



**RIVER OF STORIES**  
**WINNING ENTRIES**  
**PRIMARY SHORT STORIES**  
**2023**



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**CONTENTS**

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**Year 3-4**

**Joint Winner:** Aurora Pike, Trinity Anglican College – *My Birthday*

**Joint Winner:** Cooper Ceeney, The Scots School Albury – *The Boy's Motorbike Day*

**Runner-up:** Eloise Rogers, The Scots School, Albury – *The Dog and the Mystery Frog*

**Runner-up:** Alexis Stevens, Beechworth Montessori School – *The Queensland Adventures*

**Years 5-6**

**Winner:** Patrick Clancy, St Patrick's Parish School Albury – *The Voice in the Night*

**Runner-up:** Alicia Garley, St Patrick's Parish School Albury – *The History of Hume and Hovell*

**Runner-up:** Pyper Battocchio, St Patrick's Parish School Albury – *How the past inspired me*

**Runner-up:** Layla Matthews, Beechworth Montessori School - *Vandalism*

**Years 5-6 Short Stories Encouragement Awards**

Tex Wallen, St Patrick's Parish School Albury - *The Night Albury Turned Their Lights On*

Busby Wraith-Quinn, St Patrick's Parish School Albury - *Hume Wall Breach*

Amelie Ledger, Barnawartha Primary School – *Camping Chaos*

Sophia Graham , St Patrick's Parish School Albury – *The Divide*

Jhett Mark, St Patrick's Parish School Albury - *Dam Wall Mystery*

Olivia Burke, St Patrick's Parish School Albury - *Gretel the Crow*

Ruhee Mohammed , Trinity Anglican College - *Where did Mother go?*

Benjamin Bocquet, St Patrick's Parish School Albury - *Time machine*

Sophia Graham, St Patrick's Parish School Albury - *A Disappearance, Or Something Worse*

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**YEAR 3-4 CATEGORY**

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**Year 3-4 Joint Winner:** Aurora Pike [Trinity Anglican College]

**Title:** *My Birthday*

This is the story of my birthday. Birthdays are pretty special, but mine are super special because I'm a prank baby. You're probably wondering "what's a prank baby?" It's when you are born on the 1<sup>st</sup> April, which we all know is April Fools Day. This means I'm allowed to prank my parents and not get into trouble. But not this year. This year was different, my parents got me first...

This is how it all went down. It was a morning like any other. First, we got up and got into our school uniforms after my sister finally found her shoes and Dad had finished his "huuuuurry uuuuup" dance. Heading off to school there were a lot of things in the car boot. That should have been my first clue, but Mum was one step ahead of me and had a cover story. She said that Dad was donating stuff to the charity shop. Then we dropped off our dogs at different places. That should have been my second clue! Again, my Mum and Dad had a cover story. They said our dog George with his sore paw had to go to Grandpa's because he's a doctor, so he could help his foot and Poppy was trying out a new puppy daycare place. I should have guessed something was going on.

We started driving to school, and driving. And driving. I thought dad was just a really bad sat-nav. He kept on saying, "we're nearly there". After an hour or so I was really bored. Out of my window I saw sheep, farms, trees, and more sheep. Finally we came to a city. Just then I remembered earlier my sister said, "hey this looks like the way to Melbourne". I couldn't believe it. I thought we were on the way to school, the long way. Then I saw the big green sign saying 'Melbourne'. I was so excited! Now I got why Dad had done such a big "huuuuurry up" dance.

I had been pranked. My birthday was tomorrow and here I was in Melbourne (in my school uniform) wondering "how did this just happen?"

The next day was my big Melbourne Birthday. I got presents which explains the stuff in the boot and we went to the Zoo. For my birthday dinner there was another surprise. It was my cool Aunty Kate. Next, we went somewhere I'd been wanting to go for forever, but I'm only 9 so forever is really only the last 9 years. It was Luna Park! I was at Luna Park with my cool Aunty Kate and my family, in Melbourne on my birthday!! (Don't worry, I wasn't in my school uniform anymore.)

The next day was the real birthday surprise! My Dad took me to the Harry Potter stage show. It was unbelievable! The whole birthday was unbelievable. My favourite part was that I normally prank my parents on my birthday, but this year they got me!! Just wait till next year... 😊

**Year 3-4 Joint Winner:** Cooper Ceeney [The Scots School Albury]

**Title:** *The Boy's Motorbike Day*

There were two boys called Ted and Coop. One morning they woke up and were unsure what they were going to do today. Coop said, "let's have breakfast and think of a good idea while we are eating". Ted said "should we go fishing? What about swimming in the pool? I have a better idea, let's ride our motorbikes!"

The boys scrambled out of the house and sprinted down the dirt driveway towards the shed. Ted reached for the key that was hanging off the gum tree which was on the left of the shed. Ted unlocked the metal roller door and pushed it up. Coop used his hands to feel for the lightswitch on the inside of the shed. The lights flickered on and there were the bikes side by side. The bike on the left was a shiny red Honda125 and that was Ted's. On the right was Coop's blue Yamaha250. They walked over to their bikes and checked for fuel and oil. Ted asked, "Does your motorbike need more petrol and oil?" Coop replied "yeah mine does, does yours?" "yeah mine does too, I will get the oil and the petrol off the shelf." The boys continued to look around their bikes to see if there was anything else wrong. "Mine is all good, how is yours?" asked Coop. "Mine is good too," replied Ted.

The boys started the motorbikes up and raced out of the shed's roller door. Coop led the way and Ted followed close behind him. "This wind is so hot!" Yelled Coop, as he looked behind him at Ted who was also on his motorbike. As they approached the location where the track is, the jumps seemed smaller than normal. Some of the jumps weren't even there, which Coop thought was strange. Coop sped up to get a closer look, as they got closer Coop yelled out "the dirt track has been washed away." We can't go through the river... We will have to build a bridge or a jump! The boys turned off their bikes and searched the area for any supplies to help them build their way across. They found nothing besides a few small sticks. "These small sticks won't help us at all," said Coop. Ted replied "I think we will have to ride back to the shed and get our supplies there." Both Coop and Ted ran back to their bikes, started them up and took off towards the shed.

The boys pulled up to the shed, Coops bike did a small skid as he pulled up. They scrambled into the shed looking for any supplies. The boys found long blocks of wood and square off cuts of metal. The boys were stoked that they had found something to help them, however they quickly realised they couldn't carry the materials on their motorbikes. Coop asked "how are we going to get the wood and metal to the track?" Ted sighed and looked around the shed. "I know!!" he shouted. "We can take the buggy."

They loaded up the buggy and headed down towards the track, leaving the bikes behind. "We will come back for the bikes when we are finished building," said Coop. The boys built the bridge and spent the afternoon riding their motorbikes.

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**Year 3-4 Runner-Up:** Eloise Rogers [The Scots School Albury]

**Title:** *The Dog and the Mystery Frog*

'Crunch... Crunch... Chick... Chick... Crunch... Crunch... Chick... Chick... Ouch!'

"Who said that?" Asked Fuji, the grey, curly haired Schnoodle. He looked around, his ears flopping from side to side, but he couldn't see what was making the very strange noise.

It was a sunny Autumn morning, the leaves had changed from green to brown and were falling all over the track that weaved around the Wetlands.

Fuji and his owner Sarah were on a peaceful walk, breathing in the fresh air, and watching the river at the Wetlands move softly and effortlessly in the soft breeze. Until, Fuji stepped on something that was slimy, wet, brownish-green, and bumpy, something very small. Fuji slowly lifted his paw and hopped back in shock "Ruff!", he was hoping the 'thing' wouldn't hurt him. The creature did not run away, instead it was staring back at him and then all of a sudden it started shouting at Fuji "Watch where you are walking!".

Fuji's owner Sarah, suddenly pulled Fuji's lead and said "Come on Fuji, let's go". All Sarah heard was Fuji barking fiercely at the ground.

"Yeah Fuji, listen to your human!" said the slimy creature, who stuck its tongue out.

Fuji replied "What are you?". The creature made a funny noise 'chick chick' and then jumped into the water.

The next morning it was raining lightly, the sky was dark. This did not stop Fuji and Sarah going on their daily walk at the Wetlands. Plus, he was super keen to find out what the tiny brownish coloured creature was he met yesterday, he was thinking that it was an alien.

When Fuji arrived at the Wetlands, he started his walk on the path. This time, he was on a longer lead and very excited to explore. As Fuji was sniffing the long grass, he found a group of the tiny creatures sitting in a circle, one of them looked like it was doing a magic trick, as it was blowing a bubble out of its neck!

Fuji crept up to take a closer look. All of a sudden "AAAAHHHHHH!!!!!!" yelled one of the small brownish-grey creatures, "A monster!". Fuji ran to Sarah with a face that told her that he was frightened. Sarah was worried that Fuji was hurt, so she walked over to the grassy area. To Fuji's surprise, Sarah made a sound that he hears when she is eating her favourite treat "EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE".

Fuji was now extra confused, there was no way these aliens were like the brown treat that Sarah eats at night time.

