



YOU NEED TO HAVE
A REASON FOR
SUMMONING ME

FANTASY

STORIES

FROM

MORPETH

SECONDARY

SCHOOL



First published in Great Britain in 2023 by
Ministry of Stories, 159 Hoxton Street, London N1 6PJ
ministryofstories.org

This published edition is © Ministry of Stories

The author of each of the stories has granted permission for their work to be included in this book. If you want to adapt, reprint, translate or do anything else with all or any part of this publication, please contact the Minister for Small Print at the Ministry of Stories.

The characters and events in these stories are fictional and are solely the imaginings of the young authors. Any resemblance to real people or events is coincidental.

Designed by Studio Brick

For Ministry of Stories
Dorothy Cotter, Education Programme Manager
Sally Wood, Project Manager, Publications
Linden McMahon, Editor

Ministry of Stories is a charity registered in England & Wales
Charity no. 1138553 Company no. 07317370 Director Rob Smith
Registered Office 159 Hoxton Street, London, N1 6PJ

You Need to Have a Reason for Summoning Me

Contents

4	Introductions
4	Skye, Young Author
5	Amy Fletcher, Deputy Head of Morpeth English Department
6	Linden McMahon, Writing Facilitator
7	Acknowledgements
8	Portals To Other Worlds
10	The Rise of the Ishti <i>by Cuillin</i>
13	Rules of a Housewife <i>by Tasnuva</i>
17	The Forest of Solis <i>by Aneeqa</i>
21	A Haunted Small City <i>by Amira</i>
22	You Didn't Plan This, Did You? <i>by Bethany</i>
26	My Crazy Life <i>by Eshan</i>
29	Pearl's Diary <i>by Ivy</i>
33	Blue Ray of Power <i>by Zeeshan</i>
35	Unfortunate Hopelessness <i>by Zunairah</i>
40	Tales From The Underworld
42	MORDEATH! <i>by George</i>
44	The Forbidden School of Evil and Good! <i>by Amelia</i>
45	School of Demons and Angels <i>by Anaiya</i>
47	The School of Evil and Good <i>by Mahlia</i>
48	Forbidden Lives <i>by Skye</i>
50	The Underworld and Adventures <i>by Taz</i>
52	Camouflage with the Light <i>by Zahraa</i>
54	The Headmaster's Office <i>by Zunairah</i>

Introductions

Hello and welcome. This is our anthology, made from different fantasy lives. This is where all the mysteries unfold and are told. We hope these stories leave you with sorrow, hope and forgiveness. These stories will leave you with a message to never forget. 'People can change by the heart forever'.

— *Skye, Young Author*

Sequestered daughters, underworld schools and forests that come alive are just a tiny selection of the fantastical fantasy worlds that Morpeth Ministry of Stories attendees have created this year.

The imagination, creativity and inquisitiveness on display, when we gathered in W109 every fortnight, were wonderful to behold. The room became a space for writing (and lots of it!), sharing, pondering and thoughtful critique, and I loved witnessing how the group gained more and more confidence doing all of these things over the course of each term.

This anthology captures the messy, beautiful and complex hard thinking that all the students engaged in. All of the adults involved in the club were consistently astonished by the originality and imagination of the students, and the way in which they worked together, whether quiet and focused or rambunctious and shrieking with laughter.

I'd like to extend Morpeth's thanks to Ministry of Stories for facilitating this space for students to just write, and enabling them to bring their fantasy stories to life – we are keenly awaiting the novels we know so many of the club attendees are itching to produce.

Turn the page to enter a world of fantastic fantasies.

— *Amy Fletcher*
Deputy Head of Morpeth English Department, KS3

During this project, I had the privilege of visiting so many worlds – where elements fight for dominance, where mind-reading is just something that happens to teenagers, where princes could be wolves. The authors taking us to these worlds are students in Years 7–9 at Morpeth School, who took part in an after school fantasy writing club.

I was blown away by the fully realised realms that the writers drew from their imaginations, and the compelling plots that they wove within them. Finding out what happens next in their wildly creative stories was always a highlight of my week.

I worked with two groups of writers over two terms. The first group created their own magical systems and characters, working on their stories over six sessions. The second group created a world collectively – the Underworld – and we played a table top roleplaying game to explore it together and inspire a set of interlinked stories.

To the writers: thank you for sharing your words and imaginations with me – and now with everyone else! Congratulations on becoming published authors. Always remember that you are writers: you have the power to create and share new worlds any time you want.

To the reader: come on in, portals to new realms await...

— *Linden McMahon, Writing Facilitator*

Acknowledgements

Lots of people made this programme and anthology possible! Official Ministerial Thanks to:

Amy Fletcher at Morpeth School, whose dedication to the wellbeing, uniqueness and imaginations of her students is inspiring.

Our wonderful writing mentors Dave Busfield, Elizabeth Kuhr, Amar Patel, and Danielle Simpson, who consistently volunteered their time to support the writers. You've helped these young writers create extraordinary things!

Our volunteer transcribers Joanna Afroozi, Bojana Ajvazovic, Mara Alperin, Jenny Brooks, Judie Grant, Sade Hewitt, Greg Klerkx, Bertha Malleus, Rianne Payne, Malinda Smith and Kate Whittington.

Dorothy Cotter, Ministry of Stories' Education Programme Manager, who organised and supported behind the scenes, and made sure everything ran smoothly. And to Sally Wood for making this anthology happen.

All the teachers and families who supported the writers in taking part.

PORTALS ^{to} OTHER WORLDS

The Rise of the Ishti

Cuillin

I strolled down the dark road heading towards the tribal camp Cowah. A hoarse cry echoed over lifeless hills. It was a sound I knew far too well.

'~~Archers!~~' I muttered under my breath. It was an extremely rude Illtan curse. Just as I dived behind a rock, a shaft of white, pale light shone down from the chest of a Thoughtless One. They are giant birds with a wingspan of 12.2 metres. The Thoughtless Ones is a term that originated when King Syron cast the heartless spell and claimed dominance over the birds once called the Gliders. Their plumage, once so magnificent, a glossy shade of black now was a disgruntled mess of scraggly feathers. But the thing that had changed most was the beam. They now shoot beams of light which are deadly to all underworld dwellers. If you are an enemy of King Syron then you are an

enemy of the Thoughtless Ones. As the fear-striking cry faded on the black mountains I passed the tribal perimeter. I cast the heavy sack of dark dust I'd been carrying into the store room then jogged over to the campsite to grab a bowl of Thatetlls.

The High King clapped his hands and the room fell silent. About a hundred people dressed in excessive amounts of silk and unneeded amounts of jewels turned to face the King.

'For centuries me and the royal court have striven to rid our noble land of the lawless Ishti tribes, and now after years of attacks and raids only five tribes remain and tomorrow, at first light my men will set out to get rid our land of the traitorous filth that live inside our borders!!!'

At this the whole room erupted into applause...

* * *

The faint sound of ripples lapping gently on the banks was the only sound. Laying beneath the reed beds, the steady lap was very calming. Just then, moon broke cover, bringing the dawn of the new day. I pulled the cowl of my cloak tightly over my head and silently ghosted my way past the quivering rushes and then I saw it: a blue glare about a mile north, quickly mirrored by one from the south, and then I knew it. The royal guard had finally come aiming to obliterate the five remaining Ishti tribes. Acting on instinct I slipped my blowdart out of my pouch and loaded a dart, then I sprinted on towards the grove. I knew I'd make it before the royal guards. Where they had to force their way through chest height reeds we knew every nook and cranny of the surrounding marshes.

I reached the grove and pulled myself into the tree house. Warriors were already poised to defend the sacred grove, but thinking of the force that was coming? We were chanceless. I ran to the hut at the centre of the grove and pulled out a glowing blue stone. In its place I put a worthless piece of blue ammolite.

Then they broke the cover of the tall reeds and rushes. Their swords and helmets gleamed in the rising sun and they let out a mighty battle cry, only to be cut short as a hundred or so blowdarts rained down on them. But no matter how many people were felled, more and more kept coming, and inevitably they gained ground and got closer and closer to the trees.

