'the world did not change,
For I am the only thing that seems to stay the same',
He feels he will be trapped until the end of the time, He longs for trees, sycamore or pine,
Years ago, they were what he could see,
The thought, though distant, fills him with glee,
Then the trees came down, and the fields came up,
Everything changes except him, he is stuck,
He looks to the sky, to the swifts and the swallows,
Flying to Africa, he wishes he could follow,
A tear trickles down his threadbare face,
He can cry, he can cry!
What a wonderful sight!
He can finally join the birds who take flight,
Through the air, through the wind, through the day, through the night!
But still, he cannot touch the sky,
In his mind he is running far away,
To a different, colourful, vibrant place,
'a changemaker' he thinks 'that will be me'.
But a distant crow brings him back to reality,
He cannot move, he cannot dance,
He cannot fly, he cannot prance,
His world can never be more than this,
He will never find his happiness,
He will be here until the end of time,
Because the scarecrow is the creature that never dies.
The farmer, whom he has not seen in years,
Seems to have forgotten about him when he disappeared,
He has no use, that he can see,
Other than protecting worthless seeds,
Seeds that will grow into beautiful hay,
Only to be destroyed the very next day,
If he could walk, he would go to the sky,
Then he might be able to fly,
Or perhaps he would take his journey to a park,
So, he could watch children play and dogs bark,
As autumn turns to winter that night,
He chokes back the tears and doesn't quite cry,
He is strong and brave, and he is always changing inside,
But this change is small, and he still can't glide,
He is no longer sad, but angry the most,
In a fit, he tears away from his wooden post,
What is this? He is walking through fields of hay,
Running, flying to another Autumn Day,
He can move, he can dance!
He can fly, he can prance!
And as his world changes from autumn to winter,
So has he, he's a champion sprinter.

# The Hidden Criminal

by Olivia (Year 7)

Ping...ping...ping...

Agatha yawned in frustration, barely having her eyes open. She picked up the phone hearing a fuzzy sound and frustratedly put her phone down.

Ping...ping...ping

She angrily picked up her phone, and it was her boss notifying her that she has a case. Agatha widened her eyes thinking she was having a dream, but it wasn't.

Agatha hadn't had a case in over 2 years after what happened in the last case; Agatha was about to pull away and deny the offer the 3 dots disappeared ping... she couldn't believe what she was seeing. Her boss replied in caps, he was wanted for 1,000 pounds, she was thinking this would change her life but she hasn't done investigating in 2 long years because of a mysterious criminal that has done merger things to Agatha, he still lurks but still hasn't been got caught for murder. Agatha thought and thought over and over; she typed out the answer. Once Agatha typed yes, she hurriedly went to school. Agatha ran to her best friend Luke and told him everything.

As Agatha sat down in her form room with her headphones on thinking where to begin with her case.

Suddenly the headmaster announced that there was a murderer in the school and needed to be on lock down immediately. Agatha desperately needed something from her locker, so Agatha used her spy moves and went out of the classroom. Agatha went to her locker quickly, so she didn't get caught. In the corner of her eyes, she saw a mysterious figure hiding, then started to run; Agatha became curious and followed it. After a minute of chasing, the figure went through a tunnel, but little that he knew was that the exit was blocked off because of lockdown.

Agatha smiled thinking she had found the murderer, but she didn't know the secret hidden behind his mask.

Agatha quickly cornered the mysterious covered mask.

The hooded man didn't speak Agatha angrily asked for him to take of his mask, she was stunned, it was her enemy from year 7 she said she was jealous of her and she didn't deserve to have a place here! Agatha said she needed to report her to the police because what she did was illegal. She said that she didn't do it. She was blackmailed, Agatha was shocked.

Now she needs to find answers...



# Deceive

by Vinudi (Year 7)

**December 11th, 1993, 8:30pm**
Eugene Hall was the grandest thing I have stepped into. The chandelier, full of intricately lit candles, blinded my eyes as I stared at the portraits that told stories of long ago. The hall was full of wealthy people in extravagant garments, tailored suits and dresses with golden lace dragging on from the bottom. I was immersed in its beauty. Although rich, I have never stepped foot anywhere like this. My father always lectured me about being a proper lady and staying inside doing housework, I despised him. I was stuck staring at the beauty until I heard a voice say "Harriet! Over here," It was my assistant Jason Eugene. He was a rather clever but tardy fellow and would often help me with important cases. I waved back at him politely with a grin.