"Oh my goodness!! Fuji! Look what you have found! These are tiny precious frogs! They are endangered, they are Sloane's Froglets. Can you see the orange spots?". All of a sudden the frogs jumped and disappeared into the water.

Fuji sighed with relief. The mystery of the Wetlands creature was solved. He was also very happy that there were no aliens at the Wetlands, well not today anyway!



**Year 3-4 Runner-Up:** Alexis Stevens [Beechworth Montessori School]

**Title:** *The Queensland Adventures*

### **Chapter 1 Queensland**

WOW! The plane just took off. I can't believe I'm going to Queensland. Mum bought us a treat to have on the plane. I love these lollies, wait hang on, is that a lollipop? My favourite type is strawberry, yum!

"How many more hours Mum?" I asked.

"You have only been on this plane for five minutes!" exclaimed Mum.

"AALLEEXXIISS" screamed Ava.

"Hi" I say.

"You are so cheeky, I can't believe you popped an egg in my shoe" said Ava.

One hour later, finally, we are here. It's so BIG!

"Are we going to the Airbnb?" I asked.

"Remember we are celebrating Huxdens birthday at aunties!" Mum reminded us.

When we get there we all sing:

"Happy birthday to you

Happy birthday to you

Happy birthday dear Huxden

Happy birthday to you."

After lots of fun we all go to sleep.

The next day, after a fantastic breakfast of chocolate chip pancakes, we go outside to play with my toys.

"AALLEEXXIISS," screamed Ava, "You are so dead!"

"Help, help, help, help, I can't believe you did it again!" screamed Ava.

"Finally, I lost her" I said.

"Alexis!" said Mum. "What I said there something I need to tell you, okay? We're going to need a drum roll please..." "Movie world what did you just say we're going to movie world?"

"Obviously," stated Mum. "Are we there yet?" "No!" "How about now?" "Still no". "Wow, is that it?" "Yes isn't it big?" "Yeah, I am amazed! Can I go on the Batman Green Lantern and Road Runner?" "Yes," Mum said. Road Runner first, said Huxden. No that is too slow! No it isn't. Yes it is. No Yes No Yes No Fine Yay I'm so scared said Huxden yeah it's totally scary

I said. Can we go on the Batman? I'm not going! said Huxden. Well I'm going to make you go on the Batman cause I went on your ride! I said. It's too scary! Fine, okay. I'm going on the Batman - it looks quite scary though. I'll go on with Ava, okay. I see why that was scary.

I am going to the lolly shop buy all the lollies. Alexis, you can't buy that many lollies. I'll buy a Wonka bar gummy worms lolly pop. Okay, said mum. Let's go home. I meant to the Airbnb.

I said. Can we go on the Batman? I'm not going! said Huxden. Well I'm going to make you go on the Batman cause I went on your ride! I said. It's too scary! Fine, okay. I'm going on the Batman - it looks quite scary though. I'll go on with Ava, okay. I see why that was scary.

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### **The Next Day**

Let's go to the beach. "Okay" mum said. The water feel so nice. "Lets play volleyball. Yeah I won!", I said. "Because you know I'm the best!"

"Mum, where are we going tomorrow? To our house? I mean the Airbnb for Nannas birthday?" "Okay" I said "Let's go".

Yay, it is so much fun I had to go home. Let's go to sleep.

Alexis, Alexis the people are here.

"What! You never told me what the time was"

"Sorry. Get dressed".

Is there, Solo, cake, chocolate, pizza, salt and vinegar chips?

Yes!  
I ate them all!

**The Next day**

Alexis, we are going home – home.  
Yay. I miss home. "What's the time?"  
1 o'clock.  
What! That's so early!  
Stop being a fuss pot Alexis, okay?  
Can I sleep on the plane?  
Sure.  
Yay!

**One hour later**

Alexis waky, waky.  
What? Are we here?  
What, no we are not!  
We are landing.  
Let's get off.

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**YEAR 5-6 CATEGORY**

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**Year 5-6 Winner:** Patrick Clancy [St Patrick's Parish School Albury]

**Title:** *The Voice in the Night*

**Prologue**

According to town folklore, an ancient civilization once grew and thrived in the forgotten woods. Once, a steam train passed through the fog. Once, no light shone, nor escaped from the forest. But one day, a child's wailing broke the silence .

**The Voice In the Night.****Chapter 1: Only the wind knows.**

Fire blazed throughout the empty, lifeless, void of a forest. Even though the crackling was booming, the scream of the injured child deafening, and the howl of the evil wind vociferous, still no one heard the cacophony. Was this disaster purposed? Was this destiny? Or was it

something else entirely? As the echoes of the unfortunate events clouded and frightened the boy's head, nobody knew the answers, except the cold, unforgiving howl of the wind...

### **Chapter 2: The Voice and the Spirit.**

I awoke with an abrupt start. The icy wind twisted and funnelled around me. The sky was black, the moon was full and eerie, and my steel watch had blood and deep scratch marks throughout it. I didn't know where I was, or what I was doing beforehand. But there was one thing I did know.

I knew that a high, piercing voice warbled out, tauntingly, "Hello Shaun, Shaun, Shaun!" As sudden as it came, the voice disappeared into the cold, unforgiving night. So my name is Shaun? Bit of a funny name; it sounds like the type of thing you would scream if you stubbed your foot.

A glimmer of light caught my attention as I turned. An old, rundown shack stood right ahead of me! I was sure that the shack wasn't there before.

As I crept closer and closer to the shack, crows cawed, and the ground creaked as though it was made of timber. A sudden memory struck me, of learning that a group of crows was scientifically known as a "murder". Goosebumps and chills shivered down my spine. Something was very, very, extremely wrong here...

### **Chapter 3: Where Pride Once Stood.**

A gale of wind apparently caused a pile of soggy leaves to rustle and move, despite being too heavy to float. As I tiptoed, every snap of twigs, every whisper of wind, all felt part of something much, much more...

I stumbled across a crumbled statue with its head sadly lying detached and ignored on the dank forest floor.

A rusty, bronze plaque weakly gleamed in the moonlight, reading: "Alexander Hamilton Hume: Founder of Albury."

An image weakly flickered through my mind, of what it once was, of a sunny day with the statue upright and proudly shining. The present day statue was just a corpse, a shadow, a memory of what pride had once stood there.

### **Chapter 4: Excluded from Society.**

Another corpse sat right in front of me now. It was the old, rickety mansion, with cobwebs covering the filthy and overflowing gutters. The shell of a home had loomed over the whole forest for decades, excluded from society.

Curiosity overcame me, and I found myself drawing a wary breath, clenching my gut, and twisting the doorknob.

### **Chapter 5: So Close, But Yet So Far.**

As I tiptoed into the cobweb covered manor, crawling with rats, I heard a high pitched shriek of malicious laughter. I spun round, ready to bolt out of this place, but to my horror, I found that the door had been shut and bolted tight!

A window smashed somewhere on a higher storey, leaving the echo of tinkling glass. I slowly ventured throughout the main hall, up the stairs and into a long, overstretching, corridor. Somehow, I had the sinking feeling that escape was so close, but yet so far. But little did I know, that so was my demise...



**Chapter 6: A tale of unfortunate Events.**

Down the corridor, there came a clanking and rustling, the type only belonging to things not of this world. I crept away from the caterwauling and closer to where the shattering had been, my heart thumping harder and harder with each nervous step I took.

For some reason, I felt a feeling of unease deep in the pit of my stomach. It was like a liquid, swirling around my bowels, like a ship in a vicious storm. As the passengers of this ship would be, I was feeling deeply nauseous. What was going to happen? And who or what was in the centre of this vitriolic tale of unfortunate events?

**Chapter 7: Something From The Devil's Nightmares.**

After what seemed like an eternity, I found myself right before an ash brown, antique door with a finely carved metal doorknob. The feeling of nausea worsened, but that was the least of my worries.

The doorknob began to rattle, then shake as if the most violent hurricane was inside it, and eventually turned itself, emitting an ear-splitting screech as it opened.

What I saw that bleak night has scarred me and traumatised me for the rest of my life.

A reanimated corpse hung upside down from the ceiling, its head twisted 360 degrees to look at me. It spoke in the same taunting, spiteful cackle I had heard many times before. "Hello Shaun!" maniacally giggled the creature.

My brain couldn't take this anymore. This was too much. This was beyond terrifying, petrifying or anything. This was ripped straight from the devil's nightmares.

**Chapter 8: Untouchable**

I scrambled for the door, bolting so fast that I smashed right through it. I scarcely escaped the horrifying thing chasing me. The sides of the forest burst into an inferno as I passed, the creature hot on my heels.

Finally, after all this time, I found daylight, as I pulled free of the overgrown vines that surrounded the forest. The creature hissed and retreated into the forest, leaving me alone. At last. I was safe.

A couple of days later, I heard a high pitched voice cackling;

"Shaun, Shaun, Shaun!"

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**Year 5-6 Runner-Up:** Alicia Garley [St Patrick's Parish School Albury]

**Title:** *The History of Hume and Hovell*

Hume and Hovell were explorers back in the 1800's. They went on an expedition from Sydney to Corio Bay on the Victorian coast in the space of sixteen weeks. Their expedition was to find more grazing land for the colony, though this story is told by a bird.