When they finally reached the base of the trees, steel rasped on leather as many short swords were drawn. I found myself engaged with a knight who may have been big and powerful, but in terms of skill he had a lot lacking. A quick swish flick jab saw him tumbling down the tree, taking many others with him. Though the brave Ishti tribesmen were worth their weight in gold, lives were lost on both sides. On the edge of my consciousness I could smell the faint scent of wood smoke. It was strangely comforting...

'WOOD SMOKE,' I screamed and already I could see the orange flame licking hungrily up the side of the trees. Piercing whistles filled the air, a sound I for one knew to be the calling of eagles. They swooped down, lifting the Ishti up into the sky. 'Archers!!' I heard being shouted down below. And sure enough, eagles shrieked in terror and began to fall out of the sky. The deadly thrum of the longbow filled my ears

and I saw an arrow that could only be meant for me, but as it sailed towards me my eagle jerked its beautiful glossy brown hand into the path of the arrow. We fell... down... down... down...

The next I remember was being in a prison, a dark prison with walls dripping in this foul green slime. I felt feathers next to me: not just any feather, the feather of my eagle Oygo, and his heart wasn't beating...

I cried myself to sleep that night and the following two. On the third, I was called to see the King.

'Tell us,' said the King, 'how many of your people escaped.'

I held his gaze for a few seconds then spat at his feet.

He sighed, 'we can do this the hard way or the easy way.'

I glanced up at him. The man next to him seemed strangely familiar.

'I – will – never – tell – you – cowardly thing not worth the title of human' I sneered at him.

'Look at your leader right here.' He gestured to the man next to him.

I gasped. I'd thought I'd recognised him, but now I was sure he was our tribal leader and clearly he was the one who'd betrayed the location of the grove to the enemy soldiers.

'How could you,' I said to him, the hurt and betrayal breaking into my voice.

'Where you see cowardice, I see potential, you're just too scared to embrace it,' he sneered at me.

'Potential? You talk as if you have the upper hand, but no, for see you took me to the sacred throne room, to the broken crystal that you yourself broke to destroy the Ishtl magic. You tried to destroy the crystal so we had no chance to restore the magic. You think you've destroyed the crystal, but I have it right here.' And with that I flicked off the rope that had tied me (I'd cut it ten minutes ago) and strolled up to the broken crystal. It shone fluorescent blue. I plucked the crystal and put it with the one I had brought.

It gleamed in a blinding light and I felt its power. I finally had magic again.

Ishtl that had been hiding all over the land rose, and the oppressing evil monarchy fell like water over stone.

Rules of a Housewife

Tasnuva

Dear Diary,

I think about my life when I was younger. My life. It sounds weird saying that. I've never had that choice. Not even my words, my thoughts.

I grew up in a big house, grey, dull, sad, miserable. People never visited me because they were always too scared of my mum, my 'haunted' house, of me. Surrounding the house there was the most beautiful gardens, bright, lush, alive, which contradicted every aspect of my life.

I woke up 5.30 a.m. every day and went to sleep 12 every day. I would be woken up, stripped and taken to the bathroom where I would be scrubbed clean with cold water exactly 6°C. Then I would be dried by my hand maidens. They would later wrap a corset around me and style my hair. By the end I was cold, shivering even in the humid air. They would cover me with various

cloths to protect my 'dignity'. It hurt to walk, talk, breathe. By 1.00 I joined Mama for tea and breakfast, though I was forbidden to eat anything.

Mama talked about manners and went over the rules of a housewife. I would sit in silence, straight legs, hair tidy, hands on knees (visible) and my gown kept. I was to wear a neutral smile on my face and not to make any expressions. I screamed behind my face, anger, and frustration.

I carefully fill Mama's teacup and dismiss myself, silent sadness, ignorance. After breakfast, I am escorted to my room, my handmaiden sits there, her eyes fixating on me. Mama said a lady such as myself should never be left in a room. As her daughter, I nodded. I sit on the side of my bed with my hands in my lap, deep in thought. Thinking of the garden I have before me running on –

'My lady, in an hour your mother has instructed you to meet your tutor in the library.'

I look at her long, skinny, grim face as she mutters the words to me, and softly smile 'Thank you.' She does not acknowledge me and instead walks away.

I decide to climb down my staircase in search for a book. Mama made sure all the books were 'qualified' and fit the 'standards' to a housewife. I grab a big red one.

I never read, Mama does not know this. Perhaps I would like to read if I were able to pick out my books of my own accord. But Mama put her foot down. Mama says I should never use such vulgar language and that as a woman I need to be elegant and graceful.

I read when I want to be alone and think, occasionally flipping pages. My butler stays in the library with me. However, he never watches me as closely as my handmaidens seem to do, that's inappropriate. When I read one of Mama's precious books, she praises me and may sometimes allow me to have a tiny slice of cake.

* * *

The police arrive. I hear their sirens, their rubbery tires, scratching through my beautiful garden. I hear his

footsteps. I don't care to look, don't bother. I looked at myself, I'm indecent, half-dressed. My corset crimping as it loosely fits around my body.

I hear their voices again, I kneel down and silently break. Crystal tears flowing down my fair skin. Two men come to my aid, they don't touch me. They might get imprisoned for that. So they stay, silently accompanying me.

I feel guilty as the police storm into my house, knowing it would be too late to save Mama. Knowing I was there to save Mama, I could have resolved this as easily as I let it happen. I hug myself until my body drops lifeless, almost like Mama.

They carry her vessel on a stretcher. I think why we do not just bury her, she's dead, why all the trouble. I stare darkly at her empty body watching as the door shuts them off. I wonder, may I return to school once again?

Mama wore a necklace, no one talked about the necklace, but they all thought about it. She interacted with it quite a lot. Fiddling with it between her fingers when asking someone a question or balancing it on the top of her fingers. The necklace was clean as if all the dust purposely moved to make way. It was a bright emerald stone shaped in a raindrop (or blood drip) surrounded by prickly silver white gems. She told me how beauty was

pain as a child whilst I sat on the chair beside her as she covered up the bruises it left. I told myself I would never want it, yet I still yearned for it. My eyes were full of lust and desire as I subconsciously brought my finger to the sharp gem, my blood spilling beautifully and tragically on its surface. How I longed for this.

Without Mama and Papa, I am responsible for my own choices. I squeal, immediately looking bad, my paranoia biting into my skin. It was so long since I had been alone, I forgot the feeling. I wrapped the necklace around my neck and told my servants I would be attending school.

I let the words roll off my tongue savouring them entirely. The looks on their faces were disappointing to say the least, one day I shall find someone who cares. Hopefully.

The next day I cut my hair, tears dripping down like the blood rolling off my fingers. Pure pleasure, I smirk in ecstasy. I wipe them off and admire myself, I pick up a black rose and place it in my hair, its vine travelling down the length of my hair. It was the perfect length, shoulder length. I reached to grab something and turned back towards the mirror and started braiding my hair, I started at the bottom since the vine was almost up to my hip.

I look at myself through the mirror,

I scream in my head, I scream. I don't want Mama on my case, she might think I'm trying to kill myself and remove my hair or something. What would that help? I feel like crying, I don't want to though, I just want to feel love.

People talk of soulmates like significant as lovers. But it's not. Your soulmate doesn't even have to be someone you love romantically, but people are stubborn and hate anything that contradicts their words. Your soulmate will be someone you love but not always romantically. They can come in many different ages or genders, whether its destiny or fate or not. Your soulmate can be completely platonic and could be a best friend you love dearly, or it could be your sibling, child even. Though I hope my soulmate isn't my mother. That's my only qualification. Some people get upset or sad when they haven't found their soulmate but are inseparable best friends. If a lot of people were more open minded, they would realise a hell of a lot more, munching on flapjacks after my soulmate rant.

A boy is sitting at my doorstep, filthy little poor boy yet my heart pulls me to him. He looks at me, his eyes covering my body and looking up and down at my attire. I look down at myself, maybe I should change.

And so I do and come back in

a simple floor-length white gown. His eyes twist as he smiles and laughs, filling the air. The cold autumn air. I shiver, the breeze hitting my skin. I'm not happy, I'm lonely. I look at him. Mama and Papa would hate it, so that makes my decision.

To this day, I wonder why I did that. Wonder why I thought it was the right decision. I was lonely, I think. I just lost my mother and father, not that I was upset by it. But I do think it was chaotic. Freedom is such a big word for a little girl. Poor vulnerable soul. I think we were born broken. Perhaps I was just scared, depressed and he had love to spare. I never met him yet my heart leaped out my chest for him.

