

Eagle Arts Walk

2024



Pikes Peak Christian School
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Table of Contents

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Haven Bold, 7 th Grade	4
Brylee Cardell, 7 th Grade	5-6
Kahlan Cormier, 7 th Grade	4
Devon Drummond, 7 th Grade	6-7
Erin Godwin, 7 th Grade	3
Addie Landry, 7 th Grade	3
Dom Melendez, 7 th Grade	3
Julia Mitchell, 7 th Grade	6
Ben Painter, 7 th Grade	3
Bethany Robberson, 7 th Grade	5
Macy Sigler, 7 th Grade	6
Kenneth Survillion, 7 th Grade	3
Shannen Tolle, 7 th Grade	7
Faith Wyman, 7 th Grade	3

HIGH SCHOOL

Hannah Arney, *Senior*8

Megan Ferguson, *Sophomore*9

Adaline Graham, *Sophomore*9, 40-62

Savannah Heath, *Sophomore* 8, 32-33

Elijah Kirshman, *Sophomore*10-12

Hayley Mohr, *Sophomore*37-39

Isabella Morini, *Junior*9

Kiorra Nelson, *Sophomore*34-37

Olivia Rupp, *Freshman*12-29

Luke Willen, *Freshman*29-31

Middle School Poetry and Prose

Camping is More Than You Think

By Faith Wyman

It smells like a campfire.
It tastes like roasted marshmallows.
It sounds like rain on a tin roof.
It feels like clouds.
It looks like a perfect dove.
Forgiveness is a camping trip.

Angers true self

By Kenneth Survillion

Anger is red
It smells like rot
It taste like fungus
It sounds like torture
It feels like a knife
It looks like a demon
Anger is a fire breathing dragon

Waves

By Addie Landry

Waves crashing and turning
Throwing itself on the sand
Then, running back home

Party

By Addie Landry

Party in the woods
All around, fun for all
With the wild for you

Creatures

by Erin Godwin

The fury feline
With eyes yellow as copper
And fur sleek as silk

At the mountain top
Wolves run freely by the stream
And rabbits hop free

Winning is gold

By Dominic Melendez

It smells like victory.
It tastes like a 3 layer cake.
It sounds like 100 dollar bills flapping in the air.
It feels like a golden birch tree.
It looks like a beautiful pug.
Winning is rising up from the ashes

Joy

by Benjamin Painter

Joy is yellow.
It smells like a Christmas tree.
It tastes like freshly baked cookies.
It sounds like an "Old Church Choir."
It feels like sunshine on my face.
It looks like a basketball game.
Joy is a snow day.

School

By Addie Landry

Waking up early
Just to go to school to learn
Only to repeat

By the mangrove swamps
The crabs blossom at low-tide
And the shrimps at high

The Lost Coin

by Haven Bold

If a woman has ten silver coins,
Do you think she would lose it?
If so she will sweep and search
So that someday she may use it.

If she finds it
She wants to rejoice.
So she calls her friends
To come with her and use her voice.

She will say rejoice with me.
I have found my coin!
So come on now,
And come with me, rejoin.

In the same way the lord tells us that we may be happy.
For he has helped the coin get found,
We may rejoice in the lord almighty.
And we won't even have to look on the ground.

- Luke 15:8-10

Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin. In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

Drums

By Kahlan Cormier

Rattle, rattle, goes the snare
Tiptoe, tiptoe, across the measure.
I hear the drum smash
As the drumsticks clash
I don't care about the weather.
As I sweat in my sweater.

I don't have a care in the world,
As long as I have my drum, and my sticks.
My clicks will be immaculate.

The Story of Esther

By Bethany Robberson

This is the story of a girl,
Summoned by the king.
She was tested for marriage,
Then fitted for a ring.

This is the story of a cousin,
Who uncovered a secret plan
The plot to overthrow the king,
Would fall instead of stand.

This is the story of a cousin,
Who refused to bow to a lie.
The villain, Haman, despised him.
The cousin was meant to die.

This is the story of a villain,
Who not only hated the Jewish man,
But hated all of his people.
He made an evil plan.

This is the story of a queen,
Who heard her nation's cry.
She accused Haman,
The villain was sent to die.

.Esther 1:1-10:3

This is the story of a servant,
Who would have been dismembered.
The cousin should have died,
But his loyalty was remembered.

This is the story of a queen,
Who was brave to save her nation.
She appeared in front of the king.
She dared to go above her station.

This is the story of the wise woman,
Who asked the villain and king to dine.
She was questioned by her husband,
But only invited them another time

This is the story of a Jew,
Who begged the king for aid
The people could fight back,
Their numbers never swayed.

This is a story of God's promise.
He protects his people forever.
He used a young woman,
A woman named Esther

Do You Love Me?

Brylee Cardell

Why, oh why do you not love me Samson?
Tell me your weakness please.
I promise you I will tell none.
Do not tease.

I tell you now my love,
It is my hair that I mustn't shave.
For if i do dove,
My fate will be grave.

The horrid Philistine woman told of his secret.
The men snickered with satisfaction,
Of course she wouldn't keep it
The woman had no compassion.

So they cut Samson's seven locks of hair.
When he awoke he could not break his bindings,
The Philistines quickly took his ability to glare.
Delilah was too busy with her new fine things.

Locked in a prison house,
Now he was forever working as a slave.
Strangers passing would laugh and give vows,
In his situation he could only be brave.

He was to be the sacrifice to a false god.
He knew how he had to defeat the Philistines.
Nobody would be bored.
Samson knew all of the possibilities.

So he pulled the temple down,
All of them cracking their bones
So the Philistines drowned
Now buried in the cobblestone.

A Field of Flame

By: Macy Sigler

Hate is gold.
It smells like burning gasoline.
It tastes like iron.
It sounds like nails on a chalkboard.
It feels like a cactus.
It looks like blood fresh from a wound.
Hate is standing in a fire letting it burn.

"Cats"

By Devon Drummond

Claws clinking against
The floor, making hardly a
Sound, quietly crawling.

"Flowers"

By Devon Drummond

Bees surrounding it
All colors of the rainbow
Sitting in the sun.

"Trees"

By Devon Drummond

A lone windy day
With trees swaying left to right,
Hair blowing around

My Way out of Schoolwork

By Julia Mitchell

These are my hoodies.
They are different in color.
They are emo,
And oppose each other.

They are my hoodies,
Although droopy and black.
I love them,
And am taken aback.

These are my hoodies.
When the teacher asks a question.
I pull it over my head,
And ignore the lesson.

The Fish

By Shannen Tolle

God asked Jonah to preach,
But Jonah had fear.
So he ran away from the Lord.
But God was all ears.

When Jonah got on the boat,
God sent a violent storm.
Everyone was frightened.
Jonah knew it was what he performed.

Jonah jumped off the boat,
Then God provided a huge fish.
The fish swallowed him up.
To get out was his only wish.

He said sorry to God,
And God forgave him.
Jonah went to preach,
To all of them

Jonah 1:1-17

High School Poetry and Prose

"Timer"

by Savannah Heath

Life is a timer
An unknown number constantly decreasing.
Spurring anxiety and fear
What happens when the alarm sounds?
Blaring without warning?
Work...
Dreams...

Relationships...
Are they all for nothing?
The countdown is a mystery,
So why not soak up every second on that clock?
And when the timer ends,
and the alarm goes off,
You are grateful that the timer even existed at all.

Recipe poem

by Hannah Arney

Recipe for "honesty"

1 cup of lies not said,

2 cups of the truth,

3 tsbs of a coat of sugar,

2 cups of brutality,

2 tsp of slight stretching of truth.

Take the lies not shared and mix with the truth stir until fluffy.

Add the brutality, while stirring add slight stretching of truth.

Bake in a pan for your whole life, 415 degrees.

Then sprinkle with a coat of sugar.

“I Held a Funeral for a Flower Today”

by Megan Ferguson

I had found it crumpled on the ground
Without its life supporting roots,
Disconnected from all its friends.
I saw it like that and knew I had to do something.
So I picked it up with both hands,
Resting in on a leaf while I dug its grave.
Then I delivered the flower, wrapped in the leaf,
To its final resting place.
I say the most honoring and loving words I can think of
While burying its remains.
With that I leave, making sure to leave it unmarked.
Since I don't want to remember my mistake.

Horror Acrostic

by Isabella Morini

Haunting my dreams
Opening my eyes to darkness
Reality seeming to have vanished
Reaching out into the abyss ahead of me
Otherworldly is the only way I could explain this
Reluctantly I take a step forward and realize I am at the edge

Ode

by Adeline Graham

Autumn comes as a breeze
They call it fall because of the leaves
Rise, it says, come experience joy with me
We will live in this middle age
Between life and death
We will do it together
A certain sweetness, a certain spice
There is no time of year I love more than autumn
No season is sweeter
No season is kinder
Bury me under the dying ground
And wake me up when autumn comes again

THE LEGEND OF THAT SIDE

by Elijah Kirschman

*As the full moon started climbing,
The dwarf called Droggên teleported, finding
Himself in a place he knew not, but feared
As every shadow seemed to leer.
After some traveling, he saw a faction
Of dwarvish folk, in some great action
Of making weapons, smithery of steel,
And though there were burns, they quickly healed.
Then a great gong rang, a solemn ring,
And many rushed, and he followed, and saw what was seen;
An army of orcs and notched sword raised,
With crossbows and other weapons with a poisonous glaze.
They were a hideous sort, with hideous faces
And several hides were stuck on their maces,
Some hides were made into crude chest plates,
With ugly rusted helmets, though they masked not their hate.
A dwarf blew a horn, and one next to Droggên said,
"Stranger, put up your arms or else we'll all be dead!"
So Droggên went, and grabbed a spear,
And faced the army that struck into him fear.
Though the dwarves held their fire, the orcs shot insults,
Taunts and jeers from their land, many poisoned consults;
Until one accidentally fired his crossbow;
And almost hit the dwarven king in the torso.*

After that, the dwarfs let fly their arrows,
and struck many orcs, down into their rotten marrow,
Droggên had thrown his spear and it shot 'round,
At an orc captain, who hit the ground.
As the orcs started rushing up the hill,
Where the dwarves were stationed, suddenly, everything was still.
Droggên, panting took a moment to catch his breath,
And saw an orc with a spear that would have plunged him into death.
Meanwhile a bit ago, while the battle raged,
Across the Otherside, another plot was engaged,
Involving Bríkier, a humanoid taller than most,
And saw on the shore of a beach a horrid ghost.
It was ugly and scarred a fearsome apparition,
That was killed in a skyscraper demolition.
It showed its wrinkled hand, and beckoned the man,
To go to a strange place, a forbidden land.
Bríkier, seeming to have no choice,
Took the phantom's hand, with nothing from his voice,
As the world swirled around, then with a pop!
Came to a place where the world had seemed to stop.
It was a battlefield, one ugly and bloody,
With a storm raging around, making it quite muddy,
As the ghost disappeared, Bríkier saw one from the battle,
shaking violently on his knees, a great rattle.
The survivor looked around quizzically,
and looked at Bríkier, who he could see visibly
wasn't frozen in place like everything else,
but advanced cautiously, unsheathing the sword in his belt.

"Did you have anything to do with this?"
he said pointing to the frozen army, when something amis
caught both of their eyes, and they turned around,
and saw a strange sight hit the ground.
It was a UFO, and after a voice rang out,
In an odd language, strange and stout.
After no response, the aliens fired a beam,
That made them vanish, nowhere to be seen.
What they knew not, as they were in a realm,
Of pure chaos, no one at the helm,
When they came to, they opened their eyes wide,
and saw the fabled land of horror: That Side.

Horse Camp

By Olivia Rupp

I looked out the car window as I thought about all the fun things I would do these next three weeks. I had been looking forward to this camp for months, and now I could finally go. I've loved horses for as long as I can remember. I don't have a horse of my own, but I've been taking riding lessons since I was five. "We're almost there," my mom said. My heart beat faster with excitement. I looked out the window again and saw a sign that said HORSE CAMP in all capital letters. After my mom parked I got out of the car. I gave my mom a hug and said bye. I waved as she drove off. Even though I was excited for camp, I would miss her so much.

I stood in the sign up line, waiting to hear what cabin I was in. I was hoping for the Mustang cabin considering they were my favorite breed. My mom always said I was just like a Mustang because I'm wild just like them. My parents could never get me to stop running around the house like a horse. I was soon brought out of my flashback when the lady at the front of the line said, "Hello, what's your name?" "Avery." I said. The lady shuffled through her papers.

“Ok, you will be in the Appaloosa cabin. It’s just over there.” she said pointing to the right.

“Thank you.” I was a little disappointed it wasn’t the Mustang cabin, but Appaloosas are nice too.