*"So how are you?"* Jason asked.

*"I needed that break"* I said smiling *"But I feel great getting back into business."*

Suddenly a flood of applause filled the room, and a girl elegantly entered full of elegance and poise. Roses with emerald, green leaves were placed like a crown on her head. A white and pink dress trailing behind her specks of gold sparkling on the tips of her sleeves. Her curls from her golden honey-pot hair glimmering from the light from the chandelier.

My sister, Elliana.

*"That's my daughter!"* Someone from the crowd cheered. It was father of course, Elliot Montgomery. He never said anything, but I found it obvious that he favoured her more than me. He bought her luxurious and puffy dresses, all sorts of jewellery and well to put it simply anything she wanted.

*"You raised her well brother, it's a shame her sister isn't anything like her,"* A voice praised in the crowd, My Aunt, Mrs. Mary Allison.

I was always compared to my sister. *"Be like your sister!"* my father would say. I walked over to her. I have always seen her in the latest newsletters or magazines posing like a natural for the camera. She had short, dark brown hair dressed in a long black silk dress, a hat that covered most of her head and a feather boa to complete her attire. My father spotted me and glared at me sternly, gesturing for me to "run along" when she caught sight of me.

*"Yes?"* she asked, tilting her hat upward to get a good look at me.

*"Uh yes, hi"* I replied staring with disappointment at father.

She looked at me like I had gone mad then her husband, Nicholas Allison stepped in *"Oh this your other daughter"*

My father walked away, pouring a glass of wine.

I walked away in frustration, stamping my feet hard enough so my father could hear. Then the cook – Chef Fionna Houston – announced that the feast was about to commence. My stomach rumbled at the thought of food.

We were all seated in an extravagant dining room with mummers of excitement running across the room as people waited for the meal to be served, fork and knife in hand.

Suddenly, I felt a sharp pain in my stomach like a metal shard stabbed me. I sneaked out carefully, heading to the bathroom with my now blurry vision. As soon as I stepped in the lights started to flicker as I heard muffled screams filled with agony and fear. I leaned on the wall, my heart pounding louder than a tribal drum. Eventually, the lights turned on, and I rushed back to the dining hall, my feet aching with pain.

As soon as I got there, my jaw dropped as my eyes widened, tears starting to form.

I saw the lifeless body of Elliana. She was dead.

*"She had so much of life ahead of her!"* My aunt cried, wiping droplets that came down from her eyes.

My father stood there; life drained from his face as he clenched his fist. He looked awfully pale.

*"Excuse me everyone"* he said quietly leaving the dining room.

*"Everyone stay calm"* I shouted, my voice echoing through the room *"Jason, I need you."*

He sprinted at me, knocking plates and utensils while doing so. She was stabbed. A knife was stuck near her stomach as her gown was now drenched with blood. Tears were streaming down my face as Jason put a comforting hand on my shoulder. *"It's OK, we'll figure this out."* Then a silence came over the room.

Emerging from the curtains was a grey fog towering over the guests. Toxic gas. I got down on my knees, using my jacket as my mask. I crawled towards the stairs, inhaling gas every second. Before I knew it, everything went black.

I woke up to a voice full of fear. I felt lightheaded as streaks of blood trickled down my knee. *"My is husband GONE, Elliana's body has disappeared, and my brother has gone to!"* My Aunt screamed.

I limped over and spoke *"How? We were only out for an hour, right?"*

*"Nope"* Jason said pointing at the clock.

11:30. Three hours had passed since the gas attack. My heart sank.

*"Jason, we need to figure this out,"* I whispered as I walked towards him.

He nodded and grabbed my hand, walking upstairs.

*"My father went to the bathroom right, we should probably head there"* I stated, still perplexed after the recent events.

We arrived shortly after Jason knocked on the door. *"Mr. Montgomery are you alright?"* He asked, continuously pounding on the door.

No answer. He continued knocking, each one becoming progressively louder. Jason sighed and counted to three under his breath. He punched the door open. He peered in and froze.