I invited it in. Why? I invited him in. And every single day after that. He made up for those years of loneliness in the first few minutes we met. I never smiled, but his happiness was a part of mine. His heart belonged to me. And I gave away my heart as much as he sacrificed his to mine.

He wore a thin chain, small and silver. It was small and minimalist, but it was the cleanest thing on him. So naturally it's the first thing you focused on.

He came in, confidently instead of timid and sceptically like I imagined. The dirt fell from his clothes like babies' ripping away from strangers too attached to their mothers. His hair

was dark brown, it would be lighter if he was cleaner. But I accepted every version of him wholeheartedly.

His gaze fell on me, gratitude in his eyes yet something more mysterious. I wished I had noticed, maybe I could be happier. But I was happy every second I was with him.

I never talked much, people often described me as the timid, quiet type. He looked at me when I said that, eyes squinting into a smile. 'I think they are.'

I look at him in utter confusion and begin to speak, 'Mama sa-.'

'Not a word about your Mama' he said putting his fingers against my lips. He kept them there as he spoke again. 'I think you just haven't talked to the right person.' He mimicked my expression. I frown, and so does he. I put my arms around my neck waiting for the comforting pain of the necklace hitting my neck. It does not. I must have left it on my countertop. I get up and wrap my arms around him. He tells me it's called a hug. I have never been hugged. I like hugs. My head stings as I feel a bulge in his shirt near his collar meet my head. I move my head so I am more comfortable and silently sigh.

The Forest of Solis

Aneeqa

Dear Diary,

This is so weird. I lost my father and this random lady took me. She named me...Freddy? She's been hugging me and crying all day. Finally she's asleep. I don't know how she'll react when she sees I'm a werewolf. She's clearly not a magicholder. I can taste her tears in my mouth. It's sweet.

Dear Diary,

It's her birthday. She is gorgeous. I wonder what happened to Freddy...I think I've fallen in love. She thinks of me as Freddy. Who is this big shot anyway? I'm way better! I'm a prince!

Dear Diary,

I'm screwed. Amber's friends finally told her I wasn't Freddy. The moon shone on me at the wrong time. I became a human and they all ran away. I'm alone again. I'm gonna get the potion and be a

human forever. I will make Amber my Queen.

— Prince Luciferen

* * *

'Haha! You are so funny!' Serena said dryly. 'By the way...my mum's really sick, can I have -'

'Yeah, whatever,' I say as I pass two fifty pound notes. 'Just take it.'

We say goodbye and I get into my limousine. I hate money. Well, not really, I love money! I just hate what it does to people. What it does to me! Everyone uses me for it. I guess I'm used to it though.

'Would you like me to take you anywhere before we go home, ma'am?' Butler Bean asks me. His name's not actually Butler Bean but I call him it because he loves planting beans. His name is actually Louis.

'Yeah. To the cemetery?' I ask.
'Sure, ma'am.'
We get to the cemetery. I haven't lost a loved one but I like to come here to pay my respects to the dead.
I see a boy. About my age. He looks handsome but the dirt on his face covers it. His clothes are torn.
I walk towards him.
'Close to you?' I ask while looking at the grave.
'Yeah, haha, my mother.'
'Oh, I'm sorry...' I say. His voice is soothing.
Martha Shogun. Mother and wife.
'It's fine, I never met her,' he says with a smile. 'She passed away during childbirth. Father loved her.'
I look at him with sympathy in my eyes. I never really feel emotion. I mean I feel it sometimes, but only if it's big. Like this.
'What's your name?' I ask, trying to smile.
'Freddy Shogun.'
'Freddy...' I whisper to myself.
'Hey...' I ask. 'Do you think I could have your number?'
'I don't have a phone, sorry,' he chuckles awkwardly. 'I can give my address though?' he suggests.
'That'll be great,' I smile. 'Want to meet at Roseville Park tomorrow?' I ask.
'Sure.'

After a few months

Freddy and I are really in love. He may not be rich but to him, I am not Amber Crolista, daughter of the Prime Minister, Mary Crolista. I am just Amber to him. Just plain old Amber. He is my everything. He really is my world.
Freddy's birthday, 12th of April. He is turning 19.
'Here's my present,' I grin.
He opens the present to see what it is.
'Oh my GOD!' he yells excitedly.
'A PHONE!'
He runs to me and kisses me. A real kiss. The tingly sensation when our lips touch feels good.
We aren't dating. At least, I didn't think so. So why is he getting down on one knee?
'I know I may not be rich, but I've taken three jobs to buy this ring. It's got a REAL diamond!' he says with a pleased look on his face. 'Amber, my love, this may seem shocking, but...'
My eyes start to tear up.
'Will you marry me?'
I look at the glistening gem. It's so simple, yet so beautiful. 'Yes. I will marry you.'
This man. Since the moment I met him, he instantly made me fall in love. His eyes glowed. I don't know if it's

my love or if it's something else but I love him.

'Hey...' We hear behind us.
'Oh God.'
'What's all this mess on my living room floor?' Freddy's drunken father asks.
'U-uh, I'll clean it up Father.'
'No, no, NO!' his dad yells. 'Who's this woman! Get out you -'
Freddy punches him.
'That's my future wife.'
He looks at me, signalling me to come, so I go. Why'd I leave? Why'd I not stay and help him? I look through the window. His father yells loudly. Beer bottle in hand.
'Oh, God no...' I whimper.
The bottle smashes against his head. Blood. He isn't moving. Move. MOVE! Why isn't he moving? Wait. He didn't signal me to leave...His eyes were pointing to his bedroom.
I look into the house, waiting for his dad to leave. Okay. He walks out the backdoor. Now's my chance. I run into the house, straight into his room. It's empty. No bed nothing. Just a mattress and a note on top of it. It reads: *Forest of Solis. SOLIS, NOT DESCIAN. Talk to Annie.*
There's a map at the bottom.

3 hours later

I sit in my carriage, emotion drained from me. What is this map taking me to? Forest of Solis and Forest of Descian are both forbidden!
I look out my carriage and spot an injured wolf.
'Butler Bean. Stop here,' I order Louis.
I step out of the carriage with my first aid kit and pick him up with my bare hands.
'I'll name you...Freddy!' I smile softly at the wolf. He's very calm. While examining him for any more injuries, I notice a tattoo on his neck. W/C. 'That's odd...Wheelchair?' I say to myself, puzzled. 'No, can't be.'
I take Freddy the wolf into my carriage. I have enough food to last me 12 days, the estimated time it'll take me to get to the centre of the Forest. The X mark on the map.
'I guess we could share our meals.' I smile at Freddy.

Freddy's perspective

12 days. 12 DAMN DAYS! I've been in this carriage with this narcissist for 12 DAYS! Why is she so beautiful?! UGHHH! I was meant to go to Annie and obtain my potion and yet here I am. With the most gorgeous girl EVER!

And she's such an ANNOYING POOR GIRL. What is this carriage? How can people live with this? It'd probably only cost 50,000 pounds! POOR! Also, my name's PRINCE Luciferen! Not Freddy. Why does Amber have to be so glamorous. She's literally sparkling. And she smells like strawberries.

'Butler Beeeann,' Amber calls in a singing voice. Even her singing voice is perfect. I can't take this anymore. 'Are we there yet?'

'Actually, yes m'lady,' he smiles. 'We have just arrived.'

I look around. A whole CITY. It must be where Annie lives. It's almost as if the Forest is circling around this city, because there's not a single tree in sight.

Amber's perspective

'WHAT THE HECK!' I yell as I admire the city.

I look around at the people. Their eyes. Glows just like Freddy's when I first saw him. That isn't the weirdest thing though. They all have horns. Size depending on age. Pretty sure Freddy doesn't have that though.

A lady jumps in front of the carriage. Butler Bean quickly stops the horses.

'Hi!' she greets.

Her horns are purple with crystals falling off. She wears glasses.

Very pretty.

'I'm Annie, Freddy's cousin,' she smiles.

'O-oh...' I look down at the ground. 'You must feel terrible about his passing.'

'What? Of course not,' she laughs. 'You humans, always so sad. Come here.'

I follow her into a nursery. She points at a newborn baby, sharing Freddy's features.