I walked up to the cabin. It was a log cabin that had a sign that said APPALOOSA on it. I opened the door and walked in. There were pictures of appaloosas everywhere. There were three girls unpacking their things. One of the girls was in a black hoodie that had a horse on the front. She had on some light blue breeches and brown boots. She had brown curly hair and cute freckles on her face. Another girl was wearing a black shirt with jeans and blue boots. She had straight long dark brown hair that had streaks of blue. The last girl was wearing a bright pink shirt with some jeans and brown boots with accents of pink. She had straight blonde hair pulled back into a ponytail. “Hi!” the girl in pink said in a really excited voice. “I’m Ava, and these are my best friends.”

“Hey, I’m Evelyn and this is Amelia.” the girl with the streaked blue hair said, pointing to the girl in a hoodie. The girl in the hoodie looked away and said nothing. “Amelia’s a little shy, but she’ll warm up to you after a while.”

“Hi, my name is Avery, nice to meet you.”

“Nice to meet you too.” Ava said, “Is this your first summer here?”

“Yeah, you?”

“No, we all met at this camp last year, and this is all of our second year here.”

“Wow.”

“Come on, you can share a bunk with me.” Evelyn said.

“Really? Thanks!”

“Of course, but I get the top bunk.”

I was halfway through unpacking my things when three girls came into the cabin. Ava, Amelia, and Evelyn had a very annoyed look on their faces. All three girls were matching. They all were wearing brown breeches with fancy riding shirts. All of them had their hair in a ponytail. Two of them had brown hair and one had blonde hair. “Oh, a new girl,” the blonde haired girl said looking at me, “I’m Sadie and this is Emily and Isabella.”

“Hi, I’m Avery and...”

“Don’t talk to them Avery.” Ava said. I looked at her confused.

“Why not?”

“Oh, hello again, girls.” Sadie said. “Looks like we’re sharing a cabin.”

“No way I’m sharing a cabin with you guys!” Evelyn said.

“Well, you have no choice.” Emily said. Evelyn gave them a dirty look, and went back to unpacking her stuff. I wanted to ask questions but I felt it was best that I stayed quiet.

After a little while, we started walking toward the cafeteria for dinner. Since we arrived at 4:00 in the afternoon and we had already eaten, this was my first meal here. It was now 5:00 and I had finally finished unpacking. I walked to the cafeteria with Ava, Evelyn, and Amelia. “So what was the deal back there with Sadie, Emily, and... who was the other one?”

“Isabella.” Ava said, “Basically, they’re bullies.”

“Yeah,” Evelyn agreed, “they always made fun of all the beginners. They stole people’s things. And always snooped through people’s cabins!”

“So, what did they do to you guys?” Avery asked.

“They stole Ava’s things, they made fun of my riding because I was a beginner and I’m not the best at riding. I have improved this year though! Anyway, they also made Amelia cry because they made her take care of their horses so all they had to do was ride them.

“Why didn’t you just say no?” I asked.

“I couldn’t let those poor horses suffer. If I didn’t take care of them no one would.” Amelia said.

We got to the cafeteria. We sat there talking as we ate our cheeseburgers that were surprisingly delicious. A woman came by and gave us a piece of paper. I picked it up and it had all the camp activities with time slots next to each one. Ava, Evelyn, and Amelia explained how the time slots were divided by cabin. Two cabins at a time would be at each station. Although there were normal camp activities like swimming, bracelet making, campfire, and other activities, most of the time slots were filled with horse time. Whether that was horse care,

horse riding, horse anatomy, all of it was on there. There were also a lot of periods where we had free time to do whatever we wanted. Our schedules started the next day and I was excited.

The rest of the day was pretty calm. We had a campfire where we roasted marshmallows and hotdogs while we sang. Ava, Evelyn, and Amelia seemed like good people and I was happy that they had accepted me into their group. The one thing I didn't like about the camp was the beds. They were so uncomfortable, but eventually I drifted off to sleep, dreaming about horses and the horse that I would be paired with the next day.

We all woke up at 7:00 in the morning, giving ourselves an hour before breakfast. I got dressed and brushed my hair out. Then before doing the rest of my hairstyle, I brushed my teeth. Looking at myself in the mirror, I saw my straight brown hair that reached to my stomach. My green eyes matched my green T-shirt with a horse on it. I brushed my hair some more than pulled it into a ponytail.

I met up with Ava, Evelyn, and Amelia at the cafeteria. They all greeted me with a friendly smile. We all looked at our schedules and saw that we all had horse caring first. After breakfast we made our way to the stable. We were all divided into three sections: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Me, Ava, and Amelia were in advanced while Evelyn was in intermediate. A woman came up to us. "Alright, let's get started. My name is Milli and this is horse care. You will all choose your horse today and that will be your horse for the rest of camp. If you brought your own horse, that will be your horse. Before you settle on a horse, make sure you come talk to me so I can give advice on if I think that horse is at your experience level. Okay, go choose your horse."

I started to walk around looking at the horses. They were so cute and sweet, I wanted to pick all of them. I walked up to a beautiful bay gelding. His warm muzzle touched my hand. He seemed nice enough to be my horse. I was about to tell Milli that I chose my horse when I heard a high pitched neigh. I walked up to a round pen round pen and saw a gorgeous chestnut mare. She had white stockings that rose to her knees and a blaze of white that went from her poll to her muzzle. She was running around the round pen wildly. I gasped as I saw the Mustang branding on her. I was obsessed with Mustangs. I knew automatically that she was gonna be my horse.

I walked over to Milli to ask about the horse. "I chose my horse." I said.

"That's great! Which one did you choose?"

"That little chestnut mare in the round pen."

"Oh no! I'm sorry, but I can't let you choose her."

"Why not?"

"Well for one she's a wild mustang."

"Have you done any training with her?"

"Well, a little I guess. She still can't be ridden though."

"But can she wear a saddle?"

"Yes. For short periods of time."

"Then I can teach her how to be ridden."

"Umm... I'm not so sure..."

"Please." I said, staring up at her doing my best puppy dog face. She sighed.

"Fine, but be careful."

"Thank you so much! Oh, what's her name?"

"She doesn't have one yet. You can name her if you want."

"Okay, thanks!"

I walked over to the round pen. A lot of the other girls were still choosing their horses. My goal during those few minutes was to get her to trust me. When I went back to the round pen she seemed pretty calm as she grazed. When I entered the pen she stared at me for a moment then backed up and went back to grazing. I sat down in the middle of the pen. I knew that the first step to getting her to trust me was to let her come to me. I couldn't rush her into anything. I had to make her feel like it was her decision if she wanted to come to me.

I stood there for a few minutes when she started to take some steps toward me. She came up to me and nuzzled my shirt and chewed on my hair. I was careful not to try and pet her because it could spook her and

all our progress would be gone. I just had to wait. She reached down to my hand and nudged it. Slowly, I reached up and touched her neck. She closed her eyes in relaxation as I rubbed her neck. Then I started moving my hand near her head. She didn't seem head shy at all which was good. I stroked her white blaze and ran my fingers through her mane. I looked in her eyes and thought of a name. "Hello, Ebba, I'm Avery." Ebba meant wild and brave, which was perfect for this little Mustang.

I started to walk around the arena to see what Ebba's reaction would be. She just stared at me. It was clear that even if she wasn't completely trained, she had been around humans before. I picked up a halter and put it on her. She jerked away at first but then was willing to have it on her. I led her over to the fence post where the people who had chosen their horses were still grooming. I saw Amelia grooming her horse and I led Ebba over to her. I tied Ebba to the fence as I got the grooming box. When I got back I let Ebba smell the curry comb and then I groomed her. I did this with all the grooming tools so she would know what to expect.

I looked around for Ava, but I couldn't see her. "Where's Ava?" I asked.

"She didn't feel like any of the horses fit her, so she's looking in at intermediate level horses."

"Oh okay." I looked at Amelia's horse. It was a beautiful gray gelding. "Your horse is so pretty."

"Thanks! I had her last year, and I wanted to get to her before anyone else did. Poor Ava's horse got sold."

Amelia looked over at Ebba. "I like your horse. Mustangs have a big personality."

"I know, that's part of the reason I love them." I smiled as me and Amelia talked. I was scared that she wasn't going to warm up to me because she was so shy, but she was a lot of fun to talk to.

Sadie, Emily, and Isabella came up to Amelia and Sadie said, "Go groom our horses. I changed horses this year, now it's that white one, Angel."

"Mine is the buckskin horse, Jay." Emily said.

"And mine is the bay one, Strike." Isabella said. I looked at Strike and saw it was the horse I almost chose before I heard Ebba neigh. Amelia looked down.

"Okay." she said, quietly.

"No! That isn't fair!" I said.

"It's okay, Avery." Amelia said.

“No, it's not. Caring is part of the process and it helps you bond with your horse. You can't just ignore it. Plus, it's not fair to make Amelia do all the work when she has her own horse to take care of!” The girls looked at me, then at Amelia, and then each other.

“Fine. We'll do it ourselves this year.” they started walking away.

“You do realize what you just did, right?” Amelia asked.

“What? Stand up for you?” I replied.

“No. They're gonna make you their enemy for the rest of camp.” Amelia stared at me with a scared expression on her face.

“Well, I couldn't let you be treated like that.”

“Okay, just be careful.”

I went back to grooming Ebba. When I went to pick her hooves she let out a high pitched neigh and moved away from me. It was clear that she wasn't comfortable with me near her feet. That's when I looked at her feet and saw many scars on her legs near her hooves. When Milli walked by I called, “Hey Milli! Why does Ebba have scars on her legs?”

“Ebba?”

“That's what I named her.”

“Oh, well, she used to be a carriage horse before we took her in. If you look near her neck you'll see scars there too.” I looked at the scars on her neck. They were barely noticeable, but they were definitely there.

“The scars on her neck came from them pulling too hard on her. The cuts on her legs, however, were a result of big lick.” I stared at her in shock.

Big lick was a riding method people do to get the horse to move in a certain gait. They do this by attaching stones to the horses feet, resulting in scars, bruised feet, and weak hooves. It is a form of horse abuse and should be banned.

“No wonder she won't let me near her legs. Wait, why would they do big lick if she was a carriage horse? You said she couldn't be ridden.”

“She can’t. The thing is they used her for carriage shows, and to make it look more appealing, they used big lick to make her perform certain gaits. Even though they were never on her back, it still impacted her greatly. We never planned to have a rescue horse, but when my friend and I saw Ebba being abused like that, we had to take her. We gave the owners money, and took her here. We’ve tried to get through to her, but she’s just been through too much. If you’re not up to the task, it’s not too late to switch horses.”

“I won’t give up on her. No horse deserves what she went through. Even if I fail, I will do all I can to make her feel safe.” From that day forward, I made it my mission to always make sure Ebba trusted me and felt safe.

The rest of the day was pretty fun. I had a horse riding lesson where I rode a horse named Chocolate. Normally, you ride the same horse you care for, but since Ebba wasn’t ready, I rode a different horse. The rest of the day consisted of swimming, archery, water balloon fights, zip lining, and just hanging out with Ebba and the horses. At the end of the day, we went to the campfire, sang songs, and Ava made the best s’mores ever. After that I went to bed having Ebba in my mind all night

The next morning I made my way to the cafeteria. Just like the previous day I met up with Ava, Evelyn, and Amelia. “Amelia told us what you did yesterday,” said Evelyn.

“Which one? Me choosing a wild Mustang as a horse, or standing up to Sadie and her friends?”

“Sadie.” Evelyn said.

“Woah! You picked a wild Mustang!” said Ava.

“Yeah I named her Ebba.”

“Oh, I like that name.”

“Thanks.”

“Guys, we’re talking about Sadie, not Ebba.” Evelyn said. Me and Ava stopped talking about Ebba and looked up at Evelyn.

“Okay. Now, Avery, it’s good that you stood up for Amelia, but Sadie and her friends are dangerous. We tried to stop what they did and how they treated others, but then they made all our lives horrible.”

“You leave them alone, they leave you alone.” Amelia said, “my advice, leave them alone.”

“Well, it’s too late for that,” I said, “and since they already are gonna make my life horrible, I should at least try to stop them from treating people like this.”

“Attention, everyone!” a young lady at the front of the room said. Everyone stopped eating and talking and paid attention. “At the end of camp, there will be a riding competition on your horse that you chose. You may pick your discipline in what you want to ride. The events include: barrel racing, western pleasure, show jumping, or dressage. Come talk to me to tell me who your horse is and your event that you want to ride in.” I made my way to the front of the room.

“I’m gonna be riding Ebba in barrel racing.”

“Okay.” I went back to the table.

“What event did you pick?” Ava asked.

“Barrel racing.”

“Oh, awesome, you and Chocolate will be great at that!”

“I’m not riding on Chocolate. I’m riding on Ebba.”

“But...Ebba can’t be ridden.” Amelia said.

“Well, not yet.”

“You’re crazy, but all of us are crazy too.” Evelyn said. We all laughed.