Hi, my name is Kali the kookaburra! I live my days as a happy flying bird swooping snakes and eating them up! But that all changed when I spotted something moving on the other side of the river. At first I thought it was Dolly the pelican who always loves to copy my moves like trying to eat or scare snakes or even try to laugh like I do! She even tries to keep up with me when I'm trying to hunt. But this time it wasn't Dolly, they were people.

There were about 6 men with different animals that neither I nor the other animals have seen before. There was one animal as tall as a baby sized tree, and another animal with a pointed nose with a curved tail and a forever panting tongue! And those men! They were very different compared to the men I have seen on our riverbank! I flew closer to these different people, but they didn't notice me perching on an overhanging branch just above their heads.

Suddenly one man stepped forward without warning and I quickly held in the urge to panic since I thought he was coming for me, but even if he did spot me, he was too busy slipping on a piece of mud and landing on his back with a sickening...THUD! Seeing that man sprawled out on the ground made me laugh my head off! I laughed so hard I almost toppled off my branch and fell to my death. But the man did not stay on the ground for long as he was clearly embarrassed. He quickly stepped over the mud and tried to continue walking in a dignified manner toward the river. Though I did spot the other men smothering laughs and pointing to the other man's back which was now dirty brown with mud.

I quickly flew back to the river to warn all the birds that weird men were coming and suddenly panic broke out among the birds. As they screamed "AHH WE'RE GONNA' DIE!" But the less dramatic birds whispered, "nice knowing ya Petey," or "I really will miss you when I'm gone everybody." But still, it was a complete and utter madhouse. Then suddenly we heard the low talking of those men, as somebody said, "They're here," in a dark low tone.

As the men burst through the trees into a clearing on the other side of the river, they were shocked to discover that 500 birds were lined up facing away from them in preparation to hot tail outta there. But the men didn't find it that weird because they seemed to be staying for the night as they set up a tent and fell fast asleep, some sleeping in the tent and some sleeping under the stars bathing in soft moonlight.

Some of the birds relaxed knowing that the men knew them no harm and went back to midnight fishing. All was calm until the morning. When we were all woken up to the sound of clanging. We all flew down to the river where some birds were still fishing for food. Then all the birds saw a very weird sight that shocked everyone including me! The men were trying to cross the river using their supplies to get across! The weird animals were even being pulled across using ropes too! After a long stressed-filled wait, the men finally crossed the river pulling each other up and the animals too.

When they all got up onto the riverbank, they started moving again toward the great old river red gum that overlooks the river. One of the men stepped out toward the tree with a knife and started to carve some sort of Alien language into the solid wood of the great tree but I, Kali the kookaburra know a little bit of English so I could make out the words like 'Captain William Hovell' and '17th of November 1824'.

And as quickly as they got here they were gone. Soon after that a lot more people like those men came but they stayed for much longer, and they started to cut down trees to make room for buildings and homes. Soon all of the animals, the kangaroos, the koalas and (most importantly) birds. Me and my family did our best to get rid of them, dive bombing them, stealing their food, trying to destroy their houses, but none of it worked. The worst part was that people were capturing birds for pets! One gloomy day came and they took Dolly. I can still remember her screeching when they took her away, now she's in a house living with dreadful humans feeding her fish from the river.

Then the day came when we had to go since the humans had taken over. A lot of the birds decided not to go, which are the birds you see everyday today. But a lot came with us who agreed with us that humans were awful. So we left while the sun was setting, so over the

hills we went. We flew for many days stopping for food and water sometimes too. Then one day we came across a beautiful valley, it had lots of food and water and there were no humans! YES!

And me and all of my friends and family lived happily ever after.

P.S-(Kali) Do not under any circumstances make it your life's mission to come and find us because you'll probably wreck that too! We are very happy with no humans finding us! Now back to being happy, I hope you enjoyed the story! Bye! Kali out.

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**Year 5-6 Runner-Up:** Pyper Battocchio [St Patrick's Parish School Albury]

**Title:** *How the past inspired me*

### **Chapter 1**

It is the 30 June 2023 and I was scavenging through my attic when I found a torn up diary from 1824. When I was blowing off the dust I found it was from my great, great, great grandfather Hamilton Hume. I brought it to my mum and she said I could read it.

It has been 3 months since we left Sydney as we continued our journey south. The trip was arduous, with many breathtaking sights to be seen along the way. Myself, William Hovell and our pack horse, arrived at what our maps called 'Crossing Point'. A splendid, beautiful river that was free flowing and majestic. I decided to name this beautiful river after my father, Andrew Hume.

The year is 1824 and here I am camping alongside a river that will provide water for many generations to come. I set up our campsite next to the river whilst William collected firewood for us. "Hey Hamilton, come look at this" ', as I walked along the track I came across a huge tree. "Wow Hovell, what a find". We were circling around the tree thinking, "what should we call it Hume" as soon as Hovell said that I immediately knew what to call it "how about the Hovell tree"

My name is Pyper Hume and I have green eyes and brown hair just like my great, great, great grandfather. I am 11 years old and was born on the 30th of November 2011. A lot of my friends say I'm kind, funny, loyal and honest. But I personally think I'm adventurous and I found a whole page in this diary describing all about Hamilton Hume, so let's read.

I was born near Parramatta on 19 June 1797. At the age of fifteen I moved with my family to a large piece of land near Appin. From the age of seventeen I began my interest in exploring the world. I started exploring the land south of the Berrima region, I was exploring a bit more when I eventually got recognised for my skills and knowledge of the area and governor Macquarie had asked me to take part in many inland journeys to lots of different places like lake Bathurst, the Goulburn area and to south of Jervis Bay.

### **Chapter 2**

It was very interesting to read about that and it reminded me of myself because I really like to explore different places. That paragraph was the end of his writing in the diary but there were still pages left so I had an idea.

I invited my boyfriend Luca Borriss to come over. Luca has blue eyes, brown blonde hair and loves to skateboard. He is funny, kind, adventurous and can be a bit rough when he is playing with his friends. I asked him if he could remember any of our adventures together

and if they were worthy to be put in the diary, and he said one of my favourite stories together.

We were on our way to the great barrier reef from Sydney in the car which was a very tedious journey of 7 HOURS! Me and Luca were in the back eating nearly all the junk food before we even got on the highway but that is what kids do so you can't blame us. After many hours of electronics, board games and really just being bored we were only halfway there!!

By the 6 hour mark we were half asleep when we hit a kangaroo. The car spun out of control and we crashed into a tree." Omg is everyone ok" mum screamed out. She turned her head to see me and Luca lying there knocked out. "Call an ambulance, Call an ambulance" she screamed but Luckily she didn't because we were faking It All along. That day we got in really big trouble, like really big trouble.

We eventually got to the Great Barrier Reef and it was really fun exploring the place. We saw dolphins, turtles, crocodiles and sharks. We were walking down the beach when we noticed it was starting to get dark and couldn't find mum. We looked everywhere but couldn't find her or our cabin and we thought we would have to sleep outside for the night.

The tide was coming in and it was negative 8 degrees outside. We were freezing and I was nearly in tears. After a few hours we finally found mum and she apologised for the inconvenience and told us to always stay by her side.

"That day we learnt a very important life lesson didn't we Luca" He nodded in agreement and we went on to remember other stories.

### Chapter 3

The pages in the book were at least 198 years old so they were very hard to write on with a pen so we had to get mum to write with a feather so the paper didn't get wrecked and rip up. It was interesting to see how they write with feathers, how they dip it in the ink and the angle they have to write on. It would be cool if we learnt to write with those these days.

That writing gave me an idea to make a play about the olden days and everything they did back then. I asked around for ideas and for people who would like to participate in the play. I got a few people in all different age groups to join and we got straight to practising.

Two weeks later we were ready. We stuck posters up on poles and told everyone to come. It started at 6:00 and we saw heaps of people waiting outside and the nerves started piling in. I was shaking and crying but everyone comforted me. I was so scared to go out there but I pushed myself out there and did the best I could.

I sang every song and danced my heart away. Then the next thing I know the show is over. Everyone gave a standing ovation and left as we partied and thought about the good old days.

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**Year 5-6 Runner-Up:** Layla Matthews [Beechworth Montessori School]

**Title:** *Vandalism*

I open the book, take a deep breath, and start to write. I cannot believe this. I'm vandalizing an original signed copy of an L.M Montgomery book. This is unbelievable. Who would have thought that me, Aziza Bianca-Harper Walker, the quietest girl in the entire Paisley's Primary School, would be the one to commit such a horrific crime.

When I heard of this competition called "Playing with Story", I thought it would be really funny to literally play with the story. I would write all over it. It would be an abstract piece of art, my signature feat.

But now that I'm doing it right here, right now, little bits of doubt creep through my head and down into my heart, where they get permanently lodged, creating an aching pain in my chest. But I will keep on writing. My gut ties itself in a knot. But I will keep on writing. A hurricane of worries and doubt swirls around me, trapping me in the eye of the storm. But I will keep on writing. Then, my thoughts deliver the killing blow; Would Victoria do this sort of thing?