'Is this...his child?' I ask.

'No way! This is Freddy!' she answers as if I'm stupid. 'Look at the wall.'

I turn to a wall that seemed to be intricately painted, features and everything. There are three ladies, floating above the City. Both forests on either side, with people who own horns and glowy eyes over Forest of Solis and people with wings and sharp teeth about Forest of Descian. Both bowing down to them, as if they are royalty.

'These three are humans, your ancestors. In fact, your great-great grandmother.'

'Excuse me?' I ask confused.

'SHH' Someone adult shushes me. 'Lady Annie is speaking!'

A Haunted Small City

Amira

There was once a guard who lived in a small city named Misty.

My father was once a guard, I decided to become a guard so that my family can remember me. My brother has run away, and my parents are in the army. I'm now all alone. In my city there is a palace, filled with people. Once Mum took me while Dad was at work. There was a King and a Queen. They were very rude and murdered many people.

I needed some cash to help my family.

The next day I decided to help the King and Queen. I packed my clothes up and got ready to leave. I didn't have a phone so I left a note saying 'Goodbye Mum and Dad, I will be leaving to serve the Royal Palace. I have to leave now!'

There was once a haunted small city. A guard was roaming around with a blue hat, she's very tall and could

murder someone. She can't do much but walk around. It was dark and gloomy, her Dad was a policeman. She was all alone. Her mother was killed in the army. She's very angry and wants to murder someone that killed her mother.

A man wearing a black hat and camouflage clothing with a knife in his hand. His hair coming down to his shoulder.

You Didn't Plan This, Did You?

Bethany

'I know who you pretend I am,' she whispered with a melancholy undertone.

They lay beneath the old, withered willow tree in the overgrown grass painted blue by the moonlit sky. As they gazed into the glowing white freckles scattered across the midnight blanket hugging Earth, a small, horned silhouette galloped across the prairie, but too far away to be seen.

'Just let it go. She's not coming back.'

'Let it go!? I can't just let it go!' Tears filled his eyes and his cheeks went red. 'She doesn't matter anymore, anyways. Just forget it. I'm going home.'

She sighed helplessly.

* * *

He clenched the grimoire against his chest in the dim light of his room as he

began to chant softly. Nothing else had been working, so Neptune was on his last nerve. A cold gust of wind pushed the curtains. Nothing. He began to shake violently as he sank to his knees.

A weird noise passed through his lips, almost like a wail. It was the sound of giving up. He leaned against the bedpost and shut his eyes, which were wet and stingy from sobbing, and drifted into a calm sleep.

* * *

Neptune slowly stirred. His vision was wobbly and blurry, so he rubbed his eyes. Something dark shifted, in the corner of his eye, in the darkness of his room. He froze.

'Hello?' (Was he just going crazy?) Goosebumps rose on the back of his neck, and the red organ in his chest pumped harder and faster.

Shrugging the feeling away (or trying his best to), he stumbled from his soft bed, slumped to the kitchen and proceeded to synthesise his daily morning sustenance.

Neptune's home was decorated with pink and black lacy items, like plushies and blankets. It was the only thing keeping him sane, at this point. His walls and doors (which were always open out of his paranoia) were a soft shade of pink. The ceiling was decorated with glow-in-the-dark stars and glass chandeliers lit up the soft, carpeted floor.

As a twenty-six-year-old average male, he had to go to work. So, Neptune did what every responsible worker does: he called in sick. He was on the verge of being fired, but it was only a crusty fast-food shift, so he didn't care. He still had some money left in his late grandmother's will.

He was just about to stand from his seat when something from behind grasped his shoulder firmly. Neptune gasped, and froze, sure he's just about to be murdered, when a deliberate booming voice said, 'You must be the summoner who seeks revenge.'

He spun around, and there, right in front of him, stood an (about) eight foot tall fluffy goat – man? Its black fur contrasted with its lime green eyes, that almost seemed to glow in the dim light. It lowered its eye-muscles and

bared its light-yellow teeth, and grimaced, as if it were getting bored.

'Speak.'

'I, um, uh, er, yes, well—'

'You didn't plan this, did you?'

Neptune's legs were trembling so much that he struggled to stand.

'Okay. Who is the one you want dead? You summoned me for a reason, right?'

In an instant, Neptune collapsed.

'Happens every time...'

With a gasp, Neptune sat up... in his bed? He must've dreamt that – 'I've made you breakfast, new commander.'

The goat-guy entered the room, via the door he had to duck to get through, and set a tray on Neptune's lap.

'Who— What are you?'

'You seem to be acting hysterical, sir. Humans tend to... get shocked in the following days after summoning higher spirits. The Supernaturals. Although you need to have a reason for summoning me.'

It set the delicate china tray on Neptune's shivering lap.

'What happens to those without a reason then?' Neptune fiddled with the detailed silver spoon in between his two fingers.

'Well, I suppose you won't be able to get rid of me, unless I'm wanted elsewhere.' It bared its sharp mouth

rocks in an amused expression, as if thinking to itself.

'I assume you wouldn't want to spend your days with a blood-thirsty goat imp from Hell, would you?'

'Okay, at first you were scary, but now, you're trying too hard.'

Neptuse looked down to his dish, as his stomach growled in pain. A blood splattered tray lay on his thigh with numerous petite bowls filled with dainty, milky white teeth that glistened in the room's faint yellow glow.

'Teeth?' Neptuse could've sworn he didn't have those in his cabinet. Spooning this immaculate dish into his mouth, he gave it a good crunch, and decided it was good enough for his standards.

* * *

'So, I assume the murderer would be, like, her worst enemy, so let's start with my old pal, Brian. He shall be the first suspect.'

Neptuse slid on a dark, baggy trench coat. Because of problems due to its size, the goat (Kaos) resorted to a pair of shades and was wrapped in a big blanket.

Swiftly, it leapt up the crumbly brick wall and into this boy's room without error. It was almost as if Kaos did this on a daily basis.

'Lol, so, basically, what you need

to do is go in with a knife and –'

'Omg, I know how to use a knife so shut the bleep up.'

Neptuse copied Kaos' movements up the wall and was hit with an overwhelming stench of sweat, rotten food and misery. Bright yellow walls burnt into his corneas. Neptuse gasped and clumsily shielded his eyes.

'What the hell is wrong with this bloody room?!' he cried.

Garments of clothing were nailed to the walls and hung from the ceiling fan and concerningly thick specks of dust circled around the room, as if it were snowing.

In the centre of the room, a tiny single bed stood, miserable as an orphan with one leg and no eyes.

'What a loser. This guy has three hamster cages but he just stuffed a dead snake in one of them.'

Traversing across the carpet of sweaty clothing, Neptuse headed for the door.

The kitchen was in much worse condition – the pots that littered the floor were covered in unidentified black slime, and pieces of dessert like macaroons and cupcakes were nailed to the wall, with splatters of pale pink icing that looked like cake-blood. As he scanned the room for any living human, a blood-curdling scream rang in his ears, like a fire alarm.

His body ripped apart easily, like a

piece of sponge cake. Goopy insides flowed out like giant gummy worms saturated in icing.

With no care for accuracy or efficiency, Kaos ripped out the boy's yellowing teeth and shoved them into his watering mouth.

'What on Earth is wrong with you? Why would you do that?' Neptuse stood, frozen, gawking at it.

Clearly offended, it replied...

My Crazy Life (Not for the faint of heart!!)

Eshan

I don't know how that is even creatable or what that is. A part of me is not even surprised; the messed up missions I complete are just non-human, from saving a hostage to hijacking Area 51. But rest assured, I felt like ok I need to quit but I thought about the people, the lives I could save. I knew I had to continue my desires, my gut, but I needed a massive break. A buff dude like me is still human and has a mental capacity. But this is something that only one person can get me out of: God. A religious man like me plans to use this break to get closer to my Lord.

Also, the reason for me being a soldier is I thought I would be 'fit for the job' but the deeper reason is my family died to terrorists and I vowed to avenge them.