*"Jason, what happened"* – I began and paused. I couldn't believe my eyes.

My father laid dead and was viciously pale. I turned around and saw the leg of Mr. Allison under the bathroom cubicles. I didn't want to even think what could be over there.

*"No sign of blood must be poison,"* I observed as Jason looked at me confused.

*"But –"* He started but then suddenly and a screech combined with loud breaking of glass, came from downstairs. Without thought, I dashed downstairs with a tired Jason trailing behind me.

The gas jeopardized our progress by hours and at least 3 people had died. Miss. Allison had attempted to escape twice but all doors were locked, and we were trapped.



While pondering, a man walked in with a young boy hiding behind him. Thomas King and Alexander Allison. Thomas was the Allison family assistant and Alexander was Nicholas' and Mary's son.

*"Sorry, this one wanted to"* Thomas began.

*"Where have you all been!?"* Miss Allison interrupted.

Alexander muttered something quietly as I stared at him. Did he know his father was well – dead?

*"Alex sweetheart come with me,"* Miss Allison whispered grabbing Alex's hand.

Alex was dragged out of the room as all eyes turned on Thomas. *"Where have you been this entire time, Thomas?"* Jason asked.

*"With Alex, Captain's orders,"* He replied jokingly.

The room turned silent as Jason asked *"Why, what happened?"*

Suddenly, screams of sadness echoed across the hall, *"Why? Why him of all people?"* Alex exclaimed, running off.

*"That,"* Jason said, *"Three people including Alex's father are dead,"*

*"And there was a gas attack earlier,"* A voice added.

It was Mr. Eugene, Jason's father, and Sarah Eugene.

*"Dad where have you–"* Jason began.

*"I was discussing business matters with Sarah until the gas attack; we awoke quite recently."* Mr. Eugene interrupted wiping the tears from his eyes *"I heard about Elliot,"*

*"Oh well I didn't notice,"* Thomas stated shrugging.

Something didn't seem right about Thomas. *"I'm going to investigate further, you stay with your father and Sarah,"* I said.

*"But–"*

*"Your father's friend just died comfort him,"* I interrupted harshly.

Jason didn't argue any further as he nodded. I rushed upstairs. I was determined to figure out this case.

**December 12th, 1993, Midnight**

I was getting worried. Harriet was gone for a while. I sat next to my dad and sister awkwardly. My Father was awfully quiet as my sister was sobbing furiously. Thomas had ran to go to Alexander and Fionna Houston was with Miss Allison.

*"I'm going to check upstairs, to see if Harriet is OK,"* I said, rubbing my hand on my father's back.

They nodded in agreement as I charged upstairs. She was acting weird; she knew the exact way her father died. Poison. Wait. She was gone during the blackout. No, it can't be her. My father, sister and Thomas weren't there either. I went to the bathroom door and knocked on it. *"Harriet,"* I shouted, leaning on the door. No response. Weird. I kept knocking and kept receiving no response. Suddenly I heard screams from downstairs. Oh no...

**December 12th, 1993, 12:30**

I stood near dead bodies with a knife in my hand. Miss Allison had fled but I gave up trying to chase her.

*"Harriet..."* A voice whispered, *"How could you,"*

*"Your outnumbered Jason, everyone is dead, and Miss Allison has fled selfishly,"*

*"Actually,"* Miss Allison said with officers around her *"Not really,"*

My hands were tightened into cuffs. If my father never favoured my sister, this wouldn't have happened. I did the needful. As they say, revenge is a dish best served cold.

# Opalite Nova

by Primrose (Year 8)

Everything drifts toward the void.
Stars crumble, oceans sigh into the air, galaxies stretch into silence,
and still, you breathe—
your lungs polishing light like sapphire, your heartbeat chiseling rubies into the now.

The void does not pause.
It does not plead.
It swallows without apology.
Yet here you are, a fragile flare,
atoms conspiring like scattered topaz sparks,
blood flowing in garnet rivers, thoughts splitting like diamond prisms—
proof that matter can fold itself into brilliance,
that your brief flicker can coruscate, opalescent, against the dark.