I tried to spend as much time with Ebba throughout the day. I tried multiple methods to get her to trust me. Most of my training with her consisted of positive reinforcement. This meant whenever Ebba would do something I like such as: put her head in the halter, let me groom her, back up when I wanted her to, etc..., I would say, “Deet,” then give her a treat. She soon became a master at everything with grooming and tacking up except for letting me pick up her feet. Once she let me pick her hooves, I could start getting her used to being ridden.

I rode Chocolate around the arena. I could barely focus though. I started by warming up in the arena. I was trotting Chocolate around the arena when I saw the round pen with Ebba running around wildly. I tried

focusing on my riding, but I caught myself staring at Ebba multiple times during the lesson, longing to ride her.

One week had passed. That meant I only had two more weeks to work with Ebba. I reached down and touched Ebba's leg. We had gotten to the point where she didn't spook when I touched her leg. I pulled on Ebba's leg and she didn't lift it. She shifted her weight though, which was a start. "Deet." I said. I gave her an apple cookie. "We're making good progress, girl." Ebba nickered softly.

Halfway through the week I was able to pick up Ebba's hoof. "Good girl, Ebba!" I gave her a little break and then went back to working with her. I reached down and picked up her hoof. I took the hoof pick and started to pick out her hoof. She tried pulling away a few times but overall she was very good. I was so proud of her, and now we could work on riding.

The next morning I mucked out the round pen and groomed Ebba. Then I tacked her up. I went to get the mounting stool. I put it next to her and climbed on the stool. I started by putting my foot in the stirrup without adding any weight, and she was fine and didn't react. Then I added a little weight on the stirrup. Ebba neighed and moved away. My foot slipped out of the stirrup and I almost fell, but I regained my balance and managed to stay on the mounting block. I calmed Ebba down and tried again. And again. And again. Then right before dinner she let me put pressure on the stirrup. After dinner and the campfire I went to sleep with a smile on my face knowing I would ride her soon.

The next day, I worked on mounting her. I did some review with adding weight to the stirrup. After doing that a few times I put my hands on the saddle and pushed myself up. Ebba stirred a little. I definitely fell a few times. Finally, I pushed myself up, and Ebba didn't move. I went back down, and then did it again. I did this a few times until I finally went to mount her. I put my foot in the stirrup, pushed myself up, and then I slowly swung my leg over her back. Then I put my foot in the other stirrup. Ebba didn't buck or kick. I took things at her pace, and now I didn't have to go through the bucking and kicking. She did walk around and stirred a little bit, but eventually, she was calm. I was finally riding her. I had ridden horses my entire life, but being on Ebba

felt different. I felt so happy and free. I smiled and dismounted. I untacked her and gave her a treat along with a hug.

At breakfast I spotted Milli and approached her to talk about Ebba. “Hi, Avery. She said as I approached her “Hello,” I said, “so I was wondering if I could ride Ebba today. I was able to mount her yesterday and she was so good...”

“Wait. You were able to mount her?”

“Yeah. I sat on her for like a full minute.”

“Wow. That’s impressive. How did you do it?”

“Positive reinforcement, and not rushing her”

“I see you being a horse trainer in your future.” She smiled at me, and I smiled back. “You may ride Ebba today, but as always, be careful.” I wanted to scream of joy.

“I will, thank you!”

Once I told Ava, Evelyn, and Amelia the good news I went to see Ebba. I trained with her in the morning before our first real ride together. After lunch I made my way to the horse pen to get Ebba for our first ride. I tacked her up and made my way to the arena. I started by just walking around. I couldn’t stop smiling as I rode her around the arena. I asked her for a trot as I kicked her side lightly and clicked my tongue. Ebba and I moved in sync as I moved up and down in the saddle. Ebba was such a good girl and did everything I asked. For that ride, we just did a walk and trot. I felt like Ebba wasn’t ready for a canter, so I waited until the next day to try and canter with her.

When the next day came I walked and trotted just like the previous day for most of the lesson. When there was about 5 minutes left to ride, I tried to canter. I moved Ebba into a trot. I then clicked my tongue and squeezed her sides. At first she kept trotting with no sign of a canter. I tried again. She didn’t go. “Woah.” I said, pulling back on the reins. Ebba slowed to a walk and then a halt. I dismounted and gave her a treat.

“Hi.” Evelyn said, as I made my way towards our table for lunch. “How did riding Ebba go? Did you canter her yet?”

"No. I tried, but I don't think she's ready."

"Don't give up," Amelia said.

"Yeah, you can do it," Ava said.

"I was never planning on giving up," I said. "I'm gonna try again tomorrow. I'll tell you how it goes."

I started the next day's lesson the same way as the other two. Then at the last 5 minutes I tried cantering. I clicked and squeezed. Ebba hesitated. I did it again. This time Ebba picked up a canter. I wanted to throw my hands in the air and scream. I sat in the saddle, leaned back, and moved with her. "Yeah! Go Avery!" I looked over and saw Ava, Evelyn, and Amelia all cheering for me. I smiled at them and waved.

"Woah, Ebba." I said. Once she stopped, I dismounted. "Yes! We did it, girl!" I gave Ebba a hug and an apple cookie. I then cooled her down and let her out to graze in the pasture with the other horses.

"I can't believe it!" I said, as I ate my lunch.

"I knew you could do it." Ava said, enthusiastically. We all talked about how crazy it was that I trained a wild Mustang. After all the camp activities were over for the day except for the campfire, I texted my mom about Ebba and changed into a comfier outfit. The campfire was just as fun as all the other ones with the singing, s'mores, and stories. On the way back to our cabin, Evelyn said, "Hey, do you and Ebba want to come for a trail ride with us tomorrow after lunch?"

"Sure! That sounds like fun!"

"Great, after lunch we'll tack up our horses and hit the trail."

When it was time to go for a trail ride, we all met at the stable to get our horses ready. I tacked up Ebba and mounted her. We started to walk along a trail that goes in a circle that will end us back at camp. As I walked Ebba along the trail, I sat tensely in the saddle and held my reins tight. This made Ebba also very tense. She moved very stiffly. I was nervous and Ebba sensed that. I guess somewhere along the way, Amelia noticed this. "Are you guys alright?" Amelia asked.

"Yeah, just nervous. Ebba's never been on a trail before. What if she spooks and runs off? Or what if we're walking and she trips on a log and breaks her leg? Or what if..."

“Just relax,” Ava said, cutting me off, “you panicking will make Ebba stressed and then she’ll be worried about you the whole ride and you’ll be worried about her. Just calm down and enjoy the ride. This is supposed to be fun, remember.” I relaxed my body and loosened my reins. Almost immediately Ebba seemed to relax underneath me as well.

The ride was going great. We were all joking about how we all would react if we were in a horror movie. I was having a lot of fun with my friends and best of all, this was a great bonding experience for Ebba and I. “You know, I was pretty nervous for the competition next week, but now I’m actually really excited.” Evelyn said. “Same,” Ava added, “A nice trail ride always gets things off my mind.”

“I haven’t really practiced barrels with Ebba at all,” I said. “I was nervous about it but after this ride, Ebba and I have gotten a lot closer.” I reached down and gave Ebba a pat on her neck. Suddenly, I remembered Sadie and how everyone said she’d be awful to me. “Hey, I wonder why Sadie hasn’t done anything to me yet.”

“Yeah, I was thinking the same thing,” said Amelia.”

“Well, let’s just hope she forgot about what happened.” The trail ended as we arrived at the stable and we put our horses away and went to our next camp activity.

Throughout the week I put all my time and effort into training for the competition. I wasn’t doing this because I wanted to win, but because it was so much fun. I wanted to ride Ebba all the time. I longed to be with Ebba all the time. Ebba and I trained every day. We rode around the barrels and didn’t knock any of them down. Now we just needed to work on speed. The day before the competition, our time was 14.43 seconds. That’s really fast in case you didn’t know. Ebba and I could really win this.

The morning of the competition went by really slowly. The contest would take place after lunch. After the competition our parents would take us all home. Everyone was in their cabins packing up all their stuff. “It seems like just yesterday we arrived,” Ava said. It really had felt like we’d only been there a day.

“Please tell me you’re coming back next year,” Amelia said.

“Of course I am. I mean as long as my parents let me.” Everyone in the cabin cheered.

I made my way to the stands where Evelyn, Ava, and Amelia were sitting. The beginners were the first to show, which wasn’t really a show. All they had to do was walk around the arena, or trot or canter if they knew

how, then stop at the red flag. There weren't any winners or losers for the beginners, but they all got participant ribbons. I looked around for my parents but I couldn't find them. I tried not to think that they might miss it, and I paid attention to the beginners.

After the beginners, the intermediate were called over. "Wish me luck!" Evelyn said as she climbed down the bleachers to get her horse ready. The intermediate competition was just like ours, only the judging wasn't as harsh. The first five riders went by and Evelyn still hadn't ridden.

"Alright, the next rider is Evelyn on Jet riding western pleasure!" the lady on the intercom said. Me, Ava, and Amelia all cheered as loudly as we could. Evelyn came out and started with a walk and trot around the arena. She then moved into a canter and did one lap around the arena gracefully. After that she cut into the middle of the arena and tried to do some reining. She stumbled a little bit, making her lose her perfect posture. Because of this she lost some points but overall did very well.

Once intermediate was done, the advanced riders were called. Ava, Amelia, and I all got up and walked over to the horses. We passed Evelyn and gave her a high five. I tacked up Ebba and rubbed her neck, just like I did when she first let me touch her. "Avery!" I looked behind me and saw my parents. I ran up to them and gave them a hug.

"I'm so happy you're here!" I said.

"We're so excited to see you ride," said my dad, "Can we meet your horse?"

"Sure." They followed me over to Ebba. "This is Ebba."

"Wow, she's so pretty." My mom said, petting her. "Okay, we're gonna go sit down. Good luck!"

"Thank you!"

I checked my cinch one last time making sure it wouldn't fall off. I mounted her and rode around to warm her up. Once I had warmed Ebba up I dismounted and did my own stretches to warm myself up. I watched all the other riders on their course. Ava did incredible with her show jumping with only four faults, and Amelia was breathtaking as she did her dressage routine. Sadie and her group all did great too. Emily and Isabella did show jumping. They each rode a clear round. Sadie did barrel racing and got 17.23 seconds. It was impressive, but Ebba and I could do better. I just knew it. "We can do this Ebba. I believe in you." I said.

Finally the intercom went on and said, "Next up is Avery on Ebba doing barrel racing!" I walked Ebba into the arena, sitting tall in the saddle. Once we passed the gates, I let her run. Even though Ebba was very fast, things seemed to go in slow motion for me as Ebba rounded the first barrel at lightning speed. She went around the second barrel even faster. We were heading toward the last barrel when three cameras from behind the walls popped out and took photos. Their cameras clicked and flashed with a bright light. Even though I couldn't see who was behind the wall, I still knew who was there. It was Sadie and her friends.

Ebba stopped and reared up. I managed to hang on to the pommel of the saddle as she reared. Right as she came down she neighed frantically and charged toward the next barrel. Instead of running around it, she ran into it. The crowd gasped. Ebba started neighing and bucking. I took a deep breath and calmed myself. She was never gonna stop if I was scared. I took my hand off the rein and rubbed her neck. "It's okay, Ebba," I whispered, "I'm here." She slowed down to a soft canter. And cantered out of the arena. We finished with 25.34 seconds. I slowed Ebba to a walk and cooled her down. I was so mad at Sadie. Not because she made me lose, but because she put Ebba in danger just so she could win.

Evelyn got 2nd place for intermediate western pleasure, Ava got 5th place for advanced show jumping, and Amelia got 1st for advanced dressage. Sadie won the advanced barrel racing, and I got 7th. The judges promised that they'd made flash photography not allowed next year, but since it wasn't a rule before, they couldn't do anything about it.

I saw Sadie putting her first place ribbon on her horse's bridle. I walked over to her. "Sadie! How could you do that?"

"Hey, it's not my fault you didn't win."

"I'm not mad about me not winning. I'm mad about how you put Ebba and I in danger. One of us could have been hurt or worse. You knew she would spook at that. You're lucky that everyone turned out to be okay."

"I think you're overreacting."

"No, I'm not. All you care about is winning. You didn't even want to take care of your horse. You don't care about horses at all, do you?" Sadie opened her mouth like she was about to protest, but she just walked away.

After we exchanged phone numbers, I gave hugs to Evelyn, Ava, and Amelia. "See you guys next summer. I'll text you every day."

"I had so much fun," Ava said, "maybe even more fun than last year."

"I agree." Amelia said. "Oh, I gotta go, bye!" We waved as Amelia's car drove off. A car horn went off and we all looked at the car.

"That's my ride." Ava said, "See you next summer!"

"I should also go," Evelyn said, giving me one last hug.

"Bye!"

I was waving to Evelyn's car as she and her parents drove off. Sadie came out of the cabin. "Hey, Sadie, are you okay?" Sadie looked at me and broke down into tears.