After this mess, I plan on calling my buddy. AJ. AJ is my best friend from the military. We were two of the

best at protecting; he's first and I'm second. I didn't want to talk about him since I'm paranoid about some corrupted people finding him and attacking him. He stopped training for a while. He got tired thus we are not trying to bother him but I feel now I need a friend to help me get past this. I also lie about most of my personal traits because I keep getting paranoid and don't want to unnecessarily get in anyone's way. I feel like I want to achieve goals and a goal is to protect as many people as I can. I feel as if I have been thrown into a deep well and can't get out but will fight my sorrow and not let the same happen to others. I realize I have to fight my sorrow and just achieve my goal.

Day 1:

I called my friend and in a while he was coming here. He took a different route

but got lost and stumbled upon AREA 51.

He called me and said, 'Bro some messed up XXXX is happening here, I need backup ASAP.'

I hung up and thought, '*Sigh, I guess no holiday today.*' I said a prayer and thought, what's my goal? What's my faith? I need to go and defend AJ. I stocked up on ammunition and guns and marched towards no man's land. I used a GPS to find AJ's location. Code N5858. That's a code we made between ourselves.

'So what's the plan?'

'We go in guns out and you flank around the side and kill everyone else,' planned AJ.

We fought, determined to save all the people and expose the truth. It was brutal, blood gushing out everywhere. Once we were done, we interrogated. The usual, I don't know, I don't know. We end him and we explore. There were time machines and strange liquids. We called for backup. I felt disgusted, anger rushed through me. I nearly ditched AJ but remembered save them, save them, expose, expose, expose. I pushed on and unearthed more.

'Holy XXXX what's going on here?' said AJ.

'I agree with you,' I replied.

'Our commander needs to see this,' said AJ.

We started to retreat but we were

stopped in our tracks. A horde of soldiers were there right before our eyes and before we knew it, we were surrounded and I blacked out. Next thing I knew I was woken up in a room with a blindfold on. I immediately knew I was tied up because I couldn't move. I was listening out. I heard a slicing sound and I smelled fresh blood. I felt shook. My body immediately went into fight or flight mode. I ripped the material off with my bare wrists, unwrapped my blindfold. Next thing I knew I was held at gunpoint. I saw horrific things, a thing I cannot say in this book. I was determined to fight them but my common sense kicked in. I held it back.

A scientist approached me and said, 'After so many years, I've caught you. I sent the mafia, the seals, I even sent you to the underworld and then you lived.' His face was purple and green with envy and rage.

I said 'That's a skill issue.'

He approached me further but then a flash bang perfectly hit all of us. I was blue with anxiousness and fear but then two hands on my shoulder lead me out of the room. As soon as I left I then opened fire.

'You okay brother.'

I recognized the voice. AJ, I thought, my old partner has saved me. The flash bang wore off. I threw a grenade and wiped them all out, never

to kidnap again. A shower of relief washed over me. Me and AJ left the area and felt we accomplished something. SOMETHING BIG. We called a bunch of people to take a look at Area 51. After this I realized I matter; everyone makes an impact. Had me and AJ never found Area 51, we may have been doomed to an apocalypse.

Pearl's Diary

Ivy

When I woke up this morning my leg was burning on fire. My parents assured me that the doctor is right about the medication. But what I don't tell them is that my memories can't be helped with a small dab of cream. The nightmares burn fresh in my mind. I limped to the bathroom and plunged my leg into the bathtub. It cooled but was still smouldering, I could deal with that.

Ember was her usual self. Confident. She is on fire, a total trailblazer, yet I can't help but think that someday she'll leave me behind, a small fish in the gigantic sea of opportunities. I can't rein her in though. It would feel wrong to stop her hot in her tracks.

We enter school. She sprints up the staircase. I push myself but I struggle, tumble and trip. My leg drags behind me. Ember peers round the corner.

'Hurry up!' she tells me.

* * *

'Can you move it? Did you remember to reapply it once a week? How does this feel?' Doctor Smith's questions drill into my brain as I shift in my chair anxiously. Half of me wants to tell him to mind his own business, to shut up and that he would never understand. Just like Ember always tells me I should. But I find my mouth saying the usual 'yes,' 'yep' and 'uh huh'. The scar snakes its way up my legs, an ugly burn. I don't know why it unnerves me: it's been there since I can remember. I guess it's because the mere sight of it makes all the agonizing memories rear their ugly, ugly heads.

I reach over to hastily grab fresh bandages lying on Doctor Smith's desk but my mother slaps my hand away.

'Ow!' I say, giving her the angriest look I could get away with, which was really a quick stare.

'The Doctor needs to apply your cream first, remember,' she orders.

I silently doubt that a small dab of cream once a week could extinguish traumatic memories. Maybe someday I could invent something like that, I think to myself. Occasional rest, constant interviews and appointments would not be in the list of ingredients.

I get up on to my feet and pull on my uniform. My name is Pearl Jones and I am 14 years old. I am also known by most as just one name from Ember Flickerman's endless list of friends. I wouldn't blame them, I'm always hanging around her and to be honest, I don't have anything else to be known by. My one unique feature is a secret to everyone who isn't family.

Last night, I had a nightmare. I get nightmares often, still, it burns fresh in the corner of my mind.

I fling open the hospital's rusty doors (or try to but it was way too stiff) and ran for the bus stop. It was tomato red like my face probably was. I don't know why appointments always irritate me like this. I think it's the fact that I would be more inclined to forget my injury entirely. Sure, the mental injuries would still linger but it would be something. I go lean my head against the grimy bus window feeling the vibrations on my skull, seeing if it would calm the thoughts bouncing around in it.

I arrive at my school. I'm about to follow her when a horde of students surge past. A teacher follows looking not annoyed and tired as usual but flustered.

'What are you doing? Run!' they shout at me.

It's only when I see the flickers of red galloping towards me that I fully understand. I dart outside into the school yard, which is already lined with students. I step back hastily as the entire building is engulfed in flames. I turn and see that the tower is also ablaze. That's when a colossal wave rears up and crashes down on the fire. Some people cheer, relieved. However, more flames rise up from the ashes. The wave is heading straight towards us. It crashes again, inches away from my feet, when the earth cracks and starts to shake. Overhead a sudden gust of wind spreads the fire.

'Head to the forest!' someone shouts. We turn and race towards the nearby forest on the outskirts of town. We stumble forwards through piercing thorns and roots threatening to trip us. We halt (finally) as we approach a green field. I gaze into the forest but I can't glimpse home. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I spot a bush of ripe strawberries. Ruby red and dotted with seeds. I creep forward and extend a hand to gently pluck one.

I hear a buzzing noise behind me

and turn around to find myself facing a high wall of blue. It seems to gently vibrate. I turn my extended hand to it.

'Ouch!' I cry as a current of electricity shoots through my arm. It drops, hanging limp by my side. An electric shock. In the middle of the forest too. Weird. I hear a voice booming through the trees overhead. Its owner is not visible. I feel glad, since judging by that voice it must be something powerful and intimidating.

'Welcome! We, the elements, have been fighting for decades. This will end soon. Survive. That's all you must do. The last mortal shall reign victorious. Good luck!'

And then it's gone as quickly as it appeared. I turn and see four others on my side of the forcefield looking dazed. A fight to the death? Is that what the thing meant? And why? Whatever it meant, I make the first move. I am about to walk into the wilderness when I stop and take in what looks like a dozen red eyes staring at me from the canopy. The others have clearly seen it too as they snap out of their dazed state. I now know what they meant by survival. We run.

I stop near a river. I think about crossing it as an extra measure. I look down for a minute and take in my reflection. It could be the last glimpse of myself not caked in mud. I am taking in my blue eyes, which are surprisingly

dry from tears when they twitch. My hand curls upwards and fold up and down beckoning me. I am so spellbound by this that I obey and crouch down.

'Closer,' River Me says. I put my face right up close to the surface. River Me pulls me under instantly. She starts dragging me down. I feel water seeping into me. Not just my lungs but my brain. The hand releases me and I swim up into daylight. My wet hair and clothes cling to me.

'Thank you' I think. But it's not me thinking.

'I am now you and you are now me. We are connected.'

'What do you mean?' I gasp into the empty clearing, to seemingly no one.

'I am water. You are my possession. I am no human. I am rain, river and sea.'

The voice fades out gradually leaving me all alone with my confused thoughts. Silence. Fire. Burning fire. All of a sudden, a fireball comes blasting out from the undergrowth. It's the rough size of a large basketball but as it gets closer and ever closer, it increases in size until it's the size of my entire body.