Your body is incandescent.
Every pulse, every breath, every thought, a jewel measured in Hertz,
a tiny rebellion against silence,
a whisper of moonstone light trembling in the dark,
a miracle written in electrons and neurons,
a fleeting alignment of atoms that defies nothingness.

Beauty exists because it ends.
A comet arcs once and dissolves.
A wave crashes and is gone.
Your atoms scatter.
Yet in that impermanence, you shine.
Every vibration of your being proves that the universe can carve order from chaos,
that the fleeting, the ephemeral, the transient,
is where brilliance is born.

You cannot stop decay.
You cannot hold the void at bay.
You cannot preserve this moment forever.
But you can move.
You can shine.
You can fold brilliance into your every heartbeat.
You can be amethyst, aquamarine, moonstone, diamond, sapphire, emerald, ruby—
and in doing so, you become infinite, not in years, not in memory,
but in the pulse of light itself, in the rhythm of matter, in the song of existence.

Do not shrink from impermanence.
Do not beg for recognition.
Do not dim your atoms for fear of being forgotten.
Every flicker, every spark, every pulse
ripples farther than you can ever know.
You are alive against the dark,
your breath, your pulse, your presence,
proof that the universe can carve wonder from inevitability.

The void is inevitable.
And yet, here, now, in your lungs, neurons, atoms,
you are incandescent, luminous, irreducible,
shining against collapse.

The universe does not bend for brilliance.
It does not pause.
And that is why your light is extraordinary.
Because it exists at all, for a moment,
defying the certainty of nothing,
and in that defiance, you are sapphire and diamond, ruby and opalite,
a supernova of gems,
and simply by breathing, simply by being,
you are an opalite nova, flaring through the void.

# Things we are asked to Carry

by Jia (Year 9)

We are taught early,
How to hold ourselves smaller,
Like folding a note until it fits
Someone else's pocket.
To lower our voices
So the room stays calm
To smile when interrupted.
To call it confidence
I have watched decisions
Made about bodies
That never enter the room.
Words stacked neatly on paper,
While breath waits outside.
History loves strong women,
Once they are finished speaking.
Once their edges are softened
Into lessons.

We learn to carry conflicts

be loud, but not too loud. Be ambitious, but grateful. Be powerful, but pleasant. Be everything, and make it look effortless.

Some nights, it feels like standing in a room where the windows are open but the air won't move.

Like pressing your hand against glass

that looks thin until it doesn't break.

Like learning the weight of things you were never meant to hold, and wondering how many generations have learned the same quiet balance.

# Jumanji

by Lola (Year 10)

*‘Du du duh’*. *‘Du du duh’*. *‘Du du duh’*. There was something about this noise that was different from all the other drilling and digging sounds. *‘Du du duh’*. There it is again! Slowly walking one foot ahead of the other, climbing through the ‘No Entry’ sign. Lying half submerged into the dry, dug up soil was the corner of a reverberating, rusted box. As any curious child would, he brushed off the dirt and pulled the box out. ‘Jumanji’ was printed on the box. There were lots of messages written in capital letters, warning players the game would be ‘perilous’ – whatever that meant. Holding the mysterious box, he secretly snuck out of the building site and was on the way to share with his friends.

You couldn’t even imagine the look of surprise on his friends’ faces when the box was placed on the floor! They were speculating all the exciting things this game would consist of. Not only was the box reverberating, it started jumping up and down, like someone was inside trying to get out! In a panic, they decided to open the lid. A swirling bright light jumped out, like it was going to take the children into another universe!

The boy who originally found the box, and his three other friends, had somehow been transported into a rainforest. Prowls of jaguars running at incredible speeds, orange orangutangs swinging from trees, like Tarzan, and butterflies fluttering their vibrantly coloured wings could be seen for acres.

A voice called out, *‘Hello Players, you are playing Jumanji. None of you may leave until you personally have completed the game. Every dice roll you take will unleash something which could cause consequences. Always be on the lookout as something disastrous might happen any second. Good Luck’*.

The game began. The children were labelled as Player 1, 2, 3 and 4. It was Player 1’s turn to start. She rolled the dice. She walked three spaces forwards; still ages left to reach the end of the rainforest. Lizards, a whole load of lizards started spawning in every corner of their eyes. Climbing and clinging onto everything in the rainforests, the children had found the lizards had wrapped around them. As every child had their go, they ended up being surrounded with gorillas, monkeys, lizards and massive frogs trying to stop them moving on.