"No! I'm not okay! You were right. I don't care about the horses. The only reason I come to this camp every year is to win. A few years ago I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. My sister had always loved horses, so I gave that a shot. I thought riding was my passion, but the truth is... I never cared about riding in general. I just liked the feeling of winning." I stared at her in disbelief. I couldn't imagine the thought of someone doing something they don't care about. "Anyway, what I originally came here to say was thank you."

"For what?"

"For showing me that I don't care about this sport. I'm gonna start exploring some other options for my life thanks to you. I'll leave all the horse stuff to you. Oh, I gotta go. Bye!"

"Bye, good luck!"

Once Sadie left I made my way to the stable to say bye to Ebba. It had all gone so fast. I had been so focused on doing what's best for Ebba that I haven't even processed that I wouldn't see her until next summer. I walked over to Ebba. I ran my fingers along Ebba's blaze and gave her one last apple cookie. She

nickered softly and rubbed her head against me thanking me. I looked at Ebba sadly. "Thank you for everything. You've changed my life, and I will never forget you. I promise I will come back. It will be a while, but next summer, I'll see you again. We will beat everyone at next year's competition!" I tried to sound happy as I pushed back the tears.

I took Ebba's lead rope and led her out to the pasture. Once we got there I opened the gate and led Ebba in. I took off her halter and gave her a hug. I felt a tear roll down my cheek as I hugged her. "I love you, Ebba." I walked out of the pasture and closed the gate. Ebba started to neigh and run around in circles. She reared up and tried to break down the fence, but failed. "Goodbye." Even as I walked out of sight I heard Ebba's neigh.

As I turned the corner to the parking lot, I wiped the tears from my eyes. Milli and my parents were standing there. "Avery, we have a surprise for you." Milli said.

"What's happening?" I asked.

"I talked it over with your parents, and they're allowing you to keep Ebba."

"What?"

"You are the only person that could ever get through to her. We don't have the time to take care of her the way you do. Plus, it's very clear that she loves you. Also, you can bring her to camp every summer and participate in the contest all over again. Many people bring their own horses to camp." I started to cry again, but this time of joy.

"Wait, but we have no place to keep her."

"About that," my dad said, "while you were at camp, we actually bought some land where you can own your own horse. We were gonna wait to buy a horse until you got home, but it sounds to me like you already found your horse here."

"Are you serious?" I asked, hopefully. Owning my own horse was a dream come true. Everyone nodded.

"Thank you so much!" I screamed. I gave my parents and Milli the biggest hug in the world.

I heard a high pitch neigh, and I looked behind me. It was Ebba running toward me. "Ebba!" I said, as I ran to her. I sprinted up to her as fast as I could. Once I reached her, I gave Ebba a hug and smiled.

“How did she get here?” Milli asked.

“She must have broken down the fence. That’s what she was trying to do when I left her.”

“Wait...WHAT!” Milli ran to the pasture, relieved to see none of the other horses escaped.

“Let’s go home, girl.”

We loaded Ebba into the trailer and headed home. As we drove away from camp, I stared out the window just like I did three weeks ago on the way to camp. I thought of all the fun

I had at the camp. All the friends I made, the memories I made, I thought of all of it. Horse camp had changed my life, and I couldn’t wait to come back next year!”

Robert E. Lee Essay

By Luke Willen

Who in American history best exemplifies the traits of Christianity? Throughout his life, Robert E. Lee followed the principles of Jesus to the very best of his considerable ability. Robert Edward Lee was born on January 19, 1807. Harry “Light-Horse” Lee, his father, served under George Washington in the American Revolution. However, he deserted the family with Lee being just six, and finances became strained. In 1825, Lee entered West Point where he finished second in his class. The “Marble Model”, as he was known at West Point, entered the Engineer Corps as a second lieutenant on July 1 of 1829. On May 13, 1846, the United States declared war on Mexico after, in the words of President James Polk, Mexico “shed American blood on American soil.” Lee served with distinction in the war over Texas, impressing many superiors including future enemy Winfield Scott. Lee also gained valuable experience scouting a battlefield. After the war, he returned to improve his estate, a venture in which he enjoyed success. On March 16, 1861, Lee was promoted to colonel of the 1st Cavalry, by which time seven southern states had already seceded. Lee was offered command of the United States Army but declined saying, “Save in the defense of my native State I never desire again to draw my sword.” Lee soon took command of the Army of North Virginia. He led one of the most brilliant military campaigns in world history. Outnumbered and lacking sufficient materials such as

food and ammunition, his troops still won many victories. However, strength of numbers prevailed, ushering the Confederate States of America into an abrupt demise. After surrendering at Appomattox Court House, Lee became the headmaster of a Washington College. Now known as Washington and Lee University, it still bears his name today and is currently one of the most prestigious universities in the country. Lee held the post until his death on October 12, 1870.

Despite Lee's formidable achievements outside of the Civil War, he is mostly remembered today as the general that lost for the South. In fact, he showed Christ in all he did by being responsible, humble, and above all, faithful. (Maybe add something to tie this into next paragraph)

Lee held responsibility as one of the highest virtues. First, he would push himself to the point of exhaustion to accomplish his duty. During the Mexican-American war, he once led three brigades through the pedregal, a bed of lava five miles wide that was considered impassable, that prevented the American troops from waltzing right into Mexico City. The brigades hit the Mexican army's rear, securing victory at the Battle of Contreras. Lee then found his way back to the headquarters of Winfield Scott, and guided an attack on the flank of the enemy at the Battle of Churubusco. Lee didn't sleep for approximately forty hours. Next, Lee didn't jockey for position in politics. The majority of people think of Gettysburg as the turning point in the war. Lee's generals in the battle were utterly incompetent as Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson had died at the Battle of Chancellorsville. James Longstreet kept stalling about an attack that Lee had ordered. General Richard Ewell refused to attack several important tactical positions that had yet to be fully defended by the Army of the Potomac. Lee could have blamed either general for the loss, thereby salvaging some shred of political credibility. Lee, though, took full responsibility for the loss in his dispatches to Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Finally, Lee consistently completed the most tedious of tasks assigned to him. Unlike other Southern generals, Lee regularly reported every detail on the battlefield to Davis, including the ones that showed Lee in a bad light. He even accepted Davis' influence in his job as general of the overall army, something his predecessor General Joseph E. Johnston would never abide. Lee tried to live as responsibly as possible, but that is dwarfed by his humility.

Lee tried to introduce humility similar to George Washington's in all he did. First, Lee didn't fear hard work. As an engineer, Lee worked on the Mississippi River, often working with common laborers. He shared their tasks and rations as though he were one of them. Next, Lee

didn't need a general's badge to be a satisfied person. During the Civil War, Lee wore three stars on his uniform's collar as Washington did. In the Confederate Army, three stars designated a colonel while a large star in the center of a wreath formed the symbol of a general. However, for Lee, three stars represented Lee perfectly fine. Throughout the war, Lee inspired the troops in a way that other generals considered beneath their dignity. Lee commonly was seen riding his horse Traveler in front of the troops and conversing with them. He was no vague figure sending orders from Richmond. He was a real leader for the troops, and the troops loved him. However humbly Lee lived, it doesn't compare to his faith.

Lee stayed grounded in faith his entire life. First, Lee acknowledged a very important point in Christianity today. "I can only say that I am nothing but a poor sinner, trusting in Christ alone for salvation." Lee recognized that Jesus was his only hope though he had many temptations as a general. Next, Lee considered one book to be higher than all others. He once said that the Bible had never failed him in any of his considerable problems and predicaments. Finally, Lee used scripture to console other people in the midst of their tragedies. This was an important skill for Lee as he was a loving commander of an army in the center of the bloodiest war on United States soil to date. In a letter to his son Rooney, he comforted Rooney about the loss of his wife. "...but my grief is not for her, but for ourselves. She is brighter and happier than ever, safe from all evil and awaiting us in her heavenly abode. May God in his mercy enable us to join her in eternal praise to our Lord and Savior." Lee had faith that he was going to heaven all his life.

Robert E. Lee has been remembered as the general who lost. He has been remembered as the general on the wrong side of the Civil War. However, he should be recalled as a kind man that stuck to his faith. He should be remembered as a humble Christian. He should be remembered as a hard worker and a responsible man. Robert E. Lee is an example to look up to as an honorable Christ-like figure.

Character Sketch

by Savannah Heath

April 27, 1999

Jane, we all miss you so much. Please come back home to your loving family. Each day we feel your absence more and more, and our hearts are heavy in regret. Everyone has made mistakes, but that gives no reason for anyone to run off as you have done. You are our daughter, and we would never hurt you on purpose.

Love,
Mom

May 8, 1999

Mom, I have found my place in the world, even if you don't accept where I have gone. I find life much happier penniless, than with money. I'm on my way to Alaska, and I see that hitchhiking is the best way to get there quickly. Don't worry about me, I can handle myself just fine without you.

Yours,
Jane Evans

May 11, 1999

My dearest Jane, you are unfit to survive in Alaska on your own. I am your mother and I know that a small woman in the middle of nowhere is not a good position to be in. You are taking this too dramatically. What preparations have you done to accomplish surviving in the Alaskan wilderness on your own? You have never once in your life even gone on a hike! I won't stand by and watch my daughter die because she is too angry to forgive a little mistake. Come back home.

Love,
Mom

May 25, 1999

I have taken to the wilderness well, who knew that solitude could be as beautiful as this? I am doing fine in Alaska, and have no need or longing for home anymore. Though you may see me as unfit, I have adapted to my surroundings adequately. Food has come easily to me. The other day I shot a moose, though the meat has become infested with maggots only 6 days later. Home is not an option for myself anymore.

Yours,
Jane Evans

May 27, 1999

For such a small girl, you have always had an attitude. Is what you are doing some sort of new trend? Leaving your poor mother for a life of solitude? You bleached your hair when it became a thing everyone was doing, you changed your whole personality when everyone was doing the same; will you jump off of a cliff when everyone decides to take the leap first? I am awfully upset with your decisions in the past few months.

Yours truly,
Mom

June 5, 1999

Dorothea Evans, I have grown confident in myself, and refuse to let you bring me down. I will not be contacting you again for quite awhile. Traveling has been difficult, but I have managed to make it deep into the wilderness. I now walk into the Wild.

Yours,
Jane Evans

August 12, 1999

Mom, I have found myself in one of the worst conditions of life ever. I blame it on bad food, but maybe I should be blaming it on myself. Today of all days, I notice how beautiful blueberries are at this time of year.

Love,
Jane Evans

(This story was heavily influenced by Christopher McCandless (1968-1992). Chris is a very interesting person to research. I found out about him and immediately got intrigued by his story, so I took a deep dive into him. Chris grew up in the suburbs and one day decided to go out among the Alaskan wilderness and survive. Chris kept a diary throughout his 113 days in the middle of nowhere, Alaska, and the last entry that he put in on day 107 only said, "beautiful blueberries". He died of starvation 6 days later. I really would recommend researching him, it was one of my favorite pastimes.)

Two sentence horror story

By Kiorra Nelson

For context this story is based on a two sentence horror story. I will give the beginning of the sentence at the start of the story. Then change the ending.

Thank you!

"I begin tucking her into bed and she tells me, "Daddy check for monsters under my bed."

It was a beautiful day. I woke up and immediately felt my daughter staring at me. She has been acting a little strange lately... Well, it was strange. She would be fine one day, jumping around and yelling like all 5 year olds do. But other days... not so much. She would be quiet and content, she would just stare at the wall and mumble. I blinked almost as soon as I noticed her, but when I opened my eyes again she was gone.

"I'm going crazy" muttered. Now any normal parent would send their child to a priest and never see them again. But I just couldn't. I get snapped out of my thoughts as my wife comes around the corner holding a breakfast tray.

"Well good morning sleeping beauty!" She chimed

"I tried waking you up but you were just sleeping like a log!" She smiled

Now I know what you're thinking *"wow you seem so sad about your daughter but your wife seems completely unfazed so it can't be that bad!"* And to that I respond

"just wait"

Just then, almost like she was called, my daughter comes prancing in the room. I breathe a sigh of relief knowing that today is not one of my daughters' bad days.

"Hi daddy!" She practically shouts as she jumps into my arms. At this point my wife has put down the breakfast tray and thank goodness she did. Simply because the moment my daughter stomped into our bedroom she flinched and not simply a small jerk, she basically jumped. Personally I can understand why.

"Dad?"

I once again had been lost in my thoughts

"Yes sweetie?"

"Why do you look so sad?"

"I'm just tired"

"...ok!"

Suddenly just as I start to relax, cause I thought I was off the hook. My daughter says

"Daddy, do you like the girl?"

I pause and force a smile

"What girl?"

Then her smile disappeared. I glance over at my wife. She looks at me,

gives me an approving nod and begins to walk away. Almost like she was wishing me luck.

"The girl under my bed"

I almost jump at the sound of her tiny little voice going a bit deeper than it usually does.

"Um...what's the girl's name?"