'Run, you fool!' the water in my brain cries. I brace myself, hastily measure the distance between me and the bushes closest to me, calculating

how long it would take me if I were to run now. I get up but immediately recoil as vivid, peculiar images flash through my busy mind. I shake my head frantically and just about manage to regain consciousness, but just when I get on my feet I feel burning and see my entire leg engulfed in flames. I'm paralysed by fear as my memories flood through my panicking head. The water spirit's cries have become high pitched shrieks now. Red, orange and yellow dance their dangerous dance around me. These hallucinations are incredibly torturous.

It's like I'm being forced to replay the worst moment of my life. I am collapsing from the inside out. I shake off the flames but it's too late. It hits my whole body. I'm covered with flickering flames. As they slowly engulf me, grey plumes of smoke drift into the sky. My eyes sting. I briefly spot a strand of flaming, red hair caught on a branch and the back of a girl, though my eyes have grown blurry from tears. She's walking away as I give in. She is yet to. I give a choked cry. I close my eyes. It's painfully quiet. It seems that the spirit has left. Good.

'Water has lost. Time of death: 3 seconds ago. Killed by: Fire. Congratulations. Let the game continue.'

Blue Ray of Power

Zeeshan

I'm Mr B and I've been down here for a year now and I love it here but it feels like I'm locked in a metal cage with billions of pounds. But the world can't know. No-one can know. If anyone finds out my life will go from 100-0. Zero. That's why I will isolate myself until it's controlled. I woke up today and realised that it was very active during the night. He opened the door and threw stuff all around the house. I spent an hour cleaning everything up. I'm tired now. I just want to be normal again. I want to see my family and go to headquarters but if I went out in the world with this it would be too dangerous. Of all people in the world, why do I have to be put with this disease? I got so angry. I got a stone and threw it at the stupid mirror that gave me the curse!

5 months later

Its been 5 months and I still can't control these alien beams out of my damn hands. I feel very isolated here, almost like a deer in headlights. No but for real I miss my Mama and Papa a lot and I really want to see my Grandma. Actually NO. I don't. If my perfectly capable Grandma just went and sold her own bracelet I wouldn't be in this situation right now.

Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you how I got these weird powers. Let me explain! One fine morning I got a call from my Grandma (Grandma Johnson) and she said, 'Come to my house when you're free,' and being the nice guy I am, I quickly rushed to her house because I'm just a nice guy like that. So I entered her house and she calls to me: 'Hello love, can you go to the trading shop and get some money for this bracelet?'

'Ok Grandma,' I say. So I arrive at the shop, trade the bracelet. A bit off topic, but £100 for that piece of junk! But anyway, back to the story! So then I got these powers, fast forward to yesterday, these three burglars tried to rob me! I got so scared that I fell over and this blue ray of power came out of me.

Oh yeah I'm calling them powers now because after that incident this magical, beautiful bird just flew in and started talking. I know it sounds weird but I'm dead serious. He taught me how to use it and now I'm free! I'm going to the City tomorrow. I'm sorry but I have to go.

Oh yeah my name is Boris.

I refer to this place as a metal cage and a prison. But in reality it's a £5 million country house but I hate it here because I'm a workaholic and I need to be at my business.

Unfortunate Hopelessness

Zunairah

It wasn't me. I swear it wasn't. In fact, I know it wasn't. Dad told me to go to my room and he gave me that look. Y'know, the look. The look that means don't talk, don't listen, don't even breathe. So I obeyed his cold demeaning stare. But then again, I didn't.

I ran to my room, locked the door, breathing heavily. Filling my brain, filling my head and then, I heard it.

'AGHHH!!!'

My breathing came to a halt.

I knew that voice, that scream. It rang in my head every night. I'd have recognised that voice anywhere. So I went, I went and disobeyed. Sometimes, I wish I hadn't, but I had to, I needed to. I knew it would've been his end and if I'd left him there, I would never have been able to forgive myself. I burst into the room, my magic

overflowing out of control. Then, I saw it.

The pool of blood. His practically lifeless corpse. His dull eyes. I could feel him, his pain, his trauma.

'S-save yours-elf...' he wheezed as he took his last, final breath.

It was just as I'd imagined; no moves seen. As if it was deja-vu. I collapsed to my knees as tears rained down my face. I held him with my small shaking hands, my tiny ten-year-old body hovering over him. I couldn't feel him anymore, it was blank.

Then they came in.

They saw me.

And they all thought it was because of me.

* * *

Everyone was staring at me, not that

it's any different than the usual. It is the usual.

Let them look, I thought. Let them stare. Let them talk.

As I walked past, their whispers got louder. They'd goggle at me as if I wasn't human. Just an object that people could stare at.

Their whispers just show how weak they are. How easily they succumb to the rumours people spread. Or is that me? I questioned. *Am I the weak one?*

Am I the one who gets used and then left to pick up the pieces?

'YESSS!' Yes, yes, yes, yes, yesss! It's time Diamond, I got it as I left class, now pay up!

Heath. Heath Clive. A tall, brunette 18 year old boy who was Indian. The breeze brushed across my face, painting a smile. No pain, just joy. The smile that even Heath, my life long best friend, had never noticed. Or at least never thought to mention.

'Wrong!' I exclaim, crossing my arms, leaning on the wall. 'You said IN 3rd you get it AFTER the bell, it's lunch, not 3rd.'

I never understand why he tries it with me. I've always had the upper hand, the advantage, the magic. But in a way, I'm glad he does it. It makes me feel like him, an escape for just a little while. I don't want all the stuff I have, and Heath makes it as normal as

possible; as human as possible; as magicless as possible. I laid my hand out, signalling for my money. Begrudgingly, Heath handed over my five oceans.

* * *

There's a new lad today. Heath's showing him round. We're meeting up with the two of them at the water fountain. 'We' being me and Coral.

Coral's blonde hair was covering her face like a curtain. I'm wearing my barriers today, a type of contact lens, I guess, but not for sight, but instead, to stop the entry between the mind and the soul. Other people's minds. Right now, I don't need more people hurting my existence.

'Sooo, when did they say they're coming again?' Coral asked. Classic Coral, impatient as always. *No wonder Heath and her are such a good match.* I thought.

'Heyyy! I am not impatient and don't speak about him like that!' she declared, chin facing the sky.

'Ooo, has D forgotten that you can read minds again?' a teasing voice sounded from behind me.

We turned around and I could see Coral's face light up. Her eyes filled with joy as she embraced Heath. There was someone beside him. The new kid.

For some reason I was drawn to them. I felt that I knew them from somewhere. But where? Whether I knew them or not, they sure were handsome. Chiselled chin, fluffy brown hair. But where did I know them from?

'D, you remember Cameron, right?' Heath asked animatedly, a cheeky grin on his face.

Excitement flowed through me as I stared at the boy I first loved. It'd been years but he still held that boyish grin. My legs moved faster than my brain could process and before I could stop myself I'd flung myself at him, wrapping my arms around his waist as a stray tear flowed down my face.

'I missed you... I whispered.

'Me too, I'm so sorry Diamond,' he replied.

Days went by, and Cam finally got used to the school.

'Hey, do you see that girl over there? What's her name?' Cameron asked.

I turned and looked where he pointed. *Her.* Of course he was interested in her, everyone is. It's like last time all over again.

Except this time, I cared. He couldn't fall for her, he just couldn't.

'D, Earth to Diamond,' he waved his hand in front of my face, as if to wake me from a daze.

'Sorry, she's called Layla. Layla

Russo. The school's popular girl...' I added, with a hint of distaste. Distaste that went unnoticed by Cam, not that that was unusual, but I wanted him to notice.

'I- is she single?'

I raised an eyebrow.

'It's just, she's in a couple of my classes and I really like her and -' he rambled.

'Baaad idea. She's no good at all bro, not only is she popular but she's dated like two thirds of the boys in our school. Even the one's it's illegal to have been with,' Heath chimed in jokingly.

'Maybe she's changed,' Cam added defensively.

'Highly doubt that, she's been in and out of a relationship with blondie over there for months,' Coral said, laughing.

Blondie. That meant Caleb. The first guy. The one I never wanted but had to get.

'Caleb? As in Diamond's ex?' Cameron question exasperatedly.

'Yep, and it's ex because of her. I guess I owe her one...' I say, grinning.