Victoria is my older sister. Well, she was my older sister. She died in a car crash when she was sixteen. My entire family has never completely got over her horrific death. She had just got her learner's license. She was driving around the block with Mum in the passenger seat and me in the back, when a delivery truck suddenly swerved around the corner, and there was a head on collision. There was nothing Victoria could do about it. She died in the crash. Mum and I survived, we only had to stay in hospital for three weeks.

The thought of this is terrifying. I think; My sister died, my very own sister, my only sister died, and yet I have gone against her very words and done something horrible and wrong like this. It's like I have given up on her and every memory of her. I drop the book. It makes a horrible, deafening thud on the floor. I weep. I cry. I wail. I whimper. I'm a teary, messy excuse for a human being. My tears drip onto the floor, splashing and creating a miniscule puddle. What is wrong with me?

It's funny, because ever since Victoria died, I have started to do these sorts of things, like doing these dumb jokes that have no meaning, and the thought of what she would have thought has stopped me from doing it. Every single time it has.

I suppose it's because of a memory of her from seven years ago. I was three, she was nine. We were playing in the garden together, and Mum brought us out lunch, which was lentil salad and roast potatoes. Victoria gave me the last roast potato. I asked her in my cutesy two-year-old voice, 'Why did you give me the last 'tato, Victowia? You could have had it yoursself.' (See what I mean about the cutesy two-year-old voice?)

'Well, Aziza,' Victoria replied, smiling at me, 'I find it best, when it isn't at the expense of yourself, to always be kind, and never do the wrong thing.' That was her motto, her protocol that she gently enforced upon herself. I wish I was as kind as she was.

So, I make a pledge, a promise to myself that I will follow her protocol. I will make sure everyone remembers the happiness Victoria brought into all of our lives, that we will remember the joyful times and not be stuck in the chains of grief forever. But most importantly of all, I make a promise to myself that Victoria's spirit will live on through my actions. As I make this promise, I can feel Victoria's spirit around me, and I know that I have done the right thing. I cry some more, but this time the tears flow through me freely this time, like they are flowing through me for a good reason, to give me strength.

Tears are good in this way; they give you power and goodwill in a twisted way. They make you keep your promises. They make you more meaningful in your apologies. But most importantly, they let out all that emotion that may have been locked up inside of you, and

you know that eventually they will come out through anything that may provoke you, like me, for instance, with my vandalism of an ancient book episode. But I know I have done the right thing.

Fourteen years later

I was right about that pledge! Here I'm, fourteen years down the track, aged twenty-four, working for the United Nations. This was Victoria's dream job. She always talked about it. She would say to me, 'One day, Aziza, I'm going to join the United Nations and help refugees in Africa. It would be incredible! You could come with me, and we could resettle people into America, Australia, and Europe and- '

'I don't want to do that, Victoria,' I would reply, 'I want to be an engineer.'

But here I'm now, my flight on its way to Africa to supply rations for all of the refugees in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, to give a water supply to all the people in the Yida refugee camp in South Sudan, to find refugees to relocate in America in Pugnido refugee camp. I want all of these people in these camps to know that I'm here to help, and hopefully one day, I will find a home in a safe country for all of them to live in.

My flight lands at the Moi International Airport at two in the morning. The air is slightly humid and there's a little wind, Victoria's favourite type of weather. Thank you, Victoria, I think gratefully, Thank you for everything. Victoria may be gone, but she was still in my heart, where she will be forever.

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## PRIMARY SHORT STORIES ENCOURAGEMENT AWARDS

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**Encouragement Award:** Tex Wallen [St Patrick's Parish School Albury]

**Title:** *The Night Albury Turned Their Lights On*

"V1! V2! Rotate!" said the copilot after achieving takeoff speed.

"Gear up," I said after getting 100 feet up.

"Yes we're in second place", replied the copilot after takeoff. We were reaching speeds of 150 km/h.

My copilot then asked, "Do you want me to put the coordinates into the autopilot?"

"No, I can fly the plane manually for now. How far is it?" I asked.

"19,800 km capitan." replied my copilot.

"ah... yes, 19,800 km, of course."

At this point we were sitting at 12,000 feet in the air. We were catching 1st place ever so slightly, 3rd place was just a couple metres behind us. I have done this race eight times now and I still haven't won. I'm kinda annoyed about that. I hope I can win this one not only for me but also because this is my copilot's first time being in the race and I want to win for him.

**Tap Tap Tap.** The sound of little raindrops hitting the outside of the plane started slowly at first and then increased in intensity. The rain was getting heavier and heavier by the second. **BOOM** the sound of thunder rattled my whole plane, scarring and absolutely terrifying my copilot. **Crack,** lightning filled the air, lighting up the whole night's sky. My copilot started

to get a little worried and said "what if the lightning hits us" I said "if it does we will have to do a crash landing." This didn't really help the situation. This just made him more worried **BANG** more thunder was heard then followed by more lighting and then my copilot screaming "Ahhh what are we doing flying a plane in a lightning storm." "Calm down" I said "nothing is going to happen" he started to calm down just a little bit then there was another lightning strike he was getting so scared. "Relax, we will be there soon," I told him. He said, "Ok I'll try to calm down."

"Just look out the window, look at all the buildings," I said, trying to calm him down even more. The rain looked like it was dying down a little before a bolt of lightning hit the plane and one of the engines cut off. I tried turning the plane's engines off then starting them again but it did not turn on.

As calmly as I could I said, "Use the emergency engine turn on."

"Captain, it's not working!" my copilot screamed at me in a panic.

"We are just going to have to just glide until we get to the closest airport and try and figure something out." I responded as calmly as possible.

The sky was pitch black and the only thing illuminating the sky was the lightning every so often and the engine which now was on fire. Black smoke poured out of the engine. Now I was really worried so I picked up the radio and called out "Can anyone hear me?" "They can't hear us" I said with a sigh, "we are too far away from the starting point"

At this point we had lost most of our momentum so I had to aim the plane down then pull back up to keep moving. It was tedious work flying this plane but I enjoyed it. Then we began to nose dive. I had to pull the joystick towards me hard. So hard that my hands were aching. We managed to level it out. My copilot started trying to start the engines again and the engine that was not on fire started but we were losing fuel two times as fast as normal. I said "Yes! we can probably go until we reach another airport."

At this point we were well in last place but that's not what I cared about I just cared about making it out of the plane alive. That's probably what my copilot was thinking as well.

**Hummmmm.** Tex was woken by a noise outside. It wasn't the usual mooing of cows he was used to hearing in the middle of the night on his dairy farm out in Tawonga. He threw the blankets off him then a shiver went down his spine **Brrrrrr** it was freezing. Goose bumps started appearing on his arms and legs. It was like being in a bathtub filled with ice but I pushed through the pain and got up out of bed and walked over the window and looked outside and a plane was flying over. I noticed the plane was from the plane race but what was it doing all the way out here in the middle of nowhere. So I went over the phone and looked through my phone book until I found the right phone number. Then I found the ABC news number, so I dialled it and told them about the plane.

After receiving the call, the race headquarters contacted Albury news sub editor Clinton Mott, asking him to signal A-L-B-U-R-Y in Morse code by turning the town's street lights on and off.

"Captain! Look!" Exclaimed the copilot. In the distance, the lights flickering on and off. "It's Morse code. They want us to land in Albury."

"This is 2CO radio announcer Arthur Newnham. This is an urgent call to all residents of Albury. We have a plane in trouble and need all cars to go to the Albury Racecourse to light a makeshift runway with your headlights."

"There is the runway! Let's circle the runway twice and we will drop some parachute flares."  
"Captain! They are using cars for the runway to guide us down."

It was 1:15 am on October 24, 1934 and the Uiver landed safely in Albury. It still remains as one of the great folk laws of Albury's history. A night when its residents came together to help someone in need.

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**Encouragement Award:** Busby Wraith-Quinn [St Patrick's Parish School Albury]

**Title:** *The Hume Wall Breach*

"AHHHH! This game is broken!" Yelled Buzz at the xbox game on the TV, after he lost.

"Bang, Bang, Bang, Bang." Banged the walls as the bunk beds clashed against them.

"Stop shaking the beds Mitchell!!!" Blamed Buzz

"It's not me!" Yelled Mitch unconvincingly. Buzz and mitch went back and forth for a bit until Mitch's phone rang.....

Mitchell groaned and sat up out of his bed and picked up the phone slowly and answered it.

"Hello?" Spoke Mitchell.

"Hi Mitch, it's Mum."

"Hi, what do you need?" Questioned Mitch.

"Did you feel that shake earlier?" Asked mum worriedly.

"Yeh Buzz blamed it on me. I told him it wasn't me! What was it?"

"It was an earthquake. Now they are saying the Hume Dam wall might break. I need you to get dressed, pack some food in a bag and get up to the Nail Can Hill quickly, and don't forget the dog! Go now or the whole area will be flooded!" Mum spoke with her voice trembling, worried for her and her kids.