As time was ticking, the fatigue was catching up. One of the girls started to fade away until she became invisible and there were only three players left. More and more challenges tried to set the players back and get them to lose the game. Another child had left them as two monkeys had run up and snatched him from behind.

There were two left. Shattered, homesick and fed up, they kept playing and playing. The first six to be rolled. A massive lion ran out a bush. It slowly stepped towards the children forcing them to walk backwards. They had gone back so far, they were now on the edge of a cliff. The lion raised its foot. Leant forwards. And put it down. The two children had no other choice than to jump off the cliff and try to grab hold of the tree branches.

When the boy reached the ground, the girl had disappeared. He was the last player left in the game. He was so close to the end and just couldn’t give up now. Just a few more painstaking rolls. The final obstacle; a river. The end was in sight. You could see crocodile heads bobbing up and down into the murky water. What could you do to get past? The crocodiles were swimming closer and closer towards him. He was petrified. The one of the tails was so forceful it swept the boy onto the crocodile’s back. Trying to shake the boy off, the crocodile swam quickly all the way to the other side of the river where the boy flew off and onto the grass. The game had been completed.

The next thing the boy knew, he was back at home where he started the game. However, his friends weren’t there. They were still stuck in the game, with no way of getting out. Sirens started whaling in the streets indicating a sudden evacuation for a potential earthquake. The boy had to run out of the house and leave the box stuffed behind a big dictionary on a bookshelf and there it remained, abandoned, for no one believed the boy. When the earthquake threat had subsided, his family decided to move away with him for a fresh start and downsized, so they left many of their belongings behind.

A family with three children bought the house. With their passion for books and games they were eager to explore the leftover belongings on the shelves. *‘Oo a big dictionary, let’s take that off and look at it!’*. Once again, the box began to jump *‘Du du duh’*. *‘Du duh’*. *‘Du du duh’*...

# Warmer near the Grapevine

by Margarita (Year 11)

Can you accuse me of this crime?
I may murmur and giggle with the toxic crowd,
It's just warmer near the grapevine.

You could argue that it's just a past time.
I flit like a wonky butterfly, though still proud,
Can you accuse me of this crime?

I suppose I spread the wildfire from time to time,
In the heat of whispers, I am never loud.
It's just warmer near the grapevine.

If the ladder swings encouragingly, why not climb?
The weather's nice amongst the clouds,
Can you accuse me of this crime?

Panic not, for I can still hear heaven's childish chime,
Yet when I dictate, my subjects all bow.
It's just warmer near the grapevine.

I would just call myself... an ally.
All accusations will be disavowed,
So can you accuse me of this crime?
It's just warmer near the grapevine.



# The World

by Mya (Year 11)

The serene blue sea and the green lush land.
Our earth is a symbol of hope.
It lies in between distance planets with
No humans. No growth.
Yet as conflict grows,
The World is torn apart.
The hope GONE
As well as the peace in our hearts.
But.
We.
Can.
Change.
We have the power to protect our future.
We have the power to protect our humanity.
We have the power to protect our earth.
We are the changemakers.
The World.
The serene blue sea and the green lush land.
Our earth is our only hope.
So let's save it before we can no longer cope.

# The Tiger's Painting

by Rhiannon (Year 12)

I bolt upright. There here. Both of them. I run across the path over to the fence abandoning my bag on the grass. I stretch my arm across the fence touching the metal bars of the enclosure next to one of the tigers. He comes closer excitedly and puts his head up next to my hand. His name is Blizzard, and his friend is Ladybelle. I press my other hand up to the enclosure and Ladybelle puts her paw up next to my hand almost like giving a high five before rubbing her head against my hand similar to Bizzard. I smile at them and slowly move my hands away. I hear my parents calling me from where the corsac foxes live. I move to the other side of the path and slowly pick up my bag. I run back over to the fence where Blizzard and Ladybelle are watching expectantly as we never see each other without having some sort of fun so I say to them "Race you!".