'What so she's the one who he ch-'

Suddenly there was a shout from the other end of the courtyard, a teasing lilt in their tone. I felt my annoyance seep through my uncomfortable façade.

Quickly, I felt the brush of the wind on my face yet again as my walls built up yet again.

* * *

This is my fault. If I'd just waited a little longer he wouldn't even be here. The cold of his hand runs through me as I grab on. It's all my fault. Maybe if I just tried it again?

NO!!! Stop that Diamond! You saw the way Heath was when you woke up! HE CRIED!!! In the fourteen years you've known him, you've NEVER seen him cry! His dishevelled form haunts my mind, I'm not gonna put him through that again. NEVER AGAIN!!!

And Coral! She looked like a ghost, AT LEAST twice as small as she usually is. As if she hadn't eaten in days! Her lifeless eyes and shaking hands...

How many people must I hurt before I stop myself, before it finishes, before it ends? Cameron killed himself for me! NO! He's not dead. Not yet, and he won't be, no matter the cost. I will bring him back. Even if it costs me my life.

'No you won't! DON'T YOU DARE TRY IT AGAIN!'

I flinched, craning my head, making sure my hand was still in his.

'W-what? I didn't say anything!' I lied, the sweat trickling down my spine.

I knew it would do no good, Coral's just like me, except she's sane, to some extent.

Taking a breath, she relaxed upon seeing my fear.

'You forgot that I can hear your thoughts...' *And speak to you through them*, she added, inside my head.

'I- I didn't. I swear, trust me, I know it torments us. We'll never forget.' I hesitated, annoyance slipping off my tongue towards the end. 'Yet you seem to forget that I'm your friend. That I'm here...'

TALES *from*

The UNDERWORLD

MORDEATH!

George

I came to school one morning and noticed something was odd, extremely odd. I saw the sky turn red, and I took one look in the canteen and I saw no-one! Normally there are people in there! I went in and there were no chefs on duty, so I saw what they were serving and it looked vile! It was fish eyes and infectious fungus! Then all of a sudden I heard a crash come from the back of the kitchen and a zombie-looking chef appeared, and he screeched out BRAINS!

I sprinted as fast as I could and escaped the canteen. Then I ran to North block, all the way to my form room, and then I came to a halt and screamed! AAHHHH! My form teacher was possessed! I went all the way down the corridor and I looked behind me and noted all of the geography and humanities teachers were possessed and were coming after one person, of

course it had to be me! I quickly dashed round a corner and the zombies who used to be my teachers went the other way. I was home free! I went in a corner behind a bush and I thought, and thought, and thought. Could it only be me?

Dear Diary

I have no clue where I am! No one to turn to! You will not believe me when I tell you but I am trapped in the UNDERWORLD! I am very cold and scared. I have noticed something strange. It looks like an abandoned school! All of a sudden these thoughts rushed into my head! Why am I here? How did I get here!? Am I going to be ok? How far am I from home? I needed to find out where I was. I searched left and right, down and up and then I stopped and froze still like I had seen a ghost! I saw a school crest and this was

no ordinary crest, it was my school's crest! I could hardly believe it! I was in my school but in the underworld! And suddenly a rush of adrenaline filled my body, and I ran as fast away as I could and I hid in a bush! I am still hiding as I am writing this. Please wish me luck surviving!

The Forbidden School of Evil and Good!

Amelia

Hi my name is Alima, aka the best thief. I am 26 years old and my parents left me when I was a baby in a dustbin. I went to an adoption centre where I found my adoptive siblings: Harold, Mariana and Lavender. This is why I have to go to the underworld, it's like it's my destiny to find my parents and give them a slow painful death.

As I walk into the so-called Underworld I see nothing but pitch black darkness. WHAT IS THIS! Out of the blue a random black and white smoke appeared along with three questions: Why do you want to enter this dungeon-like place? Why do you think you are worthy enough to enter MY kingdom? And WHY ARE YOU HERE? Nervously I answer all these questions quickly and honestly for the first time in my life. As I spoke the doors opened vigorously and into this world I go.

As I walk I see two schools and a random pit. I don't know what to choose: do I go to this school or this one or this random pit? This school I go!!!

I am starting to regret my choice as THIS PLACE STINKS! I hold my breath and walk to the middle of the school, and with the click of my fingers I am wearing black leggings with a black graphic t-shirt with a zip-up hoodie. I happily walk around this crazy, cool place and see the most AMAZING things you could imagine. Potions that can make people become tall, short, flyable, hungry, happy, anything that your imagination takes you. I actually wanna stay here. Is that weird?

School of Demons and Angels

Anaiya

I made a friend, her name is Harper. We were supposed to go to the School of Good, but we ended up in Evil, and now we have to figure out how to escape. There are Watchers, zombies and demons and they are very strong. So we need to make a plan to escape. We need to figure out where the Watchers are – they're scattered around. We need to make a map of the School of Evil. We draw a map of the School which will have the Watchers scattered around in their exact places, and the rooms as well, and us. We're going to use it to navigate ourselves around the school.

It's too hard – the Watchers are at every corner. So instead of trying to sneak, we fight! And we win. And then we find a secret escape door in the back of the school where nobody goes, and it's haunted by demon ghosts. They have horns but they are see-

through and iridescent, and they look like the *Scream* mask. We start panicking, breathing really heavily and flinging our hands and biting our nails. We don't know what to do, we're stuck. The door is right there, but we can't get through. We need to find something to get past them. We're going to be the *Ghostbusters* – we're going to use a machine made by the *Zombies*. It's a big box-looking machine like a backpack, with spikes on it and it's blue.

I press a button and then the whole machine lights up with flashing lights and starts shaking, and then it shoots out foam. The foam hits the demon ghosts, and they disappear – while we can, we run out of the exit door.

There's not much to see, just grass and dead trees. We're trying to get out of the school and get home.

We're now in between the two schools so we need to figure out a way to get past the River Styx. We try to build a boat out of trees. The branches are thin and bendy, but the trunk is oak and strong. Because the twigs are bendy, we wrap them around the oak to make the base of the boat, and then we need to make the oars. So we use the trunk of the trees and carve the top of the oars so we can move the water out of the way.

We get in the boat – it stays together, and we make it to the entrance. The gates are locked. We start looking around for a key. We go into an airship, and that's where we get the key. There is a Watcher and when we try and go through the gate he says no. We convince him to let us go through the gate by offering our machine.

'What does it do?' he says.

'It makes anyone disappear.'

'That will be of good use to me!'

And then he lets us through.

There's a puff of smoke and then all of a sudden we are in our house. I feel shocked and worried, confused and relieved.

The School of Evil and Good

Mahlia

Once upon, in a dark, dark place, The Underworld. A place where bodies rot, dreams turn into nightmares and natural disasters are a daily thing. While looking for her parents Lavender was tricked and trapped into the Underworld. As she entered the gates she saw a blood red river. Wondering on what to do, she saw a captain standing next to an airship. Without hesitation, she ran towards the ladder and climbed.

'Please I beg you let me onto the airship, I NEED TO GET OUTTA HERE!'

'Hmm I guess but that will be £5.'

Lavender slammed the money in his hand and jumped on.

While flying away she yelled:

'GAWD BLESS!'

Finally at the other side of the river she jumped off and walked away. She walked for miles and miles until she saw a tall, broken down building ahead

of her. She ran until she was in front of it. She walked in, ready for what's coming up.

To be continued...

Forbidden Lives

Skye

If you're wondering who I am, it doesn't matter. What matters is what happened to me and my people. I woke up one day feeling horrid, so I stole jewels. Jewels that could pay off my debts. However, it went wrong: I ran too far away and fell into a portal to my doom. It smelt of ashes and rained gas for days. Me and my group went on an adventure to fight the master.

But first, we crossed a river. We could've swam over and have had a chance to sink or fly away in a spaceship by doing a good deed. We all chose the spaceship. So for me, I returned everything that I stole to the bank. I was like everyone else. I was in shock. Shocked by the fact that there were zombies in front of a building.

We came up with a plan, a plan like no other. Me and George distracted the terrifying alive zombies, meanwhile our top secret ninjas (pst!

just two girls!) snuck in. After a while, we attacked. Suddenly, a whole zombie crowd was after us.