I asked, afraid to have the answer.

"Oh, she says she goes by Coco"

"That's a nice name"

I lied

She looked at me kind of funny and looked behind my shoulder before

prancing out of the room. *Finally*, I almost said aloud.

After that whole interaction I quickly ate my breakfast before it got

cold and got dressed. I started down the long flight of stairs, the floor creaking at every touch. Then I start to

hear the floor creaking behind me. I thought of looking behind me but fear consumed my soul. So I froze as the

creaking got closer and closer. Until I heard a voice

"Daddy?"

I stopped breathing, unable to do anything. I knew that it wasn't my daughter who didn't ask me how but there was just something sinister to the voice. After a few seconds of me struggling not to scream for help. It slowly faded away, I almost collapsed on the stairs once I felt it was gone. I quickly turned around just to see my wife staring at me with wide eyes. She started to speak but I interrupted her and uttered the words

"Where is she"

My frightened wife slowly pointed towards my daughter's bedroom. So

I got up, brushed myself off and went to her room. As I slowly approached the door there was an eerie wind coming out from the bottom. Until I noticed it wasn't wind it was a quiet continuous whisper. But that did not stop me from helping my daughter. I burst open the door and the colors of a little girls room hit my eyes and there were a countless amount of dolls all with different faces and emotions. But my eye was drawn to one certain doll sitting almost in the middle of the room. She had a frown, which was not a normal doll face. I slowly started towards the toy and yes, the whispering was still going on, almost taunting me to come closer.

Almost immediately as I got within a foot of the doll I started feeling a

pull. Some kind of force, just about begging me to advance forwards. Though it turned out to be a bad idea.

Though every little noise was getting louder around him, he could almost hear the soft shuffle of his socks on the wooden floor. He wasn't worried about that though, what he was worried about was the fact that everything was getting quieter as he got closer. Same thing was happening to his vision, everything was fading to black in the corners of his eyes. The more he looked around the more dizzy he got. However he kept getting slower and slower as he went on. Then he heard a voice. It started like a whisper then it slowly got louder. By now the whispers had also faded away and all that remained was him and the darkness closing in around him. His heart, which was once a decent pace, now felt like he just ran a mile. Then it felt as though someone had filled the room with an intoxicating gas that flooded his lungs. After a few moments of struggling everything went black.

When he awoke he was in a room covered with white paint and what looked like to be some sort of padding. There was a large window letting in rays of sunlight, which was extremely calming after what he just went through. Then it all came crashing down on him. He quickly got up and ran to what looked like the door but it looked exactly like the rest of the white room. Yelling, screaming, shouting for anyone who might be able to tell him what just happened. When the door slowly creaked open he would soon come to understand. Men in blue hospital scrubs came in, about three. They started speaking

"Why is he yelling again?"

"Probably...hallucinations"

"Again?...poor..."

That's right. He finally remembers. As the men in the blue scrubs start picking him up, speaking words of encouragement all the thoughts come rushing back. My name is Ethan Rivers. I am 30 years old and I have been suffering from schizophrenia since the age of 11. Right now I am in a mental facility. I have been experiencing the same hallucination for the past 19 years and now I lost my daughter. And something tells me it won't be ending any time soon as I begin to slip out of reality once again.

Character Sketch

By Hayley Mohr

His footsteps made no sound as he slowly walked through the dark hallway, the only light coming from a flickering light bulb above him. He glanced around, taking in the crumbling, white walls, and the cracked tile floor. A draft blew towards him, blowing a loose strand of hair onto his shoulder. He sighed, taking a hair tie out of his pocket and tying his long, black hair into a messy bun. He arrived at a door, the rustic look matching the rest of the building. He pulled the photo out of his pocket, comparing the picture to the door in front of him. "This is it." He mumbled, twisting the handle and attempting to push open the door. It stuck to the frame, and he had to fully push his weight against it. It swung open, and he crashed

into the floor in the middle of the room. He sighed, sitting up and brushing dust off his shirt and pants, the brown color of the dirt contrasting with his gray cargo pants and black t-shirt. He stood up, and looked around in confusion. There was nothing here. No desk, or any evidence that his uncle had occupied the office. The only decoration of any sort was a pair of thin, worn curtains covering a large window, and an empty candy bar wrapper sitting in the corner.

He sighed, putting his head in his hands. This was the tenth place he had gone to, all of them empty. He exhaled in frustration, and as he turned around to leave, the door swung shut with a loud *bang*. He froze, his eyes widening in surprise. *Oh no*, he thought, slowly backing away. *This place is already creepy enough, I do not need some ghost trying to scare me*. His back hit the windowsill, and he glanced out the window, contemplating how he would safely jump out of a two story building. *I mean, there is a dumpster right below the window. I could-*

"There's no need to be afraid, Aidan."

His head whipped around, but the room was empty. *What?* He walked over to the door, and tried to open it. It was locked. He looked around, but he was the only one in the office.

"Hello?"

His voice echoed around the empty room, and he waited a few moments before calling out again.

"Is someone there?"

He walked around the length of the room, feeling along the walls. *Is there a hidden speaker?* He looked up at the corners of the room, searching for something that didn't look right. After a few minutes, he gave up and walked back to the window. *That was odd*. He thought, staring outside. *I swear someone said my name. I do have to figure out how to open this door, though*. He heard a faint click behind him, and he turned around to see the door open, and someone standing in the doorway. It was a man, dressed in a simple white button down shirt, and black slacks with gray running shoes. He had black hair, a stray lock falling over one of his dark blue eyes.

"Hello, Aidan."

He smiled, his eyes narrowing menacingly. Aidan tried to back away, then

stopped as realized he was trapped. He sighed, then looked him in the eyes.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

"I've come to kill you, of course."

His eyes widened, and he froze.

"What?"

The man chuckled softly then, then slid a knife into his hand from his sleeve.

He walked towards Aidan, slowly, spinning the knife in his hand. He glanced at the window behind him, then slammed his full body weight against the glass. The window, being old, cracked, but didn't shatter. The man grinned, watching him in amusement.

"Trying to escape now, are we?"

Aidan glared at him, then slammed into the window again, the glass splintering. The man sighed, then charged at him. He hit the window again, shattering it. His force carried him through the opening, and he gasped as he felt empty air underneath him. He hit the dumpster, bouncing off the lid and onto the asphalt. He landed on his side, wincing as he felt a few of his ribs snap. He rolled onto his back, grimacing as his ribs shifted. He heard a soft *thump* beside him, and turned his head to see the man step down from the dumpster, grinning as he walked over to him. He pushed himself off of the ground as fast as he could, and sprinted out of the alleyway. He glanced backwards to see if he was being followed, but to his surprise, the man had vanished. He looked around in confusion, then walked over to his bike, which was still leaning against the wall where he had left it. *I need to get out of here, fast.* He hopped on the bike, and peddled home, glancing behind him as he sped through the city. He arrived at his house, parking in the driveway and sprinting to his room, ignoring the pain in his ribs. He threw open his door and carefully plopped on his bed, putting his head in his hands. *That was terrifying.* He took his shoes off, and layed down, pulling the covers over him. The last thought he had was how much his chest hurt, everything faded to black and he fell asleep.

‘Everywhere, I Live Nowhere’

Short Story

By Adaline Graham

Vultures are holy creatures.

Tending to the dead.

Bowing low.

Bared head.

Whispers to cold flesh, “Your old name is not your king. I rename you ‘Everything’.”

-@cryptonature on Twitter.

With her suitcase rolling against the tiles, and two children following behind her, Mrs Tuva was in a hurry, as well as in a bad mood. The airport was a nightmare, and she was just about to miss her flight. The second flight, in one day. It was ten at night in the country they were in, just to stop by and wait for the next plane, which was about to close up and take off.

“Raske på,” she huffed, pushing one leg forward after the other, despite how badly they begged her to stop. *Hurry up!* she said.

“Jeg er trøtt!” Her littlest whined. *I’m tired!*

She shushed him, then glanced back at him. His face was flushed from overworking himself, and he looked miserable. That night, he’d been too excited about going on a plane to sleep, and now he would do anything else than get on said plane. He was six years old.

Her eyes quickly darted to her oldest. He was looking down, tired as well, but not saying anything. He was twelve years old.

They barely made it on the plane, and Mrs Tuva nearly hit a woman on the head while putting her smallest son’s tiny suitcase up in the cupboard above the seats.

The plane ride wasn’t bad. Her youngest fell asleep in the first hour, and her oldest spent most of his time looking out the window, leaning over his brother slightly, or reading a book.

“*What are you reading?*” She asked, her voice soft.

He snapped his head up, then held up the book. *Tokyo Revengers*.

“*What is it about?*” Mrs Tuva asked, taking the book, then looking at the pages. To her great surprise, it wasn’t a book at all. It was a comic, of some sorts, featuring characters with dramatic expressions and big eyes. “*Is this an Anime?*” she hissed.

“*No! It’s a Manga,*” he snaps.

“*I thought you were reading something good, an actual book.*”

He took his ‘Manga’ back, and went back to reading it, turning his knees away. She scoffed, rolling her eyes, then looked back to the show playing on her tablet. Mrs Tuva suddenly tapped the screen rapidly, skipping through a scene she didn’t want her children to see.

“Mamma!” Her oldest almost shouted.

“Hva?” She exclaimed, whispering.

He pointed to the window, then leaned back so she could see. “*We’re in the USA!*” He explained excitedly. She nodded at him, “*Yeah, we are. No more plane rides.*”

Her oldest leaned his head back. “*My tummy hurts. I think I get plane sickness.*”

“*Go to the bathroom.*”

“*Not the plane bathroom, Mamma...*” He pouted, looking sour.

Finally in the USA, her husband, Mr Rosco, awaited his family’s arrival in the airport parking garage, sitting in the front seat of the car, eager to see them again after weeks.

His phone sitting on the passenger’s seat buzzed. Mr Rosco reached for it, but the screen awakened, letting him see a text from his wife, announcing her and the kids were there, and they were coming to the car.

“*Good to see you!*” he said once out of the vehicle, opening his arms wide for an embrace from his wife, then two kids (he had to pull his stubborn twelve year old in for a hug). His littlest hugged him tightly, gabbering about the first plane, then the second plane, and the airport, and the dream he had, and the big dog he saw the day before. He also mentioned something about school, then *brunost*.

“*Is the house ready?*” Mrs Tuva asked.

“*Yeah, it’s painted and ready,*” Mr Rosco said.

And then, there they were, now in the USA. Their house was more spacious than the one they owned in Norway. They couldn't take any of their furniture, so for the time being all they had was a couch, a kitchen table with chairs, and beds. But it was alright—a new beginning for them. At this moment, the littlest one sat on the couch with their cat, Egil. The oldest was sitting at the kitchen table. Mrs Tuva was wiping down the counters, and Mr Rosco was checking out the dishwasher to see what its problem was... Outside was a small backyard, with vines covering the stone wall surrounding it. There was a banana tree in the backyard, which greatly excited the kids. The consequences wouldn't be able to find them here, Mr Rosco thought, as he surveyed his family. Nothing more could happen. They could live here, forever. Everything would be okay.

Two weeks later, the house was semi-furnished, and the kids were ready to be sent off to school. They'd be in the same school, a kindergarten through grade eight charter school. Mr Rosco looked into the school in depth, and figured it would be okay, since it was fairly small, and the reviews from parents were mostly positive (a lot of them mentioned not being okay with the P.E. teachers). Mrs Tuva was worried by the fact the kids would be starting in the middle of the year.

"I'm sure Mikkel will be fine," Mr Rosco told her. *"Kindergarten is easy."*

"I'm not worried about Mikkel!" Mrs Tuva stated. *"Starting in the middle of seventh grade won't be easy..."*

The first day of school for both of the boys arrived on a Wednesday. Early in the morning, just as Mrs Tuva walked out the door, she saw her eldest son standing at the mailbox, flipping through the mail.

"Don't get into that," she said to him as she unlocked the car door. It was a rental, and soon she'd buy her own. The oldest looked up at her, and asked, *"Mamma, who is Peter MacLumber?"*

"Someone you don't know," Mrs Tuva snapped. It felt as though a cold hand had smacked her across the face. *"You go quickly and put the mail on the table! Then, you get in the car; or we won't get to school on time."*

He rolled his eyes, then jogged to the front door of the house. The youngest sat in his car seat in the back, and Mrs Tuva looked at him through the rearview mirror above. She sighed long, and deep.

When the oldest came back, Mrs Tuva started the car and began driving the kids to their little charter school on the edge of town. The building was red brick with a sign out front that said 'Sally Ride Charter'.

"Here it is," Mrs Tuva said, turning into the parking lot.

"*We already saw it yesterday,*" the oldest said.

"*Okay, wise guy,*" Mrs Tuva said.

The oldest scrunched up his face, and he leaned forward to ask, "*What is 'wise guy'?*"

"Ah-ah-ah! *Say it in English,*" Mrs Tuva said, waving her finger as she put the car in park.