Buzz and Mitch were startled by their mum's voice and quickly got clothes and packed some apples, bananas and a box of barbeque shapes. The two brothers walked with pace across to the hill, looking a bit strange to the people who don't know what's going on. As they reached the steep bits their adrenaline kicked in, causing them to go much faster under the pressure upon them. They reached the top and tried to take their minds of the situation, sat down, watched their phone, and ate some shapes.

The boys had a laugh and then the realisation sank in, what if the wall did break and the whole of Albury flooded. Who would they lose? Family friends? They just sat in silence and looked at the great view of Albury upon them. The dog Duke seemed to calm them down until the moment they had been fearing finally came.

A loud rumble came from the direction of the Hume Dam. A fast 5m-10m wave came racing in, it looked like nothing could stop it.



"Oh crap! Mitch, look at that!" Yelled Buzz scared for his family and friends. They immediately put the Duke on a lead and tied him up to a nearby tree. They sat on the wood seat and watched the destruction.

"Hahahahahaha" Laughed the kookaburra at the wrong time.

"What are you laughing at?! It's not funny!" Yelled Buzz.

Then, waking the boys from their sad daydream was a phone ringing. You could only just hear it because of the loud waves, so it took them a while to pick it up.

"IT'S MUM! She's ok!" said Mitch, happier than ever.

"Hi mum!" Yelled Mitch

"Hi Mitch. Are you ok, have you got Buzz and the dog?" Said Mum panting and stressed.

"Were good, great actually, what about you, you don't sound very good."

"I'm ok I have Bill (Dad/Step Dad) with me. We're on the top of East Albury hill." Spoke Mum.

"Woah, you're on the other side of Albury. Maybe we could meet up somewhere? We'll have to go all the way around Albury though." Said Buzz butting into the call.

"We will worry about that in about an hour just stay safe and preserve your food, for you, and the dog!" Slowly spoke mum clearly. The boys watched their house being crushed in silence, with salty tasting tears slowly dripping down their faces.

An hour went past, waiting for water to flow a way. The boys rang their mum and asked where they should meet up. Buzz and Mitch's mum said to go the long way around town to try and avoid as much water as possible. She said to keep the dog on leash and stay together at all times! The brothers began their very long hike. "Ok, we just passed Hamilton Valley, so we're a quarter way through our hike." mumbled Mitch, gasping for air.

"Ahhhh. How much longer left to go?" Asked Buzz, sighing in exhaustion, as they passed Springdale heights.

"Not long left now" Answered Mitch, too tired to talk.

Then all of a sudden

Buzz heard some shuffling in the dry, hot, humid summer bushes. A brown snake jumped out of the bushes and tried to attack Buzz. Buzz quickly reacted and grabbed a nearby rock. He then tried out some crocodile dundee moves and jumped behind the snake and started smashing the snake in the head with his rock.

"Holy crap! Ewww! Its brains smell disgusting!" Yelled Mitchell not believing what he just saw. Buzz had gotten a shock, but all round he was fine, which was quite spectacular. They kept on their journey until they met their first obstacle. A large fast stream carrying sharp skin piercing debris.

"Ugh, yuck! I think someone's toilet is in that stream, and they didn't flush!"

The debris was the remains of Bunnings Warehouse and some bits of destroyed houses.

The boys both knew there's nothing that could stop the sharp, fast moving objects.

"What are we gonna do now?" Groaned Buzz.

"Well, looks like we'll have to find the end of the stream then go around it. The boys walked along the stream for only 10 minutes until they found the end.

"Finally!" Sighed Mitch.

"It was only like a 10 minute walk you lazy donkey" Stated Buzz, acting like he wasn't puffed.

The boys continued on their journey to meet their parents on East Albury Hill.

"I see the hill!" Screeched Buzz. Buzz immediately started sprinting towards the hill. Mitch told him to wait up but he ignored him.

"MUM! DAD! I'M COMING!" Yelled Buzz.

Him and his parents locked eyes on each other. They both had no energy but still had the big heart to sprint to each other.

"Hello! Wait where's Mitch?" Question Mum, getting worried.

"Ahh he's fine, he just couldn't keep up with me. Are you guys ok?" Asked Buzz

"We're fine." Stated Mum, with a smile that stretched across her face. Mitch eventually caught up and they had a big group huddle. Their house had been destroyed, but luckily they had friends on the East Albury Hill who generously let them stay until the water was cleared and shelters were built.

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**Encouragement Award:** Amelie Ledger [Barnawartha Primary School]

**Title:** *Camping Chaos*

I run to the house, my heart is racing. I heave myself up the stairs, as sweat dribbles nonstop down my scorching red forehead. I use my last muscles to open the sliding door, and it makes a loud bang as it slams shut. I collapse onto the couch, hoping I will win this tense game of tag.

### **CHAPTER 1 - Morning mischief**

"Gotcha!" My nine year old brother says, tagging me.

"Ugh," I groan as I get off the couch. I reach out to tag him, but he swerves, and I tumble to the ground, losing all hope of winning this game.

Woosh! The sliding door opens and standing there is dad.

"Okay guys!" He says. "Get your bags and get in the car." He then turns around, shuts the door, and walks off.

Lenny and I look at each other as we hear a loud crash. In no time, Archie - my seven year old brother - comes running through the door.

"Hi guys!" He shouts. " Let's go!" He then grabs his suitcase and rapidly darts through the door.

We are about to go camping to the local Murray River. Mum had to go to work, but she will meet us there later. The only pet we will be bringing is our mischievous blue heeler, Saphie. She is not even one yet but she can still shake hands and sit. She loves chewing on cardboard and she also really likes attention. Saphie runs off occasionally, but she always comes back because she actually does not run too far. She also loves getting wet!

By the time we get there, its past our usual lunch time. So, the three of us set our swags up whilst dad cooks us some juicy, tandoori sausages. We scoff down three sausages in less than a minute, for that is how hungry we are. When we finish eating it is 5:00. we clip our life jackets on, grab the dog and jump into the boat. Time for a little evening fish.

## **CHAPTER 2 - River Rascals**

We cast our rods in and sit patiently for a fish to bite. It is easier to be quiet and still so that way the fish won't really look at the boat, but they will bite the bait. They are tasty nevertheless they are kind of dumb.

Yank!

"Guys!" Archie screams pointing furiously at his rod.

"Shhhh." We say, pressing our fingers to our lips. Dad jumps up and reels the rod in and dangling carelessly from the end is a disgusting slimy carp. Dad grabs his big hook tool and stabs it into the carp. He then snatches his knife from the little platform in the boat and cuts the carps gills open. Even though it is gross it is the right thing to do when you catch a carp. It makes a loud slap as dad throws is back into the water. We all lean over the side to look. The carp effortlessly sinks down into the murky brown water. Despite our bad luck, we head back to the campsite. By the time we get back to the camp, mum has arrived. We throw our life jackets into the canopy, as dad lights the campfire. We eat our delicious dinner then toast marshmallow's whilst telling spooky stories. We then get dressed into our pyjamas and tiredly slouch into bed, dreaming of tomorrows adventures.

## **CHAPTER 3 - Anzac Day antics**

Yawn!

I stretch my arms as I sit up in my warm swag. I poke my head out the top and the sun greets me warmly as it shines delightfully which makes the river sparkle cheekily. Saphie is sleeping on her cardboard bed, shuffling around every now and then. The scent of smoke from last night's campfire drifts through the air. Birds chirp and planes fly overhead... Wait those three planes are flying incredibly low. Hmmmm. Oh, I know! They're for the Anzac Day dawn serve at the Albury monument! That is cool!

We all wake up eat our breakfast then mum takes me home to feed the horses and ponies. I step inside and grab my school clothes of the table then I get dressed. School clothes? Is probably what you are thinking. Well, I am a sports captain at Barnarwartha Primary School so I must go to the Anzac Day service at eleven o'clock in Barnarwartha today! I clip on my sports captain badge as I turn my bedroom light off. I then tie my shoelaces and head outside to meet mum on the veranda.

By the time we walk there, it is nearly about to begin. I run to my school section and say 'Hi' to my friends: Tom (the other sports captain), Alice & Isabella (the environmental leaders), and Maggie & Braiden (the student leaders). I watch mum go and stand with a bunch of my friends' mums and have a chat.

Then two men in navy blue suits with badges spread diagonally across their suits, come out. The crowd goes quiet. A harsh, icy cold gust of wind blows past and a cold chill runs through my body. The man starts speaking and then he plays the national anthem. We all listen and then the last post is played. The minute silence follows and then it's time to put the flowers down. The other man calls out community groups and the Chiltern guides. Then finally he calls out our school. Isabella and I place the flowers and walk back to our group.

I say goodbye to my friends and mum takes me back to our camping spot for lunch. We have sausages in bread and then we pack up to go home. We all get home and collapse on the couch, for that's how worn out we are. This has been a great camping trip! We caught four fish, and it was Saphie's first time at the river! Next time we should go for two nights!