I sliced all of them trying to save us; sadly, George did it all. After that, we all were in the dark, shadowy and lonely.

Poof! A devil and angel were together as they were telling us to make a choice: 'School of Good or School of Bad?' So we all thought good meant good and bad meant bad. Turns out, we were wrong. We got swashed up and visions flashed before our eyes while our ears were bleeding with horror. Then, we dropped into a pit filled with scared people with no eyes, mouths, noses. I started to climb out with anger and fear. I couldn't believe the things I was actually seeing. I had to be brave in order to save everyone's lives.

After we all jumped out, we were

armed. I looked to my left: people were running. I looked to my right: George had started a war with these massive mosquitos that had killer bites that could be ten inches long. HUGE. So I did what I could and started to fight them off. Until one came charging at me and took a good old bite. I've never screamed louder in my life. I think I even scared George because he ran away so far and fast. I thought I would die, but I didn't, so I caught up with the others. Heavy breathing in pain left me to suffer for two days!

Anyways, we stopped for food. I had PFC until the whole group became animals and ate it all. Jeez, how did I survive? God knows.

The next day, we were walking through the halls and found the headmaster's office. He had the crystal to victory. But somehow, it wasn't over: we still had to get it and go home.

I shoved Sox away so my cat's poor eyes were saved.

We had one weapon: Valerie. Valerie could make any situation possible. She made a grappling hook that could grab anything. She aimed... FIRE! She caught it. Victory is ours. I picked up Sox knowing the master was awake. We all got ready, I screamed 'NOW RUN!' We ran. While the figure got closer. I threw the crystal. It created a beautiful light – then into a huge portal. We went through.

Suddenly, I felt sore, I was in my room, my bed? What? My dad came in saying 'Good morning honey, how was your sleep?'

I said 'Good... let me just... yeah!' He went. What just happened? Was my horrifying experience a dream or was it a sign for me to run away before it's too late? Let's find out...

The Underworld and Adventures

Taz

I can see a burning river, flames everywhere. I look across and see two schools, one bright, one dim. It's so hot my skin is peeling off. I then see two guards surrounding the schools. One looks very peculiar. I think it's a mix of an angel and demon, they're holding onto a cerberus, the largest animal I've probably seen. I then realise I'm in the underworld. People screaming and violence everywhere! I see a few people falling into a pit. I just stand there in shock, frozen on the spot. My feet are burning and I scream in pain as I walk across the flames. I saw people rotting then building up again to normal which had me petrified. In the river, I see skulls laying there like a pin.

1 month ago

It's been such a busy day in the bakery. So many customers! I wish I could take the day off. I have to work here without Amala. He hasn't even been in for so long. I'm worried something happened! I walk into the store room and it's dead silent! Then I fall into this dark black hole. I'm here now and I'm stuck. I need help. Right now, it's chaos out there. Luckily, I've found a hiding place under the dark rock. Here's my backstory:

I grew up in London all my life even though I'm from Morocco. I stopped going to college because I'm an adult now and can do what I want. My friend works with me because he felt bad I was alone.

Me and my 'friend' go to the back to get some more coffee as it ran out. My 'friend' created a portal glowing purple and it reeked of acid and venom.

She then called my name and shoved me in there before my mouth opened.

I see a river full of lava, and bones are floating around. I see people running as if it's their last day on earth. People scream as they tell me to run, someone then grabs me by the hand and we run.

I then introduce myself as we find a large rock to hide under. She introduces herself, her name is Mariana, she's 17 and she likes to beat up boys. We see that there is a School of Good and a School of Bad. Then we see a bunch of guards and we go to hide and make a plan to escape the underworld.

I distract the guards making them run back and forth and then Mariana comes and attacks them from behind.

Then they're all down and we manage to get into the School of Bad to explore. We see loads of zombies walking really lanky. They are six

foot tall. So we both attack them from behind and their bones break up because they're really weak.

Then we have two choices, stairs and elevator. The elevator is really slow and goes up to every floor and something might attack us. We choose the stairs. Then we go up and there is a room with a stinky smell. We see a muscly dark arm stretching out.

We check and we see a big large muscular monster, with really large pointy horns. Mariana has a supply bag and it helps us distract the monster with a flashlight and it's dark and really gloomy inside the room because it doesn't like the light. The monster looks back but I teleport us and we stride to the wall using an invention I made.

Camouflage with the Light

Zahraa

Dear Diary,

Hi my name is Harold, I am 26. I grew up on a ship and became a thief, my parents were famous pirates. They were wanted by the King and Queen. I have not been stealing enough which I would call a big flaw. Even though my parents left me I will still avenge them. I have three people that care about me a lot. Their names are Alima, Iwanda and Mariana. We all met in an adoption centre.

I have been chucked into the underworld. What do I do? Where am I? Who are these people? Suddenly I see a man and a woman with crowns on their heads.

'Help me...'

All I see is white smoke and a big pit. I am running... Running away from the guards and zombies. There is nowhere to go except the two schools. Which one do I pick? They are coming

closer... I ran to the right side of the pit, not knowing which school I was entering.

Thankfully I entered the School of Good. It's beautiful. There is light everywhere and the students are dressed in amazing, beautiful white outfits. I don't know what to feel except happy and scared. First of all I don't know any of these people, second of all I am in a good school. What could happen?

HELP! THE GUARDS ARE HERE SPECIFICALLY LOOKING FOR ME...

Now I have to find something to camouflage with the light. Suddenly I turn around and see a beautiful young girl. This isn't just a regular young girl. She's like nine years old. What did she do?

She looked up at me and said, 'Hi! My name is Rosy. Who are you and what are you doing in the underworld?'

I answered, 'My name is Harold and I have been banished into the underworld for thieving. My parents were famous pirates and were wanted by the King and Queen. I was being chased by the guards and zombies and I just ran to the first school I saw. Now they are looking for me, help please...'

The tension got to me. I was sweating so much in the silence.

'Of course I will help you, I have been stuck here for a very long time. I know all the escapes...'

The Headmaster's Office

Zunairah

The school's Norwegian headmaster lay, feet up on his desk, black slacks hanging off his feet as the uncleanly stench wafted off them. Shoes, without socks. Piles of papers, most unfinished and some untouched, sat on his desk, forgotten. His red and yellow striped tie lay across his bear-belly as it slowly rose and fell. Again, and again, and again. A loud noise emitted from his mouth as the chair he was sitting in shook. His snoring could shift mountains, it seemed, as the decrepit old man slipped in and out of his dreams.

Dreams. A thought so very far away for some. A thought that this headmaster would know not of, very soon.

Beautiful gardens of lilies, orchids, gardenia, and more surrounded him as

he sat on a red and white chequered blanket beside a large wooden picnic basket. The sunset glimmered as he stared forward, grinning as if he had everything in the world.

Two figures emerged between the garden beds, a woman around the age of the headmaster, so probably around 1500, laughed melodically, holding the hand of a young brown boy who was running towards the headmaster.

Suddenly, the night came, quicker than expected, and the flowers wilted, faster than normal, especially for it being the middle of summer. The two figures stopped, turned around, towards the sun and looked up. The moonlight shimmered on their faces as their eyes said their last goodbyes. And then they were gone, faster than needed.

Darkness filled his head as pain filled his soul. Sorrow. Utter sorrow.

He ran forward and dropped to his knees, just where they stood. His body shook with tears as his heart throbbed.

A black mist emerged from inside him, surrounding him, enveloping his surroundings. However, it didn't stop with him. First the room, the mist seeping through cracks in doors and windows, escaping to the rest of the school. It was absolute carnage.



MINISTRY
OF STORIES

The Ministry of Stories champions the writer in every child. Co-founded by author Nick Hornby in 2010, we help young people write brighter futures for themselves through the power of their ideas and imagination. We build confidence, self-respect and communication skills through innovative writing programmes and one-to-one mentoring for children, working in schools and at our dedicated writing centre in east London.

Ministry of Stories is hidden behind our fantastical shop, Hoxton Street Monster Supplies, which has been serving monsters – and the occasional human – since 1818. All proceeds from their delectable offerings – including Werewolf Biscuits, Cubed Earwax and Sugar-Dusted Bogies – go back to support our work with young people aged 6–16.



**MINISTRY
OF STORIES**

159 Hoxton Street, London, N1 6PJ
ministryofstories.org/schools