The oldest sighed. "What is 'wise guy' mean?"

"*It's 'does'!*" Mikkel, the youngest, corrected.

The oldest grabbed his brother's face and pushed it back in a playful manner. Mikkel laughed and smacked his hand away, to which the oldest yelped, "Ow! Det gjør vondt!" *It hurts!*

When they arrived at the school, Mrs Tuva walked them into the office. A teacher led Mrs Tuva and Mikkel to his kindergarten class, and the oldest son went off on his own to the second floor, at the far end of the hall, next to two large windows. A couple other students stared at him, but most glanced and pretended that they didn't even see him there.

There were tables and blue cushioned chairs outside of the classroom. About fifteen kids sat on them or around them, talking loudly and horsing around. They all wore the same uniform: blue polo shirt, and beige bottoms. Girls wore skirts, and boys wore shorts. But there was one girl wearing shorts.

A bell rang moments later, and all of the students piled into a room behind a pale wooden door. He had been there yesterday to meet his homeroom teacher and to be given his schedule and iPad, but seeing the classroom filled with students and a teacher in the corner at her desk, it felt different. He pressed his lips tightly together, wishing he wasn't there. Then he saw on the whiteboard: 'WELCOME KJELL'. His lips parted, and he furrowed his eyebrows. He stormed over to the board, and wiped the two L's away with his finger, then replaced them with a D.

"Hey," a soft and high-pitched voice said to him. "Oh? Did I..." She said something he didn't pick up, and he looked up at his new teacher, Mrs Jung.

Everyone said 'welcome' to him, and when people spoke to him, Kjeld didn't understand anything they said. They spoke too fast, and he didn't know how to ask for them to slow down and speak more clearly— without their Californian growls and exaggerated pitch. He had one person throughout the day helping him (he suspected they were told to help him out by a teacher). His name was Liam and he was very impatient with Kjeld.

Mrs Tuva and Mr Rosco sat at the dining table, looking down at the envelope, which was hastily opened and the contents were spread all around.

“Rosco...” Mrs Tuva whispered, holding her forehead in her hands. *“They found us. What does this mean? Are we going to be okay?”*

“MacLumber *hasn’t said anything about the extra four thousand we used...*” Mr Rosco explains. *“Our safety precautions of moving here worked... We’ll ask for another half a year, and then we’ll pay him to get away.”*

Mrs Tuva’s eyes brighten and she smiles, exhaling out a deep breath that had been held in for many years. *“So... We’ll be free. We can keep the kids, too? And the nine thousand?”*

“Most likely. We’ll mail Beck Co the ‘things’, then the rest of MacLumber won’t ask for them,” Mr Rosco stated as he gathered the contents of the envelope and put them back inside.

Mrs Tuva sat up, and looked into his eyes. *“How did they find us here, in the United States?”*

“Hvem vet?” *Who knows?*

“How was your first day, Mikkel?” Mrs Tuva asked her littlest son as she took his hand and pulled him away from the line of kindergarteners going through the gate to the parking lot to await their parents.

“Mamma! *We did Crafts!*” Mikkel exclaimed.

“*Really?*” Mrs Tuva asked, her voice pitched up like a squeal. She then spotted Kjeld walking down the stairs, his head hanging. He looked upset, but she chose not to ask as the three of them walked to the car.

What she did ask, though, was, *“How was school?”*

Kjeld groaned. *“My English sucks. I couldn’t talk to or understand anybody!”*

“Just practice more,” was all Mrs Tuva said to him.

Kjeld, compared to Mikkel, was certainly slow in picking up English. For the rest of the sixth grade, Kjeld didn’t speak much at all. His teachers had ways around the language barrier separating Kjeld from learning, but all-in-all, Kjeld was failing the sixth grade.

“Hurry up!” Liam barked. He stood a couple meters away from Kjeld, next to his friend, Taylor. “I’ve got your books right here, what are you getting?” He watched as Kjeld scrambled for something in his locker.

“Work,” Kjeld replied, out of breath. He snatched an orange piece of paper, then ripped it out of his locker. It tore in half.

“A missing assignment?” Taylor asked. He came up from behind Kjeld, and grabbed the other half of the paper for him. Taylor was almost two heads taller than Kjeld, who was average height for a twelve year old boy. “Dude,” Taylor said. “This assignment is like, four weeks old. You sure you’re even gonna get credit?”

Kjeld made a face of uneasiness and uncertainty. “Euh... I don’ know?”

“Did Mrs Jung say you could turn it in?” Taylor asked, walking toward Liam. The three boys walked together after Kjeld slammed his locker shut.

“She... Uhm... Says ‘you can turn it in for half credit’,” Kjeld explained. Suddenly, a brooding old man appeared from behind the corner and barked. “NORWAY! TUCK IN YOUR SHIRT!”

The three sixth graders started walking faster. Kjeld shouted back, “Brette den inn til meg!” *Tuck it in for me!* Then he muttered, “Get lost, Mr van Belke...”

“Saying how nice my hair is, Norway?” Mr van Belke, the P.E. teacher asked, rubbing his bald head.

Kjeld firmly grabbed the knob of the classroom door and yanked it open. Taylor and Liam behind were giggling.

That very same day at lunch, Kjeld sat alone at the end of the ‘girl’s table’. He poked sullenly at his tiny cup of heavily preserved squared fruits. Little by little, the girls grew closer to him, like the darkness filling the earth as the sun sets. He slouched over his lunch kit, brought in his shoulders, to try and make himself as small as possible— “Kjeld, Kjeld, Kjeld,” they said. “Kjeld, why don’t you like Mr VB? Why are you so depressed? Kjeld, what’s ‘hello’ in Norwegian? Is Norway in Germany? I’m European, too! I’m twenty five percent Italian. Where did you live in Norway? Maybe you’ve met my grandpa...”

He grabbed the side of his head and tried to squeeze his ears shut.

“Shut up...” he hissed. Kjeld felt himself trembling with anger.

The girl sitting next to him leaned even closer, “Huh?” she asked.

He stood up straight, and screamed in her ear, “STOPPE!”

There was a pregnant pause, then the cafeteria erupted back into its usual hundreds of conversations. Kjeld glanced around at all the girls sitting at the table.

“*Stoppe*,” one of them said, mocking him. “Stoppy!” They laughed.

He grabbed his lunch kid and threw it at them. Some juice from his fruit cup splattered onto a couple of the girls, but it was the shock value that almost made his point. Still, they laughed and poked fun at him. He sat back down, putting his head on the table and using his arms to cover the sides of his face

Then he felt a hand touch his shoulder, then his hair. He threw himself upwards and he let loose. He grabbed the girl and pushed her back so she leaned over the bench. She swung her legs up to hook them on the metal bars underneath the table, then she brought herself back up, then moved away from Kjeld. And that was that, because he was sent to the principal's office immediately afterwards.

"So. Incredibly. Unmanly. Of you," Mr Rosco said, glaring down at his son.

Kjeld didn't look up. He stared down at the floor, watching as his tears warped his vision. *"I've told you many, many times: DON'T HIT GIRLS!"*

Kjeld tried to explain, to paint the real picture for his father— that, according to him, he only pushed her 'a little bit'. She didn't get hurt. But they believed the story the girl told, that Kjeld tried to push her off the table and he 'looked like' he wanted to beat her up.

Ridiculous. Just stupid, Kjeld thought. As he was thinking, his father pushed him, and he stumbled back.

"Pappa," Kjeld squeaked, looking up at Mr Rosco. Then his eyes were drawn to his little brother sitting on the couch. He mouthed the word 'dra'. *Leave.*

"How does that feel?" Mr Rosco asked, pushing his son again. *"How does it feel for someone bigger than you to be pushing you? You're scared, right?"*

He kept pushing him, over again. Kjeld lost his balance once, and Mr Rosco grabbed him by the arm and lifted him up to push him again. Kjeld continued to glance over at his little brother, then eventually his control left him.

"Go away, Mikkel! Just get out of here!" He shouted, wanting his brother out of the room, so he didn't have to see this. Mr Rosco took a thunderous, angry step forward. *"Stop yelling at your brother! He's not in any trouble, you are!"* Kjeld threw his arm toward the hallway where the bedrooms were. *"Go!"* He shouted again. Mikkel burst into tears. *"Stop yelling at me!"*

Mr Rosco started shouting and Kjeld screamed back, and Mikkel cried harder. He put his hands over his eyes, then his ears, then his eyes again because he was indecisive on whether or not he would rather see the fight but not hear it, or hear the fight but not see it.

Afterwards, Kjeld stormed into his room. He walked past Mikkell's room that was void of a doorknob, and into his room that didn't have a door at all. *"I hope there's a fire and I burn alive because there's no door to block the flames and smoke,"* Kjeld said as his father carried his bedroom door away. Mrs Tuva said in response, *"This is your own fault for locking your door; Don't be angry."*

Mrs Tuva and Mr Rosco sat together in a booth at Red Lobster.

"Too bad we can't take Mikkell here," Mr Rosco said in Norwegian. *"Poor little boy is allergic to seafood."*

"Yes, poor boy," Mrs Tuva said, squeezing the meat out of a crab leg. *"Speaking of, he told me you and Kjeld fought today?"*

"Yes, he got into a fight with a girl at school," Mr Rosco stated, putting more seasoning on his baked potato. *"So, I had to discipline him."*

Mrs Tuva had a tense expression as she asked, *"It wasn't physical again, was it?"*

"No," Mr Rosco told her. *"Not really."*

His wife nodded. *"That's good."* She took a bite of crab meat, then she sighed. *"He's been so moody lately..."*

"He's twelve," Mr Rosco said. *"He's always been a bit emotional, too. He's just on his phone too much. Tomorrow I'm gonna make him clean the downstairs."*

Kjeld stood in the large, open hallway, looking at the big windows next to his classroom, bright white light shining through them. He walked towards them, then pressed his head against the cold glass, staring into the blinding abyss.

"Hey, Lindgren," a voice as soothing as still water said behind him.

"Hi," Kjeld said back. He looked over his shoulder, then turned his whole body to face his Spanish teacher, Señor Ramos.

Señor Ramos smiled at him. "How was your detention?" He said so in such a way that it was humorous. Kjeld also never struggled to understand Señor Ramos, unless he was using words Kjeld didn't know at all. He always appreciated how slowly his Spanish teacher spoke, and how he clearly pronounced every sound.

"My detention was fun," Kjeld said sarcastically.

Señor Ramos patted his shoulder. "It's okay. When will your mom, or dad, be here?"

“I haven’t sent them a messaged yet,” Kjeld said.

“Do you want to step into my room for a bit? So we can talk.”

Kjeld formed a bond with Señor Ramos, even though Kjeld was slow to pick up new language, and as stubborn as he wanted to be, Señor Ramos was patient and always eager to see how Kjeld was doing.

“I think your English is just fine,” Señor Ramos told him one day. He was leaning against the wall of the school outside, with a cigarette next to his mouth. “I don’t have any problems understanding you.”

Kjeld leaned against the wall, too, with his hands stuffed in his sweater pockets. He was in seventh grade now. “But I can’t get an American accent. I sound so stupid. No one takes me seriously... But I’m so smart in Norwegian.”

“To me, your accent makes you sound smarter. Not everyone is bilingual.”

Kjeld looked up at the cloudy, overcast sky, with the palm trees seeming to graze against the clouds, and something changed inside of him. “Maybe,” was all he said.

“Mamma,” Kjeld said in a hushed voice. His mother stood in the living room, checking her phone as she leaned her hand against the vacuum cleaner. Her gray hair was draped over her shoulders, when usually it was in a braid. She wore a nice red sweater and jeans. Mrs Tuva looked much cleaner, and more lively, than Kjeld had ever seen her.

“What?” She snapped at him, flicking her eyes up to glare at her son. Then she softened her look. “*Do you need something?*” She asked softly in Norwegian.

Kjeld stepped out from behind the corner. “Who is Peter MacLumber?” He asked in English.

Mrs Tuva froze, staring down at Kjeld. Her mouth twitched in the corner, and her grip tightened on the vacuum cleaner. “Igen,” she stated. *Not one person.*

“Mamma,” Kjeld repeated, then he switched to Norwegian. “*I heard you and Pappa talking about ‘Peter MacLumber’. What did you and Pappa do? Why did we move from Norway?*”

Mrs Tuva scoffed, and the scoff turned into a laugh. “*You know why we moved from Norway...*”

Kjeld shook his head. “*You never did.*”

“*We moved... because... We needed a new start.*” A silence drifted through the air, and Mrs Tuva looked around the living room. There was a painting of a Viking family on the wall, and another painting of a boy feeding chickens. A photo of their family sitting around a fireplace— including grandparents, cousins, and aunts. Mikkel was a newborn baby, and six-year-old Kjeld was holding him in his arms...