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**Encouragement Award:** Sophia Graham [St Patrick's Parish School Albury]

**Title:** *The Divide*

Shouts and cries were carried across the ditch, being rallied with even more shouts and harmful accusations. Albury was split in two. A deep ditch soaring down below, separating them. From the view in Space, one would think these people were crazy, and they very much could be. For the right side of Albury was living back in the days of early civilization, and the left, well, they have developed their technologies a little more quickly:

"You picky not-so-perfectionists are so 'perfect' in every way, eating only good-looking food and not good-tasting food!" A maid argued from the right side. "At least we eat nutritious food instead of rotten food left out for all of these pesky bugs to eat!"

These are the ways of the people in this godforsaken city. Yelling insults at each other all day and night, one wouldn't be able to have a peaceful sleep.

"Your children run around, ruining my apple tree all day!" A farmer accused. "Your children are muddy and sloppy from doing all of those disgraceful chores!" A teacher defended, proving to have won somewhat with the fact that the farmer didn't know what 'disgraceful' meant. So, the next day, the farmer chopped the apple tree down, replanting it so that it is just out of reach of the childrens' grasp. "Now those young thieves will have no more!" He remarked quietly.

But on the right side of the ditch, a young girl dreams of technologies far more advanced than any person around her could ever have imagined. There were colours, moving screens, tall skyscrapers, robots to do everything and best of all; delicious looking food. This was her dream, to either create these things and introduce them to the right side, or fake her own death and escape late at night, creating a new life across the other side of the ditch. Her name was...

Fifi.

Multiple times, Fifi had brought up the subject of evolving to a more futuristic life with her Father. Although, he had not understood several of the words she used, making it impossible to get him to understand her longing for a different world, and this was what set Fifi's mind.

She was setting out to cross the ditch tomorrow night. It was final. Planning in her small bedroom, writing what could be her last words in the diary she valued most, and saying goodbye to her beloved dog, Fifi was about to step foot in unknown territory.

So, after sneaking behind the huts and trees undetected, she stood on the edge of the bottomless hole. Securing the rope to a nearby apple tree, then tugging on it to make sure she wouldn't plummet down to her death, Fifi prepared a run-up and launched herself forward just as she heard a shout from behind saying "NOT MY APPLE TREE!!!"

Soaring through the air, hanging on to the thin, old rope for dear life, Fifi willed herself not to look down into the abyss below. She could feel herself losing grip on the rope, slipping ever so slightly and slowly until her hands grew numb and scratched. That was when Fifi thought her time was up, falling now, rather than soaring through the air, her back slammed against solid ground.

Having recovered and looking around, Fifi saw the towering buildings all around her. Cars that rolled their wheels way too fast raced past her on black paths. There weren't many people around at this time of night, but inside the buildings, shadows of people dancing, eating, drinking and resting could be seen. Now with a spark of hope, Fifi glided between buildings, around lights and through alleyways. She was here, now all she had to do was blend in.

And blending in will be hard with all the blinding lights shining into Fifi's eyes. But right now she is trying to find a place to sleep, walking behind large buildings, often accidentally running into large dumpsters. She found a tall office building with a small storage shed behind it. Now, almost running toward it, she checked to see if anyone was around, then ran into the tin shed.

To her surprise, the light was on, it was dim, unlike any of the other buildings' lights. But the light was on for a reason, that reason being that Fifi wasn't the only person there. A young man in a suit was rummaging through some files in a cabinet, mumbling to himself. Fifi started to tip-toe her way back through the door silently. Carefully placing her feet between tools and papers that could potentially make a noise. But she lost her balance and fell, startling the man.

He turned toward Fifi, eyebrows raised in alarm, but quickly wiped his face clean of emotion when he saw her, looking as weak and poor as a street dog. Giving Fifi a helping hand, he introduced himself as Nate Saddler, working as a desk clerk at this business which proved to be called Joel's Lawyers.

He led Fifi around to the road and called for a cab to take her to 46 Stanley Street, he gave the driver a couple sheets of rectangular paper and gave Fifi a pair of keys. Telling her to go straight into the house, eat as much as she wants and to get some sleep. Then, knowing that Fifi would do this, he left her in the cab.

As the cab started to move, the street lights raced past the windows of the car. Bright, new colours transferred into the 'safe keeping' file in her brain. This is going to be my life now

she thought. The car finally pulled up in front of a large, two story building with a bright red door.

*It's beautiful*, Fifi thought, staring up at the picturesque architecture. Finally finishing up from taking in all the beauty, she strolled up to the red door, turning the key in the lock and twisting the knob to open up the door into a stunningly furnished living room. At that moment, Fifi took a glimpse of Heaven. Running, she skidded through the doorways until she found what looked like a modernised version of the kitchen, opening cupboards and a white, small door she grabbed anything and everything that smelt like deliciousness. Then, racing back to the living room, she flopped down onto the soft sofa. Eventually falling asleep.

A while later, Nate walked in, through the bright red door and chuckled a little when he saw Fifi, sprawled out across the cushions with chocolate pudding all over her face.

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**Encouragement Award:** Jhett Mark [St Patrick's Parish School Albury]

**Title:** *Dam Wall Mystery*

It was a cold and eerie night and the temperature at the bottom of the Hume Dam was -3 degrees Celsius. Just another night as the maintenance man at the wall after 42 years of service. My name is George and I love working at the Dam because I have plenty of time to myself.

Life for me changed one night three years ago, when I heard an explosion at the other end of the wall. It was odd because there was no movement of the wall. I quickly rushed to see what damage there was, but nothing! This was strange! Was I hearing things? Was it time to retire, I thought to myself. I shone my torch around the area and there lying on the concrete ground, there was a jacket. What's a jacket doing in this part of the wall?

I picked the jacket up and looked at the name tag. JACOB GEHRIG. I don't know of a Jacob Gehrig. No Jacob Gehrig works here! How could this jacket have gotten here? I took the jacket back to my workshop and put it on my desk. I went home and during the night, I couldn't stop thinking about how that jacket got to that part of the wall. There had been no visitors for over a month and I was on patrol two days ago in that same area. There was no jacket there then.

The next morning I arrived back at work and sat at my desk. There was the jacket staring at me. How do I find the owner, I thought to myself? I opened my laptop and researched the name JACOB GERHIG. To my surprise, a Jacob Gerhig was killed in 1921 at the construction of the Hume Dam Wall. Jacob and two other men lost their lives while attempting to retrieve unexploded blasting powder, the article stated. Things started to race through my mind. This doesn't make sense! How could this be possible?

I sat at my desk for an hour wondering what to do. If I hand the jacket in, people might think I'm crazy. Explosions that didn't happen and a jacket that was over a hundred years old lying on the ground. I decided to hang the jacket up in my locker and forget all about it.

It was three weeks later and I had nearly forgotten about the jacket when late one night, you guessed it, another explosion from the same area. My heart started to race, what am I going to find? This time, a helmet was lying about 10 metres away from where I found the jacket. This can't be right? I picked the helmet and looked at the name tap and it read

GEORGE PEARCE. Surely not! Was George Pearce one of the three men who was killed in the explosion?

I quickly went back to my office and opened my laptop. Before my eyes, there was the name George Pearce, 62 years - killed in the same explosion as Jacob Gehrig. This can't be real! Am I going nuts! My heart is really beating fast now. Sitting on my desk in front of me was a jacket and a helmet, what am I going to do? Once again I decided to leave the jacket and helmet on my desk and head home.

As I laid in bed all night, my mind just got totally confused. This can't be true. Why is this happening to me? Should I tell someone? People won't believe me. I tossed and turned all night wondering whether all this was a bad dream. The next day I headed back to work and sat down at my desk. I remember the newspaper articles saying that there were three people killed in the dam construction in 1921. I opened my laptop and researched the name of the third person - William Wakeford 17yrs.

Three days had gone by and you guessed it, another explosion. This time I was wondering what I would find. Arriving at the spot, there laid a pair of boots. I picked them up and they had the initials WW engraved on the inside of the boots. William Wakeford - the third man killed. I now articles from the three men. What will happen next?

The months went by and it was late on a Sunday night when I heard a fourth explosion. I thought only three men had died. I nervously walked to the area and in front of me were the ghostly figures of three men. Every muscle in my body froze and I struggled to breathe. All three ghosts were standing with the jacket, helmet and boots on.

As I rubbed my eyes in shock at the sight of three ghosts just standing there in front of me. I ran back to my office and locked the door. My heart was beating like a drum with my back up against the door. Then I thought, ghosts can walk through doors!

I stood at that door for many hours and after six months I never saw Jacob Gerhig, George Pearce or William Wakeford again. But that's not the end of the story. You guessed it! In the construction of the Hume Dam, in total eight men lost their lives. And you guessed it over the next twelve months, I had visits from the other five ghosts.

I never did tell anyone about my special visitors until now. In my retirement I sit and wonder why they visited me. Maybe they just wanted to be remembered for their work and not be forgotten.