I start to run off along the side of their enclosure before taking an abrupt left through a slightly winding tiger tunnel with one on each side for a bit. Blizzard's white fur contrasting to Ladybelle's orange on the other side. We keep going. After a short while both tigers end up on my right compared to the left, they were originally on. We run past the maned wolves and stop when we get to near the servals as Blizzard and Ladybelle can't go any further. So, we stop to say goodbye for the day at the tiger barn. I wait for them to catch upkeeping in mind they are getting old and have to take a slightly longer route to enter the barn. They run over; Blizzard happy that he managed to beat Ladybelle for once. I reach out my hands and stroke them both behind the ear. Then I hear my parents again and realise I need to hurry. I turn round and start to walk the short distance to the corsac foxes but wave to them just before I turn the corner.

It's a few weeks, maybe even months before the next time I went to see my tigers. I wander to their enclosure and sit on the grass on the other side of the path as I always do, looking through my book on tigers as I wait. They sometimes take ages to turn up as they're old and tigers sleep most of the day anyway. I wait the whole day and half an hour before the zoo closes, I have to go, and they still haven't appeared. I reluctantly pack my bag and walk through the tiger tunnel alone. I get to one of the bends and find something new. It's the wall. It's been painted. I gently touch the painting with my fingers. There's a picture of Ladybelle on one side, Blizzard on another and them both together in the middle.

The following night, I can't sleep. I can't stop thinking about my tigers. I look around my room and hear a low rumble. Then a white slightly transparent animal starts to appear and walk over to me. It looks ghostly and I quite quickly realise it's Blizzard. I become concerned about what happened to him. Then he slowly vanishes, and I lie back down unable to sleep.

**20 years later...**

In the evening, I look on the zoo's website at the news before going off to Nepal. It doesn't mention my tigers, but it does mention a few things. There's a new tiger enclosure for some Malayan tigers called Cicip and Sahaja. Caracals have been put in the tiger barn and dingoes in one of their fields. In another one of the tigers' fields two new white tigers, Mohan and Shiva, have been introduced. I search desperately but nothing of my tigers is mentioned.

I wake up at the crack of dawn. I'm exhausted but it's part of being a conservationist. I set off through Nepal to some forests near the border of India. I go round looking at camera traps that I put out a few weeks ago. The first trap I come to has no tigers on but does reveal there have been poachers in the area recently, so I take care and make a mental note of it as something to bring up. I make haste getting to the next camera trap and find it has footage of a tiger walking past and then further through the footage it has the same individual looking as though it's just eaten a big meal. I smile to myself and distant memories of Blizzard and Ladybelle pour into my head. I miss them. The next camera trap has no tigers. I'm slightly disappointed but am lifted when I notice a barasingha deer which is more commonly known as a swamp deer which is one of the most famous deer in the area. I'm glad I've seen this. It proves that the tigers in the area have prey.

Midday approaches and I sit in the forest with my colleagues eating lunch. We discuss things we

found on camera traps. I mention the poachers I found on one camera trap and silence falls. They all take it in knowing that they could be close. We decide to search for snares and other traps when we've finished eating to ensure that no harm comes to the forest.

I end up eating my lunch hurriedly and hastily get to my bag to repack for the afternoon ahead. I stuff snacks in my pockets and shove my lunchbox in my bag. Everyone else slowly follows along putting things in and out of their bags. Special equipment keeps appearing on the floor and then being picked up again and placed gently at the top of a bag ready for if its needed. They all stare at me and I lead the way to the area of the forest where the poachers have known to be.

We travel for a good hour before coming across the first snare. We quickly but carefully trigger it with a stick and then carefully remove it from the rainforest. We place it in a bag so it can do no damage to the species of the rainforest. I dart my head up. I heard something. A growl. A growl from a tiger. Me and the rest of the team run towards the noise. A tiger has been caught in a trap. The tiger swipes the air trying to get away claws drawn. We slowly approach keeping our distance. The tiger runs out of energy quickly and we rush quietly over. We all work as a team to free this tiger before the poachers appear. They'll be here soon. The tiger reminds me of Blizzard and Ladybelle but mostly Ladybelle with her orange pattern with beautiful stripes. I can't escape thinking about them. After a good two minutes working on the trap, we finally free her and she jumps away into the forest.