“You wanted to run away from something bad you did? Who are we in debt to?” Kjeld asked, speaking rapidly. His eyes were wide, staring deep into Mrs Tuva’s soul. She looked down at her son, with a wicked scowl on her face. She looked disgusted at him.

“NÅ ER DET NOK!” She screamed. *That’s enough!*

Kjeld spun to the left and legged it down the hall, his mother storming like an offended bull behind him.

“I think we’re safe,” Mrs Tuva said to her husband.

“The rest of MacLumber’s hasn’t found us, it seems,” Mr Rosco said to his wife. “Everything will be fine now.”

And they lived another year with the assumption that everything will be fine, with the future planned based on that hope. Mikkel went into the second grade, and

Kjeld went into the eighth grade. As far as they knew, snakes did not follow them, and sins were not being counted.

Mrs Tuva glared at her son with an unassuming expression on her face. She was sorting through the mail (most of it was spam), while he was drying off dishes and putting them in cupboards. She looked away from him, down at the pile in her hands. Then, a pale yellow envelope crossed her vision. The first word she read was ‘MacLumber’, and her heart froze. There was a ringing in her ears, then she held the envelope up to her eyes. Then everything unwinded when she read the date— two years ago, and the envelope was already opened. A clink was heard from behind, and she looked over her shoulder to see Kjeld standing still, and Mrs Tuva could have sworn she saw him smiling.

“I threw this piece of trash away...” she muttered, swiftly standing up and tearing the paper to pieces over the garbage can.

Through the gaps of sunlight between the blinds of his window, Mikkel looked up at the rain pebbles falling slowly down the glass. And behind his bedroom walls, he could hear his family, and their voices grew louder and louder as a shouting match began. At first it was in English, but soon it morphed into Norwegian.

“Why did you dye your hair white? You’re fifteen, Kjeld! You look like an old man!” his mother shouted.

“Don’t touch me!” his older brother shouted back. *“And I’m not fifteen, Mom! I’m still fourteen.”*

Mikkel sat up, and slid out of bed. He walked over to his bedroom door, and stuck his hand through the hole where a doorknob normally would go, then he opened it. Down the hall he could see the shadows of his mother and brother, then his father stepped out of the bathroom.

“Shut up!” he shouted. “Both of you! Just shut up!” ‘Shut up’ was one of the few English words he liked to use.

Mikkel sat in front of the Christmas tree as his brother stormed out of the house. He flinched as the door slammed shut. There he was, gone again.

“*What a disaster that child is,*” his mother sighed, rubbing the bridge of her nose. “*Did you ever act like... that?*” She looked to her husband. Mr Rosco shook his head.

“Aldri,” he said. *Never.*

“De lyver,” Mikkel said. *You are lying.* His parents looked down at the littlest boy, their eyebrows furrowed.

“*What do you mean?*” Mr Rosco asked his son. “*Who’s lying?*”

Mikkel hugged his knees. “*You and brother act the same.*” His parents demanded answers, so he explained, “*You’re always shouting, and angry. Brother shouts all the time, and he’s angry all the time. You’re all so angry!*”

“Mikkel,” Mr Rosco pressed. “*You’re being angry right now, too.*”

The littlest opened and closed his mouth, searching for the words that spoke what he felt. He raised his hands, then said, “*Because, because— Your anger makes me angry, too.*”

Like a wick to another wick, the anger in the room came together and from each individual flame, came a fire. It was like that every day.

Afterwards, Mrs Tuva leaned against the couch, the Christmas tree lights blinking behind her. “Everything...” she whispered. “Everything will be fine.”

Kjeld stormed out of the house, slamming the door as hard as he could behind him. In front of him was a street, with a few cars rolling by. The winter sky was a dark blue, and there were few clouds. Kjeld pulled out his wired headphones, plugged them into his phone as he walked down the road, and turned on ‘The Kill’ by Thirty Seconds to Mars. He walked far down the road, determined to be as far away from home as possible.

A girl with a really big dog walked by him, and he had to do a double take to comprehend the size of the animal.

“Woah!” he gasped, looking at the dog.

The girl looked over her shoulder at him, then smiled. “He’s an Anatolian Shepherd. He’s really big, yeah.”

Kjeld took out his earbuds, and gazed upon this huge dog. The girl said, “You can pet him. He loves people.” Kjeld jumped at this opportunity, and began rubbing the dog’s head. The dog rolled his head around with great joy.

“What’s his name?” Kjeld asked the girl.

“His name is Pooh Bear,” she said.

Kjeld pointed at the girl’s shirt. “I love Green Day,” he said.

“Oh! This is my dad’s shirt,” the girl explained, looking down at her chest. “I’m not really into Green Day, or rock for that matter. I like Mitski and Girl in Red.”

“Ah…” Kjeld nodded. “Uhm, I like Green Day a lot. Your dad must be cool. Does he listen to rock much?”

The girl nodded, too. “A lot of rock. He’s always blasting it when I’m at his house.”

“That’s funny,” he commented. Then the girl asked right after, “Where are you from? You have an accent.”

“You have an accent, too,” Kjeld replied impulsively. Then he felt a little embarrassed.

“Uhm, no. *You* have an accent,” the girl scoffed, but she was still smiling. “Where are you from? I like your hair, by the way.”

Kjeld stopped petting her dog for a second. “My name is Kjeld and I’m from Norway—”

“Norway!? What are you doing here in California? Is your hair natural?”

Kjeld slowly blinked at her, then he said, “Yeah, my hair is natural. Norwegians have white hair to use to hide in snow…”

“Really?”

“No.”

She laughed, and Kjeld gave her dog another scratch behind the ear. The girl tugged on the dog’s leash.

“See you— oh, and my name is Caitlyn, by the way. Cate for short. I’ll see you around!” she said. Cate gave a quick wave, then started walking. Kjeld waved back, then put his earbuds back in. He hoped to see her again.

He walked even further, and by now the sun was setting. A blanket of silence settled over him. He looked up at the pink and orange sky, then down at the edge of the city in front of him. There was a rocky hill up ahead, and a chain link fence surrounding a cement building. Overgrowth of vines and grass concealed the rocky and trashy terrain that Kjeld discovered as he walked through it.

Suddenly, his music stopped, and he took his phone out of his pocket and was utterly disappointed to find it had run out of battery.

“Oh…” Kjeld said. “I don’t know where I am.”

He tried to retrace his steps, but he wound up more confused about his location. He regretted not paying attention to his phone battery— he regretted walking out this far without a care in the world— he regretted getting mad at his parents— he regretted even bothering with anger.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered to nobody. “I’m kind of stupid...”

He sat against a palm tree, sitting criss-crossed, looking around at the edge-city. The more he stared, the more the darkness warped his vision, and he saw limbs moving about in the night, and he could have sworn someone was walking in circles around him. Kjeld was soon hugging his knees, and muttering a prayer to a god he didn’t believe in.

Something rustled— it *actually* rustled, it wasn’t his imagination.

A bald-headed bird perched on the chain link fence next to him. He could see its body in the dark, illuminated by the moon.

“You’re ugly,” Kjeld commented, sneering.

The bird barked at him! Like a dog, it barked, and Kjeld’s skeleton jerked, trying to escape his flesh.

“I’m sorry!” He pleaded. “Don’t attack me!”

The bird turned its head to the side, seeming to examine him. Then the bird opened its mouth again, and a raspy hiss was heard. Kjeld stood up, wanting to get a closer look at the bird.

“You’re... Uhm, lættis.” *Funny*. He smiled awkwardly and did finger guns to that creepy bird.

“You’re lost?” The bird asked, in English. But it didn’t sound like a human, it sounded like a bird speaking... Kjeld was frozen, then his eye twitched.

“I’m hearing things,” he told himself.

“Are you lost?” The bird repeated. “You’re lost? Are you lost?”

Kjeld backed away. “Eu-u-u-h! Noe, noe, noe, noe! This bird isn’t talking to me, n-o!”

The bird flew off the fence, and the raspy hiss returned as he attacked Kjeld, flapping his wings and clawing the boy’s face. Kjeld screamed, trying to push the bird off of him.

“HELP! HELP! HELP!” Kjeld screamed. “SOMEONE HELP ME!”

He fell to his knees, then onto his side. With his knees to his chest, and his arms over his head, he tried to protect himself against the vulture’s talons.

“I am a holy bird,” the vulture said, its beady black eyes staring at what felt to be his soul. “I will free you from your vessel. You will not be burdened by flesh, for I will consume it. Gone will be your body, and there will be your ghost.”

“Rosco,” Mrs Tuva said. She grabbed his arm. “Call the police already! It’s two in the morning— he’s savnet, Rosco, his- his phone is going straight to voicemail!” *Missing*. Her eyes wandered around his face, desperately looking for him to come to rationality. “What if he’s been... taken!?”

“Kidnapped?” Mikkell offered.

“Yes! Kidnapped!” Mrs Tuva nodded at her son. “He could have been kidnapped. We need to call the police—“

“*He’ll be home!*” Mr Rosco shouted at her in Norwegian. “*He’s just being stubborn.*”

“*It’s midnight!*” Mrs Tuva switched to their mother tongue.

Later that night, around three A.M., she sat on the couch, lost in reverie, staring at the Christmas tree. “Everything will be fine...” she muttered to the blinking lights.

He did come home. A cop found him walking along the edge city road, with scratches and bruises sprinkled across his face.

“What happened to you, kid?” He shouted from his window, cruising alongside.

“I was attacked by a big bird,” Kjeld explained.

The cop chuckled. “Nothing serious, I hope?”

Kjeld nodded. “I’m okay. Just lost.” The cop stopped the car.

“Come on in. I’ll take you home in a jiffy,” he said, smiling warmly. “It’s not safe for any kid to be out here this late.” Kjeld walked around the front of the vehicle, and quickly crawled in the passenger’s seat. He put his seatbelt on, then began directing the cop to his house.

“You live all the way in Mono?” The cop asked, wide-eyed. “And you say you walked all the way out here, to El Dorado? Jeez. I might just take you to the station tonight...”

“I’m a criminal now?” Kjeld asked sarcastically.

The cop shook his head. “Naw, it’s okay. Have you called your parents? Do they know where you are?”

Kjeld leaned back in the seat, crossing his arms. “My phone died.”

The cop pulled over on the side of the road, underneath a street lamp. “Tell me your dad’s number. Or your mom’s. Guardian?”

“Uh...”

The cop took Kjeld to the station that night, then got his dad’s phone number by looking up his address.

“It’s strange... He doesn’t know either of his parent’s phone numbers, because he doesn’t have them saved in his phone at all...” the cop told his co-worker, who was spinning around in a chair, snacking on wasabi peas.

“That is weird,” his co-worker said.

The cop put his phone to his ear. “Hello? Is this Rosco Lindgren of 4048 Madre Cul de Sac? This is El Dorado County Police Department, we have your son here— nothing bad, just found him walking on the side of the road with a dead cellphone, and didn’t want to leave him out there. You can pick him up in the morning, he’s fine right here, just wanted to— You can pick him up now, of course... See you soon.” He hung up.

His co-worker stopped spinning. “So, he’s coming here from Mono at three in the morning?”

“Yeah.”

The cop opened the door of the room where Kjeld was lying down on a couch. A couple band aids were slapped on his cheeks and forehead, and ice applied to a big bruise on his elbow.

“How ya feeling, son?” The cop asked as he sat down at a table across from the couch.

“Just fine, Jesus,” Kjeld said.

“He-seus, not Jeez-us,” he corrected.

“You need to grow your hair long to fit the part.” Keeled sat up. “And wear a white dress with a red...” He didn’t finish the sentence, because he didn’t know the word.

Jesus the cop chuckled. “I sure do. So, where are you from?”

“Norway. We moved here three years ago.”

“Why’d you leave Norway? It’s way nicer there than here in California...”

Kjeld shrugged. “It’s weird.”

“How so?”

He pondered a bit, then hesitantly said, “We... Well, my parents... They... Had work problems.”

Jesus the cop leaned forward. “Why all the way out here?”

“Erm... The states is nice?” He gave the same awkward smile to the cop as he did to the creepy bird.

“*I can't believe you!*” Mr Rosco shouted in Norwegian to his son sitting next to him in passenger's seat. “*Going to a police station? Haven't I thought you to stay away from cops? What did they ask you? What did you tell them—*“

“*Nothing, Dad!*” Kjeld sounded back.

“*Why did you walk two counties over anyway?*” Mr Rosco questioned.

“*I didn't realise I did...*” Kjeld admitted, holding his arms close to his stomach, hunched over.

When he returned home, Mikkel stood outside his brother's door that morning.

“Jeg er glad I deg...” he repeated to himself, preparing to make himself present by grabbing the curtain and peeking into his brother's room. Suddenly, the curtain moved by itself, and there Kjeld stood.

“What?” He asked, standing straighter and glaring at his little brother.

“Nothin’,” Mikkel said automatically. Then Kjeld placed the palm of his hand on the top of his little brother's head, and pushed him toward the wall. “Then move it, booger!”