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**Encouragement Award:** Olivia Burke [St Patrick's Parish School Albury]

**Title:** *Gretel the Crow*

I heard the unsettling, whistling wind ringing in my ears. The sound protruding from the Albury botanic gardens. It felt like a large bird in my ear. With sharp pains like a beak and the sound like a squawk. I crept closer toward the sound. OH MY- I Have never seen anything worse in my life than this house. I-It was like someone shaped a rotten egg into a house but A LOT bigger. It smelt like rotten eggs too, with a hint of vomit. Then a sudden unusual figure shot past me like a rocket. WOOSH, it shot back and perched on a nearby statue. It was a black crow with a collar on it, the collar was.. different, to say the least but I ignored it. Then the crow's beak started to move but I couldn't hear anything because of the wind. But after a while the wind died down so I was able to finally start making out what it was saying. It was mouthing inside, inside over and over again. I was terrified more than ever

but I stayed calm. I refused to go in for the thought of the worst. Then I started to wonder if that collar had anything to do with this, anyway I left and didn't think of ever turning back.

When I got home I dropped my bike and ran inside but I heard something screeching behind me. It was the crow. I brought down a blanket and wrapped it up then snuck it inside and up to my room, I decided it was time, time to look at the collar. It read GRETTEL, my first instincts were to take her back but I vowed to never go back there. I brainstormed some other options, one other option was to search it up on the internet. That was definitely the easiest. I tried to figure out how to word this but ended up writing GRETTEL THE CROW. error error that was strange so I tried again but searched up GRETTEL THE CROW, ALBURY BOTANIC GARDENS and it came up with.

CALL 000 NOW!! But I didn't listen. I told myself to take the bird back but I couldn't. It's like it had hypnotised me. The words were rolling in my head "take it back, go back" "AHH, STOP" I screamed but it wouldn't stop. It kept going for hours on end. I couldn't focus on what to do with the bird while this was in my head. The bird sat there as still as a statue waiting for what's next. I know I told myself never to go back but maybe if I did this would stop because I couldn't take this anymore.

It was 10:30 pm at this point. Mum and dad would be home soon so I better be quick. Mum and dad get home around 11:30. I normally have a babysitter but she couldn't come today so mum and dad trusted me to stay by myself. I packed my school backpack and left a note just in case I wouldn't be home in time. The note read: Mum and Dad I have gone out to the Albury Botanic gardens house. If you come home and see this, call the police NOW.

I left the house at 10:35 pm hoping to be home by 11:15 pm. It was a long 10 minute walk to the house but made it with the bird leading the way. This time was different then the last, there was no whistling but instead another bird, this one with a mix of brown and white feathers, it was a dove. I turned from the crow to admire the beautiful dove. I looked back to continue following the crow but it seemed to have gone and I was standing right in front of the entrance to the Albury, botanic gardens house. "Oh no" I thought in my head as I stalled myself from going in. Maybe Gretel went up to the entrance and went right, or left? I came to a point finally realising this was the only way she could go.

I trekked into the dusty chamber of a house. It was filled with bats and spider webs that had been webbed in a way I've never seen before. The further I walked the more dust I inhaled and coughed, it was like with every step I breathed in a whole bucket full of dust and debris.

I walked and walked and walked until a miracle happened. I saw Gretel again! Now I would know if I'm going in the right direction. Gretel led me to a small cupboard looking room, I was confused. I turned around to look at her when she wasn't there. I surely couldn't have lost her again. I turned around one more time. Maybe she was behind me? Suddenly I felt a large pain in my back and a big push sent me flying into the cupboard. BANG was the sound my head made when it hit the wall. I awoke a while later with a pecking sound approaching through the door. I stood as still as a tree stump praying it wasn't Gretel trying to get in. I saw a glimpse of white and brown through the hole this creature had made. Then it clicked the brown and white dove. It was there, maybe trying to save me. It had made a golf ball sized hole in the door until Gretel came past and grabbed the dove by its wings. The dove fought back trying to defend itself while I sat in silence. I heard sirens coming from far away. THE NOTE IT'S PAST 11:15.



I checked the time, IT'S 1AM. I had been walking for hours to get in here and now i couldn't get out. I heard the squawking from the birds fight. The fight was vicious with blood and feathers being scattered. I tried to find a way out so I started ripping pieces of the door out to make the hole bigger for me to fit through . After the hole was big enough for me to squeeze through I did and I ran and ran and ran till I couldn't run anymore. I made it to the end and saw my mum and dad in tears. I ran with all of the energy I had left from this day. " I'm sooooo sorry mum and dad I didn't mean this to happen. It was like it had hypnotised me. They didn't say anything and just hugged me.

Just happy that I'm home.

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**Encouragement Award:** Ruhee Mohammed [Trinity Anglican College]

**Title:** *Where did Mother go?*

"Pitter, patter" the sky unwilfully sobs, the wall around it collapsing, safety gently slipping out of its grip. My reflection glistens as I peer into the depths of the aqua abyss. Tears stream down my cheeks, staining my face like horrid scars. "She's gone", my voice rings around in my head as I try to fathom what's happening. Well, I always knew, the sceptical glances, the abysmal beast growing inside me, roaring with every harsh word laid upon it. "She really left".

"I love you Sasha, I always will" the irony stung. I peruse the river again, examining the swift waves, confidently curling up, thinking they're so high and lofty. A white letter enclosed in a transparent bottle, calls to me, it swirls its way down the river. I snatch it "CLANK" the lid pops off, a sober tear of rain races down the bottle into my bare palm. The paper unfurls like a lotus flower opening its petals after a long winter, anticipating the new adventures of spring. I squint my eyes, the spiralled letters waltzing in sync with my gaze.

*"November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1991, the Murray River*

*By Sierra Winters*

*The soft hum of the river as I curl beside its bank*

*The solemn thoughts of those who I never had a chance to thank*

*They vanished into thin air, as they say the good ones do*

*I'm sorry for those hopeless souls who always saw the blue*

*The gurgles of the river, running up, running down*

*The ones I loved, the ones who always made me frown*

*Sometimes I ponder how it would have been if I hadn't shot with fear*

*If today I could give a desperate little cheer*

Sierra Winters, my Mum! I wrap myself in my radiant red jacket as if I'm a Christmas present. The tranquil whispers of the air nibble at my ears as my fingers cautiously trace the letters, sounding out every word as I go. The gentle hush of my voice against the gusts of wind billowing around me comes as a surprise. I burst into a fit of coughs as the hoarse feeling sitting at the bottom of my throat starts to reveal itself. A fuzzy memory pops into my head, the same spiralled letters slightly slanted to the right, my Mum's handwriting. Her sickly-sweet voice bounces around my head, it covered for all her mistakes. The way she

laughed at the end of her heavy sighs made up for the fact that she had just lost a lot of money, the way her smile twisted into warped little squiggles at the end, made up for us being evicted. The way her final "I love you" was a merge of somber and cheerful croaks made up for deserting me.

As the river swishes, glinting under the moonlight and the rain starts to die down, I finally realise how much time has gone by. I gaze up at the sky, it's a black canvas decorated with gleaming white dots, colossal from up close, but like lice on a lustrous, jet-black head from where I was. I vigorously scrunch the paper into a ball, the beast ignites, its sorrow growls as hot as the sun. "How could she just leave, without me?" my voice is strained, and I hear the pain instilled into it. I think back to my 7<sup>th</sup> birthday present, a porcelain doll with a cream-white face, angelic ringlet curls and a massive ruffled dress done up in a lurid cotton-candy pink. As soon as my Mum saw it, silent tears jerked out of her eyes, flowing patiently like a waterfall "what's wrong Mummy?" I had squeaked.

"Just like the one I had," she spoke in a mused tone but she had darkened, every muscle in her face taut "You must always treasure the ones you love Sasha, one day they might just vanish into thin air, an abstract thought, a marvellous memory" Each word was a grievous stab to the chest, finally she huddled me close, and we sat in front of the fireplace, the silence of our unwritten agreement finally settling in.

"Vanished into thin air!", Where had I heard that before? My brain clicks, the final puzzle piece slipping into its place, the letter! I fling my ice-blond hair over my shoulder and my nails clench the letter, unravelling it, "Would she? Could she?" I can feel my voice violently shake as the river water laps against the grass and hits my foot like a chilly jab. "She wouldn't kill her family!", the flimsy string of confidence I had was rapidly crumbling, my Mum was capable of anything. I remember she would always say "Anything that gets in your way can be eliminated" The way she stressed the "y", always made an electric shiver run down my spine, I shudder, the frosty embodiment of fright prancing around in my stomach.

A luminous flash seeps into my eyes and I groan "BOOM, CRACKLE, LIGHTNING!" I scamper away, dazed by the gleaming bursts of light. Rain pours down on me, and it feels like I'm being pelted by thousands of rocks. My knees jolt back and forth until I collapse into a miniscule ball, shivering as the cold sighs of the night devour me. I gasp for a breath letting out raw sobs, the wrath of the sky is agonising, it feels like I'm being shattered into pieces. "SASHA!". My ears buzz as the beast grins and dissolves into a pool of affection. A warm hand strokes my cheek and I peer into two moonlit indigo eyes. "I'm so sorry Sasha!"