I think back and remember me and Blizzard running through the tiger tunnel together. I realise I'm going back home soon. I'll be able to go to the places where we used to run. The places we used to meet and the places we had fun. I can't wait and I'm hoping. Hoping that I will be able to see my tigers.

**2 weeks later...**

I leap out the car. My heart's pounding. I'm too excited about finally at long last being back. I run through the gravelled car park and through the entrance gate. I hurriedly pay for entry and I'm in. I don't want to miss any animals though I'm mainly here for the tigers, so I wander past the Javan binturong and the lemurs of different species. I keep walking calmly through the zoo saying hello to Hula the anteater and the wombats Albert and Wanda. I notice a new meerkat enclosure and some new brown hyenas. I walk up the carnivore end of the park of which the tigers are almost at the very end, and I notice bat eared foxes have arrived at the park as well. I start to get excited so rush past the servals and maned wolves.

Eventually, I stop. I stop in the tiger tunnel next to the painting of Blizzard and Ladybelle. I run my hand gently over their beautifully painted fur and continue through the tunnel. At the end of the tunnel, I look out over the paddock. The long grass sways in the wind with the sheep bleating in the distance. A paw appears out from the grass. A white paw. I stare at it, but the paw isn't Blizzard's and there are now two white tigers here. They must be Mohan and Shiva. I realise what has happened to my friends, so I meander back to the tiger painting and sit there for hours.

# Tree Eulogy

by Florence (Year 12)

Fingers buried knuckle-deep in stygian soil
no longer does he feel her crying out his name no longer does he ache
and claw and curse upon his knees.
Gone are the days of drinking in the heavens' gaze with bacchic eyes
a calling deep inside his being
a plea for sacred intoxication.

Today he looks on at time embedded in his hair
his teeth
his fingernails and suddenly they tell him he no longer wants to want.

The sky
the trickster
declaims his name still in a foreign tongue,
but he is wise unto those ways

she will be here tomorrow after all.

Old now older than their congregations
he has made his bed and watches
Pilgrims
drumming out his heartbeat as they ride
with faces fixed in abject trepidation
and how he laughs
as soft and crashing as the wind
a sound that rattles deep within the chambered hollows that hold him gently still.
Hands form a portrait of a tired refrain and in his veins
he knows
soon will come the age of silence.

Save for the canticles they sing to him.
And the voice of forest falling over beaten limbs, and plumes of breath diffusing
forth a final time, as the soft earth beckons him home.



# 1912

by Cecilia (Year 9)

Shiny, black nails. Sharp enough to draw blood. Eyeliner, precise and somehow cold hearted, shaped her face in a daunting, envious way. Her heels clicked against the wooden deck like a warning. It was a warning. Tonight was the night that everyone had been whispering about for weeks. Every conversation stilled mid-sentence; no one dared hold her gaze for more than a second. She didn't dress for women; she didn't dress for men. She dressed for revenge.

Leanna Red had boarded the Titanic at Southampton wearing a dazzling emerald-green dress that had secrets stitched into every scene. Thick, dark hair flowed down her back. Not like a waterfall, more like midnight ink being spilled in slow motion. One thing was for sure. She stood out for all the right reasons.

In the depths of her leather clutch layed a dangerous letter sealed in crimson wax – the kind of red that hinted at blood and secrets that must stay buried. If anyone knew of its contents; they would realise that she was not the only one with blood on her hands. They would pray that the ship would never reach New York.

Rain hit the deck, hammering down like bullets, each drop pounding a warning that the night was not over. This was the begging of a storm that would be much darker than the skies above. Still, Leanna stood, gloved fingers resting on the brass rail, calculating her next move, scanning the deck with her sharp eyes. Her gaze landed on a tall imposing man. Cloaked in shadow, he lingered where a man like him did not belong. At his side stood a woman. Her arms covered in elegant, silk gloves reaching her elbows. Suspicious. Leanna had believed that she had known every wealthy passenger who would be boarding Titanic.

She was not the type of woman who was easily shaken. Not of anything. But this man's gaze crawled down her spine like skeleton fingers – cold and unwelcome. Let them whisper, she thought. Let them stare. By the time the iceberg hit, her plan would already be finished.


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