Time is a tricky thing. Time is a construct, time is an idea— Kjeld didn't think that was very true. But time is only relevant to something that can run out of it.

He saw Cate again, but she wasn't kind and wouldn't let him pet her dog again. She was with a guy and another girl, and they looked at him as though he was some kind of freak. He cursed her as she walked away from him, and she gave him a bird.

When he completed the eighth grade ‘somehow’, he said goodbye to Taylor and Liam, even though they stopped hanging out with him. And he felt very emotional waving to Señor Ramos, who didn't see him, so he didn't wave back.

Kjeld's arm fell to his side. *Nothing lasts forever*, he told himself. *Just have å svelge noen kameler— to swallow some camels*. His favourite saying.

His mom picked him up half an hour after school ended, Mikkel sat on the curb, waiting for her, and Kjeld sat on the stairs. After the Po-Po incident, as Mikkel called it, their parents stopped liking Kjeld much, even though he didn't get angry much anymore.

Mikkel looked over his shoulder at his gloomy older brother.

“Jeg er glad I deg...” he whispered. “Jeg er glad I deg.” Then he took in a sharp breath. “Kjeld!” He shouted.

“Wh-at?” He groaned.

Then Mikkel’s lips were paralysed, and he didn’t say anything.

The next year, Kjeld went to a public high school. Mikkel continued attending the charter school, but he missed seeing his brother in the halls sometimes. Though, he was much better than his brother at school, so he was never alone. And as Mikkel grew and his head had more thoughts, he realised he never knew his brother that much. And some days he would forget he had an older brother.

Kjeld stopped coming home some nights. Mrs Tuva discovered he was friends with some boys from his class. She said, “That’s a good thing.”

Then one day he came home with white hair, and Mr Rocco berated him for it, and he just stormed off to his room, pushing in through the curtain covering the entrance way, and the curtain swayed back and forth. Mikkel stood in front of the black curtain, and he pushed his words out of his mouth, using all his might, and he said to his big brother, “I like your hair.”

“Kay,” Kjeld said. Then there was a heavy pause, before he said, “Thanks.”

Another night that he didn’t come home, Kjeld was strolling along the sidewalk, then he turned into a park. A group of boys with baseball gear was walking across the street. Kjeld’s music was blaring in his ears, and he walked faster past the playground. The group of boys crossed the street, and followed him, shouting at him.

“Hey! Hey! You, Emo! What are you listening to!?” The one in front shouted. He jogged over to Kjeld, and repeated his question.

His heart was running all around his chest, and he felt his hands grow clammy. “Uhm, I don’t speak English,” he said, exaggerating his accent. “Sorry,” he added.

“Bonjour! Hola!? Koni-chwa!” The boys began hollering.

One boy with dreadlocks shouted, “But you just spoke English!?”

The one in front, a boy he recognised— the boy Cate was with that one day, asked him, “What language do you speak? Where are you from? Hell-o!?”

Kjeld walked faster, but they wouldn’t give up. They were laughing, making comments about his appearance. One of them was trying to sing ‘Fall for You’ by Secondhand Serenade, but he was only repeating one line over and over.

“Leave me alone!” Kjeld screamed.

“Woah! Don’t get so mad!” The boy in front asked. He was wearing a red cap.

“There!” The one with dreadlocks pointed with a baseball glove. “You just spoke English!”

A boy from the back emerged, walking around the group of five. Kjeld looked down at his hand, and saw a metal baseball bat. His eyes widen, and he backed away.

“Woah!” He said. “I’m not gonna hit you.”

The boy with the red cap took the bat from him, and waved it over Kjeld’s head.

The one with the dreadlocks and glove looked worried. “Dude, calm down.”

“Just tell us what you were listening to,” the other boy said. “We’re just trying to be friendly.”

Kjeld grabbed a hold of the bat. “Don’t!” He barked.

A boy with red hair told him, “Don’t touch my bat, man!”

“That one’s not yours, it’s mine,” the one from the back said. They started squabbling a bit about whose-was-whos.

Kjeld used the comotion to turn around and walk away, but the boy with the red cap swung the baseball bat at his head.

Without a thought, Kjeld jumped into action! Shoving as many of the boys as he could, throwing punches, and kicking—but within four seconds, he was overpowered, and stomped to the ground. He scrambled up, and without time to react, or notice, one of the boys swung the bat and the cold metal swiped the left side of his forehead. In an instance, a warm stinging coated the area, and a headache formed.

“Oh no,” one of the boys said. He couldn’t see which one.

Kjeld kneeled, his left hand hovering over the area.

“We messed up,” another boy said. “We messed up! We gotta go!” he shouted— or was it a different boy? Whichever said to run, the rest listened, and they were gone in a flash.

Kjeld’s right hand fumbled to his pocket, and he took out his phone. His vision in his left eye was gone, and the headache grew worse with each passing second, and he could hardly hear over the sound of his ears ringing. Still, adrenaline swarmed him, and he stood, clutching his phone in his right hand. He pressed his left hand to his face, and he felt that his eye was popped out of its socket, and warm blood covered the left half of his face.

No matter, he had to get going. His first thought was to call his mom, and so that was his goal. He felt like he was climbing as he pushed one leg forward, after the other, moving his body toward the sidewalk. Out of the corner of his right eye, he saw a little kid playing, staring at him, swaying back and forth on the swing.

He walked over to the little kid.

“Can you... call my mom?” he asked the kid, handing him his phone. “Please?” he added.

The little kid looked at him with wide eyes, then he shook his head and said something. Kjeld didn’t care for what the kid said, because he saw how he shook his head with that horrified look. He cursed at the kid angrily, shouting at the top of his lungs. Then he stormed off once the kid began crying.

He trudged along the sidewalk, which was clear of people. He kept moving, desperate to find someone who would call his mom for him. The headache was awful, and he felt loopy, like he was high off some kind of drug. It was like his nervous system didn’t have the capacity to express to the brain how much his injury hurt. Or maybe it was just the shock.

After a short period, his legs gave out, and he fell onto his hands. His phone flew, skipping away from him. Kjeld intook a heavy breath, then crawled over to the device, and he flipped it over. The screen was shattered, but it still worked. He pressed on his home screen button, and the phone came to life. He unlocked it after a few failures with the password, then he tried to call his mom.

“Oh...” he whispered to himself. “I don’t know the password— er, I meant, she never let me save her as a contact...” Kjeld smacked his hand on the ground, groaning in frustration and pain. “I can’t call her... What do I do? What do I do?!”

He got up, and kept walking, leaving his phone on the ground. He passed by many street signs, but in this trance, he had no idea which sign pointed to where he needed to go. Was it this one? Was it that one? Did he need to keep going? He just kept moving, kept moving, kept moving.

A woman slowed her car down, looking at Kjeld in horror. She rolled down her window, and shouted to him, “Hey! Are you okay? You need to go to the hospital, oh my—“

“Go away!” Kjeld screamed at her. “Go away, go away, go away! I need to get home, I can’t talk to you— The police will get us. The police... We’ll be deported. We’ll be... Kicked out. I need to get home... I need to call my mom.”

“Wha?” The woman asked, her mouth agape, so incredibly confused. Her eyes scanned his caved in forehead and his eyeball bursted from the socket. Blood ran down his face, soaking his windbreaker. He looked like roadkill. “Listen, are you okay? What happened?” She asked, leaning toward the rolled-down passenger window.

Kjeld clenched his jaw, and he shook with rage. “Go away! You’re not helping me! You go, you just leave!” He shouted, swiping his hand in the air in front of her car.

The woman drove off.

It was like the sky settled down on top of him. As the sun set, so did his mind, breaking down, and shutting off. Slowly, time warped and unraveled. One moment, the sky was up, the day was a clear blue, then his hands grazed the cement of the sidewalk, and the day was a deep purple. Flashing before his eyes were many days of snow, and light rain, and big mountains, helping his parents package boxes and boxes of something he knew was very illegal. Then there was a plane, and it landed in nowhere land, and he lived nowhere, and he was a nobody in some edge city that wasn’t drawn on a map and he wasn’t present to anybody else, and there wasn’t a single person on the planet that he knew of that also knew or would even care he was laying on the ground breathing in dirt and crying out with lips that wouldn’t move, until it all ran out— his breath, that is. A vulture swooped down from a lamp post, and landed smoothly on the ground next to him.

The vulture bowed its bald head, dipping its beak into Kjeld’s cold flesh. The vulture spoke, decrowning Kjeld as the corpse’s name, and he ate the flesh, unleashing the spirit from the vessel. His new name was Everything, a little piece of many things.

“Mom,” Mikkel said softly. “Where’s—“ Mrs Tuva put her hands on the sides of her son’s head. “Stop worrying so much,” she said to him. “It’s all okay, everything is *always* okay.”

“Everything?” Mikkel questioned. “You sure *everything* is okay? What about my eggs burning this morning? What about a certain somebody being gone for hours, and hours, and you aren’t even worried about him!?”

Mrs Tuva’s forehead creased with irritation. “What about a certain somebody’s attitude ticking me off?”

Mikkel pouted. Outside of the house the Lindgren family lived, a vulture puked up its digested food onto the sidewalk, then flew off.

A loneliness never experienced before, Everything died, and Everything was born. As if on a seesaw, life and death teetered and teeter-tottered to keep a balance in the world. When something died, another thing was born, and that thing was born to die, then something was born. He saw stars explode, he saw flowers wilt, he saw a tree fall from decayed roots, and he saw bodies rot away, being reclaimed by the earth it was made from.

He surveyed everything, as he was it, he saw stars be born, he saw flowers bloom, he saw trees grow, he saw bodies being formed in their hearths. He saw the start of life, and the end of it. He saw great big mountains, and prairies. Everything could see galaxies stretching for hundreds of thousands of miles across great empty space, and he saw all that humans would never be able to discover. He saw the ocean floors of every planet there is, and he saw sunsets there as well. And as he watched a brown bear waltz into her cave with her two cubs excitedly greeting her, Everything raged a storm, frustrated by the fact that since he was *Everything*, he could never have a home again. He lived nowhere.

Mikkel glared at his parents, sitting solemnly on the couch.

"I told you so," he said through gritted teeth. "I told you so, I told you so well. I told you that you should look for him! I told you that- you that he could get kidnapped, I told you that he could get in trouble. Now he's dead! Now Kjeld is dead!" Tears ran down Mikkel's little cheeks.

Mr Rosco's hand shook, clutching onto his pant leg. "Vi vet." *We know.*

"You didn't bother with Kjeld, you didn't bother to learn English--"

"Du k  dder!" *Shut up.* Mr Rosco rose from the couch in a blink, and he stormed over to Mikkel. "*Shut up, you stupid boy! Talking like that won't bright your brother back to life, he's dead and it's no one's fault!*"

"No one's fault!?" Mrs Tuva asked, her voice whistling. "It's our fault, Rosco... We should have..."

Rosco snapped his head towards his wife. "Noe!" Then he broke down crying, crumbling to his knees, his head hung low, weeping.

And one morning the police with their red and blue sirens busted down the Lindgren's door and Mrs Tuva and Mr Rosco were taken away and Mikkel only saw them from that day forward through dirty glass in the house for prisoners.

But the only thing he wanted to see was Kjeld. He wanted to ask Kjeld about what their parents were doing, and why they moved to California for it. He wanted to ask Kjeld why he stayed out so late, and why he was always angry.

Was it because of their parent's business? And Mikkel wanted to ask about Peter McLumber, a name he faintly remember coming from Kjeld's mouth once a long time ago to him. He wanted to ask why he dyed his hair white, and he wanted to ask how he died, and why it happened.

When a group of bikers found Kjeld's body at the edge of a city in El Dorado, they reported it to the police immediately. Then the police arrived and they covered Kjeld's body with a plastic blanket so he could have some privacy. They found out from some little kid's parents that Kjeld was beaten nearly to death by a group of teenage boys, all of whom were arrested, then he walked to the edge of the city, and collapsed and died. According to some woman, he was walking down the sidewalk 'like a zombie', and he screamed at the woman for trying to help him (Mikkel was angry that she just left him there, and he wanted to cuss her out).

On a train somewhere in Norway, rain came down from the sky like bullets. He hugged his knees to his chest and watched the scenery from his window fly by, and Everything spread the train drops across the window in shapes and figures that only him and Mikkel would understand.

Mikkel pressed his hand to the glass, and he whispered to the rain drops, "Jeg er glad I deg... Kjeld, jeg er glad I deg. Jeg er glad I deg!"

The train wheels and the rolling of the machine and the howling of the wind and the pounding of the train drops and the setting of the sun and the rustling of the trees as the train pushes them by says to Mikkel, "Du også." *You too.*

A smile spreads across Mikkel's face— his lips pressed together and his eyes burning and his throat tightening, it's a smile of a thousand days of regret. But it's all gone now, lifted off his shoulders by words that were said by not a voice, but by a presence. Everything is okay now.