"You killed your family!" I retort, the words taste bitter as I spit them out. Mum's smile is like a dazzling emerald emerging from the drab crust of the earth, surrounding it, flowers of tears sprouting with no hope. "No Sasha, not me" As she embraces me a shooting star glides across the sky and I beam.

"I wish that I never have to stop hugging my Mum!"

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**Encouragement Award:** Benjamin Bocquet [St Patrick's Parish School Albury]

**Title:** *Time machine*

As I stepped into the time machine I saw the old Albury.

Ben Bocquet had a roundish face, short and orange hair, was about 4 foot 8, and I am 12. When I got there I was amazed by how much has changed in 133 years. I was longing for a drink of water so I went to the kitchen to see if I could get a drink but I couldn't find the

fridge. There was just something that looked like a cupboard and I checked if there was anything in there but there was only a piece of meat. Plain, raw. I was starving so I roamed around the house, looking in each room for something to eat. Each room had pretty carpets and furniture with gold pillows. Sitting grandly in the middle of the room were beds with canopies, big enough for Kings. Eventually, I went outside thinking perhaps I could go to town but how would I get there? There were no buses and only cars I couldn't drive.

"What year is it?" I asked a passing stranger.

"1890" he replied.

"What's your name?"

He squinted at me, trying to work out why I asked. "John Bocquet," he said. I gasped.

"So you're my great grandpa?"

"What?" he asked.

"I'm from the future. In 2023" I stated.

"The future?" He seemed puzzled. "Its 1890 right now, so that's 133 years from now"

I nodded.

"So I'm getting this right, you're my great grandson?"

"Yeah. My name is Ben Bocquet". I smiled at him.

"Let me take you to town before you get lost"

I followed.

We talked as we walked. John pointed things out as we passed. The Albury football ground didn't even look like a football field, it was just dirt and a little bit of grass, not the green grass of my time. Further we walked, passing St Patrick's church. The school was gone, so was the tax department. The roads were dirt. There weren't many cars and no traffic lights. I went into a pub and sat down with John and he told the bartender something that I didn't understand. He brought over a beer out for John then he came over to me.

"What would you like to drink?" asked the bartender.

"Can I have a fanta?" I asked.

"What's a fanta?" he asked.

"Like a drink you can drink"

"I know what a drink is. It is like beer or water" he asked, confused.

"Ok, do you have milkshakes?"

"What is a milkshake? We only have coke, beer, and water, Cognac, Crème de Menthe, Horse's Neck, Angostura Bitters, Cognac, Ginger ale, Lemon twist, Gin, Sweet vermouth, Gunfire, Black tea, Rum. Hurry and choose one"

"I'll have a coke please"

He wandered off to get my drink.

Sipping my coke as Grandpa talked to the bartender I watched as Jack the Devil walked in.

"I'll shoot the first person who talks," he yelled, pointing his Mannlicher M1890 Carbine at us. The music stopped, the drinking game stopped and everyone in the pub froze. He'd come to rob the barman. Grabbing the money, he smiled as he shot the bartender in the chest, firing till he dropped to the floor and the blood started to run under my feet. Jack the Devil left just the way he came.

Heading home John started crying.

"Why are you crying?" I asked. "Because he is my best friend that I have known for 45 years."

"Oh", I mumbled.

We sat in silence in his kitchen until he asked what is your favourite meal and I said "meat with rice."

He nodded. "Ok I can make that for you before you leave."

"Leave where?" I asked puzzled.

"Go back to your generation. It's not safe here."

"Oh," I mumbled.

John then got the meat out of the meat safe. The little cupboard I saw when I had arrived. 30 minutes later there was a beautiful dish that tasted delicious and looked so good. After he made it he went back into the kitchen to wash up. Looking at him I said goodbye, softly and ran back into Albury to teleport back to my world. As I was running back, I saw even more people looking at me and it was then that I saw Jack the devil holding up a carriage. I then saw a rifle loaded. Now was my chance to stop the terror that Jack the devil has caused. BANG!!! Jack's face went as white as a ghost and a hole as big as an apple appeared on his chest. The crowd erupted, cheering for stopping this terror that roamed the streets. Now I was holstered over some men's shoulders and I was their hero. The newspaper took a photo of me to be printed on the first page of every newspaper in Australia NSW.

I started making my way back to the place where the teleportation device was, a phone booth in the street. I couldn't wait to get back home to my family, friends and my dog Ronnie, a little sausage dog that was cute, adorable and fluffy as an Angora Rabbit. I heard muffled voices behind me. Turning around and saw 10 men armed with guns. "Why did you kill our leader?" shouted one of the men

"You're not with Jack the devil are you" I asked but I already knew they were. "Yes we are and we are glad we are with Jack" one angrily spat. "Because you killed our leader we are going to kill you". I started sprinting for my life, hearing bullets whizz past my head. Ahead I saw the booth, running fast I jumped into it and KABOOM!! I was sucked back into the future where I had been living. Back to my time at last.

I hid the machine, knowing it was dangerous to deal with going back in time. The radio buzzed beside me. "A world war has started". I dragged the time machine out. It was time to go back in time and stop a world war.

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**Encouragement Award:** Sophia Graham [St Patrick's Parish School Albury]

**Title:** *A Disappearance, Or Something Worse*

Water pounded against Charles' chest, squeezing out all of the air in his lungs. His hands and feet struggled restlessly to float up to the surface, though the invisible weights did not help. The burn in his throat throbbed just a bit too much to be comfortable. THIS was the end of Charles Dawson.

Posters flooded the streets with big bold letters saying 'MISSING!' As if we hadn't heard it on the news already! The last sighting of Mr Dawson was two days ago when he bought a couple of fish lures to go with the new fish that had just gone in season. He was real big with his fishing, catching at least 10 fish a month. It's weird not having him around, he would always be chatting to his mates. It was just too quiet.

Annmarie Dawson - Charles' Mother - had locked herself in her room for the few hours that had passed since his disappearance was announced. Anyone within a 700 metre radius was sure to have heard her. I mean, like, we were all grieving, except for the police who were out in the bush searching for anything that might help find him. Some, like Mrs Dawson, just grieved that little bit more intensely. But of course, it was understandable, seeing that she was his mother. The police found nothing for the next month that passed by. Everyone had resolved on the fact that he had died some mysterious death. The news had quieted a little on the subject, only displaying it as a minor headline. Some people would make up ridiculous stories about how he had died, joking, but inside, screaming for their friend to come back. After this, the subject was all but forgotten.

Flames ripped at Wyatts' skin, burning the silk-like fabric to ashes. Gas and smoke tore from the inside of his lungs, eating him from the inside out. His feet were helpless as they burned on the hot ashes that lay on the floor, but his hands were reaching out of the fire, trying to grasp a latch or something to help pull himself out of the fire. Through the ringing in his ears, Wyatt heard a quiet little chuckle; THIS was the last thing Wyatt Hayes heard.

Once again, the big bold letters spelling 'MISSING' lined the streets, but this one was different. Mr Hayes was old, living in a nursery home with all of the other elderly people in the town. If anything, he had been hoping to die, and if he did, he wouldn't really care if others saw how he died, it wasn't like he had any living relatives anymore. This is why this missing poster was peculiar, he wouldn't have run away, or more precisely, he couldn't run away.

So there was definitely less grieving, but fear started to spark in the nursery home of which Mr Hayes had been last seen. Some of the older women were pinned to their seats as their minds wandered to a murder scene. Of course, they hadn't actually seen the scene that Mr Hayes had died at, mostly because there was no evidence left to even suggest a death had occurred.

This also troubled the police even more. Two missing people in less than 2 months. Sure, it might not seem like a lot, but for a small town like Howlong, that was a huge number. But even worse, was the fact that, once again, the police had no leads. It was a mystery, one that was just sitting on the sidelines, laughing its head off at how stupid everyone is. But this mystery may never be found, all it does is plant doubtful thoughts that lingers in

everyone's minds. The police gave up shortly after the announcement of Mr Hayes' disappearance. Resting on the fact that he, too, is dead, just his body is yet to be found.

Wind whipped at James' scruffy hair, blowing it about like the tufts of grass that had been uprooted. His feet lifted off the ground, swinging them recklessly about. Invisible forces crushed his bones, shaping them into something indescribable. James' cheeks swirled around, squishing his eyes closed, but not before he saw a tall, black figure staring up at him. THIS was the last thing James Harold saw.

Mr and Mrs Harold cried in each other's arms as their daughters played, oblivious to their brother's disappearance. The animals on the farm starved as their caretakers grieved for their son. James was just too young to die, being only 6 years of age. "He hadn't lived a full and happy life yet. It's unfair." Mrs Harold had kept on mumbling. But there was no turning back now, James was gone. No-one knows where. The police hadn't even bothered to do anything past inspecting the area.

The town was worried that it was slowly gonna fade away, one by one, leaving everyone with a bright red spot of fear. The question is: how could this small town survive such an event?

And I don't know. But I think the town will be better off without them. No-one else knew how bad they were, what they had done to me. Otherwise I wouldn't have killed them.

**WRITE  
AROUND  
THE** *13 – 17 Sept*  
**MURRAY**



